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THESIS

ACCOMPLISHING AMERICAN STRATEGIC GOALS IN THE MIDDLE EAST THROUGH PERSISTENT SPECIAL OPERATIONS

by

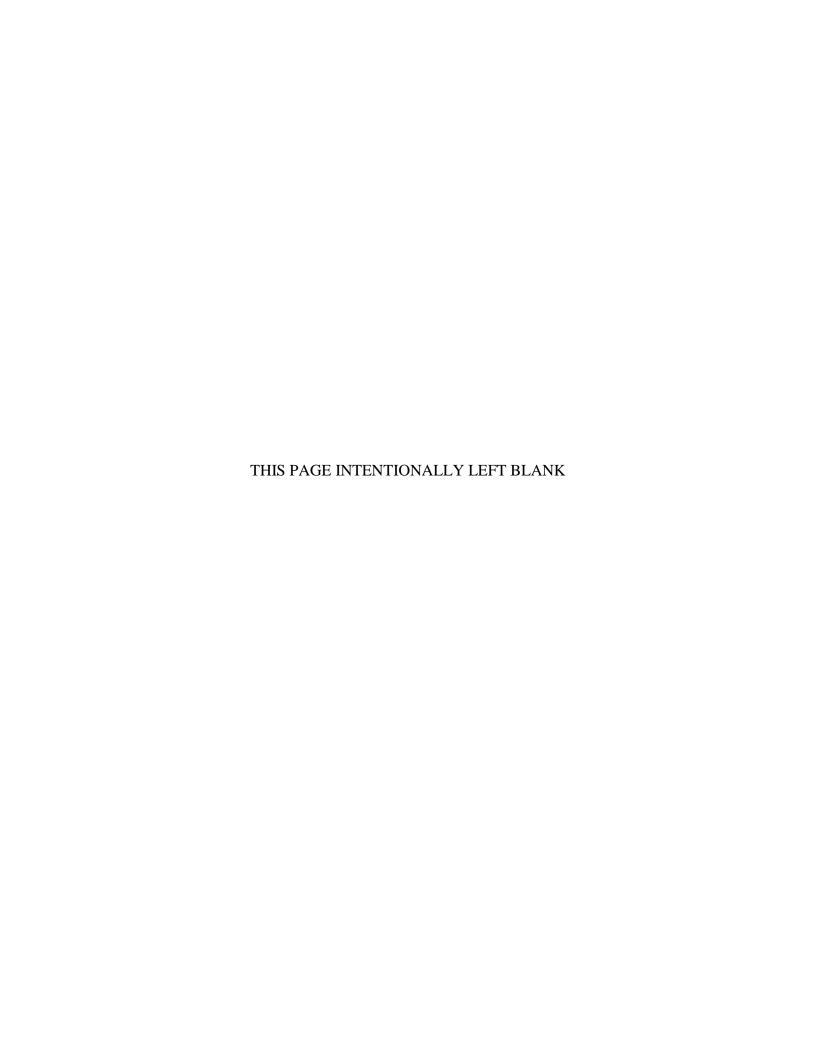Daniel D. Mitchell
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As the war in Iraq draws to a close, the importance of U.S. indirect influence in the Middle East will increase. The large footprint of the U.S. military in the region since 2003 has proven unsustainable for the long term in terms of stress on the conventional Army, acceptability to the population of the Muslim world, and patience of the American public. Further, this large-scale conflict, and the focus it has required, has diminished American ability to conduct indirect operations elsewhere throughout the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility (CENTCOM AOR). Thus, hostile networks have unrestricted access to the Middle East, which threatens U.S. interests and the stability of the region. Regional engagement provides a means to increase partner nation capacity as well as enhance indirect U.S. influence, but the program may not currently be achieving optimized, strategically significant gains that SOF have been able to achieve during other operations. This research seeks to examine how Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) might better conduct engagement through regionally coordinated persistent presence, and how to implement any suggested changes.

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ABSTRACT

As the war in Iraq draws to a close, the importance of U.S. indirect influence in the Middle East will increase. The large footprint of the U.S. military in the region since 2003 has proven unsustainable for the long term in terms of stress on the conventional Army, acceptability to the population of the Muslim world, and patience of the American public. Further, this large-scale conflict, and the focus it has required, has diminished American ability to conduct indirect operations elsewhere throughout the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility (CENTCOM AOR). Thus, hostile networks have unrestricted access to the Middle East, which threatens U.S. interests and the stability of the region. Regional engagement provides a means to increase partner nation capacity as well as enhance indirect U.S. influence, but the program may not currently be achieving optimized, strategically significant gains that SOF have been able to achieve during other operations. This research seeks to examine how Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) might better conduct engagement through regionally coordinated persistent presence, and how to implement any suggested changes.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

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LIST OF TABLES

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAB	Advise and Assist Brigades
AFP	Philippine Armed Forces
AOR	Areas of Responsibility
AQAP	Al Qaeda Arabian Peninsula
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
CA	Civil Affairs
CAFGU	Civil Augmentation Force Geographical Units
CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
CMO	Civil Military Operations
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CTB	Counter Terrorism Bureau
DENTCAP	Dental Civil-Action Programs
ERB	Emergency Readiness Brigade
ESAF	Salvadorian Armed Forces
EUCOM	European Command
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
FMLN	Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
FPF	Foreign Partner Forces
FSLN	Sandinista National Liberation Front
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GPF	General Purpose Forces
GRP	Philippine Government
IA	Interagency
IDAD	Internal Defense and Development
IMET	International Military Education and Training
IO	Information Operations
ISOF	Iraqi Special Operations Forces

JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
JRTN	Jaysh Rijal Tariqah al-Naqshabandi
JSOTF-P	Joint Special Operations Task Force—Philippines
JTF	Joint Task Force
KASOTC	King Abdullah Special Operations Training Center
KFR	Kidnapping For Ransom
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces
LCE	Liaison Coordination Element
LOO	Line(s) of Operation
MARSOC	Marine Special Operations Command
MEDCAP	Medical Civil Action Program
MEK	Mujahidin-e-Khalq
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MILGRP	Military Advisor Group
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MTO	Major Theater Operations
NOI	Networks of Influence
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NMS	National Military Strategy
NSS	National Security Strategy
NSOF	National Special Operations Forces
NSW	Naval Special Warfare
OEF-P	Operation Enduring Freedom–Philippines
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OPAT	Operational Planning and Assistance Team
PACOM	Pacific Command
PSF	Palestinian Security Forces
PSYOP	Psychological Operations
RMTC	Regional Military Training Center
SF	Special Forces

SFA	Security Force Assistance
SFOD-A	Special Forces Operational Detachment–Alpha
SOCCENT	Special Operations Command Central
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOFEX	Special Operations Forces Exhibition and Conference
TSCP	Theater Security Cooperation Plan
TSOF	Theater Special Operations Forces
UAE	United Arab Emirates
USSF	United States Army Special Forces
UW	Unconventional Warfare
VSO	Village Stability Operations

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I.   INTRODUCTION

As the war in Iraq draws to a close, the importance of U.S. indirect influence in the Middle East will increase. Unlike post-war Germany or Korea, a large footprint of the U.S. military is unsustainable for the long term because of the stress on the conventional Army, acceptability to the population of the Muslim world, and patience of the American public. Further, the troops, money, and political capital required to prosecute wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have diminished American ability to conduct military operations elsewhere throughout the world, especially the Middle East. Correspondingly, hostile networks have increasing influence in the Middle East, which threatens U.S. policy goals and the stability of the entire region. The Theater Security Cooperation Program (TSCP) provides a means to increase partner nation capacity, as well as enhance indirect U.S. influence, but the program is underperforming in the Middle East due to over commitment to Major Theater Operations (MTO).

While most of the U.S. military has focused on Afghanistan and Iraq, U.S. enemies are building and expanding their Middle Eastern networks to challenge regional U.S. security interests. By focusing on two countries, military engagement to traditional areas of responsibility (AOR) has decreased. This created a rapport vacuum that facilitates the growth of U.S. enemies. International terrorist organizations have become a franchise industry by extending ties to regional extremist groups through financing and training. Al Qaeda Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Iranian influence progressively increase their clout and control, thereby destabilizing or displacing U.S. allies and threatening U.S. security.

Additionally, Arab heads of state provide support for the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan at their own jeopardy. By sanctioning large-scale U.S. military ventures on Muslim lands, these Arab leaders open themselves to domestic and international criticism by Muslims. Since adversaries portray the U.S. war against Al-Qaeda as ideological aggression by the U.S. against all of Islam, then Arab allies of the West become puppets or apostates. While many Muslims do not believe Al-Qaeda propaganda, they see support for non-Muslims over Muslims as a violation of the religious tenets and unjust

leadership. Perceived injustice is often a primary motivation for Jihadi groups ranging from the Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah, and Al-Qaeda to name a few. But how can the U.S. push strategic policy without making matters worse?

A.   PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to identify how to optimize the use of U.S. military power to achieve strategic goals in the Middle East. This question will be examined in four steps. First, this study identifies U.S. national security goals in the Middle East and the environmental constraints and historical context—regarding U.S. military intervention in the region—which must be understood to accomplish those goals. Next, it evaluates which of the U.S. Military's available assets is most appropriate to operate under those constraints. Then multiple case studies evaluate if and how SOF contributes to the accomplishment of U.S. strategic goals. Finally, an argument is made for redistributing Special Operations Forces (SOF) from current supporting roles in Afghanistan and Iraq to primarily supported roles outside of MTOs in order to increase SOF strategic utility. Ultimately, this study seeks to identify practical methods that maximize SOF contributions to U.S. policy goals.

Because this is a broad topic, some boundaries must be set on the scope of the research. While there are many agencies and tools that are essential for Internal Defense and Development (IDAD) strategies, this study focuses on military to military engagements and the ability of small tailored forces to counter hostile non-state actors through indirect influence. This research will consider two preliminary conditions to evaluate supporting hypotheses. First, the host nation must be in a state of less than full-scale war, which allows SOF to be the supported command or operate independently. The other preliminary condition is that the host nation is either a partner state or a struggling state. Partner states are the longtime allies of the U.S. who possess sufficient stability, while struggling states are potential U.S. allies who have a measure of internal unrest that may become a failed state if the situation gets worse.[1]

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[1] Anna Simons and others, "Sovereignty Solution," *The American Interest* II, no. 4 (March/April 2007): 36.

This thesis uses two hypotheses to determine the effectiveness of regional integration and persistence on SOF utility. First, regionally integrated engagement develops both U.S. SOF–Foreign Partner Forces (FPF) and FPF–FPF relationships, creating networks of influence that counter enemy networks and prevents future conflicts, thus promoting U.S. policy goals. Regional integration aims to maximize the participation and partnership of as many security forces as possible, throughout the region, toward a common set of goals. Second, as the persistence of military-to-military engagements increases, FPF capability as well as U.S. SOF–FPF Network of Influence (NOI) increases, which prevents future conflicts and facilitates interoperability, thus promoting of U.S. interests. Persistence is a measure of both the frequency and duration of productive military to military engagement between U.S. SOF and FPF. This research evaluates the importance of regional integration and persistence in SOF effectiveness.

These hypotheses cannot be evaluated without some modest assumptions. The first assumption is that the Special Operations Component CENTCOM (SOCCENT) Commander has the ability and influence to change the current utilization of SOF in the Middle East in order to maximize SOF strategic utility. Second, that key Middle Eastern states want to work with U.S. SOF. Finally, the U.S. State Department, specifically the Ambassadors to those key countries, value the SOF contribution to TSCP but want SOF utilized in their countries modestly.

The product of this thesis is a set of operational elements that can increase the strategic utilization of SOF. This thesis intends to demonstrate how SOF employment can increase both networks of influence and capability in partner nation security forces, in order to prevent future conflict and increase U.S. influence with peer allies, thus increasing U.S. national security by achieving strategic goals. Effective military to military engagement by U.S. SOF in the Middle East is a cost effective alternative to massive troop commitments at a time when U.S. citizens have war fatigue and financial resources are increasingly limited. SOCCENT can maximize strategic utility of its forces when it employs them in the indirect and supported role, outside MTO, for regionally coordinated and persistent engagements.

B. METHODOLOGY

This thesis uses two cases studies, Operation Enduring Freedom–Philippines (OEF-P) and U.S. SOF in Central America during the 1980s, to evaluate the strategic utility of U.S. SOF. Each case study is examined using a background, force structure, mission, and analysis format. Background includes both the U.S. policy goals that drove U.S. intervention in the region and the initial conditions that U.S. forces encountered there. The force structure centers primarily on the command and control structure and the organization of operational forces. Mission describes the types of operations conducted by U.S. SOF. The analysis portion assesses the effectiveness of U.S. forces to promote strategic goals. Sources of literature used are books, journals, and other historical articles. Most of these sources exist in unclassified form.

C. ORGANIZATION

Chapter II defines existing policy goals, and regional constraints associated with the methods for accomplishing these goals. This chapter begins by evaluating the military's role in America's Grand Strategy using the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and National Military Strategy. After defining the goals and roles of the military, attention shifts to the success and consequences of U.S. military intervention in the Middle East since 1980. This chapter will explain why large-scale troop deployments to Muslim lands are counter-productive and threaten U.S. policy goals.

Chapter III discusses the advantages that Special Operations Forces have when operating in a politically sensitive environment.

Chapters IV and V are case studies where the United States conducted military engagement, using relatively small force packages, in order to accomplish strategic policy goals. Chapter IV investigates how U.S. military assistance in the Philippines since 2002 (OEF-P) counters Al Qaeda affiliate groups. Chapter V assesses how U.S. military advisement has been an effective tool for counter-insurgency and counter-drug

operations in Central and South America during the 1980s and 1990s. Chapter VI will then summarize these findings and determine trends in the efficient use of SOF military engagement.

Chapter VII seeks to apply the findings of these case studies to U.S. military engagement in the Middle East. The utilization of Special Operations Forces in the Middle East will be prescribed in two zones, the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula, using current means of SOF employment. These prescriptions will come with recommendations for SOF employment that would further enhance military engagement. The final chapter will conclude this paper with a review of the research, findings, recommendations, and areas for further research related to this topic.

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II.   U.S. STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East is of critical importance to United States' security goals. Access to oil, control of key lines of communication, potential for conflict between states, and the growth of non-state extremist networks require U.S. action to shape outcomes favorable to American interests. However, recent large-scale military commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan have proven more costly—both in financial and human capital—than is politically sustainable. Additionally, the American people are less likely to support long-term military intervention in a post War on Terror world. Further, large-scale American footprints in the Muslim world remain unacceptable to local Arab populations, and thus jeopardize high-profile military partnerships with Arab Allies. Therefore, the U.S. Military should seek to provide a cost efficient and politically acceptable strategy to promote America's interests in this politically sensitive and complicated environment.

Andre Beaufre defines strategy as "the art of applying force so that it makes the most effective contribution towards achieving the ends set by public policy."[2] In other words, this study must first examine American policy goals in the Middle East, determine the means available—especially given recent large-scale regional operations and U.S. domestic concerns—and then determine the most efficient ways in which to employ military means, taking into account political and cultural considerations of regional actors.

A.   U.S. INTERESTS

The 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS) lays out a path to promote America's policy goals for the following 4 years. In military terms, this document provides the Commander in Chief's guidance for subordinate leaders to conduct strategic planning, allocate resources, and direct their efforts. Based on the guidance from the NSS, the

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[2] Andre Beafre, *Introduction to Strategy* (New York: Fredrick A. Prager, 1965), 22.

