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**JOINT SPECIAL AND CONVENTIONAL FORCE INTEGRATION –
– A MODEL FOR ALL NATIONS –**

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List of Acronyms

160 th SOAR	160 th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (United States)
1 st SFOD-D	1 st Special Forces Operations Detachment – Delta
4 RAR	4 th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment
427 SOAS	427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron
ABCA	American, British, Canadian, Australian Armies' Standardization Program
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (Sierra Leone)
CANSOFCOM	Canadian Special Operations Forces Command
C ²	Command and Control
CCIR	Commander's Critical Information Requirement
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CO	Commanding Officer
COBR	Cabinet Office Briefing Room
CSOR	Canadian Special Operations Regiment
CT	Counter-terrorism
DA	Direct Action
DIA	Defence Intelligence Agency
DSF	Director Special Forces (United Kingdom)
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community Of West African States
HALO	High Altitude Low Opening
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
IMATT	International Military Advisory and Training Team
INTERFET	International Force East Timor
JCMOTF	Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force
JFACC	Joint Force Air Component Commander
JFLCC	Joint Force Land Component Commander
JFMCC	Joint Force Maritime Component Commander
JFPOTF	Joint Force Psychological Operations Task Force
JFSOCC	Joint Force Special Operations Component Commander
JSFAW	Joint Special Forces Aviation Wing
JSOTF	Joint Special Operations Task Force
JTF 2	Joint Task Force 2
LSL	Landing Support Logistics
LO	Liaison Officer
OC	Officer Commanding
OP	Observation Post
OPCOM	Operational Command
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PJHQ	Permanent Joint Headquarters (United Kingdom)
RAF	Royal Air Force
RFA	Royal Fleet Auxiliary
RN	Royal Navy

RUF	Revolutionary United Front (Sierra Leone)
SAS	Special Air Service
SASR	Special Air Service Regiment
SBS	Special Boat Service
SCUBA	Self-contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus
SF	Special Forces (primarily a U.S. term)
SFAS	Special Forces Assessment and Selection
SFSG	Special Forces Support Group (United Kingdom)
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SOCCE	Special Operations Command and Control Element
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SR	Special Reconnaissance
TAG	Tactical Assault Group
TTP	Tactics, Techniques and Procedures
UKSF	United Kingdom Special Forces
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
USS	United States Ship
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command

ABSTRACT

Force integration exists in various forms and has been a function of military operations for many years. Whether considered at the joint services level, including elements from a combination of Land, Air, Sea and Special Operations forces or at the combined international and Allied levels, the concept is far from new. How is it then, that when one views integration between Special Operations and what have historically been conventional forces, a greater challenge seems to materialize? The secrecy which notably surrounds operations in which Special Operations Forces are involved is one obvious aspect however in today's asymmetric threat environment a more holistic view must exist in order to maximize domestic and international force capabilities to meet the ever evolving situation.

Nations have integrated these forces over recent years with varying rates of success. This paper will evaluate the effectiveness of special and historic conventional force integration using the British hostage rescue Operation BARRAS as a template (a map of Sierra Leone including major objectives can be found at Appendix 1). The successful resolution to the hostage crisis by this joint force reinforced the mindset that this form of integration is viable for future operations. By analyzing essential building blocks, a comparison to ABCA nations established the applicability in similar circumstances. The comparative analysis of past operations identify several critical integration shortcomings however, these too can be overcome. The lessons highlighted during the analysis show the necessity of a more formal C² structure, supportive intelligence, interoperability and coordinated operational planning. Based on this examination Operation BARRAS provides an appropriate template for force integration.

“They produced disproportionate effects relative to the small numbers of deployed troops.”¹

INTRODUCTION

The above statement appears within the Commander’s Foreword of the soon to be published Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) key stone document, CANSOFCOM 2008 and provides insight into the employment of forces commonly referred to as Special Operations Forces (SOF) in the Canadian context. While the concept of SOF may not be particularly new, their employment in the complex environment of today’s conflicts has seen a dramatic increase both independently and in a joint environment. Many operations in recent history have seen actions by various military elements including SOF and conventional forces conducted in parallel each with distinct missions although and limited if any mutual support. Some, such as the British hostage-rescue in Sierra Leone at the turn of the millennium – Operation BARRAS, have had noticeable force integration and interplay in order to achieve the mission. This integration allowed for the maximization of strengths indigenous to each particular force element with a minimization of impact on any one in particular. Operation BARRAS combined capabilities found in forces primarily from the British Army’s 22 Special Air Service (SAS) Regiment and 1st Battalion, The Parachute Regiment (1 Para), the Royal Navy’s Special Boat Service (SBS), and 7 Squadron Royal Air Force (7 Sqn RAF).

The force integration in Sierra Leone in 2000, clearly demonstrates that melding forces at certain levels is a viable option for at least some national militaries. Each component was able to provide its own expertise for the mission, thereby ensuring the

¹Department of National Defence, *CANSOFCOM 2008 [DRAFT]* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2008), 3.

necessary speed and tenacity required to secure the release of British hostages. The question this raises is one that still remains elusive to some degree and is the basis of this paper – is true integration possible between Special Operations Forces and forces known historically as conventional and if so, what aspects of that combination of capabilities is necessary to ensure mission success.

In order to conduct a proper comparison, it is paramount that analogous definitions for SOF and other elements be established. Many varying terms have been and continue to be used with the purpose of coming to grips with the “type of military forces ... required to defend [national] interests domestically and internationally.”² Although the traditional titles, *Special Operations Forces* or *Special Forces* has lost much of their meaning, the use of a standardized three-tier system³ has allowed a more common understanding and framework for comparative analysis and will be used as a baseline throughout this paper.

The tier system outlines a methodology for both personnel selection and a delineation of tasks. While the tasks associated with each of the tiers could be interpreted as subjective, its commonality once again provides for its validity. Tier 1 SOF consists predominately of those soldiers involved in *Black Ops* including counter-terrorism or hostage-rescue operations and therefore has the most challenging selection standards. Canadian Joint Task Force Two (JTF 2), which was “created on April 1, 1993, as the Canadian Forces (CF) accepted responsibility for federal counter-terrorism operations

²Colonel David Barr, "Foreword" in *Casting Light on the Shadows: Canadian Perspectives on Special Operations Forces*, eds. Colonel Bernd Horn and Major Tony Balasevicious (Toronto: The Dundurn Group, 2007), 9.

³Colonel Bernd Horn, "Special Operations Forces: Uncloaking an Enigma" in *Casting Light on the Shadows: Canadian Perspectives on Special Operations Forces*, eds. Colonel Bernd Horn and Major Tony Balasevicious (Toronto: The Dundurn Group, 2007), 29.

from the [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] RCMP”⁴, is similar to several other organizations across different countries that conduct similar operations. These include U.S. 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment – Delta (1st SFOD – D); UK SAS and SBS forces and Australian SAS. Although it could be argued that UK SAS and SBS forces should be included as Tier 2, the direct involvement in Operation BARRAS as the primary hostage rescue unit necessitates their inclusion under Tier 1 for the purposes of this paper. Similarly Australian SAS could be viewed under the Tier 2 definition however their involvement in counter-terrorism activities within Australia’s Tactical Assault Group (West) also raises their ranking to Tier 1. Tier 2 echoes those elements which deal first and foremost with what are considered high-value tasks such as Strategic Reconnaissance and Unconventional Warfare⁵ and include units such as U.S. Green Berets (Special Forces), U.S. Sea Air Land (SeALs) teams and some national SAS elements such as those of New Zealand. Finally, Tier 3 elements are those which conduct Direct Action as a primary mission and can include airborne forces or the like. Direct Action for the purpose of this paper is defined as: “[operations] of an overt, covert, clandestine or low visibility nature conducted ... in hostile or denied areas (e.g. raid, ambush, direct assault, sabotage, stand-off attacks from air and ground).”⁶

The defined three-tier system will be used as the comparative framework to evaluate similarities and / or differences between SOF structures and associated capabilities of four western nations, namely the United States, the United Kingdom,

⁴Department of National Defence, "Joint Task Force Two," http://www.jtf2.forces.gc.ca/en/about_e.asp; Internet; accessed 20 January 2008.

⁵Horn, *Special Operations Forces: Uncloaking an Enigma*, 30.

⁶*Ibid.*, 27.

Australia and Canada. Each nation has in recent history conducted forms of integration, with varying levels of success. The application of integration with several operations will be used as the analytical tool in the determination of whether the potential exists for true integration of SOF and conventional capabilities as defined by the tier system.

Operation BARRAS, with its associated details including the crisis, the selection of forces, deployment and direct actions will be utilized as background for the purpose of establishing the baseline framework for integration. This intervention will then be dissected to determine the relationships between the deployed elements and their associated roles during the execution of the operation. The interplay between the services will be compared to interactions of other similar nations specifically the United States, Australia and Canada in order to identify similarities or deficiencies in capability with lessons learned and concluding remarks for a way ahead to integrate SOF and conventional forces.

“O Lord, who didst call on thy disciples to venture all to win all men to thee, grant that we, the chosen members of the Special Air Service Regiment, may by our works and our ways dare all to win all, and in so doing render special service to thee and our fellow men in all the world, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The Regimental Collect, 22 SAS⁷

CHAPTER 1 – BACKGROUND

Section 1 – The Crisis

The main perpetrators of the violent acts during the 1990s were “the rebel forces of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and the West Side Boys, a splinter group of the AFRC.”⁸ The RUF operated throughout much of the countryside, the AFRC in the area of Freetown, while the West Side Boys were active in the outskirts of Freetown, in the Occra Hills region.

The initial formation of the RUF was seen as offering a possibility for change by Sierra Leoneans as the many years of corruption had taken their toll. The people of Sierra Leone hoped for the fulfillment of RUF promises of free education and health care with an equitable share of diamond revenues from within their country. From its formation in 1984, the RUF claimed to be a political group intent on assisting the country. Their invasion of Sierra Leone from Liberia on 23 March 1991 triggered a civil war that was to last ten years. The RUF developed a deserved reputation for enormous cruelty including some of the most heinous crimes against humanity seen in years.

The RUF in general and the West Side Boys in particular had filled their ranks with children. Child soldiers are generally defined “as persons under 18 years of age

⁷Damien Lewis, *Operation Certain Death*, 1st ed. (London: Random House Group, 2004), xiv.

⁸Human Rights Watch, “*We’ll Kill You if You Cry - Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leone Conflict*,” <http://hrw.org/reports/2003/sierraleone/>; Internet; accessed 3 February 2008.

engaged in deadly violence (of a non-criminal type) as part of an armed force.”⁹ Sierra Leone became one of the first locations where western militaries became exposed to actions by these new child-combatants. Some analysts state that Sierra Leone had an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 child soldiers amongst all rebel forces with roughly 80 percent of the RUF recruits being between the ages of seven to fourteen. This reality has yet to be truly understood by western forces having placed many of its soldiers in their direct line of fire. These children place today’s soldier in a precarious ethical and moral dilemma and will continue to do so in the future regardless of any written doctrine.

President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was elected in March 1996 on a platform that promised to end the war, but he was overthrown a year later in May 1997 by an AFRC military coup which destroyed a tenuous and fragile peace. The AFRC, which consisted primarily of disaffected soldiers from the Sierra Leonean Army (SLA) who had attempted a coup a year earlier, “suspended the constitution, banned political parties, and announced rule by military decree.”¹⁰ The RUF joined the AFRC to form the government in June 1997.

The history of Sierra Leone since its independence on 27 April 1961 has been fraught with violence and corruption however; the dramatic spike in the late 1990s of crimes against humanity saw the deployment of forces from the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in response to requests from President

⁹P. W. Singer, "Caution - Children at War," *US Army War College Quarterly* XXXI, no. 4 (2001) [journal on-line]; available from <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/parameters/01winter/singer.htm>; Internet; accessed 3 February 2008.

¹⁰Human Rights Watch, *We'll Kill You if You Cry - Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leone Conflict*, 14.

Kabbah in exile. ECOMOG, primarily made up of Nigerian troops based in Liberia, moved to the Freetown airport to defend it from attacks by the RUF. Although Nigerian forces had to withdraw from around the capital, the U.N. Security Council adopted a resolution imposing mandatory sanctions on Sierra Leone in October 1997 which ECOMOG became mandated to enforce.¹¹

President Kabbah returned from exile following negotiations in March 1998. Although violence continued ECOMOG was able to establish control over roughly two-thirds of the country. By mid-1998, the ECOMOG contingent in Sierra Leone was composed of approximately 12,500 troops, predominantly Nigerian.¹² On 18 May 1999 a ceasefire was signed between the Kabbah government and the RUF/AFRC followed on 22 October 1999 by a United Nations Security Council Resolution 1270 forming the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) with a mandate ... to “cooperate with the Government and the other parties in implementing the Lomé Peace Agreement and to assist in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plan [until 31 December 2005].”¹³ The initial authorized strength of the 6,000 military personnel, including 260 military observers was increased on two separate occasions to 11,100 and then to 13,000. The entire process fell apart when the RUF captured over five hundred UNAMSIL peacekeepers and military observers in May 2000. The conflict resumed with former combatants, including children, rearming and re-conscripting.

¹¹Human Rights Watch, *We'll Kill You if You Cry - Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leone Conflict*, 14.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³United Nations, Department of Public Information, Peace and Security Section, "United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)," <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unamsil/>; Internet; accessed 3 February 2008.

The United Kingdom (UK) deployed forces to evacuate British citizens and to help secure the airport for UN peacekeepers. The force consisted primarily of the 1st Battalion, The Parachute Regiment (1 Para) under Operation PALLISER. British forces remained for several months to further assist the UN in protecting Freetown from rebel assault and in a shift of strategy and mission the British for all intents and purposes began to take control of UN forces. Government forces were organized for an offensive against RUF rebels while the UN protected key points. Following this intervention the UK sponsored a training cadre, the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT), in July 2000, to support of the SLA and “help develop the Sierra Leone Armed forces into a democratically accountable, effective and sustainable force to fulfil security tasks required by the Government of Sierra Leone.”¹⁴ Although the main British force redeployed once the country was deemed secure, IMATT continues to the present day.

Three months later the Royal Irish Regiment took command of IMATT. Various elements of the Regiment conducted both mounted and dismounted patrols in order to get a better understanding of their surroundings; of particular note was a vehicle patrol led by the Officer Commanding (OC) at the Benguema Camp, Major Alex Martial. On 25 August 2000, the mission of the patrol was to conduct a reconnaissance into the Occra Hills region approximately 35 miles north-east of the camp to visit the UNAMSIL Jordanian Battalion located at Masiaka. Masiaka and the Occra Hills were considered to be in bandit-country and in the hands of the West Side Boys, whose “unpredictability

¹⁴United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence, "International Military Assistance Training Team (IMATT (SL))," <http://www.operations.mod.uk/africa/imattsl.htm>; Internet; accessed 3 February 2008. Canadian augmentation to the IMATT mission ranges between 10 and 13 Canadian soldiers.

[was]... fuelled by alcohol and cocaine.”¹⁵ Although notoriously unpredictable, intelligence reports labelled the West Side Boys as *friendlies* in part due to their sporadic support during the recent conflict. The patrol consisted of two officers, two senior non-commissioned officers, three junior non-commissioned officers and four soldiers totalling eleven British soldiers plus one SLA Corporal as a Liaison Officer (LO). Mobility for the group was provided by three Land Rover vehicles with their associated weapons and ancillary equipment.

