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JSOU Quick Look

Intelligence Support to Special Operations

RELEVANT TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Intelligence: The product resulting from the collection, processing, integration, evaluation, analysis, and interpretation of available information concerning foreign nations, hostile or potentially hostile forces or elements, or areas of actual or potential operations.¹

Intelligence community: All departments or agencies of a government that are concerned with intelligence activity, either in an oversight, managerial, support, or participatory role. Also called IC.²

Human domain: The people (individuals, groups, and populations) in the environment, including their perceptions, decision-making, and behavior.³

Information: Any communication or representation of knowledge such as facts, data, or opinions in any medium or form, including textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative, electronic, or audiovisual forms.⁴

Influence: The act or power to produce a desired outcome or end on a target audience.⁵

Interagency: Of or pertaining to United States government agencies and departments, including the Department of Defense.⁶

The vital importance of good, sound intelligence cannot be stressed enough. Without it, there is nothing; with it, there is something. It's the difference between failure and success, between humiliation and pride, between losing lives and saving them. Intelligence is to special operations as numbers are to a mathematician.

—Charles A. Beckwith and Donald Knox, *Delta Force*, 1983

Intelligence support functions primarily focus on “adversary military capabilities, violent extremist organization (VEO) threat capabilities, centers of gravity, and potential courses of action in order to provide commanders with the necessary information to plan and conduct operations.”⁷ Intelligence support to special operations is unique because their missions are inherently different from conventional operations requiring unique modes of employment, tactics, techniques, procedures, and equipment. Additionally, special operations activities “are typically conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments” and “are often time-sensitive, clandestine, require low visibility, are (when necessary) conducted with or through indigenous forces, require regional expertise, and involve a high degree of risk.”^{8,9}

Performing these critical and unique missions, are uniquely trained and qualified personnel. They, in turn, generate intelligence requirements to support the broad spectrum of missions they must perform. Intelligence requirements are often detailed, specialized, and unique. Additionally, more so than other consumers of intelligence, special operations are guided by the operations and intelligence synergy where operations is intelligence and intelligence is operations. Each enables the other to maximize influence and effect.

While unique by necessity, intelligence support to special operations is rooted in the joint intelligence principles found in Joint Publication 2-0 *Intelligence* and JP 2-01.3 *Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment*. The long-standing intelligence process—planning/direction, collection, processing/exploitation, analysis/production, and dissemination/integration—is foundational to supporting both conventional and special operations. In addition, doctrinal analytic frameworks used throughout the intelligence and military community (e.g. intelligence preparation of the battlespace) provide context to any operational environment. Special operations missions and activities, however necessitate greater fidelity and deeper analysis on a key operational factor.

Special Operations Forces (SOF) Intelligence and the Human Domain

Human Domain understanding enables SOF to focus on relevant actor's needs when seeking to develop influence.

—*Operating in the Human Domain (V1.0)*

Special operations missions and activities require a granular understanding of the operational environment and most importantly, the people that make up the environment. The human domain is the primary operational environment for

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE SOF INTEL PROFESSIONAL

- **KNOW** your job.
- **CRITICALLY THINK** through problems and quickly adapt.
- **CONTEXTUALIZE** complicated to complex operational environments for commanders, staffs, and operational elements.
- **Understand the WHY.** Friend, foe, non-aligned tactical, operational, strategic interests matter.
- **INTEGRATE** for **EFFECT** conventional, SOF specific, intelligence community, interagency and partner capabilities.
- **MANAGE** and **DIRECT** application and integration of consistently adapting information, data and intelligence technologies.
- **Provide unquestioned VALUE.** Anticipate requirements while providing options and solutions.

SOF in population centric irregular warfare operations. An understanding of the human domain is required to conduct analysis of the human key terrain in an environment. Understanding comprehensive human domain allows SOF to best determine how to influence its environment and the varied population groups—be they adversary, friendly, or non-aligned—that comprise them. United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), through its 2015 Operating in the Human Domain (OHD) (V1.0) future operating concept, underscores this imperative. “The central idea of the OHD Concept is that SOF needs to develop and implement a comprehensive Human Domain discipline to identify, understand, and influence—through words, deeds, and images—relevant individuals, groups, and populations.”¹⁰ Accordingly, in order to identify, understand, and influence relevant populations, SOF must construct as detailed a picture as possible of their operational environment.

