



US Army Photo 031209-A-3996M-042

A patrol from the US 3rd Special Forces Group moving through a river bed, Afghanistan, December 2003.

## WHEN CULTURES COLLIDE: THE CONVENTIONAL MILITARY / SOF CHASM

by Colonel Bernd Horn

**T**he ultimate legitimacy of Special Operations Forces (SOF) became evident in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001. The immediate reliance on SOF by political and military decision-makers to strike back at those responsible for the unprecedented attack signalled that SOF had completed the transformation from a force of desperation to the force of choice. The road to that point had been a difficult one. Throughout their relatively short history, there have been constant themes – the competition for scarce resources, unorthodox concepts of discipline and accountability, as well as divergent cultural and philosophical methodologies of operation – that have always been associated with the debate on special operations forces.

Ironically, the unique attributes and characteristics of SOF that have made them the potent capability that they are today are, in some ways, their Achilles heel. Their uniqueness – their definable difference from the conventional military – has always created a barrier, if not a chasm. Although SOF are now well positioned to be the workhorse of asymmetrical operations, they must still educate themselves, as well as others, and strive to work in an interdependent manner with the conventional

military. If they fail to do so, they risk again becoming constrained and marginalized at a time when they are needed most.

### WHO ARE THESE SHADOW WARRIORS?

**S**pecial operations forces are generally defined by journalists as “the toughest, smartest, most secretive, fittest, best-equipped and consistently lethal killers in the U.S. [or any other] military.”<sup>1</sup> However, a more traditional definition, spawned from the SOF’s Second World War beginnings, describes them as forces that are “specially selected, specially trained, specially equipped, and given special missions and support.”<sup>2</sup> But this somewhat simplistic description has been eclipsed by a more comprehensive and nuanced explanation that better captures their shadowy role in the international security environment. It is generally accepted that modern SOF are “specially organized, trained and equipped military and paramilitary forces that conduct special operations to achieve military, political, economic or informational objectives by generally unconventional means in hostile, denied or politically sensitive areas.”<sup>3</sup>

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Members of the Long Range Desert Group, North Africa, 1942.

Not surprisingly, as with most military concepts, equipment and organizations, the United States normally sets the standard, and it is no different with SOF. The Americans look to SOF to conduct nine core tasks:

- Counter-terrorism (CT): Actions taken to preclude, pre-empt, and resolve terrorist actions throughout the entire threat spectrum, including anti-terrorism and counter-terrorism.<sup>4</sup>
- Special Reconnaissance (SR): Reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted as special operations in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance, employing military capabilities not normally found in conventional forces.
- Direct Action (DA): Short-term seize, destroy, exploit, capture, damage or recovery operations.
- Unconventional Warfare (UW): Organizing, training, equipping, advising, and assisting indigenous and surrogate forces in military and paramilitary operations of long duration.
- Counter-proliferation (CP): Combating the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons; intelligence collection and analysis; support of diplomacy, arms control and export controls.
- Foreign Internal Defence (FID): Organizing, training, advising and assisting host-nation military and paramilitary forces to enable these forces to protect their society from subversion, lawlessness and insurgency.
- Civil Affairs Operations (CAO): Activities that establish relations between military and civil authorities to facilitate military operations.
- Psychological Operations (PSYOP): Operations to influence the behaviour of foreign forces and governments.
- Information Operations (IO): Actions taken to achieve information superiority by affecting adversary information and information systems while defending one's own information and information systems.<sup>5</sup>

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## THE EVOLUTION OF SOF

The nine core tasks represent the mandate of modern SOF. However, those missions have evolved over time.

Special operations forces are largely a product of the Second World War. They were born in a time of great crisis, and because of a position of weakness. In the immediate aftermath of the early German victories, the British and their allies found themselves nearly devoid of major equipment, with little real military strength, and they were very much on the defensive. Nonetheless, the combative British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, gave direction scant days after the dramatic withdrawal from Dunkirk that action be taken by “specially trained troops of the hunter class” to create a reign of terror on the coastline of the occupied territories based on the “butcher and bolt” principle. Churchill realized that this offensive capability, as limited as it might have been, would be a tonic to public morale, would maintain an offensive spirit in the military, and, equally important, would force the Germans to dedicate significant resources to the defence.

