



ADP 3-05

SPECIAL OPERATIONS

AUGUST 2012

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HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

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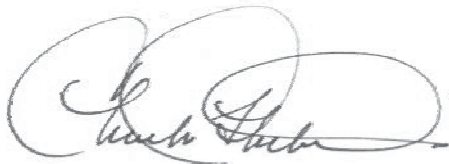
Foreword

The American Way of Special Operations Warfighting

ADP 3-05, *Special Operations*, describes the role of United States Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) in the U.S. Army's operating concept to Shape operational environments in the countries and regions of consequence, Prevent conflict through the application of special operations and conventional deterrence, and when necessary help Win our nation's wars. It will outline ARSOF's requirement to provide in the nation's defense unequalled Surgical Strike and Special Warfare capabilities. Together these two different but mutually supporting forms of special operations comprise the American Way of Special Operations Warfighting.

In the nation's most recent conflicts, success has increasingly depended on our ability to work through like-minded groups or governments and to be as precise as possible in our unilateral application of force. Warfare centered on defeating enemies who cloak themselves in the human activity of the modern, increasingly interdependent, and virtually connected world of the 21st Century has placed a rising premium on special operations forces (SOF) because it is profoundly different from that required to dominate in the traditional Land Domain. Conflict in this emerging domain requires exceptional situational awareness, a profound understanding of foreign culture and fluency in local languages, a high degree of proficiency in small unit combat skills, and the inherent and integrated use of military information support, cyber, and civil affairs operations.

The relevance of Army Special Operations Forces has never been greater. They are the cornerstones to the Joint Forces fighting our nation's wars, maintaining alliances, building partner nation capacity, developing surrogate capabilities, or conducting unilateral special operations. The future will likely increase SOF's role at not only the tactical level but also at the operational level as the requirement for long-term SOF campaigns grows. So long as belligerent nations continue to employ nonconventional means against us and terrorist networks continue their efforts to strike our homeland and our interests abroad, ARSOF will remain an indispensable member of the joint and interagency team.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles Cleveland', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

CHARLES T. CLEVELAND
LIEUTENANT GENERAL, UNITED STATES ARMY
COMMANDING

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Special Operations

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Preface

Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-05, *Special Operations*, provides a broad understanding of Army special operations by describing how executing the two mutually supporting critical capabilities of special warfare and surgical strike contribute to unified land operations (figure 1, page iii). ADP 3-05 provides a foundation for how the Army meets the joint force commander's needs by appropriately blending Army special operations forces and conventional forces.

The principal audience for ADP 3-05 is all members of the profession of arms. Commanders and staffs of Army headquarters serving as joint task force or multinational headquarters should also refer to applicable joint or multinational doctrine concerning the range of military operations and joint or multinational forces. Trainers and educators throughout the Army will also use this publication.

Commanders, staffs, and subordinates ensure their decisions and actions comply with applicable U.S., international, and, in some cases, host nation laws and regulations. Commanders at all levels ensure their Soldiers operate in accordance with the law of war and the rules of engagement. (See Field Manual [FM] 27-10, *The Law of Land Warfare*.)

ADP 3-05 uses joint terms where applicable. Selected joint and Army terms and definitions appear in both the glossary and the text. Terms for which ADP 3-05 is the proponent publication (the authority) are marked with an asterisk (*) in the glossary. Definitions for which ADP 3-05 is the proponent publication are boldfaced in the text. For other definitions shown in the text, the term is italicized and the number of the proponent publication follows the definition.

ADP 3-05 applies to the Active Army, the Army National Guard/Army National Guard of the United States, and the United States Army Reserve unless otherwise stated.

Army special operations forces are those Active and Reserve Component Army forces designated by the Secretary of Defense that are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations (Army Doctrine Reference Publication [ADRP] 3-05, *Special Operations*). The term Army special operations forces represents Civil Affairs, Military Information Support operations, Rangers, Special Forces, Special Mission Units, and Army special operations aviation forces assigned to the United States Army Special Operations Command.

The proponent of ADP 3-05 is the Special Operations Center of Excellence. The preparing agency is the Joint and Army Doctrine Integration Division, Capabilities Development and Integration Directorate, United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School. Send comments and recommendations on a DA Form 2028 (Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms) to Commander, USAJFKSWCS, ATTN: AOJK-CDI-CID, 3004 Ardennes Street, Stop A, Fort Bragg, NC 28310-9610; by e-mail to JAComments@ahqb.soc.mil; or submit an electronic DA Form 2028.

