



USASOC photo

US Special Forces traveling on horseback in Afghanistan.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES: RELEVANT, READY AND PRECISE

By Lieutenant-Colonel Jamie Hammond

Is DoD [The US Department of Defense] changing fast enough to deal with the new 21st century security environment? ... Does DoD need to think through new ways to organize, train, equip and focus to deal with the global war on terror? Are the changes we have and are making too modest and incremental? My impression is that we have not yet made truly bold moves, although we have made many sensible, logical moves in the right direction, but are they enough?

US Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld¹

Are military forces being transformed from Cold War models into relevant, efficient and effective forces that are able to deal with current and future security environments? Secretary Rumsfeld's questions could have been asked by almost every Minister responsible for defence in any Western nation, and most defence ministries are reviewing roles and force structures. The United Kingdom's Ministry of Defence has, for example, completed five defence reviews or updates in the past six years, the most recent in July of this year.² Canada however, has not issued a detailed analysis of its defence requirements since 1994, and the need to conduct some form of comprehensive review seems to be the one thing on which virtually all defence critics, analysts and practitioners in Canada agree. However, such a review must not be just an exercise in re-apportioning the budget and ensuring a fair share for each service. A defence review must tackle the hard questions of the type posed by Secretary Rumsfeld. Are the Canadian Forces (CF)

relevant? Are the contemplated changes truly bold? Will the future force structure be effective? The CF of the future must be capable of participating in discretionary operations with our allies not only to show solidarity or to earn a seat at the table; our forces must be capable of dealing effectively with the inevitable and 'non-discretionary' asymmetric challenges of the future. In short, the CF must be capable of delivering sophisticated capabilities to protect Canadians at home and abroad. Moreover, those capabilities must be delivered from within reasonable and realistic budget envelopes.

While we pride ourselves on tradition in the CF, we must recognize that the forces of the past may not be appropriate for the future. There are significant capability gaps in the current 1994-model defence structure, and, further, we retain types of forces that have not been employed in their doctrinal forms for half a century. Hard choices have to be made. While there are many underdeveloped areas within the CF that will merit attention, this article intends to show that Special Operations Forces (SOF) have evolved over the past years and have become an essential and core capability that must be considered very seriously in any defence review. Maligned or ignored in the past, SOF now seem to be in the news daily. Their flexibility and agility demonstrate not only their operational necessity in the post 9/11 security environment, but also their cost-effectiveness. But, prior to deciding what specific SOF capabilities are required by

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A United States Special Operations Forces soldier.

Canada, there needs to be a greater understanding of what these forces are, what they are doing in the world, and what they offer.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES TODAY

With the events of the past three years, it can be argued that Special Operations are no longer very ‘special.’ Both the overall US-led campaign against terrorism and the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq were conducted using SOF as a primary tool. Certainly, Special Operations are no longer just an adjunct to support conventional operations. A recent internal report by one Commonwealth military force goes so far as to suggest that a key role now emerging for conventional forces is to support Special Operations Forces, a reversal of the traditional relationship. This was certainly the case during the war in Afghanistan, but it can also be seen to be a key aspect of US operations worldwide over the last decade, and across the spectrum of conflict. This is particularly true in post-conflict operations in places like Iraq, where conventional forces in large measure conduct ‘framework’ operations and support specialized SOF operations against those who would disrupt the peace process.

Special operations forces have, however, become less special in another way. Rather than being the traditional quiet professionals who ‘neither confirm nor deny’, SOF have entered the world of the media spotlight, press releases, recruiting competitiveness and inter-service rivalry. Even some of the most clandestine forces in the world are now commonly mentioned in open sources. This attention is the direct result of the ongoing tempo of special operations, and politicians have not failed to notice the utility of SOF. In the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, significant developments are underway to enhance special operations capabilities.

“Our forces must be capable of dealing effectively with the inevitable and ‘non-discriminatory’ asymmetric challenges of the future.”

In the United States, the special operations community is currently about 49,000 strong. Over the next five years it will grow to 52,559, and its budget last year grew by 35 percent to \$6.8 billion.³ Even then, in his election platform, Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry stated that he intended to double the capabilities of the US Special Forces, add a special operations helicopter squadron to the air force and increase the number of active civil affairs and psychological operations personnel.⁴ That proposed growth would seem to make sense when one looks at the tempo of operations of US SOF. In one recent week, over 6,500 SOF personnel were deployed around the world, and they have conducted 200 missions in Iraq alone in

the past four months.⁵ Rather than maintaining a force ratio of one unit deployed to five at home, as we tend to do in Canada, US SOF pick up and go when needed. According to US Special Operations Command, 100 percent of the US Army Special Operations Aviation Regiment have seen action during the past two years, and 90 percent of the personnel in the Air Force Special Tactics Squadrons were deployed simultaneously to Iraq.⁶

In the United Kingdom, the situation is the same, albeit on a reduced scale. A Ministry of Defence paper released in July 2004 announced growth in the strength of the UK Special Forces (UK SF), along with the purchase of new SF equipment and “significant enhancements.”⁷ While British government statements do not divulge exactly what the enhancements are, the press has speculated that a further Special Forces Squadron is being created,⁸ and that a new special forces unit, the Reconnaissance and Surveillance Regiment of 600 personnel, will be created to conduct covert surveillance and work with intelligence agencies.⁹ Like their US counterparts, the British Special Forces have been constantly engaged in operations since 2001, although they remain much more tight-lipped about their work than is the US SOF community.

Although much smaller than either their US or British counterparts, Australia has made the most radical changes to its force structure by establishing the Australian Special Operations Command in 2003. This initiative, a “joint command with a command status equivalent to Maritime, Land and Air Commands,” includes over 2,000 personnel and required the conversion of an infantry unit into a special operations commando regiment and the re-grouping of other special operations components.¹⁰ SOF were the primary ground forces committed by

Australia to both the Afghanistan and Iraq operations. While the Special Air Service Regiment was the main force in Afghanistan, the Special Forces Task Group sent to Iraq also included elements from the recently re-rolled 4th Royal Australian Regiment (Commando), a nuclear, biological and chemical defence team from the Special Operations Command's Incident Response Regiment, as well as logistics forces and Chinook helicopters.¹¹ Australia, a middle power, has thus been able to 'punch above its weight' in the last four years.

