PROJECT ON SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

POSOF

CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

2006 POSOF Conference Report

The Center for Strategic and International studies (CSIS) conducted a day-long conference on Special Operations Forces on October 17, 2006. CSIS was pleased to have approximately 150 military and civilian personnel attend, as well as several distinguished speakers, including Vice-Admiral Eric Olson (Deputy Commander, SOCOM) and Mr. Mario Mancuso (Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Combating Terrorism). The conference was held in an off-the-record, non-attribution environment.

Four panels were held on a variety of issues (the conference agenda is included at the end of this document), and each moderator was tasked to provide a summary of their particular panel. The following document outlines in general terms what was discussed, and should not be considered the product of a CSIS analysis, or the particular positions of any of the moderators or participants.

Introduction

Since 9/11, the demand for U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) has increased dramatically. SOF have played – and continue to play – critical roles in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Global War on Terror (GWOT). The growing demand for special operations capabilities has made SOF an increasingly stressed national asset. Although the Department of Defense now recognizes irregular warfare as a central element of U.S. defense strategy and is investing more heavily in SOF capabilities, the SOF community still faces a number of critical challenges.

Project Goals and Objectives

The purpose of the CSIS Project on Special Operations Forces (POSOF) is to identify the most critical challenges facing the SOF community, facilitate a broader dialogue on the future of Special Operations Forces, and develop actionable recommendations to safeguard the unique culture and future health of the force and to ensure its sound employment.

Launched in December 2005, POSOF aims to engage a broad cross-section of people – current members of the SOF community, key policymakers and lawmakers, experts and opinion makers – in an ongoing dialogue on the most important strategic issues affecting the future of U.S. SOF. To this end, CSIS will host an annual conference on SOF issues, the first of which was held in Washington, D.C. on October 17, 2006. The project also sponsors ongoing research and analysis, publications, and workshops on SOF issues.

Purpose of the Inaugural Conference

The purpose of the inaugural POSOF conference was to identify the most critical challenges and issues that the U.S. SOF community is currently facing as well as possible solutions worthy of further discussion and analysis. The results of the conference will help to define the POSOF team's priorities and work plan for the coming year. The conference was also intended to fuel a broader and ongoing dialogue across diverse communities with an interest in SOF. To that end, participants were drawn from the SOF community – active duty and retired, officer and enlisted, and from all services – policymaking circles in the executive and legislative branches, the academic and think tank community, and the private sector.[1] The conference was conducted on an off the record basis in order to facilitate the most frank exchange of views possible.

In addition to keynote addresses from senior military and civilian leaders from the SOF community, the 2006 POSOF Conference covered four broad topics – irregular warfare, SOF roles and missions, the challenges of growth, and preserving the unique culture of SOF and quality of life issues – each of which is summarized below.[2]

[1] See Annex B for a list of those who participated in the 2006 POSOF Conference.
[2] See Annex A for the 2006 POSOF Conference agenda.

Irregular Warfare

Since 9/11, the average number of SOF deployed around the world in any given week has increased by 64 percent. Today, there are more than 7,000 SOCOM personnel deployed in more than 50 countries around the world, with the bulk of them serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. The demands of what has come to be called "irregular warfare" have skyrocketed in recent years and are projected to remain high for years to come. Understanding the demands of irregular warfare is key to sizing, shaping and preparing SOF for the future.

Although there is no doctrinal definition of "irregular warfare," there have been numerous attempts to define the term. The current draft DoD definition is: "A form of warfare that has as its objective the credibility and/or the legitimacy of the relevant political authority with the goal of undermining or supporting that authority. Irregular warfare favors indirect approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capabilities to seek asymmetric advantages, in order to erode an adversary's power, influence and will." Broadly speaking, IW encompasses a broad range of operations and activities, both offensive and defensive, including: insurgency and counterinsurgency, unconventional warfare, terrorism and counterterrorism, foreign internal defense, stability operations, psychological operations, civil-military operations, information operations, intelligence and counterintelligence.

