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7701 Tampa Point Boulevard
MacDill AFB, FL 33621

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Special Operations Research Topics

★ **2016** ★

Joint Special Operations University
and the Center for Special Operations Studies and Research

The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) provides its publications to contribute toward expanding the body of knowledge about joint special operations. JSOU publications advance the insights and recommendations of national security professionals and the Special Operations Forces (SOF) students and leaders for consideration by the SOF community and defense leadership.

JSOU is the educational component of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. The JSOU mission is to educate SOF executive, senior, and intermediate leaders and selected other national and international security decision makers, both military and civilian, through teaching, outreach, and research in the science and art of joint special operations. JSOU provides education to the men and women of SOF and to those who enable the SOF mission in a joint and interagency environment.

JSOU conducts research through its Center for Special Operations Studies and Research (CSOSR) where effort centers upon the USSOCOM mission:

USSOCOM mission. USSOCOM synchronizes the planning of Special Operations and provides Special Operations Forces to support persistent, networked and distributed Global Combatant Command operations in order to protect and advance our Nation's interests.

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Special Operations Research Topics 2016

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Comments about this publication are invited and should be forwarded to the Director of the Center for Special Operations Studies and Research, Joint Special Operations University, 7701 Tampa Point Blvd., MacDill AFB, FL 33621.

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The JSOU Center for Special Operations Studies and Research (CSOSR) is currently accepting written works relevant to special operations for potential publication. For more information, please contact the CSOSR Director at jsou_research@socom.mil. Thank you for your interest in the JSOU Press.

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Contents

Foreword

The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) Special Operations Research Topics 2016 publication highlights a wide range of topics collaboratively developed and prioritized by experts from across the Special Operations Forces (SOF) community. The topics in these pages are intended to guide research projects for professional military education (PME) students, JSOU faculty, fellows, students, and others writing about special operations during this academic year.

JSOU executes the joint education mission of United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and is a globally recognized academic institution that serves the entire Department of Defense and advances the SOF community's intellectual readiness. This research will provide a better understanding of the complex issues and opportunities affecting the strategic and operational planning needs of SOF.

As the USSOCOM Commander has stated, "The value of our people and our unique capabilities are exponentially improved with better education, ideas, concepts, and situational understanding." These topics will stir creativity and critical thinking among the best and brightest in our SOF network to generate new ideas. These new ideas formed after careful research and analysis will lead to the development of innovative solutions for the most pressing issues and concerns that face our community.

Topics are organized to address the five SOF priorities as identified by the USSOCOM Commander. To develop this list of topics, recommendations were solicited from the USSOCOM headquarters staff, the theater special operations commands (TSOCs), component commands, SOF chairs from the war colleges, select research centers, and think tanks. Then the attendees reviewed, revised, rated, and ranked the topic submissions at the annual Special Operations Research Topics Workshop. That workshop produced the first draft of this comprehensive list of issues and challenges of concern to the greater SOF community. The list was reviewed and vetted by the headquarters, TSOCs, and component commands prior to publication.

I encourage SOF personnel to contribute their experiences and ideas to the SOF community by submitting completed research on these topics to JSOU Press. If you have any questions about this document or ideas for

future topics, contact the Director, Center for Special Operations Studies and Research, via e-mail at jsou_research@socom.mil.

I challenge you to assist the SOF enterprise in shaping the future strategic environment by researching critical issues and using that research to develop innovative solutions and recommendations.

Brian A. Maher, SES
President

Introduction

The JSOU Special Operations Research Topics 2016 represents a list of SOF-related topics that are recommended for research by those who desire to provide insight and recommendations on issues and challenges facing the SOF enterprise. As with the past several years' topics publications, this list is tailored to address priority areas identified by USSOCOM. There are five SOF priorities: Ensure SOF Readiness; Help our Nation win; Continue to build relationships; Prepare for the future; and Preserve our force and families. This publication also includes the Key Strategic Issues List (KSIL) developed and maintained by the USSOCOM J5; Strategy, Plans, and Policy Directorate.

SOF PME students research and write on timely, relevant, SOF-related topics. Such activity develops the individual's intellect and provides a professional and practical perspective that broadens and frames the insights of other analysts and researchers in regard to these topics. This list and the accompanying topic descriptions are a guide to stimulate interest and thinking. Topics may be narrowed or otherwise modified as deemed necessary (e.g., to suit school writing requirements or maximize individual interests and experiences). The researcher should explore and identify doctrine, capabilities, techniques, and procedures that will increase SOF efficacy in addressing them. At the same time, the research on these topics should be used to inform policymakers, the larger military profession, and the public of the issues and challenges facing the SOF enterprise.

Section A (Priority Topics) identifies topics of particular importance. Sections B, C, D, E, and F each focus on one of the SOF priorities. Section G contains the KSIL developed by USSOCOM J5. The KSIL is a set of questions relevant to increasing USSOCOM's understanding of the global security environment and is built around trends expected to continue for the next 10 to 20 years.

These topics reflect a consensus of the SOF experts who participated in the Special Operations Research Topics Workshop as particularly worthwhile in addressing immediate SOF needs and in building future capacity for emerging challenges. They have been vetted through the USSOCOM headquarters, TSOCs, and components prior to publication to ensure emerging

topics were addressed. Previous years' research topics lists provide a repository of issues that were highlighted in the past. These lists may provide prospective researchers with additional ideas for relevant research. Previous editions of these publications (2009 through 2015) are available on the JSOU public web site on the publications page located at: https://jsou.socom.mil/PubsPages/Publications.aspx.

Please share this reference with fellow researchers, thesis advisors, and other colleagues, and feel free to submit additional topics for consideration. You may also visit our publications page on the JSOU public website to see if JSOU has a publication that relates to your area of interest. There is also SOF relevant material available on the JSOU Library web site, which can be found at: https://jsou.libguides.com. We encourage you to send us your completed research on these topics.

A. Priority Topics

Topic Titles

Ensure SOF Readiness

A1. SOF as a strategic instrument of war: How to employ SOF to achieve national security objectives

A2. Beyond stealth to maintain technical overmatch: What do SOF need from future/advanced technologies ("third offset")?

A3. Training SOF for the future: Identifying skill gaps associated with the next fight

Help Our Nation Win

A4. Unconventional warfare: Is America politically prepared to support an expanded capability and interest in UW?

A5. SOF in Africa: Learning from recent interventions and future opportunities

A6. Preventing, countering, and disrupting foreign fighter flow

Continue to Build Relationships

A7. Identifying, assessing, developing, and motivating potential partners in irregular warfare: Supporting effective partnerships

Prepare for the Future

A8. Resource scarcity, competition and conflict: The impact on SOF capabilities and approaches

A9. SOF challenges and opportunities in future operating environments: Where and how SOF can be decisive

A10. SOF and war by proxy: Strategic asymmetry and points of advantage

Preserve Our Force and Families

A11. Mitigating SOF suicides: Susceptibility and risk factors

A12. Examine the implications and effects of adopting programs to optimize SOF human performance: Are there limits to enhanced physical and mental capabilities?

Topic Descriptions

Ensure SOF Readiness

A1. **SOF as a strategic instrument of war: How to employ SOF to achieve national security objectives**

Special Operations Forces (SOF) have become one of the primary military capabilities for senior policymakers and Department of Defense (DOD) leaders to employ in the uncertain environment of today. This reflects a shift from the use of conventional forces (CF) to a heavy reliance on SOF. What are the implications for U.S. strategy for senior leader reliance on SOF? How should SOF be best employed to achieve national security objectives? What is the effectiveness of SOF: their role; their use as a strategic tool of warfare; and their ability to meet the security needs of the United States and the international community? What are the impacts of CF budget and personnel reductions upon SOF capabilities (equipment and personnel recruitment)?

A2. **Beyond stealth to maintain technical overmatch: What do SOF need from future/advanced technologies ("third offset")?**

In the fall of 2014, then-Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel announced the "Defense Innovation Initiative," an initiative to develop a "third offset" in technology (stealth was part of the second offset). The third offset is meant to give U.S. forces technological overmatch of its adversaries. Possible examples of this new offset include robotics, autonomy, miniaturization, 3-D printing, big data, and/or swarming. Innovation is not constrained to the defense industry, and the DOD may have to look to the commercial market for breakthrough technologies. What capabilities and/or advances in technologies need to occur to ensure United States' SOF (USSOF) maintain a technological advantage over our adversaries? How can SOF capitalize on the third offset? What are the future technology-based threats to SOF operators across the range of military and special operations? Can SOF overcome these threats? How can SOF benefit from these same technologies for operators' safety and effectiveness? How can SOF use recent technological advances to sustain a force in austere

environments, or decrease the footprint of a force in a situation that demands low visibility?

A3. Training SOF for the future: Identifying skill gaps associated with the next fight

The future operating environment is defined by an increasingly interconnected global commons paired with the increasing effects of non-state actors. SOF preparing to operate within this environment are bound by fiscal constraint, decreasing resources, and manpower limitations amongst an era of expanding SOF requirements. While the characteristics of warfare within this environment will continue to evolve, what are the skills not yet currently present within special operations that are assessed as necessary for success? How can U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) effectively prioritize training efforts while addressing the risks assumed with inaction? Given the likely requirement for foreign internal defense (FID) and unconventional warfare (UW) missions, how critical are language capabilities? How does culture and cultural intelligence play a role? Should training be broadened throughout all SOF or focused on specific SOF specialties?

Help Our Nation Win

A4. Unconventional warfare: Is America politically prepared to support an expanded capability and interest in UW?

UW consists of operations and activities that are conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area. UW has become an increasingly important tool of U.S. policy as resistance forces in many parts of the globe organize to confront oppressive regimes. This topic should examine the success and failures of past UW operations to include: the Office of Strategic Services in World War II, Russian UW in the Ukraine/Crimea, the initial stages of Operation Enduring Freedom with the U.S. in support of the Northern Alliance, Contras in Nicaragua, and the U.S. in Operation Iraqi Freedom in partnership with the Kurdish Peshmerga. Other considerations:

- How can SOF be better trained and equipped to capitalize on opportunities and enable resistance operations in times and locations of choice as approved by U.S. authorities?
- In each example of successes and failures of past UW operations, describe the conditions. How was success defined?
- What were the best practices?
- Are the American people and political leaders prepared to support UW given ethical questions and the long-term demands of UW?

