Australian Special Operations: Principles and Considerations

Ian Langford

Executive Summary

Australian Special Operations and the performance of our Special Forces have long been objects of fascination to many. Yet despite this interest and the proven utility of Special Forces, especially since the terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001 and the Bali terrorist attacks on Australians in 2002, Special Forces (unlike Land, Maritime, and Air Forces) have not been defined by a universally accepted theory of employment. This paper seeks to aid military planners by explaining the principles and considerations for the employment of Australian Special Forces. In an age of persistent conflict, where the utility of military force is judged on the ability to consistently 'overmatch' an adversary as well as solve complex problems, military commanders and planners must continue to embrace the enduring need to continually transform Special Operations capabilities, whilst at the same time protect those immutable core values, premises and employment principles that define it's culture and organisation.

The Author

LTCOL Ian Langford is a career Infantry officer with an interest in Special Forces. He has commanded at the Platoon, Company, Task Group, Joint Task Force, and Regimental level. He has served in East Timor, Solomon Islands, Bougainville, Afghanistan, the South-West Pacific, Iraq, Israel, Syria, Lebanon and on domestic counter terrorism duties.

There is a need for a theory of special operations to guide the application of SF to strategic ends beyond the ad hoc, immediate, and creative mind of the military planner implementing strategy.[1]

Robert G. Spulak

Introduction

Australian special operations (SO) and the strategic performance of the nation's Special Forces (SF) have long been objects of fascination for the Australian public. Yet, despite an impressive history, there is no clearly documented description of the operational art and science of this unique capability.[2] This absence of a clear set of employment principles is somewhat at odds with the support and priority that SF receives. How can supported environmental, functional, intergovernmental, interagency or multinational commanders employ SF effectively without some understanding of the nature of SF employment and the skills of SF operators? What will inform the decision-making of senior commanders who employ SF in a joint force? This paper will explain the principles and considerations underpinning the employment of Australian SF and why successful SO appear to defy conventional wisdom and many of the theories and applications of warfare.

The employment of SF generally sees them pitted against an adversary with superior conventional mass, firepower and mobility platforms. According to the commonly accepted understanding of contemporary military operations, these factors should spell defeat; yet, time and again, these missions succeed. This paper seeks to provide some understanding of the principles and considerations of SO, explaining how the combination of premises and principles can set the conditions for mission success against the odds. Further discussion in the later sections concerns potential future tasks for SF and includes some comment on SF culture as an organisational driver which serves to contextualise this study.

While Australian SF may share similar characteristics with other international special operations forces partners, there are elements of national strategic culture and peculiarities in its use by the Australian government that make this capability

distinctly Australian. Unlike some international counterparts, Australian SF does not 'tier' its forces into a hierarchy; it does not specialise, but instead generalises the capability across a smaller, highly trained cadre of regular and reserve forces. Australian SF are also distinguished by a 'consensus' system of decision-making which often slows the speed of decision, but also makes it more considered than other coalition decision models. Australian SF are also most effective as a politico-strategic tool (as a national mission force), but are scalable and sufficiently flexible for their employment spectrum to span the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war.

The need to define Australian special operations

There must exist something in addition to its soldiers and tanks and guns — a concept, a strategy, a notion of who it is and what it wants to be, of what it is about and what it wants to be about.[3]

Carl H. Builder

There are many elements within the government and ADF that claim to conduct 'SF-like' activities, sanctioned or otherwise. The disparate nature of law enforcement in Australia means that there are several agencies both within the state jurisdictions and at the federal level that conduct activities not altogether dissimilar to SO. Other nations apply varying definitions to their own brand of SF which are often used inaccurately to define Australian SF and SO.

The profession of arms generally prefers not to limit itself to employment models or paradigms. Practical knowledge, recent history and imitation have acted in the past as semi-effective substitutes for applied knowledge. These provide mental constructs — they set patterns and describe the natural law behind theoretical logic and design. Today, SO and SF in Australia are defined by a loose set of mottos, self-descriptions and provisional military doctrine.[4] None of this accurately describes Australian SO.

Maritime, land and air power have long been the subject of deep theoretical study. Strategists such as Alfred Thayer-Mahan, Sir Julian Corbett, Basil Liddell-Hart, William Mitchell and John Warden have drawn on fully developed concepts to underpin their theoretical and philosophical studies. Such concepts have been proven, disproven, or remain as yet unproven on the battlefields of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. SO have not enjoyed a similarly long term theoretical

gestation period. The most important contribution to date has come not from academia, but from an SO practitioner — US Admiral William McRaven in his 1995 book *Spec Ops – Case studies in Special Operations*.[5] There have also been some important contributions from the British academic Maurice Tugwell.

US special operations

William McRaven's theory of SO is based on the premise that 'special operations work because they seek to reduce warfare to its simplest level and thereby limit the negative effects of chance, uncertainty, and the enemy's will.'[6] McRaven's thesis is based on the concept of relative superiority — the ability to overcome relative friction at relative points.[7] According to McRaven, relative superiority is characterised by three basic attributes. First, 'relative superiority favours small forces' because 'large forces are more susceptible to friction'. Second, relative superiority must be achieved at the decisive moment in an engagement and, once achieved, it must be sustained throughout. Third, if lost, relative superiority is difficult to regain.[8]

McRaven wrote that relative superiority is achieved through the application of six interdependent and synergistic principles in environments that favour SO:

> **Simplicity.** Simplicity is achieved by limiting the number of tactical objectives to only those that are vital. High quality intelligence to limit the unknown factors and number of variables is essential, and innovations in equipment and tactics are crucial to overcome obstacles that may compromise surprise and speed.

> **Security**. Security results from denying the enemy prior warning of an operation. It is focused more on the denial of knowledge of timing and methods rather than the possibility of an attack.

> **Repetition**. Repetition is the term used for practice and rehearsal. It is conducted both at the individual skills and collective planning levels, and is designed to reveal weaknesses in the operation prior to its execution.

> **Surprise**. Surprise is achieved by catching the enemy off guard through deception, timing and exploitation of his vulnerabilities.

> **Speed**. Speed enables the force to reach the objective as quickly as possible so as to limit vulnerability and enhance the opportunity to achieve relative superiority.

> **Purpose**. Purpose is the prime objective of the mission, inculcated in each member of the attacking force, resulting in an understanding of and a personal commitment to its accomplishment.[9]

McRaven concluded his book by stating that, above all else, successful SO are characterised by 'a simple plan, carefully concealed, repeatedly and realistically rehearsed, and executed with surprise, speed, and a unified purpose.'[10]

McRaven's theory has been used in Australia over the past 10 to 15 years, in part because the direct action case studies included in his book have been directly applicable to Australian SO in the post-September 11 environment. Generally, however, McRaven's thesis does not provide a unified theory of Australian SO because its primary focus is limited to a single mission type. Nonetheless, his insights and conclusions have been invaluable in informing Australian understanding of the theory and employment of SO.

