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HOW IMPORTANT IS SOF TO MODERN WARFARE? IN THIS TECHNICAL AGE, IS IT INDISPENSABLE?

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IS IT INDISPENSABLE?**

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AIM

1. The 21st century's main threat is terrorism and irregular warfare, to cope with these dangers an effective and powerful mechanism is needed. For neutralizing these threats it is necessary for all countries to have well-trained and effective armed forces and high readiness capability. Special Operation Forces (SOF) is one of the effective and important elements of military power. SOF is very important to modern warfare and it is indispensable regardless of high technological achievements in the military industry. Discussing SOF functions, capability and its importance to modern warfare this paper will demonstrate SOF is excellent tool for dealing with future challenges, especially when the whole civilized world is facing the threats of terrorism and hybrid warfare.

INTRODUCTION

2. The military's primary purpose is to implement national policy by protecting against threats to its national strategic interest.¹ Military is also tool to fight out of the country and facilitate peace internationally. One of the main threats which world is facing is unconventional warfare. Unconventional operations is the ability to directly alter the way in which the tension between threatening and avoiding destruction is managed to conduct operations—for example, operating autonomously and independently, establishing and utilizing the capabilities of foreign military and paramilitary forces, sabotage, and subversion.² Unconventional warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary's power, influence.³ (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 1) In modern warfare the unit which can respond and has the capability to cope with this threat is SOF. It is small, flexible, independent and well trained unit, which with small and tactical action can bring strategic effect and serve national interest.

3. SOF comprises a wide variety of carefully selected and highly trained units from all military services, with different histories and different competencies.⁴ SOF is designed especially for fighting against hybrid warfare and non-state adversary. Special operation forces is the most skilled and professional unit in conducting direct action operation which is "Short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or diplomatically sensitive environments and which employ specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets."⁵ (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-05).

¹ Samuel P. Huntington, "National policy and the Transoceanic Navy," (U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings 80, no. 5 May 1954): 483.

² Robert G. Spulak, Jr Theory of special operation, the origin qualities and use of SOF (JSOU report 07-7, October 2007):23

³ "ADRP 3-05 Special Operations" (Headquarters Department of the Army Washington, DC, 31 August 2012): glossary 5, 87

⁴ Linda Robinson, "The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces," (Council Special Report No. 66 April 2013): 5

⁵ "ADRP 3-05 Special Operations" (Headquarters Department of the Army Washington, DC, 31 August 2012): glossary 5, 87

There are lot of facts and examples such as Afghanistan and Iraq, where SOF proved that it is none replaceable in fighting against insurgents.

4. This paper will start with analyzing SOF's function, capability and its roll in global security, then will speak about SOF's integration in technologies, next will discuss SOF,s force multiplayer capabilities, after that will discuss SOF and conventional force and finally it will contend that SOF is indispensable and important tool for fighting whit hybrid warfare, and will provides some recommendations which would help decision makers to modernize and make SOF even better and suitable for future challenges.

DISCUSSION

Function and Capability

5. The world is changing, technologies are developing, therefore in the 21st century conflicts and combat actions experiencing transformation and in modern warfare we will not likely face force on force or large-scale combat operations. "The world remains a dangerous place full of authoritarian regimes, ungoverned or under-governed territories, terrorist organizations, and criminal interests whose combined influences extend the realm of human suffering."⁶ To neutralize this threat we have to have the appropriate forces. The best forces which can cope with this threat are SOF. Most people are not aware of how widely and intensively special operations forces have been employed, and importance of their missions. SOF does great contribution in the modern world to bring peace. They do indeed conduct raids against terrorists and insurgents, they also carry out a range of advisory, information, intelligence, and civil affairs missions.⁷ It is the unit which can handle with challenges which is accompanied by special warfare. Special warfare is the execution of activities that involve a combination of lethal and nonlethal actions taken by a specially trained and educated force that has a deep understanding of cultures and foreign language, proficiency in small-unit tactics, and the ability to build and fight alongside indigenous combat formations in a permissive, uncertain, or hostile environment.⁸ It takes tremendous work and practice for SOF to achieve desired results, additionally "It achieves the desired effect through an operations structure that uses a process of find, fix, finish, exploit, and analyze (F3EA), and a framework of right partner, right location, and right capability (R3)."⁹

⁵ "ADRP 3-05 Special Operations" (Headquarters Department of the Army Washington, DC, 31 August 2012): glossary 5, 87

⁶ *Ibid*: 1-1

⁷ Linda Robinson, "The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces," (Council Special Report No. 66 April 2013): 10,

