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**The Evolving  
Requirements  
of the  
Canadian  
Special Operations  
Forces**

*A Future Concept Paper*

J. Paul de B. Taillon

JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS UNIVERSITY  
357 TULLY STREET  
ALISON BUILDING  
HURLBURT FIELD, FL 32544

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Director

James D. Anderson  
Director of Research







# The Evolving Requirements of the Canadian Special Forces

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# Foreword

Colonel Paul Taillon's paper suggests new directions for Canadian Special Operations Forces (CANSOF), propelled mainly by the demands of the international environment since the September 11, 2001 attack in New York City. This is of special interest as Canadian forces must both face-up to new threats from extremists who use terrorism to advance their interests and deal with limitations on the size of security forces. Indeed, the Canadian Armed Forces have sustained a significant negative "growth" in the last twenty years, placing this significant ally somewhere between Singapore and Uzbekistan in personnel strength of the forces.

Though small in size, the Canadian military has been lion-hearted in taking on the democratic world's most demanding security challenges: Canadians have deployed to Afghanistan, Rwanda, Haiti, and even Yugoslavia. Dr. Taillon discusses a way forward for Canada to expand its force and significantly improve capability through a focused military education system that mutually supports the missions of CANSOF and conventional forces leadership. This is a tall order and Dr. Taillon prudently highlights the current fiscal and force size constraints on Canadian Forces. He suggests the armed forces revisit the issues of accessing citizens for SOF service, placing strong emphasis on talent spotting in colleges, among ethnic groups and within specialized civilian career fields. He also advances the concept for a robust CANSOF reserve to augment the forces now decisively engaged in support of Canada's interests.

From a United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) perspective, understanding potential coalition SOF partners' capabilities and key issues is a critical element in developing strategic or operational plans. Taillon's paper provides a keen insight into current issues that are certain to impact on Canadian SOF while suggesting some things to think about as USSOCOM launches new programs for education and force transition.

Lt Col Michael C. McMahon  
Director, JSOU Strategic Studies Department

*Dr. J. Paul de B. Taillon is the Director, Review and Military Liaison, Office of the Communications Security Establishment Commissioner (OCSEC) in Canada. He has written extensively on terrorism, low intensity operations and special operations. A Canadian army reserve lieutenant colonel who has served with the British and American SOF, he is a graduate of the USMC Amphibious Warfare School and USMC Command and Staff College, and is presently a student at the US Army War College, class of 2006 and is one of the directing staff at the Canadian Forces College. He has written two books on terrorism and special forces, as well as co-edited another on special operations. He is an adjunct professor at the Royal Military College of Canada where he teaches on issues related to Terrorism, Intelligence and Special Operations in the War Studies MA program. He is also an Associate Senior Fellow at the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU), Hurlburt Field, Florida, USA.*



# The Evolving Requirements of the Canadian Special Operations Forces<sup>1</sup>

## A Future Concept Paper

*J. Paul de B. Taillon*

*The current world situation of widespread terror organizations and insurgencies highlights the need for Special Operations Forces (SOF). Canada's decision to establish a SOF capability (CANSOF) in 1992 indicates their desire to possess a strategic SOF resource to meet these threats. Dr. Taillon argues that this need remains and requires a more robust and expanded SOF capability to handle strategic challenges to Canada. He discusses morphing demographics and limited resources available to the Canadian military as critical issues in future CANSOF development. The British and American models of recruiting and training special operations forces offer useful models and he draws a sensible parallel with SOF recruiting in his native Canada.*

*All men dream, but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity; but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act out their dream with open eyes, to make it possible.*

— T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*

On 1 April 2005, the Canadian Special Operations Forces (CANSOF) celebrated its 13<sup>th</sup> year of service in the Canadian Forces (CF). The past years have been ones of great challenges and change, with a developing national and international reputation for professionalism, which was recently proven in joint and coalition SOF operations in Afghanistan. This has also been a period of garnering military and political support.

In one decade, this unit has gone from one that drew heavily from the Canadian Airborne Regiment to an organization comprising a broad spectrum of service volunteers, including reservists. CANSOF has performed duties in a number of countries, including Bosnia, Rwanda, Afghanistan and Haiti. Moreover, CANSOF operations run the gamut from protective duties for Canadian VIPs, acting as Joint Commission Observers (JCOs) in Bosnia, and training Haitian police personnel,<sup>2</sup> to surveillance and direct action operations in Afghanistan.

