

# **NATO, SOF And The Future Of The Alliance**

**A Monograph  
by  
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## **Abstract**

NATO, SOF and the Future of the Alliance, by MAJ Joseph M. Mouer, United States Army, 49 pages.

NATO continues to transform itself from a Cold-War institution. Originally designed to defend Western Europe from a conventional attack from the Soviet Union, the alliance is now extending its operational reach well beyond the borders of Europe. The realization that security for the alliance is integrated in the global security environment was first realized during the wars in the former Yugoslavia. During this conflict, NATO's Cold War structure proved inadequate to address security issues that emanated from outside the alliance but impacted on its security. Although NATO began experimenting with organizational restructuring immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Balkan crisis acted as a catalyst and pressured NATO into adopting the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) concept which provides NATO with greater operational flexibility. However, NATO is still primarily structured to conduct military operations against conventional nation-state entities as exemplified by the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), a corps-level reaction force. In order to successfully respond to the threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, NATO will require adopting changes in its organizational structure. This monograph recommends that NATO complete earlier transformational efforts by incorporating Special Operations Forces (SOF) into its permanent organizational structure to meet current and future challenges. The monograph argues NATO's current relevancy is undermined by the lack of an organic SOF command and control headquarters at the strategic and operational levels. There is robust internal capacity at the tactical level within NATO; missing are the operational and strategic headquarters necessary to leverage that Special Operations capability to conduct unilateral or combined operations across all levels of war. Without the effort to create such an organization within NATO, the alliance will be unable to respond effectively to asymmetric threats originating from outside North America and Europe.

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## INTRODUCTION

Created to protect postwar Western Europe from the Soviet Union, the alliance is now seeking to bring stability to other parts of the world. In the process, it is extending both its geographic reach and the range of its operations. In recent years, it has played peacekeeper in Afghanistan, trained security forces in Iraq, and given logistical support to the African Union's mission in Darfur. It assisted the tsunami relief effort in Indonesia and ferried supplies to victims of Hurricane Katrina in the United States and to those of a massive earthquake in Pakistan.

Foreign Affairs, Sept 06<sup>1</sup>

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been undergoing tremendous changes since the breakup of the Soviet Union. With a mandate to operate “out of area” or go “out of business”, NATO had been seeking ways to reorganize from a Cold War institution into a security organization capable of addressing many of the security concerns that have emerged since the fall of the Soviet Union. The effort to address organizational shortfalls, underway since 1989, received heightened attention during the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the mid-1990s. The wars in Bosnia and Kosovo forced NATO to conduct its first offensive military operations since its founding. Yet the highly integrated command and control structure which served NATO so well during the Cold War proved inadequate to meet the complex challenges found in post-Soviet Eastern Europe. In addition to conducting operations outside Western Europe, as envisioned by NATO’s founding mandate, the wars in the former Yugoslavia challenged NATO to begin the process of reassessing its organizational structures. Yet in spite of the wars in the former Yugoslavia, institutional inertia persisted. Indeed, Bosnia and Kosovo, still well within Europe, did not require NATO to seriously consider carrying out operations against threats emanating from more distant corners of the globe. This state of mind was shattered on September 11, 2001. After the attacks on New York and Washington D.C., NATO, first time in its history,

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<sup>1</sup>Ivo Daalder and James Goldgeier, “Global NATO,” *Journal of Foreign Affairs* (Sep-Oct 2006), 105-114.

invoked Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Article 5 states that an attack on one member is to be considered an attack on all members. As a result, NATO is currently conducting operations in places never envisioned by its members even just a few years ago. Yet the need to continue the process of institutional change continues. This monograph analyzes one such area of required change – NATO’s lack of an institutional or permanent Special Operations capability.

This monograph analyzes NATO’s post-Cold War efforts to transform the organization and argues that a Special Operations capable command and control structure is required for NATO to address many future security challenges. Without such a capability, NATO will not fully complete many of its ongoing transformational efforts and ultimately fall short of its potential to address future security threats. As alluded to earlier, the fall of the Soviet Union required NATO to respond to critics’ charge that the institution lacked relevancy. Chapter one describes NATO’s structure at the political/strategic level and argues that NATO is more relevant than ever before. As the Soviet Union dissolved, the many of the former Soviet states in Eastern Europe strived for NATO membership. This desire for NATO membership rests on two key motivations: the desire for protection against the possible re-emergence of an aggressive Russian state and a desire to move closer to Western Europe and its economic prosperity. With this expansion, NATO moved away from an organization comprised mainly of wealthy nations to an organization representing the political and security aspirations of 26 nations, many of whom had lived under the harsh economic conditions imposed on them by powerful enemies. Finally, chapter one shows that although individual NATO member nations possess Special Operations forces, those forces are not institutionalized within the NATO structure and thus NATO’s use of those forces are, at best, *ad hoc* and inefficient.

In chapter two, this monograph examines the history of NATO reorganization at the operational level with specific emphasis on NATO’s adoption of the Combined Joint Task Force (CJFT) concept. By analyzing the command and control structure currently adopted by NATO, it



is argued that NATO has in place a framework that combines the best elements of the integrated command and control structure used during the Cold War with the more flexible command and control functions adopted after the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo. Yet even with this flexible command structure, NATO has overlooked a key component necessary to provide adequate response to the challenges of the 21st Century: a Special Operations Component Command (SOCC). Indeed, under each of the Major Subordinate Commands (MSCs) within NATO, there can be found a Land Component Command (LCC), Maritime Component Command (MCC) and Air Component Command (ACC) to provide NATO with the ability to create a CJTF tailored to the specific requirements of the mission. Again, starkly lacking is the SOCC. Yet even with a SOCC in place, a few more questions require answering. For instance, what Special Operations capabilities should NATO possess? What missions would such a force be expected to perform? Chapter three analyzes European and North American SOF capacity and suggests possible compositions and capabilities of a NATO Special Operations Force (NATO SOF).

In chapter three this monograph provides specific recommendations on the composition and capabilities for NATO SOF. It is argued that NATO will require less direct action (DA) or special reconnaissance (SR) expertise than currently resides cumulatively within individual NATO member nations' forces. Instead, this monograph will posit that a balanced force capable of conducting a wide spectrum of Special Operations is more conducive to meeting NATO's future challenges. Specifically, it is contended that the model for NATO SOF should be the United States Army Special Forces (USSF). By modeling off this US Army force, NATO can develop a balanced force capable of both responding to crisis as well as developing long-term engagement operations within specific targeted countries deemed by the NATO leadership to pose future threats to European and North American security.

Currently, there is no institutionalized NATO SOF command and control nor forces dedicated to conduct Special Operations under alliance mandates. This grave lack of capability

severely limits NATO's ability to conduct the full spectrum of operations necessary to support OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM and OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM; it will also severely undermine the conduct of any future endeavors required of NATO forces. By creating a permanent command and control element such as those already existing to provide C2 to General Purpose forces (GPF), NATO can greatly enhance both its relevancy and ability for success in the 21st Century.

# CHAPTER ONE

## NATO: Past and Future

The North Atlantic Treaty, signed in Washington in April 1949, created an alliance for collective defense as defined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, from its inception NATO can be viewed as a complement to the United Nations' attested aspiration to promote global peace and stability. However, while the United Nations was conceived to promote the vision of global collective security, NATO was devised for a more specific purpose: defending Western Europe against the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> This is an important distinction and has had recent NATO planners and outside pundits questioning the role and relevancy of NATO in a post-Soviet global environment. It will be argued in this chapter that NATO remains not only relevant to North American and European stability but vitally so. Additionally, as the security of Europe and North America become increasingly tied to the global security climate, NATO's need to address security issues traditionally outside its sphere of influence will continue to grow. These pressures will require NATO not only to continue expanding into Eastern Europe, but more importantly, to leverage other global organizations outside of NATO's orbit and attempt to solve a wide variety of political and military issues before they are felt in Europe and North America.

## NATO Defined

It is important to note that NATO is as much a political organization as it is a military one, if not more so. As a political entity, NATO has the ability to leverage the combined political weight of its members to achieve its collective military goals. In the current conflict against terrorist organizations, this is no small thing. Terrorism preys upon the political will of its

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<sup>2</sup>*NATO Handbook 2006* (NATO Office of Information and Press: Brussels, Belgium), 9.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

opponents much more than it does on simple military considerations. To be sure, there will always be differences among NATO-member nations as to the specific application of military force necessary to deal with terrorism, but this fact does not undermine any collective political statement NATO makes opposing terrorist organizations that pose a significant threat to the collective security of its members.

NATO's political power has grown greatly with its expansion into Eastern Europe. Through the formal inclusion of former Warsaw Pact nations into the alliance, NATO has redefined its solely defensive military role and moved towards a political body whose clout is only exceeded by the United Nations itself. The power to leverage the political will of its members can translate into much needed political legitimacy when NATO undertakes any endeavor, military or otherwise. Historically, this has been the underlying reason for NATO's success against an aggressive Soviet Union and is depicted anecdotally by former United States Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral William Crowe. Crowe asked the late Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev why the Soviet Union never attacked into Europe. Akhromeyev's answer was that to attack one country meant to attack all 16 NATO members and that was more than the Soviet Union was willing to do.<sup>4</sup> This tale underscores the strength of the alliance. That NATO is currently comprised of 26 nations makes this tale even more poignant.

The specific mechanism by which NATO settles upon its goals is through a political body called North Atlantic Council (NAC).<sup>5</sup> The NAC is comprised of representatives from each alliance member and chaired by the NATO Secretary General who is appointed from among member nations to a four-year term.<sup>6</sup> The council is the political forum for NATO members to

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<sup>4</sup>Robert E. Hunter, "NATO in the 21st Century: A Strategic Vision," *Parameters*, Summer 1998, 15-29.

