

USSOCOM

Research Topics
2013



**JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS
UNIVERSITY**

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USSOCOM Research Topics 2013



United States Special Operations Command • MacDill Air Force Base • Florida



Joint Special Operations University and the Strategic Studies Department

The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) provides its publications to contribute toward expanding the body of knowledge about joint special operations. JSOU publications advance the insights and recommendations of national security professionals and the Special Operations Forces (SOF) students and leaders for consideration by the SOF community and defense leadership

JSOU is the educational component of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. The JSOU mission is to educate SOF executive, senior, and intermediate leaders and selected other national and international security decision makers, both military and civilian, through teaching, outreach, and research in the science and art of joint special operations. JSOU provides education to the men and women of SOF and to those who enable the SOF mission in a joint and interagency environment.

JSOU conducts research through its Strategic Studies Department where effort centers upon the USSOCOM and United States SOF missions:

USSOCOM mission. Provide fully capable Special Operations Forces to defend the United States and its interests. Synchronize planning of global operations against terrorist networks.

USSOF mission. USSOF conduct special operations to prepare the operational environment, prevent crisis, and respond with speed, precision, and lethality to achieve tactical through strategic effect.

The Strategic Studies Department also organizes and conducts strategic symposia, interagency curricula, international curricula, regional and cultural education senior level courses, and senior level professional military education.

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On the cover: Left: A Special Forces medic from 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) gives an Afghan boy a coloring book near Kandahar, Afghanistan. Photo by Steve Hebert.

Center: Members of Brazil's special operations force, Grupamento de Mergulhadores de Combate and Colombia's special operation force, Batallon de Fuerzas Especiales de Infanteria de Marina, form a perimeter after fast roping from a MH-47 Special Operations Aircraft operated by the Army 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment as part of PANAMAX 2010. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Joseph M. Clark.

Right: Two U.S. Navy SEALs navigate through murky waters during a Combat Swimmer Training dive. Photo by Senior Chief Petty Officer Andrew McKaskle.

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The JSOU Strategic Studies Department is currently accepting written works relevant to special operations for potential publication. For more information please contact the JSOU Research Director at jsou_research@socom.mil. Thank you for your interest in the JSOU Press.

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Foreword

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) 2013 Research Topics list is intended to guide research projects for Professional Military Education (PME) students, JSOU faculty, fellows, and others writing about special operations during this academic year. Research is one of the cornerstones of JSOU's academic mission and focuses on publishing in areas that contribute to understanding policy and strategy issues affecting the operational and planning needs of the Special Operations Forces (SOF). Each year representatives from the USSOCOM headquarters and Interagency Task Force, the Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs), SOF chairs from the war colleges, and JSOU Senior Fellows develop a comprehensive list of issues and challenges of concern to the greater SOF community. The list is vetted through the USSOCOM components and TSOCs to confirm the research best advances SOF missions and supports SOF interests. The final recommendations for research topics are approved by the USSOCOM Commander.

The research that results from these topics is made available to the SOF community, members of the larger military profession, policymakers and strategists, and other members of the public either through JSOU Press publications, the publication opportunities available at the various service schools and colleges, or the Defense Technical Information Center and other online media. Ultimately, the research, study, and debate of these topics informs policymakers and better prepares the profession of arms for the challenges of winning the current conflicts and meeting the needs for the conflicts most likely to face us in the foreseeable future. If you have any questions about this document, JSOU Press in general, or how JSOU can assist you in your academic research, contact the Director of Research via e-mail at jsou_research@socom.mil.

Kenneth H. Poole, Ed.D.
Director, JSOU Strategic Studies Department

Introduction

The USSOCOM Research Topics 2013 list represents an effort to identify, categorize, and list SOF-related research topics for research by PME students, JSOU Senior Fellows, and other SOF researchers who desire to make timely and meaningful contributions to SOF issues and challenges. This list is tailored to address the USSOCOM Commander's four main focus areas:

- Win the Current Fight
- Expand the Global SOF Partnership
- Preserve the Force and Families
- Responsive Resourcing

The Commander places great emphasis and value on SOF PME students researching and writing on timely, relevant, SOF-related topics. Such activity develops the individual's intellect and provides a professional and practical perspective that broadens and frames the insights of other analysts and researchers in regard to these topics. This list and the accompanying topic descriptions are a guide to stimulate interest and thinking; topics may be narrowed or otherwise modified as deemed necessary (e.g., to suit school writing requirements or maximize individual interests and experiences).

Sections A through F contain new topic categories with major ideas/concepts for 2013 from which topics can be derived, depending on the interest/experience of the researcher and the desired level of detail. Section A (Priority Topics) identifies those topics of particular importance that the USSOCOM Commander has identified for special emphasis. All of the topics seek to expand SOF understanding of specific challenges and issues and promote thinking in regard to understanding them and identifying doctrine, capabilities, techniques, and procedures to increase SOF efficacy in addressing them. At the same time, the research is also intended to inform policymakers, the larger military profession, and the public of the issues and challenges of concern to the SOF community and what might be undertaken in support of them. The topics reflect a consensus of those participating in the topics project and vetted through Theater Special Operations Commands and components—that is, the topics are deemed particularly worthwhile in

addressing immediate SOF needs and in building future capacity for emerging challenges. Topics are unique but share a focus on the following:

- Combating Terrorism
- Implications of irregular warfare and strategies and operations to win
- SOF in whole-of-government and comprehensive operational environments
- Importance of regional and cultural emphases
- Interagency coordination
- Future SOF operating environments
- SOF missions and functions, organization, force structure, and professional development and training.

Section G is a list of selected topics retained from previous years.

Previous Years' Research Topics Lists provide a repository of topics highlighted in the past. These topics lists may provide prospective researchers with additional ideas of relevant topics identified in this publication. The previous editions of the USSOCOM Research Topics (2009 through 2012 editions) are available on the JSOU public web site at <https://jsou.socom.mil/Pages/Publications.aspx>.

Note that the topics lists are posted in the publication section for the year they were published (i.e. the Research Topics 2012 list is posted in the 2011 publications section on the web site).

Limited travel funding may be available from JSOU for researchers (such as PME students) to support their projects (e.g., to conduct interviews or visit USSOCOM or component headquarters). These research "grants" are subject to approval by the Director, JSOU Strategic Studies Department, contingent on the topic selected and the value added to the project.

Please share this reference with fellow researchers, thesis advisors, and other colleagues and feel free to submit additional topics for consideration. Visit our publications page on JSOU's public website to see whether JSOU has a publication that relates to your topic of interest.

A. Priority Topics

Topic Titles

- A1. Rebalancing SOF focus toward Asia-Pacific
- A2. Cultural narratives: What is important and what is not?
- A3. Sustaining the SOF Warrior during an era of persistent conflict
- A4. Civilian-Military teaming for post-Iraq/Afghanistan security cooperation
- A5. Intelligence community and SOF cooperation
- A6. Village Stability Operations: Is this a winning ticket for the war in Afghanistan?
- A7. How does USSOCOM retain and maintain persistent interagency cooperation?
- A8. Strategic USSOCOM partnering with India
- A9. We used to be commandos: Has SOF strayed too far from its traditional roles?
- A10. SOF and continuous presence: Benefits of persistent engagement

Topic Descriptions

A1. Rebalancing SOF focus toward Asia-Pacific

The Defense Strategic Guidance (2012) underscores the growing strategic significance of Asia and the Pacific. What are the implications for Special Operations Forces (SOF)? Which countries in the region should become SOF's focus? How will transnational security issues such as the protection of vital shipping lanes and nodes be addressed? What current/traditional partner-nation SOF relationships should be relooked? What new relationships should be formed? Is a deeper focus on this region the best use of Special Operations Forces? Are there potential or proposed missions in this region that might necessitate modifications to SOF equipment requirements? How will different rebalancing efforts impact Special Operations Command Pacific's (SOCPAC) operating tempo? Are there examples in other theaters, such as Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT), for how SOCPAC might prepare for changes in their operational activity? Should resourcing SOCPAC become a priority? What is the best

way to prepare personnel for persistent engagement in Asia and the Pacific region? Should there be a similar program to AfPak Hands but focused on China and India, or other countries?