Within the joint intelligence community, many analytic tools help contextualize the operational environment. Areas, structures, capabilities, organizations, people, and events, as well as political, military, economic, social, information, and infrastructure provide comprehensive intelligence considerations, but more detail is required to support special operations. A supplemental model—the issues, goals, influencers, vulnerabilities, and opportunities (IGIVO)—analytic model specifically helps identify relevant populations and their perceptions. IGIVO focuses on five categories that are priority intelligence considerations common to irregular warfare operations:

- Issues—perceptions that something is wrong, unfair, corrupt, or needed;
- Goals—aims, ends, final result desired;
- Influence(rs)—who has what type and level of influence;
- Vulnerabilities—weaknesses, real or perceived;
- Opportunities—favorable condition for goal attainment/advancement.

Importantly, IGIVO analysis is best conducted by assessing each category through the eyes of the select population groups. Dr. Konrad Trautman, former Headquarters USSOCOM J2, professed that the IGIVO tool more clearly helped identify a conflicts’ underlying factors by focusing informational and intelligence efforts on three key questions: (1) What do varying relevant populations want? (2) What do they need? and (3) Why are they fighting?¹¹

Intelligence Community/Interagency Collaboration

To support varied special operations missions and functions, SOF intelligence professionals must learn to function as a conductor by orchestrating the intelligence community, select interagency, Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs), Theater Special Operations Command (TSOCs), USSOCOM headquarters, and organic SOF intelligence assets to create a holistic intelligence support network. Intelligence professionals must also be able to design an intelligence support concept for missions by precisely tailoring intelligence support from the intelligence community, GCCs/TSOCs, USSOCOM headquarters, and assigned SOF units. SOF intelligence has become a multidiscipline, multi-domain, interagency, multi-geographic combatant command global network.

The widely recognized operationalization of this intelligence orchestration and United States government/partner concept was Task Force (TF) 714 in Iraq, 2004-2007. US Army General Stanley McChrystal, the TF commander remarked:

“Early on, TF714 lacked a clear mandate to either build a network or get other organizations to join it ... The network I sought to build needed not just physical breadth but also functional diversity. This required the participation of the U.S. government departments and agencies that were involved in counterterrorism like State [U.S. Department of State], Treasury [U.S. Department of Treasury], the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and the FBI [U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation].”¹²

Since the days of TF714, units across the SOF enterprise have taken an integrated, meritocratic approach to planning, execution, and intelligence fusion that has provided greater environmental awareness and expanded operational opportunities, while increasing overall operational tempo and success. Intelligence community and interagency partners have also increasingly recognized the benefits of investing in relationships with the special operations community.

ENSURING PREMIER SOF INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT

In a strategic contest for influence, the size, skills, and subtlety of SOF afford the U.S. opportunities to counter malign activities in a manner that conventional military forces cannot reproduce.

—General Richard D. Clarke, Commander, United States Special Operations Command¹³

Supporting Competition, Targeting and Influence

As specific operational priorities might shift, SOF intelligence professionals must constantly adapt—seamlessly transitioning between supporting countering VEO operations and activities that counter near-peer competitors. Indeed, the strategic environment will only become more volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, not just complicated with identifiable and/or clear causation and effect. Seen and yet undiscovered linkages and nexuses exist requiring identification, study, and a cultivation of understanding to make sense of the operational environment.

As targeting for influence in competition continues to take shape—find, fix, finish, exploit, analyze, and disseminate¹⁴—will remain applicable, regardless of the special operations activity or mission. However, application of the cycle’s functions will modulate depending on the specific effect desired (finding, fixing and finishing in a competition context vs. a countering VEO context for example). Overall, support to targeting and enabling increasingly creative, innovative influence operations through specialized and emergent applications will require equally innovative and adaptive special operations intelligence support.