<sup>5</sup>NATO Handbook 2006, 34.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 74.

meet and discuss issues pertaining to policy or on-going operations.<sup>7</sup> Expansion of NATO to the current 26 nations has meant an equal increase to the number of countries on the council. Some have argued that this expansion would inevitably make it more difficult for NATO to come to a consensus regarding any issue. Thus far, this has not proven to be the case. Indeed, as will be argued several times in this chapter, the increase in members have proven to bind NATO members closer together when a consensus is made. There is a second, oft-overlooked, political structure created to tie the individual member-nation governments with NATO policy matters. This structure is the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Formally outside the NATO structure, the assembly is a permanent institution designed to assist member-nation governments with their internal laws and policies as they pertain to NATO.<sup>8</sup>

### **NATO's Political And Military Structure**

As alluded to previously, the expansion of NATO to 26-member nations does not come without some pitfalls. Although there are many potential negatives to an expanded membership, the one most remarked upon is the potential for extended debate within a more heavily populated NAC prior to undertaking a change to strategy or to agree on a new military operation. This potential will be addressed more thoroughly later in this chapter, but here it is important to describe the method by which NATO reaches decisions. This method is an important component to understanding the difference between NATO and other security organizations such as the United Nations.

Unlike the United Nations Security Council, NATO's actions are a result of consensus building and not based on voting by its members.<sup>9</sup> This distinction has practical side-effects. For one, it means that NATO's actions are the combined will of all its members and not on a simple

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 267.

majority. Second, it means that NATO deliberations have the characteristic of being long and time-consuming. This oft-remarked upon characteristic of NATO stems from this consensus-building requirement and becomes most stark within a security-crisis environment. Lastly, the need to build and maintain consensus among NATO members means that any NATO action can be maintained only as long as all NATO members agree to its continuance. Certainly, the pressure of a single member of NATO from withdrawing from a mission or action it originally endorsed is great and increases with increased NATO members. However, greater numbers poses greater liabilities and is thus a two-edged sword. As membership grows, the ability to acquire and maintain consensus for a NATO-sponsored action may prove to be difficult as the danger or hardship of the action grows. Is difficult to tell at this early date of NATO expansion whether this will prove to be a formidable or insurmountable problem, but if the ongoing NATO efforts in Afghanistan are any indicator, NATO's collective resolve to continue difficult missions can be relied upon.

In contrast to NATO's political structure is the second and most visible component of NATO - the military structure. For a military structure, NATO is rather convoluted and although this paper argues for the adoption to yet other organization within NATO, it does so with the understanding from the outset that any new addition to the NATO military structure may add to NATO's already complex nature. Again, it must be emphasized that the complex nature of NATO is an aspect reflecting its role as a political institution rather than solely a military one.

NATO has two strategic commands. The first is an "operational" command, which is to say that it is responsible for NATO's ongoing military operations such as the on-going operations in Afghanistan. This command is known as the Supreme Allied Command Europe (SACEUR), headquartered at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 38.

Interestingly, SACEUR is also the United States geographic Combatant Commander (USCOCOM) for the European area or responsibility (USEUCOM). This single United States military officer is both the commander of all NATO forces as well as the commander for all United States military forces in Europe and Africa.

The second strategic command is a “transformational” command, that is to say it is responsible for emerging NATO doctrine and future NATO forces structure. During the Cold War, this command was known as the Supreme Allied Command Atlantic (SACLANT) but has since been re-designated as the Supreme Allied Command Transformation (SACT), based at Norfolk, Virginia.<sup>10</sup> What is important to note is that like SACEUR, this commander is also “dual-hatted” as the commander of the United States Joint Forces Command (JFCCOM). This “dual-hatted” aspect will be dealt with in more detail later in this monograph, suffice it to say here that the “dual-hatted” nature of NATO commands provides the United States a unique position among NATO member nations.

The NAC receives military proposals from NATO’s military committee. The military committee is formally comprised of the Chiefs-of-Staff of member nations but for routine requirements the committee is staffed by military representatives of member nations. In addition to providing the NAC with military advice, the committee additionally provides guidance to NATO’s strategic commanders. In this way, civilian control over NATO military matters is ensured.

Finally, it is important to note that historically, the responsibility of the two NATO commanders was based solely on geography. SACEUR was the commander for Europe while Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT), was responsible for the Atlantic Ocean. Today, SACEUR is the operational commander of all NATO forces regardless of location while

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 87.

SACT is a functional command. This change reflects both the end of the Cold War as well as NATO's growing global posture.

## **NATO's Continuing Relevance**

NATO's post-Cold War relevance has been questioned by many policy analysts. But the imminent demise of NATO has been greatly exaggerated. As stated above, NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe and its stated vision to engage beyond the borders of its member nations translates into a more active security alliance. Yet the vision of NATO as a more active organization may be prompted more by necessity than choice. The collapse of the Cold War bipolar strategic environment is in reality a return to the multi-polar chaos which preceded it. NATO provides Europe and North America with a rather large "zone of stability" that acts as the glue for its member nations. NATO thus provides a dampening effect in crisis involving NATO member nations and outside competitors. The following section provides some arguments and counter-arguments as to the continued relevance of NATO.

In an article entitled "Carcass of Dead Policies: The Irrelevance of NATO," the author Steven Meyer, provides a sample of countervailing arguments to NATO's continued importance. Upon examining just a few of Meyer's critiques, the reader quickly begins to see not the irrelevance of NATO but rather the opposite. For instance, Meyer contends that during the 1990's Balkan crisis, Washington was interested less in using the existence of NATO to justify intervention in the conflict, and more interested in using the crisis to justify the existence of NATO.<sup>11</sup> This rather cynical conclusion is not supported by the events which led to NATO's involvement in the Balkan crisis. Certainly, the Balkan crisis was a test for NATO, but a test in

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<sup>11</sup>Steven E. Meyer, "Carcass of Dead Policies," *Parameters* (Winter 2003-04), 83-85 and 97.



which NATO proved not only to be capable but indispensable as a tool in the eventual resolution of the Balkan crises.

Meyer's article, and many others, reminds readers that the opponent for which NATO was created to defend against is gone. While it is certainly true that the Soviet Union is gone, nuclear-weapons equipped and oil-rich Russia remains. It would not be easy to explain to new NATO members such as Romania, Bulgaria and others that Russia does not pose a security threat to their interests. This is one of the reasons for the expressed desire of other Eastern European countries to join the alliance. The absence of an alliance such as NATO in Europe is exactly the kind of vacuum which allowed for the stronger power-hungry nations of Europe to intimidate and pursue policies of aggression in the past.

In the European context, NATO is indeed relevant. It provides Europe with a common security arrangement which binds members to the security of others and provides Europe with a way forward from the *Machtpolitik* which hastened so many wars of the past. Potential members have recognized this quality in NATO membership and are desirous of inclusion. The question now turns to NATO's relevance on a global scale and whether NATO can help to provide the same "zone of stability" in other areas of the world.

### **Collective Defense vs. Collective Security**

As stated earlier, NATO was originally designed to defend Western Europe from an attack by the Soviet Union. NATO was truly a Cold-War institution and yet due to its multinational framework, NATO is in a unique position to meet the challenges of the 21st Century security environment. The following discussion focuses on the subtle philosophical differences, pros and cons, between a collective defensive alliance and a collective security alliance. Certainly, the final word in this discussion is beyond this scope of this monograph, but

it is important to touch upon this subject as it will pertain to the topic of NATO SOF further in this monograph.

While seemingly mundane, the differences between collective defense and security alliances have had profound effects on NATO planners in a post-911 environment. In collective defense, the alliance deters aggressive acts by a credible threat to retaliate; it is inherently reactive in nature. By contrast, a collective security alliance is one in which members maintain peace when a “breach of the peace is declared to be of concern to all the participating states.”<sup>12</sup> By illustration, the UN is a security alliance while NATO has been historically a defensive alliance. In November of 2002, at the Prague Summit, NATO reached an historic milestone when it received new member nations into the alliance and declared itself ready to respond to security challenges wherever they may originate. This declaration should not be construed to be analogous to the Bush Administration’s preemption strategy however. As stated in the Prague Summit declaration, the willingness of NATO to meet challenges wherever they may originate must be understood in the context of responding to an invocation of either Article 5 or a request for assistance from the United Nations Security Council. Yet there are recent obvious examples where NATO chose to respond militarily yet the conflict did not meet either of these criteria. The war in Bosnia and Kosovo were technically not attacks on a NATO-member nation. Additionally, neither of these conflicts were inside NATO’s well-defined military orbit. Yet NATO chose to respond. Why? NATO became involved in these conflicts because they were considered threatening to NATO’s (i.e., European) stability. By attacking into Serbia to prevent the Serbian Army from destroying Kosovo-Albanians, NATO took the first steps away from collective defense towards collective security.

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<sup>12</sup>Martin Wight, *Systems of States* ed. Hedley Bull (London: Leicester University Press, 1977), 149.

Unlike the UN, NATO retains a trained and credible military capability. Like the UN, but perhaps to a lesser degree, NATO is a multinational institution which carries a degree of innate legitimacy to its operations. NATO's foray into military issues beyond the original mandate of collective defense is in keeping with the goal of European stability yet exceeds the tenets of collective defense. The wars of Bosnia and Kosovo were too near NATO to be completely ignored and much too heinous to the collective moral judgments of Europe and North America to endure; a military response was deemed necessary. The events of 911 would elicit similar desires to act, but of course in the case of September 11, 2001, the enemy would be much farther away than either Kosovo or Bosnia and its reach would extend right into the heart of both Europe and North America.

## **NATO And The Global War On Terror**

The events of September 11, 2001 had a great impact on the future of the NATO alliance. This fact cannot be understated and was readily apparent when NATO officially invoked Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty (commonly referred to as the Washington Treaty), which states that an attack against one alliance member is considered an attack on all members. In the aftermath of September 11, it was discovered that those who perpetrated the terrorist attacks were based well outside NATO's traditional area of responsibility. Ironically, it was this first invocation of Article 5 which resulted in NATO's final movement away from the purely Cold War defensive alliance and into a 21st Century collective security alliance.

Although NATO invoked Article 5 and would support the United States in toppling the Taliban government in Afghanistan, it took great pains to reaffirm its original *raison d'être* of European security and stability. Many have interpreted these seemingly conflicting positions as an inability for NATO to redefine itself from a Cold War organization. Yet another interpretation is entirely possible – that NATO understands that its focus is to maintain peace and security in

Europe and that this security is predicated upon expanding its understanding of conditions in other parts of the globe which have increasing impact on North American and Europe. The vision to expand and redefine NATO's strategic area of interest and operations is a direct result of post-Cold War assessments within NATO. Since the events of 911, NATO has become more involved in "out of region" operations. These operations are either linked to European security (Iraq, Afghanistan) or linked to UN initiatives (Darfur). NATO's growing global presence will likely continue unabated for the foreseeable future. The reason is simple: the confluence of terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) will compel NATO to view its security in terms of global presence and influence necessary to mitigate the possibility of a terrorist act upon NATO members.

