



SPECIAL FORCES: ROLES AND MISSIONS

**VETERANS OF SPECIAL FORCES
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to address the roles and missions of United States Army Special Forces. The term Unconventional Operations (UO) as a subset of Special Operations (SO)¹ will be introduced, defined and explained. The paper will explain why Army Special Forces (SF)² is the principal UO force and articulate why the UO mission is critical. Most importantly, it will show why the Special Forces Groups (SFGs)³ should primarily focus on this mission and not be diverted to missions duplicated by other Special Operations Forces (SOF)⁴ or Conventional Forces.⁵

First, we need to clarify the term Special Forces. Special Forces has become a popular term for a broad array of very diverse forces and organizations. Unfortunately, it is necessary to clarify the term Special Forces due to an apparent ubiquitous misunderstanding and misrepresentation by those who, either through ignorance or disingenuous and duplicitous intent, claim that they or their unit is Special Forces. Special Forces, when used to describe capability, individuals, units or organizations, refers to a very select set of US Army Soldiers. Special Forces units are comprised solely of Army Soldiers who have been selected, assessed and trained at the Special Forces Qualification Course at the US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) at Fort Bragg, NC.

Special Forces: US Army forces organized, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations with an emphasis on unconventional warfare capabilities [Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, "Department of Defense (DOD) Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms as amended through 17 October 2007.]

BACKGROUND

The core uniqueness of SF is "through, with and by." Basically, everything else is just icing on the cake. When a SF Soldier drops the hammer on his weapon, metaphorically, he is in mission failure because he was not able to get the indigenous asset(s) to do this. Anything SF does "unilaterally," the conventional forces can do. It is just a matter of degree and with resourcing; anyone can do direct action (DA). Therefore, regional orientation is an absolute must. The rotation of SF in OIF and OEF is a travesty. The 5th Group flag should have been planted there for the duration – PCS or whatever – with only individual replacements. NO OTHER Special Forces Group should have rotated teams there. Why? First and most important is this broke the core "through, with and by" because it broke the critical relationships with the indigenous population every rotation. Secondly, the rotation policy took the other SF Groups' focus away from their regions (i.e., the loss of Joint/Combined Exercises and Training (JCETs) and broken relationships in the other regions). This is a global war, not just an OIF/OEF war. This is

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generational war, not to be measured by time but by the influences on indigenous populations, generations of indigenous populations.

In any operational area, the ground must be owned by the SF Group. No other element should enter that operational space without the knowledge of and coordination with, that SF Group. The SF Group answers to the American Ambassador as his interagency coordinator for any and all activities, peace or war. Any element that enters the SF Group area, regardless, is under the Command and Control (C2) of that SF Group. It does not matter if it is a conventional brigade combat team or the entire Delta force or the CIA. The SF Group owns the ground because they have been there, or should have been there, for years/decades. This is generational war and there is no room for fly-by cowboys. Every move must be culturally integrated. This is the salient C2 issue.

No other SOF organization can match a Special Forces Group in complexity, depth and breadth of missions and contribution to the Nation's security, so, for minimum parity, each SF Group must be commanded by a general officer. Those who remember the Unified Quest/ Joint & Army Wargames of 2001-2004 know we successfully wargamed and exercised this concept [SF Groups looked a lot like the original Special Action Forces (SAFs) and were commanded by BGs]. These wargames also exercised SF Group C2 of vast regions with large conventional force structure subordinated to the SF, including brigades, air wings, navy ships and vessels, plus coalition forces. The Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs) remained theater-wide focused for the Region Combatant Commanders (RCC) and not just tied to one conflict or operation.

SPECIAL FORCES CORE IDEOLOGY⁶

An organization's core ideology is its enduring character — its stake fixed in the ground that says this is who we are; this is what we stand for; and this is what we are all about. Core ideology has two distinct subcomponents: core values and core purpose (and unless these are passionately held on a gut level, they are not core). Identifying the core values and the core purpose is not an exercise in wordsmithing. It is a process to define who we are.

We do not create a core ideology. A core ideology is derived not by looking outside the organization, but rather by looking inside. We do not ask, "What core values should we hold?" We ask, "What core values do we hold?"

Core ideology must be pervasive; it must transcend any leader. Core ideology is for the people inside the organization, and it need only be meaningful and inspirational to them. Core ideology plays an essential role in determining who is inside the organization and who is outside it. A clear and well-articulated ideology will attract people whose values are compatible with the values of those who are inside the organization and will repel those whose values are contradictory.

Core ideology is not to be confused with core competence. Core competence is a strategic concept that captures an organization's capabilities. Core ideology captures

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what one stands for and why one exists. One can, and perhaps should, change anything that is not a core ideology.

The act of stating a core ideology influences behavior toward consistency with that ideology. The difference between success and failure of an organization can often be traced to how well that organization establishes a common purpose and shared values to bring out the energies and the talents of its people.

What is Special Forces' core ideology? This is not a frivolous question. What would be lost if Special Forces ceased to exist? Why is it important for Special Forces to exist now and in the future? If you were offered accelerated promotion in another branch, would you accept? Why not? What deeper sense of motivation keeps you in Special Forces? When you ask yourself why Special Forces is important, question each answer by asking "Why?" five times. What is the result?

Core values are essential and enduring tenets. If circumstances around us changed and we were penalized for holding a core value, would we still keep it? If our answer is no, then we did not have a core value. You do not change core values; you change strategies.

A core value is simple, clear, straightforward and powerful. It provides substantial guidance with piercing simplicity. People can discover their core values, but new core values cannot be instilled. Core values are not something we buy into. We must have a predisposition to hold them. Core values need no justification, nor do they come into or out of fashion.

What are the core values of Special Forces? Can we envision these core values as being equally valid 100 years from now?

Core purpose is the second component of core ideology. Core purpose is the organization's fundamental reason for being, and it is the more important of the two components. It must capture the soul of Special Forces. Do not confuse the core purpose with goals or strategies, which change over time.