An important distinction between US SF and their Australian counterparts lies in the way the respective SO are formulated and then authorised. The US government is built on a republican system, with the power and authority for military action invested in the President (as the Commander-in-Chief). Combatant commanders draw their deployment authority directly from the President. Strictly speaking, they do not seek clearance through the Secretary (or Congress) for operational matters. Thus the 'bias for action' behind the use of these forces lies at the highest level of decision-making.

British special operations

Maurice Tugwell is a British SO academic of note who proposed a definition of British SO as 'small-scale, clandestine, covert or overt operations of an unorthodox and frequently high risk nature, undertaken to achieve significant political or military objectives in support of foreign policy.'[11]

Based on this definition, Tugwell argued that SO must be characterised by several key features:

> **Small scale**. The quantity and quality of military forces are inversely related. SF must comprise a small group of personnel capable of the physical and psychological demands of operations within a SO environment. While quantity is important in tasks such as 'heavy raiding' (direct action), this single task must not dilute that element of the force required for the most sensitive and technical tasks performed by SF.

> **Clandestine, covert or overt**. SF must be able to conduct operations that are deniable, hidden and declared. This covers the broad span of tasks performed by these forces, ranging from special reconnaissance through to direct action.

Unorthodox. SF should seek to employ unorthodox methods using non-traditional military equipment, weapons and tactics, which often provide the personnel and tasks their 'special' flavour. Such methods are unlikely to become orthodox due to their unsuitability for the broader conventional force. This becomes an organisational driver for SF, encouraging imagination and innovation in its members.

High risk. By their nature, SF missions are high risk. Force ratios, physical counter-measures and poor intelligence contribute to a risk profile that makes the task unsuitable for conventional force elements. SF, as part of their remit, manage risk through the selection, training and resourcing of their personnel.

SO must possess a significant political or strategic purpose. SF operations should be conducted at the strategic level of war and policy. This suggests that the tactical employment of these forces is inappropriate given the skill and resources afforded to SF. Yet the history of SO is littered with tactical-level missions that have become critical to campaigns but not necessarily to strategy. The use of the term 'significant' rather than 'strategic' supports this assertion and acknowledges this by not tying future SO solely to the strategic level of warfare.

Importantly, Tugwell argues that SF possess the potential for great strategic utility. However this can only be realised by military leaders and politicians who understand their potential and therefore create the opportunity for its application.

In Australia, the decision to commit military forces lies with the Commonwealth government. Unlike the US, where the President retains the authority to commit forces to military action without the need to seek permission from Congress, Australia does not invest this authority in a single person. Rather, these decisions are made by Cabinet, on advice from the National Security Committee, and are characterised by the need for consensus decision-making. In contrast to the US and British systems, military force (which in Australia consumes much less of the national budget than in the US and Britain) comprises 'response options' which are considered within a broader national security framework. Thus, in Australia, the bias for (military) action assumes less relevance than in the US and Britain because it is often used in combination with other non-military elements of national power. This decision architecture means that Australian SF are more often beholden to consensus-driven government decision processes that are necessarily more protracted than a US-style approach. This adversely affects their ability to achieve

an 'early influence'. In addition, the US sees itself as the global hegemony and acts accordingly. Australia views itself as a regional leader, is not without peer, and therefore cannot act with the impunity of the US (and, to a lesser extent, Britain) in its privileged position as the global superpower.

Principles and Considerations of Australian Special Forces

[SO] are not just ordinary military operations writ small; they are qualitatively different.[12]

SF and SO are not unique to Australia. Many countries have some form of 'special' capability. Some of the operating methodologies are similar, and a recent common history as a result of the Global War on Terror has meant that SF are constantly influenced by their work with partner forces. Nonetheless, Australian values, strategic outlook, culture and experience have made the conduct of SO by Australian SF distinct and these differences give rise to a particular style of thought, methodology and construct. A unified set of definitions, principles and considerations that describes Australian SO would also explain the nature, value and application of the capability and identify its inherent structural tensions.

So what defines an 'Australian' special operation? For the purpose of this paper, it is defined as a military operation conducted by SF and generally undertaken to achieve or support significant political or military objectives in support of national security and foreign policy objectives. SO are conducted throughout the operational spectrum and employ unique forms of tactical techniques, equipment and training.

It is similarly useful to define 'Australian' SF. SF are specially selected, trained and equipped personnel who conduct SO. SF are characterised by their composition of selected personnel with specialised individual competencies who use rapidly acquired and technologically advanced equipment and possess high levels of training and education.

Since the establishment of an Australian SF capability, its personnel have been defined by their intellect, role and philosophical approach to warfare. They have routinely demonstrated their ability to survive and thrive in environments of ambiguity, complexity and confusion. SF personnel have evolved from the toughened commandos of 'M' and 'Z' Special Force in the Second World War to today's personnel who are capable of adapting and thinking through the type of complex situations common to modern conflicts such as in Iraq and Afghanistan. These are environments that require language proficiency, cultural awareness, political sensitivity and the ability to use information age technology in combination with the extant military and weapon skills that define their role in the military — in essence, they must be 'soldier-diplomats'. A continued emphasis on technical excellence, professional mastery and the individual human as the most important component of the capability defines the cultural tenets of the SF organisation.

In recognising the priority that Australian SF place on the quality of their people, any examination of Australian SF and SO must also include some consideration of the employment traits that SF hold as 'immutable maxims'. Building on the Australian Army's core values (courage, initiative, respect and teamwork)[13] the Australian SF employment traits comprise:

- the SF operator is the core capability and the most important asset
- SF demand professional mastery and relentlessly pursue operational excellence
- SF cannot be mass-produced
- non-SF supporting actions enable SO
- SF must provide relevant response options in all security environments.[14]

These definitions of SF employment traits provide a basis for the articulation of an Australian theory of SO. This theory covers the spectrum of tasks performed by Australian SF.[15]

Australia's values, strategic culture and experience make the Australian employment of SF distinctive. This distinctiveness is captured in a set of premises that define SO and employment principles that govern the application of SF in an Australian context. Together, these define a unified framework to support SF's potential future evolution.

Premise 1: SF are a military capability with political utility.

SF exist as a distinct force and instrument within the military element of national power. Although they constitute a capability within the Army, once force assigned to an operation, they sit alongside the other land, maritime, air, cyber and space components within a joint task force. SF's autonomy within an operational task force has been practised and confirmed by the operational experiences of the past 15 years. Of note has been SF employment at strategically important phases of military operations, such as its missions in Iraq in 2003, and counter-terrorism missions against government-directed targets such as the North Korean drug ship *Pong-Su* in 2004. In a military sense, SF constitute a highly flexible, low-cost tool which the government uses (in preference to other larger, more costly military options) to generate a direct effect towards a strategic outcome. The employment of SF in times of uncertainty can generate strategic control and influence during decisive points in an operation. This can take the form of a commitment to an international coalition or the ability to achieve a 'strategic poise' to act as a deterrent or enable the government to demonstrate its political intent to commit to an operation through targeted engagement.[16]

Premise 2: SF are part of the Army and ADF and are subject to the obligations inherent in the profession of arms

While this premise appears to be a simple statement of the obvious, the decision to conduct SO and the fundamental capability inputs that sustain them are subject to the normative constraints that affect the total force. International laws of armed conflict, the *Defence Act* and just war theory apply as much to SF as they do to the rest of the ADF. Every SF action must be justified in legal, moral and ethical terms. Political decision-making, the Australian government's strategic assessments cycle and military convention are important considerations in an Australian context because they are distinct from Australia's allied partners. Thus they must not be so far removed from accepted Australian convention as to be considered illegitimate in that context.

