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Professional Military Education for United States Army Special Operations Forces (Part Two)

by Bradford Burris

Editor's Note: This essay comprises part two of a three-part thesis the author penned while assigned to the Naval Postgraduate School. Part one can be found [here](#).

ARSOF Professional Competencies

ADC: The boss requires me to complete a book report every couple of months and I read a passage last night that did a good job encapsulating the type of ARSOF leader that would fill our ranks in a perfect world:

I suspect that despite the limited understanding we have of events in distant places; there will always be those among us who have the gleam of the quest in their eyes. They are people of every sex and station and they yearn to be challenged to a cause. They will always be looking for that wrong to right, that ill to cure, that song to sing; and there will always be those who will go to arms in aid of the helpless and the downtrodden. Ignoring the political issues of the moment, these people will champion the weak and the poor in the face of evil and tyranny. And no matter what the outcome, in their romantic hearts they will keep the secret, if secret it must be, that they are better men for having held the lamp beside the golden door.¹

DOC: You are right when you discuss having a leader who can do everything all of the time as part of a perfect world. From my perspective as a psychologist, I can tell you that it is virtually impossible to always slate the perfect people against the appropriate tasks for their skill level.

OPS: Gentlemen, as the lone NCO on the team, I think we need to remember that we are not searching for THE answer to the question, but that we are sifting through the multitude of answers that are out there and summarizing them for the DCO. First, we need to agree on the types of missions that we foresee requiring ARSOF involvement in the next couple of decades. Second, we need to identify the skills and abilities required to accomplish these missions. After we do those two things, I believe we can develop a basic profile of what we believe these types of professionals should look like.

ADC: You have laid out a good course of action. Let's take a look at the SOF core activities and see if we are comfortable validating them as necessary for the next twenty years. Army Field Manual 3-05, *Army Special Operations Forces* states that ARSOF currently have the following nine core tasks:

¹ David Donovan (pseud.), *Once a Warrior King: Memories of an Officer in Vietnam* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Ballantine Books, 1985), 300.

- Direct Action (DA)
- Special Reconnaissance (SR)
- Unconventional Warfare (UW)
- Foreign Internal Defense (FID)
- Civil Affairs Operations (CA)
- Counterterrorism (CT)
- Psychological Operations (PSYOP)
- Support to Information Operations (IO)
- Counter proliferation (CP) of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)²

I know that everyone in this room is quite familiar with the descriptions of these tasks, but if you ever need a concise description of them, I recommend taking a look at Admiral Olson's *Joint Forces Quarterly* article "U.S. Special Operations: Context and Capabilities in Irregular Warfare" published in Issue 56, 1st quarter of 2010.³

Now that we have these core tasks listed, let's take a look at the definition of a "special operation:"

Operations conducted by specially organized, trained, and equipped military and paramilitary forces to achieve military, political, economic, or informational objectives by unconventional military means in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas. These operations are conducted across the full range of military operations, independently or in coordination with operations of conventional, non-special operations forces. Political-military considerations frequently shape special operations, requiring clandestine, covert, or low visibility techniques and oversight at the national level. Special operations differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets.⁴

This definition is very broad and it allows us maximum flexibility given the types of missions we might be called on to perform during the next twenty years. Let's evaluate the ARSOF core tasks against this definition and see if we can narrow the scope of expected standalone mission sets for our research. Then we will be able to tell when and if there are any additional missions that we should add to the list.

OPS: Sir, I have been a non-commissioned officer in the Special Operations community for a long time and, although it is a very unpopular view, I want us to make the argument that DA should not be classified as a standalone mission. Army Field Manual 3-05 defines DA as "short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and that employ specialized military

² United States Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05 Army Special Operations Forces* (Washington, D.C., 2006), 2-1.

³ Admiral Eric T. Olson is the Commander, United States Special Operations Command.

⁴ United States Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-05 Doctrine for Joint Special Operations* (Washington, D.C., 2003), GL-11.

capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets.”⁵ The manual goes on to say that “DA differs from conventional offensive actions in the level of physical and political risk, operational techniques, and the degree of discriminate and precise use of force to achieve specific objectives.”⁶ Our doctrine makes it a point to state that DA missions have a very limited scope, are time sensitive, and require a precise application of force. I believe that SOCOM has the ability to conduct these missions utilizing elements other than PSYOP, CA, and SF forces. I know the DCO’s guidance was to stay away from discussions of the 75th Ranger Regiment’s mission sets, and I am certainly not arguing that we should lay down our arms and refuse to conduct another close-combat operation. However, I do think the Ranger Regiment, Navy SEALs, and other SOCOM elements can conduct the lion’s share of the work when it comes to “seizing, destroying, capturing, or recovering through short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions in denied areas.”⁷

I am not arguing that DA is not a special operation, I am merely pointing out the fact that there are other Special Operations Forces in the United States military better suited to conduct DA, as a standalone mission, than the ARSOF forces we are concerned with as part of this project.