You cannot fulfill a purpose. A purpose is like a guiding star on the horizon: forever pursued but never reached. A core purpose does not change; it inspires change. An organization can and usually does evolve into new areas, but it remains guided by its core purpose. What is the core purpose of Special Forces? What purpose defines who we are today and who we will be 100 years from now? What is our reason for being?

The core purpose of Special Forces is to accomplish Special Forces missions through, with or by indigenous populations. This is our enduring purpose — our guiding light on the horizon. The core purpose of Special Forces is never-changing, regardless of changing strategies or the problems that our belief in it may bring in the future. No other organization has a core ideology of working through, with or by indigenous populations.

The core values of Special Forces are **unconventionalism, strength of character, doing what is right, and making a difference.** Our core values define who we are and who we will be 100 years from now, regardless of a changing world or the penalties we will encounter for holding these values.

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UNCONVENTIONAL OPERATIONS

SOF has become a popular term for a broad array of very diverse forces and organizations. The essence of SOF, the elements that contribute most significantly over the long term to the U.S. national security strategy *in terms of the numbers of active missions and their effect on national security objectives*, are the Army Special Forces conducting unconventional operations as defined in this paper. Current doctrine does not identify these unconventional operations forces as specific, distinct forces. Furthermore, there is not a published definition of unconventional operations (UO) in Joint PUB 1-02, ***Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms***. This paper provides a proposed definition for unconventional operations and identifies principal unconventional operations forces (UOF). Proposed definition for Unconventional Operations:

Unconventional operations are primarily low visibility, economy of force and economy of resources operations. They are unique in that relatively small operational elements work in a combined and interagency environment and accomplish their missions *through, with and by indigenous personnel*. This environment is always political sensitive, requiring close interagency cooperation across the operational continuum.

UO, as a subset of Special Operations, differs from the broader definition of Special Operations in that UO are always conducted ***through, with or by indigenous personnel***, always as an interagency effort, and always in a politically sensitive environment.

Special Operations: (DOD) Operations conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to achieve military, diplomatic, informational, and/or economic objectives employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional force requirement. These operations often require covert, clandestine, or low visibility capabilities. Special operations are applicable across the range of military operations. They can be conducted independently or in conjunction with operations of conventional forces or other government agencies and may include operations through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces. Special operations differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of

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employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets. Also called SO.

During peacetime, UO primarily consist of operations with nations that are important to U.S. national security strategy. Some examples of these operations are internal defense and development, foreign internal defense operations, humanitarian assistance operations, peacekeeping operations, demining operations, nation building operations, counter-drug assistance and security assistance programs. During conflict or war, UO are primarily unconventional warfare operations. Examples of unconventional warfare operations are guerrilla warfare, evasion and escape, subversion, sabotage and other operations of a low visibility, covert or clandestine nature.⁷

The above mentioned peacetime operations must continue during conflict as an economy of force effort, both within the operational and strategic area of operation (AOR) and around the globe. An example of the synergistic effect of this strategy is found in current operations. While some U.S. Army Special Forces are engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan, other Special Forces elements continue UO missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, the “Stans” and Turkey, Africa, South/Central America and the Pacific and Asia, maintaining continuous engagement and enhancing regional stability.

Unconventional operations provide a low-risk political option with the potential of high levels of political return. Conducted without fanfare, unconventional operations usually attract little, if any, media coverage.

UNCONVENTIONAL OPERATIONS FORCES

This paper introduces Unconventional Operations Forces (UOF) as a new term. UOF are those United States Special Operations Forces (SOF) that are unique in their capability to conduct a wide range of unconventional operations, as opposed to those SOF elements whose SO missions are more narrow and specialized.

These unconventional roles consist primarily of teaching, training and organizing military, paramilitary or other indigenous elements in the conduct of unconventional warfare (UW), foreign internal defense operations (FID), internal defense and development (IDAD), humanitarian assistance (HA), peacekeeping (PK), demining, nation building, counter-drug assistance (CN), etc. These efforts focus on nations, regions and populations that are important to U.S. national security strategy. Best defined as forces principally organized and trained to accomplish their mission ***through, with or by indigenous personnel***, UOF are unique. The only SOF specifically organized, trained and equipped to conduct these missions in this manner are the Army Special Forces Groups. This focus is continuous, constant and specific. UOF do not rotate to other regions to participate in an operation or the conflict *de jour*. For example, the 5th Special Forces Group would be the only Special Forces Group conducting

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operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is their regional responsibility and they stay solely engaged both during and after the conflict. This may mean this SFG has priority in growing additional units. This probably means the detachments will operate in a split mode to achieve some level of rotation and relief of individuals; however, the detachment “flags” remain in the area sustaining the critical interface with the indigenous population. The other Special Forces Groups remain similarly engaged in their regions of responsibility. Rotating SFGs and detachments means disengagement and loss of regional expertise, knowledge, legitimacy, access, and the respect of the indigenous population.

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According to *Joint Pub 3-05*, SOF has nine core tasks/missions.

I. Core Tasks

- (1) Unconventional Warfare (UW)
- (2) Direct Action (DA)
- (3) Special Reconnaissance (SR)
- (4) Foreign Internal Defense (FID)
- (5) Counter-terrorism (CT)
- (6) Counterproliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (CP)
- (7) Civil Affairs Operations (CAO)
- (8) Psychological Operations (PSYOP)
- (9) Information Operations (IO)

Several of these tasks are, in reality, subsets of others. The introduction of unconventional operations precipitates combining several of these missions. By adding unconventional operations, the principal missions shrink to three, with several subsets. The following proposed changes better organize and clarify the SOF core tasks into functional areas. The proposed realignment also recognizes some additional tasks.

II. Proposed Core Tasks

- (1) Unconventional Operations (UO)
 - Unconventional Warfare (UW)
 - Foreign Internal Defense (FID) (for COIN see endnote⁸)
 - Civil Affairs Operations (CAO)
 - Internal Defense and Development (IDAD)
 - Humanitarian Assistance (HA)
 - Counternarcotics (CN)
 - Security Assistance (SA)

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- (2) Direct Action (DA)⁹
 - Counter-terrorism (CT)
 - Counterproliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (CP)
 - Special Reconnaissance (SR)
 - Personnel Recovery (PR)

- (3) Information Operations (IO)
 - Psychological Operations (PSYOP)

The following chart shows the SOF elements and their primary missions under current doctrinal publications. Chart 1 shows only the five principal mission/task areas-- UW, FID, DA, SR, and CT.

