CURTIS E. LEMAY CENTER
FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

ANNEX 3-05 SPECIAL OPERATIONS

CATALOG OF DOCTRINE TOPICS

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INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Last Updated: 23 January 2015

This annex captures the fundamental principles by which Air Force special operations forces (AFSOF) guide their actions to support national objectives. It articulates AFSOF warfighting principles, lessons learned, and best practices for conducting Air Force special operations (SO).

This document has three primary objectives. First, it describes Air Force guidance on the proper use of AFSOF in military operations; second, it discusses AFSOF's role in planning and executing SO; and third, it explains AFSOF's unique command relationships that, left unexplained, could introduce confusion in the proper employment of this important Air Force capability. It is highly unlikely SO would be conducted as a single Service operation; therefore, SO planning should consider joint support and coordination, to include Air Force forces.

As a contributor to the SO force, AFSOF conduct and support specific US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) core activities. The SO core activities, and the AFSOF core missions, which support those activities, will be discussed in *Core Activities and Missions*. This annex provides an overview of the Airman's perspective of the SO core activities, while other annexes discuss some of these activities in much greater detail.

AFSOF Characteristics. AFSOF are distinct from conventional forces (CF). Commanders should be familiar with AFSOF characteristics, as well as SOF capabilities and limitations, to better select missions and tasks compatible with their capabilities.

AFSOF conduct joint and combined training within the special operations forces (SOF) community and with CF. When employed, SOF are presented with their command and control (C2) structure intact, which facilitates their integration into joint force plans, retains cohesion, provides a control mechanism to address specific SO concerns, and coordinates their activities with other components and supporting commands.

AFSOF routinely operate closely with other government agencies, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and other nations' forces. Clandestine/low-visibility SO requires extensive and detailed interagency and international coordination. Additionally, AFSOF require unique training and education and the development, acquisition, and employment of weapons and equipment not standard for other CF.

- Certain AFSOF personnel undergo a rigorous selection process and mission-specific training beyond basic military skills to achieve proficiency in entry-level SO skills. AFSOF

units tend to be populated with seasoned personnel, many of whom maintain high levels of competency in more than one military specialty.

- Select AFSOF are regionally, culturally, and linguistically oriented for employment. Extensive language training and cross-cultural education are routine parts of their development. Some personnel require highly technical and advanced training in order to accomplish assigned missions.

AFSOF can be formed into versatile, self-contained teams that provide an agile and adaptable force capable of operating in dynamic environments. AFSOF can:

- Deploy rapidly to provide tailored responses to different situations.

- Gain access to hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas to prepare the operational environment for future operations and develop unconventional options for addressing ambiguous situations.

- Conduct operations in most environments with minimal support, low profile, and non-intrusive presence.

- Communicate globally using organic equipment.

- Work closely with regional military and civilian authorities and populations.

- Survey and assess local situations and report these assessments rapidly.

- Execute SO missions using SOF-unique equipment.

AFSOF Mission Criteria. SOF/AFSOF employment is facilitated by basic criteria that provide guidelines for both SOF and CF commanders and planners to consider when employing AFSOF. Historically, commanders have found that following these guidelines provides the greatest propensity for AFSOF mission success:

- The mission or activity should be appropriate for AFSOF. AFSOF should be used to create effects that require SOF's unique skills and capabilities. AFSOF resources should not be planned to conduct missions more appropriate for CF.

- The mission should support the JFC's campaign, operation plan, or contingency response. Unity of effort and purpose is an imperative. Conducting operations, which do not support this economy of force, could result in the loss of limited AFSOF resources.

- The mission should be operationally feasible, supportable, and acceptable with the appropriate capabilities, capacities, and authorities for successful mission execution.

AFSOF are not structured for attrition or force-on-force warfare and should not be assigned missions or employed beyond their capabilities.

- The mission should have required resources to execute and support the AFSOF mission. Some AFSOF missions require support from non-SOF sources, such as airlift, intelligence, communications, information operations, medical, logistics, space, weather, and other types of support.

- The expected outcome of the mission should justify the risks. AFSOF assets are limited and commanders should ensure they fully consider risk to the force when making employment decisions. In addition, commanders should consider SOF mission effects on US diplomatic and domestic political interests in risk calculation.

- Coordination with indigenous populations and use of culture and language skills may be required to accomplish the mission.

AFSOF Limitations. Years of operational experience have led to understanding key AFSOF limitations. Commanders should understand:

- AFSOF cannot be quickly reconstituted or rapidly expanded, due to the lengthy time required to recruit, train, and educate AFSOF operators. Improper employment of these forces runs the risk of rapidly depleting their capabilities.

- AFSOF are not a substitute for CF. In most cases AFSOF are not organized, trained, sized, or equipped to conduct sustained conventional combat operations. Using AFSOF to conduct or support conventional operations may inhibit their ability to conduct SO.

- Most AFSOF missions require non-SOF support. AFSOF are not structured with robust logistic and sustainment capabilities. Therefore, AFSOF frequently rely on external support. Limited SOF logistical capacity frequently requires support from conventional force structures supplemented by HN or contracted support.

- AFSOF operations in non-combat areas could have additional restrictions placed upon them by the Ambassador or Chief of Diplomatic Mission, which may limit access or otherwise effect operations.

The Air Force Special Operations Forces Legacy

In preparation for Operation OVERLORD, the cross-channel invasion of France, small numbers of special operations forces began infiltrating Europe as early as 1942. Eventually, the special operators needed their own clandestine air insertion capability. In August 1943, General Carl A. Spaatz, at the time the commander of North African Air Forces, allocated three B-17 bombers to support Office of Strategic Services (OSS) activities. This marked the start of the ever-expanding special air activities in the European theater by specially trained aircrews who came to be known as “Carpetbaggers.”

Concurrently, General Henry “Hap” Arnold, commander, Army Air Forces, approved the activation of an American special air unit in the China-Burma-India (CBI) theater of operations. The First Air Commando Group’s primary task involved support for Lord Louis Mountbatten’s British commando forces in the CBI.

Together, the Carpetbaggers and Air Commandos represent the earliest manifestations of AFSOF. Since World War II, Air Commandos have fought in numerous conflicts and contingencies. Whether in the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam, Grenada, or Panama, AFSOF have supported United States national objectives honorably and with distinction.

America has always recognized AFSOF value and unique contributions, but in the face of shrinking budgets, America’s specialized airpower struggled to remain healthy and viable through peacetime. The American military’s inability to adequately respond to the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis highlighted this deficiency within America’s SOF community. Although the ill-fated rescue attempt did not make it past its initial landing site--code named DESERT ONE --it ushered in a new era for AFSOF.

Following this failed mission, congressional persistence and support from key leaders within the Department of Defense (DOD) establishment led to the creation of the USSOCOM and its Air Force component, Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC).

SPECIAL OPERATIONS DEFINED

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Special operations are operations requiring unique modes of employment, tactical techniques, equipment and training often conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and characterized by one or more of the following: time sensitive, clandestine, low visibility, conducted with and/or through indigenous forces, requiring regional expertise, and/or a high degree of risk.

Air Force Special operations are an integral part of special operations and provide combatant commanders and ambassadors discreet, precise, and scalable operations that integrate military operations with other activities. They are designed to assess, shape, and influence in foreign political and military environments unilaterally or by working with host nations, regional partners, and indigenous populations in a culturally attuned manner that is both immediate and enduring in order to enable the nation to prevent and deter conflict or prevail in war. Special operations can be conducted independently; however, most require a networked approach in conjunction with operations of conventional forces (CF) other government agencies, or host nations, and may include operations with indigenous, insurgent, or irregular forces. Special operations may differ from conventional operations in degree of strategic, physical, and political risk; operational techniques; modes of employment; and dependence on intelligence and indigenous assets.

Additionally, Air Force special operations forces (AFSOF) are relatively small forces that may operate independently from other friendly forces. Air Force special operations are often conducted at great distances from major bases in a distributed manner with relatively small footprints. They employ sophisticated communications systems and special means of infiltration, support, and exfiltration to penetrate and return from hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas. AFSOF should complement and not compete with, nor be a substitute for CF. As an example, an AC-130 gunship should not be employed when a conventional aircraft would be more appropriate for the target and the operational conditions. The need to attack or engage strategic or operational targets with small units drives the formation of special units with specialized, highly focused capabilities. Although not always decisive on their own, when properly employed, special operations (SO) can be designed and conducted to create conditions favorable to US strategic goals and objectives. Often, these operations may require clandestine or low visibility capabilities.

The most important element of the Air Force's SO capabilities resides in its aircrews, Special Tactics units, combat aviation advisory teams, and support personnel specially trained to conduct and support a wide array of missions**.** Certain AFSOF units are regionally-oriented,

culturally astute, and include personnel experienced and conversant in cultures and languages found in specific operational areas. When required, special operations forces (SOF) elements should provide liaisons to facilitate conventional, multinational, and interagency interoperability, which highlights the complementary nature of conventional and SOF. For example, SO liaisons are normally provided to the joint force air component commander to help ensure coordination, synchronization, and to prevent fratricide.