IW was also identified as one of the "four challenges" in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (along with traditional, catastrophic and disruptive challenges). According to the QDR, IW is a form of asymmetric warfare in which "those employing 'unconventional' methods [seek] to counter traditional advantages of stronger opponents." The QDR called on DoD to "shift its weight" to be better prepared to deal with irregular challenges, particularly those associated with defeating terrorist networks. Not surprisingly, irregular warfare emerged as a central element of the QDR's refined force planning construct which serves as a basis for determining the right size and capability mix of the U.S. military.

Indeed, many participants argued that IW is "the new face of warfare in the future." There are several traits that distinguish IW from other types of military activities and pose significant challenges for the Department of Defense in general and for SOF in particular. IW generally involves:

- The use of indirect, non-conventional methods and means;
- A different center of gravity: rather than focus on defeating adversary military forces, IW focuses on eroding the adversary's power, will and influence *and* gaining the support of the indigenous population;
- Protracted campaigns, which are likely to last years or even generations rather than months, in countries along the boundary lines or frontiers of globalization; and
- Local campaigns ("All IW, like politics, is local") that often have regional and global implications in terms of both the nature and influence of the adversaries involved and the U.S. actions required to counter them effectively.

These IW characteristics will require the U.S. military to fundamentally rethink its traditional approaches to campaign planning and execution.

More specifically, the GWOT in which we are currently engaged poses a number of substantial challenges for the United States. It dramatically increases and changes the nature of U.S. requirements for intelligence. The United States currently lacks the intelligence capabilities necessary to produce what one panelist called "micro analysis of the human terrain" – that is, the detailed understanding of local dynamics, relationships, personalities, enemy networks, local public opinion, etc. that is essential to success. Shortfalls in HUMINT are only part of the problem. The United States must also significantly improve its ability to rapidly fuse all-source intelligence. One participant also questioned whether the United States needs a new national organization focused on developing strategic intelligence (along the lines of the World War II-era OSS) as well as a new generation of strategists for the GWOT.

The United States also lacks effective and agile information operations at both the strategic and tactical levels. At the tactical level, SOF must be able to work closely with indigenous counterparts to help them develop their own IO campaigns. SOF must also become more media savvy in order to defeat the adversary's very rapid IO message cycle. SOF must at times also be able to practice police methods, such as investigations, in order to assist with the IO campaign.

The GWOT also increases the demand for global indirect and clandestine approaches, with several implications for SOF. Instead of providing short, episodic presence in a given locale, SOF will be required to provide persistent presence over a long period of time, particularly in ungoverned areas. In some cases, SOF will also be asked to take a more proactive approach to counterterrorism, including man-hunting missions and unconventional warfare. This will have a dramatic impact on SOF intelligence requirements. SOF will also be expected to improve their ability to operate in denied areas outside acknowledged battlefields. SOF will also be asked to increase its emphasis on detecting, interdicting and rendering safe weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, both SOF and GPF will be called upon to do more training and advising missions.

Since 9/11, DoD has taken a number of steps to better position itself to deal with IW, particularly in the SOF arena. In 2004, the Unified Command Plan expanded SOCOM's responsibilities to include "serving as the lead combatant commander for planning, synchronizing, and as directed, executing global operations against terrorist networks." Since 2001, funding for SOF has nearly doubled, from $3.8 billion to $6.4 billion in 2005; the FY2007 budget request was $8 billion. SOCOM has grown from approximately 45,000 personnel in 2001 to 53,000 in 2006. Earlier this year, a new Marine Special Operations Command was stood up. MARSOC will consist of about 2,600 personnel assigned to Foreign Military Training Units and several Direct Action companies. And the 2006 QDR, proposed further increases in SOCOM's funding and a 15 – percent increase in end strength – a 33 percent increase in Army Special Forces battalions, an equivalent increase of Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs units, and an increase in the number of Navy SEALs. DoD has also drafted an IW roadmap to flesh out and implement decisions taken in the QDR.

Nevertheless, compared to post-World War II era, there has been a glaring lack of institutional innovation to meet the new demands of this new era. The United States needs

to go far beyond increasing SOF to develop much more robust interagency capabilities for the long war.

Finally, the United States risks "doing less with more" if it focuses too much on manhunts for key individuals rather than fighting a broader and smarter war on terrorism that balances and synchronizes direct and indirect approaches.