A2. Cultural narratives: What is important and what is not?

Every culture and relevant population has many narratives through which they indoctrinate their members, institutionalize behavior and accommodate change. How can USSOCOM identify those narratives that are useful for the influence campaigns necessary for irregular warfare (IW)? How can SOF use and influence these narratives? What organizational barriers and perceptions must SOF overcome in order to more fully leverage such narratives? Who within SOCOM or the SOF community should be responsible for dissecting cultural narratives and leveraging those narratives to support command objectives?

A3. Sustaining the SOF Warrior during an era of persistent conflict

All indications point toward a continued high operations tempo and forward global engagement by SOF after the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are over. What are the lessons learned from more than 10 years of increased operations tempo that can be carried forward to sustain SOF personnel and their families? USSOCOM has administered an innovative and aggressive initiative named the Care Coalition and its Care Coalition Recovery Program since 2005 to assist the most severely injured SOF warriors and their families. What have been the impacts of various programs to sustain SOF personnel and their families? How might these programs be impacted if forced to cope with more asynchronous deployment schedules (such as smaller numbers deployed simultaneously to the same location, greater dispersion in deployment offsets and locations)? Are there fiscal or other constraints or obstacles that might limit the indefinite employment of these programs and current or increased levels? Are results consistent across the physical and emotional realms or are there divergent impacts in these two areas? How is resiliency improving through preventative (pre-rehabilitative) and rehabilitative approaches? What additional measures should be taken? What has been the effect of such programs on recruiting and retention?

A4. Civilian-Military teaming for post Iraq/Afghanistan security cooperation

The U.S. has employed Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) and District Stability Teams (DST) as models for sub-national civilian-military teaming in Iraq and Afghanistan. Village Stability Operations (VSO) have emerged as an additional model for extending security, governance and development to the local level. As we move beyond Iraq and Afghanistan, how will the U.S. conduct security cooperation activities abroad? What aspects, if any, of the PRT/DST/VSO experience might transfer to a country team process? Will SOF revert to pre-2001 tools or are there alternative approaches? What are the potential models for civilian-military teaming during steady state security cooperation? What authorities and constraints impact these alternative approaches? How might new approaches vary between permissive environments and countries or regions in which the U.S. has limited freedom of movement?

A5. Intelligence community and SOF cooperation

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past decade have seen an unprecedented rise in the need for cooperation among the intelligence community and Special Operations Forces. This increased need for cooperation requires a closer look to determine what initiatives have been successful and what opportunities for improvement exist. How might the intelligence community and SOF better cooperate/integrate in the future? What are the strengths and weaknesses of both communities? What are the implications of the specialized legal authorities each holds?

A6. Village Stability Operations: Is this a winning ticket for the war in Afghanistan?

Some propose that the conduct—and even increase in scope—of Village Stability Operations (VSO) in Afghanistan is the way to win the current conflict. How might we assess the effectiveness of the current scope of VSO in Afghanistan, and what might be gained (and required) by increasing the scope? What are the current constraints in implementing the VSO program in Afghanistan, and how might they be addressed? Is the VSO concept applicable to other countries

and theaters, and if so, how might it be adapted or generalized? How is funding for VSO influencing or corrupting operations within the VSO program? Should USSOCOM continue with this construct or is there another way? Is there a better way? What things could be changed or identified internally or externally from VSO that could better support the way ahead? What potential assessment methodologies—to include both quantitative and qualitative measures—might be used to evaluate the effectiveness of VSO in a particular location as it applies to a particular command decision, mission, or end state?

A7. How does USSOCOM retain persistent interagency cooperation: What did we do correctly the last 10 years?

In the aftermath of 9/11 Congress passed multiple authorities to facilitate interagency cooperation. One such authorization is Section 1208 of the 2005 National Defense Authorization Act. Section 1208 provides the Department of Defense (DOD) with an alternative, and more responsive, funding source for the conduct of training and assistance operations with foreign personnel compared to conventional Department of State programs (e.g., Foreign Military Assistance, Foreign Military Sales). How do different legal and/or funding programs (e.g., Section 1208) support and/or restrict interagency cooperation for SOF? What are the necessary or desired levels of interagency cooperation within SOF, and what endeavors or programs might support these levels?

A8. Strategic SOF partnering with India

The Department of Defense Strategic Guidance (2012) states that the United States is investing in a long-term strategic partnership with India to support its ability to serve as a regional economic anchor and provider of security in the broader Indian Ocean region. Where, and in what manner, should SOF change their focus in India and the Indian Ocean region? What short- or long-term presence changes should SOCPAC make in India, and what are the associated trade-offs? What avenues for increased cooperation with India's SOF should USSOCOM consider in the short- and long-term? What can SOF learn from the Indian SOF experience? Since India is a nuclear power, are there SOF-related counter-proliferation issues that should be

immediately addressed? Consider the impact of this study on U.S.-Pakistan relationship.

A9. We used to be commandos: Have SOF strayed too far from their traditional roles?

How have circumstances over the past decade shifted SOF away from its traditional roles such as foreign internal defense (FID), unconventional warfare (UW), direct action (DA), counterinsurgency operations (COIN) and special reconnaissance (SR)? What does this mean for the future? What impact does this have on SOF and USSOCOM? Should USSOCOM shed mission areas such as civil affairs and security force assistance? As conventional or general purpose forces (GPF) become increasingly “SOF-like,” should SOF fight to keep primacy in certain competencies such as CT and UW? What should the core competencies of SOF be? What are the implications or benefits of GPF overlap with SOF core operations and activities? These questions are essential to the notion of “SOF power” and the development of a coherent SOF theory.

A10. SOF and continuous presence: Benefits of persistent engagement

The Secretary of Defense’s FY13-17 Defense Planning Guidance does not address a long-standing strategy of SOF’s continuous presence. However, many of SOF’s core operations such as FID, UW, and COIN are also conducted during peacetime. How does USSOCOM better align its scarce resources with geographic command engagement strategy or Department of State (DOS) policies? Do geographic combatant commanders require SOF to maintain a continuous presence during peacetime within their assigned regions, with the specific task of cultivating relationships and identifying the capability, availability, and potential of indigenous assets? Does the future still require years of persistent engagement or has the information age made this method obsolete? Can SOF maintain this “presence” given the American people’s opposition to U.S. troops on foreign soil? If SOF continue a campaign of continuous presence, what regions should have priority and why?

B. Combating Terrorism

Topic Titles

- B1. Arab Spring: Implications for passive and active support for extremists
- B2. Using unconventional warfare against violent extremist organizations
- B3. Use of SOF in countries undergoing revolutions
- B4. What constitutes terrorism in cyberspace and how does it involve SOF?
- B5. Beyond the accidental guerilla: Are U.S. policies making terrorists?
- B6. Conducting a global counterterrorism campaign from offshore bases
- B7. Terrorist networks and strategies to counter them
- B8. SOF partners in counterterrorism
- B9. Al-Qaeda's regeneration: Prospects in the Middle East
- B10. Resourcing counterterrorism: Why taking SOF global makes sense
- B11. Violent radical extremists: Beyond psychopathy to positive psychology
- B12. Policing and counterterrorism

Topic Descriptions

B1. Arab Spring: Implications for passive and active support for extremists

The Arab Spring ousted regimes that traditionally opposed Salafist groups such as al-Qaeda. Will the new administrations dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist political groups produce societies and governments which passively and/or actively aid groups like al-Qaeda? Will these administrations even go so far as to give military training and sanctuary to al-Qaeda and other militant Salafist groups? In many cases, these new regimes use our own ideas and rhetoric. How should the United States approach these forming and formed administrations? What roles can SOF play or advocate based on SOF understanding? What can SOF do to mitigate deleterious effects to U.S. interests? Do Strategic Communications/

Information Operations/Military Information Support Operations activities apply? If so, where, when, and how can they be applied? At what point is direct action needed, as done in Afghanistan against al-Qaeda and the Taliban Government? Conversely, will the politicization of these organizations as actors in the legitimate international system actually lead to a divergence from non-state organizations such as al-Qaeda?

