



SOF News

Monthly Journal

News, analysis, and commentary about special operations forces (SOF), national defense, military, and conflicts from around the world.



March 2020

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Front Cover Image. U.S. Special Tactics Airmen train with Polish and Romanian SOF during an exercise in Romania. Photo from U.S. Embassy Bucharest, Romania Facebook - March 6, 2020.

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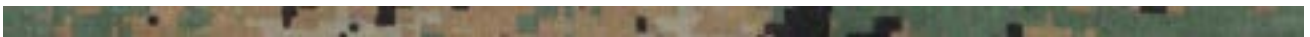
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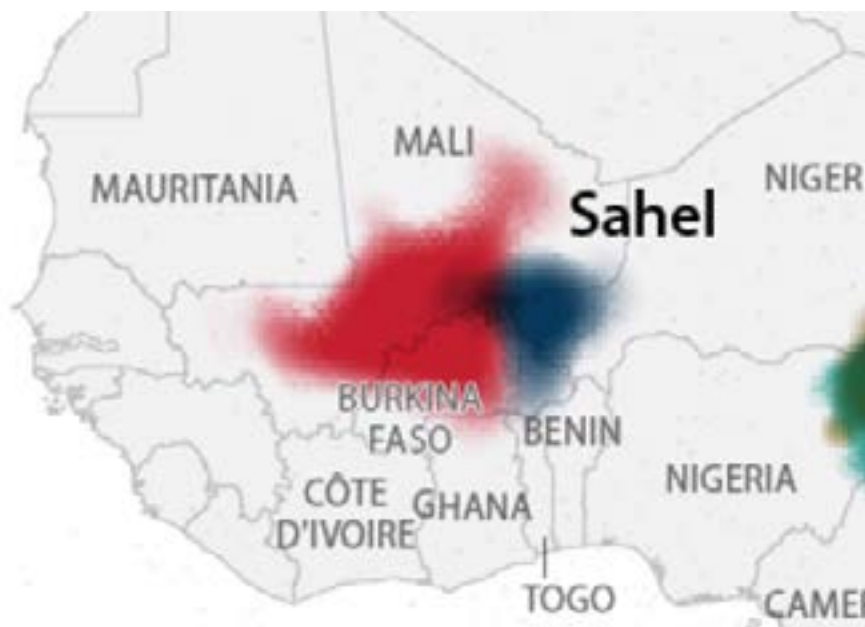
Several European nations are contributing special operations forces to Task Force Takuba to fight armed groups in the Sahel. The special operations task force will fight in the Liptako region alongside troops from Niger and Mali.

Most of the attacks in the Sahel are by Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wa al-Muslimeen (JNIM) – a group that formed up in 2017 from several smaller groups. The Sahel region of Africa has been in turmoil for several years and the security situation has been deteriorating. Attacks against government and civilian targets have increased fivefold in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali since 2016.

Establishing Task Force Takuba

The French first began asking for European SOF to participate in early October 2019. The task force is expected to be established in the summer of 2020 and begin conducting some operations in late summer early fall. It appears that the task force will have two missions – one to conduct counterterrorism operations and the other to train local African forces. It is anticipated that Force Force Takuba will be fully operational by early next year. The lead nation for Task Force Tabuka is France. The task force was officially established on March 27, 2020.

Several nations have indicated their support of the SOF task force to include Sweden, Estonia, Czech Republic, Belgium, Denmark, Portugal, Italy, and others. Sweden will be contributing up to 150 special forces personnel and some helicopters. Germany, Norway, and the United States have stated that they will not participate in the SOF task force. European SOF – French, Dutch, Danish, and others – have been working in the Sahel region for several years supporting various initiatives.



Map depicts operating areas of AQIM, JNIM, and affiliates (red) and ISIS-Greater Sahara and affiliates.

The mission of the task force is to assist the Malian and Nigerien armed forces in countering terrorist groups and to complement the current efforts made by Operation Barkhane and the G5 Sahel Joint Force. The Takuba task force will be under the command of Operation Barkhane.

Operation Barkhane

There are currently about 4,500 French soldiers in the region as part of Operation Barkhane. This operation was established in 2014. The United Kingdom has Chinook helicopters providing support and Estonia is contributing force protection personnel. Denmark is supporting with helicopters as well. The Barkhane force is focused on insurgent activity in the countries of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. France is in the process of sending an additional 600 troops to the Sahel region bringing Operation Barkhane's troop count to 5,100. Operation Serval was the forerunner to Operation Barkhane.

MINUSMA

The United Nations has a 15,000 man peacekeeping force in Mali as well. The U.N. peacekeeping mission – established in 2013 – is known as United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The organization provides operational and logistical support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force. Some of the European nations supporting MINUSMA include France, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Germany.

G5 Sahel Joint Force

Five African countries, assisted by France, set up the G5 Sahel framework in 2014. In 2017 Chad, Mali, Niger, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso established a joint force (Joint Force FC-G5S) to meet the threats from insurgents and terrorists. The region faces a number of challenges – terrorism, organized crime, and demographic growth. Climate change has degraded the ability of some of the population to make a living from agriculture or livestock – exasperating the economic well being of the regions' citizens. It is planned that once fully operational the G5 Sahel force will have 5,000 soldiers in seven battalions that will be based across three zones.

U.S. Reducing Presence?

Africa Command and the U.S. Department of Defense are currently conducting a review of U.S. troop commitments in Africa – to include the Sahel region. The new National Defense Strategy (NDS) has DoD focused on the great power competition posed by China and Russia. The U.S. military is attempting to reduce its commitments to the counterterrorism campaign in Africa. France relies heavily on U.S. logistics, air support (transport), and intelligence for its West Africa mission. France's efforts in the Sahel would be hurt by a reduction of U.S. support. A number of U.S. SOF units have been deployed over the years to Africa – complementing the efforts of the 3rd Special Forces Group in Africa.

Goals of Task Force Tukuba

If the efforts of Operation Barkane, MINUSMA, Task Force Tukbua, and the G5 Sahel Force are successful, the host nation military units will take over full responsibility for the conduct of the security mission and degrade the insurgent and terrorist capabilities. This will allow the departure of the military forces of the European nations from West Africa. Ideally, Task Force Tukuba will be successful in establishing host nation special operations units that can take over the counterterrorism mission. However, all indications are that the European nations are in for a long effort in helping the G5 Sahel nations stabilize the region and restoring security.

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"Crisis in the Sahel Becoming France's Forever War", New York Times, by Ruth Maclean, March 29, 2020.

Top Map: Used under Creative Commons, Wikimedia.org. Map by Munion / CC BY-SA.

Map of Sahel states from CRS report TE10044, December 2019.

Read [Task Force Tabuka - European SOF in Sahel](#) online.



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5th SFG and the Mint 400



The 5th Special Forces Group had a team racing in the Mint 400 – an annual off-road desert race that took place in Las Vegas, Nevada in early March 2020. The Mint 400 is one of the oldest and prestigious off-road races in America. It is held every year in March. This year's event had over 550 race teams competing in many race classes over a rough 400 mile course.

The race was started in 1968 by the Mint Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas. The event discontinued after the 1989 race but then resurrected in 2008. Currently the Mint 400 is one of the largest off-road races in the world. This year's event was observed by over 65,000 fans.

One of the events in the race was the [Mint 400 Military Challenge](#). This year over \$100,000 was raised for charitable foundations that support veterans and their families. The military class featured a variety of combat vehicles in the race and for display to the fans.

The 5th Special Forces Group operational detachment 'A' entered two GMV 1.1 vehicles loaded with weapons, radios, and other gear suited for combat rather than a off-road race. The ODA pushed the vehicles to the limit in the unique desert setting. This was the first time that an active duty military element has participated with military vehicles.

The Ground Mobility Vehicle 1.1 is highly mobile and suited for all-terrain. It is considered armor ready and can carry four occupants in a multi-role configuration. The vehicle can be transported internally by a CH-47 Chinook and C-130 aircraft.

In 2019 representatives from the Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) participated in the event. They were able to raise funds for the [Marine Raider Foundation](#).

The Mint 400 Military Challenge will likely be an annual event that will add to the overall Mint 400 race. In addition, it is an event that will continue to raise money for worthy causes that help military service members, veterans and their families.

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The Mint 400.

<https://themint400.com/>

5th SFG(A) Team Race in the Mint 400, 5th Special forces Group Public Affairs Officer, DVIDS, March 7, 2020.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/365392/5th-sfga-team-race-mint-400>

Videos:

2020 Mint 400 Miss. Emily Dobrzanski provided some glamour to the off-road event. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zS1KA2FvghE>

Justing Lofton – Method Race Wheels Qualifying. March 5, 2020.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APfBJv1Oasc>

More Mint 400 Videos on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/user/theMINT400/videos>

Photo: Green Berets with the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), accelerate their Ground Mobility Vehicle 1.1 as they start their first lap in the Mint 400, March 06, 2020, in Primm, Nevada.

(U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Justin Moeller, 5th SFG(A) Public Affairs)

Read [5th SFG and the Mint 400 Desert Off-Road Race](#) online.



The Special Operations Warrior Foundation (SOWF) is a non-profit organization located in Tampa, Florida. The SOWF exists to care for the families of fallen and wounded special operations forces. The SOWF was founded in 1980 after the attempt to rescue 53 American hostages in Iran. The operation resulted in the loss of eight special operations servicemen who left behind 17 children.

Read more in [“Special Operations Warrior Foundaton \(SOWF\) - A Good Cause”](#), by SOF News, August 9, 2019.

Special Operations Forces Site Exploitation Course (SOFSE)



Top Photo: A student at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School in the SOF Site Exploitation Operator Advanced Course photographs a cell phone during training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. (U.S. Army photo by K. Kassens, October 22, 2019)

The Special Operations Forces Site Exploitation Courses (SOFSE) provide students the ability to exploit sensitive-site materials and detainees. The United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) has two SOFSE courses that are held at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Each is three weeks long and is conducted several times a year.

The Army defines “site exploitation” as the “. . . synchronized and integrated application of scientific and technological capabilities and enablers to answer informational requirements, facilitate subsequent operations, and support host-nation rule of law.” (ATP 3-90.15). Training courses conducted by SOF and conventional forces ensure that service members are knowledgeable about site exploitation procedures and processes. This ensures that information collected and persons found on-site are methodically assessed and transported to the appropriate facility – such as a technical exploitation facility or military police detainee collection point.

SOF units can conduct exploitation at the site utilizing a ‘reach back capability’ that will allow it to rapidly prosecute subsequent targets. JSOC is one SOF unit that conducts intelligence driven operations against ISIS and other jihadist movements. Its “Expeditionary Targeting Force” utilizes ‘identity intelligence’ (I2) to conduct its missions. In addition, U.S. SOF is also conducting instruction for foreign SOF in site exploitation. For instance U.S. SOF is providing courses of instruction that include tactical site exploitation for the National Mission Unit (NMU) and select Province Special Units (PSU) in Afghanistan.

Some of the different categories of information to include biometric data (retina scan, fingerprints, etc.), cell phone data (CELLEX), electronic media (MEDEX), digital exploitation (DOMEX), and documents (DOCEX). The Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) has designated the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (parent unit of USAJFKSWCS) as the lead SOF component for sensitive site exploitation. (page 2-2, ADP 3-05, July 2019).

SOFSE OAC



Photo: A student in the SOFSE OAC fingerprints a captured enemy role player during training at Ft Bragg, NC. (Photo by K. Kassens, Oct 17, 2019).

The SOF Site Exploitation Operator Advance Course (SOFSE OAC) provides students the knowledge necessary to work on a site exploitation team. This includes team organization, responsibilities, planning, and interagency collaboration. The students in the course are trained in organizing, planning, and conducting forensic and biometric collection, document examination, media exploitation, improved explosive device exploitation, tactical questioning and detainee-handling procedures.