The founders of ARSOF forces, especially SF, created us specifically to conduct SR, UW, and FID missions. A look at our history helps make my point and adds some academic rigor to my argument. The 10th Special Forces Group is our longest standing group and it was the first formal Army peacetime unit ever dedicated to special operations. The unit’s wartime mission was to develop, organize, train, equip and direct anti-Soviet resistance forces in Eastern Europe in the event of war with the USSR.”⁸

Then, “on 24 June 1957, the 1st Special Forces Group was activated at Camp Drake, Japan . . . and was immediately transferred to the island of Okinawa, where it organized Mobile Training Teams to instruct Asian allies in unconventional warfare tactics.”⁹ Finally, “members of the 77th SFG were deployed to Laos in 1959 under civilian cover to assist French UW forces training the Laotian Army.”¹⁰ The missions undertaken by these early SF units were textbook special operations even according to the current ARSOF definition of UW. FM 3-05 describes UW as:

A broad range of military and/or paramilitary operations and activities, normally of long duration, conducted through, with, or by indigenous or other surrogate forces that are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and otherwise directed in varying degrees by an external source. UW operations can be conducted across the range of conflict against regular and irregular forces. These forces may or may not be State-sponsored.¹¹

Unconventional Warfare is arguably the most important mission that ARSOF forces must prepare for, and this is no less true today than during WWII. Today’s SF and PSYOP units trace their history to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which came to fruition during World War

⁵ United States Department of the Army, *FM 3-05*, 2–3.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces*, 55.

⁹ Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces*, 58.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹¹ United States Department of the Army, *FM 3-05*, 2–1.

II. “The OSS’s unconventional warfare mission laid the foundation for today’s Special Forces, emphasizing training of foreign indigenous forces and regional orientation of American forces (including strong foreign language and cultural training).”¹² The founding fathers of Special Forces, Aaron Bank and Russell Volckmann, chartered the organization with a focus on UW. They believed the SF mission was “to infiltrate by air, sea, or land deep into enemy-controlled territory and to stay, organize, equip, train, control, and direct indigenous personnel in the conduct of Special Forces operations.”¹³

The point that I am making with this history lesson about UW is twofold. First, UW by its very nature is a special operation; we conduct UW to achieve U.S. strategic aims in politically sensitive areas. Second, as long as most people in our world organize themselves around the Westphalian state model, the United States will have interests in those states requiring ARSOF to work with indigenous or surrogate forces to protect those interests. Furthermore, the emergence of non-state actors like Al Qaeda makes it even more critical that we retain and expand our capability to conduct UW well into the future.

If the need for behind-the-lines UW was realized during WWII, the requirement for forces specifically trained and equipped to conduct FID was born during the Kennedy administration and the run up to America’s involvement in Vietnam. While addressing the United States Military Academy class of 1962, President Kennedy stated:

This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origins—war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins; war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him . . . It requires in those situations where we must counter it . . . a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore a new and wholly different kind of military training.¹⁴

“Although few American military leaders believed that the conflict would be resolved through the patient training of South Vietnamese forces and improved civil-military relations in Vietnam, U.S. Army Special Forces played this role in Vietnam.”¹⁵ From its beginnings in the rice paddies of Vietnam, FID has evolved as an ARSOF mission to the point that it is conducted almost constantly across the entire range of military operations in a myriad of operating environments. FM 3-05 says the following about FID:

FID is a subset of stability operations. These operations promote and protect U.S. national interests by influencing the threat, political, and information dimensions of the operational environment through a combination of peacetime developmental, cooperative activities and coercive actions in response to crisis. Army forces, including ARSOF (particularly SF and PSYOP), accomplish stability goals through security cooperation. The military activities that support these operations are diverse, continuous, and often long-term. Their purpose is to promote and sustain regional and global stability. Stability operations employ Army forces, including ARSOF (particularly CA), to assist civil authorities, foreign or domestic, as they prepare for or respond to crises. The primary role of stability operations is to meet the immediate

¹² Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare*, 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁴ Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 29–30.

¹⁵ Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare*, 14.

needs of designated groups, for a limited time, until civil authorities can accomplish these tasks without military assistance.¹⁶

I like the fact that the FM describes, rather than defines, FID. In this instance, I believe the doctrine truly does the actual mission justice. Due to the holistic nature and long-term focus of FID, and understanding that the goal of FID is to resource host nation (HN) and paramilitary forces “to maintain the HN’s internal stability, to counter subversion and violence in their country, and to address the causes of instability,”¹⁷ ARSOF forces are uniquely qualified to conduct FID operations. Population security, host nation military assistance, and counterinsurgency (the three components of FID) lead me to believe that ARSOF officers cannot afford to be doctrinaire about this mission.

When conducting FID, as well as all special operations, the officer leader:

Must approach each conflict with a distinctive theory of victory; there should be no formulae specifying what ought to work. Rather than assigning the operational tasks of SOF to fit a traditional understanding of SOF capabilities, it is important that flexible SOF be tailored to novel operational tasks.¹⁸

Nowhere is this more true than when conducting FID.

Special reconnaissance is the third mission that I believe ARSOF must remain prepared to accomplish over the course of the next twenty years. Regardless of the nature of our enemies, our senior military and political leaders will always require special reconnaissance in order to hold diplomatic engagements, conduct deterrence operations, and preside over covert or clandestine military operations conducted to protect American interests abroad. JP 3-05 defines SR “as reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance, employing military capabilities not normally found in conventional forces.”¹⁹

Due to the sensitive nature of the strategic decisions that SR impacts, and the associated requirement for secrecy, there is little doubt that SR is a special operation. The four most common types of SR are environmental, armed, target and threat, and post-strike. SR is critical to America’s grand strategists as they work to develop and implement the various aspects of our national security strategy. Special reconnaissance is also of vital importance when the United States decides to take military action against a rogue state or non-state actor. One of the greatest failures of SR that I am aware of is the April 1961 debacle on Cuba’s Zapata Peninsula, known as the Bay of Pigs Operation.

If the appropriate personnel had provided the appropriate type of SR, there is a very real possibility that President Kennedy would have never allowed the operation to take place. The basic concept was for the United States to land a group of Cuban exiles in a sparsely populated swamp to take control of and hold a beachhead until the Cuban population engaged in a spontaneous revolt against the Castro regime. The utter failure of the operation provides an

¹⁶ United States Department of the Army, *FM 3-05*, 2–2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Colin S. Gray, “Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When Do Special Operations Succeed?” *Parameters, U.S. Army War College Quarterly* (Spring 1999): 9.