B2. Using unconventional warfare against violent extremist organizations

What are the possibilities of using unconventional warfare doctrine to guide actions against violent extremist organizations (VEOs)? Can activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power (e.g., operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerilla force in a denied area) be adapted to disrupt non-state armed groups such as the Taliban or al-Qaeda that employ terrorism to subvert political systems? Can SOF build and support a network to combat VEOs? What are the advantages of establishing clandestine networks that employ indigenous forces to combat terrorism? How can all elements of national power be brought to support such efforts?

B3. Use of SOF in countries undergoing revolutions

When popular uprisings result in the overthrow of a regime, the internal security situation often deteriorates, allowing non-state actors the opportunity to obtain weapons, financing, and an area in which to operate. How do we prevent non-state actors from taking advantage of loose or non-existent security conditions in a nation undergoing a revolution to obtain financing, weapons (to include weapons of mass destruction), and safe havens? Under what conditions is it appropriate to deploy SOF to counter a non-state actor's efforts to utilize a popular uprising for their own agenda? Which countries are vulnerable to non-state actor takeover?

B4. What constitutes terrorism in cyberspace and how does it involve SOF?

What threshold should be established for terrorist acts in cyberspace? Presumably it's a higher bar than online bullying or what's usually thought of as cybercrime. Does significant physical destruction of critical infrastructure count? What about the targeted attacks on key leaders, such as character assassination by planting child pornography on their computers, zeroing family bank accounts, putting children at risk, and so on? Suppose people die from secondary effects, such as shutting down electrical grids and power generation systems that control hospital incubators? Are the criteria for a terrorist act the same as for a hostile act that would trigger, say, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Article 5 [briefly, "...an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all..."]? What special skills do SOF bring to the table in countering such threats? What skills should they bring?

B5. Beyond the accidental guerilla: Are U.S. policies making terrorists?

Analysis of the master narratives of many terrorist organizations shows a common thread of resistance to the status quo. The generalized concepts of capitalism, modernization, and imperialism are viewed as a challenge to the fundamental existence of the terrorist groups and the communities they purport to represent. The organizations mobilize their followers by magnifying these threats to a level that justifies radical action. Unfortunately, these concerns are often reinforced by the actions of counterterrorist programs and policies that appear to turn threat into reality. What U.S. military, and by extension, U.S. government policies are interpreted as the most threatening and polarizing for the purpose of mobilizing terrorists? Should these policies be re-examined and modified/discontinued in order to avoid development and mobilization of the accidental guerilla/terrorist? If so, how?

B6. Conducting a global counterterrorism campaign from offshore bases

For a variety of reasons, the U.S. may be facing a future of having to disrupt global terrorist networks from fewer, forward-deployed land bases. This will affect our force employment options and detainee arrangements, as well as impact the posture of our naval assets. What capabilities does USSOCOM require of an offshore staging base? How will USSOCOM compete for limited naval assets to conduct counterterrorism (CT) missions? What seabasing initiatives are available/developing that might support this alternative? What other options are available, such as contract vessels?

B7. Terrorist networks and strategies to counter them

The U.S. and its partners have made significant progress in countering terrorism. However, terrorist organizations have proven themselves adaptable and continue to pose a threat to national security and U.S. interests abroad. Additional research is needed to gain advantage inside the cycle of adaptability. How do terrorist organizations adapt? For example, Hezbollah and Hamas have changed their tactics after gaining legitimacy. How did this situation evolve and how has the threat to U.S. interests changed? How do organizations differ? The goals of Hezbollah and al-Qaeda are different, which suggests different motivations and different strategic centers of gravity. How do we define terrorist networks? What are effective strategies to counter networks? What economy of force solutions might exist to counter terrorist networks with a leaner force in a fiscally-constrained environment?

B8. SOF partners in counterterrorism

Terrorism and counterterrorism have made for strange bedfellows for the SOF community over the past decade, and funds and efforts have been liberally expended among our partners. Some of these expenditures and their return on investment have been more effective than others. In a period of reduced funding, partnerships, and cost-sharing, how might SOF rethink and reorganize their partnership efforts and expenditures at home and abroad? How do we differentiate those who can really use our help and be real partners, from those

who are just trying to ingratiate themselves on the United States and are along for funding?

B9. Al-Qaeda's regeneration: Prospects in the Middle East

Al-Qaeda's old guard has been battered by 10 years of war in South Asia, but new al-Qaeda nodes/affiliates and adherents are developing in the Middle East and specifically on the Arabian Peninsula. Per the June 2011 National Security Strategy, the United States faces two major counterterrorism challenges in the Arabian Peninsula: al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. This monograph would examine the threat posed to the Arabian Peninsula and in particular to Saudi Arabia. How do al-Qaeda affiliates and adherents form? How do their beliefs and doctrine drive their objectives? Who supports them and why? How can an understanding of these groups drive our strategy to defeat these groups? Additionally, what competition does al-Qaeda face in recruiting affiliates that want the renown as the premier terrorist group or mastermind in the extremist world?

B10. Resourcing counterterrorism: Why taking SOF global makes sense

The United States has spent approximately \$2 trillion to prosecute the two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11. The majority of these costs can be attributed to the large logistical tail necessary to support the conventional forces deployed to both countries. In these times of fiscal austerity and economic challenges, the American taxpayers still demand the same level of security at a significantly lower price tag. From an economic standpoint, is SOF the force of choice for eradicating terrorist networks and stabilizing failing states? This includes the use of information operations/military information support operations and civil affairs operations. Can we accurately assess the comparative advantage SOF has in fulfilling these missions? What is the return on investment? Additionally, there are costs beyond dollars. How will taking SOF globally affect joint warfare or service component roles and interests and subsequently other mission requirements other than SOF? Evaluate how taking SOF global decreases the overall DOD footprint and reduces the likelihood of a major conflict.

B11. Violent radical extremists: Beyond psychopathy to positive psychology

Violent radical extremists, also known as terrorists, have been described in terms of their psychopathy—severe personality disorders marked by antisocial thought and behavior (push factors)—or, by external social factors pulling them along the path of violent radicalization. It is often argued that the confluence of push and pull factors create the conditions from which radicalized individuals are spawned. Yet, it is also argued that as a percentage of the population, this group is quite small. Therefore, what is the current U.S. conceptualization of and response to these diminutive populations? Is that response adequate and appropriate? Is there a better way to approach the problem of radicalization? What factors, as they relate to push and pull, allow the majority of the populations to resist/reject becoming violently radicalized?

B12. Policing and counterterrorism

The past decade has seen a rise in “home grown” terrorism. This, in combination with the ubiquitous nature of the internet and social media, and their utility in fueling radicalization across state and national boundaries, has introduced new challenges to law enforcement and CT efforts. What role might SOF play, with regard to training and support (and keeping in mind constitutional limitations) in homeland security and law enforcement? What are the positive and/or potentially damaging consequences of the militarization of domestic homeland security? Can we/should we expand Joint Task Force-North interagency interoperability, or use that as a model for increased SOF integration? What policy changes need to be considered for posse comitatus in order to increase the role of SOF with homeland policing? How can SOF take advantage of policing officers who also serve as Reserve/National Guard SOF? Can we attract, recruit, or incentivize more “policing” officers into Reserve/National Guard SOF? How do we capitalize on this overlapping of cultures to increase interagency operability?