DESIGNATION OF AFSOF

AFSOF is the umbrella term for those regular and Reserve Component Air Force forces, or those units or forces that have since been designated as SOF by the Secretary of Defense. The Commander, US Special Operations Command normally exercises combatant command authority over all AFSOF.

AFSOF are composed of SO aviation units (including unmanned aircraft systems), Special Tactics personnel (including combat control teams, pararescue personnel, special operations weather teams, and select tactical air control party), dedicated SOF intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance units, aviation foreign internal defense units, and support capabilities such as command and control, information operations, and combat support functions.

AFSOF ACROSS THE RANGE OF MILITARY OPERATIONS (ROMO)

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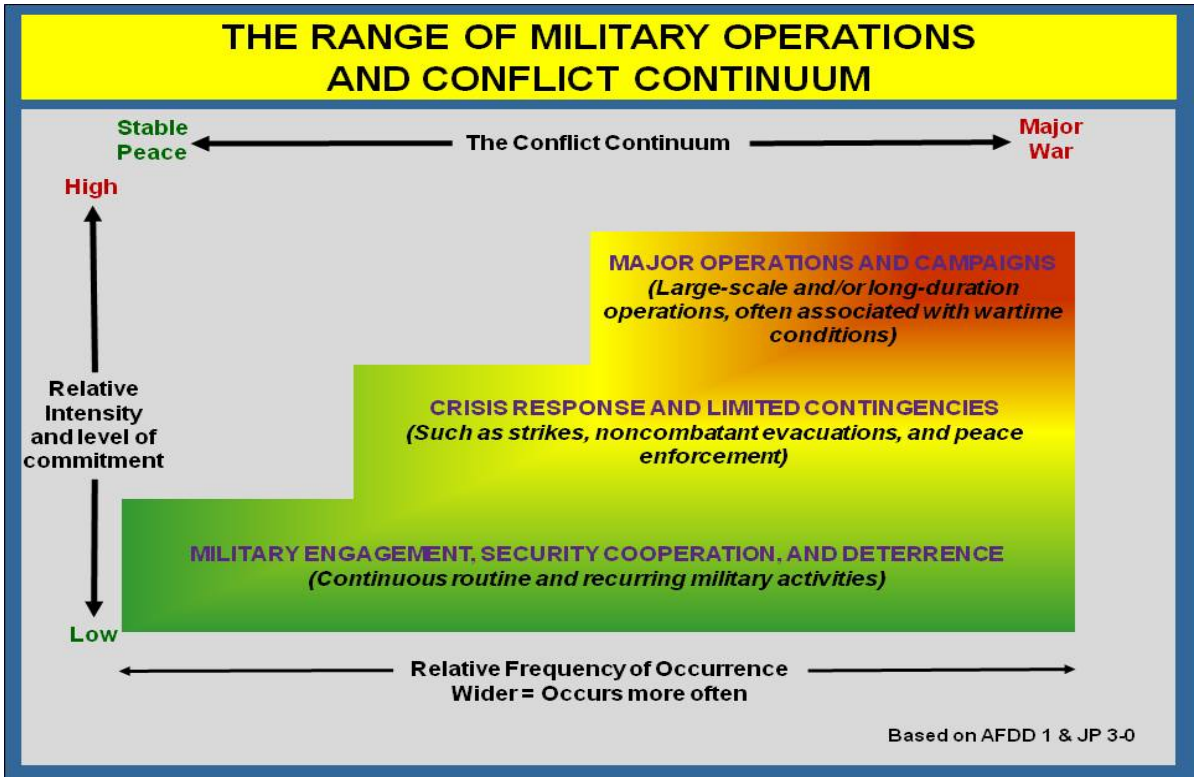
Special operations (SO) vary in scope, purpose, and combat intensity. A fundamental construct that provides context to the intensity of conflict that may occur during joint military activities is the ROMO: from recurring military engagement, security cooperation, and deterrence activities (typically referred to as peacetime engagement), to crisis response and limited contingency operations (low to high), and if necessary, to major operations and campaigns (high intensity) as depicted in figure titled Range of Military Operations.



Range of Military Operations

Military Engagement, Security Cooperation, and Deterrence. These ongoing activities establish, shape, maintain, and refine relations with other nations. Special operations forces (SOF) conducts engagement activities that support the geographic combatant commanders (GCC), US country teams, and other government agencies. These activities shape the operational environment to keep day-to-day tensions between nations or groups below the threshold of armed conflict. In addition, SOF seeks to significantly enhance situational

awareness in order to foresee, derail, or forestall crises. During these operations, Air Force special operations forces (AFSOF) could support a range of activities to include, but not limited to foreign internal defense, security force assistance, counterinsurgency, counter-terrorism, or unconventional warfare activities.

Crisis Response and Limited Contingency Operations. A crisis response or limited contingency operation can be a single small-scale, limited-duration operation or a significant part of a major operation of extended duration involving combat. SOF provides the capability to rapidly respond to crises of limited scale. SOF roles vary from assessment to conflict resolution. Responding to crises and addressing limited contingencies frequently involve both SOF and conventional forces (CF) and requires detailed collaboration, planning, and execution. Examples of AFSOF participation during these operations occurred during the United States' responses after devastating earthquakes in Haiti and Japan, and during Operation ODYSSEY DAWN in Libya.

Major Operations and Campaigns. US leadership may decide to conduct a major operation or campaign involving large-scale combat. In such cases, the general goal is to prevail against the enemy as quickly as possible, conclude hostilities, and establish conditions favorable to the US, its multinational partners, and the host nation (HN). For large scale efforts, SOF contribute by conducting activities that support the joint force commander (JFC) throughout the campaign. Most recently, AFSOF played key roles during major combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

SO provide options, which in appropriate circumstances, can prove to be the most viable means of achieving certain objectives. While SOF can be applied tactically, commanders and planners should focus SO on strategic and operational objectives and end states to maximize effectiveness. Combatant commanders (CCDR) may leverage the theater special operations command to ensure full integration of SOF capabilities when developing theater plans. SO are most effective when they have sufficient time (sometimes months to years) to conduct pre-crisis activities, establish relationships, and build partner SOF capacity as part of shaping operations (Phase 0) with partners within theater campaign and contingency plans. Longer term preparations for SO provide options for decision makers in times of crisis that would otherwise not be available. Also, Phase 0 SO preparations may provide situational awareness and understanding that permit identification of a potential crisis prior to requiring a US military response, thus allowing a whole-of-government solution to be applied to de-escalate the situation through mediation or by dissuading, deterring, or disrupting the parties involved.

The President designates national objectives and sanctions the military means to achieve them. While most SO are conducted in support of a CCDR, certain SO may be conducted under the control of the President or SecDef.

Theater objectives are established by each GCC, based on national strategic guidance, and are an integral part of a theater campaign plan. The GCC should consider integrating SO to support the theater campaign plan and other theater plans.

Operational objectives established by subordinate JFC support theater objectives and lead directly to theater success. SO provide the JFC with a flexible option for crisis response to achieve operational objectives.

When required to achieve the JFC's objectives, SO may be conducted in support of CF and vice versa. Keys to achieving effective CF and SOF integration include:

- ✪ Exchange of liaison and control elements are critical when CF and SOF conduct operations in the same operational area against the same objectives.
- ✪ A thorough understanding of a unit's capabilities and limitations that enhances integration and interoperability planning between CF and SOF.
- ✪ During mission planning, consideration of how to integrate CF and SOF maneuver elements. Detailed planning and execution coordination is required throughout the process.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS RELATIONSHIP TO IRREGULAR WARFARE

Last Updated: 13 August 2013

Adaptive adversaries such as terrorists, insurgents, criminal networks, and rogue states, resort to irregular forms of warfare as effective ways to challenge US forces. Irregular warfare (IW) conflicts are a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s).[1]

Since many irregular threats are not purely military problems, many of the responses required are not purely military either. Due to the complex nature of these threats, such conflicts may not end with decisive military victory. They are more likely to require long-term involvement to remedy, reduce, manage, or mitigate the conflict. To prevent, deter, disrupt, and defeat irregular threats, US forces should seek to work in concert with other government agencies and multinational partners, and, where appropriate, the partnered actors to understand the situation in depth, plan and act in concert, and continually assess and adapt their approach in response to the dynamic and complex nature of the problem. Because of inherent capabilities, characteristics, and specialized training, SOF are ideally suited to participate in US efforts to counter IW adversaries and threats. For more information on IW, refer to Annex 3-2, *Irregular Warfare*.

[1] JP 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*

USSOCOM CORE ACTIVITIES

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Special operations forces (SOF) conduct specific special operations (SO) core activities as established by Title 10 USC, section 167, DoDD 5100.01, *Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components*, or as otherwise specified by the President or the Secretary of Defense. These activities are explained in US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) Publication 1 (Pub 1), *Doctrine for Special Operations*; JP 3-05, *Special Operations*; JP 3-13.2, *Military Information Support Operations*; JP 3-22, *Foreign Internal Defense*; JP 3-24, *Counterinsurgency Operations*; JP 3-26, *Counterterrorism*; JP 3-40, *Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction*; JP 3-57, *Civil-Military Operations*; as well as other USSOCOM, joint and Air Force doctrine documents.

