NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
Monterey, California

THESIS

A COMPARISON OF U.S. NAVY SEA AIR LAND (SEAL) TEAMS AND U.S. ARMY SPECIAL FORCES

by

Philip E. Kapusta

June 2000

Thesis Co-Advisors: Gregory Hildebrandt
Lee Edwards

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

DTIC QUALITY INSPECTED 4

20000825 032

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.

1. AGENCY USE ONLY *(Leave blank)*	2. REPORT DATE	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED
	June 2000	Master's Thesis

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
A Comparison of Navy Sea Air Land (SEAL) Teams and U.S. Army Special Forces

5. FUNDING NUMBERS

6. AUTHOR(S)
Kapusta, Philip E.

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, CA 93943-5000

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.

12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE

13. ABSTRACT ***(maximum 200 words)***

Navy Sea Air Land (SEAL) Teams and Army Special Forces (SF) are distinct organizations that often compete for the same missions, and this thesis provides a comparison of the two organizations. Others have provided detailed accounts of both the operational and political backgrounds that resulted in SEALs and SF being placed under the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM).

This thesis provides a narrative of the relevant operational and political events that influenced the present organizational cultures of the SF and SEALs. Most notably, both units had their origins in World War II.
SF were most heavily influenced by the unconventional warfare (UW) experiences in Europe, and the
SEALs were most heavily influenced by the experiences of "frogmen" who prepared beaches for opposed amphibious landings. Both SF and SEALs faced an uncertain existence until the creation of SOCOM, and they willingly branched into additional mission areas.

The material presented can be used as a framework to understand the friction that is sometimes present between conventional and special operations units. It can also be employed as a template for assessing how future actions will fit within the SF and SEAL organizational cultures.

14. SUBJECT TERMS	15. NUMBER OF PAGES
Special Operations, Special Forces, SEAL, SOCOM, United States Special Operations Command, Special Warfare, Department of Defense	306
	16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE	19. SECURITY CLASSIFI- CATION OF ABSTRACT	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	UL

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239-18

A COMPARISON OF U.S. NAVY SEA AIR LAND (SEAL) TEAMS AND U.S. ARMY SPECIAL FORCES

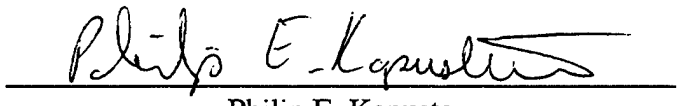
Philip E. Kapusta
Lieutenant, United States Navy
B.S., United States Naval Academy, 1992

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

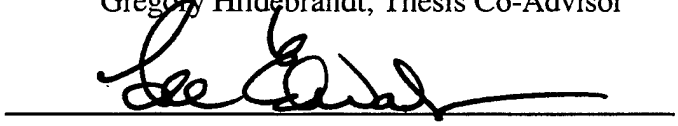
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN LEADERSHIP AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

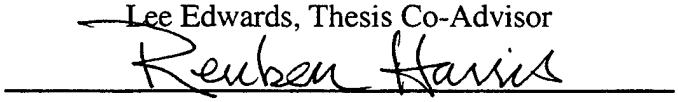
from the

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
June 2000

Author: 
Philip E. Kapusta

Approved by:
Gregory Hildebrandt, Thesis Co-Advisor


Lee Edwards, Thesis Co-Advisor


Reuben Harris, Chairman
Department of System Management

ABSTRACT

Navy Sea Air Land (SEAL) Teams and Army Special Forces (SF) are distinct organizations that often compete for the same missions, and this thesis provides a comparison of the two organizations. Others have provided detailed accounts of both the operational and political backgrounds that resulted in SEALs and SF being placed under the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM).

This thesis provides a narrative of the relevant operational and political events that influenced the present organizational cultures of the SF and SEALs. Most notably, both units had their origins in World War II. SF were most heavily influenced by the unconventional warfare (UW) experiences in Europe, and the SEALs were most heavily influenced by the experiences of "frogmen" who prepared beaches for opposed amphibious landings. Both SF and SEALs faced an uncertain existence until the creation of SOCOM, and they willingly branched into additional mission areas.

The material presented can be used as a framework to understand the friction that is sometimes present between conventional and special operations units. It can also be employed as a template for assessing how future actions will fit within the SF and SEAL organizational cultures.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION 1

A. THESIS OVERVIEW 1

B. BACKGROUND..... 4

C. SOF WITHIN THE MILITARY.....7

II. SPECIAL OPERATIONS BACKGROUND 13

A. SPECIAL OPERATIONS DEFINED..... 13

B. SOF MISSION AREAS AND COLLATERAL ACTIVITIES 16

C. SOCOM BACKGROUND 20

D. SPECIAL FORCES BACKGROUND 22

E. SEAL BACKGROUND.....27

III. SPECIAL FORCES ORIGINS.....33

A. THE WORLD WAR II ERA 33

B. THE POST-WORLD WAR II ERA AND KOREA 39

C. THE FOUNDING OF SPECIAL FORCES 42

D. THE COLD WAR ERA TO VIETNAM.....46

E. SPECIAL FORCES IN VIETNAM 48

F. EFFECTS OF VIETNAM ON SPECIAL FORCES.....62

G. THE POST-VIETNAM ERA ... .66

H. DESERT ONE 69

IV. SEAL ORIGINS.....77

A. SCOUTS AND RAIDERS.. 77

B. NAVAL COMBAT DEMOLITION UNITS.....79

C. UNDERWATER DEMOLITION TEAMS 80

D. THE POST-WORLD WAR II ERA.....83

E. THE POST-KOREA ERA 85

F. THE FOUNDING OF THE SEAL TEAMS.....86

G. THE VIETNAM ERA 89

H. THE POST-VIETNAM ERA.....93

V. CREATING THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND (1980-1986).....103

A. THE EARLY 1980s..... 103

B. GRENADA 113

C. SOF IN THE MID-1980s.....134

VI. UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND (1987-1999) 153

A. THE LATE 1980s 153

B. OPERATION EARNEST WILL 166

C. OPERATION JUST CAUSE 169

D. DESERT SHIELD/STORM 196

E. OPERATION PROVIDE COMFORT.....221

F. SOMALIA.....224

G. HAITI.....243

H. SOF IN THE LATE 1990s.....251

VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....259

A. SUMMARY.....259

B. FUTURE OF AMERICAN SOF.....268

C. ADDITIONAL AVENUES OF INQUIRY 274

APPENDIX 277

LIST OF REFERENCES 289

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST 291

I. INTRODUCTION

A. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis is a comparative study of the United States Army Special Forces (SF) and the United States Navy Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) Teams. The thesis is unclassified, so the discussion of some units, operations and missions is precluded. However, the conclusions are generally applicable across the special operations spectrum.

Special operations encompass a vast array of units and activities, many of which merit entire books on their own. However, in the interest of narrowing the thesis to a manageable scope, only the SF and SEALs are analyzed in detail. Although limited information about other special operations units such as the Army Rangers and Air Force special operations personnel is presented, the primary emphasis throughout is on the SF and SEALs. These organizations are two of the larger and more widely recognized organizations within the special operations forces (SOF) community. They also have similar mission areas, and differences and similarities between the two can prove insightful.

The methodology employed begins with a literature review. Although extensive, the literature cited is only a small fraction of the literally thousands of works on special operations. To enhance readability, the material is woven into the accounts of SF, SEAL and United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM or SOCOM) development, rather than be presented as distinct blocks.

For organizational purposes, the aborted attempt to rescue the American hostages in Iran in 1980 is used as a benchmark. The tragic failure of the operation was a watershed event for modern American SOF. Drastically reduced in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, SOF were fighting for survival. Small-scale and relatively minor proposals for changing SOF were already being pushed, but the rescue mission provided a catalyst for substantive change. This time period also coincided with the Reagan era, when a massive defense buildup was undertaken. SOF enjoyed a renaissance and changed from being a small force on the outer margins of the military to comprising a sizeable force well integrated into the American military. SF and SEAL histories are explored separately prior to 1980, and then together after the rescue mission. Prior to 1980, SF and SEALs had minimal interaction and rarely conducted joint operations. This time period also marked the beginning of a concerted effort (often by those outside the military) to foster truly joint capabilities and organizations.

This first chapter provides a brief introductory overview and then discusses the background of American SOF and their somewhat quixotic standing within the larger American military. Philip Selznick's notion of "precarious values" that differ from those of the larger organization is also introduced as it relates to SOF.

Chapter two gives a broad overview of the current SOF structure, including the composition of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM or SOCOM). Special operations themselves are defined and modern SOF mission areas are explained. Typical paths into SOF and general background material on the SF and SEALs are detailed. This chapter also references an appendix that goes into more detail

about the units comprising SOCOM. The material presented in this chapter is intended for readers who do not already possess an intimate knowledge of American SOF.

Chapter three chronicles the founding and history of the SF from World War II through the Iranian rescue attempt. The history is arranged in a roughly chronological manner. Emphasis is placed upon organizational history and selection methods, and how this influenced SF's development and present character.

Chapter four is structured similarly, and it relates the history of the SEAL Teams. It also starts at the World War II era with the "frogmen" and Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT) – the direct predecessors of today's SEAL Teams. Again, 1980 is used as a convenient end point for this section.

Chapter five chronicles the founding and development of SOCOM. It starts in 1980 and continues through to early 1987. Notable SOF missions and activities during this time period are also noted, though with a particular emphasis on SF and the SEALs.

Chapter six fully explores the establishment and development of SOCOM from 1986 through 1999. Again, the emphasis is on SF and SEAL activities during this period.

Chapter seven illustrates the concept of how "precarious values" defines SOF's standing within the larger military. In particular, SOF's organizational history and selection procedures are analyzed to determine the present character of the two groups. Chapter seven also presents conclusions and recommendations. They are intended only to provide a basis for discussion and thought, rather than purport to be the definitive guide to what is right and wrong with American SOF.

B. BACKGROUND

American SOF are currently commanded by the United States Special Operations Command, which was established in 1987. SOCOM enjoys considerably more autonomy than commands of a similar stature, including managing its own budget (Waller, 1994). Acting more like a separate defense agency than a unified command, SOCOM fights for and administers its own resources through Major Force Program 11 (MFP 11). Often likened to a separate military branch, SOCOM's creation was forced upon the military by Congressional fiat over the strenuous objections of numerous high-ranking uniformed personnel (Marquis, 1997).

USSOCOM's present force structure includes over 46,000 soldiers, and almost 30,000 of them belong to the Army component. Army forces include: the "Green Beret" Special Forces, the Army Rangers, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, Civil Affairs (CA), and psychological warfare groups. About 5,500 SEALs and support forces such as Special Boat Unit (SBU) personnel make up the Navy's contribution. The Air Force has about 9,500 special operations personnel, providing specialized infiltration helicopters and airplanes, aerial gunships and refueling tankers (Waller, 1994). Also found within the Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) are about 1,000 Combat Control Team (CCT) members and Pararescue Jumpers (PJ).

Though the American military traces its roots to the unconventional forces of the Revolutionary War, the military establishment has traditionally eschewed most every element of special operations. Only after guerilla warfare contributed significantly to the

overall Allied effort in World War II was it given official recognition in American military doctrine (Waller, p.30).

While the American military has typically been exposed to cycles of rapid expansion and massive demobilization, this trend has been particularly acute within the SOF community. World War II marked America's entry into the realm of contemporary SOF, with such units as: the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), 1st Special Service Force, Scouts and Raiders, and the air commandos. At the war's conclusion, virtually all of these units were disbanded, and only a few Navy frogmen and air commandos remained (Marquis, p. 25). A SOF buildup started in the 1950s, greatly accelerated by President Kennedy's fascination with, and call for development of unconventional warfare capabilities. After America's humiliating defeat in Vietnam, however, SOF resources were slashed to exceptionally low levels.

SOF units, particularly distrusted by more conventional commanders, were often ignored and shortchanged by their parent commands. By the mid-1970s, the Navy proposed moving all Naval Special Warfare (NSW) units to the reserves and Special Forces funding was just 5% of what it had been during Vietnam (Wooten, 1984). The military's widely quoted axiom of "no more Vietnams" was synonymous with "no more attention paid to low intensity conflict" (Waller, p. 32).

The sad debacles of the unsuccessful *Mayaguez* rescue operation and "Desert One"[1] prompted both Congress and the military establishment to undertake long-term

[1] "Desert One" was the code name of an intermediate refueling station in the Das-a-Kafir desert used during the aborted attempt to rescue the 53 American hostages being held in Iran in 1980. A helicopter and C-130 collided on the ground and eight U.S. servicemen were killed, leading to the mission's cancellation.

efforts to improve American SOF in terms of equipment, structure and capabilities (USSOCOM, 1998). Those fighting for SOF reform within the military were seldom above the rank of Colonel, and they received few rewards and several ruined careers (Marquis, p. 5). Congress provided the necessary muscle to force the Services to accept a major SOF overhaul, which was perceived within the military's upper ranks as constituting political meddling (Waller, p. 32). The struggle to consolidate SOF under a single command was a decade-long battle that eventually produced a flexible, low-visibility force well suited to the "low-intensity" operations of the 1990s and beyond.

Two of the main components of SOCOM are the Army's Special Forces (SF) and the Navy's Sea Air Land (SEAL) Teams. They are some of the most glorified and often misrepresented warriors in popular culture. While they share many of the same mission areas, they also have different institutional origins and cultures.

Prior to the creation of SOCOM, SF and SEALs existed and operated largely independent of each other. A merger of SOF into a single command created what is sometimes referred to as "a separate military service" (Marquis, p. 4). Individuals serving within the SOF community frequently report feeling significantly more kinship with their special operations counterparts in other services than with conventional soldiers within their own service (Marquis, p. 8). Joint operations, a result of both practical necessity and Congressional prodding, have also served to strengthen the ties

---

"Desert One" supplanted the mission's original code name, Operation Rice Bowl, as a recognized moniker for the entire effort.

between SF and SEALs. However, the process has not been seamless and considerable differences remain in such areas as mission focus and organizational culture.

C. SOF WITHIN THE MILITARY

SOF have always occupied an unusual, if not problematic, niche in the American military establishment. SOF units almost invariably answer to conventional commanders, who often do not have a full or realized understanding of SOF capabilities and limitations (Waller, p. 30). The SOF strategies of unconventional and guerilla warfare are more normally associated with a militarily weaker force, and do not integrate well with the American reliance upon immediate attrition and maneuver warfare. American military commanders are generally taught to confront the enemy directly, and, thus, implicitly consider SOF tactics "unworthy" (Sutherland, 1990).

Philip Selznick defines "precarious" values as those whose missions and goals within an organization are in conflict with, or in danger of being overwhelmed by, the primary aims of the organization. This well-illustrates SOF's position within the military, as the prized SOF traits of: independence, near equality among team members, and unconventional thinking do not mesh well with the conformity, hierarchy and directed thinking characterizing the far larger conventional units (Marquis, p. 8).

Desert Storm commander, General Schwarzkopf, exemplifies the sometimes strained relations between conventional commanders and SOF. Schwarzkopf himself was a former armor officer whose primary focus on was on heavy, conventional Army divisions. Ironically, Schwarzkopf's command, the Central Command (CENTCOM), was co-located on MacDill Air Force Base with SOCOM. However, relations between

the two commands were always strained, becoming even more so during the buildup preceding Desert Storm (Marquis, p. 229-230).

General Stiner, the SOCOM commander, was shocked to learn that there were no plans to employ SOF, and his forces were routinely being bumped from flights to the region to make room for conventional units (Marquis, p. 326). Stiner appealed personally to Schwarzkopf for an expanded SOF role and even unsuccessfully lobbied Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Chairman General Powell for an expanded SOF role in the coming conflict (Marquis, p. 248).

However, on one occasion, Powell overruled Schwarzkopf and ordered him to accept a 400-man SOF element to hunt for Iraqi Scuds[2] (Marquis, p. 342). Eventually, some 7,700 SOF members participated in the conflict, but getting them into theater and having missions approved was a constant struggle (Marquis, p. 251). Schwarzkopf personally approved every special operations mission and never allowed Stiner in theater, despite Stiner's persistent efforts (Marquis, p. 250). At the end of the war, Schwarzkopf did single out SOF for praise at a press conference, yet the fact that this stunned his staff is indicative of the tension between SOF and conventional commanders that even a full-scale war could not eliminate (Marquis, p. 349).

Various reasons for the SOF/conventional rift have been postulated, with the end result being that it is probably a result of a combination of factors operating together.

---

[2] Scud is the NATO code name for a Soviet-designed Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) employed by Iraq during the Gulf War. It had little use against tactical military targets, but rather was used more as a political weapon in attacks against Israeli and Saudi Arabian cities. The allied coalition, seeking to prevent Israel's entry into the war, devoted enormous resources to a marginally successful effort to prevent Iraqi Scud launches.

Hilton (1991) attributes some of SOF's difficulties fitting into the larger military as being doctrinal. The American military, and the Army in particular, has always relied upon doctrine as a guiding force, and America has never embraced special operations and guerilla warfare to the same extent as European and Asian cultures. As a result SF doctrine, centered on unconventional warfare, first emerged in the 1950s. However, this did not integrate well with the Army's Air-Land Battle concepts, which were predicated upon heavy armor and mechanized forces forward-deployed to Europe in the expectation of facing the Soviet threat. Only updated SOF doctrine and a changing geo-political climate allowed special operations to assume a more "respectable" role in the military establishment (Hilton, p. 3-4).

Simons attributes much of the antipathy between the SOF and conventional communities to widespread perception that SOF members are "out of control" and do not fall within the Army's standards (Simons, p. 36). She found that the Vietnam War had a profound impact on the SF community, both internally and in how it was perceived. There was an internal selection bias (particularly in the case of officers) towards individuals who did not "want to conform and liked rough living" (Simons, p. 32). Affecting the overall quality of SF at the time was the lowering of selection standards in order to meet the wartime needs. This inclusion of personnel, who otherwise might not have made it throughout the selection process, combined with the use of SF for "dirty jobs," contributed to the popular image of Special Forces as "cold-blooded, hair-trigger killers" (Simons, p. 35).

This unpopular image, combined with America's defeat by a seemingly inferior force, led to an almost cathartic desire on the part of senior conventional commanders to minimize the influence and structure of SF (Simons, p. 33). Although seldom explicitly stated, one popular viewpoint was that America had suffered its first loss during an "unconventional" war; so much of the blame could be attributed to the "unconventional" warriors.

Echoing Simons' findings of mistrust between conventional and special operations communities, Marquis attributed much of this to misemployment of SOF by senior conventional commanders. These commanders almost invariably have a far better understanding of conventional doctrine and capabilities, frequently resulting in SOF being employed as underequipped infantry and suffering losses against opposing heavy forces. This results in a cyclic pattern whereby SOF distrust conventional commanders, and these same commanders are disappointed by SOF unit performance fighting forces against which they were not designed to operate (Marquis, p. 8).

Also in line with Hilton, Marquis identified doctrinal and philosophical differences that cause problems. In general, American commanders learn to "close with and destroy" enemy forces, and to take and hold objectives after direct engagement with the opponent's military. However, these are antithetical to the typical SOF tactics of unconventional warfare, limited sabotage and harassment, rather than total decimation of the enemy. Thus, many conventional leaders come to view SOF contributions as irrelevant, insignificant and even going against the American ethic of "fair play" (Marquis, p. 8). Many believe SOF to be liabilities in that they can tie up significant

friendly assets by requiring extraction from deep within enemy territory or by triggering conflicts too early if they are discovered before the desired onset of hostilities.

Another point of friction, identified by Waller, is the fact that American military prides itself on being an egalitarian force, where all soldiers are treated equally. The very nature of SOF implies an eliteness, which is then viewed suspiciously by those outside the community. Waller also mentioned the issue of trust, and he concluded that commanders have never truly trusted SOF. He attributed this to the unconventional nature of the warfare they conduct, and the fact that conventional commanders have an understandable dislike for what they cannot control (Waller, p. 30).

Waller provided a personal example of the friction between the SOF and conventional communities when he described the Department of Defense's (DOD) reaction to the publication of his book. Senior Pentagon officials accused SOCOM of spoon-feeding Waller the stories about SOF operations in an effort to protect its budget. In fact, Waller reported the exact opposite: although he conducted over 200 interviews and talked to dozens of other service personnel, he reported that his negotiations with SOCOM were "tedious and tense" (Waller, p. 29). The command declassified operations "only grudgingly," and flatly refused to discuss many operations. Overall, Waller characterizes the incident as being indicative of DOD's relationship with SOF. Specifically, DOD has never been entirely comfortable with SOF, and often regards them as being more trouble than they were worth (Waller, p. 31). It was only the necessities of wartime that lead to the creation of SF and SEALs, and their existence has been contentious ever since.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

II. SPECIAL OPERATIONS BACKGROUND

A. SPECIAL OPERATIONS DEFINED

Special operations and the associated unconventional warfare (UW) form a distinct subset of overall military action. Adams (1998) defines special operations as those "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." He further points out that such operations can take place either independently, or in coordination with conventional units. One significant difference from conventional operations is that special operations are often conducted in a covert or low-visibility manner due to politico-military factors (Adams, p. xxv).

In contrast, conventional warfare is typically marked by direct, sustained combat between organized, professional militaries of sovereign nations. It is often large-scale and involves achieving or protecting national interests and objectives. Conventional warfare is almost always openly acknowledged. The forces employed are usually heavily equipped with tanks, artillery and tracked vehicles. The personnel involved are often conscripts or draftees, who, aside from some senior enlisted and certain specialists, do not receive extensive individual training (Adams, p. xviii).

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM or SOCOM) notes that special operations normally employ a small force against strategic or operational objectives by using units with a combination of special equipment, training, personnel, or

tactics that go beyond those found in conventional units (USSOCOM, 1998). SOCOM also identifies five characteristics that differentiate special operations from conventional military activities.

The first characteristic is the unconventional training and equipment found in special operations forces (SOF) units. Special operations, because of their unique nature, often specifically require specialized equipment and skills outside the realm of conventional forces. SOF units themselves are typically lightly equipped when compared to heavy, conventional forces, but the individual special operator is usually more highly trained and better outfitted than a comparable infantryman (USSOCOM, p. 1).

Special operations also tend to be greatly influenced by political considerations. Cultural sensitivity may dictate that a particular special operation be conducted in a low-profile manner such that American involvement is not readily apparent. This contrasts with conventional operations, where political constraints can affect the conduct of the operations, but seldom to as large an extent. Special operations are also sometimes extremely high profile, as in the case of hostage rescue, where even limited casualties can still be catastrophic (USSOCOM, p. 1).

Another hallmark of special operations is the use of unorthodox approaches. Far from ignoring the traditional principles of war, special operations shift the emphasis placed on their combinations and relative importance. Where conventional forces typically employ massed firepower and tactical maneuvers, SOF often rely upon surprise, speed, stealth, audacity, deception, and new tactics and techniques. Special operations seldom seek to seize and hold terrain, but rather seek to exploit specific enemy

weaknesses or act as force multipliers in support of conventional actions (USSOCOM, p.1).

The fourth distinction is that some special operations rely upon being executed within a specific, narrow time window. These missions are often in the arenas of direct action, counter terrorism, hostage recovery, and search and seizure of maritime targets. Such missions can be characterized by limited moments of tactical advantage, and additional opportunities for execution can be non-existent (USSOCOM, p. 1).

The final distinction drawn is the need for specialized intelligence. Special operations rely to a great extent upon intelligence, and they require immediate and continuous access to information, including that from nontraditional sources. In general, SOF rely upon the existing intelligence assets, but in some cases SOF may utilize advance or reconnaissance groups. SOF missions often require real time or near-real time intelligence (USSOCOM, p. 1).

Overall, special operations make use of specially trained and equipped personnel, usually working in small units, to undertake direct and indirect attacks on strategic and operational objectives. Such operations are typically outside the routine capabilities of conventional forces, or can be achieved with much greater economy of force by employing SOF. Special operations tend to strike at specific enemy vulnerabilities and make use of surprise and speed rather than the massed firepower and maneuver associated with conventional operations (USSOCOM, p. 2).

A. SOF MISSION AREAS AND COLLATERAL ACTIVITIES

SOCOM identified nine principal mission areas and eight collateral activities in its 1998 Force Posture Statement. The mission areas constitute the primary operations for which SOF are presently organized and trained. In contrast, collateral activities are those to which SOF do not specifically train, but are often tasked with by virtue of SOF-unique capabilities. While mission areas are relatively stable, collateral activities frequently change due to the dynamic international environment (USSOCOM, p. 3).

1. SOF Principal Missions:

Counterproliferation (CP) – Counterproliferation consists of activities taken to oppose the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. CP often includes using military means to protect U.S. forces and interests, intelligence collection and analysis, and support for American diplomatic measures such as arms and export controls. CP is often performed in cooperation with other U.S. government agencies (USSOCOM, p.3).

Combating Terrorism (CBT) – Combating terrorism involves precluding, preempting and favorably resolving terrorist acts across the threat spectrum. The two main components of CBT are antiterrorism and counter terrorism. Antiterrorism is defensive in nature and stresses reducing vulnerability to terrorist activities. Counter terrorism is offensive in nature and consists of active measures taken to prevent, deter and respond to terrorism. When directed by the National Command Authority (NCA) or other appropriate commanders, SOF may be directed to resolve specific terrorist incidents (USSOCOM, p. 3).

Foreign Internal Defense (FID) – Foreign internal Defense entails activities taken to organize, train, advise and assist host nation military and paramilitary forces. The objective is to develop professional forces capable of defending their nations against subversion, lawlessness and insurgencies (USSOCOM, p. 3).

Special Reconnaissance (SR) – Special reconnaissance consists of reconnaissance and surveillance activities taken to ascertain information regarding the capabilities, intentions, and actions of potential or actual enemy forces. SR may also be conducted to determine the general or specific characteristics of a particular area (USSOCOM, p. 3).

Direct Action (DA) – Direct Action missions are of a limited duration and consist of strikes or small-scale offensive operations to seize, destroy, capture, recover or damage designated personnel of material (USSOCOM, p. 3).

Psychological Operations (PSYOP) – Psychological operations are undertaken to influence or reinforce foreign attitudes and behaviors favorable to the originator's objectives. Planned operations convey selected information to foreign audiences with the intent to influence their emotions, motives and objective reasoning. The ultimate goal is to affect the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups and individuals in ways favorable to the originator (USSOCOM, p. 3).

Civil Affairs (CA) – Civil Affairs assist commanders by establishing, maintaining, influencing, or exploiting relations between the military and civil authorities (both governmental and nongovernmental) in friendly, neutral or hostile areas

of operation. The objective is to facilitate military operations and consolidate operational activities (USSOCOM, p. 3).

Unconventional Warfare (UW) – Unconventional warfare consists of activities undertaken to organize, train, equip, advise and assist indigenous and surrogate forces in military and paramilitary operations. UW is almost always of an extended duration (USSOCOM, p. 3).

Information Operations (IO) – Information Operations seek to achieve information superiority by affecting an opponent's information and information systems. Concurrently, IO entails protecting friendly information and information systems (USSOCOM, p. 3).

2. SOF Collateral Activities:

Coalition support – Coalition support consists of integrating coalition units into multinational military operations. Frequently, SOF will train coalition forces on tactics and techniques and provide communications support (USSOCOM, p. 4). Coalition support often makes use of SOF's extensive language capabilities.

Combat search and rescue (CSAR) – Combat search and rescue involves penetrating enemy air defense networks and conducting joint air, ground, or maritime operations in hostile or denied territory in day/night and adverse weather situations. The objective is to recover distressed personnel during wartime or contingency operations. SOF primarily train and equip to perform CSAR in support of other SOF missions only. However, SOF may perform CSAR for conventional forces on a case-by-case basis, providing it does not interfere with other SOF missions (USSOCOM, p. 4).

Counterdrug (CD) activities – Counterdrug actions entail training host nation CD forces and domestic law enforcement agencies in skills needed to conduct individual and small unit operations. Such operations are those with the aim of detecting, monitoring, and interdicting the cultivation, production, and trafficking of illegal drugs intended for use in the Unites States (USSOCOM, p. 4).

Humanitarian demining (HD) activities- Humanitarian demining involves reducing or eliminating threats to friendly military forces and noncombatants posed by mines and other unexploded ordnance (UXO). HD primarily takes the form of training host nation personnel in the recognition, identification, marking and rendering safe of UXO. SOF also provide instruction in program management, medical, and mine awareness training (USSOCOM, p. 4).

Humanitarian Assistance (HA) – Humanitarian Assistance consists of assisting host nation civil authorities or agencies to relieve or reduce the results of natural of manmade disasters. HA operations may also be conducted when there are serious endemic conditions involving human pain, disease, hunger, or other privation. HA operations are typically of a limited scope and duration, and they are undertaken when there is a significant threat to life or serious conditions that could lead to large-scale damage to property (USSOCOM, p. 4).

Peace Operations - Peace operations are undertaken to assist other forces in peacekeeping, peace enforcement or other military operations in support of diplomatic efforts to establish and maintain peace (USSOCOM, p. 4).

Security Assistance (SA) – Security assistance consists of providing training assistance is support of legislated programs that provide U.S. defense-related items, training and other defense services to foreign entities. Such programs can take the form of grants, loans, credit, or cash sales in pursuit of national policy or objectives (USSOCOM, p. 4).

Special activities – Special activities are actions taken abroad in support of national foreign policy objectives where the role of the U.S. government is not apparent or publicly acknowledged. Such actions are limited by Executive Orders and Presidential findings, and are subject to Congressional oversight (USSOCOM, p. 4).

C. SOCOM BACKGROUND

SOCOM is one of nine unified commands in the U.S. military, and it is composed of the Army, Navy and Air Force special operations forces (SOF). Established by Congress in 1987[3], SOCOM has an end strength of about 46,000 personnel, about one third of whom are in the reserves (USSOCOM, p. 17). All active duty and reserve Army, Navy, and Air Force SOF based within the United States are assigned to SOCOM (USSOCOM, p. 18). Overall, SOF personnel comprise about 1.4% of the total military manpower in the U.S. armed forces (USSOCOM, p. 5). A detailed breakdown of SOCOM's force structure is provided in the appendix.

SOCOM's mission is to support the geographic commanders-in-chief (CINC), ambassadors and other government agencies by training and equipping SOF to conduct the full range of SOF missions and other requirements as tasked. The commander-in-

chief of SOCOM (USCINCSOC) normally acts as a supporting CINC, but he can function as a supported CINC. In the supporting role, USCINCSOC provides trained and equipped SOF to the other CINCs. When directed by the NCA, USCINCSOC assumes command of selected special operations and is supported by the geographic CINCs (USSOCOM, p. 5).

In many ways, SOCOM enjoys responsibilities normally reserved for the Services themselves. SOCOM is responsible for training, ensuring combat readiness, monitoring personnel promotions and assignments, and managing the procurement of SOF-specific equipment. Notably, SOCOM is the only unified command responsible for the planning, programming and budgeting of military forces, namely through Major Force Program 11 (MFP 11). The authority to develop and acquire such items as SOF-peculiar equipment is normally reserved for service chiefs (USSOCOM, p. 5).

Congress, after extensive debate, created the entirely new MFP for SOF specifically to give USCINCSOC more visibility and control over SOF funding. Prior to MFP 11's creation, SOF funding was derived from Service funding and often received a low priority (Marquis, 1997). SOCOM's fiscal year (FY) 1999 budget was approximately $3.4 billion, which is about 1.3% of the total defense budget. Dedicated SOF funding allows for special operations proposals to be debated on their own merits, rather than in competition with larger Service programs. SOCOM is also able to make a comprehensive, joint analysis of SOF requirements, instead of submitting separate justifications to each military department (USSOCOM, p. 43).

---

[3] A much more detailed account of SOCOM's founding and activities can be found in chapter five.

Simultaneously with creating SOCOM, Congress also established the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD/SOLIC). ASD/SOLIC serves as the focal point for all special operations and low-intensity conflicts activities within the Department of Defense. USCINCSOC and ASD/SOLIC work together closely, and jointly they have been responsible for enormous gains in the readiness and capabilities of American SOF (USSOCOM, p. 5).

D. SPECIAL FORCES BACKGROUND

U.S. Army Special Forces (SF), sometimes dubbed the "Green Berets," are tasked with training for and conducting unconventional warfare (UW), foreign internal defense (FID), special reconnaissance (SR), direct action (DA) and other missions as directed. Founded in 1952, SF are the largest component of the Army Special Operations Command (ARSOC)[4]. There are five active duty and two national Guard Special Forces Groups (SFG), and each SFG has about 1,400 soldiers assigned (USSOCOM, p. 49, 104).

All potential candidates for SF must be males in good physical shape, meet certain mental and physical qualifications and be airborne qualified or volunteer for airborne training. Enlisted personnel must be in the paygrades E-4 through E-7 and have a high school or equivalency degree. Officers must have completed the Officer Basic Course, have had successful assignments previously, can come from any branch except Aviation, and must be either O-2s or O-3s. Applicants who meet these requirements can

[4] A significantly more detailed discussion of the history of SF is given in chapter three and continues in chapter five.

volunteer for Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS), which is a two phase program designed to identify soldiers who have the potential for SF training (Armysof1, 1999).

Attendance at SFAS is strictly voluntary, and candidates may quit at any time. SFAS's first phase measures physical fitness, motivation and ability to handle stress. Typical activities during this phase include: runs, swimming tests, physical exercises and tests, psychological tests, orienteering, and obstacle courses. An evaluation board determines which candidates are allowed to continue at the end of the first phase. The second phase of SFAS measures leadership and teamwork skills. Another board convenes at the end of second phase and determines which soldiers will be allowed to attend the SF Qualification Course (SFQC) (Armysof1, 1999). The entire SFAS process lasts about three weeks, and the final board directs in which Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) the soldier will receive additional training. Course lengths run from 26 to 57 weeks, depending upon the specialty. This determination is based upon personal preference, aptitude and the needs of the force (Perscom.army.mil, 1999).

SFAS is extremely demanding, and has an attrition rate of about 50%. Students typically endure grueling rucksack marches and operate under severe sleep deprivation. Teamwork exercises might involve moving a jeep with its engine and wheel removed (Waller, 1994).

SFAS runs about eight cycles a year, with up to 400 initial candidates each time. Most of the SFAS cadre is drawn from non-commissioned officers (NCO) who have come directly from an SFG. By design, the cadre provide little feedback to the students.

This provides an additional source of mental stress. Candidates rarely know how they are performing, but they are cognizant of the fact they are constantly being watched and evaluated. A decade ago, the instructors had considerably more latitude in punishing and sometimes abusing candidates. Now, however, the emphasis is on applying the same tests to everyone and assessing the results (Simons, p. 57).

Although SF is open to male soldiers of any MOS, there are preferred specialties. Many successful SF applicants come from combat arms areas such as infantry and armor. A typical progression is to be infantry first, attend airborne school and possibly serve in an airborne unit, then attend Ranger school and possibly serve in a Ranger battalion, and then volunteer for SFAS. Factors such as a candidate's military background, rank and age are taken into account at SFAS, though infantry experience is obviously helpful during such events as mountain orienteering.

While the SFAS is designed primarily as a screening program, the SFQC is designed to teach and develop the more advanced skills necessary for SF soldiers. Similar to SFAS, the SFQC is also divided into phases. Enlisted personnel first attend individual skills training, which is six weeks in length and is taught at the Camp Rowe Training Facility near Fort Bragg. Emphasis is placed upon land navigation and small unit tactics. This phase culminates with a special operations overview. Officers who have not already completed their Advance Course attend either the Infantry or Armor Officer Advanced Course (Armysofl, 1999).

Enlisted candidates then complete MOS qualification phase, which is 65 days in length. This qualification phase ends with a mission planning cycle exercise.

Candidates then complete three to twelve months of MOS training in one of four specialties: weapons sergeant (18B), engineer sergeant (18C), medical Sergeant (18D), or communications sergeant (18E). Officers train as detachment commanders (18A) for six months (Armysofl, 1999).

The final phase of the SFQC is collective training, and it lasts 38 days. Soldiers receive training in special operations, direct action, and UW. Collective training culminates in an elaborate thirteen-day UW exercise known as Robin Sage (Armysofl, 1999). Robin Sage is conducted in rural regions of North Carolina and provides a free-flowing environment where the students can test their newly acquired skills while attempting to develop an indigenous guerilla network.

Following successful completion of the SFQC or SF Detachment Officer Qualification Course (SFDOQC), the candidates are entitled to wear the Special Forces tab on their uniform, and they are considered SF soldiers. All SF personnel attend intensive language training. Those with higher language aptitude learn more challenging languages such as Chinese and Arabic. Language study is also dependent upon which regionally-oriented SFG the soldiers will join (Simons, p. 4).

Upon completing language training, new SF soldiers are assigned to a Special Forces Operational Detachment-A (ODA), known as an A-Team. A-Teams, consisting of 12 SF soldiers, are the fundamental building blocks for the SFGs. Six A-Teams and one B-Team (with 11 men) form an SF company. Three SF companies, a Battalion Headquarters Detachment and a Battalion Support Company form an SF Battalion.

Finally, three SF Battalions, a Headquarters, a Headquarters Company and a Support Company constitute an SFG (Simons, p. 4).

Each SFG is responsible for a designated area of the world, and its members receive geographic, linguistic and cultural training specific to that region. For example, the 10th SFG, based in Colorado, is oriented to Europe. Thus, its members study such languages as German, Polish and Hungarian (Simons, p. 5).

In addition to regional requirements, every SF company maintains one ODA qualified in scuba and one ODA qualified in military free-fall (MFF) parachuting. These skills serve as additional infiltration and exfiltration methods, and ODA members still remain proficient in all other SF areas (Hilton, 1991).

Each A-Team is commanded by a Captain (O-3), with a Warrant Officer as his second in command. There is also a team Sergeant (designated 18Z) who functions as the Operations NCO. He is largely in charge of the other nine enlisted personnel in the A-Team. He is assisted by another Sergeant trained in operations and intelligence (designated by an 18F MOS). Two NCOs are trained in each of SF's functional areas: weapons, engineering, medicine and communications. All Team members are also eventually cross-trained in another functional area as a secondary skill (Armysof1, 1999).

While enlisted men can remain on the same the ODA for years, officers serve only a two year tour on an ODA. Officers then move on to staff jobs, though they can return to operational SF units at higher levels such as company and battalion command. Enlisted personnel, however, can progress from being the junior Weapons Sergeant to

being the Team Sergeant, remaining with operational A-Teams the entire time (Simons, p. 14).

In practice, the entire A-Team is seldom together for an extended period of time. Given the multitude of advanced training schools to attend, at least one Team member is usually attending some form of training away from his unit. Nonetheless, the ODA serves as the basic social unit within SF. Team members see each other on an almost daily basis. SF companies often come together, and the men usually know many of the other SF members within their company. Battalions may infrequently gather for ceremonies or exercises, but even then companies often operate separately. Groups rarely, if ever, are together, so the primary allegiance and identification is with one's A-Team (Simons, p. 5).

ODAs also function as manpower pools for their parent commands. Thus, a soldier with a particular skill set might be temporarily attached to another unit for a specific mission. This form of almost limitless flexibility and ability to task organize helps distinguish SF units from conventional forces (Simons, p. 13).

E. SEAL BACKGROUND

U.S. Navy SEALs are organized, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations in support of joint and fleet operations in marine, littoral and riverine environments (USSOCOM, p. 50, 104). SEALs descended directly from the Underwater Demolition Teams of World War II and were established in 1962[5]. SEALs comprise the major component of the Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM), the

Navy's contribution to SOCOM. There are three active duty SEAL Teams and one active duty SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team on each coast. There are no separate reserve SEAL Teams, but reserve SEAL units, affiliated with specific Teams, exist to provide additional manpower when necessary. Each SEAL Team has close to 190 members, with approximately 140 SEAL and 50 support billets (USSOCOM, p. 51).

All potential SEAL candidates must be males in good physical condition, meet certain mental and physical qualifications, and volunteer for dive and airborne duty. Officers must have successfully completed a Navy officer accession program, and enlisted members must meet certain ASVAB minimum scores. All candidates must be 28 years old or younger and pass an initial physical screening test. Both officers and enlisted can enter BUD/S directly or transfer from another community within the Navy. Potential SEALs who meet the initial qualifications are sent to Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) training in Coronado, California (NAVSPECWARCOM, 1999).

BUD/S is a six-month, three phase program designed to assess and train potential SEALs. The training is voluntary, and students may quit at any time. BUD/S is exceptionally demanding both mentally and physically, and about 70-75% of candidates do not complete the course. Officers and enlisted attend the same course of instruction, and the officers serve as the class leaders (NavySEALs.com, 1999).

Prior to officially entering BUD/S, potential students undergo a two week indoctrination and physical training course. This time is intended to acclimate the

---

[5] A detailed description of the history of the SEALs and UDTs is presented in chapters four and five.

students to BUD/S and enhance the physical readiness of applicants who may have come directly from ships (navsoc.navy.mil, 1999).

First phase of BUD/S entails basic conditioning and is eight weeks in duration. Physical activities such as running, swimming, calisthenics and small boat seamanship are stressed. The fifth week is popularly known as "Hell Week," and it is a grueling test of endurance. BUD/S students perform demanding physical and mental tasks for five and a half days with little or no sleep. Hell Week is a sacred rite of passage for SEALs, and it is the single defining event in training. The final three weeks of first phase are spent learning about hydrographic reconnaissance (navsoc.navy.mil, 1999).

Second phase is two months long and concentrates on both open and closed circuit (bubbleless) scuba diving. The goal of second phase is to develop basic combat swimming skills, and there is strong emphasis on long distance underwater dives (navsoc.navy.mil, 1999).

Third phase is taught at San Clemente island off the coast of California, and it features land warfare instruction. Students learn land navigation, small unit tactics, patrolling, demolitions and weapon skills. The final month of the two and a half month phase features a series of practical field exercises that combine lessons from the entire BUD/S curriculum (navsoc.navy.mil, 1999).

Similar to the SF, the SEALs have moderated some of the training so that trainees are not physically manhandled or needlessly dropped from the program. BUD/S students who are injured are sometimes given time to recover and "rolled back" into the

next class. New sports medicine techniques are also employed to minimize potential injuries (Waller, p. 107).

Many of these changes were made in the face of consistent criticism by journalists, Congressional investigators and the Navy hierarchy. Some of the changes, however, are merely cosmetic, made to appease critics who have found BUD/S and Hell Week to be "mindlessly brutal." For example, requiring students to ring a bell three times prior to quitting was found to be demeaning. Accordingly, the BUD/S cadre stopped using the bell for a brief period and then reinstated its use within a year (Waller, p. 106-107).

After graduating from BUD/S, potential SEALs attend a month of airborne training and then report to a SEAL or SDV Team. Upon assignment to a Team, BUD/S graduates are placed upon a six month probationary period and undergo further advanced training. Known as SEAL Tactical Training (STT) or SEAL Basic Indoctrination (SBI), it is a four month tactical course of instruction. It features more combat diving, land warfare skills, small unit maneuver, and additional firearms and explosive instruction. Successful completion of STT or SBI leads to assignment to a 16-man platoon at a Team (NavySEALs.com, 1999).

Like the SF A-Teams, SEAL platoons are the basic unit building block for larger SEAL organizations. Each SEAL Team consists of eight SEAL platoons, a headquarters element, and about 40 support personnel. On each coast the four SEAL and SDV Teams are grouped under a Naval Special Warfare Group (NSWG). NAVSPECWARCOM commands the two NSWGs, and all other Naval Special Warfare (NSW) assets. The

NSWGs also have subordinate Special Boat Squadrons, which provide small boat (10-20 meter) support for SEAL operations. An additional Special Boat asset is the Patrol Coastal (PC), designed to enhance SEAL mobility. PCs are 170-foot ships capable of extended seagoing and embarking a SEAL platoon. They are dedicated to SOF operations and provide a long-range, high endurance capability (Waller, p. 5).

Each Team is regionally oriented, but members do not receive the same intensive cultural and language preparation as SF soldiers. For example, SEAL Team Four (based on the East Coast) is responsible for NSW operations in Central and South America, but Spanish fluency is not a requirement to be on the Team. Recent efforts have expanded the language training available for SEALs, but it is on an *ad hoc* basis.

SEALs interact with their platoon members on an almost daily basis, and they typically go through a year of prepatory training together before deploying for six months in support of fleet and unified commanders. SEALs often know most of the members of their Team and many of the SEALs stationed on the same coast. On each coast the Teams share a single compound (with the exception of SDV Team One), so the SEALs form a close-knit community. The SEAL ranks are also relatively small (about 2,000 total), allowing for members to personally know a large percentage of the total force.

When a platoon returns from a deployment, about half of the personnel remain in the platoon and form the nucleus for the next training and deployment cycle. The remainder of the platoon members transfer to other assignments. There is frequently a recovery period when SEALs can attend various schools and conduct individual training.

A platoon is commanded by an experienced Lieutenant (O-3), and he is assisted by a junior officer (O-1 to junior O-3). A senior enlisted chief (E-7 or E-8) is in charge of the enlisted personnel, and he is assisted by the Leading Petty Officer (LPO). The remainder of the SEALs in the platoon are organized into functional departments such as ordnance, air operations, submersible operations, and medical. Two petty officers are in each department, and they are responsible for that area. Most of the platoon members attend advanced schools for their specialty. For example, medical corpsmen attend the SF 18D (medic) course in addition to their Navy medical training.

Enlisted personnel can remain at the same Team for years, and they can often serve an entire career at just two Teams. In contrast, officers typically spend two to three years at a Team before transferring. Officers usually serve in two or three platoons before becoming too senior to remain in platoons. Officers progress through a series of staff and command positions, always staying with the NSW community.

III. SPECIAL FORCES ORIGINS

A. THE WORLD WAR II ERA

U.S. Army Special Forces (SF) were officially commissioned in 1952 with the intention of providing America a force to train and direct guerilla forces behind Soviet lines in the event of World War III (Waller, p. 45). The first SF unit, the 10th Special Forces Group, traced its lineage back to the "Jedburgh"[6] teams and Operational Groups (OG) run by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). By design, the new SF unit appealed to and was manned by many of the same soldiers who had operated in Axis-occupied Europe a decade earlier (Bank, 1986).

America's special operations capability was virtually nonexistent at the beginning of World War II, but military necessity dictated the rapid creation of such forces. In 1941, President Roosevelt, prodded by his longtime friend Colonel (later Major General) William "Wild Bill" Donovan, established an agency to collect worldwide intelligence, the office of the Coordinator of Intelligence (COI) (Bank, p.150). Donovan was named the head of the new agency, and he forged close ties with the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) (Marquis, p. 9).

Tasked with conducting sabotage, espionage, subversion and propaganda in Nazi-occupied Europe, Prime Minister Churchill summed up the SOE's mission as being to "set Europe ablaze" (Bank, p.149). After the attack on Pearl Harbor, President

---

[6] The "Jedburgh" teams took their name from the Scottish group of guerilla warriors who fought against the British in the Jedburgh region in the 12th century (Bank, p. 25).

Roosevelt expanded the COI's mandate to include the conduct of Unconventional Warfare (UW), similar to the SOE (Bank, p. 150).

In June 1942, the COI was redesignated as the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and its intelligence gathering functions were eventually transferred to the newly formed Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) after World War II. The nascent OSS copied a regional orientation and use of foreign indigenous forces from the SOE. This later provided a foundation for the modern SF (Marquis, p. 9).

Individuals recruited into the OSS' operational components were selected more on the basis of their ability to "go native" in Europe than upon their physical characteristics. One of the primary considerations was language fluency, since the main effort was directed towards developing guerilla networks in Europe (Simons, 1997). Thus, language proficiency and cross-cultural abilities became defining characteristics of the OSS and later its SF successor (Simons, p. 30).

Three major OSS operations helped characterized the future SF: the Jedburgh teams, Operational Groups (OG), and OSS Detachment 101 fighting in Burma. Together, the three laid the groundwork for present SF involvement in Unconventional Warfare (UW), Foreign Internal Defense (FID) and Direct Action (DA) mission areas.

First, the Jedburgh teams were three-man elements consisting of a British or an American officer, a radio operator, and a Dutch, French or Belgian officer. Each team parachuted into German-occupied territory and linked up with indigenous resistance movements. Their activities ran the gamut from providing intelligence and arranging for aerial supply drops, to training recruits and actually leading resistance fighters in direct

combat. A total of 87 teams infiltrated occupied Europe, and General Eisenhower rated the overall guerilla contribution as being the equivalent of 12 conventional divisions (Simpson, 1983).

While the Jedburgh teams concentrated on generalized guerilla activities, the OSS ran larger 15-man OGs in Europe for specific missions. Operating either alone or with Maquis resistance elements, the OGs conducted sabotage missions, collected intelligence and harassed retreating German units. Donovan reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that 19 OG teams inflicted 928 German casualties while suffering only 13 Allied losses (Simpson, p.12).