As it is by far the largest, and, from a Canadian point of view, the most important SOF command in terms of interoperability, the next section of the article will examine, in very general terms, the recent history and structure of US Special Operations Command.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF US SOF ORGANIZATIONS

Although the effectiveness and relevance of US SOF capabilities is today taken for granted across the US military, and a number of key positions are now occupied by senior special operations officers,¹² the establishment of Special Operations Command (SOCOM) was not only unforeseen by most – it was actively opposed by many. As Susan L. Marquis recounts in *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces*,¹³ today's US SOF capabilities were not developed by the senior leadership of the services, but in spite of them. It was, in fact, the combination of three shocking events in the early 1980s that were the catalysts for radical change in the US force structure. All three were failures, and showed that US elected representatives, more than their military counterparts, followed Field Marshal Slim's advice to "remember only the lessons to be learned from defeat – they are more than from victory."¹⁴

The first critical catalyst for review of the US structure was the failure of the attempted rescue of American hostages in Teheran in 1980. Operation "Rice Bowl"/"Eagle Claw" was aborted in the Iranian desert on 25 April 1980 as a result of dust storms and helicopter malfunction. Following the abort decision, one helicopter collided with a C-130 on the ground, resulting in eight deaths. Exploding ammunition from the collision also caused the commander to abandon the rest of the helicopters on the ground and the task force withdrew, leaving the remains of the six helicopters and one C-130 in the desert.¹⁵ While the American hostages continued to be held by the Iranians until negotiations led to their release in January 1981, the US military immediately began an analysis of the failure. Most notable was the Holloway Commission report, the first external review of an SOF operation, which made two key recommendations: the creation of a standing

"SOF are required for specialized operations where there is no broad conventional force requirement."

counter-terrorist joint task force to reduce ad hoc responses to terrorism, and the creation of a special operations advisory panel of active or recently retired senior officers to improve oversight.¹⁶

The recommendations of the Holloway Commission were implemented over the next three years, but it was the death of 247 US Marines in a truck bombing in Lebanon in 1983 that brought home to the US military the requirement for forces designed to deal specifically with low-intensity conflict and terrorism. The need for change was further reinforced by the American operations in Grenada, during which the application of accepted tenets of special operations (such as simplicity, security, repetition, speed, surprise and purpose)¹⁷ were woefully lacking. In fact, of seven operations during the Grenada invasion that involved SOF, only two were successful, two were marginally successful, and three resulted in the deaths of SOF soldiers for little or no operational benefit.¹⁸ The combination of all these events played a key role in increasing awareness in Congress of the need to better integrate SOF in the US military. After two more years of discussion and debate, an amendment to the 1986 *Goldwater-Nichols Defense Organization Act*, known as the *Nunn-Cohen Amendment*, was passed by Congress to establish a four-star joint command headquarters, now the US Special Operations Command. A critical issue for legislators was the importance of ensuring that SOF budgeting and development be fully protected from traditional service priorities. In the end, through civilian



A member of the British Special Air Service Regiment

British Army photo



US Air Force photo

AC-130U Spectre gunship gunners from the US Air Force 4th Special Operations Squadron loading a round into a 105mm howitzer during a live firing exercise.

intervention, and in spite of military opposition from the Joint Chiefs, the new command was established with responsibilities for SOF funding, research and development, training, and integration into joint operations.

As in Britain and Australia, Special Operations Command remains independent from the other services. In the US, however, the Army, Navy and Air Force retain SOF commands and units within their force structures, but the primary budgetary and command responsibility for those organizations lies with SOCOM. The three services act as force providers and are responsible for non-SOF specific training, equipment, doctrine, recruiting and basing. Operationally, the SOF elements normally deploy under the operational command of a regional US Combatant Commander (for example, Commander Central Command), each of which has a subordinate Special Operations command, normally at the one-star level. While SOCOM has always maintained a watch on all worldwide operations, SOCOM did not play a primary role in the command and control of deployed SOF until ordered to take the lead in the global war on terrorism in 2003. Rather, SOCOM and the services together were responsible for the long-term development of SOF and to provide ready SOF forces for

employment by the National Command Authorities, the regional commands or by US ambassadors. SOCOM retains command of one Joint Special Operations Command, and control over three component commands, as described below:¹⁹

Naval Special Warfare Command. The Naval Special Warfare Command is organized around eight SEAL Teams. These teams are made up of 6 to 8 SEAL Platoons (normally 16 personnel each), supported by SEAL delivery vehicles (small submarines) and Special Boat Units. All SEALs are trained to dive, parachute and conduct missions that range from special reconnaissance of harbours and beaches to ship boarding and inland direct action missions.

US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC). The Army has the largest SOF community of the three services and, within USASOC, the Special Forces are the largest component. Note that within the US SOF, the term Special Forces (SF) refers only to the Army Green Berets, organized into SF battalions and groups (it is worth remembering that the UK and most Commonwealth countries refer to all of their SOF as SF). The basic building block of the Green Berets is the 12-man Operational

“The role of SOF in national domestic responses to terrorism, while downplayed here, is very important to Canada.”

Detachment Alpha (ODA – the term ‘A-Team’ has fallen out of favour). This team consists of one officer, one warrant officer and 10 non-commissioned members, all qualified on the SF ‘Q-course’ and also sent on advanced skills courses (medical assistant, communications and languages, for example). Normally six Alpha Detachments are grouped as a company (ODB). Three SF companies and a support company constitute a battalion (ODC). A full strength SF battalion consists of less than 400 personnel. Three SF battalions form an SF Group. The US Army currently has five regionally focused active SF Groups (about 1,400 personnel each) and two National Guard SF Groups (both of which have seen recent action). While SF battalions are capable of establishing Forward Operating Bases, SF Groups are often used as the framework for a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF). SF personnel are capable of conducting direct action and special reconnaissance missions, but their strength lies in unconventional warfare and foreign internal defence (the first seeks to support a revolutionary force through the provision of training, equipment and advice, while the second seeks to defeat and deter revolutionary forces through the same means).

The 75th Ranger Regiment consists of three battalions (each of approximately 550 men) and a training battalion. Each battalion is structured as a three-company light infantry battalion focused on direct action missions (raids, airborne and airmobile assaults, etc). In many ways, each Ranger battalion is similar in structure and capability to the

“Competent SOF cannot be created after the crisis occurs.”

Canadian Airborne Regiment as it existed between 1993 and 1995.²⁰ While the Rangers are infantry, they are designated as SOF, which gives them certain advantages: the right to select experienced commanders at all levels (i.e. a company

commander must have already commanded a company elsewhere); a budget that allows the Rangers to maintain equipment that ensures interoperability with other SOF elements; Ranger battalions are over-manned to ensure readiness at full-strength; and an SOF-focused and demanding collective training programme.