¹⁹ United States Department of Defense, *JP 3-05*, II–6.

important lesson regarding SR. In the words of Richard Bissell, the CIA officer responsible for planning the operation:

It was rather lightheartedly assumed by the CIA that the swampy regions around the Bay of Pigs, while utterly different geographically from the mountains near Trinidad [previous invasion site] could support guerrilla operations. With hindsight, this assumption was highly questionable, and, in any event, was not carefully researched in the planning of the operation.²⁰

Had U.S. forces conducted the appropriate environmental reconnaissance, the CIA would not have “mistakenly thought that the landing site was mostly deserted and that the exiles could land unnoticed.”²¹ Nor would they have “missed the reefs at Blue Beach, which caused the landing to fall behind schedule—leaving the hapless invasion fleet still offshore when Castro’s aircraft struck.”²² It is impossible to say that, had the SR mission been given to ARSOF forces, the Bay of Pigs operation would have been a success. However, I can say with relative certainty that had detailed SR been conducted, major changes to the invasion plan would have been made that may well have led to a successful invasion.

It is not my intent to paint ARSOF-conducted SR as the panacea for all military problems but I do agree with the following excerpt from JP 3-05:

Even with today’s sophisticated long-range sensors and overhead platforms, some information can be obtained only by visual observation or other collection methods in the target area. SOF’s highly developed capabilities of gaining access to denied and hostile areas, worldwide communications, and specialized aircraft and sensors enable SR against targets inaccessible to other forces or assets.²³

To end this discussion of UW, FID, and SR, my thoughts on the entire matter are these: SF exists for three primary purposes—to acquire information about America’s enemies, to conduct operations with surrogate forces, and to provide training to foreign governments and militaries. Although ARSOF may be called to perform other missions, for example, CT as is the case today in Afghanistan, I think ARSOF needs to make it clear to itself and others where its strengths and advantages lie and where it represents “value added.” I think the United States government will experience the greatest return on its investment when Army Special Operations Forces focus on the missions that led to their creation. Given the fact that our forces were created to perform UW, FID, and SR, we must strive to conduct these missions more than any other does during the next twenty years.

ADC: All right, Ops, I think you have convinced all of us. For the purposes of our briefing, DA is out; SR, FID, and UW are in. Now, what are your thoughts about the next group of core activities: CA, CT, PO, and IO?

DOC: Before I became a doctor, I was a Civil Affairs NCO and I firmly believe that CA missions are special operations for a couple of reasons. In line with the definition of a special operation, CA personnel are specially organized and trained right here at Fort Bragg. The fact that CA missions “influence, or exploit relations between military forces and civil authorities,

²⁰ Lucien S. Vandenbroucke, *Perilous Options: Special Operations as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 32.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

²² Vandenbroucke, *Perilous Options: Special Operations as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy*, 49.

²³ United States Department of Defense, *JP-3-05*, II-6.

both governmental and nongovernmental, and the civilian populace in a friendly, neutral, or hostile area of operations”²⁴ leads me to believe they have a high degree of political sensitivity. Returning to the definition of a special operation, political sensitivity is one of the key factors that make a military operation special. There are also many cases where CA operations directly support UW and FID.

In an article published by the Joint Special Operations University Press, Herb Daniels, an SF Major, provides an excellent example of the nesting effect between FID and CA. Major Daniels participated in the Special Operations Task Force sent to the Philippines “to assist the government of the Philippines in its fight against the ASG (Abu Sayyaf Group) and JI (Jemaah Islamash) in the Sulu Archipelago.”²⁵ MAJ Daniels’ primary area of responsibility was the municipality of Talipao on the island of Jolo. He describes his operational environment this way:

The team of U.S. advisors provided several capabilities to assist the AFP Battalion to include increased intelligence support, improved communications and tactical and technical training for combat operations. Because U.S. forces were strictly prohibited by the Philippine government from engaging in direct combat operations, their greatest weapon became humanitarian resources designed to improve the livelihood of the people on Jolo while at the same time giving the AFP/U.S. military personnel access to the local community.²⁶

Based on the information above, it is easy to see that the success of the Jolo mission rested on MAJ Daniels’ ability to influence the civilian population with a targeted civil affairs project that would meet a currently unfulfilled legitimate need.

The project had to involve the village leadership in its planning and execution, as well as the local AFP commander, who served as the Philippine central government’s representative to the locality. The project needed to encourage community participation and be resourced by materials that could be secured locally. The complexity of the project had to be minimal so that all expertise could be obtained from the village or from villagers working in tandem with soldiers in the AFP/U.S. units. Most important, after the project’s completion, the AFP/U.S. personnel needed to maintain continuous access to the village in order to ensure local support and to deter insurgent activity over time.²⁷

The project that MAJ Daniels’ team conducted in the village of Talipo, which earned the support of the local population, village leadership, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), was the construction of outhouses. These outdoor latrines came to fruition using materials left over from earlier projects, and ultimately an Islamic medical NGO underwrote a portion of the construction. The real value of the project manifested itself in two distinct ways. First, the villagers received infrastructure that they had been lacking for years and the level of hygiene skyrocketed. Second, because U.S. Soldiers and members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) built the outhouses along with laborers from the local villages, bonds of trust emerged between military members and the civilian population. Because of these bonds,

²⁴ United States Department of Defense, *JP-3-05*, GL-5.