In the wake of the New York and Washington attacks on 11 September 2001, the Canadian government reportedly increased CANSOF's budget by some \$119 million as an integral part of Canada's participation in the global war on terrorism (GWOT).<sup>3</sup> The government's intent was to double the size of this unit to a reported goal of 600 personnel. This is a most difficult challenge considering not only the size of the regular CF but also the demanding selection requirements for those individuals who aspire to become SOF operators.

### **SOF Personnel Attributes**

Special Forces operators need very specific attributes. They must be highly motivated with a keen intellect, physically fit, psychologically stable, as well as resourceful and self-reliant. Moreover, SOF operators must be able to operate alone or in a small team and possess an unflappable personality, a courage that Ernest Hemingway described as "grace under pressure."<sup>4</sup>

In addition, tact and persuasive skills are also critically important for those involved in advising and training foreign militaries. Those who are not sensitive to the socio-cultural milieu in which they are operating will hold little local influence over foreign officers and their NCOs, many of whom may have had more practical experience. As one Special Air Service (SAS) operator noted, "You may advise the wily Afghan how to orchestrate a better ambush, but never say that they do not have experience in conducting ambushes."<sup>5</sup> Any short military history on the Soviet operational experience between 1979 and 1989 will quickly persuade you otherwise.<sup>6</sup>

## **The SOF Training Assistance and the Requirement for Cultural/Language Expertise**

SOF operations, by their nature, are low-visibility, using speed, surprise, audacity and deception to minimize the associated risks and to maximize the results. The employment of these tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) enables SOF forces to accomplish missions that, in many cases, conventional military forces could likely accomplish, albeit with greater difficulty; hence, they are a “force of choice.”<sup>77</sup> In some of our allied forces—the United States and Great Britain in particular—many of their SOF operators have been or are geographically oriented and, therefore, culturally well-attuned and capable of communicating in the language(s) of the region. This capability enables our SOF allies to acclimatize rapidly in exotic locales and undertake their missions from a standing start. Thus, our allied forces can easily employ their personnel to conduct foreign internal defense (FID) operations, mobile train teams (MTT) or act as advisers, not only to assist friends and allies, but also to leverage their assistance to further the foreign policy agenda of their respective governments. For the SOF personnel involved in these initiatives, such training programs improve their spectrum of competencies, as well as developing personal contacts that could have importance at a future date.

Considering that special forces and intelligence will be in the forefront in the GWOT, CANSOF is one of the two strategic military assets<sup>8</sup> that the Canadian government has available. In this regard, CANSOF has the capability of influencing Canada’s international security agenda. The future employment of CANSOF, as a training asset to assist friendly nations, could ensure high-quality training while, at the same time, extending and leveraging Canadian foreign policy interests and influence abroad. Canadian participation in foreign internal defense and military assistance programs, in conjunction with our allies, could enhance our international stature while providing a viable and attractive option for nations that may not seek assistance from our British and American cousins. Such duties, although well in the range of our Canadian light infantry capabilities, with appro-

appropriate tweaking, could be viewed at the same time as degrading their “conventional” force capabilities.

In order to address this possible future requirement, CANSOF will have to incorporate language abilities, other than the two official Canadian languages, into their skill sets. Arabic, Spanish, Chinese and Afghan dialects are some of the languages that will likely remain necessary in the foreseeable future. In addition, French is a great asset in dealing with the African Francophone nations, as well as Haiti, some of whom may, in the future, solicit Canadian military assistance.

One way of resolving the issues of language and cultural sensitivity would be to talent spot and directly recruit second-generation Canadians of various ethnic groups<sup>9</sup> into the CF, with the aim of selecting and assigning them for CANSOF training. The selection of second-generation foreign-language speakers who are Canadian citizens would be similar to the Swedish model of employing, for security reasons, only second-generation Swedish translators with their forces abroad.<sup>10</sup> A similar initiative would provide CANSOF selection with candidates who are not only Canadian but who have been born and raised in a multi-ethnic nation, retaining the vital skill sets of cultural sensitivity and insight,<sup>11</sup> in addition to having a critical language capability. Moreover, in the wake of selection and training, Canadian-ethnic operators (CEOs) should be allowed the opportunity to travel to their family homelands in order to see, firsthand, their potential area of operation and to evaluate the necessary requirements, should the time come, if they had to undertake overt or covert operations in these areas. Native speakers selected and trained as CANSOF operators would be a highly valuable addition to our capability spectrum.

