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A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES AS AN INSTRUMENT OF STRATEGY

A Thesis presented to the faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

Gregg D. Jones, MAJ, USA
B.A., Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Virginia, 1976
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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
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This study investigates the historical utility of Special Operations Forces (SOF) as instruments of national military strategy. The research concept employs the study of a representative historical example of each of the five current doctrinal SOF missions. The intent is to both assess the effectiveness of the SOF efforts at the time that they occurred, and to derive continuing themes, if appropriate, for SOF strategic employment in the future.

The study concludes that SOF strategic employment, as represented by the operations examined, has been largely effective, though not without setbacks. Further, there are operational and organizational components that repeatedly are central to success. Among these are the close integration of military operations into the larger political context, the early provision of appropriate external support resources, and the presence of sufficient and appropriately trained special operators to complete the assigned mission. While these components do not represent a checklist for the success of a strategic SOF operation, they do represent realities that historical experience suggests will be of continuing importance.

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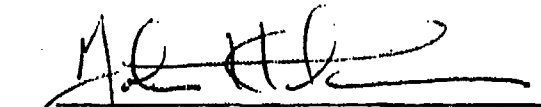

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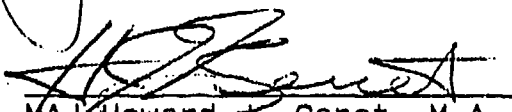

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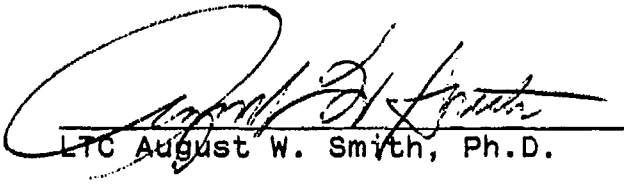

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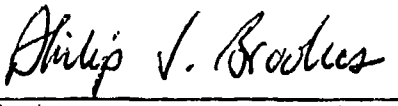

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ABSTRACT

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES AS AN INSTRUMENT OF STRATEGY by MAJ Gregg D. Jones, USA, 130 pages.

This study investigates the historical utility of Special Operations Forces (SOF) as instruments of national military strategy. The research concept employs the study of a representative historical example of each of the five current doctrinal SOF missions. The intent is to both assess the effectiveness of the SOF efforts at the time that they occurred, and to derive continuing themes, if appropriate, for SOF strategic employment in the future.

The study concludes that SOF strategic employment, as represented by the operations examined, has been largely effective, though not without setbacks. Further, there are operational and organizational components that repeatedly are central to success. Among these are the close integration of military operations into the larger political context, the early provision of appropriate external support resources, and the presence of sufficient and appropriately trained special operators to complete the assigned mission. While these components do not represent a checklist for the success of a strategic SOF operation, they do represent realities that historical experience suggests will be of continuing importance.

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GLOSSARY

Counter Terrorism (CT) - Offensive measures taken by civilian and military agencies of the government to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism. The primary mission of special operations forces in this interagency activity is to apply specialized capabilities to preclude, preempt, and resolve terrorist incidents abroad. (USCINCSOC)

Direct Action Operations (DA) - Short duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions by special operations forces to seize, destroy, or inflict damage on a specified target; or to destroy, capture, or recover designated personnel or material. (USCINCSOC)

Exfiltration - The removal of personnal or units from areas under enemy control. (JCS Pub 1-02)

Foreign Internal Defense (FID) - Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. (JCS Pub 1-02)

Guerrilla Warfare - Military and paramilitary operations conducted in enemy-held or hostile territory by irregular, predominantly indigenous forces. (JCS Pub 1-02)

Infiltration - A technique and process in which a force moves as individuals or small groups over, through, or around enemy positions without detection. (JCS Pub 1-02)

Insurgency - An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict. (JCS Pub 1-02)

National Command Authorities - The President and the Secretary of Defense or their duly deputized alternates or successors. (JCS Pub 1-02)

Special Operations - Military operations conducted by specially trained, equipped, and organized DOD forces against strategic or tactical targets in pursuit of national military, political, economic, or psychological objectives. (JCS Pub 1)

Special Reconnaissance (SR) - Reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted by special operations forces to obtain or verify, by visual observation or other collection methods, information concerning the capabilities, intentions, and activities of an actual or potential enemy, or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic or geographic characteristics of a particular area. It includes target acquisition, area assessment, and post-strike reconnaissance. (USCINCSOC)

Strategic Level of War - The level of war at which a nation or group of nations determines national or alliance security objectives and develops and uses national resources to accomplish those objectives. (JCS Pub 1-02)

Unconventional Warfare (UW) - A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes guerrilla warfare and other direct offensive, low visibility, covert or clandestine operations, as well as the indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence collection, and evasion and escape. (USCINCSOC)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

a. Background. Events of the last decade, particularly incidents of terrorism and Low Intensity Conflict (LIC), have caused the United States Department of Defense to resurrect, restructure, and revitalize U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF). These efforts have led to a dramatic increase in capability in just about all functional areas of military operations.

Command and control enhancements have included the establishment of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations-Low Intensity Conflict (ASD SO-LIC), the creation of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), the increase in authority of the Special Operations Command (SOC) within each of the theater unified commands, and the activation of headquarters and commands in all of the services' SOF elements. These sweeping efforts, in concert with initiatives in force structure and equipment modernization, have understandably provoked debate across the defense establishment as to the appropriate and maximally effective utilization of SOF.

b. Purpose of the thesis. SOF have utility across the continuum of military operations from peacetime competition to war. Further, it is a virtual article of

faith to SOF professionals, and an intuitive belief among many informed policy makers, that SOF are best utilized on strategic missions. However, the pace and scope of the recent resurgence requires that this heretofore "obvious" conclusion be reviewed. Only with a theoretical foundation constructed of rigorous logic, can future high level political and military leaders, and, just as importantly, the staffs that serve them, recommend SOF employment appropriately. To date, individual missions have been discussed in the body of professional literature in some detail. (See paragraph 2 below.) What is less defined are the criteria and conditions for SOF employment within the levels of war, and specifically, at the strategic level. More simply, there has been dialogue about how to employ SOF. This thesis studies if and when to employ SOF strategically.

Since strategic employment of U.S. SOF in the last decade has been infrequent, there is little data from which a researcher can draw conclusions as to the strategic applicability or effectiveness of the recent enhancements. Therefore, an historical perspective is perhaps the best research approach. That is, lessons of effectiveness and method may be derived from previous utilizations of SOF in strategic missions, and can hopefully assist today's decision makers.

c. Research Questions. Therefore, this study will endeavor to answer the following specific questions.

1. Primary: Have modern Special Operations Forces (SOF) historically been an effective strategic instrument?

2. Subordinate:

a. What criteria have national leaders utilized to categorize a crisis as one of strategic importance?

b. What sort of circumstances have impelled national leaders to employ SOF to attain identified strategic aims?

c. What factors contributed to the resultant success or failure when SOF have been strategically employed?

d. What criteria and lessons can be derived from this historical experience for future SOF strategic employment?

d. Assumptions. The following assumptions will be used in the preparation of this thesis:

(1) That historical examples of strategic employment of SOF exist in sufficient number to determine common national and military leadership actions, and resultant success or failure factors.

(2) That the national interests of the United States are clearly defined, and will remain relatively unchanged for the foreseeable future.

(3) That the U.S. SOF enhancements will remain in effect for the near future, and will result in increased mission readiness and capability.

e. Limitations. This study will examine the circumstances surrounding several employments of SOF in the last fifty years. The factors to be explored will include the strategic environment, the decisions taken that led to SOF utilization, and the results of the employment in somewhat general terms.

f. Delimitations. This thesis will not include classified information. Further, several operations selected for their instructive value will be spotlighted, with no attempt to examine the strategic implications of every SOF action of the past fifty years. This thesis uses the framework of the five doctrinal SOF missions, and a case study of each. The civil affairs and psychological operations often intrinsic to a SOF mission will be treated only tangentially. Certainly complete and valuable research studies could be completed in either of these subject areas alone. Finally, the lessons that may be learned from the examples chosen will be examined in the light of their universal applicability. Tactical lessons, while of

continued interest and value, are outside the scope of this work.

g. Significance of the study. This thesis should clarify for future decision makers both the utility of SOF at the strategic level, and also what limitations are inherent in their use. Officials might therefore be more informed as to the dimensions of the ever present risk they accept by opting to launch a special operation.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Introduction. There is a large body of literature regarding Special Operating Forces, both in the public domain in the form of books, and in U.S. Government sources in the forms of theses and abstracts. The serious researcher must, however, use considerable care in utilizing books available to the general public. Many are superficial or inaccurate, and pander to a readership more interested in sensationalism than analysis. Nevertheless, a discerning student can, with care, make use of some popular book publications. (Generally speaking, recent books that describe events some years in the past, such as campaign or unit studies in World War II, are relatively free of these defects. Caution must be exercised most often when using a book written about and shortly after a dramatic event, such as a hostage rescue attempt.)

U.S. Government sources are fundamentally more factual. The researcher can utilize them with fewer concerns about veracity, but must still be aware that they inevitably are a reflection of the author's background, viewpoints, and frame of reference.

To discuss the literature employed in this thesis, I have divided the bibliography into eight categories by type or focus of work: General Histories, Doctrinal Publications, Theses/Dissertations/Research Studies, Campaign and Battle Histories, Analytical Studies, Strategic Studies, Unit Histories, and Autobiographical/Biographical works. Some comments about each of these categories are appropriate at this stage of the project.

a. General Histories. Asprey, Bolger, and McMichael are the works I place in this group. Asprey's War In The Shadows is an exhaustive treatment of guerrilla warfare throughout history. It provides useful perspective primarily on the readiness of warriors through the centuries to resort to special operations of some type. Bolger's Americans At War is an effective source on the very recent commitments of American military power. These commitments have usually been in whole or in part special operations. McMichael does an impressive study on the nature of light infantry in recent history. Since many special operations are conducted with adapted light infantry tactics and techniques, this source is a valuable analysis.

b. Doctrinal Publications. The 1980's resurgence of the U.S. SOF has led to a revision and expansion of the doctrinal literature that gives the community its intellectual focus. Several are still in the ccordinating and final draft processes. Nevertheless, their value is inestimable

in synthesizing past experience into current procedures. The Field Manual (FM) 31-20 and the Joint Chiefs of Staff Publication (JCS Pub) 3-05 are particularly noteworthy. The definitions and concepts found there are the framework for this thesis. Also relevant in this category are FM 100-25, and the SOF status report produced by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD SOLIC).

c. Theses/Dissertations/Research Studies. This is by far the most populated category. Nearly all of the theses and research studies were done by serving professional officers while studying at a service school.

To survey them individually I have further subdivided this category into those studies that are doctrinal, historical, historical analytical, hostage recovery related, counter-narcotics related, or relevant to the mid-1980's discourse about the creation of USSOCOM.

I include the works of Brown, Davis, Gregory, Harned, Kraus, Maher, McMillan, Roach, and Todd among the doctrinal studies. For its value and insight across a considerable range of SOF topics, the Harned thesis, "Army Special Operations Forces and AirLand Battle," is a standout. Not only does it represent impressive scholarship, but it was a ground breaking effort to define the role of SOF in the then emerging AirLand Battle Doctrine. Of the others, the works of Davis on command and control, Maher on contingency

operations, Roach on targeting, and Todd on SOF applications to mid and high intensity conflict have the most relevance and application to likely future issues. In terms of use for this study, they offer organizational solutions to many of the difficulties apparent in the historical examples.

I place the efforts of Beckett, Hogan, Paddock, Petraeus, and Watkins in the historical category. All three of the Ph.D. dissertations I utilize are here, and I regard them as excellent sources. Hogan and Paddock are respectively the historians of the U.S. Army Ranger and Special Forces concepts. Petraeus convincingly charts the position of the US military leadership in the utilization of military force in the post-Vietnam era. These trends have important implications that often lead to SOF employment as the force of choice.

The Watkins thesis is a well-researched history of the Northern Borneo confrontation. Watkins provides a good summarization of the conflict, with particularly useful detail regarding the background origins of the strife. As this confrontation is the setting of one of the representative missions spotlighted in this thesis, such a source is a considerable value.

In the historical analytical category of theses, I place two titles: The Rothstein effort examining special leadership requirements for SOF leaders, and the Steers thesis discussing the WWII establishment of British Special

Forces. Rothstein uses several historical examples to illuminate characteristics required of the SOF leader. Both his research methodology and his approach to his thesis question lend perspective to the character of special operations forces and the missions they undertake.

Steers has compiled an exhaustive account and analysis of the plethora of early World War II, British attempts to develop a capability to raid the German occupied continent. His research provides a detailed background to two of the representative missions examined in this thesis.

The efforts of Bailey and Brauer are related to hostage recovery. They attempt a considerable challenge: to study these complex operations in a scholarly manner using unclassified sources. Both authors are able to apply their vantage point of military professionalism to extract useful conclusions.

The Harris thesis is the sole consultation I have made regarding what may well be a future strategic employment of military force in the fight against drug trafficking. That SOF could participate in such an effort is a matter of conjecture. However, the hypothetical use of any findings of this study to a consideration of a counter-drug role may improve the applications of appropriate means to ends. The Harris effort provides thought-provoking information in this regard.

Five studies, those of Fawcett, Harbison, Koren, McCombie, and Tomhave are part of the professional discourse surrounding the establishment of a Joint US Special Operations Command in the 1980s. They are useful here for their perspective on the many ways participants in such an important decision define and address strategies. The Koren and Tomhave efforts are especially thought provoking for they examine the first application of legislative as opposed to executive power to the SOF employment debate. Leaders contemplating questions of future SOF utilization may well have to consult this new constituency as well.

d. Campaigns & Battle Histories. This is a large category with sources included that run the gamut from works of meticulous scholarship to others that are barely more than journalism. Allen's book, The Savage Wars of Peace, is a thoughtful if somewhat broad treatment of soldier's views of what are now called "low intensity conflicts." He includes an interesting section on the Borneo confrontation.

