

LESSON 6 SPECIAL OPERATIONS

“I asked for a few Americans. They brought with them the courage of a whole army.”

—General Abdul Rashid Dostum, on the Green Berets sent to Afghanistan in Nov 2001

Introduction

The mission of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), as written in the Special Operations Forces Posture Statement for 2003, is as follows:

USSOCOM plans, directs and executes special operations in the conduct of the War on Terrorism in order to disrupt, defeat, and destroy terrorist networks that threaten the United States, its citizens and interests worldwide. USSOCOM organizes, trains, and equips Special Operations Forces provided to Geographic Combatant Commanders, American Ambassadors and their Country Teams.

In one form or another, U.S. special operations forces (SOF) have existed as long as the nation. Special operations afford us a flexible and precise tool upon which MAGTF operations and the joint campaign often relies. Yet traditionally, few military officers fully appreciate the unique capabilities, inherent limitations, and planning considerations necessary for the proper employment of such forces. Today’s military professional does not have the luxury of such oversight or unintended neglect.

Requirement

Objective 1. Summarize why USSOCOM was established and its unique responsibilities under Title X (Sec 167). [JPME Area 1(a), 2(a)(b)]

Objective 2. Examine the mission of USSOCOM and the missions of the component commands and major subordinate commands/operational units that compose USSOCOM. [JPME Area 1(a)(b), 2(a)]

Objective 3. Identify the elements of the special operations forces’ command and control structure that facilitate the integration of special operations into a combatant commander’s or Joint force commander’s campaign plan. [JPME Area 2(a), 3(a)(c), 4(b)(e), 5(a)(c)]

Objective 4. Discuss the different elements to be considered throughout the planning process for special operations missions. [JPME Area 2(a), 3(a)(c), 4(b)]

Read:

- Special Operations Forces Posture Statement of 2003, pp. 7 to 25 and pp. 36 to 37. (19 pages)
- Joint Pub 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, 17 April 1998, pp. III-1 to III-8 and pp. IV-1 to IV-6. (13 pages)
- Joint Pub 3-05.1, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Joint Special Operations Task Force Operations*, 19 December 2001, pp. III-9 (start at paragraph 12) to III-12. (3 pages)

Regardless of the level of commitment, training, and professional skill of our conventional forces, SOF provides us with unique capabilities not found elsewhere within the U.S. Armed Forces. Although other U.S. military forces can conduct some forms of special operations and many nations have special operations capabilities, no other force in the world has the range of U.S. SOF capabilities, including fully developed land, air, and maritime forces integrated as a joint service team.

SOF provides the nation with rapidly deployable and flexible joint task forces. SOF can reinforce, augment, and complement conventional forces before, during, and after any conflict. SOF can also conduct stand-alone operations in situations where a small, discrete force provides the nation's leadership with options that range from diplomatic efforts to the use of high-profile conventional forces. Insurgency, counterinsurgency, counter-terrorism, counter-drug activities, and counterproliferation of weapons of mass destruction are most often best handled by such a force. The relatively small size and capability of highly trained, versatile, and joint SOF teams to react rapidly to crises provide the US with options that limit the risk of escalation to larger conventional forces.

In time of war, SOF conducts operational and strategic missions that directly or indirectly support the joint force commander's campaign. Fully integrated into the joint campaign plan, SOF helps the joint force commander (JFC) seize the initiative, reduce risk, facilitate maneuver, and achieve decisive results. SOF also conducts psychological operations to influence the enemy or the local civilian populace. As force multipliers, SOF work with indigenous forces to increase their contribution to the campaign plan and support multinational forces to help integrate them into operations formed around a coalition. In an economy of force role, SOF can work with host nation forces to cover theater flanks of U.S. conventional forces in response to a major theater war.

SOF also plays a vital role in post-conflict operations. Many of the capabilities and talents used in pre-conflict situations are applicable once fighting has ceased. SOF efforts can be directed toward establishing (or reestablishing) the infrastructure required for a peaceful, prosperous society. SOF training, coupled with civil affairs and psychological operations expertise, help speed the return to normal conditions, thereby allowing conventional forces to redeploy sooner.

The need and opportunity to attack or engage strategic or operational targets with small units drives the formation of special units with limited, highly focused capabilities. The demands of special operations (SO) require forces with attributes that distinguish them from conventional forces. Commanders must be familiar with these characteristics to ensure that missions selected

for SOF are compatible with their capabilities. SOF are not a substitute for conventional forces, but a necessary adjunct to existing conventional capabilities.

The President, the Secretary of Defense, combatant commanders, JFCs, U.S. ambassadors, or other government agencies may task SOF to perform missions for which they are the most well suited among available forces, or perhaps they are the only force available. SOF are organized, trained, and equipped specifically to accomplish nine principal missions:

- Counterterrorism.
- Counter-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- Special reconnaissance.
- Direct action.
- Unconventional warfare.
- Information operations.
- Psychological operations.
- Foreign internal defense.
- Civil affairs operations.

Although SOF's principal missions are enduring and will change infrequently, SOF's collateral activities will shift more readily because of the changing international environment. However, one must understand that SOF are not manned, trained, nor equipped for collateral activities. SOF conducts collateral activities using the inherent capabilities resident in their primary missions. SOF frequently conducts the following seven collateral activities:

- **Coalition Support.** Integrates coalition units into multinational military operations by training coalition partners on tactics and techniques and providing communications. Coalition support teams often provide the JFC with an accurate evaluation of the capabilities, location, and activities of coalition forces, thus facilitating JFC command and control.
- **Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR).** A specific task performed by rescue forces to effect the recovery of distressed personnel during war or military operations other than war. Also called **CSAR**.
- **Counter-drug Activities (CD).** Trains host nation CD forces on critical skills required to conduct small unit CD operations in order to detect, monitor, and counter the cultivation, production, and trafficking of illegal drugs.
- **Countermine Activities (CM).** Reduces or eliminates the threat to noncombatants and friendly military forces posed by mines, booby-traps, and other explosive devices by training host nation forces in the location, recognition, and safe disposal of mines and other destructive devices, as well as CM program management.
- **Foreign Humanitarian Assistance.** Programs conducted to relieve or reduce the results of natural or manmade disasters or other endemic conditions such as human pain, disease, hunger, or privation that might present a serious threat to life or that can result in great

damage to or loss of property. Foreign humanitarian assistance (FHA) provided by US forces is limited in scope and duration. The foreign assistance provided is designed to supplement or complement the efforts of the host nation civil authorities or agencies that may have the primary responsibility for providing FHA. FHA operations are those conducted outside the United States, its territories, and possessions. Also called **FHA**.

- **Security Assistance.** Group of programs authorized by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and the Arms Export Control Act of 1976, as amended, or other related statutes by which the United States provides defense articles, military training, and other defense related services by grant, loan, credit, or cash sales in furtherance of national policies and objectives. Also called **SA**.
- **Special Activities.** Activities conducted in support of national foreign policy objectives that are planned and executed so that the role of the U.S. Government is not apparent or acknowledged publicly. They are also functions in support of such activities but are not intended to influence U.S. political processes, public opinion, policies, or media and do not include diplomatic activities or the collection and production of intelligence or related support functions.

Lesson Summary

This lesson introduced the capabilities and integral role special operations forces bring to the joint warfighter. An understanding of SOF organization, capabilities, limitations, and planning considerations is essential to the planning and conduct of joint operations. Understanding the mission and organization of SOF and SOF employment considerations are essential to all military leaders and planners.

JPME Summary

AREA 1					AREA 2				AREA 3					AREA 4					AREA 5			
A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D
X	X				X	X			X		X				X			X	X		X	