⁸ *Ibid*, 1-5

⁹ *Ibid*, 1-1

Despite SOF is small unit it conducts tremendous number of military operations such as: countering weapons of mass destruction, counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, foreign internal defense, stability operations, support to major operations and campaigns, unconventional warfare, civil affairs operations, hostage rescue and recovery, e.t...¹⁰ The SOF is multifunctional and designed to conduct operations in rapidly changing environment, additionally it is well positioned to conduct operations across the range of military operations, but must also be prepared to address emerging regional competitors and irregular, catastrophic, and disruptive challenges.¹¹

6. One of the arguments that supports SOF and gives its advantage than the other kinds of military forces is that it does not require large financial resources. It is one of the most cost-effective elements of the defense arsenal. Special operators are mature and highly skilled, they are selected and trained to deploy in very small numbers, whether conducting unilateral missions or working with foreign partners.¹² Some military experts argue that, in modern warfare and modern military world there are lot of high technology military equipment that in the future can replace SOF and do their job. But humans are more important than hardware or robots. Human nature and ability to take right decision in due to the specific situation and not exceeding the force when it does not needed is irreplaceable and reason for mission success. All this advantages makes special operation forces comfortable and powerful tool for policymakers which they probably will never be able to give up.

7. Besides advantages SOF has some disadvantages which we should mention. One of the biggest disadvantages is that it is takes a lot of time to train special unit like SOF, and because of these it is not easy to make a quick replacement of SOF. A second disadvantage is that it is not recommended to deploy SOF on long term mission. Long term deployment makes SOF ineffective and gives chance to the enemy to learn pattern of life and Tactic, Technique and procedure (TTP) of SOF. It is important that SOF always be in good condition morally, mentally and physically so they always can do rapid and surgical strike and be standby for a new mission.

Integration in Technologies

8. Beside its function and special operation warfare, SOF is well integrated in whole military forces structure and has additional function. Because of that, modern military equipment is very expensive and it needs to be tested before it goes to the exploitation, SOF is the unit which is authorized and qualified to do these work for whole military organization.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 1-2

¹¹ *Ibid*, 1-3

¹² Linda Robinson, "The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces," (Council Special Report No. 66 April 2013): 5,

9. As it was stated before SOF is very important unit during the wartime, but it is no less important SOF's role during the peacetime. The importance of SOF in peacetime is comes from their specific roles in wartime. As General Peter Schoomaker, commander, USSOCOM, stated before 11 September 2001, "As SOF engage in additional peacetime operations, it is important to remember that we are—first and foremost—warriors."¹³ One of the main task for SOF during the peacetime is testing and utilizing new technology and equipment before it goes to the conventional forces. This fact gives SOF advantage, and that why that one of the distinguishing characteristics of SOF is the use of technology that is not widely available to conventional forces for a variety of reasons, including limited availability, security, cost, extensive or specialized training, and risk.¹⁴ This special technology is very important for SOF for mission success (Historical and current examples include AC-130H/U aircraft, SEAL Delivery Vehicles, fast-ropeing, High Altitude Low Opening parachuting, Fulton recovery, and ground laser-designated air support.) SOF personnel can utilize such a technology because, due to the distribution of personnel, they are more capable of implementing the additional requirements.¹⁵

Force Multiplayer

10. SOF cannot be mass produced. The special selection and subsequent training, education, and experience that accumulate over time through the necessary practice, and operations to create the fully mature, insightful, reflective, and capable unit.¹⁶ That because of these characteristics what makes Special Operation Forces so unique and irreplaceable in hybrid warfare. Special operations comprehensive approach of unified land operations provides combatant commanders and ambassador's discreet, precise, and scalable operations that integrate military operations with other activities.¹⁷ SOF members are well trained and can with small team destroy much bigger enemy. We have several examples of SOF success against numerous enemies. One of the good examples is the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, where US SOF's small group destroyed hundreds of Taliban.

SOF and Conventional Forces

11. So as I stated before SOF role is growing. SOF is now tasked to take the lead in the war on terrorism. Thus, special operations cannot be defined only in the context of conventional forces at war since the war is not to be fought predominately by conventional forces.¹⁸ But integration of SOF in to the conventional forces is very important. Conventional forces and SOF integration procedures and addressing interoperability challenges during training and exercises

¹³ General Peter J. Schoomaker, "The Special Operations Team," *Armed Forces Journal International*, February 1998, pp. 32-34.