The US Army also maintains three SOF aviation battalions in the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment. These battalions primarily operate MH-47 (Chinook), MH-60 (Blackhawk) and MH-6 (Little Bird) helicopters (the M stands for Modified – both the Chinook and Blackhawk variants are modified to include air-to-air refuelling and enhanced avionics). All three battalions focus primarily on night operations in support of SOF units.

Within the US structure, Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, Information Operations, and some Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence units are also grouped within the SOF organizations.

Air Force Special Operations Command. The US Air Force (USAF) maintains six Special Tactics Squadrons (STS), which perform Combat Search and Rescue tasks, establish runways and drop zones, control air traffic and



US Navy SEALs aboard a Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat during training for Operation “Enduring Freedom”.

direct the aerial delivery of ordnance. Though small in numbers, these personnel are highly trained and extend the capability of the USAF significantly. Much of the air-to-ground operations during the Afghanistan campaign were directed by the Air Force STS Operators.

The USAF also maintain a number of Special Operations Wings equipped with aircraft ranging from MH-53J *Pave Low* helicopters to AC-130U/H *Spectre* Gunships, and other C-130 variants for air-to-air refuelling (MC-130P), insertion/extraction operations (MC-130E/H) and electronic warfare (EC-130s).

US SOF IN AFGHANISTAN

Although US SOF have operated in virtually every military operation since the establishment of SOCOM (including the costly and well-publicized operations of Task Force Ranger in Somalia in 1993, where 16 soldiers were killed and 83 injured in a single day),²¹ it has been in the past three years that SOF have become the primary actor in the operations, rather than playing a supporting role to conventional forces.

During the early phases of the Afghanistan campaign, US SOF operated mainly from forward operating bases outside Afghanistan. The initial 13 days of air operations were followed by daring raids conducted by US Army Rangers and ground special operations forces. On the night of 19 October, these forces, reportedly operating from the USS *Kitty Hawk* and staging through bases in Oman and Pakistan, attacked Mullah Omar's palace near Kandahar and an airfield some 60 miles away.²² The airfield operation (Objective 'Rhino') was conducted by 199 Rangers parachuting from 4 MC-130s at 800 feet. The fire support and Ranger force itself were overwhelming, and opposition

"SOF create military, diplomatic and political successes out of all proportion to their numbers."

was extremely light.²³ Simultaneously, a heliborne force landed at Omar's Palace (Objective 'Gecko'), and both locations were secured in less than 45 minutes. While these were essentially hit-and-run raids conducted for psychological reasons as much as for intelligence purposes, they were also a feint designed to fix Taliban forces in the south.

Initially, the main effort was in the north, where USAF Special Operations Wings operated long-range and air-to-air refuelled MC and AC-130s to support the ground operations of the Northern Alliance and other indigenous forces. Those Afghan forces were, in turn, also equipped, trained and advised by US SF battalions that deployed ODAs on the ground as early as 19 October 2001.²⁴ The ODAs were often accompanied by USAF Special Tactics Squadron Combat Controller, which deployed 190 men (70 percent of their total strength) to Afghanistan in the early months of the war, directed 90 percent of all terminally-guided weapons dropped, and called in over 4,400 bombs onto Taliban targets.²⁵ By the time Kandahar, the key Taliban stronghold, fell on 7 December 2001, there were still fewer than 300 US SOF personnel actually on the ground in Afghanistan, but their contribution was out of all proportion to their limited numbers. As the Northern Alliance became more capable, Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations personnel moved in to support their operations. Offensive psychological operations continued throughout the war through leaflet and radio campaigns.

Once the initial campaign was won, SOF elements moved into the country to establish bases from which they continued to target Al Qaeda and Taliban leadership. A Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (K-BAR) was deployed in Kandahar, and another (DAGGER) was set-up in Uzbekistan to continue offensive operations while developing more detailed intelligence through special reconnaissance and low-level information gained from the local population. Bases were established in areas of interest, and SOF combined with military intelligence specialists, electronic warfare personnel, civil affairs teams, and tactical psychological operations teams were often co-located to provide better force protection and synergy. Small conventional forces and Afghan military forces were used, where feasible, to provide better security for the specialist teams. Task Force K-BAR, led by SEALs from the Naval Special Warfare Command, conducted over 75 direct action and special reconnaissance missions during 2002.²⁶

Once the combat operations slowed, SOF operations continued with unconventional warfare intended to support the friendly Afghan forces, and develop better intelligence to target Al Qaeda and Taliban leadership and pockets of resistance. Where necessary mobile



Members of the US 75th Ranger Regiment during a waterborne exercise in Panama.

US Army photo

and fixed special reconnaissance patrols were deployed, and more specialized SOF remained on standby to conduct attacks on suspected locations. Conventional forces, used in larger numbers by this point, secured bases and conducted larger scale sweep operations. As the Afghan Transitional Authority and Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan were established, greater focus was placed on equipping and training the Afghan National Army. Throughout all these operations, Afghanistan “called for extensive coordination between Special Forces and paramilitary assets from the CIA.”²⁷

The campaign in Afghanistan has often been referred to as a special operations war, and, on the whole, that remains true. Most of the fighting during the war was either conducted by SOF, or by the USAF under SOF control. SOF provided the US military with both economy of effort and precise, relevant capabilities. The SOF effort was not a force multiplier, or a tributary feeding into a larger conventional campaign. In Afghanistan, SOF was the campaign. The effort of the US SOF in Afghanistan is made clear in the casualty figures. By mid-2003, 39 SOF personnel had been killed in action in Afghanistan, a reasonable figure for over 20 months of fighting. This figure represents 85 percent of the total number of American troops killed in action to that date.²⁸ In analyzing the lessons of the war, Norman Friedman states simply, “Special Operations Forces were essential to the war’s success.”²⁹ During Afghanistan, every US Special Forces Group, all Ranger battalions, all Special Operations Aviation battalions, and all Special Tactics Squadrons rotated forces through the country. And, by the end of 2002, even the large US SOF component was exhausted. Even small contributions of SOF from allies were warmly received, and, in American eyes, were essential as their own forces required replacement. Nevertheless, even the huge effort of US SOF in Afghanistan seems limited when compared to their commitment to the 2003 war in Iraq.

US SOF IN IRAQ

If the campaign in Afghanistan is seen as either an intra-state conflict or one against non-state actors that lent itself to the use of SOF, the invasion of Iraq was quite a different matter. Large conventional forces were obviously needed to deal with Saddam Hussein’s still viable and well-equipped armed forces. Nevertheless, even in this more traditional, inter-state conflict between modern armed forces, SOF played a transformational role.