Another way to develop these skills is to talent spot university-level students who are studying languages of operational interest and ascertain their potential contribution to CANSOF. Such personnel, once recruited and trained, could also undertake a country familiarization visit and be provided with an opportunity to tour the country and study it firsthand, while concomitantly practicing their language skills and developing cultural awareness. Unfortunately, there are no shortcuts. The classroom

lecture regarding the geography, people, culture, language and terrain features of a certain country will not provide the necessary insights on issues such as the social order, the local politics and local political peculiarities or specific eccentric social practices. Equally important, a SOF operator must be capable of adapting to an indigenous lifestyle, wherever he goes. This personal adaptability is not within everyone's character and make-up. However, those who are capable of adapting to foreign cultures will garner the respect of the locals and develop useful personal relationships, while expediting the mission.

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*... a SOF operator must be capable of adapting to an indigenous lifestyle, wherever he goes.*

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To assimilate these important, yet often overlooked, linguistic and cultural skills, the CF may have to shift their recruiting and selection paradigm to meet these new requirements. The CF may need to initiate a new, innovative and flexible program to talent spot, recruit, security screen, select and train these personnel, as well as oversee their administration. Needless to say, such a paradigm shift would be difficult. However, we must be willing to take innovative initiatives to meet the expectations of government. By ignoring these possible opportunities, the CANSOF community may well lose an important avenue to acquire and recruit appropriate SOF candidates, as well as to garner the ensuing political support and credibility.

It is important to appreciate the advantages of the cultural and ethnic mosaic that now makes up Canada's multi-cultural society and the importance of having SOF embrace this mosaic.<sup>12</sup> Historical examples illustrate the importance of such advantages, such as when British army recruiters sought out Chinese Canadians to join the Special Operations Executive (SOE) Force 136<sup>13</sup>. These same Canadians performed their duties in the harsh Malayan jungles in an outstanding fashion, always with the knowledge that they would be executed should the Japanese capture them. Recently, it was a lack of linguistic and cultural knowledge that dogged the Land Force when Canada deployed to Afghanistan and, reportedly, there was no one in the CF personnel inventory who could speak the Afghan languages. Fortunately, a Canadian intelligence officer was discovered who had the requisite language skills and was subsequently attached to the

3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (3 PPCLI) as an interpreter. This experience underscores the necessity for integrating linguistic and cultural capabilities within our SOF, as well as into our highly capable light infantry battalions.

## **CANSOF Reserve Squadron**

CANSOF has been assigned with the task of doubling its operational capability. This is a difficult order to fulfill, especially given that the regular contingent of the CF numbers approximately 55,000, with a total reserve of roughly 23,000.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, during the recent past, SOF has lost a number of its operators and support personnel to retirement, the police world and the private or public sectors. Considering the numbers lost, media reports indicate that any future growth will be painstakingly slow. Predicated upon this situation, it may be appropriate to explore the creation of a reserve CANSOF squadron. The reserve squadron would be assigned, trained and organized to conduct limited special operations, such as mobile training teams, red cells, intelligence gathering and linguistics, and be trained for rural/urban surveillance, amongst other SOF capabilities. This new reserve SOF squadron would be comprised of former members of the unit, selected CF reservists who have specialist skills sets and civilian personnel who have been talent spotted and recruited for specific qualities and capabilities, as well as individuals who self-identify. All of these individuals would have to undergo a rigorous selection program, as well as required follow-on training. These personnel would be augmentees, similar to the United States Marine Corps' Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) or the 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> SAS Regiment, consisting of British territorial soldiers who are prepared to undertake short notice training and operations.

While the idea of a reserve CANSOF squadron might be unconscionable to some in the Canadian SOF community, our allies have found that they could undertake direct recruiting from the streets, as the British Army's 21 and 23 SAS regiments have done since their inception. It is noteworthy that the London-based Artists' Rifles territorial unit was converted to 21 SAS (Artists' Rifles) in 1947<sup>15</sup> and remains an integral component of the British SOF community, as does 23 SAS. In January 2001, the US Army Special Forces (SF)

initiated a recruiting plan called the Special Forces Initial Accessions Program, better known as the 18X Program. Twenty-five years ago, the US Army had attempted to recruit SF soldiers directly off the streets, an initiative that was the subject of much controversy. Notwithstanding this initial problematic attempt, US Army Recruiting Command began screening and selecting 18X soldiers. The scheduled training timetable for these “off the street candidates” is a two-year, full-time program consisting of training at the infantry and airborne school. Once the SF candidate has undergone the first phase of training, he is posted to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. At Fort Bragg, the 18X soldier attends the Special Forces Assessment and Selection Center. If selected for SF, the candidate then attends the SF Qualification Course (SFQC). Following the SFQC, he will attend language training and the Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) course. Once these courses are completed, he is promoted to sergeant. According to Command Sergeant Major Michael S. Breasle, “the quality of recruits is impressive and, so far, the 18Xs have exceeded all expectations.”<sup>16</sup>

Considering the British and American models noted herein, the CF may wish to study and undertake experimentation with one or both of these methodologies to ascertain if either one could address current and future Canadian SOF requirements.

