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Professional Military Education for United States Army Special Operations Forces

by Bradford Burris

***Editor's Note:** This essay is part one of a three-part conversation on a way of professional military education (PME) reform for Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF). Subsequent conversations will follow weekly.*

Introduction

One way to educate United States Army Special Operators is by allowing organizational design and individual competencies to form the nucleus of a professional military education curriculum routinely evaluated against assessment variables such as the emerging strategic context, the requests of Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOC) or other customer units, and the feedback of deployed operators. This essay recommends an Army Special Operations Command-focused educational development process applicable to the career-long education and utilization of Special Forces, Civil Affairs, and Psychological Operations professionals.

To make these recommendations, I consider why the organizational structure of the Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) should differ from that of their General Purpose Forces counterparts and identify the expected ARSOF mission set for the next twenty years as well as the professional competencies required to execute this expected mission set. I then offer a series of suggestions for how the recommended changes could be implemented.

Unlike the majority of academic thought papers that analyze and present data in a dry and mechanistic fashion, this essay presents several ideas for consideration utilizing the literary medium of fiction. The characters used to convey the ideas herein are figments of my imagination; any relationship to any actual former or future special operator is purely unintentional. What you take away from the following pages will depend on your desire to infer practical concepts from the nascent thoughts presented by members of the USASOC PME working group that, while it does not exist in reality, you will nonetheless find hard at work in the following paragraphs.

Sometime in the not so distant future at Fort Bragg, NC...

The principal goal of education is to create men who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done.

-Jean Piaget (1896–1980) Swiss cognitive psychologist

CG: Hey DCO, you're never going to believe this; come in here and shut the door.

DCO: What's going on sir?

CG: The General Purpose Forces (GPF) and Special Operations Command (SOCOM) are both on the same page at the same time. Look at these documents:

We find compelling evidence that the U.S. Army's officer Corps will be unequal to future demands unless substantive management changes are made. Perhaps the most obvious risk indicator is the Army's persistent and substantial gap in mid-career officers.¹

Ok, so that's what the Strategic Studies Institute is putting out. Now, take a look at this excerpt from the 2010 SOCOM strategy that was just published:

The Operator is the platform upon which all other systems must orient . . . This operator is the building block and foundation of teams and units encompassing USSOF specialists including intelligence, logistics, and communications, as well as other essential functions. . . . In order to realize the vision, the right collection of operational, technical, and intellectual capabilities, capacities, and authorities are essential to enable the Operator to execute potential mission sets across the core activities.²

What's your take DCO?

DCO: Sir, I think we are going to see professional military education (PME) become the hot topic for the next few years. I also think that this is something we should weigh in on early so we can shape the Army's point of view because the GPF provide a large portion of the PME ARSOF officers receive.

CG: Why don't you form a small working group to conduct a literature survey, see what the prevailing thoughts on ARSOF PME currently are, and send me your findings? Your primary task is to determine if our way of doing business requires any change in order to better resource our people. I am very interested to see if we need to make any changes to the way our people are educated and, if so, what changes you recommend. I want you to consider the capacity of our people to operate effectively across the entire spectrum of conflict, from conducting direct action

¹ Wardynski et al., *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: A Proposed Human Capital Model Focused upon Talent* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009), v.

² United States Special Operations Command, *U.S. Special Operations Command Strategy 2010* (Tampa, 2009), 1.

missions through supporting humanitarian operations, to performing support and stability operations in conjunction with non-military and non-governmental organizations. I am not convinced that it is humanly possible for us to develop and manage a pool of ARSOF talent that can adequately execute our entire mission set all the time. That said, make sure you look at our current core missions and see if they will still be relevant as ARSOF missions in the future. I also want you to look at the educational competencies required by the ARSOF mission set and see what you think about creating specialists versus generalists within ARSOF. Review the ARSOF training and development model and see if it needs amending to better educate our people to get the job done.

In fact, I have a list of specific questions that I'd like your group to address. The overarching question is: how should we enhance ARSOF professional education to ensure our units can successfully execute the missions of the next 20 years? The three underlying questions that get at the heart of this big question are:

1. Why should the organizational structure of the ARSOF community differ from that of the GPF?
2. To execute our expected mission set, what type of professional competencies does the ARSOF community need?
3. How could we structure an ARSOF education system to provide our professionals with the competencies that you identify?

I also want you to limit the size and scope of your working group. I do not see any need to involve anyone outside this headquarters; the people in our subordinate units certainly have their plates full with current operations. My final request is that I want you to scale your research in a particular way. I want you to focus on Special Forces, Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs folks. I do not want you to focus your attention on the Rangers or the 160th pilots; the regimental commanders are working a separate plan for me regarding their people. Touch base with me before you head out for the day and propose whom you think should be in the working group.

DCO: Roger sir, I got it.