Arriving at the Jordanian camp just after noon, the patrol had lunch and began their return to Benguema Camp but turned off the main route to try to gain further understanding of an area near Rokel Creek known as Magbeni village.¹⁶ Shortly after turning down a track the patrol reached the village clearing and was quickly surrounded and “overcome by the men with whom they were intermingled”¹⁷ including many child soldiers. Although Major Martial attempted to remain calm and deal with the West Side Boys the situation quickly deteriorated. The ten British soldiers and one SLA soldier found themselves disarmed, bound and taken hostage by the West Side Boys who appeared to be under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Many questions arose as to why the patrol had been so easily taken hostage including the possibility that they were unable to fire on children, even though they carried weapons. Regardless, the exposure to child soldiers had a significant effect on the twelve members of the patrol. After several

¹⁵Richard Connaughton, "Operation Barras," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 12, no. 2 (Summer 2001) [journal on-line]; available from <http://web.ebscohost.com/>; Internet; accessed 25 February 2008).

¹⁶The true reason for the departure off the approved route and into Magbeni village remains one of contention. British reports state that the area was stated to be safe by members of the Jordanian Battalion, while official UN reports deny this and imply that the UK was conducting intelligence gathering and got caught. The actual reason for their detour is not part of this paper; it rather focuses on the follow on actions of UK forces during the hostage rescue itself to provide the background necessary.

¹⁷Connaughton, *Operation 'Barras'*, 111.

beatings, the soldiers were taken across Rokel Creek to Gberi Bana, the village that served as the West Side Boys' headquarters. Detailed layouts of both Magbeni and Gberi Bana villages can be found at Appendix 2.

For a total of sixteen days these soldiers endured the onslaught and savagery of the West Side Boys. Unbeknownst to the captives however, rescue forces had been warned off for deployment should negotiations fail between the UK forces and the rebels. The rescue team consisted of several different units with differing capabilities.

“In the final analysis, the eleven British soldiers of the Royal Irish Regiment were kidnapped and held hostage as an indirect result of UN failings in Sierra Leone.”¹⁸

Section 2 – Force Composition and Rationale for Selection

Following the capture on 25 August 2000 the UK Ministry of Defence placed several forces both within and without the UK on a high-state of deployment readiness. The elements which were warned off and eventually took part in hostage rescue operation included members of both the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) and the Special Boat Service (SBS), members of the 1st Battalion, The Parachute Regiment (1 Para), elements of 7 Squadron RAF (Special Forces) and combined elements of the Royal Navy (RN) and the Sierra Leonean Air Wing. It is believed that a local element at the hostage camp itself provided initial intelligence. Each of these components was tasked with a specific mission in keeping with their respective individual capabilities, but once combined they were able to create an integrated force proficient enough to secure the release of the hostages and eliminate any future threat from the West Side Boys.

¹⁸Lewis, *Operation Certain Death*, 631.

One of the critical groupings was the combination of SAS and SBS forces. Selected due to their capabilities and training in hostage-rescue operations, these soldiers formed the main assault group for Gberi Bana. Formed mainly from 'D' Squadron 22 SASR due to its proximity at the time to Sierra Leone, this sabre squadron comprised the normal four, 16-man troop structure: Air Troop, Boat Troop, Mobility Troop and Mountain Troop which all have a particular skill set. It is estimated that approximately 48 men from D Squadron augmented by 24 men from the SBS conducted the actual assault although the exact organization is not clearly defined due to its classification. This augmentation was in part due to the proximity to Rokel Creek with an anticipated riverine assault taking place. Due to the shallowness of the creek at a myriad of locations,¹⁹ this option was discarded however and the members of the SBS²⁰ who trained alongside the SAS remained integrated. The assault elements were augmented by two 6-man and 4-man SAS observation teams which were inserted by Boat Troop under cover of darkness several days before the assault to provide critical intelligence leading up to and during the actual assault phase.

The selection of 1 Para was based upon the fact that it had just returned from Sierra Leone after the culmination of Operation PALLISER and was the unit most familiar with and most acclimatized to the region when the crisis erupted. A Company

¹⁹Lieutenant-Colonel K. Beaton, United Kingdom Royal Army Medical Corps, personal conversation with author, 14 February 2008. Lieutenant-Colonel Beaton was stationed in Sierra Leone as Commander Medical during Operation PALLISER which occurred in May 2000 and was subsequently responsible for all aspects of medical coverage in support of Operation BARRAS.

²⁰Roles of the Special Boat Service are predominantly focused on the littoral and riverine actions. Although official documentation on the construct of SBS is classified, it is believed that two squadrons support general SBS tasks, one squadron conducts Maritime CT and one squadron conducts small watercraft submarine insertions.

was tasked to select between 120 and 140 soldiers²¹ for the impending mission and be prepared to conduct jungle operations. These forces were specifically trained to conduct insertions and clearance operations and were therefore well suited for the operational task in support of the SAS and SBS on the far bank of Rokel Creek. A Company was to clear the village of Magbeni in order to ensure that no retaliatory strike could be launched against the hostage rescue team.

To move and support all assault elements three Lynx Mk7 attack and three CH-47 HC2 Chinook helicopters, piloted by 7 Squadron RAF, were moved to Sierra Leone. The squadron provided suppressing fire during the initial insertion and continued supporting fire while also acting as the extraction force for both the hostages and the assaulters. These aircraft were augmented by one Mi-24 Gunship from the Sierra Leonean Air Wing. The Royal Navy through the use of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) Landing Support Logistics (LSL) SIR PERCIVALE provided a support platform for the ground forces. The ship, which was moored off of Freetown during the period of the crisis, was used as a medical triage platform and surgery for the hostages and rescuers. This provided not only a medical capability but also an area isolated from media and other elements once the rescue had culminated.

The four elements described above were combined as a joint integrated force allowing for the maximization of firepower and capability in a surgical strike which resulted in the successful rescue. Many challenges faced by members of this integrated group, including injuries and one death sustained by the soldiers, did not deter from the

²¹Lewis, *Operation Certain Death*, 261.

fact that the mission succeeded at least in part to the ability of these forces to act in unison, with clear vision and unambiguous objectives.

“For both patrols, it would be a test of stamina and character: surviving on cold rations and water they had brought into their hides, they endured attacks by the diverse insect life around the river.”²²

Section 3 – Key Events

Following a significant decline in progress during the hostage negotiations the decision was taken to insert two observation post (OP) teams into the area surrounding Gberi Bana and Magbeni as a precursor to any assault. This would allow for moment to moment intelligence to be passed back to the main operations room at the SAS camp as well as a limited response capability should the imperative occur that the hostages were to be executed. Through this deployment, the necessity of a timely rescue would become obvious. Due in part to the receipt of credible intelligence that the hostages were to be moved further inland into RUF territory²³, thereby making any assault nearly impossible, the decision to initiate the rescue was taken. It was later confirmed by the observation team at Magbeni, that some of the buildings in fact contained what they believed were civilian non-combatants, thereby forcing another change to the operational plan.²⁴

The initial insertion of the OP teams occurred on 5 September 2000. They were moved quickly upriver by inflatables and established their respective sites at Gberi Bana

²²William Fowler, *Operation Barras - the SAS Rescue Mission: Sierra Leone 2000*, 1st ed. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), 125. Although much of the details surrounding the events of the rescue are attributed to the books of Lewis and Fowler, the information has been supported by numerous other articles as well as personal discussion with Lt Col K. Beaton, Royal Army Medical Corps, who was on staff in Sierra Leone during the events in question.

²³Lewis, *Operation Certain Death*, 301.

²⁴Fowler, *Operation Barras - the SAS Rescue Mission: Sierra Leone 2000*, 121.

and Magbeni. Although the Boat Troop was able to get the two teams a significant distance upriver, they were unable to reach their final drop-off points due to numerous sandbanks. This resulted in the two teams necessarily conducting a forced march through thick bush to reach their final destinations. The density of the underbrush became a noteworthy observation which would aid in the decision to reject a land-borne assault. The 4-man team set up an OP on the south side of Rokel Creek at Magbeni and the 6-man team set up on the north side at Gberi Bana, near the building in which the hostages were being held. The confirmation of sandbanks was also the trigger for discarding the riverine assault option,²⁵ as the force would be unable to achieve surprise and speed by this route. In parallel to the OPs being positioned, the use of local tribesman, loyal to the government and the British forces, known as Kamajors “would already be acting as the eyes and ears of the British forces in the jungles around Gberi Bana.”²⁶ This linkage was achieved through negotiations of British military officials conducting liaison directly with the Kamajor leadership to the north-western portion of Sierra Leone, deep inside RUF territory.²⁷ During their time in captivity Major Martial partially befriended one of the West Side Boys who took the well-being of the hostages seriously. Whether this individual was perhaps an informant for the SAS within the rebel group or perhaps a Kamajor was unclear, but he continued to provide a calming influence on the hostages giving them hope of rescue. The combination of these watchful hidden companions provided critical information for the special reconnaissance activities of the operation.

²⁵Lewis, *Operation Certain Death*, 321.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 332. These details were corroborated by Lieutenant-Colonel K. Beaton, United Kingdom Royal Army Medical Corps.

²⁷Lieutenant-Colonel K. Beaton, United Kingdom Royal Army Medical Corps, personal conversation with author, 14 February 2008.

On 8 September 2000, government approval was granted for the assault. Orders directed that the attack was to occur at first light on Sunday, 10 September 2000. The assault force, using the three CH-47 Chinook transport helicopters, would be inserted in two phases. Two of the Chinooks inserted SAS/SBS fire teams into Gberi Bana on both the north and south sides of the village in order to secure the hostages as quickly as possible. The third Chinook dropped the first wave of A Company soldiers just west of Magbeni²⁸ into a swamp in order to conceal their arrival and movement. The third aircraft then returned to Waterloo Camp in order to insert the second wave of A Company into Magbeni. Just prior to the insertion of 1 Para, four helicopter gunships provided covering and suppressive fire on Magbeni. As the SAS/SBS teams linked up with the SAS OPs, secured the hostages and cleared Gberi Bana, A Company cleared Magbeni. Approximately four and a half hours after the assault began it was over. The British forces had suffered one SAS soldier killed and approximately 20 wounded (from all assaulting elements). The two villages were destroyed with numerous West Side Boys killed or wounded and their Commander Foday Kallay taken prisoner.

²⁸Connaughton, *Operation Barras*, 114.

“This sort of job happened only once or twice, if ever, in an SAS soldier’s lifetime.”²⁹

CHAPTER 2 – INTERVENTION

Section 1 – Details of Involved Elements

The very nature of the ground on which the hostages were being held necessitated detailed planning and execution of the assault with careful consideration taken for the specific composition of the forces. Decisions were predicated on the situation at hand, specifically involving military hostages on foreign soil. This circumstance predetermined the use of Special Operations Forces (SOF) with the subject expertise to conduct the rescue operation. The remaining challenges faced by the British chain of command however were: the methods of insertion, familiarity with the region and overall manpower requirements. Each of these challenges was addressed in a manner that ensured an integrated force-composition.

The rationale behind the initial selection of the Special Air Service (SAS) was clear from the start as they provided the necessary skill and proficiency to conduct the key element of the operation. The choice of D Squadron to lead the assault was determined in part by their proximity to Sierra Leone. D Squadron was conducting various types of training at Nanyuki near Nairobi, Kenya when the crisis began. They had already been acclimatized to the African continent and were therefore best positioned to undertake the task. D Squadron would conduct the overall planning for the assault as is always the case for special operations forces, those leading the assault actually conduct the detailed planning prior to execution.

²⁹Lewis, *Operation Certain Death*, 64.

Once 22 SAS's and D Squadron's senior staff arrived in country the level of difficulty in conducting the rescue became clear. The location of the rebel base was nearly perfect from a defensive perspective as it was in a controlled area, had controlled access which gave the West Side Boys advanced warning of any regular methods of assault, had a large creek which separated two critical objectives with one providing mutual support to the other by means of firepower and additional manpower if necessary. The existence of the creek prompted preparations of one option as a riverine assault, bringing forth a necessity to conduct a joint operation with the SBS. Although the depth of the creek with its many sandbanks subsequently eliminated the possibility of a stealth assault by that means, Special Boat Service (SBS) fire teams were retained as augmentation to D Squadron, as much training had already been conducted in unison and cohesion had been established.

One of the initial options considered, although not considered viable at the time due to its conventional force nature, was air assault. This would require insertion of elements on both sides of the creek nearly simultaneously with added fire support to ensure suppression of machine gun fire from either location. This air support was provided predominately by 7 Squadron RAF (Special Forces)³⁰ with augmentation from both the Army and Royal Navy. 7 Squadron, although RAF, is permanently assigned to Director Special Forces (DSF) to provide air support to missions such as Operation BARRAS. The limited availability of the large CH-47 Chinook airframes required two distinct insertions of forces at Magbeni approximately 30 minutes apart. The inclusion of an MI-24 Hind from the Sierra Leonean Air Wing, flown by former Executive Outcome's

³⁰Lieutenant-Colonel K. Beaton, United Kingdom Royal Army Medical Corps, personal conversation with author, 14 February 2008.

(a South African-based private military company³¹) Neall Ellis provided considerable additional firepower during the assault. This added a combined integrated effect to the operation, which now included a Sierra Leonean element.

The final major force selection hurdle was that of familiarity and manpower availability. In order to assault both Gberi Bana and Magbeni at the same time, the SAS/SBS team would require a large enabling force at Magbeni in order to neutralize its mutual support capabilities. Discussions were held to determine which other military forces would be available that could meet either or both of these criteria. An initial review was conducted in order to determine the viability of using a second SAS squadron to conduct the Magbeni assault, but this option had to be discarded due to other ongoing operations and critical, stand-by, counter-terrorism taskings.³² This led to the decision to select 1 Para as their enabler and was the preferred choice due to its recent operations in Sierra Leone. The best prepared sub-unit of 1 Para was A Company which was concluding an exercise in Jamaica, simultaneously to D Squadron exercising in Kenya, as they were acclimatized for the operation. The need for a force of between 120-140 soldiers meant minor augmentation of the Company prior to deployment. A Company would be responsible to link up with the SAS Observation Post (OP) at Magbeni and the conduct of clearance operations, a role within their conventional force-capability.

The combination of these forces allowed for the application of expertise in what can easily be termed a successful surgical or precision strike. The two assault forces were trained primarily independently with joint activities injected for interoperability

³¹Lewis, *Operation Certain Death*, 648.

³²*Ibid.*, 258-259.

purposes. Each unit also had a complete understanding of the linkages between the two locations and their respective roles. The selection process made best use of the experiences and qualifications necessary to conduct the operations without unnecessarily tasking SOF. The balance attained was sufficient to achieve mission success.

“The men of D Squadron doubted that any government in the world would sign up to Operation Certain Death.”³³

Section 2 – Assault Plan and Roles of Assault Forces

The challenge of conducting a joint operation such as Operation BARRAS is the ability to integrate and intertwine the capabilities of each element in order to achieve synergy. The selection of the specific elements provided that synergy regardless of the assault option selected. The final plan was decided upon based on intelligence gathered by means of Human Intelligence (HUMINT), Special Reconnaissance (SR) and knowledge of the environment. The elimination of both the riverine and land assaults forced the acceptance of the least preferred air-assault option. This option would nearly eliminate any possibility of surprise due to the insertion methodology required and would place the forces at much higher risk than either of the other options.