SOFSE TEC



Left Photo: Students in the Special Operations Forces Site Exploitation – Technical Exploitation Course, use a laser to photograph a document during fingerprint training. (U.S. Army photo by K. Kassens, October 22, 2019)

The SOF Site Exploitation, Technical Exploitation Course (SOFSE TEC) graduates will learn how to operate within a SOFSE facility. The students in the course are trained in advanced battlefield forensics, on-site identification, capturing, and transferring latent prints, document digitization and employment of ballistic imaging devices.

NATO SOF SSE Courses



Photo: A computer, cell phones, propaganda flyers, and images of an IED belt are some of the simulated evidence found during a site exploitation as U.S. and allied special forces search a compound for the NATO Special Operations Forces Campus Technical Exploitation Operator Controller Course on Chievres Air Base, Belgium. (U.S. Army photo by Visual Information Specialist Pierre-Etienne Courtejoie, Oct 29, 2015).

NATO SOF has several courses within the sensitive site exploitation field. These courses are held at the NATO SOF Campus in Belgium. The NATO SOF Technical Exploitation Operations (TEO) Course instructs students in the collection and exploitation of materials during a compressed operation. The NATO Digital Media Exploitation Course concentrates on the retrieval and examination of data stored on computers and other digital storage devices. The NATO SOF Cellular Exploitation Course concentrates on the retrieval and examination of data from mobile devices and the fusion of this data into intelligence reports.

During the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) the art and science of site exploitation has grown leaps and bounds. This has proved to add to the effectiveness of specialized SOF units conducting high value individual (HVI) operations (F3EAD) as well as enhancing the rule of law through warrant-based arrests. Courses of instruction such as SOFSE OAC, SOFSE TEC, and others (NATO SOF) enhance the capabilities of SOF units.

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ATP 3-90.15, Site Exploitation, July 2015

https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/atp3_90x15.pdf

NATO, Technical Exploitation in the Gray Zone: Empowering NATO SOF for Strategic Effect, by Chace A. Falgout, Utica College, May 2019.

https://www.academia.edu/39335310/TECHNICAL_EXPLOITATION_IN_THE_GRAY_ZONE_EMPOWERING_NATO_SOF_FOR_STRATEGIC_EFFECT

Read [Special Operations Forces Site Exploitation Course \(SOFSE\)](#) online.



<https://reconfoundation.org>



<https://specialops.org>



www.specialforcescharitabletrust.org



www.specialoperations.org

Combat Diver Foundation



The Combat Diver Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit public charity dedicated to preserving the history of the Combat Diver community. Though the foundations story began with a recognition that the class plaques at the Special Forces Underwater Operations School in Key West were under threat by the ravages of time and salt air, CDF's vision does not stop there. The men depicted on those plaques — from every service and from many allied nations — represent a tremendous contribution to the heroic history of the United States and its partners. Those stories should be preserved and told. With that in mind, CDF's ultimate goal is construction of the Combat Diver Museum that will serve as a home for that history.

Deep Dive 2020

Since its establishment in 2018, CDF has worked with an array of Special Operations Forces units and private donors to raise awareness for the CDF cause. This year, the foundation is growing their board of directors and will again host an annual fundraiser they call the “Deep Dive.” Last year's [Deep Dive 2019](#) event included a charity dive, a static display of all the latest Combat Diver gear, a silent auction, and a raffle, all to the soundtrack of live music on the beach. This year's event, Deep Dive 2020, will take place at the [Flora-Bama Lounge](#) in Pensacola on 29 August. Mark your calendars!



Special Forces Combat Divers emerge from the water. USASOC Twitter, 9 July 2019.

A Call to Action

Remember! CDF is funded entirely by individual contributions. In order to accomplish their mission the CDF needs your help getting the word out to donors and sponsors. Though CDF is not a membership organization, it is seeking volunteers to serve as official "Advisors" that can organize fundraisers, answer questions about the organization and its mission, and find ways to help interested people contribute. If you're interested in getting involved please contact the Combat Diver Foundation through the website.

Preserving SOF History

CDF is not just for Combat Divers. It's about an important part of Special Operations history so whether you're a Combat Diver, Water Infiltration Course Graduate, Dive Medical Officer, Dive Medical Technician, or just a history or scuba enthusiast, please support CDF. Visit the CDF website at www.combatdiver.org or follow them on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or LinkedIn for all the latest.



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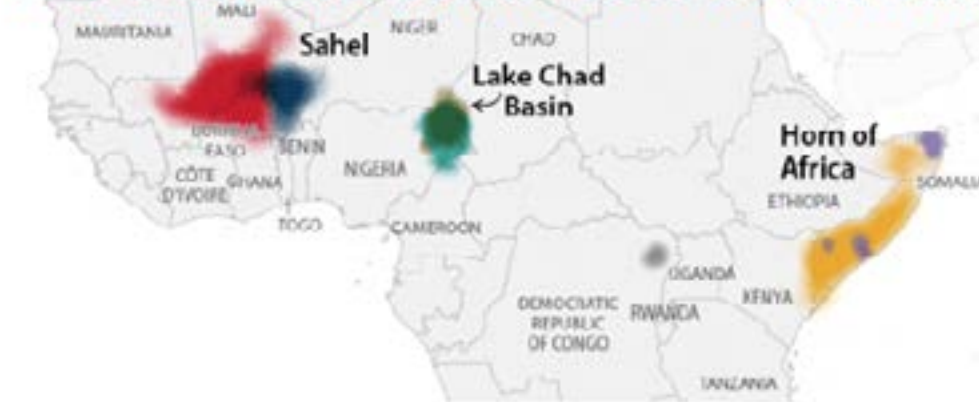
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Read this [article online](#).

US Counterterrorism in Africa



Since 9/11 the United States has significantly scaled up its counterterrorism (CT) activities in Africa. The U.S. has conducted unilateral CT operations as well as extensive training for African partner forces involved in the CT fight. Despite this long counterterrorism campaign the growth of jihadist groups continues in Somalia, north Africa, and west Africa. Many of the violent extremist organizations (VEOs) are aligned with either al-Qa'ida or the Islamic State.

PSI and TSCTI. In 2002 the U.S. established its Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI) aimed to improve the intelligence and border security capability of some Sahelian countries. [1] Later, in 2005, a much larger program labeled the Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) involved economic, political, diplomatic, and military components. The military component of TSCTI was Operation Enduring Freedom – Trans Sahara. In 2002 the U.S. established a presence at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti – initially basing SOF elements to respond to counterterrorism events in the region. The base has grown and currently houses 3,000 troops that conduct operations throughout the Horn of Africa, east Africa, and beyond.

AFRICOM and SOCAFRICA. An annual special operations exercise (FLINTLOCK) was instituted in 2005 supported by SOCEUR and later by SOCAFRICA involving several nations in the region. In 2007 the U.S. established Africa Command (AFRICOM). For many years the United States has been deploying forces to Africa to conduct counterterrorism (CT) operations and

to advise, assist, train, and accompany security forces of partner nations conducting CT operations.

Training Teams. U.S. Special Forces, MARSOC, other units have been providing training and assistance to countries in the Sahel, Lake Chad, and Horn of Africa regions. Over time many of these operations became known to the public. However some of these CT operations were 'under the radar'. Other missions barely register in the press – such as the operation against the Lord's Resistance Army in central Africa. A few became well-known due to unfavorable events.

Costly Operations. One example of an event that caught Americans by surprise includes the U.S. military involvement in Niger where four members of the 3rd Special Forces Group were killed in an ambush in October 2017. Another operation is the al Shabaab raid on Camp Simba at the Manda Bay Airfield where three Americans died in January 2020.

Support to Partners. In addition to 'boots on the ground' the United States has provided logistical and intelligence support to African and European nations in the CT fight – especially in west Africa. This includes three critical components to the CT campaign: in-flight refueling of European aircraft, airlift of European and African soldiers and vehicles, and all sources of U.S. intelligence. AFRICOM's efforts in CT in Africa is complemented by those of the U.S. State Department. [2]

Spotty Progress. There have been some successes in the counterterrorism fight in Africa but there have also been cases where progress has been very slow. Long running conflicts are in progress in Somalia, Libya, and the Sahel region of Africa and they are unlikely to end soon. The United States has had a presence in all of these areas – employing conventional and special operations forces for several years in these conflicts. However, it appears that insecurity and instability has gotten worse over the past decade despite efforts by the United States and other international actors.

Somalia

Somalia has been a failed state for many decades. Al-Shabaab militants have contributed to this state of insecurity and instability in Somalia. The group holds large areas of the rural countryside and conducts frequent attacks in the cities of Somalia. The al-Qaeda affiliated insurgent / terrorist group has been intent on toppling the UN-backed federal government. In addition to establishing a caliphate in Somalia, Al Shabaab has a stated desire to attack the U.S. homeland. The Defense Intelligence Agency has assessed that the threat from al Shabaab and ISIS-Somalia remains high. The strength of al Shabaab is estimated to be between 5,000 to 7,000. ISIS-Somalia is much smaller, estimated at 100 to 300 fighters.

In 2019 the U.S. conducted over 110 airstrikes in Central and Southern Somalia killing over 800 militants. U.S. military personnel (about 700) have been providing advise, assistance, and accompanying Somalia forces and partner nations of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). [3] SOF teams have been training select Somali units to include the Danab Advance Infantry Brigade.

Lake Chad Basin

The Boko Harem group has had a long presence in the Lake Chad Basin area of Africa. It's area of operations straddles the border of Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. ISIS-West Africa also operates in this region. The VEOs in the Lake Chad Basin area have not been significantly degraded. Other jihadist groups aligned with Middle Eastern organizations threaten to expand as well.

The VEOs are aided by the corruption and ineffectiveness of the regional governments – notably the Nigerian government. The Nigerian Army has not been able to defend remote locations and is now

consolidating its forces onto larger more defensible bases yielding much of the Nigerian northeast countryside to Boko Harem. The US posture in this region has gone from a “degrade” strategy to one of “containment”.

Sahel Region

Islamist militants have been a source of insecurity in the Sahel area of Africa. The militants, aligned with al Qaeda, are fighting for control of the land along Niger's western border with Mali and in other Sahel nations. The militants operate with basic weapons, pickup trucks, and motorcycles and are very mobile. They have been increasingly active the last several months in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. The VEOs in the Sahel region have not been degraded nor contained. There are indications that the VEOs will continue to expand their operational area. The most active and effective VEO in this region is Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM).

The U.S. currently has Special Forces teams operating in the region conducting a train, advise, and assist mission. An airfield was built and is now operational in Agadez, Niger to assist the regional government forces in providing security for its threatened areas. The airfield also functions as a U.S. drone base – beginning ISR operations in November 2019. However, there have been rumors that, having just completed the base, the U.S. may phase out or scale down operations at Air Base 201.

Libya

From 2014 to 2016 the Islamic State had a big presence in Libya but has since drifted south into the desert. The current civil war in Libya makes it difficult to truly assess the Islamic State in Libya. ISIS-Libya and al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) have been a bit quiet in north Africa the last part of 2019.

Past and current CT efforts by the United States in Libya include drone strikes against ISIS leadership. A small contingent of U.S. SOF was withdrawn from Libya in April 2019 due to the unpredictable security environment. The presence of Russian mercenary forces impede U.S. counterterrorism operations in Libya. [4] Complicating the Libyan security environment has been the introduction of proxy forces from Syria, Sudan, and Chad.

U.S. Partners in Africa

France – the Sahel Lead. The United States is fortunate to have good international partners to work in the CT effort in Africa. The French have been in the lead for several years in the Sahel region. They currently have about 4,500 troops in this area of Africa supporting Operation Barkhane which started in 2014. In addition, France has (as of 2020) established a special operations task force – Operation Takuba will have several European countries participating.

