

Special Operations



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17 July 2001

This document complements related discussion found in Joint Publications (JP) 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*; JP 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*; and JP 3-56.1, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*.

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FOREWORD

Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 2–7, *Special Operations*, joins the family of Air Force keystone publications of operational doctrine to guide the preparation and employment of Air Force Special Operations Forces (AFSOF). It builds upon its capstone publication, AFDD 2, *Organization and Employment of Aerospace Power*, presenting the fundamentals of what we airmen have learned as the best way to organize and fight at the operational level of war.

AFSOF provide aerospace power expertise and capabilities to United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and theater commanders in chief (CINCs) through both special operations and air components. AFDD 2–7, *Special Operations*, describes the support AFSOF provides to the Commander Air Force Forces (COMAFFOR) and/or the Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC). It also shows all airmen how AFSOF, as part of our Air Force aerospace team, are integrated with joint special operation efforts.

This operational doctrine document describes the best practices to fully leverage AFSOF in presenting the aerospace team to geographic and functional CINCs. It guides how we employ AFSOF to meet today's threats and challenges, and stands ready for those of the future. As the world changes, as the threat changes, and as we learn fresh lessons, our doctrine keeps pace. **By understanding the fundamentals documented here, while keeping an eye on the future, and adjusting properly—we will we remain ready to meet the challenges to come.**



MICHAEL E. RYAN
General, USAF
Chief of Staff

17 July 2001

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

This document has been prepared under the direction of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. It establishes doctrinal guidance for the employment of Air Force special operations forces (AFSOF) across the range of military operations from Major Theater War (MTW) to Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). As the Air Force's keystone document on special operations, it underpins commanders' planning and execution of AFSOF missions and forms the basis for organizing those forces.

APPLICATION

This document applies to all active duty, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, and civilian Air Force personnel. All those concerned with planning and executing Air Force and special operations missions should read and understand this document to establish a foundation for successful future application. This doctrine is authoritative but not directive; commanders are encouraged to exercise judgment in applying this doctrine to accomplish their missions.

SCOPE

Air Force Special Operations assets are used across the of spectrum military operations from MTW to MOOTW at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. AFSOF are airmen who "flex" the Air Force's special operations arm of America's aerospace power. They possess capabilities integral to the success of the joint force special operations component commander (JFSOCC), the Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC), and the Commander, Air Force Forces (COMAFFOR) in their conduct of aerospace operations. AFSOF are force multipliers and complement all joint forces in prosecuting the campaign. This document describes the airman's perspective of AFSOF, its appropriate mission areas, and its contribution to the Air Force's functions of aerospace power. Application of this document includes organization of AFSOF; planning, preparation, and execution of missions conducted by AFSOF; and operational-level considerations for AFSOF employment.

FOUNDATIONAL DOCTRINE STATEMENTS FOUND IN AFDD 2-7, *SPECIAL OPERATIONS*

- ✧ AFSOF is an umbrella term for those active and Reserve Component Air Force forces, designated by Title 10, United States Code and the Secretary of Defense, that are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations.
- ✧ AFSOF can respond quickly to NCA requirements.
- ✧ AFSOF are specially trained to be responsive to a broad range of political, cultural, and geographic considerations.
- ✧ AFSOF are flexible. They can accomplish political, economic, psychological, and military objectives.
- ✧ A single airman, either the COMAFFOR/JFACC or the JSOACC, will centrally control AFSOF.
 - ✧✧ When AFSOF are tasked to perform JFSOCC missions, C2 should be through the JSOACC.
 - ✧✧ When AFSOF are tasked to perform COMAFFOR/JFACC and JFSOCC missions, C2 will be at the discretion of the JFC and should be based on the weight of mission effect.
 - ✧✧ When AFSOF are tasked to perform COMAFFOR/JFACC missions, C2 should be controlled through the JFACC or COMAFFOR.
- ✧ AFSOF are inherently offensive in nature. They exploit enemy vulnerabilities to establish relative superiority at a given time and place.
- ✧ AFSOF is an asymmetric aerospace power function.
- ✧ AFSOF often utilize the element of surprise. The ability of AFSOF to revisit the targets has proven to be risky and ineffective.
- ✧ AFSOF are usually employed in small numbers relying more on efficiency of attack, surprise, and speed rather than overwhelming quantity.
- ✧ AFSOF are versatile. They can produce parallel effects.

CHAPTER ONE

THE AIRMAN'S PERSPECTIVE ON AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES (AFSOF)

Our forces, therefore, must fulfill a broader role—as a complement to our diplomacy—as an arm of our diplomacy—as a deterrent to our adversaries—and as a symbol to our allies of our determination to support them.

President John F. Kennedy

OVERVIEW OF AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

AFSOF supports national security strategy established by our nation's leaders. Successful examples range from their auspicious start supporting British ground troops in the China-Burma-India Theater during World War II, their clandestine involvement in striking a critical Iraqi command and control (C2) node at the beginning of DESERT STORM, the celebrated recovery of a downed airman during Operation ALLIED FORCE, to today's continuing operations worldwide.

AFSOF is an umbrella term for those active and Reserve Component Air Force forces, designated by Title 10, United States Code and the Secretary of Defense, that are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. Experiences, from the Mayaguez Incident to the failure of Operation EAGLE CLAW at Desert One, illustrated the need for a special operations (SO) mission-oriented air capability. The lessons learned—a requirement for Air Force airmen to fully integrate aerospace capabilities into special operations—was the genesis of AFSOF. The relationship has proven to be a two-way street, with SO benefiting from aerospace expertise and integration while the Air Force, as a whole, benefits from AFSOF technological and tactical innovations. The inherent conventional mission capabilities of AFSOF also add to the JFACC's aerospace power options. First and foremost, AFSOF are airmen who bring a distinct perspective in the precise application of aerospace capabilities in support of both Air Force and special operations forces (SOF) missions. AFSOF include specially equipped fixed-wing and vertical-lift aircraft, aircrews, special tactics teams, combat aviation advisory teams, and

support personnel specially trained to conduct a wide array of missions across the range of military operations.

This document details the doctrine of AFSOF developed by airmen, for airmen. It is based on historic practices and lessons learned from recent operations. It provides in-depth discussion of the airman's perspective on AFSOF to include: the principles of war; tenets of aerospace power and application to AFSOF; AFSOF mission areas; contributions to the Air Force functions of aerospace power; and the organization, planning, preparation, and execution of missions assigned to AFSOF. It cannot be all inclusive, for many uses of AFSOF are unique. Instead, it is meant to guide and provide a foundation for a commander's professional judgment. This document concludes with a list of recommended readings to further improve understanding of Air Force special operations. AFSOF doctrine is flexible and readily adaptable to respond to a dynamic strategic environment that demands AFSOF involvement in unilateral, joint, multinational, interagency, and cross-cultural operations.

Victory smiles upon those who anticipate the changes in the character of war, not upon those who wait to adapt themselves after the changes occur.

Giulio Douhet

Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, defines special operations (SO) as:

Operations conducted by specially organized, trained, and equipped military and paramilitary forces to achieve military, political, economic, or informational objectives by unconventional military means in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas. These operations are conducted across the full range of military operations, independently or in coordination with operations of conventional, nonspecial operations forces. Political-military considerations frequently shape special operations, requiring clandestine, covert, or low visibility techniques and oversight at the national level. Special operations often times differ from conventional operations in

degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets.

Historically, national security strategy requires a military SO capability that can quickly respond to National Command Authorities (NCA) direction across the full range of military operations. *AFSOF provide this quick response through aerospace power's unique characteristics: speed, range, precision, lethality, and freedom of maneuver.* AFSOF may be used against a wide range of adversaries, demonstrating flexibility in accomplishing both SO-specific and conventional missions. **AFSOF are highly trained to make them particularly responsive within a broad range of political, military, cultural, and geographic considerations.** *AFSOF are not substitutes for, but are complements to, conventional capabilities.* The small size, special equipment, and area-oriented training which characterize AFSOF make them useful in situations and environments where conventional military forces might be less appropriate, operationally or politically. For some missions, such as foreign internal defense (FID), AFSOF may be best suited to accomplish the mission because of their regional orientation, cross cultural skills, and experience in working with host nation (HN) or indigenous forces.

AFSOF APPLICATIONS OF THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR

The principles of war—unity of command, objective, offensive, mass, maneuver, economy of force, security, surprise, and simplicity—which apply to the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war, also apply to AFSOF. Airmen should understand how these principles apply to AFSOF, and commanders should use them to form and select courses of action. No single principle stands alone; they augment one another. The principles of war should be considered throughout the planning, preparation, and execution of operations.

Unity of Command

Unity of command ensures concentration of effort for every objective under one responsible commander. It emphasizes **that all efforts should be directed and coordinated toward a**

Principles of War

Unity of Command
Objective
Offensive
Mass
Maneuver
Economy of Force
Security
Surprise
Simplicity

common goal. *AFSOF command relationships and structures are established to maintain unity of command.* Coordination may be achieved by cooperation; however, it is best achieved doctrinally by vesting a single commander with the authority to direct all force employment in pursuit of a common objective. Depending on the specific missions and objectives, AFSOF may be attached to a variety of Service or functional component commanders. These include the Joint Forces Special Operations Component Commander (JFSOCC), separate or subordinate task forces (e.g., joint special operations task force [JSOTF] or joint psychological operations task force [JPOTF]), and/or the COMAFFOR/JFACC.

Objective

Every military operation should be directed toward a defined and attainable objective that contributes to strategic, operational, or tactical aims. In application, this principle refers to unity of effort. In a broad sense, this principle holds that political and military goals should be complementary and clearly defined. *AFSOF can accomplish political, economic, or informational objectives in addition to pure “military” objectives.* In conflicts ranging from MTW to MOOTW, AFSOF may be assigned objectives that lead directly to the accomplishment of national or theater-level objectives. Selecting appropriate objectives to assign to AFSOF requires careful use of operational risk management techniques and a clear understanding of both the capabilities and limitations of AFSOF.

Offensive

Offensive means acting rather than reacting to dictate the time, place, purpose, scope, intensity, and pace of operations. The initiative should be seized as soon as possible. *AFSOF are inherently offensive in nature. They seize the initiative by determining and exploiting enemy vulnerabilities to establish relative superiority at a given time and place.* AFSOF retain the initiative via careful target selection, innovative approaches to reach and depart objective areas, aggressive action, cover, and deception to produce flexibility to take new action more quickly than the enemy can react.

If I concentrate while he divides, I can use my entire strength to attack a portion of his. There, I will be numerically superior. Then, if I am able to use many to strike few at the selected point, those I deal with will be in dire straits.

Sun Tzu

Mass

The principle of mass calls for concentrating combat power at a decisive time and place to achieve a desired effect.

Concentrating military power is a fundamental consideration in all military operations. At the operational level, this principle suggests that superior, concentrated combat power is used



Concentrated firepower can create the effect of mass.

to achieve decisive results. *Mass is an effect, not simply overwhelming quantity, and it is achieved by aerospace forces through efficiency of attack.* Concentration of combat power relies on well-trained people and the mastery of tactics, timing, and weaponry. **AFSOF are usually employed in small numbers relying more on efficiency of attack than overwhelming with quantity. AFSOF concentrate their combat power at the decisive time and place for each specific objective, accomplish the mission quickly, and then withdraw before the enemy can react in force.** In addition to detailed intelligence and extensive planning common to other aerospace forces, AFSOF often require and greatly benefit from detailed rehearsals. The capability of aerospace forces to act quickly and mass effects intertwines the principle of mass with the next principle—maneuver.

