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COALITION SPECIAL OPERATION FORCES: BUILDING PARTNER CAPACITY

by J. Paul de B. Taillon

Now, it is an extraordinary thing that you should meet with so much opposition from allies. Allies, altogether, are really very extraordinary people. It is astonishing how obstinate they are, how parochially minded, how ridiculously sensitive to prestige and how wrapped up in obsolete political ideas. It is equally astonishing how they fail to see how broad-minded you are, how clear your picture is, how up-to-date you are and how cooperative and big-hearted you are. It is extraordinary. But let me tell you, when you feel like that about allies – and you have even worse allies than the British, believe me – when you feel like that, just remind yourself of two things. First, that you are an ally too, and all allies look just the same. If you walk to the other side of the table, you will look just like that to the fellow sitting opposite. Then the next thing to remember is that there is only one thing worse than having allies – that is not having allies.

— Field Marshal Sir William Slim¹

Introduction

Coalition operations have become the crucial enabler for success in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). Over the past decade, successful operations have been conducted by coalition Special Operations Forces (CSOF) in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq, underlining the need to support, facilitate, and expedite future CSOF

operations. Current and future coalitions face difficulties, as they encompass not only so-called “traditional allies,”² but also non-traditional special operations forces (SOF) partners, which raises a number of sensitive concerns, including intelligence sharing, interoperability and maintaining coalitions while balancing national interests. Moreover, the deployment of coalition SOF represents the strategic interests of their respective nations.

To appreciate the spectrum of CSOF capabilities, this article will explore recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, offering recommendations on how to enhance interoperability and integration. These include “outreach” or Coalition advocacy programs, aimed at likely SOF partners and initiatives to facilitate the interoperability of partners in a fully integrated joint CSOF command structure.

The Threat

While terrorism was viewed historically as a criminal threat, since the attacks of 11 September 2001 (9/11) it has become the primary focus of the American national security efforts and those of its partners. Terrorists are viewed as a serious and persistent threat to all nations. American and CSOF are leading the way, using their unique skills, experience, language capabilities, and cultural

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awareness to develop personal links with local populations, thereby garnering critical intelligence, fostering all-important inter-personal relationships, and forging strategically important global coalition partnerships.³ American and coalition SOF operate in many regions around the world, including the Philippines, the Pacific Rim countries, the South American Tri-Border region (Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina), the African Sahel region (Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger), and they work closely with local police, military, and security authorities to counter the persistent threat from terrorism. As Major General Gary L. Harrell, the Combined Special Operations Component Commander, United States (US) Central Command, has underlined, “CSOF are valuable contributions to GWOT, far in excess of their numbers.”⁴

This American acknowledgment underlines the necessity to reinforce and expand such contributions, particularly as their SOF are reportedly “so overstretched,” due to their operational tempo.⁵

Today’s global terrorism challenge necessitates the mobilization and maintenance of a collective will and determination, along with the requisite resources and elements of national power, to facilitate the efforts of coalition partners. The American strategic policy of pre-emption will result in certain US government initiatives taking place beyond what historically has been understood as designated combat zones, underlining the necessity for closer cooperation, as well as the development of synchronized plans that draw upon the strengths of the US and coalition partners.⁶

To overcome contemporary terrorism, the US and its allies must create an environment that eschews terrorism, and develop an adaptive counter-terrorism

strategy. This requires the support and full cooperation of the international community, as well as all US departments and agencies, to adhere to the four principles that underline this strategy:

- Prevent the emergence of new terrorist threats;
- Isolate terrorist threats that have emerged from their respective support bases;
- Defeat isolated terrorist threats; and
- Prevent the re-emergence of terrorist threats that have already been defeated.⁷

Importance of Partners

Politicians, military commanders and their planners understand that the ‘Long War,’ as it is now known,⁸ will not be won unilaterally by the United States. To prevail, the US and allied coalition partners must adopt Liddell Hart’s “strategy of the indirect approach,” to organize and synchronize the efforts of a global coalition. This will necessitate the development of effective coalition military forces, and, in particular, the interoperability and integration of CSOF at all levels.⁹ Currently, over 80 countries support *Operation Iraqi Freedom* (OIF), and *Operation Enduring Freedom* (OEF), with 64 countries contributing conventional military forces, and 12 countries contributing CSOF.¹⁰ Current SOF missions undertaken by CSOF include Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Unconventional Warfare (UW), Civil Affairs (CA), and Psychological Operations (PsyOps).¹¹ Depending upon the political or military situation, CSOF could expand or contract these missions as required.