USSOCOM CORE ACTIVITIES

The SO core activity definitions and descriptions are primarily derived from JP 3-05, USSOCOM Pub 1 and other supporting SO doctrine publications. It is important to note, core activities are mutually supporting and interoperable in most cases. Rarely, if ever, will a special operation occur that does not support, include or impact multiple core activities. The execution of one core activity may have operational or strategic influence on other core activities being performed or planned. As an example, an unconventional warfare campaign may include elements of direct action and special reconnaissance. The SOCOM core activities are:

Direct Action (DA). Short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or diplomatically sensitive environments and which employ specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets. Air Force special operations forces (AFSOF) support DA by employing specialized air mobility (SAM), precision strike, and Special Tactics core mission areas.

Special Reconnaissance (SR). 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. AFSOF support SR by employing SAM, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR), and Special Tactics core mission areas.

Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD). SOF support US government efforts to curtail the development, possession, proliferation, use, and effects of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), related expertise, materials, technologies, and means of delivery by state and non-state actors. WMD are chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons capable

of a high order of destruction or causing mass casualties and exclude the means of transporting or propelling the weapon where such means is a separable and divisible part from the weapon. The strategic objectives of CWMD operations are to reduce incentives to obtain and employ WMD; increase barriers to acquisition and use of WMD; manage WMD risks emanating from hostile, fragile, failed states, and/or havens; and deny the effects of current and emerging WMD threats. USSOCOM supports geographic combatant commanders through technical expertise, materiel, and special teams to complement other CCMD teams that locate, tag, and track WMD; DA in limited access areas; helping build partnership capacity to conduct CWMD activities; military information support operations (MISO) to dissuade adversaries from reliance on WMD; and other specialized capabilities. AFSOF supports CWMD through its Specialize Air Mobility, Precision Strike, and Special Tactics core missions.

Counterterrorism. Actions taken directly against terrorist networks and indirectly to influence and render global and regional environments inhospitable to terrorist networks. AFSOF primarily support these actions with SAM, precision strike, and Special Tactics core mission areas.

Unconventional Warfare (UW). Activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area. AFSOF primarily support UW activities with SAM and Special Tactics core missions.

Foreign Internal Defense (FID). Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security. AFSOF support this core activity through the AFSOF aviation foreign internal defense (AvFID) and Special Tactics core missions.

Security Force Assistance (SFA). The DoD activities that contribute to unified action by the US Government to support the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces and their supporting institutions. AFSOF support SFA activities through the AFSOC AvFID and Special Tactics core missions.

Note: FID and SFA are similar at the tactical level where advisory skills are applicable to both. At the operational and strategic levels, both FID and SFA focus on preparing foreign security forces (FSF) to combat lawlessness, subversion, insurgency, terrorism, and other internal threats to their security; however, SFA also prepares FSF to defend against external threats and to perform as part of an international force. Although FID and SFA are both subsets of security cooperation, neither is considered a subset of the other and can both be executed simultaneously.

Hostage Rescue and Recovery. Hostage rescue and recovery operations are sensitive crisis response missions in response to terrorist threats and incidents. Offensive operations in support of hostage rescue and recovery can include recapture of US facilities, installations, and

sensitive material outside the continental US. AFSOF support these activities through the full range of their core missions.

Counterinsurgency. Comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes. SOF are particularly suited for counterinsurgency (COIN) operations because of their regional expertise, language, and combat skills, and ability to work among populations and with or through indigenous partners. AFSOF support COIN activities employing the full range of their core missions.

Foreign Humanitarian Assistance. DoD activities conducted outside the United States and its territories to directly relieve or reduce human suffering, disease, hunger or privation. AFSOF supports HA/DR by employing Command and Control, SAM, ISR, and Special Tactics core mission areas.

Military Information Support Operations. The 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 MISO is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator's objectives. AFSOF supports MISO by employing the Information Operation core mission area.

Civil Affairs Operations. Those military operations conducted by civil affairs forces that (1) enhance the relationship between military forces and civil authorities in localities where military forces are present; (2) require coordination with other interagency organizations, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, indigenous populations and institutions, and the private sector; and (3) involve application of functional specialty skills that normally are the responsibility of civil government to enhance the conduct of civil-military operations. AFSOF can support these activities by establishing measures to help the host nation (HN) gain support of the local populace and the international community, and reduce support or resources to those destabilizing forces threatening legitimate processes of the HN government. AFSOF support Civil Affairs Operation activities by employing the full range of their core missions.

AFSOC CORE MISSIONS

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As an Air Force major command and the Air Force component to US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), Air Force special operations forces (AFSOF) are responsible for providing the necessary capabilities to conduct or support these operations and activities. AFSOC refers to these capabilities as core missions[1]. AFSOF conduct these core missions to support USSOCOM directed core activities and any other SecDef directed tasking. AFSOC core missions include:

Agile Combat Support. The foundational and crosscutting core mission that enables all AFSOC operational core missions and capabilities of specialized air power: speed, lethality, and global perspective. It effectively creates, prepares, deploys, employs, sustains, and protects Air Force special operations Airmen, assets, and capabilities throughout the range of military operations (ROMO).

Aviation Foreign Internal Defense (AvFID). Delivers SOF combat aviation advisors (CAA) necessary to assess, train, advise, assist, and equip (ATAAE) partner nation (PN) aviation units in airpower employment, sustainment and foreign integration. AvFID is conducted through persistent, periodic, or episodic engagements with PNs that facilitate advanced aviation employment and other aviation-related functions such as security, airfield management, and aircraft maintenance. Mission capabilities are applied across the operational continuum with emphasis on combating terrorism, FID, unconventional warfare, and coalition support. CAAs advise and assist GCCs, civilian agencies, and foreign aviation units on planning and integrating foreign airpower into theater campaign plans, contingencies, and other joint and multinational activities. CAA personnel ATAAE foreign aviation combat and combat support units in aircraft maintenance, logistics, airbase defense, command and control, aeromedical support, personal survival, personnel recovery and other functions supporting combat air operations. CAA are aligned by flights to the different theaters, and CAA personnel maintain a high level of garrison training and readiness in order to deploy on short notice to any nation within the assigned theater.

Command and Control (C2). The exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of the mission. C2 functions are performed through an arrangement of personnel, equipment, communications,

[1] Air Force Special Operations Command 2015 Strategic Vision. AFSOF core missions approved by AFSOC/CC to support SO core activities.

facilities, and procedures employed by a commander in planning, directing, coordinating, and controlling forces and operations in the accomplishment of joint/combined special operations (SO).

Information Operations (IO). An integrated approach of information-related capabilities during military operations to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision-making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own. Executed in both a supporting and supported role, IO are predominantly non-kinetic capabilities creating effects in all domains to ensure information superiority. When effectively integrated into operations in the same manner as traditional capabilities, it provides friendly forces the ability to collect, control, exploit, and defend information without effective opposition. The capabilities traditionally associated with IO are electronic warfare, military information support operations (MISO), military deception, and operations security. The purpose of MISO is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behaviors favorable to the originator's objectives. IO is successfully executed not by the employment of a single predetermined capability, but by identifying and using any combination of information-related capabilities necessary to achieve desired effects.

Information Operations in Recent Conflicts

AFSOF were heavily involved in the IO mission prior to and during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Getting an early start on MISO campaign, Air National Guard EC-130 COMMANDO SOLOs began airing "Voice of America" into the Kuwaiti theater of operations on 22 November 1990.

During Operation DESERT STORM the EC-130s targeted defectors by broadcasting "Voice of America"' along with prayers from the Koran and testimony from well-treated prisoners. To convince Iraqi troops to surrender, MC-130 COMBAT TALONS and HC-130 COMBAT SHADOWs dropped some 17 million leaflets over Iraqi defensive positions. The leaflets urged Iraqi soldiers to give up and warned what would happen if they did not. The promise was kept when their positions were either bombed by B-52s or struck by MC-130s dropping BLU-82 (15,000 pound) bombs. This was a model MISO campaign, combining information and strike operations. It was extremely effective and caused thousands of Iraqis to flee or surrender.

In Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM, COMMANDO SOLO aircraft broadcast hundreds of hours of MISO messages. Along with millions of leaflets, dropped mostly by MC-130s, AFSOF were an integral part of the DOD's campaign to shape perceptions. Just as in previous campaigns, these MISO messages were tailored to specific audiences. As Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld describes, "We're working to make clear to the Afghan people that we support them, and we're working to free them from the Taliban and their foreign terrorist allies." In all of these operations, AFSOF forces contributed to the commander's objectives through the broadcast and dissemination of MISO messages.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR). Synchronizes and integrates sensors, assets, and processing, exploitation and dissemination in direct support of current and future SOF operations. It consists of manned and remotely piloted aircraft and Distributed Common Ground Systems that deliver actionable intelligence to the SOF operator. ISR produces detailed, specialized products tailored to mission, customer, and pace of operation that gives SOF a decisive advantage against our adversaries.