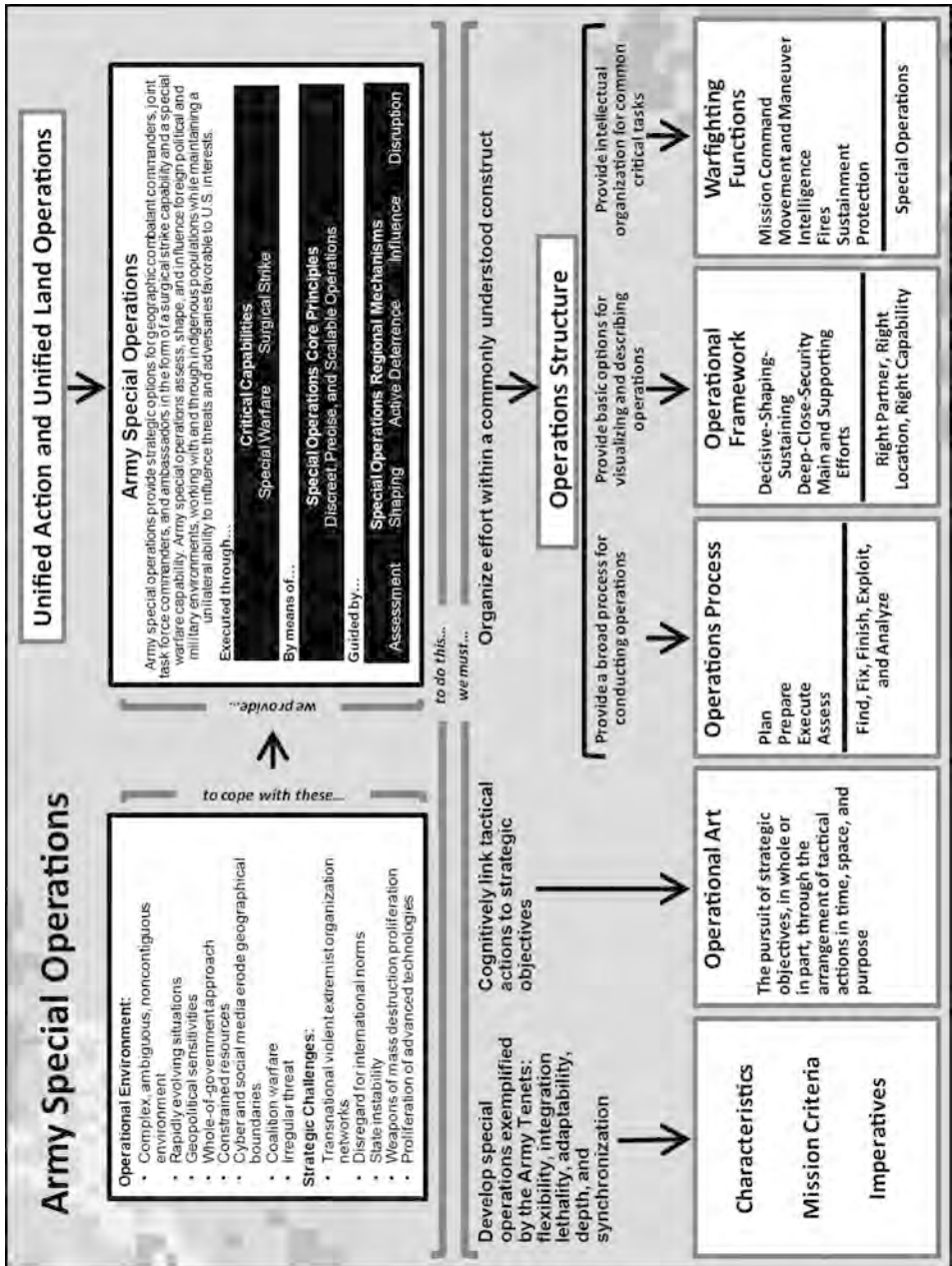


Figure 1. Army special operations

Army special operations is doctrinally and operationally linked to ADP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*. Figure 1 demonstrates the correlation of unique aspects to Army special operations as they are overlaid against the operational construct the Army uses in ADP 3-0. These are further developed in ADP 3-05 and ADRP 3-05.

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This publication first defines and discusses special operations in the strategic context within which Army special operations forces expect to operate. It also discusses the roles and critical capabilities of Army special operations. It concludes by describing the principles, regional mechanisms, characteristics, and imperatives of Army special operations forces.

Special operations are operations requiring unique modes of employment, tactical techniques, equipment, and training often conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and characterized by one or more of the following: time sensitive, clandestine, low visibility, conducted with and/or through indigenous forces, requiring regional expertise, and/or a high degree of risk (Joint Publication [JP] 3-05, *Special Operations*).

STRATEGIC CONTEXT FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS

1. The strategic context for the employment of special operations forces is determined by several factors: national policy, geographic combatant commander, joint force commander, or ambassador requirements; the character of the operational environment; as well as the nature of the threat. Missions executed by Army special operations forces may be limited in duration or long-term joint campaigns with multiple lines of operations. These campaigns may be overt, covert, or clandestine, and may be undertaken in peacetime environments or designated theaters of war. They are usually conducted in small numbers in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments. Army special operations forces constitute over half of the Department of Defense special operations capabilities and about five percent of the total active duty Army strength. United States Army Special Operations Command commands all Army special operations forces in the continental United States.

THE JOINT FORCE COMMANDER REQUIREMENTS

2. Joint force commanders, either the combatant commander or joint task force commander, identify operational outcomes that may require the application of Army special operations forces' two different but mutually supporting special operations capabilities: surgical strike and special warfare. Surgical strike provides a primarily unilateral, scalable direct action capability that is employed in counterterrorism, counterproliferation, hostage rescue, kill/capture operations against designated targets, and other specialized tasks of strategic importance. Special warfare provides a capability that achieves impact largely by working with and through others to assess and moderate behavior, address local conditions, and/or build indigenous warfighting capability, typically in long-duration campaigns. This capability is employed in unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency, foreign internal defense, security force

assistance, stability operations, and select intelligence activities such as preparation of the environment. Army special operations forces units with the mission to close with and destroy an enemy are the U.S. Army Special Forces (unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency, and combat foreign internal defense), Special Mission Units, and Rangers (counterterrorism and counterproliferation of weapons of mass destruction). These Army special operations forces maneuver units will conduct combat operations under a joint special operations forces headquarters, which may or may not be subordinate to a joint task force. Military Information Support operations and Civil Affairs operations are both a core activity and capability in support of both Army special operations forces maneuver units (Special Forces, Special Mission Units, and Rangers) and conventional forces formations.

3. Army special operations forces normally deploy as part of a joint special operations task force whose mission is to achieve desired operational- or strategic-level outcomes. United States Special Operations Command and its subordinate Joint Special Operations Command advise joint force commanders on the use of Army special operations forces' surgical strike capabilities. The theater special operations commands support United States Special Operations Command core operations and activities. The theater special operations commands are trained, organized, and equipped to provide command and control of Army special operations forces executing special warfare and surgical strike. The theater special operations commands, in support of geographic combatant commanders and joint force commanders, are postured to respond rapidly to emerging regional crises.

THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

4. Army special operations forces operational environments vary widely, from environmental or premission training with North Atlantic Treaty Organization or other coalition partners to operations by individuals or small teams. The employment of Army special operations forces by the joint force commander will depend upon the desired outcome, the determination of acceptable risk, the potential opportunities created by the employment of special operations forces, and the role that the indigenous population must play in the operation or campaign.

5. Army special operations forces also play an important supporting role in major combat operations, providing the joint force commander with a means to identify and engage selected high-payoff targets or conduct sabotage, subversion, influence, or intelligence activities in the enemy's sanctuary, rear area, or homeland.

6. Army special operations forces activities in countries outside of designated theaters of war can shape potential operational environments by working with host nation or friendly indigenous forces to assist with conflict avoidance or mitigation and set the conditions for the rapid introduction of other U.S. or allied forces. Select Army special operations forces units develop a deep understanding of local conditions and cultures which allows for a nuanced and often low-visibility or clandestine shaping of

the operational environment. Under certain circumstances, Army special operations may be the only means of achieving the desired outcome, short of a large-scale deployment of forces.

THE NATURE OF THE THREAT

7. ADP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, describes the hybrid threat and the challenges posed by nonstate entities or nuclear-capable states that use irregular and asymmetric means to threaten U.S. interests. Army special operations forces continuously study the emerging threats and participate in ongoing activities and operations designed to eliminate, mitigate, or shape the threat. Where U.S. interests are most threatened, Army special operations forces will maintain an enduring presence; partner with regional multinational partners for the purpose of capabilities building, interoperability, and direct assistance during combat operations; and provide a rapid-response special operations capability.

8. While Army special operations forces provide capabilities across the range of military operations, these forces are particularly central to the population-centric conflicts prevalent today. Army special operations forces have a global surgical strike capability to rapidly and precisely strike high-payoff targets, to rescue hostages, or to retrieve special materiel or items of interest—all with a low signature and little collateral damage. The joint force commander's reliance on Army special operations forces special warfare units to develop local or host nation solutions, to build and fight alongside friendly indigenous forces, and to deploy and remain effective in remote or denied areas is also indicative of the changing nature of the threat environment.

9. Unified land operations must account not only for an enemy's efforts on the land domain, where traditional means of fires and maneuver dominate, but also in emerging population-centric conflicts. Army operations must consider the totality of the physical, cultural, and social environments that influence human behavior to the extent that success of any military operation or campaign depends on the application of unique capabilities that are designed to fight and win population-centric conflicts. Special warfare capabilities are specifically developed for employment in these population-centric operations by Soldiers with the aptitude for working among diverse populations and invested with specific skills and preparation to be particularly successful in understanding and working with others. Many of today's enemies cloak themselves in the human activity of the modern, increasingly interdependent, and virtually connected world. Army special operations, supported by other relevant Army capabilities, recognize that all military organizations have to be cognizant and capable of effectively operating within the population. Special operations forces are especially well suited to fighting and winning effectively and ethically within the population. Civil considerations and an understanding of sociocultural factors are key to understanding the population within the operational environment (JP 2-01.3, *Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment*).

THE LINES OF EFFORT

10. Army special operations provide strategic options for geographic combatant commanders, joint task force commanders, and ambassadors. Special operations complement the Army's ability to provide a force that is postured to shape and influence through global special operations forces operations and develop a global special operations forces network that is prepared to conduct combat operations as part of the joint fight. Three lines of effort (figure 2, page 5) guide the development and employment of special operations: generating a force with a purpose, sustained engagement, and executing operations across the spectrum of lethality and influence in support of U.S. interests and host nation objectives. These lines of effort are reinforced through the training and education at the Special Operations Center of Excellence. Generating a force with a purpose is instrumental in the premission training of all special operations forces. Sustained engagement is what can be expected by our leadership and the leadership of regional partners and host nations as Army special operations are positioned in strategic locations around the globe. Army special operations provide capabilities of executing operations across the spectrum of lethality and influence in support of U.S. interests and host nation objectives.

11. The two critical capabilities of special warfare and surgical strike represent the core of America's unique Army special operations capabilities. Specially selected, trained, educated, and equipped, Army special operations forces are national assets and proudly represent the U.S. Army's commitment to providing for the broad requirements of our nation's defense. Army special operations forces' expertise in special warfare and surgical strike make them invaluable and necessary assets for the planning and execution of unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency, and counterterrorism campaigns.

12. Figure 2 shows the construct that the United States Army Special Operations Command uses to establish its doctrine and focus the command on its evaluation and development of the doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities domains required to effectively support the Army and the joint force.