A5. SOF in Africa: Learning from recent interventions and future opportunities

Comparatively speaking, Africa has become the new frontier and an area in which USSOF are active or becoming more active, in particular in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. It is a huge continent with unique challenges. This topic looks at the differences and uniqueness in SOF operations in Africa versus the Middle East, Europe, or other regions. Other considerations:

- What are the greatest obstacles to SOF effectiveness in Africa, and how can they be overcome? Have other regions encountered similar issues? If not, why?
- What can USSOF learn from prior French, Canadian, and British interventions in Africa?
- What regional dynamics are of greatest concern? What problems cross multiple regions of the continent?
- What unique logistical and operational problems does Africa present? What are the dynamics of religious and cultural conflict?

A6. Preventing, countering, and disrupting foreign fighter flow

The steady state of foreign fighter flow (FFF) across and into various Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) areas of responsibility continues to be a concern, as an example, into and out of Syria. This flow has been attributed to a range of factors, including the recruiting campaigns orchestrated by violent extremist groups and the ease with which militants from the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe can access this region. The same is true of FFF across Southeast Asia and

the relationship of VEOs with the FFF phenomenon. This research topic seeks to explore the antecedents of FFF with a focus on the social, environmental, and psychological factors that deter or motivate foreign fighters to join or support extremist causes across GCC areas of responsibility. What efforts have been made to deter, disrupt, and destroy these foreign fighter threats? Have they been successful? Additionally, the study should address FFF-defeat and countering-FFF operations. Other considerations:

- How do lethal operations, such as airstrikes, impact these antecedents?
- How might influence operations weaken these causal factors?
- What are the information environment's most appropriate leverage points for deterring or disrupting FFF?
- How do SOF identify, track, and monitor the activities of those foreign fighters that return home to do damage to the home front?

Continue to Build Relationships

A7. **Identifying, assessing, developing, and motivating potential partners in irregular warfare: Supporting effective partnerships**
Irregular warfare (IW) is a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). Recent conflicts have highlighted opportunities and policy dilemmas in the conduct and support of IW. In most of these conflicts, the United States has partnered with state or non-state actors to support or oppose an existing government. What are the best practices and other mechanisms for understanding, identifying, assessing, developing, and motivating potential partners' behavior, objectives, organization, and composition to successfully partner with SOF? Which partnership efforts are most effective and most cost-efficient? What other interests or issues must be considered (stability, capability, et cetera) when partnering with others in conducting and supporting IW?

Prepare for the Future

A8. **Resource scarcity, competition and conflict: The impact on SOF capabilities and approaches**
Water is becoming the new oil. Resource scarcity and specifically potable water scarcity is projected to be a major driver of conflict in

many parts of the world where USSOF operate. How will competition over resources shape conflict in the future, and what are the implications for USSOCOM? SOF are expected to operate in environments where potable water shortages are pervasive. How will SOF capabilities be impacted when operating in water-scarce environments? Research can focus broadly on analysis of current SOF capabilities for operating in water-scarce environments. What future technological advances should USSOF be cognizant of that can help small SOF units operate successfully? What are the potential "mine, save, and recycle" alternatives? Is "harvesting fog," a method of retrieving moisture in coastal areas, still a viable practice in other environments? How does resource scarcity affect Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operating Environment doctrine "systems perspective?" What are the land use issues and implications for the local populations?

A9. **SOF challenges and opportunities in future operating environments: Where and how SOF can be decisive**
Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has inexorably moved to a less stable and less predictable global environment. Predicting future instability, conflicts, and direct and indirect threats to U.S. interests is profoundly important to USSOCOM. What are the projected global hot spots in 5, 10, 15 years? What future state, non-state, social, and technological "game changers" could impact global U.S. interests? What do SOF need to understand about the myriad projections and predictions regarding the future operating environment so USSOCOM is prepared for the future? Where should USSOCOM focus future "Phase 0" activities to enhance stability and prevent conflict? Should there be increased emphasis on campaign planning and the application of operational design to help develop strategies for activities short of war?

A10. **SOF and war by proxy: Strategic asymmetry and points of advantage**
Proxy wars with external support for combatants in civil war situations are common in warfare, yet arguably the least understood aspect of modern conflicts. A comprehensive understanding of the types of proxy interventions since 1945—their magnitude, intent,

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Please send your completed research papers on these topics to the JSOU Center for Special Operations Studies and Research.

and outcome—can provide inferences for USSOCOM strategies for proxy interventions and UW. Do USSOF have a valid knowledge base on the "success" or "failure" of proxy wars since 1945? Considering safe havens, financial flows, military assistance, military training, UW, level of economic development, size of adversary CF, and air superiority, what are the advantages of proxy wars? What case studies are relevant for examining strategic asymmetries and the points of comparative advantage between the opposing forces?

Preserve Our Force and Families

A11. Mitigating SOF suicides: Susceptibility and risk factors

According to a 2014 New York Times article, "In the past two and a half years, 49 Special Operations members have killed themselves, more than in the preceding five years. While suicides for the rest of the active-duty military have started to decline after years of steady increases, they have risen for the nation's commandos." SOF suicides continue to happen, even with focused attention on increasing awareness in order to mitigate the risk of suicides throughout the chain of command. What's driving the increase? What has been overlooked? Are the current statistics an anomaly or a gauge for concern? What indicators correlate with susceptibility to suicide? Are there unique risk factors associated with SOF suicides? Are SOF suicides precipitated by different factors among the specialties within the SOF community? What preventive measures can be taken to reduce suicide in the SOF community?

A12. Examine the implications and effects of adopting programs to optimize SOF human performance: Are there limits to enhanced physical and mental capabilities?

An extensive study directed by a former USSOCOM Commander, Admiral Eric Olson, revealed that the current operational environment has been more difficult than operators and their families expected, leaving little time for them to adjust to the daily strains of perpetual absences. The study noted troubling consequences, with increases in domestic and family problems, substance abuse and self-medication, risk-taking behaviors, post-traumatic stress, and even suicides. The study found that SOF were frayed. There has

been legislative resistance to fund USSOCOM human performance programs and infrastructure as opposed to Military Service-funded programs. USSOCOM human performance efforts are currently integrated under the Preservation of the Force and Families (POTFF) initiative. What are the values of SOF-specific human performance programs? Should it be a stand-alone program more aligned with operational needs? Should or will the human performance initiative be considered an operational USSOCOM requirement? Why should USSOCOM spend money on such additional programs? What are the limits for the program to research enhanced or augmented physical and mental capabilities? What are the moral and ethical issues of optimizing mental and physical capabilities through the use of biomechanics, pharmaceuticals, and genetic therapies?

B. Ensure SOF Readiness

—The right people, skills, and capabilities … now and in the future

Topic Titles

B1.   How does USSOCOM ensure it has the right people, skills, and capabilities now and in the future?

B2.   SOF and conventional force integration: How to achieve operational and strategic effects while minimizing risk

B3.   SOF-specific education: Core competencies and the future SOF operator

B4.   Adapting the acquisition environment: Technology advances at the speed of the commercial market

B5.   SOF team cohesion: What breaks a SOF team?

B6.   Validity of SOF selection standards: Assessment, selection, and predictions for SOF success

B7.   Assessing tactical operations for strategic effect: Is there a disconnect?

B8.   The new special operations equilibrium: What is the right balance between surgical strike and special warfare capabilities?

Topic Descriptions

B1.   How does USSOCOM ensure it has the right people, skills, and capabilities now and in the future?
To ensure SOF readiness now and in the future, there must be an understanding of current readiness and a plan to develop people, equipment, capability, and decision making. How can SOF leaders develop a more holistic and SOF-centric understanding of SOF's current readiness, to include critical Service enablers? What knowledge, skills, and abilities are required by SOF operators, civilians, and by Service enablers—how does USSOCOM obtain, manage, and maintain them? How does the command develop a creative, leading-edge research and development process that integrates people, skills, equipment, and capabilities holistically? For equipment and capabilities, how does USSOCOM maintain SOF buying power and establish

fiscal agility? What are the decision-making processes and supporting analytics (particularly risk and causalities) that are required for SOF to organize effectively to prepare for a future defined by unpredictability and increased use of irregular/hybrid modes of warfare by state/non-state actors?

B2. SOF and conventional force integration: How to achieve operational and strategic effects while minimizing risk

As budgetary pressure continues to squeeze the military, SOF and CF must continue to find ways to maximize effects through combined efforts and resources. Command, control, and manning, to include type of manning, are important considerations in this process. In addition, the ability to advise and fight against an asymmetric enemy is a key consideration. How can SOF and CF better leverage each other? For example, how can SOF be value-added to the U.S. Marine Corps' Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs), and how can the MEUs meet SOF theater logistics and mobility needs? How do SOF optimize partnerships and reinforce supported and supporting relationships within SOF; CF; and Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational (JIIM) structural constructs to achieve operational and strategic effects and minimize risk in irregular and traditional operations across the range of military operations? How do SOF bridge critical seams between JIIM partners to conduct operations under Title 10 Authorities, Title 50 Authorities, and/or the Ambassador's Title 22 Authorities to achieve success in future complex operating environments?

B3. SOF-specific education: Core competencies and the future SOF operator

Do current education policies and practices meet current and future SOF needs? How can SOF receive adequate education on SOF-specific subjects? What are the gaps and requirements for SOF-specific education? What changes are required to ensure SOF receive sufficient education in SOF-specific subjects? What are the applicable benefits of Service professional military education (PME) programs versus notional SOF-specific PME programs? How can SOF-specific

education at Service PME programs be beneficial to the SOF community? What will the core competencies of the future SOF operator be?

B4. **Adapting the acquisition environment: Technology advances at the speed of the commercial market**
Commercial technology development, and in some cases, government research and development, is occurring at faster rates and often by non-traditional companies that have little or no DOD involvement. Traditional acquisition approaches are much too restrictive and slow for these new, changing technologies. How can SOF adapt our current skill sets and regulations to take advantage of these technology advances and continue to upgrade our technologies at the speed of the commercial market? How can USSOCOM address its processes as well as Congressional constraints? What is the link between research, development, test, and evaluation/acquisitions and future capability gaps?