Like their Army and ADF counterparts, SF are also vulnerable to fiscal and resource limitations when cost reduction becomes an organisational imperative. SF commanders must justify their proportional value in terms of other military capabilities, particularly when reductions in resourcing require cuts to capability. SF do not exist in a vacuum; their worth as an organisation within the ADF is not necessarily self-evident and is subject to review. What makes SF highly attractive is their ability to provide a low cost, cutting-edge strategic response during national security crises when alternative response options may be cost prohibitive or unacceptable due to the level of risk to capital assets such as ships, aircraft or a large body of troops.

Premise 3: SF operate at the very edge of technological and philosophical development.

SF are often the nation's first responders to emerging national security crises. The nature and complexity of their tasks generally require the employment of the latest military, scientific and technological initiatives. The need for versatile, adaptable and agile solutions to complex military problems underpins SF's ability to generate creative and effective solutions. Technological developments include military and commercial off-the-shelf procurements, as well as 'adaptive' acquisition in which the rapid securing of cutting-edge technologies supports an SF capability that is technologically superior to its peers and rivals.

SO are characterised by technologically developed small unit precision lethality, focused and fused intelligence, interagency support and integrated battle command systems. All equipment and employment modernisation initiatives must be underpinned by an intellectual foundation that is strategically focused. SF require a doctrine based on a philosophy steeped in the application of SO effects through direct and indirect means. This doctrine must be subject to continuous review and 'dynamic learning loops' capable of integrating 'best practice' tactics, techniques and procedures so as to maintain a capability edge over an adversary who in turn is actively modernising his approach to war and conflict.

Premise 4: SF relies on conventional force capabilities — they are complementary, integrative and mutually supportive force multipliers.

SF and the conventional force are mutually complementary. SF are beholden to the conventional force for their strategic force generation, enablement and support systems. While SF function in ways that are unique, they are nonetheless required to integrate with the conventional force in situations such as the seizure of points of entry to foreign countries, the handover of responsibilities to other forces, and the integration of military forces into a common joint force. SF are also responsible to the Army for the continuous transfer of relevant skills to the conventional force as part of the Army's learning and improvement process.

As the Army and the ADF modernise, SF will need to rely increasingly on non-SO platforms and projects to supplement capability. The employment of air manoeuvre assets, long-range maritime surface assault craft, strategic communications, logistic support, unmanned and automated systems, offensive fires and tactical cyber and space capabilities will most probably draw on the broader ADF inventory. In the conflicts of the future, SF force generation as a total capability will rely heavily on the conventional ADF. The qualitative development of this capability will be largely determined by how well SF embrace the conventional force enablers required to generate the total force package.

Premise 5: SF are relevant and employable at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war.

Australian SF are relevant to all levels of war. They can unilaterally or collectively perform the key Australian strategic military tasks of 'shaping, understanding, assisting, deterring, denying, and defeating'.[17] When appropriately applied, SO can achieve national objectives, either directly or indirectly. SF can act singly or as a member of bilateral or multilateral joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational efforts. SF can act independently of conventional forces or in supporting and supported roles to augment conventional forces at the strategic, operational and tactical levels.

Importantly, SF should not seek to imitate or replicate the conventional force. SF conduct missions that harness the distinctive nature of the personnel, doctrine, organisation, technology and equipment that characterises these forces. SO should therefore only be conducted where there is a clear and obvious need for an unconventional or SO-type response. All other missions should be allocated to the conventional force, in accordance with its readiness cycle and capability.[18]

Premise 6: SF organisational culture encourages creativity, adaptability, flexibility and high performance in personnel and organisations.

Possessing a multiplicity of competencies, ideas and concepts is a necessary attribute for any special force. This can sometimes seem anathema to the hierarchical and bureaucratic structures and processes typical of organisations such as the military. To the casual observer, SF behaviours such as unorthodox dress standards (typically employed to lower the signature of SO) are signs of unprofessional behaviour. However this is simply part of a carefully crafted response to an environment. The innovative nature and meticulous attention to detail that underpins SF deliberate planning provides an indication of the true nature of SO. Individual and team competencies are highly valued and a commitment to the constant pursuit of professional mastery is expected. These actions, guided by SF's core values, underpin the focus and commitment of the organisation. While rank and organisation are highly useful and necessary traits that assist in the exercise of control, the flexibility and adaptability applied by SF are recognised as critical mission factors. Mission context and first-hand experience are critical factors that affect the functioning of the force.

Premise 7: SF are enhanced by selectivity in personnel and technology.

Selectivity in personnel empowers SF in the same way that it does the Army in its recruiting and force generation processes. Different organisations, including SF, have valuable attributes that are critical to the effective conduct of SO. These attributes are further enhanced by SF training, culture, technology and experience. As a consequence, SF solicit and encourage different traits and characteristics peculiar to their *modus operandi*. The selective nature of SF also implies that these particular skills and attributes are distinctive and can be developed and nurtured within the SO environment.

As the SF core values underline, the selection and training of the core 'operator' is the basic unit of capability; professional mastery and the pursuit of operational excellence is expected, and SF cannot be mass-produced. These values are underpinned by the important filtering process that is SF selection. While there are some cultural elements of selection that need to be closely managed, its value as a force generation and force multiplication tool cannot be overstated.

Premise 8: SO concentrate on the human aspects of warfare.

The centrality of the human and the political dynamic as a way of understanding war is an important feature of SO. Given the nature of the threat environment, SF mission success is highly contingent on the forces' ability to effectively move, operate and survive inside an adversary's secure area. Technology, equipment, culture, training and education are important tools that allow SF to operate effectively. SF constantly seek to understand and leverage aspects of the operating environment in order to enhance their own capabilities, whether they be civilians, partner forces, other militaries, indigenous populations, political leaders, militias and enemies.[19] The ability to shape this element of the operating domain, designing concepts to avoid and concepts to win inside conflict relative to the human aspects of war and violence, are the keys to success, particularly where a subtle effect from a SO force element is required in order to persuade or influence the decision of a key personality or element within the human domain.

Premise 9: SF has a deep and enduring relationship with the Australian intelligence community, other coalition SF and relevant security force providers across the operational spectrum.

SF must have a deep and reciprocal relationship with all intelligence stakeholders, partner SF and other relevant security providers. Unlike other nations' SF, whose organic assets are often capable of fully enabling their own operations, Australian SO rely on fused intelligence to enable their actions and activities. Foreknowledge

is a key advantage in military operations and it is exploited by SF in the planning, rehearsal, conduct and exploitation of all missions. SF are a learning 'system' and thus draw heavily on information and intelligence that provide them an advantage over others. The placement of liaison officers and the use of embed positions between SF and intelligence agencies should be encouraged. In addition, the creation of fixed infrastructures and 'hard wiring' between all parties helps to stabilise the constant passage of information required to enable joint planning. Over time, the deepening of these relationships produces a fulsome, habitual and mutual reliance based on a need to collaborate, share perspectives and de-conflict priorities to ensure success.