²⁵ Major Herb Daniels, *Keeping COIN Simple: The Outhouse Strategy for Security Development* (Hurlburt Field: The JSOU Press, 2009), 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Daniels, *Keeping COIN Simple: The Outhouse Strategy for Security Development*, 6.

The AFP battalion commander estimated that credible human intelligence on insurgent activity in Talipao was submitted to the battalion on a daily basis. Only a few months prior, the AFP had no sources in Talipao, but initial intelligence estimated that active members of ASG and JI passed through the municipality daily. Within the first month of the outhouse projects, AFP sources indicated that routine ASG and JI routes of movement were restricted to areas outside of the quickly expanding AFP influence in Talipao.²⁸

Whether used to shape an operating environment in an area like Talipao caught in the middle of a low intensity, long duration insurgency, or to rebuild infrastructure and governmental operating capacity in a war torn country like Iraq, Civil Affairs operations are a critical component of the ARSOF inventory.

ADC: OK Doc, CA is in; what do you guys think about CT?

INTEL: Joint Publication 3-05 says that any offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism count as CT.²⁹ Maybe it's because I see it from a different point of view, but that definition actually tells me nothing. ARSOF are always conducting CT when executing UW, FID, or CA operations. Harkening back to the outhouse vignette, I can make a strong case that MAJ Daniels' team proactively countered terrorism on the island of Jolo by building those outhouses. My feeling is that CT, in the ARSOF community, is an endstate rather than a mission. ARSOF forces work toward the endstate of countering terrorism constantly through a myriad of missions, such as FID, CA, and PSYOP. It seems that the Center for New American Security agrees with my point when Michele Malvesti writes:

Special Operations Forces can help prevent terrorism, for instance, by training and enabling the security forces of a vulnerable partner country, as well as by engaging the indigenous civilian population in order to identify critical local needs—all efforts that help build environments that are inhospitable to terrorists. They can help deter terrorists from acting or receiving critical support for their operations by disseminating information that challenges their violent ideological underpinnings and creates doubt among audiences regarding their causes and tactics.³⁰

Countering terrorism is a goal that not only motivates the ARSOF community, but GPF as well. In fact, the current national security strategy directs the entire United States government to focus all efforts on countering terrorism. I do not believe that CT, as a mission separate and distinct from other ARSOF missions, is necessary because all the other ARSOF core tasks currently listed in FA 3-05 contribute to countering terrorism as a result of the overarching American focus on CT. The SOF Interagency Counterterrorism Reference Manual says it best when it acknowledges, “that no single department, agency, or organization of the U.S. Government can, by itself, effectively locate and defeat terrorist networks, groups and individuals.”³¹

²⁸ Ibid., 9.

²⁹ United States Department of Defense, *JP 3-05*, GL-6.

³⁰ Michele Malvesti, *Time for Action: Redefining SOF Missions and Activities* (Working Paper, Washington, D.C.: Center for a New American Security, 2009), 4.

³¹ Joint Special Operations University, *Special Operations Forces Interagency Counterterrorism Reference Manual* (Hurlburt Field, 2009), 1-1.

OPS: Sir, I agree with you and JP 3-05 on the point that a myriad of missions have an impact on countering terror. However, I cannot envision a situation in which the National Command Authority would direct ARSOF to conduct a CT mission and our generals would respond by saying that since everything we do has an impact on CT that they are just going to deploy several teams to conduct SR and FID. Those generals would be immediately relieved and SOF would be directed to conduct CT operations. Yes, everything we do has an impact on countering terror but not all types of terrorist activity are countered by what we do. We market ourselves as an adaptable organization capable of conducting non-standard missions and then you make the case that CT shouldn't be a standalone mission. I do not agree with that stance because the undefined nature of what constitutes terrorism requires those attempting to counter it to maintain the greatest degree of adaptability possible.

INTEL: You make a salient point; rather than attempting to define CT into irrelevance, we should embrace it as a mission to which we are able to dedicate all ARSOF skills and abilities regardless of the form in which terror manifests itself. Thanks for helping me to see CT from such a new perspective.

ADC: Ok, it looks like we have reached an agreement on CT. The next topic for discussion is PSYOP.

OPS: Every time I drive along Son Tay Road here on Fort Bragg and I see those huge brand new PSYOP battalion headquarters buildings, I wonder what it is that those guys do. That thought is not just unique to me either, by the way; the G3 tells me that the CG spends a great deal of time wondering about the future of PSYOP as part of the ARSOF community.

I know there is a great deal of misunderstanding in the community about PSYOP, so let's start with the definition in JP 3-05. Psychological Operations are:

planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. The purpose of psychological operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator's objectives.³²

Returning to the definition of a special operation, I believe political risk is at the center of what makes PSYOP a special operation. Having said that, I think it is of paramount importance to separate PSYOP as a type of special operation from the incorrect assumption that every mission conducted by members of the PSYOP branch is a special operation. For example, an MOS 37F PSYOP specialist broadcasting a surrender appeal or handing out leaflets in support of the Third Infantry Division in Baghdad does not constitute a special operation. Conversely, the same 37F broadcasting a surrender appeal or handing out leaflets in support of a Special Mission Unit conducting a covert raid in Iraq's Diyala province is conducting a special operation. The determining factor that makes the second example a special operation is the high degree of political risk associated with the covert raid.

Psychological operations conducted in countries that are not hostile in their attitude toward the United States are also special operations. For example, PSYOP soldiers task organized into a Military Information Support Team (MIST) supporting host nation efforts to delegitimize Al Qaeda networks and professionalize military and law enforcement personnel in

³² United States Department of Defense, *JP 3-05*, GL-10.