B5. **SOF team cohesion: What breaks a SOF team?**
SOF team failure is historically infrequent but may have catastrophic effects to an overall effort. The increased probability of employing SOF in small numbers for long periods under austere conditions is a POTFF issue as much as an operational issue. Is there evidence that suggests whether (social or task) cohesion erodes during long duration missions such that a team "breaks" and must be withdrawn? What breaks a team down is important, and how can USSOCOM identify those who are susceptible and not susceptible to what breaks a team down? How a team is defined is important. By focusing on teams from the various components, what factors have an impact on their teams? Factors could include strategy; assessment and selection for specific missions sets; training; tactics, techniques, and procedures; mixed gender teams; partner nations; and/or POTFF.

B6. **Validity of SOF selection standards: Assessment, selection, and predictions for SOF success**
SOF selection standards have come under scrutiny. Do today's SOF standards accurately reflect the requirements of SOF? Have changes in the global environment made them outdated? Do the standards

exclude those USSOCOM may want to serve in SOF? How does USSOCOM address those career fields that do not have selection criteria? Should there be a single joint SOF standard? What are the metrics in assessment and initial selection that predict success in both the initial training pipeline and the longer SOF career? Are high attrition rates a true measure of assessment and selection of SOF?

B7.   Assessing tactical operations for strategic effect: Is there a disconnect?
The political leadership of the U.S. faces questions regarding its commitment to strategic victory as the country commits forces to the tactical battlefield. How resolved is the U.S. to follow through at the strategic level? Distributed operations and mission command require understanding of the intended end-state at the lowest level. How does a perceived disconnect affect operational campaign planning and tactical-level battles and engagements? What have the lessons been, and are SOF able to improve strategic performance at the combatant command level? How can USSOF bridge the gap between the tactical and strategic levels?

B8.   The new special operations equilibrium: What is the right balance between surgical strike and special warfare capabilities?
Army Doctrine Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*, describes the two mutually supporting critical capabilities of surgical strike and special warfare. Surgical strike is the execution of activities in a precise manner that employ SOF in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environment to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover or damage designated targets, or influence threats. Special warfare is the execution of activities that involve a combination of lethal and nonlethal actions taken by a specially trained and educated force that has a deep understanding of cultures and foreign language proficiency in small-unit tactics, and the ability to build and fight alongside indigenous combat formations in a permissive, uncertain, or hostile environment. SOF surgical strike capability, the direct action role, offers policymakers and political leaders an attractive military option for difficult or complex situations. This surgical strike capability is a key instrument of national power, but it is not the only mission of

SOF and not necessarily the sole option for U.S. policymakers. Also, SOF must be capable of succeeding in their special warfare role on missions that may be carried out over long periods of time and in complex, often ambiguous, environments. As both surgical strike and special warfare are part of SOF DNA, what is the right balance in capability? Does this balance remain static or does it change over time? Is the balance different based on geographic and cultural areas? Is special warfare effectively considered as an option in strategic and operational planning? If not, what activities can promote understanding of SOF's special warfare capability among policymakers and other U.S. Government agencies?

C. Help Our Nation Win

—*Prioritizing and synchronizing global SOF activities to meet complex global challenges*

Topic Titles

C1. How can SOF be optimally employed to shape the strategic security environment?

C2. Sealing the seams: Command and control of the SOF network across GCC boundaries

C3. Lessons from SOF training efforts in Afghanistan, specifically in training the General Directorate of Police Special Units and the Afghan Local Police

C4. Comparison and quantification of the effects of lethal and influence activities: Consider second order effects and provide measures of effectiveness

C5. Information sharing has improved tremendously at the multinational level. How do SOF capitalize on those successes to improve information sharing at the operational level?

C6. Combating violent extremism: Are some countries, such as Indonesia, with a large Muslim population immune to extremist violence? If so, why, and what are the contributing factors?

C7. Defining the SOF contribution to computer network operations: What are SOF's roles, responsibilities, and authorities?

C8. Improving the process: Developing discrete, multi-year campaigns to shape, prevent, and/or win

C9. Violent extremism in Syria and Iraq: How does the coalition capitalize on years of operating in Iraq and previous tribal relationships to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)?

C10. The campaign against the Tamil Tigers: Does the campaign disprove the old adage, "We can't kill our way to victory?" Was it an operational success or strategic failure?

C11. SOF's involvement in fighting narcoterrorism: Are SOF authorities compatible with the mission?

C12. Identify efficient and effective media for conducting and assessing military information support operations: Are the old media techniques, such as leaflets, still effective?

Topic Descriptions

C1.   How can SOF be optimally employed to shape the strategic security environment?
Special operations actions and activities can have disproportionate affect for the resources and personnel employed, but SOF are a limited resource. How does USSOCOM synchronize and prioritize special operations, actions, and activities globally? Does the command present coherent SOF employment options and recommendations? How can USSOCOM better provide coherent and unified SOF capabilities to the GCCs? How could the command expand the range of available options through requisite authorities, capabilities, and relationships?

C2.   Sealing the seams: Command and control of the SOF network across GCC boundaries
Global SOF operations will increasingly involve adversaries who conduct activities and operations across traditional GCC seams within the air, ground, sea, and cyber domains; this will challenge SOF to respond in kind. Recent examples include command and control (C2) of SOF aviation (specifically non-standard aviation; strike; and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets) and SOF teams' pursuit of terrorist networks spanning across GCC boundaries. Does current joint doctrine SOF C2 structure sufficiently address these challenges and the evolving dynamic of cross-GCC, or seam operations? Are the authorities, leadership traits, and technical capabilities required for success currently available? What are some specific recommendations to enhance existing doctrine and/or implement new C2 concepts? Other considerations:
- GCC boundaries are readily available open source and threat groups routinely capitalize on these boundaries to secure safe haven. Are authority changes required to combat cross-border threats?

- DOD C2 Research Program has done some notable work on C2 Agility. The concept has grown from mission command distributed control to parallel operational design efforts by enabling commanders to understand and design their C2 approaches. What are the implications for SOF C2? How can SOF capitalize on this developing concept?

C3. Lessons from SOF training efforts in Afghanistan, specifically in training the General Directorate of Police Special Units and the Afghan Local Police

Currently, there is a national strategic emphasis on partnership efforts. What can SOF learn from efforts to train the Afghan National Police, with particular attention to the General Directorate of Police Special Units (i.e., National Mission Units, Provincial Response Companies, and the Afghan Local Police)? Other considerations:

- What type of support is received from other government agencies such as Department of State (DOS) and/or Department of Justice to conduct that type of training? What cultural aspects require special attention? What are the associated sustainment issues?
- How does this compare with coalition training of Iraqi police? Which lessons from Iraq were transferable to Afghanistan? Which ones were not? Why?

C4. Comparison and quantification of the effects of lethal and influence activities: Consider second order effects and provide measures of effectiveness

The benefits of lethal versus influence (nonlethal) activities continue to be controversial at the tactical through strategic levels and include actions at the village level as well as cross-border drone strikes against terrorists. Due to a lack of coherent/organized supporting information, mission analysis does not provide adequate guidance for comparison of courses of action involving lethal versus nonlethal activities. What are the key parameters (e.g., costs, psychological impacts, policy considerations) that would allow apples-to-apples comparisons of disparate courses of action? What methods of wargaming and analyzing secondary, tertiary, and greater orders

of effect relevant to a comparison of lethal and nonlethal courses of action so that they can be incorporated into the planning process? What are the individual and interactive effects of simultaneous influence messaging and lethal strikes on adversary, allied, and neutral audiences? Other considerations:

- Exploratory study of both approaches from a cultural and geopolitical approach to support comparative analysis.
- Key parameters to address.
- Secondary and tertiary effects to consider, as well as the individual and interactive effects.

C5. Information sharing has improved tremendously at the multinational level. How do SOF capitalize on those successes to improve information sharing at the operational level?
USSOCOM has made tremendous headway in minimizing bureaucracy and maximizing information sharing with coalition forces. A great example is the development of the J3-International office at the USSOCOM headquarters. Another example is operation of the NATO Special Operations Component Command in Afghanistan. Although strides have been made at the national and international/strategic levels, how well do these successes in information sharing translate to the operational level? How does the development of coalition information sharing capabilities/deconfliction impact the operational level? What equipment, tools, processes, and authorities are available at the operational and tactical level to ensure effective and efficient C2 and situational awareness at the right time and place to support mission success? How can information assurance be improved to increase mission effectiveness among USSOF, CF, interagency, and coalition forces?

C6. Combating violent extremism: Are some countries, such as Indonesia, with a large Muslim population immune to extremist violence? If so, why, and what are the contributing factors?
Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world but seems to be immune to the type of extremism and violent extremist organization groups that other Muslim countries/populations encounter. Admittedly, there are groups operating in those areas and attacks do

occur, but not to the extent that they exist or occur in the Middle East and Africa. Other considerations:

- Is this a true premise or simply a perception?
- Identify the factors within Indonesia that make it immune—or support the perception it is immune—to those types of groups or attacks.
- If the premise or perception is true at the regional level, is this also true from a global perspective? That is, are some areas more susceptible or less susceptible to radicalization? If so, why?

C7. Defining the SOF contribution to computer network operations: What are SOF's roles, responsibilities, and authorities?

Computer network operations (CNO) are related to every aspect of the operating environment to include planning, intelligence processes, and nonlethal targeting. The role of SOF in CNO needs to be defined to better support SOF-CNO training, planning, and contributions to the wider security effort. The broader CNO community requires SOF take their place with other U.S. Government agencies and elements of private industry to support CNO. An area of interest is the study, planning, development, and fostering of cyber rebellions, akin to cyber UW. Other considerations:

- What are the authorities and skill required to plan and conduct such operations?
- How would SOF integrate with other interagency efforts to support such an operation?

C8. Improving the process: Developing discrete, multi-year campaigns to shape, prevent, and/or win

This proposal focuses on the SOF design, plan, and conduct of discrete, multi-year irregular campaigns. The intent is synergizing tactical and operational special warfare and surgical strike with the full suite of SOF; coalition force; JIIM; and partner capabilities and objectives. The goal is to shape the operating environment, counter threats, and advance U.S. interests prior to a threat or crisis necessitating large-scale military intervention. Other considerations:

- How do SOF design, plan, and conduct those IW campaigns today? How should they do it in the future?