Department of Defense generates the National Defense Strategy (NDS) and the National Military Strategy (NMS). Taken together, these three documents direct the military's role in America's Grand Strategy.

Within these documents four policy goals are specified; two goals focus on opposing America's adversaries, while two focus on strengthening her allies. First, as the NMS states, "(the U.S. Military) will support efforts to counter transnational and sub-state militant groups."[3] Al Qaeda and various affiliated extremist organizations continue to be present in various sizes and levels of effectiveness throughout the region. Recent operations by newer Al Qaeda affiliates (e.g., Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula) demonstrate that the loosely confederated organization has the ability to strike at American interests even when the central leadership is not involved. Therefore, one of America's goals is to gain and maintain intelligence on these organizations, and pursue them wherever they are in order to disrupt or defeat their ability to threaten American interests.

Second, the United States seeks to check the growing regional aims of an Iranian regime that continues to seek nuclear weapons,[4] acts as a destabilizing force in the Levant[5], and pursues greater influence and dominance in the eastern Arabian Peninsula[6]. This Iranian malfeasance often creates greater instability within key United States allies and is antithetical to U.S. interests. However, Iran rarely undertakes these efforts overtly or directly; rather, they operate by proxies in an efficient and politically savvy way.

Third, the United States seeks to "Shape the Choices of Key States."[7] Shaping is the process by which the U.S. seeks to influence the actions and perceptions of key allies

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[3] U.S. Department of Defense, *United States National Military Strategy*, 2011 (Washington, DC: GPO, 2011), 11.

[4] NMS 2011, 11.

[5] David Petraeus, "The Posture of U.S. Central Command," (testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Washington, D.C., March 16, 2010).

[6] Breitbart, "Gulf states denounce Iran's meddling," April 4, 2008, http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=CNG.27d8269a87e82e558f6f222e87a9d9a8.521&show_article=1 (accessed June 1, 2011).

[7] U.S. Department of Defense, *United States National Defense Strategy*, 2010 (Washington, DC: GPO, 2010), 8.

and adversaries. While the State Department is the primary agency for shaping international consensus and coalition building, the United States Military has a crucial role in developing military security partnerships and shaping the behavior of those partners. Enabling and encouraging social, economic, and human rights reforms among allied militaries promotes United States values and the long-term viability of partner nations.[8]

Fourth, the NSS and NMS specifically list the need to build partner capacity as a U.S. policy goal. This helps our allies defend themselves from domestic threats, external hostility, as well as various transnational extremist networks. The intent of this goal is to reduce requirements for American intervention in the Middle East through collective and cooperative security arrangements, ideally deterring hostile forces from aggression.

> The security of the United States is tightly bound up with the security of the broader international system. As a result, our strategy seeks to build the capacity of fragile or vulnerable partners to withstand internal threats and external aggression while improving the capacity of the international system itself to withstand the challenge posed by rogue states and would-be hegemons.[9]

An unstated, but critical goal is to anticipate and obviate crises in politically significant locations. The regional tumult spreading through partner and hostile states during the "Arab Spring" of 2011 illustrates that the Middle East remains a politically volatile area. Governments long believed to be stable, such as Egypt, were suddenly replaced with elements largely unknown to the United States. Therefore, it is in American interests to maintain a greater information network that increases awareness, anticipates conflict, and possibly prevents destabilization within Middle Eastern states. Such a network could resolve crises in a manner that maximizes U.S. opportunities.

Accomplishing these goals requires a long-term American commitment, making constant—albeit sometimes slow—progress. As the cases examined later in this study will illustrate, defeating complex non-state threats with roots in preexisting social

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[8] Petraeus, "The Posture of U.S. Central Command."

[9] U.S. Department of Defense, *United States National Defense Strategy*, 2008 (Washington, DC: GPO, 2008), 6.

conflicts often requires persistent effort over the course of many years. Additionally, these cases will show that attempts to transform attitudes regarding human rights in partner nations often achieve success incrementally through interaction and example by American forces. Also, maintenance of a regional network would require constant effort lest the relationships upon which it is based become strained or forgotten. Thus, future U.S. military efforts must recognize the need for long term engagement in the Middle East.

B.   CONSTRAINTS OF THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

Given the broad geographic and demographic expanses of the Middle East, one may conclude that a massive commitment of military power is necessary to accomplish each of the five stated goals. However, this may not be a politically acceptable or a possible course of action. Large-scale conflicts such as recently experienced in Iraq and have Afghanistan are costly in terms of monetary expense, commitment of the military, and American political capitol internationally. In financial terms alone, the two theatres have cost a combined $1.12 trillion[10] or roughly 7.8 % of U.S. Gross Domestic Product.[11] In terms of commitment of military power, the U.S. effort in Iraq had, at its height, roughly 23% of active duty Soldiers and Marines deployed as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.[12] Operation Enduring Freedom required an additional commitment of 12% of active duty Soldiers and Marines.[13]   Furthermore, recent polls demonstrate that Americans are weary of these military commitments and many have come to believe U.S.

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[10] Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2010), 1.

[11] International Monetary Fund, "World Economic Outlook Database 2009," *Report for Selected Countries and Subjects*, http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2009/02/weodata/weorept.aspx?sy=2006&ey=2009&scsm=1&ssd =1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=111&s=NGDPD%2CNGDPDPC%2CPPPGDP%2CPPPPC%2CLP&grp =0&a=&pr.x=64&pr.y=8 (accessed 3 NOV 2010).

[12] "Number of U.S. Troops in Afghanistan Exceeds that in Iraq for the First Time," *Washington Post*, May 25, 2010, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/05/24/AR2010052403842.html (accessed 3 NOV 2010)

[13] Ibid.

military action to be a mistake.[14] The cost of this sustained monetary, human, and political capital has prompted U.S. policymakers to seek more efficient ways of achieving security goals in the coming years. Therefore, any effort to pursue American interests in the Middle East with conventional military forces will be met with strong domestic opposition.

Additionally, regional considerations specific to the Middle East restrict the use of large conventional forces to pursue U.S. interests short of war. Much like other regions, the colonial history of the Middle East predisposes it to hypersensitivity toward Western militaries within their borders. Consequently, Middle Eastern Jihadi Ideologues exploit this sensitivity greater than anywhere else in the world. Prominent Jihadi writings focus on injustices associated with Western military presence in Islamic holy lands, and criticism of foreign backed Middle Eastern leaders. Tracing popular backlash toward U.S. military intervention in the Middle East over the past 30 years shows increasing animosity and conflict through three foreign policy eras: Over the Horizon, Dual Containment, and Direct Intervention. While large scale U.S. military presence in the Middle East accomplished U.S. goals in each era, it jeopardized long-term security and stability by encouraging the growth of Anti-American sentiment, and Islamic radicalism

1.   Over the Horizon

The first major military intervention is Operation Earnest Will, which occurred during the U.S. foreign policy era characterized as Over The Horizon engagement. This policy was also known as the Guam/Nixon Doctrine, whereby the United States would support select allies and provide them whatever non-combat support short of nukes that they needed to safeguard U.S. interests.[15] Beginning in approximately 1971, the U.S. military remained within striking range of Middle East but out of sight, stationed in places like Turkey and Diego Garcia. The U.S. provided support to key allies, specifically the Shah's Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Turkey, who would stabilize the

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[14] Jeffrey M. Jones, "Americans Less Pessimistic About U.S. Progress in Afghanistan," *Gallup online,* November 29, 2010, http://www.gallup.com/poll/144944/Americans-Less-Pessimistic-Progress-Afghanistan.aspx (accessed June 2, 2011).

[15] Amin Saikal, *Islam and the West: Conflict or Cooperation* (NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 59.

region and promote U.S. objectives. This policy officially lasted until President Clinton changed U.S. foreign policy to Dual Containment in 1993. This era witnessed several conflicts between the U.S. Middle East policy and Islamists or Jihadis, however, Operation Earnest Will was a watershed for U.S. military intervention in the Middle East.

Under Operation Earnest Will, President Reagan approved the Kuwaiti government's request to reflag their oil tankers as American ships in 1987 in order to protect Kuwaiti oil exports from Iranian attack. While reflagging maritime vessels was an accepted practice internationally, it was not common for the U.S. to participate. During the course of the Iran-Iraq War, Iran had repeatedly attacked Kuwaiti oil production and transportation infrastructure in order to punish Kuwait for supporting Iraq. As a result, Kuwaiti oil exports had dropped from 2 million barrels per day to only 300 barrels per day.[16] Kuwait could no longer economically tolerate this decreased level of production, yet was unable to protect itself from Iran's aggression. So, it turned to U.S. to request protection by reflagging their tankers. Reflagging Kuwaiti oil tankers under the U.S. flag would provide justification for U.S. Naval protection for Kuwait's tankers, and to perhaps bring an end to the Iran-Iraq war.[17] Initially, President Reagan rejected Kuwait's request, but he reconsidered when Kuwait subsequently approached the Soviet Union with the same request.[18] Reflagging the tankers led to increased U.S. Naval presence in the Persian Gulf in order to block Communist expansion into the Middle East and ensure the regular flow of oil.

Prior to requesting U.S. assistance, Kuwait had drawn a fine and strong line against Western intervention or encroachment in their country since they gained their independence in 1961.[19] As a result, national sensitivity toward Western naval vessels docking at Kuwaiti ports was very high. Indeed, "In the 1980s, any large U.S. military

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[16] Shafeeq Ghabra, "Kuwait and the United States: The Reluctant Ally and U.S. Policy toward the Gulf," in *The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment*, ed. David W. Lesch, 279–98 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 284.

[17] Lee Allen Zatarain, *Tanker War: America's First Conflict with Iran*, 1987-1988 (Philadelphia: CaseMate, 2008), 30.

[18] Zatarain, *Tanker War*, 34.

[19] Ghabra, "Kuwait and the United States," 280–282.

presence in the Gulf was considered dangerous to local rulers."[20] "When the U.S. asked for port facilities, Kuwait refused for fear of inciting rejectionists in Kuwait and the rest of the Middle East."[21] Initially, Kuwait only allowed the United States Navy to refuel at sites off shore, but eventually the need for maintenance and other supplies justified docking at port.[22] While great efforts were made to conceal or minimize this from the public, word got out. Kuwaiti rejectionists, university faculty, and students characterized the U.S. role in reflagging as imperialist and an attempt at Western recolonization.[23]

While reflagging may have ensured the continuous flow of oil through the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War, it jeopardized the credibility of the Kuwaiti government, and inflamed anti-American sentiment. The Kuwaiti government was already unpopular for dismissing Parliament in 1986.[24] Additionally, Iran had encouraged rebellion in Kuwait through their disenfranchised Shia population.[25] High profile conflicts between USN vessels and Iraq or Iran also fueled anti-American sentiment. The Iraqi attack on the USS Stark set the conditions for the USS Vincennes to mistakenly shoot-down Iranian flight 655, killing 290 civilians. It is clear that these incidents served to jeopardize public support for the Kuwaiti government, increase the divide between the U.S. and Iran, and increase anti-American sentiments.

2.   Dual Containment

Under President Clinton, the U.S. adapted its Middle East engagement strategy to one of Dual Containment, where the U.S. used military forces based in the Persian Gulf and Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC) to militarily contain Iraq, and enforce

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[20] Ghabra, "Kuwait and the United States," 283.

[21] Ibid., 284.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 284–285.

[24] Ibid., 285.

[25] Zatarain, *Tanker* War, 30.

economic sanctions designed to politically and ideologically contain Iran.[26] Operation Desert Storm inaugurated the Dual Containment era. This policy era saw greater conflicts between the United States and Jihadis than the previous era. However, it was Operations Desert Storm and Southern Watch that were the greatest catalysts for anti-American sentiment and perceived injustice by the Arab populace.

Only months after the conclusion of the Iran–Iraq War, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. After a U.S.-led coalition of over 400,000 troops expelled Iraqi forces during Operation Desert Storm, the Kuwaiti government signed a military defense pact with the United States. This pact permitted unrestricted arms sales to Kuwait, training for the Kuwaiti military, as well as docking rights for USN vessels at Kuwaiti ports, and prepositioning of 60 tanks and 400 vehicles. This pact set the precedent for similar agreements with Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).[27] Additionally, Saudi Arabia ordered $25 billion of U.S. arms, and allowed 60 U.S. Air Force planes to base out of the Kingdom.[28] These pacts provided U.S. security for GCC countries and facilitated Operation Southern Watch, the mission to enforce a UN sanctioned no-fly zone in Iraq designed to protect the Shia south.

As a result of Operation Desert Storm and Southern Watch, anti-American sentiment and opposition to the Saudi government increased. "Never before had U.S. ground troops in such numbers been stationed in the Kingdom [of Saudi Arabia]."[29] Even during the Operation Earnest Will, the Saudis refused basing rights to U.S. forces.[30] Opposition to the monarchy grew despite Saudi efforts to conceal and deny the

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[26] B.A. Roberson, "The Impact of the International System on the Middle East," in *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, 55–69 (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2002), 60. Nadia El-Shazly and Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Challenge of Security in the Post-Gulf War Middle East System," in *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, 71–90 (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2002), 73–75.

[27] Ghabra, "Kuwait and the United States," 288–289.

[28] F. Gregory Cause III, "From 'Over the Horizon' to 'Into the Backyard': The U.S.-Saudi Relationship and the Gulf War," in *The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment*, ed. David W. Lesch, 299–311 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 309.

[29] Cause III, "From 'Over the Horizon,' " 299.

[30] Ibid., 306.

continuing U.S. military presence in the Kingdom, the Land of the Two Holy Sanctuaries of Islam. Reflecting popular sentiment, over 100 Islamic political activists signed a 1992 Memorandum of Advice directed to King Fahd, calling his foreign policy decisions un-Islamic.[31] During this time, Osama Bin Laden capitalized on this sentiment by issuing several statements denouncing the Saudi monarchy and the United States, to include his Declaration of Jihad and World Islamic Front Statement Urging Jihad against Jews and Crusaders. The Saudi dilemma is that they need the United States. for its international security; however, U.S. military presence inflames the Saudi public, thus threatening domestic security.[32]

3.   Direct Intervention

Al Qaeda's attack of the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001 prompted President Bush to change U.S. foreign policy from Dual Containment to Direct Intervention. The third major military commitment is Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the quintessential example of the Direct Intervention era of U.S. Foreign Policy. He adopted a strategy of preemption, unilateral action, and regime change to combat Al Qaeda and any threat to America. Military intervention in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and the Philippines are examples of this policy in action. But OIF is the model of this era of U.S. foreign policy.

The policy of Direct Intervention threatened governments who supported terrorism against the United States with military action. Most notable was Bush's 'Axis of Evil,' specifically Iraq, Iran, and North Korea.[33] After making a strong case for regime change in Iraq before the U.S. Congress and U.N., President Bush ordered the execution of OIF. On March 20, 2003, over 150,000 troops invaded Iraq, seized Baghdad by April 9 and conquered the whole country by May 1.[34] However, Saddam Hussein and various Jihadi groups had prepared to conduct an insurgency against

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[31] Cause III, "From 'Over the Horizon,'" 308–309.

[32] Ibid., 302.

[33] Patrick Tyler, *A World of Trouble: The White House and the Middle East – from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (NY: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2009), 540.