During the early years of the war, a plethora of SOF units and organizations – the Commandos, the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG), the Special Air Service (SAS), the Special Operations Executive (SOE), and the American Rangers, to name a few – emerged as a means of striking back at the seemingly invincible German military machine. As the tide of the war changed, they evolved to provide capabilities that the larger conventional military did not have, and performed distinct tasks such as raiding, sabotage, and economy of effort missions to tie down enemy forces. These activities were soon eclipsed by tasks such as strategic reconnaissance and unconventional warfare.

In the end, despite the overall success and value of special operations, the SOF were never fully accepted by the larger military community. The irregular nature of the tactics they employed, the unconventional, if not rakish nature of the operators (who were often seen as lacking discipline and military decorum), as well as the almost independent status they enjoyed were alien and distasteful to the more traditional and conservative-minded military leadership. Not surprisingly, at the end of the war most SOF organizations were disbanded.

However, in the post-war world, circumstances that called for specific skill sets not readily available in conventional military units once again necessitated the resurrection of special operation forces. The savage guerilla wars in Malaya, Oman, and Yemen, to name but a few, highlighted the strength of specially trained SOF units manned by intelligent, adaptive and highly capable individuals. Increasingly, these relatively small units proved to be very effective in countering insurgencies and other low-level conflict.

**“There has always existed a cultural and philosophical chasm between the conventional military and special operations forces.”**

Success also became somewhat of a handicap as it generated antagonism and jealousy between the SOF and the conventional military. In addition, it produced the apparent panacea of the proverbial ‘silver bullet’. For instance, during the war in Vietnam there was an explosion of SOF-type units as part of the American response to the escalating and complex nature of the war. As unique tasks emerged – such as long range reconnaissance and interdiction, riverine operations and unconventional warfare – new units were created to address the requirements. Unfortunately, the spike in demand was met, in many cases, by lowering selection standards, where in fact they existed, which inevitably led to a lowering of the overall standard of individuals serving in those units. This resulted, rightly or wrongly, in the reputation of SOF as being largely a collection of snake-eaters, cowboys and soldiers of questionable quality running amok. This legacy would haunt them for decades.

Not surprisingly, much like in the Second World War, SOF were still disdained by the mainstream army. Very few saw the utility of SOF in the Cold War paradigm of ‘AirLand Battle’ which anticipated pitting massive, heavily armoured formations against one another on the North European plain. But, despite the conventional force bias, a fundamental shift in the threat to Western industrialized nations came about in the early 1970s, and provided SOF with renewed support. Terrorism became recognized as a significant ‘new’ menace that required specific skills that were not resident within the military institution at large. Once again, specially selected individuals who were capable of agility in thought, adaptability in operations, and who possessed superior martial skills and were capable of conducting high-risk operations provided the solution.



Special Air Service Regiment training, ca. 1943.

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This turn of events provided impetus for the SOF. Relatively small, highly skilled and mobile units that presented a relatively small ‘footprint’ provided the political and military leadership with a viable response. Moreover, they soon realized that SOF could be employed in a wide variety of politically sensitive operations. SOF thus enjoyed a renaissance in the late 1980s and early 1990s, most visibly represented by the creation of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) in 1987. American special operations forces now had a unified command, control over their own resources, and, not least, representation in the highest levels of the Department of Defense (DoD). SOF, in the American case at any rate, seemed to have been finally accepted as a fundamental component of the military. This was solidified during the Gulf War of 1990-1991, where SOF units provided strategic reconnaissance, rear area interdiction and direct action raids, as well as the politically charged task of hunting Scud missiles. In the process, they appeared to earn a new respect from the mainstream military.

But their acceptance, utility and relevance became even more pronounced in the new millennium. The tragic terrorist attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City on 11 September 2001 transformed the perception of SOF and represented the culmination of their acceptance as a core element of any modern military force. Faced with an elusive foe that relies on dispersion, complex terrain, and asymmetric tactics, political and military decision-makers recognized that only a flexible, adaptive and agile response would suffice. SOF, with its organizational flexibility, rapid mobility, and its underlying strength of exceptionally well trained personnel, answered the call yet again.