Although equally successful in terms of mission accomplishment, the OSS and other special operations troops did not enjoy the same level of senior commander support in the more dispersed Pacific arena. In an example of friction between SOF and conventional commanders, General MacArthur, commanding American ground forces in the Pacific theater during World War II, scorned and distrusted the OSS' approach and refused to allow it to conduct operations in his arena. As a result, the only OSS activity in the Asian-Pacific region took place in Burma, China and Indo-china - areas outside of MacArthur's direct purview (Marquis, p. 24).

In China, the OSS worked with the nationalists (Kuomintang), but it had minimal success in trying to coordinate with the larger communist guerilla resistance (Bank, p. 152). The OSS effort in Indo-china was restricted to a few small teams, but the Burma

operation was far larger[7]. The OSS' Detachment 101, starting with an initial complement of only 25 men, compiled an impressive record. With a final strength of 684 Americans, Detachment 101 built an irregular force of Kachin tribesmen eventually numbering about 11,000. At a cost of 22 American and 184 Kachin killed, the detachment was responsible for between 5,000 to 10,000 Japanese deaths. Detachment 101 also provided 90% of the intelligence in the theater and designated 85% of the Air Force's targets (Simpson, p.13).

Many future special operators regarded Detachment 101's most enduring contribution as being the lesson that successfully building an indigenous guerilla network required total cultural immersion by the training team. OSS members first recruited former soldiers from the Burmese army and rapidly expanded to include Kachin tribesmen. To win the respect of the Kachin, detachment personnel quickly learned the importance of adopting local cultural and religious customs. Detachment 101 was greatly aided by the fact that after receiving unconventional warfare training similar to that of the Jedburgh and OG teams, its members attended regional orientation and Chinese language classes (Marquis, p. 10).

Bank also credited the original Detachment 101's structure with having a major impact on modern SF units. Although it was not recognized at the time, the OSS pattern of having a base headquarters element that directed, controlled and supported all team

---

[7] The most notable OSS operation in Indo-china was probably a small team that parachuted into the occupied colony in 1945. The group aided the Vietnamese nationalist resistance, the Vietminh. Discovering the Vietminh leader, Ho Chi Minh, near death from malaria and dysentery, the OSS medic successfully treated him and almost undoubtedly saved his life (Adams, 1998).

operations was of critical importance in determining how to organize the "new" SF when it was commissioned (Bank, p. 251-252).

Another unit meriting mention is the 1st Special Service Force, a joint Canadian-American organization that focused on DA missions. Training consisted of parachute, mountain, amphibious and infantry assault techniques. The unit was particularly active against the Germans defending the northern alpine regions of Italy, and it earned a superb reputation. Although it conducted a few traditional infantry assaults, the 1st Special Service Force was primarily engaged in commando-style raids using small raiding groups. At the end of World War II, the entire group was disbanded along with the OSS and the Army's Rangers (Marquis, p. 10).

Two notable contributions from the 1st Special Service Force to the SF were the types of training and the reputation for being manned with "eccentric" personnel who would not fit into the conventional military. Although the SF were initially founded for the purpose of building guerilla networks in occupied territory, much of SF training and employment has mirrored the Service Force's practice. Additionally, while the Canadian soldiers were all high quality volunteers, many of the American troops came from jails and prisons. This resulted in the 1st Special Service Force and similar units developing a reputation for being manned with personnel unsuitable for the "normal" military. Even though standards for acceptance into SOF have risen dramatically, Marquis attributed some of today's view of special operators as "characters" to this early impression (Marquis, p. 10).

Originally formed to conduct missions somewhat similar to those of the 1st Special Service Force, the Army Rangers evolved to perform entirely different operations. In June of 1942, the first Ranger battalion was formed in the United Kingdom in order to give American troops combat experience with British commando raiding parties. Reflective of the perennial dislike of eliteness in the Army, the intent was not to create an American raiding force, but rather to disperse the new combat veterans among regular units (Adams, p. 31).

Trained by the British as commando units, events in the European theater soon transpired to give the Rangers a more conventional orientation. Rangers were successfully employed during landings in North Africa and during the Italian campaign. However, conventional commanders tended to use them as elite infantry, often with organic engineers and artillery, rather than as commandos. Thus, the distinguishing feature of the Rangers became their superb proficiency as light infantry instead of a focus on special operations missions (Adams, p. 32).

Fighting valorously, Rangers earned an exceptional reputation during heavy combat in such locations as Anzio, the Chunzi Pass and Pointe Du Hoc on Omaha Beach in Normandy. Unfortunately, the potential dangers of misusing commandos as regular units were highlighted when almost the entire Ranger Force was wiped out opposing the Germans near Cisterna. Discovered while trying to infiltrate the area on January 30th, 1944, 761 of 767 Rangers were either killed or captured by conventional German armor and infantry forces (Adams, p. 32).

In the Pacific, the 6th Ranger battalion came closest to fulfilling a traditional special operations role. Members of the 6th typically conducted reconnaissance and raids in platoon- and company-sized elements behind enemy lines. Their most notable encounter came when a company infiltrated 29 miles behind enemy lines, freed 500 Allied prisoners and killed 200 Japanese while suffering only two dead (Adams, p. 33).

Again showing a bias against elite forces, the Army disbanded all Ranger units by early 1945. Ranger training was later changed to an individual skill, but the idea of Ranger units as highly trained and motivated conventional infantry remained. The Rangers were periodically recommissioned, always in the mold of highly proficient infantry. Ranger units even emerged as SF's principal competition within the Army for a standing special operations force. Rangers also held a considerable advantage, since they fit more closely within the standard Army model that emphasized direct, sustained contact with the enemy rather than nebulous guerilla activity (Adams, p. 33).

B. THE POST-WORLD WAR II ERA AND KOREA

Signaling how much the OSS had relied upon President Roosevelt's personal support and how much entrenched opposition there was to a "spying and sabotage" agency, President Truman officially disbanded the OSS less than two months after Japan's surrender marked the end of World War II. The President was pressured by the military, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the State Department to eliminate what was seen as a competing and dangerously uncontrollable group. Some OSS veterans transferred to conventional units, where they formed an unofficial cadre that was largely responsible for founding the modern SF (Adams, p. 42).

Prior to the OSS' dissolution, Donovan recommended that a "central intelligence authority" be established. Indeed, President Truman created the Central Intelligence Group (CIG) almost immediately after abolishing the OSS. The CIG's original purpose was to act solely as a central body to coordinate often conflicting intelligence reports. However, within two years the CIG was replaced by a permanent intelligence structure, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). While the CIA originally possessed no covert action mandate, this was added to its charter within another two years. The overall effect was the "civilianization" of national intelligence, so that when a military special operations capability was reestablished, it was focused on UW and DA (Adams, p. 44).

Despite America's recognition of the need for expanded national intelligence assets, most American military planners believed special operations to be outdated in the era of facing the Soviet post-World War II menace (Marquis, p. 11). Simpson, a former SF Group commander, attributed much of this to what has been described as a cyclic phase of anti-elitism almost inherent in peacetime. He summarized a standard argument against having elite units: a military cannot afford to select its best people and place them in a small number of elite units. The overall quality of the military is improved if these individuals are dispersed throughout the force (Marquis, p. 14). This, and the fact that America held a monopoly on nuclear weapons at the time, certainly helps explain the purposeful shedding of virtually all American special operations capabilities after the war.

This wholesale dismantling of special operations forces ensured that when the Korean War broke out in 1950, there was only a minimal UW capability in the American

arsenal. Thus, it is not surprising that SOF participation in the "police action" amounted to what Adams described as "a sideshow." Since the OSS had disappeared, the CIA did not yet have a viable covert action component, and the SF had not yet been established, the best that could be accomplished was to cobble together a few *ad hoc* units (Adams, p. 15).

One of the few organizations to conduct special operations during the conflict was the Covert Clandestine Reconnaissance Activities, Korea (CCRACK), which was effectively disbanded at the end of active hostilities. Its activities were limited to small-scale sabotage, tactical reconnaissance and the occasional prisoner snatch (Marquis, p. 11).

Another group active during the conflict was the United Nations Partisan Infantry-Korea (UNPIK), a team of American-trained Korea nationals who conducted limited sabotage operations during brief forays behind enemy lines. UNPIK eventually established some six regiments, but their actions consisted more of short waterborne raids than true partisans operating in enemy-occupied territory (Simpson, p. 15). Both the Army and CIA attempted to coordinate small special operations such as the UNPIK, but the perennial problem of poor coordination hindered an overall effort (Adams, p. 49).

For a brief period, Ranger units, newly reactivated for the Korean conflict, engaged in special operations type missions. In the fall of 1950, volunteers were recruited to form Ranger companies trained in infiltration, sabotage and raids, and some 17 Ranger companies eventually saw action in Korea. However, conventional commanders tended to use them as shock infantry, and the Rangers often found

themselves wandering like nomads, attached to various units for brief periods of time. In a further example of the Army's tendency to conventionalize special operations units, all Ranger companies in Korea were officially disbanded on 1 August, 1951, and their personnel were transferred to regular infantry units (Adams, p. 51-52).

Simpson noted that the primary reason for the lack of effective special operations in Korea was the fact that because of their often unique training, doctrine and equipment needs, SOF needed to be prepared before the onset of hostilities (Simpson, p. 16). Bank echoed his points and posited that UW forces must be prepared to initiate action as early as possible prior to an opposing regime's internal security being effective. Bank also noted that regional and language requirements necessitate at least a year of preparation, and this is best done prior to a conflict (Bank, p. 147). Korea was an excellent example of pre-war preparation being necessary, given the complexity of the Korean language and the potential difficulties with integrating Americans into an Asian culture.

C. THE FOUNDING OF SPECIAL FORCES

Significantly, the Army did establish the Office of the Chief of Psychological Warfare (OCPW), commanded by then Brigadier General (later Major General) McClure, in 1950. McClure, who had served as General Eisenhower's propaganda officer in World War II, interpreted his mandate very broadly, and in 1951 he created a Special Operations Division within the OCPW. Colonel Bank, an OSS veteran, was chosen to head the new division, and he soon changed the name to Special Forces Division (Adams, p. 48-51).

Concurrent with the Korean conflict were increased tensions with the Soviet Union. American defense policy centered almost exclusively on Soviet containment during the late 1940s, leading to increased reliance upon nuclear weapons to the detriment of other military capabilities, particularly UW (Adams, p. 43). However, the Soviets developed their own nuclear capability much earlier than intelligence had predicted, and the Berlin blockade indicated an imbalance in conventional forces in Europe between Soviet and American ground forces. At this point, partly in desperation, the Army turned to the idea of exploiting the "captive" people of Eastern Europe to offset Soviet conventional superiority via guerilla warfare (Simpson, p. 15).

Assisting Bank in developing plans for the new special operations force was Colonel Russell Volkmann, who led indigenous guerilla forces in the Philippines during World War II. They initially designed a 2,500-man force centered on 12-man teams similar to OGs, with about half the manning coming from "Lodge Bill"[8] troops (Marquis, p. 11).

There was considerable resistance within the Army itself against the idea of creating a permanent special forces unit. Most notably, G-2 (intelligence) and G-3 (plans and operations) were vehemently opposed, but the Army Chief of Staff, General Collins, supported the proposal. McClure also maintained close connections in the White House (Simpson, p. 16)

---

[8] The Lodge Bill granted U.S. citizenship to immigrants in return for service in the American military. Many early SF recruits were Eastern European refugees, who found more acceptance in the regionally oriented SF teams than they would have in conventional units (Simpson, p. 24).

Outside agencies provided an additional source of opposition, particularly the CIA and the Air Force. Many OSS veterans had joined the CIA, and they supported a civilian organization with guerilla warfare capabilities. Many within the State Department, who still harbored resentment over diplomacy's secondary role during World War II, quietly supported them. They also wanted to maintain control over military attaches, and they feared a secretive special operations force would enjoy too much autonomy. Within the Air Force, many advocated an air power-centric national strategy, and they formed a loose alliance with the CIA to become the primary military service to be involved in the future planning of unconventional warfare activities. The basic idea was that air power would decimate an enemy and CIA-led guerillas would conclude the battle with ground operations. The Army's Special Forces proposal caused a considerable interagency turf battle, but the Army was eventually selected as the lead organization for the new guerilla warfare mission (Simpson, p. 17).

Finally, on June 19th, 1952, Bank became the commander of the Army's first peacetime special operations unit, the 10th Special Forces Group (SFG) (Airborne). The 10th started with an initial strength of 10, but quickly recruited, often by word of mouth, enough volunteers to reach its expected 932 men (Adams, p. 54). Bank could afford to be selective in recruiting for his small, all volunteer outfit. He purposefully aimed his efforts at former Rangers, airborne personnel, Lodge Bill soldiers and OSS veterans. He did this partly to give a home to the deactivated Rangers and also to attract the mature, highly motivated individuals necessary to conduct the complex UW mission behind

enemy lines. No first term or junior enlisted personnel were accepted (Bank, p. 184-185).

Most of the original SF recruits were combat veterans of either World War II or the Korean conflict, and they frequently served in elite units. The often highly educated Lodge Bill entrants also offered unusual qualifications, as in the case of medical personnel. A couple of the initial SF team medics held medical degrees from European schools, and they initiated the practice of SF medics fulfilling roles far in excess of being simple first aid providers (Adams, p. 54-55). Having grown up in Europe and speaking English as a second language, the Lodge Bill troops further reinforced the importance SF placed on regional and culture awareness as well as foreign language proficiency.

SF's first year was devoted almost exclusively to training, and both Bank and McClure made deliberate efforts to focus on partisan warfare at the expense of commando-style activities. Much of this was to avoid the pervasive of pattern of conventionalization they had seen with the Rangers and other "special operations" forces and also to minimize bureaucratic friction with the CIA (Adams, p. 55).

While the 10th SFG (Abn) was initially based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, with the OCPW, events in Europe in 1953 resulted in the unit being transferred to Bad Toelz, Germany to better prepare to conduct partisan activities in Soviet-occupied Europe in the event of war (Adams, p. 57). About half of the 10th SFG (Abn) stayed behind at Fort Bragg to provide the nucleus for a new unit, the 77th SFG (Abn) (Marquis, p. 12). The catalyst for the 10th SFG (Abn) relocation was the bloody Soviet suppression of East German rioters in Berlin. Bank credited his transfer to the simple fact that the Pentagon

finally had a standing peacetime unit ideally suited to providing assistance to indigenous resistance movements (Bank, p. 203-205).

D. THE COLD WAR ERA TO VIETNAM

True to the recurring American military pattern of building up during crises and drawing down immediately afterwards, decreased tensions in Europe and the end of the Korean War led to the 10th SFG having its authorized manpower cut by 50% (Marquis, p. 13). However, by about 1956, there was renewed Pentagon interest in unconventional warfare, partially as a result of spreading Communist insurgencies in Southeast Asia. Several small SF-type detachments with an Asian focus were consolidated into the 1st SFG (Abn) at Camp Drake, Japan in June of 1957 (Adams, p. 58). By the end of 1960, largely as a result of increased emphasis on Southeast Asia, there were three understrength SFGs, the 1st, 10th, 77th, each numbering about 1,500 men (Marquis, p. 13).

Throughout the late 1950s, SF manning remained relatively stable and small detachments began operating in Vietnam and Laos, often in conjunction with CIA-directed forces (Adams, p. 59). This Cold War era also marked the emergence of the first SF doctrine, though it was largely only a slight adaptation of conventional thought. Guerilla warfare was not viewed as its own entity, but rather as support and enhancement of conventional combat. Since it was considered by conventional officers that there was nothing "new" about SF operations, the conventional military could conveniently view them as merely a specialized application of conventional doctrine that did not require extensive new equipment or training. Adams' description of the SF of the late 1950s as

a marginalized force tolerated but not nurtured by the conventional Army succinctly described their position (Adams, p. 60).

Transitioning from the 1950s, the modern SF was profoundly influenced and codified by the tumultuous 1960s, most notably by the war in Vietnam (Adams, p. 63-64). In what Simons described as a "for better *and* worse" situation, the SF experience in Vietnam gave the organization its most enduring public exposure and legacy (Simons, p. 31).

President Kennedy's election in 1960 created a radical shift in military thinking in the executive branch. Where President Eisenhower had been concerned with directly matching the Soviets conventionally, President Kennedy concentrated on the "wars of national liberation" that he saw as America's greatest challenge (Adams, p. 64). Also deeply influenced by the disaster of the Bay of Pigs in 1961, President Kennedy personally initiated substantial efforts to improve America's military capabilities short of nuclear war (Marquis, p. 14).

Although the military did not fully accept President Kennedy's direction, it did implement many of his initiatives including the establishment of the high-ranking Special Group Counter Insurgency (SGCI) and a dramatic increase in SF manning levels, though not SF's influence in DOD circles (Marquis, p. 13-14). The end result was that in addition to granting acceptance to the unorthodox trademark of a green beret worn by the SF personnel[9], President Kennedy's efforts guaranteed the fledgling SF a permanent

---

[9] General Adams, the senior commander at Fort Bragg, had made wearing a green beret, sported covertly by many SF troops, a court-martial offense. The commander of the Special Warfare Center, Colonel Yarborough, in a move highly popular with the troops, gambled and wore a green beret for a visit by

position in the Army, though at considerable cost to the long-term relationship between SOF and conventional commanders (Adams, p. 68). Despite this continued friction, SF's total peacetime existence was never again seriously threatened. SF even became a separate Army branch in 1987, allowing members, particularly officers, to have a viable career in the special operations realm.

E. SPECIAL FORCES IN VIETNAM

Three major operational areas defined the SF in Vietnam and gave it an enduring legacy. The first was building local-level indigenous forces, a mission similar to the OSS focus of training and equipping partisan networks behind enemy lines. The second major area was conducting DA missions, often using SF-trained and led strike forces. Working in units as large as 600-man battalions, these groups often supported besieged outposts, interdicted Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) infiltration routes and directly assaulted enemy positions. Finally, many SF members were involved in covert missions, the most famous of which was the Phoenix[10] Program. Both positive and negative perceptions resulted from Vietnam, but as Simons noted, " it is still Vietnam most people think about whenever they think SF" (Simons, p. 31).

President Kennedy in 1961. The President endorsed the beret as a "symbol of excellence," and the Army quickly adopted regulations authorizing its use (Simpson, p. 33).

[10] The English word *Phoenix* was a crude translation from the Vietnamese name for the program, Phung Hoang. Phung Hoang is a mythical Vietnamese bird that appears only times of peace. The mythical *Phoenix* was adopted as a rough English approximation.

1. Civilian Irregular Defense Groups

Initial SF efforts in Vietnam closely matched their doctrinal focus of building indigenous guerilla forces. In late 1961, several SF A-Teams of 12 men arrived to implement a CIA-sponsored program, the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG). Working at the district (county) level, each A-Team developed a force of about 1,000 part-time soldiers and a 300-400-man full-time defense company. The A-Teams also undertook numerous civic action programs such as medical aid, improved sanitation and water access. By the end of 1962, the CIA's station in Saigon judged the program an overwhelming success with over 300,000 South Vietnamese under true CIDG control. The CIA began requesting more SF and sought to expand the effort (Adams, p. 85-86).

Conventional Army commanders did not share the CIA's rosy evaluation of the operation and began lobbying for control of the CIDG troops. It appeared to traditional officers that the CIDG were "tied down" defending villages when they could be more effectively employed in active, offensive operations. By 1963, the CIDG was significantly altered when both the Government of Vietnam (GVN) and Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) began taking a more active more in the administration of the program. Widespread corruption within the GVN and the GVN's general indifference to the civic action portion of the CIDG program resulted in a considerable degradation in many areas. The CIDG were also employed much more frequently as traditional infantry far from their home villages (Adams, p. 87-88).

Although MACV commanders understood they were dealing with a different culture, they did not always grasp the full ramifications. They often superimposed the

template of industrial society, where frequent moves are common, on the traditional Vietnamese culture, where any such moves were traumatic events. The CIDG were increasingly employed as regular, general-purpose infantry units far removed from their home districts. This almost entirely nullified the primary UW intent of developing a local militia capable of defending only its home area (Adams, p. 90). The original program was almost exclusively centered upon ethnic minority villages such as the Montagnards in the central highlands region. Since the CIDG program met with success in that area, senior commanders tried to duplicate it elsewhere. However, as the emphasis shifted from local defense efforts based around pre-existing villages to placing strategically located base camps throughout South Vietnam, CIDG effectiveness fell precipitously (Marquis, p. 18).

By the end of 1965, virtually every CIDG had been converted to a regular military unit outside the effective control of SF. Instead of merely denying an area to VC and NVA forces, the CIDG were tasked with active counter-guerilla missions to "seek and destroy" the enemy. Many in SF tried to return the CIDGs to their original framework, but they were unsuccessful. Eventually, the village defense aspect of the CIDGs was virtually non-existent and the entire program lost its credibility with both the Americans and the Vietnamese (Marquis, p. 19).

One of the difficulties facing SF involved in the CIDG program was that much of the effort was directed toward the ethnic minorities in the central highlands region. The area was populated primarily by various non-Vietnamese Montagnard tribes. Considerable mutual ethnic animosity existed between the Montagnards and

Vietnamese, leading the Montagnards to often place their ultimate loyalties with the local SF detachment rather than the central government. There was even an aborted Montagnard uprising against South Vietnamese authority in 1964. While SF advisors were able to intervene and prevent full-scale conflict, the event illustrated the precarious nature of the SF role (Adams, 90).

SF detachments, operating largely independently, were trusted by neither the conventional American military nor the South Vietnamese government. The SF men were in turn frustrated by the eventually successful efforts to turn their local defense units into conventional infantry troops. Local SF members were also dismayed at the rampant South Vietnamese corruption and discrimination against the Montagnards. Because of the corruption and mistrust of the conventional structure, 5th SFG even published a manual explicitly calling for "Dual Channel" reporting in order to bypass mistrusted Vietnamese commanders. SF soldiers were instructed to follow normal chain-of-command reporting procedures as well as "informing the next higher headquarters" and ensuring proper action was taken. The CIA and SF even formalized a special funding channel to avoid DOD and Vietnamese interference. Unfortunately, it had the additional effect of alienating SF from the rest of the military and the Americans from their Vietnamese allies (Adams, p. 93). While often beneficial at the local level, such measures directly contributed to prejudices and stereotypes among SF, indigenous forces and conventional soldiers.

Despite its eventual withering away, the CIDG program was the primary American activity connected to the Vietnamese population and perfectly illustrated the

SF "hearts and minds" philosophy. Marquis even argued that it was the forerunner of the "Vietnamization" effort to extricate America from direct combat (Marquis, p. 19). The CIDG program also demonstrated the perennial pressure for conventionalization with the SF. An unqualified success at its original mission of local defense, the effort was wrestled away from SF by MACV and transformed into one where the methods, goals and outcomes were in opposition to the original intent.

Significantly, the mission for CIDG operations was the opposite of what SF members were originally trained to do. The initial SF premise was that its soldiers would function as the cadre for building a guerilla army against a central communist authority in occupied territory. In Vietnam, the practice reversed, the SF developed the government's forces to counter an active insurgency. SF troops were highly trained as guerillas and teachers, but they found themselves in another role entirely in Vietnam. Much of their success was because of the fact that they worked mostly with the Montagnard minorities. They built an indigenous resistance movement that opposed both North and South Vietnamese. Not surprisingly, SF concentrated on those areas such as tactical instruction and developing logistic support where there was considerable American expertise. However, it was one of the only military units to address the critical political and cultural factors fueling the insurgency (Adams, p. 144-146).

2. Mike Forces

An outgrowth of the CIDG program was the creation of "Mike Forces." These were company-sized elements specifically designed as mobile strike forces, partially in response to tactical threats facing the CIDGs within their areas of operation.

The first Mike Force was formed from Nung tribesmen in Danang in 1965. Led by SF officers, the Mike Forces were considered highly effective, but their loyalty lay almost exclusively with their American paymasters. One of the Mike Forces' primary duties was to relieve CIDG camps whenever they were assaulted or threatened, though they also performed numerous other DA missions in enemy areas. The most notable of these actions were deep penetration operations against the vast NVA infiltration network along the Vietnamese-Laotion-Campbodian borders, dubbed the Ho Chi Minh trail (Simpson, p. 124).

By the end of 1965, a battalion-sized Mike Force was present in each of the four corps' tactical areas, along with one controlled by 5th SFG Headquarters. Eventually, "Mike Force" was applied as generic term to any SF-led reaction team. Predictably, the Mike Force pattern mirrored that of the CIDGs, and in 1966 MACV ordered the adoption of "offensive guerilla warfare." Mike Forces expanded beyond their original roles as reaction forces and conducting limited reconnaissance to now assaulting Viet Cong (VC) strongholds, recovery operations and directing supporting fire. Evolving from an unconventional warfare to light infantry role, the Mike Forces were gradually absorbed by the South Vietnamese military. By the end of 1970, the last Mike Force was fully converted into a conventional unit under South Vietnamese control (Adams, p. 128-130).

The relatively highly paid Nung (ethnic Chinese) also served as bodyguards for SF personnel. Thus, from "Nung" came a somewhat misleading labeling of all Mike Force and CIDG as "mercenaries." Even official spokespersons began openly referring

to the "Green Berets and their hired mercenaries." The net effect was to reinforce the image of SF operators as renegades and further distance them from the conventional military (Simpson, p. 124).

3. Military Assistance Command-Vietnam- Studies and Observation Group

One of the best-known series of covert operations during the conflict was run under the auspices of Military Assistance Command-Vietnam-Studies and Observation Group (MACV-SOG). Initially conducted under strict secrecy with various cover organizations, by the end of the war MACV-SOG's existence and general mission areas were open secrets. The initial effort started in 1956 under a joint SF-CIA program to train South Vietnamese to conduct covert operations against the North. Although this program, known as Clandestine Action Force and 1st Observation Group, achieved no notable successes, the effort evolved into a more conventional counter-insurgency force by the early 1960s to combat the growing VC threat.

By 1963, much of the CIA participation was phased out, and the program was concentrating on more strictly military functions such as border surveillance and politically sensitive cross-border operations into Laos and Cambodia. The Vietnamese component now took the form of the Vietnamese Special Forces Command (VNSF or LLDB (Luc Luong Doc Biet)). However, the continued lack of success by the Vietnamese led to increased pressure for direct American involvement (Adams, p. 117).

Accordingly, MACV-SOG was created in early 1964, and it was given general responsibility for special operations throughout Southeast Asia. Joint in name

only, the vast majority of the 2,000 Americans who worked in MACV-SOG were Army SF. Links with the CIA diminished to the point of being almost non-existent. Reflecting the perennial distrust of special operations, MACV headquarters never sanctioned a separate headquarters for its SOG component, denying it an official standing it could have had (Adams, p. 118-119).

Early attempts were made to field joint American-Vietnamese teams, but these proved largely unproductive. By 1965, nearly all operations were run using all American or American and Vietnamese minority personnel. Some early activities included simulating a guerilla movement in North Vietnam and infiltrating Vietnamese into the North for harassment and intelligence gathering. These efforts never met with much success and they were gradually phased out in favor of conducting reconnaissance and strike missions within denied territory (Adams, p. 120-123).

SOG forces were active throughout the war, and they frequently performed some of the most dangerous and difficult missions of the conflict. Many of their missions were targeted against enemy infiltration routes and sanctuaries along the Laotian-Cambodian- Vietnamese borders. The teams often identified targets for airstrikes, provided battle damage assessments and directly assaulted targets. SOG teams operated deep within Laos and Cambodia long before Americans officially crossed the border. After the Tet offensive, many SOG assets were redirected to provide direct intelligence and operational support for conventional commanders. Within a year, SOG functioned largely as a theater and Corps-level reconnaissance and deep strike asset (Adams, p. 124-125).

Despite the American disengagement from Vietnam, SOG remained active throughout the conflict, finally concluding operations in December of 1971. A small cadre of Americans advised a Vietnamese successor organization, the Strategic Technical Directorate (STD). However, the STD had minimal operational success and finally ceased operations when the last SF soldier withdrew in 1973. Overall, SF members considered MACV-SOG to be a prize assignment, and conventional commanders rated the clearly quantifiable and understandable missions of engaging the enemy in difficult areas to be of considerable value to the war effort (Adams, p. 127).

Although labeled as unconventional, most MACV-SOG missions were merely extremely hazardous conventional activities, and they received considerable support from regular commanders. Exemplifying the traditional friction between SOF and regular forces, several conventional commanders were charged with overseeing SOG operations. One explanation is that the regular military wanted to keep SOG and its SF personnel from going too far astray. However, it served to exacerbate friction between the SOF, who were "saddled" with conventional thinkers not fully cognizant of special operations, and the conventional commanders themselves, who viewed SOG as yet another example of SOF being uncontrollable (Adams, p. 125).

Similar to the influence OSS veterans had on the forming of SF, Adams attributed SOG veterans with defining the next generation of SF members. In particular, these SOG participants were crucial in altering the preferred understanding of SF special operations from politico-military activities such as concentrating on developing local indigenous defense forces to more direct action oriented missions, such as special

reconnaissance and high-risk assaults (Adams, p. 125). This change in emphasis was in part aided by conventional commanders, who often opted to employ the more highly trained and motivated SF members as a kind of elite infantry for precarious or important assignments. SF soldiers were usually more than willing to engage in DA missions such as prisoner snatches, raids and destruction operations, since they provided high payoffs in terms of excitement and immediate damage to the enemy.

4. The *Phoenix* Program

Another operational area affecting the SF reputation was participation in the *Phoenix* Program. *Phoenix* started in 1968 as a part of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Staff (CORDS) pacification program in an effort to target the "shadow government" operated by the National Liberation Front (NLF) in South Vietnam. Phoenix's core was the attempt to synthesize the efforts of the various intelligence functions to identify and neutralize the NLF/Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) in South Vietnam. However, the actual execution of the "neutralization" phase engendered considerable controversy. General Westmoreland characterized the entire operation as "immoral, criminal, dirty work, improperly conducted" and "not a military function" (Adams, p. 133-134). Active SF participation in *Phoenix* hardly endeared the unconventional warriors to the Army's senior conventional leadership.

Phoenix began in earnest in early 1968, and SF members were deeply involved throughout its tenure. South Vietnamese Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU), and their predecessors, the Province Action Teams (PAT), were the main action arms of the program. However, as a joint CIA/MACV initiative, Americans were

instrumental in developing the operation and were frequent participants. Where the PATs had been organized along primarily secret police lines, the PRUs had a much more military structure and mission. The PATs operated in small teams usually recruited from the local populace. In contrast, the PRUs, with American SOF advisors, functioned in larger groups and often carried out conventional operations against entire VC units (Adams, p. 138).

Initially conducted under strict secrecy, by 1969 the entire *Phoenix* Program had received significant and highly negative publicity. The program garnered a reputation as being heavily involved with torture, assassination, poorly run and ineffective. SF involvement was unfavorably noted, at the same time that six SF intelligence officers were publicly accused of assassinating an alleged South Vietnamese double agent. The spate of negative publicity led General Abrams, considered to be anti-SF, to take "special pains to break the SF-CIA connection and bring SF soldiers back into the regular Army chain of command" (Adams, p. 141). For their part, the SF members taking part in the program frequently reported feeling isolated and abandoned after conducting the military's most dangerous and unpleasant, but necessary tasks (Adams, p. 142).

Overall, the program enjoyed considerable success in its aim of disrupting the VCI. However, the political costs associated with having Americans identified with an operation considered by some to be outright terrorism proved exceedingly high. By 1970, the military was deliberately understaffing its contribution in an effort to disengage itself from *Phoenix*. The entire subject of American participation became

taboo, and Adams noted that although the official 1994 SOCOM history described MACV-SOG and CIDGs, there was not a single mention of either *Phoenix* or the PRUs (Admas, p. 142).

Although MACV-SOG, CIDGs and Mike Forces were labeled as "unconventional," they still fit neatly into conventional, albeit exceptionally hazardous, military operations. In contrast, SF participation in *Phoenix* was a truly unconventional role that highlighted many of difficulties SOF would later face in the post-Cold War era. While *Phoenix* was one of the few programs that recognized that the war in Vietnam was profoundly different from the set piece, conventional conflicts that characterized the early 20th century, it also exposed deep divisions with the American military about the appropriate the role for American SOF. The eventual, though not total, victory of the conventional military (in the form of MACV) over the "dirtier" covert action advocates (typified by CIA control of operations) illustrated the predominant forces shaping SOF structure and missions (Adams, p. 133).

5. Son Tay Prison Raid

One of the final and most spectacular special operations missions of the war was an attempt to rescue to rescue American Prisoners of War (POW) from a North Vietnamese prison located 23 miles northwest of Hanoi at Son Tay. The POWs in the camp had managed to signal American strategic reconnaissance assets, and a rescue plan was formulated starting in May of 1970. At the time, there were about 470 American POWs in North Vietnam, but none had ever been rescued. During the war more than 100 rescue attempts had liberated some South Vietnamese POWs, but no living

Americans had been freed and no attempts had been conducted in North Vietnam itself. Son Tay, situated away from the heaviest of Hanoi's formidable air defenses presented a realistic opportunity to rescue a large number of Americans; an idea which held enormous appeal to senior military and civilian leaders (Adams, p. 151).

Code-named Operation Ivory Coast/Kingpin, the proposed mission, led by SF Colonel Simmons, received the highest priority. After debating the various options, the planners decided to stage a 120-man assault team in Thailand and helicopter the force into the compound using HH-53s. Simultaneously with the helicopter landings, Air Force and Navy fighter-bombers would strike Hanoi's air defense system in a diversionary attack and provide close air support. The plan called for the assault team, composed of veteran SF soldiers, to be on the ground for only 30 minutes before extracting via helicopter (Admas, p. 152).

Unfortunately, it took six months of rehearsals and preparation before the mission could be executed. In the early morning hours of November 21st, 1970, the assault team attacked the camp and began hunting for American POWs. In a fortuitous accident, one 21-man support element mistakenly landed 400 meters away in a different compound, which appears to have been a barracks for Chinese military advisors. Engaged in a furious firefight with Chinese and North Vietnamese troops, the support team killed an estimated 100 enemy before withdrawing. This erroneous action had the beneficial effect of removing from action the only potential reaction force that could have threatened the SF team at the prison compound (Stanton, 1985).

At the correct compound, the rest of the assault team killed about 50 North Vietnamese guards and systematically searched the entire area. Finding no Americans, the ground element withdrew after only 27 minutes of action. The ground force's final act was to initiate a destructive charge on a helicopter that had deliberately crash-landed in the middle of the compound. The assaulters withdrew without a single fatality and later learned that the POWs had been relocated in July due to potential flooding at the low-level camp (Stanton, p. 273).

Immediately labeled an intelligence and operational failure in the media, the mission did have some positive aspects. Senior officials knew in advance that intelligence reports were not conclusive about Americans still being at the compound. Rather than a massive failure, the mission reflected a calculated gamble. Additionally, recognizing the importance of the POWs to the American government and partially for security reasons, after the raid the North Vietnamese moved all American POWs to Hanoi, where their treatment improved dramatically (Adams, p. 154).

Far from being an operational failure, the raid demonstrated a strong American SOF capability. Operating at night, American commandos penetrated hundreds of miles into the heart of an enemy's capital and successfully engaged two heavily defended enemy garrisons without suffering a single death. The would-be rescue force spent less than half-an-hour on the ground and executed its mission nearly flawlessly. The fact that the POWs had already been moved did not alter the superb performance of the entire rescue team (Adams, p. 154).

Using SF members for the assault force was not an automatic choice, but it did illustrate the growing SF reputation in the direct action arena. The OSS teams of World War II would not have been selected for a comparable mission, which would have probably gone instead to a Ranger unit. Manning the exceptionally high-profile assault with only SF indicated that however much the conventional Army might complain about and oppose SF, there was a recognition that SF members did have special skills and could be relied upon to perform superbly during the most demanding circumstances.

Sadly, the Son Tay raid marked the beginning of a long period of decline for American SOF, and SF in particular. The raid did exemplify SF's gradual transition from an almost exclusively UW force in the 1950s to one capable of conducting the most complex DA missions by the 1960s. Son Tay also occurred at the end of a remarkable buildup in SF capability and structure, largely spurred by President Kennedy's initial support. However, the "hollow Army" of the 1970s, the close association between SF and the humiliating defeat in Vietnam, and an emphasis on strictly conventional operations conspired to actually decrease America's ability to conduct such an operation. A decade later, when American launched a strikingly similar rescue effort in Iran, mission execution was far from flawless, and the raid was a dramatic operational failure.

F. EFFECTS OF VIETNAM ON SPECIAL FORCES

Adams drew several conclusions from the SF experience in Vietnam, postulating that these lessons are relevant to both past and future SOF operations. First, there was the omni-present tendency to make regular infantry units out of such irregular groups as Mike Forces and the CIDGs. He attributed this to the almost universal belief within the

traditional military that only conventional units can truly be effective against an opponent. While it is true that ground forces are almost always needed in order to occupy and hold terrain, such a view discounts both the force-multiplier effect of SOF and the fact that some missions are "special" enough that they cannot easily be conducted by conventional units. Unconventional warfare by itself was valued only to the extent that it directly impacted the conventional battlefield, undercutting the contribution of SF as a force-multiplier in the UW role. This mentality, present since before World War II, exerts constant pressure on the Army to marginalize special operations whenever possible (Adams, p. 110).

Also relevant was the fundamental Army belief that the core mission of the military is to engage the enemy in decisive battle. With such an objective, destroying opposing military forces was the target rather than winning the hearts and minds of the civilian population. Thus, the widespread application of firepower and the often forcible relocation of the people from ancestral lands served to tear apart the fabric of Vietnamese society and alienate the populace from the South Vietnamese government (Adams, p. 110). This placed SF soldiers, operating at the local level, in conflict with higher conventional authorities. It was a battle that SF, given its limited power within the Army, could not win.

The conventional military further had a difficult time understanding how the enemy could be successful after the disastrous Tet offensive in 1968. By definition the VC had been "defeated" in decisive engagement. Applying the universal principles of conflict, America had achieved a victory. Unfortunately, applying standard principles

contributed to ignoring important cultural and political influences at the senior levels. SF operated on an almost diametrically opposed axis, where cultural concerns assumed the greatest importance. Thus, just as America faced great difficulty in trying to orchestrate its "solution" within Vietnamese society, so too were there tremendous problems when SF tried to execute a UW mission within a military dominated by conventional thought (Adams, p. 111).

It was the military's almost exclusive focus on the conventional aspects of the struggle between North and South Vietnam, to the exclusion of effectively developing the relationship between the South Vietnamese government and its populace that allowed the insurgency to flourish. Even though virtually every senior leader agreed that pacification was critical to a successful outcome, there was a conscious effort by most of the conventional military to marginalize this facet of the campaign (Adams, p. 142). SF was viewed primarily as a "loose cannon" with little ability to support the conventional effort, and little merit was given to the idea that the entire struggle was an unconventional one where raw destruction of opposing forces might not lead to ultimate victory.

Adams attributed much of the expansion of SF missions to the Vietnam experience. As an institution, SF opted to delve into additional mission areas rather than expand upon its success as a political-military force. The ultimate failure of the American effort in Vietnam no doubt contributed to a desire not to be associated solely with a "lost cause." However, SF leaders had a post-Vietnam choice, and they decided not to focus primarily upon the original OSS model of assisting indigenous resistance movements (Adams, p. 147).

Both Simons and Marquis found considerable effects upon the overall quality of SF members as a result of the need for rapid expansion during Vietnam. Despite lowered initial qualifications, attrition at the SF's primary screening course (the Q-course) fell from pre-war high of over 90% to about 30% during the war. Numerous individuals, who otherwise would not made it through SF selection programs, soon found themselves in the relatively unstructured environs of Vietnam (Marquis, p. 20). Some in the SF ranks took advantage of their operational freedom to engage in questionable and unethical behaviors that negatively impacted SF's overall reputation. Much of this resulted from SF's selection for the "dirtiest" missions and the often purposefully vague and deniable instructions they received from their non-SF commanders (Simons, p. 32).

Vietnam's extremes, rather than the more mundane activities, served to define SF. SF's extraordinary heroics and occasional misdeeds helped shape diametrically opposed views of the organization, mostly for those outside the community. SF soldiers were often regarded by the conventional military as either super-soldiers capable of almost anything or potentially renegade assassins capable of operating wildly out of control. These perceptions, though ignoring the more typical programs such as the CIDGs, reflected the popular view of SF and helped frame the debate about SF's continued existence in the post-Vietnam era. Vietnam also created differing blocs of thought within SF itself. Some team members supported the new emphasis on DA missions and earnestly embraced activities such as the *Phoenix* Program and close cooperation with the CIA. Others felt that SF had strayed from its original mandate and suffered because of SF's misuse (often at the hands of conventional commanders) during Vietnam. They

viewed Vietnam as an anomaly, and they believed that it should be forgotten and the ranks purged in order to return to the "true" SF mission of UW (Simons, p. 33).

G. THE POST-VIETNAM ERA

In the immediate aftermath of the Vietnam War, the SF structure was slashed far more than most other Army components. From a high of tens of thousands in the mid-1960s, authorized SF manning fell to about 3,600 a decade later. Of the seven active duty SFGs, four were decommissioned, and the remaining three could not be fully manned. Personnel quality, reflecting a larger trend within the Army, also suffered considerably. With many of the veterans leaving, qualifications for entry were lowered, resulting in an overall loss of both experience and maturity. Compounding personnel problems were severe equipment shortfalls, a result of the low priority the "hollow Army" placed on SOF at the time (Marquis, p. 40).

Throughout this period, SF was still a poor career option for officers. Since SF was not yet its own branch, every SF officer came from a conventional branch such as infantry and rotated back and forth between SF and the "real" Army. SF assignments were generally tolerated and regarded as neutral within the regular Army, but they actually inhibited advancement at the senior ranks. Despite these problems, SF managed to attract a fair number of mavericks who desired more camaraderie, challenge and adventure than they could find in conventional units (Marquis, p. 41).

Two major arguments against continued American efforts at low-intensity conflict emerged in the wake of Vietnam. Many scholarly articles appeared positing that military counter-insurgency was not only ineffective but also running counter to the

legitimate "liberation" movements expressing the peoples' desire for an improved government. Many military members also argued against involvement in low-intensity conflict, but they pursued it from the angle that time and effort spent there subtracted from the core mission of being able to engage an enemy's heavy combat forces. Nation building was a job for the Peace Corps and, specifically, not the military. Additional military arguments ran that special operations were in and of themselves tangential to the main effort, could spin out of control too easily, and entailed prohibitively high potential political costs (Adams, p. 156).

Some within the SF community, however, welcomed the drawdown as a chance to purge the ranks of marginal members and allow a strategic redirection. In particular, a small minority believed that SF had become too conventional and had entered into almost direct competition with the regular Army. They favored a return to the original OSS roots with a smaller, less public force. They never formally organized, and SF doctrine instead turned toward conventional missions in order to support rather than compete with the conventional Army (Adams, p. 158).

Army doctrine was also mildly revamped to emphasize "active defense." Specifically, this called for conventional, mechanized forces and nuclear arms holding primacy with SOF having virtually no role. Senior SF commanders made a deliberate choice to emphasize how they could fit into the conventional plan instead of concentrating on UW. The general consensus within SF's leadership was that they should work to integrate SF into the mainstream Army and dampen the independent image still reverberating from Vietnam. Despite some Congressional pressure to prepare

for future unconventional conflicts, the general American reaction was to recover from Vietnam by minimizing foreign involvement except in the case of vital national interests (Adams, p. 159).

Reactivation of the Army Rangers, in 1974, was one of the only areas of SOF expansion during this period. At the time, however, the new Rangers were regarded only as an "elite" conventional infantry unit entirely separate from any SOF. Their mission was the traditional light infantry assault, particularly against high value targets such as airfields, rather than UW or counter-insurgency. The Ranger reactivation emphasized the trend away from special operations within the military and the reemphasis of strictly conventional activities. At the same time, the SF budget was slashed more than 90% to a low of less than $100 million in the mid-1970s (Adams, p. 158).

Most European countries followed an opposite course and expanded their SOF capabilities, most notably to deal with increasingly sophisticated and numerous terrorist incidents. One example was Germany, which founded the GFSG-9 counterterrorist unit in the wake of the failed rescue attempt in Munich during the 1972 Olympics (Adams, p. 161).

In contrast, one American attempt to develop a counterterrorist capability, code named "Blue Light," was rapidly dismantled by senior Army leaders. Blue Light originated within the 5th SFG and focused on clandestine activities, particularly in denied areas. When the program's existence was discovered by the Army Chief of Staff, he quickly ended it, and Blue Light was regarded as yet another example of SOF being out of control (Adams, p. 162).

Attempts to reduce SOF were almost invariably made in good faith and reflected the persistent belief that good conventional units could conduct special operations whenever necessary. Neither the forces nor the missions were regarded as "special." SOF were simply highly-trained, well-equipped versions of conventional forces. By the end of the 1970s, this mentality had led to the degradation of SOF to the point that Shackley stated that American UW capability had "withered into virtual uselessness" (as cited in Adams, p. 163). The appropriate role for SF was direct support of conventional forces in lieu of having a viable, independent mission area.

In 1978, DOD officials briefed Congress that there were several units fully capable of undertaking unconventional assignments, including hostage rescue and counterterrorist operations. Included among these forces were the Rangers, SF, Marine Corps Reconnaissance Companies and the SEALs. Unfortunately, less than a year later the military was called upon to conduct just such an operation to rescue hostages in Iran, and the mission's ultimate failure was a watershed event in the evolution of American SOF.

H. DESERT ONE

On November 4th, 1979, 66 American embassy staff members were seized by Islamic militants in Tehran and held as hostages. Despite DOD's earlier assertions that it had a myriad of units capable of performing hostage rescue, there was no force capable of mounting a rescue attempt. Accordingly, a group was cobbled together and after six months of disjointed training launched Operation Rice Bowl/Eagle Claw to attempt a rescue.

Typical of the divided nature of American SOF, Army troops provided the ground assault element, and the Navy provided the helicopters and aircraft carrier to lift the assault force into Iran. Marine Corps pilots flew most of the helicopters because they proved more proficient than Navy pilots in flying the extremely difficult nighttime infiltration over land. Finally, the Air Force provided the refueling tankers and airlift to the intermediate staging area. Incredibly, although the individual components rehearsed the mission separately, the entire package never conducted a rehearsal together. Aside from the lack of mission-specific integration, few of the rescue team members had ever worked together on joint exercises or missions (Special Operations Review Group (SORG), 1980).

Closely resembling the Son Tay prison raid, the plan called for a 120-man assault force to helicopter to a hiding spot 50 miles southeast of Tehran and spend one day there. After depositing the assault team, the helicopters would stage in the hills at a nearby location. The assault team would transit to the embassy in trucks procured by a CIA in-country network. While the assault team was rescuing the hostages, the helicopters would fly in from their hiding spot and extract all Americans to Manzariyeh, an abandoned airbase 50 miles southwest of Tehran. Three Air Force AC-130 gunships were to provide close air support. At Manzariyeh, the helicopters would be destroyed, and the entire group would extract via C-141 cargo planes flying in from Saudi Arabia (Kreisher, 1999).

Unfortunately, Tehran lay about 700 miles inland, well beyond the unrefueled range of any American helicopter. After various experiments and discussion of a

parachute option, the decision was made to employ Navy RH-53D minesweeping helicopters. The RH-53s were chosen for their long range, heavy payload and ease of operation from an aircraft carrier. After further experimentation, the chosen option was to refuel the helicopters with EC-130 transport aircraft carrying special 18,000 gallon fuel bladders. Because the RH-53s did not have aerial refueling capability, a ground site 200 miles outside of Tehran, known as Desert One, was selected based upon its isolation and ability to sustain aircraft operations. For simplicity, the ground element, flying into Desert One on separate MC-130 transport aircraft, was to rendezvous with the helicopters on the ground (Kreisher, 1999).

Marine Lieutenant Colonel Seiffert led the helicopter element, and his ground counterpart was Army Colonel Beckwith. Both agreed that one of the key components to the plan was the number of helicopters available. They also agreed that at least six operational RH-53s were needed at Desert One. Beckwith had asked for ten to be launched from the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz, sailing 50 miles off the Iranian coast. However, the Navy insisted that it could only store eight on the Nimitz's hanger deck, and these eight were given only routine maintenance during the months preceding the rescue attempt. After the mission's failure, both Seiffert and the Navy stated that an intensive maintenance program just prior to the launch date ensured that all of the helicopters were fully ready for the demanding flight (Kreisher, 1999).

On the evening on April 24th, 1980, the mission was launched with eight helicopters and immediately ran into trouble. One of the helicopters was abandoned in the desert less than two hours into the mission when the pilot received an alarm

indicating potentially catastrophic problems with his rotor. The remaining seven helicopters flew into a severe duststorm that broke apart the formation and created extraordinarily hazardous flying conditions. One of the RH-53s suffered a progressive electrical systems failure, which rendered useless most of the critical navigation components. The pilot turned back, leaving six helicopters to make it to Desert One (SORG, p. 9).