Premise 10: SO is a precious and vulnerable capability.

The value, legitimacy and significance of SF have been more readily appreciated in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. That said, SF have also been recognised as vulnerable to rapid and sudden capability loss owing to the high net training liability. This produces significant periods in which members may be 'selected' but not 'qualified' or when personnel retention rates suddenly decrease, resulting in capability loss given the Army's inability to 'mass-produce' SF in the face of a sudden exodus. At current manning levels, there is just one SF operator for every 24 members of the Australian Army.[20] This figure provides some indication of the relative size of the SO force and of those vulnerabilities that require close management. It takes up to two years to qualify a basic SF soldier, representing a significant investment. However this is simply the start point for a decade of continuous training and investment in individuals who are constantly trained, tested and validated for their core martial skills.

The technical skills of SF are a continuing source of strength, but one that comes with a vulnerability — these skills are highly perishable and must be constantly practised. They are also resource intensive. Skills such as joint targeting, specialist parachute skills, helicopter deck landing qualifications, CBRNE environmental exposure, shooting skills, mountain and cold weather operating skills, and sub-surface manoeuvre skills take time to learn and are resource intensive. Yet they are absolutely essential if Australian SF are to maintain their position at the forefront of the international SO community. In an era of fiscal tightening, SF are potentially exposed to capability degradation should they be unable to maintain the currency of their skills.

Employment principles of Australian Special Forces

While there is a common perception in the military that SF are reluctant to be defined by a general set of employment principles, there are planning, rehearsal and execution traits that provide a baseline set of principles to support a characterisation of SO. Underpinning these principles are the immutable maxims of war that are equally relevant for SF and conventional forces. The principles of war apply to all conflicts. What is often different, however, is the emphasis and interpretation of these tenets by SF. For example, the principle of the concentration of effort allows conventional forces to apply combat power at decisive points in order to achieve mass. Yet it is almost impossible for SF to generate a conventional mass or overmatch against an adversary. Rather, it is relative superiority that is the crucial element of this principle for the conduct of SO. SF overmatch is made possible by the ability to pinpoint precisely where to surgically apply effects at decisive points in order to defeat the adversary plan. This is achieved through intelligence, speed and surprise, and its application becomes a concept aim-point when SO are devised and planned. A number of principles have been developed for the planning of SO based on the work of McRaven and several other contributors.[21]

Principle 1: Unified actions

The selection of the mission aim provides the sense of purpose required to crystallise the senior decision-maker's intent and incorporate this into the mission purpose and roles. For SF, it is critical that all members of the mission team intuitively understand the aims and objectives of all missions, as well as the nature of the strategic circumstances in which they operate. The mission aim is analysed through joint planning and delegation of authority, a compressed chain of command, coordination and communication that is 'flat' (dynamic) rather than 'long' (hierarchical), all aimed at achieving unambiguous guidance and mission purpose. During planning, the mission analysis phase of the joint military appreciation process represents the critical moment at which mission aims, intent and objectives must be clearly stated. The success of SO depends largely on an ability to develop unorthodox means to overcome complex problems. For mission and political risk to be correctly managed, SF must be able to select which tasks are achievable and whether or not their intended aim is appropriate and feasible.

Principle 2: Integrated and inclusive

SO involve all agencies. SF rely on the decisions, support infrastructure and resources of many external organisations to effectively generate capability. The integration of all elements of national power to support an SO mission or objective is essential to mission success. Being 'integrated and inclusive' also implies an ability to effectively manage threats and take advantage of opportunities through the embedding of SF into whole-of-government organisations as part of normal business. Joint task forces such as those that reside within Australia's National Counter Terrorism Plan and Interdepartmental Emergency Task Forces that coordinate Australia's response to emerging crises are not anomalous — they are the only recognised system of crisis management that supports Australia's National Security Committee of Cabinet. For SF to provide even the most basic of response options, it must be acknowledged that they are beholden to a predominantly non-SF security architecture. SF must therefore possess an intimate knowledge of all stakeholders within this process, understand their aims and objectives and recognise how best to support them. This includes an understanding of the culture, processes and organisational perspectives of the supporting agencies.

Since the rapid mobilisation in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Australian SF have evolved significantly to a point where they have now achieved recognition by political and military decision-makers as strategic instruments and elements of national power. This is a trust that is hard won and easily lost, and SF commanders and leaders must ensure that the future divide between SF and all other military and non-military forces is viewed less as a barrier and more as simply a task threshold between various components of the national security enterprise.

Principle 3: Relevance

SF must be complex problem-solvers. They must be able to generate solutions to any problem, thus ensuring their relevance to all situations. In one sense, SF provide a buffer allowing SO to be rapidly generated in response to an immediate crisis, thus buying time for the development of a more permanent and enduring conventional solution. In order to achieve this however, SF must be relevant to all problems. This requires a cognitive approach to situations without precedent, requiring SF to develop a deep understanding of the operating environment, adversary threats, the nature of government and its decision cycles, and the ability to be both orthodox and unorthodox as the situation requires and as the force composition allows. Being 'relevant' also means being efficient and therefore effective, particularly in an ADF which is becoming increasingly cost-conscious

in era of fiscal austerity. In the past 30 years, SF have been called on to perform a broad variety of non-traditional tasks that have included the seizure of illegally caught Patagonian tooth-fish, the detention of drug ships, the provision of training support to partners and security forces and support to policing organisations including the Australian Federal Police, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Hostage Rescue Team).

Principle 4: Readiness

In the SF context, the principle of readiness has two major applications. First, readiness means being prepared. The ability of SF to seize and retain operational initiative is the result of maintaining significant capabilities on 'no notice' levels of readiness. This requires equipment, personnel and operating resources to be permanently responsive to a sudden and unexpected crisis. This application is primarily attitudinal and is often demonstrated through SF deployment schedules that are capable of responding to an immediate operational deployment. Since 1999, SF have often deployed directly from an exercise to an operational theatre and immediately commenced combat operations.[22] This 'speed of action' often translates into a 'bias for action' as SF are always ready to provide entrepreneurial response options. This has proven highly effective in allowing SF to rapidly deploy to operational environments that lie throughout the vast global commons, be it central Asia, South-East Asia or the South-West Pacific environs.

The second application of readiness concerns mission tempo and response. SF must act so rapidly throughout the physical, temporal, cognitive, informational and electro-magnetic domains that they effectively deny the adversary an opportunity to respond on their own terms. By overwhelming their response options through superior tempo, SF invert the principles of mass and instead achieve relative superiority at the decisive point in the operation, thus rendering the adversary's mass redundant, perhaps even irrelevant.