Pakistan are conducting a special operation. In this case, and many others like it around the world, the PSYOP forces are working in conjunction with other U.S. government agencies in direct coordination with host nation entities on sensitive international issues. Because PSYOP missions meet these aspects of the definition, we should consider PSYOP a special operation.

ADC: Ok, so even though we generally see PSYOP as a special operation, we should not forget the delineation between special operations and GPF PSYOP missions. When we build our general profile of what we believe ARSOF professionals should look like, we should focus on the type of individual required to conduct Special Operations PSYOP. If we make the DCO and the boss understand this delineation between PSYOP missions, they will have the information they need to argue that the conventional army needs its own active component PSYOP capability outside of the 4th PSYOP Group. When the Army's GPF units have their own capability, our ARSOF PSYOP guys will be able to focus their efforts on PSYOP missions that are truly special operations.

PSYOP LTC Timothy D. Huening seems to agree. As he puts it in something he wrote recently, "inadequate staffing, resource constraints and a force imbalance coupled with a rising demand for PSYOP, either in MIST configurations or tactical support to the Brigade Combat Teams, complicates the understanding of PSYOP capabilities and limitations."³³

OPS: So, it looks like our conclusion here is that PSYOP should be included in the ARSOF standalone mission set for the next twenty years with the caveat that not all PSYOP missions are special operations, and those that are not are better conducted by PSYOP personnel assigned to GPF units separate and distinct from USASOC. If that's what we're saying about PSYOP, then what about another routinely misunderstood mission set known as Information Operations?

ADC: I want to start with the definition of IO from the joint pub and then I want to compare it not only against the definition of a special operation but also against the IO capabilities resident in the United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) before we make our final decision. The approved definition says that IO is "actions taken to affect adversary information and information systems while defending one's own information and information systems."³⁴ In Chapter II, the joint pub goes on to say that "defensive IO activities are conducted on a continuous basis and are an inherent part of force employment across the range of military operations. IO may involve complex legal and policy issues requiring careful review and national-level coordination and approval."³⁵

Using the definition of a special operation as a litmus test, this is how I assess the mission of Information Operations. I am laying this information out in a chart because my argument may appear counterintuitive and I want to make myself clear. Although I think that many IO activities qualify as special operations, I think that these missions are outside the purview of ARSOF. As I note in the chart, specially organized, trained, and equipped IO forces exist, but they exist as part of USSTRATCOM.

³³ Lieutenant Colonel Timothy D. Huening, "Advancing the Art and Science of Psychological Operations Requires a Serious Investment," *Small Wars Journal* (2009), <http://SmallWarsJournal.com>.

³⁴ United States Department of Defense, *JP 3-05*, GL-7.

³⁵ United States Department of Defense, *JP 3-05*, II-11.

Evaluation Criteria	Special Operation	Remarks
Specially Organized Forces	Yes	Organized outside of ARSOF units
Specially Trained Forces	Yes	Trained in non-ARSOF /SOCOM programs
Specially Equipped Forces	Yes	Top Secret capabilities
Objectives Achieved by Unconventional Means	No	The capabilities are present in many non-ARSOF units
Conducted in Politically Sensitive Areas	Yes	
Conducted Across Range of Military Operations	Yes	
Conducted with Low Visibility Techniques	Yes	
Require National Level Oversight	Yes	

Figure One. Assessment of Information Operations as a Special Operation

Claiming IO as part of the ARSOF domain creates levels of redundancy and confusion that simply are not necessary. Looking at the definition of IO again, actions taken to affect adversary information in support of special operations missions have been and should continue to remain under the control of our organic PSYOP personnel at the tactical and operational levels of war. If we ever find ourselves in a position that requires us to conduct offensive IO, in order to disable or destroy an adversary’s information platform, we will have to conduct that through USSTRATCOM regardless of our organic capabilities and that is a strategic operation. If the target platform is internet-based, and almost all of them are these days, not even a geographical combatant commander has the authority to authorize an attack against it. Such an attack requires the review, nomination, and approval of a cyber Joint Interagency Task Force. What I am saying, basically, is that we will never own the authority for offensive IO. Nor will we own the personnel to conduct IO because they reside in either STRATCOM or the GPF. For these reasons, I do not think it is prudent for us to say that IO is a standalone ARSOF mission.

Also, in accordance with the joint pub definition, conducting defensive IO on a continual basis will force us to increase resource allocations to IO at the expense of other missions in much the same way as we have seen allocations to DA increase at the expense of FID and UW missions. My recommendation is that we leave IO to the three STRATCOM subordinates specifically trained, resourced, and networked to conduct it: the Joint Information Operations Warfare Center (JIOWC), the Joint Task Force-Global Network Operations (JTF-GNO), and the Joint Force Component Command-Network Warfare (JFCC-NW).

The JIOWC has over 200 personnel specifically trained to “enable Joint Force Commanders to plan and execute IO, both offensive and defensive involving the integrated use of operations security (OPSEC), psychological operations (PSYOP), military deception (MILDEC), electronic warfare (EW), and computer network attack (CNA)/computer network defense (CND).”³⁶ In addition to the IO capabilities owned by the JIOWC, the 136 people who comprise JTF-GNO direct “the operation and defense of the Global Information Grid to assure timely and secure Net-Centric capabilities across strategic, operational, and tactical boundaries in support of DoD's full spectrum of war fighting, intelligence, and business missions.”³⁷ JFCC-NW is a little known component of USSTRATCOM responsible for the passive monitoring of, and offensive action against, enemy information platforms that utilize the internet. It is interesting to note that the director of JFCC-NW also serves as the director of the National Security Agency (NSA), which is one of the best IO agencies in the entire world.