The inclusion of SOF reservists in Canada, however, would require an administrative redesign, as their incorporation will necessitate a dramatic change in personnel administration and career management. On the positive side, this would operationally focus the issue of permeability and integration between regular and reserve components which, to date, has been problematic. CANSOF could be the vanguard champion of the initiative of permeability between regular and reserve forces.

### **Similar Military/Career Job Parameters**

The CF needs to ascertain if there are comparable SOF skill sets that align with certain civilian occupations. The author believes that there are reservists who employ, on a day-to-day basis, certain skill sets that are similar to, or that parallel, some of those required in SOF units. Police officers assigned to Emergency Response Teams (ERTs)

come to mind immediately, as do demolition engineers who work on construction projects, medical attendants, professional deepwater divers and a myriad of other civilian professional skill sets that could be easily placed under the capabilities umbrella of special operations. As an example, a former American SOF officer advised the writer in June 2004 that one of the most proficient SOF units in the United States was the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team. Apparently, some American SOF operators had been sent to LAPD SWAT as observers, as well as to undertake courses.

The World War II creation of the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) demonstrate that the recruiting methodologies suggested above are neither unique nor unusual and, indeed, have historical precedent. The multitude of psychological and physical tests available, that are specifically designed to ascertain the potential military capabilities of an individual for SOF, could be adapted to expedite the selection of “off the street” candidates. Reservists have historically brought valued skill sets to the table due to their occupational spectrum and could be the vehicle for positive innovation (i.e. administrative permeability and cultural redesign), assist in breaking down internal barriers and aid in the generation and cross pollination of ideas—all of which are critical for an effective and constantly evolving SOF capability.

### **Covert Operations**

At some point in the future, particularly should the GWOT continue unabated for the next decade, it might be necessary for Canada to develop a covert operational capability. This could be required to counter terrorist initiatives domestically or those emanating from third countries that may target Canada or Canadian interests, or those of our allies. The campaign in Afghanistan revealed certain CANSOF activities when a photograph appeared in the media of Canadian operators taking blindfolded Taliban fighters off a transport aircraft thus unveiling Canada’s participation in the covert war in Afghanistan.



The future conduct of successful covert operations will require the integration of a competent CANSOF capability with an integrated intelligence support unit.<sup>17</sup> This unit must be able to “reach back” to access all source intelligence and be capable of fusing these sources of information into coherent, timely and actionable intelligence. The need to understand a more complex and culturally diverse enemy will increase the requirement for more sophisticated intelligence products, necessitating an intelligence support apparatus based upon an interdepartmental and interagency approach. This will likely incorporate representation from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) to address tactical and strategic humint capability, slices of the Communications Security Establishment (CSE) and the CF Information Operations Group (CFIOG) to provide an intercept capability and, depending on the situation, a policing capability from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Furthermore, this organization may also take on representation from any other government department or agency, including those of allied nations, deemed necessary to meet the operational requirements of the moment.

### **“Go Softly Softly”**

Not to be critical, as all SOF units must learn from their experiences, the 2004 deployment of CANSOF operators to Haiti underscored a lack of sophistication in low-visibility, some would say covert, operations. Their deployment was uncovered shortly after their arrival when front-page photographs of very fit SOF operators, wearing trendy wraparound sunglasses and Nike baseball caps, resulted in media hype and, hence, political and public attention. Unfortunately, this incident further fueled the media interest in CANSOF activities in Haiti and in Canada. This incident brings to mind what the late and former Chief of the British General Staff, Field Marshal Lord Carver, once stated regarding his reticence in employing the British SAS in Northern Ireland. It was his firm belief that “the problem with clandestine operations is that they seldom remain clandestine for long.”<sup>18</sup> His view resonates particularly today when all military activity remains under intense media scrutiny.

SOF operators must spend considerable time training and learning how to access denied areas. Parachute, SDV, boat, submarine,

helicopter, scubas and klepper ops are just some of the means available for insertion or extraction. As global populations move from rural to urban centers, SOF forces may have to seek out lower testosterone-driven techniques of infiltration and extraction. They must learn to blend into domestic and foreign populations, while fully equipped to undertake the mission at hand. This requires training in clandestine tradecraft, so that operators may move innocuously or, as the SAS would say, in a “keeni meeni”<sup>19</sup> fashion toward their objective and, after the mission is completed, egress the area expeditiously without a trace. Such new realities underscore the necessity of multi-ethnic recruiting policies, as previously noted, so that SOF can operate unnoticed within the expanding mixture of ethnic and cultural environments found around the globe.