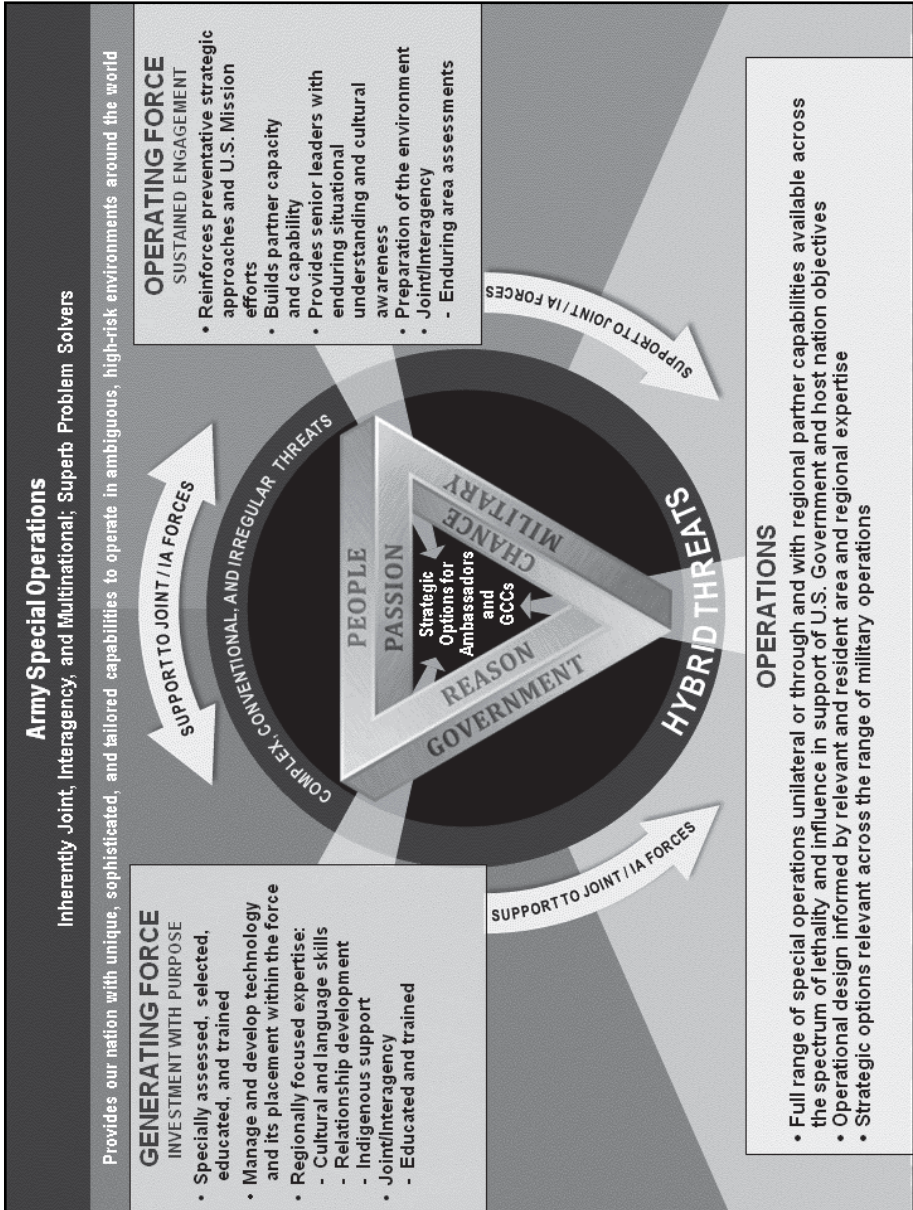


Figure 2. Army special operations lines of effort

THE ROLE OF ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS

13. In each of the joint operational phases—shape, deter, seize initiative, dominate, stabilize, enable civil authority (and back to shape)—U.S. leadership determines the level of required or acceptable military commitment and effort (figure 3). Because special operations can provide a discreet, precise, politically astute, and scalable capability, they are frequently used in diplomatically sensitive missions. In these diplomatically sensitive environments, Army special operations forces achieve effects of a magnitude disproportionate to their small footprint.

14. Army special operations are executed throughout the range of military operations; however, Army special operations in the shape and deter phases focus on preventing conflict. The graphically extended shape phase depicted on both ends of the notional operation plan phases (figure 3) highlights the disproportionate amount of time that should be spent in this phase. The extension of the shape phase not only reflects the significant level of commitment by Army special operations forces in this phase, it complements every aspect of the Army's ability to *prevent, shape, and win*.

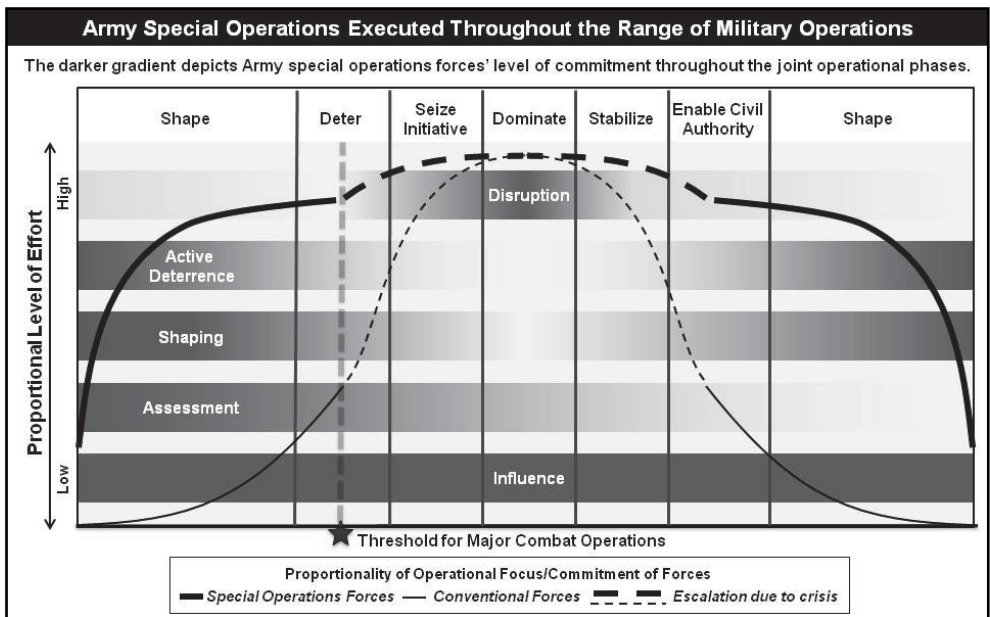


Figure 3. Role of Army special operations forces

15. In the shape and deter phases, Army special operations focus on the assessment, shaping, active deterrence, and influence activities. Army special operations include a range of coordinated and synchronized activities that are frequently conducted with unified action partners. Through sustained engagement with these operational partners, Army special operations forces foster an environment of information sharing,

enhanced interoperability, and the collaborative execution of missions, all of which facilitate joint operational planning and execution of operations.

16. In all phases, Army special operations forces are postured to conduct disruption operations against threats unilaterally through a surgical strike capability. In the deter phase, special operations may be executed against enemy activity in locations where the joint task force threshold is unlikely to be crossed, and yet the enemy must be confronted.