G5 Sahel Joint Force. The five nations of Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania are currently trying to secure the region and its borders but it is facing some challenges. The G5 Sahel, established in 2017, remains under resourced and lacks sufficient training. The French play a major role in assisting the G5 Sahel force. The U.S. provides a limited footprint of training and equipping activities to the G5 Sahel.

MINUSMA. The United Nations is assisting in the security effort. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali is engaged in an important but difficult peacekeeping mission. It is assisted by the United States and other international partners.

AMISON. The countries of Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, and others have been contributing troops for a number of years to this joint mission in Somalia. The troops of the African Union Mission in Somalia has begun its withdrawal. By 2021 the AMISON mission in Somalia should be finished; although the security situation in Somalia is unlikely to significantly improve by then.

Key African Allies. There are some key African nations who are important partners – including Kenya, Niger and others. U.S. special operations forces are working with selected African units to improve their capability to fight the terrorists and insurgents. These include the Danab in Somalia, the 11th and 51st Special Intervention Battalion in Niger, and the Kenya Special Forces and Rangers, and others.

Root Causes of Discontent

Some African nations are struggling with internal divisions in their country that are conducive to the growth of violent extremist organizations. Tribal grievances, disenfranchised minorities, conflicts between farmers and herdsman, lack of government services in rural areas, ethnic divisions, poor governance, heavy-handed government reaction to VEOs and the general

population, human rights abuses, and other factors are reasons why VEOs can recruit and maintain support within some members of African society.

SOCAFRICA has taken the position that the counterterrorism effort needs to be conducted in conjunction with programs that improve governance, development, and economic opportunity in these African nations at risk. The “three Ds”: defense, diplomacy, and development – are important components to defeating VEOs. [5]

Future U.S. CT Engagement in Africa?

Changing Focus and Resource Competition. The current national defense strategy mandates a shift in focus from the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism fight of the past two decades to a concentration on great power competition. This means resources and personnel applied to the threat posed by Russia and China in Europe, the Indo-Pacific, and elsewhere. AFRICOM and SOCAFRICA will be competing with other Combatant Commands for training teams (SOF, SFAB, etc.), ISR, medical evacuation assets, personnel recovery assets, and more. There is a finite amount of SOF, intelligence, and other resources – something has to give. In this case it appears that Africa may come up on the short end of the stick.

Downsizing the Africa Mission. The Department of Defense has recently indicated that it is planning to reduce the footprint for the newly established drone base in Niger. It plans to cut back back on SOF forces being deployed to Africa. Of note are plans to deploy elements of the newly formed Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs) to conduct training and advising missions. [6]

There is some Congressional resistance to this shift in resources away from Africa. Our European allies are also displeased with a loss of U.S. support for the counterterrorism fight in Africa. The U.S. commitment in Africa is currently ‘under review’ and we should see some policy shifts within the next few months that indicate which path the U.S. will take in Africa. Many national security observers that follow events in Africa recognize that in order to continue to contain or degrade VEOs the U.S. will need to provide long-term assistance and advising until partner forces can deal with jihadists threats on their own.

Footnotes:

[1] In conjunction with the Pan Sahel Initiative detachments from the 10th Special Forces Group began training military forces in Africa.

[2] See Counterterrorism in Africa – Innovation, Lessons Learned and Staying Ahead of the Threat, address at UN CT Regional Conference, State.gov, July 2019.

[3] See “AFRICOM predicts mission training Somalia’s ‘Lightning Brigade’ will last until 2027”, Military Times, March 17, 2020.

[4] The intelligence community has assessed that Russian paramilitary forces fighting alongside the Libyan National Army (LNA) shot down a U.S. surveillance drone over Tripoli in the later part of 2019.

[5] From “A View from the CT Foxhole” below.

[6] There are no known numbers provided as to how many SFAB ‘teams’ will deploy; but it does make for a good soundbite. While a ‘12-man’ SFAB team is specifically trained to train, advise, and assist (TAA) foreign conventional partner forces it is a poor choice to partner with foreign SOF partner forces.

United States Congress, February 2020.

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Images: Top article image derived from map found in CRS 2019 report cited above.

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www.longtabbrewing.com



www.75thrangerregiment.org

ASD SO/LIC - Reform Needed Within DoD?

(PSYOP), and counterproliferation of WMD. But the reach of SO/LIC is more than just SOF – it is involved in humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, disaster relief, counternarcotics, and more.

The ASD SO/LIC was mandated by the National Defense Authorization Act (1987). The position was established in January 1988 by Defense Directive 5138.3. The ASD SO/LIC is assisted by three Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Defense:

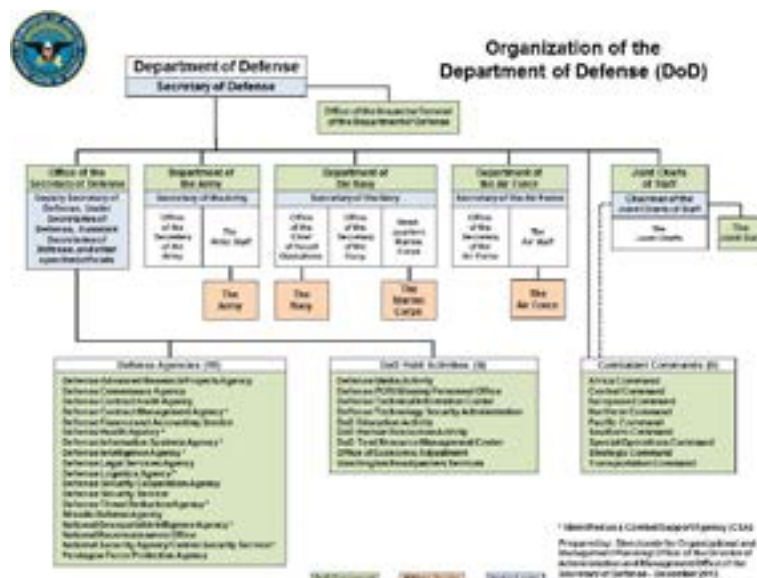
- DASD, Special Operations and Combating Terrorism
- DASD, Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations
- DASD, Counternarcotics and Global Threats

The Special Operations / Low Intensity Conflict (SO/LIC) office within the Department of Defense provides civilian advocacy and oversight over the U.S. special operations community. However, there are some in the SOF community that feel the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ASD) position should be upgraded to the Under Secretary level. They argue that SOF does not have sufficient civilian advocacy and oversight in the Department of Defense.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations / Low Intensity Conflict is the principal civilian advisor to the Secretary of Defense on special operations and low-intensity conflict matters. The ASD SO/LIC has a responsibility for policy and the overall administrative supervision of SOF activities. These core SOF tasks include counterterrorism (CT), unconventional warfare (UW), direct action (DA), special reconnaissance (SR), foreign internal defense (FID), civil affairs (CA), information operations (IO), psychological operations

Growth of SOF Force. Over the past 18 years, since 9/11 and the Global War on Terror began, USSOCOM has increased in size – from 40,000 to about 70,000. The SOF budget has grown significantly – by the billions. The SOF mission set has expanded with constant, persistent presence in many countries and engagement in many more. ASD SO/LIC has not seen a corresponding increase in structure or staffing – this is problematic for conducting the type of oversight needed.

Congressional Action. In recent years Congress has directed that the Department of Defense fill key billets, increase the staff, and consider processes that would give ASD SO/LIC direct access to the Secretary of Defense. The 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) (Section 922) instructed DoD to implement some mandatory reforms – which would expand the role of ASD SO/LIC.



The organization of the Department of Defense is shown to the left. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) is in the upper right corner. USSOCOM is denoted in the lower right hand block under Combatant Commands.

DoD Inaction. The Defense Department – one of the finest examples of a bureaucracy if ever there was one – has been slow to implement the ‘wishes’ of Congress to increase the ‘reach’ of ASD SOLIC. DoD has taken an incremental implementation approach to the requirements of section 922. There has been some resistance on the part of former USD(P)s to SO/LIC exercising more independence. SO/LIC is a significant portion of the overall manpower of OUSD(P).

Future Congressional Action? It is quite possible the Congress will once again decide to provide some pressure to DoD to address this issue. The solution that Congress comes up with may be more than the Department of Defense would want. Possible options include an Under Secretary position for SO/LIC,

making ASD SO/LIC an independent ASD (similar to ASD for Public Affairs), or establishing USSOCOM as a separate service. Currently ASD SO/LIC reports to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

Why Have an Under Secretary for SO/LIC? The DoD is a huge bureaucracy that slowly grinds away with its daily routine. Hot button issues requiring timely responses concerning SOF do not always receive immediate action. The staffing process at the Pentagon is very slow both vertically and horizontally.

U.S. SOF operates in a fast paced world. This has been true over the past two decades in the counterterrorism fight and will continue in the near peer competition short of armed conflict. China and Russia will not confront us in general war; but rather using irregular warfare (IW). More often than not SOF is the appropriate force to



ASD SO/LIC is in the first column of the chart to the left. It resides within the Office of the Secretary of Defense. ASD SO/LIC reports to the Under-secretary of Defense for Policy.

meet these hybrid threats.

Resource allocation is an ongoing battle for the different services and programs. SOF needs a seat at the table where the big decisions are made. The hierarchy of the Pentagon has a lot to do with the division of resources. The higher the head of SO/LIC is within the hierarchy the better SOCOM and SOF equities are represented.

And USSOCOM? Former ASD SO/LIC (see “A Seat at the Table” podcast below) and some members of Congress are in favor of strengthening the SO/LIC staff. However, USSOCOM may not be in strong agreement. The commander of SOCOM currently has direct access

to the Secretary of Defense – as he should. USSOCOM probably is not too keen to have to answer to or take direction from SO/LIC. The command is probably quite happy with the current level of ‘advocacy’ help they receive from SO/LIC. One challenge is that SOCOM maintains its own Special Operations Legislative Affairs office that directly engages with Congress – bypassing SO/LIC. SOCOMs own network of connective tissue is an impediment to SO/LIC fulfilling the role of a “service like” secretary.

It will be interesting to see where this issue goes in the months or years ahead. Some informative reading (and listening) is provided below under “References” for those who want to learn more.

References:

“A Seat at the Table”, SOFspot, Global SOF Foundation, March 9, 2020. A panel discussion about upgrading the position of ASD SO/LIC. Panel members include three former ASD SO/LICs – Michael Lumpkin, Brian Sheridan, and Mark Mitchell. A 38 minute long podcast.

<http://www.sofspot.org/204030/2964385-a-seat-at-the-table>

“Special Obfuscations: The Strategic Uses of Special Operations Forces”, [article](#) by Alice Hunt Friend and Shannon Culbertson, Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), March 6, 2020. This article highlights the importance of an effective SO/LIC in the context of balancing CT/COIN and strategic competition.

“America’s Special Operators Will Be Adrift Without Better Civilian Oversight”, [article](#) by Mark Mitchell, Zachary Griffiths, and Cole Liveiratos, War on the Rocks, February 18, 2020.

“America’s avengers deserve an advocate”, The Hill, November 5, 2019. Authors Meaghan Keeler-Pettigrew (Global SOF Foundation), James R. Locher III (former ASD SO/LIC), and Thomas Trask (Lt Gen Ret and former Vice Cdr USSOCOM) argue that SOF [does not have sufficient civilian oversight and advocacy](#) in the Department of Defense.

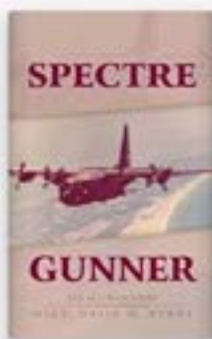
Special Operations Forces: Additional Actions Are Needed to Effectively Expand Management Oversight, U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), May 2019, 37 pages.