Strategic Requirement for Building CSOF Capacity

CSOF and building partner capacity became strategically salient in early February 2006, when the Joint Staff (J5 [plans]) at the Pentagon laid out a new 20-year defence strategy for the Long War. This strategy outlined the deployment of US forces, often clandestinely, to fight terrorism and other non-traditional threats, a 15 percent boost in the future number of SOF personnel, as well as acknowledging the requirement to operate around the globe.¹² It was recognized that SOF would play a major role, and that “[US] SOF will have the capacity to operate in dozens of countries



A patrol from the US 3rd Special Forces Group moving through a riverbed in Afghanistan.

US Army photo 031209-A-3996M-042

simultaneously,”¹³ and would deploy for longer periods of time, with the aim of building relationships with foreign military and security forces. This strategy fully acknowledged that the US military could not unilaterally achieve victory, therefore reinforcing the strategic importance of allies and coalition partners. Ryan Henry, Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, confirmed this belief, stating that, “...we cannot win this Long War by ourselves,”¹⁴ and that, should a major crisis occur requiring a surge in military forces, the US would request higher levels of military contributions from international partners.

Building Partner Capacity and Coalition Interoperability

In 2005, the Director of Strategic Studies at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Michael G. Vickers, told the Committee on Armed Services Panel on Gaps – Terrorism and Radical Islam, that the main tasks of SOF in the Long War are: [to]

- Build partner capacity and provide persistent, low visibility ground presence;
- Conduct persistent air, maritime, and ground surveillance over ungoverned areas; and
- Conduct clandestine and covert operations, counter-proliferation operations and operations in denied areas.¹⁵

Depending upon the level of perceived threat and political support, allied or coalition partners could plan, execute, or facilitate any one of these taskings.

To build partner capacity, the 2006 US Defense Budget proposed that the US Special Operations Command receive USD 4.1 billion, with a portion designated to facilitate cooperative initiatives with allies, including training other nations’ military forces. Major General Harrell emphasized the contribution of coalition forces across a spectrum of operations, and that – given the appropriate assistance, time, and investments – future CSOF activities could be expanded, predicated upon appropriate political support and coalition direction.¹⁶

To date, CSOF has integrated and functioned with relative ease in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other operational areas,¹⁷ as SOF from the Eastern European and Pacific regions employ the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) standards for training and equipment.¹⁸ Major General Harrell acknowledged that the Central Command’s SOF did much to ensure that CSOF would achieve a higher level of interoperability prior to deploying.¹⁹ Notwithstanding, some areas still need attention to ensure closer coalition SOF cooperation, interoperability, and the integration of CSOF staff in joint and combined operations. It has been recognized

“American and coalition SOF operate in many regions around the world...”

consistently that the earlier CSOF integration takes place, the better. This can be addressed through enhancing coalition SOF training and exercises to educate, train, and sensitize participating commanders and staff to tactical, operational, and strategic issues, as well as ensuing problems. CSOF partners could also provide other ideas on how

best to address a given situation. Vice Admiral Eric Olson, Deputy Commander US Special Operations Command, reinforced this point, arguing:

[that] the level of coalition SOF integration, particularly early on, will determine ultimate success in joint and combined special operations. Organizational relationships and communications are always issues in such operations, but feedback from our SOF counterparts reflects fewer integration and interoperability problems at the tactical level than we experienced as recently as a couple of years ago.²⁰

Vice Admiral Olson has noted, however, that the higher up the chain of command one goes, the more the challenges become conceptual. It is, therefore, important – indeed imperative – that US and CSOF staff and their commanders meet to discuss a concept of operations prior to assigning and engaging CSOF at the lower level. A salient lesson acknowledged by all is that the “...campaign plans, mission focus and execution parameters must be consistent across the combined force.”²¹

Strategic Importance of US SOF/CSOF Interoperability

The momentum for embracing CSOF interoperability increased dramatically in the wake of the electrifying attacks on 9/11. Since then, a spectrum of CSOF has been operating and fighting alongside US SOF on a scale never before conceived possible. Moreover, the deployment and integration of CSOF lends strategically important political and military legitimacy, as well as moral weight, to the war on terrorism. In both Afghanistan and Iraq, the US Army Special Forces became the core for the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Forces (CJSOTFs), the command and control umbrella for CSOF.