## CONSTANT THEMES

There has always existed a cultural and philosophical chasm between the conventional military and special operations forces. The differences are substantial, and the enmity is of long standing. Detractors argue that SOF are “expensive, independent, arrogant, out of uniform, [operate] outside normal chains of command, and [are] too specialized for [their] own good.”<sup>6</sup> Major-General Julian Thompson captured the essence of the traditional argument when he stated that “descending on the enemy, killing a few guards, blowing up the odd pillbox, and taking a handful of prisoners was not a cost-effective use of ships,

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craft and highly trained soldiers.”<sup>7</sup> Similarly, renowned American military analyst Tom Clancy observed that SOF “units and their men are frequently seen as ‘sponges’, sucking up prized personnel and funds at the expense of ‘regular’ units.”<sup>8</sup> Critics of SOF tend to base their arguments on constant themes that revolve around competition for scarce resources, divergent concepts of discipline and accountability, and differences in cultural and philosophical methodologies.

## COMPETITION FOR RESOURCES: ‘SKIMMING THE CREAM’

No issue engenders animosity between conventional forces and SOF more than the ‘poaching’ of manpower. It is not surprising that commanders are resentful that some of their best officers and men are attracted to, or recruited by, SOF units. “Almost invariably the men volunteering,” explained historian Philip Warner, “are the most enterprising, energetic and least dispensable.”<sup>9</sup> The ‘poachers’ themselves concede as much. “In the first place, there is probably quite a bit of understandable jealousy that any newly formed unit should be given priority as to men and equipment,” acknowledged Major General David Lloyd Owen, the commander of the Long Range Desert Group. He added: “It is only the normal reaction of any good Commanding Officer to resent having his best men attracted to such ‘crackpot’ outfits.”<sup>10</sup>

It was for this reason that Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, never agreed with Churchill’s special forces policy. He felt that it was “a dangerous drain on the quality of an infantry battalion.”<sup>11</sup> The legendary Field Marshal Viscount Slim was in strong agreement. He noted that special units “were usually formed by attracting the best men from normal units by better conditions, promises of excitement and not a little propaganda.... The result of these methods was undoubtedly to lower the quality of the rest of the Army, especially of the infantry, not only by skimming the cream off it, but by encouraging the idea that certain of the normal operations of war were so difficult that only specially equipped corps d’élite could be expected to undertake them.”<sup>12</sup>

Post-war attitudes were no different. SOF “ate up far too many junior leaders who were badly needed in the infantry battalions,” criticized Lieutenant-Colonel J.P. O’Brien in an article in the *Army Quarterly*



US Air Force Photo 010324-F-1129S-004

Members of US Navy Seal Team 5 on exercise in California.

in 1948.<sup>13</sup> Historian and former Canadian Army officer John A. English agreed. He argued that General Moshe Dyan's emphasis on expanding the Israeli airborne force, during his tenure as Chief of Staff, actually detracted from the effectiveness of the Israeli infantry as a whole. He believed that the expanded recruitment had a strong "skimming effect" that lowered the quality of the soldier posted to the standing force Golani Brigade.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Tom Clancy, in his analysis of American combat capability, wrote, "a private in an airborne unit might well be qualified to be a sergeant or squad leader in a regular formation."<sup>15</sup> Exacerbating this problem, SOF units indeed often utilize a higher proportion of senior non-commissioned officers (NCOs) than conventional units, which reinforces the claim that the army suffers from a deficiency of good NCOs.<sup>16</sup>

Further aggravating the "skimming effect" was a perception that there were negative consequences for those who failed to meet the high standards set for selection for SOF. Brooke and Slim were two of many who were convinced that those rejected had their confidence undermined by failure.<sup>17</sup> The very nature of these highly-selective units created the impression that everyone else was second-best. "I was glad they [those not selected] left camp immediately and didn't say any awkward farewells," confessed one SOF operator. "They were social lepers and I didn't want to risk catching the infection they carried."<sup>18</sup> This, of course, was a foolish attitude. As one former SAS member noted: "Elitism is counter-productive; it alienates you from other people."<sup>19</sup>

But the condemnation of SOF does not rest solely on the issue of purloined manpower. Another general complaint, as voiced by Field Marshal Slim, was that "the equipment of these special units was more generous than that of normal formations."<sup>20</sup> One historian observed: "Special forces are often the subject of envy, dislike and misunderstanding because they are ... issued with equipment which is often more lavish than that provided to their parent units."<sup>21</sup>