[34] Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of Al Qaeda* (London: Saqi books, 2006), 179, 185–6.

American forces prior to the invasion. Saddam had cached arms, munitions and money throughout Iraq, and instructed his military to conduct guerrilla warfare when defeated on the conventional battlefield.[35] Abu Musab al-Zarqawi arrived in Iraq around May 2002 to establish his local support networks, claiming that the American invasion of Iraq was inevitable.[36] After American forces invaded, Saddam and Zarqawi regularly corresponded with various Arab and Western media outlets, calling on Muslims to take up their Islamic duty and fight.[37]

While conventional U.S. military were necessary to successfully replace the Saddam regime with a fledgling democracy, it came with a much higher cost than anyone planned for. One of the most significant casualties of OIF was the sympathy that the United States garnered as a result of the 9/11 bombings. Public opinion polls demonstrate outrage over the occupation of Iraq. Pew Global Attitudes project reported that U.S. global image plummeted after the invasion of Iraq, especially in Muslim countries, including U.S. allies Turkey and Jordan.[38] This increase in hostility toward America for its invasion of Iraq provided a golden opportunity for jihadis seeking to shape public opinion to their favor.

Also, Sheik Yusuf Qaradawi's reversal of support for U.S. military action as a result of OIF demonstrates the high cost of grand military intervention. Sheik Qaradawi is the most influential Islamist cleric in the world, with an audience numbering in the hundreds of millions.[39] His progressive views also include support for democracy, women's rights, U.S. Muslims serving in the military, and repeatedly denounces Al

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[35] Atwan, *The Secret History of Al Qaeda*, 186.

[36] Ibid., 197–198.

[37] Ibid., 186, 206.

[38] "Global Opinion: The Spread of Anti-Americanism," in *Trends 2005*, 105–19 (Washington D.C.: Pew Global Attitudes, January 20, 2005), http://pewresearch.org/pubs/206/trends-2005 (accessed 7 MAR 2011), 106, 109. U.S. Favorability ratings in Turkey decreased from 52% in 1999/2000 to 30% in Summer 2002 to 15% in May 2003. U.S. Favorability ratings in Jordan decreased from 25% in Summer 2002 to 1% in May 2003. U.S. Favorability ratings in Morocco decreased from 77% in 1999/2000 to 27% in May 2003.

[39] Anthony Shadid, "Maverick Cleric Is a Hit on Arab TV; Al-Jazeera Star Mixes Tough Talk With Calls for Tolerance," *Washington Post*, February 14, 2003, p. A.01, www.proquest.com (accessed March 11, 2011).

Qaeda. In contrast, Qaradawi's views on the OIF best exemplify how a large U.S. military footprint in a Muslim land incites anti-Americanism, and support for Islamists and Jihadis. In response to invading Iraq he said, "By God, I was sympathetic with the Americans from the beginning… But truthfully, I didn't imagine then that America would go on to declare a war against the world."[40] Qaradawi's views on the American invasion of Iraq provide compelling evidence of how use of conventional U.S. forces can jeopardize long-term national interests in the region.

Indeed, Princeton University Middle East scholar, Professor Bernard Lewis warned, "there are signs of a return among Muslims to what they perceive as the cosmic struggle for world domination between the two main faiths—Christianity and Islam."[41] This perception of a cosmic struggle is certainly influenced by Jihadi rhetoric aimed at capitalizing on U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. Osama Bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri have consistently used the presence of American military forces in Iraq to inspire Muslims to take up the banner of jihad and garner support for Al Qaeda.[42] Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was relatively unknown prior to the OIF. However, the American invasion of Iraq elevated Zarqawi to international celebrity jihadi status, and eventually that of a holy martyr.[43] Studies by the Saudi government and an Israeli think tank drew the same conclusion, "that the majority of foreign fighters were not Jihadis before the Iraq war, but were radicalized by the war itself."[44]

While the Direct Intervention clearly accomplished its stated goal of Iraqi regime change, disapproval for the United States grew throughout the Middle East as a result of

[40] Shadid, "Maverick Cleric."

[41] Tyler, *A World of* Trouble, 546.

[42] Omar Saghi, "Osama Bin Laden," in *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, ed. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Piere Milelli, tr. Pascale Ghazaleh, 9–77 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 66–77. Stephane LaCroix, "Ayman Al-Zawahiri," in *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, ed. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, tr. Pascale Ghazaleh, 145–234 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 160–163.

[43] Jean-Pierre Milelli, "Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi," in *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, ed. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Piere Milelli, trans. Pascale Ghazaleh, 235–267 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 237–240, 243–246.

[44] Atwan, *The Secret History of Al Qaeda*, 206.

it. The U.S. military should generate a scalable option of military intervention to promote both immediate and long-term U.S. strategic interests.

C.   A FOURTH OPTION

In all of the three of these foreign policy periods, the U.S. military was well prepared for decisive kinetic operations, or war, designed to coerce a change to unacceptable behavior or conditions. The aforementioned conflicts testify to conventional military force suitability for and capability to resolve these conflicts. However, these three policy periods also demonstrate that the interwar years lacked sufficient preemptive engagement tools that monitor and support desirable conditions or influence a change to less desirable behavior. These examples indicate that conventional forces are ill suited to conduct non-war activities where engagement is a priority. Excepted is the highly technical skill sets, such as aviation support, that resides solely in the conventional military.

The U.S. needs a fourth model to promote strategic interests in the Middle East. This model should address preemptive engagement activities that ensure the security and stability of regional partners and interests in the interwar years. As the NSS states,

Going forward, there should be no doubt: the United States of America will continue to underwrite global security—through our commitments to allies, partners, and institutions; our focus on defeating al-Qa'ida and its affiliates in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and around the globe; and our determination to deter aggression and prevent the proliferation of the world's most dangerous weapons. As we do, we must recognize that no one nation—no matter how powerful—can meet global challenges alone. As we did after World War II, America must prepare for the future, while forging cooperative approaches among nations that can yield results.[45]

In this model, the United States will create strategic partnerships to promote our interests, and share responsibility for maintaining international stability. Furthermore, this model should provide scalable options to address crisis situations ranging from

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[45] U.S. Executive Branch, *United States National Security Strategy*, 2010, (Washington, DC: GPO, 2010), 1.

peacetime to low-level conflict to war. It should also be sustainable in terms of financial and manpower costs, as well as promote legitimacy of political allies and respect cultural sensitivities of the Middle Eastern population.

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III. SOF AS THE FORCE OF CHOICE

The conditions laid out in Chapter II present a fairly small policy needle hole that must be threaded in order to accomplish American goals without causing greater or even unforeseen damage to long term interests. Andre Beaufre wrote that "[t]he art of strategy consists in choosing the most suitable means from those available … to achieve the moral effect required."[46] In other words, while the American Military has any number of units, platforms and capabilities at its disposal, many are not appropriate for the task at hand for reasons discussed previously. The United States must seek to engage the Middle East with units that can achieve the policy demands, with means that are politically acceptable both domestically and internationally, and in a way that does not detract from other military requirements. While these may appear to present an unattainable standard, the United States does in fact have the perfect tool for these conditions.

A. POLICY DEMANDS

First, SOF thrive in environments where policy demands are high and conventional force options are low. The previous chapter discussed the various policy demands that the U.S. government deems essential, to include combating extremist groups and promoting U.S. interests and values. One has to understand the nature of extremist groups and Iranian influence in the Middle East in order to effectively counter them. International terrorist organizations, such as Al Qaeda and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, are franchise industries that extend ties to local groups through ideology, financing, and training. Defeating these networks of extremism requires a network of indigenous security forces that can adapt as quickly as the enemy.[47] Short of war, the U.S. military cannot utilize conventional forces to combat these networked groups because of constraints associated with state sovereignty and high financial costs. Further, the previous chapter also demonstrated how conventional military commitments can be extremely offensive to Middle Easterners to include U.S.

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[46] Beaufre, *Introduction to* Strategy, 24.

[47] John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *The Advent of Netwar* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1996), 82.

allies. Use of these forces is actually counterproductive to promoting U.S. values and building effective alliances. So what option does the U.S. military have besides conventional forces?

Scholar and grand strategist Dr. Colin Gray states, "The mixture of regional instability, continuing U.S. interest in international order, and a reduced scale of conventional forces suggests an increase in the use of SOF."[48] The U.S. clearly has interests in the stability and security of the Middle East, and the uprisings of the Arab Spring in 2011 demonstrate that Middle East stability is always in jeopardy.

Further, SOF have the skill sets necessary to conduct missions ranging from direct intervention to indirect intervention. Direct operations are the mission sets where security forces seek to defeat opponents through direct confrontation, requiring speed, surprise, stealth, and the precision application of force. These mission sets include raids, ambushes, cordons and searches, and special reconnaissance. Conversely, indirect operations are mission sets where security forces seek to defeat opponents by and through partner forces or various rapport building and manipulation activities, requiring cross-cultural engagement, the ability to train others, and the ability to work with indigenous populations.[49] These missions include Foreign Internal Defense, Psychological Operations, Civil-Military operations.

Two characteristics of strategic utility of SOF are the ability to shape and enable the environment, and to disrupt and defeat threats.[50] Specifically, the strategic utility of indirect SOF operations has two faces, prevention of future conflicts[51] and production and management of FPF forces for use in unavoidable conflicts. SOF ability to build partner capacity of struggling states increases the ability of those states to disrupt emerging threats before those threats become an international concern.

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[48] Colin S. Gray, "Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When do Special Operations Succeed?," *Parameters*, Spring 1999, 4.

[49] Michele Malvesti, "To Serve the Nation U.S. Special Operations Forces in an era of persistent conflict," (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2010), 11.

[50] Malvesti, "To Serve the Nation," 3, 15.

[51] Ibid., 9.

While the National SOF (NSOF) have maximum utility in Direct Action, Theater SOF (TSOF) are at maximum utility in the indirect arena. The SOCCENT Commander controls TSOF in the CENTCOM AOR, which typically includes U.S. Army Special Forces (USSF), Civil Affairs (CA), Psychological Operations (PSYOP), Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC), Naval Special Warfare (NSW or SEALs). TSOF are "designed to maintain persistent presence and cultivate long-term military-to-military relationships within their respective regions."[52] These relationships and cultural skills are ideal for building counter-extremist networks, and promote U.S values among allies.

B.   POLITICAL SENSITIVITY

Second, employing SOF in the Middle East is more acceptable domestically and internationally. SOF is specially trained to operate in these politically sensitive environments. Gray makes the point that SOF is an appealing force for politicians because it is a comparatively low cost—high return option to conventional military forces.[53] Current domestic opposition to protracted military commitments often does not extend to the employment of SOF. Indeed, the American people have demonstrated little objection to the current use of SOF in Columbia, the Philippines, and Yemen.

Further, the use of host nation partner forces is both cost effective and politically palatable.[54] In many Middle Eastern countries, military elites have a great deal of influence in the gray area where politics and defense matters merge. As such, military to military engagement between U.S. SOF and foreign military officers offers an opportunity to shape and influence Middle Eastern countries in order to support U.S. interests. This is significant in the Middle East where jihadi adversaries portray the current War against Al Qaeda as an ideological aggression by the United States against all of Islam. Thus, increasing partnerships with Muslim allies undermines this propaganda, provided that allies are seen as true partners and not puppets.

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[52] Malvesti, "To Serve the Nation," 9.

[53] Gray, "Handfuls of Heroes," 4–5.

[54] Arquilla and Ronfeldt, *The Advent of Netwar,* 8.

Further, SOF are a more palatable military option internationally due to cultural engagement skills and small force footprints. These assets make military intervention appear as an effort to respect and cooperate, rather than occupy and demand. The Warrior-Diplomats of TSOF are selected and trained for cultural interaction and language proficiency, and on average have greater experience with negotiations and influence operations. Should the environment necessitate direct intervention then NSOF is rigorously trained and amply resourced to maximize the execution of covert and clandestine missions. Simply put, these units are the only U.S. military force designed, selected, trained and resourced to operate in these environments.

C.   OPPORTUNITY COST

Third, conventional military and TSOF units were originally designed to accomplish very different missions—missions that require almost antithetical means to accomplish. As Dr. Hy Rothstein wrote,

> Decisive operations are coercive by nature. They involve the direct application of military power to compel an adversary to accede to the will of the United States and, when applicable, its allies. Regional engagement, on the other hand, is characterized by a different dynamic, that of influence. Regional engagement involves the discriminate, and often indirect, application of military power to persuade, encourage, guide, manipulate, or otherwise influence adversaries, allies, or neutrals to act in a manner consistent with, or supportive of, U.S. national interests.[55]

Thus, there is an inherent opportunity cost associated when ad hoc General Purpose Forces (GPF) units, designed to perform decisive operations, are used in a different role.

Recently, during Major Theater Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, there has been some blurring between the traditional roles and missions of SOF and General Purpose Forces. Conventional Army Soldiers on Transition Teams found themselves training and advising Iraqi and Afghan security forces, a role traditional associated with Special Forces. Likewise, SOF were often utilized to target tactical level insurgents in a

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[55] Hy Rothstein et al., *Regional Engagement: An Army Special Operations Forces Approach to Future Theater Military Operations* (June 1999), 5.

manner that did not maximize their unique skill sets. While these conflicts necessitated this peculiar arrangement, it is by no means ideal or advantageous. In fact, this role reversal detracts from the *raison d'être* of both forces, thus degrading America's ability to conduct Beaufre's definition of strategic art.

While the massive scope of recreating the Iraqi Army required GPF Soldiers to adopt these nonstandard training roles, this mission did in fact mean that Infantrymen were not performing Infantry tasks. Now as the United States looks past the short term need for this deviation in traditional mission, it should not seek to exacerbate the problem. Specifically, the Army should seek to retain the capabilities of the finest Army in the world, rather than sacrifice regular war fighting capabilities on the altar of irregular warfare. Recently, Army brigades—whose traditional mission is to close with and destroy conventional enemy formations and who have neither a traditional nor doctrinal mission of working "by, with and through" partner forces—have begun reforming themselves as Advise and Assist Brigades (AAB) with the new mission of conducting Security Force Assistance. This reorganization requires types of training—such as "city management courses, civil affairs training and border patrol classes"[56]—that are obviously not in keeping with the traditional roles of conventional combat arms. While some believe conventional units should retain the Security Force Assistance (SFA) mission for shaping operations and operations other than war after the current conflicts,[57] this use detracts from GPF units' ability to train and prepare for the next large scale conflict. As GEN Casey, outgoing Chief of Staff of the Army stated, non-standard use of conventional units has left them, "a little rusty at the battalion and brigade staff integration and synchronization skills."[58]

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[56] Kate Brannen, "Combat Brigades in Iraq under a different name," *Army Times Online*, August 19, 2010, http://www.armytimes.com/news/2010/08/dn-brigades-stay-under-different-name-081910/ (accessed 2 June 2011).

[57] Joseph E. Escandon, *The future of Security Force Assistance: Is the Modular Brigade Combat Team the right organization?* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Command and General Staff College, 2008), 97–103.

[58] Eric Beidel, "Army Chief Gen. Casey: A Bigger Portion of the Army Now Training for Conventional War," *National Defense Industrial Association*, January 6, 2011, http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/blog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=280 (accessed June 2, 2011).