- How can doctrine be adapted to ensure that SOF operational design will provide specific considerations unique to special operations across the spectrum of conflict?
- What are the events or threats in the past necessitating large scale military interventions that could have been precluded given more up-front shaping efforts? How could that have been accomplished?

C9. Violent extremism in Syria and Iraq: How does the coalition capitalize on years of operating in Iraq and previous tribal relationships to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)?

The United States has called upon SOF to play a major role in combating ISIS in Syria and Iraq, to include the training of Iraqi Security Forces. This primarily involves training forces and retraining of some forces previously trained by SOF or CF during the U.S. tenure in Iraq (2003 to 2011). How can SOF best undermine this extremist organization given the U.S. policy of "no boots on the ground [participating in combat operations]"? What other non-state organizations in Syria and Iraq should be supported or undermined? As an example, what networks or systems, such as social media and previously developed tribal relationships, can/should be leveraged to support this mission?

C10. The campaign against the Tamil Tigers: Does the campaign disprove the old adage, "We can't kill our way to victory?" Was it an operational success or strategic failure?

U.S. leadership has been saying the nation "cannot kill our way to victory," but the successful campaign against the Tamil Tigers may be an example of that approach working in the past. The campaign against the Tamil Tigers is often cited as an example of annihilation strategy. Was this an anomaly, or are there lessons to be learned from this approach? Are there limits to this strategy? Is there more to the story that would indicate the indirect approach was applied? Other considerations:

- Is this approach culturally palatable to American values?
- Does the approach adhere to national and international laws?
- Does the approach exceed the international test for "proportionality?"

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- What about those who were displaced and not eliminated—does a diaspora allow for regeneration in the future?

C11. SOF's involvement in fighting narcoterrorism: Are SOF authorities compatible with the mission?

At times, the line between traffickers and terrorists can be indistinguishable, and SOF can encounter both within their battlespaces. The nexus between traffickers and terrorists, prevalent in Africa, the Caucasus, and South America, provides the impetus to reexamine SOF authorities to address both threats. One might make the argument that SOF should have the same authorities to deal with traffickers as they do with terrorists. Other considerations:

- How are SOF being used in the fight against narcoterrorism south of the border and abroad? If SOF are not being used, why not?
- Do SOF possess the required authorities for this fight? How does integration with the Drug Enforcement Agency under counter-narcoterrorism (CNT) authorities affect SOF C2? Would integration of Coast Guard activities and capabilities into USSOCOM broaden SOF authorities to work in this domain?
- Given the objectives and priorities from a GCC perspective, what are the ways to control these CNT activities most effectively and efficiently?

C12. Identify efficient and effective media for conducting and assessing military information support operations: Are the old media techniques, such as leaflets, still effective?

Growing fiscal constraints and shifting communications paradigms demand a critical evaluation of traditional military information support operations (MISO) media to ensure SOF continue to provide combatant commanders with cost-effective options for shaping the human domain. Consider the costs associated with production, distribution, dissemination, and evaluation for traditional and web-based MISO at all levels of war, as well as strengths and weaknesses of current MISO methods for targeted audiences at different levels of war. What form of media is appropriate for conducting and assessing MISO for various target audiences at all levels of war?

D. Continue to Build Relationships

—*Global understanding and awareness that creates options*

Topic Titles

D1. Purposeful relationships and information sharing: How can we improve?

D2. Culture and human nature in building partner capacity of SOF: Why are there different outcomes?

D3. Enabling a SOF network under conditions of financial austerity

D4. Educating SOF partners: Effectiveness, funding, and human rights vetting

D5. Role of USSOCOM in technology procurement for international SOF

D6. Multinational basing: Advantages, constraints, and obstacles

D7. Virtually expanding the SOF network: Capacity building by leveraging technology

D8. Aviation within security force assistance and foreign internal defense: What is the SOF role?

Topic Descriptions

D1. Purposeful relationships and information sharing: How can we improve?
To increase effectiveness, SOF must develop purposeful relationships, interact in an informed manner, and facilitate information sharing. How can leaders at all levels throughout the SOF enterprise more effectively employ the network of purposeful relationships to conduct special operations? What interactions are consistent with current command information/guidance? What can USSOCOM do to establish an effective collaborative information environment to enable information sharing, enhance situational awareness, and support decision making?

D2. Culture and human nature in building partner capacity of SOF: Why are there different outcomes?

Competing theories on the development of nations cite different factors that lead to success. Cultural explanations are sometimes invoked to explain differences in national outcomes. Others have pointed to human nature as a critical factor. Which factors are most salient to building partner capacity, and how should SOF capacity-building efforts address those factors? How do cultural differences affect perceptions of capacity and success in capacity building?

D3. Enabling a SOF network under conditions of financial austerity

In the U.S. and most of its partner nations, budgetary pressures are constraining the amount of funding available for SOF and international SOF networking. What options are available for sustaining the funding of the SOF network? What aspects of the SOF network are most deserving of funding, and where can cuts be made without seriously degrading the network? How can partner nations be convinced to make greater contributions? To what extent will greater partner contributions dilute U.S. leadership of the SOF network, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of non-U.S. leadership of the SOF network? How do reductions in CF capabilities affect the SOF network, and how can these problems be mitigated?

D4. Educating SOF partners: Effectiveness, funding, and human rights vetting

SOF have a lengthy history of involvement in training foreign partners; however, their experience in educating those partners is considerably less extensive. Recent efforts to support education in partner nations have encountered political stumbling blocks. How important are these educational initiatives, and what can be done to expand them? Should SOF support educational initiatives in countries where the military has been implicated in human rights violations or problematic behaviors? What funding sources are appropriate, MFP-11 or security assistance under International Military Education and Training, and under what conditions? What are the essential SOF network partner education requirements for effective partnered operations?

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D5. Role of USSOCOM in technology procurement for international SOF

USSOCOM has numerous opportunities, but few authorities, for helping foreign partners obtain technology and equipment. Should USSOCOM have a greater role in procuring technology for international SOF? How would it contribute to interoperability and the expansion of the SOF network? Should USSOCOM receive additional funding and authorities to facilitate acquisition for partner SOF? Should support be limited to SOF in the SOF network? How would this effort be coordinated with other DOD and DOS efforts?

D6. Multinational basing: Advantages, constraints, and obstacles

Interest in multinational SOF basing has increased with the growth of the SOF network. What constraints and obstacles stand in the way of multinational basing? What countries and regions are best suited to multinational basing? What lessons can be learned from past joint and multinational basing efforts? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

D7. Virtually expanding the SOF network: Capacity building by leveraging technology

With increasing demands to counter violent extremist organizations, SOF find themselves stretched thin. Can SOF satisfy GCC theater security cooperation and SOF objectives by conducting capacity-building activities virtually? What technologies can facilitate virtual interactions? To what extent would it relieve pressure on SOF deployment requirements and durations? What activities can be performed adequately by virtual means, and which require physical presence? Has the spread of modern communications technology reduced the importance of face-to-face contact?

D8. Aviation within security force assistance and foreign internal defense: What is the SOF role?

Many partner nations would like additional assistance from SOF in aviation, but budgetary constraints have prevented SOF from meeting all of the demand. What role should SOF aviation play in security force assistance and FID? In which operational environments

can SOF aviation contribute the most? How valuable is SOF aviation assistance to the achievement of U.S. national strategic objectives? How can aviation contribute to the enabling of the SOF network? How does/should SOF efforts mesh with those of other DOD and DOS efforts?

E. Prepare for the Future

—SOF ready to win in an increasing complex world

Topic Titles

E1.   How can SOF prepare to succeed in an increasingly complex world?

E2.   Continuity of global special operations post-national or post-global catastrophic event: Full-spectrum implications

E3.   Education of the Special Operations Force: Preparing SOF for the future

E4.   SOF successes in preventing wars: Effectiveness of persistent peacetime engagement

E5.   How have the successes of the last 25 years affected the culture of U.S. special operations?

E6.   The fundamentals of "wars amongst the people" and implications for SOF

E7.   Counter-radicalization and counter-lone wolf attacks: Technology, social media, and ideology

E8.   Role of SOF in political warfare: Achieving national objectives short of war

E9.   The human domain in crisis, conflict, and war: Influencing cognitive behavior

E10.   What is the future design of USSOCOM?

E11.   Agile information systems that enable SOF network partner integration and SOF C2

E12.   Strategic developments in special operations: What are the lessons for future SOF development?

Topic Descriptions

E1.   How can SOF prepare to succeed in an increasingly complex world?
SOF must protect and defend our nation's interests throughout the world. How does the command develop, manage, and preserve the total Special Operations Force? Can USSOCOM more effectively

develop concepts and conduct joint experimentation with JIIM partners to address emerging threats and opportunities? Are SOF resources aligned based on an adaptable strategy informed by concepts, experimentation, prioritized future capabilities, and defined risk? Is support to the GCCs optimal, or can it be improved by obtaining authorities and leveraging Service and partner-nation capabilities?

E2. Continuity of global special operations post-national or post-global catastrophic event: Full-spectrum implications

Given the interconnectedness and vulnerabilities of American and global core systems and infrastructure, society is at risk of service disruptions should those systems fail. How does USSOCOM maintain continuity of special operations capabilities and activities after a catastrophic disruption or destruction of critical regional, national, or global systems, whether deliberate, accidental, or by natural disaster? What are the full-spectrum implications for USSOCOM? How does USSOCOM overcome various levels of diminished or lost capability or capacity in communications, administration, movement, and support to SOF operations and installations? How does USSOCOM mitigate or circumvent such disruptions so that the command may continue to operate and provide the unique SOF capabilities? How do SOF conduct a strategic counterstrike if electronic communications are no longer available?

E3. Education of the Special Operations Force: Preparing SOF for the future

The USSOCOM Commander has stated, "The value of our people and our unique capabilities are exponentially improved with better education, ideas, concepts, and situational understanding." What does USSOCOM need from its educational institutions to ensure SOF are prepared for the future? What constitutes a special operations education? Do SOF need to be taught what to think, or how to think? Are current and envisioned SOF courses valid? What are the professional career fields and academic areas most critical to the future of SOF development?