To address our lack of covert/ clandestine operational methodology, we may want to seek exchanges with our British and American allies, as do our intelligence services, so as to augment our expertise in these aspects of special operations. As well, attachments to the RCMP and CSIS, to learn intelligence/covert operational tradecraft, may also assist in enhancing the clandestine skill sets and capabilities of SOF operators and personnel.

## **SOF Coalitional Intelligence Requirements**

One of the major issues that were evident in Afghanistan was the ongoing difficulty of intelligence sharing amongst coalition allies. While it can be appreciated that intelligence sources and sensitive technology may have to be protected, it is arguably immoral and particularly disenfranchising, to assign coalition allies high-risk conventional or SOF missions without providing the critical all source intelligence along with the assigned target package. This was a serious issue within the coalition SOF community in Kabul, which, at one point, nearly alienated an ally. It was fortunate that Canadian intelligence personnel were able to intercede and address the problem. The employment of Canadian personnel to mediate this issue amongst allies ensures the necessity for a degree of tact and patience, both of which are important special ops qualities. Thus, it is vital to ensure that the SOF select and retain intelligence support personnel<sup>20</sup> who are capable of operating in a joint and coalition staff, including with SOF

operators, as well as working with ambiguity, prickly intelligence issues and allied agendas. Considering the criticality of intelligence in driving SOF initiatives, it behooves the integral SOF intelligence organizations, particularly those of the traditional or special alliance comprising of Canada, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the United States, to address the issue of how to appropriately deal with SOF intelligence requirements in a coalition operational environment. This will forego any future conflict and negate any animosity that could easily arise before, during or after coalition SOF operations. By multilaterally addressing this critical, yet sensitive, issue of intelligence sharing now, our traditional and future coalition allies will be more effective in expediting their respective forces in future SOF endeavors.<sup>21</sup>

## Information Operations

Due to the increasing operational tempo and the focus upon effects-based operations (EBO), there is a need to integrate within CANSOF an Information Operations (IO) capability incorporating electronic warfare (EW), computer network operations (CNO), psychological operations (PSYOP), as well as operations security and deception (OP-SEC). In both the special operations and conventional spheres, IO is a force multiplier that can:

- Deter, discourage, dissuade and, properly orchestrated, direct an enemy;
- Disrupt the enemy's unity of command while protecting our own;
- Protect our own plans while misdirecting the enemy.

Properly integrated Information Operations can enhance special operations across the operational spectrum and can also shape the SOF operational environment.<sup>22</sup> IO will provide, now and into the future, a vital support asset that must be encompassed by SOF and employed innovatively.

## SOF In Network-Centric Warfare

Network-centric warfare (NCW) is a relatively new approach to waging war. Described by Captain Greg Gagnon, USAF, as focusing “on the greater synergistic effect that can be created by networking and electronically linking geographically separated forces into one sensor-to-shooter engagement grid.” It also provides the operator with enhanced situational and battle space awareness through extending the individual teams and network. Gagnon argued that accessing a common operating Information Center could amass information, instead of combat forces, in order to effectively project combat power. All operators in the information-based network undertake their operations in accordance with the commander’s intent, as well as the “rule set” governing the activities and providing “guidelines for coordinating and controlling the interactions of the network entities.” These will also address who is responsible for target engagement, as well as optimizing sensor coverage while de-conflicting operators. NCW’s intent is to decentralize the decision-making powers and, through the access of a common operating information base, the network accelerates the Boyd cycle of observation, orientation, decision and action cycle—better known as the OODA loop. As a result, the network of operators “can engage more targets as an aggregate system that they individually can handle.” Concomitantly, there is an enhanced situational awareness predicated on the rules and the commander’s guidance ensuring SOF and conventional forces will not have to wait for orders.

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*NCW’s intent is to decentralize the decision-making powers ...*

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There are a number of advantages to this network-centric capability. The ability to leverage real-time information may have organizational implications in that we may have a smaller but much more situationally aware and, therefore, a more effective tip of the spear. On the other hand, the technical capability to share real time situational awareness, drawn from a common operating information base, may invite hierarchical intervention. In SOF and conventional partnering, the ability to access the commander’s network enables SOF, as well as conventional forces, to extend their combat reach

with the access to faster longer-range weapon systems within our inventory.