Precision Strike (PS). Provides the JFC and the SOF operator with specialized capabilities to find, fix, finish, exploit, analyze and disseminate (F3EAD) applicable targets. F3EAD can use a single weapon system or a combination of systems to fulfill elements of the kill chain. PS missions include close air support, air interdiction, and armed reconnaissance. Attributes associated with PS include unparalleled persistence, robust communications, superior situational awareness, precise target identification, lethality, and survivability.

Specialized Air Mobility. Includes specialized mobility and specialized refueling. Specialized mobility is the conduct of rapid global infiltration, exfiltration, and resupply of personnel, equipment, and materiel using specialized systems and tactics. Specialized refueling is the conduct of rapid, global refueling using specialized systems and tactics, thereby greatly increasing mission flexibility and range. These missions may be clandestine, low visibility, or overt and through hostile, denied, or politically sensitive airspace using manned or unmanned platforms. Operations may be conducted with a single aircraft or as part of a larger force package and are normally conducted during periods of darkness.

Special Tactics. Delivers highly specialized, combat proven capabilities to integrate, synchronize, and control air assets to achieve tactical, operational, and strategic objectives. Special Tactics personnel may be comprised of active duty, AF Reserve Component and Air National Guard forces, which may consist of combat controllers, pararescue, special operations weather teams (SOWT), and tactical air control party. Special Tactics capabilities consist of air traffic control; assault zone assessment, establishment and control; terminal attack control; fire support; operational preparation of the environment; special reconnaissance; command & control communications; full spectrum personnel and equipment recovery; humanitarian relief; and battlefield trauma care. While Special Tactics is an AFSOC Core Mission, IAW Air Force Policy Directive 10-35, Battlefield Airmen, Special Tactics personnel are a component of Battlefield Airmen. Special Tactics was previously known as Battlefield Air Operations or BAO.

AFSOF COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS

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Air Force special operations forces (AFSOF) are under the combatant command authority of the US Special Operations Command and under Administrative Control (ADCON) of the Commander, Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC). US Special Operations Command is a functional combatant command, with Service-like responsibilities in areas unique to special operations (SO), and when established as a supported command, plans and conducts certain global SO missions.

A geographic combatant commander (GCC) normally exercises operational control of Special operations forces (SOF) through the commander, theater special operations command (CDRTSOC) or a subordinate joint force commander (JFC). The CDRTSOC may also be designated as the joint force special operations component commander by the GCC (see Figure titled Command and Control of Special Operations Forces in Theater). Theater special operations commands (TSOCs) are responsive to the needs of the supported JFC whether the JFC is a GCC or a JTF commander.

When a GCC establishes and employs multiple JTFs and independent task forces, the TSOC commander may establish and employ multiple joint special operations task forces (JSOTF) to manage SOF assets and accommodate JTF/task force SO requirements. Accordingly, the GCC, as the common superior commander, normally establishes supported/supporting or tactical control command relationships between JSOTF commanders and JTF/task force commanders.

AFSOC retains ADCON of all regular AFSOF personnel. Under less than full mobilization, AFSOC exercises specified elements of ADCON over activated reserve component AFSOF personnel. AFSOC may share selected elements of ADCON with other Air Force component commands in order to obtain regional beddown support. Regardless of the arranged command relationship, commanders should provide for a clear and unambiguous chain of command.

AFSOF COMMAND, CONTROL, AND ORGANIZATION

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Air Force special operations forces (AFSOF) are presented to joint force commanders (JFCs) through a Secretary of Defense (SecDef) deployment order in coordination with and at the direction of US Special Operations Command, as the US joint force provider for special operations forces (SOF).

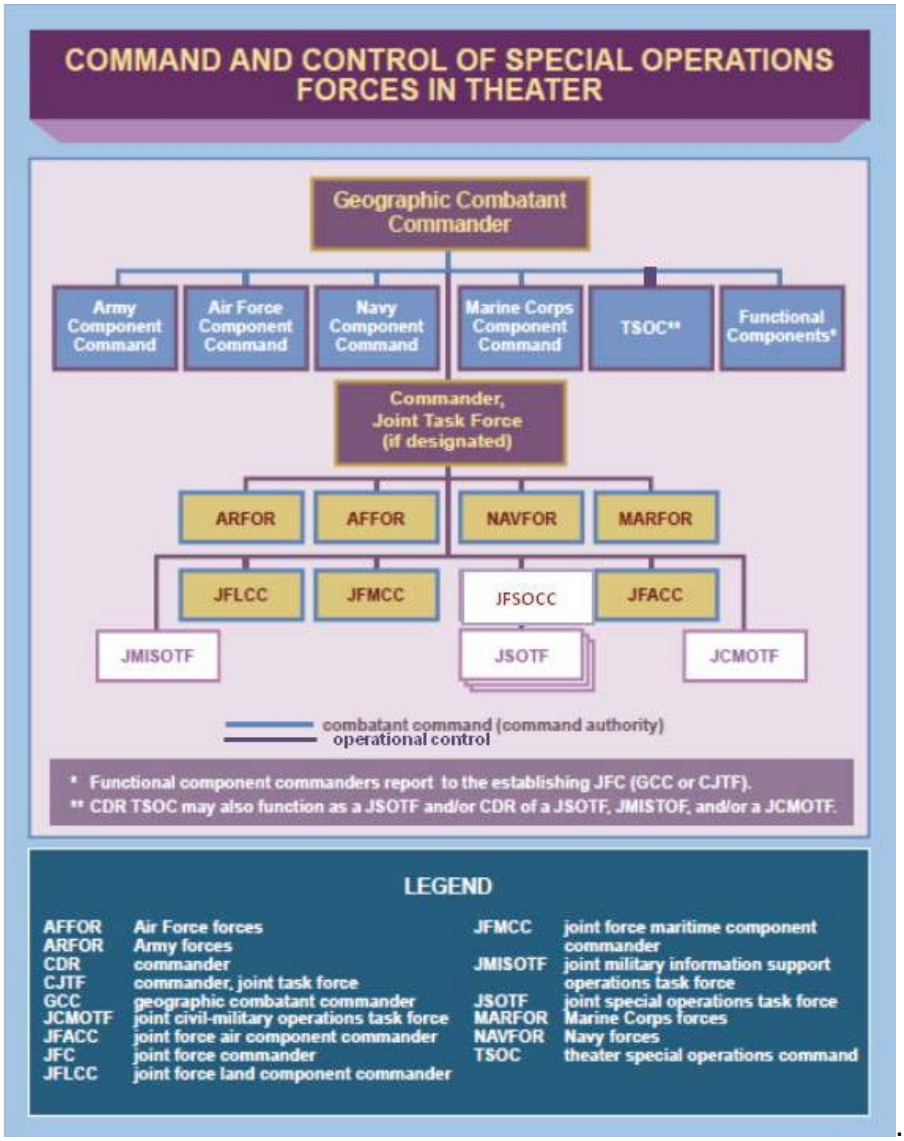
Command and Control of AFSOF in Theater

Command and control (C2) of SOF is normally executed within a SOF chain of command. The C2 structure for SOF depends on objectives, security requirements, and the operational environment. In complex environments SOF have found supporting to supported command relationships are extremely agile and beneficial to both SOF and conventional forces (CF).

Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC). TSOCs are subordinate unified commands of US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and established for each geographic combatant commander (GCC). TSOCs are the primary theater special operations (SO) organization capable of performing synchronized, continuous SO activities. The TSOC plans and conducts campaigns in support of the GCC across the range of military operations. The GCC exercises operational control (OPCON) of assigned and attached SOF through the TSOC Commander. The TSOC Commander has two primary roles. As commander of a sub-unified command, the TSOC Commander is a JFC. As such, he has the authority to plan and conduct joint operations as directed by the GCC and exercise OPCON of assigned and attached forces. Secondly, the TSOC Commander advises the GCC, Service component commanders, and others on the proper employment of SOF.

Joint Forces Special Operations Component Commander (JFSOCC). When established, the JFSOCC is the commander within a joint operations area (JOA) responsible to the establishing commander for execution of SOF missions. The JFSOCC is equivalent to the other joint functional component commanders such as the joint force air component commander (JFACC). The JFSOCC will normally be designated when one or more functional components are established and there are sufficient SOF in the JOA to execute SO. The TSOC commander or the commander, joint special operations task force (COMJSOTF) is normally designated the JFSOCC. The TSOC commander is normally established as a JFSOCC if there is more than one joint special operations task force (JSOTF) to command. If only one JSOTF is established within a JTF, the COMJSOTF is normally designated as the JFSOCC by the establishing JFC. See Figure titled Command and Control of Special Operations Forces in Theater for notional

theater command arrangements which include SO. Normally, the JFC exercises OPCON of AFSOF through the JFSOCC.