E4.   SOF successes in preventing wars: Effectiveness of persistent peacetime engagement

USSOF are active in scores of countries around the world, emphasizing the importance of shaping the environment during "Phase 0" operations. What are the historical examples of USSOF deployments and operations in "Phase 0" that prevented instability and conflict, and ultimately protected U.S. interests and homeland? What conflicts and crises were prevented or ameliorated through persistent peacetime engagement by SOF? How was SOF flexible and adaptable to adjust to changing situations and make valuable contributions in unexpected ways?

E5.   How have the successes of the last 25 years affected the culture of U.S. special operations?

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has experienced a period of significant unipolar hegemony in the world, particularly in the military and security sectors. U.S. special operations units have enjoyed a level of prestige and support that significantly changed the nature of the relationship between SOF and other nations' forces. Has the power position occupied by the U.S. led to a culture of superiority in special operations units that is counter to their original strengths and purpose? How have the SOF Truths, values, and imperatives stood up during this period? Are SOF in tune with our foreign partners' specific military needs, or is there an expectation that all our SOF partners should replicate USSOF? Does the special operations community think differently or simply think it is different? What lessons are there for future SOF development?

E6.   The fundamentals of "wars amongst the people" and implications for SOF

The U.S. Government's understanding of modern warfare, characterized by asymmetric threats, is complicated, inconsistent, and changing frequently. What should the U.S. Government do differently to prepare the nation for war and engage in modern warfare? How should the Government utilize and integrate SOF in an era of persistent engagement to maximize the strengths of U.S. and partner nation SOF?

E7. Counter-radicalization and counter-lone wolf attacks: Technology, social media, and ideology

During the last decade radicalization has increased, and along with lone wolf attacks, is expected to grow. How do SOF contribute to U.S. and global efforts to counter-radicalization? What are specific SOF counter-radicalization capabilities? How can the SOF network contribute? Lone wolf actors inspired by extremist propaganda pose legitimate threats to the U.S. homeland and interests. What are the implications of next generation technology and social media savvy violent extremists? Is ideology truly the center of gravity for violent extremist organizations? Historically, how have ideologically-rooted violent extremist movements ended? What are the current shortfalls in policies, strategies, and techniques to thwart the spread of extremist ideologies? What U.S. and partner nation agencies have capabilities to integrate with SOF?

E8. Role of SOF in political warfare: Achieving national objectives short of war

Political warfare is the employment of all of a nation's means and instruments, short of war, to achieve national objectives. Some nation states and non-state groups are actively engaged in political warfare against the United States and its partners. Nation states and non-state groups that possess the elements of national power (i.e., diplomatic, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence and law enforcement) are adapting to the global environment to develop and implement strategies and achieve objectives that would have previously been accomplished through traditional warfare. Are SOF properly configured and employed to see the signs of political warfare? What contributions can USSOF make to identify and counter political warfare activities globally?

E9. The human domain in crisis, conflict, and war: Influencing cognitive behavior

Defining and understanding the "human domain" and how SOF can influence cognitive behavior in myriad operational environments continues to be a topic of interest. As former USSOCOM Commander Admiral William H. McRaven once described it, "the

human domain encompasses the totality of the physical, cultural, and social environments that influence human behavior." What affects people's perceptions and decision-making that SOF can favorably influence to prevent/mitigate/deter crisis and conflict? What are the future advanced technologies and cultural social practices for engaging underdeveloped populations in support of partner governments to achieve U.S. interests?

E10. **What is the future design of USSOCOM?**
SOF have complex organizations, a diverse set of capabilities, and a wide range of officially assigned missions. How should USSOCOM and the SOF network be structured and organized to resource and organize U.S. and partner SOF for the future? How should USSOF be employed 25 to 35 years in the future? How can SOF ensure that USSOCOM's unique and varied SOF capabilities are employed to their fullest and most enduring effect by the GCC? Is a future redesign required for USSOCOM headquarters, the four Military Service SOF component commands, and the TSOCs to effectively meet future demands and control future operations?

E11. **Agile information systems that enable SOF network partner integration and SOF C2**
Agile information systems include, but are not limited to: e-mail, instant messaging, text messaging, face-to-face stand-up meetings, portal pages, et cetera. What are the future agile information systems that USSOCOM should be focused on incorporating into the SOF network in the next 15 years?

E12. **Strategic developments in special operations: What are the lessons for future SOF development?**
The modern American experience with special operations has a checkered past. Since the creation of the Office of the Coordinator of Information in 1941, the U.S. Government has seen fit to implement numerous legislative and strategic military changes that have culminated in the current USSOCOM and component commands. While several histories have been written about the components and USSOCOM, none have approached the depth of knowledge required

to holistically understand precisely what significant stakeholders thought about the problems the solutions were meant to solve and why they took the positions they did. Why did those individuals or organizations who proposed those solutions do so, and what lobbying and counter-lobbying occurred, and why? What made for good legislation and what holes were left by certain declarations or laws enacted? What work remains to be done to more perfectly form a national special operations capability that could have been solved by previous legislation, and why was it left undone?

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F. Preserve Our Force and Families

—Short- and long-term wellbeing of our SOF Warriors and their families

Topic Titles

F1. Understanding the challenges of social reintegration for SOF
F2. Show no weakness: Addressing the stigma associated with seeking medical and mental healthcare for SOF
F3. Examine the lessons learned from the SOF Family Pilot Program
F4. What are the vulnerabilities and potential threats to the wellbeing of SOF Service members and their families through the exploitation of social media?
F5. The Care Coalition: "We will keep the faith with you"

Topic Descriptions

F1. Understanding the challenges of social reintegration for SOF
When SOF deploy, they leave behind the familiar American lifestyle and enter into a foreign culture where they must adapt to local customs, practices, and environments. They also shift from a training status to a fully operational one which requires them to be in a prolonged heightened state of awareness. With the high-tempo of in-garrison SOF training and repeated deployments over several years, there is no longer a definitive separation of deployed and home station lifestyles to decompress; many refer to it as a purely military life. General Joseph Votel, USSOCOM Commander, stated at his confirmation hearing that "SOF live within a short-term deployment and training cycle that result in little or no reintegration period with families … we are always at war." What are the social reintegration challenges of returning SOF? With what frequency should SOF be assessed? Does successful reintegration differ across marital status, race, religion, gender, or Military Service? If so, how? What makes it difficult to reintegrate socially? What are the challenges of social reintegration, especially for single Service members who do not benefit from programs supporting family reintegration? Is there a propensity

for certain SOF specialties to reintegrate better than others, and what lessons can USSOCOM learn from these successes? What policies, programs, and practices best assist with social reintegration?

F2.   Show no weakness: Addressing the stigma associated with seeking medical and mental healthcare for SOF

Today's military leaders publicly encourage forces to seek medical or behavioral healthcare; however, surveys indicate there remains a stigma associated with it. What else can be done to "destigmatize" SOF operators and their families seeking medical and behavioral healthcare? Are there any adverse consequences to "destigmatizing" medical and behavioral healthcare treatment? What elements of military and SOF culture are present that challenge the effort to balance mental fitness with duty performance? Is a culture that rewards personnel based on how many hours they work, how many days they deploy, and how many sacrifices they make counterproductive to establishing programs that support restoring and maintaining reduced levels of stress? How can a SOF operator take leave, reduce time away from family, and/or seek measures to reduce stress when those efforts are possibly stigmatized as non-productive or perceived as a weakness? What are the implications of SOF personnel and families seeking outside healthcare under the exigencies of non-disclosure agreements? What roles could a "SOF-for-Life" program play in assisting active and retired SOF to cope with stressors? Could an analysis of the retired SOF population's coping mechanisms assist in improving current treatment protocols? Is the stigma associated with mental health treatment organizationally or culturally imposed? To what extent do SOF operators contribute to stigmas which prevent the seeking of healthcare or counseling for themselves and their families?

F3.   Examine the lessons learned from the SOF Family Pilot Program

During the last two years, USSOCOM has received unprecedented authorities and funding for POTFF initiatives. The SOF Family Pilot Program is well underway. What metrics should be used for assessing success and efficacy of the program? How does POTFF compare to U.S. sister Service initiatives? Are there similar or comparable

programs in place with partner nation SOF? What are their best practices that could be adopted by USSOF? Can the sharing of POTFF lessons and programs be leveraged to "thicken" the SOF network and improve relationships with key SOF partners? Can they be used in partnership capacity building?

F4. **What are the vulnerabilities and potential threats to the well-being of SOF Service members and their families through the exploitation of social media?**

The proliferation of social media over the last decade and the increased reliance on it for communications, gaming, entertainment, and news has created a potential threat to Service members and their families. Not only can SOF members and their families be identified through social media, but nefarious actors can then use that information to harass and threaten them. How does this specifically affect SOF, who could be considered targets of higher value? As the millennial generation and subsequent generations increasingly rely on social media to connect, how will this impact the safety and security of our forces and their families? To what extent has social media already been exploited to track, seek retribution, or exact revenge against Service personnel involved in operations overseas? To what extent does the dissemination of information identifying SOF by name through You-Tube, Vimeo, and Vine impact the safety and security of our forces and their families? What is the threat to the families of SOF based on their postings to social media sites, and how will those posts impact the Service member and his or her ability to perform their mission in an effective manner? With the declassification and release of details of previous SOF missions and operations, what are the implications for the families and descendants of SOF personnel already retired or deceased? How do USSOCOM and the Military Services address these issues and mitigate their impact on SOF and their families?

F5. **The Care Coalition: "We will keep the faith with you"**

In 2005, USSOCOM established an aggressive program to internally care for SOF wounded, ill, or injured Service members and their families. The stated goal of the Care Coalition is "to accomplish the mission by, through, and with government and non-government

organizations." The program has evolved from immediate care and recovery assistance to include a Comprehensive Recovery Plan, a Comprehensive Transition Plan, and intends to provide direct, life-long assistance to SOF personnel who are wounded, ill, or injured. In addition to transition assistance and mentoring, an adaptive sports program and fellowships were added. Documenting its history, evolution, and measures of effectiveness are of interest to USSOCOM leadership. How effective is the program? Can it be considered a model advocacy program for other Military Services? Has it had a direct effect in increasing special operations readiness? What metrics can be considered to measure its effectiveness? With expected future budget constraints, is it a long-term sustainable program?