Ben Porat and Stevenson's small books are more at the popular journalism end of the spectrum. Both were written to satisfy the public appetite for information on the dramatic Entebbe hostage rescue operation. Further, both are written with minimal operational details included. Ben Porat particularly focuses on individual experiences rather than military detail. (One suspects that this was all Israeli military censors would allow.) In any event, these

two books do provide an interesting counterpoint to the representative counterterrorism mission examined.

Daly's account of a unique application of SOF in modern warfare - the Selous Scouts in the Rhodesian War of the 1970s - may, like the Harris thesis, provide clues as to where future SOF employment trends may be heading. There are, however, some weaknesses to the Daly book that must be taken into account. The book is largely a memoir of Daly himself as recounted to a journalist acquaintance. Memory is always on uncertain resource and here it is the primary one. There is a short bibliography of mostly general background histories, and a brief listing of local newspapers. However, no note citations are included at all. Therefore, only general impressions may be safely formed which fortunately are all this thesis requires. Anything more specific extracted from Daly's book would require independent corroboration.

Two volumes of the official history of Australia in World War II are utilized in this thesis. The works of Dexter and Wigmore are, as should be expected, carefully researched and fully annotated. Based on the war diaries of the units in action, the authors go so far as to provide in their footnotes brief biographical sketches of individual soldiers the first time a man is mentioned. Therefore, the information these two sources provide on the Independent Companies, Australia's initial entry into the arena of

special operations, is reliable and rich in information.

MRD Foot is a noted historian of the efforts of resistance against the German European occupation in World War II. For this study, I utilize two of his works that focus on the Special Operations Executive (SOE), Britain's principle organization for prosecuting unconventional warfare. Both of these are very useful. One is a general history of the organization; the other is a very detailed account of SOE operations specifically in France. Both are of great value in examining the unconventional warfare representative mission, but the latter are particularly critical.

The works of Kelly and Stanton are the foundations of this study's examination of foreign internal defense. Kelly writes a semi-official history of U.S. Army Special Forces in Vietnam prepared, however, very soon after the events it recounts. Both of the Stanton books are landmarks. One is a detailed narrative treatment (as different from an official history) of US Special Forces operations in Vietnam. Stanton probably chose this form to attract a wider readership, but his investigation of small unit operational reports still ensures a considerable scholarship. His only recently published Illustrated History is virtually a companion volume to the first effort. Rather than presenting new information, Stanton concentrates on providing a truly staggering variety of photographs of every

phase of the Special Forces war. The informed researcher can discern much information from this compendium.

King has written an examination of selected US Ranger combat operations in World War II. Though I do not specifically study this force's activities on a representative mission, the activities King chooses to examine contain some similarities from which I can draw corroboration. Millar's book on the operation central to the continued prosecution of the radar war is used for the same reason. Both are well done efforts in the fields they study.

The Kramers article is by its nature brief but is nevertheless a succinct account of the Borneo confrontation. Written as it was for a magazine readership, it serves as almost an outline for the most important facts and events. For this study, it offers an opportunity to verify and cross reference the Watkins thesis.

Ladd's Commandos and Rangers of World War II is the leading overview history of the US and British military special operating units. Ladd does not attempt to provide details in great depth of each of the actions, but rather traces overall developments and employments. He also provides the service of including the many small efforts and units that populated the war. His work therefore is very valuable as an initial research point on a wide range of topics.

Pearson has written an account of the ultimately tragic WWII battle by the French underground on the Vercors massif. He writes at mostly the human level, and from the French perspective. When cross-referenced with the Foot sources, the Vercors story may be studied as a very unsuccessful part of a campaign that was effective overall.

Ryan's treatment of the Iranian hostage rescue attempt is really an expanded version of the report of the Holloway commission assigned to investigate the failure. Ryan does a good job of setting the overall context of the mission and its failure, and turns the Holloway report into a form useful to the general reader. The very fact that this synthesis and publication occurred is an indicator of the shock waves the mission's failure produced.

e. Analytical Studies. I have placed three works in this category for their effort to analyze the application of SOF as a type of force. Cohen's work is the premier scholarship in my view to date. He examines the complex and tenuous relationship between SOF practitioners and policy makers. His conclusions give a long term perspective to the issue that I have not seen anywhere else.

The Livingstone book has a very limited use for this study. It does describe the characteristics prevalent in counter-terrorism units and individuals. After that it becomes a chronicle of the many imposters and hopefuls who

drift around the fringes of special operations, and it is no longer applicable to this study.

The Paschall book is an attempt to envision the character of low intensity conflict, and the SOF role in it, into the next century. One author's view of the future is as valid as another's, but Paschall's professional career makes his speculation worth taking into account.

f. Strategic Studies. This study must attempt to take from the huge quantity of strategic literature available, that which can frame this discussion to a satisfactory degree. The consultation with Clausewitz is virtually a requirement to understand the foundation of thought on the relationship of war and the state and strategy.

The Collins book is a good contemporary treatment of many of the same general issues. Coupled with the articles in the Lykke compendium, a view of strategy as promulgated in the bipolar world may be extracted. Whether that bipolar world is truly in the past is a currently developing issue.

The articles by Downey and Metz, Metz alone, and Friedberg provide some interesting thoughts on the possibly transitory American approach to strategy. If one accepts these assertions, implications for successful SOF employment in protracted conflict are far-reaching and not encouraging.

g. Unit Histories. This is a category of works that focus exclusively on a chronicle of a specific unit. The

Geraghty book on the British SAS is of uneven quality. One is not certain whether this is due to security restrictions or attempts to market something for a general readership. In any event, it is a corroborative not a primary source for this study.

The Hinsley et al study of the effectiveness of British Intelligence in World War II is a multi-volume official history compiled with exhaustive attention to detail. Peripheral to the subject of this thesis, it nevertheless provides some background to the bureaucratic battles that shaped the secret war.

The Horner history of the Australian SAS is much different. It is an official history done with attentive scholarship, but with enough explanatory material to make it informative to someone outside the professional service. It is the primary source for this study's investigation of a representative special reconnaissance case.

Messenger presents an overall history of Britain's World War II commando units. It is an effective background account to set the stage for this study's direct action case.

Simpson wrote the first general, popular history of the US Army Special Forces. Again his book provides a background context for other more specific sources. Simpson does have one advantage however over other writers in this category: He was a long serving SOF professional who knew

from firsthand experience what information it was important to include.

Lastly, the US Army's official history of Merrill's Marauders is included for a view on what happens when immediate operational exigencies lead commanders to m'suse a"special" force. Though this provisional unit was not a special operations force by today's definition, it was initially committed to combat as one. Subsequently, inappropriate utilization of the courageous but misapplied unit exacerbated the high command's confusion. Though certainly there were many other contributing factors, the story of this unit's eventual destruction is sobering.

h. Autobiographical/Biographical. These are books obviously by or about some important personages in the history of special operations. Beckwith rushed into print quickly after Operation Eagle Claw with this version of his life and role as ground force commander of the mission. Brown's biography of Stewart Menzies is useful for the examination of the prime bureaucratic adversary to SOE in World War II Britain. Duncan studies Francis Marion, my candidate for the first strategically employed, American SOF commander. Chant-Semphill recounts his experiences as a Commando on the St. Nazaire raid. Gilbert is the distinguished official biographer of Winston Churchill. His multi-volume biography is an invaluable source of the many initiatives directed by the wartime Prime Minister utilizing

special operations. Kyle, in a book very recently published, tells his story as the air commander of the Iranian hostage rescue attempt. Harrison recounts his experiences as a WWII SAS raider in support of the SOE unconventional warfare campaign in France.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

a. Introduction. Developing conclusions on the topic will require pursuing a path of logic that is delineated by the four subordinate research questions. That is, first, a paradigm must be developed of what constitutes a strategic mission (subordinate question 1). Second, an analysis model must be created by which, third, selected representative missions may be examined (subordinate questions 2 and 3). Fourth and finally, if the analysis has resulted in lessons that lend themselves to organization, a compendium of conclusions may be derived (subordinate question 4). Below is a more detailed description of each of these steps.

b. Paradigm of a strategic mission.

(1) Definitions. "Strategic" is a frequently used term, which like "leadership," stimulates a plethora of denotations and connotations depending on the user's frame of reference. For the purposes of this study, a working definition to assist the reader in understanding the research will be used. It is derived directly from the Joint Chiefs of Staff definition presented in the Glossary, and restated in other terms for utility. A "strategic

mission," then, is a military operation directed against a defined objective of vital importance to the security of the national interest. Further, against this objective, national level command authorities are prepared to employ whatever military assets seem appropriate to ensure success.

(2) Paradigm criteria. From this definition, five criteria may be extracted to use when determining if an operation in question is a strategic mission. First, a national interest is threatened. Second, a defined objective exists. Third, that objective exerts an undeniable and critical effect upon the maintenance or furtherance of that interest. Fourth, national command authorities are involved in applying military forces to maintain or further that interest. And fifth, the selection of the military force to be applied involves difficult but necessary choices between scarce assets. Applying these criteria may allow the researcher to identify strategic missions and lead to the eventual orderly analysis of its components.

c. Mission Analysis Model. Once the many operations considered and performed are submitted to the paradigm, and those that fit the criteria emerge, a model must be prepared against which the representative missions may be analyzed. This study will apply a six step analysis model against the missions selected. These are:

STEP 1 Context and events surrounding the mission.

STEP 2 Description of the operation as planned.

STEP 3 Command and Control organization.

STEP 4 Factors bearing on selection of mission force.

STEP 5 Outcome of the operation as executed.

STEP 6 Salient lessons learned.

d. Selected Representative Missions. One historical example, from each one of the five doctrinal missions now considered the purview of SOF, has been selected. They are:

Unconventional Warfare (UW) - WWII British Special Operations Executive (SOE) activities in France.

Direct Action (DA) - WWII British Combined Operations raid on St. Nazaire, France.

Foreign Internal Defense (FID) - Selected operations of the US. Army Special Forces in Vietnam.

Special Reconnaissance (SR) - British and Australian Special Air Service (SAS) Operations on Borneo in the 1960s.

Counter Terrorism (CT) - US Iranian hostage rescue attempt (Operation Eagle Claw) in 1980.

Some discussion of a few other examples that were considered but not selected is appropriate. The WWII British airborne raid on the German radar installation at Bruneval, France was considered as a candidate for the direct action example. (Indeed, some qualities of this

operation provide an interesting counterpoint to the operation selected.) Nevertheless, the Bruneval operation was comparatively small, and arguably impacted on the tactical versus the strategic level of the conflict. In the final analysis, the St. Nazaire operation offered components that fit the nature of this study.

The American WWII intelligence agency, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), operations were also a strong candidate for the Unconventional Warfare example. OSS operated worldwide by the later years of the war, and offers the student many instructive examples. However, the British predecessor, SOE, with a focus on their operations in France was selected. SOE French operations were more pervasive in that theater, were undertaken for a longer period, and are more extensively documented.

Finally, an obvious candidate for the counter-terrorist example is the successful Israeli raid to free the hostages held at Entebbe, Uganda in 1976. However, for popular accounts that are notably short of military information, there are no scholarly examinations available of the details of the operation. Israeli security is likely to remain restrictive of operational information for the foreseeable future. In contrast, there is considerable unclassified information published regarding the selected Operation Eagle Claw.

e. Conclusion. Once these individual analyses are complete, trends and more general lessons may have emerged. These will require examination and evaluation. It is by no means certain that a clear "checklist" will be derived. Perhaps the result will be that no definitive, historically based road map for SOF strategic employment is discernible. In which case, decision makers shouldn't waste time in future crises contemplating past operations.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

PART I

Unconventional Warfare (UW) - World War II British Special Operations Executive (SOE) Operations in France

Unconventional warfare in today's doctrinal literature is described as including a "...broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations."[1] Basic definitions agree that UW includes guerilla warfare and other direct and indirect activities. In short, UW encompasses a large portion of the different measures that constitute special operations, and therefore, its diversity makes it a logical starting point for this study.

Invoking the strategic paradigm in the case of World War II Great Britain just after the Dunkirk evacuation, it is not difficult to perceive the difficulties faced by the Churchill government. The British national interest threatened at the time was no less than the continued survival and sovereignty of the Empire and home islands. (Further conjecture that to some degree the survival of western democracy was also then in the balance is beyond the scope of this study. The British national interest is as far as we need to go to establish the strategic genealogy of the operations under review.)

For a defined objective in this period, we discover that Churchill, not unreasonably, was busily employing whatever resources he could marshal in his nation's desperate defense. War aims were certainly, in the longer view, to defeat the Nazi Reich's expansion and power. However, in this period, concerns of far greater immediacy shaped policy. Churchill was determined that no single defeat anywhere would prove final. Additionally, he had judged from the many sources at his disposal, that Britain's imminent defeat from invasion was avoidable, if herculean efforts both to fill gaps in defenses, and to begin prosecution of a myriad of aggressive stratagems, were undertaken.[2] Logically and intuitively, today's researcher may therefore conclude that in this desperate period, all such objectives or stratagems employed by Churchill's war cabinet were contributory to the imperative interest of national survival; that those officials concerned (primarily Churchill) were directly and intimately involved in the detailed application of military resources; and that they were rapidly and continually forced to make choices between scarce assets by the exigencies of the situation.

Lest it appear that I have run too quickly through the strategic paradigm, a reminder is perhaps in order on the utility of such constructs. Models, mine included, are neatly constructed to examine, <u>if necessary</u>, closely similar options in a world that is now highly fragmented despite

superpower competition. There will be parts of this thesis where such difficult choices confront policymakers. However, in the summer of 1940, the real possibility of land combat on the island of Great Britain imbued policymakers with focus and clarity. It would be presumptuous and inaccurate to now clutter the historical record with descriptions of indecision that at least published sources do not record. A fight for survival inspires the execution of all manner of possible activities with great immediacy and dispatch.

Special Operations Executive (SOE) was one of the efforts undertaken to regain the initiative and insure that no defeat was final. Yet its eventual incarnation as the single secret striking arm of the British nation was not without the involvement of several separate agencies and noted personages initially. Indeed efforts to give Britain some sort of secret aggressive capability began somewhat ineffectually even before the war.