There is a timelessness to this issue, as demonstrated by the comments of General Fred Franks regarding the expansion of American SOF in the mid-1980s, specifically the Rangers. "As an élite force [Rangers]," observed Franks, "they were given ample training budgets, stable personnel policies (less rotation in and out than normal units), their pick of volunteers, and leaders and commanders who were already experienced company commanders."<sup>22</sup> This type of special status generated continual complaints. The core of the argument was always that the investment of valuable, highly skilled, and scarce manpower, combined with the lavish consumption of material resources, failed to provide a worthwhile return for the costs incurred. The efforts of special units were likened to "breaking windows by throwing guineas (gold coins) at them."<sup>23</sup>

In short, conventional commanders, whether justified or not, were continually incensed at the cost of SOF since they were perceived to receive the best

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A US Army Ranger on exercise.

personnel and too much funding, despite the fact that they normally spent less actual time in combat. But what incensed the conventional military even more was the fact that when SOF did undertake combat operations their casualty rates were often horrendous, reinforcing their argument of wastefulness. On the surface, their argument seems to be justified. A brief sampling of operations during the Second World War illustrates the high-risk nature of SOF endeavours. For example, the commando raid at Tragino suffered a 100 percent casualty rate;<sup>24</sup> the first SAS raid in North Africa 64 percent;<sup>25</sup> the mission to kill Rommel 96 percent;<sup>26</sup> and the Commando landing at Marina, in Italy 48 percent. For the "greatest raid of all", St. Nazaire, the cost was 79 percent of the Commandos and 52 percent of the naval force who were either killed or captured.<sup>27</sup> In total, British Commandos suffered a significantly higher wartime mortality rate than the rest of the army.<sup>28</sup> The experience of the Australian commandos was similar. They incurred a wartime casualty rate of 34 percent.<sup>29</sup>

In addition, naval combat demolition units suffered a casualty rate of 52 percent,<sup>30</sup> and the First Special Service Force suffered an incredible 78 percent casualty rate in Italy. In the same theatre, during the attempted break-in at Cisterna, of 767 American Rangers who crawled forward in the early



A US Special Forces soldier prepares a mortar during the Gulf War.

morning of 30 January 1944, only 6 returned.<sup>31</sup> In summary, it is generally accepted that SOF suffered a higher percentage of casualties than conventional combat troops although employed for less time in actual combat.

An examination of more contemporary SOF operations confirms the trend. During Operation “Eagle Claw”, the attempt to rescue the American hostages in Iran in 1980, all casualties at Desert One (the ad hoc base) were from SOF units. During Operation “Urgent Fury”, the invasion of Grenada in 1983, 47 percent of American casualties were SOF, and six years later during the action in Panama, Operation “Just Cause”, the number was 48 percent. SOF casualties in “Desert Storm” in 1991, represented 17 percent of those suffered, and 62 percent in Mogadishu in Somalia in 1993. As of 2003, 63 percent of American casualties suffered as part of Operation “Enduring Freedom” were SOF.<sup>32</sup> “The commandos [SOF],” calculated one military analyst, “... are statistically nine times as likely to die as regular soldiers...”<sup>33</sup>

**CONCEPTS OF DISCIPLINE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

While the perception of preferred manning and wastefulness clearly engenders ill will for the SOF, nothing is more contentious than their perceived lack of discipline and military decorum. To those on the outside, units that do not fit the conventional mould, especially those

described as élite, special or unique, are often criticized for being a ‘law unto themselves’. In his studies of military culture, sociologist Charles Cotton noted that “their [SOF/élite] cohesive spirit is a threat to the chain of command and wider cohesion.”<sup>34</sup>

This is often because leadership and discipline are more informal within SOF, and normal protocol and emphasis on ceremony and deportment are more relaxed. Professor Eliot Cohen revealed that “an almost universally observed characteristic of élite units is their lack of formal discipline – and sometimes a lack of substantive discipline as well.” His research determined that “élite units often disregard spit and polish or orders about saluting.”<sup>35</sup>

He was not mistaken. General de la Billière recalled that as a junior officer in the SAS: “The men, for their part, never called me ‘Sir’ unless they wanted to be rude.”<sup>36</sup> Historian Eric Morris noted, “the Long Range Desert Group and other like units did offer a means of escape from those petty tediums and irritants of everyday life in the British Army. Drills, guards, fatigues and inspections were almost totally absent.”<sup>37</sup> Another military historian observed that “[Mad Mike] Calvert, [Commander of 2 SAS Brigade] like many fighting soldiers was not particularly concerned by the trivia of, for example, military appearance [since] uniformity and smartness have little bearing on a unit’s ability to fight.”<sup>38</sup> But, without a doubt

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this “trivial” aspect has an enormous impact on how the respective unit is perceived by others, namely outsiders.