Command and Control of Special Operations Forces in Theater

<u>Special Operations Joint Task Force (SOJTF)</u>. The principal joint SOF organization tasked to meet all special operations requirements in major operations, campaigns, or a contingency. A SOJTF is a modular, tailorable, and scalable SOF organization that allows USSOCOM to more efficiently provide integrated, fully capable, and enabled joint SOF to GCCs and subordinate JFCs based on the strategic, operational, and tactical context. Depending on circumstances, the SOJTF may be directed to serve as the joint task force (JTF), or a joint force special operations component commander (JFSOCC). Depending on the circumstances, the SOJTF may have one or more JSOTFs assigned.

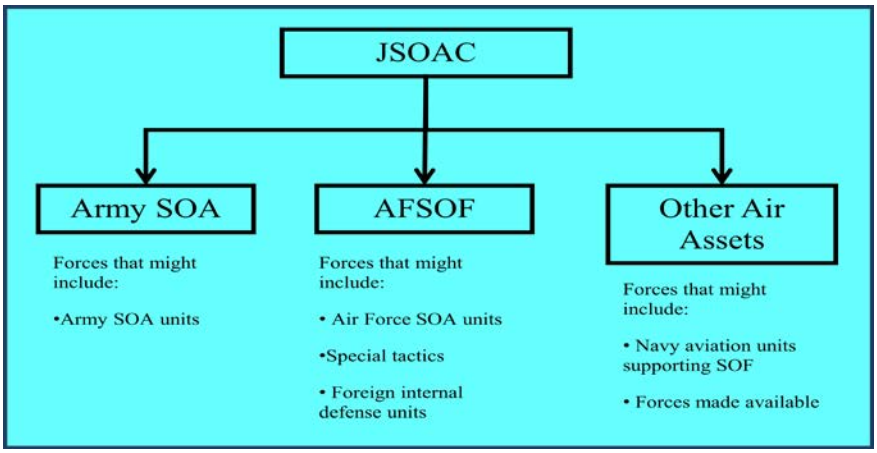
Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF). A JTF composed of SO units from more than one Service that is formed to carry out specific SO or prosecute SO in support of a theater campaign or other operations. A JSOTF may have conventional units assigned, attached, or made available for tasking to support specific missions. The JSOTF is an interim entity, designed to perform a specific mission. COMJSOTF organizes the JSOTF to accomplish the assigned mission.

Joint Special Operations Air Component Commander. To ensure the proper planning and execution of theater-wide SO aviation missions, SOF airpower should be placed under the centralized control of a single Airman. To preserve unity of command and enable the most effective use of limited SO aviation assets, AFSOF are normally placed under the operational control (OPCON) of a Joint Special Operations Air Component Commander (JSOACC). The joint special operations air component (JSOAC) collectively refers to the commander, staff, and assets of a SO functional air component of a joint force special operations component or a JSOTF.

The JSOAC is responsible for the centralized planning, direction, and execution of joint SO air activities, and for coordinating conventional air support for SOF with the JFC's designated JFACC. The JSOACC will normally be the commander with the preponderance of air assets and the greatest ability to plan, coordinate, allocate, task, control, and support the assigned/supporting air assets. There may be circumstances when the SOF commander may elect to place selected SO aviation assets under separate control. A JSOAC may be a standing organization or can be formed in response to a contingency or other operation. (See Figure titled Notional JSOAC Organization)

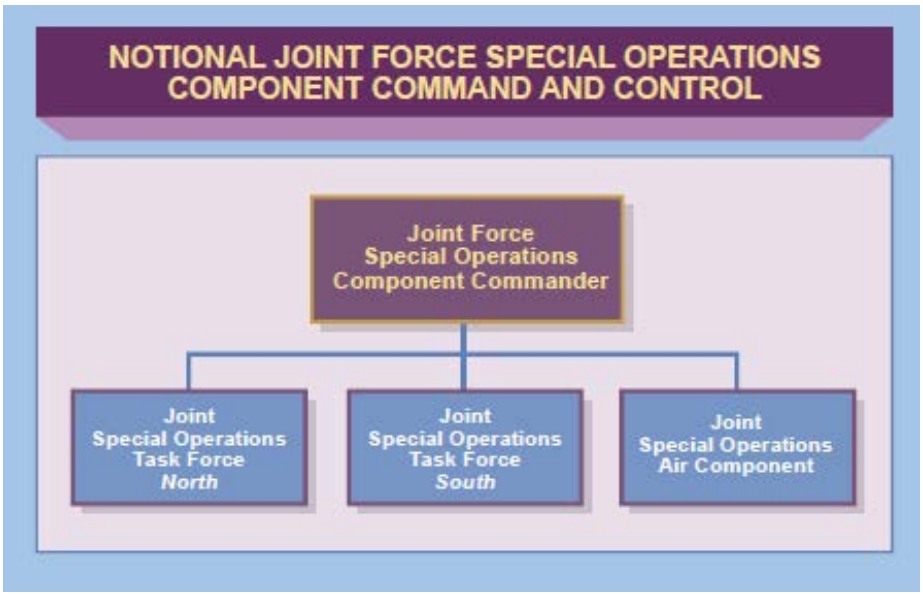
Regardless of assigned missions and C2 arrangements, it is critical that AFSOF are integrated into the air tasking order (ATO) and properly adhere to the airspace control order (ACO) to ensure operations are coordinated and deconflicted to prevent fratricide.

SOF commanders use the principles of mission command to understand the problem and visualize the nature and design of the operation to provide commander's intent. Mission command is the conduct of military operations through decentralized execution based upon mission-type orders. Mission-type orders provide for centralized control, yet are necessary for decentralized planning and execution to optimize the likelihood of SOF mission success. Special operations C2 should be flexible and responsive given the distributed, dynamic, and small-scale nature of SO. Because of the depth of experience and regional expertise of their forces, SOF commanders routinely exercise centralized control and decentralized execution, which facilitates the time-sensitive decisions often required for SO. After understanding commander's intent, AFSOF, in conjunction with SOF partners, plan, coordinate, and conduct SO. As a result, SO are executed at the lowest unit levels by those who understand, plan, and coordinate mission requirements. AFSOF employment of mission command is in line with the Air Force tenet of centralized control and decentralized execution.



Notional JSOAC Organization

In situations where multiple JSOTFs are established and the JSOAC is a theater-wide organization, the JFSOCC should exercise OPCON of the JSOACC, not any one JSOTF commander. See Figure titled Notional JFSOC Command and Control with single JSOAC and multiple JSOTFs to understand the C2 relationship with multiple JSOTFs and a single JSOAC.



Notional JFSOC Command and Control with single JSOAC and multiple JSOTFs

Commander, Air Force Special Operations Forces (COMAFSOF)
The COMAFSOF is the senior Airman and presents AFSOF to a JFC. As with the COMAFFOR, the COMAFSOF is the single Airman in charge of AFSOF issues.

Special Operations Liaison Element (SOLE)
The Special Operations Liaison Element is a liaison to the JFACC or appropriate Service component air C2 organization. They support effective integration of SOF as well as the

prevention of fratricide. Within the air operations center (AOC) the SOLE performs this function. The SOLE is a liaison to the JFACC or appropriate Service component air C2 organization. The SOLE is typically a joint team provided to coordinate, deconflict, and synchronize SO air, surface, and subsurface operations with conventional air operations. The SOLE director reports directly to the JFSOCC/COMJSOTF as a liaison and has no command authority for mission tasking, planning, or execution. The SOLE director places SOF air, land, and maritime liaison personnel in the AOC to coordinate, deconflict, and synchronize SOF with conventional air operations. The SOLE provides coordination of SOF operations in the ATO and the ACO. The SOLE also coordinates appropriate fire support coordination measures between the AOC and the SOF headquarters to prevent the potential for fratricide. A SOLE is tailored as required for the operation (see Figure titled Notional Special Operations Liaison Element Functions). The SOLE normally provides the following key functions:

- Harmonizes JFSOCC strategy and targets with JFACC's intent and vision via liaison with the AOC strategy division.
- Injects all SOF requirements (to include ground and naval SOF contingents) within the JFACC's master air attack plan via close coordination in the AOC's combat plans division.
- Facilitates all JFSOCC inputs into the JACO, ATO, and special instructions "SPINS" with the combat plans division.
- Provides updates for situational awareness to the AOC's combat operations division in order to coordinate close air support (CAS) and request immediate support for time-sensitive targets.
- Monitors and deconflicts SOF activities and locations to prevent fratricide.
- Coordinates real-time intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance requirements for the JFSOCC.
- Synchronizes SOF personnel recovery activities with the joint personnel recovery center.
- Coordinates SOF component space requirements with the JFACC when the JFACC is designated the space coordinating authority.
- Coordinates and monitors SOF support of conventional units and operations (e.g., AC-130 gunships conducting CAS in support of non-SOF units).
- Provides additional deconfliction between SOF and other aircraft to include unmanned aircraft during theater air operations.