Unfortunately, one the RH-53s that made it to the refueling site suffered an unrepairable hydraulic failure. Now down to only five helicopters, President Carter concurred with Beckwith's recommendation and aborted the mission. The task force was in the midst of conducting an unrehearsed withdrawal when tragedy struck. One of the helicopter pilots became disoriented by billowing sand while trying to reposition his RH-53 behind a refueling aircraft. The helicopter's rotors sliced into an EC-130 partially loaded with ground troops, and a raging fire ensued (Marquis, p. 72).

Explosions from the fuel and ammunition-laden aircraft killed eight servicemen, injured several others and damaged three additional helicopters. The rescue force finally extracted from Desert One, but only after abandoning five helicopters, classified materials, and the bodies of eight American servicemen in the flaming wreckage (Adams, p. 164). Navy aircraft later bombed the site, but the haunting site of the carnage provided a vivid illustration of the limits of American SOF. The dramatic failure was even more painful when contrasted with such highly successful missions as the Israeli rescue at Entebbe.

In the aftermath of the botched rescue attempt, the Special Operations Review Group, headed by Admiral Holloway, was charged with examining the mission and recommending actions to ensure the success of similar operations in the future. Quickly dubbed the Holloway Commission, the group concentrated on military issues to the exclusion of political and national level perspectives.

While the commission took great pains to praise the individual members of the rescue effort, it noted a significant number of shortcomings with U.S. SOF. According to the commission, the two major areas impacting the mission's failure were the *ad hoc* nature of both the organization and planning and operational security (OPSEC) considerations which precluded several potentially beneficial practices (SORG, p. 60).

Specifically, the commission found that the absence of an existing Joint Task Force (JTF) organization resulted in significantly more time being required before operational readiness was achieved. Even a core staff would have already resolved many of the command and control, logistics, OPSEC and administrative matters that occupied much of the rescue force's energy. Recruiting, staffing and integrating the rescue force required months of effort that could have been better spent on tactical concerns (SORG, p. vi).

A standing JTF would have further provided a framework to conduct a comprehensive, full-scale rehearsal. Such an event would most likely have exposed weaknesses in the command and control relationships and would have led to greater familiarity on the part of the element leaders. The reason a comprehensive rehearsal never took place was that mission commanders felt that bringing together all the forces

at one location posed too great a security risk for the mission, which relied heavily upon surprise. A pre-existing organization would have had a plausible reason for assembling and exercising diverse units (SORG, p. 60).

Notably, the commission also assessed that the first realistic chance for mission success was achieved at the end of March, 1980, a full five months after the hostages were seized. While noting that virtually all of the equipment used was available in November of 1979, the lack of pre-existing command and operational structures prevented a more timely American response and ultimately contributed to the mission's failure. Although the commission did not specifically rebut earlier DOD claims of having multiple units capable of hostage rescue, the events at Desert One poignantly demonstrated the hollowness of such assertions.

Because the rescue mission was SOF-directed, planned and executed, the credibility and perceived usefulness of SOF by the conventional military decreased from already low levels. Desert One's aftermath marked the nadir of both American special operations capability since World War II and the viability of the entire concept of maintaining standing SOF in peacetime (Adams, p. 165).

Two specific recommendations emerged from the commission, and they laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Special Operations Command. The first initiative was to establish a permanent Counterterrorist Joint Task Force (CJTF), and it was gradually introduced over the next years. The second proposal to create the Special Operations Policy Advisory Group was also adopted. This group consisted of high-ranking officers who had career backgrounds in special operations and/or had served at

the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) or unified Commanders in Chief (CINC) level. These members would prove to be particularly influential in fighting for SOF reform in the 1980s (Marquis, p. 73).

One immediate and lasting change that did occur was the creation of a unit dedicated solely to special operations aviation support within the Army. Recognizing the problems with the *ad hoc* aviation support during Eagle Claw, the Army tasked a unit of the 101st Airmobile Division with training exclusively to support SOF. It became known as Task Force 160 because of the constant attachment of different units to conduct its usually low-level and nighttime missions (Adams, p. 167).

Meaningful reforms were still years away, however, despite a few minor changes in the immediate aftermath of the rescue mission. Chief of Staff of the Army, General Meyer, proposed a joint Strategic Services Command (STRATSERCOM) to combat terrorism and insurgency. The Navy and Marine Corps suspiciously regarded his recommendation as an Army attempt to gain control of more SOF and zealously opposed the plan (Adams, p. 165). Again reflecting conventional distrust of special operations, there was also widespread fear that the proposed command could become a *de facto* new service and "steal" resources and responsibilities from the established Services (Marquis, p. 73). Meyer's proposal languished for about two years before it was finally removed from consideration, but it was a harbinger for SOCOM's eventual establishment.

Once Meyer recognized that his proposed STRATSERCOM was not going to become a reality, he concentrated on making what changes he could. He created the 1st Special Operations Command, which for the first time included all Army SOF under one

organization. SF also received 1,500 new billets, primarily utilized to bring understrength SFGs up to full manning (Marquis, p. 75).

Ultimately, the failure at Desert One provided the catalyst necessary for a true overhaul of America's diminished SOF capability. The Holloway Commission provided the first critical assessment of SOF conducted by an independent, external body. Although the struggle to create SOCOM and turn it into a viable entity would continue throughout the 1980s, America's inability to rescue the hostages in Iran virtually ensured that something would be done to rebuild SOF (Marquis, p. 73).

IV. SEAL ORIGINS

A. SCOUTS AND RAIDERS

Like the Army, the United States Navy entered World War II with virtually no preparation in terms of special operations capabilities. However, the Navy quickly formed such organizations as Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT), Naval Combat Demolition Units (NCDU) and the Scouts and Raiders, and these groups proved to be the forerunners of today's SEAL Teams.

Officially, the Navy considers the Scouts and Raiders to be the direct predecessors of the SEALs, though the Scouts and Raiders actually had much narrower mission areas than modern SEALs. Most Scouts and Raiders activities were limited to direct support of amphibious landing forces, chiefly guiding Marine and Army units to the proper beach. A few operations involved operating with guerilla forces in China and some Scouts and Raiders worked with UDT units against the Japanese in the Pacific (Kelly, 1992).

Though popular legend often attributes the disastrous landing at Tarawa in 1943 with impelling the Navy to create special operations forces to operate in advance of amphibious landings, the reality is that such units were already being formed at least a year earlier. An early World War II recruit into the Navy was (later Captain) Phil Bucklew, a physical fitness instructor, who was bored of leading morning calisthenics. He volunteered for the first Scouts and Raiders, who were being quietly touted as amphibious commandos, and he was selected to lead the new unit.

The new units began training in May of 1942, and they were first employed during Operation Torch, the Allied landings in North Africa, in November of the same year. The Scouts and Raiders went on to participate in every American amphibious operation in the European theater, occasionally conducting limited commando-style assaults, but more often simply guiding the landing forces ashore (Marquis, 21-22).

Notably, the Scouts and Raiders operated almost exclusively from small boats, conducting swimmer operations only when absolutely necessary. One Scouts and Raiders practice that remains to this day is the use of an "Indoctrination Week" as a selection tool for prospective recruits, all of whom were volunteers. It came about as a result of the Scouts and Raiders being asked to help train newly formed UDTs in 1943 (Fane, 1956).

This week, rapidly renamed "Hell Week," usually saw a 30-40% attrition rate and was accepted as a valuable mechanism for building confidence and screening out individuals not suited to the rigors of maritime commando work. Hell Week consisted, and still does, of nearly a week straight of punishing physical evolutions. Both officers and enlisted completed the exact same training, and Hell Week helps explain both the strong emphasis placed on physical fitness by the modern SEAL Teams. It also set the precedent that officers and enlisted always share the same hardships (Fane, p. 19-20).

Bucklew further contributed to the SEALs' land-based activities when he was sent to China in late 1944. He worked with an 80-man American detachment that was responsible for collecting intelligence on the Chinese coastline and the Japanese occupation force, as well as conducting limited guerilla warfare whenever possible. As

the only individual with amphibious landing experience, Bucklew had full responsibility for this aspect of the operation. Though the Navy eventually opted against establishing a base on the Chinese mainland, Bucklew helped set the precedent for maritime special operations forces conducting land-based reconnaissance and commando activities (Kelly, p. 55-58).

B. NAVAL COMBAT DEMOLITION UNITS

While the Scouts and Raiders were most active in the European and African arenas, slightly different naval SOF were established to work in the Pacific. Due to the absence of almost any special operations knowledge within the Navy during the beginning phases of World War II, much of the initial expertise again came from England. In the spring of 1942, British Combined Operations Pilotage Parties (COPP) were commissioned for the purpose of conducting hydrographic reconnaissance and beach landing guidance for the anticipated amphibious landings in the European theater. Both the Scouts and Raiders and the NCDUs cross-trained with the COPPs and benefited greatly from their experience. Much of the early training given to NCDUs was also a direct result of one individual, (later Admiral) Draper Kauffmann, an American who had gained wartime experience with the British (Kelly, p. 16).

Initially denied a commission in the Depression-era Navy because of his poor eyesight, Kauffmann served as a volunteer in Europe as an ambulance driver. Captured by the Germans, he was soon released and volunteered for bomb disposal during the Blitz from 1940-41. In May of 1941, he returned to America and finally received his commission. As one of the most knowledgeable bomb-disposal experts in the country,

he was tasked with establishing an American explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) school (Kelly, p. 19-20).

Because of the dangers inherent in bomb disposal, Kauffmann emphasized physical fitness to prevent fatigue from causing carelessness. His bomb school's graduation exam featured 30 continuous hours of demolition testing to evaluate candidates' reaction to stress and exhaustion. Kauffmann was in charge of the school for two years before being tasked with developing a unit capable of countering the obstacles the Germans had emplaced on the French coast (Kelly, p. 20).

Starting with volunteers from the Seabees and the bomb disposal school, Kauffmann started training the first NCDUs in 1943 with the intent of having them ready for the amphibious invasion of France (Kelly, p. 21). By the time of the attack on June 6th, 1944, several hundred men were organized into 13-man gap-assault teams and largely succeeded in clearing channels on the occupied beaches despite sometimes horrific casualties. The NCDU experience contributed greatly to the SEALs' work with small boats and explosives, though there was still minimal attention paid to swimming (Marquis, p. 23).

C. UNDERWATER DEMOLITION TEAMS

In the Pacific, the fledgling UDTs received personal attention from the fleet commander, Admiral Turner, largely as a result of the terrible consequences of the landing at Tarawa in November of 1943. No reconnaissance or obstacle clearing teams had preceded the invasion force, and as a result many landing craft ran aground. Many of the Marines aboard either drowned trying to wade to shore or were killed or wounded

by Japanese fire. Afterwards, Turner recognized the importance of specialized teams to prepare invasion beaches and lent the considerable weight of his command to such units in the Pacific (Marquis, p. 23).

Hastily trained in Hawaii, the UDTs, grouped under Fifth Amphibious Force, first saw action less than a month later during the invasion of the Kwajalein atoll. The UDTs validated their existence there and learned two lessons still considered important by today's SEAL Teams. The first was that countering enemy obstacles required trained men instead of technology, and the second was that daytime swimmer reconnaissance was possible (Kelly, p. 29-30).

A new radio-controlled, waterborne explosive drone was tested at Kwajalein, but nearly every one malfunctioned and not a single enemy obstacle was destroyed. The UDTs concluded that in the future, technology could not replace a man on the target – a philosophy that to this day holds considerable weight in the SEAL Teams. While all previous beach reconnaissance had been conducted at night and usually from boats, Turner personally ordered two daytime missions, which turned out to be complete successes. Initially deemed to be an aberration, the UDTs quickly adopted the tactic of using swimmers even during the daytime, and long distance swimming was added to the training regimen (Marquis, p. 23).

Having proven themselves, the UDTs went on to participate in virtually every remaining amphibious operation in the Pacific, gradually refining their tactics during dozens of landings. By the war's end, there were about 3,500 UDT members organized into about 30 teams (Adams, p. 39). This UDT configuration of about 80 enlisted

personnel with 20 officers was eventually adopted by the SEALs. However, the SEALs also decided to use 12-16 man platoons as basic operational elements, validating much of the NCDU experience. The end result was very similar to the organization of SF. SEAL platoons roughly equated to SF A-Teams, and about eight SEAL platoons, in conjunction with a modest support element, formed a SEAL Team.

Kelly also attributed the present SEAL penchant for security with Kauffmann's influence in the Pacific. Correspondents were anxious to report on the daring exploits of the UDTs, but Kauffmann refused, feeling that the less the Japanese knew about the American swimmers the better. Reflecting a bygone era of media coverage, the correspondents totally deferred to Kauffmann, who did finally agree to some stories after the war (Kelly, p. 42). This emphasis on security for operational reasons differs slightly in origin from the SF, but both communities continue to value secrecy and maintaining a low profile.

Another contributor to the eventual SEAL Teams was Christian Lambertsen, a medical student who developed a bubbleless underwater breathing system. He demonstrated it for the Navy, but officials could see no use for it and so the American Navy itself never developed a covert combat swimmer capability during World War II. The OSS, however, did see merit in the new system, and it trained swimmers to mine enemy harbors and support agents clandestinely (Marquis, p. 24).

Although the OSS swimmers were never employed in their intended role, several were attached to UDTs and saw action. Again, one of the major hurdles was MacArthur, who refused to allow the OSS men to conduct their operations in his theater. The one

OSS innovation that the UDTs adopted quickly was the use of fins instead of boots. Many of the modern SEAL missions of ship attack and covert infiltration had their genesis with the initial OSS efforts (Marquis, p. 25).

D. THE POST-WORLD WAR II ERA

Similar to the Army experience, almost all of the Navy SOF were decommissioned at the end of World War II, except for a small residual UDT capability. Those few who remained were considered third-class citizens in the Navy, and they had no hope of advancing beyond Lieutenant Commander (Marquis, p. 26).

The farsighted Lambertsen had one final contribution to make though. After World War II, while the UDTs were being disbanded, he gathered and requisitioned as much of the equipment as possible. He believed that the UDT skills would be required again, and he presented his collected materials to those few pockets within the military concerned with diving. His efforts greatly aided the naval SOF community by preserving much of the equipment and experience gleaned from the war (Kelly, p. 59).

While the Navy was unusual among the services in retaining a more than token special operations capability after World War II, it was still caught largely unprepared when war broke out in Korea in 1950 (USSOCOM, p. 2-10). From a strength of some 3,500 members during World War II, the remaining UDTs were cut to four teams of about 50 men each by 1948 (Fane, p. 234). Reconstituted UDTs, often using World War II veterans recalled to active duty, performed well during the Korean War's major amphibious invasion at Inchon. They also participated in about five dozen other landings and approximately 137 reconnaissance and sabotage missions. However, Korea

did not provide the numerous opportunities for beach clearance that had been present in the island hopping campaign (Kelly, p. 80).

Not surprisingly, the UDTs became extensively involved in mine clearance, particularly in the port of Inchon itself. The North Koreans had mined the harbor, and the UDT members refined their techniques for both cold weather operations and explosive ordnance disposal there (Dockery, 1991).

Another area in which the UDTs gained experience was conducting commando operations. The miniscule North Korean navy provided virtually no opportunities for underwater ship attacks, but there were ample targets along the coastline. Working with the CIA, Korean forces or on their own, the UDTs conducted numerous sabotage missions behind North Korean lines. The typical pattern was to infiltrate a small team that attacked a specific target and then quickly withdrew. One notable group of missions, collectively known as Operation Fishnet, resulted in mixed success in attempting to disrupt the North Korean fishing industry. Overall, the UDTs had only a minor impact on the conflict, but they did firmly establish a role as seaborne commandos capable of conducting operations far in excess of simply reconnoitering and clearing beach obstacles (Kelly, p. 81-83).

The final significant advance for the UDTs in Korea was the addition of aerial platforms, most notably early experimental helicopters, as insertion and extraction methods. Experiments with the new helicopters had been conducted as early as 1947, but the necessities of wartime hastened UDT efforts to develop viable techniques for delivering and recovering swimmers. Although superb methods for delivering UDTs

were rapidly perfected, actually recovering these same individuals remains problematic to this day (Kelly, p. 77-79).

E. THE POST-KOREA ERA

After the armistice halted active hostilities, the UDTs followed the usual American pattern of demobilizing after a conflict. In 1956, the five active teams were reduced to three, and the extra personnel were used to bring the remaining teams back up to authorized manning levels (Dockery, p. 95).

Throughout the 1950s, the UDTs performed a variety of specialized tasks and missions, often to help justify their continued existence to higher commands. These missions varied from supporting Seventh Fleet operations to evacuate nationalist Chinese from Tachen island in 1955 to conducting security exercises throughout the Navy. The UDTs also gained considerable cold weather experience during Arctic undersea exploration operations and during survey and demolition activities to help construct the Distant Early Warning (DEW) line in Alaska and Canada (Dockery, p. 93-94).

Another significant UDT arena was the manned space program. Recognized as being some of the most physically fit and tough individuals, UDT volunteers were subjected to intensive G-force and weightlessness tests. NASA used the UDTs as human guinea pigs to "prove" the human body could tolerate the tremendous forces associated with lift-off, prolonged space flight and reentry (Dockery, p. 97).

Using UDT members to validate the possibility of manned spaceflight started a long association between the teams and NASA. Throughout the 1960s and during the

early 1970s, UDT personnel performed the initial recovery of astronauts and space capsules for all of America's manned space flights. After the capsules splashed down, the swimmers would first ensure the astronauts safety and then attach floatation collars to the reentry vehicle to allow for its recovery. The only change in procedure occurred during the Apollo flights to the moon, when the UDT swimmers conducted their operations in decontamination suits over their swim gear, because so little was known about possible biological hazards from deep space (Dockery, p. 252-253).

F. THE FOUNDING OF THE SEAL TEAMS

Although the Navy followed the same Army pattern of harboring a deep distrust of new, unconventional units, it could not ignore President Kennedy's efforts in 1961 to dramatically increase America's special operations capabilities. As part of Kennedy's shift from Eisenhower's policy of "massive retaliation," the President personally ordered more than $100 million of Pentagon funds reallocated to special operations. Several relatively junior officers in the Navy, including Lieutenant Commander Hamilton (commanding UDT-21), took this opportunity to propose a new naval commando force to the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) (Kelly, p. 86).

Senior Navy leadership was already favorably disposed to the proposal, including both Admiral Burke, the CNO, and his successor, Admiral Anderson. Thus, within days Hamilton was given a large budget, a small staff, and the mandate of forming one SEAL Team on each coast. The new SEALs were to be commandos capable of operating in the air, on land and in the maritime environment. Although similar to the UDTs, the SEALs

were to work with all facets of the Navy and not remain specifically tied to the amphibious forces (Kelly, p. 87).

Underwater Demolition Teams were used as the initial template for the SEAL Teams, but a much greater emphasis was placed on inland warfare. This was a direct contradiction of the Navy's traditional emphasis upon "blue water" operations, which specifically sought to avoid "messy" entanglements in shallow coastal waterways. Nonetheless, the first two SEAL Teams (one on each coast) were commissioned in January of 1962, barely six months after Kennedy's call for an expanded American special operations capability (Marquis, p. 26).

Adams explained Kennedy's actions as a wholesale attempt to reorganize military thinking from a fixation on conventional methods to facing the new challenges of counterinsurgency. Instead, what resulted was a military attempt to slightly alter its already existing structure in response to the "new" wars of national liberation (Adams, p. 73). Thus, the Navy used the known quantity of its UDTs as a springboard for meeting the President's new requirements.

Initial SEAL members were drawn from UDT volunteers, providing a direct link between the two units. Since all UDT members already had hydrographic reconnaissance experience, this was accepted as a given for a training base. Additional skills were included based upon both the UDT experience in the Pacific during World War II and Army Special Forces training courses. One focus of the training was on using physical and mental stresses to identify which individuals would be able to handle the rigors of the proposed SEAL missions. Not surprisingly, this led to Team members

attaching incredible value to physical prowess as a measure of competence and suitability (Marquis, p. 26).

Hamilton himself always reported substantial support for his efforts from the Navy's senior leaders, but there were still significant problems. Each SEAL Team was composed of about 50 enlisted men and 10 officers, with a Lieutenant Commander commanding. This was very similar to the UDT model, but it also ensured that the SEALs would not enjoy considerable power within the Navy itself. All SEAL funds came from already authorized Navy budget authority, so every dollar spent on special warfare meant that it had to be taken from an already existing Navy program (Kelly, p. 88).

A possible solution to the problem of manning the SEAL Teams was quickly dismissed. Instead of simply converting some or all of the UDTs into SEAL Teams, only a small cadre was allowed to form the nucleus of the new organization. This was because the amphibious fleet still demanded unfettered UDT support (Kelly, p. 88). The SEALs were given a fairly broad mandate that called for them to be Navy fleet tactical units responsible for conducting naval special warfare (Dockery, p. 102).

Similar to the Army experience over the issue of SF soldiers wearing the green beret, President Kennedy intervened in favor of SOF on the matter of a disputed purchase of AR-15 rifles by SEALs on the open market. SEAL Team member Roy Boehm had purchased the rifles for the Teams, and was he facing a possible court-martial for doing so. Although the AR-15's successor, the M-16, eventually became the standard American infantry weapon, at the time, it was not in the military inventory. All

talk of a court-martial ended after Kennedy visited the newly formed Teams and heard about the controversy (Kelly, p. 90). This incident and the eventual acceptance of the green beret as an authorized uniform illustrate the precarious position the SEAL Teams and Special Forces held within the established military. The Services complied with the President's directives, but wanted small, controllable organizations that fit within a conventional framework.

The first operational SEAL deployment was to conduct reconnaissance along the Cuban coastline in April and May of 1962. This mission was successful, as were follow-on missions in Cuba during the missile crisis in October of the same year. These initial successes were important in establishing the viability and relevance of the SEALs, who still had to "prove" themselves as a viable organization to the larger naval establishment (Marquis, p. 26).

G. THE VIETNAM ERA

At the same time, the SEALs were also preparing to send detachments to what was then a low-scale conflict in Vietnam. Similar to the SF mission, the first SEALs arrived in Vietnam in April of 1962 to train the South Vietnamese in maritime reconnaissance, sabotage and guerilla warfare. The SEALs were configured in Mobile Training Teams (MTT), and their mission was most appropriately classified as Foreign Internal Defense (FID). This early FID tasking to train a host country's forces evolved along with the American commitment to South Vietnam, and the SEALs began taking a more active role in the conflict. Eventually, the FID mission was almost entirely phased

out in favor of direct action missions such as ambushes and reconnaissance (Dockery, p. 103-107).

By 1963, the SEALs were infiltrating Vietnamese agents into the North as part of a CIA sponsored operation. Both the SEALs and the CIA rated the overall effect on the war as minimal, but the missions did mark the beginning of direct SEAL participation in the conflict. By the mid-1960s, both the SEAL Teams and UDTs were heavily involved in direct combat, primarily in South Vietnam's southern Mekong Delta region (Marquis, p. 27).

Aiding the SEALs after 1964 were the numerous small, specialized boats of the "brow-water navy." Recognizing the particular needs of conducting operations in coastal and inland waterways, the Navy developed what would become the Special Boat Units (SBU) to support SEAL missions. Again reflecting a conventional bias against special operations, serving in the brown-water navy was considered detrimental to a successful career (Marquis, p. 27).

FID-type missions continued throughout the war, but they were largely overshadowed by the small unit infantry-style operations conducted after 1964. Unfortunately, the SEAL effort was never successfully coordinated with the larger war strategy. Many of the SEAL platoons collected their own intelligence, and they concentrated on the Direct Action (DA) and reconnaissance mission areas. While Vietnam had been the exclusive province of SEAL Team ONE until 1966, the personnel demands and stresses of combat dictated the need for additional forces. Thus, SEAL

Team TWO began sending platoons to Vietnam at the beginning of 1967 (Marquis, p. 27-28).

The increased SEAL presence in Vietnam meant that most Team members served at least one tour in-country. The typical pattern became a six month tour in country, six months off and then another six month tour. Accordingly, the Vietnam experience came to define the Teams. Marquis described Vietnam as being the perfect environment for the individual SEAL. It provided both excitement and danger, satisfying the general desire for action and adventure. SEALs came to define Vietnam "as the high point of their history" (Marquis, p. 28).

One of the most successful aspects of SEAL operations was in rescuing Prisoners of War (POW). Although they never found any Americans, the SEALs did liberate 152 South Vietnamese soldiers, accounting for 48% of the freed captives during the war (Marquis, p. 28). Dockery even attributed the continued presence of SEALs in the Mekong Delta after 1970 to the possibility of future POW rescues. The potential benefit of rescuing POWs was considered so important that SEALs continued operating long after other American combat forces had turned over direct engagement to the South Vietnamese. Finally, in 1972, the SEALs in the Mekong Delta withdrew, the last American combat unit still in that region (Dockery, p. 194).

Unfortunately, experiences and actions in Vietnam did not always mesh well with the conventional Navy and society. Many SEALs felt demoralized and disoriented after returning from Vietnam, and they became increasing disconnected from the fleet in the

1970s (Marquis, p. 28). Vietnam-era SEAL Ted Grabowsky summed up the SEALs' standing as follows:

> We had no status, no standing in the regular navy. Some part Of the navy saw us as some sort of quasi-criminal element, not a respected profession, that should only be used in desperate circumstances...Like it was some sort of immoral activity (Kelly, p. 146).

Offering evidence that Grabowsky's was not an isolated viewpoint, Vice Admiral Salzar, commander of U.S. Naval Forces, Vietnam, classified SEALs as a "two-edged sword." Likening them to attack dogs, he stated that SEALs were good to have around, but needed to be kept on a very short leash (Kelly, p. 146).

Although there was considerable friction between the SEAL Teams and the fleet, Vietnam did serve to validate the concept of using seaborne commando forces and ensure the continued existence the SEALs. Captain Bucklew, commanding all SEAL forces, had received a communication from the SEALs in Vietnam in 1966 urging that all SEALs be withdrawn from the country. The memo resulted from difficulties between the SEALs and conventional commanders (both Army and Navy) in-country, but Bucklew saw Vietnam as a critical battleground for proving the new force. He replied that since Vietnam was the only war at the time, if the SEALs wanted to continue to exist, they needed to participate in it (Kelly, p. 132). Whether the SEALs would have been totally dismantled if they had not actively participated in Vietnam is uncertain, but their overwhelmingly successful record certainly contributed to their lasting presence even after the inevitable post-war drawdown in the 1970s.

H. THE POST-VIETNAM ERA

Near the end of active American involvement in Vietnam, the Navy established a special warfare designation (1130) for officers. Two years later in 1971, it also created a designation for special operations officers (1140). These actions appeared to increase the legitimacy and stature of special operations within the Navy, but in reality there were severe negative implications (Marquis, p. 36).

Prior to having their own designators, most Naval Special Warfare (NSW) officers had to serve first in the conventional Navy and volunteer for SEAL training. Entering the SEAL community was widely understood to limit future opportunities for advancement. Former NSW Commander Rear Admiral Smith, as quoted by Marquis, explained that, "Annapolis graduates were not permitted to become SEALs. It was not considered an appropriate career..." Before having a specific designator, SEALs needed to spend part of their careers in the surface fleet. The situation was virtually identical to that of SF officers, where promotion, as limited as it might be, still required active participation in the "real" military. In order to be eligible to make Captain (O-6), SEALs could not count command of SEAL Teams and instead had to complete an additional "command at sea" tour with the regular Navy (Marquis, p. 35).

The new Special Warfare career path allowed SEALs to spend their entire career within the SOF field. While almost every NSW officer preferred this option, working solely within the SEAL community served to isolate the Teams even further from the conventional Navy. The officers themselves usually derived more personal satisfaction from spending their careers exclusively as SOF, but NSW suffered as a community

because its officers could never hold the right assignments needed for advancement in the senior ranks. Removing the SEALs as prospective commanders for conventional ships also had the effect of freeing billets for the regular Navy, which had previously "wasted" slots that were now available for true surface warfare officers (Marquis, p. 36)

Enlisted SEALs fared somewhat better, but there were still difficulties. There was no specific SEAL "rating," or career field, within the Navy. This meant that enlisted SEALs trained first in an unrelated field and then acquired their NSW skills. However, they still retained their original rating and competed for advancement within that field. Thus, they faced significant disadvantages when tested against their peers who worked within their career fields daily. Relative to officers, however, enlisted SEALs found it comparatively easy to remain within the NSW community for their entire career (Marquis, p. 35).

What came to be known as the *Mayaguez* incident demonstrated the tension between the regular Navy and the SEALs. The SS *Mayaguez*, an American merchant ship was seized by the Cambodian Navy in international waters on May 12th, 1975. The Cambodians towed the ship toward their mainland, while the American Navy launched a frantic effort to locate the *Mayaguez* and keep it in sight. President Ford was under pressure to prevent a repeat of the USS *Pueblo* incident, when the North Koreans had seized an American warship and held its crew for over a year. Additionally, the President needed to prove that America was not a "helpless giant" in the wake of its inglorious withdrawal from Vietnam less than a month earlier (Frisbee, 1999).

The aircraft carrier USS *Coral Sea* and smaller support ships rushed to the scene. A Navy P-3 patrol plane spotted the Mayaguez anchored off Kho Tang Island, some 34 miles from the mainland. Several American planes were damaged by anti-aircraft fire, indicating that any rescue force faced strong opposition. Assuming that the 39-man crew was still close to the merchant ship, a rescue force was quickly assembled in the area. Over 1,100 Marines were flown into U Tapao airbase in Thailand from Okinawa and the Philippines (Kelly, p. 202).

SEALs in the Philippines advocated a strategic reconnaissance mission, but they were quickly overruled. In the early morning of May 15th, the first elements of a planned 600-man Marine rescue effort assaulted the island in 11 heavy CH-53 helicopters. Three of the helicopters transferred their Marines to the USS *Holt*, a small destroyer. The team aboard the *Holt* directly assaulted the *Mayaguez*, hoping to liberate the crew. Though the Marines discovered hot meals on the ship, there were no people on it, and the *Mayaguez* itself was recaptured without a single shot being fired (Kelly, p. 203).

At the same time, a force of about 100 Marines landed on the other end of the island. Their intention was to sweep across the six square mile island in search of crew members, and the Marines expected little to no resistance. Instead, between 150 to 200 heavily armed Khmer Rouge troops opposed the aerial assault. Of the initial eight helicopters, three were shot down and two others were badly damaged. The assault force, far from sweeping the island, was in danger of being overrun (Frisbee, 1999).

In support of the operations on the island, heavy carrier bombing was directed at the mainland. This was intended to demonstrate American resolve and had the desired

effect. A Cambodian fishing vessel flying white flags approached the destroyer USS *Wilson* and returned the 39 *Mayaguez* crewmen to the Navy. After the captives were recovered, the Marines ashore were directed to disengage. However, the local Khmer Rouge forces pressed their attack and succeeded in switching from defensive to offensive operations against the beleaguered Marines (Frisbee, 1999).

Prior to the initial landings, naval gunfire and air support were rejected because of the possibility of causing civilian casualties. Once the danger of the Marines position became apparent, the restrictions were lifted and heavy fire support was employed. By nightfall on the 15th, the Marines managed to withdraw, but they left behind the bodies of 15 airmen and Marines killed in action, three missing Marines, and the secret avionics boxes in the downed helicopters. At this point, the SEALs in the Philippines were urgently requested (Kelly, p. 204).

After flying to the carrier, the SEAL commander, Lieutenant (junior grade) Coulter, met with Admiral Coogan, commanding the naval task force. Coogan wanted the SEALs to transit to the island in small boats flying white flags. They were then to recover the American bodies and the "black boxes" from the helicopters. Coulter was incredulous and offered instead to swim in and conduct a clandestine reconnaissance operation. Although Coogan never issued a direct order to conduct the mission, Coulter jeopardized his career by flatly refusing to accede to the Admiral's wishes. His saving grace was that he proposed a viable alternative (Kelly, p. 205).

Senior leaders in Washington soon ruled out further action against the Cambodians, but the episode epitomized the gulf between the SEALs and the

conventional Navy. Coulter summed up the SEAL position by saying, "We [SEALs] are not going in unarmed. That's not what we do (Kelly, p. 205)." From the SEAL perspective, the episode was a textbook case of how not to employ SOF. Prior to the Marine assault, when the SEALs could have used their specialized training to conduct strategic reconnaissance, conventional commanders relegated them to remaining in the Philippines. Once the initial mission ran into difficulties, the same commanders wanted to use the SEALs, but only in the role of unarmed, quasi-diplomats. Coulter found himself in the unusual position of trying, as a junior officer, to advise his senior officers of realistic courses of action. For many in the SEAL community, the *Mayaguez* incident symbolized their standing within the Navy: Naval Special Warfare was something to be tolerated, but only at the margins. Once SEALs were to be employed, little serious thought was given to taking advantage of their specialized skills, and the SEALs themselves were largely expendable. Instead of functioning as one integrated team, SEALs and the regular Navy operated as distinct organizations with different agendas (Marquis, p. 37).

In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the SEALs attempted to incorporate their combat experience into their organization. This placed them in a paradoxical position with the conventional Navy. While the SEAL Teams were defined by the Vietnam experience, America was collectively trying to forget about its defeat in Vietnam and move on to almost anything else. At the same time the SEALs concentrated on riverine and land warfare, the conventional Navy was focusing on besting the Soviets in the open ocean. National strategy was rapidly changing to embrace the concept of a bipolar

struggle, often to the specific exclusion of becoming entangled with the messy wars of liberation that had seemed so important a decade earlier. To the traditional Navy, it was great that the SEALs wanted develop proficiency in riverine operations: the only problem was that these efforts were largely irrelevant when viewed from a Service perspective (Marquis, p. 37).

With their own career path, the SEALs tended to remain in NSW, which they vastly preferred, and become even more isolated from the fleet. As the SEALs became more alienated from the regular Navy, what little support they did have decreased significantly. Finding it difficult to quantify the benefits of maintaining an active SEAL force, the Navy came very close to either decommissioning all the SEAL Teams or moving them to the reserves (Marquis, p. 39).

Similar to the SF, the SEALs reached a nadir in the mid-1970s. The Navy seriously considered one proposal that called for the abolition of NSW. Marine Corps commanders felt that they could conduct the reconnaissance for amphibious operations with their own forces, and naval leaders believed that SEAL missions and capabilities had no benefit for the fleet. Much of the battle revolved around money. Although the SEALs were allotted only a small fraction of the Navy's budget, in the lean years after Vietnam they became an enticing target (Marquis, p. 39).

A message sent by then-CNO Admiral Zumwalt illustrated the precarious position of the SEALs. Zumwalt queried his fleet commanders about their recommendations for NSW after the aborted attempt to decommission the SEAL Teams. Both commanders concurred with either disbanding the SEALs or placing them in the Reserves. The

UDTs, however, were recommended for retention, since they directly supported fleet operations. Nonetheless, Zumwalt maintained both groups (Marquis, p. 39). SEAL commanders, recognizing that their continued existence was as perilous as a change in the Navy's senior leader, decided to alter their position.

As a result of Vietnam, the SEALs of the late 1970s were experienced in riverine and jungle warfare, but their expertise ended there. While the UDTs maintained their link to the fleet performing hydrographic reconnaissance for amphibious operations, the limited SEAL skills were seen as largely irrelevant in the Navy's World War III and Cold War scenarios. Accordingly, the SEAL staff officers had to fight for the continuation of Naval Special Warfare. One junior officer commented that the [SEAL leadership's] "job in life was to justify our existence. And it was a full time job..." (Marquis, p. 66).

Senior SEALs used a broad series of initiatives, collectively known as "reconnecting to the fleet," in order to demonstrate the value of SEALs to the fleet commanders. This was a substantive change from the "counterpart training" which had typified the SEAL agenda after Vietnam. Counterpart training involved deploying SEALs overseas to conduct combined training with special operations forces from allied nations. As differentiated from Foreign Internal Defense, counterpart training emphasized the mutual participation of equals rather than Americans teaching foreign troops. Counterpart training was generally interesting and constructive for the SEALs, but the conventional Navy saw little or no benefit for itself (Marquis, p. 65).

Moving counterpart training to the background allowed the SEALs to focus upon Cold War targets that were challenging for conventional forces but could realistically be attacked by maritime SOF. Such targets were often in Third World or Soviet-allied nations. SEALs would review operational contingency plans formulated by fleet and unified commanders and then select viable targets. Typical missions included sabotage against vulnerable coastal installations, battle-damage assessment for carrier strike aircraft and marking high-value targets with lasers for precision munitions. Senior SEAL officers would collect several potential scenarios and then brief fleet commanders and their staffs about how the SEALs could support the conventional Navy. The long-term goal was to convince regular Navy commanders of the SEALs' utility and value (Marquis, p. 66).

Notably, the new missions specifically avoided independent or joint operations. Riverine warfare and counterinsurgency were also excluded in favor of direct action and special reconnaissance missions directly supporting conventional war efforts. The proposed missions represented an expanding of the SEALs' capabilities. NSW leaders entered the new mission areas assuming that traditional SEAL activities were subsets of the new, more complex, missions. Proficiency at the more complicated missions assumed that basic skills were already mastered (Marquis, p. 67).

SEAL training grew to include Arctic and desert conditions, though often at the cost of less proficiency in the jungle and maritime environments. In embracing the Navy's new "From the Sea" doctrine, which emphasized offensive maritime strikes against the Soviet Union itself, SEALs traded away some of their unconventional

capabilities (Marquis, p. 68). However, the SEALs did respond to and meet the interests of the Navy, which at that time held the power to dissolve or retain NSW. It marked a dramatic departure from the Vietnam era, when SEAL/UDT activities were effectively disengaged from the mainstream Navy.

By the early 1980s, SEAL leadership had largely succeeded in greatly expanding the mandate and capabilities of NSW. Specifically, SEALs were interwoven in the contingency and exercise plans for the Second, Sixth and Seventh Fleets, and the Fleet commanders grew to support a continued SEAL existence (Marquis, p. 67). Senior NSW leaders correctly recognized that the heart and soul of the Navy was in blue water, conventional activities, and only relevance to this aspect of naval operations would foster service-wide support for NSW.

An unforeseen consequence of reconnecting to the fleet was that the same Navy leaders who had to be convinced of SEAL value to the conventional forces came to view it as indispensable. Thus, the Navy would vehemently oppose efforts to reorganize the SEALs when SOF reform began in earnest in the mid-1980s. The SEALs themselves, having just altered their orientation and organization, were also leery of another major overhaul (Marquis, p. 68).

Although SEAL participation in the events at Desert One was minimal, the aftermath and the resultant SOF reform profoundly affected the NSW community. In the same way in which the Navy had to be convinced of the SEALs' utility, the military as a whole required substantial prodding before expanding and partially institutionalizing its special operations forces. However, by fighting the battle for its existence in the 1970s,

NSW entered the Reagan era as a *de facto* force, and the question was what its role would be rather than whether it would continue.

V. CREATING THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND (1980-1986)

A. THE EARLY 1980S

When the Reagan administration swept into office at the beginning of the 1980s, there was a renewed emphasis on the American military that coincided with changes to military doctrine. What came to be known as the "Reagan Doctrine" affected the employment of military forces and differed from previous policies primarily by being more active. The earlier aim of containment was replaced by "rollback," or an attempt to reverse Communist gains in the international arena. Rather than fight the Soviet Union directly, America would target such "recent [Communist] acquisitions" as Nicaragua and Afghanistan. The situation seemed made to order for special operations forces (SOF), which were often designed to fight in the unconventional and low-intensity conflicts short of general war (Adams, p. 175-176).

Serving as an overall blueprint for defense planning, the periodic Defense Guidance provides important direction for the future shape of the American armed forces. When the Reagan Administration included "revitalizing SOF" in its first Defense Guidance, it seemed to signal that true SOF reform was would be a high priority. Instead, the early 1980s were characterized more by minor tinkering with and stalled proposals for the SOF force structure (Marquis, p. 77).

Within the SOF community, there were high hopes for a dramatic expansion of SOF capabilities and funding. "Revitalizing SOF" had even been included in the Republican Party platform. However, the revitalization proceeded slowly. While

overall defense budgets increased dramatically, SOF budgets, still controlled by the individual Services, rose only marginally. The minor changes made to the SOF structure resulted in few improvements in SOF capability or visibility (Marquis, p. 79).

While more dramatic changes would have to wait, a small coalition of relatively senior individuals was laying the groundwork for future efforts. One area of effort was found in the office of Noel Koch, who was the Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. Koch was also allied with his military assistant, Colonel George McGovern, and Lynn Rylander, an analyst in the Office of International Security Affairs. McGovern had served as the commander of the 5th Special Forces Group and had an extensive network throughout the SOF community. Koch had served in the Army and worked in Vietnam in intelligence areas, and he had a continued interest in counterterrorism. Rylander never served in the military, but he had an extensive network of contacts through the Department of Defense (DOD) and believed strongly in the need to confront potential threats outside of Central Europe with capable SOF (Marquis, p. 80).

Koch's office soon became a focal point for those interested in improving American SOF. However, the Pentagon and DOD bureaucracy stymied initial efforts, to the point that proponents of SOF reform launched what amounted to an unconventional warfare campaign to improve SOF (Marquis, p. 82). The case of the Air Force special operations community in the early 1980s is indicative of the uphill battle SOF advocates faced.

In late 1982, the Air Force founded the 23rd Air Force and gave it responsibility for all SOF-related functions, including combat search-and-rescue (CSAR). Adding CSAR to the 23rd's charter reflected the conventional Air Force's desire to concentrate solely on bombers and fighters. Incredibly, the Air Force Special Operations Forces (AFSOF) were transferred from the Tactical Air Command (TAC) to the Military Airlift Command (MAC). The transfer perfectly illustrated AFSOF's standing in the Air Force hierarchy and was the rough equivalent of being transferred from the major leagues to the "more supportive" farm league teams (Adams, p. 187).

The shift held great significance within the status-conscious military, where combat positions hold considerably more prestige than support functions. Whereas the TAC was composed of fighter and bomber aircraft, the MAC consisted of cargo and strategic airlift planes. Instead of belonging to the band of warriors in the TAC, AFSOF members were relegated to support status with the "trash haulers." AFSOF personnel certainly considered themselves warriors with a dangerous combat mission, but their unusual pairing with cargo aircraft reinforced how out of favor SOF was within the conventional community (Marquis, p. 77).

There were some justifications for placing AFSOF within MAC, but they were far from convincing. Many AFSOF missions involved transporting other SOF such as Rangers and SEALs, which fit under MAC's overall mission area. While transporting SOF was airlift in a general sense, such thinking ignored the specialized skills needed to fly low-level, all weather missions deep in enemy territory. The MAC also had the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, responsible for search and rescue (SAR)

missions in non-combat environments. Although SAR and CSAR both involved rescuing downed airmen, there was a world of difference between picking up a pilot in Nevada and picking one up deep behind enemy lines (Marquis, p. 78).

It was also argued that AFSOF would integrate more smoothly in the MAC, which already had helicopters, than in the TAC, where helicopters were viewed as intrinsically inferior to jets. AFSOF had also suffered years of benign neglect (at best) within the TAC, so moving AFSOF to another command could be viewed as an attempt to improve its fortunes. In fact, Secretary of Defense Weinberger had issued a directive to "revitalize SOF," so the Air Force could argue that this was a reform effort to place AFSOF within a more supportive environment. Although somewhat unintended, placing AFSOF under the MAC had the important effect of placing all Air Force special operations forces under a single commander for the first time (Marquis, p. 78).

AFSOF's AC-130 gunships posed a problem, since they were definitely offensive aircraft far removed from airlift missions. However, the gunships were based on the C-130 Hercules airframe, which was a cargo plane. The gunships also provided close air support to ground troops, something fighters and strategic bombers did not do. Although there was some opposition to the transfer, even within the TAC, the gunships joined the rest of AFSOF in making the transition to the MAC (Marquis, p. 77-78).

Whatever the intentions, the integration did not proceed smoothly. The MAC had long prided itself on being an egalitarian organization, and AFSOF members considered themselves an elite. Few senior MAC commanders had any special operations experience, and AFSOF itself had few senior advocates. Few AFSOF personnel were

added to the MAC staff, and MAC commanders were often selected for high positions within AFSOF. Many MAC commanders did not view special operations as necessarily requiring special skills or training. Accordingly, the MAC mantra became, "Any MAC pilot can fly the special operations missions." Numerous MAC pilots, regardless of demonstrated aptitude or desire, were assigned low-level special operations flights (Marquis, p. 79).

Perhaps the major hurdle facing AFSOF within the MAC was the battle for resources. The MAC had long relied upon the aging C-141 Starlifter, due to be replaced by the C-17. An enormous procurement program to begin with, the C-17 suffered severe cost overruns that limited the MAC's ability to fund other requirements. The C-17 fit neatly within the mission of global airlift, and special operations, with limited representation in the senior ranks, did not. Not surprisingly, SOF requests received low priorities and frequently went unfulfilled (Marquis, p. 79). Against this backdrop, SOF required outside assistance to make substantive improvements in its standing.

One of Koch's actions was to form the Special Operations Policy Advisory Group (SOPAG), consisting of retired flag and general officers. All of the officers had served favorably with conventional units, and most had experience in special operations. The choice of retired, conventional officers reflected SOF's position within the military. Apart from the lack of SOF officers at the senior levels, only retired officers had the latitude to defend unpopular positions. Also, only officers who had served in conventional units had widespread credibility within the military. Special operations was still something to be done between "real" assignments (Marquis, p. 82).

SOPAG was intended as a semi-formal panel that provided high-level advice on special operations in accordance with one of the recommendations from the Holloway Commission. The *de facto* mission of SOPAG was to serve as a credible advocacy group for SOF and mitigate resistance to SOF reform throughout the services (Adams, p. 193). Although Koch's intention was for SOPAG to exist only until SOF reform was underway, the group continued to meet for over a decade before withering away early in the Clinton administration (Marquis, p. 82).

Another SOF reform initiative from Koch's office involved proposed directives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) to the services. Secretary of Defense Weinberger authorized Koch to draft a more explicit OSD policy statement once it was clear that the earlier Defense Guidance directing increased SOF support was not effective. Koch and Rylander created a proposal that incorporated highly classified material. This had the unfortunate effect of neutralizing the document, since its distribution was severely limited (Marquis, p. 83).

Recognizing the shortcomings with the original proposal, Koch quickly drafted an unclassified companion directive and sent it around DOD to be staffed. This proposal languished for months, since no one would sign off on the document. Most senior officials knew that the unclassified directive would be subject to public scrutiny, and they did not want to open themselves to criticism that they were not fully supportive of SOF reform. After months of inaction and being avoided, Koch finally went to Deputy Secretary of Defense Thayer and asked him to sign the directive directly. Thayer did so

on October 3rd, 1983, providing an important milestone in the efforts to rejuvenate SOF and elevating Koch's standing in the DOD community (Marquis, p. 83).

Although the memorandum did not provide for specific oversight to ensure its success, it did serve as a sign that the OSD was concerned about SOF. The directive also made clear that once the OSD made a resource decision about a SOF matter, the services were not free to alter that decision. Finally, the services were directed to produce a master plan for SOF by March 1st, 1984 for review by Koch. While this last action was somewhat vague, it did help increase SOF's visibility within DOD and accelerated the push for coordinated action in the SOF arena (Marquis, p. 84).

Thayer's action certainly helped pressure senior military officials to act, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) approved the establishment of the Joint Special Operations Agency (JSOA) two weeks later. The Chairman of the JCS (CJCS) had been "reviewing" the proposal for over a year, and the timing of its approval was hardly coincidental. While SOF proponents had hoped for an organization to increase SOF visibility and serve as an effective SOF advocate, the actuality of JSOA was a resounding disappointment. Chartered with responsibility for joint SOF doctrine and training, JSOA lacked administrative or command authority of any SOF units, and had no formal role in the budget process (Adams, p. 188).

Most telling, JSOA's first commander was a two-star Marine officer. SOF advocates had been pressing for a three of four-star position, since anything lower did not have much clout within DOD circles. The choice of a Marine was also ironic, since the Marines were the only Service with no special operations forces (Adams, p. 188).

Although JSOA was largely ineffective, it did indicate that SOF reform was progressing slowly forward. Notably, JSOA was the first flag-level special operations office since the Vietnam era. Because of its limited authority, JSOA was relegated to policy and doctrinal issues instead of the hoped for emphasis on affecting how the services treated their SOF components (Marquis, p. 86).

Congress formally entered the SOF reform battle in mid-1983 with a set of hearings held by the House Armed Services Committee on the decline in special operations capability. Once Congress proposed a series of initiatives, the Services immediately countered with several cosmetic changes of their own. The Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) was founded, with a charter to handle low-intensity conflict and, specifically, terrorism. Notably, JSOC was an administrative unit, having no command authority or input into the budget process (Adams p. 186-187).