Roles and Missions

Identifying and addressing the challenges facing the SOF community as an "HD/LD" (high demand/low density) asset in a post-9/11 security environment was a constant theme throughout the POSOF conference. With over 85 percent of deployed SOF assets committed to Afghanistan and Iraq, conference participants generally agreed that there were insufficient SOF capabilities available at this time to meet the demands of the GWOT strategy as expressed in the "7500" operational plans. Moreover, the current operational tempo for some SOF personnel – some special forces warriors are away from home station for deployments or training 16 months out of every 24 months – may not be sustainable on a long term basis and is a key factor affecting retention rates because of the stress that places on the families. From a roles and missions perspective, this raises fundamental division of labor issues for SOF at the national/strategic (e.g., which SOF missions, if any, should be given to non-Defense agencies), operational (e.g., what is the division of labor between SOF and GPF) and tactical (e.g., who should be the supported and supporting commander in IW operations) levels. Deciding what SOF should do and should not do is imperative, if an increasingly strained force, despite significant, perhaps unachievable, efforts to augment SOF, is to cope with the challenges of the "long war."

Although the primary and collateral missions assigned to SOF increased when the overall level of demand for SOF seemed to wane, the challenge today is to focus SOF on its essential missions. Many define these as those missions that are most important in fighting the "long war" and require the skill sets (both for "direct" and "indirect" action) that only SOF could provide. Some participants questioned whether the two most recent additions to SOF's primary missions (that is, Counter Proliferation and Information Operations) should be retained; others argued that Civil Affairs should be assigned outright to the "Big Army" and that the recent decision to move Army Reserve civil affairs out of SOCOM, which retains proponency for the mission, made little sense. The issue of how the USG and DoD should organize, train and equip for Psychological Operations (and, for that matter, Strategic Communications) was also addressed, but hardly resolved. The debate over which missions should stay in SOCOM's "job jar" was complicated by the changing nature of SOCOM's missions – providing "Global FID" (Foreign Internal Defense) or conducting Unconventional War ("This is not your Father's UW") pose significantly different challenges today than they did during the Vietnam era. Most participants agreed that while SOF personnel were more capable than their GPF counterparts in performing a broad range of SOF primary and collateral missions, it was still necessary to prioritize and assign missions, as one Roles and Missions panelist expressed it, to SOF that conventional forces cannot perform at all or at acceptable risk or cost.

While recognizing the need for focus, conference participants debated vigorously (and without resolution) several specific suggestions, including the following:

- The creation of a UW Command, either as an alternative to SOCOM or as an "indirect" component command as a counterpart to JSOC;
- The assignment of GWOT to SOCOM, which, prior to 9/11, had functioned more as a joint force provider than a force employer;
- The imperative to grow real operational capabilities in non-DoD agencies, particularly State and USAID, because most SOF missions are "pol-mil" in nature and often need non-military leadership;
- Organizational adaptation, including "op-intel fusion," to the growing, increasingly critical role of intelligence, since success in the "long war" often requires, according to one IW panelist "microanalysis of the human terrain;"
- The challenges, including the conduct of operations in the field, of growing more SOF and more SOF-like conventional forces; and
- Identifying where SOF, particularly in "indirect" missions requiring cultural awareness and language ability, make unique, non-substitutable contributions.

Several tensions – for example, between "white" and "black" SOF, between SOF and GPF, between SOCOM and other paramilitary agencies (particularly the CIA) and between DoD/SOF and non-Defense agencies – create roles and missions issues and affect how these division of labor controversies will be resolved. However, most conference participants seemed to agree that resource constraints sharply exacerbate these tensions, which could be mitigated by a significantly enhanced national commitment to fighting the "long war." While it is clear that the nation's soldiers, Marines, special operators, sailors and airmen are all (in varying degrees) at war, it is also clear that the nation itself is not at war and has not made the national decision to commit the resources necessary to prosecute a global campaign over the course of a generation. However, even if resources commensurate to the challenge were available, the SOF community would still face roles and missions issues, because SOF capabilities cannot be grown fast enough – and still retain the qualities and capabilities that make them unique – to execute all the missions that require "special" and not merely "elite" units.