17. In figure 3, page 6, the threshold for major combat operations is indicated by a decision point (reflected as a straight dotted line with a star) that could occur at any time. Special operations conducted during the shape and deter phases can hasten or delay the employment of a task force, and provide more time for the joint force commander to make a decision or explore alternative options. More importantly, optimal use of special operations could eliminate the threshold completely and obviate the establishment of a joint task force or the need for a large-scale conventional force deployment.

18. Army special operations forces are prepared to disrupt or eliminate threats unilaterally, with partners or friendly indigenous forces, or as a component of a joint force in all of the joint operational phases. This could take the form of a unilateral surgical strike in the shape phase or key-leader engagement in the deter phase. Army special operations forces also support the integration of interagency and multinational partners in unified action. As the operational environment is stabilized, Army special operations support the conventional force drawdown, assist in the transition of civil activities, support host nation sovereignty, and set conditions to prevent further conflict. It is at this point that the shape phase begins again.

19. Managing the optimal relationship between Army special operations forces, Army conventional forces, joint forces, and indigenous security forces and institutions can prevent future conflict or mitigate the frequency and duration of a potential future crisis. The curved dotted lines in figure 3, page 6, represent the level of effort that can be conserved by effective shape and deter operations.

20. Achieving the optimal force composition of Army special operations, conventional forces, and joint forces, and indigenous security assets directly affects U.S. success throughout the range of military operations. The environment, threat, and scale lend themselves to a flexible template for blended or integrated operations that are either special operations force-specific (only), special operations force-centric (primarily), and/or conventional force-centric. Interagency involvement is likely required in all circumstances. Such blended operations are more successful when conducted with units habitually aligned with special operations forces by region, routinely trained together, and perhaps have an advisory cadre to augment special operations forces capabilities. Innovative small-footprint missions may in their totality exceed special operations forces capacity, and certain engagement/security cooperation and deterrence activities may not be special operations force-specific but would significantly benefit from special operations forces assistance.

ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES CRITICAL CAPABILITIES

21. Army special operations forces have a significant role in the successful outcome of unconventional warfare, counterterrorism, and counterinsurgency campaigns. Special operations forces provide a lethal, unilateral, or collaborative and indigenous counter-network capability against insurgent and terrorist groups, a means to assess and moderate population behavior by addressing local underlying causes, and a means to organize indigenous security and governmental structures. In both special warfare and surgical strike capabilities, Army special operations forces provide a population-centric, intelligence-enabled capability that works with multinational partners and host nations to develop regional stability, enhance global security, and facilitate future operations (figure 4).

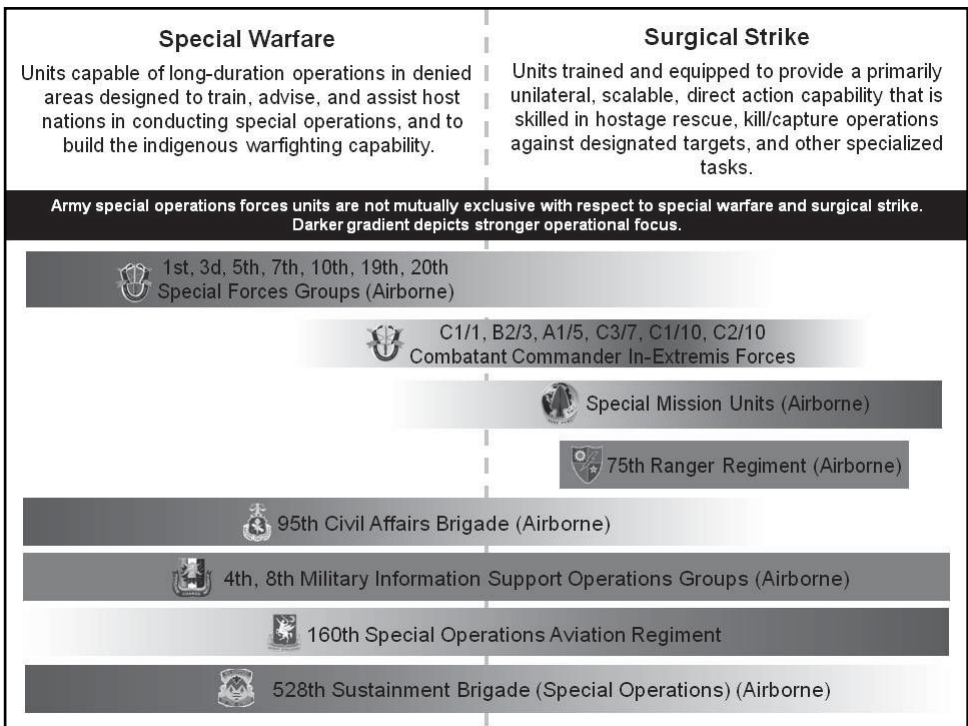


Figure 4. Special warfare and surgical strike

22. The demands of special warfare and surgical strike require both standard and nonstandard support in their employment, execution, and sustainment. The Army Special Operations Aviation Command and the 528th Sustainment Brigade (Special Operations) (Airborne) provide capabilities not replicated in the conventional force—capabilities that are specifically built to support special operations.

23. ***Special warfare*** is the execution of activities that involve a combination of lethal and nonlethal actions taken by a specially trained and educated force that has a deep understanding of cultures and foreign language, proficiency in small-unit tactics, and the ability to build and fight alongside indigenous combat formations in a permissive, uncertain, or hostile environment. Special warfare is an umbrella term that represents special operations forces conducting combinations of unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, and/or counterinsurgency through and with indigenous forces or personnel in politically sensitive and/or hostile environments.

24. *Unconventional warfare* is defined as activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area (JP 3-05). Unconventional warfare operations are politically sensitive activities that involve a high degree of military risk. These operations require distinct authorities and precise planning, and are often characterized by innovative design. Army special operations forces activities are used to influence the indigenous population to support the resistance movement or insurgency.