The entry of Hitler's forces into Austria in early 1938 apparently served as a catalyst for separate parts of the British government to begin conceptualizing the prosecution of secret operations. Within the Foreign Office itself, two distinct initiatives were embarked upon. Under the direction of a distinguished former newspaper editor, an office was established to study the effects of, and later counteract, German propaganda. At the same time, the

legendary Secret Intelligence Services - often known as either SIS or MI6, opened a small section "D" to begin examining secret offensive measures and possibilities.[3]

Shortly thereafter, and under the auspices of the Ministry of Defense, another small office began studying the prosecution of irregular warfare. Though unfashionable in Army circles, military intelligence, as represented by this section eventually designated MI(R), was also arguing for offensive operations in the rear area of the potential enemy. As events in Europe were indicating the likelihood of continuing Nazi expansionism, improved bureaucratic organization in these nascent special operations preparations seemed appropriate. Initially, informal agreements resulted in section D pursuing ideas in the realm of agents operating in plainclothes, while MI(R) was to explore courses of action that uniformed combatants could pursue. Such a continued division of labor was shortly supplanted by more pragmatic approaches, when in March, 1939 the propaganda service, Section D, and MI(R) were all formally combined, and empowered to begin circumspect operations in addition to just planning them. However, SOE was still several painful months away from its official inception, and still lacking in operational leadership and official, national sanction.[4]

The early campaigns of World War II were operational and strategic defeats for Great Britain. After only nine

months of war, British ground and air forces had been ejected from the continent, and England was the only combatant power remaining with its territory still unoccupied by German forces. Within the political structure of Britain, the combative government of Winston Churchill had ascended to power. For the special operations effort, fits and starts toward a more capable organization had occurred, typical in some ways of the uneven gestational experiences of many of the military arms of the western democracies entering modern conflict against militaristic, fascist states. Developmental efforts came to a head however, with the completion and signing of the SOE charter on 19 July 1940. A political irony of this event was that this significant document, centralizing offensive British special operations of subversion and sabotage under one organization, was written and signed by Neville Chamberlain, the former, ousted Prime Minister that history has labeled a weak appeaser.[5]

SOE was established initially under the Ministry of Economic Warfare and placed under the control of that minister, Dr. Hugh Dalton. (This was the first of several organizational arrangements that were periodically undertaken to restructure SOE's chain of command. Many of these restructurings were politically motivated by the existing bureaucracies' uncertainties about the purview and scope of the new SOE. Some changes, as will be seen, occurred

because of attempts to improve operational success from initial difficulties and failures.) Dalton and his eventual successor Lord Selborne were political figures, not in any way special operators. Both saw their role throughout the war as one of defending SOE's role in the war independent of the Foreign Office's MI6 or the military chain of command emanating from Whitehall. As it turned out, Lord Selborne performed this function a good deal more effectively than Dalton.[6] These internecine political disagreements were unfortunate but predictable. The scope of the competition with MI6, and the character of its Director, deserve to be examined in particular. Early in the war, they shaped the nature of operations as they would be executed throughout the conflict by SOE. Further, the imperative for Dalton and later Lord Selborne to devote such energy to this continuing debate, ensured that control of SOE operations (and with it true organizational power and leadership) would default down the next level of the hierarchy with implications that shall be examined shortly.

The Secret Intelligence Service, the most mysterious and secretive of British government organizations to that date, was headed by one Stewart Graham Menzies, who had ascended to that position only recently in November of 1939. Menzies, strongly supported for the position code-titled "C" by his recently deceased predecessor, and by powerful cabinet members and others in England's ruling class, was,

interestingly, staunchly opposed by none other than Winston Churchill. Then First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill favored his own candidate - the Admiral who headed Naval Intelligence.[7] Churchill's opposition ran on for some weeks before it was overcome in Menzies favor. Certainly this was a nearly inexplicable delay in time of conflict, and began awkwardly what was of the most important relationships of the war: the soon-to-be Prime Minister with his official Spymaster. Unquestionably, Menzies was highly qualified to be "C." He had served as a professional intelligence officer for twenty-four years, beginning in 1915 on the Western Front.[8]

That Menzies, when confirmed as "C," therefore became a bureaucratic foe of the embryonic SOE is not surprising. When the very earliest organizational discussions were under way, recall that at issue in the debate was the future of Menzies' own Section D. Further, Menzies reasoned that, at that juncture, if serious offensive operations were contemplated, organizational coordination required all such prosecutors to be placed under his own control. How else to ensure that agents of the SIS, charged to quietly gather and report information, were not to be unintentionally compromised by sabotage that quickly attracted intensive enemy repression? Logic seemed to dictate a structure that could coordinate operations to achieve the best results from all types of circuits of agents. As we have seen, Menzies

reckoned without the variegated and complex political landscape of many actors legitimately, and some perhaps selfishly, seeking offensive roles in the secret war.[9] Additionally, there is perhaps a continuing antipathy on the part of now Prime Minister Churchill. So recently forced to accept Menzies as "C," it is not hard to imagine him highly satisfied that Menzies' scope would be circumscribed by giving the offensive role to a competitor agency. That this initial bureaucratic conflict continued unresolved throughout the war is perhaps the strongest testimony that it suited Churchill's intentions well.

With this background information, it is now appropriate to return the discussion to SOE to recall and expand the point made earlier regarding how operational control of the organization emanated from a level below the appointed political leadership. The sorting out of roles resulted eventually in the position of Executive Director becoming the controlling force of SOE. (Another set of British initial code titles must once again be inflicted upon the reader. "CD" was the designation of the Executive Director throughout the war.) Early in tne conflict, this position passed between several individuals. But by 1943, the forceful personality who in many ways had conceptualized the organization originally, labored intensively to mount the first years of operations, had ascended to become "CD" and remained in that position until the war's end.[10] Indeed,

history views Major General Sir Colin Gubbins as the real wartime leader of the SOE.

Colin Gubbins was by background and temperament well-fitted for the role he was to assume. Though exhibiting the exterior of a traditional British Army officer from the Highlands of Scotland in the Royal Artillery, Gubbins had a very international personal history. Born in Japan to a father in the consular service who spoke fluent Japanese, Colin Gubbins also exhibited a flair for languages by becoming fluent in French and German, and being able to understand Russian. Continuing this broadening trend into his professional career, Gubbins's served with distinction in artillery on the Western Front in World War I, and in the post-war expeditionary force to northern Russia. Unusually, when the war began Gubbins was in Germany, but successfully evaded to his unit in civilian disguise. Adding to that initial personal clandestine experience, he served between the wars in Ireland, which in the 1920'was counter-insurgency service of some significance. The lessons learned there, and in several personal intelligence gathering missions into Eastern Europe prior to the outbreak of World War II, made Gubbins a sufficient authority to write two pamphlets "The Art of Guerrilla Warfare" and "Partisan leaders Handbook" just after the start of hostilities. Gubbins' personal combat special operations experience culminated when he commanded a precusor of the Commandos,

the independent companies, in action against the 1940 German invasion of Norway.[11]

Foot makes special mention that on this mission, Gubbins was forced to relieve a Guards officer for incompetence under fire, thus earning considerable and continuing enmity from the powerful Guards political circle.[12] Foot does not mention Menzies by name or imply later disputes as rooted in this action, but Menzies' regiment was the Life Guards. At the very least one can note the incident as the quintessential difference between the two soon-to-be power competitors: Menzies the consummate insider of the British power structure and Gubbins the rougher convert operative rising to command circuits of saboteurs quite outside traditional controls.

This concludes the first step of the model of analyzing this representative mission. With this appreciation for the confused environment, dominated by the imperative of securing national survival before resuming the full counter offensive, the reader may sense the context with which operations in newly occupied France where undertaken and prosecuted. The second step of the model, describing the operations as planned is an evolutionary tale. As one would expect trial and error, as well as the developing character of the allied counter-offensive shaped the nature of SOE operations in France.

To begin, it is instructive to note that when planning and conceptualizing early special operations into France, there is evidence that SOE took little notice of the French political complexities that would surround and mitigate such operations. This oversight may appear glaring today in the comfort of our present peaceful security, but recall that in late 1940 and 1941 the overwhelming imperative was to nit back wherever and however possible. The Nazi occupation was monolithic and a clear target to aggress. That the occupied countries, in our case here France, were fragmented, politically and socially torn entities, appears not to have affected early SOE strategy. In these early days there were at the very least the Free French (rallied unevenly around Charles de Gaulle in London) the Vichy French (that large potion of the homeland unoccupied by the Germans but by policy collaborationist) and the unfortunate millions living under direct German repression in occupied France. Throughout occupied France there were of course individuals and groups with varying levels of motivation toward resisting the Germans. Though the occupation was uniformly loathed, there were many who were unable or unwilling to try to do anything about it. Interwoven through all of these major populations, and trusted by none of them, was a significant communist infrastructure that was devoutly anti-Nazi and only slightly less anti-Republican France.[13]

SOE planners, in the bliss of full-steam aggressiveness, conceptualized the efforts in France into two categories: individual sabotage strikes against critical parts of the German military structure or the hostage economy they controlled, and more protracted efforts to organize full-scale clandestine resistance units that would be capable of conducting combat guerrilla operations when Allied strategic plans called for it. Both types of operation required, in the planners view, differing types of agents, and support structures. That the latter resistance structure could only be given purpose and training for their anticipated part in the counteroffensive by conducting the supposed "other" type of operations became apparent over time.[14] SOE planner's plainly had a lot to learn.

Early operations were often daring but with a decidedly haphazard quality. A commandeered French fishing boat allowed agents to sail improbably around the Gironde estuary gathering information on U Boat sorties. SOE was operating here as pure intelligence gatherers, a point not favorably viewed by naval intelligence, despite the Royal Navy being able to use the data collected. Not as useful, were a series of unsuccessful early infiltrations. One such failure resulted when the agent, at the last moment, refused to jump. (This was the only recorded such refusal for the next three years.)[15]

On still another early operation, agent initiative produced unanticipated results. Sent to disrupt, that is kill some pilots of the German night bombing pathfinder squadron, agents found that their mission was not achievable because the targets now traveled differently than earlier thought, and were not vulnerable. Undeterred, the agents split up to travel about France for a month to gather what intelligence they could. Several never arrived at the rendezvous for eventual submarine exfiltration. But the useful information brought out was considerable. To demonstrate to the reader the state of SOE knowledge at the time, it was considered highly valuable then that these agents reported that the Germans had suspended Paris taxi service and that railway travel in general was comparatively easy and not subject to checks and controls.[16]

It was more than a little disturbing then to SOE leadership to realize that De Gaulle's Free French government was preparing to launch separate and distinct special operations into France. To the Gaullists, the natural candidates to incite resistance were other Frenchmen. To that end, despite a near complete lack of military resources, they established the "Bureau Central de Renseignements et d' Action" or, fortunately for non-French speakers, the BCRA. The SOE which was just getting Section F established to work in France, was forced to establish Section RF to liase with BCRA.[17] SOE's political

landscape was now nearly as complex as the operational environment on the continent.

It took really all of 1941 to get things going in France. Infiltrations were conducted as often as circumstances allowed with some successes, and some betrayals. Of those individual operatives or groups of agents who infiltrated successfully, some were captured in the ensuing weeks, some actively worked to build resistance networks or circuits, and some, for reason of population control or faintness of heart, did little more than survive.

By the end of the year, F section could take credit for several trains wrecked, one machine tool factory working at 2/3 speed, and a fair number of German troop trains misdirected. RF could not claim even that modest level of accomplishment as the Gaullists were long on talk but short on action. The communists illogically sought to motivate the French people to a general uprising by assassinating individual Wehrmacht soldiers. Naturally, this ill-considered, poorly targeted policy inspired vicious reprisals in the form of random executions. It is generally accepted that the era of mass reprisals began in October 1941 when forty-eight citizens of Nantes were shot in vengeance for one assassinated German colonel. Such actions probably polarized the French population. Many were terrorized into neutrality, while others became determined to engage in active resistance when the opportunity

presented itself.[18] One can only conjecture whether a national resistance equal to the one which swept France in the wake of the D-Day landings would have ensued absent the assassination - reprisal cycle.

Early in 1942, a political figure of some significance burst upon the stage of resistance. Jean Moulin, a pre-war local politician of considerable charisma and courage, had been quietly evaluating and recruiting potential resisters in his area of France. When he believed he was ready, he utilized several false identities he had thoughtfully prepared, and made his way to London. There he offered de Gaulle a resistance organization which in concept exceeded the current achievements of the Britain-based Free French. Moreover, he impressed first de Gaulle, and later the SOE hierarchy as a dynamic leadership force that could perhaps rally resisters in occupied France. Such a figure had heretofore been notably absent. By the time he was reinfiltrated into France, Moulin therefore was bearing the rank of delegate-general, de Gaulle's chief resistance coordinator in France. His charge was to organize above all the disparate, directionless efforts cropping up ar[illegible] the country. His success in this endeavor in long months of clandestine activity was tremendous. The Free French, SOE via section RF, and the cells and bands now taking shape were all beneficiaries of his efforts. Whether resistance would have achieved nearly as much without him is doubtful.

Entropic political forces like the communists certainly were restrained by the effectiveness of his organization and recruiting.[19] Eventually, Moulin's luck ran out, and in mid-summer 1943, he was captured and died under torture at the hands of Klaus Barbie's Lyon based Gestapo. The extraordinary Moulin, who knew more about French resistance than any other single individual, died silent.[20] For their part, SOE in 1942 had achieved a degree of legitimacy and permanency in British war counsels. With the onset of planning of the great counter-offensive, the British military chiefs of staff sought reasonably to harness the efforts of SOE to that main task. Still at this stage of the war envisioning an invasion in 1943, SOE was charged with organizing all patriot paramilitary efforts, with particular care to be taken to avoid premature uprisings. The primary mission tasking in support of the invasion was to interdict enemy road, rail, and air transportation of reinforcements to the beachhead.[21]

This is probably the significant event at which this study can return briefly to the analysis model. It is apparent that operations were planned continually from the creation of SOE onwards not as clearly visualized steps to a final goal, but as initially efforts to disrupt the juggernaut of German power, and then as attempts to impose some structure and direction on resistance in France. While the strategic objective of averting Britain's immediate

defeat, and preparing to return to the eventual offensive was clear enough, tactical operations were mounted based on what was considered achievable. Contribution to the eventual strategic end was considered self-evident.