To: CG, USASOC
From: DCO, USASOC
Subject: PME Working Group

Sir,

These people will comprise the PME working group we discussed earlier today:

ARSOF Duty Position	Rank	Bona Fides
Deputy Intelligence Officer Intel	LTC	4 yrs MI basic branch 11 yrs SF experience
Aide de Camp ADC	MAJ	4 yrs FA basic branch 9 yrs SF experience
Clinical Psychologist Doc	MAJ	8 yrs enlisted CA experience
Operations Sergeant Ops	SFC	14 yrs SF experience

We will conduct our initial research, show you our data, and recommend ways ARSOF could proceed given the information we find.

V/R
DCO

To: DCO, USASOC
From: CG, USASOC
Subject: RE: PME Working Group

Looks good DCO, execute!

CG

ARSOF Organizational Structure

ADC: Let's begin our research by comparing the organizational designs and cultures of ARSOF and GPF. I think organizational design is one of the most important, yet underutilized analytical tools in the Army and I agree with LTG(R) Dubik who says:

Even the best people will be constrained—perhaps driven out—by poor organizational structures and cultures. We all live and operate within an organizational context. An organization's climate affects the contributions of individuals and the achievement of the common mission.³

INTEL: How will organizational design help us prove that our guys should be different from GPF guys? From my perspective, we are organized just like the GPF: they have companies, we have companies; they have regiments, we have groups. Isn't that about as different as it gets?

ADC: No sir, I don't think it is that simple. It is true that our organizational nomenclature and infrastructure are similar, but "a great many problems in organizational design stem from the assumption that organizations are all alike: mere collections of component parts to which

³ LTG (R) James M. Dubik, "Preparing for Your Future and That of the U.S. Army," *Army Magazine*, (2010), <http://www.ansa.org/publications/armymagazine/archive/january2010/Pages/Preparing%20for%20Your%20Future%20and%20That%20of%20the%20U.S.%20Army.aspx>

elements of structure can be added and deleted at will, a sort of organizational bazaar.”⁴ What makes us different is the fact that ARSOF is an organization comprised of adhocracies while the GPF much more closely resemble professional bureaucracies.

DOC: OK, you gentlemen are going to have to work with me for a bit. Help me understand the difference between professional bureaucracies and adhocracies before we get into a discussion of how they apply to Army units and soldiers.

ADC: Not a problem Doc, my last company commander graduated from the Naval Postgraduate School and structured a company professional development program around the things he learned out there. I saved the design slide he gave us and I just pulled it up on my Blackberry. You guys pass it around and take a look. While you are reading the slide, please keep in mind that the distinctions between the two organizational structures, the naming conventions, and the definitions are not mine, and that the slide is a conglomeration of ideas taken from world-renowned organizational theorist Dr. Henry Mintzberg.⁵



Figure One. Organizational Design

DOC: Got it.

⁴ Henry Mintzberg, “Organizational Design: Fashion or Fit?” *Harvard Business Review* (1981): 2.

⁵ The Mintzberg ideas, drawn from his *Organizational Design: Fashion or Fit?* and seminar notes taken during Dr. Erik Jansen’s Spring 2009 Naval Postgraduate School class titled “Organizational Design for Special Operations,” are presented here to provide a basic understanding of the differences between professional bureaucracies and adhocracies. The distinctions are not comprehensive; however, they provide the reader with the requisite knowledge for following this chapter’s argument.

ADC: OK, I see why ARSOF units need to be adhocracies; because we generally deploy as relatively small teams, we do a good job reacting swiftly to change and adapting well to changing environments. What really constrains GPF from reacting and adapting in the same manner is not a lack of any specific ability, it is a function of their organization. The real value of ARSOF's organization as an adhocracy is that the sum of the parts is greater than the whole, which is directly attributable to our ability to organize operational teams according to anticipated mission requirements. The major difference between GPF and us is that SF, CA, and PSYOP teams have flexible organizational structures and cultures and "nothing ever seems to get done without everyone talking to everyone else. Ambiguity abounds, giving rise to all sorts of conflicts and political pressures. Adhocracy can do no ordinary thing well. But it is extraordinary at innovation."⁶

I think one of the strengths of the ARSOF community requiring revitalization in accordance with our original charter is our innovative style of conducting non-standard missions without detracting from the GPF's ability to continue honing their core competencies. The delineation between GPF and ARSOF is not "either-or," it is "yes, and." Both organizations have specialty areas and, in some cases, our areas will overlap either by design or by necessity. The key to determining why our organizational structure should differ from the GPF is to remember why we were created and to determine what our history means for our future.

INTEL: I think I can help with the ARSOF background data that we will need to frame our discussion. I had to write an information paper about ARSOF history last year at Fort Leavenworth and present it to my small group. Why don't we break for lunch and you guys can read it and tell me if it is relevant at 1300.