At this point, I hope it's clear just how intimately involved USSTRATCOM and the NSA are with conducting IO. I would also like to point out that JTF-GNO and JFCC-NW are merging to create a four-star level, sub-unified U.S. Cyber Command this year. I feel that all of this information makes the argument that, IO is a mission set best managed and conducted outside the scope of USASOC.

DOC: The final mission that we need to review is CP, but as we do so we must remember that the vast majority of ARSOF's CP tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) are classified. CP refers to actions taken to locate, seize, destroy, render safe, capture, or recover WMD.”³⁸ Both JP 3-05 and Army FM 3-05 are quite vague in their discussions of CP, so I dug into Joint Publication 3-40, Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction looking for a bit more information. This document, along with JP 3-05, discusses Special Operations capabilities regarding CP in the vein of interdicting the ability of terrorist networks to obtain WMD. The degree of physical and political risk encountered by ARSOF personnel conducting CP operations easily marks it as a special operation, and the fact that failure to dedicate any assets and skills that we own to the CP fight could result in the destruction of our entire country requires that we classify CP as an ARSOF mission.

INTEL: I think we need to have a robust discussion regarding the relevance of CP as a special operation. However, doing so requires us to move into a classified venue. The next time we attend a classified update, let's stay behind and talk CP.

ADC: Gentlemen, pending the classified discussion, we have completed our review of what doctrine calls the nine ARSOF core missions, and we have agreed on the ones that we should classify as a standalone mission. Now, let's take a moment and review what we have determined. For the purposes of defining the type of ARSOF professionals necessary to conduct special operations for the next couple of decades, we are recommending that the following ARSOF missions be maintained without further caveat: UW, SR, CA, and FID. We believe that some, but not all, PSYOP activities are ARSOF missions. Additionally, we are recommending that DA and IO are eligible for deletion as standalone missions for the next twenty years. Does

³⁶ United States Strategic Command, “Fact Sheets: Joint Information Operations Warfare Center,” U.S. Strategic Command Fact Sheets, http://www.stratcom.mil/factsheets/jiowc/Joint_Information_Operations_Warfare_Command/.

³⁷ United States Strategic Command, “Fact Sheets: Joint Task Force-Global Network Operations,” U.S. Strategic Command Fact Sheets, http://www.stratcom.mil/factsheets/gno/Joint_Task_Force_-_Global_Network_Operations/.

³⁸ United States Department of Defense, *JP 3-05*, II-10.

anyone have any problem with these recommendations? Does anyone think there are any missions that we should add to the list?

INTEL: I would like to address security force assistance (SFA). I know this emerging mission has the attention of the Secretary of Defense and I think it is a mission that we should add separate and distinct from FID. The niche for SFA missions is the space between the end of stability operations, of which FID is a part, and State Department diplomatic operations. A recent report from the Army's Strategic Studies Institute describes SFA operations in the following manner:

According to the DoD's draft instruction on relationships and responsibilities for SFA, it is defined as: (1) operations, actions, or activities that contribute to unified action to support the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces and their supporting institutions; (2) the bolstering of a foreign security force or institution's capabilities or capacity in order to facilitate the achievement of specific operational objectives shared with the USG.³⁹

I understand SFA to be operations that are advisory in nature and conducted at the strategic and political levels of government, much like those that Colonel Edward Geary Lansdale conducted in the Philippines during the 1950s. The objective in a FID mission is for American troops to advise successfully some component of the host nation's (HN) security force. As I understand the Army's definition of SFA, its focus is on the governmental institutions that support the HN security forces. Advising the HN civilians who run the executive level agencies charged with national defense and security is an area of paramount importance to the United States government. America's current National Military Strategy (NMS) focuses on the ability of U.S. forces to "facilitate the integration of military operations with allies, contribute to regional stability, reduce underlying conditions that foment extremism and set the conditions for future success."⁴⁰ I think the NMS provides ample justification for the conduct of SFA outside the parameters of FID.

As I mentioned earlier, Colonel Lansdale is an excellent example of an SFA advisor. He was an advisor to Ramon Magsaysay, the Philippine secretary of national defense. Utilizing little more than his innate charm and uncanny wile, Lansdale developed tremendous personal chemistry with Magsaysay. The personal relationship between Lansdale and Magsaysay enabled Lansdale, a military officer, to serve as an advisor to a civilian on how to use to his military; Lansdale was not a direct military advisor, per se. The real magic to the relationship was the fact that Magsaysay was comfortable enough to speak with his guard down and float outside-the-box ideas to Lansdale without fear of losing face. Their relationship ultimately resulted in the resounding defeat of the Huk communist rebellion in the Philippines, and the election of the pro-American Magsaysay as the President of the Philippines.⁴¹

Introducing U.S. military advisors with the ability to effectively advise HN civilian leaders, just as Lansdale was able to do, shows there is no better way to "improve the capabilities of allies and other partners, as well as the quality of the relationship between the United States

³⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Theresa Baginski et al., *A Comprehensive Approach to Improving U.S. Security Force Assistance Efforts* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009), 2.

⁴⁰ United States Department of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C., 2004), 12.

⁴¹ For more information on the relationship between Lansdale and Magsaysay, reference: Lansdale, Edward Geary. *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1991).

and such partners.”⁴² Certainly, the ARSOF community contains some professionals with the ability to advise HN civilian leaders. In addition to the fact that many of our guys are excellent advisors because of their UW and FID experiences, SFA should be considered an ARSOF mission because HN capacity building in conjunction with America’s national security objectives carries a significant degree of political sensitivity and a large amount of national level oversight. Unlike members of GPF units, ARSOF guys are trained for and routinely conduct missions that are politically risky and heavily scrutinized by the international community. I think it makes sense to include SFA as an ARSOF mission because our guys are educated, in the classroom and on the job, to conduct SFA-like missions.