From here, recounting and examining SOE's operations must take elements from the next three steps of the model nearly simultaneously. In my view, the identification of the beginning of the shift to the counter-offensive had far reaching effects on both the command and control of SOE (Step 3), and the factors controlling force selection (Step 4). Further, the outcomes of these final operations were, much as their early-war predecessors, evolutionary in nature. Resistance became a tide and then a flood, with not always happy consequences.

For lack of a better term, 1943 might be called the year the SOE was "militarized." Remaining in terms of higher political organization in its awkward position beneath the Ministry of Economic Warfare, operational control passed (as much as any operational control over SOE ever existed) to the military chiefs of staff. Though bureaucratic language viewed the relationship as largely one of coordination, the aforementioned tasking would be viewed as a far stronger and more direct form of control in today's military. Further, in 1943, the year of the Allied strategic diversion to Mediterranean operations, guidelines to SOE reflected the continuing debate in the higher war

councils on the timing and strength of the cross-channel assault. Requirements for resistance organization in the countries of the Mediterranean littoral drew SOE resources away from efforts in France, just as conventional operations and forces had been diverted. All of this was exacerbated by the competition for the increasingly constrained resource all offensives at this stage required: aircraft.[22]

Since practical deep infiltration into occupied France depended wholly on aircraft, requests of all sorts were continual drains primarily on Bomber Command of the Royal Air Force. SOE leadership claimed that there were between fifty and one hundred unfulfilled resupply aircraft requests monthly in the spring of 1943. The RAF claimed that it would be difficult to provide more than twenty-two aircraft for such operations routinely.[23]

There was another dimension to this difficulty. If SOE was tentatively seeking integration of its work into military operations, its primary competitor, SIS or MI6, sought no such integration. Nonetheless, SIS requested continual infiltration and mission support aircraft from the same highly constrained stockage because the RAF was the sole source. SIS had its political clout, of course, as well, and was successful in persuading a coordination body entitled the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) to recommend a curtailment of SOE operations in France in August of 1943. This recommendation was ignored by SOE, the Free

French, and the Chiefs of Staff.[24] Nevertheless, the incident highlights the wages of competition between secret organizations, and the premium placed by all SOF on infiltration-exfiltration assets.

Further SIS vs SOE conflict was occurring beginning in this era as developing SOE circuits, often unavoidably, derived useful tactical intelligence. The differing nature and philosophies (to observe quietly as opposed to fomenting trouble) of the two organizations has already been discussed. Heretofore efforts to keep circuits of the two competitors separate had been continuous and necessary for security. Yet now SIS reluctantly had to agree that useful intelligence could be collected from SOE operations. Eventually, a degree of coordination in occupied France was achieved where such intelligence was transferred to and passed along via SIS agents.[25] The coordination was imperfect, however, and grudging.

SOE's war to establish circuits on the ground in France was hampered in 1943 by what I'll call the wireless penetration campaign of the Gestapo. The Germans exploited the inattention in London to codes to be used under duress when an agent is captured and forced to transmit for the enemy. Further, disclosures were worked out of some captured agents under torture. Thus, for whole circuits sent to France by parachute in 1943, the results of landing on the drop zone was immediate capture. Eventually, as the

resistance war widened deeper into thus far uncompromised southern France with fresh circuits, and as information of disappearing agents worked back to England, SOE was able to take stricter countermeasures. That SOE headquarters had been initially incautious and over-confident is undeniable. However, the Gestapo made the same error. The Germans apparently believed that they were capturing the vast majority of British agents sent to Europe. There were even discussions involving Hitler personally as to whether, as a psychological warfare tactic, to reveal to the British after the invasion occurred the numbers of agents captured. In actuality, though capture was nearly always lethal for the unlucky agents, SOE in particular and the resistance effort in general was too large in scope for the wireless penetration to turn the tide of the secret war.[26]

The winter of 1943-44 began the period of the maquis. Originally groups of young men who took to the hills and countryside of France to escape impressment into forced labor organizations in Germany, these gatherings were early on far from organized fighters. Indeed, survival through the harsh winter was the first imperative for most of them, with cold and hunger a far more immediate threat than largely city-dwelling German occupation troops.[27]

With warmer weather, and the organizing efforts of their own leadership and SOE agents bearing fruit, maquis bands coalesced and took on tactical direction. Their

problem was primarily lack of arms and ammunition, which of course turned upon the familiar requirement for aircraft parachute supply for solution. All sensible combatants knew that the struggle to invade France would occur in the spring or early summer of 1944. Hence, time for supply was short, while eagerness and anticipation to strike was abundant. Many stratagems were employed to include massed daylight drops. That some of this weaponry fell into the hands of the Germans is not surprising. Optimistic estimates felt that in six months, F section may have armed 75,000 maquis, while RF section armed a further 50,000. Probably at least a third of these arms actually were dropped to the Germans. Of greater concern was a shortage of ammunition in France. One estimate held that probably only 10,000 maquis had ammunition for a single day's fighting.[28]

Probably the largest and most organized of the maquis were gathered on some marvelous guerrilla terrain (as long as the irregulars didn't try to occupy the terrain permanently). The Vercors massif was a large, roughly triangular plateau west and south west of Grenoble. Most of the rock walls to the Vercors were over a thousand meters high, and logically, there were few roads up to the villages on its heights. Approximately 3,000 maquis had gathered here, with approximately 500 of them lightly armed by the early spring of 1944.[29]

With increasing SOE attention more arms came into the region, and the civilian administrator of the district, Chavant, exfiltrated to Algiers to try to determine what the Allied High Command might have in mind for the Vercors. The location to which he exfiltrated is significant. Rather than London, the Vercors is closer to the Mediterranean theater of operations, and fighters there anticipated an Allied invasion of southern France to occur simultaneously with any cross channel assault. Chavant in his meetings with Gaullist commanders was told that operational plans called for the dropping of 4,000 parachutists into the Vercors. Further, prior to returning to France, Chavant was given an order from de Gaulle, signed for him by his top aide, that a combined maquis-liberation force effort to turn the Vercors into a fortress in the enemy's rear was to be readied.[30]

In another quarter, a meeting occurred which would have a profound effect on not only the Vercors but other resistance organizations. Gubbins, and a high official of the counterpart American OSS, persuaded General Pierre Koenig, the recently named Gaullist head of the Forces Francaises de l'Interieur (FFI), that a resistance uprising in the south of France was necessary to persuade the Germans of the simultaneity of the twin invasions. Assault of south France would not be ready for some weeks. But it was hoped that by the ferocity of an uprising, the Germans would leave

major combat forces committed away from the Normandy theater. Koenig recognized the sacrifice the resistance in the south was being called upon to make. Maquis, once called out, would shed all pretense and cover assuming Allied main force relief was imminent. Apparently, he agreed to the stratagem, aware of its importance to the overall campaign.[31]

Surrounding the Normandy assault, the SOE inspired resistance was a dramatic success. As we have seen, an operational decision to call out the entire country overcame the earlier plans for a carefully timed call-up via coded radio message. As it turned out, this was probably just as well since a popular rebellion by much of the countryside, unprepared by the Allies, rose in revolt out of enthusiasm anyway.

Of the major rail lines attacked by SOE directed groups, the results were extraordinary and nearly the equal of allied tactical air interdiction efforts. On the night of 5 June 1944, 950 out of 1,050 planned railroad cuts were executed. The PIMENTO circuit, for example, closed the line from Toulouse to Montauban and kept it closed. Only <u>one</u> more northbound train passed through until Montauban was liberated three months later.

To assist, came swarms of allied special operators to provide tactical leadership, training, and hopefully some organizational force. Though not under the control of SOE,

teams of British and French Special Air Service (SAS), "Jedburghs" sponsored by the American OSS, and inter-allied operational groups were shortly engaged in reaping the tactical benefits of the years of SOE contact. Circuits that had been able to little more than identify potential resisters and ask them to wait, were now expanded into bands of irregulars in the enemy rear.[33]

Combat conditions in this guerrilla environment ahead of the allied armies were nearly anarchic to the combatants. One group of SAS operating with maquis soon after the D-Day landings utilized jeeps bristling with machine guns to move about the enemy rear. The vehicles had been parachuted in no doubt, using techniques in drop zone reception perfected by SOE. The SAS had two worries other than just the Germans however. Maquis were inclined to treat all vehicles on first sight as German, so the SAS put small Union Jacks on their jeeps. Further, they quickly learned to conceal themselves from allied aircraft who naturally enough also considered vehicles running around in the enemy rear to be German.[34] The level of the resistance war may be even more clearly realized when one considers that between June and September, 1944 the 1st SAS, at most a few hundred men working with various maquis bands, accounted for 750 enemy casualties, over 3,000 German prisoners, derailed or destroyed 17 trains, cut 43 rail lines, and located an extensive list of targets for the RAF to bomb.[35]

Such successes were possible but by no means certain. Indeed, when leaders with forces raised to prosecute unconventional warfare forgot the strengths of the guerrilla (hit and run) and attempted more conventional combat (stand and fight), the results could be disastrous. Returning to the Vercors massif story, the reader can readily extract these results.

Shortly after the D-Day invasion, on 10 June, the Vercors was sealed off as a fortress of Free France. Originally planned for around 2,500 maqui, nearly twice that number eventually found their way into the defenses. That the tricolor was raised at all appears to be partly because of the promises made to Chavant, and partly because of Koenig's announcement over the radio calling all of France to arms. Tragically, the fighters of the Vercors could not know that no parachutists or other allied invaders were coming to Southern France for two more months. General Koenig, in an attempt, no doubt, to save as much of the resistance as possible, reversed the tenor of broadcasts in a few days and directed dispersal of maquis bands away from population centers. For the Vercors, the actions of 10 June were naturally irreversible. Though some leaders on the massif argued for breakout and dispersal before the gathering of Germans became stronger, the leadership felt understandably honor bound to fight to protect the people of the towns on the massif. The unequal battle lasted for

several weeks, with increasingly desperate messages for allied troops and heavy weapons remaining largely unfulfilled.[36] There is evidence that de Gaulle was not made personally aware of the desperate situation until 22 July.[37]

The outcome was predictable and brutal. Using gliders to land SS inside the defenses, and air support of heavy ground columns, the Germans overran the Vercors in the last days of July and early August. Their barbarities on the townspeople within the enclave were ferocious almost beyond description. Some maquis were able to disperse and elude death. The allied invasion of Southern France came a scant two weeks later[38] The liberation of Paris, and the large remainder of French territory was completed in short order.

After this discussion of the SOE's campaign in France, what may be said about the selection of SOE as a force and the effect operations in France had upon the war? Clearly, SOE was employed, as discussed earlier, as an initial desperate attempt to carry the war to the enemy, and along with other secret organizations grew in number and variety of tasking as the war progressed. If there was an amateurish character about much of SOE, it is because there was largely no alternative. Even initial interviews to recruit prospective agents were subject to no particular scientific screening method for the good reason that none

existed. Rather, a recruiter, who for the first two years of SOE did nothing else, made an individual evaluation of a candidate after two or three meetings. By his own account, conducting his discussions with the aspirant entirely in French, the interviewer sought someone who loved freedom without being pathologically anti-Nazi, knew France, and displayed prudence rather than impulsiveness. On a later meeting, assuming an MI5 (counterintellience) security check was positive, the prospect was offered the opportunity to volunteer, after a final period of reflection. This system and a later modification of an interview board eventually provided just F section with 470 agents for France. Of those, 118 failed to return. (39 of the agents were women, of whom thirteen did not come back.[39]) It is therefore reasonable to conclude that this halting method of agent and organization development though time-consuming, eventually provided a cadre of survivable agents to prosecute unconventional warfare. SOE was the first organization of its kind in modern military history.

To begin evaluating the organization's effectiveness, some numbers must be quoted. The exact size of SOE is not known, but it probably peaked in the summer of 1944 at nearly 10,000 men and 3,200 women operating worldwide. Of these, again worldwide, 5,000 were agents, either deployed or waiting infiltration.[40] We have already seen the number deployed in France alone. SOE inspired, organized,

or directly led tens of thousands of resisters. 75,000 are thought to have perished in German concentration camps, with an additional 20,000 killed in action or executed soon after capture.[41] In the operations surrounding the landings in southern France, the allied commander, General Sir Maitland Wilson rated the fighting efficiency of the Wehrmacht as reduced to 40% by the 150,000 resisters operating in the area. In Normandy, beginning on D+1 one SS armored division that had gotten from the Russian front to Strasbourg in eight days, required a further twenty-three days to fight its way across France to Caen. Overall, the SOE personnel committed to operations in France would not have made three brigades, and the front line agents would not have filled one. Yet, their operations required the Germans to devote eight of their sixty divisions in France to rear area operations.[42]

Several salient lessons appear out of the remarkable SOE UW campaign in France, and while all of them appear obvious now they were new in World War II. (Some of them are learned more than once in this thesis, but I shall save my essays for whether these are endemic for the conclusion.)

First, an organization not in existence at the outbreak of conflict, particularly one which will attempt a new form of war takes time and often painful debate to raise, train, equip, and employ to effect. Second, and almost a corollary to the first, human nature being what it

is, new organizations tend to fight lengthy, divisive fights for resources, prestige, mission, and even survival. Third, unconventional warfare, particularly when prosecuted by a coalition, is subject to political stresses and pressures much apart from battlefield realities. Fourth, certain recourses are absolutely critical to successful unconventional warfare. Among them are craft, either air or sea for infiltration, exfiltration or supply, and human intelligence gatherers, that are fluent in language and mannerism, as well as being courageous and tenacious. Fifth, brave visionary leadership is vital but it must also be replaceable. UW is protracted in duration, and in long wars leaders get killed just the same as soldiers. There was no replacement for Moulin who was killed, nor for that matter was there probably one for Gubbins who fortunately was not.

The SOE in France accomplished a great deal with few resources, and doctrinal procedures made up as needed. This is another quality that will be repeated in other representative missions.

PART II

Direct Action (DA) - World War II British Combined Operations Raid On St. Nazaire, France

Direct action strikes have been known by a number of terms since World War II, mostly deriving from the word "raid." Aggressive, short duration attacks of high priority targets are, like unconventional warfare, often historically considered the very foundation of irregular warfare. Part of that genealogy comes from the pivotal events of World War II, when irregular warfare began to evolve into special operations as we understand the term today. The British Combined Operations, and the amphibious striking elements they contained, the Commandos, were central to this evolution.