Principle 5: Surprise

SF achieve surprise by defeating an adversary plan rather than the adversary force itself. This is effected through the application of manoeuvre theory. Surprise can be achieved through the skilled employment of intelligence, operational security, concealment, deception, timing, speed (of action), audacity and technology. In order to achieve surprise, SF must be dynamic and decisive in planning, scrupulous in rehearsal and bold in execution. Surprise is also a means to achieve relative superiority, which is particularly important when operating in a high threat

or high risk environment. When combined with the principle of speed, the effective application of surprise is the key employment principle for SO at the tactical level. However the achievement of surprise is vulnerable to any lapse in operational security.

Principle 6: Decision superiority

'Decision superiority' is the term used to describe SF offensive manoeuvre and actions which place the adversary under intense psychological pressure designed to produce a sudden and total loss of situational awareness and rob him of his willingness to fight. To achieve this, SF must accept and mitigate a higher degree of risk to increase their understanding of the operating environment. This mitigation can be achieved through a combination of surprise, speed and effective target selection. Direct action missions, unconventional warfare, asymmetric attack and stand-off attack are typical of the types of mission profiles that create this effect. The defeat of the adversary decision cycle also allows the SF commander to undermine a numerically superior adversary by hitting pre-determined decisive points to avoid an attritional engagement which could become a contest of firepower and manoeuvre.

The Future of Australian Special Forces

The shape of SF over the coming decade will be significantly influenced by a number of factors including the dynamic character of conflict, changes to Australia's national security architecture, the nature of future security challenges and increasing competition for resources within a cost-conscious ADF. SF must seek to broaden its capability aperture beyond this past decade's focus on counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations without squandering the lessons learnt from over 13 years of continuous deployment on a variety of operations. The end of operations in Uruzgan Province should not see SF forfeit the technological, procedural and organisational developments that have resulted from operations in this theatre.[23]

Predicting the exact form and function of SF over the coming decade is fraught with risk. While force structures and personnel numbers are likely to remain relatively fixed, the types of mission and the nature of the adversary present such a variety of challenges that it is difficult to rule any particular task in or out. What is clear however, is that there are four current and emergent challenges which SF will be expected to confront: disrupting violent extremism as part of a whole-of-government response; countering weapons of mass effect; defeating anti-access and area denial technologies; and waging influence (and shaping) campaigns in support of Australia's national security objectives.[24]

Disrupting violent extremism

The spread of violent extremism throughout the past decade has seen several violent extremist organisations effectively franchise themselves beyond their traditional home bases into disparate and disaggregated cells now located all over the world. This has had the concomitant effect of spreading the conflict beyond

regions such as Iraq and Afghanistan. The Bali bombing in 2002, the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in 2011, and the attack on the Boston Marathon in 2013, all originated from terrorist 'nodes' that are ideologically grouped and trained by global terrorist networks such as Al-Qaida. Given the disparate nature of these threats, the onus is on SF to support Australia's whole-of-government counter-terrorism response through initiatives such as the training of preferred partner forces, the enabling of those partner forces with intelligence and equipment, and the development of deep knowledge of operating areas through persistent presence and enduring engagement. In short, in meeting a violent extremist threat outside a direct military intervention, SF must generate a 'find and fix' effect which would allow a trained and enabled partner force to finish the operation.[25] This kind of proactive counter-terrorism will require greater emphasis on developing SF training and mentoring techniques rather than direct action.[26] In a command brief to the US Naval Postgraduate School students and faculty in 2008, the then Commander of US Special Operations Command, Admiral Eric Olsen, reinforced this point when he said, 'Direct Action is important, not decisive; Indirect Actions are decisive.'[27]

Early intervention can also influence a potential crisis before it occurs. Neutering or mitigating a crisis at its point of origin can effectively de-escalate or defuse the issue at the heart of the crisis. Australian SF have undergone a remarkable transformation since the ADF intervention in East Timor in 1999. Prior to this period, SF concentrated a high proportion of the domestic counter-terrorism capabilities, acting as the 'no fail' force element available to government as a weapon of last resort in a counter-terrorism event in Australia. Typical scenarios included resolving a siege-hostage situation or the recovery of an aircraft hijacked by terrorists. These missions assumed real importance, and continue to do so to this day. SF are optimised to respond to this type of threat and are typically expected to provide a direct action mission set to resolve a crisis.

In contrast to the pattern of operations throughout the 1980s and 1990s, SF operations today are vastly more proactive, disparate in their nature, diverse in their mission type, and persistent in their ability to focus more heavily on external threats prior to their materialising. Importantly, these operations are whole-of-government in their design; an interagency capability is now regarded as a core requirement for SO.

The principal challenge for SF in terms of supporting national efforts to confront the violent extremist threat lies in maintaining a continuous cycle of innovation to keep pace with the adversary adaptation cycle. For example, how do SF sift civilian populations to locate terrorists dressed in local garb? How do SF continue to

expand their operations and intelligence fusion into a habitual process? How does Australia build an effective counter-terrorism network that includes conventional forces, coalition partners, non-government agencies, interagency partners, all of whom have little history of working together?

The answer lies in the creation of an integrated joint initiative termed a 'virtuous cycle'. This requires the embedding of targeting boards, effects boards, interagency task forces, quarterly intelligence synchronisation meetings, and the 'normalising' of a whole-of-government process that operationalises all processes into a (virtual) standing counter-terrorism cycle. Such a cycle will enable the kind of collaboration that is essential if Australia is to remain responsive to the changing nature of the threat. One mission must lead to another, which in turn influences capability, research and equipment procurement cycles.

SF innovation will also be critical to maintaining Australia's capability learning loops. The transition of forces post-Afghanistan must not spell the end of 'discovery learning', particularly in the areas of unmanned systems, intelligence fusion (including the use of joint interagency task forces), broadband satellite communications, novel technologies, biometrics and sensitive site exploitation.[28]

Unmanned aerial systems will become integral to SO. These platforms can support intelligence collection, provide full motion video surveillance, wide area scanning, electronic intelligence and signals intelligence. In addition to conducting the 'find' and 'fix' of SF targets, this system is capable of providing a 'finish' through the direct application of kinetic fires on direction of the target engagement authority. The system is also capable of providing post-strike exploitation to confirm the target's destruction and effectively estimate collateral damage should this be required.[29]

Countering weapons of mass effect

As nascent nuclear powers continue to procure nuclear technologies and weapon capabilities, the threat of uncontrolled proliferation and diffusion of these assets into the hands of non-state actors and terrorists is likely to increase.[30] Terrorist groups currently operating in Syria and Libya have demonstrated a determination to procure and employ chemical weapons of mass effect against declared enemies.[31] Should Iran become a nuclear state, Saudi Arabia and Turkey may also seek the same capability as part of an emergent nuclear arms race. As the number and diffusion of these weapons increase, so too does the likelihood of a weapon being employed or distributed to a terrorist group. This represents a profound threat to peace and order in the Middle East and beyond.

SF form part of the vanguard of attempts to manage this threat throughout the globe. As the global counter-terrorism networks have illustrated throughout the past decade, a confederation of global SF partners is capable of broadening its role beyond global counter-terrorism to include global counter-proliferation. SF, as part of an Australian whole-of-government effort, can play a significant role in the detection and disruption of global weapons of mass effect programs.[32] Traditional SO functions, such as special reconnaissance, direct action, support operations (such as training assistance teams) and special recovery all form legitimate response options for governments to counter such threats. The use of SF to detain the North Korean drug ship, *Pong Su*, off the east coast of Australia in 2003 is one such example.

