



Army Special Operations Command troops prepare to fast rope from CH-47D Chinook

U.S. Army Special Operations Command

U.S. Special Operations: Context and Capabilities in Irregular Warfare

By ERIC T. OLSON



Irregular warfare (IW) is a concept highlighted in contemporary military thinking, but it encompasses a perspective that has long been the core of America's special operations forces (SOF).

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), created by Congress over 22 years ago, implemented its original charter and Title 10 authorities primarily as a resourcing headquarters, providing ready and relevant SOF for episodic engagements against threats to the Nation and its vital interests. Since the attacks of 9/11 and during 8 years of protracted war, USSOCOM has become a proactive, global, and strategically focused headquarters encompassing a two-fold purpose and mission. As a functional command, USSOCOM serves as proponent for U.S. SOF and for the development of equivalent unit and headquarters functions among allied and partner nations. As a combatant command, USSOCOM synchronizes Department of

Defense (DOD) operational planning for global operations against violent extremist organizations, and it is prepared to employ SOF worldwide when directed by the President or Secretary of Defense. Put simply, in fighting our nation's wars, USSOCOM decides how SOF should be prepared and recommends where, when, and how to use SOF and other forces in support of U.S. defense policy.

The operational commitments of the American military have led to an increase in demand for SOF. America's SOF are popularly prescribed as the "pinch hitters" of national security, called upon to succeed where others would fail, to solve crises by working through and with others rather than by unilaterally committing American lives. Although there are elements of truth in this perception, it is flawed for two reasons. First, by their very nature, SOF are limited in size and scope and inherently cannot form the mainstay of our large-scale military commitments abroad.

Second, while the ability to work with partners and allies, be they other nations' fielded forces or militias of local tribesmen, may be a core SOF capability, today's conflicts require other elements of our military to embrace such capabilities. In that context, this article outlines what makes SOF "special" in the operational environment, and explains how USSOCOM and SOF fit into the integrated whole of military forces tasked to defend U.S. and partner interests.

The Contemporary Context

Civil war, religious conflict, and competition between peoples rather than states have dominated human history. Despite the recent popularity of the term *irregular warfare*, such warfare is "irregular" only in comparison to the preceding century or so of state-on-state opposition. Two world wars and four decades of Cold War conflict overshadowed what has historically been the defined norm in warfare: population-centric conflict based on competing social identities and comparatively scarce resources. Examining the contemporary environment serves first to illustrate why SOF are increasingly in demand, and then introduces implications for how our overall defense posture must be oriented and resourced to defend U.S. national security.

Defining the current operating environment requires an appreciation of the complex world in which we live. The current population of 307 million Americans is less than 5 percent of the world total, which by almost any statistical metric would indicate that events will generally occur whether or not this nation wants them to. Furthermore, terms such as *uni-* or *multipolar* are inherently misleading in that they overly rely on states' territorial sovereignty as a definition of social identity or a measure of power in the global system. Sovereignty is simply not what it used to be, and even a cursory review of the past 1,000 years of civilized history suggests that "patria rarely designated the polity."¹

Although territorial sovereignty can be defined and defended, cultural, economic, and informational sovereignty cannot. Globalization creates stresses on developing and underdeveloped nations and societies, which in turn create regional instability and political tensions. Thomas Friedman similarly

described these trends as a "flattening" of the world, in which traditional hierarchies are being superseded by globalizing effects that connect us in ways for which state-centric institutions are poorly postured.²

This new realm of sovereignty is defined not by geographic boundaries but by population trends. Crime, migration, extremism, and competition for resources drive populations and foment conflict. As a result of this environment and the changing practical definition of what it means to be sovereign, war also does not mean what it used to. Traditionally defined forms of warfare such as counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare are being lumped under umbrella terms such as irregular warfare or hybrid warfare in attempts to better describe military actions in this "new" environment. The concept of war itself often means something else when translated into other, especially non-Western, languages. It is a common and perhaps naïve misconception to believe that peace is a norm from which wars deviate, or that war itself is a temporary problem with a presupposed military solution. In many parts of the world, that is simply not so. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates captured this notion well when he wrote: "What is dubbed the war on terrorism, in grim reality, is a prolonged, worldwide, irregular campaign—a struggle between the forces of violent extremism and those of moderation."³

sensus must be favored over coercion, and the ability to do so proactively requires a holistic approach to warfare aimed at both eliminating adversaries and eroding the conditions that foment and foster their behavior.