The Army also took several steps, again largely cosmetic, in light of the Congressional pressure. A new understrength Special Forces Group (Airborne) (SFG(A) or SFG) was created, but it drew its manpower from already existing SFGs. The 160th Aviation Battalion was renamed the Task Force 160, but this had more to do with the fact that smaller components were constantly added to and subtracted from its force structure than with the 160th's SOF orientation. Significantly, the 160th remained part of its conventional parent unit, the 101st Airborne Division. Finally, the Army drafted a plan that called for 5,000 special operations personnel by the end of the decade, a modest increase that fell far short of the Vietnam era manning levels (Adams, p. 187).

Representative Daniels, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, and Ted Lunger, a former SF soldier and a member of Daniels' staff, spearheaded much of the Congressional effort. The Congressional group often worked closely with Koch and his supporters, particularly on the issue of SOF aviation. Over time, their efforts coalesced into two main avenues: improving the troublesome area of SOF aviation and finding a long-term solution to the problem SOF resource allocation (Marquis, p. 87).

A clear example of SOF's low standing within the military came when Congress tried to improve SOF aviation by having the Air Force procure more MH-53 Pave Low helicopters and MC-130 Combat Talon aircraft in 1983. The Air Force responded with Initiative 17, which proposed transferring all rotary-wing SOF missions and assets to the Army. Fixed-wing SOF support would have remained the province of the Air Force (Marquis, p. 87)

Initiative 17 was justified under the dubious rationale that it would reduce the redundant helicopter capabilities of the Air Force and Army. However, it ignored the complete lack of doctrine and flight experience by Army helicopter pilots in all-weather, day/night conditions. The Army also lacked helicopters with mid-air refueling capability and the support infrastructure for the new assets. Shifting the Pave Lows to the Army would have set back SOF aviation several years, as the Army pilots underwent training in long-range helicopter missions, Army helicopters were outfitted with upgraded avionics suites, and the new platform was integrated into the existing force structure (Marquis, p. 88-89).

Koch learned of the proposal only the day before its scheduled announcement, and he promptly conferred with senior Air Force and Army officials. Despite assurances that the initiative had been properly staffed and was widely accepted, Koch found that several senior military officers had never been consulted. Significantly, the MAC commander, who owned the helicopters in question, had been bypassed, and he was ardently opposed to the move. Led by Koch and Daniels, those against the initiative rapidly formed a lobbying group that was effective in forcing more debate on the subject. Appealing to the Secretary of Defense, Initiative 17 opponents were able to insert themselves forcibly into the decision making process and eventually prevent the proposed transfer (Marquis, p. 88-89).

While Initiative 17 finally died after several years, it is significant in providing yet another example of SOF's second-class standing vis-à-vis the conventional military. Despite increased Congressional interest in special operations, the Air Force was resolutely opposed to using even SOF-designated funding to improve SOF aviation capabilities. This attitude was present less than three years after the tragedy at Desert One, where SOF aviation shortcomings had been responsible for a dramatic American embarrassment. The Services also usually compete for missions and assets in the largely zero-sum competition of defense resource allocation. That the Air Force would make a deliberate effort to reduce its forces and capabilities indicates how little regard there was for SOF-related activities.

Although the initiatives through 1983 addressed some SOF issues and made minor adjustments, they did not solve what came to be seen as the core issues.

Specifically, true SOF reform required unified command of all SOF as well as control of SOF manpower and budgetary resources. SOF advocates realized that more drastic measures were needed, since the military services would act only in the face of significant outside pressure. One of the events that helped fuel such pressure was the American-led invasion of Grenada, Operation Urgent Fury. While Urgent Fury was an overall military success, it provided decisive evidence that the talk of a "SOF revitalization" had not produced meaningful results (Marquis, p. 90-91).

B. GRENADA

United States military forces launched Operation Urgent Fury on October 25th, 1983 for the nominal purpose of rescuing about 1,000 American citizens on the tiny island nation of Grenada. Though there was certainly legitimate concern about the safety of the Americans on the island, the invasion was also significant in the larger geo-political arena of "rolling back" Communism (Dockery, p. 257). There was considerable concern that Grenada would eventually play a role in "exporting revolution" throughout Central and Latin America. Specifically, Grenada was one of the few Marxist governments in the Caribbean, and it was growing closer to Cuba, Libya and the Soviet Union. Although Grenada's military had grown to become the second largest in the region (after Cuba), the island lacked formal defense treaties with other Communist nations. Thus, Grenada offered a chance for America to exercise power in a traditional sphere of influence against a relatively inferior opponent without the risk of full-scale conflict with the Soviet Union (Marquis, p. 92).

Grenada boasted only 110,000 residents living on 133 square miles in the southeastern Caribbean. Only about 90 miles north of South America, its major economic activities were tourism and exporting spices. The island enjoyed a generally unremarkable existence as a part of the United Kingdom, finally achieving independence in 1974. The first Prime Minister, Sir Eric Gairy, presided over a corrupt and repressive regime until a political rival, Maurice Bishop, overthrew him in a bloodless coup in 1979 (Dockery, p. 257).

Bishop promptly strengthened ties with Cuba and the Soviet Union, directly opposing American interests in the Caribbean. Notably, Grenada embarked upon a program to vastly increase its military and build a massive 9,000-foot runway. Constructed chiefly by Cuban workers, captured documents indicated that instead of the stated reason of promoting tourism, the airfield was to be used by Cuban and Soviet aircraft en route to Africa and Nicaragua. By 1983, the runway was nearly complete and the Grenadian armed forces outnumbered those of all the other eastern Caribbean nations combined (Dockery, p. 258).

Despite the significant communist aid, Bishop favored strengthening ties with the West. This shift was strongly opposed by Bishop's Deputy Prime Minister, Bernard Coard, who desired a swifter transition to a Marxist state. Coard secured the support of the military and ousted Bishop on October 13th, placing him under house arrest. In response, the United States began contingency planning for a possible military operation to evacuate American citizens from the island. The initial planning was led by the Commander-in-Chief Atlantic (CINCLANT), Admiral McDonald (Dockery, p. 258).

Less than a week later, Task Force 124, carrying the 22nd Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) and the *Independence* Carrier Battle Group started sailing toward the Mediterranean from the east coast the United States. Instead, both task groups were ordered to position themselves near Grenada and await further orders. The 22nd MAU was slated to replace the 24th MAU, which was ashore in Beirut, Lebanon on an ill-fated peacekeeping mission. Only a day before Urgent Fury ultimately began, the 24th MAU suffered 241 deaths when a suicide truck bomb was detonated in its compound at Beirut International Airport. Although there was some speculation that the invasion of Grenada was partly a response to this terrorist attack, American planning and preparation began at least a week prior to the bombing (Dockery, p. 259-261).

On October 19th, the day after the naval forces sailed, Bishop was killed by government troops loyal to Coard. Incited by Foreign Minister Unison Whiteman, a crowd of civilians numbering in the thousands had called for Bishop's release. Bishop's guards, initially outnumbered, released Bishop and let him proceed to Fort Rupert. At the fort, however, more government soldiers arrived, and they opened fire on Bishop's supporters. After killing over 50 civilians, the troops assassinated Bishop and some of his top aides. This alarming development prompted the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to accelerate planning for an evacuation, and the JCS also ordered the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) to develop its own plan (Dockery, p. 259-260).

Due to widely varying estimates of the Grenadian and Cuban military strength on the island, JSOC and CINCLANT proposed quite different courses of action to the JCS on October 20th. JSOC relied upon a low-end estimate of about 250 Cuban and 300

Grenadian soldiers. Accordingly, it proposed an operation conducted entirely by special operations forces. CINCLANT assumed a much greater enemy strength and planned an amphibious landing operation utilizing only Marines. In the end, JCS compromised and assigned the northern end of the island to the Marines and the southern end to the Rangers and Special Forces (Dockery, p. 260).

The radically different plans reflected the perennial divisions between conventional and special operations forces. Neither group proposed a plan that included the other. Far from the idea of SOF acting as a force multiplier in concert with regular troops, each faction lobbied hard for its own plan to the point of excluding the other (Dockery, p. 260). The JCS was left in the position of being a final arbitrator, and it simply chose to divide the island in half. Although special operations forces had evolved to the point that they could stand as rough equals to conventional forces, there was no doctrine to integrate the two in a coherent manner.

While the United States was refining plan, the situation in Grenada continued to deteriorate. There were also increased calls for American intervention. Specifically, the Organization of East Caribbean States (OECS), Barbados and Jamaica verbally requested American military action on October 21st. Two days later, this request was formally put in writing (Adkin, 1989).

There was another request for United States action dated October 24th and signed by the governor-general, Sir Paul Scoon. Because Grenada was technically still a part of the Commonwealth, Scoon functioned as the Queen's representative. He represented the only recognized government authority, since the newly installed military leaders lacked

legitimacy in the international arena. However, evidence indicates that Scoon signed the letter on October 26th, well after the invasion commenced (Adkin, p. 113, Marquis, p. 100). Scoon was definitely supportive of the operation, and was rescued by American forces after being held under house arrest for several days (Adkin, p. 114).

President Reagan tentatively approved the invasion on October 23rd, and the plan became a reality. The next day, Operation Urgent Fury was officially approved, and all four services had a role in the mission. The outside requests for intervention served as convenient legal justifications, and there was genuine concern for the safety of Americans on the island. Perhaps most importantly, the invasion offered an opportunity to "rollback" Communist gains in the Caribbean and flex American military muscle in a relatively low-risk manner (Adkin, p. 112).

In a scene reminiscent of Desert One, the JCS imposed strict operational security measures on the entire operation once the decision was made. Although the naval forces were given a broad overview of the mission, they received the specifics only at the last minute. The strict secrecy was criticized for having a negative impact on operations and planning, but American forces managed to achieve at least tactical surprise. The Cuban and Grenadian defenders knew an attack was imminent and made some general preparations, but the invasion force was so overwhelming that these defenses had only a minor effect on the overall operation (Rivard, 1985).

Another factor causing operational difficulties was the fact that CINCLANT's plan prohibited any advance reconnaissance parties. This had the effect of preventing the 22nd MAU's SEALs from providing a hydrographic reconnaissance of the landing

area, as they would normally have done. In the end, SOF received five primary missions and employed SEALs from Teams Four and Six, Rangers, elements from the Army's Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta (SFOD-D or simply Delta), and the Air Force's 1st Special Operations Wing (SOW) (Dockery, p. 261).

Delta detachments were tasked with seizing a prison at Richmond Hill and freeing the prisoners held there as well as conducting an initial airborne assault on the airfield at Port Saliñas. The intent was to secure the airfield briefly and allow the Rangers to land in follow-on cargo aircraft. Elements from SEAL Team Six were ordered to secure Governor Scoon's residence and evacuate the governor and his staff via helicopter (Dockery, p. 262). Another SEAL Team Six unit was tasked with assaulting the Radio Free Grenada transmitting station to prevent adverse propaganda broadcasts (Adkin, p. 174). A SEAL platoon from Team Four was initially ordered to conduct a reconnaissance of the Marine landing areas, but this assignment later changed to inserting an Air Force Combat Control Team (CCT) at the Port Salinas airfield to direct the incoming Rangers (Dockery, p. 263). The concept of operations envisioned using the relatively lightly armed SOF to strike quickly under cover of darkness, link up with heavier conventional units the next morning and withdraw as soon as possible (Adkin, p. 174). SOF were employed under the assumption that the Cuban and Grenadian resistance would be minimal. Thus, the SOF would be able to strike quickly under cover of darkness and exfiltrate prior to the commencement of the main invasion (Marquis, p. 98).

Unfortunately, the Americans began having problems even before the invasion officially started. On the evening of October 23rd, a mixed group of SEALs and CCT members attempted to parachute into the ocean and link-up with the destroyer *USS Clifton Sprague*. Due to the lack of intelligence about the port Salinas airfield, the group's mission was to recon the airfield and plant radio beacons to guide in the planes carrying the Rangers. The drop was originally scheduled to take place during daylight, but the C-130 cargo planes dropped the element at last light into heavy seas. Four SEALs, laden with equipment, never rendezvoused with their small boats, and their bodies were never recovered (Kelly, p. 242).

Because the airfield was integral to the invasion plan, the surviving members of the SEAL/CCT team attempted to reach their target via small boat. After suffering a flooded engine and fearing compromise, the team drifted back out to sea and was picked up by the *USS Clifton Sprague* early in the morning of the 24th (Kelly, p. 244).

Members of SEAL Team Four who had been slated to conduct reconnaissance for the Marines were shifted to reinforce the SEAL/CCT element. This in turn resulted in the 22nd MAU receiving approval to use its own organic SEALs to perform the missions the Team Four group had originally held. While the MAU's SEALs had initially been excluded for security and unity of special operations command concerns, they ended up conducting one of SOF's few unqualified successes during Urgent Fury (Dockery, p. 264).

Feeling that advance preparation of the airfield was critical for the Rangers, General Scholtes (the SOF commander) recommended delaying the entire operation 24

hours. However, senior civilian and military officials were increasingly anxious about the tactical secrecy of the invasion, and instead delayed the invasion's start from 0200 on the morning of the 25th to 0500. This three-hour shift had the unfortunate effect of hindering SOF operations. American SOF trained extensively at night and held a vast advantage in night vision technology. Rather than striking during darkness, the SOF units arrived at their targets at dawn, when many of their strengths were neutralized (Marquis, p. 97).

Having only a few hours to complete their mission, the SEAL/CCT element that had tried to reach the Port Salinas airfield attempted to execute its tasking during the night of October 24th/25th. The small boat again suffered a flooded engine, and the same element drifted back out to sea to be picked up by friendly warships. The failure of the second attempt meant that the Rangers would assault the airfield with virtually no intelligence about its defenses. The pilots also had to locate the correct airfield without the assistance of any beacons (Kelly, p. 244).

Because of uncertainty about the situation at the Port Salinas airfield, the concept of operations called for the Rangers to either parachute onto or land at the airfield. After securing the airfield, the Rangers were to proceed to the nearby True Blue campus and protect the American students there. Once the students were safe, the Rangers were tasked with advancing on an army camp at Calivigny, thought to be the center of Cuban military activity on the island (Ranger.org, 1999). While the Rangers were on their way to the target early on the morning of October 25th, photographic intelligence belatedly indicated that obstructions had been placed on the runway days earlier. Thus, the Ranger

commander decided against attempting a landing and ordered his men to begin preparing for a combat jump while airborne (Adkin, p. 202).

Only a couple of hours earlier, a pathfinder team had parachuted into the area surrounding the airfield. Like the earlier SEAL airdrop, the pathfinders encountered difficulties, and two team members were killed when their parachutes malfunctioned (Adkin, p. 202). Further complicating the assault was the fact that the aircraft designated to lead the formation of seven airplanes had suffered a navigation equipment casualty. Thus, the Rangers approached Port Salinas airfield with their aircraft out of assigned order and the jumpers still struggling to prepare themselves for a low-level jump. One of the few guarantees the Rangers had was that their runway clearance team, originally slated to jump first, would not be able to perform its mission in time to help the rest of the assault element (Ranger.org, 1999).

Between about 0530-0700 on the morning of October 25th, the Rangers conducted a combat jump onto the Salinas airfield. The defenders at the airfield were a mixed group of Grenadians belonging to the People's Revolutionary Army (PRA) and Cuban forces. Fortunately for the Rangers, the Cubans had received orders not to fight unless they were directly attacked. Thus, the task of defending the airfield fell to the PRA, which concentrated most of its fire on the aircraft and were only marginally effective. The Rangers were able to consolidate their hold on the airfield fairly rapidly, despite initially landing in disarray (Adkin, p. 212).

By about 1100, the Rangers had cleared the airfield of the obstructions emplaced by the Cubans and PRA. The PRA did manage one counterattack spearheaded by three

BTR-60 armored personnel carriers (APC) in the early afternoon, but all three APCs were destroyed. The heavily armed AC-130 gunships from the Air Force special operations wing also proved to be very effective in neutralizing the isolated pockets of resistance (Ranger.org, 1999).

Units from the 82nd Airborne Division relieved the Rangers at Point Salinas starting at about 1400 that same afternoon. The original concept of operations called for the 82nd Airborne to conduct a rapid sweep of the southern half of the island. However, heavier than anticipated resistance and generally poor intelligence led to relatively long delays in carrying out this phase of the operation (Marquis, p. 105).

With the airfield clear and under only sporadic fire, the Rangers dispatched an element at about 0730 to undertake the second portion of their mission – securing the American students at the True Blue medical school campus. This rescue of the approximately 600 medical students was the most important of the nominal reasons for the entire invasion. Incredibly, American intelligence had indicated that all 600 students were located at the True Blue campus, located just east of the airfield. However, True Blue held only about a third of the students, with another third living throughout the community in rented houses and apartments. The final third was located at Grand Anse campus, about two miles further away. This intelligence failure was more remarkable in that the medical school was a completely open organization and literally thousands of relatives in the United States knew about the living situation (Adkin 130).

Fortunately for the Americans, the island's defenders had not taken the students hostage but had posted a small contingent of guards at the True Blue campus. About one

company of Rangers assaulted the campus and drove off the lightly armed defenders after a brief firefight. There were no casualties among either the Rangers or the students, but the Rangers were surprised to learn that there were still hundreds of other Americans left to be rescued. Because of the sporadic fighting still taking place at the airfield and the need to secure the students at True Blue, the Rangers could not immediately alter their plan and assault Grand Anse. Instead Marines and Rangers rescued most of the remaining students over the course of the following day (Adkin, p. 214-116).

Almost concurrent with the Ranger drop on the airfield was a Ranger/Delta assault on the Richmond Hill prison. The nominal purpose was to free any political prisoners located there, but similar to the situation with the students' locations, there was a surprisingly lack of intelligence about the prison. There were no specific prisoners being sought by the Americans, and the prison had no strategic value to the campaign. One possible reason given for the assault is that the highly trained Delta force simply wanted a role in the invasion (Marquis, p. 100). This is a quite plausible explanation, since SOF members often welcome the chance to participate in "real-world" missions, and there is considerable inter-service competition to justify budgets, capabilities and even mere existence.

Whatever the ultimate reasons for the attempted assault, it ran into severe difficulties from the beginning. The original plan called for two helicopters to land on each side of the prison to provide flanking cover for two other helicopters to

"fastrope"[11] men into the compound. Unfortunately, the prison was located high on a ridge, with steep cliffs and dense vegetation all around. The prison also had 20-foot walls with well-placed watchtowers and concertina wire that made any outside assault extremely difficult. Yet another glaring intelligence oversight was the fact that the prison was sited 150 vertical feet below Fort Frederick, which had a full company of defenders and two anti-aircraft guns (Ranger.org, 1999).

Further complicating the mission was the total lack of surprise. The aviation component (Task Force 160) had received notice of the invasion at the last minute and arrived at the staging area in Barbados at 0248 on the morning of the invasion. It was literally impossible for them to prepare the helicopters in time to make the scheduled 0500 assault. After a series of delays, the assault force did finally take off at 0530, though gone was any hope of a meaningful rehearsal or coordination between the ground and air components. The delayed departure also dashed any hope of tactical surprise at the prison. Tuning to Radio Free Grenada, the Rangers and Delta troopers even heard broadcasts that the invasion had started while they were still 15 minutes away from their objective (Adkin p. 179-180).

As the helicopters made their initial run into Richmond Hill prison, they were met by fierce fire from the ground. Complicating matters was the fact that there were no open fields adjacent to the prison in which they could land and deploy the flank

---

[11] Fastroping refers to a technique whereby a thick rope is anchored to a helicopter and the other end is tossed to the ground upon reaching an insertion point. Individuals then slide down the rope using thick gloves to protect their hands. Fastroping is considerably faster than rappelling, but it can prove more dangerous, since the individuals are not attached to the rope.

elements. The Blackhawk helicopters fired back with light machine guns but were largely ineffective. Expecting only light resistance, the helicopter were without any heavier suppressive firepower. Air Force AC-130 gunships were all engaged over Salines airfield, and in a startling display of lack of coordination with other services, Navy strike aircraft were prohibited from flying on the southern portion of the island. After suffering casualties to pilots, crew and passengers, the assault force withdrew to a point over the ocean to regroup (Adkin, p. 188-189).

After determining that all the helicopters were still flyable, the force made another attempt to reach the target at about 0630. Not surprisingly, the helicopters were driven off by even more effective anti-aircraft fire. This time, one helicopter was downed, and it crashed near the coastline. At least four servicemen died in this crash, and one of the assault teams fastroped onto the crash site and secured the wounded. The remainder of the helicopters limped back out to sea, and there were no further aerial assaults on the prison. Although the assaulters displayed superb personal bravery and airmanship, this mission was an unmitigated disaster that was doomed even before it began (Adkin, p. 189-191).

One mission that met with somewhat more success was the rescue of Governor General Sir Scoon by members of SEAL Team Six. Scoon was under house arrest at the Government House, and as a legitimate government link to England, his personal safety was a political and legal concern. The SEALs planned to helicopter to the Government House, land, quickly secure Scoon and exfiltrate via helicopter, all under cover of darkness. Again, because of delays with preparing the Task Force 160 (TF 160) aviation

assets, the SEALs arrived over their target after dawn. Originally composed of some 22 members in two Blackhawks, the assault team came under heavy antiaircraft as the helicopters circled near the Government House, trying to pinpoint its exact location. Because of the unexpected opposition, the SEALs modified their plan, and instead of landing, they fastroped from the helicopters (Dockery, p. 267).

Although most of the team reached the ground safely, the SEALs' long range radio was disabled by ground fire, and four team members were still in the second helicopter when it left early because of the increasingly effective anti-aircraft fire. The SEALs on the ground quickly fought their way to the Government House and located Scoon and 10 additional staff and family members. Because an aerial evacuation was out of the question for the immediate future, the SEALs set about fortifying their position. Although the more numerous surrounding Cubans and PRA had several APCs, the Government House was located on a small hill with excellent defensive fields of fire. The lightly armed SEALs were able to keep the Cubans and PRA at bay, but they were not strong enough to fight their way out of the Government House (Kelly, p. 239-240).

Content with a temporary siege, the PRA commander began reinforcing his troops and launching occasional forays towards the SEALs. Without a working radio, the SEALs were forced to call to the American-held airport on the local telephone lines.[12] Recognizing that the SEALs urgently needed air support, Admiral Metcalf released two

---

[12] This incident probably gave rise to one of the most popular stories about the conflict, whereby a frustrated officer was said to have used his credit card to call back to the United States. In fact, Lieutenant Bill Davis used the local Grenadian phone system to call to the airfield and request air support (Kelly, p. 239).

of his scare helicopter gunships to help the trapped element. Both helicopters were greeted with intense anti-aircraft fire, and one was shot down almost immediately. The other gunship was shot down as it protectively circled the wreckage of the first helicopter (Dockery, p. 268).

Perhaps emboldened by the downing of the two helicopters, the PRA launched a determined assault on the SEALs' position. Fortunately, an AC-130 arrived and delivered highly effective fire that succeeded in blunting the assault. Additional airstrikes extensively damaged many of the remaining PRA positions, and the PRA defenders contented themselves with keeping the SEALs trapped inside the Government House. With helicopter evacuation virtually impossible and the SEALs running low on ammunition, alternate plans were developed throughout the day. Finally, Metcalf authorized the use of a company of Marines to fight their way to Scoon's location the following morning (Dockery, p. 269).

The Marine company, reinforced by five tanks, easily fought its way to the mansion early the next morning and linked up with the beleaguered SEALs. With additional air support, Scoon, his staff and the SEALs were evacuated by helicopter out to the *USS Guam* (p. 269-270). Aboard the *Guam*, Scoon quickly signed a letter (backdated to 24 October) requesting American intervention (Kelly, p. 240).

While the mission was a marginal success, it highlighted some of the continued problems SOF faced. Notably, conventional commanders were critical of the fact that they had to alter their plans in order to rescue the SEALs. It was a textbook case of the often-voiced fear that special forces would get in trouble behind enemy lines and require

significant assets to save. Such surprises as nearby anti-aircraft guns and a sizeable staff underscored continued tactical intelligence failures. The insertion of the SEALs also marked a pattern that was beginning to emerge in American SOF (Kelly, p. 241). Similar to the attempted raid at the Richmond Hill prison, lightly armed SOF were deployed against what was supposed to be minimal resistance for a quick raid. Instead, the special operators frequently found themselves fighting for their lives against determined and effective resistance, often for much longer than originally anticipated.

Exactly such a situation was what took place when other SEALs assaulted the radio transmitter facility at Beausejour. Specifically, the SEALs were tasked with capturing the station intact and prevent it from being used by the island's defenders. This mission was another operation of dubious value that probably did not require the specialized skills of the SEALs. Also, the Beausejour facility was a 75,000-watt transmitter designed to broadcast propaganda throughout the Caribbean (Dockery, p. 266). For tactical purposes, the Grenadians used a transmitter at an alternate location and another mobile one that survived well into the opening day of the invasion (Kelly, p. 240). The use of the elite Team Six personnel at Beausejour was likely similar to the decision to employ Delta at Richmond Hill: no one wanted to be excluded from a "real-world" engagement.

Because of the delays with the TF 160 helicopters, the SEALs assaulting Beausejour arrived too late to prevent a broadcast at about 0600 warning that the anticipated invasion had begun. Inserting by helicopter, the SEALs quickly overwhelmed the small guard force at Beausejour and set about fortifying their position.

Realizing that Americans must have captured the transmitter, the PRA began launching forces to attempt to retake the facility. The SEALs first took a lone PRA soldier prisoner and then repulsed a truckload of PRA soldiers who suffered heavy casualties. Within a few hours, the PRA launched a much more determined attack supported by an APC (Adkin, p. 181-182).

Facing a determined infantry assault in a poorly constructed building, the SEALs were significantly outgunned and had to withdraw. In addition to not having effective anti-armor weapons, the SEALs also lacked close air support. Despite suffering several wounded, the SEALs were able to successfully withdraw towards the sea and evade pursuing PRA soldiers for the rest of the day. After nightfall, the SEALs swam out to the *USS Caron* (Kelly, p. 241). Once the American commanders learned that the SEALs had been forced to withdraw from Beausejour, they initiated airstrikes against it. These airstrikes failed to disable the transmitter, as did 20-30 rounds of naval gunfire from the *Caron* (Adkin, p. 183).

Overall, the mission at Beausejour was generally a failure. There was yet another intelligence breakdown in not identifying the other Radio Free Grenada (RFG) transmission locations. This meant that the actions at Beausejour were largely moot, since RFG continued to broadcast during the time period the SEALs actually occupied the station. The true importance of actually capturing rather than simply damaging the transmitter was shown to be negligible when American forces tried (unsuccessfully) to destroy the station after the SEALs withdrew. Beausejour also marked another occasion when lightly armed SOF encountered difficulties trying to hold off superior conventional

forces. Expecting to attack in darkness and quickly turn over to conventional units, the SEALs instead found themselves assaulting after dawn and facing repeated counterattacks throughout the day.

One SOF mission that went well involved the SEAL Team Four reconnaissance of the landing beaches for the Marines. The 22nd MAU's planners were still trying hoping to launch a heliborne assault supported by an amphibious landing near the town of Pearls. However, little was known about the island in general, let alone such intelligence items as beach composition and defenses. Accordingly, a Team Four platoon launched from the *USS Fort Snelling* late in the evening of the 24th (Adkin p. 236).

Using Seafox patrol boats to make the 15-kilometer infiltration to the island, the SEALs spent the night conducting a classic hydrographic reconnaissance of the proposed landing sites. Detecting limited beach defenses but dangerous surf and coastal conditions, the SEALs radioed back to the landing force that tracked vehicles could possibly make a successful landing and all other landing craft would be swamped. The Marines promptly canceled the amphibious preparations and relied solely on helicopter assets for their portion of the invasion (Adkin, p. 236). The SEALs were able to infiltrate, remain undetected and provide valuable and badly needed intelligence to the invasion force. It was a textbook SEAL/UDT mission, but it was not nearly as glamorous as the more exciting task of hostage rescue.

Overall, SOF had a tremendous opportunity during Urgent Fury to prove that they had arrived. The end result was a mixed bag indicating neither total failure nor total

success. The airfield seizure was a classic Ranger mission, and it stood out as one of the more successful elements of Operation Urgent Fury. Despite the seizure's overall success, the disjointed actions during the attempted reconnaissance and subsequent jumbled combat jump showed how far the US military and SOCOM still had to go. The Ranger assault on True Blue campus was also successful, but it highlighted glaring intelligence deficiencies that directly impacted the effectiveness of American SOF.

Most of the other SOF missions suffered from poor intelligence. The situation at Richmond Hill was so untenable that not a single ground soldier made it to the ground. Additionally, both SEAL Team Six elements ended up fighting off armor-supported enemy attacks for extended periods of time. The SEALs from Team Four were specifically tasked with providing intelligence to help supplement the generally poor American knowledge of the island. Although individual components were highly motivated and competent, Urgent Fury provided dramatic evidence that SOF was not yet a well-oiled machine fully integrated into the DOD. This was amply illustrated by the lack of effective close air support. Airstrikes began arriving only after SOF were in trouble rather than before.

Another problem area was excessive secrecy, as demonstrated in the realm of special operations aviation. Task Force 160, the unit that had been formed in the dismal aftermath of Desert One, provided almost all SOF aviation support during Operation Urgent Fury. Incredibly, Task Force 160 was only alerted to its crucial role in the invasion on the afternoon of October 23rd. Although planning had been underway for over a week, Task Force members had to start preparing and loading their helicopters in

Kentucky about 24 hours before they were scheduled to be flying into combat in Grenada. The cargo planes carrying the Task Force's helicopters landed in Barbados only 45 minutes before the helicopters had to launch for the invasion. Not surprisingly, the helicopters missed their assigned take off times, but they did manage to launch only an hour or two late. This delay did, however, result in the SEAL and Delta assault forces arriving on target at about 0600, negating the American advantage of fighting in darkness. Task Force 160 pilots and crew displayed superb flying skills and courage during the operation, but the entire episode demonstrated that SOF aviation support and integration still required improvement (Marquis, p. 98).

Dividing the island into separate, inviolate zones and the subsequent parceling out of missions only highlighted the lack of truly joint operational capability. The assignment of missions also demonstrated political rather than military concerns. While Scoon was certainly a legitimate objective, the use of the highly trained Delta and SEAL commandos to attack targets of dubious military value indicated flaws in decision-making. This is particularly evident when contrasted with the lackluster attention paid to the nominal objective of ensuring the safety of the American students. Only Grenadian disinterest in taking hostages prevented the students from being exploited, since there was ample opportunity for the PRA and the Cubans to seize some Americans even well after the invasion began (Adkin, p. 334). Also noteworthy is that although every service was given a role to play, the services were still operating largely independently. Even within the supposedly unified SOF community, each service entered the conflict with its own agenda. Only once the bullets were flying were efforts made to establish effective

air support procedures between ground and Air Force SOF. Joint meant simply that each service received the same number of independent targets (Marquis, p. 106).

Finally, Urgent Fury demonstrated the continued rift between conventional forces and SOF. Both sides could again point to examples that reinforced their stereotypes of the other. Conventional commanders had to divert conventional forces from other operations to rescue SOF units in trouble. Further, many of the SOF missions seemed to be undertaken not for practical military reasons, but rather simply to allow SOF to be involved in daring, dangerous exploits. Many of the SOF capabilities did not meet expectations, as in the case of the failed attempts to conduct reconnaissance of the Port Salines airfield (Marquis, p. 105).

For their part, SOF could point to how they were misused, again, by conventional commanders. Specifically trained to fight at night, this advantage was needlessly traded away and placed SOF in the position of attacking in broad daylight. Once again, SOF faced repeated counterattacks by heavily armed conventional forces, and only their high level of training prevented even more casualties. SOF could also point to years of budgetary neglect that had prevented development of viable platforms for tactical mobility. Without having worked with dedicated assets previously, many of the specialized SOF skills were neutralized by relying upon questionable infiltration methods undertaken with only minimal coordination. Compounding this was the abysmal level of intelligence that threw SOF into numerous precarious situations. As far as assaulting targets without legitimate military value, SOF blamed the conventional

commanders, since SOF was only serving in support of conventional operations (Marquis, p. 105).

C. SOF IN THE MID-1980s

In an accident of timing unrelated to Urgent Fury, the Army proposed on October 21st, 1983 that new Light Infantry Divisions (LID) be added to its force structure. While conventional divisions had about 18,000 troops (of whom only 16% had direct combat functions) the new LIDs were supposed to number only 10,000 soldiers with a full one-third having direct combat roles. Much of the reduction was achieved by stripping most of the division's heavy combat power such as tanks, APCs, artillery and aircraft. The idea was that these infantry-heavy LIDs would be rapidly deployable and able to operate in areas that did not require heavy mechanized forces (Adams, p. 180).

Even the mere proposal of the LIDs marked a significant departure from the dominant Army thinking at the time. In late 1982, AirLand battle became the official Army doctrine, and it was totally focused on countering the numerically superior Warsaw Pact threat in central Europe. AirLand stressed conventional concepts and was predicated upon the need for both "Deep Attack" against follow-on forces and maneuver warfare against first-echelon elements. The SOF role in AirLand was strictly to support the conventional forces by running partisan networks or conduct reconnaissance and raid operations deep behind enemy lines (Adams, p. 168).

In accordance with the need to engage the heavy Warsaw Pact forces, the Army adopted what was known as the Division '86 concept. There was very little variation in the composition of Army divisions. Armored divisions consisted of six tank battalions

and four mechanized infantry divisions, and mechanized infantry divisions were virtually identical with five armored and five mechanized battalions. The only exceptions were three straight infantry divisions and the two special purpose divisions of the 82nd and 101st Airborne divisions. However, even the divisions that deviated from the template of heavy, mechanized forces were still expected to be employed in the mid- to high-intensity combat arenas (Adams, p. 179).

While the LID proposal was intended to address the Army's lack of a force designed to fight outside of the European cauldron, the concept foundered and ultimately lasted no more than six years. One immediate problem was where to use the LIDs. Originally envisioned as suitable for low- to mid-intensity conflicts, there were simply very few locations where they could be effectively employed. The LIDs were too large to take the place of traditional SOF missions but too small to survive against heavy enemy formations. One advantage the LIDs did unequivocally possess was their rapid strategic deployability, which ironically made them attractive to the European theater. Thus, Army employment doctrine moved away from low-intensity conflict as a stand-alone concept, and instead it focused on how the LIDs could function in support of heavy divisions. In order to allow the LIDs to survive in Europe, many of the very capabilities that had just been removed were incrementally added back into the LIDs. The irony of placing LIDs into the very environment they were not supposed to fight in and the gradual addition of more capabilities until the LIDs virtually replicated regular infantry divisions helped doom the entire experiment. Barely six years after first being

proposed, LIDs were officially dismantled in order to avoid budget cuts in heavy forces (Adams, p. 180).

The LID saga did contain two key points regarding the ongoing SOF reform battle. First, many members of the Defense establishment recognized that there was an unmet need for American forces capable of operating in conflicts short of all-out war in Europe. Somewhat surprisingly, the Army developed the LID concept largely independently, and without a groundswell of support from its junior members. Perhaps more importantly, the LID chronology demonstrated that outside intervention was required if SOF reform was truly to move forward. The military simply had too much internal pressure to conventionalize any unit that appeared to stray too far from the model of the heavy, mechanized force designed for large-scale battles (Adams, p. 182).

Despite this overwhelming orientation towards containment of the conventional Eastern Bloc threat, geo-political events that fell short of total war were having an effect on many in the defense establishment. On October 23rd, 1983, 241 Marines died when a suicide bomber detonated a truck filled with explosives in their barracks in Beirut, Lebanon. The inevitable investigation committee, the Long Commission, reviewed the debacle and concluded that the American military was "inadequately prepared to deal with this threat [state-supported terrorism]" (Adams, p. 188). The American embassy in Beirut had been blown up in a similar manner just a few months earlier, and the continued inability to rescue the dozen or so American hostages being held throughout Lebanon fueled those who felt that America needed a more robust capability in the SOF realm (Adams, p. 186).

As 1983 gave way to 1984, many of the same proponents and antagonists were still debating the same issues regarding SOF reform. Koch, Rylander and Daniels had seen little substantive change and attempted to garner more supporters. They also understood from their previous experiences that as much of the struggle as possible would have to be conducted in public. It was too easy for reform opponents to hide behind secrecy and stifle initiatives by ensuring that they were too highly classified to be seen by more than a handful of people (Marquis, p. 108). Much of the massive military buildup started in 1979 had passed by the SOF community. At the end of 1983, active-duty SF still numbered only 3,900; a scant 900 personnel more than its all-time low hit in 1974 (Adams, p. 184). Even more telling was the static nature of resource allocation for SOF. SOF funding accounted for about one-tenth of 1% of the total defense budget from 1975 straight through 1984. Thus, although SOF funding had increased during this period, it was due more to the increased overall defense budgets than any "SOF Renaissance" taking place within DOD (Marquis, p. 111).

There were a few minor changes to SOF during this period, but they did not amount to anything substantive. The Army did activate a new Ranger battalion in late 1984, as well as another understrength SF Group in 1985. Another SEAL Team was founded, but overall active-duty SOF billets increased only from 11,600 to 14,900 from 1981 to 1985 (Adams, p. 194). The Air Force continued its foot dragging on procuring 21 MC-130 Combat Talons to revitalize SOF aviation. The new aircraft were perennially include in the procurement schedule, only to by delayed by senior Air Force leaders. Conclusive evidence emerged when a memo surfaced in light of Initiative 17

that told the Army not to worry about the Combat Talons, since they "would not have been programmatically realized" by the Air Force (Marquis, p. 115). Not surprisingly, Air Force leaders rated SOF aviation as 59th on its priority list for fiscal year (FY) 1985. When the DOD required the Services to devise plans for a 5% budget cut in FY 1985, the Air Force offered up a generous 40% of its SOF funding (Adams, p. 195).

While SOF and conventional relations continued along roughly the same trajectory, Koch was successful in linking low-intensity conflict (LIC) with SOF. While the Army made a stab at addressing the issue of LIC along conventional lines with the light infantry divisions, Koch and his allies made a good case that SOF could substantively affect the outcome in LIC environments. Interestingly, many SOF proponents did not consider the recent Grenada operation an example of LIC. They envisioned LIC as having a much heavier political and economic base that could be influenced by SOF. However, it was clear that heavy armored divisions were entirely unsuitable for missions on tropical islands, and that America needed some force capable of such taskings. SOF supporters were able to gain significant ground by positioning SOF as potential remedies for the twin issues of terrorism and LIC that came to be seen as major national security concerns for America in the 1980s (Marquis, p. 112).

Not everyone was quick to rush onto the LIC bandwagon though. Specifically, in late 1984 Secretary of Defense Weinberger issued six conditions that he said would have to be met before America would commit troops. Weinberger's employment doctrine required public support, clearly defined objectives and a vital national interest. These tests were least likely to be met in the murky world of LIC. Directly countering the

Communist threat on the conventional battlefield remained the military's almost exclusive focus (Adams, p. 194). As former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell summarized the matter, "As soon as they tell me it is limited, it means they do not care whether you achieve a result or not. As soon as they tell me 'surgical,' I head for the bunker" (Waller, p. 368). SOF advocates might have been successful in pairing LIC with special operators, but that did not necessarily translate into legitimacy or funding.

Throughout 1984 and 1985, Daniels remained the focal point for SOF reform on the Congressional side. He had a few minor allies, but he had to educate them as they went along (Marquis, p. 108). However, his efforts were not in vain, as he succeeded in helping to drag the issue into a more public venue. Koch also went on the offensive, publicly stating that there was active resistance within the conventional military to improving SOF. One of Koch's strengths was that he was persistent. Instead of the traditional political appointee tenure of only two years, Koch served for almost six years. Those who had been hoping to "wait him out" were sorely disappointed when he remained and continued strongly advocating his position (Marquis, p. 113).

Providing a significant boost to the publicity campaign was the decision by Benjamin Schemmer, owner and editor of the influential *Armed Forces Journal International* (AFJ), to weigh in on the side of improving America's SOF capabilities. Schemmer was influenced by such events as the Son Tay raid, the tragedy at Desert One, the missteps in Grenada, and the continues failure to rectify the causes of these symptomatic failures. AFJ had published a few articles over the years that gave general

support to SOF reform. However, the figurative straw that broke the camel's back came when a senior Air Force officer disparaged the Army's Delta force before Congress. The three-star general reportedly called the Delta members "trained assassins" who were "trigger happy" and posed a potential coup threat. Schemmer asked for and received a letter of apology from the general, but more importantly, he decided to use the AFJ forum to promote the cause of SOF reform in the public arena (Marquis, p. 117).

AFJ is a monthly magazine that is widely read within the defense community and has a significant impact on many defense issues. Starting at the end of 1984, the use of overt and for-attribution articles supporting SOF reform marked the beginning of a publicity offensive by SOF's advocates. They eventually added other media to their arsenal, but the entire exercise reflected disillusionment with the established budgetary and management processes (Marquis, p. 116). In early 1985, Koch gave an on-the-record interview in AFJ that could be considered a shot across the bow of the defense establishment. He was moderate in his criticism of the slow pace of SOF reforms, but it was clear that SOF supporters were switching from a low-key guerilla campaign conducted behind the scenes to a full-fledged public battle (Marquis, p. 120).

At the same time the SOF debate was becoming more public, Congress began to take a more interested and active role. Daniels had long been pushing SOF reform, and he began to gather allies – even as his positions became more extreme. In an AFJ article mostly written by Rylander and Lunger in 1985, Daniels argued for transforming SOF into a sixth separate military service. He summarized the usual litany of complaints about why SOF did not fit into the conventional mold and thus were discriminated

against. However, he also stated that was a chronic problem incapable of being remedied without drastic measures (Marquis, p. 122). Daniels was most likely staking out a bargaining position, but it was clear that he and others were extremely frustrated with the slow pace of SOF reform.

Whereas Daniels had been waging his campaign almost exclusively in the House, some SOF reform advocates joined him in the Senate beginning in 1986. Senators Cohen and Nunn, both on the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee, began to take personal interests in the issue. Cohen in particular published an article that staked out a synthesis of Koch's and Daniels' major proposals. Specifically, Daniels pushed stronger advocacy for SOF within the DOD, and Koch continuously tried to improve the problem area of joint command and control by strengthening the JSOA. Cohen tried to establish a middle position that would rectify both problem areas but was short of a new sixth military service (Marquis, p. 126). The political message in Cohen's article was crystal clear: both the Senate and House were now watching for significant SOF reform, and Congress would enforce its wishes if there was no progress forthcoming (Marquis, p. 127).

Despite seemingly clear warnings, few within the conventional side of DOD treated the SOF question with any urgency. Throughout 1985, much of DOD concentrated on the "SOF reform" of the still existent Initiative 17 and trying to rework SOF aviation. Meanwhile, Congress expressed its extreme displeasure with how SOF aviation had been treated by withholding FY 1986 money for aircraft procurement until Weinberger had certified a master SOF aviation plan and funding. In case there was any

doubt, Congress also passed a non-binding resolution that specifically stated that "SOF reform should be one of the highest defense priorities" (Marquis, p. 129). One possible explanation is that SOF problem was really too small to be worth more energy at the higher levels of DOD. Although SOF funding increased to $1.2 billion for FY 1987, it still amounted to less than one-half of one percent of total expenditures (Marquis, p. 130). All SOF funding combined would buy only about one-third of an aircraft carrier, and it might not have been considered practical to expend too much energy on the seemingly minor issue of SOF.

It appeared that the SOF reformers might have lost everything when Koch resigned in mid-1986. Richard Armitage took over for Koch and promptly assumed responsibility for SOF reform. However, he was the opposite of Koch. While Armitage issued public declarations of support for SOF reform, his actions prevented any true progress from being made (Adams, p. 189).

Even though one of SOF's chief advocates had left his position, Congressional and public pressure had built to a point that some SOF reform was inevitable. A new low was reached when the Air Force Chief of Staff testified in early 1986 that SOF aviation was "slightly less" ready than it had been in the aftermath of Desert One (Marquis, p. 131). Senators Nunn and Goldwater also expressed dismay that in 1986, the Air Force had the same number of MC-130 Combat Talons and AC-130 gunships and even fewer HH-53 Pave Low helicopters than it did in 1980. This was even more remarkable when one considered that the Air Force had been fully funded and mandated by Congress to purchase twelve new MC-130s in 1979 (Marquis, p. 130). Koch also

remained a powerful voice advocating for SOF improvements. He was well respected and credible within Congressional reform circles, and he even turned up his rhetoric once freed from the political confines of his appointed position (Marquis, p. 132).

By 1986, meaningful SOF reform was inevitable, but what form these changes were to take was still unresolved. Had DOD recognized the seriousness with which Congress was approaching the issue and responded with a true in-house solution, the reform advocates would almost certainly have agreed to it. Cohen even stated that when he introduced a sweeping reform proposal in May, it was intended only as a "threat" to prompt DOD to provide its own solution to "satisfy Congressional concern" (Marquis, p. 134). Notably, Cohen's legislation addressed several perennial SOF problems by creating a unified SOF command, establishing a new Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD/SOLIC), a new SOF coordination board and a four-star military commander. Daniels introduced a more radical act, HR 5109, that would have come close to creating a sixth military service by establishing a National Special Operations Agency under a civilian director who was entirely outside the purview of the Pentagon (Adams, p. 198).

These radical proposals did finally awaken the DOD establishment to the seriousness of SOF reform, but the Pentagon's response did little to allay Congress' concerns. Not surprisingly, SecDef, the JCS and most senior officers publicly opposed the potential changes and countered by seeking to establish a Special Operations Forces Command (SOFC). This was to be headed by a three-star commander who would have advocacy responsibility for all SOF matters. Congress was not swayed, since having a

lone three-star pushing SOF among a group of four-star officers was only a fractional improvement. The DOD plan also fell short of Congressional intentions by not providing a guaranteed resource pool for SOF and addressing command and control issues with only a few tepid realignments and minor tinkering (Marquis, p. 138).

By mid-1986, there were intense negotiations between Congress and DOD to determine the ultimate shape of the SOF reform. Unfortunately, rigidity and acrimony from nearly all participants marked these proceedings. There were clear divisions among the Congressional members, particularly between the relatively radical House and the more moderate Senate. In both cases, small minorities of total members led the call for reform, and the entire issue had a low priority for Congress as a whole. However, DOD proved exceptionally intransigent, and reformers used this as a means to produce Congressional unity (Marquis, p. 140).

A chance to avert a mandated overhaul was squandered by DOD during testimony before the Senate on August 5th. Traditional conventional suspicions of SOF were on display again when the Chairman of the JCS, Admiral Crowe, stated that he was, "wary of philosophies holding that one community is more elite than another (Marquis, p. 142)." Crowe and Armitage only reinforced Congressional suspicions though, when they offered no substantive improvements for SOF budgeting. Crowe admitted that SOF faced chronic budget shortfalls, but he stated that, DOD "cannot fully fund SOF with the other DOD components getting the leftovers (Marquis, p. 143)." Armitage had a similar response when Congress gave him an overt opportunity to negotiate a compromise. Asked if there was a middle ground between DOD's proposed SOFC and the "sixth-

service" NSOA, Armitage's answer was that SOF airlift was the biggest problem, and that the Defense Resource Board would properly rectify it. If Crowe, Armitage and the rest of DOD had addressed the issues of resource allocation and joint command and control with viable proposals, the reformers would almost definitely have agreed. Instead, Congressionally mandated change was inevitable, and it was only a matter of determining what the final form would be (Marquis, p. 143).

The final straw came during the testimony of General Scholtes, the JSOC commander who had been involved in Grenada invasion. He testified in closed sessions about the misuse of SOF by conventional commanders during the operation, the lack of effective joint command and control and the overall lack of understanding of SOF. After his testimony, Scholtes had a private meeting with many Senators and gave even more informal testimony about the need for reform, (USSOCOM, p. 4). The next day, August 6th, the full Senate passed a bill very similar to the original Cohen proposal. The House followed suit and passed Daniel's bill a week later (Marquis, p. 144).

Because of the vast differences between the two bills, they had to be reconciled by a conference committee. The Senate members were adamantly opposed to Daniel's position, believing that it directly conflicted with the recent Goldwater-Nichols Act[13]. Creating an entirely separate organization would have severely weakened the Chairman of the JCS and the unified commanders. After two months of acrimonious debate, the

[13] The Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Bill was passed in 1986 with the intent of strengthening the positions of unified commanders and the JCS. The Chairman of the JCS was elevated above his peers and now served as the principal military advisor to the President. The overall aim was to foster more effective joint operations (Marquis, p. 144).

conferees were able to reach a solution that met both the House concern for special operations in particular and the Senate's broader concern for special operations and LIC (Marquis, p. 145).