Chart 1

SOF Missions

| <u>Type Unit</u> | <u>Primary</u> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Army | |
| Special Forces | UW, FID, DA, SR, CT |
| Rangers | DA, CT |
| SO Aviation | DA, SR and Support all operations |
| Navy | |
| SEALS | DA, SR, CT, FID, UW* |
| SBU | Support all operations |
| SDVT | Support all operations |
| Air Force | |
| Fixed-wing | Support all operations |
| Rotary-wing | Support all operations |
| SO Weather | Support all operations |
| Special Tactics | Support all operations |
| Special Ops ** | FID, UW |
| MARSOC*** | DA, SR, CT, FID, UW |
| Special Msn Units | DA, SR, CT, FID, UW |

* Although the SEALs have UW as a mission, their definition is more like DA. They see UW as strikes/raids behind enemy lines unlike Army SF. Army SF practice UW in the traditional sense of working with indigenous elements in a denied area.

** The 6th Special Operations Sqd has no organic aircraft and is focused on training indigenous personnel in the use of their own aircraft

*** As a new USSOCOM entity (2005), the Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) is seeking to define its role. MARSOC has grasp UW and FID as a niche

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due to the vacuum created by USSOCOM/USASOC neglect of SF and the UO mission set. MARSOC advertises capabilities it does not have and can not achieve for a decade or more. Additionally, the Chairman of the House Armed Forces Committee (HASC) stated that he did not want to see any “duplications of Service capabilities.” MARSOC is building a UW/FID schoolhouse and UW/FID capability. This duplicative capability is projected to cost \$2 billion dollars. Why not give the \$2B to USAJFKSWCS and avoid duplication while maintaining unity of effort and consistency?

Any unit attempting to address nine core tasks/missions results in a dilution of effort and resources. Consider DA, SR, and CT. Units usually approach these as stand-alone missions and train to execute them in a unilateral manner. Each mission then receives repetitive training time, consuming significant resources. Second, the three missions of counter-terrorism, special reconnaissance and direct action are missions other SOF or general purpose forces also have as missions. Some of these other SOF units are better trained, organized and resourced than are the Special Forces Groups to conduct these missions. This is duplication we can ill afford.

The Special Forces Groups should not be so tasked.¹⁰ This means that we should get out of the CINC's *In-Extremis* Force (CIF) business or rescope this self-invented mission of trying to duplicate the National Force mission and get the mission back into the tasked mission of *in-extremis* mode vice the surgical mode. This requires much less resourcing and permits the rotation of the CIF mission each year to a different SF company size unit.....vice the perpetuation of a *prima dona* unit which is not focused on the core SF mission of UW/UO.

Unilateral direct action and special reconnaissance operations, since the late 70's, have received priority attention as Special Forces' missions. These are high visibility, immediate gratification missions, well within the comfort zone, and easily identified with by most people, most importantly the conventional Army. The Special Forces Groups have repeatedly conducted these operations; however, they do so by sacrificing expertise and competence in unconventional operations. Again, other units and some conventional force elements receive specific resourcing to train, equip and organize for these tasks.¹¹ To consider the Special Forces Group assets for ***unilateral*** tasks should be a last choice. Only if other units or general purpose forces are inappropriate or unavailable should the Special Forces Groups receive tasking for any unilateral mission--rather than being considered first. Special Forces Groups best conduct these missions and tasks ***through, with or by indigenous assets***.

The following chart shows the SOF elements and their *proposed* primary roles and missions. The introduction of UO as a task/mission category--along with DA and IO--focuses the missions functionally. This chart shows only the proposed primary missions and not secondary, subordinate or collateral missions.

Chart 2

Proposed SOF Roles and Missions

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| <u>Type Unit</u> | <u>Primary</u> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Army | |
| Special Forces | UO |
| Civil Affairs | UO |
| Psychological Ops | IO |
| Rangers | DA |
| SO Aviation | DA and Support all operations |
| Navy | |
| SEALS | DA |
| SBU | Support all operations |
| SDVT | Support all operations |
| Air Force | |
| Fixed-wing | Support all operations |
| Rotary-wing | Support all operations |
| SO Weather | Support all operations |
| Special Tactics | Support all operations |
| Special Ops | UO |
| MARSOC | DA |
| Special Msn Units | DA |

Army Special Forces' ability to conduct the broad range of unconventional operations described earlier in the paper is unique in the U.S. military. Certainly, other SOF elements and, on occasion, elements of the conventional force execute portions of unconventional operations. However, only the Special Forces Groups, by virtue of their organization, selection, assessment, training, equipment and orientation, are capable of covering the complete UO spectrum.

The uniqueness of unconventional operations lies in its cultural aspects and the selection, assessment, experience, maturity and training of the personnel. These aspects apply equally to the requirements of teaching or the conduct of military operations in a culturally sensitive environment. To conduct effective unconventional operations requires a detailed knowledge and understanding of the indigenous population's cultures and, most importantly, a unique attitude. Key elements of effective UO are language training, area/cultural studies and continuous forward presence. These are basic elements of a Special Forces Group's training. Unfortunately, when one of the Special Forces units focuses on a non-unconventional operations mission in response to a tasking, these are the first areas to suffer. To achieve adequate proficiency in these cultural aspects requires intensive training, regional focus and continuous forward presence. Additionally, the conduct of UW or FID requires integrated proficiency in DA and SR. These areas are not ignored. They are only approached with a different training focus and attitude. The uniqueness of

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unconventional operations, as explained earlier, is in executing these missions in a combined environment, ***through, with or by indigenous personnel.***

Why care about focusing the SF mission on UO? Why not leave the missions/tasks as now assigned--UW, FID, DA, SR, CT? The reasons are clarity of purpose, resources and security through continual regional engagement world-wide.