Further, the high intensity of repetitive deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan have taken their toll on GPF and have made the prospect of further perpetual commitments untenable. In fact, those current deployments of GPF to Iraq and Afghanistan would be unsustainable were it not for a short-term increase in Army manpower by 22,000. However, the Army's conventional units will be forced to cut 49,000 Soldiers from current strength by 2016.[59] These reductions make the prospect of persistent presence by an already strained and further shrinking Army an unfeasible option.

Just as unconventional use of conventional forces dulls the skills they require, SOF employment in Afghanistan and Iraq have limited their availability to conduct traditional Special Operations missions in other areas, specifically in the arena of military to military engagement short of war. Currently, 84% of all SOF are committed to Afghanistan and Iraq.[60] Further, their mission set only reflects a fraction of their capability and is challenged by external restrictions. Specifically, SOF currently act in support of GPF, compete with SOF to influence and advise the same FPF, thereby degrading the strategic value of SOF.[61] While SOF make significant contributions in these theaters, these contributions are often diminished returns in an environment flush with kinetic capabilities. Thus, these repetitive and manpower intensive requirements often bring benefit on the margins in these Major Theater Operations. SOF could be used to greater effect in an alternative manner, one that reflects core competencies in Irregular Warfare and addresses lesser-known threats.

By attempting to blur the lines between traditional roles—and by extension the operations in which each can achieve greatest utility—SOF and GPF are often working in a redundant or inefficient manner. This creates a greater cost for lesser gains than would be accomplished by an alternative plan in which each focuses on their primary skills and core competencies and in which each operated in environments most suitable to those skills. Using AABs to build partner capacity can be done if U.S. units partner with forces

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[59] "Casey warns against 'hallowing' Army," *Army Times,* February 25, 2011, http://www.armytimes.com/news/2011/02/army-casey-warns-022511w/ (accessed June 2, 2011).

[60] Malvesti, "To Serve the Nation," 23.

[61] Ibid.

one level up. In other words, an American platoon can train a partner nation company; an American company can train a partner nation battalion.[62] The extraordinary inefficiency in this can be appreciated when one considers the same host nation battalion can be effectively trained by a GPF company (roughly 130 Soldiers) or can be trained and advised by a single Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha (SFOD-A) made up of 12 Soldiers.

Additionally, the nexus of the current environment in the Middle East—below the threshold of war—and the long-term commitment required to accomplish the previously listed strategic goals create conditions which are better suited for theater SOF to be optimally utilized and in which GPF would be inefficient at best, and at worst working against America's long term interests. Table 1 demonstrates the relative utility of SOF vs. GPF in conflicts that vary in both intensity and duration.

Table 1.   Utility of SOF Vs. GPF in Various Conflicts

		Intensity of Conflict	
		Low	High
Duration Required to Accomplish Goals	Long	SOF – High GPF-Low	SOF-Moderate GPF-Moderate
	Short	SOF-High GPF-Moderate	GPF-High SOF-Low

Therefore, Theater SOF is demonstrably the force of choice for the phase zero shaping operations required to accomplish America's future goals in Middle East. However, merely identifying the appropriate tool does not lead to a plan for the region. Now that the "who" has been identified, the "how" must be addressed. In fact, SOF can be misapplied to a problem in ways that accomplish little to no gains. In recent years, partly because of commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan, theater SOF would engage Middle Eastern partner forces on a sporadic, interrupted basis which has had questionable

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[62] Escandon, *The future of Security Force Assistance*, 84.

value in building enduring relationships—thus making shaping more difficult—and has not created maximum increases in partner capacity. Therefore, in order to achieve long term gains, Theater SOF must engage as many partner forces in the region as is politically acceptable in a persistent manner in order to build partner capacity, defeat and disrupt transnational threats and shape the perceptions of both partner and adversary states. The following cases will help explore the most effective means for SOF regional engagement.

IV.   OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM—PHILIPPINES

A.   BACKGROUND

The combined efforts of the Philippine military and U.S. Special Operations Forces provide several learning points about how a persistent small force can have strategic impact. The Philippines are similar to the Middle East in various ways, including a colonial history that increases the political sensitivity of U.S. military operations there. The Philippines gained their independence from the United States in 1946 and subsequently went through a period with unpopular national leadership beholden to the United States as their Cold War benefactor. Additionally, the Philippines has numerous ethnic and religious groups who were all put under the governance of overwhelmingly Catholic government with only token representation of the non-Christian populace.[63] This led to strong distrust of their previous colonial masters, which is most evident by a constitutional clause prohibiting foreign militaries from conducting combat operations within the Philippine borders. However, it was not until 1992 that Philippine sovereignty issues came to a head and U.S. forces closed all bases and reduced their patronage and influence over the Philippine government (GRP). Almost a decade passed before Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo reengaged with the U.S. military. During this time, the Philippine military declined while Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups prospered.[64]

B.   ENEMY

The Philippines is typical of Southeast Asia in that it is an area that lends itself to Al Qaeda franchise development due to a large Muslim population within a region of ethnic fault lines and loose political control. Indeed, within the Philippine islands there is an Al Qaeda affiliate network with links to several Southeast Asian countries. While there are four main insurgent factions with numerous of splinter groups, the Moro Islamic

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[63] Cherilyn A. Walley, "A Century of Turmoil: America's Relationship with the Philippines," Special Warfare 17, no. 1 (September 2004), 6–7.

[64] Walley, "A Century of Turmoil," 4–11.

Liberation Front (MILF), the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) are the primary sources of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism and are linked to Al Qaeda.

MILF is "the strongest and most active insurgent group in the southern Philippines, as well as the most vocally anti-American."[65] It is a splinter group of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) created in 1978 by more radical elements of the MNLF.[66] They have institutional links to international terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda, Harkat-ul-unsar, and Hezbollah.[67] MILF is the parent of the Indonesian Islamic Liberation Front, also known as Jemaah Islamiyah, providing training and sanctuary to them at their inception.[68] MILF practices a Salafist Wahhabi interpretation of Islam, and has successfully created a parallel Islamic government in Mindanao.[69] It is responsible for numerous terrorist attacks of civilian targets within the Philippines. However, its prominence provided clout to openly negotiate a peace treaty in 2001 with the GRP, thus preventing the Philippine Armed Forces (AFP) and the U.S. military from conducting operations targeting it.[70]

ASG is an Al Qaeda franchise organization whose network structure extends beyond the Philippines, through Southeast Asia, and into the Middle East. Abdurajak Janjalani (Abu Sayyaf) founded this group in the early 1990s after fighting in Afghanistan as a part of MILF.[71] Indeed, it was Osama Bin Laden's brother-in-law who recruited Sayyaf to Al Qaeda and introduced him to Ramzi Yousef, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad (KSM), and Wali Kahn Amin Shah.[72] Al Qaeda has provided funding and training to ASG since its inception.[73] ASG made a name for itself through its hundreds

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[65] C.H. Briscoe and LTC Dennis Downey, "Multiple Insurgent Groups Complicate Philippine Security," *Special Warfare* 17, no.1 (September 2004), 13.

[66] Larry Niksch, "Abu Sayyaf: Target of Philippine-U.S. Anti-Terrorism Cooperation," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress RL31265 (January 24, 2007), 2.

[67] Maria A. Ressa, *Seeds of Terror* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 129.

[68] Ressa, *Seeds of Terror*, 134–135.

[69] Ibid., 127–128.

[70] Briscoe and Downey, "Multiple Insurgent Groups," 13.

[71] Ibid., "Multiple Insurgent Groups," 13.

[72] Ressa, *Seeds of Terror*, 107–108.

[73] Niksch, CRS Report 31265, 4.

of terrorist acts to include Kidnapping for Ransom (KFR) and bombings, primarily directed against Westerners and Christians.[74]   In 1995, ASG killed 53 civilians and soldiers, and wounded over 100, when they attacked the Christian town of Ipil in Mindanao. When the AFP finally killed Abu Sayyaf in 1998, ASG splintered and grew more violent and gangster-like. Khadaffy Janjalani, Sayyaf's brother took leadership of the main group of ASG and maintained close ties to Al Qaeda. ASG continued to prosecute high-profile attacks primarily against Westerners.[75] "Jeemah Islamiah and Al Qaeda cadre began to use MILF bases on Mindanao for training and planning operations, which brought JI into direct contact with Abu Sayyaf."[76] In 2002, Khadaffy called for a Muslim offensive against U.S. forces in the Philippines and affiliated ASG with the Indonesia-based JI, elevating the organization to follow a higher call of Islamic Jihad. ASG was the primary target of U.S–AFP operations during Balikatan 02-1 due to its ties with Al Qaeda and their KFR activities targeting Westerners.

Similarly, JI is an al Qaeda franchise that originated in Indonesia in the early 1970s and spread throughout Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, as well as Australia and Pakistan.[77] JI founders, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Abdullah Sungkar sought to establish Islamic sharia law in Indonesia through political revolution or jihad.[78] Ba'asyir, an Islamic cleric who is often called the Asian Osama Bin Laden, assumed leadership of JI after Sungkar died in 1999.[79] They founded al Mukmin, an Islamic boarding school in 1971 that became a recruiting station for JI.[80] This school was the first stop on a jihadi training pipeline passing through Southeast Asia and Afghanistan. Fleeing imprisonment by the Indonesian government, Ba'asyir and Sungkar travelled to Malaysia in 1985; they came into contact with other Muslim militants who connected

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[74] Mike Fowler, "Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy: Then and Now," *Small Wars Journal* (January 18, 2011), 8–9. www.smallwarsjournal.com (accessed January 26, 2011).

[75] Ressa, *Seeds of Terror*, 108–109.

[76] Niksch, CRS report 31265, 5.

[77] Bruce Vaughn et al., "Terrorism in Southeast Asia," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress RL34194 (October 16, 2009), 3.

[78] Ressa, *Seeds of Terror*, 48–50, 57–58.

[79] Ibid., 51.

[80] Vaughn et al., CRS Report RL34194, 5.

them to the global jihad. From there, Sungkar travelled to Afghanistan to meet Osama Bin Laden, where he secured training and finance for JI. Ba'asyir and Sungkar expanded JI's network across Southeast Asia and Australia, sending operatives to Afghanistan and the Philippines for training.[81] They returned to Indonesia in 1999, following General Suharto's fall, where a fledgling democracy allowed them to openly recruit and operate. JI has conducted or attempted several high profile attacks throughout Southeast Asia. Some of these include the Bali nightclub bombing of 2002, which killed over 200 people, a series of Indonesian church bombings in 2000, an attempt to bomb several Western and American targets in Singapore, and the attempted assassination of Indonesian Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri.[82] JI partners with MILF splinter groups and ASG as trainers/technical advisors.[83] JI joins ASG as a primary target of OEF-P because of their links to Al Qaeda and their high-profile attacks.

C.   COOPERATION

Cooperation between the U.S. military and the AFP began with Operation Balikatan 02-01, which was the inaugural exercise of Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines (OEF-P). Joint Task Force (JTF) 510, comprised of 1300 U.S. troops—primarily an air component and support component—had a light tactical footprint of 160 U.S. Army Special Forces (SF) and 300 Navy Seabees.[84] JTF-510 conducted combined operations with the AFP along three Lines of Operation (LOO), in priority: Building AFP capacity, Focused Civil-Military Operations, and Information Operations. JTF-510, led by 1st Special Forces Group(Airborne) Commander, COL David Fridovich, was the headquarters assigned to run operations overseeing ARSOF operations during Balikitan 02-01. He structured 1st SFG(A) to execute six-month rotations of subordinate elements, to establish a persistent partnership with the Philippine security forces.[85] These

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[81] Ressa, *Seeds of Terror*, 50.

[82] Ibid., 10, 58, 63.

[83] Niksch, CRS report RL31265, 6.

[84] Greg Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation: OEF-Philippines and The Indirect Approach," *Military Review* (November-December 2006): 6.

[85] C.H. Briscoe, "Balikatan Exercise Spearheaded ARSOF Operations in Philippines," *Special Warfare* 17, no. 1, (September 2004), 19.

combined U.S.-Philippine operations intended to work by, with, and through AFP to reinforce the legitimacy of GRP, separate the population from ASG, and then destroy ASG on the Southern Philippine Island of Basilan from January to June 2002.[86]

1.   LOO: Building Philippine Armed Force (AFP) Capacity

First, JTF-510 built AFP capacity and legitimacy in order to create a secure and stable environment by defeating ASG and protecting the local population. Special Forces Detachments were partnered with both AFP and Civil Augmentation Force Geographical Units (CAFGU), similar to Afghanistan's Village Stability Operations (VSO) program.[87] Their mission was to train, advise and assist each of their partners, however, they were restricted from actual combat operations. JTF-510 determined that ARSOTF's first priority was "improving the legitimacy of the GRP through the use of the Counterinsurgency (COIN) model,"[88] and critical to the success of this goal was putting the AFP in the lead of securing the population from intimidation or attack by ASG.

At the outset of Balikatan 02-1, "SF advisors were deployed down to the battalion level and moved in with their Philippine counterparts in remote areas near insurgent strongholds."[89] The teams worked to assess their partners' tactical capabilities. They found AFP equipment in disrepair, and that the AFP lacked adequate security and basic infantry skills, and some operational failures were the result of corruption in AFP ranks.[90] While little could be done initially regarding AFP equipment, "base-camp security was greatly enhanced after the arrival of the SF teams."[91] The teams prioritized training that established combat skills, improved the confidence of the AFP, and built rapport with local villages.

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[86] Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation," 6.

[87] Briscoe, "Balikatan Exercise," 19.

[88] Ibid., 20.

[89] Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation," 7.

[90] Niksch, CRS 31265, 8.

[91] Briscoe, "Balikatan Exercise," 20.

Indeed, advisor efforts focused on teaching the AFP all the necessary skills to effectively combat ASG, ranging from basic tactical skills to operational planning. SF teams, typically 8–12 SF soldiers, taught the AFP basic infantry skills such as marksmanship, patrolling, and combat lifesaving skills. In addition to on-base training, AFP and SF advisors conducted regular patrols that reestablished government security for the nearby villages, which were often the target of ASG intimidation or attacks.[92] SF soldiers were eventually permitted to participate in direct combat operations, as advisors only, which played a key role in improving the capability of the AFP and gaining their trust.[93] SF advisors also increased the operational planning skills of the AFP through intelligence sharing and training in information collection and fusion. Advisors were able to leverage U.S. sources of intelligence and integrate this knowledge to support AFP operations against the ASG. With increased security and greater AFP professionalism, villagers "openly shared information on the local situation with AFP and U.S. forces."[94]

"Exercise Balikatan 02-1 ended in July 2002, but the presence of Army [SOF] in the Philippines did not."[95] By the conclusion of Balikatan 02-1, AFP units had built rapport that established a positive popular image of the GRP.[96] Additionally, while combined SOF-AFP efforts did not completely dismantle ASG, combat operations denied ASG safe haven in strategically significant areas.[97] JTF-510 reorganized into Joint Special Operations Task Force—Philippines (JSOTF-P), and continued to develop AFP capacity at the operational and tactical levels of war. U.S. advisors' presence decreased to one SF B-Detachment and five SF A-Detachments, numbering a total of approximately 100 advisors.[98] Organizing as Liaison Coordination Elements (LCE) consisting of 4–12 U.S. SOF troops, teams deployed to the AFP tactical units ranging from the battalion to

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[92] Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation," 7.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., 8.