Passed as Public Law 99-661, Section 1311 S 167(f), Congress enacted the legislation on October 18th in the face of continued and public opposition from nearly the entire DOD hierarchy. The act quickly became known as the "Special Forces Bill" (Adams, p. 201). Most notably, the bill mandated the establishment of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and a new Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD (SOLIC)). Contrary to DOD wishes, the new SOCOM commander, known as Commander-in-Chief, Special Operations Command (CINCSOC), was directed to be a four-star officer. He was also given broad responsibilities such as assignment of all active and reserve SOF in the United States (Marquis, p, 146) and control over SOF doctrine, equipment and training (Adams, p. 201).

Also known as the Nunn-Cohen amendment (to the 1987 National Defense Authorization Act), the new legislation specifically defined special operations. This was the first time they were delineated in law and marked a new American emphasis on non-conventional warfare. Significantly, instead of the military leading the way in facing the new low-intensity threats, it was Congress that forced DOD's hand. After decades of mistrust and neglect, special operations were recognized as important in their own right. No longer was Congress content to let the military have free rein in determining America's SOF capabilities and objectives (Marquis, p. 145).

While the new organizational structure was aligned with the more moderate Senate's vision of SOF reform, the House faction won an important point regarding SOF budget authority. SOF would no longer draw funds from the individual services. Instead they were to be funded from their own major force program (MFP-11). This elevated SOF standing in the budget arena and put them on par with their parent services. Subject to change only by the Secretary of Defense or Congress, SOF would receive a "total obligation authority" and be free to make resource allocations (Marquis, p.145).

Overall, the new legislation addressed the primary concern of the reform advocates. Having a four-star commander and a new ASD ensured SOF of adequate representation at the senior DOD levels. Placing all SOF under a single commander enhanced joint interoperability. The creation of MFP-11 allowed SOF to select its own modernization and funding priorities and helped prevent individual SOF units from being at the bottom of their parent services' fiscal priority lists. These newly legislated changes only provided the foundation for SOF reform though. There was still strong DOD opposition to the changes, and full implementation remained months away (USSOCOM, p. 5).

Enacting the reforms ensured that they would eventually be carried out, but there were numerous practical considerations in addition to the entrenched opposition from most DOD quarters. SOF personnel needed to learn how to function in a bureaucratic environment very quickly. They came from an organizational culture that emphasized small-unit, secret operations. Few of even the senior officers had much experience

dealing with high-level, multi-year procurement, personnel or budget issues. And they were not going to get much help from the established Pentagon bureaucracy (Marquis, p. 147).

An example of DOD's resistance to the changes was the refusal to fill the new position of ASD (SOLIC). Congress specifically raised the number of Assistant Secretaries of Defense from 11 to 12, but DOD simply left it vacant (USSOCOM, p. 5). Armitage, who had vehemently opposed the reforms, was in charge of selecting the new ASD. He proposed, in November of 1987, that the position be altered and be made subordinate to another ASD. This proposal fell flat, but DOD continued its unstated policy of publicly espousing support for the changes and passively resisting them whenever possible. A few tepid candidates were screened, but none managed to garner both DOD and Presidential Personnel approval (Adams, p. 203). In frustration, Congress directed that the Secretary of the Army, John Marsh, serve as acting ASD (SOLIC). Finally, a year-and-a-half after the Nunn-Cohen amendment became law, Ambassador Charles Whitehorse was confirmed as the new ASD (SOLIC) on July 12th, 1988 (USSOCOM, p. 5). He represented a compromise choice for the various factions. Whitehorse was a career diplomat with no SOF experience, so he was neither a SOF reform advocate nor an opponent (Adams p. 205).

Actually establishing SOCOM provided the fuel for further intrigue. Congress mandated that the new command be in place within 180 days, or by April 16th, 1987. However, four-star unified commands consist of staffs of 400-1000 people with extensive communications, transportation and other infrastructure requirements. Thus,

rather than start from scratch, the simplest solution was to take an existing command and transform it (Marquis, p. 150). Circumstances pointed to the Unites States Readiness Command (USREDCOM), which had recently been assumed by General James Lindsay. REDCOM seemed to be anachronistic after the Goldwater-Nichol reforms, and Lindsay himself appeared to be a good choice to become CINCSOC (USSOCOM, p. 6).

By nearly all accounts, Lindsay was a superb choice to handle the difficult task of abolishing REDOM and creating SOCOM. He had served well, including in combat, in both conventional and special operations units. From his time as an SF A-team leader and with the 77th SFG to his commands of the 82nd Airborne division and the XVIII Airborne Corps, he was almost universally well respected. He was also a savvy politician, though he had not spent a great deal of time in Washington (which would likely have made him more suspect in the SOF community) (Marquis, p. 151)

Lindsay initially envisioned SOCOM as a component of REDCOM, and he proposed merging the two into a new command, the United States Strike Command (USSTRICOM). REDCOM was responsible for preparing conventional forces to support unified commanders, and he saw preparing SOF as a natural extension of this charter. However, after reviewing Congress' intent, Lindsay accepted that SOCOM was an entirely new command rather than a new branch of an old organization. Perhaps more importantly, military officials correctly perceived that Congress would not tolerate having SOCOM as a sub-unified or component command (Marquis, p. 152).

There was also considerable debate about the location of the new command. REDCOM was located in Tampa, Florida, and it was not considered one of the nation's

premier commands. Tampa was indisputably situated hundreds of miles away from the true DOD power center of the Pentagon. REDCOM further carried the unfortunate distinction of being a low-visibility command considered best suited for ensuring a smooth transition to retired life. Some viewed the Tampa proposal as an attempt to keep SOF as far away from the protection of Congress as possible. It was also seen as a reflection of SOF standing within the DOD hierarchy – utterly removed from the traditional power center of Washington. Many within the SOF community welcomed Tampa though, since they had little interest in becoming enmeshed in Pentagon bureaucracy (Marquis, p. 152).

Throughout early 1987, Lindsay, Congressional representatives and military officials discussed and bargained over what the new SOCOM would look like and where it would be headquartered. Congress steadfastly refused to entertain the possibility of STRICOM or some other REDCOM/SOCOM hybrid. Political leaders also viewed the idea of basing SOCOM in Tampa with suspicion. However, the plan that took shape was for Lindsay to become the first SOCOM commander and use the REDCOM facilities in Tampa. After extensive consultations with Congressional members about what was acceptable, the Chairman of the JCS formally proposed the Tampa locale to the Secretary of Defense in March of 1987. The Secretary accepted the recommendation shortly thereafter (Marquis, p. 154).

Finally, on April 13th, 1987, President Reagan approved SOCOM's formation, and DOD officially established it three days later. Lindsay was nominated as the first CINCSOC, and the Senate, without debate, accepted him. Having already completed

much of the initial work, Lindsay was well prepared for the assignment, and he presided over SOCOM's activation a little more than a month later (USSOCOM, p. 6). SOF reformers had succeeded in their main goals, but several more years of intense struggle remained. Now, however, SOF proponents had much more powerful resources.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

VI. UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND (1987-1999)

A. THE LATE 1980S

Ironically, Admiral Crowe and Deputy Secretary of Defense Taft, two of the more outspoken opponents of the SOF reform legislation, were the guest speakers at the SOCOM activation ceremony on June 1st, 1987. Crowe's remarks were highly instructive of SOF's standing within the military. He first urged the SOF community to "break down the wall that has more or less come between special operations forces and the other parts of the military." He went on to add that resistance was by no means over, and that some people would attempt to build the wall even higher. Secondly, Crowe stated that SOF needed to educate the rest of the military about SOF capabilities, roles and relevance. Crowe's third dictum was for SOF to "integrate [its] capabilities into the full spectrum of [America's] military capabilities (USSOCOM, p. 6)."

These remarks were hardly news to the assembled SOF personnel, since they had been pursuing SOF reform legislation and initiatives such as "reconnecting to the fleet" for precisely these reasons. However, General Lindsay took pains to make these avenues of effort the primary ones for the new SOCOM organization. He went so far as to distribute these taskings throughout the nascent command, helping to ensure that SOCOM became an integral part of the larger military machine rather than a separate fiefdom. This strategy reflected astute political judgement on Lindsay's part and ultimately helped guarantee the success of the fledgling command, which, like so many SOF units before it, faced an uncertain and precarious existence (Marquis, p. 165).

One of the first challenges facing SOCOM was simply identifying which forces it owned and wresting control of those forces from their parent services. Congressional legislation had been somewhat vague, and several points of contention arose between SOCOM and the conventional military concerning exactly who was included in the new command. The most dramatic example concerned the Marine Corps, which steadfastly refused to assign any forces, such as Force Reconnaissance units, to the new command. To this day, there are no Marine Corps units assigned to SOCOM, and only a few token Marines work within the command (Marquis, p. 155).

The Marines were hardly alone though, as each of the other Services also tried to maintain possession of forces SOCOM was claiming. For the Air Force, the 23rd Air Force filled both SOF and conventional roles, and it was already assigned to the Military Airlift Command (MAC). Lindsay desired the 23rd to be exclusively SOF and for MAC to retain the conventional missions and components. However, bifurcating the command entailed organizational difficulties. The 23rd was a numbered Air Force command, and having MAC retain such functions as aeromedical airlift and weather reconnaissance meant that the SOF component was not a major command equivalent. While the Air Force readily agreed to transfer the SOF components to SOCOM, it also insisted on continued partial oversight by MAC. The issue dragged on for almost three years before a solution was reached. In mid-1990, the SOF units within the 23rd were officially designated as their own major command, the Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), and placed under SOCOM's exclusive command (USSOCOM, p. 12).

Since the Army had already created its own SOF organization, the 1st Special Operations Command (1st SOCOM), these forces were the natural choice to be reassigned to SOCOM. The Army transferred all SF, Ranger and special operations aviation units to the new command in May of 1987, even before the official activation ceremony. However, major controversy erupted regarded Civil Affairs (CA) and Psychological Operations (PSYOP) units. PSYOP and CA were both part of 1st SOCOM, and Lindsay felt that they rightfully belonged in the new SOCOM. Others felt that PSYOP and CA would continue to suffer at SOCOM, and they argued for a separate, subunified command (Adams, p. 212).

Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger settled this issue in October of 1987, when he assigned all active and reserve PSYOP and CA units to SOCOM. Interestingly, Crowe and the JCS were in agreement and recognized that SOCOM would be an effective advocate for these forces. More was heard later on this issue though, when senior leaders from the Reserves and National Guard put forward the position that SOCOM only controlled CA and PSYOP forces during wartime. It was not until 1993 that the Secretary of Defense made a definitive and binding decision that CA and PSYOP were under the purview of SOCOM in both war and peacetime (USSOCOM, p. 11).

Perhaps viewing SOCOM as an Army-dominated command, the Navy fought particularly hard against releasing forces to the new command. The Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM) was created as the Navy contribution to SOCOM on April 16th,1987, and it consisted of only the SEAL training command, the

Naval Special Warfare Center. The Navy also agreed that its JSOC component should transfer to SOCOM, but it argued that the SEAL Teams, Special Boat Units (SBU) and SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) Teams should remain under Navy command. While the Navy position rested on the assertion that the Naval Special Warfare (NSW) forces had a "unique relationship" with the fleet commanders, Lindsay and his staff countered that SF had essentially the same relationship with theater commanders. Both the Navy's senior leadership and many SEALs supported the Navy's stance. The "reconnecting to the fleet" initiatives had borne fruit, and the Navy was now reluctant to cede control of this asset. Within the SEAL community, there was a feeling that the larger Navy finally recognized NSW as an integral service component and had begun to allocate suitable resources. Switching to an undeveloped, Army-centric command could threaten years of hard fought gains (Marquis, p. 155).

Similar to the situation with PSYOP and CA forces, the dispute over the SEALs went on for months and was finally resolved by Weinberger in October of 1987. He directed that the SEALs, SBUs and SDV Teams be assigned to NAVSPECWARCOM, in turn a part of SOCOM. Lindsay, the Army and the non-Navy CINCs supported this position. Conversely, Weinberger made the decision over the vehement objections of almost the entire Navy hierarchy, which was backed by the MAC and the Marine Corps (Marquis, p. 162). In a sign of just how strongly the Navy leadership felt about this issue, there was an intense effort to reverse this decision when Frank Carlucci replaced Weinberger in late 1988. Carlucci, however, upheld Weinberger's original decision (Adams, p. 212).

The elite JSOC provided a final arena for conflict regarding SOCOM's composition. Lindsay, supported by the JCS and the services, wanted JSOC to be a part of SOCOM. In contrast, the JSOC commander proposed that he continue to report directly to the National Command Authority (NCA). In March of 1987, Weinberger was again called upon to arbitrate the situation. He ruled that JSOC would be a part of SOCOM, but only once SOCOM had become fully operational (Marquis, p. 156).

Overall, the Services' reluctance to relinquish control of their respective SOF organizations highlighted an interesting dichotomy. After years of neglecting, downsizing and marginalizing their SOF components, the parent services were unwilling to cut them loose entirely. One explanation is that the services recognized that there was an increasing emphasis on special operations and low-intensity conflict, and they did not want to be left out. The services might also have recognized that SOF were already integral parts of the larger military, and they did not want to lessen their capabilities. Regardless of the motivations, the services indicated through action that they truly valued SOF and were not willing to abandon them entirely.

Concurrent with fighting to gain control of SOF units, SOCOM was also battling to establish itself as a unified command. Initially, SOCOM had positions for 250 personnel, but this was low compared to most unified commands' 400-1000. Lindsay was not concerned, since he viewed the process as being one of gradual increases. Congress, however, was not about to allow DOD to even attempt to slowly strangle SOCOM via personnel shortfalls. Accordingly, in a highly unusual and specific move in

1987, Congress directed that SOCOM have no less than 450 permanent employees by the end of fiscal 1988 (Marquis, p. 164).

SOCOM also established a Washington D.C. presence when it opened a "satellite" office in the Pentagon in June of 1987. The SOCOM Washington office was a result of Weinberger's wishes, and it helped nullify the issue of SOCOM being located in Tampa. It was headed by a high-ranking SOF officer, Brigadier General Wayne Downing, who went on to serve as SOCOM's third commander. Having a relatively senior presence in the Pentagon provided both a point of contact for individuals wishing to do business with SOCOM and a forward staging base for SOF staffers when interacting with the Pentagon bureaucracy. The office proved highly effective and was regarded as an important factor in ensuring SOCOM's connectivity with the conventional military and the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD (SOLIC)) (Marquis, p. 175).

While SOCOM managed to resolve many problems and establish itself during 1987, the same was not true for the position of ASD (SOLIC). Unlike SOCOM, the new ASD (SOLIC) position was under no Congressionally mandated deadline, and many within DOD used this as an opportunity to delay the SOF reforms as much as possible. One nefarious explanation is that SOF reform opponents hoped to wait out Congress with the knowledge that legislating a change is not the same as implementing it. There certainly were some legitimate delays in undertaking the sweeping changes called for by the new mandates, but many of the problems were exacerbated by SOF reform holdouts (Marquis, p. 176).

DOD's first action was to refuse to fill the position because Congress had not authorized an additional ASD. Thus, Richard Armitage appointed his deputy, Lawrence Ropka, as the acting ASD (SOLIC). This selection was noteworthy in that Ropka publicly voiced his strong opposition to the reform legislation. These actions only served to infuriate an already skeptical Congress. In response, Congressional SOF supporters delayed all administration appointments in May of 1987 until the ASD (SOLIC) position was filled. Over the next six months, DOD nominated a few marginal candidates who were predictably tabled before ever being voted upon. Finally, in frustration, Congress selected Secretary of the Army John Marsh as the acting ASD (SOLIC) in November of 1987 (Marquis, p. 178).

Marsh was extremely reluctant to accept the task, but he was finally persuaded to undertake it. He was chosen because he had some interest in SOF and he was one of the more powerful and senior members of the Reagan administration team. Marsh proved to be a capable steward during some turbulent times. He reported to Congress on a monthly basis and was able to pressure DOD into nominating a viable candidate. The new Secretary of Defense, Frank Carlucci, had only a minimal interest in special operations, but he recognized that the open ASD (SOLIC) position needed resolution. Accordingly, former Ambassador Charles Whitehorse was nominated and was accepted as the first true ASD (SOLIC) in mid-1988. Whitehorse did not have strong SOF credentials, but he was a good friend of Carlucci's and had extensive government experience (Marquis, p. 179-180).

Further indicative of the ASD (SOLIC)'s low standing within DOD were the proposed office location and staffing levels for the new SOF proponent. Citing space limitations, DOD wanted to situate the new ASD in an undesirable building across the street from the Pentagon. The ASD (SOLIC) office also received an initial staff of just 39 people, compared to manning levels of 120-700 for the other ASDs. During his brief tenure, Marsh was able to find space for the ASD (SOLIC) office in the Pentagon itself, alongside the other 11 ASDs. Congress took measures to improve the ASD (SOLIC)'s standing as well. While the ASD (SOLIC) originally reported through an Undersecretary of Defense, additional SOF legislation directed that the ASD (SOLIC) would report straight to the Secretary of Defense (Marquis, p. 181).

During this time, Representative Dan Daniels, a strong champion of SOF reform, passed away in mid-1988. Another worry for SOF reform advocates was the change in Presidential administrations from Reagan to Bush. The lame duck status of the Reagan appointees guaranteed that little substantive change could take pace, and the Bush assumption of power marked a philosophical shift away from special operations and low-intensity conflict. Many SOF reformers felt that there was a general strategy within DOD to delay the changes as long as possible in the hope that they could be stretched until they were abandoned without true implementation (Marquis, p. 182).

Concerned members of Congress were still monitoring the situation though, and they acted quickly when Dick Cheney was confirmed as Bush's new Secretary of Defense. Powerful Senators immediately recommended that Cheney consider Jim Locher, a Senate staffer with extensive SOF legislation experience, as the new ASD

(SOLIC). Cheney agreed to this, though with some reservations about Locher's close ties to Capital Hill and his possibly divided loyalties. Locher was rapidly accepted for the position, and he set about trying to build a good relationship with SOCOM and fighting administrative battles within DOD (Marquis, p. 183).

SOCOM's single most important battle was over funding and how the Congressional provisions for Major Force Program 11 (MFP 11) would ultimately be executed. Given their background in small-unit, commando operations, it is not surprising that SOCOM's first round of personnel concentrated their efforts on building strong intelligence (J-2) and operations (J-3) organizations. Because of a lack of expertise and perceived glamour regarding budgetary concerns, resource management was a low priority for the new command (p. 205). Lindsay also made a conscious decision to emphasize SOCOM's operational capabilities and infrastructure during the earliest parts of his tenure. Partly as a result of inheriting a CINC-oriented staff, he had few budgetary specialists and favored a go-slow approach that stressed assembling the forces first and then delving into the sometimes Byzantine procurement process. It would be over a year before SOCOM made its initial attempts to probe the budget process and several years before it gained the full control that Congress had envisioned (Marquis, p. 215).

Many within the Defense establishment recognized how critical the battle over MFP 11 was for SOCOM and how determined the efforts were within DOD to subvert SOCOM's budgetary authority. Generals Sam Wilson and "Shy" Meyer both warned of attempts by DOD to "slow roll," or effectively kill by delay, resource management by

SOCOM. Both Generals, along with numerous others in the SOF community, recognized that controlling resources was absolutely critical within government agencies, particularly within DOD. Unfortunately, Congress had been somewhat vague when enacting SOCOM's budgetary authority into law. Although Congressional intent was fairly clear, SOF reform opponents seized upon ambiguities and used them to obstruct SOCOM's efforts to gain control of resources (Marquis, p. 204).

Even before SOCOM was officially activated, Deputy Secretary of Defense Taft issued a memo in March of 1987 that attempted to delineate SOCOM's fiscal oversight responsibilities. The memo was written in response to complaints that senior officials in DOD were trying to block SOCOM's assumption of resource control, and it clearly sided with SOCOM. However, this guidance was far from the final word, as such powerful individuals as Comptroller Robert Helm and Office of Program Analysis and Evaluation head David Chu continued active efforts to prevent SOCOM from exercising meaningful resource control throughout the summer of 1987 (Marquis, p. 211-213).

Much of the budgetary battle concerned the programming and budgeting phases of the planning, programming, and budgeting system (PPBS). PPBS was a direct result of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's tenure, when he and his "Whiz Kids" implemented this system of cost-benefit analysis to help make allocation decisions. The practical effects were that resource allocation decisions made during the programming phase determined the shape of DOD from 5-20 years in the future. Individuals such as Chu and Helm who understood PPBS' intricacies were in a far more powerful position than the neophyte SOCOM budgetary personnel (Marquis, p. 206).

For years, the services had enjoyed near total authority over funds allocated to SOF, and these funds were frequently "reprogrammed" to other, higher priority projects unrelated to special operations. Thus, the services were concerned because any money specifically earmarked for SOCOM would come from their total budget authority and be unavailable for any conventional projects. Of course, this was Congress' specific intent, since there was a general feeling that SOF had suffered tremendously as their funding requests often took a back seat to conventional priorities (Marquis, p. 211).

Much of the struggle over SOCOM funding revolved around the issue of CINCSOC's standing and whether he would function as any other CINC or would have true budgetary power. Although Congressional intent was clear on this matter, insiders such as Chu and Helm argued strongly against SOCOM having effective resource control. They were able to use their extensive knowledge of the process to raise objections nearly continuously. As the issue dragged on throughout 1987, Congress was becoming increasingly agitated. Reform advocates responded with steadily escalating memos, clarifications of intent in the *Congressional Record*, minor legislative changes and threats to put confirmation hearings on hold (Marquis, p. 212-213).

As 1987 gave way to 1988, SOCOM was increasingly established and better able to participate in the budget process. Lindsay had succeeded in establishing SOCOM, and he then turned his attention to the important arena of resource allocation. SOCOM started its first, albeit small, programming shop in order to participate in PPBS as more than an observer. Congress also demonstrated its resolve on the issue and enacted

further legislation that specified that CINCSOC was unique among the CINCs in enjoying full budgetary authority (Marquis, p. 216).

When Whitehorse became ASD (SOLIC) in mid-1988, he joined the voices advocating that SOCOM be able to exercise its full budgetary authority. Unfortunately, the upcoming change in Presidential administrations gave the SOF reform opponents a final opportunity to delay full implementation of the intended changes. Senior DOD officials were unwilling to make major decisions and commit the future administration to a particular course of action. Instead, the animosity between Congress and DOD continued to simmer. DOD leaders were distressed at Congress' seeming micro-management and Congress was, in turn, frustrated by DOD's deliberate efforts to obstruct very clear guidance (Marquis, p. 221).

Believing that its intent had been made more than obvious, Congress resorted to active measures to force DOD compliance with its direction. One example was the enactment of Public Law 100-456 in late 1988. Congress took the highly unusual step of passing legislation that directed CINCSOC to submit budgetary funding proposals straight to the Secretary of Defense. Normally, Congress had only minimal involvement in the actual process of DOD budgeting, concentrating more on the overall outlays. Even this did not totally resolve the issue though, as many within DOD continued to resist the changes (USSOCOM, p. 13).

Once the new administration started taking shape in early 1989, SOF proponents and opponents alike looked for final resolution on the issue of SOCOM's control of the budget process. President Bush's first nominee as Secretary of Defense, Senator John

Tower, had his transition team at the Pentagon, and both sides in the SOF reform battle made pitches to the team. Congress also weighed in and made it clear to Tower that his already troubled confirmation process faced even more problems if the funding authority issue was not settled quickly in SOCOM's favor (Marquis, p. 221).

Accordingly, acting Secretary of Defense Taft issued what became known as the "Taft memo" on January 24th, 1989. In the memo, Taft gave specific guidance that CINCSOC was to be fully responsible for all aspects of MFP 11. Importantly, Taft also set hard time deadlines that would result in CINCSOC having near total control of MFP 11 by the beginning of FY92. To their credit, Helm and Chu complied with both the spirit and the letter of the directive, helping to end much of the entrenched resistance to SOCOM resource management (Marquis, p. 222).

Although more minor conflicts continued in such areas as manpower control, the Taft memo marked the effective end of resistance to SOCOM having full budget authority in line with the Services. While the path was by no means a smooth one, SOF reformers were successful in dealing with the two major problems of resource control and joint command. Active cooperation from DOD might have accelerated the process, but SOCOM made massive and lasting strides in improving American SOF. Given the dramatic changes involved in implementing the reforms and the newness of SOF personnel in dealing with many of the non-operational aspects, the entire process went about as well as could be expected.

B. OPERATION EARNEST WILL

Concurrent with the organizational and budgetary battles being waged domestically, SOCOM faced its first real operational challenge in the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq war. Iranian tactics during the war included attacking oil tankers in the Gulf with small boats and laying mines. After suffering repeated attacks on its ships, the small nation of Kuwait asked in December of 1986 to reflag its 11 tankers as American and have them escorted by the U.S. Navy. President Reagan approved this request in March of 1987, and this effort, dubbed Operation Earnest Will, fell to the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) (USSOCOM, p. 17).

Because the Iranians frequently operated at night and with dispersed forces, American efforts in the Gulf needed capabilities beyond those provided by large, conventional surface combatants. Marine Corps Cobra gunships were considered, but the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Alfred Gray, opposed this because of the Cobra pilots' limited nighttime experience and equipment. The mission, however, seemed tailor-made for SOF. Army aviators from Task Force 160 (TF 160) had small but lethal helicopters, and they had the extensive training necessary to fly at night. SEAL and SBU units also had the tactical knowledge and equipment to counter the Iranian threat. SBU's smaller boats were not as susceptible to mines, and they could remain on station for considerable periods of time. Recognizing the SOF potential to influence the situation, CENTCOM requested and received approval for Army and Navy SOF to deploy to the Gulf in July (Adams, p. 214).

The new task force faced several logistical hurdles, including where to maintain a base in the always politically sensitive Gulf region. After considering a few options, the task force decided to position two oil-service barges at the northern end of the Gulf. Each barge could accommodate 10 small boats, three helicopters and the necessary support equipment. It took until October to make the barges operational, and before then the SOF rode on various surface ships as they convoyed through the Gulf (USSOCOM, p. 18).

SOF helicopters started escorting the convoys in early August, and they functioned primarily as reconnaissance platforms. In September, they saw their first real action when they spotted the *Iran Ajr* laying mines in international waters. The helicopters disabled the ship and SEALs boarded and captured it the next morning (USSOCOM, p. 18).

By October, the barges were in place, and SOF began full-fledged operations. After only a few days, the Americans determined that the Iranians staged their vessels at nearby oil and gas platforms during the day and attacked tankers passing the Middle Shoals Buoy[14] after nightfall. The Americans set an ambush for Iranian gunboats at the buoy and sank all three Iranian vessels present on October 8th. Combined with continued patrols throughout the northern Gulf, these actions dramatically lessened incidents of Iranian gunboat attacks and mine laying (Adams, p. 216).

---

[14] The Middle Shoals Buoy was a prominent navigation aid in international waters that, because of the narrow Gulf waters, tankers had to pass.

After an Iranian Silkworm anti-ship missile hit a reflagged tanker in mid-October, American forces went on the offensive against Iranian oil and gas platforms. Surface ships shelled two platforms, and SEALs destroyed one of them with demolition charges. The SEALs boarded another platform and removed items of intelligence value. Various other contingency plans were in place against Iranian ships and platforms, but they never had to be executed (USSOCOM, p. 19).

Operation Earnest Will finally ran its last convoy in late 1988, after the Iranians accepted a United Nations-brokered cease fire. By all accounts, the SOF contribution to the mission was valuable and an unqualified success. SOF functioned as designed: they provided a low-cost, reliable capability that significantly augmented the conventional forces in the area. They were able to deploy on short notice, adapt to unusual circumstances and effectively counter the Iranians' unconventional threat. Their actions also validated the time and money spent on such activities as nighttime flying proficiency (Adams, p. 217).

One area that was highlighted by the operation was the need for patrol craft with extended range and station keeping ability. Accordingly, SOCOM embarked on a determined effort that resulted in the coastal patrol (PC) ships and Mark V Special Operations Craft being added to the Naval Special Warfare inventory (USSOCOM, p. 20).

Overall, SOCOM could point to its actions during Earnest Will and show support for many of its contentions. The operation demonstrated the need to have capable and mobile SOF prepared to deploy to troubled areas. There was also a need to have both

joint interoperability and the ability for SOF and conventional forces to be able to function together smoothly. As a first test, Earnest Will gave SOCOM a chance to demonstrate its capabilities and prove that truly joint operations were attainable. However, the operations in the Gulf were only a minor prelude for SOCOM's first major test, which would take place in Panama at the end of 1989 (Adams, p. 217).

C. OPERATION JUST CAUSE

American forces launched Operation Just Cause on December 20th, 1989 with the stated objectives of establishing a democratic government in Panama and capturing Panama's despotic ruler, General Manuel Noriega (USSOCOM, p. 20). However, the conflict had its roots in both Noriega's personality and America's long and tangled relationship with Panama. Much of this relationship centered on the strategically important Panama Canal. America was instrumental in helping Panama break away from Columbia in 1903, and there had been a continuous American military presence in the country since then. Soon after the canal was constructed, the Army placed a headquarters in Panama at Quarry Heights. This command evolved into the United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) in 1963, and American military presence in Panama averaged about 10,000 troops throughout the 1970s and 1980s. America's relationship with Noriega himself was always convoluted, but by late 1989 it had degenerated to the point that American leaders ordered overt and decisive military action against him (Marquis, p. 188).

Noriega was first recruited as an American intelligence asset by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) when he was a young cadet studying in Peru in the early

1960s. He remained on the American payroll as a low-level source when he returned to Panama, and he began his rise to power. As a young Lieutenant, Noriega took part in a military coup in late 1968 that was headed by Omar Torrijos. The military ultimately prevailed over the civilian government, but Torrijos' position was not completely solidified. Three colonels staged a countercoup in 1969 when Torrijos was out of the country. Noriega remained loyal to Torrijos and helped him return to Panama in a risky nighttime landing at a blacked out airfield. Torrijos prevailed over his opponents and rewarded Noriega for his loyalty by appointing him chief of military intelligence (Flanagan, p. 4-5).

Noriega continued his relationship with American intelligence agencies as he simultaneously increased his power within Panama. He was both a benefit and problem for the United States during this period. For example, he helped secure the release of American merchantmen being held by Cuba in 1971. He also provided unique intelligence on the Communist guerilla movements that were spreading throughout the region and particularly troubled American policy makers. At the same time, Noriega and Torrijos used their control of the government to build a massive drug-smuggling operation that utilized official Panamanian organizations and personnel. And while Noriega did provide reliable and meaningful intelligence to the United States, he was a double and sometimes triple agent who passed on information to American opponents as well (Flanagan, p. 6).

In 1981, Torrijos was killed in a plane crash, and Noriega swiftly set about assuming power. Noriega also returned to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) payroll

after having been dropped in 1977 due to American concerns about his terrible human rights record. Military and civilian leaders struggled throughout the early 1980s for control of Panama, with the military ultimately prevailing. By 1983, Noriega had almost total control of the National Guard and began taking over the entire country (Flanagan, p. 7).

Noriega was able to install his own handpicked candidate, Nicolas Barletta, as President during obviously fraudulent elections. The Reagan administration was willing to look the other way in part because Noriega provided valuable assistance to the American effort to support the Contra rebels in Nicaragua. However, the goodwill generated from Noriega's Contra support was not enough to overcome American objections to his ruthless actions, as when he ousted Barletta in 1985. America quickly slashed its aid to Panama by 85%, and senior Reagan administration officials warned Noriega about his reckless course of action (Flanagan, p. 8-9).

From this point on, there was a gradually escalating tension between Noriega and American leaders that eventually led to full-out warfare. Noriega first lost what little support he had within the American Congress, and even the Reagan administration began to work actively against him by 1987. After a Panamanian mob attacked the American embassy in June of 1987, all forms of American aid were canceled and administration officials began to call publicly for Noriega's ouster. Over the course of the next two years, Panamanian efforts to harass Americans increased in both number and severity. American forces documented over 1,000 harassment incidents, and they included such events as the arrest and detention of 33 uniformed American military

personnel (Marquis, p. 189). In early 1988, Noriega was even indicted on drug-smuggling charges by two American grand juries (Flanagan. p. 11).

America was not alone in opposing Noriega though, as domestic opposition and unrest grew as a result of his repressive tactics. President Eric Delvalle, Noriega's handpicked successor to Barletta, tried to strip Noriega of power in March of 1988. However, it was Delvalle who was removed from office and replaced by another close Noriega associate, Manuel Palma. There were scattered demonstrations and a brief, unsuccessful coup attempt, but Noriega was able to gain effective control over even more of the government by invoking emergency statutes. By the end of 1988, Noriega had complete control of the Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) and had institutionalized corruption throughout the country. He controlled the government, banks, businesses, the police forces, and an estimated 20% of Panama's national budget went directly to corrupt officials on Noriega's payroll (Flanagan, p. 10-12).

As 1988 gave way to 1989, relations between America and Panama continued to degenerate. The Panamanian government signed a trade agreement with the Soviet Union and established the first Soviet diplomatic mission in the country. In April, American citizen Kurt Muse was arrested for operating a clandestine radio network that had opposed and disrupted the Noriega regime. Panama placed additional and highly restrictive travel regulations on Americans, partially in an effort to prevent outside observers from witnessing the May presidential elections (Flanagan, p. 14).

The elections proved to be a fiasco for Noriega, as even rampant vote-tampering was not enough to prevent opposition leader Guillermo Endara from easily defeating

Noriega's candidate, Carlos Duque. Noriega simply annulled the election, claiming massive interference from America. His henchmen also attacked and killed several opposition members in plain view of the international press. This further lowered Noriega's world standing and placed pressure upon the new Bush administration to act decisively (Flanagan, p. 14).

America responded by recalling its ambassador, placing an additional 1,800 troops in Panama and initiating a series of provocative military maneuvers as a part of Operation Nimrod Dancer. Nimrod Dancer allowed American forces to gain familiarity with the local area as well as valuable intelligence about PDF deployments and capabilities. At the same time, thousands of American civilian dependents were returned to the United States and military personnel were gradually consolidated on bases instead on living out in town. Senior American officials also stepped up their anti-Noriega rhetoric, though Noriega was beginning to appear as an undefeatable David facing a largely impotent American Goliath (Flanagan, p. 16-17).

In a move that held important implications for American SOF, the SOUTHCOM commander, General Woerner was replaced by General Maxwell Thurman by September. Woerner had publicly criticized American policies regarding Panama beginning in February, while President Bush had decided to wait until after the May elections before moving forward. Thurman had played a critical role in effectively changing the Army into an all-volunteer force from a draft-based organization. However, he also recognized that he needed assistance in the "warfighting" aspect of his new job. Thus, he recruited the commander of the XVIII Airborne Corps, General Carl

Stiner, to develop and execute the battle plan for the expected conflict in Panama. Stiner had considerable experience in both conventional and special operations positions. His extensive SOF background helped ensure that SOF would receive a meaningful and calculated role in the eventual invasion (Marquis, p.190).

There were several attempts at mediation, most notably by the Organization of American States (OAS). However, these efforts produced few results while the situation in Panama continued to deteriorate. Harassment between American and Panamanian forces escalated, with the occasional small firefight and continued detentions and arrests. By September, America declared that Panama was without a legitimate government when Noriega replaced Palma with another of his henchmen, Francisco Rodriguez. This installation of Rodriguez was also strongly condemned by Panamanian opposition figures (Flanagan, p. 17-20).

A month after Rodriguez assumed the title of President, there was a coup attempt led by mid-level officers. Early on the morning of October 3rd, about 300 PDF soldiers seized Noriega's military headquarters, the Commandancia. They initially captured Noriega, but the coup's leaders did not have a long-term strategy. Instead, while they negotiated with Noriega for his "retirement," forces loyal to Noriega responded to the coup attempt and surrounded the Commandancia. After a brief firefight, Noriega was freed and resumed power. America avoided involvement in the coup, in part because it was poorly planned and had no link to even quasi-legitimate civilian leaders (Flanagan, p. 25). One important lesson for American planners was that the PDF's Battalion 2000 and 7th Infantry Brigade were loyal to Noriega, were elite units by PDF standards and

could react to events quickly. Thus, preventing these two units from being able to challenge American forces became an important item for American contingency planners (Marquis, p. 193).

American planning for an invasion of Panama intensified, and relations between the two countries sank even lower. On December 15th, Noriega publicly declared that a state or war existed between Panama and the United States. An American Marine lieutenant was killed by PDF forces the next day, and American military and civilian personnel who had witnessed the event were detained and mistreated. These actions infuriated President Bush, and he ordered the exhaustively planned invasion to begin on December 20th. While there had been two years of planning previously, the decision to execute the operation meant that Thurman and his staff had only a few days to refine the final missions (Marquis, p. 193).

Planning had begun in earnest in 1987, and there had been significant obstacles to overcome. Previous contingency plans had assumed that the PDF and American forces would be fighting on the same side. There was also considerable friction between the conventional and SOF factions over who would exercise command and control of what units during the operation. Thurman's selection of Stiner as the operation's commander resolved the issue and marked the first time that a SOF commander would direct large-scale conventional units. It also ensured that SOF were fully integrated into the planning and execution phases of the invasion (Marquis, p. 190).

The overall invasion effort fell under Joint Task Force South commanded by Stiner. Stiner had command of subordinate task forces such as Task Force Semper Fi,

the Marine contribution, and Task Forces Bayonet and Atlantic, consisting of regular Army infantry units. Elements of the 82nd Airborne and 7th Infantry Division reported directly to Stiner. Interestingly, Stiner also had direct command for the Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations forces detailed to the region, even though they nominally fell under the SOF umbrella. Their inclusion in the "regular" forces indicated the general ambivalence about their roles and how truly flexible the newly established SOCOM was (Marquis, p. 192).

The SOF component was organized into an entirely separate task force under Major General Wayne Downing and called the Joint Special Operations Task Force. Downing's group contained the 75th Ranger Regiment, elements of the 7th Special Force Group, SEALs from Teams Two and Four, Special Boat Unit detachments and members of both SEAL Team Six and the Army's Delta Force. This command structure was a dramatic improvement from Grenada as far as the SOF commanders were concerned. SOF had a direct role in the planning and mission selection in Panama – something that had been lacking in Grenada. Panama also emphasized conventional and special operations forces acting together, whereas Grenada had been divided into entirely separate and mutually exclusive areas of operation (Marquis, p. 192).

SOF had 10 primary missions when Operation Just Cause began, and these missions made good use of the special operators' unique skills and training. One of the most important missions was for SEALs and Army SF to capture Noriega himself. The Rangers were charged with classic direct action missions in being ordered to assault the PDF complex at Rio Hato and the PDF airbase near Torrijos-Tocumen International

Airport. SF soldiers were to observe and eventually hold the Pacora River Bridge and prevent PDF reinforcements from reaching Panama City. Another SF team had responsibility for temporarily disabling the Panamanian national TV station. SEALs were charged with disabling Noriega's yacht and two gunboats in Balboa Harbor, as well as preventing Noriega's personal plane from being used at Punta Paitilla airfield. SBU elements were tasked with securing the Panama Canal at the Atlantic entrance. Air Force SOF had responsibility for flying surveillance, transport and gunfire support missions for all SOF taskings and some conventional operations. Finally, one of the most dramatic missions called for Delta troopers to assault the El Modelo prison in the heart of Panama City and rescue the imprisoned Kurt Muse in the conflict's opening moments (Adams, p. 218).

Just prior to the commencement of hostilities, American special operations personnel covertly moved into Panama and linked up with other SOF units already in place (Adams, p. 219). The invasion plans were obvious to both sides, but the American commanders hoped to maintain at least tactical surprise. Unfortunately, in a scene strikingly similar to what happened in Grenada, Panamanian radio began to announce the exact designated start time of the attack. Stiner, hoping to gain a modicum of surprise, accelerated H-hour from 0100 on December 20th to 0045. This 15-minute change had little effect on operations though; as virtually all of Panama knew that an attack was imminent (Marquis, p. 194).

Knowing that an American assault was inevitable, Noriega had adopted a random schedule that featured frequent moves. Although American intelligence assets tracked

Noriega as much as possible, there were still considerable gaps in the coverage. Thus, when Navy SEAL and Army special mission units attempted to capture Noriega at H-hour, the snatch teams all missed him. They came close and missed him by minutes on a couple of occasions, but Noriega passed the invasion's first night driving around Panama City with a small security detail (Adams, p. 220-221).

Noriega's ability to elude capture the first night was not regarded as a particularly telling rebuke of the capabilities of American SOF. He employed numerous safehouses, warning networks and even decoy lookalikes. Senior American officials knew before authorizing SOF's arrest attempt that success was by no means guaranteed. However, the attempted grab highlighted two key issues for SOF. The first was the gradual blurring of the distinctions between military and law enforcement activities. SOF personnel hunted for Noriega on the basis of timely Justice Department rulings that allowed overseas military troops to act independently to arrest individuals wanted on American warrants. This practice was in its infancy in Panama, but it started to grow with the military's increasing participation in the "war on drugs" (Adams, p. 219). The second key issue was that SOF still had a critical dependence upon accurate and timely intelligence. Had the SOF operators known Noriega's location and been able to arrest him, the entire course of Operation Just Cause would have been altered.

In contrast, one SOF mission that was supported by excellent intelligence went exceptionally well. Rescuing Kurt Muse from the Modelo prison held a great deal of importance to the overall invasion, if only symbolically. Muse had been arrested by Panamanian security forces after he and his friends had listened in on and disrupted PDF

communications for a period of several months. They had begun using only off-the-shelf scanners, and they graduated to sophisticated monitoring and active broadcasting devices. By the time was arrested in early 1989, he and his friends were regularly broadcasting anti-Noriega propaganda nationally and issuing false orders on police and military frequencies (Flanagan, p. 87-91).

Muse was principally held in Modelo prison, which was directly across the street from Noriega's well-guarded headquarters, the Comandancia. As an American citizen, Muse was afforded certain legal protections, and American government officials were allowed to visit him periodically. These visitors provided detailed intelligence about the prison's characteristics and Muse's specific location. President Bush was personally moved by Muse's plight, and he authorized Operation Acid Gambit to free Muse (Flanagan, p. 87, 92).

Acid Gambit employed Delta commandos arriving by Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) and rescuing Muse from the prison. The rescue package would then exfiltrate via SOF aviation helicopters from the prison's roof. The plan called for Muse to be free less than nine minutes after the assault started. Delta personnel rehearsed the mission near the location that had been used to practice for the unsuccessful Son Tay prison rescue. Acid Gambit also called for AC-130 gunships to bombard the Comandancia and provide a diversion for the rescue effort (Flanagan, p. 87, 94).

This diversion worked well when it was initiated at 0045. Delta troopers were able to kill the prison guards quickly and free Muse from his cell. They then led him to the roof, and everyone loaded onto small helicopters from the 160th Special Operations

Aviation Regiment. Unfortunately, the helicopter carrying Muse was hit by ground fire just as it was taking off from the prison roof. The superbly skilled pilot was able to make a controlled crash onto the street below and then hover taxi the crippled helicopter through the streets to a small parking lot (Flanagan, p. 94-95).

When the pilot attempted another take off, the helicopter was hit yet again and crashed on its side. Several of the Delta members were wounded, but the element succeeded in establishing a defense perimeter. One of the helicopters circling above the group vectored in an APC to the embattled rescue force. The rescuers loaded Muse and their wounded comrades into the APC, and they safely evacuated the area (Flanagan, p. 95-96).

Muses's successful liberation stood in stark contrast to previous high-profile failures such as Desert One and the Son Tay raid. Although rescuing Muse was not nearly as complex as the other missions, American SOF demonstrated that they had the skills and proficiency necessary to accomplish such challenging missions. One of the most important differences was that special units did not have to be created specifically for the operation. Instead, American leaders were able to select an already assembled, funded and trained unit that existed during peacetime. The use of conventional APCs also highlighted the mutual dependency between SOF and regular forces. While the actual prison assault itself was appropriate only for highly trained commandos, these same commandos required conventional support to infiltrate and exfiltrate the target area. Operation Acid Gambit was an excellent example of both SOF and conventional cooperation and how much SOF had developed over the previous decade.

were used exactly as they were designed to be – for the rapid seizure of a defended hostile airfield.

Very similar to the Ranger takedowns of Torrijos and Tocumen was the capture of the mile-long runway and associated military structures at the Rio Hato airfield. Rio Hato was guarded by two well-disciplined PDF companies and was home to several non-combat oriented PDF units (Flanagan, p. 141). The airfield itself was also bisected by the Pan-American Highway, and controlling the highway became a follow-on mission for the Rangers (USSOCOM, p. 27).

In an effort to stun the PDF defenders and minimize collateral damage, senior American commanders elected to have two new F-117 stealth fighters drop 2,000 bombs next to the PDF barracks. SOF commanders argued to bomb the barracks directly, but Stiner ultimately decided to try to stun and disorient the defenders rather than outright kill them. The F-117 bombing runs were fairly successful, and they were followed by direct gunfire support from AFSOC AC-130s and AH-6 helicopter gunships from TF 160. After three minutes of intense aerial bombardment, five companies of Rangers began their combat jump onto the Rio Hato airfield (Flanagan, p. 141-144).

After landing and getting organized, the Rangers assaulted their objectives in the face of fairly well organized PDF resistance. The PDF utilized several light armored cars that were neutralized through a combination of aerial gunfire support and light anti-armor weapons. The entire complex was under sporadic though largely ineffective automatic weapons fire, and PDF soldiers conducted a fighting withdrawal as they contested almost every portion of Rio Hato. However, the Rangers were able to secure

the area in only an hour-and-a-half and began bringing in follow-on forces to take control of the airfield. In all, the Rangers suffered only four fatalities and 67 wounded while killing 34 PDF members and taking over 275 prisoners (Flanagan, p. 155-156).

There was one incident of friendly fire casualties, when an AH-6 helicopter gunship opened fire on a Ranger element. As a result of poor communications, two Rangers were killed and four wounded. Aside from this, the remainder of the action in the Rio Hato area was highly successful. The Rangers transitioned to maintaining control of the Pan American highway and dispatched a company to take over security of the American Embassy in Panama City on December 20th (USSOCOM, p. 27).

The assault on Rio Hato was another example of the classic Ranger direct action mission of airfield seizure, and it again validated their use for this kind of operation. The coordination with the aerial platforms was not as good as at the Torrijos-Tocumen assault, but it compared very favorably with the airfield seizure almost a decade earlier in Grenada. Overall, the Rangers performed nearly exactly as advertised by seizing three well defended airfields in a matter of hours. Additionally, the Rangers were able to accomplish this with only minimum casualties to themselves and the civilians intermixed in the combat area.

At the same time the Rangers were conducting their operations, the Naval Special Warfare component began executing its missions. The NSW contribution was organized under Task Force (TF) White, which in turn was divided into four Task Units (TU). Composed of SEAL and SBU personnel, the entire TF had 707 personnel, five SEAL platoons and nine small patrol boats to accomplish four primary missions. TU Charlie

was tasked with controlling the Atlantic entrance to the Panama Canal, and TU Foxtrot had the same mission for the Pacific entrance. TU Whiskey was to execute a rare combat swimmer attack to disable a patrol boat in Balboa Harbor in order to prevent Noriega from using it as an escape platform. Finally, the 92-man TF Papa was ordered to deny the use of Paitilla airfield as a means of escape for Noriega, particularly since he maintained his private jet there (Flanagan, p. 82-84).

TU Charlie took station at the Atlantic entrance to the Panama Canal early on December 20th with two patrol boats, two Army mechanized craft, eight SEALs and 12 Army personnel. The Americans broadcast warnings to ships in the area and patrolled the shipping channel near Limon Bay. They acted to prevent PDF sabotage against the Canal and to prevent PDF members from seizing boats in the ports of Colon and Cristobal. TU Charlie also prevented looting in the harbor area and exchanged small arms fire with PDF elements on several occasions (Adams, p. 225).

On the morning of the 20th, TU Charlie responded to reports of an arms transfer taking place on a German merchant ship in Cristobal. The Americans took PDF members under fire, and SEALs boarded the ship after a brief firefight. As the SEALs were searching the vessel, they came under heavier fire. They then evacuated their PDF prisoners to TU Charlie boats and resumed patrolling. TF Charlie continued to maintain security at the Atlantic entrance until after Christmas, at which time the TF personnel returned to their original units (USSOCOM, p. 29).

While many of TU Charlie's operations were fairly routine, they provided an excellent illustration of the conventional Navy's emphasis on blue-water missions to the

exclusion of riverine capabilities. The larger Navy lacked both the platforms and expertise to execute even relatively simple taskings in such an environment (Adams, p. 226). This was by choice though, and there was no desire to develop or maintain a robust capability to operate in the near shore environment. Riverine capability fell precipitously after the Vietnam War, and it likely would have been even more dramatic had not the creation of SOCOM ensured a dedicated resource pool.

With a mission very similar to TU Charlie's, TU Foxtrot started guarding the Canal's Pacific approaches at H-hour with five small boats augmented by SEALs. Specifically, they protected the waters around Howard Air Force base (AFB) and the Bridge of the Americas. SEALs searched some of the islands adjacent to Howard AFB, and the Task Unit detained numerous small boats in the area.