ADC: Intel, from the nods I see around the table, you made a compelling case. Now, let’s take a look at the skills and abilities that we think ARSOF professionals need to effectively prosecute the ARSOF mission set.

INTEL: While we were reviewing the missions, I wrote down the key aspects of each mission we agreed on because I think these aspects will help us identify the type of professionals that ARSOF will need to conduct the missions. What I wrote down looks like this:

ARSOF Required Capabilities:	
Operate independently	Develop, manage, discover, and interdict networks
Explain and promote U.S. national interests	Bolster HN capacity
Assist foreign and domestic civil authorities	Identify and address causes of instability
Operate in politically sensitive environments	Influence behavior
Synthesize and leverage the political and informational dimensions of an operational environment	

Figure Two. Required Capabilities for the ARSOF Operator

What I take from our discussion thus far is that the ARSOF professional is someone who “discerns new insights of the battlespace, develops responsive plans, and applies innovative, unexpected operational or organizational solutions to accomplish mission objectives.”⁴³

DOC: Sir, based on your list of capabilities and the recent finding that “SOF leaders do not believe that they are sufficiently prepared to operate at national policy, strategic, and theater

⁴² Baginski et al., *A Comprehensive Approach*, 5.

⁴³ Booz Allen Hamilton Inc., *Joint Special Operations University Educational Requirements Analysis for Academic Years 2005–2010* (McLean: Booz Allen Hamilton Inc., 2005), 16.

operational levels,”⁴⁴ wouldn’t we say ARSOF needs to do a better job attracting, educating, and retaining leaders who can develop strategic estimates, as well as strategic appreciation?

OPS: Sure, that’s great Doc. But, what does that mean?

DOC: The USSOCOM Strategy 2010 says that:

Strategic Appreciation goes beyond mere data, information, and knowledge. By applying perception, perspective, culture, history, and geography we try to achieve a higher level of *understanding*—not simply what and how events occur but rather *why*. This appreciation concentrates on relationships and synthesis of information rather than data and threats. Whereas a strategic *estimate* is an assessment of conditions against a baseline or plan, a strategic appreciation incorporates the understanding of the geostrategic context.⁴⁵

I know that it’s difficult to delineate between an estimate and an appreciation but I think that ARSOF should further clarify that a strategic estimate represents the union of three components: becoming aware of information, grasping the meaning of that information, and assessing that information against a set of evaluation criteria. Strategic appreciation, on the other hand, is achieved via the confluence of understanding, synthesis, and leverage. An ARSOF professional with a high degree of strategic appreciation has the ability to comprehend the primary impacts, implications, and ramifications various stimuli have on individuals, groups, and systems, as well as the ability to predict accurately the secondary and tertiary effects of the stimuli within a relevant context. In order for ARSOF professionals to achieve success in the missions we have identified, they must be able to develop strategic estimates *and* strategic appreciation. I believe we can deal with the nuances of developing strategic appreciation in the coming weeks but, for now, I am relatively sure that we have established a baseline profile for the ARSOF professional of the future.

ADC: Gentlemen, we have arrived at a point where we need to prepare a short summary for the DCO to ensure that we keep him apprised of what we’re doing and the direction we are headed. Based on our work over the last week or so, let’s give the DOC a couple slides as our IPR number two. While he is reviewing our work on this portion of the project, we will move on to dealing with the third question: how could we structure an ARSOF education system that resources our professionals with the competencies that you identify? Go get started on the weekend while I e-mail our update slides to the DCO.

⁴⁴ Ibid., ES7.

⁴⁵ United States Special Operations Command, *U.S. Special Operations Command Strategy 2010* (Tampa: United States Special Operations Command, 2009), A2–A3.

To: DCO, USASOC
From: Aide-de-Camp
Subject: PME Working Group #2

Sir,

Please review the working group’s IPR #2 summary slides below; slide one is our recommended ARSOF standalone mission set, slide two portrays the competencies we think ARSOF professionals should possess in order to successfully accomplish the proposed mission set.