[95] Cherilyn A. Walley, "Special Forces Training Exercises Continue Balikatan Mission," *Special Warfare* 17, no. 1, (September 2004), 42.

[96] Briscoe, "Balikatan Exercise," 24.

[97] Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation," 8–9.

[98] Walley, "Special Forces Training Exercises," 43.

the division levels, and continued to advise and assist AFP units in operational planning and intelligence fusion.[99]   While Balikatan 02-1 focused advisory efforts on Basilan Island, OEF-P extends operational reach across the whole Sulu Archipelago and began targeting JI in addition to ASG.   Between 2002 and 2006, AFP operations dealt a significant blow to ASG, reducing their armed strength from approximately 1000 to about 300.[100]   As recently as February 2009, combined JSOTF-P—ASG efforts have pursued ASG/JI across the Archipelago, successfully denying them new sanctuaries.[101]

However, training the AFP and restoring security to the southern Philippines was only a first step toward a successful AFP COIN campaign against ASG/JI.   Increased security facilitated concurrent civil-military humanitarian assistance programs.   These civil-military operations (CMO) increased the legitimacy of the AFP and GRP, while delegitimizing ASG and JI.[102]

2.   LOO: Focused Civil-Military Operations

Second, JTF-510 facilitated Philippine led humanitarian and civic-action projects to improve the quality of life of the average citizen and increase the legitimacy of the GRP.   Controlling the relationships between the people, the government, and the insurgents is essential in a COIN campaign.[103]   At the outset of Balikatan 02-1, the Philippine people were disaffected by the GRP, largely feeling neglected and oppressed. ASG often used heavy-handed intimidation tactics to control the population, who had no confidence of refuge in the AFP.   In order to restore popular confidence to the AFP and the GRP, JTF-510 developed a Philippine led Civil-Military Operations (CMO) plan aimed at driving a wedge between ASG and their popular support base.

JTF-510's CMO plan aimed to provide basic services to the population.   The AFP and JTF-510 used several tools to restore civil services and restore the trust of the

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[99] Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation," 9.

[100] Niksch, CRS report RL31265, 4.

[101] Brian Petit et al., "OEF-Philippines: Thinking COIN, Practicing FID," *Special Warfare* 23, no. 1 (January-February 2010), 14–15.

[102] Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation," 7–8.

[103] Ibid., 4–5.

Philippine people. The first step was to conduct an assessment of the socio-economic trends and living conditions on Basilan, in order to determine and prioritize CMO efforts. Under SF advisement, the AFP surveyed 60,000 of Basilan's 350,000 residents, determining that the three areas of greatest need were providing potable water, medical care, and improving transportation infrastructure.[104] No NGOs had worked on Basilan since 1999, and ASG had driven teachers and doctors off the island leaving the majority Muslim population with insufficient health care and education.[105] Because of the heavy equipment required, the Navy Seabee detachment focused on digging wells and repairing transportation infrastructure. In all, they dug three deep-water wells, improved 80km of road and erected four bridges.[106]

However, the Medical Civil-Action Programs (MEDCAP), and Dental Civil-Action Programs (DENTCAP) were the most effective tools for winning popular support. These programs typically involved regular AFP-SOF patrols to local villages, where SF trained AFP medics conducted "sick-call" in order to treat the various maladies of the people. SF medics personally treated medical conditions that required greater care, or facilitated transportation to a higher level of medical care. "More than 30,000 people had received treatment from [SOF-AFP] sponsored MEDCAPs and DENTCAPs."[107] Sometimes, the JTF & AFP used MEDCAPs to highlight the brutality of ASG, by providing medical assistance in areas of recent ASG attacks or sanctuaries. The ASG recognized the effectiveness of these humanitarian assistance missions and attempted further terrorist attacks. However, because of the MEDCAPS, the people of Basilan recognized the benefits of supporting the AFP, and showed their gratitude by providing information about ASG locations and attacks.[108]

Additionally, it was crucial that the population recognize that the AFP led the CMO projects. This leadership was facilitated by a GRP/Pacific Command (PACOM)

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[104] Cherilyn A. Walley, "Civil Affairs: A Weapon of Peace on Basilan Island," *Special Warfare* 17, no. 1 (September 2004), 30–33.

[105] Ibid., 31.

[106] Ibid., 35.

[107] Ibid., 34.

[108] Ibid.

established force-cap that prevented greater numbers of U.S. Civil Affairs (CA) soldiers from participating in Balikatan 02-1.[109] As a result, JTF-510 used the SF advisor teams to guide and resource AFP efforts. "Humanitarian and development assistance also has enhanced the legitimacy of the AFP and Philippine government at the expense of Aby Sayyaf, and provided opportunities for Philippine security forces to engage positively with local populations."[110] In fact, as the AFP regained popular trust, villagers openly shared information on the insurgents that enhanced the effectiveness of tactical operations. Further, Philippine professionals who had fled the Basilan, such as doctors and teachers, returned to their communities to provide basic humanitarian services to their own people because their confidence in the AFP's ability was restored.[111]

After Balikatan 02-1 ended and JSTOF-P replace JTF-510, CMO efforts continued across the entire area of operations. While efforts to provide clean water, medical care and transportation infrastructure continued, the CMO mission expanded to include building education infrastructure as well. "During 2006, the AFP and JSOTF-P have built 19 school-construction/renovation projects, dug 10 wells, begun five road projects, started work on five community centers and built five water-distribution centers on Jolo Island."[112] The USNS Mercy, a naval hospital ship designed for conducting medical assistance missions, has also made repeated trips to the islands. Each CMO project sought to be sustainable by the local population by either employing locals in the construction process and/or passing responsibility for maintaining the project to the local authorities.[113] By the end of 2010, "JSOTF-P reportedly has implemented over 150 construction projects worth $20 million, created livelihoods for former militants, and directly supported related USAID efforts."[114]

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[109] Walley, "Civil Affairs," 30.

[110] Thomas Lum, "The Republic of the Philippines and U.S. Interests," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress RL33233 (January 3, 2011), 17.

[111] Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation," 8.

[112] William Eckert, "Defeating the Idea: Unconventional Warfare in the Southern Philippines," *Special Warfare* 19, no. 6 (November-December 2006), 21.

[113] Eckert, "Defeating the Idea," 21.

[114] Lum, CRS Report RL33233, 17.

Furthermore, the impact of these projects extends beyond the local communities where they were conducted. These projects are a core element of the AFP and JSOTF-P information operations. As a result, Philippine communities on other islands heard about these projects and sought the assistance of the AFP. For example, the inhabitants of Pangutaran Island in the Sulu Archipelago sought assistance from AFP and JSOTF-P after hearing about these CMO projects. As a result, the inhabitants of Pangutaran rapidly notified the AFP when ASG and JI sought refuge on their island. The AFP Marines, and SF advisors, conducted a kinetic operation and expelled the ASG/JI elements from the island before they could establish themselves.[115] It is clear that AFP Information Operations enhanced the success of AFP capacity building and CMO projects.

3.   LOO: Information Operations

Third, JTF-510 conducted Information Operations with the GRP and U.S. Embassy to emphasize operational successes and build support for the GRP. This was perhaps the most difficult part of Balikitan 02-01. The Philippine citizens and media are very distrustful of any foreign military operating on their soil. Indeed this is the reason why the operation was named Balikitan, meaning shoulder to shoulder, in order to build legitimacy of the exercise in the eyes of the public. Additionally, abuses in the use of psychological operations under the Marcos regime from 1972 to 1986, increased suspicion of information operations designed to increase the legitimacy of Balikitan 02-01 and the GRP.[116] Despite these restrictions and obstacles, JTF-510 was able to achieve some tangible gains. One example is the role that information operations played in the AFP rescue of the Gracia and Martin Burnham, and Deborah Yap. The AFP rescue operation executed less than two weeks after Ambassador Ricciardone promoted a JTF-510 created wanted poster, identifying twelve prominent ASG leaders that were

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[115] Petit et al., "Thinking COIN, Practicing FID", 14–15.

[116] C.H. Briscoe, "Wanted Dead or Alive: Psychological Operations During Balikatan 02–1," *Special Warfare* 17, no.1 (September 2004), 26.

subsequently airdropped over Basilan. JTF-510 successfully used print, audio and cell text messages to contribute to tactical operations and build the legitimacy of the Balikitan 02-01 exercise.

JSOTF-P PSYOPs teams have since expanded their efforts to informing the populace on the dangers of supporting terrorists in their area. The teams regularly conduct assessments throughout their area of operations, surveying the populace and analyzing the cultures in each area. These surveys allow JSOTF-P to communicate their messages more effectively by accounting for cultural sensitivities. These surveys are valuable to Non-Governmental Agencies, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the U.S. Embassy. One product of these surveys is a 10 part graphic novel series that informs the populace of the evils of terrorism. JSOTF-P publishes this series in various forms tailored to the distribution region. Each publishing has real world correlation by using local names, attire, scenery, dialects, and historical subtleties to appeal to the targeted community. Trusted locals review each version prior to production to ensure that the novel resonates with the people.[117] This product and others have positively shaped the perception of U.S. forces, the AFP, while degrading support for the ASG.

D. CONCLUSION

Since Balikitan 02-01, Joint Special Operations Task Force—Philippines (JSOTF-P) continued the operational successes of TF-510. Their actions are best described in the moniker of "Thinking COIN, Practicing FID."[118] The U.S. Foreign Internal Defense (FID) mission is to support AFP's COIN efforts, rather than conduct COIN themselves. The aforementioned GRP imposed restrictions on direct U.S. military action forces an indirect approach characterized by working through the AFP in order to accomplish the shared goal of defeating ASG and JI terrorists. Indeed, this restriction on numbers of U.S. troops and prohibitions from conducting combat operations distinguishes OEF-P from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan. Initial U.S. military proposals

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[117] Eckert, "Defeating the Idea," 22.

[118] Petit et al., "Thinking COIN, Practicing FID," 12.

in 2001 mimicked OEF by proposing, "large, direct, and assertive role for U.S. forces: a direct combat role for U.S. military personnel."[119] Philippine imposed political restrictions dictated an indirect role for U.S. forces that led, somewhat paradoxically, to success with low cost in political, financial, and troop costs. As OEF-P enters its 9th year, the AFP is a dramatically more professional force, and the ASG and JI have been forced to withdraw from many of their safe havens.

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[119] Niksch, CRS RL31265, 10.

V.   EL SALVADOR AND CENTRAL AMERICA

For much of the 1980s, the United States conducted a foreign internal defense campaign to assist the government of El Salvador in defeating the communist Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) insurgency. This campaign involved multiple lines of operation across several countries. Despite extraordinarily small numbers of forces committed to this campaign, the United States was able to prevent the communist overthrow of the pro-American government. Additionally, these advisors successfully modernized the El Salvadorian military and changed their perceptions and operations, thus resulting in fewer human rights abuses and unjust repression of the population. This effort, mainly undertaken by SOF, with supporting conventional military and other governmental efforts successfully stopped the spread of communism in the region, and rolled back the previous progress by communist guerilla organizations. This success was the result of a campaign of persistent presence across the region by U.S. advisors, making incremental gains in terms of shaping their partner forces to achieve shared goals.

A.   SEEDS OF CIVIL WAR AND COMMUNIST PLANS

While El Salvador may have been the main effort for both communist and American backed efforts, the successful communist revolution in Nicaragua provided the catalyst that sparked this decade long campaign. By the 1970s, the Somoza family's kleptocracy had ruled Nicaragua for 40 years, at that point lead by Anastasio Somoza Debayle. Years of poverty in the face of Somoza fraud had created conditions somewhat amenable for the communist Sandinistas (the FSLN) among the people. Perhaps the most egregious example involved stealing mass amounts of international aid after a massive 1972 earthquake.[120] However, anti-government forces gained popular favor in 1974 after kidnappings by the FSLN resulted in a massive and over reactive crackdown that captured, killed, or tortured not only communist guerillas, but also large numbers of peasant farmers caught up in the dragnet.[121] This harsh repression by the Somoza

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[120] Robert Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 28.

[121] Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle*, 28.

government, and the widespread reporting of it in the United States, did not sit well with newly inaugurated President Carter in 1977. Despite Somoza's attempts to ease the violent repression and ease concerns of his American patrons, the United States decided to withdraw aid to Nicaragua. Ironically, this withdrawal of support did not improve the Nicaraguan government's human rights record; in fact, violations increased towards the end of the Somoza regime in 1979[122]. This U.S. policy did, however, leave the Nicaraguan military without external support at a time when the FSLN was receiving support from Cuba, Panama, and Costa Rica. Inevitably, the Somoza government fell and the Sandinistas came to power.

The Soviet Union and Cuba saw this as an outstanding opportunity. This was the first successful expansion of communism into Latin America since the Cuban Revolution. Moreover, it presented the communists with a base from which to back communist rebels in other Central American countries. The Soviet Union, Cuba, and Nicaragua developed a multinational plan for the spread of communism in Central America with a four cooperative plans in four separate countries. First, the communists sought to emplace a communist government in El Salvador through a FMLN insurgent campaign. These insurgents would be supplied and assisted from bases of support in Nicaragua. Additionally, Nicaragua and the Cubans would back six separate communist organizations in Honduras in order to cause disruption and make it less likely that the Honduran military would intervene in El Salvador. Finally, the communists sought to end American support for El Salvador through a robust information operations campaign.[123] In fact, the FMLN with their Nicaraguan sponsors set a target date for successful revolution of January 1981. This date was not arbitrary; it was selected to precede Ronald Reagan's inauguration, after which it was assumed American support for the Salvadorian government against the communists would increase.[124]

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[122] Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle*, 88.

[123] Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 121, 127.

[124] Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way*, 123.

By the 1970s, Salvadorian society had developed a wide rift between the poor *campesinos* and the privileged ruling class. This system, in place for over 50 years, had reached a critical point as leftist political agitators stoked dissatisfaction among the lower class, while the Catholic Church brought legitimate human rights complaints to the forefront.[125] These factors set the conditions for El Salvador's descent into civil war starting on October 15, 1979 when a junta, concerned with protecting the old power base, overthrew the government of General Romero.

The U.S. developed a region wide campaign plan to defeat the FMLN in El Salvador, disrupt the Sandinistas ability to support the FMLN, and disrupt the communists' attempts to affect the Hondurans.

B.   THE PROBLEM OF AMERICAN COMMITMENT

El Salvador presented an incredibly difficult problem for the United States. First, America was about 5 years removed from Vietnam, and the memory of military involvement in a messy anti-communist bush war was fresh in the American psyche. Neither America's public nor politicians had the will for another protracted conflict that would require large scale deployments. Second, the Salvadorian forces offered a less than ideal partner for the United States. By 1981, the government was in its third unelected military junta and appeared illegitimate in the eyes of the Salvadorian people and the international community.[126] The Salvadorian Armed Forces (ESAF) were unprepared for the conflict, numbering a paltry 15,000 troops (compared to 7,000–12,000 FMLN) in 1980,[127] and ESAF leadership was mired in a promotion system which was designed to protect the old order, failed to punish corruption or inefficiency and stifled innovation.[128] Perhaps most troubling, the ESAF leadership fundamentally misunderstood the nature of defeating the FMLN and winning the people's trust. The

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[125] Hugh Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 26–27.

[126] Benjamin Schwartz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1991), 86–87.

[127] Paul Cale, *The United States Military Advisor Group in El Salvador, 1979–1992*, (Quantico, VA: U.S. Marine Command and General Staff College, 1996), 5–6.

