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Special Operations



Air Force Doctrine Document 2-7
July 1999

This document complements related discussion found in Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*.

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BY ORDER OF THE
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

AIR FORCE DOCTRINE DOCUMENT 2-7
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FOREWORD

Air Force Doctrine Document 2-7 (AFDD 2-7), *Special Operations*, is the keystone document of our operational doctrine for preparing and employing United States Air Force special operations forces (AFSOF). Its capstone publication, AFDD 2, *Organization and Employment of Aerospace Power*, presents the fundamentals of what we, the Air Force, believe is the best way to fight, and organize to fight, at the operational level of war. AFDD 2-7 describes how the unique capabilities of AFSOF can best be used to support the commander's intent across the range of military operations.

Our operational doctrine describes not only how we employ AFSOF to meet today's threats and challenges, but also guides our efforts as we prepare to meet those of tomorrow. Time and again, the capabilities of Air Force special operators have been needed to advance this nation's interests, and they have risen to the task and accomplished the difficult jobs. This specialized force, unique in all the world, will remain capable only if we look to the future and critically and honestly evaluate what missions we need AFSOF prepared to do. As the world changes, as the threat changes, and as we learn fresh lessons, our doctrine must keep pace. **Only by understanding the fundamental lessons learned by those who went before us—lessons written in this document—will we remain ready to meet the challenges of the future.**

MICHAEL E. RYAN
General, USAF
Chief of Staff

July 1999

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

This document has been prepared under the direction of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. It establishes doctrinal guidance for the employment of Air Force special operations forces across the full range of military operations from major theater war to military operations other than war (MOOTW). As the Air Force's keystone document on special operations, it should underpin commanders' planning and execution of AFSOF missions and form the basis for organizing those forces.

APPLICATION

This AFDD applies to all active duty, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, and civilian Air Force personnel. All those concerned with planning and executing special operations should read and understand this document as a foundation for future success. This doctrine is authoritative but not directive; commanders are encouraged to exercise judgment in applying this doctrine to accomplish their missions.

SCOPE

Air Force Special Operations assets are used across the spectrum of conflict, principally for strategic- and operational-level missions. AFDD 2-7 describes the missions, unique characteristics, force composition, command relationships, planning issues, and support requirements which commanders need to understand in order to effectively employ Air Force special operations forces.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES PERSPECTIVE

Our forces, therefore must fulfill a broader role—as a complement to our diplomacy—as an arm of our diplomacy—as a deterrent to our adversaries and as a symbol to our allies of our determination to support them.

President John F. Kennedy

From an auspicious start supporting British ground troops in the China-Burma-India Theater during World War II, through their involvement in initiating raids at the beginning of DESERT STORM hostilities, to today's continuing missions worldwide, Air Force special operations forces (SOF) support the goals of our nation's leaders.

Today, AFSOF is an umbrella term for those active and Reserve Component Air Force forces, designated by the Secretary of Defense, that are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. AFSOF include specially equipped fixed-wing and vertical-lift aircraft, and aircrews, special tactics teams, aviation advisory teams, and personnel specially trained to support special operations communications, intelligence, and weather functions.

This document details the doctrine of AFSOF. It includes an in-depth discussion of truths held dear by AFSOF, discusses the principal SOF missions and collateral activities AFSOF are tasked to support, lays out the methods used for command and control (C2) of AFSOF, and discusses criteria used by AFSOF during the planning, preparation, and execution of special operations. It draws from fundamental lessons learned by Air Commandos in operations long past and recent. It cannot be all-inclusive, for every use of AFSOF is different; it is meant to guide and provide a foundation for commanders' professional judgments. This document concludes with a list of recommended readings meant to further improve the reader's understanding of Air Force special operations.

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Victory smiles upon those who anticipate the changes in the character of war, not upon those who wait to adapt themselves after the changes occur.

Giulio Douhet

To understand how AFSOF should be employed, one must first understand the essential elements, characteristics, capabilities, and limitations of SOF itself. AFSOF are the flexible air arm of the joint SOF force and as such, AFSOF doctrine is inherently joint and easily adapted to the multinational environment. AFSOF roles and missions span the spectrum of conflict; as a result, AFSOF are fully engaged in peacetime. AFSOF doctrine must be rapidly adaptable in response to a dynamic strategic environment which demands AFSOF involvement in unified military, inter-agency, and cross-cultural operations.

OVERVIEW OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Joint Pub 1-02, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, defines special operations (SO) as

“Operations conducted by specially organized, trained, and equipped military and paramilitary forces to achieve military, political, economic, or psychological objectives by unconventional military means in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas. These operations are conducted during peacetime competition, conflict, and war, independently or in coordination with operations of conventional, nonspecial operations forces. Political-military considerations frequently shape special operations, requiring clandestine, covert, or low visibility techniques and oversight at the national level. Special operations differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets.”

Historically, national security strategy has required a military special operations capability able to quickly respond to National Command Authorities (NCA) direction across the range of military operations. *Special operations forces provide the NCA with a wider range of military options and capabilities than what is available in conventional forces* and with the ability to take appropriate, timely, and effective action when national interests are challenged. SO are most often con-

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ducted by joint forces following joint doctrine, but are readily adaptable and quite effective in the multinational arena as well.

The NCA may direct the use of SOF against a wide range of adversaries including terrorists, insurgents, guerrillas, or regular combatants. Likewise, SOF can be used to support insurgents, guerrillas, or regular conventional operations. **SOF are a force multiplier** that may operate deep in enemy territory to disrupt, distract, or reconnoiter enemy forces or otherwise assist in friendly conventional actions.

SOF are unique in their training and employment—making them particularly responsive to a broad range of political, military, cultural, and geographic considerations. *SOF are not substitutes for strong conventional forces but are complementary to conventional capabilities.* Depending on mission requirements, SOF may operate in place of, or in addition to, conventional forces throughout the range of military operations. The small size, special equipment, and area-oriented training which characterizes SOF make them useful in situations and areas where use of conventional military forces might be less feasible operationally or politically. For some missions, such as foreign internal defense (FID), SOF may be best suited to accomplish the mission because of their regional orientation, cross-cultural skills, and experience in working with host nation (HN) or indigenous forces. These characteristics not only enable employment in these unique circumstances, but also enhance these forces' capabilities when deployed in support of conventional military operations.

SOF PERSPECTIVE ON THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR

The principles of war (unity of command, objective, offensive, mass, maneuver, economy of force, security, surprise, and simplicity) are guidelines that commanders can use to form and select a course of action and apply to the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. These principles represent the best efforts of military thinkers to identify those aspects of warfare that are universally true and relevant.

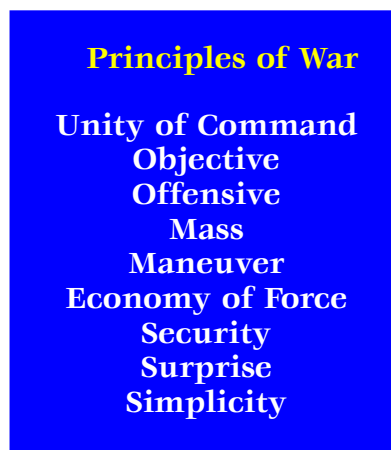


Figure 1.1. Principles of War

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It must be understood that no single principle stands alone—they are interconnected and augment one another. For example, if a plan isn't simple enough, security is more difficult to maintain and if security is compromised, then surprise and speed are lost too. Also, the principles must be considered throughout the planning, preparation, and execution of an operation.

Unity of Command

Ensure concentration of effort for every objective under one responsible commander. Unity of command means that all forces operate under a single commander with the authority to direct all forces employed in pursuit of a common objective. This principle emphasizes that all efforts should be directed and coordinated toward a common goal. Coordination may be achieved by cooperation; however, it is best achieved by vesting a single commander with the authority to direct all force employment in pursuit of a common objective.

Normally, all SO units—less psychological operations (PSYOP) and civil affairs (CA)—fall under the operational control of a joint force special operations component commander (JFSOCC), who works directly for the joint force commander (JFC) and ensures that all SO support the JFC's campaign. PSYOP and CA, because they operate throughout the entire theater and directly support almost all conventional forces, usually have separate task forces working directly for the JFC. SOF missions usually originate with the JFC or the theater components (with the advice of the JFSOCC) and are directed toward the same ends as the operations of conventional forces.

Objective

Direct every military operation toward a defined and attainable objective that contributes to strategic, operational, or tactical aims. In application, this principle refers to unity of effort. Success in military operations demands that all efforts be directed toward the achievement of common aims. In a broad sense, this principle holds that political and military goals should be complementary and clearly defined.

SO objectives are often political, economic, or psychological as well as military. In war, SO objectives predominantly focus on enemy military vulnerabilities without direct force-on-force confrontation. During MOOTW, SOF can be assigned objectives that lead directly to the ac-

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accomplishment of national- or theater-level objectives. Planners must avoid adding secondary objectives to SO missions, for this can stretch an already limited force to the danger point. This relates directly to the principle of simplicity—adding more objectives increases complexity. Determining SOF objectives requires a careful balancing of risk versus gain (normally using operational risk management techniques) and a clear understanding of both the capabilities and limitations of SOF.

Offensive

Act rather than react. Dictate the time, place, purpose, scope, intensity, and pace of operations. Seize the initiative as soon as possible. Offensive action, or initiative, provides the means for joint forces to dictate battlespace operations.

SO are inherently offensive in nature. SOF seize the initiative by determining and exploiting enemy vulnerabilities to establish temporary, relative superiority at a given time and place. SOF must retain the initiative through careful target selection, innovative approaches to reach and depart the target areas, aggressive action, and the ability to take new action more quickly than the enemy can react.

Mass

Concentrate combat power at the decisive time and place. Concentration of military power is a fundamental consideration in all military operations. At the operational level, this principle suggests that superior, concentrated combat power is used to achieve decisive results. *Mass is an effect, not just overwhelming quantity.* Mass is an effect that aerospace forces achieve through efficiency of attack.



Concentrated firepower can create the effect of mass.

In SO, concentration of combat power relies more on quality of people and the focus of tactics, timing, and weaponry than it does on quantity. SOF have limited resources and must concentrate their com-

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bat power at the decisive time and place for each specific objective, accomplish the mission quickly, and then withdraw before the enemy can react in force. This requires detailed intelligence, extensive planning, and painstaking rehearsals.

Maneuver

Place the enemy in a position of disadvantage through the flexible application of combat power. Like the offensive, maneuver forces the enemy to react, allows the exploitation of successful friendly operations, and reduces our vulnerabilities. Airpower's versatility and responsiveness allow the simultaneous application of mass and maneuver.

Maneuver is essential to SO in order to gain relative superiority and exploit enemy vulnerabilities. This is done by infiltrating and exfiltrating hostile and denied areas and conducting operations at unexpected times and places, and in unanticipated ways.



Specially trained personnel are few in number and should be used accordingly.

principle requires clearly articulated objectives and priorities.

SOF should not employ their limited resources on secondary or nonessential tasks. Economy of force is critical to the successful conduct of SO given the small size and lack of redundant capabilities inherent in SO units. SOF may conduct indirect special operations with indigenous forces as an economy of force measure, allowing the concentration of conventional forces elsewhere.

Economy of Force

Devote minimal combat power to secondary efforts to ensure overwhelming combat power is available. At the operational level, this requires minimum effort be made towards secondary objectives that do not support the larger operational or strategic objectives. This principle

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Security

Protect friendly forces and operations from enemy action that could provide the enemy with unexpected advantage. Security enhances freedom of action by reducing the vulnerability of friendly forces and creating opportunities to strike the enemy where least expected. Security must be a particular focus of operations during peace support or crisis situations when forces operate from austere and unimproved locations, in small units, or in crowded urban settings and face threats to security from individuals and groups as well as possible military or paramilitary units.

Security is of paramount importance to SOF, especially during operations in hostile or denied areas. The success of SO often depends on the ability to gather precise information about enemy defenses as well as the ability to conceal the timing and method of attack. Security is essential for SOF to achieve the relative superiority required for successful mission execution. SO planning staffs normally are small and compartmented. Compartmentalization, however, can exclude key people from the planning cycle. *Inadequate security may compromise a mission, but excessive security may cause the mission to fail for lack of coordination.* SOF must balance security concerns with the operational requirements of joint rehearsal and integration. Risk is inherent in military operations. Application of this principle includes prudent risk management, not undue caution. Commanders must resolve these conflicting demands on mission planning and execution, particularly in those cases where SOF forces are to be working in an integrated way with conventional forces.



Surprise is critical to special operations.

Surprise

Attack at a time, place, or in a manner for which the enemy is unprepared. The speed and range of aerospace forces, coupled with their flexibility and versatility, make them particularly capable of achieving surprise. Air- and space-based intelli-

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gence, surveillance, reconnaissance systems enhance the ability to achieve surprise by providing information superiority. Aerospace forces can enhance and empower surface forces to achieve surprise.

Surprise can help the commander shift the balance of combat power and thus achieve success well out of proportion to the effort expended. This is especially true of SOF.

Achieving surprise is a principal talent of SOF. Conventional forces stress surprise but may sacrifice some measure of surprise to attain mass. Even when compromised, conventional forces may be strong enough to defeat the enemy in spite of its defenses. Although not the only important factor, surprise is often the key that allows SOF to achieve relative superiority. *SOF must achieve enough surprise and speed to accomplish the mission before the enemy can react effectively.* They achieve surprise through timing, security, exploiting indirect approaches, and by taking bold, imaginative, and audacious action. SOF also integrate cover, deception, and electronic warfare throughout planning, preparation, and execution.

Simplicity

Avoid unnecessary complexity in organizing, preparing, planning, and conducting military operations. This ensures that guidance, plans, and orders are as simple and direct as the objective will allow. Simple guidance allows subordinate commanders the freedom to creatively operate within their battlespace.

This principle relates directly to the principle of objective and economy of force as well. With SOF's limited resources, it's essential to keep it simple. SOF do this by pursuing only the most essential objectives, thus reducing the number of forces involved and the time on target. Keeping it simple also allows SOF to adapt rapidly to changing situations and to more clearly focus planning and preparation.