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“A View from the CT Foxhole: Mark Mitchell”, CTC Sentinel, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, December 2018. Mark Mitchell, the Principle Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations / Low Intensity Conflict is [interviewed about SO/LIC](#) and the role of SOF in the counterterrorism fight.

“Senate votes to boost civilian oversight of special ops, reinforcing earlier mandate”, Federal News Network, June 19, 2018. This [article](#) provides some detailed information on the measures the Congress expected DoD to take to beef up the staff of SO/LIC.

Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict Legislation: Why Was it Passed and Have the Voids Been Filled?, by Colonel William G. Boykin, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 1991, 71 pages.



Visit the [SOF News Book Shop](#) for popular titles about special operations forces, training, and history.



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September 20, 2020

54th Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB) Activation



The [54th Security Force Assistance Brigade](#) (SFAB) was formally activated by the U.S. Army during an official ceremony at Fort Bragg, North Carolina on March 5, 2020.

The establishment of the 54th SFAB has been in progress for over a year. The uncasing and display of the command and brigade colors marked the beginning of the unit's history and lineage. The keynote speaker at the ceremony was General Michael Garrett – the commanding general of the United States Army Forces command.

The 54th SFAB is an Army National Guard unit composed of a brigade headquarters and six battalions. The brigade has units in Indiana, Georgia, Texas, Ohio, Illinois, and Florida. The 54th SFAB [headquarters is part of the Indiana National Guard](#).

Mission. The [mission of an SFAB](#) is to carry out train, advise, and assist (TAA) missions with foreign nation military partners. Along with the U.S. Army's Special Forces, the SFABs are the U.S. Army's permanent and dedicated organizations specifically trained in the combat advisory role. The SFABs do not do the full range of missions assigned to Special Forces – such as counterterrorism (CT), direct action (DA), special reconnaissance (SR), unconventional warfare (UW), and other SOF missions.

Active Duty SFABs. The active Army has established five Security Force Assistance Brigades. The [1st SFAB completed a tour in Afghanistan](#) in late 2018. The [2nd SFAB completed an Afghan tour in 2019](#). The 3rd SFAB is currently deployed to Afghanistan and a small element of the [3rd SFAB is in Iraq](#). Smaller elements of the SFABs have deployed to other locations around the world. The 4th and 5th SFABs are currently training up and are projected to deploy worldwide – most likely to the Pacific and Africa regions.

Training. Most members of the 54th must pass an assessment and selection process. Those personnel assigned to an advisor position attend the Combat Advisor Training Course at the [Military Advisor Training Academy](#) (MATA), Fort Benning. In addition, SFAB soldiers receive training on foreign weapons systems, driving, SERE, and medical subjects. SFAB soldiers also receive language and cultural training.

Unit Training. The national guard units in the individual states are conducting training events throughout the year. A typical training event is described in a November 2019 article published on DVIDS by the Georgia National Guard. Read "[Georgia Guard's 1-54th SFAB Conducts Team Assessment at Fort Benning, Georgia](#)", DVIDS, Nov 15, 2019.

OCONUS Missions. Some of the SFAB guard units have gotten an early start. Members of the Florida SFAB units deployed in the summer of 2019 to the Dominican Republic and [trained up soldiers of Caribbean nations](#) during a recent Tradewinds exercise. Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 54th SFAB (Florida) completed a [five day exchange in the Commonwealth of Dominica](#) where they worked with the Dominica Police Force on tactics and techniques for policing operations and crime scene investigation.

Volunteers. The National Guard SFAB is accepting volunteers for advisor and non-advisor positions. The applicants for advisor positions are interviewed by commanders and senior NCOs. There is an assessment and selection process that applicants must pass. This consists of physical fitness tests, interviews, and other selection events. Learn more on how to become a [National Guard SFAB combat advisor](#).

References:

54th Security Force Assistance Brigade, SOF News, January 30, 2019
<https://sof.news/sfa/54th-sfab/>

54th Security Force Assistance Brigade Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/54SFAB/>

Security Force Assistance Command (SFAC)
<https://home.army.mil/bragg/index.php/units-tenants/SFAC>

Photo: A Soldier from the Florida Army National Guard Security Forces Assistance Brigade (SFAB) advises a Haitian Soldier on the proper handling technique of a shotgun during Tradewinds 2019, at Las Calderas Naval Base, Dominican Republic. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Leia D. Tascarini, June 2019).



<http://www.blacksmithpublishing.com>

Imperatives 2020 - Global SOF Foundation



The Global SOF Foundation recently held its SOF Imperatives Forum in Washington, D.C. in February 2020 and released its annual SOF Imperatives Document.

The SOF Imperatives Forum featured a number of discussions and presentations by members of the Senate and House as well as current and former leaders of the special operations community. A common theme was how to find a balance between the mission of countering violent extremism while also shifting focus to the new era of great power competition as directed by the National Defense Strategy.

Included in the congressional representatives were Senator Joni Ernst and Representatives Mike Waltz, Jason Crow, and Scott Peters. Some of the leaders of the SOF community included VADM Tim Szymanski (USSOCOM), Lt Gen James Slife (AFSOC), Lt Gen (Ret) Thomas Trask, and LTG (Ret) John Mulholland. Former ASD's of SO/LIC were also present and participated in a panel discussion: Michael Lumpkin, Brian Sheridan, and Mark Mitchell.

The Imperatives 2020 Document is distributed to

congressional representatives and staffers in order to educate key leaders on specific special operations force topics. The document highlights key issues for U.S. SOF in the areas of strategy; support to operations, training, and readiness; support to the force; maritime, land forces, and aviation.

The Imperatives 2020 Document is 8-pages long and in PDF format. It is available on the Global SOF Foundation website:

https://gsof.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2020-01-30_GSOF-2020-Imperatives.pdf

The Global Special Operations Forces (SOF) Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that aims to build and grow an international network of military, government, commercial, and educational stakeholders in order to advance SOF capabilities and partnerships to confront global and networked threats.

<https://www.gsof.org/>

Two Marine Raiders KIA in Northern Iraq



Central Command [released a statement](#) saying that two U.S. service members were killed in action in Iraq on Sunday, March 8, 2020. “Two U.S. service members were killed by enemy forces while advising and accompanying Iraqi Security Forces during a mission to eliminate an ISIS terrorist stronghold in a mountainous area of north central Iraq.”

Both Marines were assigned to the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion, Marine Forces Special Operations Command, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. They were identified as:

Gunnery Sergeant [Diego D. Pongo](#), age 34, of Simi Valley, California
Captain [Moises A. Navas](#), age 34, of Germantown, Maryland

Some reports say that the recovery effort of the wounded and deceased took over six hours and involved a unit from the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC). The operation took place in the mountains more than 35 miles south of Erbil. The raid on the terrorist base was described as a partnered company-sized operation by ISOF.

The target was a terrorist training camp located in a tunnel and cave complex in the Qara Chockh mountains. Four other U.S. service members were wounded. News reports say that the U.S. conducted airstrikes with F-15 fighter jets, drones, and Apache attack helicopters. It is estimated that between 20 to 25 ISIS fighters died in the engagement.

The last death in Iraq due to combat action was a Marine Raider – killed on August 10, 2019. Gunnery Sergeant [Scott Koppenhafer](#) died after being engaged by enemy small arms fire while advising and accompanying Iraqi security forces on a planned operation in Ninewah province. Koppenhafer was a member of the Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC).

The Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command was created as a major command within the Corps and a co-equal component of United States Special Operations Command (SOCOM). The majority of the MARSOC units are based at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The subunits of MARSOC include the Marine Raider Regiment, the Marine Raider Support Group, and the Marine Raider Training Center. The Marine Raider Regiment has a headquarters company and three Marine Raider Battalions. Two Marine Raider Battalions are located at Camp Lejeune and one at Camp Pendleton.

Read this article online: [Two Marine Raiders KIA in Northern Iraq](#).

DEFENDER Europe 2020



The ability for the United States to reinforce NATO in Europe in the event of a conventional war with Russia will be the centerpiece of DEFENDER-Europe 20. This months-long exercise will take place from February to April this year.

Editorial Note: On Thursday afternoon, March 11, 2020, the Department of Defense announced some significant cutbacks on the personnel who will participate in this exercise in light of the Corona Virus outbreak.

Thousands of American troops will be transported to Europe – one of the largest movements of U.S. troops for an exercise in 25 years. In addition, another 17,000 troops from almost 20 countries will be participating as well. The premise of the exercise is the response to Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Some of the exercise locations include the Baltic States, Poland, and Georgia.

Why Conduct DEFENDER-Europe 20? The exercise will show that NATO allies and partners stand stronger together. It supports U.S. National Defense Strategy and NATO deterrence objectives. It demonstrates the ability of the U.S. military to project power globally. The exercise will enhance the strategic readiness of the U.S. military.

A Lot of Moving Parts – Logistics is Huge. The movement of U.S. troops will also be tied to moving lots of equipment from the states to different locations in Europe. In addition, it includes the use of equipment and vehicles in pre-positioned locations in Europe. This includes:

- 2,500 equipment containers
- 6,000 vehicles
- 1,500 tracked vehicles

The exercise is logistics heavy – the major phases of the exercise involve ‘deploy’, ‘draw equipment’, ‘move’ to training location, conduct 6 linked exercises, and then ‘redeploy’. Parts of the exercise will involve the quick deployment of paratroopers to the ‘battle zones’. In addition, thousands of U.S. troops permanently based in Europe will participate in Defender-Europe 20 as well.

Exercise includes:

- Transferring 20,000 U.S. troops and pieces of equipment from the United States to Europe. This will be the largest force from the U.S. to Europe in more than 25 years.
- Movement of 8,000 U.S. troops and equipment from various locations in Europe.
- Conducting a series of smaller exercises with partner nation forces. Some of these include Allied Spirit XI, Dynamic Front 20, Joint Warfighting Assessment 20, Saber Strike 20, Swift Response 20, and Trojan Footprint.
- U.S. paratroopers will be conducting airborne insertions into Latvia, Lithuania, and Georgia.
- Cyberspace and space will be components of the exercise – in accordance with the U.S. DOD incorporating the doctrine of a 'multi-domain battle'.

Comparisons with REFORGER. During the Cold War the Soviet Union posed a real threat to Western Europe. The conventional strength of the Warsaw Pact was considered strong enough that they could mount an attack on Europe and perhaps reach the shores of the Atlantic within weeks. The ability of the United States to rapidly reinforce Europe was tested through the REFORGER exercise. However, thinking that Defender-Europe is a repeat of REFORGER is off the mark. The Soviet Union and its 'client states' in Eastern Europe are no more. Russia's conventional capability is a far cry from that of the Cold War-era Soviet Union. Lt. Col. (Ret) James Carafano, of the Heritage Foundation, explains this further in "[DEFENDER-EUROPE Not a 21st Century REFORGER](#)", Association of the United States Army, January 23, 2020.

Russian Concerns. Of course, the Russians will be tracking this exercise very closely. Much of the Defender-Europe 20 activities will center on Georgia, the Baltic States, or Poland which are very close to Russia's borders.

SOF and Trojan Footprint. This annual U.S. Special Operations Command Europe-led exercise brings together U.S., allied, and partnered special operations units. It is tied into the DEFENDER-Europe 20 exercise. Read about [Trojan Footprint 19](#) and [Trojan Footprint 18](#).

Future of DEFENDER-Europe. It is projected that this exercise will be an annual event. On even-numbered years it will be a large exercise and in between it will be scaled-down.

The months-long DEFENDER-Europe 20 exercise will attract a lot of attention from military observers from NATO. The endeavor should reveal some important lessons for future large scale exercises. Of course, the Russians will likely be paying very close attention as well.