Prior to the actual day of the assault, the OP teams moved forward to the edge of the wood line to provide immediate situational awareness to the inbound forces. They were to act as the first responders to any hostile action by the rebels once the inbound force was in ear shot, although the window of opportunity was not expected to exceed 30 seconds.³⁴ If alerted by the noise, the rebels might attempt to execute the hostages;

³³Lewis, *Operation Certain Death*, 361.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 355.

denial of this opportunity fell to the OP should it be necessary. Once the forces were on the ground, the OP team would provide supporting fire from their jungle positions or move forward into the village if necessary. The SAS/SBS teams attacking Gberi Bana would be inserted in nearly simultaneous waves with just enough time for the first aircraft to get boots on the ground. The intention was to have a group inserted at both the north and south end of the village in order to create two fronts on which the West Side Boys would have to defend. Each assaulting team had conducted rehearsals based on being “responsible for [assaulting] and [securing] a number of specific, pre-identified targets.”³⁵

The RAF had also worked on their plans and recommendations to ensure coordination and support. The intent for the deployment was to fly in formation with the three Chinooks leading, two carrying SAS/SBS with A Company window gunners and one carrying the first wave of A Company’s Magbeni assaulters, followed by three Lynx and the Sierra Leonean Air Wing MI-24 in support. It was deemed critical to have the transport helicopters leading in order to reduce the reaction time of the rebels upon arrival. While the insertions were occurring, the attack choppers would suppress any heavy machine guns at Magbeni which could fire upon the forces at Gberi Bana. This fire would continue until directed by the ground forces to shift focus. Once void of soldiers the two remaining Chinooks would remain in the area on station, but out of range, for the impending extraction of hostages and casualties. The Royal Navy (RN) was on standby for the purpose of providing a hostage muster station as well as a hospital and surgical capability to the force. It was expected to have approximately 10 percent

³⁵Lewis, *Operation Certain Death*, 353.

casualties of the force of approximately 280 soldiers, which would have taxed the limited capacity of the medical facilities.³⁶ It was fortunate that the actual casualty figures were below those initial estimates.

The entire plan rested on a tenuous assumption that the rebels would be caught by complete surprise early in the morning. With significant battle experience and knowledge of the Occra Hills region the West Side Boys should have had ample ability to challenge any assault, whether by way of the land, creek or air. Had they had the forethought of their own OPs or some sort of watch to provide early warning, they may have been able to challenge the critical element of surprise that the British assaulters very much needed.

*“Three men [SAS] stand there for a few seconds, listening. Sure enough, apart from the distant throb of the incoming choppers, Gberi Bana is totally, deathly quiet.”*³⁷

Section 3 – Execution

With D Squadron and its SBS augmentation assaulting Gberi Bana to liberate the hostages, A Company’s task was adjusted from *defeating* the enemy vice *destroying* them to a plan designed to give the rebels a *Golden Bridge* of escape.³⁸ This change in tactic would provide additional flexibility to the West Side Boys who might not want to fight to the death and thereby reduce the likelihood of an extended battle and higher casualties. Minimum equipment was taken on the assault in order to increase speed and mobility although this reduced flexibility for an extended battle should it occur. The aircraft

³⁶Lieutenant-Colonel K. Beaton, United Kingdom Royal Army Medical Corps, personal conversation with author, 14 February 2008.

³⁷Lewis, *Operation Certain Death*, 533.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 266.

departed Freetown at 0616 hours on Sunday, 10 September 2000 on route to the West Side Boys' camp. During the initial phases of the assault, limited information had been conveyed to the UN and the Sierra Leonean Army (SLA) in order to receive support for the establishment of a cordon in the region. The Jordanian Battalion from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) augmented by SLA forces were to seal off the area in order to eliminate any short term reinforcements from either the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) or other rebels.

The first Chinook helicopter inserted SAS elements on the north side, consisting of approximately six fire teams or 36 soldiers, by fast roping from the hovering aircraft at approximately 0640 hours. The required clearance time to exit the aircraft was 90 seconds for all personnel in order to reduce the exposure to hostile fire. A Company augmentees provided heavy machine gun fire from the airborne platform. The fire fight became a high-intensity close-quarter battle where one SAS soldier was seriously injured soon after his decent. Shortly after the initial insertion, the helicopter landed under fire in order to evacuate two casualties. The most seriously injured soldier, Lance-Corporal Bradley (Brad) Tinnion, received critical internal injuries and later died while undergoing surgery on Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) SIR PERCIVALE. The remainder of the group moved quickly using fire and movement to secure the building, which had been confirmed by the OP over the preceding days to contain the hostages. Once the casualties were extracted, the second aircraft discharged its soldiers on the south side of the village to join the fight. As one fire team moved directly to the hostage building, the remaining five teams cleared specific objectives and buildings as had been rehearsed.

Simultaneously, the Lynx and MI-24 launched their assault on the southern river bank at Magbeni, allowing the SAS to move through Gberi Bana unimpeded by enemy fire as well as permitting the third Chinook to deliver the first of two groups of A Company Paras just south of Magbeni. The covering fire from the attack helicopters provided a short period of noise which allowed the insertion to occur undetected. Shortly after the initial advance into Magbeni, the second tranche landed and established a mortar position to assist the movement of the Paras through the village. Several of the soldiers in the first wave of Paras were injured by a blast that is believed to have been a friendly fire mortar, but this remains unconfirmed.³⁹ The assault on Magbeni was stalled shortly thereafter as heavy resistance was received from the now fully awake village-occupants, the Paras were pinned down.

At 0700 hours a Chinook landed to extract all the hostages and was quickly airborne and on route to RFA SIR PERCIVALE while the forces on the ground continued the clearance operations. A Company used smoke screens and support from the RAF before securing and clearing the majority of Magbeni. At 0730 hours a second Chinook began its flight back to Freetown with eleven casualties. Sporadic but sustained gun fire continued to be received from the rebels in the tree line until approximately 0800 hours when the West Side Boys in the immediate vicinity were finally suppressed and their commander, Foday Kallay captured.

The three British Land Rovers were secured by the Paras shortly thereafter and mop-up operations continued into the early afternoon. The final elements of the assault force were extracted at approximately 1600 hours. Although there was one direct loss of

³⁹Lieutenant-Colonel K. Beaton, United Kingdom Royal Army Medical Corps, personal conversation with author, 14 February 2008.

life and 20 wounded, this was below the initial casualty estimates of approximately six killed and 23 wounded.⁴⁰ The operation was a success using an integrated SOF and conventional force.

⁴⁰Lieutenant-Colonel K. Beaton, United Kingdom Royal Army Medical Corps, personal conversation with author, 14 February 2008.

“Despite extensive advances in the area of personnel selection since 1945, the make up of the contemporary soldier that is sought and so highly prized by SOF [Special Operations Forces] organizations has changed little since the inception of the first modern SOF units in the early stages of the Second World War.”⁴¹

CHAPTER 3 – INTERPLAY

Section 1 – Selection Process

Throughout the short history of Special Operations Forces (SOF), the selection process has been a key instrument in ensuring that high-quality soldiers are identified to enter the training program. This necessity has come about because “the level of training needed by SOF is extremely demanding and few who consider attempting the arduous SOF selection and training process will ultimately succeed.”⁴² Although a highly discriminating methodology is used, the characteristics and capabilities of individuals required for these forces has remained relatively extant since the initial procedures were determined by organizations such as the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and its British counterpart the Special Operations Executive (SOE) during the Second World War.⁴³

OSS used leading psychiatrists to study human characteristics and behaviour in order to advance screening criteria that would enable it to select individuals for clandestine operations that were based on specific mission requirements. This study was the first of its kind and revolutionized SOF selection. The two approaches that this team reviewed and analysed were organismic and elementalistic selection. These assessment

⁴¹Major Tony Balasevicious, "Finding the Right Stuff: Special Operations Forces Selection" in *Casting Light on the Shadows: Canadian Perspectives on Special Operations Forces*, eds. Colonel Bernd Horn and Major Tony Balasevicious (Toronto: The Dundurn Group, 2007), 38.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 37.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 38.

methodologies were then applied to the mission specific tasks that OSS personnel would need to conduct once deployed. Major Sam Young, formerly of U.S. Army Special Operations Command stated that “the organismic approach assesses an individual’s performance on an assigned task or in a difficult situation ... while the elementalistic approach, which was in its infancy during the 1940s, identifies personality traits through written tests.”⁴⁴ The overall selection processes of OSS assessed the individual as a whole and rated them accordingly over a three day period.

Similar processes exist today as armies have attempted to move away from a mere attrition-based selection process. Instead of accepting soldiers on mass only to eliminate the majority due to failures in meeting necessary thresholds in specific testing (e.g. physical fitness), a screening process has been applied that reduces the number of accepted candidates to a more manageable level, one based on the likelihood of success during the follow-on main testing phase. This adjustment was a result of experiences on the American Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC) where many soldiers failed but the organization remained responsible for the costs associated with the training and testing throughout the course. These lessons allowed for the development and establishment of the Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) course. A short duration screening phase resulted in both fewer candidates for SFQC and fewer follow-on training failures. This form of screening also allowed for the initial testing of the more difficult and high failure activities.⁴⁵ The overall traits required for SOF to this day that are inherent in the selection process are broken down into the following components:

⁴⁴Major Sam Young, "A Short History of SF Assessment and Selection," *Special Warfare: Professional Bulletin of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School* 9, no. 2 (May 1996), 23.

⁴⁵Balasevicious, *Finding the Right Stuff: Special Operations Forces Selection*, 41.

physical fitness, cognitive, personality/interpersonal and communication. As highlighted by Major Balasevicius:

... the personal qualities required for long-range, long-term operations in enemy territory ... are part of a man's character and, although they may be developed over a period, they must be learnt in childhood ... these qualities are: initiative, self-discipline, independence of mind, ability to work without supervision, stamina, no fear of height, patience and a sense of humour.⁴⁶

While the current selection processes remain an uncertain science,⁴⁷ the selection of appropriate candidates has improved quite dramatically.

The system of selection used in western countries in general and ABCA nations in particular is comparable as most work closely together both in training and on operations.

While actual standards required to successfully pass the tests of selection remains classified for obvious reasons, the fact remains that they have become much more streamlined and restrictive. Similarities can be seen to the U.S. selection process by comparing the main prerequisites for part of Australian SOF capability selection.

“Members serving within [SOF] are selected on the basis of certain mental and physical characteristics. Prerequisites for ... selection include: a. Maturity and Psychological Stability; b. Physical [Fitness]; and c. [Self] Discipline.”⁴⁸

Each of the Tiers within the SOF community must meet varying levels of selection based on their mission profiles. In other words, the more critical the mission or task, the higher the level of achievement required and the more restrictive the selection

⁴⁶Balasevicius, *Finding the Right Stuff: Special Operations Forces Selection*, 44.

⁴⁷Major Daniel G. Burwell, "Special Forces Assessment Ad Selection Program Development for Force XXI" (Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Course Paper, 1999), 7.

⁴⁸Tom Dececchi and Bernadette Dececchi, "Selection and Preparation of Team Members for Special Operations," in *Choice of Force: Special Operations for Canada*, eds. David Last and Bernd Horn (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 252.

becomes. The criticality of targeting high quality soldiers for these difficult tasks however, is exacerbated by the limited recruiting base available. The primary source for SOF selection remains in those units which already cater to the more demanding tasks such as Airborne or Parachute Regiments across all nations and must therefore be carefully managed to ensure capacity exists on both sides of the equation.

With the changes occurring as part of modernization some SOF communities such as the 1st Special Warfare Training Group, which is responsible for conducted SFAS selection, have altered their methodology to include coaching, teaching and training in order to maximize soldiers' abilities and increase production capacity. Similarly the United Kingdom is adjusting some of its processes also although critics suggest that this is at the cost of other critical selection criteria.⁴⁹ Only time will be able to corroborate whether these methods will provide the same capable SOF soldier or not. "The methods of recruiting said quality soldiers has been enhanced and met with success, yet obtaining the quantity of *quality* soldiers for SF remains a challenge."⁵⁰

"When the hour of crisis comes, remember that forty selected men can shake the world..."⁵¹

Section 2 – Organizational Design

Many varying concepts exist as to the Organization Design necessary to meet SOF requirements when operating in a combined (with other national forces) or joint (with other components of the same nation) battle space. Understanding this requirement

⁴⁹Balasevicious, *Finding the Right Stuff: Special Operations Forces Selection*, 51.

⁵⁰Major Richard S. Wheeler, "Special Forces Recruiting Methodologies for the Twenty-First Century" (Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Course Paper, 2000), 94.

⁵¹Robin Neillands, *In the Combat Zone: Special Forces since 1945* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 1. Originally stated by Yasotay, a 13th Century Mongolian Warlord.

is imperative in order to fully appreciate the challenges faced by the integration and interoperability of SOF and conventional forces. The requisite comprehension will be detailed through a simple comparison of the Command and Control (C²) construct used during Operation BARRAS compared to the current practices used in present day US doctrine.

As was shown in Chapter 1, the United Kingdom was faced with the dilemma of determining the organizational design required to meet the operational obligations necessary to secure the release of the hostages. Although the resulting task force was small in contrast to those of current deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, it was highly functional and well integrated. The C² lead rested with the SOF element, in this case the Commanding Officer (CO) 22 Special Air Service (SAS) with direct links to D Squadron in theatre throughout the operation. The planning for the operation was likewise initiated in the United Kingdom, predominately by SOF but with significant linkages to both the military and political hierarchy. The process by which SOF plans and executes its missions is based on the concept that the organization expected to conduct the operation is also responsible for its planning. As the planning continued and the decision was taken to use elements of the SAS, the Special Boat Service (SBS) and 1st Battalion, The Parachute Regiment (1 Para), a general C² structure was established. A design of the C² structure for Operation BARRAS⁵² is provided at Figure 1 and demonstrates the

⁵²The United Kingdom Joint Special Forces Support Group (SFSG) was established in August 2005 based primarily on the experiences from Operation BARRAS. It has a core grouping from 1st Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, augmented from the Royal Marines and the RAF regiment designed to provide infantry and specialized support to SAS and SBS special operations. Further clarity will be provided later in the chapter.

challenges of these types of operations while simultaneously shows the viability of

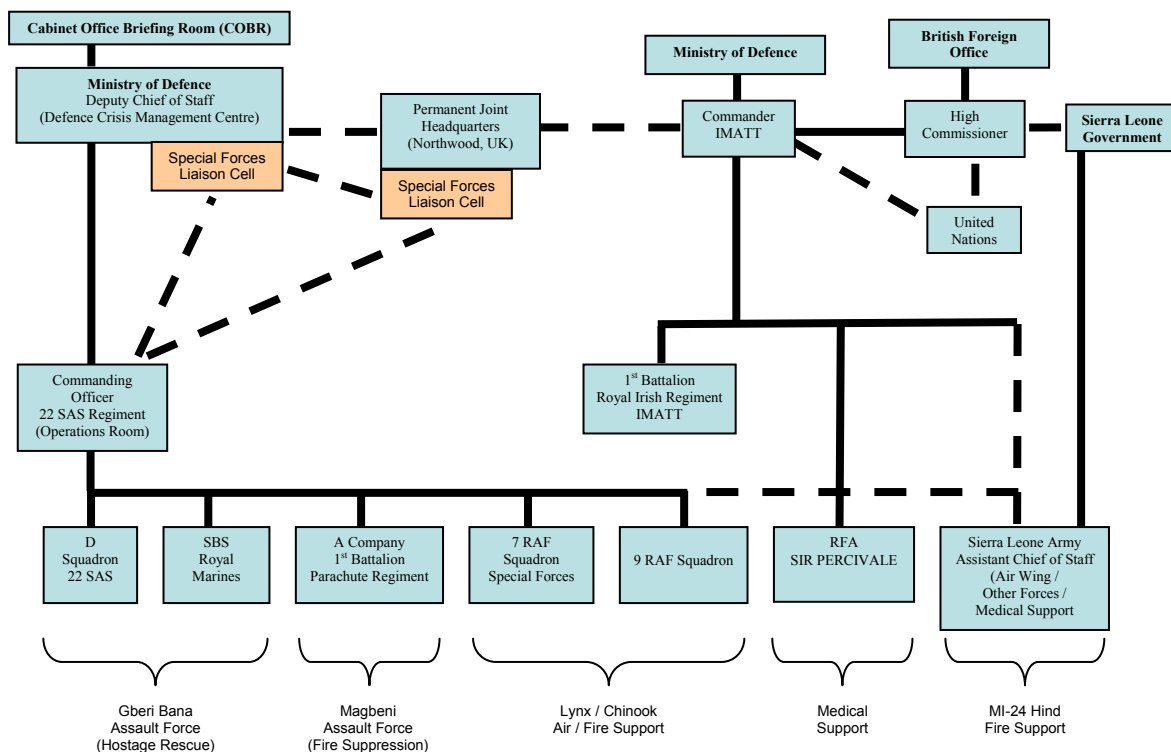


Figure 1 - Operation BARRAS C² Structure

Source: Lieutenant-Colonel K. Beaton, United Kingdom Royal Army Medical Corps, personal conversation with author, 27 February 2008.