MILITARY OPERATIONS OTHER THAN WAR UNIQUE PRINCIPLES

The end of the cold war dramatically changed the international security environment. Our security challenges in the once bipolar world have been replaced by multipolar regional concerns. Unique training, specialized assets, and inherent capabilities make SOF ideally suited to support a wide range of activities that fall under the umbrella term MOOTW.

Six principles specific to MOOTW have been identified. In addition to the already defined principles of objective and security, the principles of MOOTW include unity of effort, restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy.

Unity of Effort

Seek unity of effort in every operation. This MOOTW principle

is derived from the principle of war, unity of command. It emphasizes the need for ensuring all means are directed to a common purpose. However, in MOOTW, achieving unity of effort is often complicated by a variety of international, foreign, and domestic military and nonmilitary participants; the lack of definitive command arrangements among them; and varying views of the objective. This requires that JFCs, or other designated directors of the operation, rely heavily on consensus building to achieve unity of effort.

SOF play an important role in building consensus and establishing effective liaison among the many players. Many SOF operators and units have extensive experience in the interagency process and have worked closely with US ambassadors and their country teams on operations and exercises. Language ability, cultural awareness, reliable communications, and familiarity with foreign armed forces—built on repeated peacetime deployments—allow SOF to foster unity of effort for the JFC.

Restraint

Apply appropriate military capability prudently. *A single act could cause significant military and political consequences; therefore, judicious use of force is necessary.* Restraint requires the careful balancing of the need for security, the conduct of operations, and the political objective. The desired end state may be jeopardized if excessive force is used. Clear, understandable, and appropriate rules of engagement are absolutely essential, both to provide adequate protection for the force and to ensure appropriate restraint.

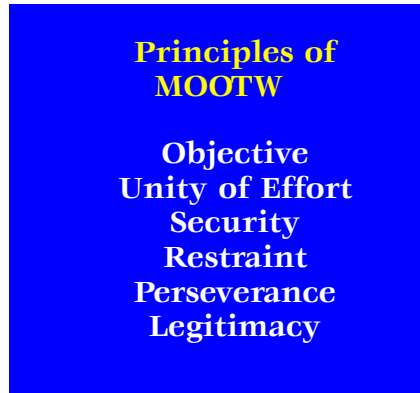


Figure 1.2. Principles of MOOTW

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SOF personnel are often in very close contact with the population in MOOTW and must be particularly conscious of this principle. The use of persuasion by an integrated psychological operations campaign can become the key to tactical success without violence.

Perseverance

Prepare for the measured, protracted application of military capability in support of strategic aims. *Some MOOTW may require years to achieve the desired results.* Commanders balance their desire to attain objectives quickly with a sensitivity for the long-term strategic aims and the restraints placed on operations. Therefore, the patient, resolute, and persistent pursuit of national goals and objectives, for as long as necessary to achieve them, is often the requirement for success.

SOF units are trained to conduct the extended operations common to FID programs. Smaller forces typical of SO facilitate resupply and funding for a long-term operation.

Legitimacy

Sustain the legitimacy of the operation and of the host government, where applicable. In MOOTW, legitimacy is a condition based on perception by a specific audience of the legality, morality, or rightness of a set of actions and is frequently a decisive element.

A carefully designed FID program and a well thought out CA program can help a host nation establish, build, and maintain its legitimacy. PSYOP can increase the perception of legitimacy of actions taken by US and multinational partners in MOOTW. PSYOP can also be effective in undermining the legitimacy of an enemy as well as its external sources of support. SOF's concern for human rights, demonstrated both in educating local security forces and the behavior of special operators themselves, can do a great deal to enhance legitimacy on behalf of the local military.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS UNIQUE PRINCIPLES

To the above principles of war and MOOTW, we can add three more principles that are of particular value to special operations: repetition, speed, and purpose.



Repeated and realistic dress rehearsals make success more certain.

Repetition

While preparing for a mission, repetition is indispensable for success. SOF, like all military forces, perform standard mission profiles as a part of routine training. Practicing tactical skills over and over again improves the ability to react quickly to threats and to execute the mission under combat conditions. *Special operations often vary enough from the standard scenario that new equipment and/or tactics must be used.* When this happens, full dress rehearsals as well as partial rehearsals are a must. *While repetition improves tactical skills, full dress rehearsals reveal weaknesses in the plan.* Time and time again, unrehearsed portions of operations have resulted in failure during execution.

Speed

In special operations, it is essential to get in, accomplish the objective, and withdraw as quickly as possible. Any delay increases vulnerability and decreases chances for success. The longer a given mission lasts, the more the friction of war works against SOF. In order to maximize speed and surprise, SOF are relatively small in number and lightly armed. Because of this, SOF cannot sustain action against a large defending force for very long. *SOF achieve relative superiority by moving so quickly that the enemy doesn't have time to react in force.*

If I concentrate while he divides, I can use my entire strength to attack a portion of his. There, I will be numerically superior. Then, if I am able to use many to strike few at the selected point, those I deal with will be in dire straits.

Sun Tzu

...special operations forces succeed, in spite of their numerical inferiority, when they are able to gain relative superiority through the use of a simple plan, carefully concealed, repeatedly and realistically rehearsed, and executed with surprise, speed, and purpose.

William H. McRaven
SPEC OPS, 1995

Purpose

This encompasses the principle of objective and adds a second part to it. In addition to a clearly defined objective, **special operators often require an exceptionally strong sense of determination** or purpose. A personal commitment to achieving the mission's objectives is vital to achieving relative superiority.

RELATIVE SUPERIORITY

The concept of relative superiority is central to the success of special operations. Detailed in William McRaven's book, SPEC OPS, *relative superiority is achieved when a relatively small, lightly armed force gains a decisive advantage over a larger, more heavily armed force.* Compared to conventional forces, SOF are generally smaller in number and more lightly armed. SOF use the principles of simplicity, security, repetition, surprise, speed, and purpose to achieve relative superiority over a larger, more heavily armed enemy. By moving with stealth and speed, SOF reach their ob-



Figure 1.3. Relative Superiority

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jective, carry out the mission, and withdraw before the enemy can react with a coherent defense or counterattack. However, the longer an engagement continues, the more vulnerable SOF become to the firepower of the defenders. Once relative superiority is lost, so too is the initiative, and the overwhelming firepower of the defender generally prevails.

SOF TRUTHS

Modern SOF are the result of more than fifty years of experience. SOF have witnessed periods of improvisation, rapid buildups and subsequent rapid draw-downs, some magnificent successes and some equally spectacular failures. **The following SOF truths capture the essence of lessons learned over past decades, and provide a foundation for thinking about SOF today and in the future.**

- ✦ **Humans are more important than hardware.** *People—not equipment—make the critical difference.* The right people, highly trained and working as a team, will accomplish the mission with the equipment available. On the other hand, the best equipment in the world cannot compensate for a lack of the right people.
- ✦ **Quality is better than quantity.** A small number of people, carefully selected, well trained, and well led, are preferable to larger numbers of troops, some of whom may not be up to the task.
- ✦ **Special operations forces cannot be mass produced.** *It takes years to train operational units to the level of proficiency needed* to accomplish difficult and specialized SOF missions. Intense training—both in SOF schools and units—is required to integrate competent individuals into fully capable units. This process cannot be hastened without degrading ultimate capability.
- ✦ **Competent special operations forces cannot be created after emergencies arise.** *The creation of competent, fully mission capable units takes time.* Employment of a fully capable special operations capability on short notice requires highly trained and constantly available SOF units in peacetime.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS MISSIONS

Several aspects of SO missions distinguish them from conventional military operations. SO missions:

★ **Are high-risk/high-gain.** *The success or failure of a SO may have a direct impact on the national interests*

and reputation of the United States and other countries. Clandestine or covert projection of forces and operations in foreign areas in peacetime has far-reaching political implications. For this reason, the NCA retain the peacetime authority to approve these operations.

★ **Depend on timely, detailed intelligence and strict security.** Intelligence and security are paramount in SO and should be emphasized during all phases of planning. *Deficiencies in either intelligence or security may result in mission failure* and the potential loss of lives and scarce resources. Detailed intelligence provides SOF commanders with the information necessary to tailor the force against a particular target whether military, political, social, psychological, or economic.

★ **Depend on a small, highly trained force.** SOF depend on force quality and cannot rely on quantity to do the job. *The training time required to qualify SOF personnel precludes the ability to rapidly generate a trained and ready replacement force.* Within this small group of personnel resides a highly coordinated and integrated force with significant planning; employment; and command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence support capabilities and expertise.

★ **Must achieve relative superiority.** As discussed previously, SOF are often pitted against a numerically superior, more heavily armed enemy. By using the principles of simplicity, security, repetition, surprise, speed, and purpose to achieve relative superiority, SOF are able

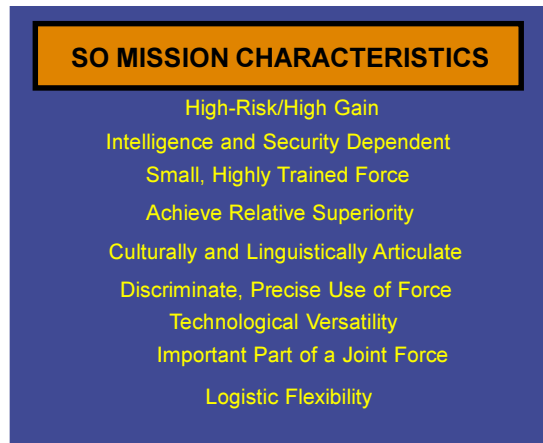


Figure 1.4. SO Mission Characteristics

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to accomplish their mission in spite of a larger, more heavily armed defending force.

- ✦ **Depend on a culturally and linguistically articulate force.** *SO personnel may need to interact with foreign individuals or groups, while avoiding conflicts over sensitive socio-political issues.* SOF personnel adjust to the environment in which they are operating. Difficulties with cultural or physical adaptation could threaten individual and team performance, and security. A detailed area orientation, including mastery of language and culture, may be necessary, depending on the mission.

- ✦ **Frequently require discriminate and precise use of force.** *The total destruction of a target is not always the best strategy.* The JFC may require a facility, like a radio station for example, to be captured or temporarily incapacitated. At other times it may be necessary to take out a small target that's engaged with friendly forces nearby. SOF are particularly well suited for this type of mission. Detailed nodal analysis may be required to determine what effect will achieve a specific mission objective. In addition, SOF planning must be integrated in detail with the planning of conventional forces operating in the same area or airspace in order to insure unity of effort and avoid fratricide.

- ✦ **Require technological versatility.** *SOF exploit the entire spectrum of technology.* On some missions, they can employ tactics and plans based on using equipment that is on the leading edge of technology. SOF assist host nations with their existing technology systems conducting the principle missions of FID and unconventional warfare (UW), as well as the collateral activities of counterdrug, coalition support, humanitarian and security assistance. Often SOF provide the gateway and rapid connectivity between US and allies' technology, increasing US ability to reassure allies and respond rapidly in a coalition environment.

- ✦ **Can be an important part of a joint force.** *The application of SOF can involve resources well beyond those of a single Service.* AFSOF routinely join with Army special operations aviation and frequently assume joint special operations air component commander (JSOACC) responsibilities. *Additionally, commanders often need non-DOD agencies to support or participate in certain phases of assigned missions.* Joint SOF training missions and exercises develop the teamwork, timing, and unity of command that are essential to successful execution.

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- ✦ **Require logistics flexibility.** *Logistics requirements may be defined on short notice. Sources and application may be situationally unique.* Consequently, AF/SOF need the flexibility to procure, modify, or design equipment and procedures on short notice to meet a mission's peculiar transportation, equipment, weapons, supply, and other support requirements. Close coordination with theater, Service, and SO logisticians is necessary to ensure timely and responsive support.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

Attributes

The demands of SO require forces with attributes that distinguish them from conventional forces. The lessons learned from past operations and deployments, as well as the requirements of current operations, have brought about a unique force with distinctive characteristics, capabilities, and limitations. Commanders must be familiar with these to ensure that missions selected for SOF are compatible.

- ✦ **SOF must train in a joint environment.** As demonstrated during Operation EAGLE CLAW (the Iranian rescue mission), an ad hoc force that must be pulled together at the last minute for a complex mission is an invitation to disaster. SOF conduct joint and multinational training regularly, both within the SOF community and with conventional forces. SOF units plan and execute joint operations routinely. SOF forces must be able to integrate into JFC plans easily and effectively.
- ✦ **Most SOF personnel undergo careful selection processes and advanced, specialized training** beyond basic military skills to achieve entry-level SO skills. These programs, which may take years to complete, make unlikely any rapid replacement or generation of personnel or capabilities.
- ✦ **SOF are composed of mature and experienced personnel**, many of whom maintain a high level of competency in more than one military specialty.
- ✦ **Selected SOF are regionally oriented for employment.** Regional familiarity and cross-cultural communications skills allow SOF personnel to work effectively with local military units, civilian governments,

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private organizations, and the populations of the countries in which they are deployed. Repeated deployments overseas allow them to develop heightened awareness of conditions in the region and to make valuable contacts.

Depending upon requirements, SOF operate independently or in conjunction with conventional forces. SOF can complement, reinforce, and support conventional forces so that they can achieve an objective that might not otherwise be attainable. The special skills and low visibility capabilities inherent in SOF also provide an adaptable military response in situations or crises requiring the tailored, precise use of force.

Limitations

SOF personnel cannot be replaced quickly and their capabilities cannot be expanded rapidly. They require extensive training, which may take years to complete, and are relatively few in number. Squandering scarce SOF resources on inappropriate missions or inordinately dangerous tasks runs the risk of depleting the SOF inventory quickly.



Special operators cannot be quickly replaced.

SOF are not a substitute for conventional forces; they provide different capabilities that expand the options of the employing commander. SOF should not be used for operations when conventional forces can accomplish the mission. SOF are neither trained nor equipped to conduct sustained, conventional force-on-force engagements. They should not be substituted for conventional forces in defensive situations or used indiscriminately.

SOF are not the solution to MOOTW. SOF have a role to play in MOOTW, just as they have a role to play in war. *MOOTW almost always require*

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AFSOF often require logistics support from conventional forces.

an integrated, interagency approach to solving the problems encountered; SOF alone cannot do this.

SOF usually are not a totally independent, stand alone force.