G. USSOCOM J5 Key Strategic Issues List

Overview

The J5 Strategy Division is responsible for USSOCOM's understanding of the global security environment, which helps articulate appropriate strategy and force development requirements. The Key Strategic Issues List (KSIL) is a set of questions the J5 believe to be relevant in an attempt to support this understanding and is built around trends expected to continue for the next 10 to 20 years. This is a living document and it will change to address other questions as the J5 is able to generate satisfactory answers to some, while identifying additional questions to explore. If individuals are interested in working with the J5 on one of the KSIL topics (with your organization or individually), please contact: Lieutenant Colonel Tom Nagle at (813) 826-3132, Bob Jones at (813) 826-1294, or via e-mail at J5KSIL@socom.mil.

Discussion

In addition to using these questions as a method to focus J5's thinking and research, the KSIL is also used as a tool to conduct engagements with outside organizations. They are used to both spur discussion and notify others what USSOCOM interests are. In cases where outside organizations share these interests, the KSIL provides a list of potential research topics. The J5 is building a network intended for sharing insights and research products to better inform strategic thinking, while continuing to look for opportunities to become involved with researchers and receive feedback related to KSIL questions. In some cases, the J5 has sponsored travel to USSOCOM for briefings on the findings of a research project related to the question list to general officer-level personnel.

KSIL key points
- Aimed at improving understanding of global conditions and trends to enable better strategy for USSOCOM.
- Intended to invite debate among competing perspectives; multiple perspectives on a single question are valuable.

- Relevant for academic inquiry to encourage participation from both civilian universities and professional military education schools.
- Focused around: What should be keeping us up at night when we think about the future?

What follows is a summary list of the KSIL and individual descriptions with objectives and pertinent research themes to support a comprehensive understanding of each strategic issue.

Topic Titles

G1.   Weapons of mass destruction
G2.   Information/digital age
G3.   Shifting power distribution and diffusion
G4.   Megacities
G5.   Tactical actions versus strategic results
G6.   Conflict prevention
G7.   Human nature versus culture
G8.   Risk management
G9.   Interest-based strategies
G10.   Weapons technology proliferation
G11.   Disruptive and game-changing technologies
G12.   Adaptability and agility
G13.   Capability gaps
G14.   Long-term fiscal constraints
G15.   Strategic constraints
G16.   Demographics
G17.   Energy/other resources

Topic Descriptions

G1.   Weapons of mass destruction
Are current policies and actions advancing or undermining our counter-proliferation intentions? Are the incentives for the acquisition and/or use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) rising or subsiding at the state level? What about the incentives for transfer of WMD to non-state actors? How can the U.S. favorably change

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these incentives? How can USSOCOM better contribute to counter-proliferation efforts?

The objective of this research topic is to develop new insights across the breadth and depth of counter-proliferation efforts. Enabling technology for WMD is increasingly accessible for a range of actors, and counter-proliferation capabilities are not keeping pace. Therefore, incentives/disincentives for acquisition remain paramount. Sanctions have not proven especially effective in deterring some states from developing WMD capabilities. Enforcing global "rules" for possession of such weapons is also difficult in an era where states and populations are especially sensitive to any perceived infringement upon their sovereignty. The United States' counter-proliferation effort is evolving, and our need for greater understanding of the associated issues is growing. The majority of our current counter-WMD efforts are aimed at nuclear proliferation, while growing evidence indicates that it is other forms of WMD that will be more problematic.

Themes of interest include:
- Evolving incentives for transfer.
- Options for preventing or deterring proliferation.
- Systemic evaluation of the United States' counter-proliferation program.
- Evolution of WMD policies, especially those associated with rogue states and non-state actors.
- Implications of U.S./United Nations proliferation policies on emerging states.
- Options to manage expanding membership to the "nuclear club."
- Achieving the appropriate balance between nuclear, biological, chemical, cyber, and electromagnetic pulse counter-proliferation efforts.
- Potential advantages of focusing policy on management of consequences of possession.
- Evolving definitions of WMD. What is the next possible WMD? Most dangerous? Most Likely?
- Can we adequately survive/recover from a WMD event?

G2. **Information/digital age**

Does the information/digital age impact the nature of stability? What are the implications of increasingly numerous empowered individuals? How does information transparency affect the interactions of states? What are the implications for our military operations and engagements? Are there opportunities? What are the specific implications for SOF in cyber warfare?

The objective of this research topic is to develop new insights into how the information and digital age is changing the nature of the global strategic environment. Cyber tools are changing the relationships among and between individuals, informal groups, non-state actors, and states. Individuals and groups have been empowered by the accessibility of the Internet and social media, which has in turn driven rapid social change. States' ability to adapt and respond to powerful narratives that emerge through these tools has been increasingly challenged by their speed, scope, and reach. Governments are also struggling to safeguard state secrets; sensitive information is increasingly vulnerable to disclosure. While the information and digital age may once have been an advantage to the U.S., it now finds itself struggling to keep up with the latest advances quickly spreading across the globe through the private sector.

Themes of interest include:

- Implications for governance and regional stability.
- Falling cost of network development for non-state actors.
- Social media networks and cultural impacts.
- Development and leverage of distributed populations.
- Grievance mobilization; recruitment to causes/networking.
- Influence of "virtual" leaders.
- Effects on state decision cycles.
- Ability of U.S. to influence narrative/information wars.
- Appropriate versus needed U.S. Government authorities in the cyber realm.
- Impacts on the relationship between states and non-state actors.
- Operations security issues and bureaucratic practices (inability to change/update/procure systems appropriately).

- Security of personal information.
- State secrets and malignant disclosure.
- Cost/benefits of open information sharing.
- Crowdsourcing and intelligence analysis.
- U.S. vulnerability to cyber-attack, and appropriate military preparation/response.

G3. Shifting power distribution and diffusion

Is the nature of power changing on the international stage? If so, is it doing so uniformly (i.e., is there a common understanding of "what matters" across regions)? Are power shifts creating a higher likelihood of conflict, if so, among and between which groups? Are today's shifts in power unique or largely similar to historical experience? How does this change how USSOCOM/TSOCs/SOF conduct engagements and the range of SOF activities?

The objective of this research topic is to further develop our insights into how new power relationships are shaping the strategic environment. There are two main areas of interest on this question: internal and external power shifts. Internally, governments are increasingly challenged to meet the demands placed on them by populations that are becoming more aware of their relative circumstances. The disaffected are better able to organize using modern communications capabilities and pressure governments through either violent or non-violent means. Externally, regions with shifting power among states are likely to face turmoil. Even if a rising power intends to do so peacefully, the established power may act to preserve its position through violent means. It becomes more difficult to discern how governments facing multiple pressures both internally and externally are likely to interpret their interests and predict their actions. Stable relationships may degrade quickly under these conditions. Building a stable network of partners requires an alignment of interests; these interests may shift dramatically in the current environment and affect U.S. strategy. How does the U.S. deal with challenges to its power?

Themes of interest include:
- Diffusion of power from traditional centers to new players.
- Associated impacts on interest alignment.

- Changes in the nature/sources of power—regionally or globally.
- Implications for U.S. partners in terms of policy and military activities.
- The role of relative and/or absolute power gains in today's world.
- Changes in the viability of security umbrellas (conventional and nuclear).
- Evolving constraints on power.
- Evolving utility of the use of force.
- Changing utility of types of military power.
- Approaches to resolving power struggles.
- Changes in the role and influence of international institutions.
- Challenges to Westphalian order, and ability of states to respond.
- Ability of states to resolve internal power struggles.
- The viability of mediator roles for the U.S.
- The relationship between power shifts and U.S. interests and/or security.
- The relationship between business and states' ability, or inability, to exercise power.
- Implementing effective strategies given changing contexts of power.

G4. Megacities

Do rapidly growing cities with massive urban slums pose a substantial challenge to vital U.S. national interests? What are the critical distinctions between such cities in developing versus developed nations? What is the basis of control/power/influence within a megacity? Who is most likely to wield it (governments, gangs, tribes, or anarchy)? Is it possible to create advantageous strategic effects under these conditions? Is the megacity environment unique for SOF? If so, what capabilities are required for understanding it and conducting the full range of SOF activities?

The objective of this research topic is to develop new insights and understanding of rapidly growing, hyper-connected megacities. This

effort is based upon creating an understanding of the major trends at work in the early twenty-first century: population growth, urbanization, littoralization, and vastly increased electronic connectivity. Between 2012 and 2040, the world population is estimated to grow by 2.2 billion, but that growth will not be evenly distributed. Urban environments in littoral areas in the developing world will account for a significant portion of additional population growth, and draw in almost 1 billion rural-to-urban migrants, increasing the developing world's urban population by more than 3 billion. These urban environments will consist of large, densely populated under-governed urban areas with dramatically increased electronic connectivity. Such an environment will account for drastic changes in demographics that are themselves sources of conflict for formal governance and wide opportunities for corruption, violence, and unrest (youth, unemployment, wealth disparity, disease, access to healthcare, sex distribution, et cetera). At the same time, greater connectivity between individuals able to share views and import ideas from regions beyond megacities increasingly allows violence, unrest, and extremist views to rapidly spread in densely populated urban areas with negative effects on the stability of megacities.

Themes of interest include:

- Perceptions versus reality on opportunities in megacities.
- Defining U.S. interests in megacities.
- Differences between cities and organized states.
- State's power versus city's local influence and power (preeminence struggle?).
- Role/impact of overlapping jurisdictions.
- Relationship between formal city core and informal periphery.
- Immigration integration/culture clashes.
- Competing methods of informal leadership and influence.
- How to develop relationships with informal leadership structures/players.
- Ability of the U.S. to balance relationships with cities and owning states.
- Role of demographic issues in exacerbating problems (economic, political).
- Natural disaster consequences and response.

- Potential trends that reverse/increase/change migration to cities.
- Stress on surrounding resource system as cities grow.

G5. **Tactical actions versus strategic results**

Has there been a disconnect between our tactical actions and our strategic intentions during the war on terror? If so, are we resolving it? What have the strategic lessons been? Are we able to improve our strategic success without making major changes across the inter-agency? What types of strategic metrics should we use? How can SOF better assess and operate using measures of strategic performance?