SOF and conventional force integration with A Company, 1 Para being placed under Operation Command (OPCOM) of CO 22 SAS. As can be seen in this design, CO 22 SAS was directly under command, as is normally the case, to the Crisis Defence Management Centre at the Ministry of Defence. This provided the senior military chain of command with the requisite knowledge of the ongoing operation thus ensuring that both the strategic military and political levels had a complete understanding of the situation. The necessity to link into the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR) was due to the sensitive nature of the military action that would need the authority of the Prime Minister Tony Blair. Each military level had direct liaison capabilities through the attached Special Forces Liaison Cells to ensure an all-informed network.

This operation was linked to the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) not with a command relationship, but rather a lateral informational relationship as operations outside the United Kingdom are normally the responsibility of that headquarters. Similarly through PJHQ an informational link was established to Commander IMATT Brigadier Gordon Hughes⁵³ and the British High Commissioner for Sierra Leone, Peter Penfold, in order to acquire the necessary support from their respective elements to round out the capabilities of the force as well as its support requirements. Specifically RFA SIR PERCIVALE was OPCOM to IMATT and would be used for medical support while the High Commissioner had the inter-governmental link to President Kabbah which could authorize the use of its Army Air Wing Hind MI-24 for fire support. The Sierra Leonean government was also included in order to ensure the mop up operations to clear the jungle area around the West Side Boys' camp could be completed immediately following the operation.

Today's construct for deployable task forces which may include both special operations and conventional forces, do not differ significantly from that used in Sierra Leone but are rather at variance in the size of the organization itself. United States Joint Doctrine such as Joint Publication 3-05 Doctrine for Joint Special Operations 2003 provides a good example of this. Although US-centric, the construct shown in Figure 2 has been used by many Allied nations including Canada,⁵⁴ as a capstone organizational design for force integration purposes. The linkages between each of the elements can

⁵³Connaughton, *Operation Barras*, 110.

⁵⁴Major Steve Day, "Special Operations Case Study" (presentation, Canadian Forces College, Toronto, ON, February 12, 2008), with permission.

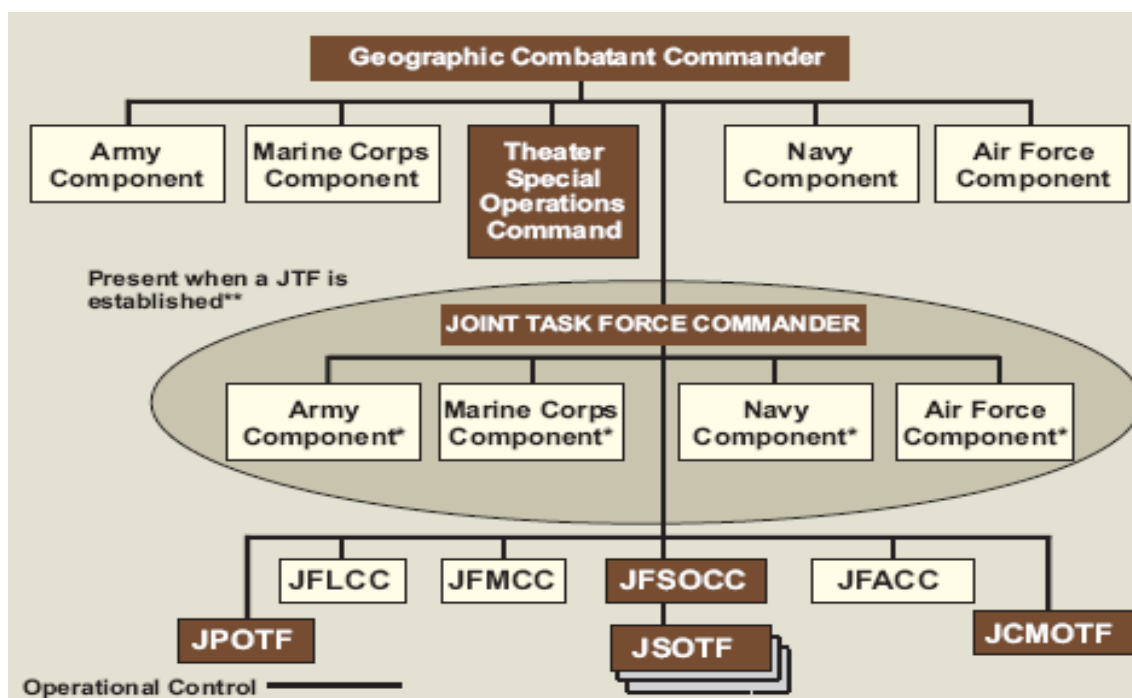


Figure 2 - Special Operations Forces Subordinate Joint Force Command and Control

Source: United States Joint Publication 3-05 Doctrine for Joint Special Operations, 17 December 2003

be equated to those C² linkages seen during Operation BARRAS. If one superimposes the Commanding Officer 22 SAS in place of the Joint Task Force Commander, one can see how each of the components of his command correlate directly to those represented in Figure 1. The Officer Commanding A Company acted as the Joint Force Land Component Commander, while elements of the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy acted as the Joint Force Air Component Command and Maritime Component Command respectively. The remaining C² components shown in Figure 2 are additional capabilities not applicable to this comparison. It is also noteworthy to comment that while no national governmental or ministerial C² structure is illustrated in this general diagram as exists in Figure 1, these elements do exist and are superior to the military organizational design either immediately above the Joint Task Force Commander or the Geographical Commander.

The linkages above the Joint Task Force Commander become predominately a nationally-specific structure at the operational, strategic and political levels. In this respect, the correlation between the two designs becomes clearer. The design applied to Operation BARRAS as well as that shown within US doctrine have distinct similarities thus allowing for C² relationships to be built in order to minimize special operations and conventional force integration problems.

“SOF will prepare for the world’s uncertain future while operating in an ever-dynamic present.”⁵⁵

Section 3 – Allied SOF and SF Structures

There are three Allied nations to which Canadian military doctrine and activities are linked and are to some degree analogous. These nations are: the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. These nations plus Canada make up ABCA otherwise known as the American, British, Canadian, [and] Australian Armies’ Standardization Program. By invitation of the ABCA Armies, New Zealand (NZ) was granted observer status in the Program under the sponsorship of Australia in 1965 and officially accepted as a full member in March 2006 although the title remained unchanged.⁵⁶ New Zealand as a non-permanent member will not be considered within this paper.

Of specific interest within the comparative analysis of this paper is the composition and similarity of the organizational structures within SOF of each nation. Each country within ABCA proper has similar capabilities to meet national priorities,

⁵⁵United States, Department of Defense, United States Special Operations Command, “SOF Vision 2020,” <http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA323509>; Internet; accessed 1 March 2008.

⁵⁶American, British, Canadian, Australian Armies Standardization Program, "ABCA Program," <http://www.abca-armies.org/>; Internet; accessed 1 March 2008.

ranging from Counter-Terrorism (CT) to Direct Action (DA) forces and supporting air components. These constituent parts of national capability will be detailed at the unclassified level in order to provide a comparison across ABCA and subsequently to the United Kingdom based on Operation BARRAS example to determine the viability of these national structures. The country reviews will occur in the following order: the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and finally Canada in order to demonstrate the merging of SOF thought and associated doctrine in our national construct. The specific unit comparisons are shown in the table below.

Table 1 – ABCA Unit Comparisons

ABCA Nation	Tier 1 Counter-Terrorism	Tier 2	Tier 3 Enabling Unit	Air Support Unit
United Kingdom	Special Air Service Regiment	Not part of this discussion	1 st Battalion, The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces Support Group)	7 Squadron Royal Air Force and Army Air Corps 657 Squadron
United States	1 st Special Forces Operational Detachment – Delta		75 th Ranger Regiment	160 th Special Operations Aviations Regiment
Australia	Special Air Service Regiment / Tactical Assault Group (West)		4 th Battalion Royal Australia Regiment	171 st Aviation Squadron
Canada	Joint Task Force 2		Canadian Special Operations Unit	427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron

Sub-Section 3.1 – United Kingdom (UK)

As has been previously described in Chapter 2, the United Kingdom established its own form of force integration in Sierra Leone. Lessons learned during the operation have yielded numerous changes to its defence organizational structure with specific

emphasis on SOF support requirements. While some organizational elemental designs have remained the same such as the SAS and SBS, much of the supporting cadre has been melded in order to provide responsive enablers to UK SOF. As stated in the UK Ministry of Defence's document *Delivering Security in a Changing World: Defence White Paper 2003* future deployments "will require ... forces and their supporting structures to be more flexible and adaptable."

The group is battalion-sized and includes the 1st Battalion, The Parachute Regiment (of which A Company directly supported Operation BARRAS), one company-sized grouping of Royal Marines and one flight of the RAF Regiment. This combination has streamlined most of the enablers necessary to conduct similar surgical precision military strikes.

The air support element from the RAF consisted of 7 Squadron RAF Special Forces as depicted in the C² structure for Operation BARRAS. 7 Squadron RAF operate twin-rotor Chinook HC2 transport helicopters combined with Gazelle HT3 helicopters for reconnaissance and support to SAS / SBS troops. Augmented by Army Air Corps (AAC) 657 Squadron flying Lynx helicopters in a dual attack/utility helicopter role, these two squadrons formed the Joint Special Forces Aviation Wing (JSFAW). Finally, 47 Squadron RAF Special Forces Flight provides C-130 Hercules fixed-wing transport support such as was the case for the delivery of Lynx helicopters to Sierra Leone.

Each element presented combines to form an integrated capability of both what has historically been considered conventional forces and SOF. The design and creation of SFSG has allowed for the integration of these forces, thereby simplifying training and future operations. This linkage also simplifies the C² structure required in order to conduct those operations. Speculation exists that the establishment of SFSG used the US 75th Ranger Regiment concept as a template. The British example is based on the experiences emanating from Operation BARRAS as well as those of other ABCA nations and provides an excellent example of a model for all nations.

Sub-Section 3.2 – United States (US)

The United States has had a parallel history of SOF to that of the United Kingdom as far back as the Second World War with the work conducted by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The organizations of interest for the purposes of this paper are: the 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment – Delta (1st SFOD-D); the U.S. Army's 75th Ranger Regiment and their supporting Special Forces Air element. Similarly to the British model, these organizations have become more integrated in recent years providing a capability comparable to the UK.

1st SFOD-D (known simply as Delta in many arenas) is the “US Army’s special operations unit organized for the conduct of missions requiring a rapid response with surgical application of a variety of skills”⁵⁹ making use of specific training and experience to serve as a counterterrorist force. Delta was structured similarly to the British SAS by Colonel Charles Beckwith⁶⁰ based on his military exchange experience with the SAS in 1963.⁶¹ Authorization for the formation of 1st SFOD-D was granted on 2 June 1977.⁶² Delta plans and conducts a wide variety of special operations, once again similarly to the SAS. Although limited information is available at the unclassified level, Delta’s organizational design is believed to operate in three squadrons (A, B, and C) with specializations believed to mimic the SAS with skills such as High Altitude Low

⁵⁹GlobalSecurity.Org, "1st Special Forces Operational Detachment (Airborne) DELTA," <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/sfod-d.htm>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2008.

⁶⁰George Sullivan, *Elite Warriors: The Special Forces of the United States and its Allies* (New York: Facts on File Inc, 1995), 36.

⁶¹Samuel A. Southworth and Stephan Tanner, *U.S. Special Forces: A Guide to America's Special Operations Units – The World's most Elite Fighting Force*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002), 125.

⁶²Sullivan, *Elite Warriors: The Special Forces of the United States and its Allies*, 36.

Opening (HALO) parachutists, Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus (SCUBA) qualifications and many others.⁶³ Delta's first opportunity to put its training to the test was during Operation EAGLE CLAW, the failed hostage rescue attempt in Iran in 1980.⁶⁴ Details of this operation will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

The modern day U.S. Army's 75th Ranger Regiment is an enabler to Delta and finds its origins during the Second World War based on the British Commando forces of 1940. Presidential enthusiasm caused Colonel Lucian K. Truscott Jr. to evaluate the British Commando forces resulting in the orders being issued to create a U.S. equivalent on 1 June 1942. The current construct of the 75th Ranger Regiment (1st and 2nd Battalions) were created in 1974.⁶⁵ Their first combat assignment was in 1980 during Operation EAGLE CLAW alongside 1st SFOD-D. The 3rd Battalion and the Regimental Headquarters were established on 3 October 1984 with the 75th Ranger Regiment officially designated in February 1986.⁶⁶ The Rangers' primary mission is "to conduct raids or ambushes designed to capture or destroy enemy personnel or equipment ... but Ranger battalions can also carry out light infantry missions."⁶⁷ In the same way as 1 Para has been employed at attack and seize key terrain as demonstrated by the assault on Magbeni, the 75th Ranger Regiment's capabilities include DA raids in order to secure key terrain or destroy critical infrastructure. The capabilities of the Rangers allow for the

⁶³GlobalSecurity.Org, *1st Special Forces Operational Detachment (Airborne) DELTA*, 1.

⁶⁴Sullivan, *Elite Warriors: The Special Forces of the United States and its Allies*, 44.

⁶⁵Ian Westwell, *Spearhead: US Rangers 'Leading the Way'*, 1st ed. (Havertown, PA: Ian Allan Publishing, 2003), 87.

⁶⁶Australia, Department of Veterans Affairs and Department Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, "Report of the Review of Veterans' Entitlements," <http://www.veteransreview.gov.au/report/about/print.htm>; Internet; accessed 12 March 2008.

⁶⁷Sullivan, *Elite Warriors: The Special Forces of the United States and its Allies*, 53.

employment of task-tailored sized organizations from a simple squad through to regimental-size operations using various insertion methods and platforms. The regiment has been a part of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) since 1987 and acts as an enabler for other SOF⁶⁸ elements either as a precursor or as an integral part of a task force.

The final element to be detailed with reference to U.S. Special Force capability is the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (160th SOAR). Shortly after the failed hostage rescue mission Operation EAGLE CLAW in Iran the Army created a special aviation unit to address the military's lack of aircraft and crews trained and able to perform special operations missions including low-level and night flight operations.⁶⁹ Officially established on 16 October 1981 and reorganized on 16 May 1990 to be reassigned to the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, 160th SOAR provides primary aviation support to Army SOF. Within its capabilities are light observation helicopters including the MH-6 Little-Bird which can be converted to the AH-6 attack variant and heavy assault helicopters including the MH-60 Black Hawk and MH-47 Chinook. These provide the necessary facilities to allow the regiment to task-tailor its assets to meet the requirements of SOF.⁷⁰ These airframes provide SOF the integral aviation capacity, simultaneous C² and a fully functional SOF integrated force (including the historical conventional light infantry unit).