25. *Foreign internal defense* is participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security (JP 3-22, *Foreign Internal Defense*). Foreign internal defense activities provide a capability that is oriented on proactive security cooperation. Foreign internal defense activities shape the operational environment and prevent or deter conflict through sustained engagement with host nations, regional partners, and indigenous populations and their institutions.

26. Foreign internal defense and unconventional warfare may be considered conceptual opposites; however, the training and education provided to Army special operations forces to work with indigenous forces in the conduct of unconventional warfare is equally applicable in foreign internal defense. In both capabilities, Army special operations forces focus on interacting with and influencing indigenous powers to act. The ability for Army special operations forces to build insurgent capabilities during unconventional warfare is the exact skill set used by Army special operations forces when working with or through indigenous forces and host nation institutions to defeat an insurgent threat.

27. ***Surgical strike*** is the execution of activities in a precise manner that employ special operations forces in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover or damage designated targets, or influence threats. Executed unilaterally or collaboratively, surgical strike extends operational reach and influence by engaging global targets discriminately and precisely. Surgical strike is not always intended to be an isolated activity; it is executed to shape the operational environment or influence selected target audiences in support of larger strategic interests. Although the actual strike is short in duration,

the process of planning frequently requires interagency and host nation partnerships to develop the target and facilitate post-operation activities.

28. Surgical strike activities include actions against critical operational or strategic targets, to include counterproliferation actions, counterterrorism actions, and hostage rescue and recovery operations. *Counterproliferation* actions prevent the threat and/or use of weapons of mass destruction against the United States, its forces, allies, and partners. *Counterterrorism* actions taken directly and indirectly against terrorist networks influence and render global and regional environments inhospitable to terrorist networks. *Hostage rescue and recovery* operations, which are sensitive crisis-response missions, include offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, preempt, and respond to terrorist threats and incidents, including recapture of U.S. facilities, installations, and sensitive material.

29. Both special warfare and surgical strike have unique requirements which are met through the conduct of special reconnaissance to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance, and preparation of the environment as a type of shaping activity supporting core activities that may be conducted in the future. The execution of special reconnaissance and preparation of the environment by special operations forces will be coordinated with the joint task force commander due to the possible mission impact on conventional force planning and/or support of conventional force operations.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS CORE PRINCIPLES

30. The core principles of *discreet*, *precise*, and *scalable operations* are reflected in Army special operations forces' ability to operate in small teams in friendly, politically sensitive, uncertain, or hostile environments to achieve U.S. objectives unilaterally or with or through indigenous forces and populations. These principles enable Army special operations forces to conduct a wide range of missions, often high risk and clandestine or low visibility in nature.

31. Discreet, precise, and scalable operations enhance the credibility and legitimacy of the indigenous population or host nation that we are working with as follows:

- The operations are discreet by deliberately reducing the signature of U.S. presence or assistance.
- The operations are precise in the manner that Army special operations forces' targeting focuses on eliminating collateral damage and through the use of dedicated intelligence to identify and target both individuals and systems that enable minimal U.S. presence with or without indigenous support to attain strategic objectives.

- The scalable aspect of these operations is directly associated with the way Army special operations forces are organized, trained, and equipped to carry out operations unilaterally with minimal conventional or indigenous support or they can execute actions that are part of a large-scale conventional operation to attain operational and strategic objectives.

ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES REGIONAL MECHANISMS

32. **Regional mechanisms are the primary methods through which friendly forces affect indigenous populations, host nations, or the enemy to establish the conditions needed to safeguard our interests and those of our allies.** Army special operations forces focus on the regional mechanisms of assessment, shaping, active deterrence, influence, and disruption to manage precrisis/crisis thresholds, conduct planning and execution of all special operations, and synchronize Army special operations capabilities. These mechanisms are methods for special operations forces to categorize their activities as they plan operations and deploy in support of theater objectives with a regional orientation.

33. Regional mechanisms complement planning by providing focus in framing complex problems. Regional mechanisms are not tactical missions; rather, they describe broad operational and tactical effects that must be considered in planning and execution of missions. By combining the mechanisms in an operation, commanders can effectively address the human dimension of the problem while acting to reduce the security threat. Combinations of regional mechanisms produce complementary and reinforcing effects that accomplish the mission more effectively and efficiently than single mechanisms do alone.

ASSESSMENT

34. Through sustained engagement with enduring partners, Army special operations forces develop a clear understanding of the operational environment that includes enemy and friendly capabilities and vulnerabilities, as well as the sociocultural dynamics of the indigenous population and their leaders. Initial and ongoing assessments inform planning, preparation, and execution, and ensure efforts and events are linked, progressive, measurable, and effective in support of combatant or joint task force commanders' desired effects or outcomes.

SHAPING

35. Shaping activities are condition-setting activities that facilitate potential future operations or other strategic missions, such as humanitarian assistance and counterterrorism activities. Army special operations often work with both indigenous and conventional forces in the activities that are designed to create conditions among

key social, political, and military leaders, and collective capabilities within a country or region which, over time, are supportive of attaining a specified desired end state.

ACTIVE DETERRENCE

36. Army special operations proactively employ capacity-building activities (foreign internal defense, security force assistance, counterinsurgency, and unconventional warfare) to dissuade adversaries and threats from their contemplated violence. Active deterrence often involves lethal and nonlethal activities (including surgical strike), diplomatic and developmental efforts, and the training of credible and effective foreign security forces. These activities enable the defeat of terrorists or insurgents in other countries before the belligerents threaten the United States.

INFLUENCE

37. Army special operations contribute an understanding of the foreign operational environment and populations critical to inducing or reinforcing foreign attitudes and behaviors favorable to desired objectives. Influence is developed and exercised through sustained partnerships with host nations, regional partners, and indigenous populations and institutions. Army special operations leverage these networks and years of sustained partnerships using selective messages and actions (lethal and nonlethal in nature) to ultimately encourage foreign audience behaviors that enhance freedom of action and facilitate U.S. operations.