Maneuver

The principle of maneuver calls for action to place the enemy in a position of disadvantage via the flexible application of combat power.

For the airman, this involves using the advantage of three-dimensional maneuver that is common to all aerospace assets. *The Air Force conducts*

“aerospace maneuver” at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels, and AFSOF contribute an important part to all three. AFSOF aerospace maneuver capabilities can complement operations of other aerospace forces, as well as enable attainment of relative advantage in operations conducted with surface maneuver forces. As with other aerospace forces, AFSOF are able to proceed directly to their objective areas without the need for large scale reaction to the enemy. *At the strategic level, AFSOF are expeditionary in nature. Their focused training and small initial logistics footprint allow them to deploy rapidly; ready for immediate action.* AFSOF are often deployed in advance of other forces to help prepare the battlespace for the arrival of follow on forces. However, since AFSOF are not structured for extended force-on-force engagements at the operational and tactical levels, AFSOF conduct aerospace maneuver by infiltrating and exfiltrating hostile and denied areas to achieve assigned objectives at the time, place, and manner unanticipated by the enemy.

Economy of Force

The principle of economy of force calls for the rational use of force by selecting the best mix of combat power. *At the operational level, this requires minimum effort be made towards secondary objectives that do not support the larger operational or strategic objectives.* Economy of force requires clearly articulated objectives, priorities, and a disciplined “strategy-to-task” approach to planning. *Like all aerospace power forces, AFSOF should remain focused on primary objectives.*



AFSOF personnel are few in number and should be used accordingly.

Security

The principle of security requires that friendly forces and their operations be protected from enemy action that could provide the enemy with unexpected advantage. Security enhances freedom of action by reducing the vulnerability of friendly forces. Security is a particular focus during peace support or crisis situations when forces

operate from austere and unimproved locations, in small units, or in crowded urban settings. AFSOF deploy to and operate in all these environments. Threats to security include individuals and groups as well as military or paramilitary units. Security is of critical importance to AFSOF, especially during operations in hostile or denied areas and during covert or clandestine missions. Mission success often depends on the ability to conceal the timing and/or method of attack. To maintain this security, AFSOF planning is often compartmented and stresses deception, concealment, and low visibility.

On the other hand, excessive security may cause the mission to fail for lack of coordination. Therefore, planning for AFSOF missions should balance security concerns with operational rehearsal (when required) and requirements to integrate with other forces. Security requires prudent risk management without undue caution. Commanders are responsible for resolving these conflicting demands and striking a balance between them during mission planning and execution.

Son Tay

Summer of 1970: North Vietnam was holding more than 470 American prisoners of war (POWs). Many were not held in a central compound but were scattered in small compounds in Hanoi and the surrounding area. Though difficult, perhaps impossible, to rescue POWs in the midst of Hanoi, it might be possible to pluck a significant number from an outlying compound. Early information confirmed the presence of 55 Americans at a small compound near the Son Tay citadel, 23 miles northwest of Hanoi.

Training for an assault began in August 1970. Only 56 Army Special Forces (SF) soldiers would be on the ground, but they would be integrated with an air armada of 116 aircraft. The Navy would create a diversion by attacking Haiphong. The raiding force itself included two C-130E (CT)s (now designated MC-130E COMBAT TALON) as pathfinders, five HH-53 helicopters, and one HH-3 helicopter escorted by five A-1 SKYRAIDERS. The helicopters would be refueled by two HC-130s prior to entering North Vietnam. There were also F-4s flying combat air patrol and F-105G WILD WEASELS for surface-to-air missile and antiaircraft artillery suppression. To ensure success, planners strove to have twice as many aircraft as were thought required.

Preparation included a four-phase training program, progressing from individual Service to joint activities using a building-block approach. It included development and refinement of new procedures and tactics. The C-130E(CT)s, for example, were not accustomed to flying near stall speed for long periods (necessary to allow the helicopters to stay in formation). Also, Army SF adopted Armson single-point sights, dramatically improving accuracy under low light conditions. Joint interoperability and full mission rehearsal were stressed to include alternate plans in case certain elements failed to arrive on time/on target.

The operation was executed on 20 November 1970, and although no prisoners were found, its execution was near flawless. Not one soldier or airman was killed nor seriously injured, including Navy and Air Force airmen involved with the deception and cover operations. In spite of the huge disappointment at not finding any POWs, the operation did have positive results for all POWs in North Vietnam. The raid caused the North Vietnamese to gather all POWs from the countryside and place them in camps in Hanoi, thereby allowing POWs to talk, to take care of each other, and to organize.

General John P. Flynn, the senior American POW, is quoted as saying, “It was the most magnificent operation of the war.” The Son Tay raid is considered a “text book case” on how to plan, prepare, and execute a joint special operation. Additionally, the Son Tay raid remains a model for integration of special operations and conventional forces. Integration was the enabling mechanism; the Mission Commander, Air Force General LeRoy Manor, was empowered by a letter from the CJCS [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of staff] stating that he was to be given any support requested. To institutionalize the “best practice” of integration, supportive doctrinal relationships and effective liaisons are required. The genesis for the doctrinal establishment of the JSOACC [joint special operations air component commander] and SOLE was Manor’s work in providing SOF with airpower employment expertise and gathering the complete SOF picture for integration back into conventional air operations. Airpower expertise is provided to the JFSOCC by the JSOACC. The SOF picture is integrated into the JFACC’s plan via the SOLE. The fact that more than two aircraft were used for each man on the ground at Son Tay was a harbinger of the extensive air support that marks modern SOF operations. It also highlights the need for education and training emphasizing these doctrinally recommended relationships.

Surprise

The principle of surprise leverages security by attacking in a time, place, or manner for which the enemy is unprepared. The speed and range of aerospace forces, coupled with their flexibility and versatility, make them particularly capable of achieving surprise. Aerospace forces can enhance and empower surface forces to achieve surprise. Surprise can be the fulcrum the commander uses to shift the balance of combat power, thus achieving success well out of proportion to the effort expended.



Surprise is critical to special operations.

Achieving surprise is a principal capability of AFSOF. AFSOF use surprise and speed to accomplish the mission before the enemy can react

effectively. Even when compromised, conventional forces may be strong and/or large enough to defeat the enemy in spite of its defenses. Due to their relatively small size, surprise is often key to AFSOF achieving relative superiority. They achieve surprise through timing, security, exploiting indirect approaches, concealment, deception, use of poor weather/visibility, and by taking creative and audacious action. To achieve surprise, AFSOF also often integrate cover stories, deception, and electronic warfare throughout planning, preparation, and execution.

...special operations forces succeed, in spite of their numerical inferiority, when they are able to gain relative superiority through the use of a simple plan, carefully concealed, repeatedly and realistically rehearsed, and executed with surprise, speed, and purpose.

William H. McRaven

Spec Op: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfares

Simplicity

The principle of simplicity reminds the commander and his staff to avoid unnecessary complexity in organizing, preparing, planning, and conducting military operations. This ensures that guidance, plans, and orders are as simple and direct as the objective will allow. Simple guidance allows subordinate commanders the freedom to creatively operate within their battlespace. This principle relates directly to the principles of objective and economy of force as well. With limited AFSOF resources, it's essential to keep plans and operations simple.

AFSOF do this by pursuing only the most essential objectives, thus reducing the number of forces involved and the time required in the objective area. Keeping plans and operations simple also allows AFSOF to adapt rapidly to changing situations.

AFSOF APPLICATIONS OF THE TENETS OF AEROSPACE POWER

The fundamental guiding truths of aerospace power employment are known as tenets and should be understood by every airman. *The tenets of aerospace power complement the principles of war. The tenets provide more specific considerations for aerospace forces, including AFSOF.* As with the principles of war, the tenets require informed judgment in application. The application of the principles and tenets are left to commanders'

judgement as they strive to craft the most effective employment of aerospace power for a given situation. The basics of these tenets—centralized control and decentralized execution, flexibility and versatility, synergistic effects, persistence, concentration, priority, and balance—are explained in AFDD 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*. The following is a discussion of how they are applied to AFSOF.

Centralized Control and Decentralized Execution

Centralized control and decentralized execution of aerospace forces are critical to force effectiveness. *AFDD 1, Air Force Basic Doctrine holds that aerospace power should be controlled by a single airman who maintains a broad strategic and/or theater perspective in prioritizing the use of limited aerospace assets to attain the objectives of all US forces across the range of operations. C2 arrangements for AFSOF are flexible, permitting effective accomplishment of missions. They work in concert with the C2 arrangements and planning for other aerospace forces that are also operating theater or joint operating area (JOA)-wide, to ultimately achieve the joint force commander's (JFC's) objectives.*

A JSOACC subordinate to the JFSOCC becomes the single airman responsible for AFSOF mission execution when they are performing SOF unique missions. The special operations liaison element (SOLE), provided by the JFSOCC to the JFACC, works in the joint air operations center (JAOC) to coordinate, deconflict, and integrate SO air and surface operations within the JFACC's battlespace. When performing missions for the JFACC or other components, specific command relationships will be determined by the individual component commander.

Regardless of assigned missions and C2 arrangements, it is critical that AFSOF are integrated into the air tasking order (ATO) and properly adhere to the airspace control order (ACO) to ensure operations are integrated and to prevent fratricide. Real-time coordination between AFSOF, COMAFFOR/JFACC, and any other forces operating in the deep battlespace is vital.

The concept of **decentralized execution** is just as central to the proper application of airpower as centralized control. Delegation of execution authority to responsible, capable lower level commanders is necessary for effective span of control and to foster initiative, situational responsiveness, and tactical flexibility. *For AFSOF, a JSOACC who is an airman,*

and subordinate commanders who are also airmen, ensure the intent of this concept remains intact. More specific information regarding organization of AFSOF and JSOACC and SOLE duties is contained in chapter three.

Flexibility and Versatility

Aerospace power is flexible and versatile. Although often used interchangeably, flexibility, and versatility are distinct in meaning.

Flexibility *allows aerospace forces to exploit mass and maneuver simultaneously to a far greater extent than other forces.* At the operational level, flexibility allows aerospace operations to shift from one campaign objective to another, quickly and decisively. *AFSOF exemplify the concept of flexibility by being organized, trained, and equipped to achieve a wide variety of missions.* For example: AFSOF gunships can be dynamically retasked from a rear area Air Base Defense role to a close air support (CAS) mission. Flexibility is a gunship's greatest asset due to its long loiter time and excellent communication, air refueling, and in flight replanning capabilities.