The Challenges of Growth

In addition to the stresses of constant deployment and operations, U.S. Special Operations Command faces significant challenges resulting from its central role in the GWOT and, especially, to achieve the growth described in the Quadrennial Defense Review. The command faces daunting personnel, material and institutional hurdles to expand the force, transform it and preserve the special qualities that have made SOCOM a newly important actor.

The panel's presentations and discussion focused primarily on the personnel challenges, the institutional challenges and on the need for SOCOM to better explain its roles and missions on Capitol Hill. In sum, the command is having difficulty meeting the demands of current deployments, let alone rising to the new challenges of expansion, creating some skepticism in the field and across SOCOM's various components. The view from the "schoolhouse" is

somewhat better, but the challenges of training a force experiencing such tremendous operational and personnel tempo issues are significant, and could be exacerbated by the need to train an expanded force. On Capitol Hill, SOCOM's presence may need to be strengthened commensurate with its new role and growing importance.

These challenges are inseparable from the command's new role. Three years ago, The Department of Defense expanded SOCOM's role to include planning and synchronizing efforts related to the GWOT. This shifted the command's orientation away from its heretofore primary responsibilities for training, organizing and equipping and providing special operations forces to theater combatant commanders. In effect, SOCOM itself has become a crucially important "warfighting" command – one with a mission covering the globe – while retaining the train-and-equip missions often associated with the military services and departments.

The scope of the GWOT mission far exceeds the command's previous tasks. It includes supervising all Defense Department plans, intelligence priorities and operations against terrorist networks, theater security activities and a host of other subsidiary efforts. This expanded role has required SOCOM to dramatically increase its staff while at the same time placed new requirements on forces in the field, both for operations it directs and those in support of theater commanders, especially in the U.S. Central Command region.

The special operations elements in the military services and SOCOM have significantly increased recruiting, retention and training efforts in recent years, yet personnel levels in many critical occupational specialties remain chronically low. Between 2000 and 2005, the Army increased its recruiting goals for enlisted active-duty Special Forces by 72 percent, or 1,300 soldiers; the Navy has upped SEAL requirements by 22 percent, or 200 enlisted special warfare crewmen, and is expanding opportunities for officers as well. Altogether, the services paid more than $28 million in recruiting bonuses in 2005. Although in total the services have generally met their recruiting requirements, mismatches remain in some important specialties, including Army Special Forces operations and intelligence NCOs and medical NCOs, enlisted SEALS, and Air Force combat controllers and search and rescue personnel. Across SOCOM in recent years, more than three-fourths of specialties have been "underfilled."

Similar efforts have been made to improve retention. Beginning in 2004, the Pentagon began paying large reenlistment bonuses to special operations personnel, up to $150,000 in some specialties for those with 19 or more years of service and willing to serve a additional six years. In 2005, the cost of such bonuses for 688 service members exceeded $41 million. Further bonuses have been authorized for some more experienced SOF, including those assigned to SOCOM, but in many cases not yet instituted by the services.

SOCOM and the service components have also taken a number of steps to increase and improve training capacity. The number of military instructors has been increased, and this expansion is planned to continue. U.S. Army Special Operations Command is further adding civilian instructors; 45 have been brought in since 2004 and another 300 are to be added as part of the expansion of the training base associated with the expansion of the force. Changes have also been instituted to improve and refocus training on those skills

associated with the GWOT as well as core combat skills. The Army intends to enlarge its ability to put soldiers through its SF qualification course from 1,800 to 2,300 per year.

Despite these efforts, serious questions remain about the command's ability to meet its growth targets. The Quadrennial Defense Review included an ambitious plan to increase overall SOF by 15 percent, increase the number of Army Special Forces battalions by a third, increase SEAL team manning, develop a riverine warfare capabililty, expand Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs units by 3,700, create a SOCOM unmanned aerial vehicle squadron and a Marine Corps Special Operations Command.

These increases have been matched by a significant number of current and planned organizational changes. The Joint Special Operations Command, the core headquarters for SOCOM's special-mission units and an important element in the planning and conduct of the GWOT, is intended to become a three-star billet. Reserve component Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations units have been shifted out of SOCOM to be managed by the Army, while active-duty soldiers in these specialties will still be under SOCOM; the idea is to link those active-duty soldiers in these specialties directly to special operations forces while employing reservists with conventional units. The hope is that units will reap the benefits of habitual relations, but some of those in the communities affected by the switch are not convinced.