NOTIONAL SPECIAL OPERATIONS LIAISON ELEMENT FUNCTIONS

SOLE Director: Liaison to JFACC

Strategy Division
- Coordinates and synchronizes SO strategy and targets with other components to meet combatant commander objectives and guidance.
- Nominate SOF targets for inclusion in the joint integrated prioritized target list.
- Provides SOF input for JFC apportionment recommendation decisions.

Combat Plans Division
- Coordinates SOF air requirements within the master air attack plan.
- Coordinates with JSOTF/JSOAC on ATO inputs and ensures distributed ATOs are merged with the master ATO.
- Provides SO input for inclusion in SPINS.
- Coordinates airspace requirements and deconfliction for future operations.
- Represents the SO components on the targeting effects team in the JAOC.

Combat Operations Division
- Monitors and coordinates current day flying operations with other components.
- Deconflicts ongoing SO surface operations in real time with other components.
- Maintains updated list of team locations for deconfliction.
- Coordinates support for and prosecution of SOF-monitored targets to include time-sensitive targets.
- Coordinates airspace management with JAOC airspace manager.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Division
- Coordinates ISR requirements for SOF in the field.
- Provides intelligence support for combat plans and operations division.

Other Coordination
- Coordinates requirements for airfield surveys supporting force basing (AMD).
- Coordinates JTAC support for SOF when required.
- Coordinates logistic requirements including supply, transportation, and contracting (AMD).
- Coordinates communications requirements, as necessary, for SOF in the field (communications representative).
- Coordinates with JPRC.

LEGEND

AMD	air mobility division	JSOAC	joint special operations air component
ATO	air tasking order	JSOTF	joint special operations task force
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance	JTAC	joint terminal attack controller
JAOC	joint air operations center	SO	special operations
JFACC	joint force air component commander	SOF	special operations forces
JFC	joint force commander	SOLE	special operations liaison element
JPRC	joint personnel recovery center	SPINS	special instructions

Notional Special Operations Liaison Element Functions

JFACC Support to SOF

On occasion, SOF require JFACC support. For example, the JFACC can reduce risk to SOF mission success by providing air superiority in the joint special operations area (JSOA). By gaining and maintaining freedom of movement/freedom from attack, the JFACC provides an umbrella of protection that facilitates and enables the success of SOF missions. This support requires detailed integration and is normally coordinated through the SOLE. Creating and maintaining habitual relationships with the JFACC best facilitates this integration. When CF are tasked to support SOF performing JFSOCC missions, the JSOACC should exercise TACON of

CF requiring detailed integration or participation in SOF missions (provided he has the C2 capability).

Another notable example of support to SOF is the JFACC's CAS to SOF surface elements. There were numerous examples during Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM when the JFACC provided CAS to SOF teams engaged with enemy forces.

SOF Support to the JFACC

Reciprocating JFACC support to SOF missions, the SO component may provide support or enable JFACC tasking and priorities. Historical documentation of SOF exploits during Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM offer a more detailed example of SOF support to the JFACC.

For example, during operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, AFSOF Special Tactics teams leveraged air-power by providing accurate targeting and weather data, enabling the dismantling of the Taliban and Iraqi warfighting capability.

SOF and JFACC mutual support

At times general purpose force (GPF) air advisors and SOF combat aviation advisors (CAA) will work together as a combined air advising team, with GPF air advisors augmenting SOF CAA teams and vice versa. For example, GPF agile combat support personnel could support a SOF CAA team, or SOF CAAs with expertise in a specific foreign aircraft could support a GPF mobility advising team.

Organization of Expeditionary Air Force Special Operations Forces

As with all Air Force units, AFSOF fit under the air expeditionary task force construct. Due to its relationship with USSOCOM, AFSOF provides deployed unit designations that differ slightly from the conventional Air Force model. Although the names differ, AFSOF organizational patterns are quite similar to conventional unit orientation and functionality.

During Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, AFSOF STT members assisted anti-Taliban Forces in Afghanistan. STTs and JTACs coordinated CAS that enabled the fall of the Taliban with a minimum commitment of US and coalition ground forces.

Expeditionary Special Operations Wing (ESOW)

An ESOW is normally composed of the wing command element and several groups. ESOW will carry the numerical designation of the wing providing the command element. Deployed assigned or attached groups and squadrons retain their numerical designation and acquire the "expeditionary" designation. AFSOF presented as an ESOW should be attached with specification of OPCON to the GCC, who normally delegates that authority to the TSOC

commander or JFC. The ESOW will form the core unit of an Air Force Special Operations Air Component (AFSOAC). The AFSOAC is the Air Force Component of a joint special operations force, normally composed of a special operations wing, special operations group, or squadron, and elements of Air Force Special Tactics personnel. The AFSOAC Commander (COMAFSOAC) is normally designated the JSOACC. The dual hatted COMAFSOAC/JSOACC normally exercises OPCON over assigned and attached forces and TACON over aviation forces made available for tasking. Unlike the command relationships for a JFACC which is normally limited to TACON, the JSOACC is normally delegated OPCON over all SOF aviation forces regardless of Service. Specified elements of administrative control (ADCON) are exercised by the forward deployed COMAFSOAC; remaining ADCON elements are retained by Commander, Air Force Special Operations Command.

Expeditionary Special Operations Group (ESOG) and Expeditionary Maintenance Group (EMXG).
ESOGs and EMXGs are tailored wing command and squadrons elements. Since Air Force groups are organized without significant staff support, a customized element is needed to provide command and control for ESOGs or EMXGs in a scale smaller than the normal wing. The dual hatted COMAFSOAC/JSOACC normally exercises OPCON over assigned and attached forces and TACON over aviation forces made available for tasking.

Expeditionary Special Operations Squadron (ESOS), Expeditionary Special Tactics Squadron (ESTS), and Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron (EMXS).
The squadron is the basic fighting unit of the Air Force. The ESTS is the basic administrative and logistics support unit required to enable Special Tactics capabilities during contingency operations. Combinations of ESOS and EMXS may form an Air Force Special Operations Air Detachment (AFSOAD). The AFSOAD is normally subordinate to an AFSOAC, JSOAC, JSOTF, or a JTF, depending upon the size and duration of the operation and the joint organizational structure.

Expeditionary Elements below Squadron Level.
In addition to expeditionary wings, groups, and squadrons, the Air Force can deploy elements below the squadron level for specific, limited functions. These include individuals and specialty teams such as Special Tactics, CAA, and combat support. They may deploy independently of other Air Force units, often to remote locations, and may operate directly with other Services. Examples of such deployed elements include augmentation to a joint military information support task force or Special Tactics personnel supporting a contingency response group. These elements may also be referred to as Air Force Special Operations Air Elements. The AFSOAE contains selected AFSOF units that are normally subordinate to an AFSOAC or AFSOAD.

AFSOF MISSION PREPARATION CONSIDERATIONS

Last Updated: 13 August 2013

This section offers some planning considerations when preparing for the employment of Air Force special operations forces (AFSOF) elements in combat. Historically, AFSOF tasking has ranged from missions that called specifically for AFSOF capabilities, to missions where AFSOF was the only force that could accommodate due to time constraints or mission location. Regardless of how or why AFSOF are tasked, the tasking authority should be provided with a candid assessment of AFSOF capabilities, limitations, and risks associated with mission execution.

AFSOF missions are often high-risk/high-payoff operations, have limited windows for execution, and require first-time success. Given the limited size and sustainability of AFSOF, adequate support is vital to the success of the mission and should be properly planned. Mission rehearsal is a key critical element of mission preparation.

Repeated and realistic dress rehearsals make success more certain.

AFSOF are employed as part of a joint SOF package. As a result, AFSOF mission and sustainment planning considerations often should be coordinated and integrated with joint special operations forces (SOF), other joint, multinational, or other government agency partners. Failure to properly coordinate requirements can severely impact mission effectiveness.

Mission Rehearsal

Rehearsal of special operations (SO) is a fundamental SOF principle; however, in extreme situations, mission rehearsals may not be possible. Often, repeated rehearsal of certain mission elements is necessary because personnel and essential tasks differ from mission to mission and because of the possible strategic implications of these missions. Each operation may bring together a group of specialists who have worked together infrequently, or not at all. In addition, the specific tasks required may not have been practiced together or integrated in the required sequence. Rehearsals help reduce the risk to SO mission success by revealing plan shortfalls.

Rigorous training and rehearsals of the mission are integral to all operations because of the affiliated complexity and high risk**.** The requirement for rehearsal may present challenges when operating within the 72-hour air tasking order (ATO) planning cycle.

Mayaguez Incident

On 12 May 1975, the SS *Mayaguez*, an American-owned freighter, was boarded and seized by Cambodian forces while in international waters off the coast of Cambodia. The next day, the ship was taken to Koh Tang Island while the ship's crew was taken to another island for interrogation. The operation to take back the ship and rescue the crew highlights what can happen if reaction time is short, force selection is ad hoc, previous joint training is not done, and mission rehearsal cannot occur in the time available.