DISRUPTION

38. Army special operations degrade the effectiveness of adversaries and threats. This includes their support networks, shadow governments, infrastructure, and financing, through unilateral surgical strike and special warfare in concert with Service or Army conventional, joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational partners.

ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES CHARACTERISTICS

39. In order to meet the rigorous intellectual and physical demands of special warfare and surgical strike, Soldiers volunteering to become Army special operations force operators undergo a physically and mentally demanding assessment and selection program. Candidates are evaluated to ensure they have the character, commitment, and intellect to succeed in the rigorous training and education programs that follow. The characteristics that define Army special operations and the individuals who execute the missions are introduced to Soldiers during assessment and selection and reinforced throughout their careers.

40. Army special operations are characterized in a manner that underscores utility and distinctness. Understanding these characteristics enables joint force commanders and ambassadors to develop appropriate special operations missions in the application of national and military power. Army special operations characteristically—

- Are low-visibility or clandestine.
- Have a minimal signature.
- Are used to foster habitual (indigenous) relationships.
- Are used to employ precise and timely actions and messages.

41. Special operations forces are unique in the execution of their operations because of their skills in the conduct of people-oriented operations. The characteristics of special operations Soldiers enable them to carry out special warfare or surgical strike—the Army special operations forces critical capabilities. Although many of these individual characteristics are shared by other Army forces, Special Forces, Civil Affairs, and Psychological Operations Soldiers are uniquely trained, organized, equipped, and employed in tailored operational packages that have the following characteristics:

- Language trained.
- Regionally aligned.
- Culturally astute.
- Politically nuanced.
- Trained in mediation and negotiation.
- Expected to operate autonomously.
- Proficient at interorganizational coordination.
- Proficient with and enabled by application of advanced technologies.

ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IMPERATIVES

42. The following 12 imperatives are the foundation for planning and executing special operations in concert and integrated with other forces, interagency partners, and foreign organizations. Special operations commanders should include the applicable imperatives in their mission planning and execution.

UNDERSTAND THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

43. Special operations cannot shape the operational environment without first gaining a clear understanding of the theater of operations, to include civilian influence and enemy and friendly capabilities. Special operations forces achieve objectives by understanding the political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time variables within the specific operational environment, and develop plans to act within the realities of those operational environments. Army special operations forces must identify the friendly and hostile decisionmakers, their

objectives and strategies, and the ways in which they interact. The conditions of conflict can change, and Army special operations forces must anticipate these changes in the operational environment and exploit fleeting opportunities.

RECOGNIZE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

44. Many special operations are conducted to advance critical political objectives. Army special operations forces understand that their actions can have international consequences. Whether conducting operations independently or in coordination with partners, special operations forces must consider the political effects of their actions. Special operations forces must anticipate ambiguous operational environments where military factors are not the only concern. Special operations forces are superb “bridging entities,” frequently creating conditions for nonmilitary activities to occur within indigenous populations and for civil institutions to achieve U.S. and host nation objectives. Consequently, advancement of political objectives may take precedence over the achievement of military priorities.

FACILITATE MILITARY AND INTERAGENCY ACTIVITIES

45. Most special operations occur in an interagency environment where the U.S. Government departments and agencies are supporting common national objectives as part of a country team effort. Army special operations forces must actively and continuously coordinate their activities with all relevant parties—U.S. and foreign military and nonmilitary organizations—to ensure efficient use of all available resources and maintain unity of effort.

ENGAGE THE THREAT DISCRIMINATELY

46. Special operations missions often have sensitive political implications. Therefore, commanders must carefully select when, where, and how to employ Army special operations forces.

ANTICIPATE LONG-TERM EFFECTS

47. Army special operations forces must consider the broader political, economic, informational, cultural, demographic, and military effects when faced with dilemmas because the solutions will have broad, far-reaching effects. These forces must accept legal and political constraints to avoid strategic failure while achieving tactical success. Special operations forces must not jeopardize the success of national and geographic combatant commander long-term objectives with a desire for immediate or short-term effects. Special operations policies, plans, and operations must be consistent with the national and theater of operations priorities and objectives they support. Inconsistency can lead to a loss of legitimacy and credibility at the national level.

ENSURE LEGITIMACY AND CREDIBILITY

48. Significant legal and policy considerations apply to many special operations activities. Legitimacy is the most crucial factor in developing and maintaining internal and international support. The United States cannot sustain its assistance to a foreign power without this legitimacy. Commanders, staffs, and subordinates foster legitimacy and credibility through decisions and actions that comply with applicable U.S., international, and, in some cases, host nation laws and regulations. Commanders at all levels ensure their Soldiers operate in accordance with the law of war and the rules of engagement. However, the concept of legitimacy is broader than the strict adherence to law. The concept also includes the moral and political legitimacy of a government or resistance organization. The people of the host nation and the international community determine legitimacy and credibility based on popular perceptions of the cause and methods. Without legitimacy and credibility, Army special operations forces will not receive the level of indigenous support that is essential to success.

ANTICIPATE AND CONTROL PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

49. All special operations have significant psychological effects that are often amplified by an increasingly pervasive electronic media environment and the growing influence of social media. Some actions may be conducted specifically to generate a desired behavioral change or response from a selected target audience. Commanders must consider and incorporate the potential psychological effects and impacts of messages and actions into all their activities, anticipating and countering adversary information, as needed, to allow for maximum control of the environment.

OPERATE WITH AND THROUGH OTHERS

50. Supported non-U.S. forces serve as force multipliers in the pursuit of mutual security objectives with minimum U.S. visibility, risk, and cost. The long-term self-sufficiency of the foreign forces and entities requires them to assume primary authority and accept responsibility for the success or failure of the mission. All U.S. efforts must reinforce and enhance the effectiveness, legitimacy, and credibility of the supported foreign government or group.