The history of Army Special Operations Forces is rooted in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). World War II OSS veterans Colonels Aaron Bank and Russell Volckmann were the vanguard that brought ARSOF into existence and their reason for establishing ARSOF elements is generally described this way:

Special operations, as envisioned by the two men, and by Bank in particular, were a force multiplier: a small number of soldiers who could sow a disproportionately large amount of trouble for the enemy. Confusion would reign among enemy ranks and objectives would be accomplished with an extreme economy of manpower.⁷

Bank and Volckmann received a helping hand from Secretary of the Army Frank Pace who, in 1951, pressured the Army General Council to create the Office of the Chief of Psychological Warfare (OCPW).⁸ As the first leader of OCPW, Brigadier General Robert McClure recruited WWII veterans with considerable experience in guerrilla warfare and with operating behind enemy lines. McClure saw the need for a force capable of conducting special operations, and he

⁶ Mintzberg, "Organizational Design," 12.

⁷ Global Security, "Early Cold War Army Special Operations," *Global Security: Military*, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/arsoc-history3.htm>.

⁸ For detailed information regarding Secretary of the Army Frank Pace's impact on the creation of the OCPW, refer to Alfred H. Paddock Jr., "The Road to Fort Bragg," in *U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002).

accepted the view of OCPW's Special Operations Division Chief, Colonel Volkmann, that such missions should include:

1. Organization and conduct of guerrilla warfare
2. Sabotage and subversion
3. Evasion and escape
4. Ranger and Commando-like operations
5. Long-range or deep penetration reconnaissance
6. Psychological warfare⁹

Under the Congressional provisions of the Lodge Bill, McClure formed an OSS-like special unit comprised mainly of immigrants from Eastern Europe who were capable of training guerrilla armies in Soviet occupied areas, as well as conducting other unconventional operations deep inside enemy territory. Special Operation Forces morphed from their OSS roots into the modern form during America's involvement in Southeast Asia.

“With Operation White Star in Laos and the increasing requirements associated with the advisory mission in Vietnam, the need for ARSOF grew. By 1969, there were almost thirteen thousand men in seven Special Forces groups.”¹⁰ In the aftermath of the failed Iranian Hostage Rescue mission (1979) and the lessons learned from Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada (1983), Congress fought for and won an increased capability for all military special operations in general, and ARSOF in particular. On December 1, 1989, the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) took control of all ARSOF forces. Throughout their existence, ARSOF units have been organizations filled with professionals capable of operating independently or as small teams in order to conduct non-standard missions in complex environments.

DOC: Ok, I went over the history paper during lunch and I think I have a grasp of the organizational design requirements essential for ARSOF professionals. Let me give you my conclusions and you tell me if I understand the picture of ARSOF you are painting. First, because ARSOF teams conduct non-standard missions, they must maintain a tremendous amount of organizational flexibility such that the control mechanisms in one team may be completely unlike those in another team. Second, informal communication, both internal and external to the teams, is required to ensure mission accomplishment because teams that share organizational office space in garrison may conduct operations in completely different geographical and cultural areas when deployed. Finally, ARSOF teams routinely accomplish missions beyond the scope of many GPF elements due to their small size, unique skill set, and flexible operational acumen.

ADC: Doc, I think your conclusions along with the following statement regarding ARSOF organizational culture present an excellent justification for ARSOF elements being organized the way they are. The history of U.S. special operations forces is in many ways separate from that of American conventional military forces and has resulted in an organizational culture—values, beliefs, and perspective—distinct within the American military. Special operators fight a different kind of war. A war that often involves more training of other forces than fighting. A

⁹ Alfred H. Paddock Jr., *U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002).

¹⁰ Dick Couch, *Chosen Soldier: The Making of a Special Forces Warrior* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2007), 277.

war that frequently requires observation rather than attack. A war that pits a handful of special operators against large conventional forces. A war that is most likely to take place during peacetime, before and after military conflict, in an attempt to prevent crises or put things back together if war is unavoidable. Special operators know their history and see its effect on who they are today.¹¹

INTEL: Following the assertion that ARSOF fights a different kind of war to its logical conclusion, retired Major General Sidney Shachnow, a 32-year veteran of the Special Forces provides an excellent description of the type of professionals required to conduct ARSOF missions. Recalling his conversation with Shachnow, author Robert D. Kaplan writes: A Special Forces guy, Shachnow told me, has to be a lethal killer one moment and a humanitarian the next. He has to know how to get strangers who speak another language to do things for him. He has to go from knowing enough Russian to knowing enough Arabic in just a few weeks, depending on the deployment. We need people who are cultural quick studies. Shachnow was talking about a knack for dealing with people, almost a form of charisma. The right man will know how to behave in a given situation—will know how to find things out and act on them.¹²

Although Shachnow limited his comments to members of one component of the total ARSOF organization, I think we all agree that the same requirements are generally true of PSYOP and CA professionals.

OPS: Now that we have reviewed the type of organization that ARSOF is and where it came from, we need to spend some time explaining why ARSOF professionals should maintain these historical differences in support of whatever our country's future missions turn out to be.