Network-centric special operations will, theoretically, both enhance battle space and situational awareness, and expedite the decisions-making cycle, thereby increasing our combat effectiveness. Considering the theoretical benefits of network-centric warfare and its possible future application, it behooves our CANSOF, and perhaps our light forces, to join with our allies, as well as the academic community, to explore the potential impact and what it will mean to future light infantry/SOF operations.<sup>23</sup>

## **Introducing SOF to Military Education**

The impression held by many staff officers is that SOF operators are Rambo-like personnel in uniform. Moreover, many officers in core staff and command positions are not well versed in the capabilities of and requirements for SOF operations. In addition, there is little appreciation that SOF is a “high value low density” national strategic asset. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the Canadian Forces Staff College system and those of our close allies, to introduce courses that familiarize future staff officers on SOF and fully incorporate them in exercises, particularly scenarios incorporating a domestic and/or foreign counter-terrorist situation. This will ensure that aspiring SOF staff officers garner an appreciation of how a joint and coalition staff would employ these assets (integration of capabilities), as well as understanding some of the real issues that coalitions have with SOF and how to remedy them.

Our educational institutions should also encourage studies in the history of SOF operations, their requirements, lessons learned etc., so as to garner an understanding of SOF special requirements and operations in the political and military context. Such studies will assist future staff officers in understanding what SOF represents and what they can achieve when given the resources and opportunity, as well as appreciating the political risks that accompany SOF missions.

It is also vital for planning staffs to have knowledge of what SOF skills are available within our traditional coalitions, as well as partaking in exercises incorporating SOF as a main player and not just ancillary assets.<sup>24</sup> Such initiatives will assist in embedding SOF in

our contingency planning and establishing, within our staff officer cadre, how to employ their special skills while ensuring that these low density resources are not employed in an inappropriate manner. In addition, this could necessitate the creation of a separate career field for SOF officers/non-commissioned members (enlisted). Furthermore, education for SOF personnel should be expanded to increase the depth of their knowledge on the history of SOF, increase their understanding of the political and military implications of SOF forces in peace and war, as well as garnering a deeper appreciation for their role in conventional and unconventional operations. Selective SOF courses and case studies are currently offered by the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ontario and could be expanded.

### **Downloading Non-SOF Tasking**

Predicated upon the high quality of our light infantry battalions, there is an opportunity to download a number of tasks that have been undertaken by SOF. The non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) and the close personal protection (CPP) roles are two tasks that, arguably, could be assigned to selected individuals within our highly trained light infantry battalions. The author views this as a capabilities triangle. At the apex are the special forces, which are American army and navy counterterrorist forces, the Counter Revolutionary Wing (CRW), formerly known as the Pagoda Team of the SAS and CANSOF. Beneath the apex are special forces capable of conducting strategic reconnaissance, direct action operations, foreign internal defence, etc.

The base of the triangle consists of light infantry that are highly trained and skilled in airborne, airmobile, raiding, patrolling and traditional high-speed, low-drag light infantry operations. As well, the light infantry represents a feeder organization for CANSOF, where young soldiers have an opportunity to develop a spectrum of leadership and soldiering skills that will give them a solid base from which to project themselves upward into the next level in the SOF triangle. CANSOF selection will take them to the next level, where they are monitored for their skill sets and mentored for their development. Canadian light infantry battalions should be seen as a logical stepping stone, or an intermediary step, for those inclined to undertake

CANSOF selection. Should that become the case, the light infantry battalions would be able to assume, due to the high quality of their personnel and their training, the traditional ranger/commando operations that fall into the wider range of what are known as gray SOF tasks. Arguably, Canadian light infantry should be capable of conducting normative roles expected of a highly trained unit of this type, as well as becoming counterinsurgency specialists able to conduct operations of this nature utilizing all manners of surveillance, tactics, psychological operations (PSYOP), as well as civil military cooperation (CIMIC). The creation of a light infantry unit designated as a Special Operations Direct Support Unit (SODSU), like the 1st Battalion The Parachute Regiment or the US Ranger, could undertake similar selection/training to that of a traditional ranger or commando unit and be able to support CANSOF operations.<sup>25</sup> As historical experience argues, the SODSU must be an integral component of the CANSOF community and, ideally, be co-located with CANSOF to facilitate planning and integrated training, both of which are vital for operational effectiveness.

Counterinsurgency operations have historically improved the quality of light infantry. It exercised junior leaders at all levels, as well as developing and honing combat skills such as tracking, instinctive shooting, small unit patrolling and tactics, survival, navigation, intelligence and situational awareness. The British experiences in Malaya and Borneo demonstrated the advantages derived from this sort of demanding training. In Borneo, the SAS absorbed members of the Guards Independent (Pathfinder) Company of the Parachute Brigade, as well as a number of individuals from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Parachute Regiment, all of whom were selected for their finely honed light infantry and operational skills.<sup>26</sup> Hence, our light infantry battalions could become leading edge counter insurgency experts, as well as a stepping stone to those interested in becoming CANSOF operators. This should be further explored.