Too often many people confuse enthusiasm for competence. They also believe the potential to conduct a given mission equals the capability to execute it competently. SOF requires a professional approach that appreciates the full extent of task/mission requirements and recognizes limitations.

The prime resource is time. Even given the years of recent experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, many SF units (battalions and teams) still focus on DA, SR, or CT. Accordingly, much of their training time is spent perfecting their *unilateral* capabilities in these areas at the expense of time focused on the UO aspects. By so narrowly focusing on the DA, SR, or CT missions, these elements have degraded their ability to be truly effective in the more complex activities of UO. They cannot make the transition without significant effort and time or they must accept increased risk. Likewise, units effectively trained in UO will not be able to transition rapidly to effective *unilateral* DA, SR or CT. These, too, are complicated missions requiring intensive training.

Critics can point out a shortfall in the capability of the overall conventional force resulting from this proposal to delete special reconnaissance as a unilateral mission for the numbered SF Groups. This shortfall is in human intelligence (HUMINT). Many conventional Army commanders expect Special Forces to fill this role and this attitude is reinforced through misrepresentation of SF in the Army's Combat Training Center (CTC) program and the Battle Command Training Program (BCTP). Unilateral SR by Special Forces is an easy solution to their problem.

Unilateral reconnaissance should never be a task/mission for Special Forces. If this tactical/operational capability is lacking, then it must be addressed as a separate issue. Special Forces can assist with this task/mission; however, this should not assume nor require Special Forces to act unilaterally. The regional combatant commanders must require SF to maintain a continuous presence during peacetime, pre-conflict missions in their assigned regions, with the specific task of cultivating relationships with the objective of identifying the capability, availability and potential of indigenous assets. HUMINT, augmented by technical means, is the most effective and efficient way of conducting information collection, both for tactical and operational intelligence (not foreign intelligence collection) and can only be effectively achieved through indigenous assets trained by the UOF. These assets might conduct missions alone or be organized, trained, equipped and led by UOF. However, to effectively accomplish this requires years of constant presence and engagement to establish the cultural knowledge, credibility, legitimacy and trust of the indigenous population. Unilateral collection by SF is the method of last, and most ineffective and inefficient, choice.

UO is a complex field that requires dedicated attention and training to achieve and maintain proficiency. To dilute and divert the efforts and resources of the Special

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Forces Groups to *unilateral* CT, DA and SR as primary missions severely degrades the ability of these Groups to address adequately the UO role.

Surprisingly, it is the conventional forces and Congress that seem to have grasped the unconventional approach while USSOCOM and USASOC remain rooted in and fixated on the unilateral CT, DA and SR missions. Even given the current operational situation in Iraq and Afghanistan, the SOF community continues the twenty plus years of neglect of Special Forces and UO. A prime reason for this is that UO training is difficult to conduct, time intensive and expensive. Also, it is difficult to measure, validate and certify. It is easy and cheap in resources (time) to measure, validate and certify DA and SR training. But the most likely reason UO has been neglected is that UO is difficult, long duration, can't be explained in a "sound bite," more educational-based than training-based, and requires years of seemingly snail paced progress that does not read well in Officer Efficiency Reports or budgets.

However, it is the "routine and not so glamorous" unconventional operations which in fact contribute most to U.S. national security strategy in terms of the numbers of missions conducted and their effect on national security objectives.¹²

A compelling example of this contribution was the unconventional operations role SOF played in Haiti. By any measure, the U.S. Army Special Forces mission in Haiti was an unqualified success. This success, however, was due to the extraordinary people in Special Forces, and not due to preparation through UO training. Consequently, there were many mistakes corrected on-the-go through on-the-job experience. Also, none of the lessons learned in Haiti were applied or, apparently even considered, in the planning or execution of the operations in Iraq or Afghanistan. Both SOF and the conventional forces repeated the errors of Haiti.

Never totaling more than 1,200 personnel (including support personnel), which comprised only 5% of the total U.S. force package, the Special Forces controlled 95% of the land mass and 80% of the population in Haiti.

The Special Forces detachments were dispersed all across the country. In fact, the only places Special Forces did not have the dominant role was within the cities of Port-au-Prince and Cap Haitien. The mission of the Special Forces was to support the Multi-National Force-Haiti (MNF-Haiti) in establishing and maintaining a stable and secure environment to facilitate the transition of the new Government of Haiti (GOH) to functional governance and to participate as required in the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH), and then hand over military operations to designated UNMIH forces and redeploy.

By 5 October 1994, the Special Forces detachments were spread throughout Haiti and physically occupying the FAd'H (Haiti's military) garrisons. The Special Forces divided Haiti into three Areas of Responsibility (AORs) - the Northern Claw, the Central Region and the Southern Claw. One SF battalion was assigned to each of the AORs. Each battalion AOR was sub-divided into at least two SF company AORs and these sub-divided into SF detachment AORs. The detachment (ODA) was the smallest element deployed and typically was comprised of 8-9 Special Forces soldiers plus attachments (units were not at full strength of 12 personnel for numerous reasons; this shortage greatly stressed the soldiers and required combining teams in some

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instances). The normal attachments were one U.S. military linguist if needed, a Civil Affairs detachment of 2-4 personnel usually lead by a captain, and a Psychological Operations attachment of 1-2 personnel with a loudspeaker.

This typical SF detachment, with attachments, was required to control large areas. Some of the assigned AORs were 2,000-plus square kilometers in size, containing 8-11 major towns of 10,000 to 50,000 people each, with a total population of around 300,000 people in the AOR.

In each AOR, the SF were the only authority. There were no police, and the Haitian military was effectively disassembled. The town mayors, many of them Cedras appointees, had fled; the legal system was not operational; lawyers and judges were corrupt and many had fled; the prison system was atrocious; there was no border control; no port control; the electrical system was inoperative; the water system was destroyed. In short, the SF had to organize a complete political, legal, civil, and administrative infrastructure in 95% of Haiti. Again, the success of this operation depended not on prior UO focused training, but on the quality of the Special Forces soldiers.