The panel addressed a number of aspects of these trends. Research across all special operations communities reveals attitudes of uncertainty both about the current condition of the force and its ability to meet the demands of expansion. The Army's "18 X" project to bring in civilians with skills in demand in the special forces has received a generally positive response but has, at the same time, raised a number of concerns about experience levels in new SF operators, a lack of maturity tied to lack of previous military service, and a worry about the relative young age of some of these soldiers. The centralizing of Army special operations aviation assets and the expansion plan for Task Force 160, the special operations aviation unit, has raised concerns about the availability of SOF aviation to ground units. More broadly, there is a current concern about the dilution of standards and overall quality the special operations force and a concomitant concern that the plan for expansion will exacerbate the problems.

Congress is similarly unsure about the ability to expand SOF according to the QDR outline while still maintaining quality. It has concerns about the maintenance of standards in basic accession schools such as the Army's Qualification Course or the SEAL Basic Underwater Demolition training, where past initial "pass rates" have been low, in testament to the difficulty of the courses. Similarly, some on Capitol Hill are unsure of the wisdom of the reorganization of the command, including the transfers of responsibilities for Civil Affairs. And, as the panel discussion made clear, Congress has been frustrated by SOCOM's conduct of its equipment modernization program.

Preserving the Unique Culture of SOF and Improving Quality of Life

The purpose of the panel was to explore the unique attributes of the SOF community and address how those essential qualities and high standards might be maintained during a

period of expansion and high operational tempo. In addition, the panel members were asked to identify particular resources or support needs from their institutional or individual perspectives.

The special operations community has formulated four core principles that summarize the basic requirements for a highly capable and well-functioning force. They are: 1) humans are more important than hardware; 2) quality is more important than quantity; 3) SOF cannot be mass produced, and 4) competent SOF cannot be created after an emergency arises. Observing these principles is particularly critical during a time when the national strategy relies heavily on special operations capabilities to prosecute the war on terrorism through direct and indirect means and to aid the conventional forces as subject matter experts in irregular and unconventional warfare and counterinsurgency. Maintaining the high quality required for functional SOF requires a focus on the individual operator and the optimization of this high-value asset.

The panel addressed this broad issue from four distinct vantage points. One panelist presented the view from the Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC), the newest component of the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM). Another panelist presented the view from the active-duty component of Civil Affairs, which is also part of SOCOM and falls under the U.S. Army Special Operations component command. A third panelist presented the results of his research on stresses on the force, the cultural ethos of the various SOF components and their comparative advantages. A fourth panelist presented the view of a senior noncommissioned officer with years of field experience in both Special Forces and special mission units.

MARSOC was formed in 2006 to help answer the increased demand for units capable of performing foreign internal defense as well as special reconnaissance/direct action (in particular the mission of finding and fixing targets). The U.S. Marine Corps answered the call by forming two distinct units, the Foreign Military Training Unit, and the Marine Special Operations Battalions. MARSOC has also formed a support group and a training unit to provide the unique training and language instruction required, in addition to its headquarters element at Camp Lejeune, NC. MARSOC units are based at Lejeune and at Camp Pendleton, CA.

MARSOC plans to be fully operationally capable in FY 2008 with a projected strength of 2,500; current manning is roughly 800. Individual Marines commit to a 3- to 5- year tour, but the MARSOC commanding major general envisions that many Marines will serve successive tours in MARSOC and SOCOM and relevant DOD billets to take advantage of the specialized training and groom strategic leadership. MARSOC is a train and equip command whose units deploy as directed by SOCOM in support of combatant commanders or other entities. The first FMTUs of MARSOC deployed on foreign internal defense missions this year. As a newly created unit, MARSOC's challenges include filling all its authorized slots, refining its training requirements, defining the partnership of MSOBs with their respective Marine Expeditionary Units, addressing resource needs including airlift, and maintaining Marine Corps ethos while integrating with the SOCOM community as a new component. The latter task is already advanced in that numerous Marines have served in recent years in SOCOM billets and a proof of concept trial period preceded the standup of MARSOC in February 2006.