V/R
 ADC

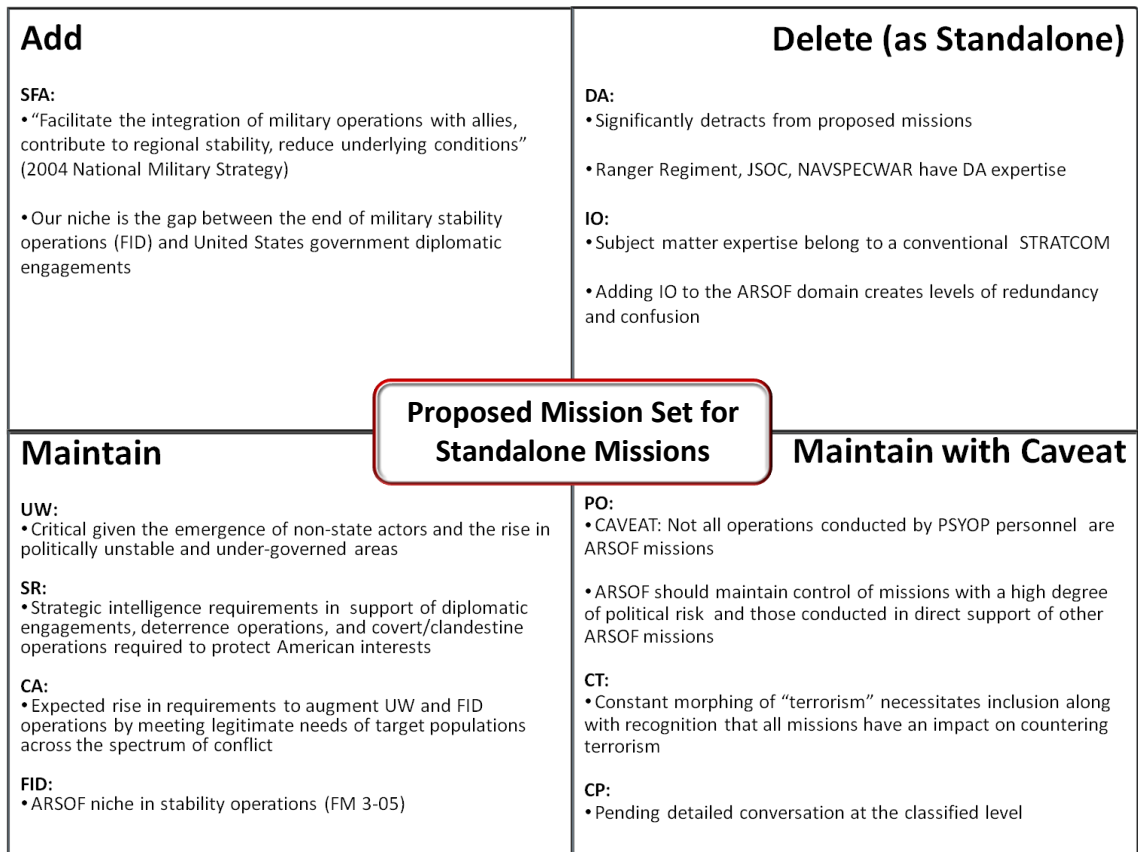


Figure Three. Proposed Mission Sets

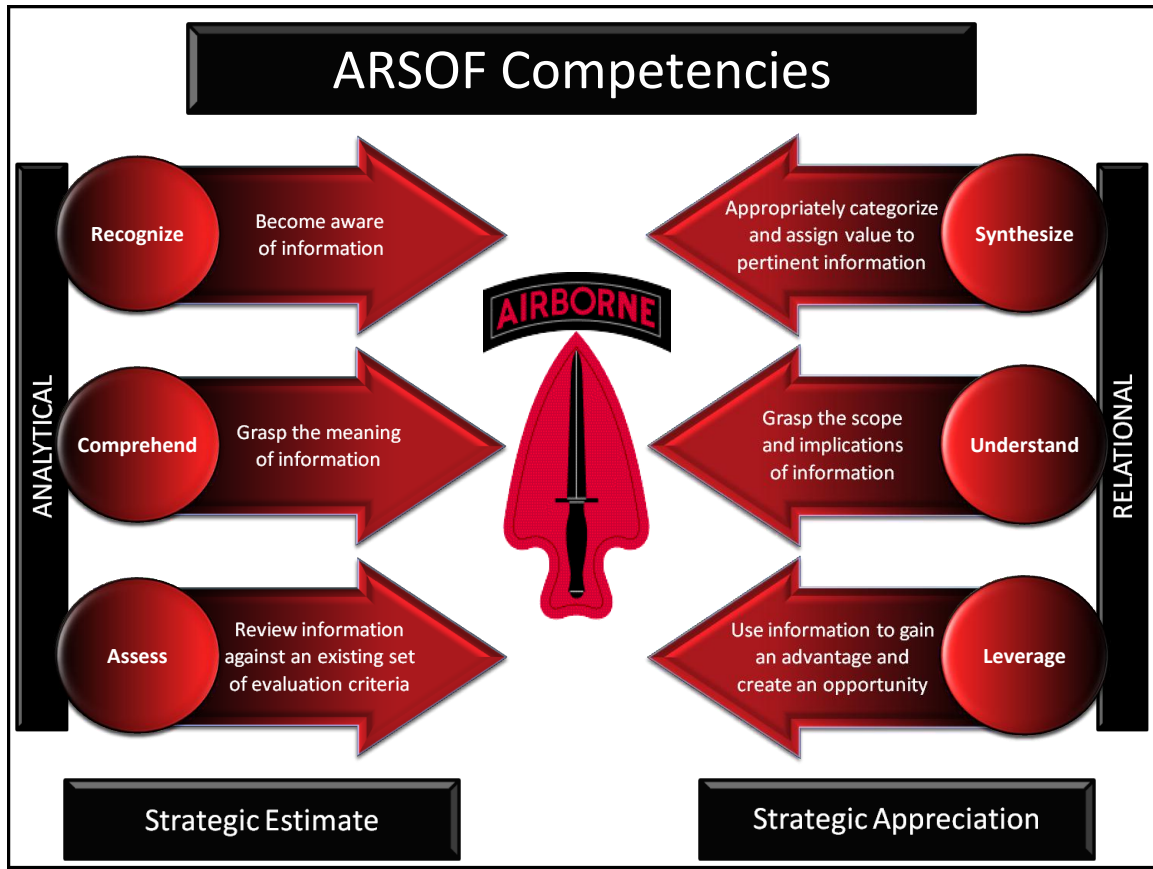


Figure Four. ARSOF Competencies

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Major Bradford M. Burris is an active duty Military Information Support Operations (or Psychological Operations) officer. He has served in various command and staff positions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Major Burris earned a Master of Science in Defense Analysis at the United States Naval Postgraduate School. He currently serves as the Operations Officer of the 6th Military Information Support Operations Battalion at Fort Bragg, N.C.

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