Unfortunately, although philosophically NATO is prepared to conduct "out of region" operations, it still remains structurally unable to conduct the entire host of full spectrum operations which are required to address problems ranging from humanitarian crisis, to terrorism through full-scale conventional war. One of the major structural problems facing NATO planners is the way the alliance creates a force to conduct a particular mission. While beyond the scope of this paper, it is beneficial to succinctly explain how this process works.

When a NATO operation or mission is approved by NATO's North Atlantic Council, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe initiates the force generation and activation process. This process is rather straight forward but rests upon member nations' internal capacities and capabilities. Some have criticized that new member nations are in reality "security consumers" rather than "security providers" due to their limited capacity to commit forces to a NATO missions.<sup>13</sup> Be that as it may, offers to provide personnel are addressed during conferences attended by representatives from NATO-member countries. While these conferences may take

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<sup>13</sup>Meyer, 83-85 and 97.

place on an ad hoc basis there is an annual conference held for all operations and missions, the Global Force Generation Conference.<sup>14</sup>

It is possible that NATO-member countries will commit complete units to particular operations or missions. Additionally, countries that provide leadership for an entire operation or mission, or take responsibility for providing essential units for the mission, are identified as “lead-nation.” For example, the lead country for a given operation or mission might provide the command element and a significant part of the forces, and will also be responsible for filling the remainder of the force required.<sup>15</sup> The NATO process of force generation has been the target of many criticisms, mainly due to the length of creating a force. But one process that NATO does not have to worry about is the Command and Control (C2) of NATO missions if the United States takes on the mantle of “lead-nation”. Recall the earlier discussion of the “dual-hatted” command structure of NATO – it is this structure that mitigates the requirement to create an ad hoc command. The United States will assume this role and has created functioning permanent commands to support NATO missions. This places a great deal of reliance on the United States during crises. NATO has addressed this issue by creating European headquarters capable of filling this critical C2 requirement. Indeed, much of the reorganization undertaken in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union addressed the issue of command and control.

Although NATO has addressed many of the strategic gaps that became apparent during the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo, there is one remaining strategic and operational shortfall that has thus far received little attention within the NATO command structure: SOF. There are land, sea and air functions within NATO that have permanent C2 structures associated with them. Yet there is currently no command structure to support Special Operations conducted under the auspices of NATO, as a result any SOF command structure under NATO is ad hoc in nature. It a

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<sup>14</sup>NATO Website <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b040906e.htm> , accessed 24 March 2007.

global security environment defined more by asymmetric threats rather than threats posed by well-defined nation states, this state of affairs will not do.

## **The Need For NATO SOF Command And Control**

NATO's current force structure is completely inadequate to deal with asymmetric threats. The current NATO Ready Force (NRF) concept was fully developed in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, yet its origins remain completely fixed to Cold War-like conflict, that is – large, high-intensity conflict between nation-states. Like the United States' conventional forces, NATO's available European formations are tailored to conduct conventional large-scale operations. Yet unlike the United States, NATO possess no "unconventional" or Special Operations command element suited to deal with threats characterized by trans-national terrorists groups. As a result, while NATO is able to deter or respond to security challenges stemming from nations such as Serbia it will face significant challenges stemming from enemies such as Al-Qaeda. Certainly, individual NATO-members possess extremely capable Special Operations forces, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, but NATO as a collective body possess no force nor command element suited to control a NATO SOF mission.

Special Operations elements are extremely valuable and take time to develop, resource and maintain. Naturally, this fact drives individual members of NATO to use its internal SOF capabilities to protect its own national interests. Additionally, NATO European members will attempt to use INTERPOL and other international organizations to detect, deter and defeat terror organizations operating on their soil. An example of this effort is the recent INTERPOL initiative to detect and prevent global bioterrorism. Yet even here, INTERPOL has identified limits on

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

law-enforcement efforts to counter terrorism.<sup>16</sup> Certainly a multi-pronged law-enforcement approach is required when dealing with terror organizations operating within the national boundaries of the European Union, Canada or the United States, but this does not address threats originating from outside Europe and North America. Here NATO's ability to counter the transnational threat is limited to large-scale conventional units or ineffective civil-military assistance.

## **What SOF Can Do For NATO**

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual difficulty that NATO (or any large military organization) has with responding to a crisis with conventional military forces. The basic problem is two-fold: the lack of information and ability to adequately determine when the level of crisis is high enough to warrant a military intervention. The lack of information becomes manifest when an outside agency, like NATO, cannot determine precisely when a crisis is looming. In the figure 1, this is depicted as "perceived steady-state" along the crisis curve. SOF elements can mitigate this effect by quickly deploying to a location or, as will be advocated later within this monograph, routinely visit and assess possible crisis areas to provide "ground truth" to NATO and partner nations. Next, the crisis becomes apparent but lack of information makes it extremely difficult to know what response to take. Taken together with "perceive steady-state," this is usually label as "a missed opportunity." Again, SOF elements can provide the necessary situational awareness to planners and decision-makers without having to deploy large military formations or diplomatic effort unable to reach trouble spots due to a heightened threat environment.

Finally, when the crisis has been identified there is still a "cost/benefit dialogue" as depicted in figure 1, which allows for a continuation of the crisis in hopes that a diplomatic effort

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<sup>16</sup>INTERPOL Website, Initiative to Counter Bio-Terrorism, <http://www.interpol.int/Public/BioTerrorism/default.asp>, accessed 24 March 2007.

can resolve the problem prior to the introduction of forces. Usually, the crisis has not developed far enough along to warrant a major introduction of forces or it is deemed that military forces may prove to be an “over-reaction” to the crisis. The recent wars in the Balkans are an example of this phenomenon. The star at the top of the graph depicts the point at which the crisis begins to diminish. The goal is to move that point lower and earlier along the crisis curve.

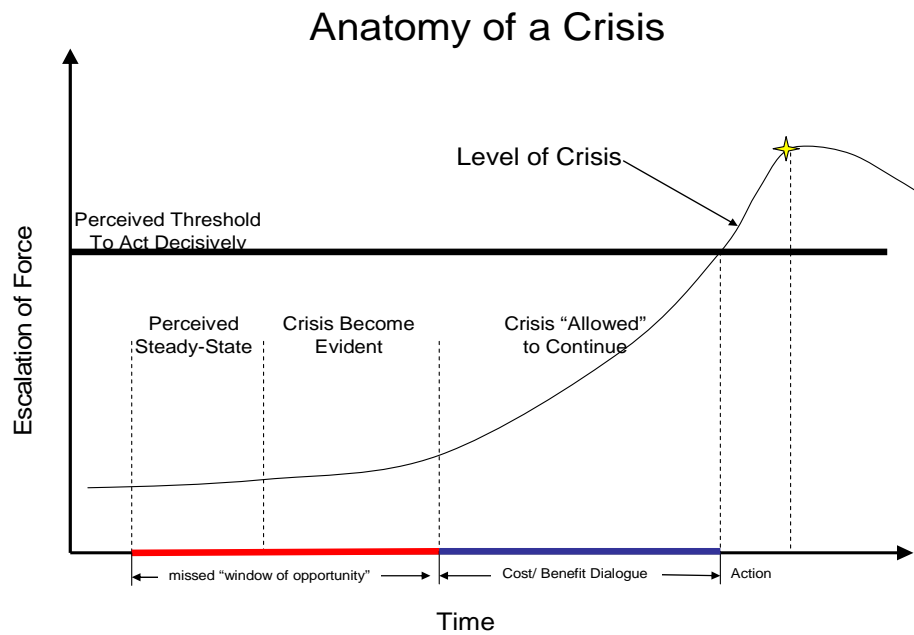


Figure 1. Anatomy of a Crisis

What will be argued in the next chapters is that SOF can assist to bring down the “perceive threshold to act decisively” by allowing NATO decision-makers the much needed information to either prevent the crisis or respond with the appropriate level of forces before the crisis worsens. This is depicted in Figure 2.



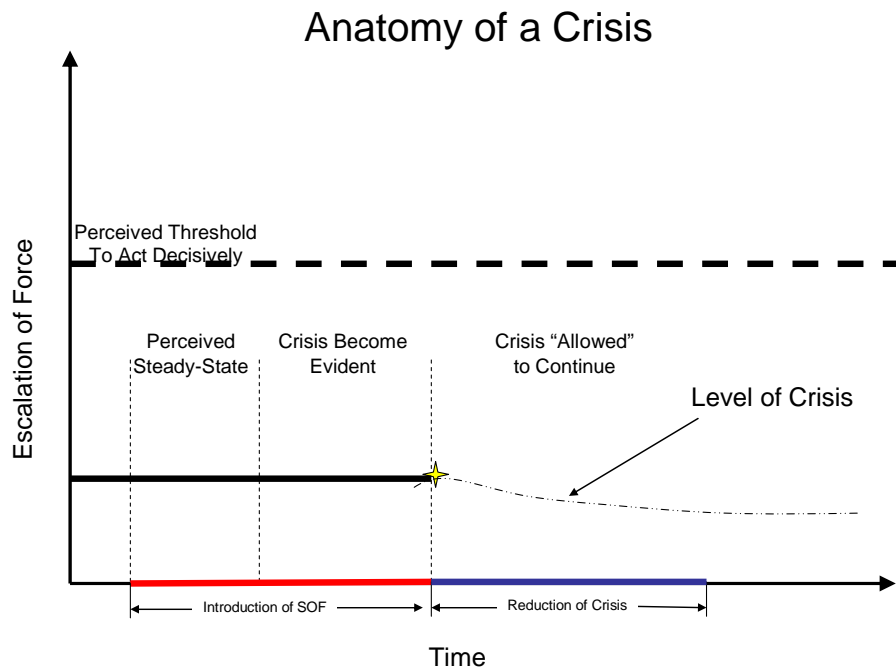


Figure 2. Anatomy of a Crisis II

## Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the continued relevancy of the NATO alliance and its role in the global security environment for the foreseeable future. NATO's political might has been greatly enhanced with the inclusion of many former Warsaw-Pact nations into the alliance. NATO continues to exert influence within Europe to bind its member nations towards common security goals. The events of 911 have resulted in NATO invoking Article 5 for the first time in its history. This historic event was precipitated from threats emanating well outside NATO's traditional security challenges. In order to thwart these challenges, NATO must adopt a global security posture and expand its definition of security to include threats from non-nation state actors such as Al-Qaeda. However, currently NATO is structured to address conventional nation

state threats. Although NATO possesses the political resolve to defeat and deter terrorism, it lacks the command and control structure best suited to address this concern.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **NATO SOF Command and Control**

This chapter will explore the Command and Control (C2) issues surrounding the implementation of a NATO-SOF element. In doing so, it will be necessary to examine how NATO doctrinally establishes C2 relationships and how these relationships impact on mission execution. The practical considerations of establishing C2 structures and relationships inherent in any US-unilateral operations become points for negotiation in alliance and coalition mission development. This is not due to the “politics of alliance” so much as it is on determining approaches necessary to mitigate differences in language, communication architecture and systems, operating procedures, force capabilities and the like. As NATO expanded membership to the current 26-member nations, these differences have only increased. This chapter will look at the methods used by NATO to create Command and Control structures and analyze the pros, cons and applicability of these structures. This chapter will recommend an architecture for NATO-SOF C2. It must be stressed also that in this chapter will focus on the Military Command structure of NATO, subordinate to the civilian controlled North Atlantic Council (NAC), and commanded by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR).