## Conclusion

The intent of this paper is to underline a number of issues that will likely have some impact upon the evolution of the Canadian SOF. It must be kept in mind that Canada does not have the 60 plus years of experience of our Commonwealth and American allies. Moreover, we are a conventional force steeped in a conventional mind set. However, it is vital that we learn from the past—our own and others’—as well as aggressively pursue the skills that our allies have within their respective SOF communities in order to develop and expand our own capabilities for future SOF operations/coalitions. The CANSOF community should look at the:

- Development of a CANSOF force structure to include specialized tasks/skills/training for a reserve CANSOF squadron;
- Development of CANSOF linguistic and cultural skills;
- Encouragement of unorthodox approaches and unconventional techniques;
- Development of flexible thinking and innovation in addressing unconventional security threats;
- Investment in academic expertise, science and technology; use academics and technologists as force multipliers;
- Promotion of a CANSOF capability for forward-basing, rapid deployment, regional adaptability;
- Development of regional orientation of CANSOF.

There are four simple, yet self-evident, truths coined by our southern cousins, which are fundamental and underline aspects of the issues discussed in this paper and apply to all SOF. They are:

1. Humans are more important than hardware;
2. Quality is more important than quantity;
3. Special operations forces cannot be mass produced;
4. Competent SOF cannot be created quickly after emergencies occur.<sup>27</sup>



## Notes

1. Special Operations Forces (SOF) is used to incorporate all special operations capable and direct support elements.
2. David Pugliese, "Elite Canadian Commando Force Planned Attack on Peru Terrorists," *Ottawa Citizen* (4 November 1998).
3. Canada, Department of Finance, "Enhancing Security for Canadians, Budget 2001," <http://www.fin.gc.ca/budget01/bp/bpch5e.htm>
4. "Why Special Operations Forces Are Special," John Collins, Special Forces study group, Washington, DC (15 June 2004).
5. Discussion with an SAS officer who was operating in Afghanistan in 2001-2002, London, England (1 November 2004).
6. The losses incurred by the Soviet forces, included 118 jets, over 333 helicopters, 147 tanks, 1,314 armoured carriers, 433 mortars and artillery pieces, over 1,338 command and control vehicles, over 11,369 trucks and 510 engineering vehicles. Soviet troop strength never really rose above 104,000 personnel. (See M.Y. Nawroz and Lester Grau, "The Soviet War in Afghanistan: History and Harbinger of Future War?," *Military Review* (September -October 1995). It should be appreciated that 75% of these troops were assigned to defend cities, base camps and lines of communication. The situation was more problematic than it seemed at first as these units were not up to full strength as 25 to 30 % of Soviet personnel were stricken with a number of diseases such as malaria, dysentery, typhus and hepatitis to name a few. Of the 642,000 Soviet personnel who rotated through Afghanistan during the decade of war, the numbers of dead was reportedly 15,000, this is number viewed as a gross underestimation by many analysts. Some experts argue that at least 40,000 to 50,000 Soviet forces were killed. Some 415,932 troops fell victim to disease, 115,308 suffered infectious hepatitis and 31,080 from typhoid fever.
7. See Bernd Horn, J. Paul de B. Taillon, David Last, Eds., *Force of Choice: Perspectives on Special Operations*, Ontario: Queen's University Press, 2004.
8. The other strategic weapon system is our four submarines.
9. Issues of social cohesion and social inclusion are becoming more important, especially given that Canada's population growth will be "driven by visible minorities—defined as 10 groups, including Chinese, South Asians, Filipinos and Latin Americans—through immigration and higher fertility rates." By 2017, Canada will have between 6.3 to 8.5 million people of visible minorities. Jill Mahoney, "Visible Majority by 2017: Demographic Balance in Toronto, Vancouver Will Tip Within 12 Years, Statscan Says," *Globe and Mail* (23 March 2005).
10. Discussions with Swedish officers, 1st Mech Infantry Bde HQ, Pristina, Kosovo (15 May 2002). These linguistic and cultural skills have not been lost on the terrorists. In the declassified study by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, "Sons of Fathers: The Next Generation of Islamic Extremists in Canada," it was noted that "these indi-

viduals have been raised in an atmosphere of strict, extremist Islam within the general Canadian mosaic. They represent a clear and present danger to Canada and its allies and are a particularly valuable resource for the international Islamic terrorist community in view of their language skills... and familiarity with Western culture and infrastructure.” Stewart Bell, “Jihadists Being Raised in Canada,” *National Post* (23 April 2005). This obviously raises the importance of a highly effective security screening program to ensure all personnel selected as CEOs are cleared before any enrollment.