All of the factors of the strategic paradigm discussed in Part I of this chapter apply in this representative mission as well. Indeed, the casting about for strategies that would disrupt a possible German invasion, and bring about an eventual turn of the tide, which occupied the political community as described earlier, were mirrored within the uniformed services.

Within the mission analysis model, to understand the context of events one must examine the readiness and capability of the British armed forces to conduct raiding

operations, as they termed them, at the beginning of World War II.

As such operations were perforce to have an amphibious character, a force with the capability to conduct those operations was wanted. In keeping with the state of military unpreparedness generally, no such force existed. Before the war, the Royal Marines had been suggested as a logical organization to conceptualize and establish a peacetime raiding capability but the idea had never been acted upon. Even after the beginning of the war, a proposed Royal Marine Brigade, sponsored by the Admiralty, was established as apparently a naval contingency force without a specific mission envisaged. Due to be combat ready by June of 1940, the Royal marines were not fully trained at the time of the German invasion of Norway, but were, unfortunately for them, ready in time to be diverted to entirely different roles.[43]

Victims of an equally disorganized operational lineage were a group known as the Independent Companies, mentioned in passing in Part I. Conceived as a guerrilla raiding force by the disparate officers that would eventually coalesce into SOE, these ten units were organized in the first months of 1940. Recall that Gubbins commanded a force of five of the companies in the effort to stave off the German conquest of Norway. These units were composed of Army troops who had volunteered from regular formations, and

had been given brief training in operating behind enemy lines. Vaguely intended for use in a UW campaign, they found themselves overpowered by the blitzkrieg in Norway. After withdrawal, they found themselves relegated to channel island security duty.[44] As we have seen, Gubbins moved on to SOE, but the idea of extracting volunteers for raiding from the Army's units was born.

On 4 June 1940, the last day of the Dunkirk evacuation, a British Army staff officer named LTC Dudley Clarke wrote a paper proposing a force that could project raiding parties from seacraft to damage the Germans. Recalling and borrowing the name given in the Boer War to Boer raiders, "Commandos," Clarke packaged his idea well enough to convince his superior, General Sir John Dill, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, of its efficiency. Four days later, Dill likewise convinced Churchill, who did however insist upon two stipulations: no unit was to be diverted from the essential defense of Britain, and the new force would have to get along with a minimum of arms.[45]

Much like SOE, the commandos and the headquarters that controlled them, named "Combined Operations," got off to a start remarkable only in its confusion of roles and sources of assets. The first Director of the organization, LTG Bourne of the Royal Marines, conceived of a force that would conduct numerous harassing raids, each on a small scale as supportable by war office and admiralty resources.

However, Churchill, after events revealed the home islands to be secure, pushed enthusiastically for raids to be conducted on a much larger scale. To that end, he supported the growth of Combined Operations, and he replaced Bourne with Admiral Sir Roger Keyes in July of 1940. In World War I, a much younger Keyes had led a seaborne raid to destroy the U boat bases at the port of Zeebrugge. He was ostensibly the aggressive personality Churchill sought.[46]

Keyes found his attempts to respond to Churchill's urgings and his own offensive proclivities severely restrained. Real asset shortages, a need to establish and train the Commandos, and a traditionally - minded Chiefs of Staff structure that would just have soon seen the Commandos reformed into regular battalions, all contributed to Keyes' difficulties. As the danger of invasion of the home islands did not really pass until late autumn of 1940, any operational planning was hamstrung by the overriding imperative of home defense. Some tiny cross-channel raids were mounted, but they were ineffectual, and in early 1941 three Commandos (of about five hundred men each) were sent to the middle east theater. (There, this force would be mostly misused as infantry and eventually disbanded.)[47] Later in 1941, other raids were launched from Britain that were small and largely unproductive. Some promising concepts and targets were being studied but the vision Churchill held of several thousand man strikes on the

continent were simply not supportable at the time, and even Keyes was unable to deliver them.[48]

In October, 1941, Keyes was replaced as Director, Combined Operations by Lord Louis Mountbatten, 41 years of age, cousin of the King, and naval war hero. Combined Operations took on a more aggressive vitality shortly thereafter.[49] Some of this was undoubtedly due to Mountbatten's personal leadership. Some of it also was no doubt accounted for by the increasing development of the Commandos and Britain's warfighting capacity overall. Between the time of Mountbatten's appointment and the execution of the St. Nazaire operation, six raids of up to a full Commando in size were launched.[50]

With this context in mind, it is now appropriate to examine how the St. Nazaire raid, Operation CHARIOT, was planned. To fully understand the planning one must understand what the commandos had to go to St. Nazaire to destroy in the first place. This was the time when the Battle of the Atlantic, though it had passed many of its worst weeks was still being fiercely contested. Prosecuted largely on the German side by U-Boats, the massive and capable capital ships of the Nazi navy were a continuing concern for the Admiralty. In May, 1941, the battleship BISMARCK and heavy cruiser PRINZ EUGEN had sallied into the North Atlantic. Sinking Britain's largest battle cruiser before being brought to bay and sunk by most of the Royal

Navy's Home Fleet, BISMARCK and her escort were running for the only channel harbor large enough and sufficiently defended to accommodate them - St. Nazaire. Further, Germany still retained the battleships SCHARNHORST, GENEISENAU, and TIRPITZ. TIRPITZ was a particular concern. A sister ship of BISMARCK, TIRPITZ was already ominously positioned in a Norwegian fjord. A rapacious voyage of destruction through allied targets of opportunity to haven at St. Nazaire was distinctly possible. Additionally, should Tirpitz sustain battle damage, the only drydock in the Axis-occupied world large enough to accept her was also in St. Nazaire. Hence, to significantly affect the possible outcome of the Battle of the Atlantic, critical targets in the St. Nazaire harbor basin should be destroyed, and TIRPITZ, if she sallied, could only return to her fjord.[51] This from the German point of view would be a poor investment. No fjord could offer a battleship-size repair facility!

It is a leap ahead in the mission analysis model, but one glaring alternative leaps out at the reader so I shall dispose of the reason a direct action strike force was selected now. RAF bombing seems on the face of it an easier means to accomplish the task. However, even if the large number of aircraft required were available, which they were not,[52] the accuracy of high level bombing was not sufficiently developed to permanently destroy complex

machinery buried deep in tons of concrete. A far more close range assault was required to be sure of success.

The size of the drydock staggers the imagination. It was 350 meters long, 50 meters wide, and 18 meters deep, and had a capacity of 47 million gallons of water.[53] Clearly a concept of great creativity was needed to put this facility out of the war. Combined Operations headquarters assigned a staff led by LTC Charles Newman, Commander of Number 2 Commando, and CDR R.E.D. Ryder, Royal Navy to come up with a way. It was decided that control of seawater into and out of the drydock was the key. Hence, the large gates, or caissons, particularly the one at the seaward end, and the huge pumps that sluiced the dock full or empty, had to be destroyed. It was then determined that if a fast warship, perhaps a destroyer, loaded with explosive, could be rammed into the seaward caisson, that perhaps that would destroy the more than one hundred ton steel gate. The pump house would simply have to be entered by demolition parties, and blown up. All this would be accomplished while under fire from powerful shore defenses. At a minimum, it was reckoned Number 2 Commando would have to provide a main force of 100 men to fight through the dock defenses and protect the demolition parties composed of volunteers from Numbers 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, and 12 Commandos.[54]

The destroyer selected for the center piece role was the HMS CAMPBELTOWN. Before being transferred as one of the

famous first fifty lend-lease destroyers from the United States, she had been the USS BUCHANAN, originally built for World War I but commissioned in 1919. For the raid, two of her four funnels were removed, and the remaining two slanted to hopefully give the silhouette the night time appearance of a German Mowe class vessel.[55] If a few more seconds could be purchased by that deception before the shore guns opened up, that might make all the difference.

For the several dozen demolition targets, Commandos carried explosives in rucksacks weighing between sixty and ninety pounds. This weight left them totally dependent upon the Commandos tasked to protect them for security. All that the demolition parties were armed with were pistols. The demolitions teams rehearsed until their charges could all be emplaced and fuses lit in darkness, in under ten minutes.[56]

Command and control arrangements were remarkably straightforward for CHARIOT, from Churchill, to Mountbatten at Combined Operations, to LTC Newman commanding the landing forces, and CDR Ryder commanding the nineteen vessel sea force. (A variety of heavily armed motor launches accompanied the CAMPBELTOWN to land Commandos and attempt to suppress shore batteries. Additionally, a Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) went along to fire special delayed action torpedoes designed to sink beneath the caissons to cause further damage.) [57]

The operation was executed on 28 March 1942. The force had contact with and attacked a U-Boat, but unscathed, the convoy proceeded, pilotless, up the Loire estuary. Flying German colors as hopeful close-in deception, the force also hoped that a diversionary RAF bombing raid would further cover the approach. As it turned out, the bombers missed their targets almost entirely due to weather, and probably only succeeded in awakening the shore battery crews.[58]

Still undetected with under two miles to go, the whole force was closing at 18 1/2 knots or nearly 20 miles per hour. Shortly thereafter, German searchlights started to come on, but went off again when reassured by German coded responses from CHARIOT signalmen. Finally, seven minutes away from impact, the German uncertainty vanished as searchlights and a hail of fire sought the force. British navy ensigns broke out all down the convoy and one of the fiercest small ship to shore gun battles of the war ensued. Commando casualties behind light armored screens were nearly immediate. Guns concentrated on the CAMPBELTOWN, but in one of the outstanding feats of known seamanship her captain, CDR Beattie, rammed his 1,000 ton vessel, moving at over 20 knots, into the dead center of the caisson only four minutes off the timetable.[59]

The bow of the destroyer rode up and slightly over the caisson. Below CAMPBELTOWN's decks were 24, 400 pound

depth charges concreted (for tamping) into a steel box. Fused with an eight hour chemical delay system, the Commandos hoped to have time to complete their other tasks before the acid ate through the copper contacts.[60]

The demolition party's destruction of the pump house was typical of the ashore experiences of the Commandos. Getting down the ladders off the CAMPBELTOWN, which rested at an angle of twenty degrees, was no easy task for the demolitions men. Most were wounded in some fashion from the run-in. Fortunately, their difficult progress was not specifically impeded by Germans, who had their hands full with the covering fire of the motor launches and the assaulting protection parties. Blowing open the steel door with a small charge, the heavily-laden group descended down several levels to the main pumps. Upon arriving at the bottom they found four impeller pumps, upon which they placed approximately 40 pounds of explosives each. Apparently, one of the more difficult parts still lay ahead because the fuses would burn for only 90 seconds while the party climbed up the stairs in near total darkness. They just gained the outside before the deafening explosion went off, pitching concrete high into the air. After a pause, the party re-entered the building, prepared to attack the electric motors on the top level, if needed. It was not. The pump house and the mechanisms within it were a total

wreck. Whatever happened with CAMPBELTOWN, the dock could no longer be flooded and pumped dry.[61]

The covering force fight was conducted with ferocious and individual violence for nearly an hour. It's intensity allowed the main object of the raid to go forward as has been described, but at a frightful cost. As we have seen, the Commandos on board the CAMPBELTOWN were able to disembark, but only a few of the motor launches survived the fire to land the other assault parties. Indeed by H+1, after Ryder had personally gone ashore to see for himself that CAMPBELTOWN was well lodged and sinking, the sea force commander could see that both points of Commando embarkation were now once again in enemy hands, and that every boat but one of his force was on fire. All the decks were covered with wounded; many had been hit repeatedly. Knowing that the objective of the raid had been accomplished, Ryder was forced to withdraw, and abandon to German capture those Commandos who had gotten ashore and were now cut off. The errant air diversion, and lack of air support had cost the force dearly.[62]

Later the next morning, after most of the commandos had been killed or captured, and Ryder's force had fought its way out of the Loire estuary, the CAMPBELTOWN blew up. The fuses activated four hours late, but the blast peeled open the 160 ton caisson, and killed, estimates tell us, over one hundred Germans spectating in curiosity. The

waters of the Loire rushed in, sweeping the back half of the CAMPBELTOWN in with them. The front half of the old BUCHANAN had become, of course, fragments in an instant. Two days later, and an hour apart, the special under-caisson torpedoes went off, causing still more damage, consternation, and German casualties.[63]

Of the attack force of 611, 169 were killed. Sixty-four of these were Commandos, 105 were naval personnel. Most were hit during the river battle and ensuing withdrawal. Just over 200 Commandos were taken prisoner.[64] Nevertheless, there are few more successful and daring raids in military history. The courage of the participants was marked by 83 awards of decorations, which the British traditionally do not dispense lightly. Five Victoria Crosses were awarded: one each to LTC Newman, CDR Ryder, and CDR Beattie, and two posthumously to raiders who stauchly manned guns on the motor launches until killed. The dry dock remained ruined for the rest of the war, and TIRPITZ never sallied out, quite likely because of it. Indeed, the dock was not able to be repaired and functioning again until the 1950s.[65]

There are lessons to be derived certainly from CHARIOT. Again with the commandos as with SOE, painful months of force development and training went by before a viable capability existed. In this instance, the experience included disagreement between the political and military

leadership about the scale of operations to be pursued. Also as with SOE, special operators learned how critical air resources' presence or absence can be for them. Further, an obvious lesson was affirmed but it should be stated nonetheless. Lightly armed special operators, whether maquis on the Vercors or Commandos on the Loire, suffer greatly from the firepower of heavy forces when the irregular's shields of stealth and surprise are dropped. On CHARIOT, the period of exposure to enemy fire was relatively limited - just over an hour - but the results were lethal in the extreme. Additionally, leadership played a pivotal role-particularly that of Newman and Ryder. Yet, a further consideration in the examination of St. Nazaire was the quality and constancy of the individual combatants. Highly trained, carefully rehearsed, and determined, there were frequent cases of small, ostensibly leaderless groups pressing on to accomplish all of the tasks they could. CHARIOT is a success that, along with many other Combined Operations contributions in World War II, make a strong case for the value of special operations forces.