For SOF, the 2003 Iraq War differed in two great respects from the 1991 Gulf War. First, SOF were given a significantly greater role in 2003 and, second, as observed by General Tommy Franks,

We saw for the first time integration rather than deconfliction of forces. This integration enabled conventional (air, ground, and sea) forces to leverage SOF capabilities to deal



A US Special Forces soldier in an observation post, Afghanistan.

USASOC photo

effectively with asymmetric threats and enable precision targeting simultaneously in the same battle space.... Likewise, Special Operators were able to use conventional forces to enhance and enable special missions.³⁰

This integration was especially marked in the south, where, according to a US Army report, “the heroic actions of the special operations troopers in the south stood out every day because of their close integration into V Corps and I MEF [Middle East Force] operations.”³¹ It was in the north and the west however, where the SOF role was so markedly different than it had been just over a decade before. Part of the difference was simply the scale of SOF effort. According to a Congressional Research Unit report, 9,000 to 10,000 US SOF personnel deployed for Iraq out of an available force of 47,000, of which only 10,000 are combat forces.³² Following the SOF successes in Afghanistan, General Franks gave SOF the responsibility for controlling and dominating almost two thirds of Iraq during the war. The 5th Special Force Group were tasked to protect the Central Command left flank, control the western deserts and prevent the Iraqis from deploying Scud missiles into the area, as had been done in 1991.³³ This task was clearly successful, and US, British and Australian SOF in Western Iraq secured over 50 targets on the first night of the operation, and 50 more the next night, while other SOF dominated potential Scud and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) sites.³⁴

When Turkey denied US and British basing and transit rights almost at the last minute, the whole campaign plan in the north of Iraq had to be reconsidered. In the end, Task Force Viking (under the commander of 10th Special Forces Group, Colonel Charles Cleveland) was given the missions to conduct unconventional operations with Kurdish groups and to fix and destroy Iraqi forces in the north. Although some ODAs had been inserted beforehand, the bulk of the Task Force Viking forces were inserted by MC-130 on 20 March 2003.³⁵ As in Afghanistan,

“JTF 2 provides Canada with the tip of the spear, but we can’t go searching for the shaft on the day of a crisis.”

individual ODAs operated alongside indigenous forces to conduct combat operations against regular and paramilitary opposition. While this was a normal role for US Army Special Forces, during the campaign Colonel Cleveland became responsible for 80,000 troops. This included US SOF, Kurds, allied SOF, the 173rd Airborne Brigade (which conducted a parachute assault on 26/27 March 2003), as well as a task force from 1st Armored Division, the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit and a battalion from 10th Mountain Division, all of which linked up with his forces during the course of the campaign.³⁶

While SOF were never intended to take on Iraqi armoured forces, their success against much larger mechanized forces was impressive. At one objective in Aski Kalak on 5 April, Kurdish Peshmerga and a force of three US ODAs (about 36 personnel) took on and destroyed a dug-in Iraqi armoured force protecting a key bridge. Every Iraqi armoured vehicle was destroyed by either close air support or by Green Berets armed with Javelin man-pack missile systems. As one soldier later stated, “Not a single [coalition] tank was available, nor needed.”³⁷ Results were similar on 6 April when elements from 3rd Special Forces Group and 80 lightly armed Peshmerga were engaged by an Iraqi infantry brigade with T-55 tanks and armoured personnel carriers at Debecka Pass. This engagement was widely reported at the time because of tragic ‘blue-on-blue’ casualties filmed by a BBC crew on location, which occurred when a close air support aircraft mistook Peshmerga and SF personnel at a disabled T-55 for the Iraqi target. In spite of the friendly casualties, and again because of the combination of fast air and Javelin missiles (described by Sergeant First Class Anteriori, a participant, as “worth its weight in gold”), light forces destroyed a significant number of armoured vehicles and forced the Iraqis to abandon eight T-55s and 16 APCs on the battlefield.³⁸

In terms of conducting operations throughout the country, SOF contributed approximately 8 percent of the combat forces initially engaged in Iraq.³⁹ Their operations, critical in the west and north, were no less key in the south and central sectors. In a 6 April 2003 article, written after two weeks of operations, the *New York Times* credited SOF with securing offshore oil platforms, rescuing Private Jessica Lynch, seizing the Haditha Dam (which had the potential to cause significant flooding), controlling the west of Iraq, seizing airfields H2 and H3 (suspected WMD sites), raiding Saddam Hussein’s Thartar Palace, destroying 10 tanks in two convoy attacks near Ramadi, securing the north, training the Kurdish forces, and operating with the CIA in searching for regime leadership.⁴⁰ As Brigadier General Gary L. Harrell summarized in the same article, “[SOF were] doing things that have never been done on such a large scale and have produced phenomenal results.... The coalition is getting plenty of bang for the buck from SOF.”

While not all SOF operations went according to plan – British papers claim that a Special Boat Squadron insertion into Northern Iraq resulted in vehicles being

“SOF are precise, lethal and discriminate.”

captured and personnel forced to flee,⁴¹ and at least one operation demonstrated to US SOF the risks of operating without air cover⁴² – on the whole, SOF played a significant role in the success of the campaign. As Cordesman notes in a section

of his history of the conflict entitled “Snake Eaters with Master’s Degrees”: “It is already clear that at least the United States has drawn the lesson that such forces [SOF] are so valuable that they need significant expansion.... It seems likely that Special Forces are becoming a critical new element of joint warfare in an era of asymmetric warfare.”⁴³ There is however a clear understanding throughout the US military that “SOF must complement – not compete with nor be a substitute for – conventional forces.”⁴⁴ In Iraq and Afghanistan, SOF have proven that they are essential forces on the battlefields of the future.

The implications for Canada are twofold. First, as SOF have proven their utility, both against asymmetric threats and as a war fighting tool, the CF needs now to consider their relevance and relative priority in our force structure. Second, SOF are unmistakably now the fourth component (in addition to naval, land and air) in joint operations, and only those nations that provide forces to the coalition special operations component commander will be informed of the nature of theatre SOF operations. As SOF operate in politically sensitive environments, their operations will often be discreet and compartmentalized. Only a CF SOF contribution will give Canada true insight into what is actually happening behind the scenes in a theatre of operations. Canada therefore needs to consider SOF as one of four possible service contributions to coalition operations.

EMERGING ROLES

Generally, in battle, use the normal force to engage; use the extraordinary to win.

