

Jedburghs get instructions from Briefing Officer in London, England, ca. 1944 (Office of Strategic Services/U.S. National Archives and Records Administration)



Force Integration in Resistance Operations

Dutch Jedburghs and U.S. Alamo Scouts

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Joint special operations forces (SOF) integration with conventional forces (CF) is a difficult undertaking in missions ranging from

humanitarian to combat, yet all future military operations against peer adversaries will require the close cooperation of SOF and CF for success. This axiom is especially true for liberation operations entailing collaboration with national resistance groups in occupied territories, where the latter will be engaged by U.S. SOF formations as part of their unconventional warfare mandate. With the return of Great Power competition, the threat of Russian or Chinese territorial aggression and occupation becomes a national security anxiety for a number of states, which generates the requirement to consider SOF-CF integration in liberation operations where friendly resistance groups are present. The Baltics, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Taiwan, Burma, and Tibet are all examples that demonstrate this prospect of Russian or Chinese aggression and occupation.

Proper SOF-CF integration and synchronization depends on effective coordination and liaison for greatest effect.¹ Effective liaison between liberating conventional forces and friendly resistance elements in an ambiguous battlespace is necessary to avoid fratricide and to unify all regular and unconventional elements toward a common objective. Multinational SOF elements are the logical choice to provide this bridging function given their inherent expertise with irregular forces—militias, local security forces, and resistance members—as well as their ability to blend into local populations. Unfortunately, an established joint organizational unit of action does not currently exist for this mission.

This article proposes the establishment of multinational Jedburgh-like SOF teams to link CF units to national resistance organizations during operations. In World War II, the Jedburghs were multinational, three-person teams designed to conduct sabotage and guerrilla warfare in Axis-occupied territory as well as liaison between resistance groups and the Allied war effort. In today's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) context, NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ) would be the organization

to catalyze the establishment of such teams, and NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) formations in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland could provide the ideal pilot platforms for their launch. After NSHQ pilots this concept, the United States and selected Asian allies could consider a similar model for the Indo-Pacific theater of operations. The World War II historical examples of the Dutch Jedburgh teams in Europe and the Alamo Scouts in the Pacific demonstrate the value of such SOF liaison elements between conventional forces and resistance groups, while framing a possible modern approach.

Integration Challenges

SOF-CF integration has been an enduring problem since the advent of modern-era special operations forces in World War II. In canvassing the relevant literature on the topic, a number of practitioners and academics have identified the issues and obstacles associated with achieving optimal SOF-CF integration.² The challenge is to extract the relevant historical examples of this phenomenon while culling the rest. With *integration* doctrinally defined as “the arrangement of [conventional and special operations] forces and their actions to create a force that operates by engaging as a whole,” this article identifies four obstacles for SOF-CF collaboration.³ First, doctrine and policy do not comprehensively define how SOF-CF integration should occur.⁴ This deficit causes organizational friction when this collaboration is mandated by operations. Second, when concepts such as SOF-CF synchronization are defined, they tend to rigidly focus on combat missions and do not account for operational fluidity between unconventional, conventional, or humanitarian scenarios.⁵ This latter situation characterizes liberation operations on occupied territory. Third, there is a lack of mutual understanding between SOF and CF, creating a sense of SOF “otherness vis-à-vis the conventional forces from which the personnel were originally drawn.”⁶ This perception necessitates habitual and frequent

contact to build trust and enduring personal relationships between SOF and CF formations. Finally, the actual implementation of SOF-CF integration has often led to ad hoc organizational arrangements or mechanisms, both in training and in wartime. This expediency promotes poor mission execution and complicated command and control relationships.

In general, the prospect of conducting combat operations to liberate occupied territory presents a complex landscape for the conventional joint force commander, who must integrate surviving national resistance groups into a concept of operations that aims for a common operational and strategic end-state. At the same time, the commander needs to mitigate risks associated with these armed groups conducting independent actions that might be counterproductive to operations or harmful to the civilian population. The latter point ranges from resistance groups taking punitive actions against actual or perceived collaborators to committing war crimes against civilians and property. The solution is the preconflict establishment of small, multinational SOF teams to liaise and coordinate with an allied national military and its planned resistance components to support CF actions.