Versatility *in aerospace power is underscored by the fact it can be employed equally effectively at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.* Unlike other forms of military power, aerospace forces conduct parallel operations by employing globally with unmatched responsiveness to achieve strategic, operational, or tactical objectives simultaneously. Aerospace attacks can be simultaneous and continuous against a broad spectrum of targets, and with sufficient force to simply overwhelm an enemy. *The versatility of aerospace power, properly executed in parallel attacks, attains parallel effects, presenting the enemy with multiple crises so quickly that there is no way to respond (i.e., strategic paralysis).* *AFSOF, capable of producing parallel effects, exemplify the versatility of a aerospace power.*

For example: EC-130E Commando Solo aircraft can conduct psychological operations (PSYOP) by broadcasting over selected media. These messages can be targeted to influence the adversary's leadership, the will of its forces, and its population(s) in ways favorable to furthering US goals. In addition to targeting various segments of a population, the Commando Solo can also serve as an airborne communications link for friendly forces.

Synergistic Effects

The proper application of a coordinated force can produce “synergistic” effects: effects exceeding the individual contributions of the force components when employed separately. *AFSOF are capable of achieving synergistic effects through precise, coordinated application of various assets within their wide array of capabilities. The result can be cascading effects that result in disproportionate pressure on enemy leaders to comply with our national will.* As an aerospace force, AFSOF have the overwhelming ability to observe adversaries and counter their movements through speed and agility. This unique attribute can dictate the tempo and direction of operations from MOOTW through MTW.

Persistence

Aerospace forces are uniquely suited to persistent operations. Persistence suggests continued efforts. *Unlike surface power, aerospace power’s inherent speed and range allow its forces to visit and revisit wide ranges of targets nearly at will. Aerospace power does not have to occupy terrain or remain constantly in proximity to areas of operation to apply force upon them.* It is the intention of most modern aerospace operations to quickly attain objectives through swift, parallel, and decisive blows to the adversary’s operational and strategic centers of gravity. *AFSOF contribute to persistence of aerospace power by operating across the theater or JOA covertly and/or clandestinely beyond the reach and strike capabilities of other weapon systems and forces. However, given the character of most special operations, AFSOF’s ability to revisit the same targets has often proven to be ineffective and too risky.* Such operations may involve the interdiction of lines of communications, destruction or neutralization of enemy facilities, and attacks in support of, or in advance of, friendly forces.

Success flourishes only in perserverance . . . ceaseless, restless perserverance.

Baron Manfred Von Richtofen, “The Red Baron”

Concentration

Aerospace operations achieve concentration of purpose. The versatility of aerospace power makes it attractive in almost every combat

task. *Airmen should guard against the inadvertent dispersion of aerospace power often caused by high demand.* One of the most constant and important trends throughout military history has been the effort to concentrate overwhelming power at the decisive time and place. The modern application of this concept focuses upon concentrating combat power to achieve decisive effects at the proper time and place. The principles of mass and economy of force deal directly with concentrating the appropriate power at the right time and the right place (or places) to achieve the desired effects. With forces as flexible and versatile as aerospace forces, the demand for them often exceeds the available forces. Acquiescing to these demands normally results in the fragmentation (vice integration) of the aerospace effort in an attempt to fulfill too many demands. *This tenet could have been established with AFSOF high-demand, low-density assets in mind. They are employed within a chain of command most appropriate for the assigned tasks, ultimately enabling accomplishment of the JFC's objectives.*

Air power is indivisible. If you split it up into compartments, you merely pull it to pieces and destroy its greatest asset—its flexibility.

Field Marshall Montgomery

Priority

Aerospace operations must be prioritized. Given their flexibility and versatility, **demands for aerospace power will likely overwhelm commanders unless appropriate priorities are established.** *AFSOF are limited resources that require application where they can make the greatest contribution to the JFC's most critical and current priorities.*

Balance

Technologically sophisticated aerospace assets such as AFSOF will be available only in finite numbers; thus, balance is a crucial determinant for an aerospace commander. An aerospace commander is uniquely, and best suited to determine the proper theater-wide balance between offensive and defensive operations and proper strategic, operational, and tactical applications. Much of the skill of an air commander is reflected in the dynamic and correct balancing of the principles of war and the tenets of aerospace power to produce a synergistic effect. An air commander should balance combat opportunity, necessity, effectiveness, efficiency,

and impact on accomplishing assigned objectives against the associated risks.

Raid on Entebbe, 3 July 1976

On a Saturday evening, after flying over 2,200 miles from their homeland, four Israeli C-130s carrying an elite force landed at Entebbe, Uganda. Spending only 51 minutes on the ground, the small force surprised and overwhelmed a group of Palestinian terrorists and Ugandan soldiers, and rescued 106 hostages who had, only the Sunday before, been passengers aboard an aircraft hijacked while en route from Tel Aviv to Paris. Of the 35 who died, two were Israeli attackers and four were hostages; the rest were terrorists or soldiers supporting the terrorists.

Why was this counterterrorism mission such a stunning success? Offensive was seized and rapidly exploited by a force focused on a clear objective—get our people out alive. Security was maintained—though the eyes of the world were focused on the situation. Total surprise was achieved—attackers drove from the aircraft in a Mercedes similar to those driven by Ugandan officers, winning precious time as defenders failed to attack a symbol of authority. Detailed all-source intelligence ensured the force knew what to expect in the target area. After repeated rehearsals at a mockup of the target, the assault occurred with frightful speed; only three minutes elapsed between aircraft touchdown and terrorists' deaths. Though few in number and in the heart of an enemy land, the attackers had overwhelming superiority relative to the defenders at Entebbe.

In the end, the mission was feasible, the force was appropriate, and the needed resources were available. Lastly, Israeli leadership weighed the loss of military personnel, national prestige, as well as the risk of hostages/lives against the twin goals of gaining freedom for the hostages and striking a blow against terrorism. This mission only succeeded because they believed the outcome justified the risk—very real risk, which will always be remembered—the following day, the mission's name was changed to Operation JONATHAN, in honor of the brave officer (Jonathan Netanyahu, brother of a future prime minister) who died leading it.

CHAPTER TWO

AFSOF CONTRIBUTIONS TO AEROSPACE POWER

AIR FORCE CORE COMPETENCIES AND FUNCTIONS

Core competencies are at the heart of the Air Force's strategic perspective and its contribution to our nation's total military capabilities. These six core competencies (aerospace superiority, precision engagement, information superiority, global attack, rapid global mobility, and agile combat support) when applied, produce superior military capabilities. *They are the basic expertise that the Air Force brings to any activity across the range of military operations, whether as a single Service or in conjunction with the core competencies of other Services in joint operations. AFSOF exemplify the Air Force's core competencies.* The Air Force's core competencies form the basis of AFSOF's five mission areas. AFSOF can either conduct or support virtually all Air Force functions of aerospace power from which the core competencies stem, specified in detail in AFDD 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*. This chapter will discuss AFSOF's distinct contribution to these functions.

AFSOF MISSION AREAS

AFSOF mission areas closely parallel the core competencies of the Air Force. The mission areas represent the distinct contributions of AFSOF to the Air Force functions and represent the aerospace capabilities AFSOF bring to the joint special operations community. These mission areas also further define the Air Force's function of SO employment to assist the JFC's campaign objectives and the JFACC's joint air operations plan. A fuller description of SO employment, discussed in terms of how AFSOF mission areas support the Air Force functions, follows.

AFSOF Mission Areas

Precision Employment/Strike
Information Operations
AFSOF Mobility
Shaping the Battlespace
Agile Combat Support

Precision Employment/Strike

The AFSOF precision employment/strike mission area includes precise and responsive firepower and support. AFSOF precision employment/strike

ground elements and airborne platforms provide all weather weapons delivery and support (target designation, air traffic control, and drop zone [DZ] and landing zone [LZ] operations) across the full spectrum of conflict. The ability of aerospace forces to deploy globally and strike precisely provides force multiplication and minimizes collateral damage. Additionally, it allows the discriminate employment of asymmetric force and permits freedom of maneuver for supported forces. AFSOF's contribution to these capabilities, supported by their leading edge technologies and specialized skills, greatly expand the reach and combat capability of the JFC's forces. The following are examples of how AFSOF support precision employment/strike expressed in terms of aerospace power functions.

On 17 January 1991, 2 hours before the official H-Hour of Operation DESERT STORM, two flights of Army helicopters led by AFSOF MH-53s took off for the first strikes of the war. Twenty-two minutes prior to H-Hour, they destroyed two critical Iraqi radar-warning sites. Simultaneously, AFSOF special tactics team (STT) installed radar beacons along the Saudi-Kuwait-Iraqi borders to direct allied aircraft into the gaps of Iraqi early warning radar. The actions performed by AFSOF paved the way for the aerial onslaught that followed.

✧ Counterair

- ✧✧ By providing armed reconnaissance and/or direct action missions against high priority Integrated Air Defense System (IADS) targets.
- ✧✧ By inserting teams capable of kinetic and nonkinetic destruction, interruption, or degradation of C2 nodes.
- ✧✧ By conducting a range of missions against airfields from disruption of communications, navigation aids, and facilities to supporting actual seizures.

✧ Counterspace

- ✧✧ By penetrating ground-based space support facilities through covert, clandestine, or overt means to achieve desired effects.
- ✧✧ By destroying ground-based space support facilities.

✧ Counterland

- ✧✧ By providing terminal air control operations for a variety of air dropped precision-guided munitions (PGM) and CAS.

- ★★ By conducting interdiction missions requiring limited collateral damage.
- ★★ By striking targets that are difficult to identify due to concealment or movement.
- ★★ By providing long duration/concentrated CAS coverage as well as excellent troops in contact capability.
- ★★ By providing precision firepower that aids the commander in obtaining desired effects.

★ Countersea

- ★★ By delivering and directly applying force(s) to capture, degrade, or destroy enemy maritime capabilities.
- ★★ By conducting counter SOF maritime missions.

★ Strategic Attack

- ★★ By infiltrating/exfiltrating long-range direct action (DA) teams, deep in the battlespace to conduct operations integrated with or in support of JFC/JFACC operations.
- ★★ By providing force application to achieve a wide range and level of desired effects while limiting collateral damage.
- ★★ By providing real-time target observation and evaluation on targets to ensure effects are/were achieved.

★ Combat Search and Rescue

- ★★ By providing specially trained and equipped forces to the JFC's Joint Search and Rescue Center (JSRC) or to the JFACC's Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) to support planning and monitor execution of combat search and rescues (CSARs).
- ★★ By providing specially trained and equipped forces to conduct or support JSRC/RCC CSAR missions.
- ★★ By providing pararescue jumpers (PJs)—DOD's uniquely trained and equipped recovery specialists (see AFDD 2-1.6, *Combat Search and Rescue*).

★ Command & Control

- ★★ By maintaining and providing robust, low-profile, lightweight communication equipment for superior connectivity to commanders.
- ★★ By providing a ground and air picture prior to main force deployment, so AFSOF quick reaction, expeditionary capabilities can serve as the JFC's/JFACC's initial “eyes and ears”.
- ★★ By providing combat aviation advisors to allow the JFACC to effectively integrate and liaison with coalition air assets to maximize the combined air operations plan.

★ Navigation and Positioning

- ★★ By providing adverse weather delivery of personnel, navigation aids, and aircraft instrument approach equipment to establish high priority airheads.