CENTCOM Initiative in Developing CSOF

To assist nations confronting terrorism, Central Command (CENTCOM) has created a special operations and counter terrorist (CT) capability, so that regional partners can conduct successful CT operations within their respective borders. CENTCOM is pursuing bilateral SOF operations

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between regional nations to develop SOF skill sets, and to expand their respective experience in coalition operations.²² Recognizing that there are no simple solutions to interoperability, Major General Harrell sewed together a patchwork of strategic, operational, and tactical initiatives to facilitate the inclusion of CSOF. These include:

- A CENTCOM Coalition Command Cell (CCC) staffed by senior national representatives and defence attachés;
- Pre-deployment and interoperability training;
- Communications security memoranda of agreement (COMSEC MOA);
- Acquisition and cross-servicing agreements (ACSA); and
- Combined training and exercises.²³

This CENTCOM initiative has done much to address the challenge of coalition interoperability. To illustrate, an overview of CSOF operations in Iraq and Afghanistan will underline the challenges and successes faced in both these theatres.

CSOF Partners in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF): An Overview

Over 13,000 SOF personnel were deployed during *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, making it the largest SOF deployment since the Vietnam War. The contingent included Australian, British, Polish, and American SOF, who undertook a variety of land, air, and maritime operations throughout the Iraqi theatre. To effect those operations, the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command (CFSOCC) was created in early 2003, and it was charged with the command and control of US Army, USAF, and USN SOF assets, including the CSOF provided by the respective coalition nations.²⁴

To facilitate command and control during OIF, three task forces were created to conduct Special Operations (SO) missions within the Iraqi theatre:

- Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – North (CJSOTF-N);
- Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – West (CJSOTF-W);
- Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – South (CJSOTF-S).



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These task forces were directly supported by the Combined Joint Special Operations Aviation Component (CJSOAC), which had Australian and British aviation assets under its command and control. These assets flew at least 2181 missions, many of which were behind Iraqi lines.²⁵

The CJSOTF-W was built around the US Army's 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), and was reinforced by coalition special forces from the Australian and British Special Air Service, including the 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (Commando). Its area of responsibility (AOR) was the western desert – the area from Baghdad to Kuwait.²⁶ The primary mission of CJSOTF-W was to deny freedom of movement to the Iraqi ground forces, to plan and execute strategic reconnaissance (SR), to conduct unconventional warfare (UW), and, most importantly, to restrict Iraq's ability to launch SCUD missiles at coalition and friendly forces.²⁷ Australian, British, and US SOF, along with USAF Special Tactics Squadron personnel, were rapidly deployed throughout CJSOTF-W AOR. They commenced the forward reconnaissance of Iraqi defensive positions, monitored their ground movements, and conducted counter-theatre ballistic missile (CTBM) operations. Amongst their assigned tasks, the CSOF teams called in close air support to suppress and destroy Iraqi defensive positions, and provided "eyes on the sparrow" intelligence and reconnaissance to both USMC and US Army commanders throughout their rapid armoured advance to Baghdad.²⁸

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The assimilation of SOF coalition partners was facilitated by clear command relationships, a common understanding of the importance of the principle of unity of command and effort, and solid grounding in the doctrine being employed and in staff procedures. During the opening phases of the attack on Iraq, Australian and British SOF were assigned appropriate missions, and they were under the tactical control of CJSOTF-W. These tasks also contributed to the counter-theatre ballistic missile operations focused in the western deserts of Iraq, and they were tactically and strategically sensitive.²⁹

Coalition SOF Integration during Operation Iraqi Freedom

From the outset, it was vital to ensure that CSOF were thoroughly integrated into the campaign plan for Iraq. Commanders and their staffs ensured that the integration started at the most senior levels of leadership residing at the Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC), and then cascaded down to the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF), to the combined Army Special Operations Task Force (ARSOF), and to the respective tactical levels.³⁰

The effectiveness of coalition integration in Iraq was demonstrated when an Australian SAS patrol reached a boundary of their assigned AOR. The patrol commander observed an Iraqi military convoy heading toward his position, and immediately sought

a close air support mission from the Airborne Warning and Control Squadron (AWACS). The British AWACS crew subsequently directed a flight of fighters onto the Iraqi convoy, all this occurring within eight minutes of the air support request.³¹ It should be appreciated that such close air support procedures had been developed and fully rehearsed with American SF, coalition SOF, and with British and US aircraft during three well-planned exercises that were undertaken leading up to the invasion. This occurrence illustrates the critical importance of consistently exercising coalition operational and support procedures prior to any combined deployments.