Cultivating the Special Operations Intelligence Professional

Echoing the first SOF truth¹⁵ that humans are more important than hardware, the key to intelligence support to special operations will remain the intelligence professionals that provide support. To that end, JSOU plays a unique and sustained role in educating SOF intelligence professionals through its varied courses, particularly the Special Operations Intelligence Course (SOIC).

SOIC specifically addresses SOF intelligence and the human domain, intelligence community/interagency collaboration and ensuring premier SOF intelligence support. It does this by exposing students to special operations intelligence missions and requirements by asking students to analyze real-world emerging security situations through analysis of a human domain threat/area assessment—IGIVO—and by stressing identification of national, theater, and SOF organic intelligence assets to produce a detailed concept of intelligence support against a real-world security situation. Most importantly, SOIC promotes individual and collective critical thought by examining historic intelligence support to special operations while assessing current and future intelligence processes, procedures, technologies, and support requirements.

Where Can I Learn More about SOF Intel?

For applicable works relating to the aspects of intelligence support to special operations highlighted in this Quick Look, please reference:

Nathan Bos, *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies*, ARIS Series, 2d ed. (Ft. Bragg, NC: United States Army Special Operations Command, 2013).

Richards Heuer, *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Burtyrki Books, 2020).

Richards Heuer and Randolph Pherson, *Structured Analytic Techniques for Intelligence Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2011).

David Moore and Jeffery Jones, *Critical Thinking and Intelligence Analysis: Containing Eight Additional Critical Thinking/Intelligence Analysis Publications* (Washington, D.C.: Defense Intelligence Agency, 2007).

Konrad Trautman, *Special Operations Intelligence: Guiding the Tip of the Spear* (Tampa, FL: JSOU Press, 2014). UNCLASSIFIED//FOUO//REL to USA, FVEY. ■

Endnotes

¹Department of the Army, *ADP/ADRP 1-02 Operational Terms and Military Symbols* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters of the Department of the Army, 2018).

²Department of the Army, *ADP/ADRP 1-02 Operational Terms and Military Symbols*.

³United States Special Operations Command, *Operating in the Human Domain Version 1.0–Operating Concept*, (MacDill, FL: USSOCOM, 2015).

⁴“Computer Security Resource Center,” NIST Information Technology Glossary, accessed 13 August 2020, <https://csrc.nist.gov/glossary/term/information>.

⁵United States Special Operations Command, *Operating in the Human Domain*.

⁶Department of the Army, *ADP/ADRP 1-02 Operational Terms and Military Symbols*.

⁷Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint and National Intelligence Support to Military Operations*, Joint Publication 2-01 (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017).

⁸Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Special Operations*, Joint Publication 3-05 (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014)

⁹United States Special Operations Command J5, *A More Perfect Union: A Theory of SOF in Competition*, USSOCOM Competition Series (DRAFT), UNCLASSIFIED USSOCOM internal document not available to the public.

¹⁰USSOCOM, *Operating in the Human Domain Version 1.0–Operating Concept* (MacDill, FL: USSOCOM, 2015).

¹¹Marcus Canzoneri and David Walther, *Issues, Goals, Influence, Vulnerabilities, Opportunities (IGIVO): Key Intelligence Considerations for Irregular Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Defense Intelligence Agency, 2017).

¹²Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, (New York, NY, Penguin, 2013).

¹³USSOCOM Posture Statement before the 116th Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, 30 April 2020.

¹⁴F3EAD means: Find: identify and locate a target; Fix: keep under surveillance; Finish: kinetic or non-kinetic; capture, kill, disrupt, influence etc.; Exploit: examine, analyze, and process information/material gained; Analyze: information gained turns to intelligence; Disseminate: broadly provide info and intelligence derived. Acronym derived from: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, (Washington D.C.: The Joint Staff, June 2020),

¹⁵“SOF Truths,” USSOCOM, accessed 13 August 2020, <https://www.socom.mil/about/sof-truths>.

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