

# The Future of Special Operations:

Is this the time to change the Unified Command Plan?



GLOBAL SECURITY  
FORUM 2012

April 11  
12:30-1:45

## Defense Strategic Guidance

- Future environment will require U.S. forces to respond with greater speed and agility to varied threats.
- Emphasizes “innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches” against globalized challenges and prevention of future conflict.

## Special Operations Forces

- SOF is well positioned to meet Defense Strategic Guidance requirements.
- SOF possess skills and knowledge in indirect and direct action, can undertake local actions that have strategic effects, and that generally require a relatively small number of personnel.

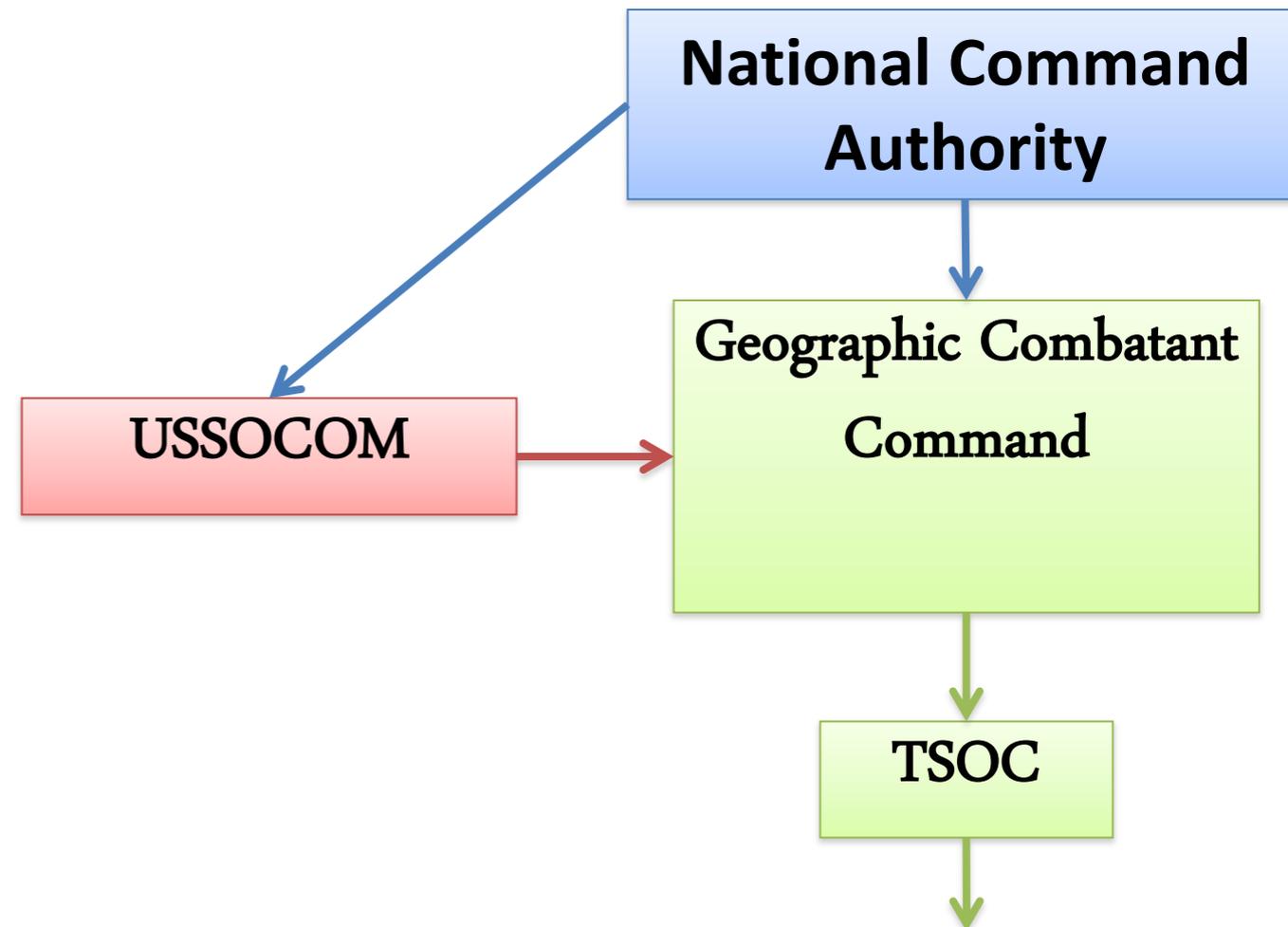


## Direct and Indirect Action

- SOF balance direct and indirect means to achieve desired outcomes.
- Past decade has seen an increased demand for direct action SOF missions, which are often kinetic in nature.
- Public focus has largely been on these missions, which are relatively visible and whose effects are more quantifiable.
- Future environment will emphasize indirect actions, which increase security through non-kinetic means.
- For both direct and indirect actions, local knowledge and relationships are important.

## Command and Control of SOF in Theaters

- USSOCOM provides SOF units and capabilities to GCCs.
- GCCs assume operational control of deployed SOF.
- GCCs exercise OPCON through their TSOCs, which are sub-unified commands.



**Title 10, Section 167 (d)** - Unless otherwise directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense, a special operations activity or mission shall be conducted under the command of the commander of the unified combatant command in whose geographic area the activity or mission is to be conducted.



## Command and Control of Selected Special Operations

- USSOCOM *may* be directed to exercise command of deployed SOF.
- This occurs rarely, if ever.

**Title 10, Section 167 (d)**- The commander of the special operations command shall exercise command of a selected special operations mission if directed to do so by the President or the Secretary of Defense.

**2004 UCP** - USSOCOM is authorized to deploy SOF against terrorist networks as directed.

**National Command Authority**

**USSOCOM**



## Does this construct work?

- Architecture may not be flexible enough to combat global threats that do not conform to a regional construct.
- Current architecture requires that GCCs initiate all requests for SOF deployments.
- Some support USSOCOM having a greater ability to initiate and coordinate SOF deployments.
- Continued ability of NCA to initiate SOF deployments is essential.
  - Most sensitive missions of national priority, such as bin Laden raid.

## Discussion Questions

1. Is this the time for a change in the architecture governing SOF?
2. Why or why not?
3. If so, how should it change?
4. If a change were to take place, how might it affect the future employment of SOF?
5. How might it affect the relationships between SOF, the larger military, the GCCs, and the interagency?