US SOF and CSOF Staff Integration

During the initial stages of the operation in Iraq, the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) made up much of the staff assigned to the CJSOTF-W. Embedded and integrated coalition staff, consisting of Australian and British officers, served in many of the directorates of CJSOTF-W. Notably, the CJSOTF J3 (Operations) and the deputy commanders, as well as the J3 Western Desert and Assistant J2 (Intelligence) were all coalition allies. The British J3 and his US staff were so well acquainted with the doctrine that integration “appeared to be seamless.” A ‘top-down’ staffing approach with coalition seniors further facilitated multinational interoperability, ensuring that CSOF was integrated into each phase of operations.³²

During the strategically important CTBM operations in Iraq, US Special Forces (SF) became a vital asset for the combined force air component commander (CFACC). During operations, coalition SOF units rapidly adapted to new technologies by effectively employing precision-targeted air delivered ordnance. However, this coalition capability and flexibility was predicated upon years of training using well-established NATO close air support procedures, which ensured interoperability with both American aircraft, and those of CSOF.³³ These procedures were further exercised and honed by CSOF during follow-on air strikes against the Iraqi military targets.



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While operating in Iraq's western desert, CSOF were attacked on a number of occasions by Iraqi forces. Fortunately, these contacts were short-lived, as coalition SOF were rapidly supported by close air support, and, therefore, could engage or disengage as required. To ensure the effective coordination of air support tasks, a combined staff of American and British officers made up the 'joint fires element' of CJSOTF.³⁴ For CSOF undertaking counter-theatre ballistic missile operations in Iraq's western desert, the most harrowing time was during the days immediately following their insertion. Initially, American, Australian, and British forces had to deconflict their respective operations to conduct a passage of lines safely when CSOF planned (or suddenly found it necessary) to transit each other's operating areas. This was complicated further by the necessity of conducting all tactical moves at night – the same period when Iraqi forces would conduct aggressive counter SOF operations – resulting in an increased possibility of friendly fire, also known as a 'blue on blue' incident.³⁵ To mitigate potential problems, a series of rehearsals was conducted, a common radio frequency was provided, and activities were tightly planned, coordinated, and controlled. It is notable that CJSOTF-W's CSOF/US Special Forces detachments were successful, and they achieved their missions without loss of any CSOF personnel, while, concomitantly, inflicting substantial materiel damage and casualties upon the Iraqi formations. The success of CSOF in Iraq was predicated upon tried and true interoperable procedures, an integration of CSOF staffs, close coordination and integration of coalition partners up and down the command and control chain, and through extensive combined training in joint operations.

CSOF Assistance to Task Force 145

The close liaison between the US Special Forces and the Jordanian Special Forces helped produce a major success in the 2006 pursuit of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the al Qaeda terrorist leader in Iraq. Media reports indicated that the Pentagon's Task Force 145 received intelligence from a human source working under the direction of a Jordanian SF team operating inside Iraq. While acknowledging the importance of other intelligence collection methodology and techniques, it is often a single 'informer' who can provide the critical piece of timely information to take the operation to the next level – such as the capture of a high value target (HVT). In this case, the Iraqi informant identified Zarqawi's spiritual leader, and American intelligence was then able to technically monitor activity through his mobile telephone communications. American intelligence subsequently located the spiritual leader at a safe house, where he was meeting with Zarqawi. The house was surrounded, and an air strike was called in on the premises. In the wake of the air attack, Zarqawi was found alive in the rubble, but he quickly succumbed to massive internal injuries. This successful mission, within which Jordanian Special Forces played a lead role, further illustrates the critical and growing importance of CSOF in the Long War.³⁶

CSOF Partners in Operation Enduring Freedom: An Overview

In 2002, the first year of *Operation Enduring Freedom* in Afghanistan, SOF units operated hundreds of miles from their parent Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A). To address this situation, the CJSOTF-A commander established a Special Forces liaison element, better known as a coalition coordination cell, that subsequently was staffed from the 3rd SF Group, and co-located with the five CSOF task groups. The coordination cell had staff representatives from J2 (intelligence), J3 (operations), J4 (logistics) and J6 (command, control, communications and computer systems). The coordination cell provided an American C2 (command and control) umbrella, as well as the vital communications and intelligence links to coalition SOF headquarters. The coordination cell also facilitated access to and dissemination of American intelligence in response to coalition requests for information (RFIs), video feeds, surveillance and reconnaissance reports, radio frequencies, and cryptology. The coordination cell ensured deconfliction and facilitated the incorporation of coalition SOF throughout the Afghan battle space when they conducted special reconnaissance and direct action missions against al Qaeda and Taliban elements.³⁷



A member of the British Special Air Service (SAS) in Afghanistan.