### **The Evolution of NATO Command and Control**

The path to the current state of NATO’s military command structure has been long and influenced heavily by the changes in the strategic global environment. Indeed, during the Cold War, NATO’s command structure changed very little since the threat remained constant, known and fairly predictable. In contrast, since the end of the Cold War, there has been an accelerating drive to change both NATO force structure and command relationships. Primarily, changes within NATO began as a result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union but accelerated at the

outbreak of war in the former Yugoslavia. That is because the Balkan conflict highlighted many inadequacies not readily apparent during the Cold War. As a result of events prompted by the crises in the Balkans, NATO undertook a major effort to reorganize in order to maximize its operational flexibility. However the task to create relevant changes within NATO remains unfinished; the attacks in New York and Washington DC in 2001, along with the terror events conducted in Madrid and London require NATO to maintain the effort to modernize itself. Prior to examining the current command and control structure within NATO, it is necessary to provide an overview of the process by which NATO adopts changes.

NATO conducted no significant military operations between its founding in 1949 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. As a consequence, there was very little development in command and control arrangements within the Alliance during this period. Indeed, the most significant change to NATO's overall command and control architecture resulted not from an externality such as a new Soviet threat posture, but rather due to France's withdrawal from the Alliance in 1966.<sup>17</sup> This state of affairs drastically changed with collapse of the Soviet Union. Lacking a defined enemy, the role and existence of NATO, was questioned. Unfortunately, time to ponder the future of NATO was placed on a backburner due to the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo. Again, these conflicts highlighted many of the inadequacies of NATO command and control. For instance, prior to the Balkan conflict, NATO forces were arranged along geographic areas of responsibility and those forces assigned to a particular area of responsibility did not conceive of operating outside those areas. Thus, during the Balkan crises, it was unclear where responding NATO forces would come from or who would command them as Bosnia and Kosovo were outside of NATO. The framework for such a mission had not yet been created. In 1994, acting on a proposal by the United States, NATO accepted the concept of creating a Combined Joint

Task Force (CJTF) Headquarters which would address the many shortfalls highlighted by the wars in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>18</sup>

The concept of a Joint Task Force (JTF) is nothing new to United States military planners. It is codified in United States military doctrine and exercised routinely. In the United States military, Joint Task Forces are assembled primarily to conduct short-term, quick reaction contingency operations.<sup>19</sup> They are generally deployed to address a specific security concern or crisis and dissolved once that concern or crisis has been resolved. The CJTF concept as adopted by NATO has retained these essential features. Indeed, a CJTF headquarters is designated as such from an existing command structure within NATO and, much like its U.S. counterpart, can be constituted from different levels of the NATO operations command structure, yet unlike the U.S. counterpart, there is a quasi-permanency in the NATO model. Figure 3 displays the basic outline of NATO military organization from strategic to tactical. Depending on the requirements of the mission, a CJTF can be constituted from any operational level command or can stand up utilizing any of the Component Commands, if required. As shown, JFC Lisbon does not possess organic subordinate component commands, but it does have the assignment to function as a sea-borne NATO CJTF if required.

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<sup>17</sup>NATO Website, <http://www.nato.int/shape/news/2003/history/h030722.htm>, accessed 24 March 2007.

<sup>18</sup>“European Security Institutions, Ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?,” *Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis*, 38.

<sup>19</sup>Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*, II-14.

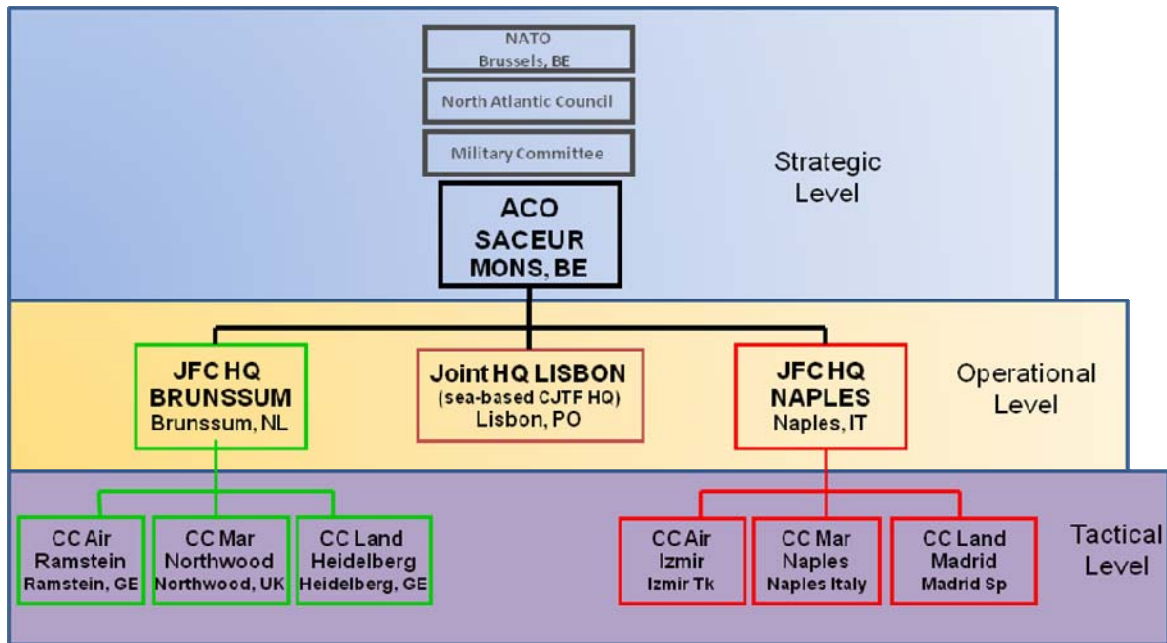


Figure 3. NATO Military Organization

This command and control structure provides NATO with the ability to integrate North American and European forces by providing a structured, familiar and routine hierarchy. Additionally, this structure also allows NATO to scale, up or down, and tailor its force to a specific mission. This is achieved due the nature of the Joint Force Command (JFC) Headquarters and Component Command (CC) elements subordinate to the JFC. Because these headquarters are permanently manned and resourced, they can be trained and exercised routinely, thus ensuring adequate expertise necessary to perform the highly complex missions that may be assigned to them. Additionally, they are prepared to execute the role of a mission-specific task force which may not require the resources of the entire JFC staff. Finally, NATO possesses the ability to simultaneously field multiple CJTF headquarters and respond to several crises occurring at the same time. This structure vastly increases the flexibility and responsiveness of NATO. Yet this structure is not complete; it lacks an organic Special Operations force.

## **NATO SOF Command and Control**

Just as the CJTF concept was originally proposed by the United States, so too should NATO adopt another concept from the United States military – a permanent component command to C2 Special Operations Forces (SOF). SOF provides strategic and operational commanders with a unique force capable of both conducting independent operations or in support of larger force. In order to provide this flexibility, a Special Operations headquarters should not be built on an *ad hoc* basis nor should it be constructed from joint forces unaccustomed to working together. Finally, Special Operations Forces should be commanded and directed by leaders familiar with both their training and capabilities in order to provide decision makers with a realistic assessment of their utility in conducting any missions assigned to them. Currently NATO has no such organization permanently at its disposal, even though most NATO member countries possess some Special Operations capable force. It will be argued in the remaining sections of this Chapter that establishing such SOF command and control entity will complete much of the work already done to allow NATO to face the asymmetric and other threats that certainly lay in many future security challenges.

## **NATO Combine Joint Special Operations Component Command**

That the United States chose to create a unique command and control structure for its Special Operations Forces did not arise from a simple decision to do so. Rather, the United States created its current SOF C2 structure as a result of sensational failures in the conduct of missions that were vital to the United States' security and prestige. The most famous of these failures resulted in the tragic losses in men and equipment during the execution of the mission to rescue American citizens taken hostage during the Iranian revolution in 1979. As a result of these failures, the American Congress mandated the establishment of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). USSOCOM is charged with the responsibility to train, equip

and deploy highly trained Special Operations Forces to the Combatant Commanders.<sup>20</sup> Congress also established a new funding stream, Major Force Program 11 (MFP-11), to ensure that proper resources were provided to US SOF. Because of the unique requirement for Special Operations Forces to carry out independent missions, US SOF is by nature a joint force. The joint nature of SOF and the unique capabilities of SOF-unique aircraft, water-borne crafts, logistics and personnel all provide additional compelling reasons to contend that SOF elements should be commanded by well-trained, SOF-experienced leaders. NATO SOF is no exception.