Sun Tzu⁴⁵

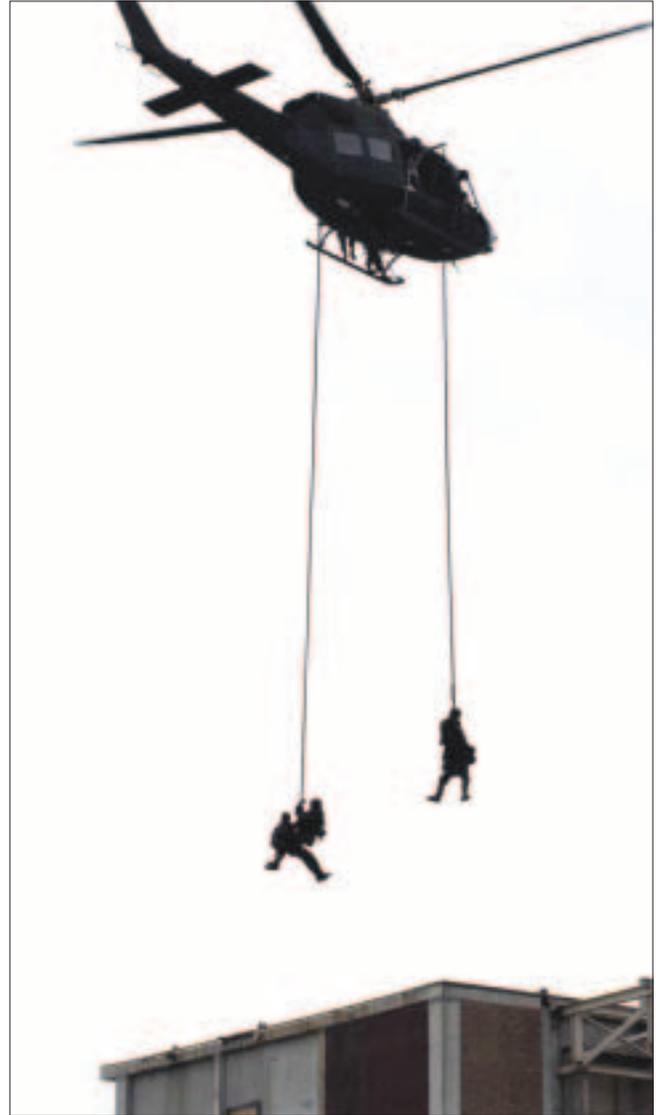
By definition, SOF are required for specialized operations where there is no broad conventional force requirement. Counter-terrorism has long been a speciality of SOF. Operations such as the SAS Prince’s Gate hostage rescue in London in 1980 demonstrate vividly the role of military forces in domestic counter-terrorism. Since 9/11, this role has taken on broader meaning. In Canada, for example, the December 2001 ‘public security’ budget allocated funds and tasked DND to double the capacity of JTF 2, including its capability to attack terrorists and terrorism beyond our borders. In the US, countering terrorism has required specialized and often covert, discreet or clandestine SOF capabilities specifically designed to track and attack terrorist or régime leadership targets. These forces are separate from the largely ‘white’ or war fighting SOF referred to above. While the United States developed such special mission units in the late 1970s and early 1980s, these forces did not emerge from the shadows until the post 9/11 operations. Not only have the forces emerged from the shadows, but their roles are also being transformed.

As Canadians consider what SOF capabilities are required within the CF, we must be cognizant of the distinction between 'black' and 'white' SOF, and of the fact that SOF themselves are not static. We must not aim to develop capabilities based solely on yesterday's operations, but must develop relevant forces for the future.

With the recommendations of the Holloway commission, the United States created a standing counter-terrorist special operations task force. Several authors have suggested that the Joint Special Operations Command took on that role,⁴⁶ although the US government has never confirmed this, and even retired General Carl Stiner and author Tom Clancy, in their book dealing with Stiner's role as commander of the counter-terrorist task force and later of Special Operations Command, refer only to a generic Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF).⁴⁷ Nevertheless, it was clear even before 11 September that US special mission units would play a key role in attacking terrorism. In fact, SOF preparations began long before 9/11. According to former US National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection and Counter-Terrorism, Richard Clarke, joint special operations personnel prepared a plan to capture an Al Qaeda leader in Khartoum in 1996, only to have the plan cancelled at the White House (in spite of Al Gore's reputed recommendation to "Go grab his ass⁴⁸"). The *9/11 Commission Report* also highlights the fact that in early 1998 (prior to the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania) that the Joint Special Operations Forces commander and the commander of Delta Force were asked to review CIA plans for an assault to capture Osama bin Laden in Tarnak Farms (the site where four members of 3 PPCLI were killed in 2002).⁴⁹ Clearly, US SOF have long had a key national interagency role that goes far beyond military joint operations.

According to several press reports, it was these specialized national-level strategic special operations forces that made up a series of largely covert numbered task forces established to track and capture or kill Al Qaeda, Taliban and later, Iraqi régime leadership. According to an article in the *New York Times*, two special operations missions tasked to track 'high-value targets' (Task Force 5 in Afghanistan and Task Force 20 in Iraq) were replaced in the summer of 2003 by Task Force 121, which had a broader regional mission.⁵⁰ Task Force 20 was reportedly responsible for the collation of intelligence on and the subsequent capture of Saddam Hussein's sons Uday and Qusay on 22 July 2003.

While the *Washington Post* suggested that there was a rift within the SOF community on how best to go after such targets,⁵¹ proponents of the numbered joint task forces were vindicated when Task Force 121 captured Saddam Hussein on 13 December last year.⁵² As in previous operations, interagency intelligence gathered and analyzed by the task force provided a sound basis for a successful action. According to *Newsweek*, Task Force 121, "a pure hybrid of civilian intelligence and military striking power," continued its operations into 2004 in Afghanistan tracking bin Laden.⁵³



JTF 2 soldiers rappelling from a helicopter onto the top of a building in a hostage rescue simulation.