In the NATO setting, this peacetime planning and coordination would primarily occur with host-nation SOF and territorial forces, elements that have leading roles in wartime resistance operations. This situation goes beyond the generic Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*, recommendation that “special operations commanders provide liaison to component commands to integrate, coordinate, and deconflict SOF and conventional force operations” because resistance operations imply that “language differences, cultural diversity, historical animosities, and uneven allied and partner capabilities will further complicate these activities.”⁷ These future multinational SOF liaison teams would train and exercise with relevant national forces in peacetime to prepare for occupation situations in combat or conflicts below the threshold of armed conflict.

Military Assistance and Liaison with Resistance Elements

In the NATO SOF context, this resistance liaison assignment falls under the umbrella of the military assistance task, which is a broad category of activities that support and enable critical friendly assets—in this case, resistance organizations in occupied territory.⁸ The military assistance mission is well understood by both NATO SOF and CF; therefore, such a liaison element would not be doctrinally unfamiliar. Resistance, as defined by the Swedish Defence University's *Resistance Operating Concept*, is

*a nation's organized, whole-of-society effort, encompassing the full range of activities from nonviolent to violent, led by a legally established government, potentially exiled, displaced, or shadow, to reestablish independence and autonomy within its sovereign territory that has been wholly or partially occupied by a foreign power.*⁹

The significance of this definition is twofold. First, resistance in the NATO environment is not about insurgency, but rather the armed and unarmed efforts of a legitimate NATO member government to restore its sovereignty in the face of adversarial aggression and occupation. Second, this approach to resistance requires peacetime planning, establishment, and organization of national resistance components as part of a comprehensive defense concept. Even with peacetime planning, resistance organizations become messy and complex once faced with an occupying enemy. According to U.S. Army doctrine, “The primary components of the resistance model are the underground, the guerrilla or armed force, the auxiliary support to the underground and guerrilla or armed force, and the public component.”¹⁰ While all these resistance actors are important, there is no neat division between these components, and a CF commander needs to engage with all of them to harness their capabilities for common objectives.¹¹ This situation increases the commander's need for a connecting liaison element that can advise him or her and facilitate communication and collaboration with the

resistance. Despite the mixed historical record on SOF-CF collaboration, the following historical vignettes illustrate how to successfully accomplish this mission with dedicated SOF liaison teams.

The Dutch Jedburgh Liaison Mission

As noted, the Jedburghs were three-man, multinational special operations teams from the Office of Strategic Services that parachuted into occupied Europe to establish a link between local resistance forces and the Allied command.¹² This concept provided the blueprint for the modern SOF mission of enabling resistance forces in support of conventional and unconventional warfare missions.¹³ While used throughout Europe, several teams, with Dutch personnel, were allocated as the Dutch Liaison Mission to advise corps and division commanders on the utilization of the Dutch resistance in combat operations in the Netherlands.¹⁴ Holland's geography complicated resistance operations given its lack of sanctuary—mountains, forests, wilderness—and the presence of skilled German internal security forces. For Operation *Market Garden*, Special Forces Headquarters attached Jedburgh teams to the British airborne corps and each participating airborne division. This decision resulted in the teams deploying jointly for the first time with conventional forces, which led to two teams playing significant liaison roles in integrating resistance forces into ongoing conventional operations.¹⁵

In his book *Dutch Courage*, researcher Jelle Hooiveld examines how Jedburgh teams Edward and Clarence were extremely successful in making resistance services available to their Allied forces in their operating sectors, with Team Edward organizing and managing a diverse group of rival resistance groups to augment Allied units, while Team Clarence engaged with and armed assorted local groups to unify efforts on orders from the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division commander.¹⁶ Reviewing these *Market Garden* Jedburgh teams in the context of modern-day SOF support to conventional liberation operations

provides three specific lessons on using SOF to coordinate the activities of partisan forces in support of future conventional campaigns.¹⁷