References:

DEFENDER-Europe 20, U.S. Army Europe
<https://www.eur.army.mil/DefenderEurope/>

Read article online: [DEFENDER-Europe 20](#)

Invincible Sentry 20 - Uzbekistan



U.S. Central Command conducted Invincible Sentry 20, a bilateral exercise hosted by the government of Uzbekistan in military training facilities within the Tashkent region from February 24 to March 2, 2020.

Invincible Sentry 20 was a crisis response rehearsal designed to evaluate the command and control operations between U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), component command staffs (including SOCCENT), other U.S. Government agencies, and the host nation. It was also designed to build readiness and interoperability between U.S. and Uzbekistan forces in case the need arises for a combined response to regional crises or contingencies.



U.S. Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) served as the command and control element for all U.S. Special Operations participating in the exercise. U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) worked closely with the Uzbekistan National Guard and other Uzbek security forces to train on critical tasks and realistic scenarios that provided an opportunity to pursue ways to better address common threats to regional security.

The exercise allowed for both American and Uzbek participants to improve operational agility when confronted with unfamiliar challenges. Each day of the exercise, U.S. and Uzbekistan forces rehearsed, executed and learned from each other as they went through various tactical maneuver scenarios.

The partnership opportunity served as another repetition for SOCCENT to apply capabilities and achieve validation to continue to provide SOF operational planning and support throughout the region. In addition, the exercise helps the U.S. to maintain a strong working relationship with Uzbekistan.



Uzbekistan Independence. With the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 the Central Asian country gained its independence. The U.S. was one of the first nations to recognize the country. After 9/11 the U.S. used a base called [Karshi-Khanabad Airbase](#) or K2 in southern Uzbekistan to launch air strikes and Special Forces teams into northern Afghanistan. The U.S. base was maintained until 2005 when relations between the two countries deteriorated because of Uzbek government human rights violations and an alleged [massacre of protesters in May 2005](#).

Improved Diplomatic Relations. The U.S. and Uzbekistan have common interests and there has been an improvement in relations since 2018. There is a desire to prevent the movement of foreign terrorist fighters and narcotic traffickers. Uzbekistan shares a border with Afghanistan and can play a role in stabilizing the security environment. There is hope that Uzbekistan can play a big role in reintegrating Afghanistan into the Central Asian sphere.

“Our military cooperation with Uzbekistan is based on mutual respect and common interests. Training programs and joint response exercises such as Invincible Sentry show the depth and breadth of our security partnership with Uzbekistan.” (U.S. Ambassador to Uzbekistan, Daniel Rosenblum)

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Uzbekistan in February 2020 while touring the Central Asian states. He carried a message to the ex-Soviet Republics – “Beware of China”. He warned Uzbekistan and the other Central Asian countries to be [wary of Chinese investment](#) and influence. However Uzbekistan and its neighbors rely on China for much of their foreign trade and investment – so the U.S. will likely see some ‘gentle resistance’ to the [message about China](#).

U.S and Uzbek Military Relationship. The relationship between the U.S. and Uzbek military has been growing over the past few years. The Uzbek Minister of Defense [visited SECDEF Mark Esper](#) in July 2019. The minister also [visited several U.S. military sites](#) across the country. The U.S. SECDEF was scheduled to visit Uzbekistan in March 2020 but his visit was cancelled due to the coronavirus events.

In August 2019 six Uzbek soldiers visited the Black Rapids Training Site in Alaska exchanging techniques on mountain operations. In September 2019 a number of visits were conducted by Uzbek military officers to explore collaboration on officer training and military research. In addition there have been visits to Uzbekistan by U.S. military members from the aviation and medical community.



SPP, Mississippi, and Uzbekistan. The State Partnership Program links the National Guard of the individual U.S. states with the militaries of other countries. Mississippi and Uzbekistan began their partnership in 2012. Over the past several years they have conducted a number of joint military events. Uzbek special forces participated in a SOF exercise in Mississippi in January 2019. In December 2019 members of the Uzbek Special Operations Battalion visited Camp Shelby, Mississippi taking part in the annual “Best Warrior” competition. The MS NG has plans to post a full-time officer in the Office of Military Cooperation (OMC) in the US Embassy in Tashkent.

The U.S. has an interest in the development of stronger diplomatic and military ties with Uzbekistan. The never-ending fight against terrorism, the situation in Afghanistan, and the great power competition with Russia and China places Uzbekistan in a key geographic position. Once the coronavirus threat has subsided it is expected that the U.S. and Uzbek will continue to conduct staff visits to each other’s countries, conduct joint exercises, and expand mil to mil relationships.

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Parts of this article derived from story published on DVIDS on March 17, 2020 entitled [“U.S. and Uzbek National Guard together in Central Asia”](#).

[“Rethinking Uzbekistan: A Military View”](#), by Major Daniel O’Connor, U.S. Army, Military Review, Army University Press, March – April 2020.

United States Strategy for Central Asia: 2019-2025, Department of State, 2020. This 6-[page document](#) is posted on the website of the U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan.

Photo: A U.S. special operator teaches a member of the Uzbekistan National Guard how to detonate a flash bang grenade while performing tactical movement procedures during exercise Invincible Sentry 20 in the Tashkent region of Uzbekistan. Photo by Staff Sergeant Steven Colvin, U.S. Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT), February 25, 2020.

Read [Invincible Sentry 20 - Uzbekistan](#) online.



A conceptional overview of all relevant topics of small unit tactics every soldier ought to be familiar with in order to be effective on today's battlefield. The handbook is categorized into five functional areas; history, doctrine, planning, operations, and common skills.

While the book is useful to any one in the Army it is especially beneficial for the prospective Green Beret who is about to or is currently attending the Special Forces Qualification Course. The author was an instructor with the U.S. Army Special Forces Small Unit Tactics course that prepared Army soldiers for attendance at the Special Forces Qualification Course.

Published by Blacksmith Publishing, the book is available through several publishing outlets. You can read more at the link below:



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One Year Later - Physical Defeat of Daesh



On March 23, 2019 the Pentagon announced the physical defeat of the Daesh caliphate in Syria. Over 110,000 square miles were liberated and 7.7 million people freed from Daesh oppression. The Syrian Democratic Front was assisted by U.S. airpower, ISR, and special operations forces in its defeat of the Islamic State fighters. The SDF had finally captured Baghouz – the last Islamic State physical enclave in Syria.

The Special Operations Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (SOJTF-OIR) published this story below on March 18, 2020 summarizing the rise and fall of the Daesh in Iraq and Syria. The article details the final battle for the last ISIS enclave of Baghouz where the SDF defeated the ISIS fighters in their last piece of physical terrain.

“At the height of their power, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, now referred to as Daesh, operated in 18 different countries and had an annual budget of \$1 billion with an estimated 30,000 members. They conducted ground attacks on both government forces and any other force that opposed them. Their goal: to establish a so-called caliphate in the region.



On Aug. 7th, 2014, the U.S.-led coalition launched airstrikes against Daesh. On March 23rd, 2019, the Pentagon announced the physical defeat of the Daesh caliphate in Syria. Over 110,000 square miles were liberated. Approximately 7.7 million people were freed from Daesh oppression. In Baghouz, Syria, where the final battle took place, a yellow flag was flown atop a building by U.S.-backed Syrian forces as they celebrated their victory over Daesh.



Photo: US Artillery in Iraq fire at ISIS locations near Iraqi-Syrian border on June 5, 2018. Photo by PFC Anthony Zendejas, U.S. Army.

Founded in 1999 under the name Jamā'at al-Tawhīd wa-al-Jihād and changing to Islamic State of Iraq in 2006, and with an allegiance to al-Qaeda, the oppressive presence of Daesh in the region grew once Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi came to power in 2010. Al-Baghdadi became involved with Daesh while detained in Camp Bucca in the early 2000's. When released from detainment, he quickly rose in prominence by being directly involved in the violent atrocities conducted by Daesh.

Throughout the next several years with al-Baghdadi as head, Daesh seized control of several major cities in Iraq. Kidnappings, mass murder, and extortion were common crimes committed by Daesh members. By declaring the creation of a so-called caliphate, Daesh gave al-Baghdadi self-proclaimed authority over the Muslims of the world. Their declaration as a caliphate was criticized and disputed by Middle Eastern governments. They were officially declared a terrorist organization by both Iraq and Syria, along with many other nations of the world.

Coalition troops were sent into Iraq to support the defeat of Daesh. In October of 2014, this combined effort was given the name Operation Inherent Resolve. Along with Iraqi and Syrian forces, over 30 countries combined together for the sole mission of defeating Daesh. The Combined Joint Task Force- Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) worked with partner forces to free the nearly 8 million people under the control of Daesh.

By mid-2015, Kurdish fighters expelled Daesh out of towns in Syria and reclaimed military bases that had fallen under Daesh control. In late 2015, Iraqi forces took control of Ramadi from Daesh and then Fallujah just six months later. After several years of combined assaults, Daesh was quickly losing control of central Iraq.

Mosul was retaken from Daesh control toward the end of 2016. Mosul was considered by Daesh as their capital city in the two years since it fell under their control. By early 2017, Daesh had lost all control of central Iraq. At the end of July 2017, it was reported that Daesh had lost an estimated 73% of the territory they had once controlled in Iraq. By the end of the year, the Iraqi Army announced all of Iraq had been liberated and their people freed from Daesh oppression.



Photo: US tactical vehicle provides security on roads near Manbij, Syria. Photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy Koster, Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve, June 20, 2018.

Coalition troops were sent into Iraq to support the defeat of Daesh. In October of 2014, this combined effort was given the name Operation Inherent Resolve. Along with Iraqi and Syrian forces, over 30 countries combined together for the sole mission of defeating Daesh. The Combined Joint Task Force- Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) worked with partner forces to free the nearly 8 million people under the control of Daesh.

By mid-2015, Kurdish fighters expelled Daesh out of towns in Syria and reclaimed military bases that had fallen under Daesh control. In late 2015, Iraqi forces took control of Ramadi from Daesh and then Fallujah just six months later. After several years of combined assaults, Daesh was quickly losing control of central Iraq.



Photo: US SOF helped to establish defense forces throughout the Kurdish territories of Syria. Picture depicts members of the Raqqa Internal Security Force hosting their flag. (photo from VOA video).

Mosul was retaken from Daesh control toward the end of 2016. Mosul was considered by Daesh as their capital city in the two years since it fell under their control. By early 2017, Daesh had lost all control of

central Iraq. At the end of July 2017, it was reported that Daesh had lost an estimated 73% of the territory they had once controlled in Iraq. By the end of the year, the Iraqi Army announced all of Iraq had been liberated and their people freed from Daesh oppression.

On March 23rd, 2019, the Syrian Democratic Forces announced that Daesh had lost its final stronghold in Syria, bringing an end to their so-called caliphate. On Oct. 26th, 2019, during a raid conducted by U.S. forces, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed in Northwest Syria.

CJTF-OIR continues its pursuit of Daesh remnants to this day. The remains still linger, but with few resources and the inability to project power to the same degree as they did in 2012, they have very little influence in the region. The continued training of partner forces within the scope of the Defeat Daesh mission is now the focus of Operation Inherent Resolve, along with preventing Daesh from re-emerging in the region and recruiting members to fight for them once again.