11. The importance of cultural sensitivity is often overlooked due, in part, to our own cultural arrogance. T. E. Lawrence understood this as he developed and led an Arab guerrilla force against the Turks in the First World War. As advised by Lawrence in article 15 of the 27 Articles of T. E. Lawrence, Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them. Actually, also, under the very odd conditions of Arabia, your practical work will not be a good as, perhaps, you think it is.” This wisdom is easily applicable to other countries and cultures.
12. This cultural and linguistic appreciation is underlined in the new US based initiative called the “Pat Roberts Intelligence Scholar Program” (PRISP) which is a three year pilot program that grants up to \$50,000 per student studying the language and culture of a “critical area” such as the Middle East. The program is described as a way “to provide the Intelligence Community (IC) with an enhanced means to recruit intelligence officers with critical skills that the labor market does not readily provide.” This could be relatively applied to SOF. Russell Cobb, *The Daily Texan* (20 April 2005). This issue is also important in regards to interrogation techniques and strategies. For an explanation of this, see Stephen Budiansky, “Intelligence: Truth Extraction,” *The Atlantic* (June 2005).
13. For an overview of special operations experiences of Canadian military personnel, see Roy MacLaren, *Canadians Behind Enemy Lines 1939-1945*, University of British Columbia, 1981.
14. Due to the small number of regular and reserve personnel that comprise the CF ensure a small pool of SOF candidates, hence the need to talent spot potential candidates outside of the military stream.
15. J. Paul de B. Taillon, *The Evolution of Special Forces in Counter-Terrorism: The British and American Experiences*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger 2001, p. 28.
16. CSM Michael S. Breasseale, “The 18X Program: Ensuring the Future Health of Special Forces,” *Special Warfare* (May 2004), pp. 28-31
17. It should be noted that Britain has formed a new regiment to be called the Special Reconnaissance Regiment (SRR). This unit will reportedly recruit men and women from the various branches of the Armed Forces, especially those of Middle Eastern or Mediterranean appearance as well as other ethnic minorities. Such an initiative is highly supported by this paper. Sean Rayment, “Britain Forms New Special Forces Unit

- to Fight Al-Qaidah,” *Sunday Telegraph* (27 July 2004) and “New Regiment Will Support SAS.” *BBC News* (5 April 2005).
18. Field Marshal Lord Carver, letter to author (24 December 1985).
  19. Keeni meeni is a Swahili phrase to denote extremely dangerous undercover work. It refers to the sinuous movement of a deadly snake in long grass.
  20. For an interesting discussion on this, see Jon-Paul Hart, “Killer Spooks: Increase Human Intelligence Collection Capability by Assigning Collectors to Tactical-Level Units,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (April 2005).
  21. For an interesting insight on intelligence issues, see LCol Lester W. Grau, “Something Old, Something New, Guerrillas, Terrorists and Intelligence Analysis,” *Military Review* (July-August 2004).
  22. LCol Bradley Bloom, “Information Operations in Support of Special Operations,” *Military Review* (January-February 2004).
  23. For an excellent article on this topic, see Captain Greg Gagnon, USAF, “Network-Centric Special Operations: Exploring New Operational Paradigms,” <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/cc/gagnon.html>
  24. Steven P. Schreiber, Greg E. Metzgar, Stephen R. Mezhir, “Behind Friendly Lines: Enforcing the Need for a Joint SOF Staff Officer,” *Military Review* (May-June 2004).
  25. In May 2005, the Canadian Forces announced that the army would be creating a strike force of highly trained “Ranger” troops to assist in operations with CANSOF. It was estimated that this force would be brought into being within five years. Chris Wattie, “Ranger Troops to Replace Airborne as ‘Pointy End’ of Canadian Forces,” *Ottawa Citizen* (3 May 2005).
  26. During the Borneo conflict, the SAS trained the Guards Independent (Pathfinder) Company of the Parachute Brigade to undertake SAS-type operations. In 1966, before the conclusion of the Borneo campaign, G Company 22 SAS was formed from the ranks of this Guards formation and volunteers from the 2nd Battalion of the Parachute Regiment. Steve Crawford, *The SAS Encyclopedia*, London: Simon and Schuster, 1996, (p. 45).
  27. Joint Special Operations University pamphlet.