Unconventional Operations, prudently and judiciously executed, can provide for regional stability through low-level U.S. presence. This presence can act as a brake on regional ambitions, demonstrate U.S. interest, possibly mitigate the spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and augment the counter-proliferation strategy.

We can not only focus on the "*conflict de jour*." We must put just as much emphasis and effort to promote and sustain UO in all regions, simultaneously. Nations that see or benefit from these unconventional operations may become more convinced and assured of U.S. interest in and concern for a given region. This presence can foster diplomacy, whereas absence may foster conflict. Nations or regions that perceive themselves adrift from or outside the sphere of concern of the worlds only super-power, feel compelled to pursue their own independent means of national security. This can exacerbate regional arms races, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and regional instability.

U.S. foreign policy will always be in transition. At best, it is difficult to anticipate world and regional events. Samuel Huntington¹³ describes it thus:

All in all, the emerging world is likely to lack the clarity and stability of the Cold War and to be a more jungle-like world of multiple dangers, hidden traps, unpleasant surprises and moral ambiguities.

Unconventional operations can provide a window through which this "jungle-like world" can be viewed with greater clarity. This is the arena, the regionally focused arena, within which unconventional operations forces thrive and can, if properly and timely employed, provide a unique option in executing the national security strategy of the U.S.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

First, codify in doctrine the terms unconventional operations (UO) and unconventional operational forces (UOF). As a distinct element of SOF, recognize UOF as key implementers of national security strategy.

Secondly, the primary mission for Army Special Forces Groups must be unconventional operations. Either eliminate or clearly state DA, SR and CT as duplicative, subordinate missions for the Special Forces Groups. Clearly indicate that other SOF or general purpose force elements are more appropriately tasked for these missions. Unconventional operations require intense focus. Diversion of training time and resources to missions performed by other elements is duplication.

Finally, and most important, keep the Special Forces Groups' units involved outside the United States to open these "windows" and help provide insight into these ambiguous areas. This will assist with regional stability. To adequately do this will require change to the current structure, funding and employment of the SF units. The strength of Special Forces is in their cultural and regional focus.

To accomplish this, significantly increase funding and priority for unconventional operations and UO training. Ensure regional orientation and funding for the UOF to sustain continuous presence in their respective regions. Give the active and National Guard Special Forces battalions clear areas (regions) of responsibility that remain fixed.

It takes years and decades to cultivate an area and inculcate regional expertise in a unit. An Unconventional Operations Force cannot change its language and region every few years and be expected to develop any significant degree of expertise or understanding of a region or to achieve cultural knowledge, credibility, legitimacy and trust of the indigenous population.

These regions must be carefully selected based on world dynamics and not based on current force structure. This means identify the regions and allocate (vice apportion) the units, then determine the headquarters structure at SF Group level. This will mean that different regions will have different mixes and numbers of allocated battalions. Concurrently, make the SF battalions more organizationally independent, even at the expense of the SF Group support structure.

The current SF Group headquarters structure will probably require modification. Some structure should be moved to the battalions. Conversely, no matter how much the battalion structure increases, the SF Group must have assets available to augment or weight a battalion in a given scenario. Another consideration is to move the Group headquarters into the theaters and make them the Army component headquarters for the Theater Special Operations Commands. The focus of UOF activity will be the battalion, not the SF Group. Another key related issue is to up-rank SF; make group commanders brigadier generals (O-7s); battalion commanders' colonels (O-6s); Operational Detachment-B (ODB) commanders' lieutenant colonels (O-5s) and Operational Detachment-A (ODA) commanders' majors (O-4s). In operations involving SF, the actual number of personnel needed is relatively small, yet the requirement usually calls for an O-6. Likewise, ODBs as Advanced Operational Bases (AOBs) or

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Special Operations Command and Control Elements (SOCCEs) require higher ranking personnel. Furthermore, every noncommissioned officer (NCO) position on an ODA should be authorized up to E-8, which allows for retention of personnel and experience.

The real key to all the above is the command and control relationship. UO (i.e. Special Forces) are the force that is selected, assessed, trained and equipped to globally engage on a continuous basis indigenous populations. SF is the only force that lives with, eats with, works with, and immerses long term (decades and for generations) in the culture of indigenous populations. Special Forces is the only US entity that learns about and understands the cultural, political, economic and military environments of the indigenous population. At least, this is the proper use of Special Forces even if this is not fully happening now. Therefore, in any area, the ground must be “owned,” both metaphorically and operationally, by the SF element. No other element should enter that operational space without the knowledge of and coordination with the appropriate SF Group. The SF Group (or the actual SF operational element on the ground be it a group, battalion, ODB or ODA) answers to the American Ambassador as his interagency coordinator for any and all activities, peace or war. Any element that enters the SF element area, regardless, is under the Command and Control (C2) of that SF element. It does not matter if it is a conventional military formation or JSOC or the CIA. The SF element “owns” the ground because they have been there, or should have been there, for years/decades. They are the only US entity that truly understands the environment. This is generational war and there is no room for fly-by cowboys. Every move must be culturally integrated. This is the salient issue. The real solution to this situation is the reorganization and reactivation of the Office for Strategic Services, as a separate Cabinet –level organization comprised of Special Forces and the CIA; however, that is the subject for the future. The implementation of the recommendations above are needed now.