There are some operations that SOF can conduct alone, but these are limited. *Normally, at least some support from conventional forces is required*, particularly with regard to airlift and logistics, and in many circumstances SOF can operate in support of conventional forces. SOF logistics support is austere. A large number of SOF units generally cannot maintain themselves for extended periods of time without significant support from the conventional support structure.

THE ORIGINS OF AFSOF

History is a key source of doctrine. *Missions we prepare to accomplish today are based on missions we've had to accomplish in the past. The way we plan to fight today is based on lessons we've learned in the past.* Today's well trained, equipped, and motivated Air Commandos owe their enhanced capability to the quiet professionals of the past. These were the ones called upon to do the "impossible," whether it required flying low, slow, and alone in the dark behind enemy lines or developing unique new capabilities such as blacked out, night vision goggle operations. For over 50 years, AFSOF have met challenges around the world.

The genesis of AFSOF occurred in World War II, when special flying units were created to infiltrate and resupply personnel involved in direct

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action, UW and special reconnaissance (SR) missions. This war also saw the first use of aircraft for PSYOP missions and the first helicopter combat search and rescue (CSAR) mission.

By the end of the Korean War, we began to understand that our specialized aerospace forces fulfill certain roles and requirements, all continuing today: AFSOF are normally used in joint operations or combined with irregular or special forces of other nations; AFSOF are most effective when regionally oriented; AFSOF are used for infiltration, exfiltration, and resupply, normally of specialized units; AFSOF are used in certain close air support (CAS) roles; AFSOF conduct theater aviation advisory which includes UW and FID missions; and AFSOF support PSYOP campaigns.

Still, as each conflict ended, we allowed our military capabilities, which include our special operations capabilities, to decay as our need for them was forgotten. Each time, world events—in some cases accompanied by loss of American lives and prestige—forced us to rebuild them. This is an important lesson we must never forget.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES MISSION

Special Ops forces were the glue that held the coalition together.

General H. Norman Schwarzkopf

THE UNIQUE NATURE OF AFSOF

AFSOF are America's special operations airpower. These highly trained active and reserve aircrews operate uniquely equipped, fixed-wing and vertical-lift aircraft to provide combat airpower "any time, any place." As the Air Force element of SOF, AFSOF are structured to provide denied territory mobility, surgical firepower, special tactics units, and aviation advisory interface with foreign organizations. *They normally act in concert with Army and Navy SOF*, including Army special forces, Rangers, and special operations aviation, Navy sea-air-land (SEAL) teams, PSYOP forces, and civil affairs units, but *AFSOF are also capable of acting as part of an Air Force component* in a larger joint structure. AFSOF are prepared to support activities ranging from limited duration combat operations to long term materiel and advisory support of foreign governments and military services.

Headquarters, Air Force Special Operations Command (HQ AFSOC) is the Air Force component of United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), a unified command. HQ AFSOC crews and aircraft provide precise, multi-target firepower and engage in a variety of activities such as infiltration and exfiltration, armed escort, reconnaissance, interdiction, resupply, refueling, and personnel recovery. Additionally, they perform psychological operations by using video and radio broadcasting and conducting literature drops.

Forward Presence

Special operations forces tend to be small and of a nonthreatening nature, speak the local language and understand the culture, have theater/area of responsibility (AOR) knowledge and experience, and are able to interface on a political/military level if neces-

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sary. As such, they may be considered ideal to establish presence. This low visibility characteristic allows SOF insertion where conventional forces may be inappropriate or may heighten tensions. Because a special operations force tends to be small, it also is normally a lower cost option than a larger conventional force.

“In-Extremis” Operations

“In-extremis” refers to a situation of such exceptional urgency that immediate action must be taken to minimize imminent loss of life or catastrophic degradation of the political or military situation. Because of their joint training and specialized equipment, AFSOF are particularly capable of supporting forces that may be called upon to deal with a situation in this category.

AFSOF BROAD MISSION AREAS

Four broad mission areas—SOF mobility, information operations, precision employment/strike, and forward presence and engagement—encompass the AFSOF mission. AFSOF will continue to plan and modernize to become ever more effective in each of these areas.



AFSOF provide mobility to a joint team in all environments.

SOF Mobility

The SOF mobility mission area includes the rapid, global airlift of personnel and equipment through hostile airspace to conduct special operations.

AFSOF are an integral part of a joint SOF team during mission planning, rehearsal, and execution, and may

provide unique capability to conventional force commanders. *SOF mobility includes covert, clandestine, or overt tasks.* AFSOF capabilities must accommodate all operational and physical environments, especially conditions of adverse weather and darkness. Operations may be conducted with a single aircraft, as part of a SOF task force or as part of a larger force package.

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AFSOF believe that protection of their aircraft and all aboard is among their most critical responsibilities. Key to SOF mobility is the ability to successfully penetrate hostile airspace, and Air Force special operations aircraft are designed to do just that. The ability to penetrate hostile defenses has costs; one is a trade-off between the weight of cargo or munitions an aircraft can carry and the weight of defensive systems carried by that aircraft.

Air Force special operations aircraft are designed to penetrate defended airspace, even if this lessens the allowable cargo load. This does not mean AFSOF aircraft can safely go anywhere and stay there indefinitely—they cannot. It does mean these aircraft will be made as survivable as the airframes can possibly be made, and it does mean that **Air Force special operators, flying Air Force special operations aircraft, can safely go places where others would be at greater risk.**

Information Operations

The SOF information operations (IO) mission area focuses on gaining, exploiting, defending, or attacking information or information systems. SOF IO may be a discrete mission, an implied task of other missions, or an enabling/supporting capability. *IO span the spectrum of conflict and are valued primarily for their indirect affect and ability to enhance the effectiveness of other operations.* Due to the increasing vulnerability of the international community to manipulation of information and the possible consequences of that interference, SOF IO may require allied involvement, interagency coordination, and NCA approval.

Precision Employment/Strike

The SOF precision employment/strike mission area includes precise and responsive support to SOF or conventional forces. AFSOF precision employment/strike ground elements and airborne platforms provide all-weather weapons delivery and



Today's gunships have far more firepower than this Vietnam-era model.

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SOF support (target designation, air traffic control, and drop zone and landing zone operations) across the full spectrum of conflict. The ability of aerospace forces to deploy globally and strike precisely provides force multiplication, minimizes collateral damage, allows the discriminate employment of asymmetric force, and permits freedom of maneuver for supported forces. These capabilities, supported by both leading edge technologies and specialized skills, greatly expand the reach and combat capability of US and coalition forces. The precision employment/strike mission area will evolve to include nonlethal weapon systems and non-destructive attack against adversaries and their physical infrastructure.

Forward Presence and Engagement

Forward presence and engagement **includes the training, advising, assisting, and assessing of foreign aviation organizations** to integrate, employ, sustain, and defend their resources during internal conflict, regional crisis, or war. In addition, this mission area includes outside the continental United States exercise activity, AFSOF interaction as part of and with other US forces involved in air expeditionary operations, peacetime operations, and support to regional CINCs' in-extremis forces. Forward presence and engagement includes advising and assisting US theater commanders to determine the capabilities of forces within their AORs, including the interaction between civil and military organizations. The scope of this mission area includes posthostility operations requirements following contingencies.

AFSOF CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOF MISSIONS

AFSOF conducts or supports all nine principal SO missions: UW, direct action (DA), SR, combatting terrorism, FID, PSYOP, counterproliferation, CA, and IO. Conventional Air Force forces may be required to support special operations, and in some cases, special operations forces may be employed in support of, or integrated with conventional forces.

Civil Affairs

AFSOF may provide support to forces conducting civil affairs through airlift, communications backup, information broadcasting, and technical advice on aerospace operations. Otherwise, AFSOF are not normally involved in the civil affairs mission.

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Combatting Terrorism

Combatting terrorism consists of actions, including antiterrorism (AT) and counterterrorism (CT), taken to oppose terrorism throughout the range of military operations.

AT, CT, and other force protection activities reduce the vulnerability of individuals and property to terrorism. Responding to requests from the Services and other government agencies, SOF can provide training and advice on how to reduce vulnerability to terrorism and other hostile threats. SOF can also evaluate the adequacy of existing physical security systems against potential threats. When directed, SOF can augment existing security forces to protect important persons, resources, and events.

Entebbe, 3 July 1976

On Saturday evening, after flying over 2,200 miles from their homeland, four Israeli C-130s carrying an elite force landed at Entebbe, Uganda. Spending only 51 minutes on the ground, the small force surprised and overwhelmed a group of Palestinian terrorists and Ugandan soldiers, and rescued 106 hostages who had, only the Sunday before, been passengers aboard an aircraft hijacked while en route from Tel Aviv to Paris. Of the 35 who died, two were Israeli attackers and four were hostages; the rest were terrorists or soldiers supporting the terrorists.

Why was this counterterrorism mission such a stunning success? Offensive was seized and rapidly exploited by a force focused on a clear objective—get our people out alive. Security was maintained, though the eyes of the world were focused on the situation. Total surprise was achieved—attackers drove from the aircraft in a Mercedes similar to those driven by Ugandan officers, winning precious time as defenders failed to attack a symbol of authority. Detailed all-source intelligence ensured the force knew what to expect in the target area. After repeated rehearsals at a mockup of the target, the assault occurred with frightful speed; only three minutes elapsed between aircraft touchdown and terrorists' deaths. Though few in number and in the heart of an enemy land, the attackers had overwhelming superiority relative to the defenders at Entebbe.

In the end, the mission was feasible, the force was appropriate, and needed resources were available. Lastly, Israeli leadership weighed the risk of personal loss of status, of national loss of status, as well as the risk of lost lives against the twin goals of gaining freedom for the hostages and striking a blow against terrorism. This mission only succeeded because they believed the outcome justified the risk—very real risk, which will always be remembered—the following day, the mission's name was changed to Operation JONATHAN, in honor of the brave officer who died leading it.

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CT consists of offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism; this includes intelligence gathering and threat analysis in support of those measures. AFSOF fixed-wing and vertical-lift aircraft are well suited to support counterterrorism operations. Additionally, AFSOF gunships can provide highly accurate and mobile firepower and could be especially important in the rapidly changing environment of a counterterrorist operation. Air refuelable AFSOF aircraft could enhance flexibility and reduce reaction time in meeting terrorist threats.

Counterproliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction

Counterproliferation refers to the activities of the Department of Defense across the full range of US Government efforts to combat proliferation, including the application of military power to protect US forces and interests; intelligence collection and analysis; and support to diplomacy, arms control, and export controls; with particular responsibility for assuring US forces and interests can be protected should they confront an adversary armed with weapons of mass destruction or missiles. The proliferation threat extends to almost every region of the world and creates serious challenges to US security interests.

USSOCOM activities are focused on actions taken to seize, destroy, render safe, capture, or recover weapons of mass destruction (WMD). SOF provide unique capabilities to monitor and support compliance with arms control treaties. If directed, SOF can conduct or support SR and DA missions to locate and interdict sea or land shipments of dangerous materials or weapons. SOF are tasked with organizing, training, equipping, and otherwise preparing to conduct operations in support of US Government counterproliferation objectives.

AFSOF can be expected to provide mobility to SOF teams and transport WMD devices or materials. AFSOF can be expected to provide CAS to SOF teams if required during forcible seizure of WMD. AFSOF may provide regional expertise as part of an air expeditionary force and may provide liaison functions between these forces and the foreign nations involved.

Direct Action

DA missions are short-duration strikes and other small scale offensive actions principally taken by SOF: (1) to seize, destroy, or inflict damage on a specified target; or (2) to destroy, capture, or recover designated

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Special operations tankers extend range and permit more time on target.



personnel or material. In the conduct of these operations, SOF may employ raid, ambush, or direct assault tactics; place mines and other munitions; conduct standoff attacks by fire from air, ground, or maritime platforms; provide terminal guidance for precision-guided munitions; and conduct independent sabotage.

AFSOF mobility assets infiltrate SOF directly to the objective or into a secure landing zone where they can move to their target. Gunships provide on-call fire support to ground forces. This can be through close air support coordinated by special tactics teams or the attack of predetermined interdiction targets, independently, or in support of an air component commander. AFSOF assets are capable of information attack, and through the capabilities of special tactics teams (STTs) and gunships, are capable of physical destruction of information systems and nodes.

Foreign Internal Defense

SOF are a primary means of providing US military expertise to other governments in support of their internal defense and development efforts. Providing such expertise in a timely and effective manner can preclude deployment or combat involving the conventional forces of the United States.

The purpose of FID is to help host nations sustain their economic, social, political, and military development. *The primary role of SOF in this US Government interagency activity is to train, advise, and assist HN military and paramilitary forces.*

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FID operations help host nations respond to their societies' needs.

Within a foreign country, the US Government organizes its departments, agencies, and military Services into a country team to promote a united and coordinated effort to prevent and defeat insurgency as well as to help combat lawlessness and subversion.

Normally, the senior

members of all US Government agencies assigned within a host country form the country team. The head of the country team is the US Ambassador or senior US diplomatic representative. This team provides the central management, coordination, and integration of diplomatic, economic, and military efforts. Nonmilitary efforts designed to eliminate the political, economic, and social conditions that supported the original insurgency are often the most critical to successful collective security operations. If US military action is necessary, AFSOF can provide a broad range of assistance. This could range from training HN units, to airlift, to direct support.

The extent of AFSOF participation in civic action programs varies with the needs of the individual country, the resources available, and the host government's willingness to accept help. Historically, the host government achieves the best and most long-lasting results through self-help programs.

DOD usually gives the US Air Force responsibility to develop HN essential air facilities including the communications necessary for control, navigation, and meteorological support. An important objective in these actions is to facilitate contact between the central government and the people, particularly in rural areas.

US assistance should be compatible with HN needs and capabilities. AFSOF should help the HN develop a capability to gather intelligence and conduct visual and photo reconnaissance through discriminating research and evaluation of every available human, documentary, and material resource. Also, AFSOF should train the HN security forces to

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protect vital assets (including air assets), identify targets, choose weapons and mode of delivery, develop proper techniques for supporting ground forces, and develop logistics and supply systems.