DOD defines *irregular warfare* as a "violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s)."⁴ IW is then inherently both political in purpose and local in character. The focus is on populations and effective governance rather than on territories and material dominance. This has distinct implications for how irregular wars must be fought and for the forces that fight them.

U.S. Special Operations

USSOCOM was activated on April 16, 1987, at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. DOD created the new unified command in response to congressional action in the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the Nunn-Cohen Amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act of 1987. Congress mandated that a new four-star command be activated to prepare SOF to carry out assigned missions and, if so directed, to plan for and conduct special operations. In addition to the military department-like authorities of developing training and monitoring readiness, Congress gave USSOCOM its own budgetary authorities and responsibilities

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Regardless of how wars are defined, one constant remains: current and potential antagonists are unlikely to directly oppose America's conventionally postured military forces. This means that the United States is most likely to get hit, as occurred on 9/11, in ways for which the preponderance of its military is least prepared. No longer can a massed military presence be relied upon to secure solutions to what are inherently political conflicts, as physical presence without popular value will ultimately be perceived as occupation. Proactively engaging in these conflicts requires a lengthy commitment before the fighting even starts. As proud as America may be of its ability to run quickly to the sound of the guns, the surest means of winning against an irregular enemy is to defeat him before the shooting starts. Con-

through a specific Major Force Program in the DOD budget. Additionally, USSOCOM was granted its own acquisition authorities, enabling it to develop and procure equipment, supplies, or services peculiar to special operations.

USSOCOM now has approximately 54,000 Active-duty, Reserve, and National Guard Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and civilians assigned to its headquarters, four Service components, and one subunified command. USSOCOM's components are U.S. Army Special Operations Command, Naval Special Warfare Command, Air Force Special Operations Command, and Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command. The Joint Special Operations Command is a USSOCOM subunified command. Headquarters, USSOCOM, through its component and

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subunified commands, prepares and fields SOF to conduct the core activities listed below.

- Direct action: seizing, destroying, capturing, or recovering through short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions in denied areas
- Special reconnaissance: acquiring information concerning the capabilities, intentions, and activities of an enemy
- Unconventional warfare: conducting operations through and with surrogate forces that are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed by external forces

- Information operations: achieving information superiority by adversely affecting enemy information and systems while protecting U.S. information and systems
- Counterproliferation of weapons of mass destruction: either locating, seizing, destroying, or capturing, recovering, and rendering such weapons safe
- Security force assistance: sustaining and assisting host nation or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority through the unified action of the joint, inter-agency, intergovernmental, and multinational communities

employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional force requirement.” Furthermore, special operations “are applicable across the range of military operations” and “differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets.”⁵ While the definition effectively (if not succinctly) outlines the manner in which special operations and SOF differ from conventional forces and missions, it offers little regarding their operational integration within an overall campaign plan and IW context.

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U.S. Navy (Byron C. Linder)

353^d Special Operations Group and U.S. Marines unload relief supplies from CH-53E for remote areas of west Sumatra, Indonesia, following two earthquakes

- Foreign internal defense: providing training and other assistance to foreign governments and their militaries to enable the foreign government to provide for its national security
- Civil Affairs operations: establishing, maintaining, or influencing relations between U.S. forces and foreign civil authorities and civilian populations to facilitate U.S. military operations
- Counterterrorism: preventing, deterring, and responding to terrorism
- Psychological operations: providing truthful information to foreign audiences that influences behavior in support of U.S. military operations

- Counterinsurgency operations: defeating insurgency through military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions
- Other activities specified by the President or Secretary of Defense.