SF are capable of employing clandestine and novel techniques to detect weapons of mass effect despite the extraordinary measures taken to conceal weapons technology and programs. International law can be enforced through interdiction on the high seas, during transit through chokepoints, and by intelligence sharing with partner SF. In the event of a major conflict between nuclear states, in which Australia, as part of a coalition, was asked to contribute military forces, the location and identification of weapon stockpiles would be a priority task for SF. Assault forces must be prepared to enter sites, render weapons safe and recover them without releasing any weapon effects. This mission could probably only be conducted by SF, as the use of a precision munition, for example, would fail to safely neutralise the weapons of mass effect. SF also offer the ability to covertly secure weapons of mass effect through the use of an unconventional warfare program that employs an indigenous proxy force to act on its behalf. These forces could also be used to effect regime change in the event of a rogue dictator attempting to hijack his country's nuclear inventory for his own purposes.

Defeating anti-access and area denial capabilities

Access to all geographic areas that are critical to national security will remain an ongoing requirement for Australia. There are areas in east and south-east Asia that are particularly vulnerable to interdiction, notably in terms of trade routes and lines of communication such as the Malacca Straits and Torres Strait, which are vital commercial shipping lanes. The recent spread of advanced weapon technologies such as precision-guided anti-ship missiles implies that future adversaries may possess the means to construct anti-access and area denial systems that could undermine and disrupt Australia's military and non-military access to critical geographic chokepoints. These capabilities include precision-guided supersonic cruise missiles, fast attack craft, anti-satellite weapons, computer network attack

capabilities, advanced attack aircraft and integrated air defences. The proliferation of these systems may see Australia restricted to certain areas of the global commons at the behest of an adversary nation with the means to enforce its demands.

In the face of such threats, the ability to apply an asymmetric counter-measure through the precise employment of SF is likely to become more important over the coming decades. Alongside submarines, computer attack capabilities, stealth aircraft, and space-based weaponry, SF will form the basis from which Australia can penetrate an anti-access and area denial system without the need to risk a capital asset such as an ADF major fleet unit. The pairing of these assets, whether it be SF with submarines or SF with cyber attack capabilities, would provide a lethal combination against a broad range of conventional weapon systems by creating uncertainty in the minds of an adversary and thus providing an effective deterrent to conflict.

SF are capable of conducting special reconnaissance, early effect direct action, disruption through sabotage and deception, and in some instances offer an alternative to heavy investment in nouveau concepts such as Air-Sea Battle given their ability to attack an adversary command, control, communications, computer, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance system as a principal line of operation.[33] With an expansion of cyber and space weapon technologies over the coming decades, SF offer these capabilities the enabling access required to target an adversary in an area protected by anti-access and area denial systems that safeguard it from more conventional forces. Of equal importance in the future will be the development of technologies and manoeuvre platforms that are capable of penetrating integrated air defence systems (an undersea delivery system is one example), and developing the ability to defeat anti-access systems through the use of unconventional warfare (fomenting insurrection in a target area, for example) and proxy forces trained by SF to conduct SO to undermine an adversary's interests. The use of social media to access denied areas is another opportunity for SF that deserves consideration.

Waging influence campaigns

The proliferation of area denial technologies, combined with the increasing complexity of military interventions, imply that, in the future, countries such as Australia may seek to employ unconventional and indirect methods short of war to gain influence or assert control in pursuit of policy goals. A principal means for SF to facilitate this effect is through the partnering and training of regional and global indigenous forces. This type of partnering was most recently evident in Libya,

where anti-Gaddafi forces were trained and enabled by SF. More recently, support to the anti-Assad 'Free Syrian Army' provided another example of policy-makers' preference for proxy forces rather than conventional forces.[34]

SF have a long tradition of training partner forces of other nations to build indigenous capacity. This is a classic role, and will remain essential throughout this era of 'persistent conflict'. Partner force relationships often take many years to develop and are most effective when they are formed during periods of peace and stability. SF present an effective means to achieve influence because they are often easily paired with a counterpart 'special' force which is likely to wield significant influence within the foreign military. It is also an important element of shaping and maintenance of the balance of power within the international system. It is likely that, if Australia does not actively partner with regional nations (in turn gaining access and influence), other nations will fill that void, seeking to achieve their own foreign policy outcomes.

One of the means by which Australian SF can achieve influence throughout the region within the structure of a 'campaign' is through the ADF's Defence Cooperation Program (DCP). DCP is used by the ADF to pursue international engagement and is a critical component of its approach to managing the strategic environment. Through DCP, Australia seeks to build deeper strategic partnerships and contribute positively to the region's security and stability, while at the same time managing strategic uncertainty. Future defence engagement must continue to evolve in line with the changing character of the international system, which includes a more complex and interconnected Indo-Pacific region, underpinned by Asia's sustained economic growth and comprising a larger and more inclusive cohort of powerful Asian and non-aligned states. Australian SF are well placed to support DCP and Australia's national security strategy as part of a whole-of-government campaign that seeks to preserve and enhance Australia's interests throughout the global commons and in areas where control represents a means to achieve a security or military strategic objective. 'Influence campaigns' describe one method used by SF to achieve regional access, control and influence through the use of proxy forces.[35]

While SF will maintain their focus on training partner forces throughout an influence campaign, they will also need to be prepared to partner with these forces as combat advisers. This requires the development of a deep relationship with partner forces, with a particular emphasis on key leaders. An understanding of local culture and language will be essential to achieve the appropriate amount of leverage with

the partner force.[36] Another important element that must be considered is time. Influence campaigns take years to develop and conduct and therefore require a heavy investment from personnel. This employment model is anathema to traditional career modelling and will require special dispensation on the part of military career planners if the SF member is not to be disadvantaged as a result of being deployed for years at a time as part of the campaign design. There must also be an organisational imperative to improve foreign language proficiency (which incurs a training liability), update authorities for employing SF in training roles, and develop new technological capabilities that will equip future SF with the 'smart tools' required to conduct influence campaigns as part of a whole-of-government effort.

Influence campaigns are ideal for SF. They require small teams, up-skilled with language, culture and specialised skills, to operate in a disaggregated environment for protracted periods. They also require sound judgement, political savvy and the ability to operate in uncertain and non-permissive environments without overt support. While they present a degree of risk which policy-makers will be required to manage carefully, they present a significant opportunity to influence the operating environment to support Australia's national security interests. They also provide an effective asymmetrical defeat mechanism for many of the conventional anti-access and area denial systems currently operating throughout the international system.

Building Special Forces Culture

Commanding the [SF] Rangers was like driving a team of very high spirited horses. No effort was needed to get them to go forward. The problem was to hold them in check.[37]

William Darby

Australian SF has experienced significant growth since 2001. In that time, the emphasis to a certain degree has been on 'right-sizing' SF in an Australian Army which has also been tested by deployments to East Timor, Iraq, Afghanistan, Solomon Islands and other conflict zones. As operations in those theatres reach a conclusion, the emphasis for SF will shift towards reshaping roles and responsibilities to ensure that they are capable of meeting a broader array of challenges.

