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The Need to Create an Unconventional Warfare Advanced Studies and Training Center

by John Cochran

Unconventional Warfare or UW is the most difficult and complex of any form of combat. UW's complexity lends itself to the salient fact that it is not a straight on fight; instead it is a method of warfare that employs psychological warfare, subversion, sabotage, guerrilla warfare, and intelligence operations. Its very nature is to attack from the inside of the enemy and through the use of a disenfranchised section of society force the enemy to acquiesce and capitulate. It requires its soldiers to meld into the sociological and physical environment, apparently a farmer or banker one moment and conducting a direct action or kinetic strike the next. UW is not just a slugger's war or a thinking man's war; it requires a mental and physical decathlete whose sole devotion is mastering its complexity. Assurance that the specified soldiers can conduct this successfully requires both continual exercises and a devoted education system which focuses solely on this multifaceted form of warfare. These facts necessitate the creation of an Unconventional Warfare Advanced Studies and Training Center whose sole responsibility is the advanced training and continual education of UW to facilitate the tactical, operational and strategic needs of the US military's only force with UW as its fundamental mission: US Army Special Forces. As stated by then Director of Central Intelligence, Robert Gates,

Unconventional Warfare...remains uniquely 'Special Forces'. It is the soul of Special Forces; the willingness to accept its isolation and hardships defines the Special Forces soldier. Its training is both the keystone and standard of Special Forces Training; it has long been an article of faith, confirmed in over forty years of worldwide operations, that 'if you can do UW missions, you can do all others.' The objective of UW and Special Forces' dedication to it is expressed in the Special Forces motto: *De Oppresso Liber*.

Since its inception in 1952, US Army Special Forces (USSF) has had the responsibility to deploy forces in order to conduct UW during wartime. UW, while not a new form of warfare, had most recently proven its immense value during the course of World War II in both the European and Pacific theater. At that time, UW was a conceptualized and understood mission of the regiment due to the vast knowledge and experience of its soldiers. Soldiers that comprised USSF during this period came from the former Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Jedburgh Teams and Operational Groups, Ranger units, First Special Service Forces, former European partisans, and even former German soldiers with counter-insurgency experience. This core of men that made up the newly formed 10th Special Forces Group understood and had experience in the utilization of UW from the tactical to the strategic levels.

This knowledge was then passed down to the new soldiers as they were accepted into the regiment, as well as captured in those very first field manuals that explained such topics as Guerrilla Warfare (GW), Insurgencies, Sabotage, and Subversion. However, as time progressed

the institutional knowledge and experience in conducting UW began to slowly fade from USSF with more emphasis placed on Direct Action (DA), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Special Reconnaissance (FID), and Counter-Insurgency (COIN) as necessitated by the threat at the time. Currently, the most comprehensive training exercise in UW is confined to the USSF Qualification Course's culmination exercise Robin Sage. However, UW remains the core mission and *raison d'être* for USSF. Current doctrine from USSOCOM makes USASOC the proponent for Unconventional Warfare and USSF remains the primary force for this mission. These reasons further the requirement that UW is emphasized both in command philosophy and in the continual education of all SF soldiers as emphasized by the ARSOF priorities "incorporating the best practices in training, education, and cutting edge technology."

Currently an advanced education system for SF soldiers does not exist, a shortfall that has been identified throughout the regiment. In outlining the progress of education of the SF soldier UW at the advanced tactical, operational, and strategic levels does not exist for the vast majority of the force. The only operational and strategic level education available is at Ft. Leavenworth's Command and General Staff College (CGSC) and a course at the Naval Post Graduate School (NPS), Monterey. CGSC offers two 25 hour blocks of instruction with an elective 48 hour blocks on instruction¹, while NPS has the Guerrilla Warfare course necessary for completing the Special Operations Low Intensity Conflict (SOLIC) degree². These blocks of instructions are currently only available to Officers and Warrant Officers³. UW education needs to be a continued and a progressive training venue needs to build upon the basic introductory skills USSF soldiers learn in their basic Qualification course; however, it is not something that can be conveyed through short instruction blocks or distance learning modules. UW is a method, act and philosophy that must be learned in a classroom/instructor environment which is both fluid and dynamic. This fact was best stated by ADM Eric Olson, Commander of USSOCOM in his speech to the November 2008 Special Forces Qualification Course graduates

You will move quickly to embrace and apply new technologies and you will hold true to the low-tech unconventional warfare missions for which Special Forces were initially established...and which remain the primary mission of the Special Forces today. No one else does unconventional warfare...no one else can do unconventional warfare...no one else should do unconventional warfare.