PART III

Foreign Internal Defense (FID) - Selected Operations of U.S. Army Special Forces (USASF) in Vietnam

This portion of the study will examine a specific part of the controversial operations of U.S. Army Special Forces (USASF) in Vietnam. From its earliest commitment as a unit presence in 1961, until the beginning of the large buildup of American ground combat forces in 1965, USASF prosecuted as advisors a major share of the counter-insurgency effort in the country. As such, they constituted for that period, the primary military arm of American strategy.

Regarding American strategy and the often confusing formulations of it in the early days of the Kennedy administration, today's student may clearly see the confusion of American strategic policy. Comparisons to paradigms such as the one in this thesis, themselves created from study of the traumatic disarray of the long Vietnam experience, point up such failures sharply. As the description unfolds in the next pages, the reader should however endeavor to screen out the well known end results of the conflict, and focus instead on the implications the policy had early in the war for the USASF.

With the need to ask the first three questions in the paradigm, the policymakers of the Kennedy Administration were already in trouble. First, a clarification of a

threatened national interest had to be accomplished, and from that a defined objective should have emerged that exerted an undeniable, critical effect upon the maintenance or futherance of that interest. Yet, when he took office, Vietnam was far enough down on the priority list of problems that the outgoing President Eisenhower had not briefed JFK on Vietnam! This was allowed to happen despite reports that the government of the South, headed by President Ngo Dinh Diem, was not correctly organized or focused to counter the mounting communist insurgency.[66]

Kennedy, in an effort to discern the true nature of the world in the context of the Bay of Pigs defeat, and recent confrontation with the Soviet Premier in Vienna, sought guidance via a series of high level missions to Vietnam. One of the first was by Vice President Lyndon Johnson who returned with what is probably as close to a definition of the national interest, stated like an objective, as was likely to be seen. He articulated the now almost arcane point that if Communism was not stopped in Vietnam, it would have to eventually be fought on the shores of the continental United States. The identification of San Francisco as a future location of tactical combat was actually made in his memorandum. From there it was an easy step to advocate a major U.S. effort to save the South Vietnamese government, and its President. This would by extension, secure our own borders. However specious these

assertions are known to be today, the fact remains that the strategic value of Vietnam was established with the Kennedy Administration.[67] No further rigorous examination, despite the continuing efforts to try to understand the war, ever truly substituted for, or delineated further, this first hazy and ultimately erroneous attempt to define our national interest and strategic objective.

Continuing with the paradigm, there is no question that the National Command Authority (NCA) was in this case personally involved with the selection of the type of force he felt was needed to advise the fight for freedom in Vietnam. Almost as soon as he was sworn in, JFK had ordered his Secretary of Defense, Robert MacNamara, to begin moving away from a defense policy solely based on massive retaliation.[68] The military institution that Kennedy sought to make more cosmopolitan, however, did not understand many things about the insurgency its government was about to challenge. Prepared to face the very real threat of communist expansion by conventional combat, most commanders simply did not understand that one fought insurgency not by maximum force, but often with minimum military power to achieve very politicized victories. Further, they did not understand that merely killing more and more guerrillas did not constitute victory. Indeed, it escaped them that insurgencies are not so much "won" as they become militarily stalemated, or

ideally quiescent, while political bridges to the disenfranchised are constructed.[69]

Within the military, particularly the Army, one group that did understand this was Special Forces. Spiritual heirs to the tradition of the World War II Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and SOE, Special Forces were designed to be the free-world's guerrillas in the coming confrontation with communism. They seemed the closest thing the military had to what the situation in Vietnam required. JFK, therefore, affirmed its elite status, expanded the unit, blessed its unofficial headgear, the green beret, and personally committed it as a counterinsurgency force to Vietnam.[70]

The final point of the strategic paradigm is in this case academic. As mentioned earlier, the American military was large and capable of prosecuting high-intensity, main-force conflict, but not ready as an institution for the reduction of an insurgency. Virtually the only force conversant with the required doctrine, though from exactly the opposite perspective, was the Special Forces. They were the closest thing to what was required, and rationally, much against the trend of NCA decisions in Vietnam, JFK selected them.

To begin the mission analysis model, we may briefly outline the context surrounding the Special Forces commitment. Virtually nothing about the policies of the

ruling Diem regime was helpful to the prosecution of the insurgency. A very small ruling minority enriched itself from the twin benefits of immense American aid and a power structure that allowed the economic profits of the country to flow to them. Respect for the rights of the ethnically, religiously, and culturally fragmented societal groups that made up the country was virtually non-existent. Worse, there was no focused strategy to deal with the communist insurgency, and the Vietnamese Army was suffering from rampant corruption and disorganization. Attempts by U.S. country team members to use American aid as a lever for improved social and military conditions, that would by extension forestall the insurgents, was met with open threats from the Diem regime. That U.S. policymakers acquiesced to this situation is evident of how rigid the belief had become in the Diem government as the best hope of "stopping communism." Further, it indicates the total lack of understanding of the country and its people by the high commanders of the U.S. effort.[71]

Special Forces personnel, even before the Kennedy sponsorship, had a far better feel for the country and its difficulties because of a series of combined training missions that had been undertaken even in the last years of the Eisenhower administration. This was very much in the Special Forces tradition of the time. Though the official lineage of the USASF included the World War II 1st Special

Service Force (a Canadian-American elite unit that compiled a combat record nearly unique in modern warfare), the true doctrinal origins of Special Forces lay with the American OSS and the British SOE. Though both were quasi-military organizations (that is both were heavily populated with civilians) their reason for existence was to foment unconventional warfare to assist the military campaign. OSS did not survive the end of World War II as an organization.[72] However, the capability and doctrine it developed led eventually to an unconventional warfare arm within the Army, though not without considerable political maneuvering. Special Forces, small, capable, and almost unknown to the Army at large much less to the general populace, found itself spearheading an American commitment of uncertain prospects.

As mentioned earlier, USASF had operated in South Vietnam prior to the focused commitment by President Kennedy. Vietnamese Army officers and NCOs completed parachute training provided by Special Forces in 1957, and in the same year, SF suffered its first fatality in the country in a training accident. Other typical training courses run on an infrequent basis for the South Vietnamese by USASF included instruction in weapons, medical treatment and demolitions techniques, and long-range patrolling. For a time, USASF provided a 30 man instructional cadre to run

ranger training for the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).[73]

All of this however was focused into an effort beginning in 1961 that became the burgeoning USASF Foreign Internal Defense operation in the country. A CIA officer, COL Gilbert Layton, posted with the Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG) conceived of a way to enlist the hill tribes or montagnards who populated the Vietnamese hinterlands in the defense of the nation. Layton's concept was to form these tribal groups into paramilitary organizations that could contest the rural areas upon which the Viet Cong (VC) relied upon for sanctuary. Further, militarizing the montagnards would hopefully ensure that they would not in some future way be employed against the Diem government. The montagnards lived in isolated, primitive villages. Layton's concept virtually required a unit such as Special Forces to develop the Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) he envisioned.[74] The NCA initiative, the concept of employment, and the situation in the country had coalesced to give USASF its flagship mission in the Vietnam war.

The CIDG program was planned to operate initially from a base village or area development center. A paramilitary force would be recruited and trained there to secure the village and immediate surrounding area. Within the secure enclave, it was envisioned that SF medics could

work to improve the health of villagers and other projects could eventually be fostered. Militarily, it was hoped that the controlled area around the corps could gradually be expanded, in theory driving insurgents farther and farther away from the population. The first experiment of this nature was established at the village of Buon Enao in February, 1962. Later that year, the SF constructed CIDG camps multiplied throughout the country. The new military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) was surprised and pleased by the rapid success.[75]

Here the analysis model must once again be melded to provide an understandable narrative flow of events. The US advisory effort had been hungry for an indication of success. With the initial reviews of the CIDG program coming in, the command and control organization above the SF began what was to be the first of innumerable changes. Further, the results of SF proficiency and success brought about almost runaway expansion of the SF role and force size in country. As such, a general chronological description is now probably most understandable.

With the success of the Buon Enao experiment, the US military high command sought to send a variety of types of units to Vietnam to capitalize on the SF success. However, a key, and perhaps the pivotal SF personality of this era, intervened to take charge of events. COL George Morton, the Special Warfare Chief of MACV, was influential and

successful in preventing Washington from dispatching the wrong type of units to Vietnam for advisory duty. Rather, he patiently continued the expansion of the CIDG camps. By August of 1962, only five, 12 man "A" Detachments had brought approximately 200 villages and over 10,000 montaguard Rhade tribesmen into the CIDG. Morton envisioned the eventual commitment of an entire Special Forces Group, which would contain at least four to five times as many Detachments. CIDG proved itself as a viable combat force when in October, the VC launched a multi-directional mass assault against the now famous Buon Enao complex. Despite the loss of the SF Detachment Commander, the outnumbered Rhade held.[76]

These successes, hard won in the mountainous jungles, ironically were not acclaimed by the Diem regime, and later were even openly opposed. The regime feared the militarization of the proud and ethnically different montagnards. While USASF were present physically providing support, US pressure upon the Diem government could usually ensure at least tacit acquiesence. The concept, of course, called for the eventual departure of the SF with the now-pacified province to be turned over to Government of Vietnam (GVN) control. This almost always led to a period of repression by corrupt government officials and lazy ARVN units against the montagnards who had cleared the area. In some

provinces, the CIDG were even immediately disarmed by GVN representatives.[77]

While these difficulties occurred, COL Morton's efforts continued and were eventually formalized in Operation SWITCHBACK. This plan called for the USASF to assume full and final control of the CIDG program countrywide not later than July of 1963. COL Morton assumed a new title and responsibility - US Army Special Forces Vietnam (Provisional).[78] By the time of the completion of SWITCHBACK, COL Morton commanded 674 personnel, of whom 524 were in the field in 37 "A" Detachments and 4 "B" Detachments. Viet Cong military action against these personnel and the CIDG they advised increased apace.[79] The VC had identified their greatest threat, and now more often sacrificed stealth and security to strike at that threat. They were normally only marginally successful but the intensity of combat was increasing.

In November 1963, the character of the war changed for the SF due to three events. President Kennedy was assassinated, President Diem was deposed and assassinated, and the Special Forces mission altered dramatically. Regarding the last, the CIA had become enamored with the concept that Vietnam's several hundred mile border could be controlled and infiltrations prevented. General Paul Harkins, the US Commander in Vietnam and not an officer

noted in history for understanding the insurgent character of the war, directed USASF to assume CIA'S border surveillance responsibility. To delineate his operational concept, General Harkins attempted to capitalize on SF's earlier FID successes with CIDG by directing that the same thing be accomplished in the border areas to block infiltration. Here, however, the task was much different in practice. Not only was the area much farther from support, but most of it was actually devoid of indigenous population! As a result, the GVN conscripted criminals and other societal castoffs from the lowlands to form border security companies for SF to advise. That these personnel were ill-suited and ultimately unsuccessful in this near impossible task is not surprising. These were troops sent off to die by a South Vietnamese government that did not care about them, or by extension, their USASF advisors. From the SF side, a relatively acceptable change of role at the beginning of the war to FID operations was becoming altered beyond recognition.[80] It was shortly to be more so.

In the last months before the arrival of American ground combat troops, Special Forces found itself cast in yet another role by the new American commander, General Westmoreland. Recognizing that the purely advisory era was coming to an end and that combat intensity was increasing at the tactical level, General Westmoreland decided to use the effective, tough SF units to bridge the gap until US large

units arrived. That this was outside the traditional SF doctrinal role was considered irrelevant. Whether General Westmoreland had sound military reasons for this, that is whether the tactical situation would have been significantly worse had SF not been so applied, is a matter of considerable conjecture. As it turned out, SF units led their wide variety of indigenous fighters in nearly every conceivable tactical mission. With increasing regularity, such units were used as reaction forces for trouble spots, and as continuing border security elements. Even highway security became part of the SF purview during this period. Finally, SF personnel found themselves as advisors to GVN sector and sub-sector authorities.[81] By 1965, the conflict had become not only an insurgency but also a developing larger-scale war, characterized by the introduction of capable, well-equipped North Vietnamese regular formations that resembled their VC predecessors only in the continued employment of guerrilla tactics.[82].

Certainly there are lessons to be derived from the USASF experience in the early years. Care must be taken however to attempt to extract here relevant results from the specific FID operational employment record, rather than developing a listing of lessons of the American employment in Vietnam overall. Such a larger list is well outside the scope of this study, is lengthy, and indeed still controversial. Rather, some factors of the strategic view held by

the NCA, and how this was translated into USASF employment in country is proper and instructive.

We have seen the wide spectrum of confusion at the highest national levels that policymakers operated under as they tried to formulate a military strategy for Vietnam. That many of those views were ill-informed and flawed is now clear with the benefit of knowing the historical result, and is still a bit peripheral. What is central for this discussion is that the muddle existed at all, and continued, as we know, throughout years of combat. If the NCA was so doubting and uneducated about the nature of the war that a mission by the Vice President of the United States was needed, and, if the military structure of the nation was patently grid-locked as to how to prosecute such a war, one wonders what further prima facie evidence a President might require to realize that perhaps a national interest and objectives so ill-defined might not be at risk. After all, if our security were truly so threatened, would not some knowledge of the potential area of operations and its value be present? Would not responsible military planners have identified the needs for force structures to attain the objectives to protect the vital interest? (In the final analysis, that the US military was in the main unprepared for counterinsurgency war is understandable and not entirely the fault of the uniformed services. If the soldiers lacked prescience, so did the government they served. Prior to

Vice President Johnson's visit, Vietnam had not been a vital interest of the United States nor insurgency a critical threat. Therefore, military planners did not structure to fight there or anywhere against that type of foe.) It is therefore small wonder that from the policy confusion came a concomitantly fragmented military response. Therefore, a lesson for policymakers and SOF leaders alike is the imperative of identifying the defined national interest and of delineating the objectives required to secure that interest.