★ Weather Services

- ★★ By providing meteorological support for DZ and LZ operations.
- ★★ By providing special operations weather teams (SOWT) to furnish critical weather and oceanographic support for Air Force, Navy, and Army SO

★ Other Considerations—Air/Surface Integration

- ★★ By providing a variety of means and methods to integrate COMAFFOR/JFACC forces and surface forces.
- ★★ These means and methods include, but are not limited to:
 - Assault zone reconnaissance, surveillance, establishment, and terminal control.
 - Combat search and rescue.
 - Combat casualty care and evacuation staging.
 - Terminal attack control and guidance.
 - Tactical weather observations and forecasting.

Rear area security and air base defense with excellent loiter capability, day and night sensors, redundant communications, and precise firepower.

Information Operations (IO)

The AFSOF IO mission area focuses on gaining, exploiting, defending, or attacking information or information systems to assist in obtaining and maintaining information superiority. AFSOF IO

may be a discrete mission, an implied task of another mission, or an enabling/supporting capability. The ability to support the commander with a fused, all source, and near-real-time presentation of the battlespace, while at the same time complicating the same for an adversary, is the essence of IO. Due to the increasing vulnerability of the international community to manipulation of information and the possible consequences of that interference, AFSOF IO may require allied involvement, interagency coordination, and NCA approval. **IO is always an implied task in AFSOF operations.**



A dedicated PSYOP platform, the EC-130E is operated by the Air National Guard.

The following are examples of how AFSOF employ IO.

★ Counterinformation/Information Warfare (IW)

- ★★ By broadcasting radio and television PSYOPS and counter propaganda messages to selected targets, thereby achieving tactical, operational, or strategic effects.
- ★★ By performing leaflet drop(s) to support PSYOPS or counter propaganda, or otherwise deliver information to displaced personnel, enemy fielded forces, enemy populations, etc.
- ★★ By performing physical attacks on selected targets to cripple enemy information systems.
- ★★ By leveraging deception to hide intention from enemy collection systems.

Information Operations (IO) in the Gulf

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

SR teams provided essential information to commanders in preparation for the ground offensive. Information included traffic suitability analysis and other details unavailable by any other means. On one IO/direct action mission, British commandos destroyed a buried fiber-optic communications cable about 35 kilometers from Baghdad.

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

- ★★ By using electronic warfare to degrade or disrupt enemy communications and weapon systems, thereby enhancing survivability.

★ Information-In-Warfare (IIW)

- ★★ By providing SOF medical elements to obtain real-time medical intelligence as well as future sources of contingency HN medical care.
- ★★ By operating advanced airborne sensor packages to provide various types of information.
- ★★ By infiltrating, operating, maintaining, and exfiltrating a variety of ground-based sensors to provide various types of information.
- ★★ By surveying a potential LZ/DZ for utilization by friendly forces.
- ★★ By providing infiltration, exfiltration, and resupply of SOF special reconnaissance (SR) teams/personnel to monitor targets vital to the JFC’s campaign plan.
- ★★ By providing advanced sensors and communication gear for armed reconnaissance, standoff, or clandestine surveillance.

- ★★ By providing weather teams to AFSOF and other component SOF arms to ensure the best weather information is provided to SOF teams and assets.
- ★★ By providing weather information from STTs for LZ/DZ operations.

AFSOF Mobility

The AFSOF mobility mission area includes the rapid global airlift of personnel and equipment through hostile airspace to conduct operations and to enable air mobility across the spectrum of conflict. AFSOF are an integral part of the Air Force team and provide unique capability to the JFC, JFACC, and JFSOCC. AFSOF deployment readiness and unique training contribute to their constant readiness status and to their ability to quickly respond. They often are the first forces to deploy on a global scale. *AFSOF mobility includes covert, clandestine, and overt tasks.* AFSOF capabilities accommodate all operational and physical environments—especially conditions of adverse weather, darkness, and denied territory. Operations may be conducted with a single aircraft or as part of a larger force package.

AFSOF contribution to rapid global mobility is not limited to aircraft but includes the key ground role played by STTs. While not a formal element of the global air mobility support system (GAMSS), STT play an integral part in rapid global mobility. They are the dynamic link between the surface forces and the air assets that deliver, sustain, and recover them.

An Air Force objective is to rapidly respond to developing situations, obtain an early assessment and prevent escalation by presence or support to the rapid deployment of right-sized follow on forces. STTs are uniquely trained and equipped to rapidly deploy and conduct airfield assessment and airfield surveys in austere and hostile environments. STTs are designated in the air traffic control and landing systems program guidance letter as the Air Force's initial provider of tactical airfield navigational/approach systems and terminal air traffic control (ATC) services. To this end, STTs maintain the capability to perform airfield selection, evaluation, survey, and establishment to include: en route and terminal navigation aids (for example, Mobile Microwave Landing System (MMLS) and portable tactical air navigation (TACAN)), ATC, and terminal control of close air support for air base ground defense. In addition to “first there” ATC and airfield management, STT also performs these functions for LZs

and DZs. As the airhead matures, STTs hand off these tasks for sustained operations to other elements. STTs make it possible for theater forces, aerospace expeditionary task forces (AETFs), and Lead Mobility Wings to seamlessly deploy and employ.



Air refueling of ASOF aircraft provides great mobility and flexibility.

Key to AFSOF mobility is the ability of rigorously trained AFSOF aircrews to successfully penetrate hostile airspace using specially designed aircraft. This capability creates a trade off between the weight of cargo or munitions AFSOF assets may carry versus the weight of defensive systems carried. AFSOF aircraft are designed to penetrate defended airspace, even if this lessens the allowable cargo load. This does not mean AFSOF aircraft can safely go anywhere and stay there indefinitely. It does mean that **AFSOF personnel, flying AFSOF aircraft, can go places where others might be at greater risk.** The following are examples of how AFSOF support rapid global mobility and global attack expressed in terms of aerospace power functions.

★ Airlift

- ★★ By providing limited self deployment.
- ★★ By tailoring deployment and employment support of forces to, from, and in the battlespace.
- ★★ By providing long-range infiltration, exfiltration, and resupply of forces in hostile and denied territory.
- ★★ By supporting AETF deployment with airlift aircraft and crews trained and equipped for self-protection.
- ★★ By supporting AETF deployment with STTs.
- ★★ By selecting, evaluating, surveying, and establishing airfields including en route and terminal navigation aids (MMLS and portable tactical air navigation [TACAN]) for COMAFFOR/JFACC forces.

- ★★ By providing adverse weather delivery capability for personnel, navigation aids, and aircraft instrument approach equipment to establish high priority airheads.
- ★★ By preparing air bases, LZs, and austere or expeditionary airfields where ATC for visual flight rules (VFR) and limited instrument flight rules (IFR) must be established in support of AETF.
- ★★ By providing ATC and landing systems capable initial airfield operations (ATC and airfield management) until the tanker airlift control element (TALCE) and conventional ATC follow-on forces assume those functions
- ★★ By providing terminal attack control of CAS for air base ground defense.
- ★★ By providing organic evacuation to points where conventional airlift/aeromedical evacuation units are located.

★ Air Refueling

- ★★ By providing air refuelable vertical lift and fixed-wing aircraft, thereby greatly increasing flexibility and range.
- ★★ By providing forward arming refueling points which have the ability to refuel and arm vertical lift and fixed-wing assets at unimproved airfields.
- ★★ By augmenting conventional rescue units with refueling assets.

★ Other Considerations

- ★★ By providing a variety of means and methods to support rapid global mobility and global attack, AFSOF is a key enabler to getting forces to and from the fight.
- ★★ These additional means and methods include the following:
 - Personnel recovery and battlefield trauma care.
 - Tactical weather observations and forecasting.
 - Coalition liaison to aid in forward basing and integration with HN air assets.
 - Promote safety and interoperability between US forces and coalition partners.

Shaping the Battlespace

Part of AFSOF's contribution to shaping the battlespace is forward presence and engagement. **This includes the training, advising, assisting, and assessing of foreign aviation organizations** to integrate, employ, sustain, and defend their resources during internal conflict, regional crisis, and war. In addition, this mission area includes exercise activity outside the continental United States. It also includes, AFSOF interaction as part of and with other US forces involved in air expeditionary operations, peacetime operations, and support to regional commanders in chief (CINCs') in-extremis forces. Forward presence and engagement include advising and assisting US theater commanders to determine the capabilities of forces within their area of responsibility (AOR), to include the interaction between civil and military organizations. The scope of this mission area includes post-hostility operations requirements that follow contingencies.

Combat Aviation Advisors

- ★★ Conduct local or regional assessments of foreign aviation forces' capabilities to employ and sustain aviation resources.
- ★★ Make recommendations to JFACC regarding capability of foreign aviation units to support combined air operations plan objectives.
- ★★ Promote safety and interoperability between US forces and coalition partners.
- ★★ Act as an aerospace power force multiplier by developing and executing tailored training programs to increase the tactical effectiveness of HN aviation resources in support of CINC's objectives.
- ★★ Facilitate area air defense coordination via JFC's area air defense commander (AADC) battlestaff and airspace deconfliction via JFC's airspace command authority (ACA) staff.
- ★★ Provide assistance to aviation forces in direct participation of FID, coalition support (CS), unconventional warfare (UW), humanitarian relief/assistance, and disaster relief.
- ★★ Provide JFACC liaison to coordinate, deconflict, and integrate foreign aviation forces supporting multinational air operations.

Special Ops forces were the glue that held the coalition together.

General H. Norman Schwarzkopf
USA, Command in Chief
US Central Command

Agile Combat Support (ACS)

ACS provides the foundation for, and is the enabler of, the AFSOF mission areas. It includes the actions taken to ready, sustain, and protect AFSOF assets, personnel, and capabilities throughout the spectrum of warfare. The combat support process involves five underlying principles: responsiveness, survivability, sustainability, time definite resupply, and information integration. Additionally it supports the unique contributions of aerospace power: speed, flexibility, versatility, and global reach. The following disciplines contribute to AFSOF ACS.

- ★ **Civil Engineering:** Develop, operate, sustain, and protect facilities, equipment, and personnel.
- ★ **Communications and Information:** Combat-ready communications and information systems, services, people and infrastructure to execute AFSOF operations.
- ★ **Intelligence Support:** Implementation of the intelligence preparation of the battlespace (IPB) methodology, including personnel, equipment, and training required to provide the operator mission-tailored intelligence data and analysis—from planning to post-execution.
- ★ **Logistical Support:** Maintain the mission readiness of AFSOF, including aircraft maintenance, supply, transportation, logistics planning and contracting functions required to support all AFSOF operations.
- ★ **Medical Support:** Medical and dental support to deploying and deployed AFSOF and other command-directed beneficiaries (joint/combined SOF, combat air forces (CAF), other joint/combined conventional forces, and civilians), including targeted medical screening, surveillance, intelligence, prevention, diagnosis, treatment, evacuation, and human performance enhancement, in remote, primitive, permissive/semipermissive environments under all conditions.