¹⁴ Robert G. Spulak, Jr *Theory of special operation, the origin qualities and use of SOF (JSOU report 07-7, October 2007): 12, 13*

¹⁵*Ibid, 13*

¹⁶ Colonel Bernd Horn "NO ORDINARY MEN" (Special Operations Forces Missions in Afghanistan 2014): 19

¹⁷ "ADRP 3-05 Special Operations" (Headquarters Department of the Army Washington, DC, 31 August 2012): 1-1

¹⁸ Special Operation Component Command Manual (NATO special operation headquarters 20 October 2014): 39

provide the best means of reducing missed opportunities, unnecessary delays, and the potential for collateral damage, including fratricide, during conflict.¹⁹ Conventional forces can do great job during the large scale conflicts, but there are some conflicts where SOF is more effective and this is joint operations. During the joint operations SOF conducts unconventional actions against enemy vulnerabilities in a sustained campaign, undertaken by specially designated units, to enable conventional operations and/or resolve economically politico-military problems at the operational or strategic level that are difficult or impossible to accomplish with conventional forces alone.”²⁰ SOF is group of special men emerge who have the personal capability to overcome risk and the skills that allow them to perform strategically important tasks (when organized into special and small units) that conventional forces cannot.²¹ In addition, the Quadrennial Defense Review 5 asserts that future security challenges (irregular, catastrophic, and disruptive) will not be easily addressed by conventional forces and will require a greater role for special operations.²² Additionally At the individual level for SOF warriors and at the organizational level for SOF, SOF overcome risks that conventional forces cannot by changing the combat process, which is made possible by greater attributes, training, and technology.²³ Conventional forces have structure and doctrine to attempt to make results more predictable. SOF uses all available means to accomplish mission objectives without unacceptable risk by using assets in unexpected and “creative” ways.²⁴ Lastly even if we do not accept the current conventional wisdom, special operations have always been discussed in terms of their potential and actual strategic impact.²⁵ To use SOF effectively we should consider that we need to know what SOF can do, not only to effectively fight the current war on terrorism but to effectively address the future challenges to our security.²⁶

¹⁹*Ibid*, 39

²⁰ James Kiras, *Rendering the Mortal Blow Easier: Special Operations and the Nature of Strategy*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Reading, July 2004, pp. 8-9. See also his subsequent book based on the thesis, *Special Operations and Strategy* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

²¹ Robert G. Spulak, Jr *Theory of special operation, the origin qualities and use of SOF* (JSOU report 07-7, October 2007): 2

²² *Ibid*, 3

²³ *Ibid*, 17

²⁴ *Ibid*, 17

²⁵ For example, Colin Gray, *Explorations in Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996).

²⁶ Robert G. Spulak, Jr *Theory of special operation, the origin qualities and use of SOF* (JSOU report 07-7, October 2007): 3

CONCLUSION

12. To conclude and summarize all advantages and disadvantages of Special Operation Force and its role “in today’s globalized and networked world”²⁷ we can assume with high probability that SOF will continue competing with high technologies. SOF will still remain irreplaceable tool for fighting to terrorists and some non-state actors and, “given the centrality of special operations forces in addressing today’s national security challenges, it is imperative that they be employed to best effect.”²⁸ Because all these benefits SOF will be in priority of policy makers and will be the best equipped unit among the other military forces. SOF surgical strike capability, or the direct action role, offers policymakers and political leaders an attractive military option for difficult or complex situations. This surgical strike capability is a key instrument of national power, but it is not the only mission of SOF and not necessarily the sole option for government policymakers.²⁹ SOF will be the best equipped because Special Operations Command performs the vital foundational roles of developing leaders and doctrine and sharing that understanding with government partners.³⁰ To be at the height of the performance SOF should have promotion from national level of government and well-designed budget equipment and training. Policymakers have a “major role to play on several fronts to ensure that the special operations budget is rebalanced and well-designed plans receive consistent funding, they should frame the new direction and order a rebalancing of the SOF budget to achieve this goals.³¹ Funding and flexible budget is important for every military organization but especially for Special operation command, because SOF is in avant-garde of military forces. They are the country’s premier precision raiders, vital in meeting such urgent contingencies as killing or capturing terrorists, rescuing hostages, and securing weapons of mass destruction. Those capabilities are essential and must be maintained.³²

²⁷ Linda Robinson, “The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces,” (Council Special Report No. 66 April 2013): 5,

²⁸ Ibid, 26

²⁹ “Special Effects” (By Andrew White - August 10, 2017)

³⁰ Ibid, 26

³¹ Ibid, 27

³² Ibid, 27

RECOMMENDATION

13. This paper discussed SOF's capability, strength and weaknesses, SOF's importance in modern warfare and how important is for strong country to have strong SOF community. To keep SOF as a strong power there are some steps that need to be done: First, SOF should stay as a priority unite for policymakers. The money and new technologies that they are investing in SOF is the best guaranty for safety and stability of any country's democracy and security. SOF should have priority to select its members from all military community and all high military decision makers should help and promote them. SOF should not be deployed for a long term deployment, because there TTP can be determined from enemy forces. additionally long term deployment exhausts SOF and they becoming less effective, they getting used to situation and environment and as the result they stop paying attention on details, all these can be dangerous for SOF and for whole operation. There is more integration and coordination required from SOF and other conventional forces, which can be achieved from as more joint practice and training in peacetime as joint operation.

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