The varied range of special operations, both as historically executed and conceptually outlined above, presents challenges to the very definition of what comprises a special operation and to what must characterize the forces that undertake these missions. According to joint doctrine, *special operations* are conducted to “achieve military, diplomatic, informational, and/or economic objectives

America’s SOF are organized, equipped, trained, and deployed by USSOCOM to meet the unique demands of regional combatant commanders around the world. The first part of the command’s mission is to “provide fully capable Special Operations Forces to defend the United States and its interests.” USSOCOM is a force provider in a large sense, much like a military Service. The second part of the USSOCOM mission is to “synchronize planning for global operations against terrorist networks.” This defines a combatant command authority codified in the Unified Command Plan, which states that the USSOCOM commander “is responsible for synchronizing planning for global operations against terrorist networks, and will do so in coordination with other commands, the services, and, as directed, U.S. government agencies.”⁶ USSOCOM synchronizes the prescribed plans for operations, then reviews, coordinates, and prioritizes them, to make recommendations to the Joint Staff and Secretary of Defense on how resources should be allocated to match the ever-present demands of global operations.

The most comprehensive element of USSOCOM’s synchronization effort is the global collaborative planning process. This effort draws on other combatant command

capabilities and expertise to develop the DOD war on terror campaign plan, which, coupled with the combatant commands' regional war on terror campaign plans, is dynamic and under continuous review. USSOCOM and the DOD Global Synchronization Community have developed structured processes to evaluate and prioritize the many capabilities, operations, activities, resources, and forces required for DOD efforts to deter, disrupt, and defeat terrorism. The primary forum is the semiannual Global Synchronization Conference, an event that brings stakeholders into a single cooperative venue that sets the stage for much of the collaboration to occur in the following 6 months. This synchronization is intertwined with USSOCOM's role as a resource provider.

It is a common misperception that USSOCOM plans and executes operations globally. Except for rare occasions, USSOCOM does not synchronize or command specific operations; that is the role of the operational commanders who maintain the authority to position and utilize their allocated SOF. Connecting operational authority to proper utilization is of the utmost importance in correctly employing SOF assets that are by definition in limited supply. For example, establishing continuity among disparate efforts is a distinct concern in Afghanistan, where the dynamic nature of tribal structures, physical terrain, and civil-military activities combines to challenge traditional military hierarchies.

The creation of Combined Forces Special Operations Component-Afghanistan in early 2009 was instrumental in extending SOF reach from the tribal level to the national level while remaining integrated within the overall military campaign and with continuing efforts to transition Afghan forces from a military to a civil security enforcement role. That transition itself is critical to executing a comprehensive civilian-military plan that will integrate the security, governance, development, and strategic communications dimensions of supporting the Afghan government, ongoing interagency efforts, and international partners.

Taken in sum, USSOCOM builds SOF and then reviews the manner and recommends the places in which those forces will be used. USSOCOM prioritizes both material resources, in terms of what equipment SOF needs and how to get it, and operational resources, in terms of where the threat is and

how best to engage it. That product is then provided to combatant commands to apply operationally, while USSOCOM retains a mutually reinforcing relationship with each Theater Special Operations Command as the crucial tie between force provision and operational application. This then broadly encompasses USSOCOM's role within the national security strategy: to decide how SOF should be prepared and to help decide where and when to use them. That role can then be further expanded into SOF's roles in irregular warfare.

Irregular Capabilities and Capacities

In employing indirect operations to gain asymmetric advantage over adversaries, irregular warfare is not a new mission area for SOF. Unconventional warfare, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, Civil Affairs, psychological operations, and foreign internal defense are all traditional IW activities and core activities for SOF. With the IW emergence as a focus area for broader participation across

that compose the whole of an IW campaign; conventional and special operations must be coordinated rather than simply deconflicted. This inherently requires the development of appropriate mechanisms to mesh IW activities within DOD, with the diplomatic and development efforts of our interagency partners, and in accordance with mutually supporting interests of the United States and partner nations.

These priorities underscore the USSOCOM mission to ensure that SOF are highly trained, properly equipped, and deployed to the right places at the right times for the right missions. SOF personnel must be capable of planning and leading a wide range of lethal and nonlethal special operations missions in complex, ambiguous environments.