As for the duplicative UW/FID efforts of MARSOC, cease this divisive path and provide the \$2B funding to USAJFKSWCS for a world-class joint UO educational and training university. The US Army JFK Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) has served with distinction the training needs of Army SOF (ARSOF) and the Department of Defense under different names and organizational structures in response to varying security requirements of the Cold War and post-Cold War. If *tribal* memory and sentiment are to be relied upon, the Center’s signature period came under its designation as the US Army Special Warfare Center. Through its Military Advisory and Training Assistance (MATA) Course(s), the school prepared literally thousands of officers and NCOs from all the Services, other government agencies and from many allied nations for advisory duty in Viet Nam during the 1960s. After the US withdrawal from Viet Nam, our military all but erased advisory concepts and doctrine from its operational repertoire, especially when linked to counter insurgency efforts, and by which it’s military leadership was so recently snake bitten. The new USA JFK Special Warfare Center and School, however, and the Special Forces operational groups, sustained the ‘guerilla POI’ and critical military advisory skills that ultimately turned the tide against a rebel takeover in El Salvador, and that ultimately pushed the Taliban out

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of Afghanistan *by, with and through* the Northern Alliance. These unconventional operations represent the majority of the few bright spots in US security operations since the end of World War II. In light of this infrequently -publicized distinction, and with a clear opportunity and need to nurture its demonstrated unconventional operations heritage, the USA JFK SWCS must make yet another transition in its journey to maturity. This time it must become a world-class center of unconventional operations and advisory education and training, a center of knowledge and innovation to serve the security needs of America and her allies in the 21st century. USAJFKSWCS should offer Special Forces and other ARSOF professionals, and selected interagency counterparts, an educational and training framework that permits professional educational growth beginning at the entry (tactical) level through the strategic levels of unconventional and advisory operational art. It will combine academic inquiry with field application. Degree-granting programs, certifications and occupational specialties, both civilian and military, offered in-house, on-line and in collaboration with an array of academic institutions (Johns Hopkins, MIT, UCLA, National Defense University, etc.) will produce well-rounded tactical, operational and strategic thinkers prepared to conceptualize, plan and apply the elements of national power (diplomacy, information, military, economic) to achieve country or regional security conditions that will produce the prosperity and freedoms that characterize stable states. The School will be lead and staffed by distinguished academic, military and administrative persons, who will engage in conceptual and doctrinal development, experiment with and examine concepts and force configuration excursions, and who will teach and mentor emerging leaders as they track through their professional education programs over the course of their unconventional warfare and operational careers. Additionally, USAJFKSWCS will be the National and International center for academic and professional excellence for unconventional warfare sponsoring and hosting seminars, forums, conferences and wargames. USAJFKSWCS will be the National integration center for unconventional operations and the interagency process. The School will offer the regional and functional commands, as well as other government agencies, a venue for examining lessons learned, for developing remedial approaches, and to formulating mid-and long-term strategies to achieving national security objectives in a forum that brings together proven operators from across the interagency. The School will serve to centrally shape, manage and over-watch the doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, personnel and facilities (DOTML-PF) sustainment programs of ARSOF, and of those forces in support of the Special Forces Unconventional Warfare Command.

The advantages of these recommendations are obvious. The United States gains regional experts with on-the-ground experience, able to help obviate Huntington's "jungle-like world of multiple dangers, hidden traps, unpleasant surprises and moral ambiguities." Additionally, this provides for mutual trust and understanding through personal and sustained contact with regional personalities. This is easily the most important outcome of the long-term regional orientation. In most of the developing nations, personal relationships are the key to trust and understanding. UOF can develop these relationships and facilitate the critical interface between coalition forces in a

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conflict. UOF, sufficiently resourced, can maintain a forward presence that can reassure nervous nations and increase regional stability. Furthermore, in the event of an incident or even conflict, these elements then provide a ready source of first-hand regional expertise.

Unconventional operations provide a realistic option for the uncertain future. Unconventional operations forces, focused and resourced, can provide a low risk option for the future as U.S. foreign policy continues to evolve. However, significant attention and resources must be focused on these unconventional operations forces. These unconventional operations forces can, and most likely will, play an increasingly active role around the world, especially during the next 10-30 years of global transition.

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ENDNOTES

1. Special Operations (DOD): [Joint Pub 1-02]: Operations conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to achieve military, diplomatic, informational, and/or economic objectives employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional force requirement. These operations often require covert, clandestine, or low visibility capabilities. Special operations are applicable across the range of military operations. They can be conducted independently or in conjunction with operations of conventional forces or other government agencies and may include operations through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces. 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.

2. United States Army Special Forces (DOD): [Joint Pub 1-02]: US Army forces organized, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations with an emphasis on unconventional warfare capabilities. Also called SF.

3. There are several Special Forces organizations. The numbered Special Forces Groups form the core of Special Forces. In the active component, these are the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th and 10th Special Forces Groups. In the reserve component, the numbered SF Groups are the 19th and 20th. This paper will only address the active component. The roles and missions of the reserve component groups requires analysis outside the scope of this paper. Other non-numbered Special Forces units include SFOD-D (Delta Force) and Training Group of the U.S. Army Special Warfare Center and School at Ft. Bragg, NC.

4. Special Operations Forces (SOF): [Joint Pub 1-02]: (DOD) 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. See also Air Force special operations forces; Army special operations forces; naval special warfare forces.

5. General purpose forces and conventional forces are used interchangeably. (DOD) 1. Those forces capable of conducting operations using nonnuclear weapons. 2. Those forces other than designated special operations forces. (Joint Pub 1-02).

6. ⁶ James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997).

7. Unconventional Warfare (DOD): [Joint Pub 1-02]: A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes, but is not limited to, guerrilla warfare, subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and unconventional assisted recovery. Also called UW.

8. **FM 31-20, December 1965: Section II. CONSIDERATIONS FOR COUNTERINSURGENCY**

43. General

In counterinsurgency operations, U.S. supported forces operate in less restrictive environments than in unconventional warfare, and their efforts are directed towards countering insurgent movements by denying them the support of the population and by destroying them by combat actions.

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44. Missions

Missions assigned TOE Special Forces detachments committed into counterinsurgency operational areas are broad in scope. Once in-country, these missions are further broken down into detailed requirements dictated by the local situation and the counterinsurgency plan for that area. Missions may be to-

- a. Train, advise, and provide operational assistance to indigenous Special Forces detachments, ranger-type units, paramilitary forces, and other military forces.
- b. Perform limited, military civic action and environmental improvement programs to support the overall counterinsurgency plan. For additional information on civic action see FM 31-73 and FM 41-10.
- c. Organize, train, advise, and direct tribal, village, and other remote area groups in counterinsurgency operations. This may include establishment of external defenses and internal security, border operations, and surveillance tasks.
- d. For details on additional missions assigned Special Forces detachments supporting counterinsurgency operations, refer to FM 31-21, FM 31-21A, FM 31-20A, FM 31-73, and FM 41-10.