The objective of this research topic is to further develop our insights into why tactical programs and activities intended to produce certain enduring effects during the U.S. response to the attacks of 9/11 have, by and large, fallen short of those objectives. Assessing the effectiveness of operations has been a deliberate activity since World War II, with a heavy emphasis on quantitative measures emerging in the Vietnam era. Various approaches (systems analysis, effects-based operations, et cetera) have fallen short in establishing compelling tactical metrics to desired strategic effects. There are a variety of factors that may contribute to this effect. This topic is intended to spur research into discrete areas, such as the effect of using tactical metrics to drive strategic effects, as well as into cross-cutting analysis that assesses how current thinking on operations assessment may impact strategic progress.

Themes of interest include:

- The benefits and risks of employing immediate/local/objective measures of tactical performance to predict strategic progress.
- The benefits and risks of employing measures which are more subjective, broader in area, and accrue over time in an effort to give a better sense of strategic progress.
- Exploring how prioritizing tactical metrics may undermine strategic objectives.
- Exploring how assumptions of rationality may mislead tactical actions.

- Aspects of human nature as a framework for assessing strategic progress.
- The development of a family of indicators of strategic progress that is naturally occurring, and easily collected and reported.
- The appropriateness of labels (i.e., regular and irregular warfare) for understanding conflicts.
- Comparing and contrasting measures of strategic performance in "state-based" and "populace-based" conflicts.
- What would a counter-UW strategy consist of? Would it be more appropriate than the more traditional responses (e.g., counterterrorism, combatting terrorism, IW, et cetera)?
- Have policy decisions to preserve regimes deemed as good, or remove/replace regimes deemed as bad, created infeasible conditions in the current strategic environment for achieving the strategic goals desired?
- Is stability of governance (requiring changes that may increase short-term risk to U.S. interests) more important than stasis of government for long-term U.S. interests?
- How do changes in the strategic environment affect how we think about the strategies and tactics best suited to secure our interests?

G6. Conflict prevention

Are the deterrence-based theories behind the U.S. National Security Strategy adequate to address the current and future strategic environment? Are they appropriate for state and non-state actors? Is the competition and conflict we are currently experiencing necessarily detrimental to U.S. National Security Strategy? Is prevention of conflict practical? If so, what would a "prevention approach" entail? How could USSOCOM facilitate a new prevention approach?

The objective of this research topic is to develop new insights into which approaches are appropriate for achieving U.S. national security objectives in the current and future strategic environments. It is possible that a heavy emphasis on a deterrence-based security approach is not adequate or appropriate, given the current and emerging strategic environment. Further, any potential successes in deterring

conflict are difficult to measure or even understand, particularly given information that has come to light from the Soviet archives that indicate our assumptions on their rationality were unfounded. Simply deterring an undesirable event does not necessarily address underlying causes or grievances that may fester under conditions of artificially-imposed stability. The absence of conflict does not indicate the absence of threats to U.S. interests, and the costs associated with maintaining a status quo that is threatened in multiple dimensions grow quickly. A more comprehensive conflict "prevention approach" may provide a way to complement or replace the heavy emphasis on deterrence. A thorough examination of both approaches is required to improve strategy for the current and emerging strategic environment.

Themes of interest include:

- Viability of modern deterrence strategies in the current/emerging strategic environment.
- U.S. security costs and benefits from conflicts and competition.
- Elements of a prevention-based approach.
- Determining the costs and benefits of a prevention approach.
- Exploring the relationship of prevention and deterrence. Are they complementary or in conflict?
- The role of prevention and deterrence at the tactical and strategic levels.
- Advancing U.S. interests through prevention and/or deterrence.
- Appropriateness of systemic assumptions (i.e., rational, unitary actors).
- Assessing the success of deterrence and/or prevention.

G7. Human nature versus culture

Have we focused too exclusively on the role of culture in attempting to explain recent crises? Are the problems we will face in the future more firmly rooted in human nature or human cultures? Is the answer to this question important for our strategic approach? For a force that distinguishes itself on understanding language, regional expertise, and culture, how do SOF incorporate/use aspects of fundamental human nature in its activities?

The objective of this research topic is to further develop our insights into a more comprehensive socio-cultural awareness. One must understand the culture where one operates to implement effective tactical programs, but should also explore the possibility that there are common aspects of human nature across cultures that are equally necessary to understand. This would assist in developing strategic concepts and frameworks that lend context and focus to tactical actions. As people become increasingly empowered to informally challenge formal power structures through legal means if available, or illegal means if necessary, an understanding of human nature may help develop a clearer understanding of these types of problems and conflicts.

Themes of interest include:

- The distinctions and commonalities between societies that are stable and unstable.
- The distinctions between "naturally" and "artificially" stable societies.
- Commonalities across cultures with origins in human nature.
- The distinction between political and popular legitimacy in relation to stability.
- The distinction between political and popular sovereignty in relation to stability.
- The sufficiency, value, and role of various legal mechanisms in fostering stability across cultures.
- Is political conflict internal to a system of governance distinct from political conflict between systems of governance? How so, and so what?
- Do aspects of human nature provide strategic indicators for the health/stability of a society?
- How can SOF track strategic indicators while concurrently developing cultural awareness to improve tactical performance?

G8. Risk management

In what areas does the U.S. or USSOCOM face a great deal of risk, given current and projected resourcing? Which areas are critical? In what areas are we able to accept risk? In what areas must we "buy

down" risk to maximum extent possible? What are the most effective risk-management strategies available?

The objective of this research topic is to develop insights on the best practices for managing risk and pursuing a strategy in a rapidly changing environment. Globalization has created a more complex world, made up of a tangled web of relationships and other interdependent factors. Accurately predicting the types of threats and unforeseen events we must contend with is increasingly difficult. Current practice across the national security apparatus closely ties risk directly to threats; new "risks" (interpreted as threats) require new capabilities or programs to counter them. The wider range of potential crises, however, leads to a longer list of capabilities and capacities to optimally respond. Budget constraints prevent the U.S. from mitigating risk simply through identifying additional resource requirements. Though there has been a higher emphasis on "flexibility" as an approach to mitigate risk in recent years, multi-role platforms and capabilities that possess that trait are increasingly expensive. An approach that provides a better method of assessing risks associated with strategic choices and weighing trade-offs across the options will better support decision-making.

Themes of interest include:
- Opportunity costs.
- Resource management and prioritization.
- Improving risk assessment methodologies.
- Emerging sources of military and political risk.
- Opportunities for controlling risk.
- Errors in risk assessment and response.
- Organizational issues in effective risk management processes.
- Linking risk to strategy.
- Utility of measurements for levels of risk.
- Options to transfer/share risk with partners.
- National security equivalents of diversification or other risk management strategies.
- Multipurpose weapons platforms capabilities and pitfalls.

G9. **Interest-based strategies**

How can the United States best position itself to preserve and build upon a network of actors with interests that are congruent? How do we ensure stability of this network as governments change and adjust to the demands of their populations? How should USSOCOM posture itself to support an "interest-based" approach?

The objective of this research topic is to develop insights into an interest-based approach to strategy (national government, Military Service, or combatant command). This includes examining how interests are derived from organizational values, norms, and morals. If some interests change over time, shaped by evolving cultures, fortunes, and current events, are there vital interests that endure? As the global situation shifts due to power distribution and diffusion, a country's interests may change to meet the new power arrangements. This can put a country at odds with former "partners" who used to have shared interests and bring former "threats" into closer alignment. Another aim of this topic is to explore relative advantages of other approaches to strategy (e.g., threat-based or influence-based strategies). Lastly, documents such as the National Security Strategy and national defense and military strategies describe U.S. national interests. As a functional combatant command with global reach, USSOCOM is in a unique position to support vital national interests in both direct and indirect manners. How USSOCOM can best provide this support may shift over time as the global environment evolves.

Themes of interest include:

- Defining interests of states, individuals, and other actors.
- Utility of broad ideological versus narrow pragmatic interests.
- Realism versus liberalism.
- Evolution of U.S. grand strategy.
- Influence of partners' interests on achieving U.S. interests.
- Incongruence between values and interests or how to better align values and interests.
- Utility of, or problems with, "special relationships" to an interest-based strategy.

- SOF contribution to national interests beyond counterterrorism and counter-WMD.
- Dangers of over-reliance on threat-based strategic approaches to address current events.
- Concept of near-, mid-, and long-term strategy-making to address vital and important national interests.
- Reconciliation of divergent interests with partners.
- Can an interest-based strategy compete in the budgetary process with a threat-based approach?

G10. Weapons technology proliferation

How are the proliferation of innovation and the falling cost of weapons and dual-use technology changing military balances of power? How does advanced weaponry in the hands of non-state actors change the dynamic for SOF activities?

The objective of this research topic is to develop new insights into how innovation proliferation, low-cost weapons, and dual-use technologies will impact the changing military balances of power. As recent history has proven, innovation and dual-use technologies can be stolen or appropriated by hostile military powers. Similarly, certain non-state actors and individuals will seek to acquire and exploit dual-use technological innovations and low-cost weapons. As the complexity of technological innovations continue to increase at an exponential rate, the universal appetite for these advancements is unlikely to wane. Existing control mechanisms such as international regulations and security arrangements may be insufficient to stem the tide of proliferation over time. The risk associated with the proliferation of certain technologies or weapons could potentially jeopardize global security and stability. Such an environment may compromise the comparative technological advantage enjoyed by the U.S. military and eventually tip the scale of power.

Themes of interest include:
- New applications of emerging technology.
- Impacts of multiple centers of weapons innovation across the globe.

- Sufficiency of international agreements to control detrimental effects.
- Cost-effective responses to new technological challenges.
- Appropriateness of exquisite, multi-role weapon platforms in a world of rapid innovation.
- Areas of the globe at highest risk due to technological innovation in weapons.
- Potential changes to U.S. industrial base.
- How to adapt DOD to benefit from weapons innovation.

G11. Disruptive and game-changing technologies

What disruptive and game-changing technologies have potential global significance? How will these emerging technologies impact future conflict? How does USSOCOM leverage game changing technologies to advance SOF operations? Is USSOCOM's acquisition process positioned to capitalize on rapid fielding of untested, potentially disruptive technology?