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ADM Olson testifies on U.S. policy toward Pakistan and Afghanistan before Senate Armed Services Committee, April 2009



DOD (Bradley A. Lall)

DOD, it increasingly describes activities that both SOF and General Purpose Forces will employ in their operational approaches. These approaches must reflect a certain focus, where the “new high ground for operational forces will be to capture the perceptions of populations, not to seize terrain.”⁷⁷ Furthermore, participation by U.S. operational forces in total should imply an integrated set of activities

Too often, special operations are thought of as unilateral, high-risk, one-shot deals. There are of course times when that is the case, but what is truly *special* about special operations is the ability to work through and with others in pursuit of mutually beneficial outcomes to unusually complex situations. Put simply, a “special operation is above all a powerful exercise of mind; muscle and even disciplined

response are essential but secondary.”⁸ Gaining the right perspective is paramount—only then can the right processes follow. It is important to be able to accurately predict the effects of our decisions and actions within the specific operational context of a microregion.

The complexity of the present strategic environment requires that SOF operators maintain not only the highest levels of war-fighting expertise but also cultural knowledge and diplomacy skills. These “3D operators” are members of a multidimensional force prepared to lay the groundwork in the myriad diplomatic, development, and defense activities that contribute to the U.S. Government’s pursuit of vital national interests. Fundamental to this effort is the recognition that humans are more important than hardware and that quality is more important than quantity. Investments in weapons platforms and technologies are incomplete without the right people to employ those systems.

The focus is to first select and nurture the extraordinary operators and then to provide them the most operationally relevant equipment. Language skills and regional knowledge continue to be key to establishing effective relations with the foreign forces, organizations, and individuals with which SOF will interact.

The 1st Special Forces Group language training program was recognized by the Army and DOD as the best of its kind in 2007, but, even though language training programs have been enhanced in recent years, SOF remain underqualified in many key languages and dialects. USSOCOM will continue to expand these programs, stressing the need for a few individuals to be thoroughly steeped in select languages and cultures. We have termed these programs Project Lawrence, intended to produce individual regional expertise in support of a persistent presence approach. Yet unlike the career path of their namesake, T.E. Lawrence of Arabia, these initiatives include an exploration of innovative options to permit specialization without sacrificing promotion opportunities, for which the proactive support of the Services is required.

One of USSOCOM’s priority initiatives is the increase of regional expertise through recruitment of native heritage speakers. As of August 2009, approximately 350 legal nonpermanent residents with special language skills and abilities joined the Army under a pilot program. Called Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI), the program

embraces the multifaceted cultural heritage of this country by allowing for the quick inclusion of ethnic diversity into the military force over the long term. While it is a new program, MAVNI is not without precedent. The Lodge-Philbin Act of June 30, 1950, allowed for recruiting foreign nationals into the U.S. military, and provided members to the U.S. Army Special Forces. MAVNI fulfills a similar critical need today, and overall educational quality is phenomenally higher than non-MAVNI recruits: 87 percent of recruits are enrolled in college or have a college degree, and 29 percent hold Master’s or higher degrees. By comparison, the top recruiting battalion in the Nation enlisted 13.7 percent with college degrees.⁹

To meet more immediate tactical needs, USSOCOM has initiated steps to dedicate in-Service translators and interpreters to its Army component for joint use. Individual development aimed at correctly aligning language testing, career management, and incentives remains important to the overall capability, requiring strengthened institutional programs at the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine component levels. We are already behind, and there is a long way to go, in recognizing and incentivizing such expertise before it becomes possible to develop and sustain real experts in specific key regions around the world.

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Resourcing IW

SOF cannot grow more than 3 to 5 percent per year in those key units and capabilities that must be developed within the SOF organizational structures and training pipelines. This growth rate will not meet the already obvious appetite for the effects of SOF in forward operating areas. The solution, beyond the necessary continued steady and disciplined growth of specific special operations capabilities, is to mitigate the demand on SOF by developing and sustaining supporting capabilities within the Services that are beyond their organic needs, and can therefore be used in direct support of special operations commanders. This will enhance the impact of forward-deployed SOF without placing unfeasible additional demand on SOF’s own limited enabling units.