AFSOF may also provide continuous, long-term guidance in the operational employment of indigenous air units and supporting activities. *The presence and active support of AFSOF demonstrates firm US resolve and provides a base for expanding US efforts* as required. If the situation deteriorates or escalates, the ambassador, in conjunction with the combatant commander may request additional assistance and guidance. Joint Pub 3-07.1, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense* and AFDD 2-7.1, *Foreign Internal Defense*, provide detailed information on foreign internal defense.

Information Operations

IO refers to those actions taken to gain, exploit, defend or attack information and information systems. DA, SR, PSYOP, and FID missions all may support or be supported by IO.

The ever increasing requirement for SOF to participate in MOOTW demands capabilities that may be employed in peacetime to deter a cri-

Information Operations in the Gulf

AFSOF were heavily involved in the IO mission prior to and during the war in Iraq. Getting an early start on the PSYOP campaign, on 22 November 1990, Air National Guard EC-130 Commando Solos began airing "Voice of America" into the Kuwaiti theater of operations.

Special reconnaissance teams provided essential information to commanders in preparation for the ground war. Information included traffic suitability analysis and other details unavailable by any other means. On one IO/direct action mission, British commandos destroyed a buried fiber-optic communications cable about 35 kilometers from Baghdad.

During Operation DESERT STORM, the EC-130s continued wooing defectors by broadcasting "Voice of America" along with prayers from the Koran and testimony from well-treated prisoners. In support of a PSYOP campaign to convince Iraqi troops to surrender, MC-130 Combat Talons and HC-130 Combat Shadows dropped some 17 million leaflets over Iraqi defensive positions. The leaflets urged Iraqi soldiers to give up and warned what would happen if they didn't. The promise was kept when their positions were either area-bombed by B-52s or struck by MC-130s dropping BLU-82 (15,000 pound) bombs. This was a model PSYOP campaign, combining information and strike operations. It was extremely effective and caused thousands of Iraqis to flee or surrender.

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sis, control crisis escalation, project power, or promote peace. Adversaries' nodes, links, human factors, weapon systems, and data are particularly lucrative targets, which can be affected through the use of lethal and nonlethal applications of coordinated IO assets.

AFSOF broadly views IO as **an entity that is capable of helping all mission areas**. It is also *an individual mission area and an enabler for all AFSOF mission areas*. The elements that comprise offensive IO and defensive IO are important to all military operations. They are critical for AFSOF operations. All of the elements of offensive IO are currently used by AFSOF. *Operations security (OPSEC), PSYOP, military deception, electronic warfare, physical destruction, and information attack are used in various forms during AFSOF operations*. Defensive IO operations are also used in conjunction with AFSOF operations. *Security measures, counterintelligence, and counterdeception are important aspects of ensuring AFSOF will achieve surprise* on the objective and obtain the necessary relative superiority to successfully prosecute the mission.

Planning for special information operations is ongoing in both offensive and defensive arenas. At the other end of the spectrum, during peacetime, AFSOF IO, in the form of military-to-military contacts, advisory and training roles, and humanitarian efforts, just to name a few, are viewed as some of the most crucial IO strategies in helping to prevent or contain potential hostilities.



A dedicated PSYOP platform, the EC-130E is operated by the Air National Guard.

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Psychological Operations

Dedicated PSYOP forces are assigned to USSOCOM and can conduct operations in conjunction with other SO missions or in support of general purpose forces. SO can support strategic, operational, tactical, or consolidation PSYOP objectives, by providing intelligence, leaflet delivery, media broadcasts, or force application.

PSYOP can support the FID efforts of SO by targeting insurgents, local populace, military forces, and neutral forces. PSYOP can specifically assist FID efforts by helping discredit insurgent forces and strengthening support for the HN.

PSYOP may support UW by reaching out to resistance sympathizers and the uncommitted and by targeting hostile military forces and their sympathizers to achieve certain psychological effects in support of SO objectives.

PSYOP can also play a key role in DA, SR, and CT actions conducted by AFSOF. Effective PSYOP can maximize the psychological impact of successful operations and minimize the adverse impact of failed or compromised actions.

AFSOF can provide support to PSYOP. This support ranges from leaflet delivery and media broadcasts of PSYOP programs by specially configured aircraft to dropping the largest conventional bomb in the US Air Force inventory, the BLU-82. Commanders could also employ SOF against targets primarily for psychological effect. Joint Pub 3-53, *Doctrine for Joint Psychological Operations*; Joint Pub 3-13.1, *Joint Doctrine for Command and Control Warfare (C2W)*, and AFDD 2-5.3, *Psychological Operations*, provide more detailed information on PSYOP.

Special Reconnaissance

SR consists of reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted by SOF to obtain or verify, by visual observation or other collection methods, information concerning the capabilities, intentions, and activities of an actual or potential enemy. It includes securing data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, geographic, or demographic characteristics of a particular area. It also includes target acquisition, area assessment, and post-strike reconnaissance.

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During Operation DESERT STORM, AFSOF helicopters, supported by AFSOF tankers, infiltrated and exfiltrated teams performing special reconnaissance in central and western Iraq. AFSOF normally provide denied territory mobility. Airborne fixed-wing gunships provide surveillance and if necessary, close air support when required to protect forces on the ground.

Unconventional Warfare

UW 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. Armed rebellion against an established or occupying power is often the context for UW. *Along with other agencies, SOF may provide advice, training, and assistance* to existing indigenous resistance organizations in order to exploit a hostile power's political, military, economic, and psychological vulnerabilities. *During war, AFSOF may directly support the resistance movement by infiltrating operational elements into denied or sensitive areas* for the purpose of organizing, training, equipping, and advising or directing indigenous resistance forces. Typically, successful UW operations need long-term, patient political support and US military commitment. In situations when direct US military involvement is inappropriate, AFSOF may provide indirect support from an external location.

- ★ **Guerrilla warfare** consists of military and paramilitary operations conducted by irregular, predominantly indigenous, forces in enemy-held or hostile territory.
- ★ **Subversion** is an activity designed to undermine the military, economic, political strength, or morale of a regime or nation.
- ★ **Sabotage** includes those actions aimed to injure or destroy resources within the enemy's infrastructure in areas presumed to be safe from attack.
- ★ **UW intelligence activities** are designed to collect and report information concerning the capabilities, intentions, and activities of the established or occupying power and its external sponsors.
- ★ **Evasion and escape** are activities that assist military personnel and other selected persons to move from an enemy-held, hostile, or sensi-

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tive area to areas under friendly control; to avoid capture if unable to return to an area of friendly control; or, once captured, to escape.

COLLATERAL ACTIVITIES

Because of some inherent platform and personnel capabilities, **AFSOF may also be tasked to support missions other than those for which SOF are principally organized, trained, and equipped.** *AFSOF are not manned, trained, or equipped for collateral activities; rather, they conduct collateral activities using the inherent capabilities resident in their primary missions.* Some common collateral activities in which AFSOF may be tasked to participate include: coalition support, CSAR, counterdrug operations, countermine operations, humanitarian assistance, security assistance, and other special activities.

Coalition Support

AFSOF are prepared to act as a liaison between members of a coalition. Using their cross cultural and broad range of military skills, *AFSOF assist in the integration of coalition units into multinational military operations by training and advising coalition partners* on tactics and techniques and providing communications. AFSOF aviation advisory teams interface with coalition forces to assess their capability and integrate them into the coalition effort. These teams ensure C2 interoperability, synchronization of forces, and deconfliction.

Combat Search and Rescue

CSAR is a specific task performed by rescue forces to effect the recovery of distressed personnel during wartime or contingency operations. AFSOF maintain an inherent and/or organic capability to conduct personnel recovery and/or CSAR within their core mission force structure. When CSAR requirements exceed theater joint CSAR (JCSAR) capabilities, *SOF may be directed to perform JCSAR missions.* However, JCSAR taskings may be conducted at the expense of



Personnel and machine—first helicopter rescue, Burma, 1944

Mayaguez Incident

On 12 May 1975, the USS *Mayaguez*, an American-owned freighter, was boarded and seized by Cambodian forces while in international waters off the coast of Cambodia. The next day, the ship was taken to Koh Tang Island while the ship's crew was taken to another island for interrogation. *The operation to take back the ship and rescue the crew highlights what can happen if reaction time is short, force selection is ad hoc, previous joint training is not done, and mission rehearsal cannot occur in the time available.*

The plan called for 11 Air Force helicopters (six HH-53 Air Rescue Service and five CH-53 special operations helicopters) to support Marines in an assault on Koh Tang Island and to board and retake the *Mayaguez* itself. It was assumed that the ship's crew was being held on Koh Tang Island and the rescue force was told to expect only a handful of lightly armed Khmer Rouge soldiers.

The operation began on the morning of 15 May 1975. Retaking the *Mayaguez* went smoothly. The operation at Koh Tang Island, however, soon deteriorated into what one helicopter pilot described as "absolute and utter chaos." As it turned out, there were about 300 Khmer Rouge dug in on the island with heavy weaponry. By the time the first assault was completed, all but one of the original assault helicopters had been destroyed or damaged. Ironically, about three hours into the first assault, the Cambodians gave the entire crew of the *Mayaguez* back to forces from the USS *Holt*; the original problem had been solved. The Marines on Koh Tang Island, however, had to be reinforced and then extracted. These operations lasted through the night. In the end, US casualties were 15 killed in action, 3 missing in action, and about 49 wounded.

This rescue special operation highlights points made elsewhere in this document. Intelligence is key to SO—all source intelligence must be readily available and regularly exercised by SO planners. Joint teams conducting SO must train together regularly and perform detailed mission rehearsals to be effective. When deciding how quickly to act, planners must weigh the advantages of further preparation against the advantages of a quick reaction. Finally, operations against foes of uncertain strength must include armed escort in the force package.

core SOF mission readiness and/or capabilities. *The ability of some SOF forces to conduct air, ground, or sea operations deep within hostile or denied territory at night or in adverse weather make SOF well suited for this mission.* Based on these capabilities, the JFC may task SOF to participate in the Joint Search and Rescue Center. CSAR/personnel recovery operations resemble DA missions in that they are characterized by detailed planning, preparation, rehearsal, and thorough intelligence analysis.

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Counterdrug

Counterdrug measures are interagency activities taken to disrupt, interdict, and destroy illicit drug activities. The primary SOF role is to support US and HN counterdrug efforts abroad by advising, training, and assisting HN military and paramilitary forces. When specifically authorized, SOF assist police operations targeted at the sources of narcotics.

Countermine

Countermine operations attempt to reduce or eliminate the threat to noncombatants and friendly military forces posed by mines, booby-traps, and other explosive devices. Special forces teams, using their organic engineering and demolition capability, train HN forces in techniques to locate, recognize, and safely dispose of mines and other explosive devices. PSYOP teams assist HN governments in the development and execution of public education programs designed to reduce risks to noncombatants through public awareness of the land mine problem.

Humanitarian Assistance

Humanitarian assistance refers to programs conducted to relieve or reduce the results of natural or manmade disasters or other endemic conditions

such as human pain, disease, hunger, or privation that might present a serious threat to life or that could result in great damage to or loss of property. Humanitarian assistance may include disaster relief, medical, veterinary and dental aid, rudimentary construction, water and sanitation assistance, and support to or resettlement of displaced civilians (refugees or evacuees).

Operation PROVIDE COMFORT

Following DESERT STORM, the Europe-based 39th Special Operations Wing returned home only to redeploy to Turkey two weeks later in support of Operation PROVIDE COMFORT—the humanitarian operation to protect the Kurds in northern Iraq from Saddam Hussein's forces. Operating alongside conventional airlift forces, HC-130s, MC-130s, and MH-53s airlifted and airdropped food, clean water, and other supplies to the Kurdish refugees, while special tactics teams controlled the airspace over the camps. With SOF's assistance, hundreds, if not thousands of lives were saved.

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Security Assistance

Security assistance is a group of programs authorized by the Foreign Assistance Act, the Arms Export Control Act, or other related US statutes. The US Government provides defense articles and services, including train-

The merit of an action lies in finishing it to the end.

Genghis Khan

ing, to eligible foreign countries and international organizations that further US national security objectives. The primary SOF role in security assistance is to provide mobile training teams and other forms of training assistance. Personnel providing security assistance services (to include mobile training assistance) are prohibited by law from performing combatant duties.

Special Activities

Special activities are governed by executive order and require presidential approval and congressional oversight. These are activities conducted abroad in support of national foreign policy objectives. They are normally conducted in such a manner that US Government participation is neither apparent nor publicly acknowledged. When supporting or conducting a special activity, AFSOF can perform any of their traditional missions, subject to the limitations imposed on special activities. Such activities are normally compartmented and centrally controlled.

PRIMACY OF THE MISSION

AFSOF may be tasked by the National Command Authorities or joint force commanders to perform missions for which they are the best-suited among available forces, or perhaps the only force available. When assigned a mission by a commander, it becomes the focus of the assigned unit, even if it is not a primary mission or a common collateral activity. Under these circumstances, AFSOF provide the commander with a candid assessment of their capabilities, limitations, and risks associated with employment in nontraditional missions. When tasked by the JFC to perform a mission, it is possible SOF will operate inside an established area

Operation EAGLE CLAW, 1980

When Iranian “students” seized the US embassy in November 1979, the Air Force scrambled to regenerate special operations capabilities lost after Vietnam. By December, a rescue force was selected and a training program was under way. Training exercises were conducted through March 1980, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) approved mission execution on 16 April 1980. Between 19 and 23 April, the forces deployed to Southwest Asia.

“FROM US ALL
TO YOU ALL
FOR HAVING THE GUTS TO TRY”

Written on two cases of cold beer, given to American SOF by British mercenaries in Oman following the failed Iranian rescue attempt.

On the evening of 24 April, six C-130s left Masirah Island, Oman, and eight RH-53D helicopters departed the USS *Nimitz* in the Arabian Sea. Both formations headed for the location code-named Desert One. Within four hours, two helicopters had aborted. The remaining helicopters were delayed due to an unforecast “dust front,” and one developed a hydraulic malfunction that its crew could not fix at the Desert One site. Because planners had decided six helicopters were required for the mission to continue, and only five were now available, the rescue attempt was aborted.