This was not lost on the special forces troops. “We were already conspicuous by our lack of dress code,” confessed one SAS non-commissioned officer (NCO), “The green army always dresses the same.”<sup>39</sup> One new American special forces operator recalled his amazement on arriving at his new unit. “Sergeants Major are the walking, breathing embodiment of everything that’s right in the US Army,” he explained. Yet, his first glimpse of his new sergeant major caught him unprepared. “This guy looked like Joe Shit the Ragman,” he exclaimed. “His shirt was wide open and he wore no T-shirt. His dog-tags were gold plated. His hat was tipped up on the back of his head, and he wore a huge, elaborately curled and waxed handlebar moustache.”<sup>40</sup>

The fact of the matter is that SOF realize their lax discipline and dress codes irritate the conventional army. This is part of the SOF appeal, as is their need to clearly differentiate themselves from the ‘regular’ army. This is also why it generates such enmity from the conventional hierarchy. Nonetheless, much of this dynamic is based on the type of individuals who choose to join these units. David Stirling, the founder of the SAS, reflected that the “Originals” were not really “controllable” but rather “harnessable.”<sup>41</sup> The Rangers were acknowledged to consist largely of “mavericks who couldn’t make it in conventional units.”<sup>42</sup> “Commanding the Rangers,” explained William Darby, their first commanding officer, “was like driving a team of very high spirited horses. No effort was needed to get them to go forward. The problem was to hold them in check.”<sup>43</sup>

American Special Forces (‘Green Berets’) were later similarly described as those “who wanted to try something new and challenging, and who chafed at rigid discipline.”<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, General de la Billière observed: “Most officers and men here do not really fit in normal units of the Army, and that’s why they’re here in the SAS, which is not like anything else in the Services.”<sup>45</sup> He assumed most of the volunteers, like himself, “were individualists who wanted to break away from the formal drill-machine discipline” which existed in the army as a whole.<sup>46</sup> This fits a similar pattern. According to General Peter Schoemaker, who joined Delta Force under its founding commander, Colonel Charlie Beckwith: “Beckwith was looking for a bunch of bad cats who wanted to do something different.”<sup>47</sup>

This element of self-selection, combined with the feeling of accomplishment as one of the few

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who successfully passed selection, along with the self-confidence resulting from challenging, difficult and hazardous training, creates an aura of invincibility and an intense loyalty to what is perceived as a very exclusive group. An intimate bond between those who belong is generated through shared hardship and danger. Members of these ‘special’ groups frequently develop an outlook that treats those outside the ‘club’ as inferior and unworthy of respect. Often, this sense of independence from the conventional army, as well as the lack of respect for traditional forms of discipline, spawn what some analysts describe as the emergence of units that are more akin to militant clans than military organizations.<sup>48</sup> Needless to say, this type of organization and its institutional attitude is anathema to a military that prides itself on decorum, tradition and uniformity.

Not surprisingly, the arrogance and deliberate insubordination of SOF operators often fuel the fire. No image is more representative than the scene from *Black Hawk Down* when a captain gives direction to a group of senior NCOs. Upon completion, the group, less one, acknowledges the orders. The captain quickly seeks to confirm with the recalcitrant NCO that he understood the direction. The Delta Force sergeant replies nonchalantly, almost contemptuously: “Yeah, I heard ya.” This is a classic of art reflecting reality.