C. Irregular Warfare Strategy and Operations

Topic Titles

- C1. Comparison of other nations' counterinsurgency practices
- C2. Understanding and exploiting social media to support irregular warfare campaigns
- C3. Building partnership capacity: Myth or reality?
- C4. Counter-piracy, armed private security, International Maritime Organization policy, and the laws of the sea
- C5. Seeing beyond red: What is the fate of "Fixing Intelligence" in irregular warfare?
- C6. Combating the influence of non-state organizations' deep reach
- C7. Iran's Revolutionary Guard and Qods Force: Purveyors of terrorism or a model for the future of irregular warfare?
- C8. Cost-effective development and civil affairs
- C9. Alternatives to state-centric security and stability operations
- C10. Assessing success in irregular warfare

Topic Descriptions

C1. Comparison of other nations' counterinsurgency practices

It is useful to examine other countries' counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. This can be historical such as case studies on British operations in Malaya or Northern Ireland. It can also include contemporary analyses of how other partner nations are operating in Afghanistan or even the Russian experience in the Caucasus, in particular with the use of SOF. What worked, what did not, and why? What types of projects were acceptable and advanced the COIN intent, and what did not? What defines success? What defines winning? Who actually won the conflict? For example, if the insurgents in El Salvador are now elected leaders, did they win? What are the long term effects of strategies? How are some strategies more enduring in comparison to others that result in a quick fix?

C2. Understanding and exploiting social media to support irregular warfare campaigns

Social media played a crucial role in the recent Arab Spring uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East. However social media's role, functions, cultural implications, and architecture are not widely understood or appreciated throughout the U.S. military. To be successful in IW operations, commanders, planners, and analysts must have a solid appreciation of the roles, functions, and characteristics social media exert within their area of responsibility. Specific questions that arise are: What is the cultural, security, and economic impact of social media in countries and regions of interest? What is the level of access and usage of social media within relevant countries and regions, and what do the architectures look like? Do the governments monitor or restrict social media access and usage, and how? How can the U.S. and partner governments or organizations best understand, utilize, and/or mitigate the impact of social media? What authorities or capabilities limitations might prevent that from occurring?

C3. Building partnership capacity: Myth or reality?

The notion behind the concept of building partnership capacity revolves around the assumption that the U.S., as a benevolent (and concerned) third-party, can use military forces and expertise to fundamentally change or improve the capacity of other nations' security organizations. Is the involvement of U.S. forces more beneficial or detrimental to the stability of the host nation? The threat that a local populace faces is going to somewhat dictate the answer to whether U.S. force presence is necessary. Have improvements occurred in spite of or because of U.S. involvement, or would the improvements have occurred through other mechanisms without the commitment of third-party military assistance?

C4. Counter-piracy, armed private security, International Maritime Organization policy, and the laws of the sea

The past decade of steadily increasing piracy off the coast of Somalia despite conventional naval operations has highlighted the difficulty of policing such an expanse of water. Additionally, a significant

portion of the shipping industry continues to pay ransoms, and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) discourages the use of armed private security contractors. Will an analysis of piracy incidents over the past decade determine the utility of armed security over the IMO's non-lethal practices for shipboard security? Should the U.S. lead an effort to renegotiate international treaties and laws of the sea? How do various port restrictions based on local laws and sovereignty apply? A primary objective of this research is to develop a more thorough understanding of the IMO's concerns, the shipping industry's concerns, and to promote international implementation of more efficient and cost-effective means of countering piracy off the coast of Somalia. What are the most effective counter-piracy strategies developed to date? Have non-kinetic weapons been effective in neutralizing pirates? How can SOF better support U.S. efforts in countering piracy?

C5. Seeing beyond red: What is the fate of “Fixing Intelligence” in irregular warfare?

Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capabilities in order to erode an adversary's power, influence, and will. Within a given country or region, how does the military intelligence community identify what the population at risk perceives as either grievances or as measures of legitimacy? Major General Michael Flynn's paper “Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan” introduced and emphasized the importance of “white activity” (population-centric) and “green” (government-centric) information over “red activity” (enemy-centric). It was meant to support an overall population-centric approach for Afghanistan. Should Flynn's approach be tried from the start in other contingencies? What changes are needed to enhance military access, appreciation and fusion of white and green intelligence? How does white information, especially when generated with the velocity and volume of social media, fit within a tasking, processing, exploitation, and dissemination analysis process? What structures and procedures are required for the fusion of white, green, and red intelligence?

C6. Combating the influence of non-state organizations' deep reach

Organizations such as Hezbollah have expanded and diversified over the years, and these organizations have become a model for future organizations seeking influence inside a nation-state (e.g., Muqtada al-Sadr's Islamist national movement within Iraq). These organizations are often complex—with or without state sponsorship, containing everything from a well-equipped militia to providing services to the local populace. In some areas, the populace often depends solely upon these organizations for the basics (food, water, sanitation, and security). It can often be difficult to break their hold upon a population. What factors are associated with the rise of such an organization in a particular region, and how might it be interdicted before becoming established? How can we dismantle or even co-opt some of these organizations when they threaten U.S. interests? What methods are most effective in preventing the growth and diversification of a nascent organization whose beliefs run contrary to U.S. or the international community's interests? How do we best prevent nation-states from using these organizations to their advantage to seek regional hegemony? How can we better help partner nations in countering these organizations?

C7. Iran's Revolutionary Guard and Qods Force: Purveyors of terrorism or a model for the future of irregular warfare?

Iran's Qods Force is equipped and organized to train, advise, and assist surrogate forces. They also have a long history of persistent engagement with their surrogates and a much less constrained approach to unconventional warfare than USSOF. Many of their efforts even become self-perpetuating with minimal residual support. What can be learned from a study of their successes and failures?

C8. Cost-effective development and civil affairs

What has experience shown to be useful criteria for the selection and shaping of projects for development, and how might these vary by localized conditions? What should those projects be? Roads, schools, dams, canals, district centers? What about ice manufacturing near fisheries, or bus stops instead of air terminals? After the past decade of civil affairs operations in Afghanistan, which projects have proven

the most effective? A measure of performance and effects of civil affairs and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) can be carried out through case studies or through analyses of Civil Military Operations Centers' databases. Considering cost models, other recent case studies could be of value as well (such as the Philippines, African countries, et cetera). Could in-depth studies help civil affairs (CA) planners understand how certain local factors influence project effectiveness? Does the fusion of socio-cultural intelligence with outreach to village, tribal, or even regional leaders aide the selection of CA projects?

C9. Alternatives to state-centric security and stability operations

Some believe that U.S. policy, doctrine, and practice assume that states must be built on the Westphalian model in order to be responsible members of the global order. That model presumes internal supremacy, administrative control, and responsibility within its borders. However, does establishing, sustaining, or expanding the authority of states along these lines ensure a more stable society, or other factors at play? What alternative instruments and models of state power may be more appropriate for certain political, social, and economic contexts? What are the implications for U.S. policy, strategy, and doctrine across the spectrum of IW, stabilization, and conflict prevention? Are there key institutions that are necessary for any form of state governance (Westphalian or otherwise)? How can these be built or encouraged?