While repositioning behind the C-130s, one helicopter collided with a C-130. The two aircraft were quickly engulfed in flames. The on-scene commander decided at that point to load the survivors of the collision and all the other helicopter crews in the C-130s and depart. Eight men had been killed and five more injured. Five intact helicopters, the burned wreckage of the helicopter and C-130, and the dead were left behind.

Shortly thereafter, a six-member commission was appointed by the JCS to study the operation—many of its findings are central to AFOSOF thought today. Headed by Admiral James L. Holloway III, the panel included General LeRoy Manor, who commanded the earlier Son Tay raid. One issue investigated was selection of aircrew. Navy and Marine pilots with little experience in long-range overland navigation or refueling from C-130s were selected though more than a hundred qualified Air Force H-53 pilots were available. Another issue was the lack of a comprehensive readiness evaluation and mission rehearsal program. From the beginning, training was not conducted in a truly joint manner; it was compartmented and held at scattered locations throughout the United States. The limited rehearsals that were conducted assessed only portions of the total mission. Also at issue was the number of helicopters used. The commission concluded that at least ten and perhaps as many as twelve helicopters should have been launched to guarantee the minimum of six required for completion of the mission. The plan was also criticized for using the “hopscotch” method of ground refueling instead of air refueling as was used for the Son Tay raid. By air refueling en route, the commission thought the entire Desert One scenario could have been avoided.

Operation EAGLE CLAW, including its planning and aftermath, marks a critical turning point for AFOSOF. This public failure of US special operations, contrasted against recent successes by the Israelis at Entebbe and the West Germans at Mogadishu, began a serious debate that ultimately led to today’s far more capable forces.

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of operations (AO). In this case, designating a surface commander as the supported commander within that AO does not abrogate the authority of a SOF commander who has been tasked by the JFC to execute functions throughout the JOA. Of course, coordination with that surface commander becomes critically important.

AFSOF CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONVENTIONAL MISSIONS

In addition to their primary theater objectives, SOF can provide support to joint air operations in one of four areas: first, SOF can act as an economy of force measure, striking certain targets which allow conventional assets to strike other priority targets. Second, SOF may be able to conduct some surgical operations which may be beyond the capability of conventional assets. Third, SOF can integrate with conventional airpower in a synergistic attack. Finally, because of some inherent personnel and platform capabilities, SOF can provide other contributions enhancing the air campaign (enhancement operations). Each is discussed below.

Economy of Force Measures

Economy of force measures are operations which can be conducted by either conventional air or SOF. By conducting these operations, SOF free up conventional air to conduct other priority or deeper operations.

SOF may provide a stealthy and precision strike alternative for certain targets. Clandestine infiltration, destruction of targets, and immediate assessment by SOF free conventional air assets for other taskings more commensurate with capabilities of air attack.

Surgical Operations

SOF assets can also conduct certain surgical operations that may be beyond the capabilities of conventional airpower. SOF can limit damage to specific effects (or limit collateral damage) which are beyond the capability of joint air assets. Destruction or incapacitation of weapons of mass destruction without releasing deadly contaminants is one such example. SOF operations can also be used when AFSOF forces have a unique capability not resident in conventional forces.

SOF may be employed to locate, target, and destroy concealed, mobile, or perishable targets. SOF can also be employed when the intent is to

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merely damage a target, rather than destroy it. For instance, the JFC may task SOF to render a facility inoperable without destroying its vital components.

Synergistic Attack

Synergistic attack is an operation SOF and conventional airpower conduct jointly but may not be able to conduct independently. These operations enhance the effectiveness of both SOF and conventional airpower, thereby providing an effect in total that is greater than the sum of the parts. In order to effectively conduct synergistic attack, AFSOF forces may be made available to the COMAFFOR/JFACC for tasking. Similarly, the COMAFFOR/JFACC may make conventional forces available to a special operations component commander.

With sophisticated equipment, SOF personnel and assets can operate in a hunter-scout or hunter-killer role by designating targets for conventional assets electronically, or optically. SOF directly contribute to joint air operations by conducting asymmetrical DA strikes against airfields, ground radar, and other high-value counterair targets. SOF can also locate perishable targets, or those targets that can be disassembled and relocated, and can then positively identify and designate them for airpower to destroy. SOF can also perform poststrike reconnaissance after conventional air attack.

Historically, SOF personnel have been used to place navigation beacons at key locations, allowing conventional assets to update their navigation equipment. This action can increase bombing accuracy and reduce possibilities of collateral damage.

Enhancement Operations

Because of inherent personnel and platform capabilities, SOF assets provide capabilities that can enhance the overall air campaign. AFSOF aircraft can deliver the 15,000 pound BLU-82 bomb for psychological effect, to create instant helicopter landing zones, or other purposes designated by the JFC. Select SOF aircraft are capable of broadcasting messages on both military and civilian frequencies, to include radio and television. AFSOF aircrews are trained in leaflet airdrop aiding joint psychological operations task force operations, and the unique capabilities of SOF aviation make it a capable force for personnel recovery and CSAR.

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SOF OF THE FUTURE

It is the greatest possible mistake to mix up disarmament with peace. When you have peace you will have disarmament.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill

Obsolete weapons do not deter.

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher

The future world environment will require an agile military force sized, trained, and equipped to quickly and successfully respond to the full spectrum of crises that may arise. Globalization, information propagation, space commercialization, technology proliferation, and disintegration of nation states are just beginning to have full effect on the world as we know it. Though the international environment will still be dominated by state-to-state relations, nonstate actors such as terrorists, rival armed factions, transnational organizations, international crime organizations, narco-traffickers, and multinational corporations will play an increased role in world politics. Although they may not pose a strategic threat to the US, many can seriously threaten US interests in a limited time and place. The increasing reliance upon information systems will provide tempting avenues of attack for insurgents, terrorists, and other potential adversaries. The proliferation of WMD, particularly biological and chemical agents, may make them the weapons of choice for developing nations.

In addition to military competence and regional knowledge, an appreciation of historical, political, cultural, and socioeconomic realities will be more essential in the future as the US reduces its permanent military and diplomatic presence in parts of the world. In numerous cases, small unobtrusive elements



The next major AFSOF improvement expected is acquisition of 50 CV-22 aircraft.

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can be used as a low-key deterrent or a lead-in for larger scale forces. Through close contact in military-to-military activities, our SOF warrior-diplomats will help shape the international environment in ways that protect and promote US interests.

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CHAPTER THREE

COMMAND, CONTROL, AND INTEGRATION

Air Power is indivisible. If you split it up into compartments, you merely pull it to pieces and destroy its greatest asset—its flexibility.

Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery

AFSOF offer the joint force commander or joint force air component commander (JFACC) numerous capabilities that may be used throughout the spectrum of conflict. **To maintain flexibility and unity of effort, aerospace forces require a centralized, responsive, and unambiguous command and control structure.** Successful special operations within a joint or multinational force require expert liaison, early integration into the planning process, and proper matching of capabilities to mission requirements.

Special operations command and control arrangements are normally more flexible and diverse than for conventional forces. Tactical control (TACON) of specialized AFSOF elements (i.e. Special Tactics Teams or AC/EC-130s) may be exercised by a variety of commanders at all levels within a joint force. When SOF air assets are employed as part of a joint SOF force, OPCON of these forces should be placed under the JFSOCC to assure centralized control/decentralized execution and to maintain normal SOF aviation organization.

AFSOF units based in the United States are assigned to the Commander in Chief, US Special Operations Command (USCINCSOC). *USCINCSOC exercises combatant command (command authority)(COCOM) over these forces* through subordinate JFCs, Service component commanders, or functional component commanders. USCINCSOC as a supporting commander, provides AFSOF to theater CINCs through assignment or attachment. Joint Publication 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*, explains the transfer of forces between CINCs.

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THEATER ORGANIZATION

AFSOF in theater are under COCOM of the geographic combatant commander. *OPCON of theater SOF (except civil affairs and psychological operations) is normally exercised through the theater special operations command (SOC).* The SOC is a subunified command that functions as the special operations component for the theater. The theater SOC commander advises the theater CINC and other component commanders in all areas of special operations, providing the CINC with the expertise to assist the CINC in the employment of joint SOF. The theater SOC fully integrates SOF into theater and country peacetime plans, as well as the geographic CINCs' war plans.

The SOC also provides the nucleus for the establishment of a joint special operations task force (JSOTF) when a joint task force is formed. The theater SOC commander is responsible to the geographic CINC for planning and conducting joint special operations in the theater, ensuring that SOF capabilities are matched to mission requirements, exercising OPCON for joint special operations and advising the CINC and component commanders in theater on the employment of SOF.

When a JFC is designated, the SOC commander may be designated as the JFSOCC. *The Air Force component of the theater JFSOCC is referred to as the Air Force special operations component (AFSOC).* An AFSOC is a wing- or group-sized force formed in response to a specific contingency or operation. The AFSOC commander (COMAFSOC) may establish provisional Air Force special operations detachments (AFSODs) or elements (AFSOEs) if subordinate units are required to deploy to an advanced operating base or forward operating base. The COMAFSOC directs, coordinates, and integrates the AFSOF air effort through control of assigned and attached Air Force assets.

The AFSOD and AFSOE are squadron- and element-sized AFSOF headquarters respectively. They are composite organizations composed of different Air Force SO assets. Composition of these headquarters depends on the nature and length of the mission, type of aircraft, personnel and sustainment required, as well as the characteristics of the facilities from which operations are conducted. An AFSOD is normally subordinate to a theater AFSOC, JSOTF, or JTF, while an AFSOE is normally subordinate to a theater AFSOC or AFSOD.

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The Commander, Air Force Forces (COMAFFOR) is normally responsible for providing logistics and combat support to the AFSOC. This includes transportation, base or engineering support, common supply items, base operating support, and other sustainment.

THE JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS AIR COMPONENT COMMANDER

The JSOACC is the commander within the SOC, JFSOCC, or JSOTF staff responsible for planning and executing joint special operations aviation and for coordinating, deconflicting, and integrating such operations with conventional, non-SO air activities. *The JSOACC is normally the SOF aviation commander of the Service component providing the preponderance of SO aviation forces*, to include airframes, special tactics teams, aviation advisory teams, special operations weather teams (SOWTs), and support personnel. Alternatively, the JSOACC may be the SO Service component commander most capable of conducting, commanding, and controlling SO aviation. The JSOACC normally provides administration, C2, operations, common user logistics, plans, intelligence, weather, communications, medical, and security support for the joint SOF aviation forces.

The JSOACC is the single spokesperson for all SOF aviation matters. The JSOACC is not a competitor to the JFACC. *The JSOACC's responsibilities closely parallel those of the JFACC, but only as they relate to special operations.* The JSOACC maintains liaison with the SOF components and ensures the close, effective coordination of AFSOF and Army special operations aviation activities with the JFACC through the air operations center (AOC), or with other Service components through their respective AOCs. *Regardless of SOF aviation C2 arrangements, SOF aviation operations must be closely coordinated and integrated with the JFACC* in order to ensure airspace deconfliction, flight safety, OPSEC, synergistic attack, and above all, to prevent fratricide.

Also, depending on the mission, the theater commander can assign other conventional air assets, either Air Force, Army, Navy, or Marines, under the OPCON or tactical control (TACON) of the SOC commander to provide additional support for discrete SOF operations.

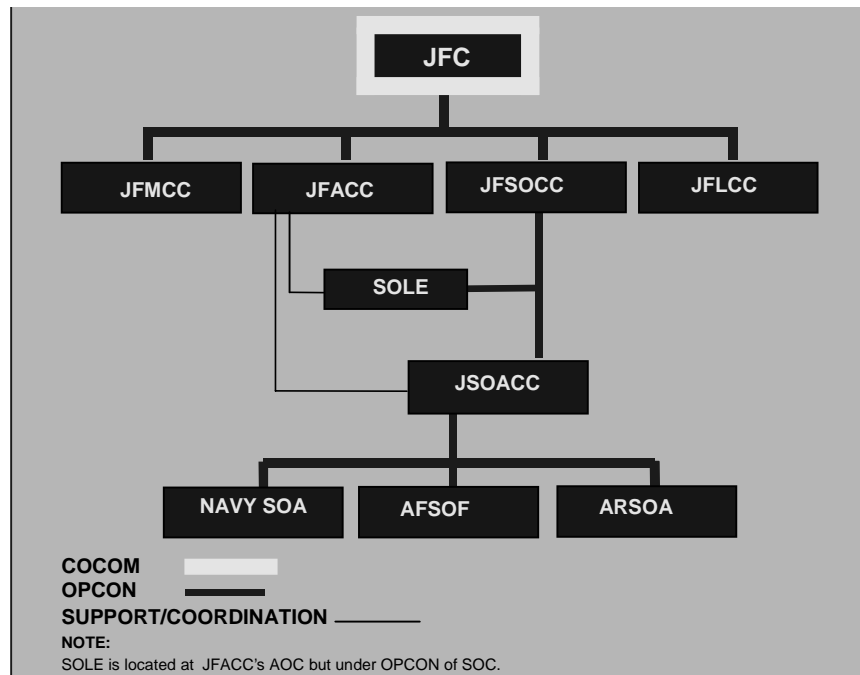


Figure 3.1. AFSOF Command Relationship—Generic Joint Force

THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS LIAISON ELEMENT

The JFSOCC and the JFACC share a common operational environment with a theater-wide perspective. Therefore, whether operating autonomously or in conjunction with conventional forces, SOF aviation and surface assets must be integrated closely in all joint air operations, from planning through execution, to provide integration, coordination, deconfliction, and to prevent fratricide. Integration is crucial since air assets and SOF are the only forces that routinely operate deep in enemy territory. All planning and execution conducted by the JSOACC must be coordinated with the JFSOCC, JSOTF (if activated), and JFACC directly or through the special operations liaison element (SOLE). **The SOLE integrates all air and surface activity into the JFACC's air tasking order and airspace control order, and serves as the JFSOCC's representative to the JFACC. In order to ensure coordination, deconfliction, and integration of SOF operations, it is essential that SOF air operations comply with provisions of the airspace control order, and that these operations are part of the air tasking order.**

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Elements of special operations missions such as targeting, infiltration or exfiltration of special operations personnel, and establishment of restricted operations areas can have a negative impact on the broader air campaign if not closely integrated. As a result, active coordination with the JFACC is required.