INTEL: Interestingly enough, I recently completed a review of the United States Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) Joint Operating Environment (JOE) 2010 and the Chief of Staff of the Army's (CSA) article *The Army of the 21st Century* and I think these two documents provide a good discussion of the possible future operating contexts. I think we should rely heavily on the JOE and refrain from using ARSOF or SOCOM analysis so that we can avoid giving the CG assessments and recommendations open to criticism as ARSOF-centric, one-sided, or too narrow in scope.

ADC: Sir, I think that's wise. While you have the floor, I'd appreciate it if you would go ahead and frame the potential future operating environment for us.

INTEL: The part of the JOE that I found most interesting was the opening statement regarding the context of international interaction for the next twenty years. The JFCOM analysis is significantly different from most prognostications we see from Washington-based think tanks; JFCOM's analysis is that "despite serious challenges to international stability by unconventional powers using a variety of tools and methods, cooperation and competition among conventional

¹¹ Susan Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1997), 264.

¹² Robert D. Kaplan, "Supremacy by Stealth," *The Atlantic Monthly* (2003): 65.

powers will continue to be a primary operational context for the Joint Force for the next 25 years.”¹³

Even though intelligence analysis and prediction is certainly not a zero sum game, I think the JFCOM framing is important because it points to the fact that state-on-state warfare is a concept that is going to dominate international relations well into the future. Our military in general, and the land forces of the GPF in particular, must maintain the capability to win large-scale battles with overwhelming force. Understanding that the Army is America’s primary land-based fighting force, I don’t think the CSA’s assessment of the future operating environment puts as much emphasis as it should on maintaining a GPF force-on-force capability. I think the Army is pushing too hard to turn itself into an organization configured to conduct unconventional operations. The CSA seemed intent on tilting the focus of the GPF too far out of balance toward unconventional operations when he wrote:

Given the emerging security environment, the evolving character of conflict, and the Secretary of Defense’s vision of balance in our defense strategy, we see four roles for land forces in the 21st century: *prevail* in protracted counterinsurgency campaigns; *engage* to help other nations build capacity and to assure friends and allies; *support* civil authorities at home and abroad; *deter and defeat* hybrid threats and hostile state actors.¹⁴

I think it is probably wise for the Army to increase its ability to conduct what it terms “hybrid” or “irregular” warfare; I just don’t think it should do this at the expense of its conventional capability, which increasingly appears to be what the Army is doing. Too great a focus by the GPF on changing its organizational structure or its leader professional development program will create a situation in which we have a large GPF with a greatly degraded capacity to conduct conventional warfare. Further, transitioning a professional bureaucracy into an organization comprised of professionals capable of conducting effective irregular operations across all three levels of war would be a monumental undertaking requiring decades to complete.

Speaking of irregular warfare, in addition to the discussion of major state-on-state war, the JOE posits what I think is a crucial warning:

The second scenario of particular significance confronting the Joint Force is the failure to recognize and fully confront the irregular fight that we are in. The requirement to prepare to meet a wide range of threats is going to prove particularly difficult for American forces in the period between now and the 2030s. The difficulties involved in training to meet regular and nuclear threats must not push preparations to fight irregular war into the background, as occurred in the decades after the Vietnam War.¹⁵

In his discussion of the future operating environment, the CSA basically says that the structure of the GPF, as well as the traditional abilities of GPF professionals, requires an almost total restructuring. The following is General Casey in his own words.

¹³ United States Joint Forces Command, *The Joint Operating Environment 2010* (Suffolk, 2009), 38.

¹⁴ General George W. Casey Jr., “The Army of the 21st Century,” *Army Magazine* (October 2009): 26.

¹⁵ United States Joint Forces Command, *The Joint Operating Environment*, 62.

The future is not simply irregular warfare by nonstate actors—adversaries can be expected to use a full spectrum of options, including every political, economic, informational and military measure at their disposal. When combined with cultural and demographic factors, these measures will present U.S. military leaders with complex challenges that will require increasingly complex solutions. Hybrid threats necessitate hybrid solutions, and such solutions increasingly require military forces that are adaptive and versatile enough to function in a variety of situations against myriad threats with a diverse set of national, allied and indigenous partners.¹⁶ What I am trying to point out with this comparison between the CSA’s vision of the future and JFCOM’s analysis is that our future operating environment will be more complex than ever before in the history of our country.

I am fully aware that neither the analysis I read you nor my commentary is groundbreaking, but where I am going with this line of discussion is to an assessment of what JFCOM and the GPF see as the type of professional required to conduct operations in our future operating context. Published in November 2009, *A Leader Development Strategy (ALDS) for a 21st Century Army*, is the CSA-approved guidance for leader development. “The ALDS builds on an accrual of skills, at each level and over time, to prepare leaders for increased responsibility. It is important to note that any development model we pursue must be built on a foundation of **lethality** [sic] as the unique capability we deliver to the nation.”¹⁷ When compared to the CSA’s written statement from a month prior, this statement seems to place too great an emphasis on kinetic operations: “being versatile, expeditionary, agile, lethal, sustainable and interoperable are the defining qualities of a balanced Army.”¹⁸ The ALDS also appears mechanistic and too highly standardized when it delineates the Army’s professional expectations by virtue of rank.