The plan called for 11 Air Force helicopters (six HH-53 Air Rescue Service and five CH-53 special operations helicopters) to support Marines in an assault on Koh Tang Island and to board and retake the *Mayaguez* itself. It was assumed that the ship's crew was being held on Koh Tang Island and the rescue force was told to expect only a handful of lightly armed Khmer Rouge soldiers.

The operation began on the morning of 15 May 1975. Retaking the *Mayaguez* went smoothly. The operation at Koh Tang Island, however, soon deteriorated into what one helicopter pilot described as "absolute and utter chaos." As it turned out, there were about 300 Khmer Rouge dug in on the island with heavy weaponry. By the time the first assault was completed, all but one of the original assault helicopters had been destroyed or damaged. Ironically, about three hours into the first assault, the Cambodians gave the entire crew of the *Mayaguez* back to forces from the USS *Holt*; the original problem had been solved. The Marines on Koh Tang Island, however, had to be reinforced and then extracted. These operations lasted through the night. In the end, US casualties were 15 killed in action, three missing in action, and about 49 wounded in action.

—*A Very Short War,* John F. Guilmartin

Language, Region and Culture Considerations

AFSOF face an expanding and dynamic operational environment requiring the ability to operate in and across the gamut of language, region, and culture contexts. Understanding the changing operational environment is critical to success. Cross-cultural competence and foreign language proficiency increase efficiency and lower risks to its core missions. Select AFSOF personnel normally have basic cross-cultural skills to avoid misunderstandings that may prolong or complicate mission accomplishment. The type and level of training should be appropriate to the individual's position, function and career path.

Language and cultural competence skills are supplemented with an increased understanding of regional, country-specific, and local political/military dynamics. Regional education includes basic education on geography, demographics, economics, politics, and selected historical events. Particular emphasis is placed on the specific political/military context in which the US foreign policy requires the use of military force. This context goes beyond pre-deployment intelligence briefings, and examines the stability and legitimacy of the host nation governance structures. This knowledge can be critical to operational effectiveness. Commanders should plan and optimize cultural, regional, and language training requirements to provide the most significant training in the most effective manner.

AFSOF OPERATIONAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Last Updated: 23 January 2015

Operations security (OPSEC), communications security (COMSEC) and physical security are vitally important to special operations forces (SOF). From initial planning stages to the force recovery stages of a special operation, mission-critical information and OPSEC indicators should be tightly controlled to prevent the adversary from deriving or collecting information that would compromise the mission success. Air Force special operations forces (AFSOF) habitually operate from secure training sites and employment bases in order to shield forces from the attention of hostile intelligence collectors. Since AFSOF have little organic base defense capability, they depend almost exclusively on conventional Air Force units or sister Service support defense against air, missile, and ground threats.

Additionally, AFSOF pay particular attention to COMSEC, in order to control inadvertent release of mission-critical information and OPSEC indicators. For example, AFSOF maximize secure communications that ensure communication discipline (emissions control) and discretion (low probabilities of detection and intercept). Effective planning and coordinating can ensure information is adequately controlled, while ensuring access to information, equipment, and activities necessary for flexible yet compartmented operations.

Intelligence

In past warfare, a lower level of effort was required to identify the enemy (e.g., an armored division massed on the border). However, in today's conflicts, a greater level of effort is required to identify the enemy (e.g., terrorist networks, cells, and leadership). Therefore, AFSOF planning and execution are intelligence-intensive, timely, and detailed. Tailored, all-source intelligence is vital. All-source intelligence should be broad in scope yet adequately detailed. Due to the nature of special operations (SO) tasking, AFSOF intelligence specialists should be prepared to provide information on a broad spectrum of target sets associated with the core activities.

Intelligence requirements for AFSOF differ from those of other air components due to the nature of the objective, degree of detailed planning information, and the tailored support that may be required. Such intelligence allows for AFSOF to avoid engaging the enemy and provides security for clandestine missions. Some of the products often associated with AFSOF mission planning are:

- SOF mission folders
- Mission planning orders validated through rehearsal(s)
- Evasion plan of action for all missions
- Combat tactics and concepts of employment based on expected threat scenarios
- Target materials
- Annotated imagery
- Specialized geospatial products

Release of post-mission reports with organically collected intelligence, target area analysis, and intelligence assessments may be constrained by the sensitivity of many types of SOF missions. Depending on the sensitivity of the mission, commanders should report data either through special access or routine intelligence reporting channels, as appropriate. To the extent possible, sensitive information may be provided when sources and methods are removed (e.g., tear line).

Communications

AFSOF communications consist of three broad categories: command and control (C2), mission support, and tactical communications. Communications for C2 deal with operational planning and execution. It requires immediate and responsive communications connectivity from the joint force commander and joint force special operations component commander (JFSOCC) through the joint special operations air component (JSOAC) to the most forward deployed SOF forces. Command and control should enable AFSOF operators to rapidly deploy and dynamically operate with assured connectivity and security in all environments. Tactical communications are carried by SOF airborne and supporting or supported ground forces to communicate with command stations and other SOF elements in operational missions. Interoperability between tactical communications and C2 networks is critical. Low probability of detection and low probability of interception are critical requirements for SOF tactical communications means. AFSOF requires integral communications resources that are characterized by high reliability, flexibility, light weight, and a small footprint. SOF initial and on-the-move communications should be rapidly and continuously available to operate in a variety of threat environments. Man-packable equipment should be operational within minutes versus hours or days. AFSOF communications forces contain, and normally require, organic communications specialists and equipment to provide these rapidly deployable communications capabilities. SOF combat support communications provides deployed network infrastructure, secure telecommunications services, and access to the DoD Information Network (DODIN). Access to the DODIN enables planning, intelligence, logistics, and other functions at austere deployed operating locations. Mission support communications infrastructure may be provided on a limited basis by SOF unit deployable communications teams or by host base operating support. SOF deployable communications teams are trained and equipped to provide specialized and general

communications services for initial AFSOF beddown support. They are intended to move forward to austere operating locations with AFSOF aviation units.

Information Operations (IO)

Information Operations should be an integral part of SOF operations. IO integrates and synchronizes multiple information-related capabilities (IRC) within the information environment spanning the range of SOF operations, but primarily occurring outside of traditional conflict. This integration occurs between several different capabilities, which may be interchangeable based on the mission planned or the availability of capabilities. As such, IO should be carefully integrated and synchronized within the SOF planning and execution processes at the JSOAC level, and should not be regarded as a separate IO campaign plan. Only through the balanced application of IRC can the commander's desired effects be achieved at the operational and tactical levels.

Cyberspace Operations

Cyberspace Operations crosses all the physical domains and provides military advantage to both SOF and adversaries alike. Cyberspace operations in support of special operations can often be conducted remotely, thus reducing the SOF footprint and contributing to freedom of action within a given operational area. Some AF cyberspace forces may be designated to provide specific support to SOF; in some cases, they may be apportioned directly to SOF, while in others, they may be aligned in a supporting role.

When formed, the JSOAC should identify desired cyberspace operations and submit a theater-specified cyberspace support request to the joint special operations task force / JFSOCC who will validate and forward the request to combatant commanders -designated lead for cyberspace operations.

Cyberspace defense of the JSOAC network is the responsibility of the Service component providing the network (e.g., the component AFFOR for Air Force-provided networks, and ARFOR for Army-provided networks). The JSOAC/J6 has collateral responsibility for network defense when operating an enclave off of the main, Service-provided network. When parts of the SOF network reside inside of the air operations center or other component operations centers, that component's communications section has a collateral responsibility to defend the portions of the network residing with the component's firewall.

Space Operations

AFSOF rely on space capabilities and assets to enable combat operations. To accomplish this, AFSOF require timely, accurate, and current space products and support from initial planning through deployment and execution. To ensure the proper integration of space capabilities, space personnel are assigned to AFSOF units to support contingency operations. AFSOF deploys space personnel as part of the SOLE and AFSOF C2 nodes. As the AFSOF space experts, these teams plan and coordinate the necessary SOF space requirements through the space coordinating authority , normally the joint force air component commander (JFACC), in order to ensure cross-component space tasking consolidation, prioritization, and deconfliction.

AFSOF COMBAT SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS

Last Updated: 23 January 2015

Combat support consists of those functions necessary to support and sustain operations at a base. The majority of these functions are not organic to Air Force special operations forces (AFSOF) and are provided by the Commander, Air Force special operations forces (COMAFSOF) or other Service component commander tasked with providing such support. The COMAFFOR, through an air expeditionary wing or air expeditionary group commander, is normally responsible for providing the combat support and Service-common logistics support required by deployed AFSOF. At forward operating locations where the preponderance of forces are AFSOF, the AFSOF commander is responsible for ensuring combat support and Service common logistics support are provided at that location.

The AFSOF commander should coordinate Air Force Service support requirements directly through the COMAFFOR's A-staff. Other support requirements may be provided by a Service component commander other than COMAFFOR, per the geographic combatant commander's direction. Unique support requirements for Special operations forces (SOF) should be coordinated via SOF channels. AFSOF become operational early in the initial phase of any operation; therefore, sufficient combat support capability should be planned and deployed on a rapid enough timeline to achieve sustained operational capability, with minimal risk, commensurate with the geographic combatant commander's operational objectives.