It was Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's confidence in the ability of the US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) to create and employ such relevant, coordinated and responsive interagency task forces that caused him to lobby for and eventually assign SOCOM an expanded role in January 2003 for the prosecution of the Global War on Terrorism. With this change, the SOCOM Commander now has the responsibility to conduct his own operations, rather than just support the operations of regional commanders.⁵⁴ In order to adapt SOF for this new task, a new Center for Special Operations has been created within SOCOM Headquarters to consolidate intelligence, planning and operations functions to better track down and "destroy terrorist networks around the world."⁵⁵

This seemingly continual change and transformation of SOF is unlikely to stop anytime soon. At a recent conference, Lieutenant General Norton Schwartz, the senior Pentagon operations officer, stated that even further, fundamental changes will be required of SOF in the future. "This community needs to morph.... We need to look more like

them [terrorists] than we do like us,” Schwartz stated as he argued for greater human intelligence and signals intelligence components within SOF.⁵⁶ Even greater changes may be on the horizon as the 9/11 Commission has recommended that, “lead responsibility for directing and executing paramilitary operations, whether clandestine or covert, should shift [from the CIA] to the Defense Department. There it should be consolidated with the capabilities for training, direction, and execution of such operations already being developed in the Special Operations Command.”⁵⁷ While commentators such as Jennifer Kibbe have expressed concern over the legal framework for US military covert operations, there does seem to be a growing support for this type of consolidation.⁵⁸

OBSERVATIONS ON MODERN SOF

This article has presented only a glimpse of current SOF structures, recent operations and future trends. Much has had to be left out because of space considerations and the limitations of open source references. In particular, the role of SOF in national domestic responses to terrorism, while downplayed here, is very important. In Canada, the UK, Australia and New Zealand, SOF provide the primary national counter-terrorist armed response. Even in the United States, with the legal limitations on the use of the military there delimited in the *Posse Comitatus* Act, US SOF nevertheless play important roles in concert with the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI. These domestic responsibilities of SOF are now among the highest priority military tasks.

Finally, the contributions of Canadian and Commonwealth SOF during the past few years have been glossed over. While the US clearly operates on a different scale than their smaller allies, British, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand SOF have all conducted similar types of operations. From these collective experiences we can draw some general observations. First, SOF have truly become the fourth component of joint operations. They are not solely an add-on, a force multiplier, or an optional approach. They are a critical component to success. Without them a military coalition will be less likely to win. Without SOF, and having to rely on allies for that capability, a nation is likely to be deprived of an understanding of what is happening below the surface of an operation, and therefore less able to exercise its sovereignty prerogatives during coalition operations.

Second, SOF are in demand today and for the future. All of our closest allies are enhancing their SOF capabilities, and yes, it is usually at the expense of other elements of their force structure. Australia re-rolled an infantry battalion and allocated it to SOF, the British are reducing the strength of their infantry while enhancing SOF and, finally, the US are placing a priority on SOF augmentation. As armed forces are reduced in strength and have to rationalize their defence capabilities and spending, SOF are growing and taking a greater share of limited funds.

Third, as US SOF doctrine has stated for years, “competent SOF cannot be created after the crisis occurs.” It takes years to create SOF structures and to develop competent SOF personnel. The US SOF community was ready to respond to 9/11 only because, as Air Force General Charles Holland said in 2002, “political and military visionaries ... created this command to ensure the United States had a force trained, equipped and ready to combat such adversaries [terrorists] and destroy them.”⁵⁹ It is clear that joint SOF structures will not be proposed by the individual services at the expense of their own core capabilities. Tough decisions must be made and, to be ready for future threats, they must be made now.

Fourth, when used appropriately, SOF create military, diplomatic and political successes out of all proportion to their numbers. They are cost-effective. They operate across the spectrum of conflict, understand the requirements of other government departments and are comfortable with tactical, operational and strategic goals. Armed appropriately, employed sensibly and supported by joint assets, they are high-intensity warfighters, as important a contribution to coalition operations as any other arm. They can be capable force ‘packages’ that Canada can afford to develop to the highest world standard, and ones that allies will request in the future.

Fifth, specialized counter-terrorist SOF are best used as a part of coordinated interagency teams, either conducting intelligence-led operations or conducting operations to develop intelligence. They do not and should not conduct conventional military operations. To be most effective, they must be established within coherent and ready standing formations, with all the tools necessary to function. JTF 2 provides Canada with the tip of the spear, but we can’t go searching for the shaft on the day of a crisis. But, counter-terrorist forces must not be misused. Committing JTF 2 to some SOF tasks would not only be an inappropriate use of a strategic asset, it might actually reduce that unit’s ability to conduct counter-terrorist operations to protect Canadians. Canada needs a range of SOF capabilities that can function in a broad spectrum of scenarios, and that can be combined when needed.

Sixth, SOF are precise, lethal and discriminate. In preventative, conflict and post-conflict operations, they are part of the solution not part of the problem. They can be structured so as to have knowledge of the operational locale and the language skills needed to function amongst the indigenous population, and they train to operate and fight in sophisticated and sensitive environments. Considerations of collateral damage are weighed, as a rule, not just against the military objective to be achieved, but against the political and humanitarian goals.

Finally, as seen in both Afghanistan and Iraq, all SOF are not equal. Counter-terrorist forces should not be used to conduct overt unconventional warfare. Direct action units like Rangers are not suited for discriminate engagements or ‘hearts and minds’ tasks. Just as armed forces require a range of conventional capabilities, so too, do they require

a range of SOF capabilities. Particularly in a small military force, these capabilities must complement conventional forces, not replicate them. Just as all SOF are not equal, not all nations are capable of developing sophisticated and credible SOF. These are high-end forces that G-8 nations like Canada can generate, whereas many other nations cannot.

DECISIONS FOR CANADA: STILL WING-WALKING?

This article began with some basic questions about defence relevance. Are the changes we have made and are making too modest and incremental? As we consider our future force structure in Canada, some hard questions must be asked about what are discretionary and non-discretionary operations. What are the military options that the CF *must* be capable of providing to the government of Canada at short notice in a crisis? Given the huge cost to the taxpayer of virtually any defence capability, we must ensure the forces we develop are relevant, robust and ready. In coalition scenarios, they must be contributions to success, not just contributions to force size. If they can meet domestic, asymmetric and combat threats, their relevance can only be increased. Few would dispute the claim that SOF meet the non-discretionary asymmetric threats of the future security environment.

This article has attempted to show how SOF either contribute to warfighting, or lead it. They are compatible with Canada's aspirations and economic realities. SOF are equally well suited for soft power diplomacy and capacity building, and for hard power fighting. While a number of proposals for SOF structures have been or are being proposed,⁶⁰ what is a critical first step is for the CF to acknowledge the need to transform in order to remain both

affordable and relevant. While most officers need little convincing of the relevancy of SOF, many still believe they are unaffordable for a small force. I would suggest that in an era of sustained asymmetric threats, we cannot afford not to have a robust SOF capability to protect Canadians at home and abroad, and to engage enemies when necessary.