The JFSOCC provides the SOLE to the JFACC or appropriate Service component air C2 facility; the SOLE operates in the joint air operations center (JAOC). The senior SOLE representative works directly for the JFSOCC and places SOF ground, maritime, and aviation liaison officers throughout the JAOC staff. The senior SOLE representative must possess the credibility and authority to represent the JFSOCC on time sensitive and critical issues. Besides the senior SOLE representative, liaisons are provided to the JFACC in the JAOC's Strategy Division, Combat Plans, Combat Operations, Joint Search and Rescue Center, and Air Mobility Control Division.

INTEGRATION AND SUPPORT FOR SOF

AFSOF are one component of the SOF force. **The synergies of integrating AFSOF as well as all SOF into the JFC's overall campaign plan or a theater commander's objectives bring a host of capabilities across the spectrum of conflict.** AFSOF conduct or support the nine SO principal missions of counterproliferation, foreign internal defense, combatting terrorism, direct action, civil affairs, information operations, special reconnaissance, psychological operations, and unconventional warfare. AFSOF also conducts and supports a range of collateral activities to include coalition support, nation assistance, peace building, civil support, disaster relief, counterdrug, noncombatant evacuation operations, peace operations, and other special activities in support of national foreign policy objectives. Synergy and capability may be lost if SOF components are split apart or if SOF are isolated from the overall campaign plan. The geographic combatant commander or JFC must determine where SOF are best utilized, and how they best are organized within the joint structure.

Commanders may employ virtually any aerospace asset in special operations, and AFSOF may require support from conventional assets to suppress enemy air defenses, create diversions, augment airlift capability, and provide firepower. Augmenting forces provide capabilities beyond those found in special operations aviation. The JFSOCC normally

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requests conventional air support sorties to augment SOF on a mission-by-mission basis. The JFC may also direct TACON of conventional air assets to the JSOACC or COMAFSOC for a specified period of time, or that SOF air assets be provided to the COMAFFOR or JFACC. A SOF-only JSOTF gains flexibility and force enhancement when augmented with US Air Force elements. Conventional Air Force elements could provide: logistics support (as is the COMAFFOR's responsibility); a robust command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance network (airborne command and control center, battlespace awareness, mission planning support); Service CSAR, firepower (top cover for extractions or strike capability for aborted operations); and strategic mobility (airlift and refueling). Such augmentation requires advanced planning at the earliest stages as well as real-time coordination.



Conventional forces provide refueling support to AFSOF.

AFSOF SUPPORT TO JOINT OPERATIONS

SOF aviation or a combination of SOF components may be assigned OPCON or TACON to a Service or functional component commander depending on the nature of the mission or objectives to be accomplished. For example, in an operation in which aerospace forces are the predominant forces being employed (e.g. Operations DENY FLIGHT and ALLIED FORCE), and the only SOF assets, then unity of effort might best be served by assigning those forces to the COMAFFOR/JFACC.

SOF may contribute to joint air operations in numerous ways. SOF may act as an **economy of force** measure by providing a stealthy and precision strike alternative for certain targets. SOF are capable of **preci-**

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sion attack which can limit damage to specific effects which are beyond the capability of joint air assets. SOF provide capability for **synergistic attack**. Unique SOF capabilities also allow **enhancement operations**, making the overall air campaign more effective. These four areas were detailed in chapter two.

AFSOF SUPPORT FOR INTERAGENCY, MULTINATIONAL, AND EXPEDITIONARY OPERATIONS

All requests for AFSOF support to ambassadors or country teams are forwarded through the geographic combatant commander. The geographic commander will normally exercise OPCON of such forces once deployed into the theater. In all cases the C2 organization for AFSOF should depend upon the specific objectives, security requirements, and operational environment. **In all multinational, interagency, and expeditionary operations, deployed AFSOF should normally be under the command of the theater CINC.**

Grenada, 1983

In October 1983, SOF were assigned several key missions when the United States used military force to maintain stability on the island of Grenada and to avoid another hostage crisis by evacuating American students threatened by Grenadian leftists. AFSOF flew through ground fire to airdrop Army Rangers onto the Point Salines airfield and provided CAS with AC-130 gunships. Other Army SOF conducted an unsuccessful and costly daylight air assault on Richmond Hill Prison. SEALs reconnoitered the beach at Pearls, rescued the governor general at his residence, and seized the Radio Free Grenada radio station. PSYOP broadcasts and leaflet drops were developed by Army PSYOP units and supported by AFSOF aircraft. Civil affairs units coordinated the care, feeding, and shelter of civilians evacuated from combat areas, eventually returning them to their homes after hostilities ceased.

Although an overall success (defenses were neutralized and the students removed to safety), Operation URGENT FURY highlighted persistent deficiencies: inadequate intelligence, inadequate training of some elements, lack of communications interoperability among conventional and special operations forces, inadequate equipment, and—in particular—the inability to properly integrate SOF into the overall plan.

The lessons are clear: if SOF forces are to be integrated with conventional forces, the command structure must be established in such a way as to provide unity of command, and unity of effort, both in planning and execution, and; if joint operations will be conducted on short notice, forces must jointly train before the operations are required.

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CHAPTER FOUR

SOF PLANNING, PREPARATION, AND EXECUTION

The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.

John Stuart Mill

MISSION CRITERIA

There are five mission criteria that should be carefully applied prior to planning and executing SOF operations.

These criteria assist commanders and their staffs to objectively evaluate missions, providing a clear set of tests to determine the feasibility and utility of SOF operations. They can ensure SOF apply their resources wisely, allowing them to conduct meaning-

ful operations which contribute to the overall theater campaign. They can also be used to advise the joint force commander of the proper application of SOF in light of the total force structure available and the desired objectives. These five criteria should be applied across the range of military operations.

These criteria should not be followed blindly. Doctrine requires judgment in application. *There are times when the combat power available does not permit the neat observance of doctrinal roles*, and the forces on hand must be committed to the vital tasks at hand, regardless of doctrinally correct roles. Superb units cannot sit idly on the sidelines when there are insufficient forces to accomplish vital tasks.

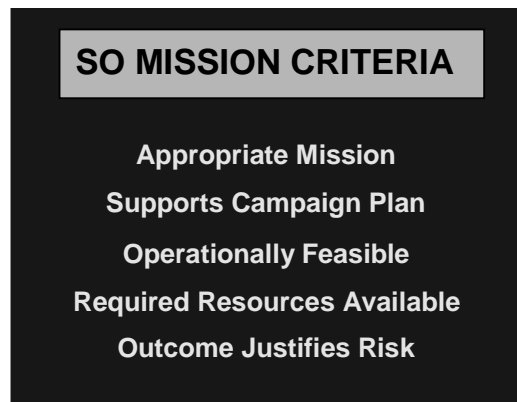


Figure 4.1. SO Mission Criteria.

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Appropriate Mission

The operation should be an appropriate SO mission. *During hostilities, SOF units should not conduct operations that other units are trained to do and which do not take advantage of unique SOF skills and capabilities.* To prepare for combat, units should normally exercise operations that are part of their mission-essential task list (METL) or designed operational capability (DOC) statement. While it is essential for SOF units to exercise METL and DOC requirements, this is not a negative restriction impairing the natural SOF characteristics of flexibility, adaptability, and force tailoring. Further, this does not preclude Air National Guard units from conducting missions assigned by state authorities.

Supports Campaign Plan

SO should support the theater campaign plan. Each geographic CINC has a theater command strategy. All commanders should know and understand the CINC's priorities and goals. They should ensure their unit training either supports these goals and priorities directly or improves their ability to conduct operations supporting the goals and priorities during times of crisis.

Operationally Feasible

SO missions should be operationally feasible. *SOF cannot afford to waste resources on missions that are beyond their capability.* This does not mean SOF should not prepare to take on difficult challenges. This simply means commanders should be realistic and understand their specific operational limitations.

Required Resources Available

Required resources should be available to execute SO. Certain SO may rely heavily on conventional support. Support like CAS, air refueling, electronic countermeasures, diversion, and deception may be essential to ensure successful mission execution. *In some instances, higher priority SO missions may preclude other theater SO; in other cases, SO may be unaffordable and counterproductive because they require too many theater resources to support them.*

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Outcome Justifies Risk

The expected outcome should justify the risk. *Commanders should ensure operations make more than a marginal contribution to the CINC's campaign plan.* SO should not be conducted simply because they can be done.

Firepower from the Sky

The aerial gunship has evolved as a modern tool of precision engagement, but it does have limitations. The fixed-wing gunship was an innovative and important new weapon developed during the Vietnam War. Originally, gunships were introduced to help defend remote government outposts and hamlets, which were especially vulnerable to night attack. Perhaps the most meaningful statistic is that after four years of intense combat in Vietnam and Laos, no outpost under gunship protection was ever overrun.



AFSOF aircraft are designed for highly effective night operations.

Today, aerial gunships provide a critical capability—highly responsive surgical firepower, effective against a wide variety of targets, available over long ranges, and capable of lengthy loiter times. Gunships were particularly effective supporting ground forces in Kuwait and helping suppress the Iraqi incursion into Khafji, Saudi Arabia. One, *Spirit 01*, destroyed eight Iraqi armored personnel carriers and caused others on their way to the fight to disperse or retreat. Unfortunately, a gunship was lost at Khafji. Supporting a force of US Marines, *Spirit 03* stayed beyond its 0600 planned departure time. Without the cover of darkness, it was apparently struck by a missile and went down off the Kuwaiti coast, losing the entire crew of 14, the single largest loss of the air war. *A lesson learned at great expense: aircraft optimized for night use may be at great risk when used in daylight.*

MISSION PREPARATION

Security

OPSEC and physical security are vitally important to AFSOF from initial planning stages to force recovery stages of a special operation. Mission critical information, essential elements of friendly information, and OPSEC indicators should be tightly controlled to prevent the adversary

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from deriving or collecting information that would compromise the mission or allow that adversary to plan and act against AFSoF. From secure training sites to secure employment bases, the small, tailored AFSoF should be shielded from undesired attention and hostile intelligence collectors. AFSoF equipment and personnel must be provided levels of force protection that will allow uninterrupted mission execution. Special arrangements should be made to control OPSEC indicators and inadvertent information release. For example, communications should be secure, conducted with disciplined emissions control, and have low probabilities of detection and interference. Effective planning and coordination can ensure information is adequately controlled, yet insure access to equipment or activities necessary for flexible operations. Additionally, information operations vulnerability assessments should be used to decrease the total operations signature and ensure mission commanders are aware of mission risks.

Communications

AFSoF communications support falls into two categories: command and control communications and mission support. Communications for command and control deal with operation and execution. The sensitivity of SO can require communications connectivity from the NCA to the joint force commander. Mission-support communications support planning, intelligence, logistics, and other functions. AFSoF normally require dedicated communications specialists and equipment to provide a rapidly deployable communication capability.

Communications are critical to mission success. *Ideally, systems should provide alternative methods of communication in case of equipment failure, adverse atmospheric conditions (propagation), or natural and man-made interference, etc.* However, commanders should consider actions to be taken with and without communications during all phases of the mission. Communications should provide connectivity with other components. Additionally, computer systems should be interoperable among supporting organizations.

To enhance deployability and reliability, AFSoF communication equipment should be lightweight, secure, jam-resistant, survivable, maintainable, interoperable with other units, and as small as practical. Organic communications should include intelligence communications channels to receive “sensitive” compartmented information which may have an

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impact on mission planning, targeting, escape and evasion, and threat reaction forces.

Intelligence

AFSOF planning and execution are intelligence intensive; timely, detailed, and tailored all-source intelligence is vital in support of SO. All-source intelligence should be broad in scope, yet minutely detailed. Intelligence collection and production agencies should respond rapidly to identified needs before and during mission planning and during mission execution. Intelligence requirements for SOF are similar to those of conventional forces, though the degree of detail is frequently greater. Also, the nature of SOF objectives may require support different than that needed for conventional operations. For instance, SOF may need intelligence to avoid enemy forces, where conventional forces wish to engage those forces.

Commanders should identify intelligence information requirements as early as possible to support anticipated and probable missions. This will ensure that collection, production, and dissemination agencies can provide the critical intelligence needed.

- ✦ Commanders should use all-source intelligence (collection) from both organic and external intelligence sources for special operations.
- ✦ Organic collection capabilities include aircrew members; local and host nation personnel; AFSOF aircraft airborne sensors (infrared, radar, and low-light television recorders); and STTs, SOWTs, and attached ground personnel.
- ✦ External sources of intelligence information includes the theater J-2 and the associated Joint Intelligence Center or Joint Analysis Center, theater Army, Navy, and Air Force units as well as allied units. National-level sources of intelligence include the Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, National Imagery and Mapping Agency, the Department of State, the Department of Energy, and the various National Intelligence Centers.

While some of the information collected by intelligence sensors and sources can be used directly in a near-real-time mode, most should be processed and interpreted (production) to provide the basic intelligence needed to execute SO missions. AFSOF intelligence personnel have the

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responsibility to review, collate, integrate, and utilize intelligence products from external collection and production agencies to support AFSOF operations. The resulting intelligence products should support:

- ★ SOF mission folders.
- ★ Mission planning and rehearsal.
- ★ Evasion and escape plans for all missions.
- ★ Combat tactics and concepts of employment based on expected threat scenarios.
- ★ Mission execution.
- ★ Combat assessment.

Post-mission reports (dissemination) on organically collected intelligence, target area analysis, and intelligence assessments may be constrained by the sensitivity of many types of SOF missions. Depending on the sensitivity of the mission, commanders should report data either through special access or routine intelligence reports or channels, as appropriate.

Mission Rehearsal

Rehearsal of special operations is critical to their success. *Often, repeated rehearsal of certain mission elements is necessary. This is because*

Four brave men who do not know each other will not dare to attack a lion. Four less brave men, but knowing each other well, sure of their reliability and consequently mutual aid, will attack resolutely.

Ardant Du Picq

both personnel and essential tasks differ from mission to mission and because of the possible strategic implications of these missions.

Son Tay

By the summer of 1970, more than 470 American prisoners of war (POWs) were being held by North Vietnam. Many were not held in a central compound but scattered in small compounds in Hanoi and the surrounding area. Though difficult, perhaps impossible, to rescue POWs from the middle of Hanoi, it might be possible to pluck a significant number from an outlying compound. Early information confirmed the presence of 55 Americans at a small compound near the Son Tay citadel, 23 miles northwest of Hanoi.