For instance, here is a summary of the GPF’s expected proficiencies by leader grouping:

Our junior leaders must achieve and sustain mastery of mission essential weapons, equipment and systems. We want our junior level leaders to anticipate transitions within tactical operations and act upon opportunities. We want them to appreciate the complexity of the security environment in which they operate and have sufficient knowledge of geo-politics, culture, language, and information operations to recognize the need to consult experts.

Mid-grade leaders will possess self-awareness skills in order to come to grips with the reality that their subordinates possess individual proficiencies that exceed their own. We expect them to become masters of military science; those who display an inclination will become apprentices in operational art. . . . It is at this level that leaders begin to understand how their formations enable the work of the multitude of civilian organizations they will encounter outside the joint and coalition formation.

Senior leaders contribute to the development and implementation of national and geo-political strategy. They astutely manage complexity, and anticipate transitions at campaign level. They

¹⁶ Casey, *Army Magazine*, 28.

¹⁷ United States Department of the Army, “A Leader Development Strategy for a 21st Century Army,” Department of the Army, [https://atn.army.mil/media/docs/A%20Leader%20Development%20Strategy%20for%20an%20Expeditionary%20Army%2011%20SEP%2009%20\(Approved\).pdf](https://atn.army.mil/media/docs/A%20Leader%20Development%20Strategy%20for%20an%20Expeditionary%20Army%2011%20SEP%2009%20(Approved).pdf)

¹⁸ Casey, *Army Magazine*, 34.

embody the expertise and the wisdom within our Army. These leaders operate within the Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental and Multinational (JIIM) environment as a matter of routine and lead across those boundaries to advance national interests. They coordinate and synchronize combined operations with allied and coalition partners, interagency organizations, and a range of civilian organizations. They determine and deliver effects across the spectrum of conflict.¹⁹

DOC: It sounds to me like the Army's GPF comprise a professional bureaucracy attempting to change its design and culture while simultaneously adhering to the same hierarchical professional education system in place since the 1970s. Based on what you have provided us, I can't help but agree with Dr. Arthur T. Coumbe of the Strategic Studies Institute, who believes the Army's professional development system "subordinates intellectual and strategic astuteness to tactical and operational expertise."²⁰

OPS: Yeah Doc, my major problem is with the GPF leader development strategy as well. What these guys describe as the desired endstate for senior leaders is exactly what we expect of the people on our detachments and teams. ARSOF captains and staff sergeants are the ones who must be able to "coordinate and synchronize combined operations with allied and coalition partners, interagency organizations, and a range of civilian organizations."²¹ Our tactical level leaders are the ones who "determine and deliver effects across the spectrum of conflict."²² On the other hand, I think it is safe to assume that we expect our senior leaders to execute many of the tasks that the GPF assigns to those they call their entry-level leaders. Our Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) commanders, Theater Special Operations (TSOC) commanders, along with all our field grade commanders and senior level staff officers are people we need to "anticipate transitions within tactical operations . . . while they concurrently appreciate the complexity of the security environment in which they operate."²³ As force providing commanders, ARSOF field grade and senior leaders are the professionals who should "have sufficient knowledge of geo-politics, culture, language, and information operations to recognize the need to consult experts, which in many cases will be our junior professionals—those on our detachments and teams."²⁴

ADC: Gentlemen, I would summarize your discussion that ARSOF organizational structure should differ from that of GPF in the following manner: given their sheer personnel numbers and organizational missions, the GPF may still need a more routinized assembly-line approach to PME that takes place in stages and does not introduce strategy until the ranks of Lieutenant Colonel and Sergeant Major. We, on the other hand, choose to agree with Ohio State University Professor Emeritus Williamson Murray who recently gave the following testimony before a United States House of Representatives Subcommittee on Professional Military Education: Educating officers [and we believe NCOs] in stages has the consequence that producing a mind that is able to grasp the strategic level of war requires the transition to a broader understanding of

¹⁹ United States Department of the Army, "A Leader Development Strategy," 12–13.

²⁰ Arthur T. Coumbe, *Army Officer Development: Historical Context* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2010), 14.

²¹ United States Department of the Army, "A Leader Development Strategy," 13.

²² *Ibid.*, 13.

²³ United States Department of the Army, "A Leader Development Strategy," 12.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

conflict from their earlier conditioning. Not many manage that transition, which is why real strategists are so rare. Improving the analytic capabilities of officers [and NCOs] and teaching them how to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity should begin before commissioning [and at initial entry for enlisted professionals] and be pursued concurrently with training throughout the whole professional development process.²⁵

DOC: As I listened to your summary, I sketched out this graphic to highlight the differences between the CSA's view as outlined in the ALDS and our ARSOF-specific assessment of human capital development.