Given the emphasis on expeditionary capability development in Australia's recent *Defence White Paper*, future SF are likely to conduct more counter-terrorism and influence campaigns in addition to their traditional roles such as point of entry seizure, direct action, special reconnaissance and special recovery operations.[38] These 'early effect' operations will require a more proactive employment threshold and will involve partner forces from other nations. The challenge of nullifying, disrupting and defeating anti-access and area denial threats, weapons of mass effect and violent extremist organisations is unique and will test Australia's whole-of-government response. In addition, the skills required to preserve the traditional SF warfighting capability will multiply as the future operating environment becomes increasingly 'crowded, connected, collective, lethal, and constrained'.[39]

Underpinning the SF ability to achieve these tasks is culture. Organisational culture is described as:

> … an organization's expectations, experiences, philosophy, and values that hold it together, and is expressed in its self-image, inner workings, interactions with the outside world, and future expectations. It is based on shared attitudes, beliefs, customs, and written and unwritten rules that have been developed over time and are considered valid.[40]

While many of the traits and employment principles articulated in this paper reflect qualitative aspects of SF culture, there nonetheless remains a need to better define SF organisational culture beyond these important drivers. One of the most influential elements of service in SF is the selection process.

Selection as an organisational driver

Selection for SF is an essential component of the culture of the organisation. It is a vital process for SF force generation as it identifies those individuals who possess the appropriate physical and cognitive skills required to serve in the organisation. It is also a powerful cultural driver, much the same as initial Army recruit or officer training. This process enhances the individual's sense of achievement as one of the few who have successfully passed selection, and generates self-confidence resulting from challenging, difficult and hazardous training, often giving rise to an aura of invincibility and an intense loyalty to what is perceived as a very exclusive group.

An intimate bond among those who belong to the 'selected' group is generated through shared hardship and danger. This sense of separation from the military mass encourages the emergence of SF units that are more akin to militant clans than military organisations.[41] If unchecked, arrogance or aloofness bred from a cult of élitism develops and nurtures an 'in group' mentality that tends to be dangerously inwardly-focused. The group then trusts only those who have passed the rigorous selection standards and tests. These negative aspects often arise from an emphasis on the exclusivity of the 'warrior cult' and nurtures an unassailable belief that 'only those who have done it know, or can be trusted, or more dangerously yet, can give direction'.[42] In order to defeat this organisational challenge and focus on the positive aspects of the selection process, SF commanders must emphasise self-discipline and hierarchy; they must prioritise the group over the individual, and use specific rituals and symbols to convey important meanings and transitions.

Undeniably however, selection is all-important in the process of building SF capability. 'Our assessment and selection programs,' explained General Wayne Downing, a former commander of US Special Operations Command, 'are designed to get people who do things in an unconventional manner; who are accustomed to working in scenarios and in situations that are very unstructured ... our people will generally come up with a very novel approach of how to solve problems, and many times people on the conventional side of the armed forces are very uncomfortable because our people do not do things in the traditional ways.'[43]

The need for strong participative leadership

SF commanders and those in authority must always demonstrate virtue, honour, patriotism and subordination in all that they do. SF culture is built on a leadership model that is participative in nature but relies in turn on example-based leadership to inspire obedience from those in the organisation. This is particularly the case in ethical behaviour, where conduct characterised by double standards, poor moral lifestyle choices and ethical laziness sow the seeds of discontent. Unlike other elements of the Army, where authoritarian leadership can impress personnel to achieve results, SF culture *will* collapse into dysfunctional behaviour if commanders and leaders fail to inspire their subordinates through personal example. The SF leadership group must epitomise these personal values.

The broadest employment of reserve force personnel and females is also a practice that SF should continue to embrace, both from an organisational efficiency perspective and to encourage society to regard it as an 'employer of choice'. These are issues that strong, focused leadership can facilitate. The establishment of a 'floating pool' of former full-time, reserve SF is one way to support retention of the skills and capability of the total force. Movement into and outside the full-time component should be seen as a reflection of the modern, mobile workforce, and its effectiveness has been demonstrated through the use of reserve personnel on recent operations. Moreover, the opening of all positions to personnel based on pure ability rather than gender empowers all members of society to potentially join the organisation, and frees SF from reliance on a diminishing pool of white Anglo-Saxon males, the traditional domain of SF recruiting. All these initiatives require strong leadership, which in turn will positively influence culture and learning within SF.

Conclusion

The SF [operator] is one of our Nation's great assets: superbly trained, physically tough, culturally aware, an independent thinker — a quiet professional.[44]

General Charles Holland

The future rarely cooperates with any attempt to accurately forecast it. Given the size and complexity of the tasks and opportunities that lie ahead for Australian SF, decisions taken today regarding future force structure may take years to implement, and even longer to deliver tangible benefits. The 1997 raising of a full-time commando capability, for example, shaped a significant element of the force that would become integral to Australia's SF capability. This kind of tectonic shift in force structure and planning will continue to inform SF modernisation and organisation ensuring that it remains an effective and viable capability.

What this study seeks to describe is a brand of SF that is distinctly Australian. While undoubtedly Australian SF and their US counterpart have much in common, there are nonetheless significant differences that make Australian SF distinct. Australian SF do not 'tier' their forces; they do not specialise, but instead generalise the capability across a smaller, highly trained cadre of regular and reserve forces. Australian SF are subject to an established system of decision-making, often slowing the speed of the decision, but perhaps making it more considered than other coalition decision models. Australian SF are most effective as a strategic tool, are scalable and sufficiently flexible to provide an employment spectrum that spans the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war. These are some of the features

of Australian SF that make them unique, and justify the use of a single, unifying theory of employment to support the appropriate use of Australian SF by military policy-makers now and into the future.

To remain at the cutting edge of capability, SF cannot maintain a status quo. They must constantly adapt and redefine themselves, while protecting and adhering to the core values, premises and employment principles that define their organisation. This must also be recognised as an extremely fragile organisation, with a number of critical skills and equipment types vulnerable to sudden and catastrophic capability loss. This past decade has been defined by the counter-terrorism, man-hunting and swarming operations undertaken in countries such as Afghanistan. The coming decades will be different. Adopting a vision for SF that concentrates on the emergent threats from violent extremist organisations, the proliferation of weapons of mass effect, anti-access and area denial technologies and irregular forces will require a refocus to bring a closer integration with whole-of-government processes and initiatives. Only then can this nation ensure that its SF can contribute effectively at the strategic level and create an enduring rather than a limited effect in pursuit of Australia's national security objectives.

Endnotes

1 Robert G. Spulak, Jr., *A Theory of Special Operations: The Origin, Qualities, and Uses of SOF*, The JSOU Press, Hurlburt Field, Florida, 2007, p. 3.

2 The doctrine publications ADDP 3.12 *Special Operations*; LWD 9-1 *Employment of SOF*; LWD 9-1-3 *DA* and LWD 9-1-4 *SRO* do not adequately explain the underpinning logic for SO.