⁶⁸Sullivan, *Elite Warriors: The Special Forces of the United States and its Allies*, 63.

⁶⁹John Clarke, Air Marshall Doug Riding and Dr David Rosalky, *Report of the Review of Veterans' Entitlements*, 1.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

Each of these units has conducted operations in an integrated fashion including present day locations such as Iraq and Afghanistan. In order to provide a better comparative analysis however Operations EAGLE CLAW and URGENT FURY will be analysed in Chapter 4 with a view to providing details concerning force integration and the challenges associated with it.

Sub-Section 3.3 – Australia (AU)

The Australian construct is similar to the British model due to the obvious historical lineage. Australian SOF forces consist of four units: the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR); 4 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (4 RAR); 1st Commando Regiment and 171st Aviation Squadron. Each of these units has varying operational capabilities in order to provide the Australian Defence Force (ADF) an inherent integrated Special Forces capability.

SASR is a SOF regiment modeled on the British SAS but it also draws on the customs of both the Australian Second World War 'Z' Special Force commando unit and Independent Companies in the South Pacific. This organization is tasked with two primary roles – reconnaissance and counter-terrorism. Again, it is structured along similar squadron lines containing three sabre squadrons (1, 2 and 3) each including five troops: Headquarters, Airborne (similar to the SAS Air Troop in its specialization); Amphibious (Boat Troop link); Vehicle Mounted (Support Troop resemblance) and Signals which is distributed to each Patrol for operations. The SASR is responsible for counter-terrorism, hostage rescue and precision direct action missions. The two primary tasks fall to a sub-grouping within SASR known as the Tactical Assault Group (TAG)

West which was established in August 1979⁷¹ with a follow on TAG (East) established in September 2002 under the operational command of 4 RAR. While SASR normally conducts the precision surgical strike capability like its sister UK Regiment, 4 RAR conducts large-scale raids and acts as an enabler to SASR much like 1 Para supports the SAS and the 75th Ranger Regiment supports 1st SFOD-D. In the counter-terrorism role the two TAG elements of SASR and 4 RAR are allocated the following tasks:

- neutralization, including capture, of terrorist groups, which might include snipers, hijackers, kidnappers, bombers or assassins, and the neutralization of aircraft or ships;
- recovery of hostages and property held by terrorists; and
- recovery of buildings and installations held by terrorists.⁷²

Although these integral CT capabilities exist within both SASR and 4 RAR, 4 RAR remains an enabler to SASR for other larger scale DA missions. The final element of SOF capability within the Australian military lies with the 1st Commando Regiment (a reserve force unit). It fills a unique role in providing a surge capacity to the main Commando capability. It is not an initial responder, but rather enables the close relationship between the unit and the local community and is therefore not a part of the Allied integration comparison.

The 171st Aviation Squadron, co-located with 4 RAR, which includes TAG (East), provides the necessary aviation support to Australian SOF. Equipped with the S70A Blackhawk utility helicopter, the squadron exists to “improve the ability of Army aviation to provide troop lift support to the newly established Special Operations

⁷¹John Clarke, Air Marshall Doug Riding and Dr David Rosalky, *Report of the Review of Veterans' Entitlements*, 1.

⁷²*Ibid.*

command and counter-terrorist capability.”⁷³ This co-location was a direct result of inquiry findings following a 1996 Blackhawk helicopter crash due to failings in joint training. The inquiry specifically recommended that “[dedicated] Army aviation assets be allocated in support of counter-terrorist and special operations capability and that the units be co-located during training, planning and the conduct of operations.”⁷⁴ This capability provides SOF an integral aviation capacity with a simultaneous integrated C² structure and a fully functional integrated force.

As previously eluded to, the organizational structure created by the Australian Defence Force in recent years has enabled a closer working relationship between the primary responders (SASR), its enablers (4 RAR) and its air arm (171st Aviation Squadron). This streamlined methodology demonstrates the consistency across ABCA as a possible model for all nations. In order to determine the Canadian position, it is necessary to now review the Canadian construct.

Sub-Section 3.4 – Canada (CA)

As initially described in the Introduction, Canada’s SOF today falls within the area of responsibility of the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) established in 2006 as part of Canadian Forces Transformation as a method of meeting today’s challenging and dynamic security environment. Within CANSOFCOM, there exist several different elements which are mutually supporting in

⁷³Australia, House of Representatives, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, “Proposed Relocation of 171st Aviation Squadron to Holsworthy Barracks, NSW,” <http://www.aph.gov.au/House/committee/pwc/holsworthy171/report.htm>; Internet; accessed 12 March 2008.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

order to meet the diverse integration challenges of this environment. The elements of specific interest within the context of this paper are: Joint Task Force 2 (JTF 2); the Canadian Special Operations Regiment (CSOR) and 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron (427 SOAS).⁷⁵ Each of these units combines to form a melded capability to conduct operations much in the same way as the other three ABCA permanent members. A fourth unit also exists within the CANSOF

UK SAS and the US Delta. Although the precise construct of the unit is not available at the unclassified level, the unit's missions is

To provide a force capable of rendering armed assistance and surgical precise effects in the resolution of an issue that is, or has the potential of, affecting the national interest. The primary focus is counter-terrorism; however, the unit is employed on other high value tasks.⁷⁸

This mission emulates the missions of other ABCA nations' Tier 1 forces with selected components constantly on high readiness alert to conduct operations in keeping with their primary roles.

In August 2006, CSOR was established as a "vital enabler for JTF 2 to address a capability gap that existed prior to its creation."⁷⁹ CSOR acts as the primary reinforcement to JTF 2 much like 1 Para of UK SFSG, battalions of the 75th Ranger Regiment or 4 RAR. It was formed based on a light infantry company from the Royal Canadian Regiment and can conduct larger scale Direct Action or Special Reconnaissance missions and is continuing its expansion. Once CSOR has completed its expansion up to its approximate full 750 member strength, scheduled for 2010, CSOR will have three Direct Action sub-units and one Special Forces sub-unit.

The creation of CSOR enables special operations in general and JTF 2 in particular. In this manner, JTF 2 can focus on the precise surgical tasks for which they are selected and trained thereby allowing CSOR to conduct larger scale operations either independently or in direct support of JTF 2.

The final Canadian element as part of CANSOFCOM to be addressed is 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron. This unit originally tasked with providing

⁷⁸Department of National Defence, *CANSOFCOM 2008 [DRAFT]*, 11.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

B Flight in direct support of JTF 2 operations was transferred under command of CANSOFCOM in its entirety 1 February 2006 to assume its current principal role of providing an aviation capability to all the units within this command. Equipped with the CH-146 Griffon utility helicopter 427 SOAS can provide air insertion and extraction to SOF elements. The current construct of 427 SOAS does not allow for an attack helicopter variant of the aircraft such as the Lynx used during Operation BARRAS, nor does it hold large heavy-lift transport helicopters such as the CH-47 Chinook. Emerging details however, concerning the procurement of machine gun systems to be outfitted to some if not all Griffon helicopters in the near future were featured by Public Works and Government Services Canada stating that they would be “awarding a sole-source contract to a U.S. firm for the purchase of three, electrical-driven Gatling guns that can fire up to 3,000 rounds a minute to be installed on helicopters.”⁸⁰ Similarly “the Harper government announced in the summer of 2006 its intention to buy U.S.-built Chinook helicopters”⁸¹ although firm details have yet to be promulgated to the community at large. The exact distribution of either of these platforms is not clear and whether 427 SOAS will be directly allocated either the Gatling guns or Chinook helicopters remains speculative and will be decided in due course. Of paramount importance however is that the capability exists within the Canadian Forces to provide similar platforms as were seen in Sierra Leone in 2000.

On 19 April 2005, the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), General Rick Hillier provided his vision for the creation of CANSOFCOM. “We intend on bringing JTF 2,

⁸⁰David Pugliese, “Canada ponders deploying armed helicopters to Afghan,” *National Post*, 11 February 2008, 1.

⁸¹*Ibid.*

along with all the enablers that it would need, to conduct operations successfully into one organization [with] one commander [all within] one organization.”⁸² As CANSOFCOM continues to expand its roles and capabilities, the integration which the CDS eluded is occurring and provides a singular, unified and integrated special and conventional force structure to meet Canada’s strategic requirements. “The CSOR, with the other units of CANSOFCOM, is a complete Special Operations team that is integrated to interoperate seamlessly, as opposed to being put together on an ad hoc basis.”⁸³

⁸²Department of National Defence, Chief of the Defence Staff’s CANSOFCOM Initiating Vision, April 19, 2005.

⁸³Department of National Defence, "Canadian Special Operations Regiment," http://www.csor.forces.gc.ca/en/standingupofcsor_e.asp; Internet; accessed 13 March 2008.

“Everything that could go wrong, did. Eight men died when we had to abort the mission because the richest nation on earth ended up one helicopter short.”⁸⁴

CHAPTER 4 – ALLIED COMPARISON

Section 1 – Methodology

In order to conduct a proper comparison of Allied Special Operations Forces (SOF) capabilities and capacities as it pertains to integration, a methodology or comparative construct must be established as a common framework. Throughout the paper thus far several familiar themes have developed specifically clear C² structures and unity of command, communications, intelligence (including weather), critical timelines, mission by force component, joint coordination, equipment capabilities and rehearsals (more specific details of the comparison can be found in the table included at Appendix 3). The comparative analysis will be conducted by using operations that demonstrate both positive and negative aspects of special and conventional force (enablers) integration in order to provide plausible lessons learned and conclusions for future integration.

The comparative analyses will use the background operation of this paper, Operation BARRAS in order to determine the pros and cons based on the above methodology on what can be considered the template for force integration. Thereafter, two distinctly different US operations will be reviewed, an early failure in integration (Operation EAGLE CLAW) followed by a reasonable success (Operation URGENT FURY). The intent is to simultaneously determine the reasons for both success and failure during these two operations. The analyses will then shift to reviewing the

⁸⁴Colonel John T. Carney Jr. and Benjamin F. Schemmer, *No Room for Error: The Covert Operations of America's Special Tactics Units from Iran to Afghanistan* (Toronto: Random House of Canada Limited, 2002), 84.

Australian model during Operation WARDEN which includes the activities during both Operations SPITFIRE and STABLISE during the International Force [intervention] in East Timor (INTERFET) and culminate with a comparison to Canadian doctrine and current capabilities as no true integrated Canadian deployment has yet occurred with the current construct.

Section 2 – United Kingdom (UK)

As described earlier, the United Kingdom's deployment to Sierra Leone provided a good example of a special and enabling force integration capability on which the Ministry of Defence has built additional capability in recent years. Although the command structure shown in Figure 1 of Chapter 3 demonstrates many different dynamic facets to the organization, it also shows a clear lineage of capability which was made available in order to enable the Commanding Officer (CO) of 22 Special Air Service (SAS) in the completion of his mission. That said, some difficulties did arise which might have been better mitigated with additional resources.

The C² structure was a compilation of both strategic-political and strategic-military levels due to the sensitive nature of the task however these linkages did not hinder the actions of the operational commander in any way. The integration of D Squadron, 22 SAS with enablers from 1st Para and 7 Squadron RAF allowed for clear and distinct lines of operation to be conducted. Similarly, the necessary augmentation forces, such as the Royal Navy's Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) SIR PERCIVALE and the Sierra Leonean Army Air Wing were placed in direct support of the operational commander using the necessary military command relationships facilitated by the

political relationships already in existence at the High Commissioner level. Although little detail is specifically known about the coordination conducted between the British High Commissioner and the Sierra Leonean government under President Kabbah, the level of support provided demonstrated the excellent political relationships which had been built over preceding years. The overall command and control construct therefore had no adverse effect on the operation and in fact directly enabled the synergy created.

The communications construct was similarly effective due to a centralized command post established within Sierra Leone at Waterloo Camp. Through this main hub, CO 22 SAS and his operations staff were able to coordinate the necessary information operations needed to feed the commander's critical information requirements (CCIRs) up the chain of command to either the strategic-political or strategic-military level for resolution. The criticality and the time sensitive nature of the information was not lost on anyone involved regardless of position.

The communication systems in place for the purpose of coordination were interoperable between the involved units, including ground to air capability. This seamless communications capability was enhanced by the pre-positioning of members of the SAS at both Gberi Bana and Magbeni in Observation Posts (OPs) to supply moment-to-moment information to those who required it. This became paramount during the initial deployment to the rebel camp locations where an early morning haze was still in existence. Ability to delay the inbound aircraft by a mere few minutes allowed the weather to improve sufficiently to complete the assault as rehearsed. Similarly, higher level linkages directly to Prime Minister Tony Blair ensured he was kept apprised of the situation as it developed. This capacity guaranteed that all levels of command had the

necessary knowledge at the appropriate time. From available information it appears that there existed a flawless informational transfer between all nodes.

One of the challenges of any military operation is the need for accurate and timely intelligence in order to ensure proper application of force at the right location and at the right time thereby improving the likely success rate. Accurate intelligence was required prior to the actual abduction of the hostages and then throughout the hostage rescue effort itself. During initial briefings to the Royal Irish Regiment, intelligence briefings depicted the West Side Boys as *friendly forces* due to their pro-government position during earlier military activities and the fact that they were an RUF splinter group. This actual information however, was only partially true. The West Side Boys were seen to be working their own willing to assist those helpful to their cause. Keeping that in mind, the unpredictability of the West Side Boys⁸⁵ should have been clearly briefed to members of the Regiment and to the ill-fated patrol in particular regardless of the actual intent of the patrol. Also, knowledge existed prior to the patrol's capture as to the state of mind of the West Side Boys in the afternoon periods of the day, when they were known to normally be under the influence of both alcohol and drugs, thereby increasing their unpredictability and situational volatility under unusual circumstances. This influence further increased the likelihood of confrontation to any incursion into their area of operations.⁸⁶ Had this information been made available to the patrol leader, the possibility exists that the patrol would not have taken place or perhaps would have been rescheduled to avoid the afternoon period.

⁸⁵Lewis, *Operation Certain Death*, 27-28.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 36.

Another failing from an intelligence perspective was the level of understanding as to the expected from the West Side Boys during any assault following the hostage taking. Intelligence reports gave the SAS and 1 Para an incorrect assessment stating that in all likelihood the West Side Boys would only put up a minimal struggle if confronted⁸⁷ with a formed disciplined British military force. This incorrect evaluation caused significant increase in risk to the soldiers infiltrating the camp. Had CO 22 SAS been made aware of the fact that a strong resistance would be fought, it may have caused him to change his methodology of attack in order to address the expectation. It may have also caused an increase in force structure requested prior to the assault to ensure an appropriate force ratio. The resulting fight and ensuing casualties for both D Squadron and 1 Para may have been diminished had the proper intelligence been available. With the level of determination shown by the rebel forces, a strong possibility existed that the hostages could have been killed or that the entire assault may have failed. This demonstrates how significant accurate and timely intelligence is to any such high-risk military action conducted by SOF.

One mitigating factor that greatly assisted in the operation was the early decision to insert OP teams into both Gberi Bana and Magbeni. These teams were not only able to provide immediate intelligence as to the state of the hostages, but were also able to provide corrected information on the layout and defence capabilities of the two camps. A good depiction of the layouts existed prior to their insertion although it was incomplete due to the lack of friendly aerial surveillance capability through treetop cover. The

⁸⁷Lieutenant-Colonel K. Beaton, United Kingdom Royal Army Medical Corps, personal conversation with author, 27 February 2008.

criticality of intelligence preceding and during any such joint operation cannot be overstated and is one of the main rationales for the term *intelligence led operations*.