A second lesson arises from the evolution of SF employment roles. Organized originally to prosecute UW, commitment to Vietnam began as advisors and trainers from the outset. With NCA support and impetus, this mission expanded until a full-scale FID operation was underway. The success of that program derived from the inherent capabilities of the montagnards that SF were able to develop, and from the professionalism and skill of the SF personnel. Later, as the intensity of the war increased, the alteration of the SF mission to first border security, and then later on to country wide "everything force," was less successful. Though accomplishing missions and inflicting casualties far exceeding a normal unit's capabilities, the combat became too widespread for SF and the paramilitary units they advised to contain. (That the insurgency was not defeated before this phase was largely the fault of the Diem regime,

and the US unwillingness to force it to change as a price for support.) Therefore, SOF often can accomplish tactical missions for which it is not doctrinally intended. The quality of SOF personnel will frequently return an investment of their expertise far out of proportion to their numbers. Nevertheless, there is a limit to what even specially selected and trained soldiers can achieve, for if misapplied too often or too distant from their doctrinal capabilities, they will be overwhelmed.

Finally, leadership appears again as a lesson of this experience. The vision of COL Morton, and his energetic pursuit of that possibility, were pivotal to the success of USASF as the initial change of mission - to FID - was undertaken. SF's greatest successes in the early war were under the unified command of a professional SOF headquarters, rather than during the MAAG period. Further, at the Montagnard camps the leadership capabilities of the SF personnel of all ranks made the difference between success and failure. CIDG units responded with fierce loyalty and dedication to the courageous personal leadership of SF non-commissioned officers. (Later in the war, it was frequently these same leadership qualities which permitted SF advisors to retrieve so many desperate situations often at the cost of their own lives.)

In summation, one cannot say simplistically that SF did or could have won the war alone prior to the commitment

of US ground forces. Vietnam was probably a bad war for the US to fight at all, and it certainly was a losing strategy to back the Diem gang. Nonetheless, in this period, USASF FID operations with the CIDG were successful. That success created illusions for policymakers about how to fight their special operations capability, thus joining the many illusions held at high level about the war in general.

PART IV

Special Reconnaissance (SR) - British and Australian Special Air Service (SAS) Operations on Borneo

This portion will examine the role of the special reconnaissance operations of the British and Australian SAS in the conflict on Borneo in the early 1960s. A little known campaign today, this contest can be confused somewhat with a jungle conflict that occurred a few years before in nearby Malaya. That, however, was the reduction of an insurgency by British forces, and as such was a different kind of problem, though many tactical techniques were transferable from one war to the other. A further possible confusion that might occur is with the American effort in Vietnam, which was simultaneously being conducted as described in Part III. There is simply very little comparison, again beyond the level of some tactical techniques. The problems the US faced of sponsoring an unpopular regime's campaign against a developed insurgency well supported by a nationalistic, if communist North Vietnam, were simply not concerns in Borneo. The action there was not truly an insurgency. There was no repressive monolithic regime to awkwardly try to prop up, and the threat was of an entirely different nature. Now that we have examined what the Borneo conflict cannot be compared to, let's examine the nature of it, and determine the strategic imperatives that

impelled Britain and Australia to respond with military force.

The large island of Borneo was mostly the property of the powerful, Muslim, and non-aligned South Pacific state of Indonesia. Three areas of the north part of the island were not Indonesian territory. As of 1961, a newly federated state of Malaysia had been founded with the internal and external security guarantees of Britain. The province of East Malaysia in the federation was constituted by the districts of Sarawak and Sabah. The third area of North Borneo not under Indonesian control was the sultanate of Brunei, a small oilrich country that accepted British security guarantees but declined to join the Malysian federation.[83]

The threat from Indonesia emanated from the desire of its leader, President Sukarno, to pursue an expansionist ambition called MAPHILINDO. This was intended as a policy to unify all peoples of Malay origins residing in current Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia into a political entity.[84] As a first step the absorption of Sarawak, Sabah, and Brunei into the Indonesian province of Kalimantan, that is all the rest of Borneo, was to be accomplished. To that end a strategy of Confrontation, or "Konfrontasi" in Indonesian, was adopted. This was conceived as a series of political and eventually military actions to defeat the concept of the Malaysian federation on Borneo.[85]

The Konfrontasi began in December, 1962 with an armed Indonesian sponsored revolt in Brunei.[86] The moment had come for Britain to evaluate its interest in the region and determine what if any action would be taken. For the British these questions were really already answered. Not only had Britain affirmed the economic importance of the region by their lengthy colonization, but after World War II, when the decision was made to divest herself of the Empire, Britain constructed a carefully considered web of security treaties for Malaysia and Brunei. In addition to a mutual defense treaty, Britain agreed to train the Malayan Army and would, in turn, be allowed bases in the region.[87] Therefore, it is not too great a stretch to state that by virtue of treaty, long colonial relationship, the sacrifice of British forces against the Japanese, the recent successful counterinsurgency war, and the continued economic benefits of Singapore, Malayan, Bruneian, and Hong Kong Trade, the British decision to honor their commitments was totally predictable. There can be little question that both the British national interest, as perceived by the logic that impelled their treaty initially, was threatened. Further, it is clear that a defined objective of the resumption of stability in the region as obtainable by military action was fully in keeping with the British view of their interest. The nature and method of the military force to be applied

was to be determined by the local commander, who was given a wide range of authority as we shall shortly see.

To continue with the description of the context of the confrontation that eventually led to the SAS employment, it is next important to say that the Brunei uprising was swiftly responded to by British forces. Indeed, the first British forces touched down in Brunei to secure the main town initially on the same day the revolt began. Despite the fact that the initial force was small (two companies of Gurkhas), follow-on forces arrived rapidly and acted aggressively upon arrival. Within six days of the outbreak of the revolt, it had been broken by the three British infantry battalions and two Royal Marine Commandos deployed.[88]

One week later on 19 December 1962 the British government again demonstrated its ability to take a decision and resolutely pursue it. MG Walter Walker was officially appointed as Commander, British Forces Borneo and given command of the forces already deployed there with the intention that they would remain. Though further military incursions inspired by Indonesia into Sarawak were still some five months away, the British command had recognized the threat, its source, and the requirement for retaining the initiative in the confrontation.[89] Therefore, the local victory in Brunei was never viewed as more than that, and once the military threshold had been crossed, Walker and

the British government took on Konfrontasi with great determination.

In Walter Walker, the British selected well the soldier to lead the jungle fight against Konfrontasi. Having fought in the Burma campaign in World War II, and in the Malayan emergency, he had also been the first commandant of the Jungle Warfare School. On his flight to Borneo, Walker drafted his operational concept for the campaign. Walker later asserted that not only was his experience in the Malyan emergency critical to his concept, but also his own study of the lengthy insurgency in French Indo-China had much to do with how he proposed to fight in Borneo.[90]

No clearer statement of how the operation was planned and executed could be asked for than MG Walker's 5 point concept: He intended to achieve -

1. Unified Operations
2. Timely and Accurate Information
3. Speed, Mobility, and Flexibility
4. Security of Bases
5. Domination of the Jungle

After a few weeks in Borneo, recognizing the Indonesian effort to radicalize and terrorize the jungle border tribes, MG Walker added a sixth point: Winning the hearts and minds of the people.[91]

The British prosecution of these points was highly professional and determined. The pursuit of the second

objective regarding the acquisition of intelligence, is the centerpiece of this discussion. Before expanding on that point in some detail, it is worthwhile to summarize the execution of the other points to complete the description of the context within which the SAS operated.

Regarding unified operations, MG Walker simply and forcefully established a single joint headquarters to coordinate and direct operations. This unity of command included not only the three services, but the civil administration, and police forces as well. Such freedom of action to establish a span of control commensurate with the nature of the emergency was enviable. The coordination of the civil administration of the natives with military security was salutary.[92]

The pursuit of speed, mobility and flexibility was a continual challenge. Borneo's terrain and vegetation made much of the countryside literally trackless. This concept was pursued by air and sea. Helicopters were put to vital and continual use, supplies were frequently air dropped, and hovercraft that could carry up to 2 tons of supplies sailed rapidly on rivers or coastal waters.[93]

Bases were secured by having a clear concept of what they were for and a limitation at that level to ensure that rear areas did not grow larger than was useful. As domination of the jungle was another concept, MG Walker decreed that each unit was responsible for its own base security,

and that bases were for the temporary refit of patrols and the security of surrounding villages only. Hence, bases were to be defendable by about 1/3 of a unit's strength. The rest of the personnel were to be out patrolling.[94]

This leads naturally into the concept of domination of the jungle, a phase that the SR efforts of the SAS would make possible. The idea was that this was the core concept to defeating Konfrontasi. The border frontages for the four engaged brigades were 181, 442, 262, and 81 miles in length. The only way to control this immense line of difficult jungle was by continual, aggressive patrolling. Units had to live in the jungle, passing between and among the villages, for weeks at a time. By such ceaseless activity, not only were the British forces a more familiar sight to the villagers than the Indonesian border raiders, but at no time could the Indonesians count on having the initiative. It was always at issue. Further, when British forces located Indonesian parties, the reaction was always immediate, violent, and relentless. MG Walker achieved this eventual tactical and moral ascendancy by carefully and thoroughly enhancing the training of the individual soldier. All units arriving in the theater received six weeks of acclimatization, jungle operations, and small unit patrolling training.[95] All of these factors made the main force that the SAS supported, highly compatible with the special reconnaissance techniques employed. Rarely in modern

warfare has there been so harmonious a mixture of trained units, operating on similar techniques, pursuing a clear commander's intent, under such a unified command.

Early in the confrontation the British 22nd Special Air Service Regiment deployed to Borneo where it was to be employed once again on the tasks it had perfected in the Malayan emergency. ("22 SAS" will be used to distinguish this formation from their Australian fellows.) The 22 SAS Commander, LTC John Woodhouse, convinced MG Walker that his regiment could move out into the jungle, provide early warning of Indonesian activities, and watch and report the strengths and capabilities of the located enemy. To accomplish this, Woodhouse deployed his men in four man teams across the entire frontage to operate out of aboriginal villages on four month long tours. Speaking some of the language, and living immersed in the culture, allowed the men to develop rapport and informational sources among the villagers to a very high degree. With each four man team operating in their same general area for their entire tour, the level of knowledge accumulated about the terrain was considerable.[98] After a time the British then, had personnel who knew the country and the people better than the Indonesians did!

This phase continued for several months as the British girded themselves for the sizeable military incursions from Kalimantan that were in the offing. When

these began, in April 1963, the 22 SAS had already effectively emplaced a difficult intelligence barrier along the entire border. Nevertheless, the long term demands of the war would require depth of SAS trained personnel. With a view to this, LTC Woodhouse expanded 22 SAS's force structure by an additional squadron. Further in 1963 with the formal political structure of the Federation of Malaysia established as a member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, Australia, and to a smaller extent New Zealand, dispatched their SAS formations to Borneo under the auspices of that treaty. Sufficient SAS manpower now was present to establish nearly continual deep special reconnaissance operations across the border.[97]

The historical ancestry of the Australian SAS was firmly rooted in the prosecution of special operations in Pacific Island jungles. Unlike 22 SAS, whose World War II beginnings were in the Middle Eastern and Western European theaters and who came to jungle experience only after the war, Australian fighting elites had been recruited to conduct a secret war against Japan on, believe it or not, an SOE model transferred to Oceania. In 1941, Australia formed its own Independent Companies that were ready for island deployment before the Japanese conquest of much of the Pacific just after Pearl Harbor. Indeed, one of these companies conducted a classic, nearly two year guerrilla campaign on Portuguese Timor, an area that abuts present day

Indonesia. Later, successive Independent Companies participated widely in the New Guinea campaign harassing enemy flanks and rear areas, though later in the war some misapplication to infantry tasks did occur.[98]

In the modern era, the Australian SAS capability developed slowly beginning at a company level in 1957. The Konfrontasi was the requirement which motivated the Australian government and military command to consider expansion of their SAS structure. Both LTC Woodhouse at the behest of MG Walker in an informal personal visit, and formal government-to-government communications in 1963, had broached the idea of future Australian military support on Borneo. Certainly Woodhouse sought particularly SAS augmentation to improve 22 SAS's tactical capability. As a result, expansion of training exercises and further recruitment were instituted. For personnel already in the SAS company, focused pre-deployment training in the Malay language and additional medical training were instituted. This measured program culminated in 1964 with the establishment of the Australian SAS regiment in September, and the deployment of the unit to combat on Borneo in February 1965.[99]

The introduction of these new units (recall also the half squadron of New Zealand SAS that arrived at the same time as the Australians) required an adjustment of the command and control of the secret war. Therefore,

Headquarters SAS Far East was established headed by the new commander of 22 SAS, LTC Gray. This organization combined and coordinated all of the SR activities on Borneo under a single command that reported ultimately to MG Walker. SAS commanders had other coordination responsibilities, such as working closely with the Brigade Commander of the combat troops in whose area they reconnoitered, and the Australian SAS commander could seek the ultimate redress if required of appealing to his own government in Canberra. However, the operational command line was clear, and affirmed in unmistakable reality the strategic nature of the 22 SAS and Australian SAS role on Borneo.[100] Command went from NCA to MG Walker to Headquarters, SAS Far East.

It is now appropriate to examine the results of the SR operations conducted. The Konfrontasi fizzled into military impotence during 1965, and by 1966 a military coup had relegated Swkarno to the role of figurehead.[101] The political victory was clear and the military campaign cost the Indonesians at least several thousand combatants killed. The British lost a total of 92 killed from all services, the Australians 2.[102] Of these, in their continual SR patrols over three years of operations, 22 SAS had seven men killed.[103] In four months of such operations, the Australian SAS lost one man killed in action.[104] It is vital that the context of these startlingly low friendly casualties is clarified. Many days of continual patrolling,

with occasional village visits stage-managed for political effect, were conducted with uninterrupted stealth, trail discipline, and mastery of jungle craft. Continual alertness was required not only to guard against the chance contact, but to allow the spotting of tiny tracking indications that could lead to a border-crossing group. When located, stealthy reporting to bring a destruction force to the optimal time and place was virtually an art. Later in the campaign, SAS teams pushed their SR clandestinely into Indonesian territory. The ability to discover staging areas, and then call forces to destroy the border crossers in them, effectively bankrupted the border incursion tactic of Konfrontasi for Indonesia.