As shown in figure 3, NATO does not currently possess a SOF component command (CC) either to advise the NATO leadership or to command and control NATO SOF-specific missions. Yet this is not to say that NATO does not have experience creating a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF). NATO has a CJSOTF currently conducting C2 functions in Bosnia supporting the commander of Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Sarajevo. The structure of the CJSOTF in Bosnia and the role of the current CJSOTF in Afghanistan attest to the requirement of SOF-specific element necessary to support NATO's strategic goals. However, when viewed in detail, both of these examples illustrate the requirement to base future NATO SOF operations on a more adequate command structure. In both of these headquarters, Bosnia and Afghanistan, there is a preponderance of U.S. systems that cannot easily be replaced. It is therefore necessary to build an adequately trained European command and staff to direct SOF operations. This reliance on U.S. personnel and systems defeats the purpose of shared responsibility among NATO members when conducting operations. Ultimately, the current construct also places an undue burden on tactical commands to generate NATO Special Operations strategic plans in addition to executing those plans. Although there are many possible

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<sup>20</sup>United States Code, Title 10, Subtitle A, Part I, Chapter 6, Section 167, Unified Combatant Command for Special Operations.



solutions to this state of affairs, this monograph will recommend one solution and attempt to provide some detail necessary to construct a NATO SOF C2 structure.

## **US SOF Command and Control**

Before describing a recommendation for NATO SOF C2 it will be necessary to briefly describe how US SOF is organized as this will be the primary example for which a NATO C2 structure is modeled. Additionally, this monograph will limit the discussion only to the conceptual C2 framework. Issues regarding commonality of equipment, communications architecture and the like are beyond the scope of this paper.

As alluded to earlier, US SOF Command and Control has undergone an evolutionary process. United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) has been designated as a Combatant Command charged with the training, equipping, deploying and conducting operations designated as Special Operations by the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) or the President of the United States (POTUS).<sup>21</sup> In order to carry out these responsibilities, a command and control structure was developed which allows flexibility, joint integration and scalability. It must be stressed here that the current command and control structure within US SOF has been an evolutionary process. By evolutionary, the author intends to mean that the current command structure carries forward many elements of prior command and control structures that may not provide the most efficient means to employ US SOF. Similarly to NATO, USSOCOM is undergoing machinations to address many of these perceived inefficiencies.

Figure 4 is a simplified wire diagram of the C2 relationships for US Special Operations Forces and depicts the relationships between US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), US European Combatant Command (USEUCOM), and US Central Command (USCENTCOM).

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

This monograph will focus on these three command entities as they all directly relate to Special Operations Forces and NATO. This monograph will not discuss other combatant commands such as US Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), US Pacific Command (USPACOM) or US Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM). Figure 4 will be the basis for discussing United States Special Operations Command and Control and additionally it will be used as the core to model a future NATO SOF C2 structure.

In describing US SOF C2, the first thing to note is the relationship between “in-theater” SOF, (i.e., SOF deployed to other combatant commands) and their relationship with USSOCOM. In fact, there isn’t a direct relationship. USSOCOM, as directed by legislation, provides trained SOF to other geographic combatants. Under this arrangement, USSOCOM is a force and resource providing headquarters. USSOCOM has limited ability to directly command special operations or activities. As stated United States legislation “Unless otherwise directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense, a special operations activity or mission shall be conducted under the command of the commander of the unified combatant command in whose geographic area the activity or mission is to be conducted. The commander of the special operations command shall exercise command of a selected special operations mission if directed to do so by the President or the Secretary of Defense.”<sup>22</sup> This verbiage is readily apparent in Figure 4; in both USEUCOM and USCENTCOM, SOF forces report directly to either the Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs) or to the theater combatant commands. This aspect of US SOF will be leveraged to provide a mechanism to support the NATO SOF concept which is discussed later in this chapter.

The final aspect worth noting in figure 4 is the relationship between the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT). SOCCENT has direct command and control of the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A). CJSOTF-A is a combined headquarters as it contains forces from many of the same countries which comprise NATO (along with a few non-NATO members), yet the relationship between ISAF and CJSOTF-A remains vague. This vague relationship may be explained and perhaps be understandable considering the fact that ISAF assumed the Stability and Reconstruction mission for Afghanistan while CJSOTF-A is focused on counter-terrorism. Yet this explanation does not highlight what is truly an increasingly overlapping of mission between ISAF and CJSOTF-A. Set between these two missions is an enemy whose activity is increasingly bent on driving a wedge between the United States and its allies in NATO.

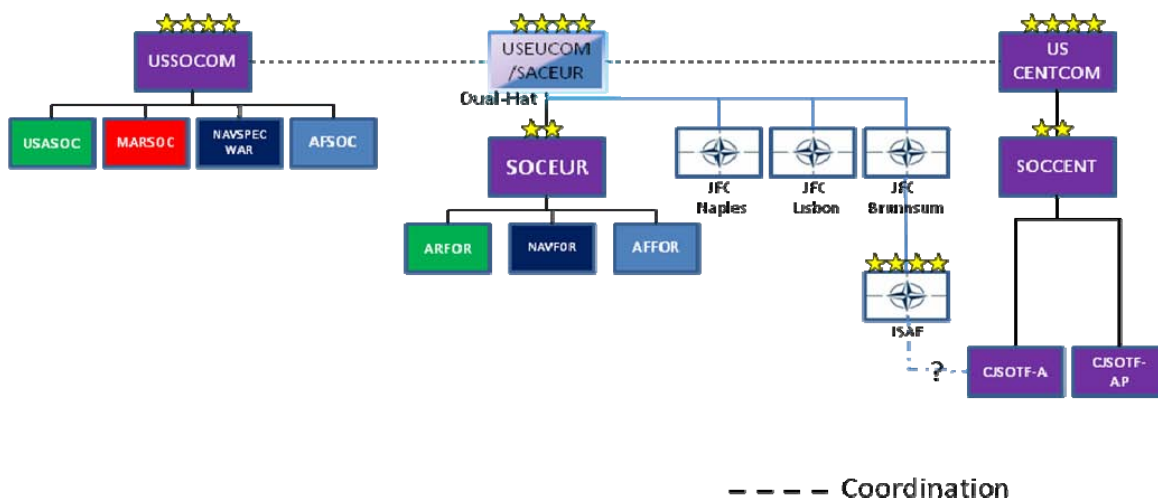


Figure 4: Relationship Between SACEUR, ISAF, and SOCCENT

The first step necessary in correcting any problem is to identify that there is a problem in the first place. Regarding SOF, this has indeed taken place within both USEUCOM and NATO. The next step is to propose a solution, which is the aim of this monograph. Perhaps the most obvious answer is to simply “dual-hat” Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) as the

headquarters for a NATO SOF element much like the commander of USEUCOM (COMUSEUCOM) has been “dual-hatted” as both commander of US forces in Europe and the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) for NATO. Obvious as this may be, it is not the solution proposed by this monograph. Instead, a new command structure within NATO with habitual relationships with SOCEUR will be presented. In this manner, SOCEUR can remain a US-unilateral command and concentrate on fulfilling its role in that regard. SOCEUR can however, begin to provide training and necessary exchanges aimed at increasing the interoperability among US and NATO SOF Headquarters and tactical units.

Figure 5 depicts the recommended additions to NATO’s organizational structure to incorporate a NATO SOF capability. The largest issue facing this structure is not the internal capacity to field tactical SOF units within NATO but rather the capacity to field trained headquarter elements required to command and control those tactical units. As states earlier, in the case of NATO general purpose forces (GPF), any of the three Joint Force Commands (JFCs) or any of their constituent component commands (CC) can organize and conduct the mission of a CJTF. It is highly unlikely that a future NATO Special Operation command and control headquarters will be able to field multiple nodes required to support several simultaneous NATO operations but should at least be resourced to support two simultaneous CJTFs with a Special Operations Component Command. To create capacity, a NATO SOF element will require leveraging individual partner nations’ internal capacity to augment surge requirements.

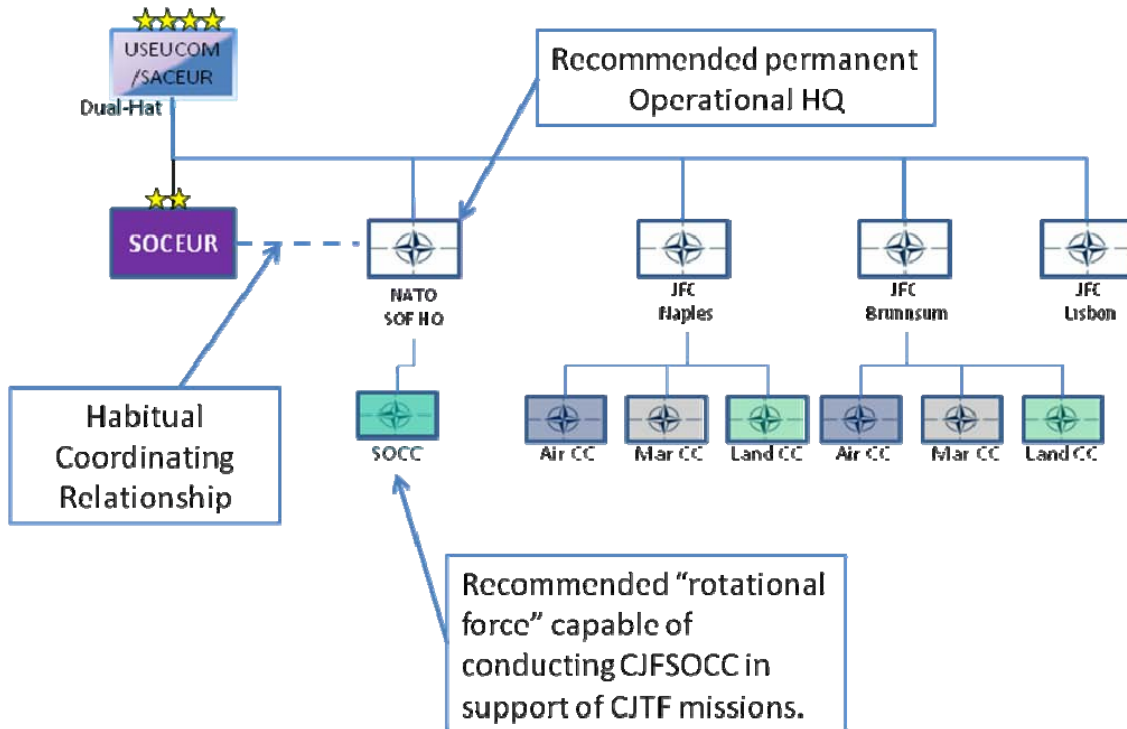


Figure 5. Recommended Additions to NATO's Organizational Structure

Of course, building both the elements depicted in figure 5 is easier said than done. Even with the ability to tap into partner-nation capacity, length and complexity of missions will challenge partner-nations ability to sustain such a requirement. Some obvious questions that arise in such recommendations that will be discussed are: What are the responsibilities of the recommended NATO SOF Headquarters? What elements comprise the NATO SOCC?