Another part of the SOF community undergoing significant change is civil affairs. The reserve component and headquarters shifted to Army Reserve Command in 2006, leaving active-duty civil affairs in SOCOM under the U.S. Army Special Operations Command. Active-duty civil affairs tactical units usually deploy in support of special operations units. In the summer of 2006, a new brigade-level command was activated, the 95th Civil Affairs Brigade (Abn). The brigade is in the process of growing from one to four battalions by 2009, one devoted to each of the four regions demarcated by the geographic combatant commands. If an Africa command is created, civil affairs headquarters plans to argue for a fifth battalion. Active-duty CA is undergoing significant change since the enlisted cadre now comes from the conventional forces rather than the Special Forces. The change was required because the growth demands for Special Forces have tapped all SF-qualified personnel to fill those units. The training base has responded by developing a distinct course for NCOs transitioning from general purpose forces to CA. CA previously relied on SF NCOs with 12+ years of experience and now relies on NCOs averaging 7+ years of experience from throughout the Army. Recruitment goals are being met, and the reenlistment rate is high. Creation of a CA branch for active-duty officers has meant that more younger officers now fill the ranks. Expectations therefore must be adjusted during this growth period, particularly for the fact that 100 percent fill rate of personnel does not equal 100 percent capability.

Reach back mechanisms will help support these less-experienced soldiers in the field. If active-duty Civil Affairs is to perform its role of first responder in ungoverned hostile areas, significant investment in training and education must be made. Civil Affairs soldiers current serve one day deployed for every day at home, but increasing proposed missions will not allow for easing the high operational tempo with its impact on quality of life, pre-deployment training and the ability to create a reserve deployment force for emergencies. Additional proposals floated for consideration included building CA battalions that are a mix of active duty and reserve personnel. Civil Affairs units require coordination nodes and information management kits that facilitate handling of both classified and unclassified information given their heavy interaction with civilian agency partners, indigenous people and entities, and nongovernmental organizations. USG funding and training for civilian personnel deploying with CA needs to be increased and improved. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency has resources and authorities that can be tapped for security, stabilization, transition and reconstruction efforts.

The growth of special operations units contemplated by the Quadrennial Defense Review will affect every component of the community and therefore its culture. SOF culture as such dates to the formal creation of SOCOM in 1987, but in addition to this overarching culture there are important subcomponent cultures. In part these trace to the respective services the subcomponents belong to, but they also have their own particular values and identifiers, for example the Army Special Forces and the Navy SEALs. Their rigorous standards for selection and performance make them elite units, as are the elite counter-terrorism units that are drawn from their ranks and the Ranger regiment. Exclusivity is therefore part of SOF culture, as is the secrecy surrounding most of its missions. The Marine Corps had historically resisted incorporation into SOF since elitism runs counter to its egalitarian ethos. Another feature of SOF culture is that operational units minimize distinctions between officer and enlisted in favor of a competence-based culture.

In addition to the challenge of acculturating large numbers of new SOF operators into a cohesive unit, the QDR called for consideration of whether some SOF missions may be migrated to the general purpose forces. The SOF community will need to define its core missions and those which may be successfully passed off to others, possibly with initial or continuing assistance from SOF. Training of foreign militaries in less hostile environments is one possible example. The nine official tasks currently assigned to SOF are special reconnaissance, direct action, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, counterterrorism, psychological operations, civil affairs, counterproliferation, and information operations. Rangers and Navy SEALs have traditionally specialized in direct action tasks, while the other Army special operations forces (Special Forces, active-duty Civil Affairs and active-duty Psychological Operations) have specialized in unconventional warfare and foreign internal defense (which can also include raids as a subsidiary task.) Elite Army and Navy units, known as special mission units, undertake counterterrorism missions and dedicated units deal with nuclear, chemical and biological weapons threats.

Each of these missions requires a specialized skill set acquired and maintained through a demanding training regimen, which underscores the need for a division of labor. That has led to a certain degree of friction and competition for resources between those tasked with direct action and those undertaking the UW/FID missions that require intensive language and cultural training. That competition may increase if the latter are intended to operate in more countries for longer durations and in less visible modes, as the QDR envisioned. Even though the QDR calls for across-the-board growth in SOF units, including unilateral direct -action specialists such as Rangers and special mission units, it also places relatively greater emphasis on the UW- and FID-type missions whose defining trait is working with indigenous forces since those forces have inherent advantages in combating irregular threats. Determining the optimal resource apportionment for the various missions and units will be one of the key QDR implementation tasks.