As part of the operation, detailed timings were established in order to ensure that all troops were in position and conducting their assaults in an organized fashion. The assaulting forces, both SAS and 1 Para, boarded helicopters according to precise timelines in order to meet the supporting aircraft converging on the rebel camp. The other supporting aircraft were based on RFA SIR PERCIVALE and were required to arrive simultaneously with the assault forces to ensure success. The two groups rallied while airborne at a specified point and at a specified time as previously coordinated. Effective communications between all parties at the tactical level allowed for the adjustment of timings due to weather while at the same time ensuring an all informed network. This interaction allowed for precise coordinated action to continue without hindrance. The effective use of communications and liaison was critical to the efficient manner in which the operation was executed and no doubt contributed to its success.

As illustrated earlier in the paper, inter-service (joint) coordination and specific missions assigned to each component were critical during Operation BARRAS. Training including full rehearsals allowed each unit to understand its responsibilities and each soldier to clearly understand their part within it. The rehearsals conducted with joint aspects at the core ensured the full appreciation of other organizations as well. Each unit rehearsed using the same equipment that they would carry into the assault thereby ensuring that the equipment used was appropriate to the tasks assigned and resolve any problems which may have arisen. In this manner, all aspects of operation were integrated to ensure success.

Section 3 – United States (US)

Two contrasting operations will be used to analyse US application of special and conventional force integration. The first, Operation EAGLE CLAW in Iran, was considered a failure in many different respects whereas Operation URGENT FURY in Grenada several years later was considered a success. The fundamental question that arises, is why? Each of these operations had various problems although one succeeded where the other one failed. The same methodology will be used; however a progressive comparison will be conducted between operations in order to demonstrate the differences that caused either a positive or negative outcome. A brief description of each operation is necessary in order to set the tone for what happened thereafter.

Operation EAGLE CLAW was the failed rescue attempt of the US hostages held in confinement in Tehran between 24-25 April 1980 following the assault on the US Embassy by radical Islamists who supported Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini. The hostage crisis began on 4 November 1979, when a mob seized the embassy thereby taking a large group of employees hostage (a total of seventy-one were initially captured although nineteen were released within weeks). A revolution had been led eleven months earlier by Ayatollah Khomeini with the overthrow of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran, who had been a staunch US supporter. After 169 days, it became clear that no diplomatic efforts were succeeding in securing the release of the hostages, at which point President Jimmy Carter ordered the preparation and execution of Operation EAGLE CLAW rescue effort. Numerous problems occurred prior to and during the operation which was eventually aborted, but not before eight US servicemen had died.

Operation URGENT FURY was the US invasion of the Caribbean island of Grenada on 25 October 1983 following several years of increasing anti-communist tension in the region. The difficulties began in 1979 when the New Jewel Movement under Maurice Bishop launched a revolution against the government and established a people's provisional government. Suspending the constitution and ruling by decree all other political parties were banned and no elections occurred. The Movement aligned itself with Cuba until an illegal coup overthrew Bishop on 13 October 1983. Bishop's government had initiated the construction of a large airfield at Point Salinas however in March 1983 President Ronald Reagan announced that the runway was clear evidence of Soviet/Cuban militarization and a potential threat to the United States.⁸⁸ The mid-October coup by the significantly more leftist party faction caused further angst in the United States which was attempting to prevent Soviet Communist expansion during the Cold War. A military build-up was initiated by the new government while Bishop was placed under house arrest. He escaped during follow on protests but was later captured and murdered along with several other government officials. This escalation in the conflict caused the United States to plan and deploy to Grenada within one week.

Both operations had direct involvement from the highest level of office within the United States – the Office of the Presidency. The first operation occurred under the Carter administration while the second occurred under the Reagan administration, but both presidents fully supported the operations, although for very different reasons. President Jimmy Carter was working diligently to find a diplomatic solution to the Iranian crisis while Ronald Reagan was elected in part due to the inability of the Carter

⁸⁸James Adams, *Secret Armies: The Full Story of S.A.S., Delta Force and Spetsnaz* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987), 223.

administration to resolve it. For Carter, the military option was one of last resort, while for Reagan it was an opportunity to reinforce the fact that the United States would not sit idly by and watch communism spread beyond Cuba in the Western Hemisphere. As one official noted “[the Reagan] administration came to power with the intention of punching someone in the nose.”⁸⁹

From a C² structural perspective, the two operations differed significantly. Operation EAGLE CLAW was a deployment which had never been attempted and thereby had many growing pains, from which Operation URGENT FURY would have the benefit. One of the fundamental challenges in the Iranian operation was that there was the lack of a capability in the Iranian desert and a clearly designated site commander. Although General James B. Vaught was established as the overall commander, he was in command via the Command Net radio from Egypt and not on the ground which caused inter-service rivalry and compartmentalized command to take place.⁹⁰ The disarray caused by a lack of a local commander would be resolved during the next operation in Grenada. There was also a lack of a unified US centralized command structure to oversee the operation. This problem was addressed by the Admiral James L. Holloway in the *Holloway Report* prepared after the failure of the rescue attempt which in turn led to the establishment of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) as a method of resolving the deficiency. The challenges during Operation URGENT FURY however were not at the mission commander level, but rather due to the clashes between the newly established JSOC and Atlantic Command who was charged with overall responsibility of

⁸⁹United States, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, “Grenada,” <https://call-rfi.leavenworth.army.mil/RFISystem/>; Internet; accessed 25 February 2008.

⁹⁰Major C. E. Holzworth, "Operation Eagle Claw: A Catalyst for Change in American Military" (Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Course Paper, 1997), 25.

the operation. The difficulty was that only limited communications and staff capacity existed at Atlantic Command.⁹¹ This led to orders and counter-orders throughout the short preparation timeline.

Further, operational security measures which were in place plagued both operations and were in part responsible for many of the difficulties incurred. The challenges to maintain secrecy prior to any operation in general and these two in particular caused major coordination problems during both the planning and execution phases. Although the weather wreaked havoc on the communications links, Operation EAGLE CLAW was more affected by the requirement to maintain radio silence during deployment from the Forward Staging Bases and the aircraft carrier USS NIMITZ until arrival at Desert One, the forward operating base (FOB), in the Iranian desert. This requirement caused aircraft to be or forced to return to the USS NIMITZ without notifying Desert One. Some communications were possible at a secure level, but these were not available to all units thus creating noteworthy interoperability challenges. While these difficulties were evident during the planning phase of Operation URGENT FURY, they did not appear problematic during the execution from the perspective of deployment. At the tactical level, the lack of communications interoperability between the four services involved (Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps) caused many friendly fire incidents.⁹² The criticality of viable communications between the major players in any

⁹¹Major Mike J. Simmons, "Operation Urgent Fury: Operational Art Or a Strategy of Overwhelming Combat Power?" (Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Course Paper, 1999), 35.

⁹²Carney and Schemmer, *No Room for Error: The Covert Operations of America's Special Tactics Units from Iran to Afghanistan*, 154.

operation both during the workups as well as during the actual operation is paramount to ensure that necessary information flow exists despite operational security restrictions.

Similar intelligence shortcomings were seen during both US operations as were evident during Operation BARRAS. There was however a greater impact of those deficiencies on US forces during both of their military actions. The criticality of advanced reconnaissance by elements of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) were lacking in both 1980 and 1983. The CIA was responsible to provide the initial true picture of the situation in both cases but quickly fell short. In Iran, although an informant was revealed to have been in location during the period leading up to the rescue attempt, no information was provided beyond the CIA for operational security concerns of losing their source. It took additional time to move members of Delta into Tehran in order to get the best knowledge available and begin to coordinate the support activities necessary. Further, failure in intelligence briefings on sand-storms which were a particular phenomenon during the period planned for the assault was the main cause for both the loss of capability when helicopters returned to the USS NIMITZ as well as for the collision of a helicopter and refuelling C-130 aircraft on the ground at Desert One. The intelligence decision which led to non-disclosure of the weather was once again based on the premise of operational security.⁹³ The intelligence deficiencies demonstrated during Operation EAGLE CLAW “revolved around the need of military planners to have

⁹³Carney and Schemmer, *No Room for Error: The Covert Operations of America's Special Tactics Units from Iran to Afghanistan*, 85.

accurate and timely situation oriented operational and environmental detail”⁹⁴ which failed to appear.

In a comparable manner, no proper intelligence source was initially available on the ground in Grenada and the operation was carried out without any tangible intelligence available about the true military situation on the ground.⁹⁵ This was apparent in the seven different estimates of size and threat and five different estimates of likely enemy resolve provided by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) in a three day period.⁹⁶ No proper mapping capability was provided for the island in time for the invasion although intelligence officers were aware of the mounting tensions on the island. Misinformation was consistently caused by the necessity for operational security and the over-compartmentalization of planning. The obvious problem throughout the intelligence preparation of the battlefield was one of priority for operational security at the expense of proper planning and execution.

Adherence to critical timelines became problematic throughout the operations which were exacerbated by lack of communications. In Iran the slippage in timings was out of the control of the members of the task force and was predominately due to the environmental impacts both in the air and on the ground. This scheduling challenge caused several near collisions during landing sequences but was avoided because of the skills of both the air and ground crews to manoeuvre the aircraft already on the ground. In Grenada, the loss of flexibility due to scheduling changes caused hasty planning and

⁹⁴Michael Smith, *Killer Elite: The Inside Story of America's most Secret Special Operations Team*, 1st ed. (London: Orion Publishing Group Ltd, 2006), 12.

⁹⁵Carney and Schemmer, *No Room for Error: The Covert Operations of America's Special Tactics Units from Iran to Afghanistan*, 118.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

an inability to coordinate a complex plan with the multiple services involved. Initial responses by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the National Security Advisor were that the operation could be prepared within 48 hours. The staff also agreed to shift the deployment lead time from four or five days to three days further constraining the ability to create a smooth transition from plans to operations.⁹⁷ As was recognized during Operation BARRAS, timings are critical, however sufficient flexibility must be built into the plan in order to ensure proper sequencing of the forces involved. Failure to maintain that flexibility will invariably cause major problems.

Both operations faced similar challenges as they pertain to component missions and joint coordination. The major undertones during both were inter-service rivalry and a lack of interoperability. The need for each element to be represented in the mission became supreme over the necessities of the mission itself. The force assembled for Operation EAGLE CLAW was compiled from six different units across four different services⁹⁸ creating confusion during the mounting phase and a nearly dysfunctional force as a result. Operation URGENT FURY lacked inter-service cooperation during many of the preparatory activities⁹⁹ with limited operational staff experience in the Command assigned the task of supporting primarily a land-based operation.¹⁰⁰ These rivalries were evident at the highest levels of command and continue to this day as a challenge during joint operations.

⁹⁷Carney and Schemmer, *No Room for Error: The Covert Operations of America's Special Tactics Units from Iran to Afghanistan*, 115.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 86.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

Inter-service rivalry also wreaked havoc as it pertained to both equipment availability and rehearsals. As an example, the decision was taken to allow Marine pilots to fly the Naval RH-53D Sea Stallion helicopters due to their similarity to the Marine aircraft. Although similarities did exist between the two different variants the Marine pilots were not the best for the job, but Air Force pilots who were available and had experience in these types of operations, were not chosen. Due to inexperience, critical systems which could have assisted in the deployment of the aircraft were deemed excessively heavy and therefore removed in order to increase the number of soldiers. These systems would have been crucial during the poor visibility conditions during the flight. The limited rehearsals conducted in both cases also failed to ensure the synergy required for such operations. The services conducted their own rehearsals as planning compartmentalization still existed and thereby failed to identify inherent systemic interoperability conflicts both in procedures and equipment. The *Holloway Report* ordered after Operation EAGLE CLAW, judged that “an exercise of the operation in its totality would have identified problems in advance of the operation.”¹⁰¹ These words were unfortunately not heeded during the preparations for Operation URGENT FURY.

The comparison of each of these US operations demonstrates that similar predicaments have occurred that subsequently have caused or could have caused, major military tragedies. Across the comparisons a trend of inter-service or inter-agency rivalry springs forth thereby signifying one of the root causes which challenge modern day military actions. Many steps were corrected in the timeframe between Operations EAGLE CLAW and URGENT FURY, however many remained extant.

¹⁰¹Charles G. Cogan, "Desert One and its Disorders," *The Journal of Military History* 67, no. 1 (January 2003): 204; <http://links.jstor.org/>; Internet; accessed 27 January 2008.

Section 4 – Australia (AUS)

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) was the primary contributor and main regional player during operations conducted in East Timor in 1999. After initial signs began to surface that Indonesia would in all likelihood allow East Timor to secede from Indonesia proper, the United Nations began preparing to conduct election support. Simultaneously but more covertly, on 11 March 1999 the Australian Government directed that 1 Brigade be brought to a state of high-readiness, although the exact rationale was not disclosed. Shortly thereafter Major General Peter Cosgrove, Commander Army 1st Division directed that limited contingency planning be conducted¹⁰² in order to be prepared to deploy on reasonably short notice to East Timor. During July and August violence began to increase as the pro-integration movement rallied to remain within Indonesia. The election was held on 30 August 1999 and the results were published on 4 September 1999. A majority of 78% in favour of independence was recorded.¹⁰³ The impending violence placed United Nations personnel on the brink of a violent calamity who were subsequently evacuated by Australian forces two days later. The request by the Indonesian government for an international force authorized by the United Nations¹⁰⁴ to regain and maintain peace and security saw the deployment of a multi-national force called the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) led by Australia beginning on 20 September 1999. Five months later, on

¹⁰²Peter Cosgrove, General, *My Story*, 1st ed. (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), 151.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁰⁴Australia. Department of Defence. Media Release by The Hon. John Moore, MP <http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/timor/index.html>; Internet; accessed 7 April 2008.

28 February 2000 command of military operations was handed over to the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET).¹⁰⁵

The operations led by Major-General Cosgrove had the good fortune to avoid many of the challenges which his US counterparts faced nearly 20 years earlier. His position as one of the main commanders of expeditionary forces in Australia allowed him certain flexibilities not available to the larger US forces. From the start, Cosgrove worked to build a well trained Brigade which he further developed once official direction was received about the impending deployment. He put together an integrated team including naval, air, land and special operations forces and with only a small disagreement on the C² relationships of the SOF element during the UN evacuation, the command environment worked well and without incident. Cosgrove was responsible for all aspects of the deployment and its day-to-day operations. One peculiar aspect about the ADF is the premise that in all it does effort will occur in the joint environment for the good of the nation vice any particular service.¹⁰⁶ This concept is at the root of their military ethos and therefore assists in reducing if not eliminating the inter-service rivalries. This can be seen in the establishment of an Australian Joint Support Unit which provided the majority of communications capacity within East Timor as well as the rear link to Australia.¹⁰⁷ The INTERFET command structure became a singular unified system with continuous communications to the United Nations representatives. Although

¹⁰⁵United Nations, "The United Nations and East Timor - A Chronology," <http://www.un.org/peace/etimor/Untaetchrono.html>; Internet; accessed 12 April 2008.

¹⁰⁶Australia. Department of Defence. Air Power Development Centre. "Australian Air Publication AAP 1000-D.", 5, <http://www.defence.gov.au/raaf/airpower/html/publications/>; Internet; accessed 19 March 2008.

¹⁰⁷Cosgrove, *My Story*, 171.

INTERFET was not subordinate to the UN, it did maintain a professional relationship with that organization and all others within East Timor including the Indonesian military hierarchy, thus ensuring unity of purpose during the deployment.