A day later, SEALs boarded two of Noriega's yachts and captured 18 Panamanians and a stockpile of weapons and ammunition. TU Foxtrot continued its patrols until December 26th, when it took station in the waters next to the Papal Nunciature. Noriega himself had taken refuge in the Nunciature, and TU Foxtrot prevented his escape via water without incident (USSOCOM, p. 30).

In one of the first actions of the conflict, two "swim pairs" of two men each from TU Whiskey attached limpet mines to the *Presidente Porras* in Balboa Harbor. The boat was considered a possible means of escape for Noriega, and American commanders wanted it disabled as soon as possible. Balboa Harbor itself sat almost directly across the Canal from Rodman Naval Station, a large American naval base. Accordingly, the

combat divers set out in small rubber raiding craft with close to a dozen other personnel acting as surface support and contingency forces (Flanagan, p. 82).

Because H-hour had been accelerated, the divers entered the water fairly close to the target and made their way to the pier. The teams traveled independently, and both were able to place their mines on the target ship successfully. Although there was sporadic gunfire around location, neither team was detected or directly targeted. The charges worked perfectly, and both swim pairs were able to extract without any casualties. After the swimmers linked up with the surface element, the entire group returned safely to Rodman. Significantly, the operation marked the first time since World War II that combat divers had attacked an enemy vessel while it was in port (Flanagan, p. 83-84). Although this is considered a classic mission for maritime special operations forces, its rarity indicates how frequently SOF perform tasks outside their original mandate.

The most dramatic NSW mission of the operation involved the three SEAL platoons and command element that attacked Paitilla airfield. The airfield sat directly on the water, fairly close to Howard AFB. Although the choice of SEALs for this mission later engendered considerable debate, using them to land covertly and deny use of the airfield made at least some sense. The concept of operations called for the SEALs to land at the southern end of the runway, where the command element would remain. The platoons would advance up the runway and disable both Noriega's private jet and prevent any aircraft from using the airfield. The entire operation was envisioned as requiring about five hours (Flanagan, p. 84).

Larger patrol boats towed about 15 SEAL rubber raiding craft to within two miles of the objective and released the smaller boats. The SEALs landed fairly uneventfully, and the platoons advanced on their objectives while the command element stayed near the landing site. Roughly simultaneously with the landing, major firefights broke out at the Comandancia and surprise was lost. Due to intelligence that Noriega might arrive at the airfield in a plane, one platoon took an ambush position in the middle of the runway. After traveling nearly the length of the runway, the other platoons advanced towards the hanger that was believed to shelter Noriega's plane (Flanagan, p. 85).

Several PDF guards were in place at the hangers, and the SEALs and PDF began to exchange verbal demands. A firefight started when a SEAL opened fire on a PDF member who had taken an aggressive firing stance. An intense firefight ensued, and two SEALs were killed and another eight were wounded. An AC-130 gunship that was overhead to provide support was unable to fire due to the close proximity of the forces as well as communication problems. The other platoons rapidly advanced to reinforce the original platoon, and two more SEALs were wounded. After three more firefights, the PDF withdrew and the SEALs consolidated themselves into a defensive perimeter (USSOCOM, p. 28).

After some delay, a helicopter arrived to medevac the wounded, but two of the wounded eventually died of their injuries. Another platoon that had been on standby at Rodman was sent to reinforce the SEALs at the airfield. Once day broke, the SEALs dragged aircraft onto the runway to prevent its use. Because of heavy fighting elsewhere, the SEALs were told that their relief was not available. The SEALs

consolidated their positions and remained under sporadic fire until 1400 on the 21st, when a company of Rangers relieved them (Adams, p.224).

The mission at Paitilla was hardly a success, and there was considerable criticism from nearly all quarters in the aftermath. Many in the SEAL community pointedly noted that airfield seizure was not SEAL mission. However, senior SOF commanders had reviewed the mission and accepted it (Marquis, p. 196). There was also a great deal of political pressure to ensure that the Navy received a "fair" percentage of the missions during Just Cause. This illustrated one of the worst effects of joint operations, whereby each component must take part in the action, often in disregard of better options. While in hindsight the Rangers might have been the better choice, "fairness" dictated that Navy special operators play a significant role in the overall scheme of maneuver (Adams, p. 225).

Difficulty communicating with aerial assets also harkened back to operations in Grenada. While there was some improvement, the problems at Paitilla indicated that there was still considerable work to be done in the area of true joint interoperability. The final criticism was that the SEALs almost never work in groups as large as three platoons. Although this is certainly true, SEAL commanders had ample opportunity to voice their concerns prior to the mission. The actual units involved in Paitilla also had several opportunities to train and rehearse the operation together (Marquis, p. 196).

In addition to the original operations, SEALs were tasked with several contingency missions during the course of Just Cause. After regrouping from Paitilla, members of TU Papa conducted numerous searches for arms caches and Noriega

supporters (USSOCOM, p. 29). Other SEAL personnel searched various small islands in an effort to root PDF units from their operating bases. Still more SEAL elements teamed with Army Special Forces in a near constant effort to capture Noriega (Marquis, p. 192).

At the same time NSW assets began their H-hour missions, Army SF troops organized under TF Black started their assignments. TF Black had the 3rd Battalion of the 7th Special Forces Group as its core, and they were supplemented by an additional SF company and both Army and Air Force SOF aviation support. The SF teams had responsibility for several reconnaissance and surveillance missions at the opening of hostilities. They included: observing the PDF's Battalion 2000 at its base Fort Cimarron, watching the Pacora River Bridge, and monitoring the PDF's 1st Company at Tinajitas (USSOCOM, p. 30).

Since the Americans had identified Battalion 2000 as one of the PDF's most effective units, reporting on its movements and preventing it from reaching Panama City received a high priority. Unfortunately, when the first SF reconnaissance team took up positions overlooking Fort Cimarron, Battalion 2000 was already on the move. The same was true for the soldiers watching the 1st Company, and both teams reported nothing more than occasional mortar fire (USSOCOM, p. 30).

The mission at the Pacora River Bridge was much more dramatic however. Initially, the SF team was simply to observe the bridge until relieved by Rangers who would arrive after their assault at Tocumen. On December 18th, this plan was ruled impractical, and the SF soldiers prepared instead to seize the bridge. In particular, the

bridge was the only viable route available to Battalion 2000 if it tried to move from Fort Cimarron to Panama City (Flanagan, p, 77).

Only two helicopters were available to insert the SF members at the bridge because of other H-hour commitments. At the last minute, another helicopter became available, and the troops involved quickly increased to 24 from 16. As the two A-teams boarded their helicopters at Albrook AFB, they came under sporadic but ineffective fire. Because of the extra helicopter, the pilots decided to land at northern end of the bridge rather than the planned southern end. The pilots also flew straight to the bridge in light of the enemy gunfire and accelerated H-hour (Flanagan, p. 78).

The decision to land at the northern proved fortuitous, since there was an eight-vehicle PDF convoy reaching the bridge from the south at the exact same time. The SF teams quickly deployed into fighting positions and began engaging the convoy with light anti-armor weapons and small arms. They succeeding in halting the convoy before it could cross the bridge. As the PDF members exited their trucks and began firing at the Americans, an AC-130 gunship opened fire on the stalled convoy (Flanagan, p. 78).

After the initial attempt to cross the bridge, the PDF engaged the SF teams throughout the night and made foot assaults across the bridge and along the length of the riverbank. With the help of observation and aerial support from the AC-130, the SF soldiers were able to hold of the attackers without suffering a single casualty. On the morning of the 20th, another SF group reinforced the original teams, and the combined element swept across the bridge. They captured 20 prisoners, weapons, and ammunition and learned that they had soundly routed the Battalion 2000's heavy weapons company.

Units from the 82nd Airborne Division arrived at the bridge during the afternoon of the 20th, and the SF teams returned to base (Flanagan, p. 79-80).

The highly successful mission at Pacora River illustrated some of SOF's best qualities. SF teams were able to assimilate additional personnel less than five hours before a mission. They also demonstrated superb flexibility in rapidly transitioning from a reconnaissance to a direct mission. The superb coordination with the AC-130 gunships further highlighted the significant gains that had been made since the problems in Grenada. Finally, the unit commander attributed some of the success to the fact that a majority of his men had deployed to Panama before for training. Thus, they were more familiar with the local culture and military climate than members of conventional units could hope to be (Flanagan, p. 76-77).

After the initial H-hour missions, the SF teams received additional taskings. A roughly three A-Team element was dispatched to disable Radio Nacional's transmitting stations at 1850 on the evening of the 20th. The SF members were able to locate and disable the AM transmitter very quickly, but they were unable to find the FM transmitter. After returning to base, the same group was given the new target location for the FM component, and they launched less than two hours later. This time, they were successful in disabling the FM transmitter, and Radio Nacional stopped broadcasting pro-Noriega propaganda (USSOCOM, p. 31).

The next day, more SF troops were sent back to the transmitter, and this time they repaired the facility. This enabled the station to air pro-American messages. Using SOF for this mission allowed for exactly the surgical capability needed. While the

transmitters could have easily been destroyed from the air, only well-trained soldiers on the ground could disable the station in a way that allowed it to resume broadcasting the next day (USSOCOM, p. 32).

SF language skills also came into play, as the team members were detailed to work with Panamanian civilians to seize PDF supplies hidden in remote locations. Again, the SOF individuals were able to gain the trust and confidence of the local populace based on their language and cultural familiarity. Notably, SF troops, with help from Panamanian civilians, were able to capture a mobile PDF transmitter that had been used after the initial raids were successful in knocking Radio Nacional from the air (USSOCOM, p. 32).

The final major SOF commitment involved so-called "Ma Bell" missions[15] that were not a part of the original concept of operations but quickly became a major focus of the overall American effort. American forces captured nearly every key target in Panama's developed areas within the opening days of the operation, but numerous small PDF elements remained throughout the countryside. They maintained bases known as *cuartels*, and the garrisons ranged from a couple dozen to hundreds of PDF soldiers (Flanagan, p. 216).

Direct assaults on the *cuartels* risked increased casualties on the part of the Americans, the PDF and local civilians. In response, an SF Major, tasked with assisting the pacification effort, developed the idea of simply talking the PDF into surrendering.

---

[15] The operations became known as "Ma Bell" missions because they relied upon making telephone calls to local PDF commanders and talking them surrendering their garrisons without a fight (USSOCOM, p. 32).

Americans first established an *ad hoc* unit consisting of regionally oriented SF detachments, Rangers, Air Force SOF gunships and troops from the 7th Light Infantry Division. This group then developed a two-phase plan that aimed to induce the PDF garrisons to surrender without resistance (Flanagan, p. 215).

The first step was to insert a small SF team into a nearby town with gunships and a reaction force standing by if needed. The SF team then called the local *cuartel* commander and talked to him about surrendering his command. If the PDF commander seemed resistant, an AC-130 gunship would fire 105mm rounds into unoccupied areas of the *cuartel*. The second phase involved bringing a larger SF team into the *cuartel*, searching for weapons, and separating wanted criminals from the PDF ranks. Rangers and 7th Infantry personnel also occupied the local towns and helped prevent civil disorder. Once the surrender was accomplished, a few Spanish-speaking SF members stayed behind and the unit progressed to the next *cuartel* (Flanagan, p. 216).

These missions were phenomenally successful, and they resulted in the surrender of 14 *cuartels*, 2,000 PDF troops, and 6,000 weapons without a single American casualty. Several of Noriega's strongest supporters were also arrested as criminals (USSOCOM p. 32).

"Ma Bell" operations showed SOF at their best. Because many of the SF troops had worked with the PDF commanders previously, they already had an established rapport. Language and cultural fluency also played an important role. SF members were sensitive to PDF concerns and made sure to conduct surrender ceremonies that did not demean the PDF. Surrendering was even referred to as "ceasing hostilities," since

"surrender" had a strong negative connotation in Panamanian culture. Finally, the missions were not even an idea when Operation Just Cause began, but they were successfully executed 14 times from 22-31 December. They showed SOF ingenuity and belied the image of bloodthirsty commandos determined to fight whenever possible (Flanagan, p. 217).

In the final assessment, Operation Just Cause was a marked improvement in the performance of America's conventional and SOF units. American casualties stood at 23 killed and 324 wounded in Panama, whereas there had been 19 killed and 152 wounded fighting in Grenada against a much weaker opponent (Flanagan, p. 229). Coordination between the conventional and special operations units also showed tremendous improvement. After-action reports specifically noted the more effective relationship between the two groups in all areas. Starting with the planning phase, SOF personnel were an integral part of the process, and this continued throughout the execution phase, even when detailed guidance was not available (Marquis, p. 201).

SOF participation also reached the point where it was a critical mass of the overall American effort. Of the roughly 20,000 troops that participated in the operation, about 4,500 were SOF. This indicated that SOF were truly integral parts of the American military establishment. SOF inclusion in the planning process helped ensure that SOF received appropriate and meaningful missions (Marquis, p. 202).

Many of SOF's most important contributions were developed as the operation unfolded rather than being scripted in advance. The Ma Bell missions were a perfect example of SOF acting as a force multiplier. They were literally able to talk 2,000

enemy soldiers into surrender based in large part upon SF's long-standing training in and orientation with the local area. Notably, this type of mission was not even considered until the second day of the operation. Having a force capable of executing this task validated the SOF contention that years of training and preparation were required in order to have the force available when it was needed.

Comparisons of similar missions during Just Cause and Urgent Fury showed how much American forces progressed during the intervening years. The successful rescue of Kurt Muse stood in stark contrast to the failed attempt to liberate the prisoners in Grenada's Richmond Hill prison. Muse's rescue was also a small redemption for the sad debacle that took place when trying to rescue the American hostages in Iran. The airfield seizures in Panama compared very favorably with the takedown of Grenada's solitary airfield. In Panama, Rangers were able to seize three airfields against much more effective resistance, but with similar American casualty figures. Perhaps the most important improvement was in the area of joint command and control. During Just Cause, SOF units had both the autonomy they needed and the close interaction with conventional units that made them useful to the larger effort. Panama was a limited validation for the SOF reformers, but there were still issues to be resolved (Marquis, p. 201).

D. DESERT SHIELD/STORM

The American military did not have to wait long for another test, since it was called upon to execute one its most massive mobilizations in response to Iraq's invasion of the tiny Arab nation of Kuwait on August 2nd, 1990. Iraq had maintained territorial

claims on Kuwait for over 50 years, but the primary motivation for the invasion appears to have been financial. Iraq was deeply in debt, largely a result of the costly war it fought with Iran throughout the 1980s. The Iran-Iraq War was partially funded by the other Gulf states that feared an expansion of Iran's version of Islamic fundamentalism. Iran and Iraq fought to a stalemate, and the whole affair left Iraq with obligations of about $80 billion. When the war was over, Iraq asked for its wartime debts to be forgiven, an immediate grant of $30 billion, and for exceptions to OPEC's pricing and production constraints (Pimlott, p. 35-37).

Iraq's relations with the Western world were also faring poorly. There were several instances where Iraq's efforts to procure components for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) were thwarted in the West, and Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was viewed as a personally dangerous presence in the region. Hussein made numerous threats against Kuwait, but they received only tepid reaction from the Western powers. Hussein was condemned, but proposed economic sanctions never received any support (Pimlott, p. 38).

Iraq's invasion also took place during a pivotal point on the geopolitical front. Since World War II, smaller nations undertook actions with due regard for the bipolar Soviet-American struggle and how these superpowers would react. By 1990 though, the Soviet Union was in the process of imploding, and its attention was firmly riveted on the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe. For its part, America had provided a fair amount of support to Iraq in an attempt to staunch the spread of Islamic fundamentalism. Further, American policy on the Middle East was somewhat vague, as when

Congressional hearings in late July specifically noted that America had no defense treaties with Gulf states. It was against this backdrop that Hussein ordered his military to attack and occupy what he referred to as Iraq's "nineteenth province" (Pimlott, p. 39).

Defeating the ill-prepared Kuwaiti defense forces proved to be quick work for the powerful Iraqi military. Hardened by nearly a decade of combat experience against Iran, the Iraqis were able to seize virtually the entire country in a single day. The Iraqis enjoyed enormous superiority in terms of manpower and equipment. At the time, the Iraqi military was the fourth largest in the world, and it boasted over 5,500 tanks, about 5,100 other armored vehicles and more than 5,000 artillery pieces. Iraq also had more than 1.5 million regular and reserve personnel under arms (Pimlott, p. 29-30).

The Iraqi military machine was of uneven quality, with some units being fairly lavishly equipped and trained, and others being little more than poorly trained conscripts. The higher-end units had modern weapons such as Soviet T-72 tanks, advanced Mig-29 aircraft and excellent artillery pieces such as the South African G5/6 howitzer. In particular, the eight divisions of the Republican Guard possessed the most modern platforms, and Iraq's other 50 regular divisions made do with older and less capable equipment. Finally, the militia units usually had only rudimentary training and the most basic of arms (Pimlott, p. 180).

After the initial strike, Iraq consolidated its hold over Kuwait, and by August 6th, elements of 11 divisions had over 200,000 troops and 2,000 tanks actually in the kingdom. These forces began constructing extensive fixed defenses, and on August 8th, Hussein formally annexed all of Kuwait. Even more troubling to the Western world was

that Iraq forces possessed the means to continue their advance into Saudi Arabia. They easily could have occupied northern and eastern Saudi Arabia, and threatened the remaining Gulf states. This would have given Hussein control over 40% of the world's proven oil reserves and allowed him virtually unlimited power to dictate the price and availability of all oil flowing from the Middle East. Not surprisingly, the Western reaction was swift and meaningful (United States Department of Defense (DOD), 1992).

Within days, the United States announced that it was sending troops that were prepared to defend Saudi Arabia. Some of the very first American units on the ground were hastily deployed NSW and SF components. These initial forces were in no position to offer effective resistance to a determined Iraqi assault, but they served as an important tripwire to demonstrate resolve. Less than a week after the Iraqi invasion, lead elements of the 82nd Airborne Division began arriving in Saudi Arabia (Marquis, p. 228).

Additional, heavier forces were deployed to Saudi Arabia, and under an effort labeled Operation Desert Shield, some 19 nations contributed units to an American-led coalition. The initial charter was solely to defend Saudi Arabia against possible Iraqi attack, but thanks to increasingly strong support from United Nations (UN) resolutions, the coalition was tasked with evicting Iraqi forces from Kuwait. It took six months for the coalition to prepare its armies, and Hussein remarkably allowed this buildup to take place without interference. By January 1991, there were some 540,000 coalition troops poised around the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations (KTO), and they included over 7,000 SOF. It was America's largest ever SOF deployment, and despite a somewhat rocky

relationship with General Schwarzkopf, the coalition commander, SOF contributed significantly during all phases of the campaign to oust the Iraqis (Marquis, p. 228-229).

As Desert Shield gave way to Desert Storm (the actual launching of offensive operations against the Iraqis), SOF continued to be tightly constrained within five primary mission areas. In particular, Schwarzkopf personally maintained firm control over SOF activities. The animosity between Schwarzkopf and the USSOCOM Commander, General Stiner, illustrated the continued contentious status of SOF within the larger conventional military. Most notably, Schwarzkopf ordered that SOF cross-border operations required his personal approval and were to be severely limited before the commencement of any large-scale ground offensive. Echoing the traditional conventional wariness of special operations, Schwarzkopf feared that SOF might get in trouble behind enemy lines, and he did not want to have to "divert forces from the real war and bail them out" (Adams, p. 233).

For their part, special operators felt unduly restricted. They were specifically trained for and most useful performing such missions as organizing guerilla forces in occupied territory and conducting covert reconnaissance in support of large conventional offensives. Several aggressive SOF packages and missions were proposed, but nearly all of them met a determined wall of resistance at Schwarzkopf's level. Of course, one of Schwarzkopf's major concerns was preventing the war from beginning prematurely, and he did not want the Iraqis to be able to claim any sort of provocation on the part of the coalition (Marquis, p. 231).

Organizationally, almost all SOF fell under the Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) Commander, Colonel Johnson. He was responsible for all SOF in theater with the exception of Civil Affairs (CA), Psychological Operations (PSYOP), some NSW assets specifically attached to the fleet, and a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) that searched for Scud missiles later in the conflict. Johnson's forces included two different Special Forces Groups (SFG), elements from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), five squadrons of Air Force SOF airplanes and helicopters, five SEAL platoons, and Special Boat Unit (SBU) detachments. Johnson also exercised tactical control (TACON) over foreign special operations units such as the French and the British (DOD, p. 525).

SOCCENT's mere existence was an improvement for SOF, but the fact that it was headed by only a Colonel showed its relative importance. Each service had a three-star officer representative on the CENTCOM staff, and they far outranked Johnson. In military circles, this distinction meant the difference between being a key decision-maker and being one of many who submitted items for consideration. Stiner recognized this, and he engaged in several ultimately fruitless efforts to have himself assigned to CENTCOM (Adams, p. 233). Having another four-star commander in theater might have been too much, but the lack of a flag-level advocate for SOF at CENTCOM highlighted that SOF was still not considered a part of the "real" military.

Indicative of the still hazy definition of SOF was the fact that all CA and PSYOP forces were removed from SOCCENT and placed under the conventional Army Component, Central Command (ARCENT). Some Air Force SOF assets such as AC-

130 gunships and EC-130 Psyop aircraft were also taken from their regular SOF units and detailed to conventional squadrons. These moves had only a minimal impact on the conduct of SOCCENT's already constrained operations (Adams, p. 233). However, these decisions again demonstrated SOF's low standing relative to the conventional military.

The placement of CA and PSYOP units under ARCENT also impacted how they functioned and reflected the continued difficulties in integrating SOF with conventional operations. CA had few initial advocates, so they had a very low priority for mobilization and transportation to the theater. Virtually all CA units were in the Reserves, and they began arriving in strength only after the war had begun. Thus, they were often employed haphazardly and sometimes acted in a quasi-PSYOP role of reacting to Iraqi propaganda. In part, this was due to the extensive delays involved with the getting the PSYOP campaign approved by higher levels. The PSYOP plans had to be approved at the Presidential level, and the Iraqis proved extremely effective at exploiting the general absence of coalition propaganda during the first few months of the conflict. Finally, Schwarzkopf himself intervened in December in an effort to streamline the process. Once the PSYOP campaign was in place though, it had a tremendous impact on the entire conduct of the war (Adams, p. 234-235). The overall lesson was that although CA and PSYOP units had gained in prestige and likely effectiveness in the previous decades, there was still considerable apathy and ignorance about how to employ them effectively. Their mission areas did not fit nicely into the direct action-oriented

focus of both the conventional military and the SOF community, and they were often included only as an afterthought.

SOCCENT proposed numerous operations throughout the conflict, but because of Schwarzkopf's desire to limit SOF participation and the largely traditional model of a conventional, almost set-piece engagement, SOF was initially limited to just five missions. They included: coalition warfare support to train and liaise with foreign units, special reconnaissance (SR) within the Combined Special Operations Area (CSOA), coordinating passage of CSOA forces through friendly lines, Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) in Iraq and Kuwait, and reconstituting Kuwaiti military forces that had managed to flee the Iraqi onslaught. Additionally, SOF assumed tasks in support of enforcing UN sanctions against Iraq and hunting for Iraqi Scud missiles later in the conflict (Adams, p. 234).

One of SOF's most important contributions to the effort was in newly developed area of coalition warfare support. Coalition warfare support combined elements of foreign internal defense (FID), whereby American forces trained other nations' military units, and a liaison function, whereby small teams of American SOF were attached to coalition units and helped coordinate everything from fire support to reports to higher headquarters. The training effort began with SEALs working with the Saudi Navy, and it rapidly progressed to include the vast majority of SF personnel in theater. SOCCENT developed specifically tailored Coordination and Training Teams (CTT) who worked initially with the Saudis, and eventually with virtually all of the Arab-Islamic coalition members. Some 109 SF teams were active, and their language skills were vitally

important to their training efforts (DOD, p. 528). The need for a rapidly deployable force with both language and training skills certainly bolstered the perennial SOF contention that such a capability required years of development and a highly specialized organization.

Just as important as the training given was the liaison role the SF CTTs played. Most of the Arab-Islamic coalition members had structures radically different from the Western armies, and their reporting procedures were not compatible with the NATO-style organization used by CENTCOM. Adding to the confusion was the fact that many of the Arab armies used Soviet-style equipment that was identical to that used by the Iraqis. Thus, avoiding "friendly fire" incidents from the dominant coalition air power became a high priority. The CTTs performed superbly, as they were able to help integrate the Arab forces into the coalition. The CTTs also served a valuable function in expediting situation reports to CENTCOM and allowing for more effective command and control. The overall effect was to boost the confidence the Arab-Islamic forces and CENTCOM had in each other. This was particularly important in view of the political constraints under which the war was conducted (DOD, p. 528-529).

After action reports did note two problem areas with the CTTs. The first was that there was a shortage of SOF personnel with sufficient language fluency. Again, this only reinforces the often repeated SOF mantra that such skills must be developed during peacetime and cannot be quickly created in times of crisis. The second problem was that many of the SOF trainers lacked experience dealing with larger-scale combined arms operations. This points to difficulties that are becoming more severe as SF has become

its own branch. SF members had switched from being conventional soldiers who had undergone SOF training to becoming full time special operators who no longer had a base combat arms specialty. This reflected the constant pressure on SF to master not only its own small unit tactics, but also remain in sync with the conventional Army (DOD, p. 529, Marquis, p. 233).

Although SOF were effectively banned from conducting direct action (DA) missions, they did have a large role to play in the SR arena. NSW assets were some of the very first units in country, and they ran numerous successful reconnaissance patrols along the Kuwaiti coastline through September. They also stationed SEALs on the Saudi-Kuwaiti border near Al-Khafji. The platoons there provided real-time intelligence on Iraqi movements and directed aircraft onto ground and maritime targets. The SEALs finally withdrew from this position during Iraq's ill-fated offensive into Al-Khafji after calling in air strikes on the advancing forces. SEALs also provided harbor patrols during the buildup phase of Desert Shield, particularly when high value cargo ships were offloading critical supplies (DOD, p. 530).

In one of the most highly publicized operations of the war, a platoon of SEALs carried out a deception operation on the eve of the commencement of ground hostilities. Even though previous SEAL reconnaissance missions had indicated that the beaches of Kuwait were strongly defended and unsuitable for an amphibious assault, CENTCOM wanted the Iraqis to tie down their forces along the coast to defend against one. This would freeze them in place and allow the coalition forces to sweep into the desert to the west of the Iraqi defenses and come at the Iraqis from behind. Thus, on the night before

the ground invasion began, SEALs planted delayed explosive charges and lane markers to simulate an amphibious invasion off the coast of Kuwait City. They then opened fire just offshore and directed airstrikes on Iraqi coastal defenders. The feint was an overwhelming success, and all Iraqi divisions defending against a sea borne invasion remained in their fixed positions throughout the first day of the ground offensive (Marquis, p. 238).

While the coalition ground offensive proved to be an overwhelming success, CENTCOM had numerous questions prior to its execution. The concept of operations called for the XVIII Airborne Corps to move 500 miles west and then attack into the Euphrates river valley in order to seal off the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations (KTO). Simultaneously, the tank-heavy VII Corps was to move 250 miles to the west and then launch the main thrust of the offensive by attacking the Iraqi formations from the west. This strategy rested upon fooling the Iraqis into thinking that the main assault was from the sea and due south from their positions. Thus, the major relocation of the coalition forces began only after the air offensive had significantly degraded Iraqi reconnaissance capabilities. CENTCOM had concerns about whether the desert soil could support the heavy traffic. Another concern was the Iraqis would learn of the coalition plan and reposition their forces. Despite having almost total air supremacy and excellent technical intelligence collection methods, CENTCOM wanted even more information about Iraqi troop movements. In response, SF teams were tasked with various SR missions just prior to the ground offensive (Pimlott, p.153).

Once the aerial portion of Desert Storm began, several SF teams made brief nighttime forays into Iraqi-held territory on helicopters. The SF squads stayed only long enough to take photos and soil samples of possible routes of advance for the coalition forces. They provided the final confirmation that the terrain and soil conditions were suitable for tracked and wheeled vehicles (Marquis, p. 234). Twelve SF teams of 8-10 men each also launched 12 reconnaissance missions just before the ground campaign began. The teams were inserted hundreds of kilometers behind enemy lines by helicopters. Most notably, they were tasked with reporting on Iraqi movements on Highway 8, which was a possible avenue of maneuver for the very capable Republican Guard armored units (Adams, p. 239).

The results of these daring missions were somewhat mixed. Only two of the teams managed to remain undetected and complete their entire assignment. Several of the teams called for extraction almost immediately after landing, because of actual compromise or the likelihood of being compromised at daybreak. While SR missions are a core capability for SOF, the bleak terrain and rural population near the hide sites combined to make the missions almost impossible. In general, the flat, often featureless desert terrain offered few potential hiding spots for the reconnaissance teams. Many of the teams also encountered farmers and villagers, forcing them to abort their missions (Adams, p. 239).

One of the SF teams became embroiled in a prolonged firefight that required a massive and complex evacuation that seemed to confirm Schwarzkopf's worst fears about SOF requiring rescue. The SF members built their hide site near the Euphrates

River, but Iraqi children discovered them the next morning. The children alerted local villagers, who investigated the SF team. SF soldiers held their fire against the unarmed civilians at the same time that they called for close air support and prepared themselves for the inevitable firefight. Over 150 Iraqi soldiers arrived shortly and began attacking the 10-man SF element. For the next six hours, the SF members fought a running battle with the Iraqis and called in repeated airstrikes. Just as night was falling, two helicopters from the 160th SOAR made a daring landing and safely extracted the entire SF team. Over 150 Iraqis were killed, but the mission could hardly be called an overall success. Having a desperate SOF element pinned down far behind enemy lines was exactly the nightmare scenario CENTCOM was trying to avoid. SOF proponents, however, could point out that the SF teams executed missions far beyond the capability of conventional units while showing versatility and outstanding battlefield performance (Marquis, p. 235).

Despite the fact that extracting the teams undoubtedly alerted the Iraqis to the reconnaissance effort, the teams were able to provide evidence that there were no large scale Iraqi troop movements taking place. The SR missions also highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of using SOF in this role. The small SF teams could provide only a very limited picture of specific regions, and they were vulnerable to compromise. However, they were able to watch targeted areas continuously instead of being limited to specific windows of opportunity. SF teams were also not easily fooled by deception and camouflage efforts; something at which the Iraqis showed great skill (Adams, p. 240).

Another area in which SOF excelled was that of Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR). CENTCOM originally gave this mission to Air Force Component, Central Command (CENTAF), but SOF aviation assets were much better suited to the long-range, precise navigation requirements of the mission. Accordingly, SOF used Army and Air Force special operations aircraft and ground forces to provide continuous CSAR coverage throughout the conflict. Iraqi air defenses were extremely dense and proved fairly resilient. However, only 38 coalition aircraft were shot down during the entire war. Because of the requirement for a verifiable survivor and his location, only seven CSAR missions were launched. An additional complicating factor was that many of the aircrew ejected very near Iraqi air defense positions, making rescue impossible (DOD, p. 533).

Of the seven attempted CSAR missions, three were successful in recovering downed aviators. SEALs recovered one pilot about 35 minutes after he ejected near the Kuwaiti coast. AFSOC helicopters picked up another aviator 160 miles inside Iraq; just as CAS aircraft destroyed an Iraqi military vehicle attempting to capture him. Army SOF picked up the last pilot some 60 miles inside Iraq. Although the nominal success rate was fairly low, having an established CSAR program was critical to the morale of the pilots risking their lives daily over hostile airspace. Also noteworthy was that SOF aviation assets were called upon to perform missions outside their normal roles. The combination of sophisticated avionics and highly skilled pilots made SOF the platforms of choice. Again, SOF displayed great versatility and proved the value of allocating

resources to relatively expensive and dangerous training during peacetime (DOD, p. 534).

The final main SOF mission involved attempting to reconstitute the remnants of Kuwait's ground and maritime forces into units that take part in the coalition offensive. In early September, CENTCOM reached an agreement with the surviving Kuwaiti military hierarchy to train an SF battalion and a commando brigade. The mission was assigned to the 5th SFG, which deployed six Special Forces Operational Detachments (SFOD). The goal of the program was decidedly political in nature. The Kuwaiti detachments were never envisioned as having much of a military impact on the war, but their presence added greatly to the psychological and political arsenal of the coalition (DOD, p. 527).

Training began slowly, with only 60 Kuwaitis trained in the first block of instruction. However, the program was significantly expanded after delays in acquiring the necessary weapons and equipment. By the time the ground offensive started, the SF teams had trained a total of 6,357 Kuwaitis and formed an SF battalion, a commando brigade and three infantry brigades. All of these units participated in the ground offensive, and their mere presence provided a substantial political boost to the often fragile coalition (DOD, p. 528).

A small NSW team simultaneously began reconstituting the Kuwaiti Navy. SEALs and SBU members trained the Kuwaitis starting in October, and the Kuwaitis manned and equipped three small ships. The training went well, and all three ships participated in the conflict in CSAR roles, as well as supporting other NSW activities.

NSW personnel also helped the Kuwaitis rebuild their naval bases after the conflict (DOD, p. 528).

A collateral mission area that saw SOF involvement was in enforcing UN sanctions and embargoes against Iraq. By the end of August, the UN Security Council had authorized the use of force to ensure compliance with its mandates, and some 19 navies helped in this regard. In all, some 7,500 merchants were challenged, and of these almost 1,000 were boarded. Although the coalition forces were authorized to use disabling fire on any ship that refused an inspection, this was definitely a last resort. Accordingly, SEALs, and American and British Marines performed 11 "takedowns" of merchants that did not submit to more conventional tactics. Having dedicated SOF as an option gave the sanction enforcers an appropriate response that walked the fine line between using too much force and allowing merchants an easy loophole. Due in large part to having this capability, coalition forces never had to use disabling fire, and sanction enforcement was highly successful throughout the conflict (Marquis, p. 229).

SEALs attached to fleet assets also took part in mine hunting and clearance operations. The Iraqis deployed large quantities of maritime mines in an effort to counter the coalition's vast superiority in the Persian Gulf. In response, SEALs rode on Navy helicopters and jumped into the water when mines were spotted. The SEALs then attached explosives to the mines and recovered to the helicopters. In all, SEALs destroyed some 25 mines in this manner. Other SEALs from SOCCENT were the first to liberate Kuwaiti territory. Without suffering any casualties, they assaulted the Iraqi-held Qaruh island and captured the Iraqi defenders along with their equipment. They

then used Qaruh as a staging base to conduct further SR and DA raids against oil platforms the Iraqis were using for early warning and shipping harassment (DOD, p. 531). Although these were not dedicated missions before the war, they showcased the SEALs' flexibility and the value of having a standing, highly trained force of commandos.

One of the least recognized, yet most important, SOF contributions during the conflict was by the 4th Psychological Operations Group (POG). As mentioned previously, the approval process for PSYOP activities reached to the Commander-in-Chief, and it was exceptionally cumbersome. One example is a 10-minute 4th POG videotape that required over two months for approval. By the time it was approved, it was out of date, and it had to be reedited and approved yet again (Adams, p. 235). Conventional commanders were also somewhat dubious about potential PSYOP contributions to the campaign. However, the excellent work done by PSYOP units in Panama had created a demand for their involvement, and there was moderate pressure to include them when possible (Marquis, p. 240).

Unfortunately, the PSYOP campaign got off to a very slow start, and the Iraqis dominated the propaganda front for the majority of the buildup phase. One contributing factor is that almost all of the PSYOP units were in the Reserves and had to be mobilized. PSYOP units also suffered from a severe lack of skilled language specialists. It was not until November that the 650-person 4th POG element arrived in theater. They had to wait until December for approval of the PSYOP campaign, but they then began to achieve good results (DOD, p. 538).

Once the PSYOP forces began work in earnest, they were very effective at reaching their target audience. Airborne platforms transmitted "Voice of the Gulf" radio broadcasts 18 hours each day for almost a month-and-a-half. The PSYOP message included information to counter Iraqi propaganda as well as induce Iraqi troops to surrender. Another aspect of the induced surrender campaign took the form of massive leaflet drops. Some 29 million leaflets were dropped during the course of the conflict, and they often doubled as safe conduct passes. The leaflets were frequently dropped in conjunction with such actions as intense raids from B-52 bombers. Based upon after action debriefs and actual Iraqi surrenders, the PSYOP campaign succeeded beyond the most optimistic estimates. Over 85,000 Iraqi troops gave themselves up to coalition forces, including many entire units that offered no resistance. Literally thousands of lives were saved on both sides through the efforts of the PSYOP forces, as they had the dramatic effect of removing entire divisions from the Iraqi order of battle (Marquis, p. 243).

Over 100 PSYOP loudspeaker teams were active during the ground offensive, and they were widely credited with preventing thousands of unnecessary casualties on both sides. The teams accompanied combat units into battle and were often able to talk Iraqis into surrendering. They typically broadcast messages in Arabic to surrounded Iraqi positions, and were highly effective at influencing their already affected audience. The overall PSYOP contribution to the conflict is hard to overstate, as the relatively small PSYOP contingent showed just how valuable a contribution SOF can make when well integrated with conventional forces (Marquis, p. 241).

A vital mission performed by SOF with mixed results emerged halfway through Desert Storm. The Iraqis began the conflict with about 1,200 Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBM) known more popularly by their NATO code name of "Scud." The Scuds were notoriously inaccurate against point targets such as a specific military base, but their 400-mile range allowed them to reach major cities in neighboring Israel and Saudi Arabia. Scuds were fired from mobile launchers the size of tractor trailers, which could launch a missile and depart the area in about 30 minutes. The Iraqis also proved highly adept at both concealing their Scud forces and providing numerous realistic decoys to divert the coalition's efforts. This made detecting and destroying the missiles and associated launchers extremely challenging. Western intelligence services also estimated that the Scuds could be armed with either chemical or biological warheads (Pimlott, p. 120).

Iraqi forces began launching Scuds on the second day of the air campaign, and they aimed at the coalition's most vulnerable point: the fragile agreements keeping Israel on the sidelines and the Arabs participating in the effort. Coalition planners knew that Israel was a likely target for the Iraqis, and Israeli forces were fully prepared to retaliate against any Iraqi attack. An Israeli attack against Iraq would have changed the entire character of the war. Jordan could easily have left the coalition and fought against the Israelis, along with Arab forces from Syria and Egypt. This would have embroiled the Middle East in yet another Arab-Israeli conflict, and the battle to retake Kuwait would have become a secondary concern. Thus, it was no surprise that Scuds began raining

down on Israeli and Saudi Arabian cities soon after coalition aircraft began the aerial campaign on January 17th (DOD, p. 167).

Desperate to prevent an Israeli reaction, coalition commanders poured enormous resources into efforts to prevent Scud launches and destroy the missiles both on the ground and in the air. Patriot air defense batteries deployed to both Israel and northern Saudi Arabia. Whole squadrons of the most advanced aircraft were shifted from previous assignments to take part in nearly continuous patrols over known and suspected Scud launch sites. However, the Scuds' mobility and surprisingly effective tactics by the Iraqis resulted in Scud launches on a fairly regular basis. Within the first two weeks of the war, a total of 53 Scuds were fired: 26 of them targeted at Israeli cities. As the Israelis started to show signs of preparing to retaliate, CENTCOM was willing to use any means at its disposal to counter the Scuds. Much of the problem stemmed from the vast area that could be used for the launches. The Iraqis could fire from almost anywhere in western Iraq and be gone from the site within 10 minutes after launching. Locating and destroying the mobile launchers had CENTCOM's highest priority (Adams, p. 242).

British Special Air Service (SAS) commandos had conducted cross-border operations since the air war began, but their foot and vehicle patrols were limited to the portions of Iraq near the border with Saudi Arabia. American authorities decided to commit elements from the Army's elite Delta Force along with SOF aviation assets and SF troops to the Scud hunt. Although they were not specifically trained for such a mission, the highly trained forces were able to expand the areas covered by the counter-

Scud ground component. SOCOM dispatched an 877-man Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) for the sole purpose of neutralizing the Scuds. JSOTF members began arriving in theater in the second week of the air campaign, and they immediately began training with the experienced SAS operators. The entire JSOTF was placed directly under CENTCOM and completely bypassed the SOCCENT chain of command (Adams, p. 242).

JSOTF troops inserted their first teams less than a week later, and they kept up their patrols for the duration of the conflict. Typically, SOF helicopters inserted vehicle-equipped teams far behind enemy lines, and the teams hid by day and hunted for Scuds during the night. When they spotted possible Scud launchers, they called in immediate airstrikes. The record of these Scud hunters is uncertain. They destroyed numerous targets, but some or all of them could have been decoys. Estimates of actual Scuds taken out by these forces range from zero to over 20 (Adams, p. 243).

Regardless of the final tally of Scuds, SOF made a very significant contribution to this portion of the war. Only 33 more Scuds were launched after the ground patrols became active. The presence of ground forces also certainly changed Iraqi tactics and probably forced them to launch from hastily improvised sites. Notably, not a single American Scud hunter was killed, though several were wounded in a series of firefights with the Iraqis. Most importantly, the Delta contingent helped achieve the central aim of the Scud hunt by keeping Israel out of the war. Committing such a valuable resource to the anti-Scud effort helped mollify Israeli leaders and showed that the coalition was doing everything in its power to respond to Israeli concerns. This also addresses the

question of why such a highly trained unit was dispatched to a mission for which it did not train. Aside from the fact that almost all of the SF personnel in theater were already tasked to coalition support and CSAR missions, using America's most elite SOF unit indicated to the Israelis just how important an issue it was for the coalition (Adams, p. 242-245).

As important as what SOF did do during the Gulf War, is what SOF did not do. Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) planners proposed several possible missions that were vetoed by CENTCOM. Just after the Iraqi invasion, JSOC planned for a high-risk mission to rescue the American staff remaining in the US embassy in Kuwait City. Known as "Pacific Wind," the plan was given a minimal chance of success, and it was not necessary once the Americans were allowed to leave Kuwait in December. However, the fact that America had a ready force that could contemplate such an action showed how far American SOF had come in just over a decade. While it had taken America over six months to develop a viable plan to attempt to rescue the hostages in Iran, a similar rescue package was able to plan, rehearse and finally abort a like mission in under four months (Adams, p. 236).

Despite the difficulties trying to capture Noriega the previous year, JSOC also planned missions to capture Hussein and his top aides when they visited Kuwait City. This was another high risk operation that was disapproved by CENTCOM. In particular, CENTCOM evaluated the proposal as having a low chance of success, but having a good chance of provoking the Iraqis before coalition forces were fully prepared. CENTCOM

frequently regarded such operations as SOCOM trying to make work for itself at any cost (Adams, p. 236).

SOCOM floated many more scenarios; including using the Rangers and having the SF develop guerilla movements behind Iraqi lines. Several potential Ranger targets such as terrorist training camps were evaluated, but CENTCOM disapproved all of them save for one Ranger raid late in the conflict because of the effort against the Scuds. Again, CENTCOM felt that SOCOM was trying to shoehorn its way into an almost entirely conventional struggle. SOF leaders, for their part, felt that they were being excluded from viable missions by conventional commanders who did not understand how to employ SOF properly (Adams, p. 243).

SOCOM also opened discussions on using the SF to build a guerilla movement with the rebellious Kurds and the fledgling resistance organization in occupied Kuwait. To SF commanders, the KTO offered superb opportunities with both the Kuwaitis and the Kurdish rebels fighting for autonomy. Developing these already existing movements into stronger fighting forces capable of conducting sustained guerilla warfare behind Iraqi lines had great appeal to the SF members trained to do exactly that. However, there was precious little support for this initiative outside of the SF community. Notably, the Kurds were not restricted only to Iraq, but had sizable populations in coalition partners Syria and Turkey. Both of these allies were strongly opposed to any action taken to strengthen the rebellious Kurdish minority. The coalition also had little intelligence on the small Kuwaiti resistance movement, and its efforts would have only a minimal impact on the larger conflict. CENTCOM's concept of operations also called for a war

of only a few months, and conventional commanders felt that there was not enough time to develop a meaningful guerilla network. The final major CENTCOM consideration was to avoid provoking a premature Iraqi response that could seriously threaten the initially weak coalition. Thus, plans for the SF to work with guerilla movements behind Iraqi lines received virtually no support outside the SF community itself, and they never advanced beyond the most preliminary stages (Adams, p. 237).

Overall, SOF contributions to Desert Shield/Storm were tremendous, and they illustrated many of the benefits of employing well-integrated special operations and conventional forces. The most important SOF missions were: decreasing coalition casualties through liaison, helping to hold the coalition together, deception operations, CSAR, and psychological operations (DOD, p. 541). SF liaison teams were critical to maintaining command and control over the diverse coalition units, and the SF presence resulted in far greater confidence on the part of both CENTCOM and the units themselves. SOF deception and reconnaissance missions helped tie down thousands of Iraqi troops and ensure that CENTCOM's strategic move to the west had not been compromised. SOF assets contributed significantly to the absolutely critical task of keeping Israel out of the conflict. American leaders showed just how seriously they treated the Iraqi Scud threat by committing their most elite units to hunt for the missiles. This helped assuage the Israeli leaders, and helped prevent a disastrous disintegration of the coalition (Adams, p. 244).

SOF units also demonstrated their importance when they assumed the CSAR mission. They showed the value of having flexible, highly trained units prepared for a

variety of tasks. This tasking also highlighted the conventional fixation with weapon systems and destroying enemy forces to the exclusion of ancillary missions. Responsibility for CSAR was clearly delineated to conventional units in peacetime doctrine, but conventional commanders largely neglected it. However, having a viable CSAR capability was vital to maintain the morale of coalition aviators. SOF ground and aviation assets were able to step quickly into the void and performed well (Marquis, p. 239).

Psychological operations were both vitally important and difficult to measure in terms of direct effectiveness. Literally tens of thousands of Iraqis surrendered, largely as a result of the PSYOP campaign. These surrenders saved numerous lives on both sides and are an excellent example of conventional and SOF synergy. They also demonstrate the sometimes hazy results from SOF operations. Just as coalition integration was increased to some immeasurable extent by SOF liaison teams, so too was the Iraqi military degraded by some unknown factor due to PSYOP efforts (Marquis, p. 239).

The overall assessment of SOF in Desert Shield/Storm was largely positive and showed a dramatic increase in SOF and conventional coordination. It was the single largest SOF deployment in history, and SOF were fairly well represented on the planning and command staffs (DOD, p. 541). However, the lack of truly senior SOF representatives illustrated that SOF was still distinctly separate from the conventional military. For all the tales of dramatic rescues and missions far behind enemy lines, SOF remained marginal participants in the entire operation and there was considerable friction over SOF missions and roles at the senior levels. The coalition fought a massive

conventional battle, and CENTCOM actively acted to limit SOF participation. Nonetheless, SOF performed well in the role of supporting conventional operations rather than trying to supplant them. SOF troops were called upon in numerous circumstances, and conventional leaders came away from the conflict with a generally favorable opinion of SOF (Marquis, p. 248). The nature of SOF involvement in the conflict indicated that SOF had reached a phase of development where its existence was no longer in question. Instead, the question became one of determining what form SOF participation would take. Not surprisingly, SOF troops received their next chance to prove themselves during Desert Storm follow-up missions before the war was even formally concluded.

E. OPERATION PROVIDE COMFORT

SF teams were called upon to perform after Desert Storm's ground hostilities ceased and hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians required immediate attention. Shortly after a truce suspended the coalition's direct military action, rebellious Kurds mounted a challenge to Hussein's rule in northern Iraq. Despite the losses suffered at the hands of the coalition, the Iraqi Army was still powerful enough to quell the uprising. The Iraqis then began a ruthless campaign that drove the Kurds from their villages into the mountainous region along the Iraqi-Turkish-Iranian border. Soon, about 1,000,000 ill-prepared Kurds were along the border, and they were dying at the rate of 500-1,000 each day. Both the Turkish and Iranian governments were reluctant to aid the refuges, mindful of their own difficult Kurdish populations (Adams, p. 245).

By early April, there was a massive need for humanitarian assistance, and SF troops and Air Force SOF assets were dispatched to remedy the crisis. They addressed the most immediate needs by airdropping critical supplies, establishing safe water supplies and providing basic levels of medical care. Originally envisioned as a two-week mission, it soon became apparent that far more resources and time were needed. Two joint task forces were established, and French and British troops joined the effort designated as Operations Provide Comfort. It was a mammoth undertaking that eventually lasted over three years and involved thousands of military personnel working closely with even more civilians from non-governmental organizations (NGO) (Marquis, p. 247).