C10. Assessing success in irregular warfare

The International Security Assistance Force Afghanistan Assessment Group (2010-2011), worked with a research agency to develop population-centric quantitative measures of performance and effects using various sensors and data. The data compiled measured population activity like road traffic, economic activity, communications volume, and tried to correlate them to levels of perceived normalcy verses levels of perceived instability. Currently there are efforts to develop crowd-sourcing methods of collecting measures of effects for COIN as well. However, effective assessments—whether at the strategic, operational, or tactical level—frequently require some

combination of subjective and quantitative input. It is challenging to assess atmospheric in areas with limited to no observation assets. In some instances, other government agencies are also collecting data; however, this data is not available to other interested parties due to a lack of awareness, software compatibility, or collaboration. What are the effective techniques for identifying quantitative assessment criteria within an irregular warfare environment? What bias exists in assessments? How can SOF units collect data to drive measures of effectiveness? How does SOF best share information with other government agencies at the lowest levels? How can SOF optimize their assessments given constrained collection resources?

D. Interagency Issues

Topic Titles

- D1. Interoperability among international and United States' Special Operations Forces
- D2. Special Operations Support Teams and their role within the interagency
- D3. The SOF supporting role in whole-of-government approaches
- D4. Intelligence agencies and SOF collaboration: Past, present, and future
- D5. From the field to the beltway: Lessons on interagency reform
- D6. Interagency cooperation against violent extremist organization sustainment via the black market and grey economies

Topic Descriptions

D1. Interoperability among international and United States' Special Operations Forces

U.S. counterterrorism strategy focuses intensively on the development of partnerships with key nations in order to address transnational threats. As USSOF work alongside Special Operations Forces from partner nations, interoperability issues may arise, posing a potential risk to mission effectiveness and undermining the achievement of national security goals. What level of interoperability should USSOF have with international SOF, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Special Operations Forces? This research would identify the limits of interoperability and seek to understand potential scenarios in which such interoperability would be a security asset as well as, potentially, a security risk.

D2. Special Operations Support Teams and their role within the interagency

Special Operations Support Teams (SOSTs) are positioned at specific agencies. They are designed to be a direct liaison to USSOCOM as well as an outreach to theater special operations command (TSOC) and component commanders. While we have made significant progress

adding new members to some of the interagency organizations and have leveraged better communications between the agencies and the DOD, we are still falling short with developing a better relationship and understanding of what the wants and needs are from each community. How can our SOSTs be better implemented/managed to support our SOF? How can SOSTs more effectively coordinate with the Interagency Task Force (IATF) and other USSOCOM personnel involved in interagency activities? How can we build on these teams to better build relations and add knowledge management amongst the interagency? What are the main issues they face from developing an open line of communication with the organization they are supporting? What internal and external factors are contributing or not contributing to a whole-of-government approach?

D3. The SOF supporting role in whole-of-government approaches

Under a national counterterrorism strategy that emphasizes a whole-of-government approach and robust use of indirect activities, SOF will often play a supporting role in activities led by other U.S. Government agencies, especially the Department of State (DOS). What can or should be done to prepare SOF and USSOCOM to operate effectively in an interagency and DOS-led environment? Similarly, how can the interagency be better prepared to work with USSOCOM/SOF? Is there a need to develop an interagency operating concept, similar to the joint operating concept to more clearly articulate the processes and authorities of various interagency partners in order to increase integration? What role can/should professional development opportunities play in increasing integration?

D4. Intelligence agencies and SOF collaboration: Past, present, and future

The intelligence services and the military have long worked together in past conflicts. But the partnership has drawn particularly close in the campaigns in Afghanistan and Yemen. The operational tempo of the last 10 years has made difficult any assessment of the evolution of this relationship, and its impact on both SOF and the intelligence agencies. Such an assessment could also suggest future areas of cooperation and ways to enhance the partnership, while raising

any concerns that derive from the different legal authorities governing the organizations to their differing methods of operations. What legal authorities are affected by these changing and more cooperative relationships?

D5. From the field to the beltway: Lessons on interagency reform

A decade of conflict has forced greater cooperation among members of the interagency. Without deliberate changes that will effectively shift the institutional cultures and bureaucracies within interagency members this decade of cooperation will not lead to permanent effective institutional collaboration. Comparative analysis and evaluation across agencies could explain and clarify significant policy, operational, intelligence, and funding changes that have facilitated interagency cooperation. What institutional changes did cooperation drive within DOD, DOS, USAID, and the rest of the interagency? Which of these changes will be long lasting? Are there practices, policies, authorities, or structural changes that could further, or more effectively, shift key interagency institutions (DOS, USAID, Department of Homeland Security, DOD) to sustain better Interagency cooperation? Which examples of interagency cooperation are most at risk if institutional changes are not incorporated?

D6. Interagency cooperation against violent extremist organization sustainment via the black market and grey economies

A wide array of transnational violent extremist organizations are financially sustained by black market and grey market activities. Such activities include the sale and distribution of illegal drugs, human trafficking, sale of counterfeit goods, and a range of black market and smuggling activities. These activities sit at the nexus of criminal and terrorism activities and require a robust interagency response that often includes the Departments of Commerce and Treasury and the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). How can SOF improve collaboration with and shape their relationship with the Departments of Commerce and Treasury, the DEA and other government agencies in support of U.S. counterterrorism strategy?

E. Regional and Cultural Issues

Topic Titles

- E1. If we do not wage peace, we will be waging war: Prioritizing and preparing for SOF activities to shape the environment
- E2. Promoting language and cultural expertise
- E3. Programmatic approaches to building current and future regional capability
- E4. Cultural vampires: Why don't we see our own reflection?
- E5. China's SOF professionalization and regional implications
- E6. Countering insurgency in Pakistan
- E7. Building persistent cultural expertise and population engagement
- E8. Female Engagement Teams: Assessing the capability
- E9. The application and acquisition of cultural knowledge
- E10. Foreign professional military education institutions: Are they important for SOF diplomacy in future operations?

Topic Discussions

- E1. **If we do not wage peace, we will be waging war: Prioritizing and preparing for SOF activities to shape the environment**
Throughout the last 10 years almost all the prioritization lists that guide Special Operations Forces have been based on the threat present within nation-states. While threat-oriented approaches will remain important, there is an increasing recognition of the need to identify and potentially mitigate underlying conditions that may lead to conflict. Is this ounce of prevention really worth a pound of cure? Is it possible to implement this concept within a fiscally-constrained environment, and is SOF currently capable (i.e., trained, equipped, manned, and financed) to support such an endeavor? What measurements can be used to assess this effectiveness? What are the socio-cultural indicators of potential future conflict? What characteristics and trends, perhaps linked to continued globalization, may make some cultures and regions more likely to be the scene of conflict as globalization progresses? How might the intelligence community work in concert with other government agencies, academia, partner

nations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to produce supporting and predictive analysis for shaping an environment? What potential shaping efforts might SOF undertake to mitigate the potential for full-scale conflict in under/ungoverned areas and safe havens, and what analytical products might best support their efforts?

E2. Promoting language and cultural expertise

The current key and development job requirements for SOF operators leave little time for the acquisition of language and cultural expertise. Language and cultural expertise programs, including advanced degrees in regional studies, often involve a three to five year commitment. Yet completion of the programs offers marginal career advancement opportunities in traditional SOF career paths. How can SOF promote and incentivize language/cultural expertise programs without degrading the operator's competitiveness for rank and command assignments? What alternate command career pathways can SOF establish to keep these individuals within the organization? How could the manning and personnel management be modified to allow SOF operators to specialize in language and cultural expertise and be well positioned for future advancement and promotion? What are the factors associated with the current disconnect between the stated importance of language and cultural expertise for SOF missions and the negative impacts such training has on SOF career paths, and how might these factors be mitigated?

E3. Programmatic approaches to building current and future regional capability

The Services traditionally had a reactionary posture toward regional expertise. Vietnamese, Russian, and Romance language speakers may be in demand one decade, then less so the next when new threats emerge. After 9/11 the Services scrambled to develop Arabic, Pashto, Dari (and Farsi) and Urdu skills—how will they (and the AfPak Hands cadre) be treated by 2020? Despite the diversity within the United States, the Services are woefully short specialists for many key regions or countries. This is particularly true for Asian languages and the less commonly taught languages such as Yoruba, Swahili, and other African languages. What set of force (personnel) management

priorities makes sense over the long run to let us engage quickly and effectively with populations in regions that are not yet a national priority?