Unconventional warfare requires one to be a skilled advisor, possessing the characteristics of open-mindedness, empathy, self-reliance, and patience. It requires proficiency in cross-cultural communications, the ability to build rapport with tribal leaders and foreign military commanders; the ability to see problems through other people's eyes, and to gain the trust and confidence of a wary civilian populace. It requires diplomacy, flexibility, and adaptability, just as much as it requires proficiency in small unit tactics and operational planning. While high-tech, short-duration assaults to capture or kill high-value targets are necessary and urgent, it is

¹ This change in instruction was implemented the spring of 2010.

² The National Defense University initiated a graduate degree in Irregular Warfare the fall of 2010 in partnership with the Special Warfare Center. Due to the newness of this degree course I did not include it in the overall paper; however, I wanted to note its existence.

³ Naval Postgraduate School currently has both a Marine Gunnery Sergeant and a US Army Master Sergeant in attendance of its SOLIC degree. The Master Sergeant is in Psychological Operations while the Gunnery Sergeant is Civil Affairs. This is a recent event for the January 2011 class.

the long-term, behind the scenes, persistent engagement activities that will have the most enduring effects.

And this nation counts on its Special Forces to best balance the Direct and Indirect Approaches to warfare.

With that defining statement, USSF must begin the process of establishing an institution within the Special Warfare Center's (SWC) current construct that serves as a historical and current doctrine repository, as well as the educator of this vast and complicated form of warfare. This institution would be the place where USSF soldiers come throughout their career to develop that in-depth understanding of UW and ensconce the force in this form of warfare. As USSF soldiers advanced through the ranks they would be exposed to more complex forms of UW and receive training that would allow them to conduct UW operations throughout the spectrum of strategic, operational, and tactical. The end result, a military force which is truly the subject matter expert on this multifarious mission.

Unconventional Warfare Advanced Studies and Training Center

"If one is master of one thing and understands one thing well, one has at the same time, insight into and understanding of many things." –Vincent Van Gogh

The immediate objective for this institute is to create an educational program that progresses with a USSF soldier's career, emphasizing the advanced tactical, operational, and strategic aspects of UW. As a SF soldier progresses in rank and responsibility, the required educational program would prepare them for the operations at their respective levels by providing instructional content across the spectrum of professional development to include Advanced Non-Commissioned Officer Course (ANCOC), Sergeant Major Academy (SMA), Warrant Officer Education System (WOES), ILE/NPS, and Pre-Command Course for USSF. This would be the "whole system" approach to education and impart a greater understanding of doctrine throughout the USSF regiment. In addition to providing classroom instruction, the institute would create and introduce advanced field training exercises within these training venues. This training will increase in intricacy through each stage in order to broaden the perspective of the senior leaders of USSF and also allow USSF soldiers to put into practice, classroom theoretical instruction with constant and substantial feedback. The result would be Special Forces Command Teams and leaders with enhanced UW skills able to be involved in national level campaign planning, as well as able to provide accurate and relative input into the creation of new policy.

In addition, the UW Advance Studies and Training Center will be responsible for partnering with national institutions of higher learning, such as National Defense University, Naval Postgraduate School, and the respective branch war colleges in order to provide for the education of the greater DOD and national leadership on the "broad-strokes" of UW. While this will require incremental growth on the part of SWC in order to provide the necessary man-power to accomplish this objective, its payoff will be incalculable. National military and civilian leaders will be educated on the unique capabilities and limitations of UW and they will be exposed to the soldiers who perform the mission promoting the confidence in both. This interaction will also foster habitual partnerships between USSF and those entities furthering the capabilities of an already talented force and possibly providing for better strategic options for defense in the future.

Conclusion

As it has since its beginning, Unconventional Warfare remains the most complex of missions. It requires constant study and practice to perfect. The creation of an educational entity whose sole purpose is the study and advancement of this form of warfare would allow for the advancement of an already exceptional force in what is their core mission. It would provide a venue for creating leaders who can articulate the advantages and disadvantages of UW and how it can be incorporated into national policy. It would go far in enhancing the world's finest and most versatile Special Operations Force, which in turn would increase the capabilities/options of the Geographic Commanders, the National Command Authority, and the National Leadership. Finally, it would solidify the title of UW subject matter expert for USSF amongst the SOF community. The mastery of Unconventional Warfare is a lifelong pursuit and a desire among the soldiers in USSF. Such passion must be afforded opportunity which in turn will allow USSF to reach the potential envisioned by its founders.

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