- ★ **Operations Support:** Provide initial/upgrade training, mission planning, mission rehearsal, ground, and continuation training for personnel—deployed, deploying, or at home station—to ensure a combat ready force structure. This is accomplished through formal and informal courses, mission planning systems, fixed-base and desktop simulators, life support training and equipment, and a synthetic battlespace for aircrews, maintenance, and ground personnel to develop their skills in an environment capable of simulating a wartime scenario.
- ★ **Security Forces Support:** Ensure a safe and threat-free environment for AFSOF and support global engagement across the spectrum of conflict to include antiterrorism, air base defense, combat weapons (lethal/nonlethal), force protection, military working dog, and physical security/resource protection.
- ★ **Space Operations:** Integrate space capabilities throughout SOF. Educate and train SOF on existing space products, capabilities, and hardware to support mission planning and execution. Ensure space operators understand the unique requirements necessary to provide tailored global support for current operations or future capability development.
- ★ **Weather Support:** Provide weather-related data to support the SOF mission, including support to both the Army special operations forces (ARSOF) and AFSOF operators. This includes personnel, equipment, and training required to provide to the operator all weather data, climatology, weather observations, electro-optical predictions, solar information, and weather forecasts needed from planning phase to post-execution.
- ★ **Legal Support:** Provide decision makers with the information and analysis to evaluate options, assess risks, and make informed decisions within the bounds of international and domestic law. Advocate, negotiate, mediate, and litigate to preserve command prerogatives. Educate airmen on responsibilities under domestic, international, and specific host-nation law. Provide airmen with relevant and responsive readiness programs including personal legal assistance, preventive law, and claims. Assist commanders in fielding a disciplined force by administering a military justice program—including area defense counsel services—that fairly addresses misconduct and deters wrongdoing.

CHAPTER THREE

COMMAND, CONTROL, AND ORGANIZATION

COMMAND AND CONTROL (C2)

AFSOF are organized to rapidly assemble and employ tailored forces capable of functioning both synergistically with each other and complementarily with other aerospace and surface forces in unified efforts. Whether operating within the context of the theater SOF efforts or in conjunction with the JFACC's joint air operations plan, AFSOF organization provides versatility and flexibility for the precise application of aerospace power.

Because AFSOF retain an inherent capability to perform both traditional aerospace power and SO-unique missions, they may be tasked to support one or more components of a joint force during the same campaign. The JFC apportions AFSOF as needed. Four situations exist which should guide C2 relationships for AFSOF:

- ★ AFSOF conducting JFSOCC missions: When AFSOF are tasked to perform JFSOCC missions, C2 should be exercised through the airman responsible for executing the air portion of the SOF campaign, the JSOACC.
- ★ AFSOF conducting COMAFFOR/JFACC and JFSOCC missions: When AFSOF are tasked to perform both COMAFFOR/JFACC and JFSOCC missions, C2 arrangements are at the discretion of the JFC, and should be based on the weight of mission effort.
- ★ AFSOF conducting COMAFFOR/JFACC missions: When AFSOF are tasked to perform COMAFFOR/JFACC missions, C2 should be exercised through the JFACC or COMAFFOR.
- ★ COMAFFOR/JFACC supporting JFSOCC objectives: When conventional forces are tasked to support AFSOF performing JFSOCC missions, C2 of conventional forces requiring detailed integration and/or participation in SOF mission rehearsals should be exercised by the JSOACC if he has the C2 capability. Otherwise, the COMAFFOR/JFACC will exercise C2 of conventional forces and coordinate with the JSOACC/JFSOCC.

During early campaign planning and prior to the deployment of forces, the JFACC should identify and inform the JFC of the SO forces required to execute JFACC missions. These forces can then be identified by the JFC in his request for forces to the NCA and be attached or put in a supporting role as appropriate. During campaign planning and execution the JFACC presents apportionment recommendations to the JFC. These recommendations may include AFSOF not under the direct control of the JFACC but required to execute the JFACC's mission.

As the campaign progresses, the JFACC will continue to make apportionment recommendations to the JFC. It is likely that the requirements for AFSOF operating in support of the JFACC will change. These changes should be reflected in the JFACC's apportionment recommendations to the JFC. The established command relationships should remain flexible enough to adapt to the situation as the campaign progresses.

Whether operating under control of the COMAFFOR/JFACC or the JFSOCC, SO missions are integrated into other air activities supporting the theater campaign. Integration is crucial because the JFACC and the JFSOCC normally share common operational areas, and their assets routinely operate in the deep battlespace. SOF aviation and surface assets are integrated closely in all joint air operations, from planning through execution. To ensure this, the JFSOCC provides the JFACC a SOLE to coordinate, deconflict, and integrate SOF operations, strategy, and plans with JFACC forces.

THE JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS AIR COMPONENT (JSOAC)

The JSOAC normally resides within a JSOTF or JFSOC and provides C2, operations, maintenance, weather, communications, medical care, and SOF-specific intelligence for AFSOF and attached forces. Combat support that is not SOF-specific is provided by the COMAFFOR. The JSOAC is responsible for planning and executing SOF air missions for the JSOTF or JFSOC, in accordance with the latest versions of the ATO, ACO, special instructions (SPINS), and other relevant JAOC products. **The JSOAC is also responsible for consolidating and tracking requests for SOF air support (CAS, electronic warfare, suppression of enemy air defenses, etc.) and transmitting SOF inputs to the ATO, ACO, and SPINS through or in coordination**

with the SOLE (depending on the specific theater of operations or joint task force (JTF) command arrangements).

The JSOAC is led by the JSOACC. **The JSOACC's responsibilities closely parallel those of the JFACC, but only as they relate to SO. The JSOACC complements the JFACC and is not a competitor to the JFACC.** When tasked, JSOACC makes forces available to support COMAFFOR/JFACC requirements (STT, CSAR, CAS, etc.). *For SOF activities, the JSOACC is the single spokesperson for all SOF aviation matters and responsible for C2s.* The JSOACC will be the commander with the greatest capability to plan, exercise C2, and support joint SO aviation activities. The JSOACC supports the JSOTF or JFSOC with aerospace capabilities and employment expertise, and advises the JFACC on SOF aerospace employment in conventional roles. The JSOACC is responsible for ensuring that the SOLE is provided the information it needs to integrate AFSOF and SO aviation activities with other air activities. The JSOACC is also responsible for ensuring AFSOF and SO aviation operators have and follow the latest versions of the ATO, ACO, SPINS, and other relevant JAOC products.

THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS LIAISON ELEMENT (SOLE)

The SOLE is provided by the JFSOCC to the JFACC and resides in the JAOC. The SOLE works for the JFSOCC and serves as his liaison staff. JFACC and JFSOCC missions range throughout the entire JOA. Therefore, whether operating autonomously or in conjunction with conventional forces, SOF aviation and surface assets must be closely integrated into all joint air operations—from planning through execution—to provide coordination, deconfliction, and to prevent fratricide. Integration is crucial since air assets and SOF are the only forces that normally operate deep in enemy territory. All planning and execution conducted by the JSOACC must be coordinated with the JFSOCC and the SOLE.

The senior SOLE representative places SOF ground and air liaison officers throughout JAOC divisions. Liaison officers must possess the credibility and authority to represent their commanders on time-sensitive and critical issues. In addition to AFSOF fixed-wing and vertical-lift operators, SOLE liaison officers may include SF, Army special operations aviation (rotary and fixed wing), Navy sea-air-land (SEAL)

team members, STTs, combat aviation advisory team (CAAT) members, SO weather personnel, space operators, intelligence personnel, targeteers, airspace controllers, logisticians, and operational administrators. These liaisons are provided to the JFACC and reside in the JAOC's strategy division, combat plans division, combat operations division, and other locations as needed. The SOLE deploys to the established, alternate, or emerging theater JAOC, as required. A "standard" SOLE consists of 43 personnel; however every SOLE is tailored as needed. A complete SOLE may not be required for a small-scale contingency or when the JFSOCC and/or the JSOAC is collocated with the JFACC.

The SOLE integrates all SOF air and surface operations with joint air operations via the JFACC's ATO. A critical role of the SOLE is to prevent fratricide through shared asset coordination and deconfliction. The SOLE must consider airborne fire support and reconnaissance, C2 platforms, aerial refueling, as well as deconfliction of deep battlespace operations. Specific SOLE duties include operations, plans, airspace control, special tactics, CSAR, intelligence, weather, space support, logistic, and administrative liaison activities. Specific functions include ATO and ACO generation, real time mission support within the JAOC, operations and intelligence support for targeting, combat airspace control for prevention of fratricide, coordination with special plans functions, coordination with the JSRC, plus administration. The SOLE also assists in the deconfliction of joint special operations areas (JSOAs) and unconventional warfare (UW) operating areas with the JFACC and JAOC. The SOLE ensures that all SOF targets, teams, and air missions are coordinated, deconflicted, and properly integrated at all planning and execution phases.

The senior SOLE representative proactively seeks JFSOCC guidance and approval to contribute to joint air operations in four broad areas. First, SOF can act as an economy of force measure, striking targets that allow joint air to strike higher priority targets. Second, SOF may be able to conduct surgical operations beyond the capabilities of joint air forces (e.g., against weapons of mass destruction [WMD] production or storage facilities inaccessible to joint air due to environmental or dispersal concerns). Third, because of unique training and multiple air/ground combat power delivery capabilities, SOF may combine with joint air operations in a synergistic attack (e.g., terminal guidance operations). Finally, SOF may enhance joint air operations with specialized personnel and platform capabilities to assist in locating deep targets.

AFSOF FORCE PRESENTATION

AFSOF is by its very nature expeditionary and organizes as scalable, task-oriented, tailored forces to accomplish assigned tasks, specific objectives, or effects. AFSOF present forces in various methods and components, to accomplish expeditionary objectives.

By presenting forces in this manner the principle of unity of command is achieved and maintained.



AFSOF present forces in a variety of sizes based on mission needs.

Special Operations Expeditionary Wing (SOEW). The SOEW is normally composed of a special operations wing or a wing slice. The SOEW is composed of the wing command element and appropriate groups. It is attached to a COMAFFOR, JSOTF, JSOACC, or JTF depending upon size, duration, and nature of the operation. The SOEW may be composed of units from different wings, but where possible, is formed from units of a single wing.

Special Operations Expeditionary Group (SOEG). The SOEG is an independent group. The SOEG is normally the lowest command echelon of forces reporting directly to a COMAFFOR, JSOTF, JSOACC, or JTF.

Special Operations Expeditionary Squadron (SOES). **The squadron is the basic fighting unit of the US Air Force.** Squadrons are configured to deploy in support of crisis action requirements. However, an individual squadron is not designed to conduct independent operations; it requires support from other units to obtain the synergy needed for sustainable, effective operations. As such, **an individual squadron or squadron element should not be presented by itself without provision for appropriate support and command elements.** If a single operational squadron or squadron element is all that is needed to provide the desired operational effect (e.g., an element of MC-130s performing humanitarian operations), **it should deploy with provision for commensurate support and C2 elements.** The SOES is normally subordinate to a SOEG or SOEW. In some operations, not all support and C2 elements need to deploy

forward with the operational squadron. Some may be positioned “over the horizon,” constituting capabilities provided through reachback. A single squadron or squadron element may deploy without full support elements if it is planned to augment a larger unit, and can obtain necessary support from that unit.