[128] Cale, *The United States Military Advisor Group in El* Salvador, 32.

ESAF, feeling that strong-armed repression was their only effective tool, backed official and semi-official "death squads" who dealt harshly with both guerillas and their sympathizers alike. This heavy handed campaign reached its low point in 1980 with two high profile incidents which brought international condemnation upon the Salvadorian government: the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero during mass, and the abduction, rape and murder of four American nuns.[129]

It would seem the deck had already been stacked against any American effort to prevent communist success. By the time President Reagan came to office, the FMLN "final offensive" had failed, but had mobilized the leftist guerillas into the "war of movement" phase, and allowed them to take de facto control over large portions of the country. Additionally, a well-established supply line from Nicaragua was funneling weapons from across the communist world into FMLN hands, many of them being American weapons captured by the Vietnamese.[130]

"Our most urgent objective is to stop the large flow of arms through Nicaragua into El Salvador…," wrote President Reagan in a 1981 State Department bulletin, "(w)e consider what is happening is part of the global Communist campaign coordinated by Havana and Moscow."[131] Despite resolve on the part of the administration, the prospect of U.S. involvement in El Salvador was low. By 1980, the U.S. media had drawn allusions between proposed involvement in Central America to Vietnam.[132] American public polling showed that only 2 percent favored U.S. intervention, and 80 percent were opposed to even sending advisors.[133] Against this backdrop, the Administration and congress reached a compromise; the number of advisors allowed in country would be

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[129] Schwartz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 86–87.

[130] Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way*, 125.

[131] Marvin Gettleman, *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War*, (New York: Grove Press, 1981), 217.

[132] Cale, *The United States Military Advisor Group in El Salvador*, 9.

[133] Cynthia Arnson, *El Salvador: A Revolution Confronts the United States*, (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 1982), 73.

strictly limited to 55 at any given time.[134] Further, these advisors were strictly forbidden from participating in combat operations; they could only assist in training and advising.

C.   SOF ADVISORS

Ironically, this limit proved to be one of the keys to success in El Salvador. As COL James Steele—Military Advisor Group (MILGRP) commander from 1984–1986—pointed out,

> Nobody … cursed the 55-man limit more than I… but I just have to tell you that doing it with a low U.S. profile is the only way to go. If you don't, you immediately get yourself into trouble, because there is a tendency for Americans to want to do things quickly, to do them efficiently – and the third step in that process is to do it yourself. If you take that third step here, you have lost the battle.[135]

In March of 1981, the first 55-man package arrived in country and task organized themselves into several functional units to maximize the effect of this relatively small group of Americans. First, the advisors established the MILGRP headquarters—with overall responsibility for the United States efforts to combat the FMLN, and support requirements such as helicopter maintenance. Second, the advisors created small unit training teams which trained ESAF units as embedded advisors. Third, they created Operational Planning and Assistance Teams (OPATs), which advised ESAF units in more complex environments—ones in which interaction with the local population was critical. Finally, they created Mobile Training Teams that trained various ESAF units on specific specialized tasks.[136] After filling these requirements, the advisers averaged one Special Forces advisor per ESAF battalion.

In order to better combat the FMLN, several changes had to be made in ESAF operations. First, the advisors convinced the battalions to leave their fixed compounds, which had been targets for FMLN attacks, and patrol the country. The point of this was

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[134] A.J. Bacevich, *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador*, (Washignton DC: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1988), 55.

[135] Max G. Manwaring and Court Prisk, *El Salvador at War: An Oral History of conflict from the 1979 insurrection to the present*, (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1988), 407.

[136] Cale, *The United States Military Advisor Group in El Salvador*, 13–14.

twofold: to engage the population in order to rebuild the faith of the people in the ESAF, and to deny the guerillas safe haven and freedom of movement within the country. Second, because of the limited number of advisors, they would often have to adopt a "train the trainer" model for instruction, which placed a higher burden on the Salvadorian non-commissioned officers and junior officers. This was key in a society with no tradition of strong NCOs and in which competence and innovation among officers was not viewed as necessary for success.[137] Third, the advisors made structural changes to the units they advised. At times when more precision than their battalion could provide was required, these advisors would often recruit from within the battalion a smaller, elite unit of volunteers.[138] This operational progress, along with growing support for the ESAF among the population, created an environment in which FMLN guerillas did not have the freedom of movement they did in 1981 nor could they prevent the ESAF from operating anywhere throughout the country. According to COL John Ellerson, the MILGRP commander from 1986–1988,

> The people that we capture tell us that 24-36 hours tops, and they've got to be moving. Increasingly in the core areas of the country it's the terrorists that you kill. Their equipment is not in that good shape. Their uniform is not that good. He doesn't look like he has been living a very good life. So again, the picture I want to create is there are 56,000 out and about and going anywhere they want. There is no place in this country now that the ESAF doesn't go, can't go, in those smaller operating units[139].

By 1986, massive attrition among the FMLN and this inability to train what forces did remain caused a 34 percent annual decline in FMLN massed attacks even at the tactical level.[140]

Perhaps the greatest accomplishments the advisors had were those they developed over the course of several years. "One of the principal missions of our military trainers is to… reduc(e) the abuses suffered in the past by the civilian population at the hands of the

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[137] Bacevich, *American Military Policy in Small Wars*, 27–28.

[138] Cale, *The United States Military Advisor Group in El Salvador*, 32–35.

[139] Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 306.

[140] Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 150.

armed forces."[141] This gradual change did not occur because the advisors insisted on immediate changes; rather they habitually talked about the practical reasons for respect for human rights. They highlighted the importance of the relationship between the people and the military in a counterinsurgent campaign, as well as the importance of taking prisoners for intelligence reasons, gradually reduced the number of human right abuses. On occasion, when these practical arguments didn't work, the advisors pointed out that claims of abuses would lead to withdrawal of U.S. support.[142] Diminishing the exposure of these abuses had key strategic significance as the KGB had begun a propaganda campaign, targeting American peace organizations, to advertise abuses of the United States backed government in the hopes of disrupting U.S. support for the counterinsurgents.[143] In the end, U.S. efforts had a demonstrable effect in the decline of "death squad" murders, from 610 per month in 1980 to 23 a month in 1987.[144]

Thus, despite the bleak picture at the outset of American involvement, a relatively small number of advisers were able to shape their partner force and bring the conflict to acceptable conclusion. Prior to the American advisors the FMLN had almost achieved manpower and firepower parity with the ESAF, ESAF affiliated crimes turned both the population and American public opinion against them, and the ESAF had neither tradition of strong junior leaders nor the drive to seek out the enemy. Despite all of this, the American advisors reformed the ESAF by training and empowering NCOs, thus built long term capacity in their partner force, assisted in planning operations that both built rapport with the local population and denied the enemy safe haven, and changed the ESAF's human rights record.

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[141] Ronald Reagan as quoted in Human Rights Watch, *El Salvador's Decade of Terror*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 20.

[142] Cale, *The United States Military Advisor Group in El Salvador*, 34.

[143] Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way*, 128–129. This campaign included providing the New York Times with forged State Department documents claiming abuses and corruption which had not occurred

[144] Cale, *The United States Military Advisor Group in El Salvador*, 23.

D. SUPPORTING EFFORTS/ REGIONAL TIES

Honduras became involved as a regional player in the war in El Salvador for two reasons. First, the communists sought to prevent the possibility of Honduran intervention into El Salvador. If the Honduran military were occupied with their own domestic insurgents, they would be less likely to intervene in the civil war in El Salvador.[145] Second, the MILGRP started sending key Salvadorian personnel to the newly created Regional Military Training Center (RMTC) in Honduras in order to train more of the ESAF without violating the 55 advisor limit.[146] In addition to assisting in training 3,500 Salvadorian soldiers,[147] this facility was key in developing Honduran capacity to defeat their own communists, and was indicative of the total regional approach taken and required by the United States to combat the Communist strategy. Unfortunately, a lack of diplomatic effort failed to maintain this relationship and by 1985 Honduras closed the RMTC to Salvadorian training because of preexisting animosity.[148]

Additionally, the United States sought to expand the regional campaign by conducting Unconventional Warfare (UW) against the Sandinista regime by backing the Contra rebels, which started in November 1981[149] and continued until the news of the Iran-Contra scandal in 1986. The Reagan administration at different times publicly presented different objectives for this UW campaign—either overthrow of the Sandinista regime[150] or disrupting Sandinista ability to back the FMLN.[151] However, it does not appear that the UW campaign was able to achieve either effect. The Sandinista regime was eventually defeated in open elections in 1990, and there was little demonstrated decline in the amount of material support provided to the FMLN by the Sandinistas.[152]

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[145] Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way*, 127.

[146] Cale, *The United States Military Advisor Group in El Salvador*, 24.

[147] Ibid., 25.

[148] Ibid.,

[149] Roy Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy: the Making of American Policy in Nicaragua 1981–1987*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 16–18.

[150] Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy*, 57.

[151] Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way*, 130–131.

[152] Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 150–151.

This may be due to an ill-defined American goal for the Contras and that the UW effort—mainly run by the Central Intelligence Agency—was never properly synchronized with the SOF and conventional military efforts in El Salvador and Honduras. Had the Contras been specifically designated a supporting effort to the FID mission in El Salvador, their attacks could have been better directed against Nicaraguan ability to export revolution and, thus, had measurable effects.

E.   CONCLUSION

The campaign in Central America was successful because the United States addressed multiple efforts undertaken by communist forces in the region. The guerilla campaign to overthrow the government of El Salvador was matched by the COIN efforts of the MILGRP and ESAF. The smaller guerilla effort to fix the Hondurans was matched by a COIN effort, and the Nicaraguans efforts to supply and support the two were countered by the infamous Contra campaign. However, this would probably have proven more effective had the goal been to disrupt Nicaraguan support rather than regime change. We can see from the closure of the RMTC that a lack of military and diplomatic effort throughout a region can lead to a mismatch in priorities. An interagency type task force established to synchronize U.S. efforts throughout the region would probably have proven more effective.

However, what probably made El Salvador most successful was persistence. For the better part of a decade, U.S. advisors maintained a constant presence in the country working towards the eventual goal of the defeat of the FMLN. Rather than seeking large gains early on, the advisors worked diligently to create step by step lasting gains, both in terms of effects on friendly and enemy forces.

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VI. FINDINGS

The previous two case studies are examples of limited numbers of U.S. SOF conducting operations in politically sensitive environments in order to promote the strategic interests of the United States. In OEF-P, SOF operating by and through the Philippine Armed Forces over a 9-year period were able to make dramatic gains in defeating the Abu Sayyaf Group and Jemaah Islamiyah in the Philippines. In the El Salvador Case study, small numbers of SOF advisors were able to shape the military of El Salvador assisted by other efforts in Honduras and Nicaragua to combat growing Communist influence in the region. The two primary lessons of these case studies are that SOF is most effective when they are persistent and regionally integrated.

A. PERSISTENCE

Strategic utilization of SOF is more effective when used persistently. For the U.S. military to pursue strategic interests regarding security improvements in troubled spots around the world requires increases in both influence over FPF and intelligence on U.S. adversaries. Increasing both influence and intelligence requires greater trust, which can only be gained with persistent presence or engagement.[153] These case studies demonstrate that persistence adds value to SOF's ability to build capacity of FPF, contributes to Intelligence synergy, can shape future conflicts, and enable other Interagency and conventional military assets.

Persistence requires the frequent and sustained interaction between SOF and FPF. In OEF-P, a small SOF element has constantly engaged the AFP since 2002, rotating advisors on a semiannual basis. In El Salvador, 55 troops advised Salvadorian military from 1981 to 1989, rotating on an annual basis. In each case, SOF advisors were in direct contact with FPF, living in the same small unit compounds, working together on a daily basis. This level of interaction promoted U.S. interests in a sustainable and enduring way.

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[153] Discussions with Dr. Hy Rothstein informed the thinking on the ties between Security, Influence, Intelligence, Trust and Presence.

First, SOF effectively increased the security capability of the AFP and Salvadorian military through increased influence based on greater trust borne out of persistent presence. Progressive capacity building requires consistency and continuity to be effective. Trainers and advisors must either keep excellent records on the progress and capabilities of a unit that can easily be passed to the next set of trainers/advisors, or they must have prolonged interaction to facilitate continued improvement. Prior to Balikatan 02-1, the AFP was generally viewed as unprofessional, oppressive, and unable to protect the local population from ASG. Similarly, the Salvadorians viewed their military as lackeys for the ruling elite who brutalized the population. They lacked professionalism, tactical skill, and the credibility necessary to effectively combat a communist counterinsurgency. Additionally, these forces had neither the operational capability nor the will to venture out from their compounds to defeat the FMLN. However, SOF advisors affected remarkable improvements in both of these security organizations over the course of years through constant training and interaction. The AFP gained the professionalism and tactical skills to protect the population, which led to greater support for the government and less for the ASG/JI. Similarly, the Salvadorian military improved their operational skills, but more significantly operated with greater professionalism that restored popular trust in their military. Persistent SOF engagement increased the capability and professionalism of these security forces that had fomented support for the insurgents/terrorists to that point.

Second, SOF increased the security within the Philippines and El Salvador by synthesizing intelligence with FPF after establishing trust through constant engagement. Intelligence sharing is impossible without trust between organizations, and building relationships of trust takes time. As these relationships grew, a greater comfort level developed between these forces that led to greater intelligence synergy. In the Philippines, U.S. SOF and the AFP increasingly shared information with each other and integrated their intelligence assets, which led to greater success against the ASG/JI. In El Salvador, the military's habitual heavy-handedness prevented U.S. military, intelligence, and diplomatic elements from sharing information lest it be used to brutalize the population. As the Salvadorian military's conduct changed and they earned the trust of

the population, greater intelligence brought similar increases in the effectiveness of COIN operations. Partner Forces' enhanced ability to gain information from the population can be fused with American technical means to provide a more complete analysis of events in the country. In each case, persistence was essential for the growth of trust that enables intelligence cooperation and operational effectiveness.

Third, SOF enabled other Interagency (IA) and conventional military assets because of persistence. The U.S. often uses several elements of national power to promote U.S. interests. To be effective, these elements must be integrated and focused. Effective coordination and focus of these assets requires grassroots information about the needs of the population, the state of the military, the status of the enemy, among other factors. Persistent presence in country allows advisors to gain a better understanding of what situations may be effectively remedied by the involvement of other government assets or NGOs. Additionally, the assessments of these efforts after implementation by the advisors lead to better execution.

At the beginning of U.S. efforts in both the Philippines and El Salvador, information on the state of the population and the insurgency was lacking. As of 2009, USAID and CMO programs aimed at improving the quality of life of the Philippine population are largely credited as the most significant reason for popular support of the Philippine government and military.[154] The SOF/GRP civil affairs assessment of 60,000 people on Basilan was the first survey of the population that had been done in over a decade by either governmental or non-governmental agencies.[155] The information gleaned from this survey enhanced GRP, USAID, and CMO efforts on the island because those efforts were able to effectively target the needs and grievances of the population. These assessments also facilitated Information Operations (IO) messaging refinement that promoted the credibility and legitimacy of the government beyond those who directly benefited from CMO assistance. Additionally, the introduction of the USNS Mercy to support JSOTF-P efforts demonstrates the ability for these advisors to leverage conventional military assets. In El Salvador, consistent work with the military led to

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[154] Eckert, "Defeating the Idea," 20–21.