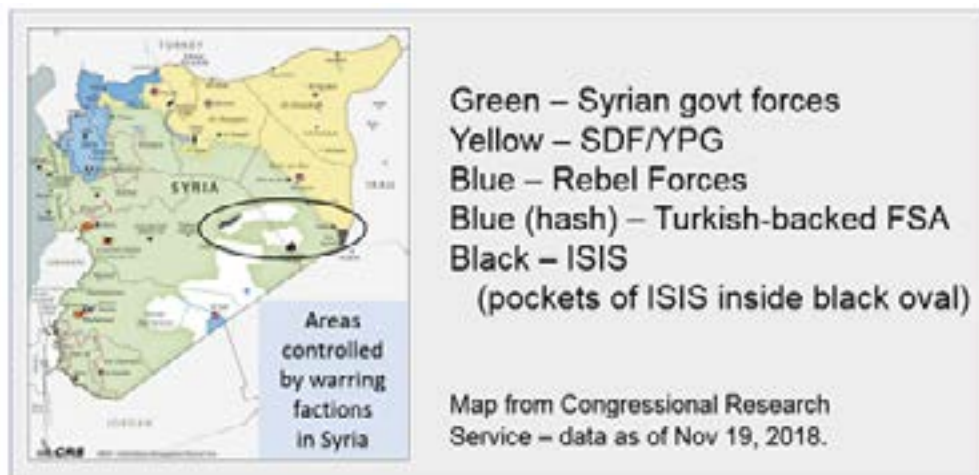
Iraq is working hard to establish a stable, unified government. After being devastated by the threat of Daesh, the Iraqi people are primed and ready for this transition, moving closer to being a free and sovereign nation withstanding against any third-party interference. Its military is ready to take a more active role in the safety and security of Iraq, and demonstrate its ability to protect the people and interests of Iraq.

The last of Daesh's territory in Syria crumbled at the battle of Baghouz. The SDF were the critical land force in this offensive and through their significant sacrifice eliminated the last territorial stronghold held by Daesh. By taking a disciplined, incremental approach to the battle the SDF were able to spare the large civilian population that Daesh fighters used as human shields in the densely populated area. The tactical effectiveness of their approach mixed with the fair treatment of civilians showed the SDF to be an honorable and powerful fighting force.

After over a month of fighting, The SDF declared final victory over Daesh on March 23, 2019, marking the end of Daesh controlled territory in Syria. Their legacy: millions of people have been liberated from Daesh's barbaric cruelty and fear, and over 900 Daesh fighters surrendering by the end of the battle.

In the last year, the role of the Coalition has been to work alongside partner forces in Iraq and Syria in preventing the remnants of Daesh from returning to power, and to keep the extremist ideologies of Daesh

suppressed. The destruction of Daesh provides partners the space and time to recover from the physical and emotional damage that has been left behind in their wake.



Map depicts the last remaining enclaves of ISIS in Syria in November 2018.

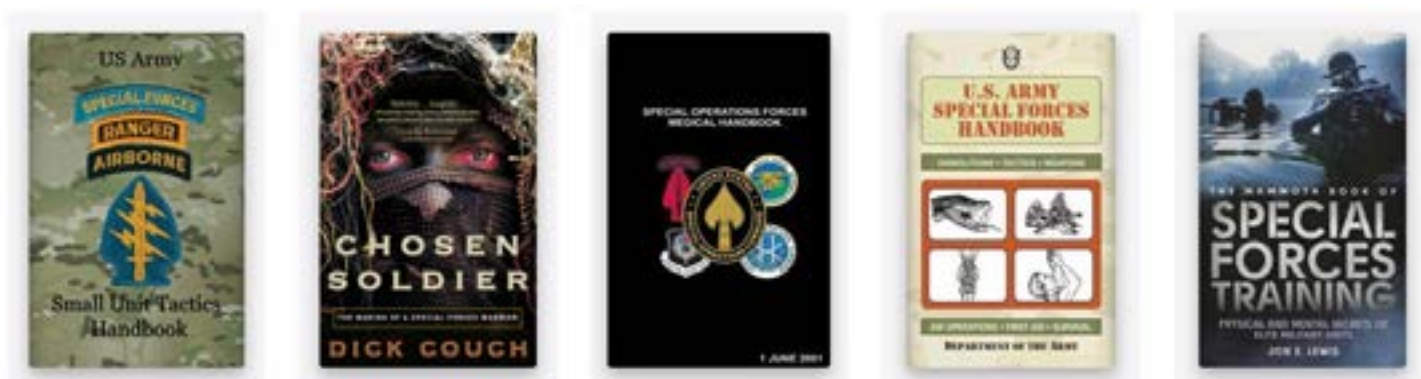
The lessons of the rise and fall of Daesh have shown the international community the need to remain vigilant and prepared, to swiftly respond to any threat by third-party actors or violent extremist organizations. The fortitude of the Iraqi and Syrian people and the continued Coalition support of our partner forces, what was once darkened by Daesh, is rejuvenated with the aspirations of a free people.”

The above article is from “The Defeat of Daesh: One Year Later”, Special Operations Joint Task force – Operation Inherent Resolve (SOJTF-OIR), by Specialist Brian Redmer, March 18, 2020.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/365422/defeat-daesh-one-year-later-nemabuna-reva-dais-salek-pase>

Top Photo: Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) provide security for a Coalition mortar crew providing fires support to SDF against ISIS locations in Operation Round Up taking place in the Middle Euphrates River Valley (MERV) in Syria. (photo by SSG Timothy Koster, CJTF-OIR, May 13, 2018).

Read [One Year Later - Physical Defeat of Daesh](#) online.



[SOF News Book Shop](#)

MARSOC and Force Design 2020



Force Design 2030

On March 23, 2020 the United States Marine Corps published its Force Design 2030. The 15-page document provides a roadmap ahead for the Marine Corps with major changes to mission and organization. Naturally, a document of this importance will be of interest to those who follow the activities of Marine Forces Special Operations Command or MARSOC.

There are some sweeping changes to come for the Marine Corps. The Corps is tasked with the role of the nation's naval expeditionary force-in-readiness while at the same time modernizing in accordance with the latest National Defense Strategy (NDS). This institutional change will be done with the fiscal resources provided – meaning some structure has to be sacrificed. The Design Force 2030 report explains the reasons for the change, the methodology used to determine the changes, and how the force will be reorganized.

The force will be redesigned for naval expeditionary warfare and to be a force that can focus on its role in the competition with Russia and China. Higher echelon units will be reorganized and get smaller. Some units and military occupational specialties will be eliminated. The force will decrease in size by about 12,000 personnel.

Force Structure Changes – Divestment

- three infantry battalions
- tanks (support to be provided by the U.S. Army)
- three heavy helicopter squadrons
- three medium-lift tiltrotor squadrons
- two (?) light attack helicopter squadrons
- two AA companies & AAV and ACV requirements
- three law enforcement battalions
- Marine Wing Support Groups
- three bridging companies

Force Structure Changes – Investment

- additional rocket artillery batteries
- additional Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS)
- expansion of training and education

There are other changes that might be made in the future. The USMC is looking at a redesign of the infantry battalion, emerging naval expeditionary force formations, littoral maneuver and sustainment, increase in light armored reconnaissance, MEU redesign, and the 18 VMFA squadrons.

MARSOC and Force Design 2030

“Force design places new demands on our FMF that require us to revisit our current manpower policies supporting MARSOC. We must develop assignment policies that continue to satisfy MARSOC personnel requirements while ensuring appropriate rotation of personnel in and out of MARSOC. Any change to the current policies should not limit MARSOC’s ability to recruit, assess and develop relationships and candidates, in coordination with FMF units and leaders. Recommended changes to policy should ensure Marines remain competitive for promotion and have broad opportunities for assignment within the Marine Corps and the joint force.”

Page 11, Force Design 2030, USMC, March 2020
MARSOF 2030

The above paragraph in quotes is the only mention of MARSOC in the Force Design 2030 paper. However, there is a document published that may provide additional fidelity to how MARSOC will look like in the future. In March 2018 the Marines published a report entitled [MARSOF 2030](#). The document provides a roadmap for MARSOC to be relevant in the current and future operating environment.

MARSOF 2030 identifies four interconnected and mutually supporting themes that will provide a strong conceptual basis for a future MARSOC.

- MARSOF as a Connector
- Combined Arms for the Connected Arena
- The Cognitive Operator
- Enterprise Level Agility

The MARSOF document provides a couple of pages to explain each of the above themes. It then provides two “operational vignettes” that help us imagine the four concepts listed above. One is a fictional account of a Marine SOF team deployed in West Africa in 2028 that is part of an effort to support a struggling host government. The second vignette depicts a Special Operations Task Force (SOTF) operations center in the Middle East in 2030. The document ends with implementation guidance.

The *MARSOF 2030* paper was published before the current National Defense Strategy (NDS) was published that moved our focus from counterinsurgency and counterterrorism to competition with near peer adversaries (China, Russia, etc.). However, it is forward looking in its approach. It remains to be seen what type of changes MARSOC will make with the publishing of *Force Design 2030*.

References:

Force Design 2030, United States Marine Corps, March 2020 (pdf, 15 pages)
Read or download the [report here](#).

MARSOF 2030: A Strategic Vision for the Future, Special Operations Command – United States Marine Corps Forces, March 2018. (pdf, 23 pages)
Read or download the [report here](#).

New U.S. Marine Corps Force Design Initiatives, Congressional Research Service (CRS), March 26, 2020, pdf, 4 pages.
Read or download the [report here](#).

Read [MARSOF and Force Design 2020](#) online.

Curated SOF News

The entries below are a listing of 'curated news' about special operations for March 2020

COVID-19 Hits SOCOM HQ. The United States Special Operations Command headquarters has had its first [positive case of the Wuhan virus](#). A civilian at SOCOM's hqs in Tampa tested positive on March 21st. Several members of NSW on the west coast have also tested positive. About 3,000 personnel work at SOCOM hqs; the command has gone to mission-essential status only for people going to work. (Military Times, Mar 25, 2020).

SOA elections. The [Special Operations Association](#) will be holding elections for a new President, Vice President, and one Director to three year terms.

New Chem-Bio Shroud. A new shroud being developed for the special warfare community may be adopted by the general ground forces as well. Read "[US Army granted patent on new chem-bio helmet shroud](#)", by Troy Carter, TechLink Center, March 24, 2020.

U.S. Woman 'Rescued' in Secret Op. During his daily coronavirus briefing at the White House on Sunday, March 22, 2020 President Trump said that a secret operation was conducted to rescue an American woman held in terrible circumstances who was the victim of a violent crime. No more details were provided. Apparently the rescue was more of an assisted movement. Read "[American Woman Rescued in Secretive Military Op. Trump Says](#)", *Military.com*, March 22, 2020.

Congressional Support Needed for SOF. Lt. Gen Thomas Trask, USAF (ret) is a former Vice Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command. He has penned an article citing the need for congressional support of U.S. special operations forces. Read "[Cool Gear Like This Only Goes So Far. U.S. Special Forces Need Help](#)", *The National Interest*, March 22, 2020.

SOFIC Cancelled. The annual [Special Operations Forces Industry Conference](#) held in Tampa, Florida has been [cancelled](#) due to the Wuhan virus. (*National Defense Magazine*, Mar 20, 2020).

More Cancelled SOF Events. The [Special Operations Warrior Foundation](#) has cancelled two of its April events; DESERT ONE Documentary Screening and 'Heroes Unite' 40th Anniversary.

Mini-Drone for SOF ISR. USSOCOM is testing a number of small drones for use by special operations forces. The drones need to operate during both day and night and under adverse weather conditions. One drone tested, the C-Astral ATLAS C4EYE mini tactical drone is [described in this article](#). (*SUAS News*, Mar 13, 2020).

Barrett MRAD Sniper Rifle. In 2019 the Department of Defense selected the MRAD as its newest Advanced Sniper Rifle. The MRAD is highly customizable to include offering eight different caliber options. Read "[Barrett MRAD: One of the Best Precision Sniper Rifles on the Planet](#)", *The National Interest*, March 14, 2020.

New Tactical Vehicle for SOCOM? The U.S. Special Operations Command is looking to acquire a new ground mobility vehicle for its SOF units. The command's new Joint Armored Ground Mobility System (JAGMS) is looking for a vehicle that can hold 9-11 passengers, be lifted by a C-130, and meet SOCOM's survivability requirements. Learn more in "[SOCOM is eyeing a new armored tactical vehicle](#)", *Task & Purpose*, March 4, 2020.