Expeditionary Elements below Squadron Level. In addition to expeditionary wings, groups, and squadrons, the Air Force can deploy elements below the squadron level for specific, limited functions. These include individuals and specialty teams such as STT, CAAT, and security forces, etc. They may deploy independently of other Air Force units, often to remote locations, and may operate directly with other Services. For ADCON purposes, these elements should normally be attached to the commander of a recognizable Air Force entity in the region. Examples of such deployed elements might be a psychological operations team augmenting a Joint Psychological Operations Task Force (JPOTF) or an STT augmenting a predominately surface force.

Combat Aviation Advisory Team (CAAT). CAATs are AFSOF teams specifically trained and equipped to provide advisory assistance in the interrelated areas of FID and coalition support. They are specifically tailored to assess, advise, and train foreign aviation forces in air operations employment and sustainability. These teams support the geographic CINCs primarily by facilitating the integration and interoperability of friendly and allied aviation forces supporting joint, combined, or multinational operations. Additionally, they directly support the JFACC’s joint air operations plan to ensure appropriateness of air tasks assigned to coalition partners.

CHAPTER FOUR

AFSOF PLANNING, PREPARATION, AND EXECUTION

MISSION PREPARATION CONSIDERATIONS

AFSOF may be tasked to perform missions for which they are either the best suited among available forces or the only force available. When assigned a mission by a controlling headquarters, that mission becomes the focus of the assigned unit. Under these circumstances, AFSOF provide the tasking commander with a candid assessment of its capabilities, limitations, and risks associated with the mission.

AFSOF missions are often high-risk operations, have limited windows of execution, and require first-time success. Commanders must evaluate the appropriateness of AFSOF for a specific mission, the attendant risk, and the potential adverse affect of mission failure. Given the limited size and sustainability of AFSOF, adequate support is vital to the success of the mission and must be properly planned for. The following should be given consideration when planning, preparing, and executing AFSOF missions:

Security

Operations security (OPSEC) and physical security are vitally important to AFSOF—from initial planning stages to force recovery stages of a special operation. Mission-critical information and OPSEC indicators should be tightly controlled to prevent the adversary from deriving or collecting information that would compromise the mission or allow the adversary to act against AFSOF. From secure training sites to secure employment bases, the small, tailored AFSOF should be shielded from the attention of hostile intelligence collectors.

AFSOF equipment and personnel should be afforded levels of force protection that allow uninterrupted mission planning and execution. Special arrangements should be made to control OPSEC indicators and inadvertent release of information. For example, communications should be secure, disciplined (emissions control), and discrete (low probabilities of detection and interference). Effective planning and coordinating can ensure information is adequately controlled, while ensuring access to information, equipment, and activities necessary for

flexible operations. Additionally, IO vulnerability assessments should be accomplished to decrease the total operations signature and ensure mission commanders are aware of mission risks.

Aerospace forces are most vulnerable on the ground. Thus, air base defense is an integral part of AFSOF deployments. AFSOF provide in-place and deployable air base defense forces who are organized, trained, and equipped to undertake force protection missions. During periods of low-or mid-level threat (Level I or II), air base defenders have prime responsibility for force protection—from attackers attempting close attack with penetrating forces to stand-off attack.

During periods of high-level threat (Level III), air base defenders depend on support from rear area security response forces (from other components or host-nation forces) to ensure physical security.

Communications

AFSOF communications support falls into two categories: C2 communications and mission support. Communications for C2 deal with operation and execution. The sensitivity of AFSOF can require direct communications connectivity from the NCA, to the JFC, and directly to the executing unit. Mission support communications support planning, intelligence, logistics, and other functions. AFSOF contain, and normally require, dedicated communications specialists and equipment to provide a rapidly deployable communication capability. AFSOF organic communications capabilities can greatly aid the COMAFFOR/JFACC in maintaining connectivity to his forces. This is particularly true in the early phases of the crisis, when AFSOF are often the first to deploy.

Communications are critical to mission success. *Ideally, systems should provide alternative methods of communication in case of equipment failure, adverse atmospheric conditions (propagation), or man-made interference, etc.* However, commanders should consider actions to be taken with and without communications during all phases of the mission. Communications should provide connectivity with other components. Additionally, computer systems should be interoperable among supporting organizations.

To enhance deployability and reliability, AFSOF communication equipment is designed to be lightweight, small, secure, jam resistant,

survivable, maintainable, and interoperable. Organic communications should include intelligence communications channels to receive “sensitive” compartmented information which may have an impact on mission planning, targeting, evasion and escape, threat reaction forces, and ultimately even mission success.

Intelligence

AFSOF planning and execution are intelligence intensive, timely, and detailed. Tailored, all-source intelligence is vital in support of AFSOF. All source-intelligence should be broad in scope, yet minutely detailed. Intelligence collection and production agencies should respond rapidly to identified needs before and during mission planning and mission execution. Intelligence requirements for AFSOF are similar to those of other air components, though the degree of detail is frequently greater. Also, the nature of the objective may require different, tailored support. For instance, AFSOF may need intelligence to avoid enemy forces, where other forces may wish to engage those forces.

Commanders should identify intelligence information requirements as early as possible to support anticipated and probable missions. This ensures that collection, production, and dissemination agencies can provide the critical intelligence needed. Commanders should use all-source intelligence (collection) from both organic and external intelligence sources for SO. Organic collection capabilities include aircrew members, local, and HN personnel, AFSOF airborne sensors (infrared, radar, and low light television recorders), STTs, special operations weather teams (SOWTs), and attached ground personnel.

External sources of intelligence information include the theater J-2 and the associated Joint Intelligence Center or Joint Analysis Center, theater Army, Navy, and Air Force units as well as any allied units. National level sources of intelligence include the Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, National Imagery and Mapping Agency, the Department of State, the Department of Energy, and the various national intelligence centers.

While some of the information collected by intelligence sensors and sources can be used directly in a near real time mode, most should be processed and interpreted to provide the basic intelligence needed to execute SO missions. AFSOF intelligence personnel have the responsibility to review, collate, integrate, and utilize intelligence products from

external collection and production agencies to support AFSOF operations. The resulting intelligence products should support:

- ★ SOF mission folders.
- ★ Mission planning and rehearsal.
- ★ Escape and evasion plans for all missions.
- ★ Combat tactics and concepts of employment based on expected threat scenarios.
- ★ Mission execution.
- ★ Combat assessment.

Mayaguez Incident

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

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

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

This rescue special operation highlights points made elsewhere in this document. Intelligence is key to SO—all source intelligence must be readily available and regularly exercised by SO planners. Joint teams conducting SO must train together regularly and do detailed mission rehearsals to be effective. When deciding how quickly to act, planners must weigh the advantages of further preparation against the advantages of a quick reaction. Finally, operations against foes of uncertain strength must include armed escort in the force package.

Post mission reports on organically collected intelligence, target area analysis, and intelligence assessments may be constrained by the sensitivity of many types of SOF missions. Depending on the sensitivity of the mission, commanders should report data either through special access or routine intelligence reports or channels, as appropriate.

Mission Rehearsal

Rehearsal of special operations is critical to their success. Often, repeated rehearsal of certain mission elements is necessary. This

is because both personnel and essential tasks differ from mission to mission and because of the possible strategic implications of these missions. Because each SO is unique,

each operation may bring together a group of specialists who have worked together infrequently or never at all. In addition, because each operation is unique, the specific tasks required for success may have never been practiced together or integrated in the required sequence. Through rehearsal, a plan's flaws are discovered, and its options are tested. Simply put, personnel working together for the first time and doing something they have never done together, perhaps with strategic level implications, is unsound. *Special operations usually require rehearsal, because there is rarely an opportunity to repeat the mission if the first attempt fails.* The requirement for a rehearsal can present challenges when operating with the JFACC forces. The JFACC operates on a 72-hour ATO cycle. The rehearsal may increase the ATO cycle for SOF missions and JFACC support of SOF missions to 96 hours (or more). The SOLE will coordinate out-of-cycle ATO requests.



Repeated and realistic dress rehearsals make success more certain.

Four brave men who do not know each other will not dare to attack a lion.

Four less brave men, but knowing each other well, sure of their reliability and consequently mutual aid, will attack resolutely.

Ardant Du Picq

Logistics

The interrelationship among tactics, strategy, and logistics is especially critical to AFSOF where the technological edge may offset enemy defenses and sustainment may provide vital insurance against the unexpected. The Air Force component is responsible for providing Service common logistics support to AFSOF. When



AFSOF often requires logistics support from conventional forces.

deployed, **AFSOF are normally supported by the theater COMAFFOR** unless otherwise provided for by directives.

AFSOF should provide sustainment requirements to the Air Force component logisticians during both deliberate and crisis action planning. This is necessary to ensure requirements are included in the operations plan or operations order time-phased force and deployment data (TPFDD). Requirements can then be sourced by the logistics agencies with visibility in the Joint Operations Planning and Execution System and distributed through the Joint Theater Distribution System. Coordination of the AFSOF logistics support concept with the Air Force component logisticians, and early identification of requirements, are key to responsive sustainment support. If the theater COMAFFOR cannot satisfy the AFSOF sustainment requirements, then the theater CINC may direct another Service to provide this support.

AFSOF should have the ability to execute time sensitive, discrete deployments. *A reduced deployed logistics footprint can enhance both the timely response and the security of an operation.* However, logisticians also balance support requirements provided by HN or contracting with the security/OPSEC requirements of the mission. In addition to speed, the system used to mobilize and deploy AFSOF should be able to function in an environment where OPSEC precludes normal predeployment coordination. This heightened security environment may require significant tailoring of established mobilization procedures at the unit level. *AFSOFs day-to-day activities should closely resemble its deployment processing activities.* AFSOF logisticians balance security requirements with the size of the logistics footprint.

Highly specialized airplanes operating in small numbers should be adequately supported by readiness spares packages. These packages should be maintained at sufficient levels to ensure a quick response and sustained operating capability for short duration contingencies. A broken airplane that generates out of the ordinary communications to request maintenance parts can ruin an otherwise perfect OPSEC plan, or worse, result in mission failure.

Weather

AFSOF need accurate and timely weather support during all phases of planning. The US Air Force has established the SOWT as the basic element designed to provide critical weather and oceanographic support for Air Force, Navy, and Army SOF. Team composition is scenario dependent and generally consists of observation, forecasting, and staff weather services to deployed SOF.

Space Support

Space systems support AFSOF across the range of military operations, from initial planning through mission execution until force recovery. Space assets provide assistance with communications, positioning and navigation, intelligence, missile warning, and weather. Traditional uses include the global positioning system for precise all weather navigation and communications satellites for secure voice, data, and intelligence broadcasts. Satellite imagery and electronic intelligence can also be used for mission route planning, mission rehearsal, and objective area operations.

Military Deception

Commanders and operations planners should **consider incorporating military deception into battle plans and individual missions at the beginning of the planning process** to support combat objectives and to enhance the overall probability of mission success. Early implementation is the key to deception success. In many cases the groundwork can be started before SOF arrive in theater. Military deception helps a commander attain operational security and surprise by causing an adversary to misallocate combat, combat support, or intelligence resources in time, place, or quantity. Military deception planning processes parallel and complement the normal sequence of operations planning actions;

therefore, military deception planners should be involved in all phases of execution planning.