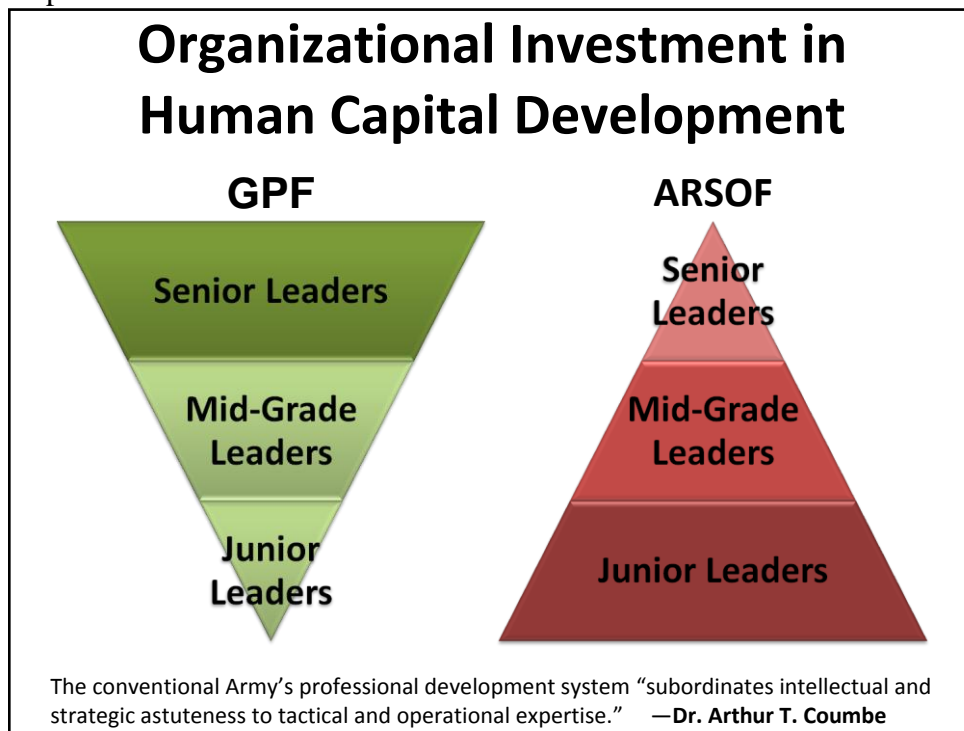


Figure Two. Human Capital Development

INTEL: I like how our argument is shaping up and I think we should include a discussion of how lessons learned impact GPF versus how they impact the ARSOF community. For our purposes, it might be helpful to frame the discussion with an analogy from the world of construction. Concerning organizational design and culture, the GPF typically uses “lessons learned” to rebuild its organizations while ARSOF organizations generally approach fixing themselves from a remodeling perspective. In many cases, rebuilding is useful and appropriate but it is also very costly. Rebuilding requires the investment of large amounts of time and human capital, and it has a significant impact on operational capacity. The relationship between rebuilding an organization and that organization’s ability to impact current operations are zero sums. Simply stated, to the degree that GPF focus on rebuilding; they have a diminished ability to project power and affect current operations. In contrast to the conventional process of using lessons learned to drive massive restructuring, ARSOF organizations typically adhere to the

²⁵ Williamson Murray, *Transcript of testimony before the House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Professional Military Education* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2009), 9.

principle of making incremental changes based on a holistic assessment of their organizational “fit” within the operational environment.

ADC: I hear you arguing that GPF seek to change the context based on lessons learned while ARSOF organizations seek to influence and then control the context by working through the local people responsible for managing the context.

OPS: Sir, that’s exactly what I am hearing and I wholeheartedly agree. I think the handling of the Civilian Irregular Defense Corps (CIDG) program during Vietnam provides a good historical example of this. The CIDG plan was “the centerpiece of the U.S.-sponsored internal development effort in Vietnam . . . to create support among the peasants and cut off that same population as a source of support for the Viet Cong.”²⁶ Author Thomas K. Adams describes the GPF’s plan to change the context in Vietnam with the CIDG program in the following manner: The CIDG militia units were the essential element of the program, since without military protection, the Viet Cong would simply seize control. These self-defense groups were to be established at the village level where they would pacify the immediate area, meaning they would keep Viet Cong elements out of the village, patrol the local area and defeat or expel any Viet Cong units encountered. The pacified areas surrounding CIDG area development camps were to be integrated into the already existing national strategic hamlet program.²⁷