SOF roles, missions and resourcing decisions directly affect SOF culture, maintenance of SOF standards and esprit de corps. The senior noncommissioned officer who is acculturated in his particular subspecialty may become frustrated if he is not able to perform the role that he was selected and trained for. This job-satisfaction criterion was cited as the most important factor determining whether a SOF operator chooses to stay or leave the service, more than the lure of private security companies' higher salaries. The sense of purpose and of accomplishing the mission is highly developed in these heavily vetted service members. Being given the latitude to execute assigned missions and to do so in a command climate that is willing to accept the risks entailed in inherently high-risk missions were cited as key factors contributing to operators' job satisfaction. The suggestion was also made to model improved support to operators on the special-mission units support systems as pertains to family support, range and other training facilities, and aviation support. Another suggested innovation was to turn noncommissioned officer education into degree-bearing programs. Senior NCOs could be permitted to serve in more ground-level assignments, which would add experience to tactical units and provide greater job satisfaction than staff assignments. Such a change would also mitigate the effects of less-experienced 18X soldiers on the army SF teams. Manpower increases could also come from using the Lodge Act to recruit foreign nationals with the desired language/cultural expertise.

The operator's job satisfaction has a direct bearing on his family's sense of well being. In addition, key factors that affect family well being is the amount and quality of family support services (medical, legal, financial and psychological), particularly given the operators' frequent and extended deployment. Job satisfaction and reenlistment rate is also heavily influenced by the future financial calculations, including the ability to pay for children's college education. While operators receive significant bonus pay, it is not incorporated into base pay for purposes of retirement benefits. In addition, while reenlistment rates have been improved since the institution of bonuses for operators with over 19 years of service, the military services have not yet instituted bonuses for mid-career operators with 14 to 19 years of service or for those who are deciding whether to make military service a career.

Continued investment in cutting-edge technology is necessary to maintain the superiority that enables SOF to survive and prevail while operating in small units in denied areas. Laser target designators operated by tactical air controllers and other operators permit them to bring precision air power to bear, and night-vision capability enables SOF to remain dominant in nocturnal operations. Unmanned aerial vehicles and other intelligence and communications advances have enabled SOF to achieve greater information superiority and fuse intelligence and operations in shorter cycles, which are key to operating against hard-to-detect and amorphous adversary networks. Two downside effects of the growth in high-tech capabilities are possible overdependence on such systems and the temptation of higher echelons to micromanage operations, which run counter to two hallmarks of special operations, innovative self-reliance and delegation of authority to experienced ground units who are best positioned to assess courses of action and react quickly. Expanded close-air support training and expanded aviation support were two suggested areas for further investment.

Conclusion

Based on what the POSOF study team heard from special operations personnel and others at the 2006 POSOF conference, as well as preliminary research on the current challenges and opportunities facing the U.S. SOF community, we are in the process of identifying the primary areas on which we will focus our research and analysis over the coming year. This work plan will also reflect our best judgment as to where CSIS has a comparative advantage to make a difference.

Overall, we will aim to advance four overarching project objectives: 1) provide a venue for exploring perspectives from all parts of the SOF community; 2) identify and examine the most pressing policy-related issues affecting the SOF community as well as possible solutions; 3) explore ways of enhancing SOF contributions in the war on terror and irregular warfare more broadly; and 4) examine issues related to the current and projected expansion of SOF. In support of these aims, we expect to focus our near-term research and analysis on three key areas:

- Clarifying Roles and Missions: SOF and Interagency; SOF and General Purpose Forces; and SOCOM as the DoD lead for the Global War on Terror
- Intra-SOF Issues and Resources, and

- Managing the Challenges of Growth.

For the most up to date information on the POSOF project as it evolves, please visit our Project on Special Operations Forces page on the CSIS website at http://www.csis.org/isp/posof/.

About CSIS

For four decades, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has been dedicated to providing world leaders with strategic insights on – and policy solutions to – current and emerging global issues.