[155] Walley, "Civil Affairs," 30–31.

professionalization and positive contact with the Salvadorian population and thus greater knowledge of the population's grievances. In the Philippines, SOF persistent engagement facilitated the USAID Growth with Equity program in Mindanao, as well as other NGO projects.[156] SOF's ability to enable GRP and other Interagency and NGO efforts should not be underestimated, as they often have greater freedom of movement than State Department personnel to move throughout partner countries that have security challenges, such as the Philippines, El Salvador, Yemen, Lebanon, etc.

In both cases, the FPF militaries had equipment in disrepair and an opportunity to receive Foreign Military Sales (FMS) from the United States. The FMS program is a tool that U.S. uses to build the capacity of FPF to be more effective military forces. President Bush agreed to supply $100 million in military assistance and $4.6 billion in economic aid to the Philippines in 2002.[157] Between 1980 and 1989, the United States provided $3.5 billion in military aid to El Salvador.[158] From 2006 to 2010, the United States provided $82.8 million in military assistance to the Philippines primarily to support counterterrorism efforts targeting ASG and JI.[159] Common concerns related to providing millions of dollars of U.S. military assistance to partner nations include effectiveness, sustainability, timeliness of the program, and whether the equipment will be used to promote shared interests.[160] Addressing these concerns requires stronger joint strategic planning and coordination between Department of State and Defense at the regional level.[161] Persistent SOF engagement is uniquely suited to this task as they routinely work with the Country Team as well as reporting to their military headquarters when training with a FPF. However, SOF can provide realistic assessments of the equipment purchased as well as recommendations for future purchases. In El Salvador, SOF advisors were also

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[156] Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation," 8.

[157] Briscoe, "Balikatan Exercise," 18.

[158] GAO Report, *El Salvador: Accountability for U.S. Military and Economic Aid*, 1990, http://www.fas.org/asmp/resources/govern/gao90132.pdf (accessed June 2, 2011).

[159] Nina M. Serafino, "Security Assistance Reform: 'Section 1206' Background and Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress RS22855 (February 11, 2011), 7.

[160] Serafino, CRS RS22855, 17–19.

[161] Ibid., 24.

able to identify promising military leaders as candidates for the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, where the U.S. military educates these officers in its Professional development Schools, such as staff colleges and War Colleges. Thus SOF elements provided an information and feedback conduit for these programs that, without SOF information, might have had limited returns.

Additionally, these cases demonstrate the potential effect that persistence can have on shaping the behavior of questionable allies. Concerns over government abuse caused the United States to withdraw support from the Samoza regime in Nicaragua that precipitated the communist victory. However, similar concerns over ESAF human rights abuses did not lead to withdrawal of support, rather it resulted in support that transformed the ESAF, both in terms of effectiveness against the FMLN and human rights. While there is no proof for a counterfactual, one could argue that this type of support for the Samoza government may have prevented far more suffering and conflict in the long run, and may have resulted in necessary reforms within the Samosa government.

In summary, SOF utility grew with their engagement persistence. SOF was able to achieve these gains in capacity building, intelligence synergy, and enabling other IA assets because they constantly engaged with their FPF and the local population. Therefore, SOF was able to promote U.S. Strategic interests because their engagement was persistent.

B.   REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Effective SOF utilization requires regional integration in order to have a strategic impact. These case studies demonstrate that when facing a regionally oriented threat, SOF must organize in a regional manner. State sovereignty often complicates, and possibly prohibits, the U.S. military from operating in politically sensitive areas. The Communists understood this in the 1980s as terrorist organizations do today. U.S. forces must be able to deny sanctuaries and support across an entire region in order to defeat extremist threats with regional ties. While U.S. forces could operate across the Philippine islands, ASG/JI had reach beyond the Philippine which facilitates their continued survival. While the U.S. efforts in Central America were dedicated to defeating

communists in El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua, these efforts were not efficiently coordinated in an overarching regional plan. SOF utility was diminished because they were not used in a regionally integrated manner.

First, enemies of the United States will continue to operate in a regional manner. When considering operations less than traditional warfare, the enemies are often insurgent or terrorist organizations. These organizations by nature are non-state actors who can move easily across geographic boundaries. Conversely, U.S. forces generally respects the sovereignty of states, and as such cannot move across these porous boundaries the way the enemy can. These restrictions offer the enemy bases of support, operation, and sanctuary across a region when political sensitivities preclude conventional U.S. forces intervention, and if that state is either unwilling or unable to combat these enemies. ASG/JI are able to escape and fight another day because OEF-P does not have elements outside of the Philippines. Indeed, the government of Singapore recognized this in 2002 and attempted to mobilize their neighbors against the growing al Qaeda threat.[162] They were unable to affect cooperation at that time, however, the United States is a much more influential country than Singapore. The U.S. can incentivize S.E. Asian countries to partner with U.S. SOF for a cooperative effort against extremist threats. Indeed, the Philippine partnership was initiated this way when the United States offered the GRP assistance after American citizens were taken as hostages and executed by ASG. Similarly, El Salvador and Honduras were incentivized to accept U.S. advisors for combating Communist insurgents.

However, while SOF utility increases when they are employed across a region, a regionally integrated plan requires an empowered regional headquarters. The El Salvador-Nicaragua-Honduras case illustrates the importance of an empowered headquarters to unite military and non-military efforts across a region. Military advising and training efforts in El Salvador and Honduras were independently productive; paramilitary efforts in Nicaragua were also independently productive. However, these efforts supported each other mostly from coincidence rather than design.

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[162] Ressa, *Seeds of Terror*, 154–155.

Another factor to consider is authorities for a regional effort. During Balikatan 02-1, JTF-510 was initially restricted from conducting combat operations with their FPF because they were only allowed to train and advise rather than assist. This was an issue during the rescue attempt of the Burnhams. While embedded presence by JSOTF-P facilitated action by FPF to rescue American citizens, different authorities would have allowed SOF advisors to conduct the operation jointly with the AFP and perhaps could have resulted in complete, rather than partial, success.

SOF has the ability to achieve strategic effects during engagements especially in environments less than traditional war. These forces are uniquely suited to achieve effects greater than the size of U.S. commitment. Persistence and regional integration, when combined with the capabilities and competencies of SOF, have an enhancing effect that build over time, paying greater dividends than the commitment of SOF in a sporadic and unsynchronized manner. The next chapter will explore how these concepts can be operationalized in the current Middle Eastern environment in order to maximize the effectiveness of Theater SOF.

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VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The current environment in the Middle East requires the United States to re-position its Special Operations Forces to more effectively achieve American goals. This reallocation should, to the best extent possible, maximize information flow that provides a clear picture of emerging crises, thus equipping decision makers with a broad range of options for early crisis resolution. Additionally, these forces should be part of framework of persistence and regional engagement as illustrated in the preceding case studies. Specifically, regional engagement is required to counter nefarious networks spanning the Middle East whether they are non-state transnational terror organizations (e.g., Al Qaeda) or state sponsored (e.g., Iranian proxies) organizations.

A. LINES OF OPERATION

SOF operators in the Middle East would operate along four Lines of Operation in order to advance America's interests. These LOOs are Build Partner Capacity and Capability, Build Networks of Influence, Leverage and Support Interagency, and Enable Scalable Kinetic Actions. First, these operators would build partner capacity and capability to enable partner nations to more effectively combat threats to both Host Nation and American interests. Ideally, U.S. SOF and FPF train together on an uninterrupted basis, so that training is progressive and consistent. Furthermore, this schedule would increase the interoperability of these units, which increases the effectiveness of combined operations should a crisis occur. This LOO also serves as the vehicle to build trust between U.S. SOF and FPF that enables building Networks of Influence.

Second, the operators would build Networks of Influence (NOI) in the region to increase operational intelligence and influence among partner states. These networks would facilitate atmospheric and cultural knowledge regarding the Host Nation in order to better develop a picture of the regional situation. This information should be collected and refined to provide the SOCCENT Commander with quality analysis of the regional threat environment. Moreover, these operator teams could serve as a vehicle for

information sharing with FPFs. Additionally, these networks would aim to shape the perceptions, choices, and utilization of FPF. As was demonstrated in the El Salvador case study, constant interaction with FPF can help shape the ways by which they deal with non-combatants and other non-hostile actors. This shift in "ways" is valuable in countries where past FPF actions have strained or endangered the Host Nation's relationship with the United States, neighboring countries, and their own citizens (e.g., Lebanon[163] and Bahrain[164]). Instead of pushing these partners away because of their poor human rights record, SOF NOI provides an alternate technique to pursue reform. Furthermore, in order to most effectively counter transnational threats in this environment, such as al Qaeda or Iranian influence, the United States must foster a relationship of trust through persistence between partner nations and U.S. SOF, as well as among several partner nations where the United States acts as the honest broker. This security network will facilitate information sharing and interoperability that removes geographic border that transnational threats often use for sanctuary, thus increasing the aggregate security of the Middle East and ultimately the United States.

Third, the SOF elements within each country would leverage and support other U.S. agencies to assist whole of government approaches to non-security challenges to the Host Nation. Included under this LOO are SOF efforts to provide Humanitarian Assistance, facilitate USAID access to indigenous peoples in rural areas of the Host Nation, enable counter-drug operations, and promote Human Rights. Current SOF TSCP operations act under the authority of the U.S. country team, as a diplomatic tool that increases cooperation with the partner nation. These efforts can be expanded, while remaining under the supervision of the country team, in order to have a multiplying effect on whole of government approaches. As was illustrated in the Philippine case study, atmospherics collected by these elements could provide better information for all U.S. agencies (e.g., potential projects for USAID and Non-Governmental Organizations).

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[163] Elise Labott, "Congressman suspends US aid to Lebanese Army," *CNN online*, August 10, 2010, http://articles.cnn.com/2010-08-10/politics/lebanon.aid.suspension_1_israel-lebanon-lebanese-soldiers-hezbollah?_s=PM:POLITICS (accessed June 2, 2011).

[164] Jackie Northam, "Bahrain Crackdown puts pressure on U.S. Diplomacy," *National Public Radio online*, May 22, 2011, http://www.npr.org/2011/05/22/136507091/bahrain-crackdown-puts-pressure-on-u-s-diplomacy (accessed June 2, 2011).

Finally, the SOCCENT Commander would have at his disposal elements available to execute a range of scalable options in order to deal with emerging threats. These options range from influence to coercion throughout operational environments ranging from engagement to war. These options begin, at the low end, with influencing and assisting FPF with mission development and planning. The next step up would involve U.S. SOF advising and supporting FPF during missions, or U.S. SOF led combined operations. Under extreme cases, U.S. SOF could act unilaterally or provide intelligence and preparation crucial for National SOF actions. The last option is SOF's ability to prepare for the introduction of GPF for an imminent major conflict. Figure 1 below demonstrates the scalable options provided by persistently embedded SOF.

Coercion	SOF support for Major Theater War	War
	SOF support for short duration GPF action	Conflict
	National SOF Direct Action	
	Theater SOF Unilateral Direct Action	
Armed Finesse	Combat Advising FPF	
Influence	Mission Planning in Conjunction with FPF	Engagement
	Training and assistance/ Information Sharing	

INCREASED LEVEL OF CONFLICT

Mitchell & Nelson 2011

Figure 1.   Scalable Options

This concept, if adopted, will allow the United States to accomplish the four goals established in the NSS, NDS and NMS as well as developing a sensory network throughout the region that will provide decision makers with a realistic assessment of events throughout the Middle East. Moreover, this solution would minimize or ideally not inflame local sensitivities to American military presence, nor would it likely be politically or fiscally unacceptable to the American public. In the event of threats to American and Allied interests, America could work by, with, and through partner forces thus reduce the need to employ U.S. forces and, if the crisis proves to require

conventional American military might, the forward positioned SOF would be able to prepare the environment for the introduction of those conventional forces.

While progress in each of these LOOs is desirable throughout the Middle East, each country in the region presents its own inherent challenges, threats, opportunities and concerns with neighboring nations. Further, the interconnected relationships of many of these countries and threats mean that achievements or setbacks in one country will have residual effects in neighboring states. Therefore, SOF advisors must take specific circumstances of each country, as well as wider regional concerns, into consideration.

B.   REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

1.   The Levant

The greatest enduring security challenge in the Levant revolves around security for Israel and the threats posed to it by Hezbollah and Hamas. This issue shapes the security decisions of all states that border Israel, and compels Israel to maintain a hard line stance against any threat, regardless of size. As such, Hamas and Hezbollah act as spoilers of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. These organizations regularly receive financial and material support from external sponsors such as Iran or entities within Saudi Arabia. Syria often acts as a channel for this support as well as a direct belligerent in some cases. Therefore, the U.S. security goals for the Levant should focus on supporting the Israeli-Palestinian Peace process though efforts to stabilize the area by pre-empting security threats to Israel.

Close partnership with Egypt should be a cornerstone of any effort to stabilize the Levant and set the conditions for an enduring two state solution to the Israel-Palestinian problem. U.S. partnership with former President Hosni Mubarak reflected the belief that Egypt is a key state that largely influences the stability of the Levant. While recent upheaval during the Arab Spring deposed the Mubarak regime, it doesn't diminish the important role that Egypt plays. In fact, partnership with the Egyptian military is more important now than prior to the Arab Spring. The military is perhaps the only stabilizing influence in the country right now, shaping the outcome of the regime change while

maintaining security.[165] They've been able to do this because the people largely view the military as an honest broker, but they have not always enjoyed that level of popular support. There is an opportunity for SOF to build on the Egyptian military's current status toward greater professionalization that supports current trends toward social and economic reform, and to further leverage this relationship to monitor and shape the transformation of the new Egypt. Other regimes are already attempting to use this transformation to their advantage as Iran sent two war ships through the Suez Canal only days after Mubarak's fall.[166] Additionally, Iranian agents have recently been expelled from Egypt, demonstrating that Iran seeks to influence or support threats to Israel from Egypt and that Egypt opposes Iranian influence within its borders.[167] U.S. SOF should persistently train with Egyptian Army, Air Force, and Navy units with a priority on those units that have responsibility for Eastern Egypt/Sinai/Gaza strip area. This is key with Egypt's recent opening of the Gaza crossing, potentially giving Hamas greater influence and freedom of movement. Previous relationships between American and Egyptian militaries suggest that Egypt would accept this partnership; however, if they do not the aid that President Obama and the G8 recently promised to support Egypt could be used as leverage.[168] This aid should be conditional on military cooperation between Egyptian and U.S. forces. This provides an opportunity to build greater partnership between Egypt and the United States as well as monitor the Egyptian security forces level of support for Human Rights, while decreasing Israel's suspicions of a Southern threat.

Lebanon is the second leg of the security and stability tripod that supports Israeli-Palestinian peace. Hezbollah is a key hindrance to this peace for two reasons. First,

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[165] Natalia Bubnova and Paul Salem, "Arab Spring: View from within the Region," *Carnegie Middle East Center*, June 1, 2011, http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=44330&lang=en (accessed June 2, 2011).

[166] Alaa Shahine and Mariam Fam, "Iran Warships Complete Suez Canal Voyage Amid Israel Objection," *Bloomberg online*, February 22, 2011, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-02-22/iran-warships-enter-suez-canal-on-syria-trip-egypt-state-run-agency-says.html (accessed June 2, 2011).