From an intelligence perspective, Cosgrove was able to apply his experiences gained during the Vietnam War and in Malaysia¹⁰⁸ both of which were in the same geographical region thereby allowing him some understanding of the environment, weather conditions and some limited demographical detail. He realized that he needed to understand the people and the culture to ensure the integration necessary with both the military forces and paramilitary forces and gain the support of East Timor's population. The latter of these was critical due to their ability to create what might be considered an untenable situation, if they believed that the necessary security was not in place to allow them to live in peace or if they believed the pro-integration militias would be able to maintain their grip on specific contested areas. Should the militias maintain any form of control or intimidation capacity, INTERFET's mandate could easily become indefensible. Cosgrove made considerable use of his linkages with the Indonesian Major-General Kiki Syahnakri, with whom he had built a good rapport on arrival in theatre. This association provided a local face recognized by most of the polity and allowed Cosgrove the time to build his own networks of intelligence and understanding of the true situation. In order to build these networks and to understand the clandestine operations methodology used by the militias, Cosgrove made use of his under command SOF capacity as well as local assets. In this way, he sent elements out to gather intelligence and provide sophisticated and immediately responsive ground reconnaissance

¹⁰⁸Cosgrove, *My Story*, 170.

potential.¹⁰⁹ Commander INTERFET was able to maximize his own intelligence network and simultaneously erode that of the factions working against his and the international communities purposes.

With the establishment of the UN Security Council Resolution for the deployment of INTERFET forces and the agreement by the Indonesian government to accept international forces, the timelines necessary for deployment were set.¹¹⁰ This did not create unnecessary difficulties for the initial forces led by Australia as they had already been preparing for the impending possibility for several months. Each component was given specific tasks in support of the operation which easily lent itself to an integrated force. As weather in the region was not considered an impediment, the timelines remained fixed for all elements and were easily coordinated and executed despite limited capacity at both the sea port and air port of disembarkation. The air and sea ports at Dili were used both for inflow of military capability and the exodus of Indonesian military and nationals who wished to remain part of the greater Indonesian state. The balance required for these two aspects to ensure cooperation was crucial to maintain a calm and stable situation. One of the few challenges which Cosgrove faced in determining priority of inflow was whether or not SASR soldiers would arrive to secure the airfield prior to the first tranche of regular soldiers. This issue could easily have derailed many of the good relations which had been built with local security forces as the deployment of an airport security party, particularly one from the SASR,¹¹¹ may have undermined the understanding that Indonesian forces would provide the initial security. Cosgrove's

¹⁰⁹Cosgrove, *My Story*, 170.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 186.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 188.

decision not to send the SASR in first, disgruntled many from a security stand-point, but proved to be invaluable at building the trust necessary to enable operations and secure his intelligence sources.

The Commander maintained situational awareness through the use of his integrated SOF. A comparison can be done between the employment of Special Forces in this case and that of Operation BARRAS, where these forces were used to gain critical moment-to-moment intelligence in a similar manner as the OP teams. Although a peace enforcement operation, this integration demonstrates the possibility of special and conventional forces successfully integrating in operations other than war.

The SASR had a specific set of tasks and was integrated in the INTERFET chain of command as did the other three service components. While the land forces were the obvious choice for patrol purposes inland, naval forces were given several different tasks within their area of expertise in support of the mission.

While the mere presence in the region was a demonstration of international resolve, the navy flotilla provided an external to theatre capability for helipads, supply warehouses, hospitals and communications nodes for land forces. The capabilities allowed for critical systems to be immediately available in a fully secure and independent location. Similarly the amphibious capability allowed for both movement of sustainment capacity and troops to other areas throughout the area of operations without reliance on a somewhat tenable road network.¹¹²

Finally, the air forces were similarly used for both movement and sustainment activities as well as deployment and redeployment requirements from mainland Australia.

International elements were integrated directly into the command structures and given similar support tasks. Specific capability existed within these international players and the delineation of tasks was directly based on those tasks for which the organizations had

¹¹²Cosgrove, *My Story*, 171.

trained and rehearsed. They deployed with the equipment necessary to meet the objectives of the task force and once again the similarity to Operation BARRAS can be seen. The naval capability acted as the helipad and hospital, ground forces were given specific infantry related tasks while SOF provided the quick reaction force and intelligence gathering mechanisms. Several joint capabilities were used throughout Operation WARDEN from the initial planning stages to the culmination of the operation including a three service wide logistics plan which maximized the capabilities of each service without unnecessarily duplicating activities. The main characteristics of the system were speed and flexibility.¹¹³

The similarities between the employment of both special and conventional forces under a unified command as demonstrated during Operation WARDEN reemphasize the feasibility of this version of force integration. Unlike the US model, where inter-service rivalries was a root problem, the Australian model provides an excellent example of a top down strategic level approach to force integration. There is no reason to doubt that similar integration would be possible in operations other than peace enforcement.

Section 5 – Canada (CA)

As was mentioned at the beginning of this Chapter, Canada has not yet deployed the full breadth of SOF and enablers simultaneously, but this should not be read to imply that such integration in a Canadian context is not in fact possible. The majority of the capacities which exist in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia do exist in the Canadian Forces albeit in a different organizational structure and at the tri-service

¹¹³Cosgrove, *My Story*, 169.

level vice integral to specific Army or Army/Air constructs. Each of the comparative operations which were conducted by the other three ABCA nations can be superimposed on the Canadian CANSOFCOM structure with some minor variation. That said, with the addition of capacity within the Canadian Air Force of defence suites for utility helicopters and the ongoing procurement of heavy lift transport helicopters, the C² structure and the actual supporting units can easily mimic the other nations albeit not necessarily in size at this time. There is no reason to believe that the current CANSOFCOM structure could not easily be adapted in a manner similar to arrangements for Operation BARRAS once the procurement process is complete.

“The task is to correct what went wrong and to build on what went right without losing sight of the fact that conflicts in the future may be quite different from those in the past.”¹¹⁴

CHAPTER 5 – LESSONS LEARNED

The majority of operational and training activity of Special Operations Forces (SOF) over their short history has involved partner nations such as those within ABCA. SOF elements tend to stick within their own circle of capability thereby maximizing combined interoperability. This is no less apparent in the application of intelligence sharing. Much of the available high level intelligence gathered is sourced from both national and partner sources, but is kept tightly controlled for security reasons. In many cases dedicated air support exists as demonstrated by both the British and American case studies presented. This has allowed for limited joint interoperability but still within the historically closed arena centred on SOF. The critical linkages shown are predominately in the realm of the air / land battlespace although similar mutual support (although not covered by this paper) exists between SOF and naval assets although not necessarily directly committed to the SOF construct. These forces have been able to build trust and cohesion simultaneously reinforcing information and support barriers between SOF and most land-centric units to the point of service rivalries. As demonstrated by the operational comparison within Chapter 3, most ABCA nations have begun down the road of expanding Special Operations capacity to include other land-centric enabling forces such as the United Kingdom’s 1 Para or the United States’ 75th Ranger Regiment.

¹¹⁴Ike Skelton, "Military Lessons from Desert One to the Balkans," *Strategic Forum* 174 (October 2000) [journal on-line], 4, available from <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/SF174/sf174.pdf>; Internet; accessed 15 March 2008.

The lessons learned described herein are those of ABCA nations as provided by historical review and After Action Reports (AARs) at the unclassified level and follow the methodology used throughout the comparative analysis. Throughout each of the four operations discussed, several key lessons are consistently seen to challenge special and conventional force integration within the air / land battlespace. These challenges have either seen a successful or failed application of previous lessons learned,¹¹⁵ specifically within the areas of Command and Control (C²), Intelligence, Interoperability and Operational Planning.

Section 1 – Command and Control (C²)

One of the most significant difficulties throughout any campaign deals with the requirement to maintain a unified C² structure. It seems to be a recurring problematic theme and the compared operations are no exception. The operation which triggered transformation of SOF C² capability, EAGLE CLAW, established the criteria for such a structure. Although the size of the forces involved in each of the operations was dramatically different, the importance of unity of command was not lost on the commanders involved in the more recent three operations. Strategic, operational and tactical level links built on pre-established headquarters were therefore reasonably well configured to undertake the operations while simultaneously linking to non-military agencies ensuring lateral or inter-agency unity. Clear linkages between strategic

¹¹⁵Lieutenant-Colonel Rob Matheson, Canadian Army Lessons Learned Centre, personal discussion with author, 26 October 2007. Discussions with the Canadian Army Lessons Learned Centre have unfortunately failed to yield additional information from the perspective of either Canadian or other ABCA nations from that already included within this paper.

objectives and the tactical execution existed¹¹⁶ to enable the chain of command in meeting the overall national mission's intent. The application of the characteristics of simplicity and intelligibility of command relationships is clearly shown.

Failures in simplicity and clarity in Iran were rectified a few short years later when in Grenada, Admiral Wesley McDonald, Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Command was tasked as the overall commander of the invasion and was located in the immediate vicinity of the assault. Each subordinate commander was responsible for a particular aspect of the plan reporting directly to him, whether it was Major-General Edward Trobaugh, Commanding General, 82nd Airborne Division as the ground force commander¹¹⁷ or the initial on scene commander Vice-Admiral Joseph Metcalf.¹¹⁸ SOF elements, which included part of 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta (1st SFOD-D), were also linked into the chain of command – it was simple and clear. Similarly, Operation WARDEN was straightforward and based on the Australian Army's 1st Division already under the command of Major-General Peter Cosgrove.

Only Operation EAGLE CLAW had a disjointed C² structure and thus experienced confusion due to its ambiguous structure. The only clear line of command authority existed at the Task Force level with the Commander, Major-General James B. Vaught, located in Egypt. The details of relationships on the ground at Desert One were not communicated to all elements involved and the situation soon became almost

¹¹⁶Major Paul J. Montgomery, "Force Selection for Obtaining Lodgment in a MOOTW Environment" (Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Course Paper, 1996), 8.

¹¹⁷United States, House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee, "Lessons Learned as a Result of the U.S. Military Operations in Grenada," 13, <https://call-rfi.leavenworth.army.mil/RFISystem/>; Internet; accessed 20 February 2008.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 20.

uncontrollable.¹¹⁹ The Delta element under the command of Colonel Charles Beckwith had overall decision authority for proceeding or cancelling the operation, but none of the supporting commanders were subordinated to him. It is imperative that clearly defined lines of authority be established and that the tactical commanders be given the autonomy to conduct the operation in keeping with their Commander's vision. This requirement exists equally when SOF is integrated into the force composition. If not, as was seen in Iran, "nearly the whole chain of command [will get] involved in operational control."¹²⁰ The necessity that all forces be properly and clearly integrated in the command structure both in the planning and execution of operations is paramount.

Section 2 – Intelligence

Intelligence is a critical enabler to any operation whether planned or occurring "with virtually no advance warning."¹²¹ The ability to gain credible, accurate and timely intelligence is essential to ensure that force design and capability meeting the requirements. Each of the ABCA nations makes use of diverse national intelligence gathering agencies spanning numerous capabilities. While the majority of these systems are classified, the success or failure of an operation can easily hinge on the availability of accurate and timely intelligence. While some of the information may be made available by the insertion of SOF prior to any conventional force, a lack of true understanding can

¹¹⁹Major Richard A. Radvanyi, "Operation Eagle Claw - Lessons Learned" (Quantico, VA: U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College Course Paper, 1999), 34.

¹²⁰Colonel Stephen E. Anno and Lieutenant-Colonel William E. Einspahr, *Command, Control and Communications Lessons Learned: Iranian Rescue, Falklands Conflict, Grenada Invasion, Libya Raid* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: U.S. Air War College Research Paper, 1988), 10.

¹²¹Skelton, *Military Lessons from Desert One to the Balkans*, 2.

exist if intelligence assets are not made available early enough in the planning phases. Interestingly, SOF normally have access to the highest levels of intelligence gathering mechanisms due to the high-risk and political sensitive nature of the operations in which they are involved. Unfortunately, strategic and operational intelligence failures however failed to correctly identify the resolve of the West Side Boys in Sierra Leone or the defenders at Point Salines International Airport in Grenada. The SAS and the 75th Ranger Regiment fought extensively for a period of time and in the “first 4 or 5 hours, the amount of resistance ... surprised [them].”¹²² In both cases, “intelligence was deficient both in volume and quality.”¹²³

Intelligence gathering and dissemination in support of force integration is normally decisive. As was demonstrated in Sierra Leone and in East Timor, the use of SOF to gain intelligence and distribute it to other conventional forces allowed for greater flexibility and assisted in the success of the missions. The passage of critical intelligence is of utmost necessity.

Strategic-political and strategic-military level intelligence communities need to be included in planning in order to understand and communicate national priorities. The difficulties of ensuring appropriate intelligence is available across the integrated force arises when only limited elements such as SOF have all or most of the intelligence picture. Integration of intelligence and command branches is critical and must be fed to all organizations that require it as quickly as possible.

¹²²United States, House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee, “*Lessons Learned as a Result of the U.S. Military Operations in Grenada*”, 25.

¹²³Major Mike J. Simmons, "Operation Urgent Fury: Operational Art Or a Strategy of Overwhelming Combat Power?" (Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Course Paper, 1994), 36.

Section 3 – Interoperability

Interoperability challenges have truly come to the forefront in recent years as the necessity for joint operations has increased. In particular, two vital aspects tend to dominate the world of joint missions: communications and the commonality of Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) as developed in the joint environment. As discussed earlier in this Chapter, the SOF community has been interoperable across partner nations for some time although this is not been the case when referring to SOF / conventional forces. Once again, trust and confidence in other forces is an enabler to interoperability.

Communication is sometimes considered “the glue that [ties] together the operation of the four independent ... military service elements.”¹²⁴ Smaller sized deployments, as seen during Operation BARRAS, are normally the easiest to merge and thereby ensure communication interoperability. In this case, the SAS as the lead element for the assault was responsible for providing communication systems and already had within its equipment inventory the capability to communicate with 7 Squadron (Special Forces) Royal Air Force. Establishment of one main command post as a hub at Waterloo Camp simplified and reduced miscommunication. During Operation WARDEN, communications capabilities allowed information to be pushed to those elements that required it. Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) personnel were also linked directly to Cosgrove’s International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) headquarters as a subordinate unit ensuring further integration and flexibility.

¹²⁴Anno and Einspahr, *Command, Control and Communications Lessons Learned: Iranian Rescue, Falklands Conflict, Grenada Invasion, Libya Raid*, 41. The four services are normally depicted as the Army, Navy, Air Force and Special Forces in today’s contemporary operating environment.

Although the communications support was extensive during Operation EAGLE CLAW, several major flaws became apparent due to failings in interoperability. While working to secure the Desert One landing site, Army Ranger forces “could not talk to Delta or Air Force pilots ... more importantly, Desert One was unable to talk directly to the [Marine] helicopter force.”¹²⁵ This capability gap occurred due to equipment incompatibility. During the inflow of the helicopter force from the USS NIMITZ only the lead helicopter had the communications capability to contact the Task Force Commander in Egypt. His directions to carry on with the mission were not received by any other helicopter or by the ground site at Desert One, again due to equipment incompatibility. The SOF commander, Colonel Beckwith, was unable to follow the status of events although it was his go / no go decision for the rescue attempt. During Operation URGENT FURY, similar shortages of equipment occurred leading Admiral Metcalf to write that in “Grenada we did not have the interoperability with the Army and the Air Force even though we had been assured at the outset that we did.”¹²⁶ It seemed to be a come as you were party although some effort was made to “[appropriate] from the Army, some of their COMM gear, ... [which] ... would connect with each other,”¹²⁷ prior to embarking on the invasion in order to ensure some interoperability.