45. Application of UW Techniques

Unconventional warfare techniques, in establishing intelligence nets; evasion and escape mechanisms on a limited scale; the use of psychological methods to gain support of the local population; and raids, ambushes, and air operations all have application in counterinsurgency. Techniques employed will depend largely upon the assigned tasks and the support required. The organization and presence of effective local defense units can neutralize the insurgents' efforts to gain support from the people. Special Forces detachments must carefully analyze each mission assigned and evaluate them in the light of unconventional warfare techniques and their application to counterinsurgency operations. For additional information refer to FM 31-21, FM 31-21A, and FM 31-20A.

- a. *Civil Guards*. Special Forces detachments will find that civil guard units are primarily charged with the mission of internal security. The civil guard is normally trained in individual weapons, light machine guns, and small mortars. The civil guard, in its security role, performs limited tactical missions such as raids, ambushes, and the pursuit of insurgent forces. The civil guard usually is organized into companies and battalion-size units. The tactics and techniques that Special Forces units use in support of guerrilla operations have the same application as when training civil guards. The Special Forces detachment commander can receive support in counterinsurgency not normally available in guerrilla operations. This support includes artillery fire support; armed light aviation support; close air support; extensive communications; and effective medical evaluation.
- b. *Self-Defense Units*. These units normally are responsible for the security of villages and hamlets; guarding major headquarters, bridges key intersections, and local airstrips; and for conducting limited, offensive operations. They may be organized into platoons or squads, and members normally are from the villages and hamlets within the area. With proper training they can conduct around the clock patrols, raids, and ambushes. In nonmilitary missions they can assist in emergency relief and be the principle support of environmental improvement, self-help programs set up by Special Forces units.
- c. *Civil Defense Groups*. These groups are more likely to be identified with primitive tribes in remote areas, not readily accessible to regular forces. Among those included in this group are people from rural areas, ethnic minorities, and other miscellaneous groups such as workmen's militia, youth organizations, and female auxiliaries. They can provide local and internal security of their villages and hamlets when properly trained and armed with adequate weapons. Training emphasis is on defensive tactics. Special Forces detachments assigned to these groups, especially in remote and border areas, will conduct extensive training in guerrilla operations. This includes training in-
 - (1) Hunter-killer team techniques.
 - (2) Trail watching.
 - (3) Border surveillance.
 - (4) Ambush of supply routes.
 - (5) Raids on insurgent camps.
 - (6) Intelligence gathering penetrations of insurgent controlled areas.

46. Selection of Operational Detachments

The same general criteria applies in selecting detachments for counterinsurgency operations as for unconventional warfare operations. The same preparations are made for infiltrating counterinsurgency areas except that logistical support is more rapid and secure, lessening the amount of equipment accompanying the detachment. For general guidance on the training and advisory capabilities of Special Forces detachments, see chapter 11, FM 31-21.

47. Operations

- a. Major emphasis is placed on operations to interdict and harass insurgent guerrilla units, training areas, and logistical installations and to deny insurgent forces access to local supply sources. These operations can be most successful and effective when Special Forces detachment personnel accompany long-range patrols and host country Special Forces units on deep penetrations into insurgent controlled territory. When properly coordinated with other receiving state activities conducted by regular forces (air strikes and major offensives against strongholds) these interdiction operations can make a significant contribution to the destruction of the insurgent threat. Major goals are to-
 - (1) Destroy and damage supply routes and depots.
 - (2) Capture equipment and key personnel.

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- (3) Create confusion and weaken insurgent morale.
- (4) Force the insurgent to keep on the move.
- (5) Fragment the insurgent force.
- (6) Relieve villages of the insurgent threat.
- (7) Deny the insurgent the support of the local population.

b. Types of missions assigned paramilitary forces are basically the same as those conducted in guerrilla warfare operations; however, additional missions not normally associated with interdiction operations may include-

- (1) Border operations (surveillance and denial) .
- (2) Reaction force operations.
- (3) Reconnaissance and combat patrols.
- (4) Long-range patrols into insurgent controlled areas.
- (5) Psychological operations.
- (6) Military civic actions.

c. Paramilitary forces, directed by Special Forces, conducting offensive and defensive operations against an insurgent force have certain advantages that are denied the guerrilla force in limited or general war. Some of these are-

- (1) Artillery support from guns outside insurgent-controlled areas.
- (2) Immediately available, close air and other air support.
- (3) Reinforcements particularly from mobile airborne and ranger units.
- (4) Evacuation from the operational area if necessary. Paramilitary forces, because of their location, organization, and support, can conduct extensive defensive operations in support of their villages and hamlets. Defensive tactics employed by paramilitary forces are similar to those of conventional forces with the exception of more primitive techniques for securing areas. These techniques include such defense measures as moats, palisade fences, man-traps, and terrain stripped of concealment and cover for an attacking force.

48. Border Operations

a. *General.* In a majority of cases where a subversive insurgency has been successful against an established government, support from sources outside the country has been a key factor in its success. A contributing factor to success in counterinsurgency is a denial of this external support which includes the use of adjacent countries as a sanctuary.

b. *Border Control.* Indigenous forces may be given missions of accomplishing varied border control operations concurrently with other military operations. There are two basic concepts of control-

(1) *Border denial.* These measures are taken to physically separate the insurgent force from external support provided from an adjacent country (see FM 31-10).