Foremost, against a highly sophisticated and repressive occupier such as Nazi Germany, Russia, or China, team members must have superb language expertise and cultural acumen to blend into the local population. As Hooiveld noted for the Dutch Liaison Mission, “Any non-Dutch member of the [Jedburgh] party was a liability to the resistance movement unless his presence there had some absolute justification.”¹⁸ Second, SOF liaison teams must educate conventional force commanders on resistance capabilities and the requirements to attain the necessary integration. Team Clarence was able to achieve this objective, but the success also had much to do with Major General James M. Gavin, 82nd Airborne Division commander, having confidence in the team.¹⁹ Finally, the CF commander must have an understanding of SOF activities and missions as well as a willingness to trust the SOF liaison element to operate in his or her interest with resistance forces. Unfortunately, in *Market Garden*, the British airborne corps leadership had neither, and its assigned team was ignored, resulting in no leveraging of resistance assets and resources.

Alamo Scouts in the Philippines: Liaison with Guerrillas on Leyte and Luzon

Lieutenant General Walter Krueger, commander of the U.S. Sixth Army, established the Alamo Scouts as a special reconnaissance force in the Southwest Pacific during World War II.²⁰ This small 140-person unit contributed to combat operations by providing tactical intelligence and conducting special operations within enemy-held areas.²¹ In this latter role, the Alamo Scouts provided essential liaison with the disparate Filipino resistance organizations on the islands of Leyte and Luzon to support the Sixth Army's conventional force combat operations in its efforts to liberate the Philippines.

On Leyte, the U.S. Sixth Army directed the Scouts to contact and

U.S. Soldiers assigned to 3rd Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, conduct door breach demolition qualification training in support of North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group—Poland, in Bemowo Piskie, Poland, May 14, 2020 (U.S. Army/Timothy Hamlin)



synchronize guerrilla elements to support campaign objectives. In a shift from their original reconnaissance mission, the Alamo Scouts “consolidated five guerrilla groups, established operational sectors for them, and created intelligence reporting networks.”²² During the Luzon campaign, the work of the Alamo Scouts broadened to include the organization and direction of guerrilla activities, in which Scout teams engaged with guerrilla units and organized their actions in support of the regular forces.²³ Alamo Scout liaison activities enabled guerrilla elements to support both the 43rd Division and XI Corps in expanding combat operations and to set the conditions for future operations.²⁴

The Alamo Scouts example provides an excellent proof of concept for the advantages that accrue from having an established, rather than ad hoc, special operations liaison team linking resistance elements—in this case, rather sizable guerrilla forces—to division-, corps-, and army-level conventional formations in the execution of a liberation campaign. As Stephen Ryan notes, “The Alamo Scouts were able to harness the combat power of the guerrilla forces. . . . When the conventional force landing began, the Scouts directly integrated guerrilla activities to support the ground force main effort.”²⁵ The Scouts were also well embedded in the U.S. Sixth Army’s structure and had a habitual and trusting relationship with the conventional commander. Such a case could be easily projected onto any scenario in which an allied country is confronted with partial occupation from a peer adversary, and NATO or coalition conventional forces need to integrate resistance elements—guerrillas, underground, or auxiliaries—into the overall concept of operations. A SOF unit of action, already emplaced within a conventional construct and by virtue of its expertise and capabilities, would be the connecting mechanism to achieve greatest effect.

Creating a Multinational Jedburgh Testbed

The historical examples of Dutch Jedburgh teams and Alamo Scouts offer potential for adaptation in the current security environment with Russia and

even China. Both of these revisionist powers employ a mixture of national power instruments to achieve significant strategic advantages over other nations, while avoiding the international thresholds for armed conflict.²⁶ In Europe, a number of states are directly threatened by Russian gray zone action, which could include the occupation of territory. The Donbass and Crimea in Ukraine, Transnistria in Moldova, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia are examples of this threat.