The program, executed exclusively by SF soldiers, sought to influence rather than overtly change the prevailing context by establishing “the first grass-roots intelligence system to collect detailed, systematic information on the NLF (National Liberation Front) and the VC (Viet Cong). The SF teams simultaneously conducted numerous simple civil affairs programs.”²⁸ As the CIDG program became increasingly successful, the Army bureaucracy showed a:

building sentiment for getting SF and their CIDG soldiers out of the village-defense business and into the jungles chasing VC, and DOD [sic] actively sought to do just that. Thus began a theme that would be repeated over and over again. The SF would repeatedly train village-defense forces, only to see them marched off for conventional combat or diverted to other purposes.²⁹ The CIDG program lost most of its effectiveness, and the military leadership phased it out completely after its came under GPF control and its focus was shifted, thanks to external pressures. Taking into account the fact that the CIDG program’s initial success was due to SF’s ability to effectively work with and train Vietnamese forces, it is interesting to note that in less than a year, the CIDG program was halted. “The official U.S. Army Lessons Learned for 1965 recommended that additional emphasis be placed on training in basic infantry techniques and small unit tactics.”³⁰ What I find interesting about the story is the fact that the SF units involved with the CIDG program were successful because they were able to assess the situation without placing themselves inside the narrative unfolding in front of them.

²⁶ Thomas K. Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 83.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁹ Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare*, 87.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

In the second part of his book, Adams makes two points that I think are very applicable to our discussion. In addressing the success of the CIDG program before GPF took control, he writes that the CIDG was successful because of its adherence to the concept that “unconventional-warfare operators must be able to operate outside their own cultural milieu.”³¹ Adams goes on to note that “the Army Special Forces in Vietnam was able [sic] to attract such flexible persons, place them in appropriate positions and allow them the latitude to create their own jobs in the absence of useful doctrine or national policy.”³² In contrast, the GPF sought to change the existing social context in Vietnam by placing itself in the middle of the narrative and then attempted to restructure the environment to the Army’s liking. Adams describes a point of view that I think still applies to today’s GPF:

The dominance of the Army paradigm and its resulting puzzle solutions (the military-technical approach and the conventional model of warfighting) had important impacts on the prosecution of the war. Once the 1965 decision was made to introduce large numbers of U.S. troops, it was inevitable that the military effort, with its greater resources, would become the dominant influence on U.S. policy in Vietnam.³³

I think we should use Adams’ research to show, as an organization and regardless of the GPF’s educational curriculum, it will always make itself the central figure in a military campaign because it is organized as a professional bureaucracy. This is the opposite of ARSOF.

DOC: Now we need to address the one thing that we haven’t explicitly covered in our discussion thus far. What does the history of ARSOF portend for the future?

ADC: The relevance of our history to our future is that the Army specifically created ARSOF units as small flexible teams for two broad purposes. The first reason for creating ARSOF organizations as small scalable units was to enable them to train and conduct combined operations with foreign indigenous forces operating deep inside enemy territory. The second reason for ARSOF’s enduring organizational design is to provide the President of the United States with a force capable of conducting America’s special operations in such a fashion as to maximize strategic gains while simultaneously minimizing resource expenditures, collateral damage, unnecessary exposure, and unintended consequences. Many of the organizational and cultural changes discussed by the CSA have been part of ARSOF since their creation.

INTEL: Do the notions that emerging challenges “will require a fundamentally different Army from the one we had before 9/11,”³⁴ and that “the challenges of institutional change in large organizations like the Army are substantial, especially as we are adapting an organization that is already the best in the world at what it does”³⁵ hold any meaning for us?

ADC: I think those views are probably correct when applied to GPF, but I don’t think they hold anywhere other than maybe at the margins when applied to ARSOF units. Further, Mintzberg’s belief that “sometimes an organization’s management, recognizing the need for internal

³¹ Ibid., 146.

³² Ibid.

³³ Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare*, 147.

³⁴ Ibid., 30.

³⁵ Ibid., 40.

consistency, hives off a part in need of special treatment,”³⁶ but that “it is difficult to corner off a small component and pretend that it will not be influenced by the rest”³⁷ requires consideration.

INTEL: Based on everything that I have read, the GPF is attempting to revolutionize almost every aspect of its organization while simultaneously trying to inculcate many of the functional skills that have been the hallmark of ARSOF professionals since the era of Colonels Bank and Volckmann. I believe the GPF Forces have correctly realized that their current organization is incongruent with the emerging security environment. However, while many observers believe the Army has the wrong structure in the right situation, my view is pretty much in line with the CSA who believes that “one truism about predicting the future is that we will never get it exactly right; indeed, we can only aspire not to be too wrong.”³⁸ That said, the GPF leadership has the choice “between evolution and revolution, between perpetual mild adaptation, which favors external fit over time, and infrequent major realignment, which favors internal consistency over time.”³⁹