In no other professions are the penalties for employing untrained personnel so appalling or irrevocable as in the military.

General Douglas MacArthur

Training

AFSOF place extraordinary demands on assigned personnel. Demanding tasks require knowledgeable, trained individuals. Most AFSOF weapon systems and their associated training requirements are unique within the US Air Force. To ensure combat readiness, AFSOF are trained to meet their most demanding standards. To complement training, AFSOF often use mission planning and rehearsal devices to enhance survivability and mission effectiveness.

Legal

Depending on the situation, execution authority may rest with an on scene commander or the NCA. Consequently, it is important that all participants in an AFSOF operation have an adequate appreciation for the legal considerations of the mission. Legal advice begins during training and continues throughout mission planning and mission execution. Training for AFSOF should extend beyond the required legal briefings conducted annually for all personnel and include relevant US, international, and operations law, with particular attention to the law of armed conflict (LOAC) and human rights issues. Failure to comply with these laws and the rules of engagement could bring discredit upon the United States, subject the violator to prosecution under US law or the Uniform Code of Military Justice, possibly deny legal protection to AFSOF personnel in the event of their capture or detention, and even expand the scope of the conflict. During actual operations, the commander and staff should have access to, and seek, qualified legal advice. Commanders should ensure legal professionals have access to the same information that is going to decision makers in order to properly advise them of all aspects of an operation. As AFSOF deploy with a small footprint, the deployed judge advocates assigned to those staffs will likely not be AFSOF assets. The AFSOF commander should anticipate issues on which he might require AFSOF legal support prior to deployment because, although the legal professionals attached to the joint air operations center may employ legal

expertise to control and exploit the legal environment across the full spectrum of operational missions, they might not have AFSOF experience or access to SOF-specific classified programs.

The Air Force Code of Professional Responsibility requires judge advocates to give counsel to commanders performing their official duties and on other matters, such as in the civil affairs arena, including potential social, political, and economic implications of their decisions. Judge advocates may act as civil affairs/liaison with local authorities to implement favorable agreements that smooth the process of introducing forces or allowing them to transit foreign countries.

Special operations during a crisis may take place in complicated political and legal environments. Commanders and their legal advisors must work closely with ambassadors and other diplomatic representatives of the US and its allies. Legal professionals also may represent the commander in discussions with host-nation officials and representatives of governmental organizations.

Medical

AFSOF medical support requirements depend on the number of supported personnel, their location, the military situation, and access to existing medical facilities. AFSOF missions often test the limits of personal endurance. AFSOF personnel often operate from areas where the **lack of preventive medicine could result in mission degradation**. In addition to rendering routine or emergency medical care to deployed personnel, AFSOF medical personnel should be able to ensure applicable elementary field sanitation and hygiene, disease prevention and control, and environmental risk factor assessment and control.

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

Recovery of hostages or survivors normally presents unique medical considerations for those who have been subjected to traumatic events. Hostages or survivors may be confused, apprehensive, physically incapacitated, or act in a manner that can impede their rescue.

SOF personnel conducting personnel recovery (PR) missions should also be prepared to use indigenous medical facilities to support hostage recovery operations.

AFSOF may be required to provide organic evacuation to points where conventional airlift and aeromedical evacuation (AE) are located. To support this requirement, selected AFSOF medical personnel should be trained to provide initial AE support. AFSOF medical planning should address ground-air evacuation interface, organic resources to provide preevacuation stabilization, and hand-off procedures with conventional medical and AE forces.

Risk Management

Commanders **ensure combat capability is preserved by minimizing unnecessary loss of personnel, equipment, and materiel** in mishaps. Safety staffs identify, evaluate, and recommend corrective actions for hazards associated with employing weapon systems and satisfying operational and training requirements. Commanders, functional managers, supervisors, and operators must eliminate or reduce risks and hazards consistent with mission requirements and the principles of risk management.



Assets are precious—safety is a critical consideration in all AFSOF operations.

At the Very Heart of Warfare Lies Doctrine. . .

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Glossary

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACO	airspace control order
AE	aeromedical evacuation
AETF	aerospace expeditionary task force
AFDD	Air Force Doctrine Document
AFSOF	Air Force special operations forces
AOB	advanced operating base
AOC	air operations center
AOR	area of responsibility
AT	antiterrorism
ATC	air traffic control
ATO	air tasking order
C2	command and control
CAAT	combat aviation advisory team
CAF	combat air forces
CAS	close air support
CIF	CINC's in-extremis force
CINC	commander in chief
COCOM	combatant command (command authority)
COMAFFOR	Commander, Air Force Forces
COMAFSOC	Commander, Air Force Special Operations Com- ponent [in theater]
CS	coalition support
CSAF	Chief of Staff of the Air Force
CSAR	combat search and rescue
CT	COMBAT TALON
DA	direct action
DOC	designed operational capability
DOD	Department of Defense
DZ	drop zone
FID	foreign internal defense
FOB	forward operating base
GAMSS	Global Air Mobility Support System

HN	host nation
IADS	Integrated Air Defense System
IFR	instrument flight rules
IO	information operations
IPB	intelligence preparation of the battlespace
IW	information warfare
JAOC	joint air operations center
JFACC	joint force air component commander
JFC	joint force commander
JFSOCC	joint force special operations component commander
JOA	joint operations area
JPOTF	joint psychological operations task force
JSOA	joint special operations area
JSOAC	joint special operations air component
JSOACC	joint special operations air component commander
JSOTF	joint special operations task force
JSRC	joint search and rescue center
JTF	joint task force
KIA	killed in action
LOAC	law of armed conflict
LZ	landing zone
METL	mission essential task list
MIA	missing in action
MOOTW	military operations other than war
MTW	major theater war
NCA	National Command Authorities
OPCON	operational control
OPSEC	operations security
PGM	precision guided munitions
PJ	individual pararescue specialist (Air Force)
POW	prisoner of war

PR	personnel recovery
PSYOP	psychological operations
RCC	Rescue Coordination Center
SAM	surface-to-air missile
SAR	search and rescue
SEAL	sea-air-land (Navy)
SF	special forces (Army)
SO	special operations
SOC	special operations command
SOEG	special operations expeditionary group
SOES	special operations expeditionary squadron
SOEW	special operations expeditionary wing
SOF	special operations forces
SOG	special operations group
SOLE	special operations liaison element
SOW	special operations wing
SOWT	special operations weather team
SPINS	special instructions
SR	special reconnaissance
STT	special tactics team
TACAN	tactical air navigation
TACON	tactical control (command authority)
TALCE	tanker airlift control element
TPFDD	time-phased force and deployment data
US	United States
USAF	United States Air Force
USCINCSOC	Commander in Chief, United States Special Operations Command
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
UW	unconventional warfare
VFR	visual flight rules
WMD	weapons of mass destruction

Definitions

Air Force special operations forces. Those active and reserve component Air Force forces designated by the Secretary of Defense that are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. Also called **AFSOF**. (JP 1-02)

antiterrorism. Defensive measures used to reduce the vulnerability of individuals and property to terrorist acts, to include limited response and containment by local military forces. Also called **AT**. See also terrorism. (JP 1-02)

combat aviation advisory team. A special operations team specifically tailored to assess, advise, and train foreign aviation forces in air operations employment and sustainability. Teams support theater combatant commanders throughout the operational continuum, primarily by facilitating the integration and interoperability of friendly and allied aviation forces supporting joint and multinational operations. Teams are specially trained and equipped to provide advisory assistance in the three interrelated areas of foreign internal defense (FID), coalition support (CS), and unconventional warfare (UW).

clandestine operation. An operation sponsored or conducted by governmental departments or agencies in such a way as to assure secrecy or concealment. A clandestine operation differs from a covert operation in that emphasis is placed on concealment of the operation rather than on concealment of identity of sponsor. In special operations, an activity may be both covert and clandestine and may focus equally on operational considerations and intelligence related activities. (JP 1-02)

close air support. Air action by fixed and rotary wing aircraft against hostile targets which are in close proximity to friendly forces and which require detailed integration of each air mission with the fire and movement of those forces. Also called **CAS**. (JP 1-02)

coalition force. A force composed of military elements of nations that have formed a temporary alliance for some specific purpose. (JP 1-02)

combatant command (command authority). *Nontransferable command authority* established by title 10 (“Armed Forces”), United States Code, section 164, exercised only by commanders of unified or specified combatant commands unless otherwise directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense. Combatant command (command authority) cannot

be delegated and is the authority of a combatant commander to perform those functions of command over assigned forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations, joint training, and logistics necessary to accomplish the missions assigned to the command. Combatant command (command authority) should be exercised through the commanders of subordinate organizations. Normally this authority is exercised through subordinate joint force commanders and Service and/or functional component commanders. Combatant command (command authority) provides full authority to organize and employ commands and forces as the combatant commander considers necessary to accomplish assigned missions. Operational control is inherent in combatant command (command authority). Also called **COCOM**. See also operational control; tactical control. (JP 1-02)

combat search and rescue. A specific task performed by rescue forces to effect the recovery of distressed personnel during war or military operations other than war. Also called **CSAR**. (JP 1-02)

conventional forces. Those forces capable of conducting operations using nonnuclear weapons. (JP 1-02) *[Also, those forces not specially trained, equipped, and organized to conduct special operations (see also special operations).]* {Italicized definition in brackets applies only to the Air Force and is added for clarity.}

counterterrorism. Offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism. Also called **CT**. (JP 1-02)

covert operation. An operation that is so planned and executed as to conceal the identity of or permit plausible denial by the sponsor. A covert operation differs from a clandestine operation in that emphasis is placed on concealment of the identity of sponsor rather than on concealment of the operation. (JP 1-02) *[In special operations, an activity may be both covert and clandestine.]* {Italicized definition in brackets applies only to the Air Force and is added for clarity.}

deception. Those measures designed to mislead the enemy by manipulation, distortion, or falsification of evidence to induce him to react in a manner prejudicial to his interests. (JP 1-02)

direct action. Short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions by special operations forces to seize, destroy, capture, recover, or

inflict damage on designated personnel or materiel. In the conduct of these operations, special operations forces may employ raid, ambush, or direct assault tactics; emplace mines and other munitions; conduct standoff attacks by fire from air, ground, or maritime platforms; provide terminal guidance for precision-guided munitions; and conduct independent sabotage. Also called **DA**. (JP 1-02)

evasion and escape. The procedures and operations whereby military personnel and other selected individuals are enabled to emerge from an enemy-held or hostile area to areas under friendly control. (JP 1-02)

foreign internal defense. Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. Also called **FID**. (JP 1-02)

guerrilla force. A group of irregular, predominantly indigenous personnel organized along military lines to conduct military and paramilitary operations in enemy-held, hostile, or denied territory. (JP 1-02)

guerrilla warfare. Military and paramilitary operations conducted in enemy-held or hostile territory by irregular, predominantly indigenous forces. (JP 1-02)