The lessons derivable from this remarkable campaign of SOF application are several. First, at the national level the circumstances and location surrounding the Confrontation resulted in a rapid, unequivocal British response. This in turn allowed the appointment of a military commander with clear objectives and the governmental support to accomplish them. The lesson is, apparently, when these attractive circumstances exist, capitalize on them. If they do not, and if a response is contemplated, a determined stance executed with vigor can improve the situation. Second, in difficult terrain that classically protects intruders, insurgents, and all sorts of opponents, highly trained SOF units can gather the intelligence

critical to victory. After all, terrain, weather, and vegetation impinge on the operations of both sides. The trick is to accept the perhaps alien environment, and learn to fight well in it. SOF units by virtue of the selection and training of their personnel can return tremendous dividends. Protracted living in remote country, often with the requirement to establish a rapport with indigenous peoples, is a mainstay of SOF capability. Higher commanders should capitalize on this quality. Third, yet again there is an inter-relationship with support transportation. To attain the speed and flexibility required, helicopters in Borneo were of inestimable value. Fourth and finally, the quality and prior experience of both the British command leadership and the SAS leadership were salutary. Certainly LTC Woodhouse and his SAS subordinates and successors were extremely competent and effective. Of even greater importance, however, was the jungle warfare and counter-insurgency expertise of MG Walker. To follow success with success, upon Walker's departure, the campaign was concluded by his replacement, MG George Lea, a former 22 SAS commander. Both commanders well understood the value, tactical requirements, and operational limitations of the SOF unit they commanded.

PART V

Counter Terrorism (CT) - US Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission - 1980

This final representative mission examination will look at the unsuccessful Operation EAGLE CLAW mounted by the United States to retrieve the hostages seized from the American Embassy in Tehran on 4 November 1979. As this is the most recent operation examined, there are several realities that should be set out before the discussion. First, much of the operational detail and personal recollection surrounding the mission remain classified. Published sources are general, but all that is available. One new autobiography by a key participant has been published this year. However, an official account of the operation will certainly not be made public for years, if at all. Second, the necessity to confront terrorism and its recent reincarnation of group hostage seizure and retention, has impelled western SOF organizations to develop its newest and most secretive capability. Both of these factors will impinge on the nature of the analysis of EAGLE CLAW.

The security of a nation's individual citizens is a fundamental tenet of modern nations, particularly western democracies. Certainly few nations in the world hold life, particularly US life, so dear as the United States. Further, the sophistication of media communications within the US ensured that immediate national concern and political

pressure coalesced to virtually mandate some sort of action. Diplomatic, political, informational, and economic responses were all employed throughout what came to be known as the "hostage crisis." Military actions to accomplish the national objective of restoring the hostages' freedom was a step contemplated with caution and care. Within the administration of President Carter, the primary early advocate for the preparation of a military rescue operation was the National Security Advisor Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski. His arguments were persuasive. The President ordered the US Department of Defense to prepare a rescue mission, and then mandated restrictions that had an eventually direct operational impact: the force was to be kept as small as possible and maximum possible secrecy was to be maintained throughout the preparation.[105]

Regarding the choice between scarce assets mentioned in the strategic paradigm, once again there were little choices between units. Rather, choices perhaps existed between levels of violence to be employed, and once that was decided, how to task organize the force being prepared. Certainly, the Carter administration had an image of a reliance on negotiation as opposed to military force. A concept of massive retaliation stood little chance of adoption. Rather a minimum force rescue operation was the implication behind the guidance to the Pentagon to prepare a lean force.[106].

Regarding task organization, the problem was slightly simplified. Unlike all the other examples in this study, the US military had a force in being, specifically, though only recently, organized to conduct counterterrorist operations. Delta Force, commanded by COL Charles Beckwith, had passed through an elaborate series of bureaucratic obstacles to get to exist at all.[107] Just before the hostages were taken in Tehran, Delta had completed validation training and evaluation.[108] The difficulty for the military planner lay in the rest of the task organization. Just like their predecessors had faced in 1940 London, there was no organic command and control, transportation, or support organization to back up the ground rescuers the US Army possessed.

With a view to, again in history creating the ad hoc organization that could accomplish the entire task, highly qualified individual planners were summoned to the intensive planning effort beginning in Washington. Among them were MG James Vaught a Washington assigned officer with previous special operations experience who would be the overall commander, and COL James Kyle US Air Force who would serve as deputy commander. As the Joint Task Force (JTF) was composed, there was cause for concern about both the clumsiness of the Department of Defense structure that would perhaps slowly turn over operational control of forces to the JTF, and whether this all could be done in great secrecy.[109]

Among the key actors appointed to the increasingly complex operational force, were an Air Force Major General who actually outranked MG Vaught to serve as a "special consultant," a Marine Colonel who was to plan helicopter employment for the mission but was oddly not to be a member of the task force staff, and another Marine Lieutenant Colonel who was to be the helicopter flight leader. MG Vaught apparently never delineated the formal chain of command between these three officers in relation to himself".[110]

Over the weeks these and other organizational difficulties occurred during the planning of the operation. (A degree of this would have been unavoidable under the best of circumstances, much less operating under the White House secrecy restrictions). The plan that eventually evolved was necessarily complex; complex because it was a long way to Tehran and back.

Simply put, the plan called for a force of helicopters, that had been carried into the Middle East aboard a US aircraft carrier, to proceed across the Iranian desert to an isolated site designated Desert One. At the same time, Delta, transported on C130 aircraft, would fly to Desert One separately from land bases in the region. Transloading to the helicopters, that were also to be refueled at Desert One, Delta was to continue on to meet a ground reception party of several pre-infiltrated intelligence gatherers.

They were then to spend the remainder of that night and the next day resting and hiding. Their helicopters were to fly to a separate hide area for concealment during the same period. On the next night, Delta was to proceed by vehicle into the city, assault the Embassy compound and another area where some Americans were being held, and liberate the hostages. Simultaneously, the helicopters were to fly to a nearby soccer stadium. From there Delta and the hostages would be exfiltrated out of Tehran to an airfield at Manzariyeh some miles outside the capital. This field, earlier secured by a force of US Army Rangers, would contain several C141 jet transports for force and hostage exfiltration out of country. The helicopters were to be left behind. The concept also contained several other elements of air support if trouble was encountered, and support aircraft to communicate with and fuel the force from various support locations outside Iran.[11] Obviously the plan had great distances to cover, at risk, pursuing a multi-phased timetable.

In this highly politicized drama, it was not until after the force was prepared, and all other negotiations had proved fruitless, that the decision meeting on whether to go forward with the attempt was held. Interestingly, there appears to have been confusion among the high policymakers, and even with the President himself, about the levels of violence planned and the possible likelihood of hostage or

Iranian casualties. President Carter was uncomfortable with the knowledge that in the assault or exfiltration, hostages could become casualties from stray gunfire. Further, he had apparently not heretofore focused on the fact that Iranians who attempted to resist the rescue would be killed. Evidently the potential costs of the operation were only at the decision briefing hitting home. Nevertheless, the President ordered the execution of EAGLE CLAW. He did so while harboring grave personal doubts, over the protest of his Secretary of State, while apparently the Secretary of Defense assumed a vague coordination role throughout.[112]

In the event, the operation met tragic disaster before ever proceeding past Desert One. Due to a series of freakish sandstorms and mechanical failures, too few helicopters reached Desert One. The heartbroken commanders decided to abort EAGLE CLAW immediately. On the refuel repositionings prior to the flight out, a hovering helicopter crashed into one of the C130s. Many men were burned, and eight were killed. The remainder of the force departed Iran with unimaginable disappointment. Shortly, as the world learned of the disaster, American prestige would suffer deep humiliation.[113]

An official review was conducted into the planning and execution of the mission headed by retired Chief of Naval Operations James Holloway. The review was explicitly not entitled an inquiry which sought to assign individual

culpability. Rather the identification of military lessons was the objective. The Holloway group after its study concluded that no single

> action or lack of action caused the operation to fail, and that no one alternative or all the alternatives (measures suggested by the Holloway group) could have guaranteed its success.[114]

A total of nearly two dozen issues were identified by the panel as contributory.[115]

Many of these are not specifically applicable to the scope of this study due to their technical nature. Several of them however are, and will be reflected in the lessons learned comments that appear below.

First, once again the characteristics of the political atmosphere at the NCA level were mirrored to a degree down the chain of command. Certainly no direct correlation can be drawn appropriately, but the atmosphere was one of uncertainty. The NCA was unsure of the range of options available, and the military structure was uncertain how to configure a force for success and secrecy simultaneously. Second, the military's uncertainty was a reflection of the relatively unprepared states of its services and Joint Staff to deal with this type of contingency. With the exception of Delta Force, ad hoc force composition was required. We have seen in Part I and II the time, and trial and error that takes. Each hostage situation is unique, but most are desperately short of time and leave little room for

error. Third, it should have been no surprise that the mission force would require highly capable infiltration/ exfiltration means, and up to date human intelligence. For EAGLE CLAW that meant a lot of aircraft with sophisticated crews, and a need to infiltrate a reconnaissance group into Iran well ahead of the rescue force. COL Beckwith understood this perfectly, as would have Colin Gubbins. That SOE's boss Dalton, did not, was forgivable as that was the initial attempt at these offensive special operations. That Beckwith's and Vaught's civilian masters were uninformed forty years later is more difficult to countenance. Fourth, and finally again, the issue of SOF leadership and the ability of SOF personnel to retrieve difficult situations is germane. The factors that defeated EAGLE CLAW were cumulative. Some of these had been at one time capable of being influenced by the SOF leadership, but many of these were totally beyond their scope of control. The differences between the CHARIOT team of Newman and Ryder, and the EAGLE CLAW team of Beckwith and Kyle are only those of space and time. In determination, courage, and dedication, I contend that these teams and the men they led are indistinguishable. The system that spawned and launched CHARIOT put success or failure almost entirely in the hands of the Commandos. The system that launched EAGLE CLAW flawed the mission to the degree that leadership and fighting quality were insufficient to prevent defeat.

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

SOF strategic employment, as represented by the operations examined, has been mostly effective, though not without interim setbacks and even a salutary mission failure. There are some threads of common experience that have run through the history of the five representative missions, and which would certainly be seen again in other cases. Taken individually, none of the lessons or results is necessarily particularly penetrating. But taken as a compendium, I suggest that they offer insights into the nature and character of SOF, how they are frequently utilized, and how much they may be reasonably expected to achieve in the future.

Fundamentally SOF as they are organized, trained, and employed today (by the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and their cumulative antecedents) originated in the effort to prosecute significant special operations in World War II. Development of unit roles, procedures, methods of regeneration and recruiting, and traditions have evolved from then until the present day in response to combat experiences, political pressures, and efforts to optimize employment through doctrinal improvement.

A look at the trends indicated from the five representative missions is instructive for policymakers and SOF leaders. Understanding the historical experience will sensitize those communities to realities that have been seen before, and can reasonably be expected to occur in some form again. This is however definitely not a "checklist" approach to the future employment of SOF. The result of this study is more that evolutionary occurrences may be expected, and that frequently final results will not resemble the preconceptions valued at the beginning of the conflict.

Six trends or, a more authoritarian word, lessons emerge here. That is, with a view towards summarization, they are -

1. If there is a perceived need for a SOF capability an organization to supply it will be created. Over time, however, SOF development has reacted to these needs and policymakers have made permanent, in peacetime structure, the capability that the conflict inspired, even if specific portions of organizations deactivated at war's end.

2. Where a capability or organization exists at the inception of a conflict, frequently roles or missions are altered by high level policymakers to meet requirements. SOF, largely because of the high quality of personnel they contain, are frequently able to accomplish missions deriving from such alterations. However, historically there has been

a very fine line between successful role or mission alteration (such as the USASF shift from a UW to a FID role for Vietnam) and misuse (such as the later experiences of the same unit).

3. SOF organizations are tantalizing to policymakers by virture of their secrecy and the excitement their employment generates. Frequently these factors, as well as the sheer unconventionality of the SOF in traditional organizations, spark bureaucratic competition over SOF employment and control issues.

4. There is a continuous political character to special operations. Not only are these operations frequently prosecuted in highly politicized environments, but the units themselves to some degree are affected by the political climate in which they have been committed.

5. There is an enduring reliance by ground or Army SOF upon external support resources. In today's parlance that could be stated as having a "Joint" character. There are many types of support which SOF units require but two appear to be historically persistent needs. These are for the means of air and sea infiltration, exfiltration, and supply, and for timely, continuing human intelligence. Special operations, as conceived today, appear to need this support as much as ever.

6. The individual quality of SOF personnel and leaders is of continuing importance. Determination,

courage, tenacity, creativity, patience, guile, and an appreciation for other languages and cultures appear to be only some of the critically required qualities. Special operations really are high risk or long duration missions. Most often they are both. They can only be successfully accomplished by specially selected, trained, organized, and equipped formations when things go well. When things go wrong, and if there is to be any rescue from disaster, it requires the maximum effort and considerable sacrifice from the SOF unit to retrieve success.

Relationship to Previous Studies

None of the findings or resulting assertions of this study conflict significantly with previous works done in this subject area. Rather, this study has been an effort at collation, and, more importantly, synthesization of the history of the strategic use of SOF. In that process, the combination and analysis of information presented in sources with a far narrower focus was the primary activity. Historical knowledge about SOF in the unclassified arena reposes in literally dozens of disparate sources. Many of these works were useful to this study for contextual reasons, rather than as direct citations concerning the operations under review. Researchers in this field for the foreseeable future will be obligated to delve into this wide body of literature in a similarly eclectic way.

Suggestions For Further Research

Two approaches readily suggest themselves as of this writing. First, a far larger, more comprehensive study should be done on the evolutionary development of the British and American SOF from World War II to the present. Such a review would clarify the evolutionary nature of special operations, and assist in defining SOF's contribution and difficulties, not only in terms of single conflicts or engagements, but also in terms of the history of nations' power over decades.

Second, similar studies to this one may be amplified if the researcher chooses to access classified sources. Doing so will allow considerably more breadth and depth of study concerning operations more recent than Vietnam. Rationally, the future research must balance the level of classified information utilized with the intended readership. In summary, it is no exaggeration to say that for all of the works written to date regarding SOF history, there is a great deal of the story still to be revealed and documented in useful form.

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