The enabling capabilities that must be provided in greater number by the Services include mobility, aerial sensors, field medics, remote logistics, engineering planners, construction, intelligence, regional specialists, interpreters/translators, communications, dog teams, close air support specialists, security forces, and others that permit SOF operators to focus more directly on their missions. Assigned at the unit or detachment level to support joint SOF commanders away from main bases, the effects of such a combined force will remain integrated within an overall campaign effort while having immediate impact in the local conditions where they are employed.

The goal is a two-fold balance: first, to have sufficient organic SOF-peculiar enablers to permit rapid response to operational crises; and second, to have enabling capabilities assigned in direct support of SOF for longer term sustainment and expansion of the operation. SOF are and will remain dependent on the Services for key force enablers. The nonavailability of these force enablers has become the most vexing issue in the current operational environment, especially in view of the responsible General Purpose Forces drawdown in Iraq. SOF cannot fully provide for their own needs over the long term, and the provision of such support is a mandate of the General Purpose Forces: “Services

and/or executive agents should be prepared to support special operations as soon as possible but not later than 15 days after SOF are employed.”¹⁰

In addition to an appropriate baseline budget, SOF readiness requires investment in the rapid fielding of both existing solutions and cutting edge technologies, even when relatively small purchase quantities do not optimize production costs. Here the authority to direct funds is actually more important than the amount of funding itself; policy and planning decisions must objectively project future needs and anticipate any new or expanded authorities required to meet those needs.¹¹ USSOCOM’s aggressive use of its acquisition authority is a key factor in providing wide-ranging, time-sensitive capabilities to widely dispersed and often isolated forces.

Because this budget authority is limited to SOF-peculiar equipment and modifications, USSOCOM also depends heavily on Service acquisition programs that develop and procure Service-common mobility platforms, weapons, ammunition, and other equipment that is then modified to meet SOF's mission needs.

While Federal acquisition regulations uniformly apply to DOD, USSOCOM strives to take advantage of flexibilities inherent in these guidelines to expeditiously provide materiel solutions for the SOF operator. This is accomplished in cooperation with the three military departments, as these departments fund, develop, acquire, and provide the basic Service-common vehicles, aircraft, boats, weapons, ammunition, and other equipment to USSOCOM, which is then modified to SOF-specific platforms, systems, and equipment. When a SOF requirement cannot be met using a Service-common solution, USSOCOM uses its authority to develop and acquire SOF-peculiar equipment or modify the Service-common equipment to meet SOF needs. In those instances, the USSOCOM acquisition culture stresses assertive risk management and process efficiencies to steward a system that is arguably more tailorable, responsive, and agile than elsewhere in DOD.

While some capabilities are truly SOF-peculiar and reside within USSOCOM's processes, most special operations capabilities are based on Service-provided systems. It is therefore important that DOD collectively transitions from a platform-based acquisition cycle to one that is capabilities-based, wherein capabilities such as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance collection suites or specific weapons packages can be modularly employed on a variety of ground, maritime, and air platforms to increase their tactical and operational reach. Doing so would allow USSOCOM to buy, try, and modify capabilities without being constrained by Service platform considerations and also allow USSOCOM to upgrade modular capabilities at the pace of technology advancement. In return, the rapid development of SOF-peculiar and modular systems is likely to expand a catalogue of systems through which to appropriately fit and equip portions of the conventional force for the IW fight.

Commitment to Success

The problems SOF and DOD must be prepared to address include the inability

of nation-states to deal with increasingly complex challenges or to meet the needs and expectations of their populations. These challenges are exacerbated by the growing number of nonstate actors who have strategic effects in a networked and interconnected world. In the vacuum created by weak or failed governments, nonstate actors have achieved greater influence over benign populations by addressing their basic needs and grievances, and

by intimidating and sometimes brutalizing them into submission. When governments fail to address the needs of the population, they become irrelevant and people will make choices shaped by their own immediate needs for survival.