E4. Cultural vampires: Why don't we see our own reflection?

The U.S. national security community, which includes Special Operations Forces, often fails to understand how our own established narratives and cognitive frameworks prevent us from taking a critical view of ourselves. Despite a strong emphasis on learning about the cultural and social issues of other countries there is often little understanding of how other cultures see the United States and how they interpret U.S. actions. How have policies and operations been influenced by this failure to see how the U.S., U.S. forces, and SOF personnel are perceived? How can the development of the ability to see ourselves as others see us lead to more successful engagement with other cultures? How do SOF educate and encourage leaders, planners, and operators to critically analyze the U.S. and SOF from an outsider's perspective? Are formal Red Teams the only way to achieve this goal? What other actions could result in development of this ability?

E5. China's SOF professionalization and regional implications

China is moving from a large military traditionally composed of conscripts to smaller and more professionalized armed forces. What is the reason behind this transformation and its goals? How is this military transition and modernization affecting China's SOF and their capabilities? What are the implications of China's military transition for Taiwan's security? What potential SOF missions might China be preparing to conduct in Asia, and how might the United States counter their efforts?

E6. Countering insurgency in Pakistan

Because of its status as a nuclear power, the threat from insurgency and/or terrorism in Pakistan has significant regional and global implications. What approaches can be used to develop improved military to military and other diplomatic relations with Pakistan in order to counter the threat from insurgents and terrorists? How can geographical areas inside Pakistan that may serve as safe havens for

terrorists be identified? What measures can be taken to counter the threat of weapons of mass destruction falling into terrorist hands? How do terrorist organizations and insurgencies interact with, fight against, or gain support from Pakistan's government (or elements within it)? Which of these actions should be countered, and how?

E7. Building persistent cultural expertise and population engagement

In many different types of operations, relationships with the local population—both civilian and military—are central to mission success. In recognition of this, efforts toward building cultural awareness and 'cultural intelligence' capabilities within SOF have increased. Though the need to build personal relationships with the local population is recognized, there seems to be little continuity in retaining these relationships between rotations. This lack of continuity can lead to increasing disenchantment by the population as the benefits of relationship building never come to fruition. It can also lead to indifference and unwillingness to engage. What can be done to maximize the retention of socio-cultural information and relationships with locals between rotations? One suggestion is to have "practical" regional guidebooks that are based on interviews from the team in place and available for the next team before it arrives. Another possibility is to have overlap between the rotations. What are other potential solutions, and what are their pros and cons (i.e. practicality, cost, availability of resources, impact)?

E8. Female Engagement Teams: Assessing the capability

What are the roles, limits, and effectiveness of female SOF personnel employed in Cultural Support Teams (CSTs), or Female Engagement Teams (FETs) as part of Village Stability Operations in Afghanistan? Do these soldiers receive adequate training prior to deployment? Are there "common threads" of concern expressed by the personnel experienced in these activities that would suggest opportunities for improvement of this program (i.e. cultural, social, medical, or counseling training; equipment; funding; et cetera)? What has been the impact of these teams on the Afghan women? Are they adequately equipped and resourced to handle the challenges posed

by Afghan women (health, mental, social problems)? Are the impacts being made by these CSTs/FETs indicative of requisite U.S. military doctrinal changes? Should such teams be established earlier in future U.S. operations in foreign lands?

E9. The application and acquisition of cultural knowledge

When Western militaries think of cultural knowledge (or cross-cultural competencies), which is the ability to recognize the shared beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors of a group of people and, most importantly, apply this knowledge toward a specific goal, they tend to focus this analysis on the “enemy” and “host nation” domains. One of the problems with this approach is that the population is a key center of gravity in COIN and other operations. Should cultural intelligence be applied in this domain as well? How can cultural intelligence be utilized when working with other government agencies, nongovernment organizations, and key partner nations? Are there other areas where cultural intelligence becomes important? How are these domains/areas related to each other? What is more beneficial to teach: culture general or culture specific knowledge? How should this subject be taught?

E10. Foreign professional military education institutions: Are they important for SOF diplomacy in future operations?

Foreign professional military education (FPME) institutions have been viewed as a venue for SOF to promote our way of life and facilitate relationship building in countries and regions of interest. These institutions are also thought of as a direct way to enhance our SOF community’s regional and cultural expertise and create a better “SOF Diplomat.” What are the actual connections these FPME institutions have on our diplomacy in foreign countries? Is there a direct correlation with SOF attending one of these institutions and being viewed more positively or negatively to that particular country’s interest over time?

F. USSOCOM and SOF Issues

Topic Titles

- F1. Thickening the force: General purpose force roles and preparation for supporting SOF
- F2. Does USSOCOM need global authorities in order to effectively fight the global combating terrorism mission?
- F3. Persistent engagement in noncombat theaters
- F4. What should USSOCOM's role be in security cooperation?
- F5. Talent management: Global assignments for SOF
- F6. SOF personnel advancement, retention, and career development
- F7. Maritime SOF operations
- F8. Force structure balance
- F9. SOF and technology
- F10. Stopping the unauthorized transfer of SOF tactics, techniques, and procedures
- F11. Afghanistan: 2014 and beyond

Topic Descriptions

F1. Thickening the force: General purpose force roles and preparation for supporting SOF

The drawdown of conventional forces in Iraq and Afghanistan combined with an expansion of SOF globally is likely to increase in operations tempo for SOF rather than decrease it. To help mitigate the increased pressure on SOF, what are appropriate and feasible roles for GPF support to SOF? What specialized training or equipment is required for GPF to support or augment SOF, and how can the SOF Force Generation initiative introduced in SOF doctrine be advanced? How will GPF be selected, trained, and resourced to support SOF? What organization will conduct the training? Are there legal and funding constraints associated with GPF support to SOF? Research can be approached from a philosophical or functional perspective rather than a force-centric perspective.

F2. Does USSOCOM need global authorities in order to effectively fight the global combating terrorism mission?

Since 9/11, under Title 10, USSOCOM has provided SOF to the theater geographic combatant commanders for them to employ in military operations and security cooperation missions within their areas of responsibility, yet USSOCOM maintains responsibility for synchronizing the global effort against terrorist organizations. As we move away from active theaters of major combat and into smaller more spread out IW engagements, is this the most efficient use of SOF? How does USSOCOM coordinate a global counterterrorism campaign plan? USSOCOM's experience as a force provider in the war on terror provides a unique opportunity to examine the adequacy of the Title 10 service-like responsibilities and authorities of the command. What issues and problems have emerged? What has worked well? Where have responsibilities and authorities not been adequate for the demands placed on SOF? What additional service-like authorities should or should not be given to USSOCOM? Should USSOCOM become a separate, fifth Service with responsibilities and authority for assignment of personnel, promotion, all training and education, and special pay entitlements? Is a change to the Unified Campaign Plan the answer? Why or why not? Should the Secretary of Defense support legislative changes in order to consolidate and streamline authorities and funding for SOF? If so, which ones?

F3. Persistent engagement in noncombat theaters

How can SOF develop persistent engagement or presence in non-combat theaters? What is the appropriate footprint for SOF to have in these environments? Will a large overt footprint hinder the legitimacy of the host nation government, or will a small footprint be too risky? How can SOF tailor packages to specific regional areas with respect for resourcing and cultural sensitivities? What is the best way to develop "left of zero" awareness in emerging threat environments? Unlike current episodic theater security cooperation plan events, could persistent presence truly develop regional or country specific expertise (to include language and cultural familiarity)? Could SOF conduct episodic engagement through accompanied deployments? What would the implications be of moving operators and

their families to noncombat theaters for extended periods? Instead of episodic 30-120 day deployments, would deploying operators and their families to regionally focused areas for two to three years be more advantageous? Would this also reduce stress on the force and their families?