[167] "Egypt to Expel Iranian envoy in spy probe," *al Jazeera online*, May 29, 2011, http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/05/2011529172315889739.html (accessed June 2, 2011).

[168] Nathalie Boschat, Sebastian Moffett and William Horobin, "G-8 Leaders in France Focus on Mideast," *Wall Street Journal online*, "Middle East," May 27, 2011, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304520804576346621134703208.html?KEYWORDS=G8+2011+summit (accessed June 2, 2011).

Hezbollah has a great deal of military capacity and capability, which they demonstrated in 2006 by militarily and politically humiliating Israel.[169] Second, Hezbollah capitalized on that victory by securing popular support and seizing significant legitimate representation in the Lebanese government.[170] Therefore, there is less political support for military partnership between the United States and Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) than Egypt. This was also true in America when Congressman Berman caused a freeze on military aid to Lebanon after a rogue Lebanese soldiers/sniper killed an Israeli security guard in 2010.[171] However, military partnership is possible on a small scale that can encourage stability and professionalization of the LAF as a whole. Investment in Lebanon is a long-term endeavor because the United States shunned cooperation with Lebanon for over 20 years, and as such created an influence vacuum that Iran and Hezbollah were happy to fill. The U.S. should not make this mistake again, and should seek to partner with LAF elite forces, such as the Lebanese Rangers, Strike Force, and Marine Commandos. These elements offer the best hope of countering Hezbollah's influence and encouraging the professionalization of the LAF. These units also provide domestic security against terrorist elements such as Fatah al-Islam, and may be able to decrease nefarious threats to Israel's Northern border.[172]

U.S. SOF partnership with Palestinian Security Forces (PSF) should be the third leg of Israeli-Palestinian security and stability tripod. The U.S. started a low visibility security partnership with PSF in March 2005, in order to supplant Israel's need to police Palestinian areas.[173] This element intends to eliminate terrorist threats to Israel while

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[169] Ronen Bergman, "Israel's Secret War on Hezbollah," *Wall Street Journal online*, October 15, 2009, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704107204574475111169141066.html (accessed June 2, 2011).

[170] "Hezbollah," *New York Times*, "Times Topics – Organizations," January 24, 2011, http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/h/hezbollah/index.html (accessed June 5, 2011).

[171] Labott, "Congressman suspends US aid to Lebanese Army."

[172] Nizih Saddiq, "Lebanon Army Advances into Camp," *Reuters online*, July 15, 2007, http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/07/15/us-lebanon-fighting-idUSL1434460820070715 (accessed June 2, 2011).

[173] Charles Levinson, "Palestinian Support Wanes for American-Trained Forces," *Wall Street Journal online*, "Middle East," http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125547035200183335.html (accessed June 2, 2011).

providing basic security to Palestinians.[174] Therefore, successful partnership may provide Israel an opportunity for security coordination, with U.S. SOF as a guarantor of security while simultaneously affording the Palestinian Authority the means to deter violent elements that undercut peace overtures. While direct partnership with Israel is highly sensitive and a source of conflict between U.S. SOF and Arab allies, coordination should occur in order to provide this security assurance to Israel that prevents or decreases their direct intervention in Palestinian areas. Furthermore, Israel technically falls outside of the CENTCOM AOR and while any U.S. SOF that do partner with them should come from European Command (EUCOM) forces, these SOF operators should remain in close communication with SOCCENT to ensure there is a common goal all SOF are working toward.

2. The In-Between: Jordan

Jordan represents a key ally in the region with the potential to assist with interests in both the Levant and in the Persian Gulf. Sharing a border with Israel, a large Palestinian Diaspora population and a regent who has been a leader in promoting Israeli-Palestinian peace, Jordan has an interconnected relationship with the Levant nations. Jordan has also committed their own SOF to assist in training Iraqi Special Operations Forces and has recently begun the process of admission into the Gulf Cooperation Council, thus demonstrating Jordan's commitment to the Gulf States. Finally, the construction of the King Abdullah Special Operations Training Center (KASOTC) and bi-annual hosting of the Special Operations Forces Exhibition and Conference (SOFEX) have positioned Jordan as a crucial hub for SOF collaboration throughout the Middle East.[175] SOF Advisors in Jordan should work within the primary LOOs as well as facilitate multilateral training and collaboration.

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[174] Levinson, "Palestinian Support Wanes for American-Trained Forces."

[175] SOFEX Jordan, "About SOFEX," http://www.sofexjordan.com/ (accessed June 2, 2011).

3.   The Gulf Cooperation Council

Iraq is a unique situation, given the American involvement there since 2003. While much has been made regarding an official declaration to the end of the conflict in Iraq, it is still in a state of low-level turmoil, threatened by Sunni extremist networks. These networks take the form of franchise affiliates of transnational organizations (e.g., al Qaeda in Iraq) or Sunni rejectionist groups such as Jaysh Rijal Tariqah al-Naqshabandi (JRTN). Additionally, recent events in Iraq demonstrate a worrisome level of Iranian influence within the largely Shia Iraqi government. The current agreement between the United States and Iraqi government requires the withdrawal of all American troops by the end of 2011; however, a smaller SOF presence may be able to sustain operations in the future. The traditional SOF footprint in Iraq has included three battalion sized SOTFs.[176] Many of the forces within these SOTFs have been dedicated to missions that can be phased out in order to focus a smaller group of operators towards roles that will pay the highest dividends. These operators should focus primarily on partnering with Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF) and Iraqi Police Emergency Response Brigade (ERB). These units have been nurtured and mentored by American SOF and have had the greatest success against insurgent networks. While ISOF has occasionally been accused of executing missions based on sectarian motivations, most of these alleged incidents were directed by the Counter Terrorism Bureau (CTB), ISOF's higher civilian headquarters.[177] Further, SOF constantly tracks both the demographic composition of ISOF, as well as their operational targeting in an effort to minimize their potential as a tool of sectarian violence. By maintaining a partnership with these forces, U.S. SOF can continue to illuminate potential sectarian influence within CTB, and compel these forces to resist illegal or immoral orders. Further, this diminished footprint in Iraq would free up SOF to conduct the roles discussed throughout the rest of the Middle East.

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[176] Charles Briscoe, et al, *All Roads Lead to Baghdad: Army Special Operations Forces in Iraq* (Fort Bragg, NC: USASOC History Office, 2005), 421–422.

[177] D.J. Elliot, "Iraq strengthens the Counter Terrorism Bureau," *The Long War Journal,* September 10, 2008, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/09/the_iraqi_counter_te.php (accessed June 2, 2011).

Saudi Arabia has expressed concerns over both the threat presented by religious extremists and the growing attempts of Iranian hegemony. Additionally, Saudi security force interventions into Yemen[178] and Bahrain[179] demonstrate both the Saudi regime's concern over threats presented in neighboring countries and their operational reach and influence. However, Saudi leaders may be disinclined to openly welcome persistent SOF advisors into their Kingdom or to acknowledge this relationship to their public. While certain technical advisors (e.g., F-15 pilots and navigators) currently maintain a presence in the Saudi Kingdom, and while the Saudis reached out for SOF support in cases of a crisis,[180] the long term presence of SOF advisors may remind the Saudi population of the U.S. military presence in the 1990s that caused domestic problems and reinforced jihadist complaints against the royal family. Therefore, if the Saudis resist the idea of a persistent partnership within their borders, SOF advisors should still attempt to build relationships and capacity within the Saudi special operations community somewhere outside the country. These initial steps could take the form of short duration joint exercises or even persistent training that takes places at an acceptable off-site facility (e.g., KASOTC). These initial steps should still be aimed at gaining further trust that will lead to the invitation for SOF to maintain presence within Saudi Arabia.

Bahrain is currently the headquarters of the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet and, therefore, most probably amenable to the idea of persistent U.S. partnership. However, Bahrain now finds itself in a period of distress as the Shia majority population has been in sustained protest against the ruling Sunni royal family. While this uprising was originally spawned as a result of the greater "Arab Spring," both Iranian influence to incite the Shia and the Bahraini government's violent and repressive response – backed by a Saudi intervention – have exacerbated the situation. Therefore, advisors in Bahrain should work with both decision makers and internal security units in order to increase security and counter Iranian influence while shaping a more professional Bahraini military which

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[178] Robert F. Worth, "Yemen Rebels Routed, Saudi Arabia Says," *The New York Times,* A14, November 10, 2009.

[179] Nada Alwadi, "Bahraini regime enlists Saudi-led forces against protests," *USA Today,* March 15, 2011, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2011-03-14-bahrain_N.htm (accessed June 2, 2011).

[180] Yaroslav Trofimov, *The Siege of Mecca* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 188–197.

human rights of the citizens – much like the advisors shaped a change in civil military relations in El Salvador. These advisors should seek to provide the Bahraini government with greater legitimacy among its people and prevent a key American ally from regime change which would likely result in Bahrain becoming an Iranian satellite state.

The United Arab Emirates have a strong tradition of military exchanges with the United States. Recent intelligence collaboration targeting al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula suggests the Emirates would be amenable to a SOF collaboration.[181] However, comments made by the Emirate ambassador to the United States suggest that the UAE is concerned with more than just transnational terror.[182] Conventional military threats presented by a growingly belligerent Iran threaten American allies across the Gulf and, by extension, their relationship with the United States. Therefore, SOF advisors in UAE should partner with Emirate SOF as well as building conventional military and specialty capabilities to counter Iran. An example of these specialty capabilities would non-standard maritime capabilities intended to counter the small swift boats by which Iran could potentially threaten Gulf sea lanes. Kuwait, Oman and Qatar have similar reason to feel threatened by Iranian attempts to extend influence and power across the Gulf and therefore advisors in these countries should seek to develop similar capacities. Additionally, these states are potentially vulnerable to the threat of Iranian incitement of Shia populations, as in Bahrain. Conventional Kuwaiti military units had a longstanding relationship with American SOF through the 1990s with Operation Iris Gold.[183] Additionally, American presence at al-Udeid Airbase suggests that Qatar would also be willing to host perpetual SOF advisors.

SOCCENT should continue to designate a separate effort for Yemen until the multitude threats to stability and security are resolved. No less than three primary armed

[181] Mark Mazzetti, Robert F. Worth and Eric Lipton, "Bomb Plot Shows Key Role Played by Intelligence," *The New York Times,* October 31, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/01/world/01terror.html?ref=cargobombplot2010 (accessed June 2, 2011).

[182] Jeffrey Goldberg, "UAE Ambassador on the Challenge of Iran," *The Atlantic,* July 6, 2010, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2010/07/uae-ambassador-on-the-challenge-of-iran/59252/ (accessed June 2, 2011).

[183] Global Security, "Iris Gold," http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iris_gold.htm (accessed June 2, 2011).

groups threaten security within Yemen: the Houthi rebellion in the North, the Southern Secessionists, and al Qaeda Arabian Peninsula.[184] While these three groups have their own grievances and goals, they all threaten the stability of Yemen, and subsequently the stability of the Arabian Peninsula. Yemeni stability is further complicated by large numbers of African refugees, tens of thousands annually, that immigrate to Yemen. This refugee pipeline also transports guns, drugs, and other militants such as members of al Shabaab between the Arabian Peninsula and Somalia.[185] Additionally, Yemen is projected to run out of fresh water within the next 10 years as a result of the overproduction of qat, a narcotic that most of the adult male population uses daily.[186] Yemeni stability is paramount because of the influence the country has over the Gulf of Aiden and the global shipping that passes through it, and because of the opportunities that ungoverned spaces afford terror organizations for basing and training. As such, U.S. SOF employment is necessary to coerce the Yemeni government, and various insurgent/terrorist groups, towards a lesser level of conflict. First, SOF would aim to professionalize elite police and military units, as well as train a viable coast guard to both increase capability and popular trust in the security apparatus. Second, SOF would conduct kinetic lethal actions to kill or capture members of AQAP, even if they have dual membership with the Houthis or Southern Secessionists. Finally, SOF would also enable Interagency resources in order to address non-military threats to stability.

4.   Adversary States

As an overt American adversary in the Middle East and a source of much of the tumult this concept seeks to counter, Iran is not in the same category as the friendly and semi-friendly states previously addressed. However, this does not mean that Iran is not susceptible to SOF influence. The influence channels that Iran uses could be turned against them by SOF advisors in neighboring countries. Further, SOF advisors could

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[184] U.S. House of Representatives, "Yemen on the Brink: Implications for U.S. Policy," *Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, One Hundred Eleventh Congress, Second Session* (Washington DC: GPO, February 3, 2010), 2.

[185] Jeremy M. Sharp, *Yemen: Background and U.S. Relations* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service Report RL34170, (March 22, 2011), 31–32.

[186] "Yemen on the Brink: Implications for U.S. Policy," 2.

potentially empower existing Iranian resistance organizations outside Iran (e.g., the Mujahidin-e-Khalq or MEK) in order to achieve effects within Iran. Persistent engagement is necessary to shape perceptions within Iran, or prepare the environment for the possible future conflict.

Similarly, Syria is an adversary that U.S. SOF can counter. Syria's support for terrorist groups in Lebanon and Iraq is well known, and they also retain the ability to target Israel.[187] However, instability in Syria during the Arab Spring demonstrates that there is a significant number of disaffected Syrians who support regime change. Indeed, President Obama recently stated that President Assad must reform or step aside.[188] SOF has the ability to help prepare for potential future conventional conflict with Syria, or support resistance groups from locations outside of Syrian borders. Both options require SOF to be regularly employed in Middle Eastern States that border Syria. However, any attempts at influencing or shaping Syria and Iran must be conducted with the utmost levels of discretion as these attempts may not be in keeping with the goals of the neighboring countries from which American SOF would undertake them.

C.   SOCCENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Many of the problems facing friendly countries in the Middle East are shared and interconnected. Likewise, American SOF, persistently engaged in the region can share information and create a distributed network of flexible and responsive nodes that can anticipate and counter various adversary organizations. Thus, an adaptive Middle East security network negates the advantages afforded to these transnational networks, such as the ability to move easily across geographic boundaries. However, SOCCENT must enable the SOF efforts in each country by being able to accurately analyze and respond to information provided from each of the distributed SOF operator elements throughout the region. This information must be constantly compared to previous reporting from each of

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[187] Conal Urquhart, Nidaa Hassan and Martin Chulov, "Israeli troops clash on Syrian border with protesters marking six-day war," *Guardian News*, June 5, 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/05/israel-syria-violence-border-protest (accessed June 5, 2011).

[188] President Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President on the Middle East and North Africa," (U.S. State Department, Washington DC, May 19, 2011).

the other nodes, in order to create a refined picture of enemy threats and develop appropriate measures to counter them. Without a free and responsive flow of information, the reporting generated from trusted relationships within each country will stagnate and compartmentalize. If this happens, this SOF empowered Arab security network will fall short of maximum effectiveness and likely wither away.

The adoption of this concept would result in a regionally networked, low visibility and low cost forward American presence. These operators would be uniquely suited to keep decision makers abreast of security threats and opportunities throughout the region, leverage non-SOF or interagency assets to accomplish American goals, and react through scalable means to crises and threats. This would not, however, be completely free of costs. In fact, this would require the constant deployment of Theater SOF, which is already in limited supply. In fact, while SOF has maintained a very high operations tempo during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, this concept would require a similar schedule of deployment for SOF, possibly in perpetuity. However, these facts do not diminish the exponential gains that can be achieved with a relatively small, and politically acceptable, investment.

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