CMJ Collection

In December 2001, CSOF, drawn from seven nations, were deployed to Afghanistan to conduct operations under the auspices of *Operation Enduring Freedom*. During the following year, these coalition partners conducted over 200 direct action, special reconnaissance, and sensitive site exploitation missions.³⁸ This tempo could only have been accomplished due to a high degree of coordination and interoperability.

The CJSOTF-A represented inter-operability at the operational level, having CSOF representation from contributing nations, although interoperability more often than not was truly manifested at the tactical level of an American SF battalion. When the 2nd Battalion, 3rd SF Group was assigned to and established its forward operating base 32 (FOB 32) at Kandahar Airfield, it was co-located with five CSOF task groups embedded in the coalition coordination cell. Taking advantage of CSOF expertise in static and mobile special reconnaissance, FOB 32 commenced the operational preparations for their respective SF detachments. FOB 32 also planned and undertook combat missions with coalition SOF in the Afghan provinces of Oruzgun, Helmund, and Paktika. These initial reconnaissance missions were instrumentally successful during subsequent operations against leadership cells belonging to al Qaeda and the Taliban. Moreover, SF detachments conducted many of their missions based upon the intelligence and information provided by CSOF – a true indication of trust in their CSOF partners.³⁹

During initial operations, it was recognized quickly that certain CSOF partners were particularly skilled in mobile reconnaissance missions, enabling the identification, seizure, and destruction of enemy arms caches. Predicated upon sound and timely intelligence, and exercising close coordination, CSOF members conducted their own successful direct action missions, locating and capturing a number of members of the Taliban leadership cadre.⁴⁰

Coalition SOF and the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment

Supporting CSOF was the 3rd Battalion 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, better known to those in the community as the “Night Stalkers.” Both CSOF and the supporting air assets have acknowledged that interoperability was vital to successful joint and combined SOF initiatives. The 160th planning staff and flight commanders understood the criticality of this point, and undertook to facilitate CSOF operations to the fullest extent by ensuring intimate coordination between the ground force commanders and the air planners. The Danish SOF contingent was officially commended for their exceptional planning ability, since they brought with them two of their US-trained pilots. Both these aviators, well versed in US air planning formats and requirements were, astutely, assigned to billets on the air

operations planning staff of the battalion, thus expediting CSOF air planning. On a series of occasions, the 160th inserted CSOF into their AOR, including insertions onto extreme slopes at high elevations. On a number of these occasions, battalion crews took enemy fire while conducting their approaches to drop-off points, underlining the high degree of trust and professional dedication that existed between the 160th and coalition SOF partners.⁴¹

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Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The experiences and lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan underscore the critical importance of deliberate planning for coalition SOF operations. Fortuitously, the planning and decision-making processes employed by CSOF mirrored American doctrine.⁴² The “commonality” of doctrine and formats

for developing concepts of operation, staff work, and briefbacks facilitated interoperability, and has further cemented the professional trust between the US and the various CSOF units engaged in operations. Moreover, under the American C2 umbrella, coalition SOF proved their ability to undertake special operations successfully at both the tactical and operational levels. Strategically, CSOF contributes directly to the legitimacy and credibility of US and coalition political and military objectives, and to subsequent initiatives in the struggle against terrorism.

In the Long War, CSOF operations will remain a vital component of the coalition effort. Hence, it is incumbent upon military professionals to assimilate the experiences and lessons learned in Afghanistan and Iraq, and to build upon them in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of integrated CSOF operations. A key lesson from operations in Afghanistan and Iraq is the early integration of qualified CSOF personnel into senior positions in CJSOTF. This ensures a unity of effort, and it maximizes the skills and potential of coalition partners.⁴³ Multi-national SOF exercises, at both the tactical and operational levels, could improve interoperability and build upon the hard-won lessons of Afghanistan and Iraq. The following recommendations would, if incorporated, expand and enhance future CSOF interoperability, and assist in our coalition efforts in the Long War.

- Create Coalition SOF Mobile Training Teams (CSOFMTT). Operators from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Poland, and others under NATO (+)⁴⁴ could develop NATO standard SOF tactics, technologies, and procedures (TTPs) to enhance individual military skills, develop counter insurgency and counter terrorist expertise, and pass on proven techniques. The January 2006 announcement of the creation of the International Special Forces Training Course (ISFTC) at Fort Bragg is an important and substantial step towards CSOF interoperability. The 15-week course takes students through a comprehensive SF program. This initiative can also be a vehicle for

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coalition advocacy and strategic partnering. Moreover, instructors from CSOF nations would give the course a true coalition SOF flavour. CSOF nations would benefit from sending candidates to train and develop personal

connections with other students in anticipation of future coalition initiatives.