SF members flourished in their role, and they were instrumental in the operation's ultimate success. They were able to negotiate actions among the notoriously fractious Kurdish factions, helped by both good cultural awareness and their status as elite warriors. SF soldiers were also able to establish smooth working relations with virtually all NGO personnel. This was a particularly difficult task given the often inherent distrust between the military and the civilian NGO workers. Tens of thousands of lives were saved, and the operation eventually became an almost entirely NGO-run event. However, the importance of military protection and coordination of the rival Kurdish factions was reinforced in 1996. Hussein's forces launched an offensive against the Kurds, and one Kurdish faction sided with the Iraqis. The Kurds were routed, and the entire relief effort in northern Iraq collapsed. A few thousand Kurds were eventually

evacuated out of the Middle East, but there was no major effort to recreate another relief operation (Adams, p. 254).

Operation Provide Comfort provided an excellent example of how SOF could provide unique capabilities with far reaching impacts. American political leaders were under severe pressure to alleviate the Kurdish suffering that was given extensive media coverage. However, occupying northern Iraq with conventional forces was not a realistic option. Small SF teams were able to exert American influence and control over northern Iraq in a way that would have required tens of thousands of conventional troops. The SF teams were self-contained and did not require extensive control or a massive logistics tail. They were also able to balance the competing agendas and viewpoints of the participants in a manner that no one else could have. Establishing credibility with both hardened rebel fighters and pacifist volunteer aid workers while in primitive conditions required extensive training and experience (Adams, p. 248).

Although not apparent at the time, Operation Provide Comfort gave a preview of the types of missions SOF and the military would perform in the post-Cold War arena: coalition efforts rather than unilateral actions, smaller opponents instead of a defined, bipolar enemy and often in conjunction with civilian agencies. The fundamental orientation of most military missions also changed. American forces still had to be prepared to defeat enemy forces on the field of battle, but the vast majority of actions centered on enforcing peace accords and political agreements. These volatile regions clearly required military intervention, but the tasks at hand were more in the nation-building category rather than attrition or maneuver warfare. They were exactly the sort

of missions that played to the SOF strengths of flexibility, rapid deployment, decentralized control and diplomacy. Unfortunately, they also carried significant political risk and could be influenced by numerous factors well outside the traditional areas of military control (Marquis, p. 250).

F. SOMALIA

In late 1992, American forces intervened in Somalia under the auspices of a UN resolution. Somalia, a former Italian colony, faced a widespread famine and was ravaged by a civil war waged by the militias of numerous private warlords. Fresh on the heels of the overwhelmingly success in Kuwait, the UN Security Council authorized deployment of another multinational coalition to protect humanitarian workers in Somalia and prevent the militias from exploiting the citizenry. Some 26 nations contributed troops to the endeavor, known as Operation Restore Hope. Unfortunately, there were dramatically different interpretations among nearly all the involved parties about what the UN contingent was supposed to accomplish (Neillands, 1998).

American leaders envisioned a relatively quick mission whereby they would secure the largest population centers and help protect relief agency personnel from harassment by the militias. Once this was accomplished, American troops could withdraw and allow other UN forces to continue monitoring the subdued militias. However, events unfolded in a dramatically different way that demonstrated the risks inherent in both special operations and the new, supposedly more benign global security situation (Neillands, p. 309).

Operations began fairly well, with SEALs conducting successful hydrographic reconnaissance missions for Marines and Army troops landing near the capital of Mogadishu in December of 1992. Most of the Somali clan leaders supported the introduction of UN forces into the country, and there was virtually no resistance to the initial deployments. Notably, the leader of the powerful Habr Gidr clan, self-proclaimed "General" Mohammed Farah Aideed, was among these early UN supporters (p. 309). However, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali had long supported one of Aideed's main rivals, former dictator Mohamed Said Barre, at least as far as Aideed and his supporters could tell. This perception was to have far reaching consequences as Operation Restore Hope began to disintegrate (Bowden, 1999).

Composed mainly of the 1st Marine Division and the Army's 10th Mountain Division, the early American commitment boasted over 24,000 troops. These forces were largely successful in executing their hybrid security/humanitarian taskings, and there was a some measure of stability in the country. However, the UN master plan called for disarming the various militias and engaging in nation-building to transform Somalia into a functional country again. As UN forces began operations that went beyond simply protecting relief workers, they ran into increasingly violent opposition from the clans' militia members (Neillands, p. 309).

UN operations started to meet sporadic resistance, and first American soldier was killed in mid-January. Confrontations between UN troops and militia fighters were soon regular occurrences, particularly after clan leaders refused UN demands to hand over their heavy weapons. The clans were not strong enough to oppose the UN directly, so

they relied upon such guerilla tactics as sniping, mines and small-scale ambushes. By the middle of 1993, Somalia was in an even greater state of anarchy than when the UN forces had first arrived. There was simply no functioning government. Clans were the *de facto* authorities, but they did not providing basic services such as policing, education and sanitation (Neillands, p. 310).

Meanwhile, the UN mission transitioned from the United Task Force (UNITAF) to the more militarily active United Nations Operations Somalia (UNOSOM II). Where the emphasis had previously been on protecting relief workers and ensuring food distribution, UNOSOM II had the more ambitious goal of nullifying the clans' power (Adams, p. 258). Specifically, UN troops took active measures to disarm the militias, and the two sides began fighting even more. Whereas the clans had initially tolerated the UN presence, there was now virtually open warfare. Somalia was one large area shooting arena with rival militias, and the UN contingent was simply the best armed among the factions (Neillands, p. 310).

Some SF teams from the 5th SFG were active throughout the country during both UNITAF and UNOSOM II, and they worked with the clans in remote locations. Their mission closely approximated that of unconventional warfare, and they attempted to help the local populace develop as self-reliant groups. The missions were purposefully low-profile with limited aims. Not surprisingly, the SF members were able to establish good relations with several different clans. While the SF teams had limited success in raising levels of self-sufficiency, there was never any real challenge to the power and primacy of the clan leaders in virtually every aspect of the ordinary peoples' lives (Adams, p. 258).

By early May, direct American involvement was decreasing, and the Marines withdrew from the country. Soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division remained, but their mission changed to being one of being a Quick Reaction Force (QRF). Somali warlords resumed fierce fighting almost as soon as the UNITAF troops departed, no longer deterred by the reduced UN contingent (Bowden, p. 92).

The single event that acted as a tripwire for further UN action was an ambush of Pakistani troops by Aideed's Somali National Alliance (SNA) forces. In early June, the Pakistanis conducted a pre-announced inspection of an SNA arms cache. The inspection itself was uneventful, but the SNA attacked the Pakistanis after they left. An Italian reaction force had to rescue the Pakistani contingent, but 28 UN troops were killed and twice that many were wounded. Immediately thereafter, the UN Security Council passed a resolution that called for taking action against those responsible for the ambush. This was tantamount to declaring war on the SNA (Adams, p. 259). Two weeks later, the Pakistanis further aggravated the situation by firing into a crowd of Somali demonstrators and killing 20 protesters (Neillands, p. 310).

UNOSOM II had reached a decision point, and it fell to Admiral Jonathan Howe, the commander of UN forces in Somalia, to set the direction of operations. UN intervention had largely eradicated the immediate effects of the famine. However, seemingly intractable factional violence kept the country in a perpetual state of anarchy. Howe believed that Aideed's capture could lead to a suspension of the hostilities, and he lobbied senior American decision makers for a special operations force capable of

capturing Aideed. Howe's initial requests were denied, and UN and Aideed forces started a series of escalating engagements (Bowden, p. 91-93).

Aideed's SNA was officially designated as an outlaw faction the day after the attack on the Pakistanis. Howe placed a $25,000 bounty on Aideed's head, and the SNA quickly countered by offering a $1 million bounty on Howe. SNA propaganda became more virulently anti-American, and SNA forces regularly fired mortar rounds at UN positions. UN forces stepped up their efforts to capture Aideed with house-to-house searches, but he was able to avoid them with seeming ease. Aideed's stature grew among the Somalis with each failed attempt. Many UN commanders were advocating stronger actions, and by the middle of July Howe authorized a direct assault on the SNA's senior leadership (Bowden, p. 94-95).

On July 12th, American-led forces attacked SNA leaders at their regular meting place of the Abdi House. American helicopters gunships pounded the structure with missiles and gunfire, and then UN forces searched the ruins. An estimated 20-73 Somalis were killed, and scores more were wounded. Much of the SNA leadership was there, but Aideed was not. In a sign of Somali hostility to foreigners, four Western journalists who arrived to cover the attack were beaten to death by an enraged mob. Aideed's standing was bolstered by the attack, and the UN forces had moved from their original humanitarian mission to being in open conflict with the SNA (Bowden, p. 94-95).

Howe continued to use his influence to push for a Delta element that would allow him to capture Aideed. He envisioned a small team that could snatch the warlord during

one of his many public appearances. In late August, four more Americans were killed by a remote detonated land mine believed to have been set by the SNA. This was the turning point for the American administration, and a large force of Delta, Ranger and 160th SOAR personnel was dispatched to Somalia. The 450-man element arrived on August 23rd, and began a three-phase operation designed to capture Aideed and/or cripple his top leadership (Bowden, p. 95-96).

Designated Task Force (TF) Ranger, the American commandos were an impressive force, and they demonstrated how far SOF had come from the post-Vietnam nadir. The 160th SOAR Boasted some of the most advanced helicopters in the world. There were AH-6 "Little Birds," which were two-seat attack helicopters armed with machine guns and rockets. Another variant was the MH-6 Little Bird, which had outward-facing jump seats configured to deliver Delta assault troops rapidly and with pinpoint accuracy. Additional Blackhawk helicopters provided more lift capability and were heavily armored (Bowden, p. 4). The most important element was the pilots themselves. They all had extensive experience and spent countless hours refining their superb flying skills. They preferred to fly at night to take advantage of their proficiency with night-vision devices. They were probably the best equipped and trained helicopter pilots in the world, and they operated almost exclusively with other SOF assets. The 160th SOAR marked a dramatic improvement from the patchwork aerial armada that had attempted the rescue of American hostages in Iran a decade earlier (Bowden, p. 21).

TF Ranger's ground forces were also among the finest in the world. The primary assault force came from the Special Forces Operational Detachment Delta, or simply

Delta. Although not officially confirmed by the Army, Delta occupied the very pinnacle of the military's traditionally male hierarchy. Drawn from the Army's elite units such as the Rangers and SF, Delta selectees underwent another grueling selection process that winnowed their ranks down to only the finest. They received lavish funding and trained almost continuously. They eschewed normal military customs and courtesies, in part because they judged themselves mainly on the basis of ability. Trained extensively in hostage rescue, they were frequently called upon to perform other covert and semi-covert missions throughout the world. They operated with as little fanfare as possible, and their commitment to Somalia indicated that America was sending its best (Bowden, p. 34).

Supporting Delta was B company from the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger regiment. The Rangers typically assumed blocking positions around a target Delta was assaulting. They provided a cordon of security around the area to prevent indigenous people from moving in or out of the perimeter. Rangers were elite infantry, and they had all passed through their own rigorous selection process. However, they also followed a conventional operational model. They were more physically and mentally fit than regular Army soldiers, but they derived their elite status from being more disciplined than regular Army formations. Where Delta soldiers had civilian-length hair and considerable autonomy, Rangers wore distinctive crew cuts and followed procedures rigidly. Serving in the Rangers was often a stepping stone to further volunteering for SF and/or Delta selection (Bowden, p. 8).

TF Ranger also included superb organic support elements. They traveled with their own medical staff and enjoyed excellent intelligence support (Bowden, p. 227). Air

Force SOF contributed Pararescue Jumpers (PJ) and Combat Control Teams (CCT) to provide for CSAR and effective air-ground liaison. There was also a small contingent of SEALs, though some regarded their presence as a token gesture in the interest of maintaining joint relations (Bowden, p. 137). That such a force could be dispatched in a matter of days spoke volumes about America's increased SOF capability though. It had taken six months to produce a similar force for the failed Iranian hostage rescue mission, and now it was simply a matter of giving the activation order.

TF Ranger was charged with capturing the elusive warlord, and it was clear from the outset that this was going to be a risky and possibly fruitless mission. Aideed and his militia had total control over the vast majority of the city, while the UN troops ventured out of their secure compounds only with overwhelming force. Delta did not specifically train for this kind of mission, but the concept was very similar to its primary mission of hostage rescue. Considerable attention was also given to the idea of negotiating Aideed out of power, including having him retire comfortably in exile. Thus, TF Ranger was partially an instrument to pressure Aideed into a settlement. Early indications were that the strategy was working, and Aideed's intermediaries were seriously negotiating on his behalf (Adams, p. 262).

Complicating matters slightly was the fact that TF Ranger operated as a unilateral American mission. Major General William Garrison, a highly respected and experienced special operator, was in command of TF Ranger, and he reported straight to CENTCOM. America was not about to place such a valuable and sensitive asset under UN control (Adams, p. 262). Garrison himself was low-key and exemplified the SOF soldier. He

maintained a low profile and had participated in covert actions throughout the world. As a former Delta commander, he inspired confidence in both his men and more senior officials (Bowden, p. 23).

Initial TF Ranger missions were executed well, but they suffered greatly from a lack of intelligence. Attempting to pinpoint Aideed in Mogadishu was reminiscent of the efforts to apprehend Noriega in Panama. There was precious little information on Aideed's movements, and just before TF Ranger arrived, the CIA's best Somali asset shot himself in the head playing Russian roulette. Garrison was frustrated, as he had the capability to assault any given building on a moment's notice. America's premier commandos could swoop down and arrest Aideed if his location could be fixed for even a brief period of time (Bowden, p. 22).

There were problems with operational security, not the least of which was the fact that TF Ranger's mission was fairly well known. Aideed had previously made little attempt to hide, but he began taking security precautions after TF Ranger arrived in country (Bowden, p. 95). TF Ranger also operated from open hangers that were visible to much of the city. Somalis could observe the base camp and receive significant warning about upcoming operations. There were also suspicious activities on the part of the Italian troops co-located with TF Rangers. Many of the Italians were overtly sympathetic to the Somalis, and they appeared to be giving advance warning of impending raids (Bowden, p. 206). In an effort to combat this, TF Ranger launched three flights each day. These "profile flights" accustomed the Somalis to helicopters

flying throughout the city at all hours and made it harder to recognize "real" missions (Bowden, p. 22).

Prior or October 3rd, TF Ranger conducted six actual raids. They used varied mission profiles, attacking three times during the day and three times at night. They also varied insertion and extraction methods, alternately arriving and departing with helicopters and ground vehicles. The first mission received negative press attention when the commandos seized a group of UN employees. The UN workers were caught with black market goods in a restricted area, but the media portrayed the event as reflecting total ineptitude (Bowden, p. 22). Gradually, the missions became more refined and started producing results. TF Ranger had come exceptionally close to capturing Aideed himself on a couple of occasions, and several of his top leaders had been successfully detained. Despite the general knowledge of TF Ranger's mission, the Somalis were unaware that the entire leadership infrastructure of the Habr Gidr clan was targeted (Bowden, p. 28). Captured clan members were detained far to the south of Mogadishu at a camp located on an island near the port of Kismayo. Also notable was the fact that no Americans had been seriously injured in any of the attacks, despite sporadic Somali gunfire (Bowden, p. 96).

On the afternoon of October 3rd, low-level Somali intelligence assets reported that top Habr Gidr members were meeting at a building near the Olympic Hotel. Aideed's location was unknown, but it was possible that he was with them. Garrison authorized a raid on this location, and the TF Ranger forces prepared for a quick, daytime mission. Based upon their previous experiences, they planned for a assault that lasted no more

than an hour (Bowden, p. 29). Ultimately, the raid turned into an 18-hour marathon battle that decimated TF Ranger, led to the rapid withdrawal of American forces from Somalia, and highlighted the potential pitfalls associated with employing SOF.

The concept of operations called for a helicopter insertion, followed up by a extract via ground convoy. Delta assaulters would land next to the target building and capture any of Aideed's inner circle while the Rangers provided a cordon of security on the surrounding streets. Once the prisoners were ready for transport, a convoy of nine Humvees and three larger trucks would arrive at the location and return the entire force back to base camp. Watching over the entire assault were three observation helicopters and a Navy P-3 Orion configured as a surveillance platform. The aerial assets had live video feeds to the command center, and the entire Joint Operations Center (JOC) would be able to watch the assault as it occurred (Bowden, p. 5).

Unfortunately, the target building was located near the Bakara Market, which was Aideed's stronghold. It was the only location in the city where Aideed's militia could quickly marshal significant forces. UN troops ventured into the area only with overwhelming force, and many nations' forces simply avoided ever coming close to the Bakara Market. Compounding the risk to the Americans was the daylight timing of the raid. American technical superiority and training afforded TF Ranger tremendous advantages at night, but daylight made for a much more level playing field (Bowden, p. 21).

Even before the assault began, Somalis started burning tires to summon gunmen to the fight (Bowden, p. 50). As the Delta soldiers conducted their raid and captured 24

prisoners, the Rangers and helicopters outside started taking intense fire (Bowden, p. 32). Although the Somali resistance was stronger than expected, the only American casualty to that point was a Ranger who fallen during the insertion. A small three-vehicle Humvee element was broken off from the main convoy to rush him back to the base camp for immediate medical attention. The Humvees raced back towards the UN compound, and they met a series of ambushes and roadblocks. They were able to fight their way to the camp, but not before suffering TF Ranger's first fatal casualty. However, the stiff Somali resistance they encountered was only a harbinger of the battle that awaited the rest of the assault force (Bowden, p. 50-57).

After Aideed's heavy weapons were destroyed, he had searched for an effective countermeasure to the American military force; most especially the helicopters. Aided by Islamic resistance fighters who had experience against Russian helicopters in Afghanistan, Aideed's fighters learned how to use Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPG) against the dreaded American helicopters. Aideed correctly surmised that if his forces could shoot down even one aircraft, TF Ranger personnel would form a defensive perimeter around the location. With the Americans in a fixed location, his fighters could then cause significant casualties; possibly even enough to convince the Americans to abandon their efforts. Aideed's SNA gunners shot down the first Blackhawk a week before the October 3rd raid, but American commanders dismissed this event as a fluke. Aideed, however, knew that his new strategy could work, and he planned accordingly (Bowden, p. 110).

Thus, SNA fighters concentrated their efforts on shooting down a helicopter, and they succeeded just as the assault force was preparing to load the vehicles and depart. The Blackhawk crashed about two blocks from the target building, and TF Ranger ground personnel immediately raced to the scene to form a perimeter (Bowden, p. 80). Additional troops from the designated CSAR platform also landed and began securing the crash site (Bowden, p. 138). The ground convoy was then ordered to proceed to the crash site and evacuate everyone (Bowden, p. 101). Navigation was exceptionally difficult in the narrow and unmapped streets and alleyways of Mogadishu though, and the convoy was coming under increasingly heavy fire. Then, another Blackhawk was shot down, and it crashed about 10 blocks south of the first crash site (Bowden, p. 108). Two other helicopters were severely damaged, but they managed to make it back to the airfield safely (Adams, p. 263). The overall effect was to destroy the American aerial supremacy that had been taken for granted. TF Ranger went from being an invulnerable force capable of striking anywhere in Mogadishu to being an outnumbered group of commandos clinging desperately to an increasingly threatened defensive perimeter.

The ground convoy ran into considerable problems and started taking heavy casualties. Aircraft were trying to direct the Americans to the first crash site, but the instructions were difficult to translate in the labyrinthine maze of streets. Meanwhile, Somalis were shooting at the vehicles from all directions. The convoy twice passed within a block of the helicopter, but not everyone was aware that that was the intended destination. Instead, the battered contingent received conflicting directions and kept negotiating the same kill zones while more and more Somali gunmen flooded the area.

Finally, the convoy commander asked for and was granted permission to return to base. His forces reached a main road and headed back with numerous dead and wounded (Bowden, p. 123, 130).

With the CSAR team and the ground convoy already committed to trying to reach the first crash site, there were precious few resources that could be detailed to the second downed helicopter. Realizing the gravity of the situation, commanders hastily organized a relief convoy of support personnel at the base. Directed by helicopters, the provisional rescue force set out in the general direction of the second crash site. However, they encountered intense Somali gunfire and roadblocks as soon as they left the base. They tried an alternate route, but that one proved just as perilous. Finally, they were directed to proceed in a wide, sweeping arc to skirt most of the heavy fighting. Unfortunately, this also meant that the convoy would not reach the helicopter before the Somalis. This rescue force met much the same fate as the original convoy. At times, the soldiers could see the second crashed helicopter, but there was no way for them to reach the site through the narrow streets. They drove through several roadblocks and ambushes before also being overwhelmed with casualties and returning to base (Bowden, p. 164, 227).

After seeing movement at the second crash site, two Delta snipers volunteered to land and help evacuate the crew. They could see Somali mobs closing in on the helicopter, and they knew that there was a slim chance of a successful rescue. After reaching the helicopter, they established a defensive perimeter with members of the crew. However, the heavy volume of fire and extensive damage to the helicopter fleet

prevented an aerial rescue effort. Somali mobs overran the crash site and captured one of the pilots before ground units could reach the scene (Bowden, p. 189-195).

The assault force, which was waiting at the target building, received orders to proceed to the first crash site. There, they consolidated their position with the elements that had first moved to secure the downed helicopter. A mixed force of 99 Delta and Ranger personnel occupied a series of buildings, and they were surrounded by thousands of Somalis. The American ground units were in sporadic contact with each other, but they were aided greatly by helicopter gunships that continued to punish the encircling Somalis. However, the situation was looking increasingly dire, since both ground convoys had been forced back to base and the remaining soldiers were running critically low on ammunition and supplies (Bowden, p. 204, 232).

Several of the Americans were dead or seriously wounded, but an aerial medevac was out of the question. Instead, Garrison authorized a single Blackhawk to make a resupply run just after nightfall. Amazingly, the helicopter was able to drop off the badly needed supplies and limp back to base despite sustaining numerous hits (Bowden, p. 231). Although the resupply alleviated the most severe problems, there was still an excellent chance that the trapped contingent would be overrun during the night. Nearly everyone involved credited the helicopter gunships with saving the American position. Both Somalis and Americans interviewed after the battle concluded that the Somalis would have been able to overrun the trapped American force had it not been for the highly effective air support from TF 160 (Bowden, p. 340).

Meanwhile, a massive rescue convoy was being organized, but it was taking time to coordinate the multi-national effort. The Malaysians supplied the armored personnel carriers (APC), the Pakistanis provided four tanks, and Americans were serving as the majority of the infantry. After hours of delay, the rescue convoy started making its way towards the trapped assault team (Bowden, p. 270-271).

Many in the rescue convoy saw a bittersweet irony in being called upon to rescue the TF Ranger personnel. The Americans in the convoy came from the 10th Mountain Division, which had been in Somalia for months. They had watched with a sense of envy and frustration as TF Ranger had flown into town and started executing secret missions well removed from the UN chain of command. Thus, there was a poetic justice in the Task Force getting into trouble and calling upon the conventional soldiers (Bowden, p. 264).

When the convoy moved into the city, it did so with massive firepower that it was willing to use. The Somalis had some roadblocks in place and fired at the vehicles sporadically. However, the combination of armored vehicles and overwhelming fire superiority allowed the rescue force to keep moving (Bowden, p. 276-278). Half of the convoy went to the second crash site, but by then the Somalis had removed all the American bodies (Bowden, p. 280). The other half of the convoy managed to link up with the embattled assault force. After a delay in removing some of the bodies from the crashed Blackhawk, the wounded and dead were loaded into the APCs. Finally, after dawn, the entire force extracted back to UN controlled areas (Bowden, p. 282, 294).

Total casualty figures amounted to 18 dead and 84 wounded Americans. The rescue convoy also suffered as one Malay was killed and another four were wounded. Estimates of Somali casualties vary widely, but most averaged about 500-1000 dead and well over 1000 wounded (Adams, p. 264).

Both sides could claim victory, but to do so was essentially meaningless. TF Ranger had technically completed its mission by arresting two high-level clan leaders. Fire superiority had also allowed the Americans to inflict massively disproportionate casualties on the Habr Gidr clan. The assault force had struck straight at Aideed's main power base, and despite some perilous moments had managed to extract as a coherent force. However, TF Ranger sustained relatively heavy casualties that severely weakened the marginal political support for the mission in Somalia. Aideed's militia, equipped with only RPGs and small arms, had managed to exact a punishing toll on America's premier commando force (Bowden, p. 332). Much like the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, America had prevailed in the immediate battle, but the price was so high that the war was over.

For their part, the Habr Gidr could claim that they had successfully faced the most advanced SOF organization in the world and inflicted punishing casualties. Aideed had stood up to combined weight of the UN and America, and he would not be forced to share power. In the long run though, this only meant that well-intentioned UN efforts to improve Somalia were at an end. Somalia never broke free from its cycle of civil strife, and Aideed himself died in 1996 without having consolidated power over rival clans.

There was also a horrible imbalance in the casualties suffered by the Somalis, and much of the Habr Gidr's military strength was eradicated in a single day (Bowden, p. 333).

The immediate aftereffects included both a suspension of the attempt to arrest Aideed and a massive influx of heavily armed American troops. However, these new forces were for force protection only. On October 6th, the President met with his advisors, and they made the decision to end the U.S. presence in Somalia. For all practical purposes, the UN mission in Somalia was over, since the American commitment was the backbone of the overall relief effort. It was only a matter of the United States withdrawing its forces as safely as possible. By March of 1994, the pullout was complete, and Operation Restore Hope was officially concluded with Somalia in much the same state it had been two years earlier (Bowden, p. 311).

Many within the SOF community regarded the battle as victory of sorts, with American troops executing a complex mission and acquitting themselves heroically under exceptionally demanding conditions. There were also several lessons to be drawn from the engagement; though many were just reinforcements of already accepted axioms with regards to SOF employment. TF Ranger enjoyed little secrecy, as its presence and mission were well known. Lack of good intelligence also meant that many missions were conducted during daylight, when the tremendous American advantage in night operations was nullified (Marquis, p. 254). The SOF reliance on both speed and surprise was readily apparent when assessed based upon the results when a contingent was pinned down. Although the individual and unit performances under fire were outstanding, the lightly armed SOF ran into severe problems when fighting for a

significant period of time in an environment nearing that of a conventional battle (Adams, p. 266).

Another lesson learned was the difficulty inherent in operating with foreign militaries. SF liaison teams had accompanied UN troops during the initial deployment into Somalia, but they were withdrawn a short time later. Had they been present when the rescue convoy was forming, its reaction time almost undoubtedly would have been shorter. There were also questions about the mission itself. TF Ranger was operating in an environment of pseudo-peace and tasked with arresting a UN-declared criminal rather than an enemy. None of the SOF commanders objected to the mission, but it was conducted under unusual restraints and only partially filled the traditional definition of direct action (Marquis, p. 253-254).

Although the battle was only an 18-hour gunfight involving less than 1,000 Americans, it had an important effect on America's military policy for the rest of the decade. As one of the first military engagements in the post-Cold War era, Somalia set an important precedent for the use of force. America had embarked on the mission with the intention of literally restoring hope to the ravaged nation of Somalia. With the Soviet threat rapidly receding and the experience of the overwhelmingly successful Gulf War, there had been high hopes that selective military intervention could be used to end hunger and factional violence in some of the world's more desperate regions. Instead, American policy makers learned to avoid messy entanglements that could result in a similar outcome. All future deployments were measured against the results in Somalia (Bowden, p. 334).

Television footage of mutilated U.S. soldiers being dragged through the streets also had a chilling effect on the American public. Congress convened hearings and applied tremendous pressure on the Administration to bring the troops home. Secretary of Defense Les Aspin was forced to resign, and Garrison's career was effectively foreclosed (Bowden, p. 334). Events in Somalia were particularly damaging when compared to the incredible successes from the Gulf War. The mindset of "no more Somalias" also helps explain why America was reluctant to intervene in such troubled areas as the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The specter of Somalia also influenced American leaders when they attempted to influence events in Haiti beginning in 1994 (Bowden, p. 334).

G. HAITI

Haiti was very similar to Somalia in that it was a country with widespread corruption and violence where basic civil institutions had largely ceased to function. Located on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, Haiti had a long tradition of oppression and grinding poverty. However, in 1990, Catholic priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide became the first freely-elected President when he defeated the elite ruling minority by garnering the support of Haiti's innumerable poor (Adams, p. 266).

Aristide's term was cut short though, and he was overthrown during a military coup in September of 1991. The new regime practiced particularly violent repression, including outright killing an estimated 3,000 Aristide supporters. The Haitian military, known as the Forces Armée de Haiti (FAd'H), assumed almost all government and security functions. However, in practice, the FAd'H did little more than exploit the

people and maintain the military junta in power. Thousands of Haitians attempted to escape the troubled island by fleeing in often-unseaworthy vessels. U.S. Coast Guard personnel returned these refugees to Haiti when possible, and then they began temporarily holding the refugees at the American base in Guantanamo, Cuba (Adams, p. 267).

Meanwhile, the international community was trying to drive the military leaders from power. Both the UN and the Organization of American States (OAS) enacted increasingly harsh sanctions beginning in mid-1993. America took the lead in pressuring the Haitians for results, and by October American forces started deploying to enforce internationally sanctioned embargoes. Known as Operation Support Democracy, the American effort fell under Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) 120. CJTF 120 assets boarded over 600 vessels over the course of the next five months, and their success led the smugglers to change their tactics. The smugglers began operating smaller boats in shallower water in an effort to avoid the large military ships. In response, CJTF 120 began deploying NSW's new Patrol Coastal (PC) ships. In conjunction with embarked SEALs, the PCs met with some success in thwarting the smugglers. By June of 1994, CJTF had boarded over 1100 ships, but there was still a fair volume of goods moving into and out of Haiti (USSOCOM, p. 49-50).

By May of 1994, the sanctions and embargoes were as strict as possible, and American planners began preparing for a military intervention. The concept of operations called for a 15,000 strong invasion force. Similar to events in Panama, SOF would capture many of the key targets in the invasion's opening minutes and then turn

them over to conventional units. SF teams would also replicate Panama's "Ma Bell" missions by securing the countryside and convincing outlying FAd'H units to surrender peacefully. Once stability and security had been established and Aristide returned to power, the American-led invasion force would turn over with 6,000 UN troops. The UN forces would, in turn, train a new Haitian police force and then depart (USSOCOM, p. 50).

Haitian military leaders played a series of cat and mouse games in an increasingly desperate attempt to remain in power. American leaders were sometimes slow to act, both to minimize the image of America as an imperial power and to avoid the series of missteps that had resulted in unacceptable casualties in Somalia. In one notable episode, the *USS Harlan County* attempted to land an international force at Port-au-Prince harbor in October, 1993. However, the landing was aborted when the Haitians rulers staged a "riot" of about 200 demonstrators. The incident showed how averse to casualties the Americans were, and raised the possibility that the Haitian leaders might be able to outmaneuver or outlast the Americans (Bowden, p. 335).

Haiti's military junta virtually refused to negotiate, and all UN human rights monitors were expelled in mid-1994. Increasing numbers of Haitians fled, with the Coast Guard recovering some 23,000 refugees from April to July alone. With nearly every imaginable sanction and embargo already in place, the UN Security Council passed a resolution in July that authorized international military action to replace Haiti's government. American military planning accelerated, and the invasion and occupation were set for early September (Adams, p. 269).

SOF had a large role in the planned intervention, which had been dubbed Operation Uphold Democracy. The bulk of the initial entry forces were from the XVIII Airborne Corps. Additional Rangers, SEALs and SOF aviation assets were positioned off the Haitian coast aboard the aircraft carrier *USS America*. SEALs conducted hydrographic reconnaissance missions to support Marine landings, and PSYOP forces instituted a leaflet and radio campaign to prepare the Haitian populace for the imminent action (USSOCOM, p. 51-52).

The invasion force had literally begun operations when former President Carter and retired General Powell negotiated a settlement with the junta. Multi-national forces still arrived in Haiti on September 19th, but their entry was unopposed. Within two weeks, there were some 20,000 troops in Haiti, with the vast majority coming from the United States. Officially designated the Multi-National Force (MNF), the occupation force was primarily an American operation with a few Caribbean nations contributing token troops. Due to the altered nature of the entry, the force composition was different than originally planned. Soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division provided the bulk of the conventional forces, along with Marines and SOF. The MNF was tasked with establishing a "safe and secure environment" that would allow for a follow-on UN contingent (Adams, p. 270).

Conventional troops secured the two main cities of Port-au-Prince and Cap Haitien, and they largely remained there. Much like the experience in Panama, SF contingents were charged with securing the outlying villages and countryside. Three battalions from the 3rd SFG set up what were termed "hub and spoke" operations. Each

Battalion established a forward operating base and then dispatched A-Teams to nearby towns. PSYOP and CA detachments frequently accompanied the SF soldiers as they tried to create a "safe and secure environment." In many areas of the country, the local SF contingent functioned as the *de facto* government (USSOCOM, p. 52).

Planners had originally hoped for an influx of non-governmental relief organizations (NGO) to assume the task of rebuilding the country's infrastructure and caring for the populace. However, the NGOs were slow in arriving, and the military ended up performing many humanitarian assistance and nation building tasks. By December, there were some 400 NGOs with a presence, and the military function became coordinating their efforts and occasionally providing assistance and security (Adams, p. 272).

Other SOF were given a range of missions that were generally preparation for possible contingencies. The Rangers were designated as a Quick Reaction Force (QRF), though MNF troops never encountered significant resistance. Air Force AC-130s were available for fire support, but they were not called upon. Elements from the 3rd SFG also functioned as a CSAR team. This CSAR team eventually transformed into a makeshift QRF and then finally a VIP escort service. The soldiers involved regarded it as a misuse of their capabilities, and it was not nearly as effective as the "hub and spoke" operations (Adams, p. 271).

Within a month of arriving in country, SF teams had visited every one of Haiti's 500 main village and towns. They were overwhelmingly successful in convincing the local FAd'H members to surrender peacefully. SF teams also made significant numbers

of arrests. There was, however, some friction due to the fact that the SF had the nearly impossible task of establishing a secure environment in a nation wrenched by poverty and violence. The negotiated settlement with the junta had called for the local authorities to continue their jobs until replaced in elections. However, most of the officials either deserted their positions or were driven out by vengeful Haitians angry at years of abuse and neglect. This left the Americans in the position of needing to rebuild almost the entire infrastructure (Adams, p. 276).

By nearly all accounts, the SF, CA and PSYOP troops did an outstanding job despite a lack of formal training. They emphasized self-reliance and local solutions whenever possible. Because there was essentially no rule of law in Haiti, Americans generally relied upon common sense to make decisions. Occasionally, the Haitians were unhappy with the American actions, and they would complain. This created a point of friction when embassy staffers investigated the accusations. The SF members felt that they were being unfairly judged by civilians who were ready to believe the worst about SOF had no true understanding of the situations the SF faced (Adams, p. 278).

Another major SF tasking was disarmament. Numerous weapons were scattered throughout the country, many in the hands of ex-FAd'H members. The MNF adopted a policy of confiscating "all visible weapons" and did not attempt the nearly impossible task of a total disarmament. SF teams were very successful in uncovering larges caches of weapons, and they made selective searches when they had reasonable evidence that specific individuals might have arms. Again, SF faced some criticism for not conducting a total disarmament program, but the decision had been made by the MNF commanders

that it was simply impossible to confiscate the tens of thousands of weapons throughout the country (Adams, p. 279).

Haiti's overall situation was stable enough by February of 1995 that Operation Uphold Democracy was deemed a success, and UN forces made preparations to assume control. In practice, many of the troops already in country simply shifted from being part of the MNF to falling under the UN Mission in Haiti (UNMIN). However, there was a profound difference in the orientation of the new organization. UNMIN's primary task was holding elections that allowed for total Haitian self-determination rather than establishing law and order (Adams, p. 281).

SF, PSYOP and CA forces still had significant roles to play under UNMIN. SF teams continued their presence in the Haitian countryside, and weapons seizures remained a major issue. In particular, Aristide's newly reinstated government accused the SF of being too friendly to the ex-FAd'H members and not confiscating arms diligently enough. These were almost universally unfair charges, and they were not reflective of the delicate balancing act that SF soldiers performed on a daily basis. PSYOP forces often acted as the only channel of information, since there were few other viable means of distributing any source of media. CA teams generally facilitated outside relief, as American leaders wanted to avoid being tied down to long-term commitments to engage in any sort of nation-building (Adams, p. 282-284).

Throughout 1995, significant progress was made, and legitimate local officials began performing their duties. The UN-trained police force also started assuming many of the security functions being performed by the SF. Anxious to pull out, American

commanders began reducing the military forces, and the final SF teams withdrew in early 1996 (Adams, p. 284).

In the final assessment, Haiti served to showcase SOF's ability to act in a unique manner as well as point out some of their limitations. SF soldiers possessed the language and cross-cultural skills required to become the *de facto* rulers of Haiti's countryside. Just 1,300 SF members were able to accomplish what would have required many more thousands of conventional troops. The A-Teams were also able to operate effectively with only nebulous orders to establish a safe and secure environment. They had the training and maturity to recognize that this went beyond simple presence, and they could deal with complex issues at the local level. Naval SOF assets were also able to step in and perform well in the shallow water environment. The need for such action indicted both NSW proficiency with boarding operations and the larger Navy's concentration upon blue-water operations to the exclusion of the littorals (Adams, p. 285).

Although never specifically articulated, intervention in Haiti amounted to nation building. SF, PSYOP and CA forces performed exceptionally well in this environment, even though they were not specifically trained for it. They demonstrated the value of having highly trained and flexible soldiers available. Their employment also illustrated the American military's tendency to allocate SOF to tasks that fall outside of traditional warfare. SOF will accept the mission and perform it to the best of their abilities. However, the need for SOF indicates either a misapplication of the military or neglect of certain areas by the conventional forces (Adams, p. 285).

H. SOF IN THE LATE 1990s

SOF found themselves performing a wide variety of tasks in the late 1990s, though most of them fell far short of large-scale warfare. One of the most significant taskings involved the Former Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). The FRY disintegrated in the early 1990s, and the major ethnic groups of the Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims began open warfare. Shockingly to the West, the factions practiced a form of "ethnic cleansing" that was somewhat similar to Nazi tactics and included concentration camps and mass executions. However, Western nations were extremely reluctant to intervene, and until 1995, only lightly armed UN observers were active in the FRY. America did maintain a SOF contingent in nearby Italy though. Organized as the Joint Special Operations Task Force Two (JSOTF2), SF and SEAL personnel worked with Air Force SOF assets to provide a dedicated CSAR component for American forces operating in the FRY. JSOTF2 was also responsible for fire support and limited boarding operations in support of a UN arms embargo on the warring nations (USSOCOM, p. 53).

America tried to minimize its involvement in the FRY, though it was an active participant in Operation Deny Flight. Deny Flight sought to prohibit aircraft from flying over most parts of the FRY, and some NATO aircraft were shot down during enforcement of the ban. Two AFSOC crewmen were injured while attempting a rescue of two downed French aviators. AC-130 gunships also provided aerial fire support in support of UN-mandated restrictions in Bosnia. Other AFSOC aircraft supplied transportation for critical personnel and supplies during UN operations (Defenselink.mil, 2000).

By the end of 1995, there was sufficient international pressure to force an end to the war, and NATO launched Operation Deliberate Force. This was a concentrated bombing campaign primarily directed at the Serbs, and it forced them to the negotiating table. Under strong U.S. pressure, all warring factions ultimately agreed to a peace framework known as the Dayton Peace Accords in late 1995. A NATO-led coalition was dispatched to the FRY to separate the warring parties and enforce the peace agreement. American SOF were ordered into the FRY as part of what was named Operation Joint Endeavor (USSOCOM, p. 53).

All SOF fell under the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) headquartered in Sarajevo, where the SF also located a Forward Operating Base (FOB). Similar to the coalition support activities of Desert Storm, SOF established Special Operations Command and Control Elements (SOCCE) and Liaison Coordination Elements (LCE). NATO divided the areas of responsibility into three primary zones, or Multi-National Divisions (MND). Each MND had one SOCCE that advised the MND commanders on SOF operations and capabilities. The SOCCEs also provided secure communications that proved critical in numerous circumstances (USSOCOM, p. 54).

In addition to NATO forces, several other nations contributed units to Joint Endeavor. Many of these units were from former Warsaw Pact nations, and working them into the force structure required tremendous coordination. Accordingly, LCEs manned by SF personnel were attached to both NATO and non-NATO units. The LCEs were absolutely vital to ensuring smooth communication among the various forces. SF

language skills and cultural awareness were critical to the success of these operations (USSOCOM, p. 53-54).

Other SOF units were also tasked. Air Force SOF aircraft provided all-weather airlift when the harsh Yugoslav weather prohibited flying by all other units. SEALs supported the initial entry of U.S. forces into Bosnia by conducting hydrographic reconnaissance missions to facilitate bridging operations on the Sava River. They also manned the CJSOTF's QRF. Both PSYOP and CA forces conducted their usual tasks in attempting to help rebuild the shattered country and disseminate information. In particular, CA forces coordinated the efforts of over 500 organizations (USSOCOM, p. 55).

When Operation Joint Endeavor gave way in 1996 to its successor, Operation Joint Guard, many of the SOF roles remained the same. The CJSOTF continued to deploy SOCCEs to the three MND commanders, and LCEs were still active with four Eastern European units. Joint SF and SEAL teams also assumed responsibility for the Joint Commission Observers (JCO) program. Small six-man teams facilitated communication between the military and civilian communities. The JCO teams provided all parties with situational awareness and established a military presence throughout the country. Similar to actions in Haiti, the JCOs were particularly active in the more remote regions, and the SOF traits of maturity and independence were critical to mission success. SOF continued to maintain responsibility for CSAR, personnel recovery and special reconnaissance. CA and PSYOP contingents continued to build upon their previous efforts (USSOCOM, p. 56).

Operation Joint Guard continued until mid-1998, when the entire effort transitioned to Operation Joint Forge. American SOF consolidated some of their operations, primarily into the American-commanded MND-North. One LCE continued to work with the Russian troops in country, and only liaison officers remained with the other MNDs. SF-staffed JCOs continued to operate in MND-North, along with a QRF. CA and PSYOP forces became a larger part of the SOF contribution, and they continued to function throughout the entire theater (USSOCOM, p. 56).

Following much the pattern that had been set since the end of the Cold War, SOF found themselves operating with coalition forces where SOF diplomacy and language skills had a significant impact. They were also called upon to perform missions that fell outside the traditional models of conflict. Once again, SOF executed their taskings well and showed the value of having adaptable, trained units maintained in a high state of readiness.

Another area that witnessed SOF involvement was that of counter-narcotics (CN). SOF began getting more involved in CN missions in the early 1990s, and by 1997, SOF units were conducting about 250 missions each year. SOF efforts ran a considerable gamut. SF units frequently trained domestic law enforcement agencies, particularly in surveillance techniques. SF training teams also conducted numerous training missions for foreign CN troops. This mission was closely interrelated with FID, as many of the foreign CN forces were military units. SEALs and SBU teams established similar programs to train foreign organizations in riverine and coastal interdiction operations (Adams, p. 255).

Under Joint Task Force Six (JTF-6), some SOF ran CN missions along the southern U.S.-Mexico border. SOF ran close to one-third of all JTF-6 missions, and they were in high demand. They provided a short-notice surveillance and communication capability to law enforcement units operating in the area. Many SOF commanders were upset about what they regarded as a waste of assets. In particular, CN missions tended to require medical and communication skills that were in short supply. Thus, using SOF for CN missions meant that they were not available for other assignments (Adams, p. 256).

In April of 1996, SOF aviation and ground units deployed to Dubrovnik, Croatia to assist in recovery efforts when an Air Force transportation airplane crashed into a mountain while ferrying Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown and other executives. SOF units were the only ones capable of a timely response on the rugged terrain and in severe weather conditions (USSOCOM, p. 61).

Almost immediately after the recovery efforts, the same SOF personnel began Operation Assured Response. SEALs and SF teams were dispatched to the American Embassy in Liberia due to a breakdown in civil order in that country. Air Force SOF aircraft transported the ground units, as SOF was the only integrated force package capable of reaching the embassy quickly. The SOF elements provided security for the Non-combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) for two weeks until relieved by Marines. In that time, they evacuated over 2,100 people without suffering any casualties. SOF again demonstrated the benefits of having adaptable forces capable of rapid deployment (USSOCOM, p. 61).

A year later, an SF A-team in Sierra Leone was conducting a training mission with indigenous units when rebel forces overthrew the government. The SF members were able to make their way to the American Embassy thanks to their previous relationships with the soldiers manning fighting positions throughout the country. At the Embassy, SF personnel helped prepare for an evacuation and were able to move about the city of Freetown despite rampant looting and gunfire. After helping to establish a helicopter landing zone (HLZ) for Marine aircraft, the SF Team took security positions to protect the NEO. Most notably, they successfully turned back a rebel force attempting to reach the HLZ. In all, over 2,000 people were evacuated. Although their presence was unintentional, the SF soldiers were instrumental in ensuring the safe conduct of the NEO and helped avert potential deadly confrontations with the rebels (USSOCOM, p. 63).

As SOCOM prepared for the 21st century, General Schoomaker laid out four principal avenues of effort that would affect SOF's relevance. First, SOF had to be prepared for the "asymmetric threats" that were characteristic of the chaotic post-Cold War world. This played well to SOF strengths of peacetime engagement and emphasis on indirect rather than direct warfare. Secondly, Schoomaker pointed out that SOF had to embrace technology in a manner that allowed for increased capability without being replaced. Third, SOF needed to provide unique capabilities that could not be replicated by increasingly accurate conventional formations. Finally, SOF needed to be prepared for unpredicted events such as Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests that had national security implications (USSOCOM, p. 64).

SOF history has been one of struggle for acceptance, and even the reforms of the mid-1980s did not guarantee American SOF a permanent force structure. Schoomaker envisioned a forward-deployed force that offered a wide range of capabilities to theater CINCs. Indeed, on any given day, over 3,500 SOF personnel are deployed in almost 70 different countries. Bolstered by their language and cultural skills, SOF operators are able to respond to crises quickly and effectively. SOF are also aided by mobility programs protected within the now SOF-specific budget. Undoubtedly, strong SOF adaptability and capability will allow for continued relevance in the future, and American policy makers will continue to rely upon them (USSOCOM, p. 65).

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A. SUMMARY

Examining the organizational and political histories of Army Special Forces (SF) and Navy SEALs offers many insights into the present and future of American special operations. Although they are frequently compared, SF and SEALs traveled separate routes to establish themselves, and they are distinctly different organizations.

SF, descending from the OSS, began by recruiting soldiers for the primary mission of unconventional warfare (UW). Thus, the main selection criteria were strong language skills, maturity and cross-cultural skills. SF demanded an individual who had already proven himself in the conventional Army and could be relied upon to work independently. The role of highly trained and physically fit traditional infantryman was assumed by the Rangers.

That America would establish some form of standing special operations capability in the Cold War era was highly probable, though not necessarily in the SF model. Significant inter-agency and internal Army opposition slowed the founding of SF, and its survival was not assured. President Kennedy's personal support and intervention were critical to SF's continued existence. The Army was hardly sold on the concept of UW, and it easily could have incorporated all UW functions under a unit such as the Rangers.

Vietnam provided a proving ground for the new SF, and it came to define SF with both good and bad results. SF emerged from the conflict with a strong reputation for executing their primary mission of UW exceptionally well. SF also gained an

impressive reputation for accomplishing other difficult tasks just as well. Commanders naturally called upon their most capable soldiers to perform the most challenging and important assignments, and SF members were happy to accept them. This resulted in a broad expansion of SF mission areas that came to include the more direct action (DA)-focused activities. However, SF relations with the traditional military suffered. There was mutual mistrust when SF units were employed in conventional manner and when they performed politically controversial missions. Additionally, there was an unstated desire within the military to lump SF together with America's first military defeat and consign both to an area far removed from the traditionally successful conventional Army.

In contrast to the SF, the Navy developed its SOF with a primary emphasis on physical ability. Descending from the DA-oriented SOF of World War II, the SEALs placed a premium on the ability to complete physically demanding tasks such as hydrographic reconnaissance. Thus, SEAL trainers looked for young recruits capable of and willing to withstand unbelievably harsh conditions for relatively short periods of time. Whereas SF measured missions on terms of weeks and months spent in enemy territory, the SEALs counted their mission in terms of hours and days.

Naval SOF also existed, much like the SF, on the fringes of the traditional military. These specialized units were constituted during wartime because circumstances required them, and they were rapidly dissolved or reduced as soon as the conflict was over. This allowed the blue-water Navy to return to what is considered its "true"

mission. Special warfare was seen as the domain of a small group at best to be tolerated and at worst to be monitored almost as closely as the enemy.

Unlike the Army, the Navy did maintain at least a small special operations capability continuously since the opening days of World War II. This provided and unbroken link from the "frogmen" through to the modern SEAL Teams. This was more a result of the recognized need for at least a residual capability to execute special operations during peacetime than true high-level support for naval SOF. Despite this recognition, considerable mistrust abounded between the conventional and SOF components of the Navy. Although the Navy was already studying unconventional warfare, President Kennedy's personal attention was again the deciding factor in establishing a lasting naval special warfare capability.