Training for an assault began in August 1970. The assault would be carried out by Army special forces (SF) airlifted by Air Force helicopters. The Navy would create a diversion by attacking Haiphong. The raiding force itself included two MC-130s as pathfinders, five HH-53 helicopters, and one HH-3 helicopter escorted by five A-1 Skyraiders. The helicopters would be refueled by two HC-130s prior to entering North Vietnam. There were also F-4s for combat air patrol and F-105G Wild Weasels for surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft artillery suppression. To ensure success, planners strove to have twice as many aircraft as were thought needed.

Preparation included a four-phase training program that progressed from individual Service to joint activities using a building-block approach. It included development and refinement of new procedures and tactics. The MC-130s, for example, were not accustomed to flying near stall speed for long periods (necessary to allow the helicopters to stay in formation). Also, Army SF adopted Armson single-point sights which dramatically improved accuracy under low light conditions. Joint interoperability and full mission rehearsal was stressed to include alternate plans in case certain elements failed to arrive at the target.

The operation was executed on 20 November 1970, and although no prisoners were found, it was carried out almost flawlessly. Not one soldier or airman was killed or seriously injured including the Navy and Air Force airmen involved with the deception and cover operations. In spite of the huge disappointment at not finding any POWs, the operation did have positive results for all POWs in North Vietnam. The raid caused the North Vietnamese to gather all POWs from the countryside and place them in camps in Hanoi—allowing POWs to talk, to take care of each other, and to organize themselves. General John P. Flynn, the senior American POW, is quoted as saying, “It was the most magnificent operation of the war.”

The Son Tay raid is considered a model of how to plan, prepare, and execute a joint special operation. Although the establishment of the force was ad hoc in nature, the raiders had the time and leadership to properly select and train members in individual and joint skills, and to perform extensive mission rehearsal. Also, note that force selection was not based on rank or Service but rather on experience in Southeast Asia or operational specialty. By combining technical expertise with regional familiarity without concern for branch of Service, the planners developed a force well suited to the objectives.

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Because each special operation is unique, each operation may bring together a group of specialists who have worked together infrequently or who possibly have never worked together. In addition, because each operation is unique, the specific tasks required for success may have never been practiced together or never in the proper sequence. Through rehearsal, a plan's flaws are discovered, and its options are tested. Simply put—personnel working together for the first time and doing something they've never done together, perhaps with strategic-level implications, is unsound. Special operations require rehearsal.

Logistics

The interrelationship among tactics, strategy, and logistics is especially critical to AFSOF where the technological edge can help offset enemy defenses and adequate sustainment can provide vital insurance against the unexpected. The Air Force component is responsible for providing service common logistics support to AFSOF. When deployed, **AFSOF are normally supported by the theater COMAFFOR** unless otherwise provided for by directives. AFSOF should provide sustain-



SOF must sometimes procure non-standard equipment.

ment requirements to the Air Force component logisticians during both deliberate and crisis action planning. This is necessary to ensure requirements are included in the operations plan or operations order time-phased force and deployment data. Requirements can then be sourced by the logistics agencies with visibility in the Joint Operation Planning and Execution System, and distributed through the Joint Theater Distribution System. Coordination of the AFSOF logistics support concept with the Air Force component logisticians, and early identification of requirements, are key to responsive sustainment support. If the theater COMAFFOR cannot satisfy the AFSOF sustainment requirements, then the theater commander may direct another Service to provide this support.

AFSOF should have the ability to execute time-sensitive, discreet deployments. *A reduced deployed logistics footprint can enhance both the*

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timely response and the security of an operation. However, logisticians must also balance support requirements provided by host nation or contracting with security/OPSEC requirements. In addition to speed, the system used to mobilize and deploy SOF should be able to function in an environment where OPSEC precludes normal predeployment coordination. This heightened security environment may necessitate significant tailoring of established mobilization procedures at the unit level. *AFSOF's day-to-day activities should closely resemble its deployment processing activities.*

Highly specialized airplanes operating in small numbers should be adequately supported by readiness spares packages. These packages should be maintained at sufficient levels to ensure a quick response and sustained operating capability for short duration contingencies. A broken airplane that generates out-of-the-ordinary communications to request maintenance parts can ruin an otherwise perfect OPSEC plan or, worse, result in mission failure.

Weather

AFSOF need accurate and timely weather support during all phases of planning. The US Air Force has established the SOWT as the basic element designed to provide critical weather and oceanographic support for Air Force, Navy, and Army special operations. Team composition is scenario dependent and generally consists of individuals to provide observation, forecasting, and staff weather officer services to deployed SOF.

Space Support

Space support systems can support SOF across the range of military operations, from initial planning through mission execution until force recovery. Space assets can provide assistance with communications, positioning and navigation, intelligence, and weather satellites. Traditional uses of



Space systems enable precise navigation over featureless terrain.

space systems include the global positioning system for precise all-weather navigation and communications satellites for secure voice, data, and intelligence broadcasts. Satellite imagery and electronic intelligence can

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also be used for mission route planning, detection and threat avoidance, navigation, and objective area operations.

Military Deception

It is extremely important for an AFSOF commander to use the appropriate tools to conduct a SOF mission. Commanders and operations planners should **consider incorporating military deception into battle plans and individual missions at the beginning of the planning process** in order to support combat objectives and to enhance the overall probability of mission success. Military deception helps a commander to attain operational security and surprise by causing an adversary to misallocate combat, combat support, or intelligence force resources, in time, place, or quantity applications. Military deception planning processes parallel and complement the normal sequence of operations planning actions; therefore, military deception planners should be involved in all phases of execution planning.

Training

In no other professions are the penalties for employing untrained personnel so appalling or irrevocable as in the military.

General Douglas MacArthur

SO place extraordinary demands on assigned personnel. Demanding tasks require knowledgeable, trained individuals. Many of the AFSOF weapon systems are unique within the US Air Force, and training requirements vary with each system. To ensure combat readiness, AFSOF are trained to meet their most demanding standards. To complement training, AFSOF should also acquire



Special operators hone their skills with challenging training scenarios.

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and use mission planning and rehearsal devices to ensure mission readiness and success.

Legal

AFSOF can be employed across the range of military operations. Depending on the situation, execution authority may rest with an on-scene commander or the NCA. Consequently, it is important that all participants in a special operation have an adequate appreciation for the legal considerations of the mission. Legal advice begins during training and continues throughout mission planning and mission execution. Training for AFSOF should extend beyond the required legal briefings conducted annually for all personnel and include relevant US law, international law, and operations law, with particular attention to the law of armed conflict and human rights issues. Failure to comply with these laws and the rules of engagement could bring discredit upon the United States, subject the violator to prosecution under US law or the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and possibly deny legal protection to SOF personnel in the event of their capture or detention. During actual operations, the commander and his or her staff should have access to and seek legal advice as needed.

Medical

SO medical support requirements depend on the number of supported personnel, their location, the military situation, and access to existing medical facilities. AFSOF missions often test the limits of personnel endurance. AFSOF personnel often operate from areas where the **lack of preventive medicine could result in mission degradation**. In addition to rendering routine or emergency medical care to deployed personnel, SO medical personnel should be able to ensure applicable elementary field sanitation and hygiene, disease prevention and control, and environmental risk factor assessment and control.

SO medical personnel provide detailed analysis for planning and intel-



Medical personnel are key members of the AFSOF team.

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ligence functions. **They should be aware of potential health hazards, endemic diseases, and other related data associated with the destination country.** Plans and procedures must also ensure medical personnel comply with combatant CINCs' directed deployment surveillance criteria.

Recovery of hostages or survivors normally presents unique medical considerations for those who have been subjected to traumatic events. Hostages or survivors may be confused, apprehensive, physically incapacitated, or act in a manner that can impede their rescue. SOF personnel conducting personnel recovery missions should also be prepared to use indigenous medical facilities to support hostage recovery operations.

AFSOF medical personnel may be required to provide organic evacuation to points where conventional airlift and aeromedical evacuation are located. To support this requirement, selected AFSOF medical personnel should be trained to provide initial aeromedical evacuation support within areas of SOF operations. SOF medical planning should address ground and air evacuation interface, employment of organic medical resources to provide limited stabilization prior to evacuation, and hand-off procedures with conventional medical and aeromedical evacuation forces.

Risk Management

Commanders **ensure AFSOF combat capability is preserved by minimizing the unnecessary loss of personnel, equipment, and materiel** resources through mishaps. Safety staffs identify, evaluate, and recommend corrective actions for hazards associated with employing weapon systems and satisfying operational and training requirements. Commanders, functional managers, supervisors, and operators eliminate or reduce risks and hazards consistent with mission requirements and the principles of risk management.



Assets are precious—safety is a critical consideration in all AFSOF operations.

At the very Heart of Warfare lies doctrine...

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Glossary

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFDD	Air Force Doctrine Document
AFSOC	Air Force special operations component (in theater), <i>see also</i> HQ AFSOC.
AFSOD	Air Force special operations detachment
AFSOE	Air Force special operations element
AFSOF	Air Force special operations forces
AOC	air operations center
AOR	area of responsibility
ASD (SO/LIC)	Assistant Secretary of Defense (Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict)
AT	antiterrorism
C2	command and control
C2W	command and control warfare
CA	civil affairs
CAP	combat air patrol
CAS	close air support
CBT	combatting terrorism
CINC	commander in chief
COCOM	combatant command (command authority)
COMAFSOC	commander, Air Force special operations component
COMAFFOR	Commander, Air Force Forces
CSAR	combat search and rescue
CT	counterterrorism
DA	direct action
DOC	designed operational capability
DOD	Department of Defense
FID	foreign internal defense
HA	humanitarian assistance
HN	host nation
HQ AFSOC	Headquarters, Air Force Special Operations Com- mand
IO	information operations
JAOC	joint air operations center
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JCSAR	joint combat search and rescue

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JFACC	joint force air component commander
JFC	joint force commander
JFLCC	joint force land component commander
JFMCC	joint force maritime component commander
JFSOCC	joint force special operations component commander
JSOA	joint special operations area
JSOACC	joint special operations air component commander
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command
JSOTF	joint special operations task force
JTF	joint task force
METL	mission-essential task list
MFP	major force program
MOB	main operations base
MOOTW	military operations other than war
NCA	National Command Authorities
OPCON	operational control
OPSEC	operations security
POW	prisoner of war
PSYOP	psychological operations
SAR	search and rescue
SEAL	sea-air-land
SF	special forces
SO	special operations
SOC	special operations command
SOF	special operations forces
SOLE	special operations liaison element
SOWT	special operations weather team
SR	special reconnaissance
STT	special tactics team
TACON	tactical control
US	United States
USAF	United States Air Force
USCINCSOC	Commander in Chief, United States Special Operations Command
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
UW	unconventional warfare
WMD	weapons of mass destruction

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Definitions

Air Force special operations component. The Air Force component of a joint force special operations component. Also called **AFSOC**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

Air Force special operations detachment. A squadron-size headquarters, which could be a composite organization composed of different Air Force special operations assets. The detachment is normally subordinate to an Air Force special operations component, joint special operations task force, or joint task force, depending upon size and duration of the operation. Also called **AFSOD**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

Air Force special operations element. An element-size Air Force special operations headquarters. It is normally subordinate to an Air Force special operations component or detachment, depending upon size and duration of the operation. Also called **AFSOE**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

Air Force special operations forces. Those active and reserve component Air Force forces designated by the Secretary of Defense that are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. Also called **AFSOF**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

antiterrorism. Defensive measures used to reduce the vulnerability of individuals and property to terrorist acts, to include limited response and containment by local military forces. Also called **AT**. See also **counterterrorism** and **terrorism**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

Army special operations component. The Army component of a joint force special operations component. Also called **ARSOC**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

Army special operations forces. Those active and Reserve Component Army forces designated by the Secretary of Defense that are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. Also called **ARSOF**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

aviation advisory team. A special operations team specifically tailored to assess, advise, and train foreign aviation forces in air operations employment and sustainability. Teams support theater combatant commanders throughout the operational continuum, primarily by facilitating the integration and interoperability of friendly and allied aviation forces sup-

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porting joint and multinational operations. Teams are specially trained and equipped to provide advisory assistance in the three interrelated areas of foreign internal defense (FID), coalition support (CS), and unconventional warfare (UW).

civil affairs. The activities of a commander that establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces and civil authorities, both governmental and nongovernmental, and the civilian populace in a friendly, neutral, or hostile area of operations in order to facilitate military operations and consolidate operational objectives. Civil affairs may include performance by military forces of activities and functions normally the responsibility of local government. These activities may occur prior to, during, or subsequent to other military actions. They may also occur, if directed, in the absence of other military operations. Also called **CA**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

clandestine operation. An operation sponsored or conducted by governmental departments or agencies in such a way as to assure secrecy or concealment. A clandestine operation differs from a covert operation in that emphasis is placed on concealment of the operation rather than on concealment of identity of sponsor. In special operations, an activity may be both covert and clandestine and may focus equally on operational considerations and intelligence-related activities. (Joint Pub 1-02)

close air support. Air action by fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft against hostile targets which are in close proximity to friendly forces and which require detailed integration of each air mission with the fire and movement of those forces. Also called **CAS**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

coalition force. A force composed of military elements of nations that have formed a temporary alliance for some specific purpose. (Joint Pub 1-02)

combatant command (command authority). Nontransferable command authority established by title 10 ("Armed Forces"), United States Code, section 164, exercised only by commanders of unified or specified combatant commands unless otherwise directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense. Combatant command (command authority) cannot be delegated and is the authority of a combatant commander to perform those functions of command over assigned forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objec-