As our government undertakes a serious and detailed review of defence requirements, military planners will have to come up with creative options for relevant, robust, precise, and affordable defence capabilities for the future. That will require letting go of some older and less relevant capabilities developed during the Cold War. In the early 1990s, then Chief of the Defence Staff, General John de Chastelain, proposed the 'wing-walker' metaphor for Canadian defence policy. In short, as the security environment changed, our actions were akin to a daredevil wing-walker whose key to success is never releasing hold of one thing until something else is firmly gripped. For General de Chastelain, the aircraft in the analogy was our national defence policy. We are again in a situation where the security environment is changing. We now can see that capabilities such as SOF are the secure handholds that will take us through the turbulence of asymmetric threats, but we hesitate to drop the old and trusted handholds of our current force structure. If we can only look down, we will see that some of our most trusted handholds have rusted through over the years, and others are prohibitively expensive and therefore beyond our reach. Some we have not actually used for decades, yet they continue to weigh down the aircraft. Others might not even be attached to the airframe any longer. The world has changed, and we don't have a lot of money. Yes, we really do have to think.



NOTES

1. Memo to CJCS General Richard Myers, VCJCS General Peter Pace, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith dated 16 October 2003. Available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/dod/rumsfeld-d20031016sdmemo.htm>.
2. Following the 1998 Strategic Defence Review of 1998, the UK MoD published an updated White Paper in 1999, a 'New Chapter' to the Defence Review in 2002, a new White Paper in 2003 and finally a Defence Command Paper in 2004. Each has resulted in significant changes to the structure and strategy of the MoD. See <http://www.mod.uk/publications/index.htm>.
3. Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker, "Special Warriors Have Growing Ranks and Growing Pains in Taking Key Antiterror Role," *The New York Times*, 2 Aug 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/02/politics/02mili.html>.
4. See http://www.johnkerry.com/issues/national_security/military.html accessed on 30 August 2004.
5. Schmitt and Shanker, *Op. Cit.*
6. Robert Wall, "Sharpening the Sword," in *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, Vol. 160, Issue 8, 23 February 2004, p. 80.
7. See <http://www.mod.uk/issues/security/cm6269/index.html> accessed on 2 August 2004. Note that the UK and Australia refer to all of their Special Operations Forces as Special Forces (SF), while in the United States only the US Army Green Berets are referred to as SF; the term SOF is used to encompass all US Special Operations Command forces.
8. Sean Rayment, "SAS creates a new squadron to counter threat from Al Qaeda," in *The Telegraph*, 7 March 2004, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2004/03/07/wbin107.xml>
9. Sean Rayment, "Britain forms a new special forces unit to fight the Al Qaeda", *The Telegraph*, 25 July 2004, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2004/07/25/nrsr25.xml>
10. Of note, the Commander of SOCOMD (a Major General) is of equivalent rank to the chiefs of the other services. See: <http://www.defence.gov.au/terrorism/>
11. See speeches by senior Australian commanders at press conferences at <http://www.defence.gov.au/media/2002/73002.doc> and <http://www.defence.gov.au/media/2003/ACF17A.doc>
12. General Henry Shelton, the past Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was Commander of SOCOM in 1996-97, General Peter Schoomaker, current Chief of Staff of the US Army, was appointed to that position after retiring in 2000, following three years as commander SOCOM. In addition, the current J3 at the Pentagon, Lieutenant General Norton Schwartz, has a strong SOF background.
13. Susan L. Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces*. (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1997), see especially Chapter Six – "Legislating Change". This book is of value not only to those interested in SOF history; it is also an excellent case study in capability development and institutional resistance to change.
14. Field Marshal The Viscount Slim, *Defeat into Victory* (New York: David Mackay, 1961), p. 99.
15. For reviews of the Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission by participants, see James Kyle, *The Guts to Try* (New York: Orion Books, 1990), or Charlie Beckwith, *Delta Force* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1983).
16. Admiral James L. Holloway, et al., Report of the Review Group into the Iranian Hostage Rescue Operation. 23 August 1980. Report available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB63/doc8.pdf>