One of the main functions of a future NATO SOF Headquarters will be to delineate which operational and tactical missions its subordinate elements will be expected to perform. Additionally, NATO SOF HQ will provide guidance as to the level of training necessary to perform those missions. Essentially the role of the NATO SOF Headquarters does not differ much from the role that USSOCOM performs within the context of US SOF. As such, the NATO SOF Headquarters should have the authority to conduct collateral activities relating to NATO

special operations missions. Specifically, the commander of NATO SOF (COMSOCNATO) should be provided with the authority to conduct the following functions relating to NATO special operations activities: Develop strategy, doctrine, and tactics; Prepare and submit to the North Atlantic Council (NAC) program recommendations and budget proposals for special operations forces and for other forces assigned to the command. Additionally, COMSOCNATO should be responsible for the training of assigned or attached forces, establish and validate requirements to ensuring the interoperability of equipment and forces. Finally, the current NATO training facilities and functions, long in existence, which supports SOF tactical interoperability, should be assigned to this headquarters.

Interestingly, of the two proposed components of NATO SOF, the NATO SOF Headquarters is arguably the easier construct. Under this recommendation, it is not envisioned that this headquarters deploy to C2 operations in support of a CJTF. Rather, that function is reserved for the SOCC, which should have the ability to deploy as a Combined Joint Special Operations Component Command (CJSOCC). This requirement is more difficult than first appears. The level of competency to conduct this mission is high and it can be argued that there are currently only a few nations within NATO that can adequately perform the functions necessary to organize, plan, execute and control complex special operations across the combined and joint force. However, it is not impossible to create this capacity within NATO. One has only to recognize that the current NATO component commands under the Joint Force Commands (JFCs) already retain the ability to perform similar functions for general purpose forces at corps level. Therefore, the obstacles to build additional SOF capacity which can field a CJSOCC should not be insurmountable. Indeed, as has been argued throughout this monograph, such an effort is not only prudent to achieve unity of command and effort for NATO special operations, it is a requirement.

## Conclusion

There is a current void within the NATO command and control structure that has been highlighted by current operations. That void is the command and control of Special Operations Forces contributing to NATO mission across the globe. North American and European nations individually possess enormous SOF capacity. However this capacity cannot be effectively brought to bear due to the inability of NATO to provide proper C2 under the CJTF concept. To be sure, there are currently SOF elements contributing to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. However these SOF elements can, at best, be described as contributing in spite of the current C2 arrangement and not because of it. This state of affairs should not be allowed to continue as it effectively undermines the effective use of a valuable resource necessary to thwart enemy control of local populations in Afghanistan.

As stated earlier in this chapter, there are many possible ways to create an effective and supportable C2 arrangement. This monograph proposes only one such solution. However, the point that should not be lost in the discussion is that some solution must be adopted. This monograph proposes establishing a NATO SOF Headquarters, here entitled Headquarters, Special Operations Command NATO (HQ, SOCNATO) which is responsible to SACEUR and is co-equal with the established Joint Forces Commands. It is envisioned that the headquarters undertake the responsibility to ensure integration, training and sustainability of elements assigned to it. Additionally, this monograph proposes the creation of an element within HQ, SOCNATO that retains the ability to deploy and function in the capacity of a Combined Joint Special Operations Component Command (CJSOCC) answerable, when deployed, to the Commander, Combined Joint Task Force (COMCJTF). NATO currently possesses the ability to train, deploy and sustain several general purpose CJTFs with constituent component commands. This monograph argues that, in light of this, NATO retains the ability to prioritize and support the

creation of the proposed Special Operations commands. In doing so, NATO will gain the ability to truly conduct full-spectrum operations across the joint force. Moreover, in creating these entities, NATO will increase its flexibility to respond to crisis with an element not requiring the kind of “operational footprint” usually found with general purpose forces. However the unique abilities which Special Operations possess should only be led by competent leadership fully knowledgeable of the unique capabilities and limitations of tactical Special Operations Forces. The next chapter will recommend, in more detail, what capabilities a NATO SOF element should possess at the tactical level.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Building NATO SOF

In chapter one, the case was made that due to NATO's growing global presence, a presence which is necessary to meet the security challenges of 21st century, NATO should possess an "in-house" Special Operations capability and not rely on *ad hoc* structures to meet future Special Operation requirements. Chapter two focused on the current lack of an established and capable Special Operations command and control structure within NATO and provided a recommended framework for such a structure. The question addressed in this chapter is: What specific SOF capabilities should NATO possess? This is no small question – as will be seen, the range of possible capabilities is quite large. The method by which this monograph seeks to answer this is to break the question into its constituent parts. First, what specific operations does NATO envision having to conduct that would necessitate having to possess a special operations capable force? Do these operations meet NATO's mandate to address both the core task of defending Europe as well as thwarting many of the growing "out of area" security threats such as those found in Darfur and Afghanistan? Finally, what kinds of forces are necessary to conduct these operations? Does NATO currently have access to them and, if so, how large are these forces? By analyzing NATO's Special Operations requirements and then weigh them against NATO's ability to command, control, train, and resource these requirements, this monograph will attempt to present a recommended force structure that will be able to enhance the ability of NATO to meet its military commitments while at the same time not place an undue burden on its support structures.

Any NATO SOF structure must be tailored to enhance NATO's overall flexibility while at the same time not compete with member nations' internal or unilateral Special Operations

Forces requirements. This is a delicate balance and one that will have to be considered as the case for of building the NATO SOF structure is presented.

## **SOF – A Primer**

Arguably, the United States processes the broadest range of SOF capabilities of any NATO member nation. A close examination of those capabilities will provide perspective on possible NATOSOF options. Certainly, unlike the United States, NATO will be unable to amass the resources necessary to build and maintain US-like SOF capabilities. Because of this, NATO must choose from the outset what NATOSOF structure to build and what capabilities it should possess due to these resource constraints.

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) is charged to train, organize, equip and deploy combat-ready special operations forces to combatant commands.<sup>23</sup> In order for USSOCOM to meet this requirement, the Nunn-Cohen Amendment created USSOCOM and gave its commander (COMUSSOCOM) direct control over the majority of its fiscal resources.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the most significant aspect to the Nunn-Cohen Amendment is that the amendment established a separate major force program (MFP), MFP-11, which allowed USSOCOM to pay, train, equip, and deploy US SOF.<sup>25</sup> This unique funding aspect to US SOF within the US Department of Defense structure will be discussed further. For now, it is important to note that even US SOF required special legislation to fund US SOF. Although it will not be argued, nor should it be inferred here, that NATO SOF will require the establishment of a unique NATO funding stream, what is of note is the significant amount of resources that the United States, and by extension other NATO nations, spend in order to possess the unique capabilities inherent in Special Operations Forces. By not creating the command and control structure for

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<sup>23</sup>USSOCOM Command Mission: [http://www.socom.mil/Docs/Command\\_Mission-060214.pdf](http://www.socom.mil/Docs/Command_Mission-060214.pdf)

<sup>24</sup>United States Code.

NATO SOF as argued in chapter two of this monograph, NATO does not effectively tap into these highly resourced and competent forces.

Under United States statute, US SOF is directed to perform the following activities.<sup>26</sup> The definitions of these activities are provided in order to analyze and assess whether NATO should also inherently possess the ability to perform these activities.

- Direct Action (DA) – short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and that employ specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets.
- Special Reconnaissance (SR) – reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance, employing military capabilities not normally found in conventional forces.
- Unconventional Warfare (UW) – UW is a broad range of military and/or paramilitary operations and activities, normally of long duration, conducted through, with, or by indigenous or other surrogate forces that are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and otherwise directed in varying degrees by an external source. UW operations can be conducted across the range of conflict against regular and irregular forces. These forces may or may not be State-sponsored.
- Foreign Internal Defense (FID) – FID is a subset of stability operations. These operations promote and protect U.S. national interests by influencing the threat, political, and information dimensions of the operational environment through a combination of peacetime developmental, cooperative activities and coercive actions in response to crisis. FID missions include Humanitarian Military Assistance (HMA), Population Security and Counter-Insurgency.
- Civil Military Affairs (CMA) – used to establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces and civil authorities (government and nongovernment) and the civilian populace in a friendly, neutral, or hostile AO to facilitate military operations and to consolidate operational objectives

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

- Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) – are planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals
- Counter-Terrorism (CT) – operations that include offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, preempt, and respond to terrorism
- Other activities as may be specified by the President or the Secretary of Defense.

A structure for NATO SOF capabilities can be built from the list of these activities. First, let us note something particular about the eight activities assigned to United States Special Operations Forces – only 2 of them have a predominantly “kinetic” (i.e., combat or force-on-force) ring to them – Direct Action (DA) and Counter-Terrorism (CT). The remainder (i.e., SR, UW, FID, PSYOPS, CA) are primarily combat enabling activities or “non-kinetic.” This distinction, that between “kinetic” and “non-kinetic” Special Operations, has had a profound impact on the perception of what Special Operations are and what Special Operations are not with the resultant debate as to who Special Operations forces are and who they are not. Most notably, this debate is highlighted when asking whether forces organized and trained to conduct Civil Military Affairs (CMA) are special operations forces. Typically, the answer to this debate rests not on the actual activity they perform, but rather what headquarters has command and control of them. If the element belongs to USSOCOM or any of its subordinate elements, then they are de facto special operations forces. This may initially seem as if the effects on the battlefield are less important than how those particular elements are commanded and controlled. This is not the case, effects on the battlefield and command and control are the essential elements that designate units as special operations forces. If the effects are necessary to support special operations missions, then it has been determined that those forces be under the direct supervision of a special operations headquarters. While seemingly coherent, there has developed a somewhat split culture within US Special Operations – this split generally runs along those that advocate and support

SOF as a “kinetic” force and those that support SOF as a force which can build, maintain and influence others to promote US long-term interests. As one observer of US SOF put it “This disagreement is reflected in a division of opinion within the special operations community as to whether they ought to be ‘shooter’ or ‘social workers.’ The result is an uneasy division of labor between the two extremes, with SOF units dedicated to both sorts of missions.”<sup>27</sup> In developing a NATO SOF framework, a balance must be struck from the start to prevent this kind of needless debate.