F4. What should USSOCOM's role be in security cooperation?

Providing capabilities to enable partner nations the ability to conduct the wide spectrum of special operations requires a disciplined approach to research, development, fielding, and sustainment. Should USSOCOM restructure its security cooperation role? Should USSOCOM manage and execute its own security cooperation budget in tandem with Theater Combatant Command budgets? Should a USSOCOM security cooperation officer be placed in embassies alongside component security cooperation officers? As USSOCOM extends its engagement with Four and Five Eye countries and continues to mature relationships with NATO SOF Headquarters member nations as well as other focus countries, what should USSOCOM's long range strategy of end goals and objectives be for each of these relationships?

F5. Talent management: Global assignments for SOF

In taking SOF global by expanding interagency and foreign assignments for SOF personnel, how do these assignments affect personnel advancement and career development? Are SOF career paths able to properly accommodate for multiple interagency and exchange tours in ways that don't negatively impact advancement or even retention? Do SOF career paths allow for the time to educate personnel properly for these assignments? Will these tours diminish or enhance operator skills? Should USSOCOM pursue multiple-track career options for SOF such as a SOF liaison or a SOF-specific foreign area officer program? Should this apply to both the noncommissioned and officer corps?

F6. SOF personnel advancement, retention, and career development

What are the effects of service professional military education (PME) requirements dwell time and non-traditional tours on the

advancement, retention, education, and further development of SOF personnel? Can this be measured properly to capture effects? If not, what policy, legislation, or even service doctrine need to change to accommodate an appropriate measurement? Dependent on the priorities for SOF, how can individual services capture these requirements in advancement, command, and milestone selection? How can USSOCOM better influence services to capture these requirements and influence the services to implement? Human resource policies vary widely between the services, and DOD incentives have not been implemented equally across the services, so while one service requires schooling for advancement, another service penalizes service members for leaving the tactical or operational fight. The administration of PME is service specific. As the Services manage a reduction of end-force strength, PME slots will become even more difficult to acquire for some service members. Should USSOCOM have a larger say in service-sponsored PME for SOF?

F7. Maritime SOF operations

Examine the future of full-spectrum SOF operations conducted from the sea. What types of operations can be optimized for sea-basing? In what operations can we expect SOF to be in the supporting or supported role? What revised relationship does USSOCOM need with the Department of the Navy? What operational relationships are required between each Combined Force Maritime Component Command and respective TSOC? Does the U.S. Navy have the proper inventory (ships, submarines, even aviation units) to support these operations? What capabilities does this inventory currently have, and what else is needed? Which Navy and Marine units should habitually support maritime SOF operations? How do we maintain this habitual support in the current budget environment? Who should budget these units that provide habitual support?

F8. Force structure balance

Given the challenges of the 21st century and recent policy and strategy decisions, how well structured are SOF? What are the strengths and shortfalls of current and proposed force structures? Are there vulnerabilities and risks? What is the best way forward?

F9. SOF and technology

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated that technology has both helped and hurt the outcome. What is the role of technology for Special Operations? When does it become counter-productive to the outcome? Can an analysis of USSOCOM and SOF component acquisition mechanisms against strategic needs determine whether there is a disconnect? Is there a gap between what we say and what we do? What potential mismatches exist between the introduction of U.S. weapon systems to foreign countries by SOF, and the ability of those countries to take full advantage of and sustain those systems? Can USSOCOM partner with U.S. industry to deliver inexpensive solutions for partner nations to self sustain? Should the U.S. and SOF continue acquisition of foreign systems such as Russian built weapons and aircraft for partner nation use? What changes in USSOCOM's strategic planning and technology development and exploration programs need to be implemented to ensure game changing or revolutionary technologies can be realized? What types of human performance driven research should be explored? Are there other options to develop host nation industry solutions for defense?

F10. Stopping the unauthorized transfer of SOF tactics, techniques, and procedures

The unauthorized and sometimes intentional illicit transfer of SOF-specific tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) is a concern for USSOCOM. Private military companies hire former SOF personnel to teach, train, advise, and even assist foreign nations' SOF on the intricacies of executing various SOF missions. Some of the TTPs transferred are sensitive and unique, and in some cases, were the deciding factor between mission success and failure. SOF TTPs are a target for exploitation by domestic commercial interests in addition to hostile foreign governments. What types of counter-exploitation policies/programs are in place to mitigate the unauthorized transfer of these TTPs? What organizations and resources are available to oversee this type of program? Who is responsible for oversight, and what are the sanctions and penalties for the unauthorized release of sensitive TTPs?

F11. Afghanistan: 2014 and beyond

As the U.S. military draws down in Afghanistan, what national security challenges will remain? What organizations will pose the greatest threat to U.S. interests as the drawdown is executed? Should the drawdown occur in phases, or what actions can SOF take now to prepare for success as the conventional forces prepare to depart?

G. Topics Retained from Previous Years

Topic Titles

- G1. National cost threshold when defeating terrorist networks
- G2. Comprehensive approaches: Sharing the security burden globally
- G3. Comprehensive approaches: Developing better national strategies
- G4. Embedding full-time Special Operations Liaison Officers in select embassies
- G5. Importance of socio-cultural understanding in combating terrorism
- G6. Influencing public attitudes in different cultures and societies
- G7. Preempting and preventing insurgencies
- G8. SOF roles and missions in an unstable Middle East
- G9. Bridging the DOD-nongovernmental organization divide
- G10. SOF aviation: Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems
- G11. What are the appropriate metrics for DOD to assess irregular warfare operations?
- G12. Leveraging academic support for Special Operations

Topic Descriptions

G1. National cost threshold when defeating terrorist networks

One of the objectives attributable to al-Qaeda is the desire to economically bankrupt the United States. If this is true, it is an objective that has not yet been achieved. Nonetheless, the United States and its allies have suffered losses of blood and treasure and have made vast expenditures in security precautions and counterterrorism activities to defeat the terrorism network. Expenditures have been made by both the public and private sectors. Various estimates of a “true cost” have been postulated in terms of actual dollar and opportunity costs, but single analysis has brought together the qualitative and quantitative metrics to provide a basis for judging a cost threshold of where the objective might be realized. Moreover, national will is another cost threshold; it is not just about dollars. What are the costs currently attributed to the current level of efforts in counterterrorism security and operations worldwide? How is or should this burden be shared?

What does the U.S. spend? Which of these costs are sunk costs—that is, would be expended anyway as a part of any security paradigm? How much effort and money can the United States afford to expend over what timeframe for successful counterterrorism? How are U.S. funds and efforts best used? What should the U.S. spend to support partner nations in establishing/improving their counterterrorism organizations and efforts?

G2. Comprehensive approaches: Sharing the security burden globally

Iraq and Afghanistan, threats of potential conflicts, and increased instability exceed the costs of what American taxpayers can reasonably be expected to support. Contributions of friends and allies in Afghanistan in a comprehensive approach have helped. Nonetheless, United States security capacity is strained by increasing commitments. Is a new global security paradigm possible based on a comprehensive approach? What is a comprehensive approach, and what are the scenarios it may support? For example, from a U.S. perspective, can we delegate more of the counterterrorism, nation building/peace-keeping/FID operations to others? Can the North Atlantic treaty Organization and the United Nations take more of the security burden in various regions/states? If so, what are the plausible scenario implications for SOF? What are the measures of capability on the host nation to assume the responsibility?