American SOF have always held what was aptly described as a "precarious value" within the military mainstream. In contrast to European and Asian cultures, which have valued unconventional and guerilla warfare for centuries, American military leaders, partially reflecting American society at large, have viewed the independent, non-conforming and less regimented SOF with suspicion.

This had led to repeated attempts to make SOF more conventional and marginal within the well-established military hierarchy. Special operations were seen as irrelevant and problematic, so America did not even start forming SOF until after the commencement of World War II, long after most other industrialized nations. Those units that were formed battled for their existence and with conventional units for

missions. Most were dramatically reduced at the end of each conflict, and some were outright disbanded.

For officers, serving in a special operations capacity almost invariably led to a lackluster career by conventional standards. This had the effect of both limiting SOF influence and making SOF members more marginal in the military. The relatively low rank of even senior SOF officers ensured that SOF were always at a disadvantage when competing for limited DOD resources. The impossibility of reaching the senior ranks of the military also perpetuated the image of the SOF officer as a second-class rogue operator, however much he might have been celebrated in popular culture. Many SOF officers found their work personally rewarding though, and there was no shortage of volunteers to staff SOF units.

The Special Operations Command (SOCOM) emerged in the mid-1980s as the result of America's poor track record with SOF. Against a backdrop of increasing worldwide terrorism, U.S. forces were unable to execute several high-profile special operations missions. Most notably, efforts to rescue captured Americans from the USS *Mayaguez* and from the American Embassy in Iran ended disastrously. In contrast, smaller nations such as Israel and Germany were able to conduct rescue missions successfully using their own SOF. This resulted in pressure on the American military establishment to be able to replicate these successes. Many senior military leaders insisted that America had a viable SOF capability or that conventional forces could perform the so-called SOF missions. However, political leaders remained unconvinced and began agitating for change.

While the fiasco at Desert One jump-started SOF reform efforts, Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada provided the final impetus needed to rouse Congress to action. The DOD response to Congressional pressure was particularly telling of the lack of attention being paid to special operations. Most of the reform advocates were simply hoping to spur DOD into action on the two major issues of SOF resource allocation and joint command and control. They would likely have settled for fairly benign measures that at least addressed the problems. However, the DOD hierarchy opposed virtually all reform efforts and did little to seek a compromise. This resulted in several unusually specific Congressional actions meant to force the DOD's hand. When it was apparent that there was entrenched resistance to reform efforts, Congress and a handful of SOF advocates enacted detailed provisions to ensure SOF's position.

Only after about four decades of struggle were special operations units guaranteed a stable position with the American military, and this was largely the result of Congressional pressure. SOCOM evolved into an organization controlling its own fiscal and personnel resources and representing about 3% of the total American military. Its existence assured, the question became how to integrate SOF with conventional forces?

SF and SEAL members defy stereotyping. They are often portrayed as either bloodthirsty killers or Renaissance men capable of virtually any physical or mental feat. Neither portrayal is correct, and most SOF personnel fall comfortably in the middle of these two extremes. SF and SEALs tend to draw action-oriented individuals, but they are far from fitting and Rambo, lone-wolf profile (Simons, p. 1). They receive extensive training and are frequently called upon to directly engage hostile forces. However, they

are invariably well disciplined and avoid indiscriminate violence. Ironically, many of their missions involve training and reconnaissance where enemy engagement is studiously avoided. Popular accounts sometimes also play up SOF personnel as heavily muscled, multi-lingual ambassadors equally at home in the jungle and teaching class. This too is an inaccurate picture. There is a strong emphasis on physical fitness within SOF, and the SF in particular emphasize foreign language capability. However, only a handful fit the mold of warrior-poet, half commando and half intellectual. The defining characteristics seem to be that SF and SEAL members are highly motivated, readily accept new challenges and form lasting bonds with their teammates.

Both SF and the SEALS continue to select their candidates based upon the markers first established nearly 50 years ago. SF approaches selection by setting minimum requirements for age and prior service. The selection process is designed to screen for mature individuals who have proven that they can handle uncertainty and will be able to operate independently for long periods of time. In contrast, the SEAL screening process sets a maximum age and looks for service members who respond well to physical challenges and will never quit despite daunting hardships. Despite extensive research, there are few reliable clues to determine if candidates will successfully complete either SF or SEAL training. Both programs traditionally have attrition rates that hover between 50-75% after the initial screening tools eliminate the most clearly unfit. Most of the actual assessment is conducted by experienced senior enlisted trainers, and the ultimate question consistently remains: "Would I trust my buddies' lives to this candidate?" (Simons, p. 57).

Interestingly, both SF and the SEALs independently arrived at virtually the same organizational building blocks of using 12-16-man teams. These operational elements become the focal points of the members' lives, and team members are intimately familiar with each other. SOF operators may have only a passing familiarity with others in their SF Battalion or SEAL Team, but they have to know and trust their A-Team and platoon members completely. This is where the Rambo caricature of a lone commando breaks down. Contributing to the A-team or platoon has the highest priority, and anyone who is not a team player does not last (Waller, p. 35).

SOF contributions are frequently hard to quantify and escape empirical measurement. This often places SOF leaders in the position of trying to justify their contributions to skeptical conventional commanders. One example is the use of SF teams as liaison elements with coalition units during Desert Storm. The coalition warfare support function was important, and it certainly reduced casualties while improving unit performances. Similarly, SEAL deception operations were able to mislead elements of the Iraqi Army and help keep them removed from the main coalition effort. However, such contributions are difficult to compare to hard numbers such as 1,500 enemy tanks destroyed. The end result is that SOF proponents often find themselves relying upon abstract measures of effectiveness to demonstrate results. This is problematic in a military focused on large-scale maneuver warfare and matching platform with platform.

An interesting paradox emerged in World War II and Vietnam, when SOF units had large numbers of personnel deemed unsuited for the conventional military. Yet,

when these individuals served in SOF organizations, the SOF units performed better than conventional units. While much of the superior SOF unit performance can now be attributed to superior equipment, this was usually not the case during World War II and Vietnam. There was very little SOF-specific equipment available, and many SOF units even used "inferior" materials. Some of the differences doubtless were the result of better and more extensive training. However, it is also quite likely that there are many individuals who fare poorly in the hierarchical, structured conventional military, but who thrive in the independent, ability-based small teams that characterize SOF.

Adams identified two major mission groups that characterize SOF employment. The first are unconventional missions such as UW that are not normally encompassed in conventional warfare. The second are largely conventional activities that are "special" because they are performed with great proficiency and/or under exceptional circumstances. An example is a DA raid that is conducted by SOF because of the high value or selective nature of the target: a mission that could conceivably be accomplished by a conventional unit. The proliferation of SOF missions was attributed to conventional commanders wanting to ensure success by using the best possible forces and SOF leaders consistently wanting to prove their relevance in a resource-constrained environment. DA and SR operations also had quantifiable results, and the missions themselves were often more appealing to the individual SOF members. However, this had the effect of expanding the scope of SOF responsibilities to the point where no unit can be proficient in all areas. Unit commanders are then left a choice of being either partly capable in all areas or fully capable in only some (Adams, p. 304-305).

Within the Army, SF have a virtual lock on UW, largely because of the extensive training necessary to conduct it. It is currently impractical to train large conventional units in the language and cultural skills necessary for UW. Nor is it practical to deploy small teams of young, first-term enlistees to remote locations and expect them to operate with minimal supervision. However, SF face considerable competition in such areas as DA and SR. These missions generally fall within conventional warfare and other units such as the Rangers and the Marines train for them. The SOF distinction becomes how they are conducted. SEALs face little competition within the Navy for SOF missions, because the Navy is centered on blue-water operations and ships. Until the creation of SOCOM, much of the SEALs' struggle centered on proving their relevance to fleet concerns. Now, however, SEALs cover the full range of SOF missions and compete with other SOF assets such as SF and even the Marines for many missions.

SOF commanders have accepted an ever-growing list of missions because of a desire to prove their worth within the larger military and because of the military "can-do" spirit that is magnified within the highly competitive SOF community. The diverse SOF mission areas are the result of legislation, historical accidents, SOF initiatives and the general tendency to accept any new task that does not fall within conventional bounds (Adams, p. 303). Since SOF cannot maintain units that are proficient in all areas, the challenge for commanders is deciding where to focus limited resources and prepare for the future.

B. FUTURE OF AMERICAN SOF

American SOF are well established, and the debate now centers on their role in the future rather than their mere existence. However, the end of the Cold War and lack of a true "peer competitor" to the United States have led to a decidedly nebulous future for SOF. Defense analyst Bill Lind has posited that the world is entering the "fourth generation" of warfare. He defines the first three generations as having encompassed: the era of smoothbore muskets, the attrition warfare of the American Civil War in the form of massed troop movements, and the nonlinear maneuver warfare seen in World War II. In the next generation of warfare, the conflict will include all of society and focus on collapsing the entire social structure. There will be little distinction between war and peace, and small, highly trained combat teams will supplant large conventional formations. Military and police personnel will share many of the same objectives and tactics. Political operations will be just as important as troop formations and military concerns. In particular, political leaders will become increasingly important targets. However, forces will be operating in small groups more like terrorist cells than recognizable military units (Waller, p. 367).

While this view of the future might be an extreme, elements of fourth generation warfare are already in evidence. The UN experience in Somalia illustrates this well. The UN contingent was first tasked with ensuring food distribution and providing an atmosphere of security and stability. Largely a police function, the military was the force of choice because of the logistics involved and the relatively heavily armed clan militia forces. However, clan fighters fought in a manner far removed from the

organized military formations coalition forces faced the year before in Iraq. Somali gunmen blended into society and fought sporadic engagements largely on their own terms. They wore no uniforms, came together only for specific battles and involved "civilian" elements of society.

SEALs and SF initially conducted operations such as reconnaissance and foreign internal defense (FID) in support of the conventional forces in Somalia. However, the nature of the employment changed, and the conflict was a "fourth generation" battle. The UN and the clans were battling for control of the society, and political leaders were legitimate targets. Both the Somali clans and the UN placed bounties on each other's leaders, and SOF were called in to perform the function of arresting Aideed. Although it was naïve to believe that capturing one militia leader would lead to a stable Somalia, the SOF attempt to seize Aideed's leadership infrastructure became the central mission.

Arresting an individual is normally a police function, though the military might be the only force capable of doing so in a remote foreign location experiencing disorder. American military actions since World War II indicate a trend away from the clearly defined wars that took place until the second half of the 20th century. America is less likely to engage in unilateral military actions, and most engagements have taken place under the umbrella of a coalition acting within a mandate. Instead of unconditional surrender, missions are much more likely to feature nation-building and peace enforcement.

The end of the Cold War has had an effect on the type of conflicts America enters, with the result being that SOF are even more likely to be employed. The Soviet-

American struggle was often carried out in a series of "proxy wars" because the danger of direct confrontation was too grave. Since both sides possessed massive nuclear arsenals, they often fought each other through surrogate states. Many areas of dubious strategic value became battlegrounds for the twin superpowers. Thus, American troops could fight the Soviet-supplied North Vietnamese military for over a decade and the Soviet military could battle American-supplied Mujahadeen guerillas in Afghanistan for a similar time period. However, political leaders took great care to avoid escalating conflicts to the point where a direct U.S.-Soviet exchange might take place. SOF were called upon to support the conventional military and to carry out some independent operations. They acted as force multipliers in open conflicts and could also act covertly when participation was politically sensitive. SOF were also employed in several circumstances where there was no direct American national interest. Instead, they were used as a counterpoint to Soviet involvement.

Although the end of the Cold War had the effect of rendering many regional conflicts of little interest to the United States, this does not lessen the likelihood of SOF use. With no Soviet threat to counter, America could selectively engage troubled areas with the aim of promoting democracy and stability. Often, the forces best suited for this were SOF. With their language and cultural skills, SOF could work well with a limited logistics tail. SOF were also rapidly deployable and maintained a low footprint. For example, a few hundred SF troops were able to execute Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq and perform the same tasks that would have required tens of thousands of conventional forces. SF were able to establish a presence without requiring a large

occupation force or raising the thorny issue of militarily occupying another country. With their maturity and training, the SF members were their own force protection.

The poor results of operations in Somalia had a chilling effect of the use of American military power to intervene in many post-Cold War conflicts. This partially explains American reluctance to become actively involved in such locales as the Former Republic of Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Timor and Sierra Leone. With no national interest or Soviet threat at stake, there is little pressure to put American lives at risk. However, political leaders do face pressure to act when media reports continue to show suffering on a wide scale. SOF are often selected as the force of choice, and this trend will likely continue.

American military employment has recently been characterized by multi-national coalitions operating under a limited mandate from an organization such as the UN. Such actions can be loosely grouped under the framework of military operations other than war (MOOTW). However, this term is still somewhat fuzzy and current American military doctrine calls for U.S. forces to be able to handle two major regional conflicts (MRC) near-simultaneously. This strategy addresses the conventional forces needed, but it pays little attention to the smaller-scale and more likely contingencies that will result in the use of the American military (Adams, p. 290). As a result, SOF continue to be employed under a guiding doctrine that lists them as potential participants in over a dozen mission areas, but without any SOF-specific missions.

The trend of MOOTW-style engagements is likely to continue, and SOF will play an important role. Language and cross-cultural skills will be critical to keeping

coalitions together and functioning efficiently. SOF place extensive investments in "human capital" training such as negotiation and regional awareness that are important in MOOTW environments. SOF offer a surgical strike capability superior to that of the most modern weapons systems. They are also particularly valuable against "asymmetric" threats. As in the case of Somalia, complete military and technological supremacy is often of little use in an area where technology is irrelevant and there are no fixed targets.

Although American military dominance allows the targeting of specific targets with great precision and little risk, SOF provide unrivaled capabilities to perform such operations as: arresting wanted individuals, resolving local disputes and assisting indigenous populations. SOF will likely be called upon to perform such functions with greater frequency, and the challenge for political and military leaders will be in determining when such employment is justified.

The need to justify training, resources and personnel is prevalent throughout the military, most notably during periods of downsizing. However, this feeling is particularly acute within SOF, where the organizational culture often promotes a siege mentality. SOF commanders absorb the lessons learned from decades of struggling for existence, and they often seek to prove the worth of their units. Thus, they are willing to accept almost any mission, and the high caliber of SOF personnel often result in the mission being executed well. However, at some point there are so many competencies to be maintained that it is impossible for any one unit to be good at all of them.

SOF units face continual pressure to become more like the conventional units in their parent commands. The typical pattern includes the formation of small, select unit charged with a highly specific mission. Gradually, the unit grows to incorporate additional taskings as well as a larger infrastructure. As the unit grows, it start to more closely resemble a conventional organization in terms of both size and function. After the SOF unit reaches a critical mass, a new organization is created, often along the same lines as the original group (Neillands, p. 316).

The history of SF illustrates this cycle well. Based upon the OSS experience, a small detachment was charged with being able to execute UW, primarily in Eastern Europe. The original group specifically eschewed commando training in favor of concentrating on partisan warfare. SF teams gradually increased their area of responsibility to include regions around the world, and they began incorporating more commando training into their activities. By the end of Vietnam, there were SF organizations that were division equivalents, and SF missions had expanded far beyond just UW. By the mid-1980s, SF was its own branch, and the establishment of SOCOM meant that SOF was responsible for its own research and development, personnel, budget and administration; similar to conventional organizations. Not surprisingly, small organizations such as Delta Force were then created to address specific missions. This appears to be perennial situation that will likely continue into the foreseeable future.

A final danger is that SOF will become, either figuratively or literally, an entirely separate service. While there are a few arguments that conventional forces will be irrelevant in the future, there will likely be a place for both conventional and SOF units

in the near to medium term (Adams, p. 301). Despite the lack of a force capable of directly threatening the United States, many nations are capable of projecting considerable military power into areas where America has an interest. SOF also typically run into severe problems when they face heavy enemy units in direct combat, and they often require conventional units to provide a base of operations.

Marquis identified the threat as being largely internal. Ironically, the functions such as resource control and personnel management that Congress specifically gave to SOCOM could lead to a drive to make SOF entirely independent. SOCOM must balance its operational concerns against its logistical requirements. SOCOM benefits from service-provided infrastructure such as medical care and bases, and it should seek to preserve the operational nature of its forces rather than duplicate what is already available. SOF must also remain connected with the conventional military. Particularly given the action-oriented culture from which most SOSOM staffers come, there could be considerable pressure to focus almost exclusively on the operational side of being a "warfighting CINC." SOCOM led the way in terms of truly joint command and control, and it must ensure that this is carried into all areas of the military rather than leading to joint SOF units that cannot function with the larger military (Adams, p. 259).

C. ADDITIONAL AVENUES OF INQUIRY

There are several interesting avenues of inquiry resulting from the results presented here, and they include: using SF A-Teams and SEAL platoons as templates for future conventional units, examining if SF and SEAL selection processes produce the

desired candidates, how to measure SOF contributions and an examination of SOF missions.

SF A-Teams and SEAL platoons function well, and could they provide a model for conventional organizations? In particular, in a fourth generation warfare environment, SOF experience with small units could prove invaluable.

SF and SEAL selection processes produce specific kinds of individuals, and examining the final product could be helpful. Many of the selection methods derived from World War II practices, and examining them in the light of 21st century requirements could prove illuminating.

SOF contributions are frequently exceedingly difficult to measure, and designing a system to capture them could be very beneficial. The recently available tools of fuzzy logic, advanced theoretical models and massive computing power might be able to provide meaningful comparisons and evaluations of such SOF activities as UW and humanitarian assistance.

Finally, an in-depth analysis of SOF missions could be both relevant and helpful. "Joint Vision 2010," lays out the road map for the next decade without identifying any SOF missions. By the same token, "Army Vision 2010" has no SOF-specific missions but does include SOF as participating in several mission areas (Adams, p. 293). A thoughtful analysis of the areas in which SOF should and should not be involved could provide a useful guide for the future.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

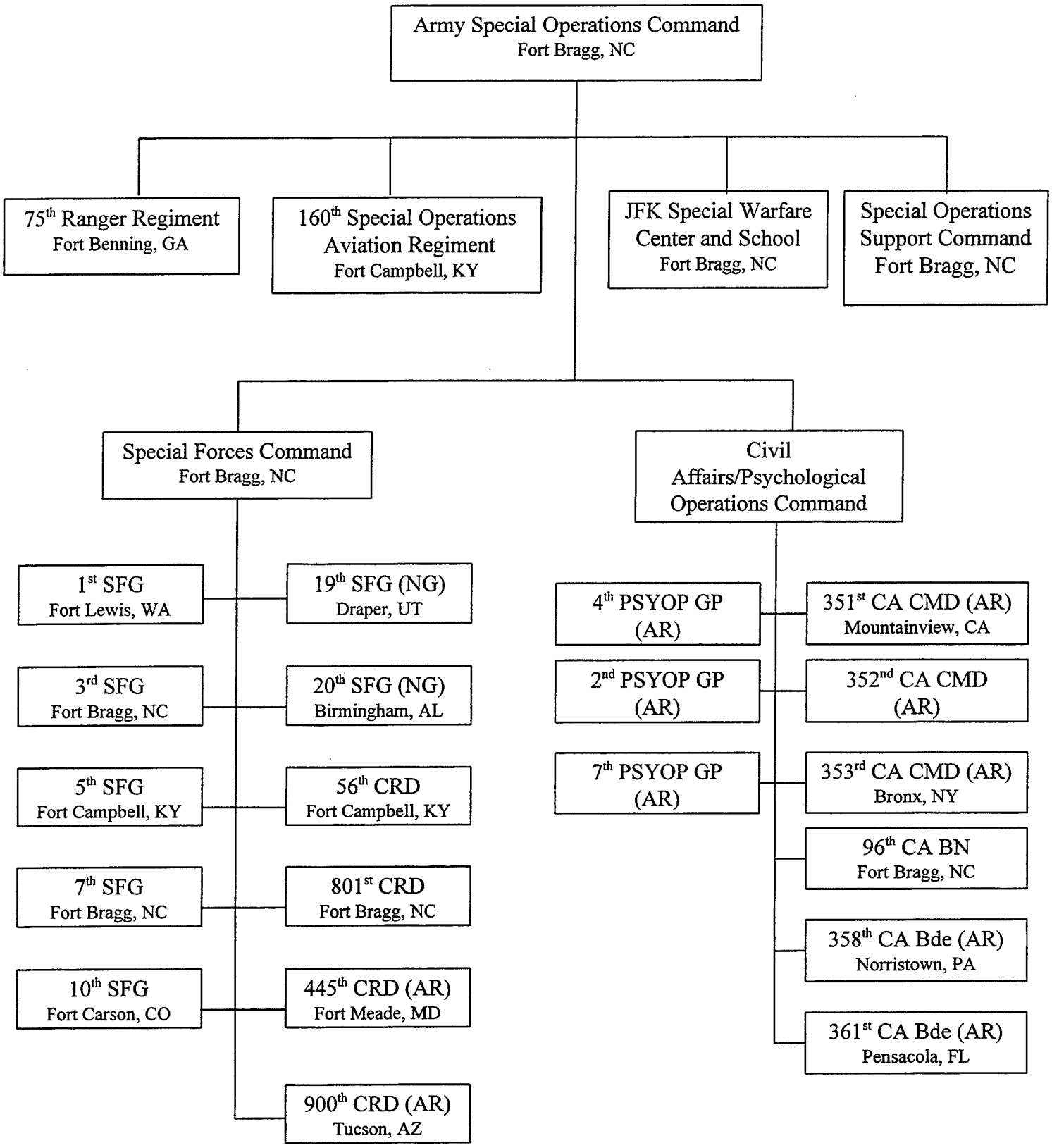
APPENDIX

This appendix provides a graphical and narrative overview of the force structure and organization of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) as of 1999. The material herein is drawn almost exclusively from the 1998 United States Special Operations Forces Posture Statement (published by USSOCOM in 1998) and from the 1999 Special Operations Forces Posture Statement accessible on DefenseLINK at www.defenselink.mil.

The information presented is widely available and is intended as background for understanding the present configuration of America's special operations forces (SOF). Readers who already possess an intimate knowledge of US SOF may find the appendix helpful as a reference, while those with less exposure to SOF may find the material elucidating.

USSOCOM was established as a unified combatant command at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, on April 16, 1987. It is commanded by a four-star flag or general officer with the title of commander-in-chief, U.S. Special Operations Command (USCINCSOC). All Army, Navy and Air Force SOF based in the United States were eventually placed under SOCOM's combatant command.

This appendix details USSOCOM's three service component commands: the Army Special Operations Command, the Naval Special Warfare Command, and the Air Force Special Operations Command. The Joint Special Operations Command, a sub-unified command of USCINCSOC, is also briefly discussed. Organizational diagrams are presented, followed by short, general descriptions of the units depicted.


Army Special Operations Command
Fort Bragg, NC
75th Ranger Regiment
Fort Benning, GA
160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment
Fort Campbell, KY
JFK Special Warfare Center and School
Fort Bragg, NC
Special Operations Support Command
Fort Bragg, NC
Special Forces Command
Fort Bragg, NC
Civil Affairs/Psychological Operations Command
1st SFG
Fort Lewis, WA
19th SFG (NG)
Draper, UT
3rd SFG
Fort Bragg, NC
20th SFG (NG)
Birmingham, AL
5th SFG
Fort Campbell, KY
56th CRD
Fort Campbell, KY
7th SFG
Fort Bragg, NC
801st CRD
Fort Bragg, NC
10th SFG
Fort Carson, CO
445th CRD (AR)
Fort Meade, MD
900th CRD (AR)
Tucson, AZ
4th PSYOP GP (AR)
351st CA CMD (AR)
Mountainview, CA
2nd PSYOP GP (AR)
352nd CA CMD (AR)
7th PSYOP GP (AR)
353rd CA CMD (AR)
Bronx, NY
96th CA BN
Fort Bragg, NC
358th CA Bde (AR)
Norristown, PA
361st CA Bde (AR)
Pensacola, FL

The U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) is headquartered at Fort Bragg, North Carolina and is composed of active duty, National Guard and Reserve elements. USASOC is composed of Special Forces (SF), Rangers, special operations aviation, civil affairs (CA), psychological operations (PSYOP), and combat support and service support units.

One of USASOC's major components is SF, with five active duty and two National Guard groups, each with three battalions. There is one Ranger regiment, organized into three battalions, and one special operations aviation regiment.

The overwhelming majority of the CA forces are in the Reserves, with one active duty battalion and 24 Reserve battalions. There is also one active duty PSYOP group, with five battalions, and two Reserve PSYOP groups, with eight total battalions.

Chemical reconnaissance detachments (CRD) are split evenly between Reserve and active duty forces, with each having two. The support command consists of one special operations signal battalion, one special operations support battalion and six theater-specific support elements.

Rangers – Acting as elite light infantry, Ranger battalions are maintained at a high state of readiness and are capable of land, airborne or maritime deployments. Rangers focus almost exclusively on direct action missions and have been used extensively since the Vietnam War. One battalion is maintained on alert at all times, and Rangers are often employed to support other SOF operations.

160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR) – Flying advanced helicopters and staffed by experienced pilots, the 160th SOAR provides both lift and

attack capabilities to special operations forces. Mission profiles include: force insertion and extraction, aerial security, armed attack, medical evacuation, electronic warfare, mine dispersal, and command and control support. Members of the 160th are extremely proficient at night flying, and the 160th's helicopters are equipped with some of the world's most advanced night flying aids.

Special Forces – Special Forces soldiers receive extensive training in individual and specialized skills. Enlisted members have a primary specialty in operations, intelligence, communications, medical aid, engineering or weapons. They are also cross-trained in a secondary specialty. SF's primary focus is to train, advise, and assist host nation military or paramilitary forces in conventional and unconventional warfare techniques. Each group is oriented to a particular region of the world. Accordingly, SF soldiers are specifically trained in their regions' native culture and language.

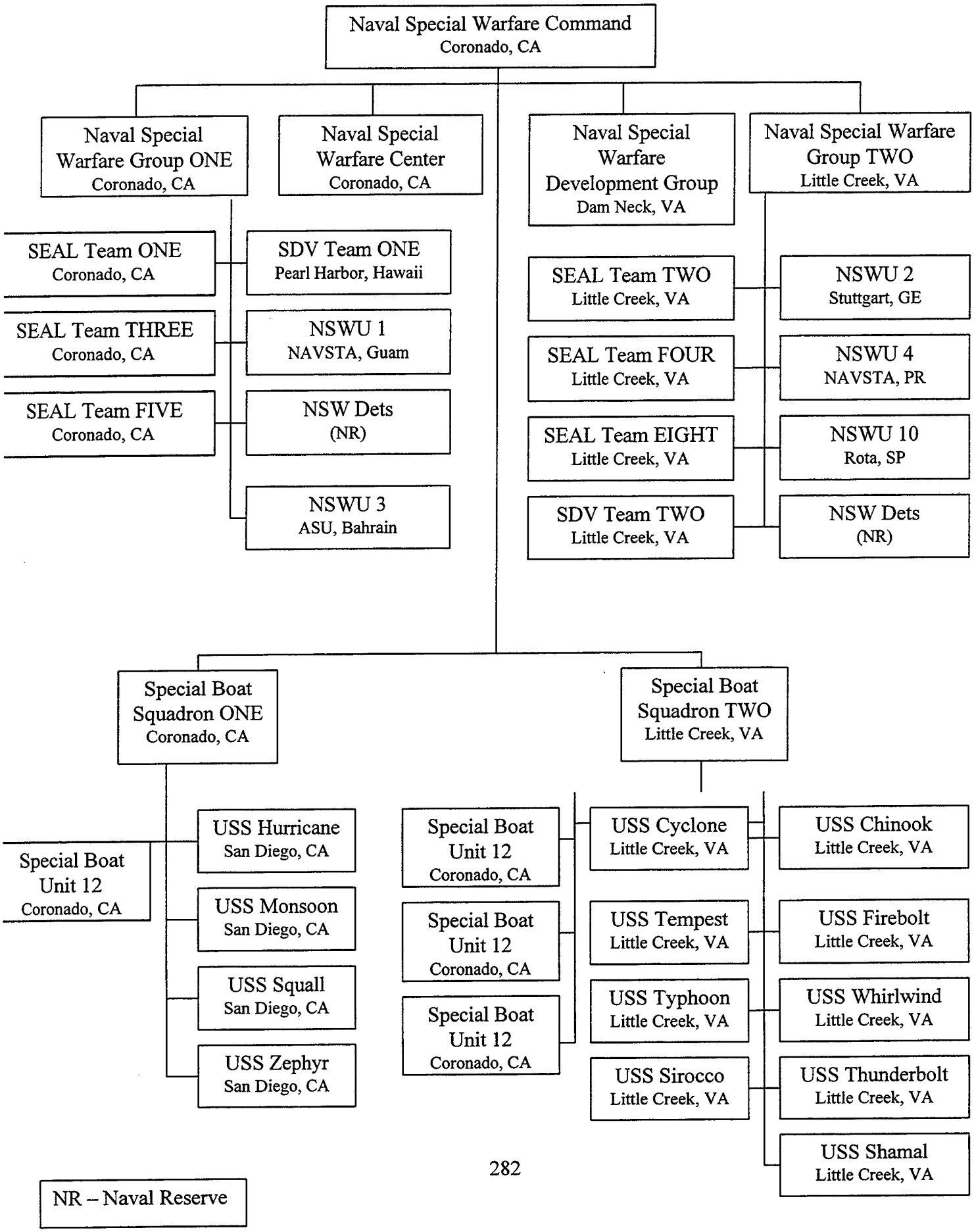
Special Operations Chemical Reconnaissance Detachments – Chemical Reconnaissance Detachments (CRD) conduct chemical reconnaissance in permissive, semi-permissive and denied areas. CRDs are employed by special operations force commanders and theater CINCs. The CRDs within SOCOM are the only CRDs with this mission within the Army.

Civil Affairs – Civil Affairs forces act as liaisons between the military and the civilian populace in order to increase military effectiveness. Almost 97% of Civil Affairs personnel are in the Reserves, and they often hold similar jobs in the civilian sector. Their skills are often highly specialized and include: public safety, finance, economy and support of dislocated persons.

Psychological Operations – Psychological Operations (PSYOP) units induce or reinforce attitudes and behaviors favorable to American interests in selected foreign audiences. PSYOP operations take place throughout the full spectrum of conflict. PSYOP personnel receive intense cross-cultural and language training along a regionally oriented focus.

The John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School – The John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center (JFKSWC) is responsible for special operations training, leader development, doctrine and personnel advocacy. The JFKSWC and its resident Training Group conduct the full spectrum of special operations training.

Special Operations Support Command – The Special Operations Support Command (SOSCOM) provides combat service support, combat health support, and signal support to Army special operations forces throughout the world. SOSCOM's two major subordinate commands, the 528th Support Battalion and the 112th Special Operations Signal Battalion, are both headquartered at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.


Naval Special Warfare Command
Coronado, CA
Naval Special Warfare Group ONE
Coronado, CA
Naval Special Warfare Center
Coronado, CA
Naval Special Warfare Development Group
Dam Neck, VA
Naval Special Warfare Group TWO
Little Creek, VA
SEAL Team ONE
Coronado, CA
SDV Team ONE
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii
SEAL Team THREE
Coronado, CA
NSWU 1
NAVSTA, Guam
SEAL Team FIVE
Coronado, CA
NSW Dets
(NR)
NSWU 3
ASU, Bahrain
SEAL Team TWO
Little Creek, VA
NSWU 2
Stuttgart, GE
SEAL Team FOUR
Little Creek, VA
NSWU 4
NAVSTA, PR
SEAL Team EIGHT
Little Creek, VA
NSWU 10
Rota, SP
SDV Team TWO
Little Creek, VA
NSW Dets
(NR)
Special Boat Squadron ONE
Coronado, CA
Special Boat Squadron TWO
Little Creek, VA
Special Boat Unit 12
Coronado, CA
USS Hurricane
San Diego, CA
USS Monsoon
San Diego, CA
USS Squall
San Diego, CA
USS Zephyr
San Diego, CA
Special Boat Unit 12
Coronado, CA
Special Boat Unit 12
Coronado, CA
Special Boat Unit 12
Coronado, CA
USS Cyclone
Little Creek, VA
USS Tempest
Little Creek, VA
USS Typhoon
Little Creek, VA
USS Sirocco
Little Creek, VA
USS Chinook
Little Creek, VA
USS Firebolt
Little Creek, VA
USS Whirlwind
Little Creek, VA
USS Thunderbolt
Little Creek, VA
USS Shamal
Little Creek, VA
NR – Naval Reserve

The Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM) is headquartered in Coronado, California and includes Naval Special Warfare (NSW) forces organized to support naval and joint special operations within theater unified commands. NSW consists of Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) Teams, SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) Teams, Special Boat Units (SBU), Patrol Coastal (PC) ships, and Naval Special Warfare Units (NSWU) which support deployed forces.

NAVSPECWARCOM consists of two active NSW groups and two active special boat squadrons. One of each is based on both the East and West Coast. NSW groups consist of three active SEAL Teams and one active SDV Team. NSW units provide support for deployed SEAL and SDV Team members belonging to their parent NSW group.

There are three active and one Reserve SBUs which operate a variety of special operations craft. Also found within the Special Boat Squadrons are the Patrol Coastal ships, which provide longer range and more capable maritime support for the NSW groups.

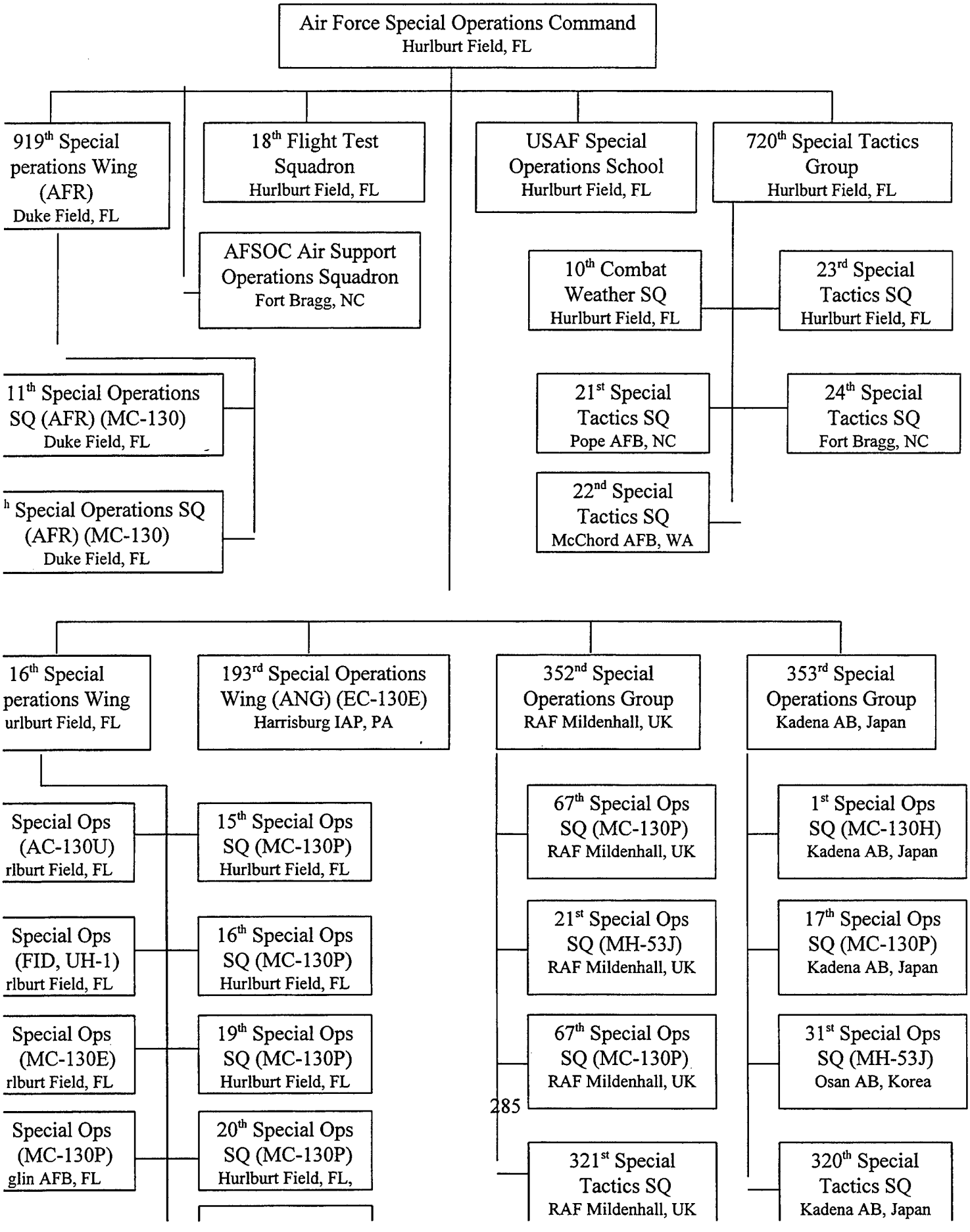
Sea-Air-Land Teams – Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) teams are maritime, multipurpose combat forces organized, trained and equipped to conduct special operations missions in all operational environments. Typically organized into 16-man platoons operating from sea-based platforms, SEALs primarily conduct clandestine ground and waterborne reconnaissance and direct action missions in maritime, littoral, or riverine environments in support of joint and fleet operations.

SEAL Delivery Vehicle Teams – SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) Teams are composed of specially trained SEALs and support personnel who operate SDVs and dry deck shelters (DDS). SDVs are wet submersibles designed for clandestine reconnaissance, direct action and passenger delivery missions in a maritime environment. DDSs deliver SDVs and specially trained SEALs from modified full-sized submarines.

Naval Special Warfare Center – The Naval Special Warfare Center (NSWC) in Coronado, California is responsible for both basic and advanced training for NSW forces. The NSWC also provides doctrinal development and testing for NSW.

Naval Special Warfare Development Group – The Naval Special Warfare Development Group (NSWDG), headquartered in Dam Neck, Virginia, develops and evaluates new tactics for NSW. The NSWDG also develops and tests new equipment for use by SEALs.

Special Boat Units – Special Boat Units (SBU) are manned by specially trained personnel who are responsible for maintaining and operating a variety of special operations ships and craft. Examples include rigid hulled inflatable boats (RHIB), and coastal patrol ships (PC). The SBU mission is to conduct coastal and riverine interdiction and support naval and joint special operations. SBU provides the Navy's only riverine operations capability and small craft support for SOF.


Air Force Special Operations Command
Hurlburt Field, FL
919th Special perations Wing (AFR)
Duke Field, FL
18th Flight Test Squadron
Hurlburt Field, FL
USAF Special Operations School
Hurlburt Field, FL
720th Special Tactics Group
Hurlburt Field, FL
AFSOC Air Support Operations Squadron
Fort Bragg, NC
10th Combat Weather SQ
Hurlburt Field, FL
23rd Special Tactics SQ
Hurlburt Field, FL
11th Special Operations SQ (AFR) (MC-130)
Duke Field, FL
21st Special Tactics SQ
Pope AFB, NC
24th Special Tactics SQ
Fort Bragg, NC
h Special Operations SQ (AFR) (MC-130)
Duke Field, FL
22nd Special Tactics SQ
McChord AFB, WA
16th Special perations Wing
urlburt Field, FL
193rd Special Operations Wing (ANG) (EC-130E)
Harrisburg IAP, PA
352nd Special Operations Group
RAF Mildenhall, UK
353rd Special Operations Group
Kadena AB, Japan
Special Ops (AC-130U)
rlburt Field, FL
15th Special Ops SQ (MC-130P)
Hurlburt Field, FL
67th Special Ops SQ (MC-130P)
RAF Mildenhall, UK
1st Special Ops SQ (MC-130H)
Kadena AB, Japan
Special Ops (FID, UH-1)
rlburt Field, FL
16th Special Ops SQ (MC-130P)
Hurlburt Field, FL
21st Special Ops SQ (MH-53J)
RAF Mildenhall, UK
17th Special Ops SQ (MC-130P)
Kadena AB, Japan
Special Ops (MC-130E)
rlburt Field, FL
19th Special Ops SQ (MC-130P)
Hurlburt Field, FL
67th Special Ops SQ (MC-130P)
RAF Mildenhall, UK
31st Special Ops SQ (MH-53J)
Osan AB, Korea
Special Ops (MC-130P)
glin AFB, FL
20th Special Ops SQ (MC-130P)
Hurlburt Field, FL,
321st Special Tactics SQ
RAF Mildenhall, UK
320th Special Tactics SQ
Kadena AB, Japan

The Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) is headquartered at Hurlburt Field, Florida, and it consists of active duty, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard (ANG) units. AFSOC was established May 22, 1990, and it is a major command.

One of AFSOC's major components is an active duty special operations wing with nine special operations squadrons. Two additional wings, one Air Force Reserve and the other ANG, fly fixed-wing aircraft. AFSOC also has two overseas-based special operations groups. There is one Special Tactics group, which has four special tactics squadrons and one combat weather squadron.

AFSOC has one active test flight squadron, as well as a special operations support squadron. There is also a USAF Special Operations School co-located with AFSOC at Hurlburt Field.

Air Force Special Operations School – The USAF Special Operations School, located at Hurlburt Field, Florida, is charged with educating U.S. and selected foreign personnel about the missions and functions of special operations. Because of the importance of working with foreign counterparts, cross-cultural issues and communications are taught in addition to operational courses.

18th Test Flight Squadron – The 18th Test Flight Squadron conducts operational and maintenance suitability tests and evaluations for equipment, concepts, tactics and procedures for special operations forces. Testing includes AFSOC, joint command and joint service projects.

720th Special Tactics Group – The 720th Special Tactics Group is composed of combat control teams (CCT) and pararescuejumpers (PJ) who work jointly in special

tactics teams. Their missions include: air traffic control at forward locations, close air support, casualty care and collection station establishment, and combat search and rescue. The combat weather squadron provides tactical meteorological forecasting for special operations.

AC-130H/U – The AC-130 Spectre is an airborne fire support platform using side-firing weapons integrated with sophisticated sensors to provide extended, all-weather and day/night capabilities. Spectre missions include: close air support, air interdiction, armed reconnaissance, escort, limited command and control and combat search and rescue.

MC-130E/H – The MC-130 Combat Talons provide global, adverse weather, day/night capability to airdrop and airland personnel and equipment in support of special operations. Some Talons can also refuel helicopters on deep penetration missions. MC-130s are equipped with sophisticated navigation and aerial delivery systems that, in conjunction with extensive training, allow Talon crews to penetrate hostile airspace at low altitudes in adverse light and weather situations.

MC-130P – The MC-130P Combat Shadow flies clandestine or low visibility, low-level missions into politically sensitive of denied territory to provide aerial refueling for special operations helicopters. Combat Shadows also airdrop special operators, resupply bundles and tactical equipment. Equipped with sophisticated navigation avionics, Combat Shadows can operate from austere airfields and in day/night, adverse weather conditions.

EC-130E – The EC-130E Commando Solo provides an airborne broadcasting capability allowing commanders to target specific avenues of communication. Used largely for psychological operations and civil affairs broadcasts, Commando Solos can operate in the standard AM, FM, HF, TV and military communications bands.

MH-53J – The MH-53J Pave Low is heavy-lift helicopter with a sophisticated navigation suite allowing day/night flights in adverse weather at low altitudes. The Pave Lows' missions include: undetected penetration into denied areas for infiltration, exfiltration and resupply of special operations forces and combat search and rescue. Pave Low crews receive extensive training in low level and night flying. MH-53Js are heavily armored and can mount a combination of three 7.62mm miniguns or .50 caliber machine guns.

MH-60G – The MH-60G Pave Hawk is a medium-lift helicopter equipped with an all-weather radar allowing the crew to avoid inclement weather. Pave Hawk missions are: infiltration, exfiltration and resupply of special operations forces in day/night and marginal weather conditions and combat search and rescue.

Joint Special Operations Command -- The Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) was established in 1980 and is located at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. JSOC is a sub-unified command of USSOCOM. It is a joint headquarters that studies special operations requirements and techniques. JSOC ensures interoperability and equipment standardization, plans and conducts special operations exercises and training, and develops joint special operations tactics.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Adams, T. K. (1998). *US special operations forces in action: The challenge of unconventional warfare*. Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers.

Adkin, M. (1989). *Urgent Fury: the battle for Grenada.* Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Bank, A. (1986). *From OSS to green berets*. USA: Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Basic underwater demolition SEAL. Online. Available HTTP: http://www.NavySEALs.com/train/bud.html (30 July 1999).

Basic underwater demolition/SEAL program. Online. Available HTTP: http://www.navsoc.navy.mil/cnswc/programs/buds.html (30 July 1999).

Bowden, M. (1999). *Blackhawk down*. USA: Atlantic Monthly Press.

Buckley, K. (1991). *Panama: The whole story*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Buckler, T. (1997). *Operation kingpin*. Online. Available HTTP: http://www.thehistorynet.com/Vietnam/articles/1997/06972_text.htm (5 June 1999).

Dockery, K. (1991). *SEALs in action.* Canada: Avon Books.

Fane, F. D. (1956). *The naked warriors: The story of the U.S. navy's frogmen.* Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute Press.

Flanagan, E. M. (1993). *Battle for Panama: Inside operation just cause*. USA: Brassey's (US), Inc.

Frisbee, J. L. (1991). *The Mayaguez incident*. Published in *Air Force Magazine*. Online. Available HTTP: http://www.specialoperations.com/Operations/mayaguez.html (26 May 1999).

Hilton, C. L. (1991). *United States army special forces: From a decade of development to a sustained future.* (Defense Technical Information Center No. AD-A236 431).

Kelly, O. (1993). *Brave men: Dark waters.* New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Kreiser, Otto. "Desert One." *Air Force Magazine*, 1/99. Online. Available HTTP: http://www.afa.org/magazine/0199/desertone.html (31 May 1999).

Marquis, S. L. (1997). *Unconventional warfare: Rebuilding U.S. special operations forces.* Harrisonburg, VA: R.R. Donnelley & Sons Co.

Neillands, R. (1998). *In the combat zone: special forces since 1945.* USA: New York University Press.

Pimlott, P. and Badsey, S. (1992). *The Gulf War Assessed.* New York, NY: Arms and Armor Press.

Ranger Training Brigade. (1999). *An abbreviated history of the American army ranger.* Online. Available HTTP: http://ranger.org/history/history.htm (12 May 1999).

Rivard, D. T. (1985). *An analysis of operation urgent fury.* (Defense Technical Information Center No. AD-A156 556).

Simons, A. J. (1998). *The company they keep.* USA: Avon Books.

Simpson, C. M., III. (1983). *Inside the green berets.* USA: Presidio Press.

Special Operations Review Group. (1980). *Rescue Mission Report.* Unclassified version. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Stanton, S. L. (1985). *Green berets at war: U.S. army special forces in Southeast Asia, 1956-1975.* Novato, CA: Presidio Press.

Sutherland, I. D. (1990). *Special forces of the United States army, 1952-1982.* San Jose, CA: R. James Bender Pub.

United States special forces: the green berets. Online. Available HTTP: http://www.users.aol.com/armysof1/Quick.html (1 June 1999).

United States Department of Defense (1992). *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War.* Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

United States Special Operations Command (1996). *Special operations in peace and war.* (USSOCOM Pub 1). Author.

United States Special Operations Command (1998). *United States Special operations command history.* MacDill AFB, FL. USSCOM History and Research Office.

Waller, D. C. (1994). *The commandos.* New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Wooten, J. (1984). *Special operations forces: issues for Congress.* Washington DC: Congressional Research Service.

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Defense Technical Information Center.....2
   8725 John J. Kingman Rd., STE 0944
   Ft. Belvoir, Virginia 22060-6218

2. Dudley Knox Library.....2
   Naval Postgraduate School
   411 Dyer Rd.
   Monterey, California 93943-5101

3. Nimitz Library.....1
   United States Naval Academy
   Annapolis, Maryland 21402-5029

4. Superintendant.....1
   United States Naval Academy
   Annapolis, Maryland 21402-5029

5. United States Naval Academy.....1
   Office of Institutional Research
   Stop 2B
   Annapolis, Maryland 21402-5029

6. Commander.....1
   Naval Special Warfare Center
   NAB Coronado
   San Diego, California 92155

7. US Special Operations Command.....1
   ATTN: Command Historian
   McDill AFB, Florida 33608-6001

8. Professor Gregory Hildebrandt.....2
   Department of Systems Management
   Code SM/Gh
   Naval Postgrauate School
   Monterey, California 93943-5000

9. Professor Lee Edwards.....2
Department of Systems Management
Code SM/Le
Naval Postgrauate School
Monterey, California 93943-5000

10. Philip Kapusta.....2
2022 Governor Thomas Bladen Way #104
Annapolis, Maryland 21401