- Create a NATO SOF School. The international Long Range Patrol School (LRPS) at Weingarten, Germany had a cadre of instructors from various NATO nations and was a focal point in developing standardized NATO patrol techniques. A similar-style NATO SOF School would provide a base of knowledge and skills, along with standardized TTPs for a spectrum of SOF missions, enhancing future CSOF interoperability.
- Ascertain coalition SOF expertise and leverage that expertise. Many nations have developed unique or niche capabilities, such as the Norwegians have done for snow or high altitude conditions. Coalition SOF must have an awareness and appreciation of respective skills and capabilities, and leverage these to the benefit of the CSOF community.⁴⁵
- Create an SOF “Olympics.” CSOF would be tested by undertaking several operational scenarios, such as a direct action operation, a hostage rescue, a strategic reconnaissance mission, and a long-range patrol⁴⁶ to assess the professionalism, flexibility, and equipment of those partaking, and for ascertaining the interoperability of these CSOF partners.⁴⁷ This would provide a venue to learn from the respective experience of the participants, so as to share successful TTPs in preparation for future deployment initiatives.
- Create an SOF Staff College. The college could look at special and asymmetric operations that have occurred throughout history, including the profiles and experiences of various special forces to garner insights as to their respective history, skills, and methodologies. The SOF staff college would teach new planning methodologies, emphasize the responsibilities of commanders and staff in planning sensitive, as well as normative, SOF operations. The curriculum could examine the issues and experiences of CSOF partners, and the development of their respective SOF.⁴⁸ Courses would be taught to enable SOF operators to understand various cultural mores, behaviours, and traditions, as well as to emphasize that this cultural understanding is

“The Long War will require great patience and a comprehensive approach to defeating the terrorism threat.”

as important as the weapons they carry.⁴⁹ The SOF Staff College could also conduct a series of NATO standard exercises focusing upon the spectrum of SOF missions. This would assist in talent spotting, and in the training and development of operational skills of SOF/CSOF personnel, as well as staff planners, trainers/instructors, and commanders. This initiative could be extended to incorporate the creation of an SOF planning specialty, similar to the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), conducted at the U.S. Command and Staff College, Leavenworth, as well as selecting officers to become special operations and irregular warfare strategists. This initiative could readily be put under the umbrella of the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU), based at Hurlburt Field, Florida.⁵⁰

- Increase coalition SOF attachments and secondments to various SOF/CSOF schools. The exchange of officers, instructors, and students would secure the human dimension of CSOF, and put a real coalition face upon, in particular, American SOF schools and training programs. This would ensure an increase in interoperability through an awareness of the various coalition cultures, staff and operating methodologies, while concomitantly developing personal contacts.
- Solicit CSOF participation in US and coalition SOF exercises and, at the same time, garner coalition input and ideas. CSOF observers/participants may have unique cultural, operational, or methodological insights that would be advantageous to the SOF/CSOF community. The request or invitation to participate would, in itself, acknowledge coalition value and importance.
- Assist coalition initiatives in the Long War, particularly in regions where post-colonial nations are experiencing confrontations with terrorism and insurgency. And also where British or American presence could be problematic, coalition partners may wish to provide military assistance in the Long War through a future NATO (+) program.⁵¹ This multinational operational detachment A team (ODA, which is a US Army Special Forces A Team) could consist of coalition SOF members from Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, Poland, and so on. This would be an expansion of the Second World War era Jedburgh teams,⁵² or “Jeds” for short. These were small units comprised of three military officers/non-commissioned officers – one British (Commonwealth), one French and one American – that were parachuted into France to provide intelligence, and to assist the French underground in aligning underground activities to support Allied operations, conducted both prior to and after the Normandy

invasion.⁵³ Such multinational ODAs could conduct foreign training and undertake advisory missions, essentially performing Foreign Internal Defence (FID) or Stability and Security Operations (SASO). Today, this initiative would embrace coalition SOF, taking it to a higher level through team integration – a real ‘Rainbow 6’!⁵⁴

- Support ongoing international SOF symposiums and academic institutions that study irregular warfare and special operations. These venues could be employed to enhance coalition SOF exchanges, to tap respective SOF academics, and to build networks internationally within the SOF academic field. This has been demonstrated at the numerous international SOF symposia held at the Royal Military College of Canada, which has hosted four such events to date.
- Select, train, and return intelligence support personnel. In recent operations, a major and persistent issue was the difficulty of intelligence sharing amongst coalition allies. Considering the criticality of intelligence in driving SOF initiatives, the integral SOF intelligence organizations, particularly those of the traditional or special alliance comprising Canada, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, must address how to manage SOF intelligence requirements appropriately in a coalition. While it can be appreciated that intelligence sources and sensitive technology may have to be protected, assigning coalition allies high-risk conventional or SOF missions without providing critical all-source intelligence, along with the assigned target package, is arguably

immoral, and particularly disenfranchising. It is vital to ensure that SOF select and retain intelligence support personnel who are capable of operating effectively on a joint and coalition staff, as well as working with ambiguity, prickly intelligence issues, allied/foreign SOF operators, and allied agendas.⁵⁵