G3. Comprehensive approaches: Developing better national strategies

Many countries struggle in the development of their national strategies. Yet, legitimate state actors that have evolved good processes for strategic appraisals and strategy formulation invariably pursue strategies that complement U.S. interests rather than oppose them. How can the SOF community help other nations understand strategy formulation better and gain a better appreciation for whole of government and comprehensive approaches to local, regional, and global security and stability issues? Do SOF warriors understand national strategy and strategy development? Do SOF warriors know and understand the concepts of Internal Defense and Development (IDAD)? Where

does SOF teach our Captains how to appreciate and develop strategy? Does the interagency and military leadership (not just SOF) understand IDAD? Should there be a national executive agent for IDAD? Where does SOF fit best as a tool to support IDAD?

G4. Embedding full-time Special Operations Liaison Officers in select embassies

SOCOM is developing Special Operations Liaison Officers (SOLOs) for assignment with partner nation SOF headquarters overseas. Should SOCOM have full-time SOLOs embedded in the country teams at U.S. embassies in countries with critical SOF operations? What would be the purpose and role of such SOLOs? What role justifies placement of a full-time SOLO at an embassy as opposed to what military attaches or security cooperation officers do currently? What would be the specific duties of a SOLO, and how would they differ from other U.S. military personnel assigned to an embassy? What are the diplomatic, legal, and bureaucratic requirements? Are there professional development implications? Should SOF heavily participate in respective Service Foreign Area Officer programs or develop a parallel SOF-specific career track? Should there be language, country experience, and rank requirements? Do we have the resources/manpower to execute this idea?

G5. Importance of socio-cultural understanding in combating terrorism

Understanding culture has been an area of training and tactical emphasis for SOF warrior-diplomats since the beginning of Special Forces. Improvements in cultural understanding at the tactical and interpersonal level have been useful, but insufficient. Success requires an understanding of both culture and society and how they interrelate. Individual cultures, tribes, civil and religious structure and organizations, economic structure and activities, and governance structure and practices are all part of the tapestry of a nation. How do we need to think holistically and strategically about societies and cultures? What disciplines are available to aid SOF in thinking about cultures and societies, and how can they inform us? What paradigms are available to help us understand the complexity and

nature of intercultural interactions? What are the implications of what is known and what is not known at this time? How can SOF use this knowledge or improve on it? How does enhanced cultural awareness impact SOF operations? What is the linkage between the U.S. and Host Nation End State and cultural understanding?

G6. Influencing public attitudes in different cultures and societies

The U.S. military effort to assist earthquake victims in Pakistan changed public attitudes in regard to the United States favorably, if only briefly. How foreign public attitudes shift and change is poorly understood or responded to by United States agencies. What research has been done in regard to foreign public attitudes and how they are shaped and changed? What are the dynamics of these shifts, and why does the U.S. fail to anticipate, avoid, or gain advantage from them? What insights can SOF gain from this research? Does it confirm or conflict with what SOF now believes or acts on?

G7. Preempting and preventing insurgencies

The Iraq and Afghanistan experience reinforces the old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Explore the possibility that through strategic assessment, U.S. assets could identify where insurgencies might occur and take preemptive actions or preventive measures to preclude them or mitigate their consequences. What are the metrics for an assessment and the decision to act? What types of missions might be used? What are the metrics for success? What risks are involved? Considering all this, how would SOF assets be used in these circumstances? How do you convince the host nation it has a problem, and then how does the Embassy/SOF team approach the problem?

G8. SOF roles and missions in an unstable Middle East

Recent instability in numerous Middle Eastern countries presents challenges and opportunities to the U.S. in the global order. However, these opportunities do not promise to be easy, and failure will create more challenges to the world community. U.S. interests are best served if modernity occurs and arrives in the least painful way for the populations involved. Where on the spectrum of conflict might these

transitions occur? How can they be moved closer to stability? What are the likely SOF roles and missions as this process unfolds. How can SOF contribute to the reshaping of these societies in ways that are not contrary to the interests of the United States and the indigenous populations? How does Special Operation Forces collaborate with its European allies to have a positive impact on these nations? What risks are involved? Who leads the effort?

G9. Bridging the DOD-nongovernmental organization divide

There is an existing history of NGO aversion to cooperation and identification with U.S. military forces. Yet, military professionals and NGO professionals share much in common in regard to values and commitment. And, increasingly they share the same operational space. More recently, some members of the NGO community have begun to question their aversion, and the military has developed a new appreciation for what NGOs can do to help in fragile states. Should we further bridge the DOD-NGO divide, and if so, how? What are the reasons for the divide? What are the advantages and disadvantages of greater cooperation? Where does it make sense, and where is it not appropriate? Are there ways to facilitate shared operational space issues? Are there doctrinal precepts? What are they? What are the mechanisms of bridging—for example, doctrine, education, and structural? Are there unique SOCOM roles and responsibilities in regard to NGOs? What are possibilities and the pros and cons of SOF working with NGOs?

G10. SOF aviation: Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UASs) have provided enhanced capabilities to address a variety of operational requirements. The purpose of this study is to explore the utility of employing UAS assets to support irregular warfare operations. How can multi-mission UASs assist in nontraditional environments? What specific capabilities can UASs bring to irregular warfare activities? Which irregular warfare strategies and tasks are appropriate for UASs? Identify specific employment profiles for using UASs in irregular warfare situations. Consider such missions as humanitarian relief operations, civil affairs, disaster

response and the resulting hybrid threats they may impose on COIN and irregular warfare operations.

G11. What are the appropriate metrics for DOD to assess irregular warfare operations?

The measurement of success in irregular warfare operations is extremely difficult because of the absence of “cookie-cutter” solutions to address any given situation and the need to develop specific metrics on a case-by-case basis. This study tackles the challenge of determining how irregular warfare operations can be viewed as effects-based when existing measurements of success are so rudimentary. Active engagement with academia and the application of assessment and analysis tools already used by social scientists can greatly assist in irregular warfare evaluation efforts. Contrast the need for an “inside out” assessment model that considers people, adversaries, and environmental perspectives with the traditional U.S. “outside in” approach. How do we arrive at data baselines against which to measure effectiveness? How do we measure the impact of irregular warfare activities (beyond killing the terrorists) in achieving geographic combatant command, DOD, and national strategic goals? What is the measurement of effect(s) for FID in terms of partner preparedness vs. SOF relationship building? What are the lines of operation for other SOF activities, and how can those measurements be captured? How do we define success, and how do we measure it? How do we measure “good enough?” How do we assess when no action is better than action that, though successful, may result in huge strategic costs? What are the time horizons across which we should measure?

G12. Leveraging academic support for Special Operations

The SOF community, in the form of Office of Strategic Services, was an innovator in the recruiting and use of academic specialists—for example, anthropologists, political scientists, historians, and linguists—to advance irregular warfare initiatives. Support in the early days was typically enthusiastic. While productive relationships have continued to some extent, recent years have seen far less enthusiasm in academia for defense and security interaction. Sometimes the response is outright rejection and hostility. In a 2008 effort to

reinvigorate what decades earlier had been productive relationships, former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates oversaw the development of what was called the Minerva Consortia. This initiative included academic outreach and a number of programs that included the creation and deployment of Human Terrain Teams, document exploitation for key areas of interest to both scholars and military planners, religious and ideological studies, and other applications of history, anthropology, sociology, and evolutionary psychology expertise residing in U.S. universities. Some of these programs, however, particularly the Human Terrain Teams under U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command management, have proven controversial in academia and in reviews of implementation and effectiveness. While SOF has its own priorities and approaches, concepts for leveraging academic support for special operations should be considered in light of such controversies and problem areas. This study addresses how SOF can most productively use expertise found in U.S. universities and academic research centers to advance SOF knowledge, skills, initiatives, and operations. It will consider concepts, approaches, specific activities and programs, and the overall nature, appropriateness, and potential of academic/university relationships.