To prepare for this scenario and enhance an already existing NATO deterrent posture, NATO Special Operations Headquarters could work with its SOF member nations to create multinational Jedburgh-like SOF liaison teams that can provide the critical link between CF and national resistance elements in times of crisis. NSHQ is ideally suited for this brokerage role. Created in 2009, NSHQ provides strategic SOF advice to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and the NATO chain of command. At the same time, NSHQ offers a collaborative, interdependent platform to enhance and expand the Alliance SOF network, while developing the SOF capability and interoperability of Allies and partners.²⁷ This Jedburgh-like approach would be a method for multinational special operations and conventional forces to combine in a habitual way to further increase NATO capacity to conduct SOF-CF operations in an unconventional warfare environment.

Structurally, an ideal team would consist of three to four personnel with obligatory host-nation participation to guarantee language and cultural expertise. The remaining team members would be expected to possess requisite language and cultural knowledge. The team would have a joint composition since maritime operations and airpower play significant roles in resistance and liberation operations. For the air component, SOF infiltration and joint terminal attack controller knowledge is needed. Similarly, maritime expertise in littoral activities and infiltration techniques would be invaluable. Team members could be a mix of SOF operators and enablers.

For implementation, NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence formations could serve as the pilot platforms to establish the multinational Jedburgh-like teams, since these are conventional multinational battlegroups already operating in countries facing Russian aggression. Besides exercising the liaison and coordination with national militaries and their planned resistance initiatives in peacetime, these small SOF teams would also contribute to greater SOF-CF interoperability within the EFP construct.

In July 2016, in response to the Russian occupation of Crimea and the Donbass, NATO decided to establish an EFP in the eastern part of the Alliance, with four multinational battlegroups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. These battlegroups, led by the framework nations of the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, and the United States, respectively, are multinational and combat-ready, demonstrating the strength of the transatlantic bond. Their presence makes clear that an attack on one Ally will be considered an attack on the whole Alliance. The battlegroups form part of the biggest reinforcement of NATO’s collective defense in a generation.²⁸ These battlegroups, together with local national defense forces, provide both strategic deterrence and initial defense for their host countries.²⁹ Adding a small multinational SOF Jedburgh-like element would enhance the EFP forces and extend their capabilities into the unconventional warfare space. This idea finds support from several European researchers who argue that the “EFP deployments in the Baltic region could serve as an experiment for wider defence cooperation among clusters of NATO countries.”³⁰ The creation of multinational resistance liaison missions would be a step in this direction.

While SOF-CF integration could be daunting in all types of operations, campaigning to liberate occupied territory adds the complication of managing a resistance interface with disparate stay-behind groups and guerrillas. With the existence of both Russian and Chinese aggression toward neighboring countries in their geographical space, prudent

preparation would recommend evaluating and experimenting with the concept of establishing small multinational SOF liaison teams to manage the resistance interface for conventional forces. The two World War II historical examples of the Dutch Jedburgh teams in Europe and the Alamo Scouts in the Pacific demonstrate the value and feasibility of having established SOF elements provide unique and successful liaison capabilities between conventional forces and resistance groups to unify efforts. In the modern context, the creation of multinational Jedburgh-like formations to link NATO CF units to national resistance organizations would contribute to further deterring Russian aggression and gray zone action. The forward-deployed EFP units would serve as the right platform for this experimentation. At a minimum, such SOF liaison detachments would enhance the EFP initiative by providing unconventional and special warfare expertise. After proof of concept with the NATO EFP formations, this idea could be exported and adapted to an Asian environment to deal with potential Chinese incursions. JFQ

Notes

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¹⁵ Ibid., 53, 126.

¹⁶ Ibid., 92–94, 228.

¹⁷ Gutjahr, “The Role of Jedburgh Teams.”

¹⁸ Hooiveld, *Dutch Courage*, 230.

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