In the best case scenario, people will turn to a benevolent nonstate actor such as a nongovernmental organization, a moderate and tolerant religious group, or

2^d Marine Special Operations Battalion conducts parachute training at Reno/Stead Airport



U.S. Marine Corps (Stephen C. Benson)

a local ethnic or traditional institution. However, populations also turn to extremist or criminal organizations, many of which are sponsored by rogue nation-states. Nonstate groups such as al Qaeda, the Taliban, Hamas, Hizballah, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, Jamal Islamiyah, and MS-13 are growing in influence and shaping the choices of populations as nation-states fail to adequately address their needs and grievances. Responding to these challenges requires an approach that is integrated with the long-term work of civilian agencies, especially the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, to foster the credibility and influence of legitimate authorities among relevant populations.

This is specialized excellence within a full spectrum capabilities set. Many of the enabling capabilities previously listed are not exclusively military in nature, nor are they restricted to government services. Some are commercial entities that have been constructing things in adverse places for decades. Academic specialties such as anthropology are also included on this list of essential enablers that must exist within a balanced joint force above and beyond the organic needs of the Services. Only with such an “excess,” as misleading as that word may be, can we ensure that the resident expertise is available to adapt to any emergent security scenario that may face us in the coming years. These imperatives apply to both SOF and to the larger U.S. defense establishment, which has been tasked

our assistance in resolving their crises. There really is nothing special or irregular about it, but it does require wisdom and persistence. Such an approach has historically been a core part of U.S. special operations, and it must remain a mainstay capability of our future military. Tomorrow’s victories will be defined by the successes of others, and their defeats will be our failures. The commitment, in either case, remains ours, and we must embrace it now. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 42.

² Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

³ Robert M. Gates, “A Balanced Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (January-February 2009). See also Eric T. Olson, “A Balanced Approach to Irregular Warfare,” *The Journal of International Security Affairs*, no. 16 (Spring 2009), 3.

⁴ Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, April 12, 2001, as amended through March 17, 2009), 282.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 511-512.

⁶ Department of Defense (DOD), *Unified Command Plan* (Washington, DC: DOD, 2009). The Unified Command Plan in its entirety is a classified document, though the guidance presented here is not.

⁷ Robert H. Scales, *The Past and Present as Prologue: Future Warfare through the Lens of Contemporary Conflicts, The Future of the U.S. Military Series* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2009), 4.

⁸ Derek Leebaert, *To Dare and to Conquer: Special Operations and the Destiny of Nations, from Achilles to Al Qaeda* (New York: Little Brown, 2006), 586.

⁹ U.S. Special Operations Command, “MAVNI Recruiting Update” (Tampa, FL: J1, August 7, 2009). See also Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., *U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1982).

¹⁰ JP 4-0, *Joint Logistics* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, July 18, 2008), V-9.

¹¹ Richard M. Miller, *Funding Extended Conflicts: Korea, Vietnam, and the War on Terror* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007), 121.

¹² Robert M. Gates, remarks delivered to the Economic Club of Chicago, Chicago, IL, July 16, 2009.

Joint Tactical Air Controller coordinates with aircraft to provide close air support for Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force—Afghanistan



U.S. Army (Corey Dennis)

Beyond these required changes must also come a change in how the U.S. military organizes and trains units. Everyone must invest in IW capabilities and incentivize the best and brightest to pursue these career fields. Such an investment must be formalized in policy that incentivizes these disciplines as core skills, and institutionalizes operator career progression that rewards specialized rather than generalized performance. This investment is already long overdue. If we do not commit a significant portion of our personnel to living abroad in other cultures for extended periods and to specializing rather than generalizing our skill sets, then we will fail to gain the trust, credibility, and faith of those nations and partners we claim to be fighting alongside.

to provide “a portfolio of military capabilities with maximum versatility across the widest possible spectrum of conflict.”¹²

The conflicts we are engaged in are bigger than DOD, and they will require a global effort. The United States will need to go even beyond a whole-of-government approach to what can be called a whole-of-nations approach: an ability to work through and with others in pursuit of mutually beneficial outcomes to unusually complex situations. Doing so requires more than setting an “American” example for others to follow, as neither words nor deeds are sufficient to justify our presence abroad over the long term. Our military forces must be able to live as locals do, and understand and respond to indigenous concerns, if we are ever to expect others to accept