### **Getting it Right from the Start**

As NATO and US planners consider what capabilities a future NATO SOF should have, they should understand this debate within the US SOF community and structure the force to negate this tension. While this sounds easy – it may prove harder than it first appears. First, kinetic operations are usually well-defined, of short duration and readily highlight allies’ superiority in training, equipment and organization. Additionally, there are structural reasons why a NATOSOF element will gravitate towards the kinetic end of the SOF spectrum. Given a choice therefore, kinetic special operations are preferable to the perhaps more esoteric nature of “non-kinetic” special operations. This “non-kinetic” version of special operations can be characterized as blending the political and military aspects of war to achieve a desired outcome. As a result, if successfully applied, this type of special operations can provide strategic successes far beyond the initial resources dedicated to the mission. Conversely, due to the high level of ambiguity resident in such approaches, the risks associated with these types of operation are perceived to be incalculable and thus, almost by default, the risks are considered to be too high. Again, what this monograph will propose is a highly balanced approach in determining

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<sup>27</sup>Hy S. Rothstein, *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare*, (Naval Institute Press: Annapolis, MD, 2006) 18.

appropriate capabilities for NATO SOF whereby NATO SOF can conduct either mission to a high level of competence.

The structural reasons, alluded to above, why a NATO SOF force will seem disproportionately kinetic can be seen in Table 1. Table 1 is a compendium of allied SOF elements listed by country (excluding the United States). The preponderance of these elements are commando-type units whose expertise lay in conducting short-duration strike operations. In the parlance of U.S. SOF, they are predominantly DA and SR units. Professor Hy Rothstein has coined the phrase “hyper-conventional” to describe the units dedicated to kinetic special operation mission.<sup>28</sup> This phrase is not meant to be pejorative, rather it is meant to suggest that the special operation units dedicated to kinetic operations have been trained, equipped and organized to such a high level of professionalism and capability that in the conduct of these kinetic operations these units are almost peerless. But the phrase also implies that the nature of these kinetic operations is essentially conventional. Although performed to a high degree of excellence, a raid is still a raid and an attack is still an attack. Although necessary in some degree, it is doubt full that NATO will require a SOF element that matches, skills for skill, the capabilities resident in these “hyper-conventional” SOF units. Rather NATO SOF should look for capabilities that match those operations which NATO envisions conducting on a habitual basis – predominately Stability and Reconstruction Operations (SRO) and deterrence operations.

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 102.

**Table 1. Allied Country SOF Capabilities<sup>29</sup>**

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Belgium        | 1x para-commando brigade (2 paratroop/parachute, 1 commando, 2 mechanized infantry, 1 reconnaissance squadron, 1 artillery)  |
| Bulgaria       | 1 special forces (SF) command  |
| Canada         | 1 commando unit  |
| Czech Republic | 1 SF group   |
| Denmark        | 1 SF unit  |
| France         | 2,700 SOF 1 command headquarters, 1 paratroop/parachute regiment, 1 helicopter unit, 3 training centers (48); 500 marine commandos in 5 groups: 2 assault, 1 reconnaissance, 1 attack swimmer, 1 raiding |
| Germany        | 1 SOF division with 2 airborne (1 crisis response force), 1 SF command (1 commando/SF brigade)   |
| Greece         | 1 special operations command (including 1 amphibious commando squadron), 1 commando brigade (3 commando, 1 paratroop/parachute squadron)   |
| Italy          | Naval special forces command with 4 groups: 1 diving operation, 1 navy SF operation, 1 school, 1 research  |
| Latvia         | 1 SF team  |
| Lithuania      | 1 SF team  |
| Netherlands    | 1 SF battalion   |
| Norway         | 1 Ranger battalion   |
| Poland         | 1 special operations regiment  |
| Portugal       | 1 special operations unit; 1 commando battalion  |
| Spain          | special operations command with 3 special operations battalions  |
| Turkey         | SF command headquarters; 5 commando brigades   |
| United Kingdom | 1 Special Air Services regiment, 1 marine commando brigade, 1 commando artillery regiment, 1 commando air defense battery, 2 commando engineer units, 1 landing craft squadron                           |

<sup>29</sup>David C. Gompert and Raymond C. Smith, "Creating a NATO Special Operations Force," *Defense Horizons* (March 2006), 3.

## **NATO Missions and SOF Capabilities**

As stated previously, the type and nature of missions NATO may undertake in the future have expanded. This expansion has resulted as NATO seeks to address security concerns outside its traditional area. During the Cold War, NATO envisioned having to conduct high-intensity warfare as characterized by allied operations during World War II. In the post Cold War environment, and in particular, the post 9/11 environment, the likelihood of NATO conducting high-intensity warfare has given way to the more likely prospect of conducting “low-intensity” stability operations like those being conducted in Afghanistan, Iraq and other places. Certainly, NATO must maintain the ability to defend Europe, but the question is not whether it does so by thwarting a large conventional enemy, but rather by conducting smaller-scale missions well beyond Europe’s borders.

Figure 6 depicts the expansion of NATO’s mission set. At its core, NATO’s purpose remains unchanged from its Cold War founding – collective defense. Arguably, it is under this scenario that the need for large quantities of kinetically focused special operations forces makes the most sense. Certainly there may be a need for conducting other special operations, such as Unconventional Warfare, in the conduct of defending Europe from conventional attack, however since those operations tend to be long-duration missions with long latency periods for their effects are felt on the battlefield, their utility under this scenario may be negligible. It is here that the balance between “kinetic” and “non-kinetic” SOF must be struck. For while it is unlikely that NATO will have to defend Europe against a conventional attack in the near future, it does remain a core task which NATO must address.

Far more likely than a direct attack conventional attack will be a requirement for NATO to conduct many of the “outer core” missions depicted in figure 6. Taken together, these missions generally mirror how the U.S. Department of Defense Joint Publication 3-07 defines Military



Operations other than War (MOOTW).<sup>30</sup> As these missions are increasingly more likely to involve NATO forces, future NATO Special Operations forces, well versed in “non-kinetic” options, may become the force of choice to respond to a majority of these events. The implications for a NATO SOF element to undertake these various missions means that, from the outset, NATO must determine what necessary SOF-specific tasks to concentrate on.

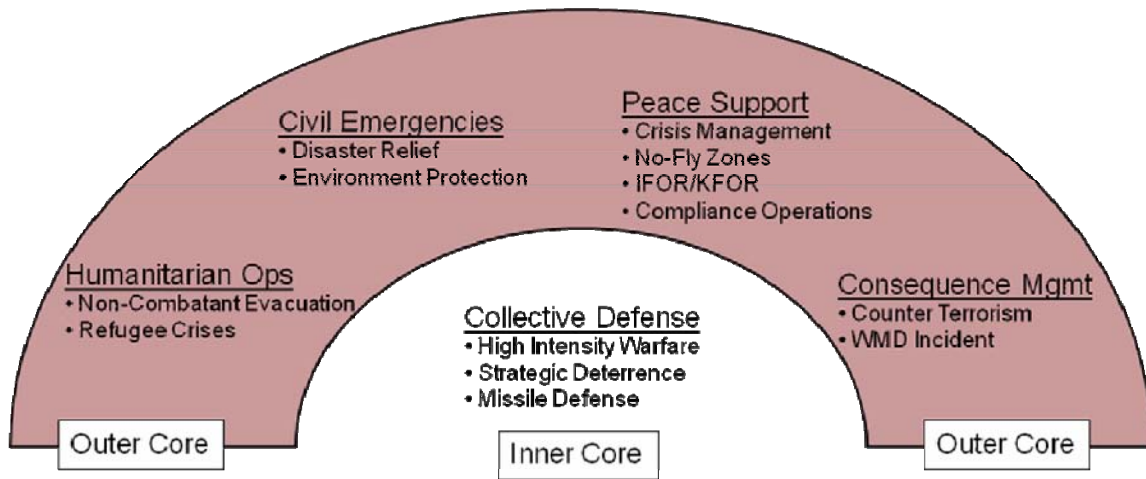


Figure 6. Expansion of NATO’s Set<sup>31</sup>

As previously stated US SOF trains and conducts a wide variety of missions. However NATO has fewer categories for which it requires allied SOF to be proficient in. NATO requires SOF to be able to conduct Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR) and Military Assistance (MA).<sup>32</sup> DA and SR have definitions that are well known to the special operations community, both American and European. But Military Assistance is a NATO construct and is currently defined as a broad spectrum of measures in support of friendly or Allied forces in peace, crisis, and conflict. Military assistance can be conducted by, with, or through indigenous or

<sup>30</sup>Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for MOOTW*, GL-3.

<sup>31</sup>“European Security Institutions, Ready for the Twenty-First Century?” *Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis* (2000), 13.