Conclusion

The Long War will require great patience and a comprehensive approach to defeating the terrorism threat. More importantly, it must be recognized that this is not purely an American problem, but an international problem in which military forces alone cannot win. The war demands the concerted, multi-disciplinary effort of global partners, and CSOF will be instrumental in conducting long-term, effective operations aimed at generating enduring effects to defeat the terrorists and their support networks.⁵⁶ To ensure strategic success in the Long War, coalition members must maintain a unity of effort. All avenues that help to seed, nurture, and renew mutual trust and coalition interoperability will do much to ensure victory on this new ‘battlefield.’ To facilitate the successful interoperability of SOF, there must be a coalition SOF standard. This will not be easy, since there is no simple “silver bullet” solution to ensure interoperability. Hence, the coalition special operations community must come together and provide the guidance, doctrine, training, and education to achieve seamless interoperability, thus ensuring that coalition Special Operations Forces remain the ‘tip of the spear.’

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NOTES

1. Field Marshal Sir William Slim, "Higher Command in War," *Military Review* (May 1990), p. 12.
2. Sometimes known as the "Five Eyes" community, consisting of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These countries are viewed as the traditional CSOF allies. For the purposes of this article, CSOF will encompass both traditional allies and coalition partners.
3. See also Hala Jaber and Michael Smith, "SAS Hunts Fleeing Al-Qaeda (AQ) Africans," in *Times* (14 January 2007). US Special Forces and British Special Air Services assisted by Ethiopian and Kenyan forces were coordinating the destruction and trapping of AQ terrorists.
4. Major General Gary L. Harrell, "Coalition SOF Support to the War on Terrorism," in *Presentation* (29 January 2005), at <www.dtic.mil/ndia/2005solic/harrell.ppt>.
5. Alec Russell, "Overstretched American Special Forces Hit the Language Barrier," in *Daily Telegraph* (4 May 2006).
6. Thom Shanker and Scott Shane, "Elite Troops Get Expanded Role on Intelligence," in *New York Times* (8 March 2006), and Rowan Scarborough, "Special Operations Forces Eye Terrorists," in *Washington Times* (12 August 2005).
7. Lieutenant General Dell L. Dailey and Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey G. Webb, "US Special Operations Command and the War on Terror," in *JFQ 40* (1st Quarter 2006), p. 45.
8. The "Long War" was originally called the Global War on Terrorism, or GWOT, which was also referred to simply as the War on Terrorism, or the War on Terror.
9. In recent times, much focus has been placed on SOF operations in the direct action (DA) mission areas. These are "attractive" operations as they are easy to see and report, and they have an immediate result. This reality, unfortunately, overlooks or underestimates the critical importance of the indirect approach strategies that have long-term strategic effects, such as foreign internal defence, national capacity building, and complementary SOF and conventional operations.
10. Harrell.
11. *Ibid.*
12. See Ann Scott Tyson, "Ability to Wage 'Long War' Is Key to Pentagon Plan," in *Washington Post* (4 February 2006), and Josh White and Ann Scott Tyson, "Rumsfeld Offers Strategies for Current War: Pentagon to Release 20-Year Plan Today," in *Washington Post* (3 February 2006).
13. *Ibid.*
14. Tyson.
15. Michael G. Vickers, "Transforming US Special Operations Forces." Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Prepared for OSD Net Assessment, (August 2005), p. 8.
16. *Ibid.*
17. It should be underlined that in the traditional alliance context, the New Zealand Special Air Service, and Canada's Joint Task Force 2 (JTF2), worked intimately against Taliban elements in Afghanistan. As described to this writer, "Our NZSAS squadron commander would command an op [operation], then the Canadian JTF2 squadron commander led the next op. I believe this was never done before." Interview with senior New Zealand SAS commander, Auckland, New Zealand (21 November 2006).
18. Harrell.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Vice-Admiral Eric T. Olson, "SOF Transformer," interview by Jeffrey McKaughan, in *Special Operations Technology*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 19 February 2006, at <http://www.special-operationstechnology.com/archives.cfm?CoverID=69>.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Harrell.
23. *Ibid.*
24. "A Bid for Freedom," in *Global Defence Review* (2006), at <http://www.global-defence.com/2006/utilities/article.php?id=41>.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. Mark C. Arnold, *Special Operations Forces Interoperability with Coalition Forces*, John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (2005).