(2) *Border surveillance.* This consists of an extensive network of observation posts and watchers, augmented by intensive patrolling activity to detect, ambush, and destroy small groups of infiltrators. Normally, only border surveillance is especially applicable to Special Forces directed indigenous forces, operating in rugged terrain where construction of physical barriers is unfeasible. For a discussion of border control in counterinsurgency operations, see FM 31-16.

c. *Organization for Operations.* The primary organization for border control . operations is based on the insurgent situation and the terrain in the area. Special Forces commanders develop a force capable of sustained operations in remote areas for given periods of time. As a guide, a company of approximately 150 men can effectively control up to 10 kilometers of terrain of rugged hill masses and forests or jungles. Organizations are developed to insure adequate communications, fire support, and a highly trained reaction force as reserve.

d. *Bases of Operation.* The Special Forces detachment commander in planning border control operations must consider-

(1) *Range of fire support weapons.* If fire support from bases are provided by 105mm and 155-mm howitzers, their respective ranges will permit location and deployment of base camps up to 30 kilometers apart. Shorter range weapons will not permit as much distance. A larger organization will be required to effectively control the assigned area.

(2) *Mobility of reaction force (reaction time).* Maximum use of civilian transportation should be exploited; however, lack of fuel and other necessary POL may negate the use of civilian vehicles. Sufficient helicopter support must be available on a continuing basis in those areas which are most active.

(3) *Communications requirements.* The detachment commander must determine his communications needs and coordinate with the Special Forces group signal officer for procurement of additional signal equipment and of needed technical advice. Communications systems must be designed to tie in with existing systems and must include connection with local, intelligence gathering agencies and reaction and back-up forces. Indigenous personnel are trained in the use of any system established.

(4) *Effective span of control.* This is effected by an adequate communications system and strong, well-trained leaders. Conscientious advisory support from Special Forces personnel will insure maximum effort. Patrols and outposts will be given explicit directions to cover most contingencies that may arise and constant patrolling and periodic inspections of outposts and observation posts will further insure compliance with issued orders.

(5) *Logistical support of operational units.*

The Special Forces commander and his counterpart, in committing long-range patrols into insurgent controlled areas or in pursuit of insurgent forces, must plan for a sound logistical resupply system. Lack of adequate supplies shorten the

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range capability of these patrols and render them ineffective. The detachment commander may consider using the area drop zone system for resupply. Procedures used will serve as a technique of control through the establishment of phases lines, so that he knows exactly where his patrols are at all times. Supplies also may be delivered to fixed outposts periodically. Changes of personnel and constant relocation of other than fixed outposts may negate such resupply; however, sufficient rations must be taken in to last for a given period of time. Consideration will be given to the use of pack animals where they are locally available, particularly in areas where predictable periods of poor flying weather, such as a monsoon season, is experienced.

e. Intelligence. The Special Forces operational detachment plans for the development of intelligence nets in the operational area to supply him a constant flow of intelligence. Military intelligence personnel, trained in agent recruiting and net organization are infiltrated into the operational area to develop the intelligence potential, and agents native to the area may be brought in by -

(1) Preparing cover stories (i.e., merchants, farmers) for entry into populated areas.
(2) Their assignment to paramilitary forces and local law enforcement agencies with freedom of movement throughout the area.

f. Operational Techniques. The techniques involved in border control operations are many and varied. They are limited only by the planning given to the operation by the detachment commander and his support elements. Techniques can include-

(1) Saturation patrolling, to the maximum extent possible, with no fixed patterns and times.
(2) Small-unit operations of squad size or below.
(3) Surveillance of insurgent activities from fixed locations by day, with active operations against targets of opportunity during periods of darkness.
(4) Deceptive measures taken when moving forces through the area of deceive the insurgent forces in their surveillance activities.

(a) Use of civilian clothing to hide uniforms and identity, e.g., dress patrols as farmers or workers so that they can move freely through an area without suspicion.

(b) Use of enemy clothing when traveling over trails normally used by the insurgent.

(5) Penetration of the insurgent force and their support elements, by selecting and training local indigenous personnel.

(6) Infiltration of homing devices into the enemy organization by allowing them to capture arms, ammunition, radios, or other equipment essential to their activities.

(7) Gathering intelligence by using-

(a) A centralized system for maintaining records on prisoners, suspects, or criminals, who, through the promise of parole or pardon, may be used to solicit information or act as agents or informers. The inherent risk, of course, is the possibility of double agents. Also the detachment commander can successfully employ deception operations by implanting false information, or other means.

(b) Intelligence maps which indicate routes, movement times, and primary and alternate base locations, which, when cross-referenced with other files, will indicate the tentative activities of the insurgent in the area, substantiation by surveillance of the population, and attitudes and reaction to curfew and other restrictions. For additional information, FM 31-10, FM 31-16, FM 31-21, FM 31-21A, and FM 31-73.

9. Direct Actions missions may be conducted as part of unconventional operations such as unconventional warfare and counter-narcotics, but the desire is that these missions be combined operations if possible.

10. CT proficiency requires intense effort to become truly surgical. However, the CT mission given to SF is an *in-extremis* mission. If honestly approached in this manner, and not as a *de facto* duplication of the principle CT forces, then this mission is only a DA mission. Obviously, the degree of risk increases.

11. Some examples are: the Special Mission Units, the Special Support Units, the Rangers, Divisional and Corps recon units, the 82d Airborne, the USMC, the SEALs. None of these units are focused on UO.

12. Special Forces elements have been training with their counterparts in many nations around the globe for many years. Through their presence in these countries, relationships and contacts have been established that have had far reaching effects. In many of these countries, the military counterparts with whom Special Forces have worked have eventually risen to various positions of power--in some cases even Head-of-State. These relationships have lead to regional stability in some cases and access to critical facilities in others. In almost all cases, SF is viewed in these countries as informal ambassadors of the U.S. and positive examples of democracy. The leverage gained in negotiations with foreign governments over our national security goals and objectives often staggers the imagination of the casual observer. For example, if one accepts that one of

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our goals in Liberia was to gain and maintain the trust and confidence of its leader, President Doe, then the efforts of a single Special Forces sergeant met and exceeded expectations. There are other operations, usually classified, where Special Forces Soldiers accomplishments far exceeded anything thought possible in terms of the long term positive impact on U.S./allied relations.

13. Samuel Huntington is an Eaton Professor of the Science of Government and Director of the John M. Olin Institute of Strategic Studies at the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University.