3 Carl H. Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1989, p. x.

4 ADDP 3.12, *Special Operations* (provisional), released in 2011, is the most recent ADF doctrine publication on SO.

5 William H. McRaven, *SPEC OPS: Case Studies in Special Operations: Theory and Practice*, Ballantine Books, New York, 1996. William Harry 'Bill' McRaven is a US Navy Admiral and is the current Commander of US Special Operations Command. He previously served as Commander, Joint Special Operations Command and as Commander, Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR). In addition to his duties as COMSOCEUR, he was designated inaugural director of the NATO Special Operations Forces Coordination Centre, where he was charged with enhancing the capabilities and interoperability of all NATO Special Operations Forces. McRaven's thesis at the Naval Postgraduate School, 'The Theory of Special Operations' has evolved into an unofficial description of SO and is acknowledged by countries such as Australia as a pre-eminent reference.

6 Ibid., p. 9.

7 'Friction' is the disparity between the ideal performance of units, organisations or systems and their actual performance in real world scenarios. See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1984 (1832), p. 87.

8 McRaven, *SPEC OPS*, pp. 8–23.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., p. 11.

11 Cited in Colin Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, Greenwood Press, US, 1986, p. 145. Tugwell was a career officer in the Parachute Regiment who served in the Second World War and a succession of colonial counterinsurgency operations. He served most notably in Ireland where he headed the black propaganda information policy unit which operated covertly in Northern Ireland. After leaving Ireland he transferred to Iran as an instructor at the Imperial Armed Forces College during the reign of the Shah. In 1976 Tugwell took up a defence fellowship at King's College, London.

12 Edward Luttwak et al., *A Systemic Review of "Commando" (Special Operations 1939-1980)'*, C&L Associates, Potomac, MD, 1982, S-1, quoted in Frank R. Barnett, B. Hugh Tovar and Richard H. Schultz (eds.), *Special Operations in US Strategy*, National Defense University Press, Washington D.C., 1984, p. 34.

13 Australian Army core values represent those fundamental values expected of all personnel serving in the Australian Army. See I'm an Australian Soldier, released by the Chief of the Australian Army, Lieutenant General Gillespie, in July 2008, and updated by the current Chief of the Army in July 2013, http://www.army.gov.au/Who-we-are/I-am-an-Australian-Soldier

14 This list reflects some crossover with the 'US SOF Truths' first articulated to US SOCOM in 1986. See John M. Collins, *U.S. and Soviet Special Operations*, House Armed Services Committee, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., 1986.

15 Tasks include but are not limited to: special reconnaissance, special recovery, support operations (including proxy and guerrilla warfare and special shaping operations) and direct action (including precision strike).

16 Since the ADF intervention in Bougainville, SF have been a critical component of all advance force operations, responsible for setting the conditions for the insertion of the conventional main joint task force.

17 'Shape, understand, assist, deter, deny, and defeat' are strategic effects described by the ADF in its strategic assessments cycle.

18 Examples of mission hand-off between SF and the conventional force include point target reconnaissance, security force assistance tasks, and opposed ship boarding in counter-piracy missions.

19 This is most evident during security force assistance, foreign internal defence and training assistance team tasks.

20 This figure is based on a 'total force' Army of 30,000 and a SOCOMD population of 2000.

21 See McRaven, *SPEC OPS*.

22 This occurred on Operation Astute (force elements deployed from Exercise Pitch Black) and Operation Quickstep (force elements deployed from Exercise Wyvern Sun).

23 Australia's mission in Uruzgan officially ended in 2013. See: http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/2013/06/03/minister-for-defence-visit-to-afghanistan-2/

24 These future mission sets are in some part drawn from Jim Thomas and Chris Dougherty, *Beyond the Ramparts: The Future of Special Operations Forces*, Centre for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Washington D.C., 2013.

25 Ibid., p. 6. See also Christopher J. Lamb and Evan Munsing, 'Secret Weapon: High-value Target Teams as an Organizational Innovation', *Strategic Perspectives*, National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies, No. 5, March 2011, p. 33.

26 Ibid., p. xi.

27 Major Christopher D. Pratt (US Army), *Permanent Presence for the Persistent Conflict: an Alternative Look at the Future of Special Forces*, graduate thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2009, p. 15.

28 This list is not exhaustive, but represents the most important capabilities that must be migrated from operations in Afghanistan to the broader SO capabilities suite.

29 For more information, see Major General Richard Comer (US Air Force, retired), 'AFSOC Year in Review: 2011-2012', *Defense Media Network*, August 2012, p. 2, http://www.defensemedianetwork. com/stories/afsoc-year-in-review-2011-2012/2/

30 Australian Government, *Defence White Paper 2013*, Department of Defence, Canberra, para 2.67 discusses Iran's attempts to develop a nuclear capability.

31 'Watch out: The West is nervous about Syria's chemical weaponry. How to curtail it?', *The Economist*, 2 July 2012, http://www.economist.com/node/21559671

32 Steven P. Bucci, Director, Douglas and Sarah Allison, Center for Foreign Policy Studies, Heritage Foundation, testimony before the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Non-proliferation, and Trade, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Counter-Proliferation Contingency Planning is needed for Syrian WMD*, 19 July 2012.

33 See General Norton A. Schwartz (US Air Force) and Admiral Jonathan W. Greenert (US Navy), 'Air-Sea Battle: Promoting Stability in an Era of Uncertainty', *The American Interest*, 20 February 2012.

34 In both instances, the United States and the United Kingdom (with UN-sponsored support from Australia) sought to effect regime change without having to use conventional ground forces.

35 For more information, see *Defence White Paper 2013*, pp. 55–71.

36   There is no better example of this than the Australian Special Operation Task Group in Afghanistan which has partnered with elements of the Provincial Response Company-Uruzgan since 2008 and the strike force from the National Directorate of Security since 2010.

37   William O. Darby and William H. Baumer, *Darby's Rangers. We Led the Way*, Presidio Press, Novato, CA, 1993, p. 184.

38   *Defence White Paper 2013*, pp. 28–31.

39   Australian Army, *Future Land Warfare Report 2013*, Department of Defence, Canberra, pp. 1–16, http://www.army.gov.au/Our-future/Publications/Key-Publications/Future-Land-Warfare-Report.

40   http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/organizational-culture.html

41   John Talbot, 'The Myth and Reality of the Paratrooper in the Algerian War', *Armed Forces and Society*, November 1976, p. 75; Eliot A. Cohen, *Commandos and Politicians*, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1978, p. 69; Donna Winslow, *The Canadian Airborne Regiment in Somalia. A Socio-cultural Inquiry,* Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia, Ottawa, 1997, pp. 135–41.

42   Winslow, *The Canadian Airborne Regiment in Somalia*, pp. 126–33.

43   Susan L. Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare. Rebuilding US Special Operations Forces*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C., 1997, pp. 47–48.

44   General Charles Holland, US Air Force, 'Quiet Professionals', *Armed Forces Journal International*, February 2002, p. 26.