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tives, and giving authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations, joint training, and logistics necessary to accomplish the missions assigned to the command. Combatant command (command authority) should be exercised through the commanders of subordinate organizations. Normally this authority is exercised through subordinate joint force commanders and Service and/or functional component commanders. Combatant command (command authority) provides full authority to organize and employ commands and forces as the combatant commander considers necessary to accomplish assigned missions. Operational control is inherent in combatant command (command authority). Also called **COCOM**. See also **operational control**; **tactical control**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

combat search and rescue. A specific task performed by rescue forces to effect the recovery of distressed personnel during war or military operations other than war. Also called **CSAR**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

combatting terrorism. Actions, including antiterrorism (defensive measures taken to reduce vulnerability to terrorist acts) and counterterrorism (offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism), taken to oppose terrorism throughout the entire threat spectrum. (Joint Pub 1-02)

conventional forces. Those forces capable of conducting operations using nonnuclear weapons. (Joint Pub 1-02) [*Also, those forces not specially trained, equipped, and organized to conduct special operations (see also **special operations**).*] {Italicized definition in brackets applies only to the Air Force and is added for clarity.}

counterdrug. Those active measures taken to detect, monitor, and counter the production, trafficking, and use of illegal drugs. Also called **CD**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

counterinsurgency. Those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency. (Joint Pub 1-02)

counterterrorism. Offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism. Also called **CT**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

covert operation. An operation that is so planned and executed as to conceal the identity of or permit plausible denial by the sponsor. A covert operation differs from a clandestine operation in that emphasis is placed

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on concealment of the identity of sponsor rather than on concealment of the operation. (Joint Pub 1-02) [*In special operations, an activity may be both covert and clandestine.*] {Italicized definition in brackets applies only to the Air Force and is added for clarity.}

deception. Those measures designed to mislead the enemy by manipulation, distortion, or falsification of evidence to induce him to react in a manner prejudicial to his interests. (Joint Pub 1-02)

direct action. Short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions by special operations forces to seize, destroy, capture, recover, or inflict damage on designated personnel or materiel. In the conduct of these operations, special operations forces may employ raid, ambush, or direct assault tactics; emplace mines and other munitions; conduct stand-off attacks by fire from air, ground, or maritime platforms; provide terminal guidance for precision-guided munitions; and conduct independent sabotage. Also called **DA**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

evasion and escape. The procedures and operations whereby military personnel and other selected individuals are enabled to emerge from an enemy-held or hostile area to areas under friendly control. (Joint Pub 1-02)

foreign internal defense. 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. Also called **FID**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

guerrilla force. A group of irregular, predominantly indigenous personnel organized along military lines to conduct military and paramilitary operations in enemy-held, hostile, or denied territory. (Joint Pub 1-02)

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

humanitarian assistance. Programs conducted to relieve or reduce the results of natural or manmade disasters or other endemic conditions such as human pain, disease, hunger, or privation that might present a serious threat to life or that could result in great damage to or loss of property. Humanitarian assistance provided by US forces is limited in scope and duration. The assistance provided is designed to supplement or comple-

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ment the efforts of the host nation civil authorities or agencies that may have the primary responsibility for providing humanitarian assistance. Also called **HA**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

infiltration. 1. The movement through or into an area or territory occupied by either friendly or enemy troops or organizations. The movement is made, either by small groups or by individuals, at extended or irregular intervals. When used in connection with the enemy, it infers that contact is avoided. 2. In intelligence usage, placing an agent or other person in a target area in hostile territory. Usually involves crossing a frontier or other guarded line. Methods of infiltration are: black (clandestine); gray (through legal crossing point but under false documentation); white (legal). (Joint Pub 1-02)

information in warfare. Involves the Air Force's extensive capabilities to provide global awareness throughout the range of military operations based on integrated intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets; its information collection/dissemination activities; and its global navigation and positioning, weather, and communications capabilities. Also called **IIW**. (AFDD 2 and AFDD 2-5)

information operations—Actions taken to affect adversary information and information systems while defending one's own information and information systems. Also called **IO**. (DODD S-3600.1) The Air Force believes that in practice a more useful working definition is: *[Those actions taken to gain, exploit, defend or attack information and information systems and include both information-in-warfare and information warfare.]* {Italicized definition in brackets applies only to the Air Force and is offered for clarity.}

information superiority. That degree of dominance in the information domain which permits the conduct of operations without effective opposition. (Joint Pub 1-02)

information warfare. Actions taken to achieve information superiority by affecting adversary information, information-based processes, information systems, and computer-based networks while leveraging and defending one's own information, information-based processes, information systems, and computer-based networks. Also called **IW**. (Joint Pub 1-02) *[Information operations conducted to defend one's own information and information systems, or attacking and affecting an adversary's information and information systems.]* {Italicized definition in brackets applies only to the Air Force and is offered for clarity.}

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

joint force commander. A general term applied to a combatant commander, subunified commander, or joint task force commander authorized to exercise combatant command (command authority) or operational control over a joint force. Also called **JFC**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

joint force special operations component commander. The commander within a unified command, subordinate unified command, or joint task force responsible to the establishing commander for making recommendations on the proper employment of special operations forces and assets, planning and coordinating special operations, or accomplishing such operational missions as may be assigned. The joint force special operations component commander is given the authority necessary to accomplish missions and tasks assigned by the establishing commander. The joint force special operations component commander will normally be the commander with the preponderance of special operations forces and the requisite command and control capabilities. Also called **JFSOCC**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

joint special operations air component commander. The commander within the joint force special operations command responsible for planning and executing joint special air operations and for coordinating and deconflicting such operations with conventional nonspecial operations air activities. The joint special operations air component commander normally will be the commander with the preponderance of assets and/or greatest ability to plan, coordinate, allocate, task, control, and support the assigned joint special operations aviation assets. The joint special operations air component commander may be directly subordinate to the joint force special operations component commander or to any nonspecial operations component or joint force commander as directed. Also called **JSOACC**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

joint special operations area. A restricted area of land, sea, and airspace assigned by a joint force commander to the commander of joint special operations force to conduct special operations activities. The commander of joint special operations forces may further assign a specific area or sector within the joint special operations area to a subordinate commander for mission execution. The scope and duration of the special

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operations forces' mission, friendly and hostile situation, and politico-military considerations all influence the number, composition, and sequencing of special operations forces deployed into a joint special operations area. It may be limited in size to accommodate a discrete direct action mission or may be extensive enough to allow a continuing broad range of unconventional warfare operations. Also called **JSOA**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

joint special operations task force. A joint task force composed of special operations units from more than one Service, formed to carry out a specific special operation or prosecute special operations in support of a theater campaign or other operations. The joint special operations task force may have conventional nonspecial operations units assigned or attached to support the conduct of specific missions. Also called **JSOTF**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

military deception. Actions executed to deliberately mislead adversary military decision makers as to friendly military capabilities, intentions, and operations, thereby causing the adversary to take specific actions (or inactions) that will contribute to the accomplishment of the friendly mission. The five categories of military deception are: **a. strategic military deception**—Military deception planned and executed by and in support of senior military commanders to result in adversary military policies and actions that support the originator's strategic military objectives, policies, and operations. **b. operational military deception**—Military deception planned and executed by and in support of operational-level commanders to result in adversary actions that are favorable to the originator's objectives and operations. Operational military deception is planned and conducted in a theater of war to support campaigns and major operations. **c. tactical military deception**—Military deception planned and executed by and in support of tactical commanders to result in adversary actions that are favorable to the originator's objectives and operations. Tactical military deception is planned and conducted to support battles and engagements. **d. Service military deception**—Military deception planned and executed by the Services that pertain to Service support to joint operations. Service military deception is designed to protect and enhance the combat capabilities of Service forces and systems. **e. military deception in support of operations security (OPSEC)**—Military deception planned and executed by and in support of all levels of command to support the prevention of the inadvertent compromise of sensitive or classified activities, capabilities, or intentions. Deceptive

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OPSEC measures are designed to distract foreign intelligence away from, or provide cover for, military operations and activities. (Joint Pub 1-02)

military operations other than war. Operations that encompass the use of military capabilities across the range of military operations short of war. These military actions can be applied to complement any combination of the other instruments of national power and occur before, during, and after war. Also called **MOOTW**. (Joint Pub 1-02) [*An umbrella term encompassing a variety of military operations conducted by the Department of Defense that normally complement the other instruments of national power. These military operations are as diverse as providing support and assistance (when consistent with US law) in a nonthreatening environment, and conducting combat not associated with war. Also called MOOTW.*] {Italicized definition in brackets applies only to the Air Force and is offered for clarity.}

multination. Between two or more forces or agencies of two or more nations or coalition partners. (Joint Pub 1-02)

multinational operations. A collective term to describe military actions conducted by forces of two or more nations, typically organized within the structure of a coalition or alliance. (Joint Pub 1-02)

operational control. Transferable command authority that may be exercised by commanders at any echelon at or below the level of combatant command. Operational control is inherent in combatant command (command authority). Operational control may be delegated and is the authority to perform those functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission. Operational control includes authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations and joint training necessary to accomplish missions assigned to the command. Operational control should be exercised through the commanders of subordinate organizations. Normally this authority is exercised through subordinate joint force commanders and Service and/or functional component commanders. Operational control normally provides full authority to organize commands and forces and to employ those forces as the commander in operational control considers necessary to accomplish assigned missions. Operational control does not, in and of itself, include authoritative direction for logistics or

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matters of administration, discipline, internal organization, or unit training. Also called **OPCON**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

operations security. A process of identifying critical information and subsequently analyzing friendly actions attendant to military operations and other activities to: a. Identify those actions that can be observed by adversary intelligence systems. b. Determine indicators hostile intelligence systems might obtain that could be interpreted or pieced together to derive critical information in time to be useful to adversaries. c. Select and execute measures that eliminate or reduce to an acceptable level the vulnerabilities of friendly actions to adversary exploitation. Also called **OPSEC**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

overt operation. An operation conducted openly, without concealment. See also **clandestine operation; covert operation**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

perishable target. A force or activity at a specific location whose value as a target can decrease substantially during a specified time. A significant decrease in value occurs when the target moves or the operational circumstances change to the extent that the target is no longer lucrative. (Joint Pub 1-02)

psychological operations. Planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. The purpose of psychological operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator's objectives. Also called **PSYOP**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

raid. An operation, usually small scale, involving a swift penetration of hostile territory to secure information, confuse the enemy, or to destroy installations. It ends with a planned withdrawal upon completion of the assigned mission. (Joint Pub 1-02)

Rangers. Rapidly deployable airborne light infantry organized and trained to conduct highly complex joint direct action operations in coordination with or in support of special operations units of all Services. Rangers also can execute direct action operations in support of conventional nonspecial operations missions conducted by a combatant commander and can operate as conventional light infantry when properly augmented with other elements of combined arms. (Joint Pub 1-02)

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relative superiority. A condition that exists when an attacking force, generally smaller, gains a decisive advantage over a larger or well-defended enemy. (This term is from William H. McRaven's *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice*.)

sea-air-land team. A naval force specially organized, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations in maritime, littoral, and riverine environments. Also called **SEAL team**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

search and rescue. The use of aircraft, surface craft, submarines, specialized rescue teams and equipment to search for and rescue personnel in distress on land or at sea. Also called **SAR**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

security assistance. Group of programs authorized by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and the Arms Export Control Act of 1976, as amended, or other related statutes by which the United States provides defense articles, military training, and other defense-related services, by grant, loan, credit, or cash sales in furtherance of national policies and objectives. Also called **SA**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

special forces. US Army forces organized, trained, and equipped specifically to conduct special operations. Special forces have five primary missions: unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, direct action, special reconnaissance, and counterterrorism. Counterterrorism is a special mission for specially organized, trained, and equipped special forces units designated in theater contingency plans. Also called **SF**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

special operations. Operations conducted by specially organized, trained, and equipped military and paramilitary forces to achieve military, political, economic, or psychological objectives by unconventional military means in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas. These operations are conducted during peacetime competition, conflict, and war, independently or in coordination with operations of conventional, nonspecial operations forces. Political-military considerations frequently shape special operations, requiring clandestine, covert, or low visibility techniques and oversight at the national level. Special operations differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets. Also called **SO**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

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special operations command. A subordinate unified or other joint command established by a joint force commander to plan, coordinate, conduct, and support joint special operations within the joint force commander's assigned area of operations. Also called **SOC**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

special operations forces. Those active and Reserve Component forces of the military Services designated by the Secretary of Defense and specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. Also called **SOF**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

special operations liaison element. A special operations liaison team provided by the JFSOCC to the JFACC (if designated) to coordinate, deconflict, and integrate special operations air and surface operations with conventional air. Also called **SOLE**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

special operations weather team/tactical element. A task-organized team of Air Force personnel organized, trained, and equipped to collect critical weather observations from data-sparse areas. These teams are trained to operate independently in permissive or semipermissive environments, or as augmentation to other special operations elements in nonpermissive environments, in direct support of special operations. Also called SOWT/TE. (Joint Pub 1-02) The Air Force's definition for special operations weather team is: [*Specially organized, trained, and equipped Air Force weather personnel. These teams of Air Force weather people are organized, trained, and equipped to support Army and Air Force special operations forces units. They support unilateral or joint air, ground, and maritime special operations. Teams are trained to operate independently in permissive or uncertain environments, or as augmentation to other special operations elements in hostile environments. They are able to collect critical weather observations from data-sparse areas, generate mission tailored forecasts, and determine the impacts of meteorological and oceanographic conditions on operations in order to assist decision-makers in developing appropriate courses of action.*] {Italicized definition in brackets applies only to the Air Force and is offered for clarity.}

special reconnaissance. 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 char-

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acteristics of a particular area. It includes target acquisition, area assessment, and post-strike reconnaissance. Also called **SR**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

special tactics team. An Air Force team composed primarily of special operations combat control and pararescue personnel. The team supports joint special operations by selecting, surveying, and establishing assault zones; providing assault zone terminal guidance and air traffic control; conducting direct action missions; providing medical care and evacuation; and, coordinating, planning, and conducting air, ground, and naval fire support operations. Also called **STT**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

tactical control. Command authority over assigned or attached forces or commands, or military capability or forces made available for tasking, that is limited to the detailed and, usually, local direction and control of movements or maneuvers necessary to accomplish missions or tasks assigned. Tactical control is inherent in operational control. Tactical control may be delegated to, and exercised at any level at or below the level of combatant command. Also called **TACON**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

terrorism. The calculated use of violence or threat of violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological. (Joint Pub 1-02)

unconventional warfare. 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 activities, and evasion and escape. Also called **UW**. (Joint Pub 1-02)

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