As we discussed earlier, JFCOM’s analysis of the emerging security environment between now and 2035 unequivocally finds that “the state will continue to be the most powerful international actor.”⁴⁰ The key point JFCOM makes is that “the power of states will vary dramatically from culture to culture, region to region but will mutate and adapt to the international environment’s changing conditions as a **centralized** mechanism through which power is organized.”⁴¹ Accepting the current GPF organizational structure and JFCOM’s analysis of the future leads me to the counterintuitive conclusion that maybe the Army’s GPF should maintain the organizational construct they have had since WWII. I am not advocating a rigid adherence to what worked in the past regardless of the current or future context. However, as discussed by organizational theorist Henry Mintzberg, I believe in the notion of maintaining the status quo at least long enough to determine whether the organization should attempt to change the environment or if the organization should allow the environment to change it. The way to deal with the right structure in the wrong environment may be to change the environment, not the structure An organization cannot be all things to all people. It should do what it does well and suffer the consequences.⁴²

OPS: If the GPF does decide to stick with its current plan to undertake a massive restructuring, as I think it will, it would do well to listen to the advice of Mark Moyer, who writes: Recently, some reformers have advocated making the U.S. Army an adaptive organization by transforming the organizational culture through new policies, incentives, educational programs, and organizational structures. The desired final product—an adaptive organization—is the correct one, but the instruments proposed for creating it are inadequate; they cannot reshape an

³⁶ Mintzberg, “Organizational Design,” 13.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Casey, *Army Magazine*, 30.

³⁹ Mintzberg, “Organizational Design,” 14.

⁴⁰ United States Joint Forces Command, “The Joint Operating Environment,” 38.

⁴¹ Ibid., author’s emphasis.

⁴² Mintzberg, “Organizational Design,” 14.

organization by themselves any more than chisels and rasps alone can change the shape of marble.⁴³

The Army's GPF appears to be suffering from an identity crisis in that it wants to combine the adaptability of an adhocracy's people with the stability of a bureaucracy's hierarchical structure. Speaking bluntly, a professional "bureaucracy in a dynamic industry calling for constant innovation or, alternately, a flexible adhocracy in a stable industry calling for minimum cost makes no sense."⁴⁴ The more ARSOF and GPF converge, it is more likely we will see a force consisting of unconventional warfare professionals organized in such a highly conventional structure that they will be unable to "interact more closely with the population and focus on operations that bring stability, while shielding them [the population] from insurgent violence, corruption and coercion."⁴⁵

ADC: Is it fair, then, to say that the ARSOF community should be different than the GPF in both organizational structure and mission set because allowing for an ARSOF-GPF convergence would result in a decrease in ARSOF's ability to conduct the missions they were created to conduct?

INTEL: I know you'll get no disagreement from the SF guys in the room. Do you have any issues with that conclusion Doc?

DOC: I have no problem with it. The conclusion is predicated on well-documented history and the widely accepted principles of organizational theory. Obviously, there are going to be critics, but those who disagree with us will do so as a matter of perspective more than for any other reason.

ADC: As far as I am concerned, we are now at the point that, drawing on our history and an analysis of the evolving strategic operating environment, we need to explore the type of ARSOF professionals we think we need in order to execute ARSOF's expected future mission set. Why don't we start there tomorrow? You guys go ahead and do whatever you need to do while I take the last few minutes of the day to send the DCO an update showing him what we have accomplished so far.

To: DCO, USASOC
From: Aide-de-Camp
Subject: PME Working Group #1

Sir,

IPR #1 slides are attached; slide one is our BLUF while 2-3 provide supporting information.

⁴³ Mark Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 260.

⁴⁴ Mintzberg, "Organizational Design," 13.

⁴⁵ Stanley A. McChrystal, *Commander's Initial Assessment* (Kabul: Headquarters, International Security Force, 2009), 1-2.

Why should the organizational structure of the ARSOF community differ from that of the GPF?

Because of their organizational design, ARSOF provide America's leadership the ability to maximize strategic gains while simultaneously minimizing expenditures, exposure, and unintended consequences. GPF, while effective, do not provide the same capabilities.

Figure Three. Summary Slide, Question #1



Figure Four. Organizational Design

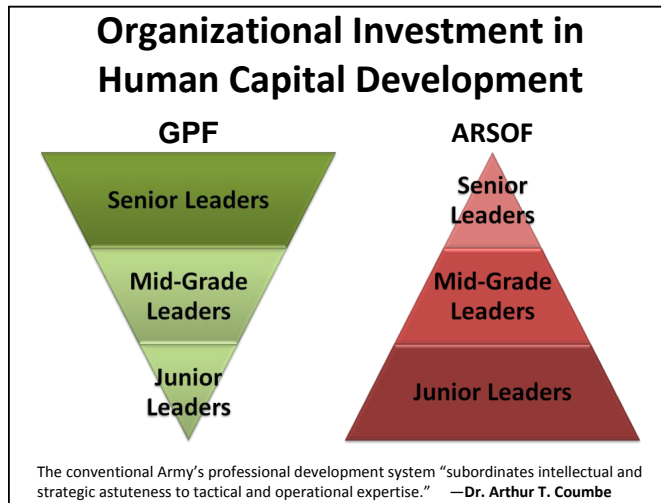


Figure Five. Human Capital Development

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