humanitarian assistance. Programs conducted to relieve or reduce the results of natural or man-made disasters or other endemic conditions such as human pain, disease, hunger, or privation that might present a serious threat to life or that could result in great damage to or loss of property. Humanitarian assistance provided by US forces is limited in scope and duration. The assistance provided is designed to supplement or complement the efforts of the HN civil authorities or agencies that may have the primary responsibility for providing humanitarian assistance. Also called **HA**. (JP 1-02)

infiltration. 1. The movement through or into an area or territory occupied by either friendly or enemy troops or organizations. The movement is made, either by small groups or by individuals, at extended or irregular intervals. When used in connection with the enemy, it infers that contact is avoided. 2. In intelligence usage, placing an agent or other person in a target area in hostile territory. Usually involves crossing a

frontier or other guarded line. Methods of infiltration are: black (clandestine); gray (through legal crossing point but under false documentation); white (legal). (JP 1-02)

information in warfare. Involves the Air Force's extensive capabilities to provide global awareness throughout the range of military operations based on integrated intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets; information collection/dissemination activities; and global navigation and positioning, weather, and communications capabilities. Also called **IIW**. (AFDD 2 and AFDD 2-5)

information operations. Those actions taken to affect adversary information and information systems while defending one's own information and information systems. Also called **IO**. (AFDD 1). *[Those actions taken to gain, exploit, defend or attack information and information systems. This includes both information in warfare (IIW) and information warfare (IW).]* {Italicized definition in brackets applies only to the Air Force and is offered for clarity.}

information superiority. That degree of dominance in the information domain which permits the conduct of operations without effective opposition. (JP 1-02)

information warfare. Actions taken to achieve information superiority by affecting adversary information, information-based processes, information systems, and computer-based networks while leveraging and defending one's own information, information-based processes, information systems, and computer-based networks. Also called **IW**. (JP 1-02) *[Information operations conducted to defend one's own information and information systems, or attacking and affecting an adversary's information and information systems.]* {Italicized definition in brackets applies only to the Air Force and is offered for clarity.}

insurgency. An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict. (JP 1-02)

joint force commander. A general term applied to a combatant commander, subunified commander, or joint task force commander authorized to exercise combatant command (command authority) or operational control over a joint force. Also called **JFC**. (JP 1-02)

joint force special operations component commander. The commander within a unified command, subordinate unified command, or joint task force responsible to the establishing commander for making recommendations on the proper employment of special operations forces and assets, planning and coordinating special operations, or accomplishing such operational missions as may be assigned. The joint force special operations component commander is given the authority necessary to accomplish missions and tasks assigned by the establishing commander. The joint force special operations component commander will normally be the commander with the preponderance of special operations forces and the requisite command and control capabilities. Also called **JFSOCC**. (JP 1-02)

joint special operations air component commander. The commander within the joint force special operations command responsible for planning and executing joint special air operations and for coordinating and deconflicting such operations with conventional nonspecial operations air activities. The joint special operations air component commander normally will be the commander with the preponderance of assets and/or greatest ability to plan, coordinate, allocate, task, control, and support the assigned joint special operations aviation assets. The joint special operations air component commander may be directly subordinate to the joint force special operations component commander or to any nonspecial operations component or joint force commander as directed. Also called **JSOACC**. (JP 1-02)

joint special operations area. A restricted area of land, sea, and airspace assigned by a joint force commander to the commander of joint special operations force to conduct special operations activities. The commander of joint special operations forces may further assign a specific area or sector within the joint special operations area to a subordinate commander for mission execution. The scope and duration of the special operations forces' mission, friendly and hostile situation, and politico-military considerations all influence the number, composition, and sequencing of special operations forces deployed into a joint special operations area. It may be limited in size to accommodate a discrete direct action mission or may be extensive enough to allow a continuing broad range of unconventional warfare operations. Also called **JSOA**. (JP 1-02)

joint special operations task force. A joint task force composed of special operations units from more than one Service, formed to carry out

a specific special operation or prosecute special operations in support of a theater campaign or other operations. The joint special operations task force may have conventional nonspecial operations units assigned or attached to support the conduct of specific missions. Also called **JSOTF**. (JP 1-02)

military operations other than war. Operations that encompass the use of military capabilities across the range of military operations short of war. These military actions can be applied to complement any combination of the other instruments of national power and occur before, during, and after war. Also called **MOOTW**. (JP 1-02) *[An umbrella term encompassing a variety of military operations conducted by the Department of Defense that normally complement the other instruments of national power. These military operations are as diverse as providing support and assistance (when consistent with US law) in a nonthreatening environment, and conducting combat not associated with war. Also called MOOTW.]* {Italicized definition in brackets applies only to the Air Force and is offered for clarity.}

multinational. Between two or more forces or agencies of two or more nations or coalition partners. (JP 1-02)

multinational operations. A collective term to describe military actions conducted by forces of two or more nations, typically organized within the structure of a coalition or alliance. (JP 1-02)

operational control. *Transferable command authority* that may be exercised by commanders at any echelon at or below the level of combatant command. Operational control is inherent in combatant command (command authority). Operational control may be delegated and is the authority to perform those functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission. Operational control includes authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations and joint training necessary to accomplish missions assigned to the command. Operational control should be exercised through the commanders of subordinate organizations. Normally this authority is exercised through subordinate joint force commanders and Service and/or functional component commanders. Operational control normally provides full authority to organize commands and forces and to employ those forces as the commander in operational control considers necessary to accomplish assigned missions. Operational

control does not, in and of itself, include authoritative direction for logistics or matters of administration, discipline, internal organization, or unit training. Also called **OPCON**. (JP 1-02)

operations security. A process of identifying critical information and subsequently analyzing friendly actions attendant to military operations and other activities to: a. Identify those actions that can be observed by adversary intelligence systems. b. Determine indicators hostile intelligence systems might obtain that could be interpreted or pieced together to derive critical information in time to be useful to adversaries. c. Select and execute measures that eliminate or reduce to an acceptable level the vulnerabilities of friendly actions to adversary exploitation. Also called **OPSEC**. (JP 1-02)

overt operation. An operation conducted openly, without concealment. See also clandestine operation; covert operation. (JP 1-02)

psychological operations. Planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. The purpose of psychological operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator's objectives. Also called **PSYOP**. (JP 1-02)

raid. An operation, usually small scale, involving a swift penetration of hostile territory to secure information, confuse the enemy, or to destroy installations. It ends with a planned withdrawal upon completion of the assigned mission. (JP 1-02)

relative superiority. A condition that exists when an attacking force, generally smaller, gains a decisive advantage over a larger or well-defended enemy. (This term is from William H. McRaven's *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice*.)

sea-air-land team. A naval force specially organized, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations in maritime, littoral, and riverine environments. Also called SEAL team. (JP 1-02)

search and rescue. The use of aircraft, surface craft, submarines, specialized rescue teams and equipment to search for and rescue personnel in distress on land or at sea. Also called **SAR**. (JP 1-02)

security assistance. Group of programs authorized by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and the Arms Export Control Act of 1976, as amended, or other related statutes by which the United States provides defense articles, military training, and other defense-related services, by grant, loan, credit, or cash sales in furtherance of national policies and objectives. Also called **SA**. (JP 1-02)

special forces. US Army forces organized, trained, and equipped specifically to conduct special operations. Special forces have five primary missions: unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, direct action, special reconnaissance, and counterterrorism. Counterterrorism is a special mission for specially organized, trained, and equipped special forces units designated in theater contingency plans. Also called **SF**. (JP 1-02)

special operations. Operations conducted by specially organized, trained, and equipped military and paramilitary forces to achieve military, political, economic, or psychological objectives by unconventional military means in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas. These operations are conducted across the full range of military operations, independently or in coordination with operations of conventional, nonspecial operations forces. Political-military considerations frequently shape special operations, requiring clandestine, covert, or low visibility techniques and oversight at the national level. Special operations often differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets. Also called **SO**. (JP 1-02)

special operations command. A subordinate unified or other joint command established by a joint force commander to plan, coordinate, conduct, and support joint special operations within the joint force commander's assigned area of operations. Also called **SOC**. (JP 1-02)

special operations expeditionary group. An independent group, normally the lowest command echelon of forces reporting directly to a COMAFFOR, JSOTF, JSOACC, or JTF. Also called **SOEG**.

special operations expeditionary squadron. The squadron is the basic fighting unit of the US Air Force. Squadrons are configured to deploy in support of crisis action requirements. However, an individual squadron is not designed to conduct independent operations; it requires

support from other units to obtain the synergy needed for sustainable, effective operations. As such, an individual squadron or squadron element should not be presented by itself without provision for appropriate support and command elements. If a single operational squadron or squadron element is all that is needed to provide the desired operational effect it should deploy with provision for commensurate support and C2 elements. The SOES is normally subordinate to a SOEG or SOEW. Also called **SOES**.

special operations expeditionary wing. Normally composed of a special operations wing or a wing slice. The SOEW is composed of the wing command element and appropriate groups. It is attached to a COMAFFOR, JSOTF, JSOACC, or JTF depending upon size, duration, and nature of the operation. The SOEW may be composed of units from different wings, but where possible, is formed from units of a single wing. Also called **SOEW**.

special operations forces. Those active and Reserve Component forces of the military Services designated by the Secretary of Defense and specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. Also called **SOF**. (JP 1-02)

special operations liaison element. A special operations liaison team provided by the JFSOCC to the JFACC (if designated) to coordinate, deconflict, and integrate special operations air and surface operations with conventional air. Also called **SOLE**. (JP 1-02)

special operations weather team. Specially organized, trained, and equipped Air Force weather personnel. These teams of Air Force weather people are organized, trained, and equipped to support Air Force, Army and Navy special operations forces units. Teams are trained to operate independently in permissive or uncertain environments, or as augmentation to other special operations elements in hostile environments. They are able to collect critical weather observations from data-sparse areas, generate mission tailored forecasts, and determine the impacts of meteorological and oceanographic conditions on operations in order to assist decision-makers in developing appropriate courses of action.

special reconnaissance. Reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted by special operations forces to obtain or verify, by visual observation or other collection methods, information concerning the capabilities, intentions, and activities of an actual or potential enemy, or

to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, or geographic characteristics of a particular area. It includes target acquisition, area assessment, and post-strike reconnaissance. Also called **SR**. (JP 1-02)

special tactics team. An Air Force team composed primarily of special operations combat control and pararescue personnel. The team supports joint special operations by selecting, surveying, and establishing assault zones; providing assault zone terminal guidance and air traffic control; conducting direct action missions; providing medical care and evacuation; and, coordinating, planning, and conducting air, ground, and naval fire support operations. Also called **STT**. (JP 1-02)

tactical control. Command authority over assigned or attached forces or commands, or military capability or forces made available for tasking, that is limited to the detailed and, usually, local direction and control of movements or maneuvers necessary to accomplish missions or tasks assigned. Tactical control is inherent in operational control. Tactical control may be delegated to, and exercised at any level at or below the level of combatant command. Also called **TACON**. (JP 1-02)

terrorism. The calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological. (JP 1-02)

unconventional warfare. A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes guerrilla warfare and other direct offensive, low visibility, covert, or clandestine operations, as well as the indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and evasion and escape. Also called **UW**. (JP 1-02)