17. These tenets are taken from William H. McRaven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice*. (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1996).
18. For a short and critical review of these operations see Richard A Gabriel, *Military Incompetence: Why the American Military Doesn't Win*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985).
19. Source for the material below is primarily from The United States Special Operations Forces Posture Statement 2003-2004: "Transforming the Force at the Forefront of the War on Terrorism", accessed at http://www.defenselink.mil/policy/solic/2003_2004_SOF_Posture_Statement.pdf. Supplemented by various open web sites, including www.specialoperations.com and www.specwarnet.com. Where possible web-based information has been corroborated.
20. In fact, the two Regiments were twinned and shared very similar company-level organizations and equipment.
21. This took place on 3-4 October and was the subject of Mark Bowden's book *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: G.K. Hall, 2000) and the feature film of the same name. For a short review of this operation and other SOCOM operations prior to Iraq, see: United States Special Operations Command, *US SOCOM History: 15th Anniversary Edition* (MacDill AFB: SOCOM, 2002) available at http://www.socom.mil/Docs/15th_anniversary_history.pdf
22. See Jason Burke, et al., "US special forces kill 20 in fierce Afghan firefight." *The Guardian Observer*; Sunday 21 October 2001. Accessed at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/waronterror/story/0,1361,578138,00.html> 8 Aug 2004. Some of these claims are corroborated in Robin Moore, *The Hunt for Bin Laden: Task Force Dagger – On the Ground with the Special Forces in Afghanistan*. (New York: Random House, 2003), pp. 28-29. For the view of commander CENTCOM on these initial operations (which he discusses in detail), see General Tommy Franks and Malcolm McConnell, *American Soldier*. (New York: Regan Books, 2004), pp. 303-305.
23. See Dr. Richard Kriper, "Into the Dark: The 3/75th Ranger Regiment" in *Special Warfare*, September 2002, pp. 6-7.
24. See the account of ODA 595 in "The liberation of Mazar-e Sherif: 5th Group conducts UW in Afghanistan," in *Special Warfare*, Vol. 15, No. 2, June 2002, pp. 34-41 and in Moore, Op. Cit., p.104, who identifies ODA 595 as the first force on the ground during the war. Although CNN and the *Guardian* claimed that US and UK SOF had already entered Afghanistan on 28 September 2001, these assertions have not been confirmed by other sources. See <http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/09/28/ret.special.operations/> and <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,560245,00.html>. The SOF insertions were actually planned much earlier. See Franks, Op. Cit., pp. 296-300 for his frustration at ten days of delays, largely due to weather and dust.
25. Colonel John T. Carney, Jr. and Benjamin F. Schemmer, *No Room for Error: The Covert Operations of America's Special Tactics Units from Iran to Afghanistan*. (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002), pp. 274-275. For AFSOF operations, see also Michael Hirsh, *None Braver: U.S. Air Force Pararescuemen in the War on Terrorism*. (New York: New American Library, 2003).
26. See http://www.navsoc.navy.mil/navsoc_missions.asp
27. Frank L. Jones, "Army SOF in Afghanistan: Learning the Right Lessons" in *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Winter 2002/3, p. 18.
28. Carney and Schemmer, *Op Cit*, p. 284.
29. Norman Friedman, *Terrorism, Afghanistan and America's New Way of War*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2003), p. 221.
30. Presentation to the Senate Armed Services Committee, 9 June 2003, quoted in Anthony H. Cordesman, *Lessons of the Iraq War: Summary Briefing*. Washington: CSIS, 15 July 2003 at http://www.csis.org/features/iraq_instantlessons_exec.pdf, accessed on 24 July 2003.
31. Gregory Fontenot, Col (ret'd) et al, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM*, (Fort Leavenworth: Centre for Army Lessons Learned, U.S. Army, 2003). Accessed at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2004/onpoint/ch-8.htm>.
32. Ronald O'Rourke, coordinator, *Iraq War: Defense Program Implications for Congress*. CRS Report RL31946. (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 4 June 2003), pp. 40-42.
33. Williamson Murray and Major General (ret'd) Robert H. Scales Jr., *The Iraq War: A Military History*. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 2003), p. 185.
34. Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics and Military Lessons*. (Washington: The CSIS Press, 2003), p. 59. See also "Australian forces go Scud hunting in western Iraq" in *Jane's Intelligence Review*, July 2003, pp. 20-22, and "Interview with MGen Duncan Lewis," same issue, p. 56.
35. For detailed chapters on Task Force VIKING, see Robin Moore, *Hunting Down Saddam: The Inside Story of the Search and Capture*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004).
36. Murray and Scales, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 189-190.
37. Quoted in Moore, *Hunting Down Saddam*, p. 44.
38. Gerry Gilmore, "Special Operations Troops Recount Iraq Missions," American Forces Information Service, Washington, 5 February 2004. Accessed at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Feb2004/n02052004_200402057.html
39. Cordesman, *The Iraq War*, p. 362.
40. Thom Shankar and Eric Schmitt, "Covert Units Conduct a Campaign Invisible Except for the Results" in *The New York Times*, 6 April 2003, accessed at <http://query.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=14August2004>.
41. Thomas Harding, "Shake-up in Special Boat Service over claims it 'panicked and fled' in Iraq", *The Daily Telegraph* 26 July 2004, accessed at <http://portal.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2004/07/26/nsbs26.xml>.
42. See Steve Voegel, "Far from Capital, A Fight That US Forces Did Not Win," in *The Washington Post*, 10 April 2003, p. 38.
43. Cordesman, *The Iraq War*, pp. 364-365.
44. Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, 17 December 2003, p. I-1, accessed at http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp3_05.pdf.
45. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, translated by Samuel B. Griffith, (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 91.
46. See David C. Martin and John Walcott, *The Best Laid Plans: The Inside Story of America's War Against Terrorism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), or Jennifer D. Kibbe, "The Rise of the Shadow Warriors" in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 2, Mar/Apr 2004, pp. 102-116. See also Franks, *Op. Cit.* in which he refers to the elite operators and special mission units of Joint Special Operations Command.
47. See General Carl Stiner (ret'd), Tom Clancy and Tony Koltz, *Shadow Warriors: Inside the Special Forces*, (New York: GP Putnam's Sons, 2002).
48. Richard Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror*, (New York: Free Press, 2004), pp.144-145.
49. Thomas H. Kean et al., *The 9/11 Commission Report* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 22 July 2004), pp. 112-113, accessed at <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>
50. Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, "Pentagon says a Covert Force Hunts Hussein," *New York Times*, 7 November 2003.
51. According to Green Berets in Afghanistan, at least two high-value, senior Taliban targets were allowed to slip through their hands while distant special mission units were tasked to respond rather than SF troops already in the area. In both cases, SF personnel claimed that the slow response of the elite SOF forces resulted in the escape of Taliban leaders. See Gregory L. Vistica, "Military Split on How to Use Special Forces in Terror War" *The Washington Post*, 5 January 2004.
52. See Robin Moore, *Hunting Down Saddam*, pp. 227-256, for the most detailed account of this operation, dubbed "Red Dawn".
53. Michael Hirsh et al., "The Hunt Heats Up," *Newsweek*, Vol. 143, Issue 11, 15 March 2004, pp. 46-49. According to the article, TF 121 was at the time commanded by a SEAL officer, William McRaven, author of *Spec Ops* cited above, and described in the article as "the smartest SEAL that ever lived." This is a claim that, though possibly true, will undoubtedly bring a smile to the face of many US Army SOF operators.
54. Discussions on this topic were reported as early as September 2002, see Susan Schmidt and Thomas E. Ricks, "Pentagon Plans Shift in War on Terror," *The Washington Post*, September 18, 2002, Page A01. See also Jennifer Kibbe, *Op. Cit.*, p. 110.
55. Tom Breen, "U.S. Special Operations Command," *Armed Forces International*, July 2004, p. 46.
56. Quoted in Robert Wall, "Sharpening the Sword: Special Operations clamor for better ISR, but cultural change also deemed critical" in *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, Vol. 160, Issue 8, 23 February 2004.
57. Thomas H. Hearn, et al, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, p. 451.
58. For useful discussions of the issues involved, see Jennifer Kibbe, *Op. Cit.*, Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker, "Special Warriors Have Growing Ranks and Growing Pains in Taking Key Antiterror Role," *New York Times*, 2 Aug 2004, Richard Ladner, "Special Ops, CIA Mix In War Stir Legal Questions," *Tampa Tribune*, 29 February 2004, and Colonel Kathryn Stone, "All Necessary Means" – *Employing CIA Operatives in a Warfighting Role Alongside Special Operations Forces*. USAWC Strategy Research Project, (Carlisle Barracks, Penn: US Army War College, 7 April 2003). It should be noted that covert has a particular meaning in the US. Although clandestine operations intend to hide the operation prior to execution, covert operations intend to hide the sponsor, in this case the United States. While covert operations are an unlikely strategy for the government of Canada, clandestine and discreet operations are understood as a necessary part of Canadian security operations. That said, effective oversight must be considered thoroughly in any such operations.
59. Quoted in Tom Breen, *Op. Cit.*, p. 47.
60. See Major Brister's article in this volume, or the CF Land Staff's Directorate of Land Strategic Concepts', *Future Force: Concepts for Future Army Capabilities* (Kingston: DLSC, 2003), pp. 176-179.