AFSOF normally require conventional support, like this SOF MQ-9 loading for airlift.

Logistics

AFSOF should provide sustainment requirements to the Air Force component logisticians during both contingency and crisis action planning. Coordination of AFSOF logistics support with the Air Force component logisticians and early identification of requirements is essential for a sustained and responsive support cycle. Provision of Service common logistics support and SOF unique logistics support should be seamless to deployed AFSOF using a single Air Force supply chain and the joint theater distribution system.

AFSOF should be able to execute time sensitive, discrete deployments. A reduced deployed logistics footprint can enhance both the timely response and the security of an operation. The

system used to mobilize and deploy AFSOF should be able to function in an environment where operations security (OPSEC) precludes normal pre-deployment coordination. However, planners should balance the need for OPSEC against the need for adequate logistics support and the size of the logistics footprint to ensure timely deployment and, ultimately, mission success. Lack of adequate logistics support can put the mission as much at risk as the failure to maintain appropriate OPSEC.

Because AFSOF generally operate small numbers of highly specialized aircraft, they should be adequately supported by readiness spares packages (RSP). The RSP should be maintained at sufficient levels to ensure a quick response and sustained operating capability for short duration contingencies.

Civil Engineer

The lack of lightweight and easily employable bare base facility support coupled with extremely short notice, rapidly evolving, and fluid missions requires AFSOF to arrive and conduct operations well ahead of base operating support establishment. To bridge the gap, AFSOF provides a family of small specialized force modules. These capabilities employ the latest technology, tailored to minimums, and in most cases personnel are multi-skilled, substantially reducing manpower footprints. Capabilities include explosive ordnance disposal, gunship support, force protection teams, expeditionary engineer teams, counter-weapons of mass destruction /chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear teams, collective protection with personnel teams, and a family of light, easily employable beddown assets known as air rapid response kits.

Rapid arrival and establishment of an airhead at staging locations necessitate an increased demand on SOF, its enablers, and supporting agencies. The nature of the SOF mission heightens the probability of encountering hazards and accepting risk. AFSOC's enablers provide the commander with great capability in minimized packaging to assist in avoiding and mitigating those risks.

Weather Operations

AFSOF weather forces provide a broad-spectrum of support from deployed and garrison conventional weather forces, global strategic and operational reachback forecasting to the capabilities of special operations weather teams (SOWT). SOWT provide environmental data collection operations and indigenous personnel weather liaison/training in the deep battle space as well as tailored environmental forecast products for unique worldwide missions of both conventional and SOF. The joint force special operations component commander (JFSOCC), in coordination with JFSOCC staff weather officer, determines weather resources required to support joint force commander (JFC) objectives. AFSOF units have enhanced performance when accompanied by organic SOWT. Team composition is scenario-dependent and generally consists of forward observing, planning and mission execution forecasting, and staff weather services. SOWT members operate independently in permissive and semi-permissive environments or as an attachment to SOF teams in hostile areas. SOWT are the only force in

the DOD organized, trained, and equipped to perform special reconnaissance operations in support of environmental requirements for the JFC.

While other forces have the ability to provide basic weather reporting, SOWT provide robust environmental intelligence collection expertise. SOWT can perform these tasks while employed tactically on or near the target, along flight routes, or from forward staging areas. In coordination with the joint force special operations component (JFSOC) staff weather officer, AFSOF weather forces develop an environmental sensing strategy that supports the theater sensing strategy. Deployed SO weather forces are normally attached with specification of operational control (OPCON) to a JFSOCC. Administrative control support is normally provided by the COMAFSOF. SOWT contain specially trained personnel who deploy to collect and disseminate environmental intelligence products in hostile/denied areas. SOWT record and transmit timely, accurate, and operationally focused forward-area weather observations for supporting SOF and conventional missions. The environmental intelligence collected by SOWT is rapidly relayed to higher-echelon weather agencies and integrated into global and theater computer forecast models for inclusion in strategic and operational decision-making processes.

Legal

The employment of Air Force and joint SOF may incorporate significant legal considerations beyond those of conventional forces, including law of armed conflict, use of force, fiscal law, environmental law, international agreements (not only those to which the US is party, but also those to which the US is not but the host nation for the AFSOF activity is a party), and other legal considerations including US and/or host nation domestic laws and policies. The key to avoiding legal obstacles to mission accomplishment is early identification and resolution of potential legal issues before they become "show stoppers." Active involvement by SOF-knowledgeable judge advocates, providing legal advice to commanders, planners, and operators, should be sought and used from the earliest stages of planning throughout mission execution. Commanders should ensure that qualified legal support is integrated into mission planning, rules of engagement development and publication, aircrew and operator training, and actual mission execution.

Medical

AFSOF medical support requirements depend on the number of supported personnel, their locations, the military situation, and access to existing medical facilities. AFSOF personnel often operate from areas where the lack of preventive medicine measures during mission planning and early phases of execution could result in mission degradation. In addition to rendering routine or emergency medical care to deployed personnel, AFSOF medical personnel should ensure applicable elementary field sanitation and hygiene, disease prevention and control, and environmental risk factor assessment and control. The AFSOF aerospace physiology team supports high altitude airdrop missions and human performance threat assessments.

AFSOF medical personnel provide detailed analysis for planning and intelligence functions. They should be aware of potential health hazards, endemic diseases, and other related data associated with the destination country. Plans and procedures also ensure medical personnel

comply with the commander's directed deployment surveillance criteria.

Recovery of hostages or survivors normally presents unique medical considerations for those who have been subjected to traumatic events. Hostages or survivors may be confused, apprehensive, physically incapacitated, or act in a manner that can impede their rescue. SOF personnel conducting personnel recovery missions should also be prepared to use indigenous medical facilities to support hostage recovery operations. AFSOF medics and operational psychologists supervise exercises; provide medical stabilization/treatment following repatriation; and assist reintegration of captured and isolated personnel.

AFSOF medics assist the SOF approach to building resilience. The resilience training continuum ranges from performance enhancement through restoration; AFSOC has embedded medical assets within certain operational units for that purpose. Embedding resources fosters relationships, understanding, and trust between Airmen and providers. AFSOF medics and operational psychologists also participate in assessment and selection of operators, consultation on demanding and realistic training, ongoing monitoring of personnel, and treatment when needed.

AFSOF medical personnel establish the SOF casualty care continuum. They are responsible for planning and conducting medical care from the point of injury back to forward resuscitative surgical care. AFSOF medical and pararescue personnel are charged with providing initial stabilization in personnel recovery and mass casualty incidents.

AFSOF provide organic evacuation to points where conventional airlift and aeromedical evacuation (AE) are located. Selected AFSOF operational medical personnel train on SOF fixed and rotary wing aircraft to provide casualty evacuation from the point of injury back to a conventional interface point. AFSOF medical planning should address ground-air and maritime-air evacuation interface, organic resources to provide pre-evacuation stabilization, transload tactics, and hand-off procedures with conventional medical and AE forces.

Since AFSOC medical assets are limited, commanders should carefully consider available resources when assigning AFSOC medical personnel casualty evacuation roles and other contingency tasking forward of the AFSOC force beddown location. Sound risk management processes should be considered when determining the best resource to provide this capability. Appropriate planning and tailoring of force size during the predeployment planning phases greatly assist in ensuring availability of the required medical resources to meet operational requirements. AFSOC medical assets are designed for rapid deployment and to deploy for short durations.

AFSOC has developed medical modules that can be deployed incrementally or totally to support operational requirements. Medical personnel receive extensive medical training and AFSOC medical equipment and supply packages are designed to be highly mobile, relatively lightweight, and sufficient to provide a total spectrum of medical care in austere environments. AFSOC medical modules can serve as the stand-alone medical capability or the initial building blocks to

which additional medical assets may be added. These additional assets may be acquired from AFSOC, other Services, SOF medical elements, or from conventional military medical assets. In combination with other AFSOC units and other medical units, AFSOC has the capability to provide a robust medical presence. AFSOC can provide medical personnel in support of IW and medical stability operations in forward operating environments supporting other SOF assets.

Non-SOF Support Activity Requirements

AFSOC is logistically supported in garrison by limited organic general purpose forces. This organic logistics capability focuses on continental US resource management and support as well as providing limited support to forward deployed AFSOF. Organic logistics capability does not include base operating support (BOS), deployment and distribution (intertheater/intratheater air mobility assets) and SOF-specific contracting support.

AFSOC has the capability to sustain operations no more than 15 days; missions that require sustainment extending further than this capability require additional support. AFSOC forces transiting or remaining at a permanent or expeditionary site require BOS. The geographic combatant commander (GCC) and its Service component commanders, in coordination with the Theater Special Operations Command commander, are responsible for ensuring that effective and responsive support systems are developed and provided for assigned/attached AFSOC organizations. The GCC appoints the joint base operating support provider for the requesting AFSOC organization.