The objective of this research topic is to develop new insights into emerging disruptive and game-changing technologies that could have global significance and/or impact on future conflict. Emerging disruptive technologies, particularly ones with broad applications, have the potential to transform existing markets or create new ones. When applied to a military problem, game-changing technologies can disrupt existing doctrines or TTPs and radically alter the balance between competitors. As the pace of technological development continues to accelerate, competitors will strive to integrate innovative technology to gain an advantage. More broadly, opportunities created by new technologies will alter societies in unforeseen ways, as social media has.

Themes of interest include:
- Space exploration.
- Nanotechnology and wetware.
- 3D printing.
- Cyber innovations.
- Human enhancements.
- Multi-nation weapons procurement programs.

- Bioengineering.
- Agro engineering.
- Impacts on position, navigation, and timing.
- A day without … (pick a technology).

G12. Adaptability and agility

Is the USSOCOM enterprise an adequately flexible system capable of rapid change (in whole or in parts) when required? What "best practices" can be implemented to maximize our ability to generate capacity and capability when needed? How does USSOCOM position itself to provide the widest options possible for policymakers?

The objective of this research topic is to develop new insights into USSOCOM's ability to generate capacity, and its capacity to meet, protect, and advance U.S. national interests. SOF is commonly viewed as the force of choice when considering small footprint, cost-effective tactical operations that create strategic effects. In the last 13 years, the USSOCOM enterprise has grown from 25,000 to nearly 69,000 personnel. This growth has enabled SOF to operate further, in greater capacity, and in more regions of the world than ever before. However, this growth in capacity does not come without consequences … particularly as the United States enters a period of fiscal austerity. The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review is primarily focused on rebalancing the Joint Force, which includes reducing force structure of the Military Services. Special operations rely heavily on the Military Services to provide enabling support. Cuts to the Military Services' force structure will impact special operations not only in enabling support, but in recruitment as well. The degree to which these cuts will impact SOF is yet to be determined. However, the USSOCOM enterprise will need to develop innovative approaches to not only maintain its own capability and capacity, but adapt to a leaner Military Services capacity that could impede USSOCOM's activities.

Themes of interest include:
- Bureaucratic and Military Services preferences.
- Barriers to innovation.
- SOF truths versus evolving strategic landscape.
- Developing capabilities and capacities prior to crisis.

- Effects-based management and development of force.
- Defining a SOF narrative for the future (preparing for and preserving peace).
- Small footprint, cost-effective approaches.
- Integrating SOF into Military Service, GCC strategies.
- Alternative structures for optimal organization, management, and recruitment of SOF.
- Pushing "Joint" down to lower levels in SOF.

G13. Capability gaps

Are the methods the DOD and USSOCOM use to determine gaps in required capabilities adequate and appropriate for the current strategic environment? How do we balance effectiveness and efficiency? Are there widening gaps in any critical capabilities that we have been unable to address?

The objective of this research topic is to develop new insights into how DOD in general, and USSOCOM more specifically, might better anticipate and respond to identified capability gaps. Although many observers of the strategic environment have pointed to fundamental changes that are occurring, the processes by which we prioritize and procure capabilities (materiel or otherwise) have remained basically unchanged for decades. Given lengthening procurement timelines and routine budgetary problems with major weapons systems, the DOD will eventually need to reexamine the methodologies that we employ to appropriately resource our strategies. Further, it is appropriate to explore whether the processes by which gaps are identified are adequately connected to a guiding strategy, and not dominated by more narrow bureaucratic preferences.

Themes of interest include:
- DOD/SOF narrative, determining how best to employ forces.
- Balancing current demands against developing future needs.
- How to best determine/measure gaps. Threats? Opportunities? Other possibilities?
- Identifying and designing capability requirements.
- Role of understanding and design for capability requirements.
- Controlling bureaucratic preferences.

- Innovation in capabilities during fiscal constraints.
- Current, unaddressed capability gaps.
- Approaches in prioritization of requirements (no fail missions, enhancing capabilities, et cetera).
- Balancing effectiveness against efficiency.
- The responsiveness of the requirements process.

G14. Long-term fiscal constraints

Do the growing fiscal constraints in industrialized nations affect their perceptions of their interests and appropriate security postures? Are military alliances and partnerships likely to undergo changes due to fiscal pressures? Will powerful states be less likely to offer security guarantees? What types of military commitments will states be willing/unwilling to make for less than vital interests? Should this affect U.S. policy and basing? Beyond USSOCOM-specific budgetary pressures, how does the wider financial pressure affect USSOCOM/SOF, and are there opportunities upon which to capitalize?

The objective of this research topic is to develop new insights into how growing fiscal constraints across developed nations will impact their security posture and the security environment writ large. Despite a variety of security challenges, the U.S. and other industrial nations are reducing defense spending. Economic recovery from the global recession of 2007-2009 has not been sufficiently robust to avoid spending cuts. Such an environment may force nations to reevaluate the interests for which they are willing to deploy military forces. Reduced commitments and security arrangements among partner nations may shape the strategic environment in unforeseen manners.

Themes of interest include:
- Uneven global economic recovery and security impacts.
- New and shifting regional economic and security agreements important to the U.S.
- Trends in responses to pop-up crises.
- Nuclear aspirant states and the changing role/manner of deterrence.
- The viability of massive weapons programs (e.g., F-35, K-46, Littoral Combat Ship, et cetera) in this environment.

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- Shifting state perceptions of "vital national interests" versus "less than vital."
- Emerging multi-polarity, or multiple power vacuums?
- Shifts in the nature of military responses in lower-intensity situations (e.g., air power, SOF, and drones).
- Impacts on the viability/credibility of security umbrellas.
- The effect of this security environment on incentives for other states to acquire conventional or unconventional weapon capabilities.
- Cost-effective strategies for the U.S. and partner nations to protect interests.
- Changes in support to multinational organizations and associated effects.
- The role and relationship of economic power to military power (is this changing?).
- The sufficiency of Goldwater-Nichols today; is there a next step for Military Service interdependence?
- The viability of burden sharing in a world with widely diverging interests and economic disruption.

G15. Strategic constraints

Does our strategic culture blind us to potential threats, sources of risk, and opportunities? Does our national security process have a similar effect? How can USSOCOM avoid overly restricted solutions to problems that are poorly defined or understood due to these constraints?

The objective of this research topic is to develop new insights into how the idea of constraints affects strategy development. Constraints can either be self-imposed or forced upon us from the system we operate in. The cultural biases of the military and the DOD influence our strategic performance. Organizational culture theories suggest that our point of view on particular issues restricts our ability to perceive the full array of options available. Without the benefit of considering all relevant possibilities, our strategic performance may be degraded. Additionally, the United States' position as a global leader ties us to the international political system and its processes which

put constraints on our actions. Furthermore, our domestic system has legal, moral, political, and social constraints that affect our strategic outlook and subsequent plans to address national security issues. This topic is intended to assist in identifying sources of potential blind spots and constraints and locating effective and acceptable ways to provide new perspectives and approaches on enduring problems. USSOCOM must recognize the constraints we operate within in order to develop better strategic approaches.

Themes of interest include:
- Definition of constraint and its implications for the military and USSOCOM, specifically.
- The impact of organizational culture on decision-making.
- Improving information-search heuristics.
- Current problems and identifying new perspectives.
- Constraints of the international and domestic systems.
- How does an organization develop a holistic strategy that accounts for constraints?

G16. Demographics

How does the rise of the middle class in developing nations affect the security threats and opportunities in those countries? What are the most dangerous population shifts or migrations on the horizon? What are the implications of "youth in revolt" in fragile states (situations in which youth lose touch with their culture as families are torn apart by conflict and respond in ways that separate them from traditional guidance)? Does the changing role of women in unstable regions have USSOCOM implications?

The objective of this research topic is to develop new insights into global demographic trajectories and the resulting implications for U.S. interests. As globalization and other factors create the conditions for a rising middle class in developing nations, it can also support the expansion of conflict. Immigrants fleeing conflict, or moving to regions with better opportunities, can challenge their new governments' ability to respond. More affluent societies with higher educational levels typically have lower birthrates than immigrant groups from developing nations, which contributes to social stresses.

Europe is currently experiencing a range of problems associated with an inability to adequately integrate new arrivals. Angry unemployed youths have frequently taken to rioting, and immigrant groups are often isolated from both the larger society as well as their heritage. Is it possible for the U.S. to favorably shape the trends associated with this challenge?

Themes of interest include:

- Relationship to U.S. interests.
- Interacting system (of demographic trends) or single-factor causality?
- Globalization.
- Education relative to birth rates.
- Transnational organized crime.
- Integration and resolving cultural stresses created by migration.
- Response of organic population to demographic shifts (cultural?).
- Politics of blame and out-groups.
- Perceived opportunities leading to permanent or temporary migration.
- Youth bulges, unemployment, and dissatisfaction—relative to governance.
- Technological empowerment of isolated immigrants.
- Changing patterns in connections across diaspora communities.
- Needs versus demands versus expectations of the growing middle class on basic services, commodities, and energy.
- SOF implications in fragile states and shifting populations.

G17. Energy/other resources

Will changes in energy harvesting and consumption alter the global security environment? Will rising energy consumption in emerging nations impact the strategic landscape? Will demand for other resources (food, water, et cetera) shape conflict in manners that have implications for USSOCOM?

The objective of this research topic is to develop new insights into energy and natural resource trends, the associated regional and global security impacts, and the implication for special operations. Many consider access to energy and other natural resources a critical element to international relations and assert that it has been a principal catalyst for conflict and war. Continued growing global demand for resources strains current distribution capabilities and depletes known reserves. Other changes in the energy and natural resources strategic environment may also impact the international order, perpetuating old struggles and possibly conflict among a new set of global actors.

Themes of interest include:

- Shifts in regional power and world order.
- Political stress points.
- Economic competition.
- Global corporations.
- Nascent, alternative markets.
- Probable technological breakthroughs (enabling new energy sources or retrograde fuels).
- Cultural and social aspects.
- Nongovernmental organizations and transnational power structures.
- Climate and environmental pressures.
- Developing versus developed nations.
- Trends in self-sufficiency and dependency.
- Sources and distribution networks.
- Vulnerability of critical energy infrastructure.
- Potential humanitarian crisis points.
- U.S. presence and response.
- Opening of "new" frontiers: Arctic, Antarctica, Amazonia, Andes, Asia, Pacific, space/lunar, et cetera.