<sup>32</sup>NATO Publication, AJP-3.5, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations (STUDY DRAFT)*.

surrogate forces that are trained, equipped, supported, or employed in varying degrees by special operations forces.<sup>33</sup>

The definition of Military Assistance resembles the United States Unconventional Warfare definition but is somewhat broader. Figure 7 depicts the relationship between US and NATO missions. Of course, there is a direct parallel between the Direct Action and Special Reconnaissance; both U.S. and NATO generally agree on the definitions of these missions. However in terms of surrogate operations, i.e., those operations directed in varying degrees by U.S. or Allied forces but conducted by others, there is less of a direct correlation. By recognizing the similarities between FID, UW and MA, NATO SOF planners can apply the appropriate resources to achieve a desired military effect to whatever SOF-unique missions they are assigned. The remaining “non-kinetic” missions that are inherent to U.S. SOF are not in the current NATO doctrine as solely pertaining to SOF. This reflects the view within NATO that these missions (CA, IO, PSYOPS) are important missions to the whole force and are not particular to SOF. Even within the U.S. military this view has gained ground in recent years and can be seen as manifesting itself in the split between “general purpose” civil affairs units, and those dedicated to SOF. Regardless, in the context of NATO, it is enough that the capability exist. In that case, NATO SOF can requisition the capability from NATO in order to provide their enabling capabilities.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

## **US SOF/ NATO SOF Mission Crosswalk**

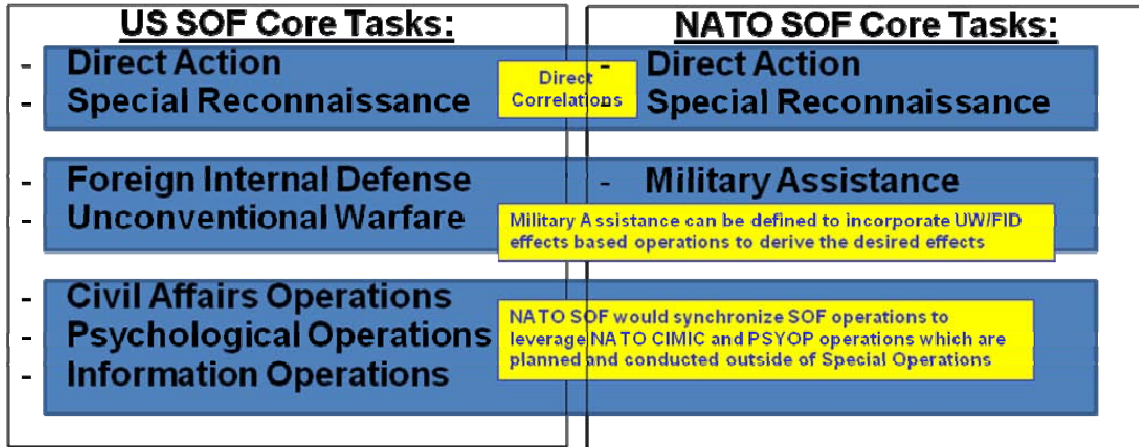


Figure 7. US SOF/NATO SOF Mission Crosswalk<sup>34</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Many of the nations comprising NATO retain some SOF capability. This capability is distributed, trained to varying levels of proficiency, not dedicated to missions required by the alliance but by national needs, and resourced to the capability of the member nation. In order to leverage the capabilities inherent in these nations, NATO has provided the doctrine by which SOF will be utilized for NATO-sponsored missions. This doctrine identifies Direct Action, Special Reconnaissance and Military Assistance as core competencies for NATO SOF. Were NATO to execute an Irregular Warfare campaign these competencies will provide NATO with the ability to successfully execute such a campaign.<sup>35</sup> Missing to these core competencies are the “non-kinetic” SOF missions as outlined by U.S. SOF doctrine. However, even though NATO SOF does not recognize these missions as uniquely SOF, it does possess the capability to leverage

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<sup>34</sup> Constructed from author discussions with Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR), Future Operations Division (FOD), 2007

these capabilities by utilizing other-than-SOF assets resident in NATO's force structure. By carefully balancing "kinetic" and "non-kinetic" SOF missions, NATO will be able to effectively harness the robust political and military capacity of the alliance. Were NATO to weigh one over the other, a reduced capability will drive NATO to execute missions utilizing a force that is ill-suited to create the long-term effects necessary to counter asymmetric threats. Additionally, NATO's resident cultural and language capacity can serve to enhance both the credibility and effectiveness of SOF-specific missions. NATO SOF could, if it were properly harnessed, provide the Western democracies with an effective, legitimate, credible SOF capability not found in any one member nation which could effectively counter the political and military efforts of terrorist and other non-nation state threats.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Origins of Change**

NATO was designed and intended to defend against an attack by the Soviet Union. The Cold War confrontation between the Soviet Union and the Western Democracies never manifested itself as a conventional war in Europe. This fortunate outcome to the Cold War was in no small part due to the credible military deterrent of NATO. Today, Europe and North America are not threatened by invasion from a peer competitor. As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO's relevancy had been called into question. However, while the demise of the Soviet Union removed the threat of a large conventional threat to Western Europe, Eastern Europe quickly destabilized. Ethnic rivalries, legitimate desires for self determination and simple power-grabbing in the former Yugoslavia quickly dashed hopes of peace throughout Europe. As

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<sup>35</sup> Irregular Warfare is conflict in which some or all forces engaged (on any side) do not belong to the regular forces of legally constituted states, and/or employ non-traditional methods, Summary of Irregular Warfare Workshop, 20 Sep 2005.

Yugoslavia disintegrated and fell into barbarity not seen in Europe since the Second World War, NATO initially did not act. However NATO's initial reluctance to involve itself in the affairs of Eastern Europe had nothing to do with a lack of will. The reluctance stemmed from NATO's institutional role in the defense of Europe. The war in Bosnia did not involve an attack on a NATO member nation. Additionally, while the war was occurring in Europe, it was initially perceived unlikely to spill over into Western Europe. But perhaps more importantly, NATO was not structured to execute a response to Bosnia. NATO was structured to conduct strategic defense and hence was arrayed along well-defined geographic responsibilities. Since Bosnia was "outside" NATO, which geographic entity would respond? Could a NATO organization from a single geographic region successfully carry out the full spectrum of military operations necessary to respond to the crisis in Bosnia? If not, how would NATO organize such a response? These and many other questions mired NATO's initial response to Bosnia and portended to require changes within NATO in a post-Cold War world.

## **NATO, 911 and Afghanistan**

NATO, in putting an end to the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo, truly transformed itself. NATO, for the first time in its history, conducted offensive operations, operated outside member nations' borders, acted in lieu of a United Nations mandate and re-organized itself to enhance its operational flexibility by adopting the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) concept. Yet as NATO struggled, adapted and met the challenges posed by the wars in the former Yugoslavia, there still existed the debate as to whether NATO was a necessary security organization. After all, how many Bosnia's and Kosovo's could there be?

After Bosnia but before the terror attacks of 911, NATO underwent a series of organizational changes to break any remaining Cold War strategic legacies. Most of these changes are NATO attempts to provide itself with the ability to respond to crisis rapidly and with

scalable, flexible forces. These post-Bosnia/pre-911 concepts are still evident within the current NATO structure. The Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) is one such entity. This corps-level multinational force is built for rapid deployment to crisis areas. While the ARRC provides NATO with a corps-level asset, it is clear that it is conceptually different from the current CJTF concept. Currently the ARRC is the Land Component Command to the Allied Command Europe (ACE) and is not dedicated to either of the current regional Joint Force Commands, essentially providing the ACE with a corps-level quick response force. The ARRC concept competes for resources within the JFC/CJTF concept and can be viewed as a relic of NATO's meandering through strategic concepts in the 1990s. NATO's attempts to bolster its relevance ended when the terrorists struck on September 11, 2001.

With invocation of article 5 of the treaty, NATO's out-of-area CJTF concept would be realized, particularly in the form of the International Stabilization Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The alliance, 26-nation strong, is conducting operations far outside Europe. The question is whether such an alliance can hold together as a cohesive military force or fall apart due to petty internal squabbling. As of this writing, the Taliban is targeting NATO forces specifically with the intent to drive wedges between the NATO allies. This strategy has thus far not worked but the battle is far from over. In addition to the NATO mission in Afghanistan, NATO is operating under the UN security mandates in Iraq and providing Humanitarian Assistance in the Darfur region of Sudan. Yet in the conduct of these missions, NATO still requires organizational modernization. This monograph has argued for the creation of a NATO Special Operations Component Command (SOCC) to complete the CJTF concept adopted in the 1990s. Without such a command, the robust and highly-trained SOF possessed by NATO members will continue to be controlled on an *ad hoc* basis. SOF, in support of NATO, can address many of the emerging threats and crisis with minimal general purpose force involvement and provide political and strategic decision makers with real-time ground truth information on

developing threats. Yet without a trained and experienced command and control element, many of these necessary SOF-unique abilities will remain beyond NATO to effectively utilize.

Creating a NATO SOF Command and Control (C2) element is only part of the solution to effectively leverage the abilities of SOF. NATO planners and strategic decision-makers however will naturally gravitate towards the “kinetic” end of the SOF spectrum simply due to existing organizational capacity. This temptation should be resisted; “non-kinetic” SOF will be more effective to thwart the existing threats facing NATO but will require accepting uncertainty and conducting persistent engagement with nations and other organizations outside Europe.

The creation of a NATO SOF command will require the same determination that was used to ensure the successful integration of NATO’s general purpose forces. Certainly issues pertaining to equipping, training and deploying a NATO SOF capability will be daunting, but not insurmountable. If nothing else, NATO has proved the concept of sustained combined efforts in spite of national politics and limitations. NATO has gone far in recent years to transform itself from a Cold War institution to an alliance ready to meet the challenges posed by a well-financed and dedicated cadre of terrorists. NATO must continue this effort by establishing a SOF capability that, once established, can enable the industrialized West to thwart the asymmetric threats utilized by non-state entities such as Al-Qaeda. Much as the US military is learning, NATO will realize that corps-level organizations provide disproportionate liabilities, as compared to SOF, in the conduct of counter-insurgency operations.

## **The Future of NATO**

NATO will continue to be relevant to European and North American security. Since its inception, NATO has fulfilled its mission in providing a credible deterrent to those who would attempt to use military force against allied members. Preeminence in conventional capability has driven potential adversaries toward the use of asymmetric techniques among which terrorism

reigns supreme. Just as NATO weathered the threat of nuclear holocaust during the Cold War to successfully stall communist expansionism, so now NATO is called upon to stand against the nihilism of terrorist organizations. Certainly NATO faces many internal political realities such as national caveats, which limit the roles and responsibilities of certain military forces within NATO in the conduct of its missions. National caveats, resources, trained forces and other constraints within the alliance provide fodder to critics of NATO's ability to successfully address 21st Century threats. But these constraints are not permanent fixtures of NATO and can be remedied over time. Highlighting these aspects of NATO without consideration for what works with the alliance is akin to throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater.

In order to achieve the military effectiveness resident, yet lying dormant, in the advanced societies of Western Europe and North America, a capable and relevant organization must be built to prosecute the current war. The current conflict is irregular in nature; it is less a contest of military might than of will. NATO has proven resolve. It has shown the ability to transform in light of new requirements. NATO should embrace a SOF capability much as it has embraced the Corps-level organization of the past to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The strategy of the enemy is rather simple – prolong the fight as long as possible and the allies will become fatigued. NATO will not become fatigued; it is the cumulative will of not one nation, but twenty-six. By leveraging the inherent capacities of these nations, no entity can withstand its collective will.



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