Global SOF Interview. Stu Bradin, the president of the Global SOF Foundation [is interviewed](#). (*SOFREP*, Mar 2, 2020).

International SOF

SASR and Commandos of Australia. Unfortunately the elite warriors of Australia have been in the news recently. Two writers ask if the elite troops became too elite – wearing beards, living in a special compartmentalized camp, and increasingly aligning themselves with the American Special Forces. Read more in [“Let Loose the Dogs of War: Why some elite soldiers were off the leash”](#), *Brisbane Times*, March 24, 2020.

Australia’s Security Sector Needs a Softer Touch? A lecturer in gender and politics in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Sheffield comments on harmful notions of masculinity. He says that “Notions of manhood that centre on strength, emotional detachment, risk-taking and violent resolutions of disputes all shape conflict, propel men to join violent groups and hamper peacebuilding.” (Editor thinks “Hmmm”). Read [“Addressing men’s harmful notions of masculinity in Australia’s security sector”](#), *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, March 27, 2020.

Royal Marines in Belarus. The 42 Commando spent some time training with the 103rd Guards Airborne Division during Exercise Winter Partisan. See [“British Royal Marines conclude training in Belarus”](#), *Naval Technology*, March 24, 2020.

Australia – Murder Charges Likely. A recently aired video showing a Special Air Service Regiment member killing an apparently unarmed Afghan will likely lead to murder charges. Read [“Defence braces for SAS murder charges”](#), *The Saturday Paper*, March 21, 2020.

Wpns of Russian SOF. Warren Gray describes the various weapons that Russian special operations forces have for their use. Read [“Weapons of the Russian Special Forces”](#), *Gunpowder Magazine*, March 22, 2020.

USSOCOM and Comms. Dan Goure writes about how the United States Special Operations Command has solved some communications issues with the Tactical Radio Application eXtension (TRAX). Read his article [“SOCOM Has Solved the Military’s ‘Tower of Babel’ Problem”](#), *RealClear Defense*, March 20, 2020.

CANSOF Cdr Promoted. Former special forces commander Lt Gen Mike Rouleau [has been picked](#) to be the military’s second-in-command. Rouleau is currently commander of the Canadian Joint Operations Command. (*Vancouver Courier*, March 16, 2020).

French SOF – Among the Best. A French SOF mission in Africa provides some details about the French special operations forces. Read [“Tough as Nails: Why France’s Special Forces are Among the Best”](#), *National Interest*, March 19, 2020.

Swiss SOF Getting Upgrades. Enhanced capabilities are coming to the KSK’s army Reconnaissance Detachment 10 (DRA-10) and the Military Police Special Detachment Unit. (*Janes*, Mar 17, 2020).

Australian SAS Under the Glare. A [helmet cam video](#) aired on Australian television on Monday, March 16, 2020 shows an Australian soldier killing an – apparently – unarmed and compliant Afghan. The helmet cam video has sparked a renewed focus on the SAS. (*The Age*, Mar 17, 2020).

Exercise Northern Griffin 2020. Finland’s Utti Jaeger Regiment is [hosting special operations forces](#) from several countries in an area inside the Arctic Circle. I bet it is COLD! Last year 10th SFGA participated; this year the group sent observers. (*The Barents Observer*, Mar 8, 2020).

Exercise Hawk Strike and Hungarian 2nd Special Operations Forces. U.S. Army aviation aircrews recently trained [alongside soldiers](#) from the 1st Cav Division and the Hungarian SOF. (3rd CAB, 1 Cav, Mar 12, 2020).

ARSOF News

Army SOF Officer Assignments. MG Jonathan Braga, currently commander of SOCPAC, will be deputy commanding general for U.S. Army Pacific. MG Tony Fletcher, currently commander of SOCSOUTH, will be deputy director of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency. BG Marcus Evans, currently with the J-3 Joint Staff, will be commander of SOJTF-A. BG Allan Pepin, currently CG USASOAC, to be deputy CG USASOC. Col (P) Guillaume Beaurpere to be commander of SOJTF-OIR. Col (P) Isaac Peltier, currently commander of SOCNORTH, to be deputy commander, 4th Infantry Division.

CSM Adkins (Ret) Health Update. COVID-19 has put [Bennie Adkins](#), Medal of Honor recipient into the hospital. He is critically ill with respiratory failure.

MH-47G SOF Helicopter. Read a [short article](#) describing the special operations variant of the CH-47 Chinook helicopter used by the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR). (*Air Force Technology*, March 25, 2020).

Brower Heads COVID-19 Endeavor. The Governor of Tennessee [has appointed](#) former 5th SFGA commander Scott Brower to head up a COVID-19 Unified Command. (WKRN.com, Mar 23, 2020).

Former SF Officer to Head NCTC. President Trump has picked LTC (Ret) Chris Miller, a former Special Forces officer, to be the next director of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC). Miller is currently the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Combating Terrorism. See [“Trump taps new director for National Counterterrorism Center”](#), *The Hill*, March 18, 2020. There are some national security observers who see a ‘purge’ taking place [within the intel community](#) by the Trump administration. (*The Washington Post*, Mar 19, 2020).

Ranger Competition Postponed. The 37th Annual Best Ranger Competition scheduled for April 17-19, 2020 has been put on hold. Another event affected by the Wuhan virus.

SFQC Candidate Dies at FBNC. A soldier training to become a Green Beret died after being found unresponsive in his barracks room at Fort Bragg, NC on Monday, March 16, 2020. He was on an 18X-Ray contract and had been injured while training in the fall of 2019. See [“Special Forces candidate dies while assigned to med group”](#), *Army Times*, March 18, 2020.

Green Beret Colonel’s Promotion Delayed. Colonel Bradley Moses was the 3rd Special Forces Group commander when four members of his command [died during a mission in Niger](#) in the fall of 2017. He had escaped punishment for the ill-fated mission. But, apparently, not completely. It appears that lawmakers [have delayed his promotion](#). (*New York Times*, Mar 14, 2020).

Former GB Now Envoy for Hostage Affairs. On February 21, 2020 [Roger Carstens](#) (SF LTC Ret) was appointed to be the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs. Carstens served in the 1st Ranger Battalion and in U.S. Army Special Forces. He is a former Deputy Assistant Secretary with the Department of State, worked overseas with international NGOs in Somalia and Jordan, and was the Senior COIN Advisor for the COMISAF Advisory and Assistance Team (CAAT) in Afghanistan.

GBs vs Delta. For those not familiar with ARSOF units and missions this article could be helpful. [“4 Key Differences Between the Green Berets and Delta Force”](#), *Military.com*, March 13, 2020.

CRE / CIF – Staying, Going, or Changing? On February 26th Defense Secretary Esper said he is reviewing the need for Special Forces to have dedicated crisis response forces while briefing the House Armed Services Committee. Read more in [“Pentagon to Decide if it Still Needs Green Beret Response Forces”](#), *Military.com*, March 11, 2020.

AFSOC News

ST Airman Dies During Training. A student in the Air Force Combat Dive Course at the Naval Support Activity Center in Panama City, Florida died during a [water training event](#). (*Military.com*, Mar 20, 2020). A1C Keigan Baker [was in training](#) as a Special Tactics combat controller apprentice. (*Air Force Magazine*, Mar 20, 2020).

Female Candidate Advances in STO Pipeline. A female Air Force officer has completed a phase of training in the Special Tactics Officer training pipeline. She has just completed the Special Tactics / Guardian Angel Assessment and Selection Course. Next stop is the Pre-Dive Course. Read "[Airman Advances in Quest to Become First Female Special Tactics Officer](#)", *Military.com*, March 18, 2020.

17 SOS and HIMARS. During exercise Cobra Gold 2020 in Thailand the Marines [successfully launched](#) the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System. The USAF 17th Special Operations Squadron used a MC-130J Commando II for the insertion. (*Naval Technology*, Mar 17, 2020).

AC-130W Gunships in the Arabian Gulf. The USAF gunships have been [conducting training](#) with U.S. Navy patrol coastal ships and P-8A Poseidon aircraft in the CENTCOM area of responsibility. (DVIDS, March 15, 2020).

Moving SOF Wing to Germany? Plans to move a special operations wing and refueling tankers from RAF Mildenhall to Ramstein Air Base and Spangdahlem in Germany [have been put on hold](#). U.S. European Command is conducting a reassessment of the previous closure decision. (*Stars and Stripes*, Mar 10, 2020).

AFSOC Refocusing. The Air Force Special Operations Command is shifting from a focus on combatting terrorism to a [pivot to All Domain Operations](#). AFSOC will attempt to better integrate cyber, space, and information operations in its activities. The new AFSOC Strategic Guidance calls for investment in human capital, reorganization to meet joint force requirements, and modernization of capabilities. (*Breaking Defense*, Mar 6, 2020).

AC-130 Crew Recognized. An AC-130 Spooky crew provided more than nine hours of air support to endangered special operations unit during an April 2019 mission in Afghanistan. The mission enabled the rescue of 15 patients during a casualty evacuation event. Read more in "[AC-130 Crew Receives 14 Medals for Afghanistan Mission](#)", *Air Force Magazine*, March 3, 2020.

MoH Recipient Chapman Remembered. An Air Force training facility has been renamed in recognition of an Air Force combat controller who died fighting al Qaida fighters during the Battle of Takur Ghar in Afghanistan. Read "[Special warfare training annex renamed for Medal of Honor recipient Chapman](#)", *Air Force Times*, March 5, 2020.



MARSOC News

New SEL for SOJTF-OIR. Marine Corps Master Gunnery Sergeant Andrew McCurry, currently assigned as the Marine Raider Support Group senior enlisted advisor, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina has a future assignment in Iraq. He has been selected to replace Command Sergeant Major Dave Lance as the command senior enlisted leader for the Special Operations Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve.

In Defense of Marine Raider Charged with Manslaughter. According to one opinion piece Gunnery Sergeant Josh Negron acted in lawful defense of a fellow Raider in Iraq that resulted in the death of a U.S. contractor (a retired Green Beret). There is always several versions of a story. This is the defendants version. Read [“What Would a Warrior Do?: In Defense of Marine Raider charged with manslaughter”](#), *Marine Corps Times*, March 6, 2020.

MARSOC Consolidation. 900 Marines, sailors, and civilian employees with the 1st Marine Raider Battalion and 1st Marine Raider Support Battalion are moving. The Camp Pendleton based units will join the rest of the Raider community at Camp Lejeune. See [“It’s official: Marine Raiders Leaving California for a new home in North Carolina”](#), *Marine Corps Times*, February 12, 2020.

MARSOC’s 14th Anniversary. Marine Raiders gathered at MARSOC Hqs on February 21, 2020 to celebrate the [anniversary of the organization](#). (*The Camp Lejeune Globe*, Feb 29, 2020).

NSW News

NSW Sailors Positive for COVID-19. SEAL training at BUD/S has been suspended due to the high risk of [re-spiratory conditions during training](#). At least four NSW members have tested positive for the Wuhan virus. (*The San Diego Union-Tribune*, Mar 20, 2020).

HSC-85 on the Chopping Block. The Navy plans to shut down its Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 85. The crews of HSC-85 are the Navy’s only [helicopter squadron dedicated](#) to providing special operations forces support. (*The Warzone*, Mar 23, 2020).

NSW Member has COVID-19. Test results confirm that a second-class petty officer assigned to Naval Special Warfare [has tested positive](#) for the Wuhan virus. (*DVIDS*, Mar 19, 2020).

SSG Melgar Murder Trial Date Moved. The trials for a Navy SEAL and a Marine Raider charged in the death of a Green Beret in Mali in June 2017 has been moved from March to July 2020. See [“Trial dates moved for SEAL, Marine Raider charged in Green Beret death”](#), *Army Times*, March 18, 2020.