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*
35. A 'blue on blue' incident, also known as 'friendly fire,' is when troops from the same or an allied military accidentally fire on each other. This is also known as amicide, or fratricide.
36. For an overview of this operation, see Ellen Knickmeyer and Jonathan Fines, "Insurgent Leader Al-Zarqawi Killed in Iraq," in *Washington Post Foreign Service* (8 June 2006), and Claude Salhani, "Jordanian Role Larger Than First Reported," in *UPI* (12 June 2006).
37. Arnold.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*
44. Although Australia and New Zealand are not under the NATO umbrella for the purpose of such a program, they could be invited to partake in such a NATO (+) initiative. If not, they could be included as Commonwealth attachments.
45. During OEF operations in Afghanistan, the Norwegians were considered highly capable SOF intelligence and operational planners, and their methodology was, in part, copied by Canadian SOF intelligence operators. In Afghanistan, the Canadian Special Operations Intelligence Cell (SOIC) reportedly set the standard for intelligence support for SOF operations.
46. *Ibid.*
47. Observers would note differences in equipment, intelligence requirements, communications used, risks taken, commonality of reporting formats, tactics, techniques, and procedures employed while assessing real time variations from the NATO base model.
48. For various overviews, see Roy MacLaren, *Canadians Behind Enemy Lines 1939-1945* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1981), William H. Burgess, III, (ed.), *Inside Spetsnaz: Soviet Special Operations* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1990), Greg Annussek, *Hitler's Raid to Save Mussolini* (Cambridge: Da Capo, 2005), Tim Saunders, *Fort Eben Emael* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2005), Ian Westwell, *Brandenburgers: The Third Reich's Special Forces* (Hersham: Ian Allan, 2003), Otto Skorzeny, *My Commando Operations: The Memoirs of Hitler's Most Daring Commando* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 1995), Eric Lefevre, *Brandenburg Division: Commandos of the Reich* (Paris: Histoire and Collections, 2000), James E. Mrazek, *The Fall of Eben Emael* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1970), Douglas Dodds-Parker, *Setting Europe Ablaze* (Windlesham: Springwood, 1983), T. E. Lawrence, *Revolt in the Desert*, (New York: Tess Press, 1926), John Arquilla, (ed.), *From Troy to Entebbe: Special Operations in Ancient and Modern Times* (Lanham, MD: United Press of America, 1996) and William H. McRaven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1995).
49. Students would also undertake a broad spectrum of initiatives in dealing with terrorists, guerrillas, and insurgents, and study the following notables in history; T. E. Lawrence, Vo Nguyen Giap, Mao Tse-Tung, Sun Tzu, Chen Peng, Augusto Sandino, Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara, and Osama Bin Laden.
50. JSOU is based at Hurlburt Field, Florida, and offers a wide range of courses regarding terrorism, unconventional warfare, special operations, and staff officer training. With an academic staff comprised of in-house experts and drawing from international adjunct professors, this would be a logical expansion under JSOU, and could facilitate future US SOCOM/CSOF initiatives in the Long War. For an overview as to the training for SOF staff personnel, see Commander Steven P. Schreiber (USN), Lieutenant Colonel Greg E. Metzgar (USA) and Major Stephen R. Mezhir (USAF), "Behind Friendly Lines: Enforcing the Need for a Joint SOF Staff Officer," in *Military Review* (May-June 2004), pp. 2-8.
51. According to reports, SOCOM has approximately 7000 troops overseas, with a major concentration in Iraq and Afghanistan. One report noted 85 percent of these were in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Horn of Africa. Ann Scott Tyson, "New Plans Foresee Fighting Terrorism Beyond War Zones," in *Washington Post* (23 April 2006).
52. Julian Thompson, *The Imperial War Museum Book of War: Behind Enemy Lines* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2001), pp. 299-301.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Taken from Tom Clancy's techno-thriller novel, *Rainbow Six*. The novel focuses upon a multi-national counter-terrorist unit, codenamed 'Rainbow.' The use of the numeral six in American military jargon is designated for the commander.
55. Jon-Paul Hart, "Killer Spooks: Increase Human Intelligence Collection Capability by Assigning Collectors to Tactical-Level Units," in *Marine Corps Gazette* (April 2005).
56. Dell and Webb, p. 47.