The challenge of any joint deployment is the ability of forces to operate together. Prior to being able to accomplish this, a common language of procedures must also be established and applied in a joint training environment. On numerous occasions,

¹²⁵Anno and Einspahr, *Command, Control and Communications Lessons Learned: Iranian Rescue, Falklands Conflict, Grenada Invasion, Libya Raid*, 41.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*

¹²⁷United States, House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee, “*Lessons Learned as a Result of the U.S. Military Operations in Grenada*”, 43.

deploying units rarely have the opportunity to train together and therefore must build interoperability upon arrival in the theatre creating an unacceptable risk. During Operation BARRAS, the SAS and 1 Para trained in the same location in order to appreciate each others roles. Prior to Operation WARDEN, Cosgrove conducted high-readiness training for the Brigade which included elements of SOF to ensure the establishment of communications linkages. Differences in TTPs have on many occasions been the downfall of organizations. It is critical that overall coordination of joint training be overseen at the highest levels to guarantee that information and lessons gleaned are recycled into future training activities. When forces are interdependent for their very survival “complete force integration is essential [and] direct supervision of joint training is mandatory.”¹²⁸ From the perspective of special and conventional force integration, the establishment of specific mission oriented units with their own enabling or supporting units is a method to gain interoperability and has been seen with the establishment of the United States Special Operations Command in 1987, the United Kingdom Special Forces Support Group in 2005 and the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command in 2006. Each of these command structures allows for joint and integrated training at the highest levels to reduce the fog of war upon deployment.

Section 4 – Operational Planning

Operational planning prior to deployments is another key element to ensure success. On too many occasions however two quandaries have confronted planners: the necessity of Operational Security (OPSEC) and planning compartmentalization / inter-

¹²⁸Radvanyi, *Operation Eagle Claw - Lessons Learned*, 17.

service rivalry. These complexities still exist today in varying degrees must be carefully massaged so as not to impede the operational planning process.

OPSEC necessities impacted both the U.S. and British operations. The stipulation that only a minimum number of personnel be involved in the planning to ensure secrecy has aided some and hindered other operational planners. Operation BARRAS required that the entire operational planning be held in the strictest secrecy using the rationale of the hostages' safety. Security requirements are further intensified during special and conventional integrated operations due to the high-level intelligence information available to SOF from their inherent capabilities and familiarity with other nations' forces. The challenge lies in the balance that must be achieved to make certain that all forces that require specific information in the conduct of planning for operations are imparted with it. All too often a paranoid need for security imposes unnecessary risk in other arenas. In Iran for example, the need for OPSEC during the inflow of aircraft had a direct result on the failure of the mission due to a lack of airframes available. In Sierra Leone, the result was that support staff in theatre was unaware of the impending rescue attempt until it was nearly upon them, causing needless crash planning as was evidenced with the medical evacuation plan.¹²⁹ The need for security invariably results in all other functions in planning, training and execution becoming subservient which leads to an "almost indiscriminate application of OPSEC measures to almost all information involving [the] operation."¹³⁰ Too much OPSEC can be as damaging as too little OPSEC.

¹²⁹Lieutenant-Colonel K. Beaton, United Kingdom Royal Army Medical Corps, personal conversation with author, 27 February 2008.

¹³⁰Radvanyi, *Operation Eagle Claw - Lessons Learned*, 8.

Obsession with operational security also leads to compartmentalization in planning and the establishment or reinforcement of barriers between groups and services working towards a common goal. In Sierra Leone the SAS was unsure and initially unconvinced of 1 Para's capabilities wanting rather another SAS Squadron to conduct the Magbeni clearance operation. These complications do not merely plague special and conventional integration but spawn dissention regardless of the service. The inherent political need for each service to be part of an operation or a solution causes strife and squabbles as was obvious during both US operations. The political vice operational necessity of having Marine pilots flying the Navy's RH-53D helicopters during EAGLE CLAW caused increased problems where other Air Force pilots with combat experience were available and better suited for the task.¹³¹

The impacts of Operational Security and compartmentalization / inter-service rivalry continue to cause significant angst during operational planning. It is imperative that all levels of command work towards balancing the needs of each to minimize their effect and maximize efficiencies of service capabilities. Recent years have witnessed dramatic improvements in C² relationships both within the individual services and at the inter-service level. Operational Planning, tactics, doctrine and training have also seen a plethora of effort applied to truly build joint forces.¹³²

¹³¹Carney and Schemmer, *No Room for Error: The Covert Operations of America's Special Tactics Units from Iran to Afghanistan*, 99.

¹³²Skelton, *Military Lessons from Desert One to the Balkans*, 4.

Section 5 – Concluding Remarks

During the Second World War, specific organizations such as the United States' Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the United Kingdom's Office of the Security Executive (OSE) saw the need for forces capable of conducting covert and clandestine operations behind enemy lines that became known as Special Operations Forces (SOF). The need for a specific type of soldier capable of conducting these concealed operations demanded a new form of selection to be established in order to ensure that the right individuals were amassed to ensure success. Although this period established SOF capability, it did not necessarily see a requirement for enabling forces as they exist today. Since that time the environment of conflict has become more complex and indeed more dangerous thereby necessitating a resurgence of this capability. In the present day, SOF has been subdivided into tiers with the highest capability and most challenging tasks assigned to Tier 1 forces, which include Counter-terrorism, to the less challenging at the other end of the scale to Tier 3 forces as enablers who conduct supporting activities for Tier 1 as well as other Direct Action or Special Reconnaissance activities.

The year 1980 saw a tragic event unfold in the desert sands north of Tehran that would become a catalyst for the development and expansion of this niche capability. The results of the *Holloway Report* following the debacle at Desert One directed the creation of a Joint Special Operations Command which began to oversee the expansion and improvement of U.S. military units with the mandate to provide interoperability of joint operations inclusive of special and conventional forces. With the follow on establishments of joint Special Operations headquarters throughout the ABCA nations the integration of what were considered conventional forces such as light infantry units as

depicted by the initial Ranger Battalions or the 1st Battalion, The Parachute Regiment was the natural next step. Primary SOF units such as 1st SFOD-D, SAS, SASR and JTF 2 required further augmentation to meet their growing employment needs. This call has been answered by the integration of both air and land manoeuvre elements to enable the air / land battle under a singular command umbrella forming unity of command. The clarity which was provided during Operation BARRAS demonstrated that both elements could in fact work closely together in mutually supporting roles. The use of air assets both from within and without the United Kingdom Director Special Forces provided the added flexibility of mobility to the force.

Although the structures created by ABCA nations do not entirely mimic each other nor do the sizes of the units involved truly compare, the general principles that each nation has applied to their constructs remain the same. Each nation has taken the steps to create a primary counter-terrorism and hostage rescue unit, establish light infantry oriented units to enable that primary unit and provide the necessary air support capabilities to facilitate mobility. The footsteps in which the Canadian Forces in general and CANSOFCOM in particular are following with the creation of the Canadian Special Operations Regiment, the integration of 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron and the procurement of helicopter fire support and heavy lift transport capacity will ensure that the Canadian Forces will be well poised to enable them to undertake actions similar to those of Operation BARRAS. It has been shown that true integration of special and conventional forces is possible and is being enacted. Such a grouping maximizes the strengths indigenous to each particular force element and ensures synchronization of the overall formation – truly a model for all nations.

APPENDIX 1
MAP OF SIERRA LEONE (INCLUDING MAJOR OBJECTIVES)

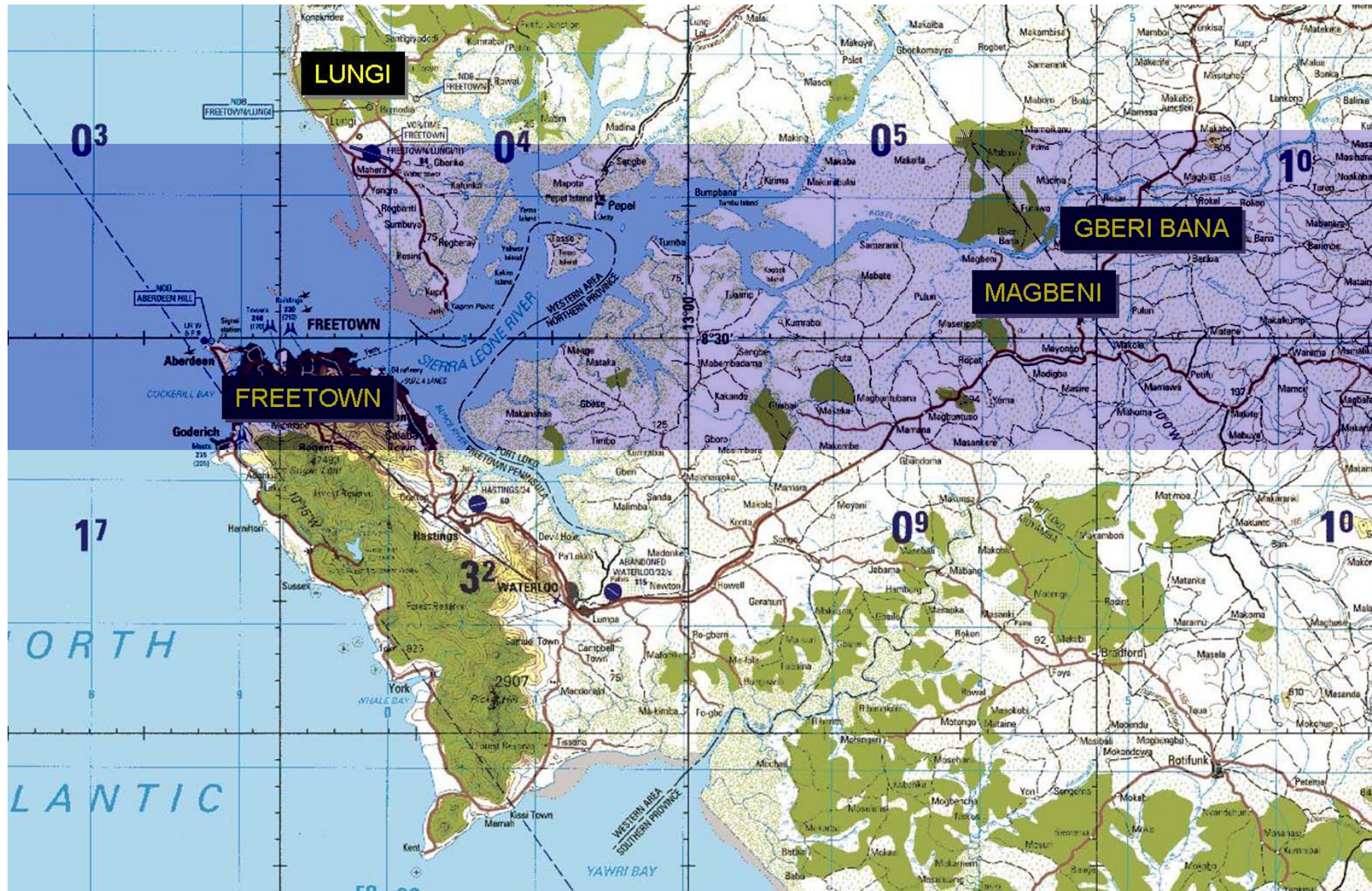


Figure 3 - Map of Sierra Leone (including Major Objectives)

Source: Lieutenant-Colonel K. Beaton, United Kingdom Royal Army Medical Corps, personal conversation with author, 14 February 2008.

APPENDIX 2
LAYOUT OF AIR INSERTION AND EXTRACTION METHODOLOGY

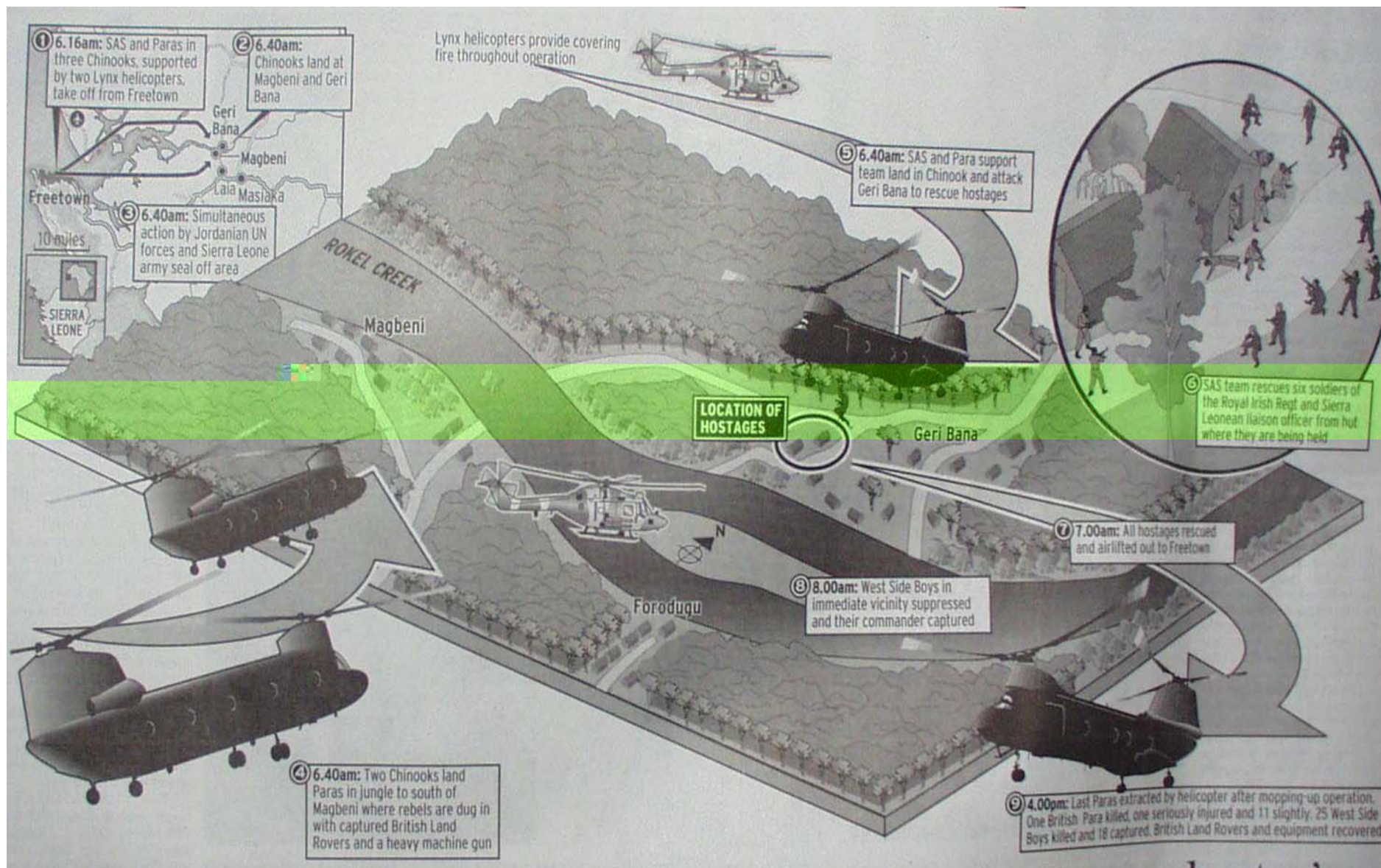


Figure 4 – Layout of Air Insertion and Extraction Methodology

Source: Lieutenant-Colonel K. Beaton, United Kingdom Royal Army Medical Corps, personal conversation with author, 14 February 2008.

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