Former Navy SEAL Helps Burn Patients. The Sons of the Flag put patients in touch with surgeons that help create a course of treatment. Read [“A Navy SEAL’s Mission to Revolutionize Burn Care”](#), *The Epoch Times*, March 12, 2020.

Navy SEALs ‘Friends’ with Serbians. The Germany-based Special Warfare Unit Two SEALs trained with the Serbian Special Anti-Terrorist Unit in Belgrade recently. Read [“Navy SEALs train with Serbians as US works ‘toward a friendship’ in a Russian-influenced nation”](#), *Stars and Stripes*, March 2, 2020.

Mark VI’s for Ukraine. Armed patrol boats are destined for Ukraine’s future. This is an important development considering the tensions with Russia in the Black Sea and the [Sea of Azov](#). (*Defence Blog*, Mar 7, 2020).

SOF History

Operation Vigilant Warrior. In the fall of 1994 the only U.S. combat troops in Kuwait were sixty-five Special Forces soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group. In October a significant amount of Iraqi forces began moving south to the Kuwait border. The U.S. responded with Operation Vigilant Warrior (Oct-Dec 1994). The [spring 2020 edition](#) of *Army History* tells the story of this operation. (not SOF history, but an interesting read on deterrence of Iraq in the mid-1990s).

AN/GRC-109. Read a detailed [posting about the 'special forces' radio set](#) used for several decades during the Cold War. Old SF commo guys will feel their fingers twitch impulsively trying send code.

British SOE Agent – Noor Inayat-Khan. Read the [story of a female British operative](#) for the Special Operations Executive (SOE) who parachuted into occupied France during World War II. (*The Scotsman*, Mar 8, 2020).

Canadians and the 'Devil's Brigade'. Read an article about the Canadians who joined the elite American-Canadian commando unit of World War II. "[The Devil's Brigade and the Canadians who helped make it fearsome](#)", by Derek H. Burney, *National Post*, March 3, 2020.

OSS, SIS, SOE, and Camp X. During World War II would-be secret agents [roamed rural Maryland and Virginia](#) learning the 'ungentlemanly arts' of espionage, covert action, and irregular warfare. (*The National Interest*, Feb 29, 2020).

Virginia Hall – 'The Limping Lady'. Time Magazine featured Virginia Hall as one of the '100 Women of the Year'. She was an American operative with the British Special Operations Executive and the Office of Strategic Services. Infiltrated into occupied Europe she assisted the French resistance. Read more in "[1943: Virginia Hall](#)", *Time*, March 5, 2020.

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SOF Aviator and the OBL Raid. One of the pilots on the raid into Pakistan that killed Osama bin Laden provides some background of the mission. Read "[Legendary special operations aviator reveals bin Laden mission details for the first time](#)", by Alex Quade, *Military Times*, March 17, 2020.

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SOF and Great Power Competition

SOF Paradigm in Great Power Competition. Published in October 2019 by NSI, 46 pages. The report features [guest articles](#) from several members of the SOF community who currently work for SOCEUR, NDU, USASOC, and other organizations. A good read.

Political Warfare. Ari Cicurel, a senior policy analyst at the Jewish Institute for National Security of America, argues that the U.S. needs to incorporate 'political warfare' into its strategic thinking. Read ["Endless Wars and Political Warfare"](#), *The Hill*, March 20, 2020.

NDS and ARSOF Strategy. The 2018 National Defense Strategy calls for the U.S. military to maintain its competitive advantage against its adversaries. The reality of 'great power competition' is that we are in conflict right now. The United States Army Special Operations Command has refined its [mission and vision](#) for the future. Read *Army Special Operations Forces Strategy*, USASOC, 2019, PDF, 8 pages.

SOF and Winning an Asymmetric War. The current National Defense Strategy is moving U.S. special operations forces focus from counterinsurgency and counterterrorism to that of great power competition. Our principle near peer adversaries – Russia and China – will not confront the U.S. in open warfare. Instead they will challenge us below the threshold of armed conflict. The U.S. Army special operations forces (ARSOF) is uniquely qualified to operate in this new environment some call the 'gray zone', 'hybrid warfare', or 'political warfare'. U.S. Army special operations forces should be the force of choice to lead these efforts against adversaries that deliberately avoid America's conventional strengths. Read ["How to Win an Asymmetric War in the Era of Special Forces"](#), *The National Interest*, October 12, 2019.

GPC Lessons from Tibet. Steve Ferenzi, a Special Forces officer and Army Strategist with the USASOC G-5 Strategic Planning Division, wrote a 17-page article (including end notes) about the support of a proxy force by the United States from 1956 to 1974 in the mountains of Asia. His case study offers lessons for future proxy engagements in establishing mechanisms that facilitate proper proxy selection, mitigate deviation from sponsor goals, and optimize proxy capabilities. Read ["Proxy Warfare on the Roof of the World: Great Power Competition Lessons from Tibet"](#), *InterAgency Journal* Vol 11, No. 1, 2020, pages 94 – 110.

Votel on Great Power Competition. On February 24, 2020 General (Ret) Joseph Votel delivered the keynote address at a Center for Strategic & International Studies event. His topic was *Great Power Competition in the Gulf*. You can read his address in this [16-page PDF](#).

China, Greenland, and the Arctic Circle. Greenland needs to exploit its natural resources and China seems willing to help. Access to zinc, iron, uranium, and rare-earth elements are a motivating factor for China to be involvement in Arctic Circle ventures and developments. Marco Volpe [provides more info](#) in *The tortuous path of China's win-win strategy in Greenland*, The Arctic Institute, March 24, 2020.

U.S. – China Media War. The United States and China is currently engaged in a war of words over the Wuhan virus outbreak across the world. Read more in ["Coronavirus Crisis: U.S.-China Media War Couldn't Come at a Worse Time."](#), *Small Wars Journal*, March 25, 2020.

Russian Disinformation and Coronavirus. China is not the only country spreading falsehoods about the worldwide pandemic. The Russian [propaganda feeds](#) into the views of conspiracy theorists worldwide. The goal is to cause panic, sow distrust, and widen the divide between Europe and the United States. (The Soufan Center, Mar 24, 2020).

NATO's New Member. The Republic of North Macedonia is now the [30th member](#) of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Macedonia has been a consistent supporter of the ISAF and Resolute Support Missions in Afghanistan. (NATO, Mar 27, 2020).

Books, Reports, and Publications

Staring Down the Wolf. A former Navy SEAL, Mark Devine, has a book out that says seven commitments can help make a business team 'military-strong'. His [book is reviewed](#) in *Navy Times*, March 6, 2020.

Russian Way of War. B.A. Friedman, a wargame analyst and officer in the USMC, [presents his views](#) on a recent book about how Russia conducts political warfare. Read his review of *The Russian Understanding of War: Blurring the Lines Between War and Peace*, by Oscar Jonsson, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2019. (The Strategy Bridge, March 24, 2020).

Defending NATO's Northern Flank. Norway occupies a key geographic position within the 'high north' region. Read about allied perspectives on strategic options for Norway in [this 96-page report](#) (pdf). *Enhancing Deterrence and Defence on NATO's Northern Flank*, RAND Corporation, March 25, 2020

Counterterrorism Yearbook 2020. 19 authors contribute to this [annual review](#) by the Counterterrorism Policy Centre of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. (119 pages, PDF).

Military Review. The March – April 2020 issue from the Army University Press is now posted online. <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/journals/military-review/english-edition-archives/March-April-2020/>

CTC Sentinel. The [March 2020 issue](#) is now online. Published by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. Topics include the Hanau terrorist attack, an interview of a former Director General of MI5, the Pensacola terrorist attack, how U.S. supporters help finance daesh, and al-Shabaab's PSYOP media warfare campaign.

Armor. The winter 2020 edition of the '[mounted maneuver journal](#)' is now available online. Interesting stuff if you like tanks I guess. (75 pages, PDF).

Drones and the Cyber Threat. A new report is out that examines the relationship between drones and cyber security. Read "[How to Analyze the Cyber Threat from Drones](#)", RAND, March 2020, 94 pages.

Terrorist Attack Cycle. Writers with the U.S. Army Antiterrorism Division have penned a short article entitled "Complacency Kills: Understanding the Evolving Terrorist Attack Cycle", Military Police, Spring 2020, PDF, pages 13-17. <https://www.dvidshub.net/publication/issues/52587>

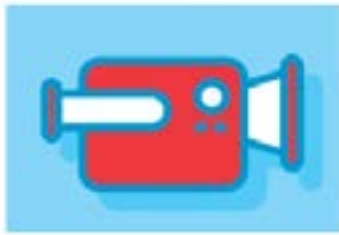
Italian COIN in Africa. A new book provides a study of the Italian experience in counterinsurgency operations in Africa during the Mussolini regime. I am not sure I like the review of the book by Robbin Laird; but the book itself by Federica Saini Fasanotti sounds very interesting. Gen (Ret) John Allen provides the foreword. Read the [review](#) of *Counterinsurgency Operations: A Perspective from Italian History*, Defense Info, March 13, 2020.

China and IO. China knows how to use strategic communication to shape primary audience attitudes and opinions on a key geopolitical issue. The U.S. . . . not so much. Read more in a [4-page pub](#) by the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) published February 2020.

"Case Analysis: the FARC in Colombia." Lee E. Taylor II provides an informative tract that looks at Colombia's [COIN campaign over the years](#). He identifies successes and failures at the tactical and strategic level. Published by *Small Wars Journal*, March 2020.

From the Cold War to ISIL: One Marine's Journey. A book by Jason Bohm [is reviewed](#) by Joseph J. Collins in "Thirty Years as a Marine Officer: Lessons for Many Audiences", *Small Wars Journal*, March 7, 2020.

Videos, Movies, and Podcasts



Video - 75th Ranger Regiment: 2nd Battalion Task Force Training. Members of regiment conduct training at JBLM, Washington. U.S. Army, March 17, 2020, 1 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjilWIPs_c

Video - Armed Overwatch & Gothic Serpent. CSM (Ret) Rick Lamb presents a short video about his experiences in Somalia and the need for Armed Overwatch for SOF. Global SOF Foundation, March 24, 2020, 5 mins. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYN6c_UCqdM

Podcast - The History of BELSOF. Two Belgian SOF operators tell the story behind their Special Forces Group and Special Operations Regiment, diving deep into their roots in World War II. Learn how Belgium's elite soldiers earned their berets and became the units they are today. Global SOF Foundation, March 20, 2020, 23 mins. <http://www.sofspot.org/204030/3068785-the-history-of-belfof>

Video - Green Berets - the Battle of Lang Vei. The North Vietnamese launched a surprise Tet Offensive in 1968. A big battle ensued at Khe Sanh where thousands of Marines were encircled. A little to the east of Khe Sanh was a small U.S. camp of Special Forces. This video is about how the Green Beret camp got overrun and the survivors were rescued. History Apple, 2016, 52 mins. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8d4JBDp-Gno>

Video - Battlefield Finland 2020. An inspiring recruitment video. Finnish Defense Forces, January 13, 2020, 2 mins. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fIT1lbG7OHw>

Podcast - Special Operations Forces in the Fight Against ISIS and on Tomorrow's Multi-Domain Battlefield. Jake Miraldi interviews Major General Patrick Roberson – a career special operations soldier. In August 2019, he assumed his current role as commanding general of the Army's John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School. Before that, he commanded Special Operations Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve. He talks about SOF in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria over the past few decades. In addition he talks about the US special operations forces and what the future will bring – especially in terms of the great power competition era the US now finds itself in. Modern War Institute, March 5, 2020. (32 minutes) <https://mwi.usma.edu/mwi-podcast-special-operations-forces-fight-isis-tomorrows-multi-domain-battlefield/>





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