CSIS is led by John J. Hamre, formerly U.S. deputy secretary of defense. It is guided by a board of trustees chaired by former senator Sam Nunn and consisting of prominent individuals from both the public and private sectors. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., CSIS is private, non-partisan and tax-exempt.

Initial funding for POSOF was provided by Thomas O'Gara, chairman of the O'Gara Group.

The co-directors for POSOF are Michèle A. Flournoy, senior adviser at CSIS and a former principal deputy assistant secretary of defense, Mr. Thomas Donnelly, Senior Fellow at CSIS and a former member of the HASC staff, and Kurt M. Campbell, senior vice president of CSIS, director of the International Security Program and a former deputy assistant secretary of defense.

The POSOF project will also be guided by an Advisory Board of retired senior military officers from the SOF community, former senior government officials, and business leaders. The Board will be chaired by FedEx President and CEO Fred Smith. Invited members include: Sam Nunn, former U.S. Senator (D-GA) and CSIS Chairman of the Board; William Cohen, former Secretary of Defense and U.S. Senator (R-ME); General Wayne A. Downing, USA (Retired); General Hugh Shelton, USA (Retired); General Charles R. Holland, USAF (Retired); Michael Vickers, Director of Strategic Studies, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments; and Linda Robinson, U.S. News and World Report.

Annex A

POSOF Conference 2006

Tuesday, October 17, 2006
Center for Strategic and International Studies
1800 K Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

Agenda

0800-0830 **Registration**

0830-0840 **Welcoming remarks** by Dr. John Hamre and Mr. Tom O'Gara

0840-0930 **Keynote Address**
Speaker: **VADM Eric Olson**, Deputy Commander, SOCOM

Introduction by: **Dr. Kurt M. Campbell**, Director and Senior Vice President, CSIS

0930-1100 **Irregular Warfare**
This panel will explore the nature of irregular warfare and the challenges it presents for the U.S. government as a whole, the U.S. military writ large, and for SOF in particular. It will also assess recent and ongoing DoD efforts to respond to IW demands.

Moderator: Michèle Flournoy, CSIS and POSOF Co-Director
Presenters: Michael Vickers, CSBA
David Kilcullen, U.S. Department of State
CDR Bob Gusentine, USN
COL Ken Tovo, USA

1115-1245 **Roles and Missions for SOF in the 21st Century**
This panel will examine roles and missions within the SOF community, between SOF and general purpose forces, and between DoD and the rest of the U.S. government. It will also debate various proposals for organizational change within the SOF community.

Moderator: Clark Murdock, CSIS
Presenters: Christopher Lamb, NDU/INSS
Dave Baratto, IDA
LTC Dave Duffy, USA

1245-1345 **Luncheon Speaker: Impacts of the 2006 QDR on SOF**

Speaker: **Mr. Mario Mancuso**, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Combating Terrorism

Introduction by: **Dr. Kurt M. Campbell**, Director and Senior Vice President, CSIS

1345-1515 **Challenges of Growth**

This panel will explore the challenges associated with rapidly growing SOF capabilities to meet current and future demands while maintaining SOF quality and training standards. It will also address the impacts of high operations tempo on SOF recruitment and retention.

Moderator: Tom Donnelly, CSIS and POSOF Co-Director

Presenters: Bill Natter, HASC staff
LTC Mark Grdovic, White House
Maj Steve Grenier, USA
CDR Ken Niederberger, USN

1530-1730 **Preserving the Unique Culture of SOF and Improving Quality of Life**

This panel will identify ways to preserve SOF's unique culture, improve quality of life, resources and support systems at a time of expansion and heightened operations tempo.

Moderator: Linda Robinson, U.S. News and World Report

Presenters: Col Keith Lawless, USMC
COL Ferdinand Irizarry, USA
Tom Mahnken, U.S. Department of Defense
Command Sergeant Major Michael S Breasseale, USA (Ret.)
Pete Kent, O'Gontz Group

1730-1745 **Closing Remarks: The Way Ahead**

Michèle A. Flournoy, CSIS and POSOF Co-Director
Tom Donnelly, CSIS and POSOF Co-Director

1745 **Adjourn**

Annex B

2006 POSOF Conference Participants

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