DEVELOP MULTIPLE OPTIONS

51. Army special operations forces must maintain their agility by developing a broad range of options and contingency plans. They must be able to shift from one option to another before and during mission execution, or apply two or more simultaneously, to provide flexible national and regional options.

SUPPORT LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENT

52. Army special operations forces must recognize the need for persistence, patience, and continuity of effort. Special operations forces must demonstrate continuity of effort when dealing with political, economic, informational, and military programs. The ability of special operations forces to invest the intellectual capital, the operational assistance, and the cultural affinity form the ability to remain engaged with foreign forces and entities directly facilitating shaping.

PROVIDE SUFFICIENT INTELLIGENCE

53. Success for special operations missions dictates that uncertainty associated with the threat and other aspects of the operational environment must be minimized through the application of intelligence operations and procedures. Because of the needed detailed intelligence, Army special operations forces typically must also access theater of operations and national intelligence systems to address intelligence shortfalls and to ensure that timely, relevant, accurate, and predictive intelligence is on hand. Human intelligence is often the primary intelligence discipline for satisfying special operations forces critical intelligence requirements, whether from overt or controlled sources. The key to effective intelligence support is for special operations to fully leverage the entire intelligence support system and architecture. Army special operations forces units also provide information and intelligence through area assessments, special reconnaissance, and post-operational debriefing of units.

BALANCE SECURITY AND SYNCHRONIZATION

54. Security concerns often dominate special operations, but overcompartmentalization can exclude key special operations forces and conventional forces personnel from the planning cycle. Special operations forces commanders must resolve these conflicting demands on mission planning and execution. Insufficient security may compromise a mission; conversely, excessive security may also jeopardize a mission.

INTERDEPENDENCE

55. Army special operations forces and conventional forces must blend their individual activities more effectively. Interdependence between special operations forces and conventional forces will increase the effectiveness of shaping activities and improve execution of counterterrorism and irregular warfare. A high level of interdependence has been developed over the last decade, but a more cohesive special operations and conventional force effort will improve the Army's ability to execute decisive action by combining the capability advantages of each force. The Army must seamlessly integrate lethal and nonlethal special operations and conventional force capabilities while maintaining unique cultures and capabilities that shape the environment and enable success of the joint force in the operational environment.

CONCLUSION

56. The relevance of Army special operations forces has never been greater. In nearly every region of the world, Army special operations forces support the combatant commander by maintaining alliances, building partner capacity, influencing selected foreign target audiences, developing friendly indigenous capabilities, or conducting unilateral special operations. As long as enemies and adversaries continue to employ conventional and nonconventional means against the United States and its allies, and terrorist networks continue their efforts to strike the homeland and interests abroad, Army special operations forces will remain indispensable to the nation's defense.

57. ADP 3-05, *Special Operations*, updates earlier doctrine to reflect the current conditions of the operational environment. More importantly, this publication lays out the basic foundation for commanders and civilian leaders alike on how special operations provide discreet, precise, and scalable operations in the pursuit of national objectives. The two mutually supporting critical capabilities of special warfare and surgical strike give decisionmakers the latitude to blend those capabilities with conventional options, or measure the benefits against the risks to conduct these unilaterally.

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Glossary

ADP	Army doctrine publication (ADP 3-0)
ADRP	Army doctrine reference publication (ADP 3-0)
Army special operations aviation	Designated Active Component forces and units organized, trained, and equipped specifically to conduct air mobility, close combat attack, and other special air operations. (ADRP 3-05)
Army special operations forces	Those Active and Reserve Component Army forces designated by the Secretary of Defense that are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. (ADRP 3-05)
Civil Affairs	Designated Active and Reserve Component forces and units organized, trained, and equipped specifically to conduct Civil Affairs operations and to support civil-military operations. (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-57)
counterinsurgency	Comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances. (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-24)
counterterrorism	Actions taken directly against terrorist networks and indirectly to influence and render global and regional environments inhospitable to terrorist networks. (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-05)
direct action	Short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and which employ specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets. (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-05)
FM	field manual
foreign internal defense	Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security. (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-22)
GCC	geographic combatant commander
IA	interagency
JP	joint publication

Military Information Support 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. Formerly known as psychological operations (PSYOP). (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-13.2)
preparation of the environment	An umbrella term for operations and activities conducted by selectively trained special operations forces to develop an environment for potential future special operations. (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-05)
Rangers	Rapidly deployable airborne light infantry organized and trained to conduct highly complex joint direct action operations in coordination with or in support of other special operations units of all Services. (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-05)
*regional mechanism	The primary method through which friendly forces affect indigenous populations, host nations, or the enemy to establish the conditions needed to safeguard our interests and those of our allies.
Special Forces	U.S. Army forces organized, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations with an emphasis on unconventional warfare capabilities. (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-05)
special operations	Operations requiring unique modes of employment, tactical techniques, equipment, and training often conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and characterized by one or more of the following: time sensitive, clandestine, low visibility, conducted with and/or through indigenous forces, requiring regional expertise, and/or a high degree of risk. (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-05)
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 operational area. See also special operations. (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-05)
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. (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-05)

special reconnaissance	Reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance, employing military capabilities not normally found in conventional forces. (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-05)
*special warfare	The execution of activities that involve a combination of lethal and nonlethal actions taken by a specially trained and educated force that has a deep understanding of cultures and foreign language, proficiency in small-unit tactics, and the ability to build and fight alongside indigenous combat formations in a permissive, uncertain, or hostile environment.
stability operations	An overarching term encompassing various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief. (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-0)
*surgical strike	The execution of activities in a precise manner that employ special operations forces in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover or damage designated targets, or influence threats.
theater special operations command	A subordinate unified command established by a combatant commander to plan, coordinate, conduct, and support joint special operations. (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-05)
unconventional warfare	Activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area. (JP 1-02. SOURCE: JP 3-05)
USAJFKSWCS	United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School

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