One operator laughingly described how he had failed to salute two “crap-hat” [regular army] captains. He explained that he “couldn’t because he was smoking and couldn’t do two things at once.”<sup>49</sup> In another case, a former support officer of a counter-terrorism organization revealed that “assaulters would refuse to listen to others regardless of rank because ‘you hadn’t done selection’.”<sup>50</sup> Similarly, an executive assistant to a Sector Commander in Bosnia disclosed that “whenever they [SOF operators] didn’t like what they were told they went in to see the commander [circumventing the chain of command].”<sup>51</sup>

In the end, the arrogance and aloofness bred from a cult of élitism that is often endemic within specially selected groups develops and nurtures an ‘in-group’ mentality that is dangerously inwardly focused. They trust only themselves – that is those who have passed the rigorous selection standards and tests. Anthropologist Donna Winslow confirmed the negative aspects that often arise from an emphasis on the exclusivity of this ‘warrior cult.’ It nurtures an unassailable belief, she insisted that “only those who have done it know, or can be trusted, or



Badge of Joint Task Force 2

DND

more dangerously yet, can give direction.”<sup>52</sup> Alan Bell, formerly of the SAS, confessed: “We tended to have an arrogance that we knew it all, did it all, and had nothing to learn.” Moreover, he acknowledged that they would work only with Delta Force or SEAL Team Six – no one else. “We figured it wasn’t worth our time,” he confessed. “We doubted their capabilities.”<sup>53</sup>

But this type of attitude has consequences. “Too often,” observed Tom Clancy, “there’s friction, competition, and rivalry – a situation often made worse by the sometimes heavy-handed ways of the SOF community.”<sup>54</sup> In the end, this reluctance to work with others, compounded by arrogance, breeds animosity, mistrust and barriers to cooperation and the sharing of information with outside agencies. In the end, everyone loses.

### **DIVERGENT CULTURAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL METHODOLOGY**

Competition for scarce resources and disagreement on comportment and discipline were not the only bases for conflict, disagreement and antagonism. Rather, these elements only support the larger issue – the divergent cultural and philosophical methodology of SOF and the conventional army. General Leslie Hollis captured the essence of the debate when he stated that there existed a misconception within the conventional army that special formations are “a lot of resolute but irresponsible cut-throats, who roam around the campaign area, spreading confusion amongst their own troops and consternation amongst those of the enemy.”<sup>55</sup>

Part of the problem may result from a limited philosophical understanding of war. M.R.D. Foot, British historian and a Second World War intelligence officer for the SAS, stated that special operations “are unorthodox coups ... unexpected strokes of violence, usually mounted and executed outside the military establishment of the day.”<sup>56</sup> For those trapped in a dogmatic conventional doctrinal mind set, SOF, almost by definition, become problematic. “To the

**“The SOF soldier is defined by his intellect, role and philosophical approach to warfare. ...He is capable of operating in an environment of ambiguity, complexity and change.”**

orthodox, traditional soldier,” explained US Colonel Aaron Banks, “it [unconventional warfare] was something slimy, underhanded, illegal, and ungentlemanly. It did not fit in the honor code of that profession of arms.”<sup>57</sup> Almost fifty years later, the same sentiment remains. “There is a cultural aversion on the part of conventional soldiers, sailors, and airmen,” explained Lieutenant General Samuel Wilson, “to things that smell of smoke and mirrors and feats of derring do ... It’s a little too romantic ... It’s not doing it the hard way.”<sup>58</sup>

The nature of war and how it is fought was not the only issue of concern. Commanders often likened SOF to ‘private armies’, that often tend to “become an object of suspicion to the public army.”<sup>59</sup> This is often because SOF value action and have little institutional patience with bureaucracy. This, coupled with an ‘end justifies the means attitude’, means that conventional feathers are likely to get ruffled. “One danger of the private army [SOF]” commented one senior officer, “is certainly that it gets into the habit of using wrong channels.”<sup>60</sup> He was not wrong. Calvert conceded: “A private army ... short-circuits command.”<sup>61</sup>

This is not surprising since SOF type units have often owed their existence or survival to a powerful mentor who is well positioned to look after his wards. For instance, Prime Minister Winston Churchill took great interest in the development of the Commandos, and he supported other similar aggressive, unorthodox type units. General George Marshall personally pushed his subordinates to support the establishment of the American Rangers, and his political master, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, allowed the director of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) to maintain a direct pipeline to the White House. Later, President John F. Kennedy heaped lavish attention on the American Special Forces, much to the chagrin of his conventional chiefs of staff. And, recently, it has been Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld who has personally ensured that American SOF received starring roles in US operations, as well as hefty increases in manpower and budgets. Not surprisingly, SOF are more than willing to use their special connections to further their cause. Equally evident, this type of special access and privilege infuriates conventional commanders who often try to even the score whenever possible.

The refusal to cooperate or work with conventional forces due to ‘security concerns’ creates another impediment to co-existence. Often SOF operators arrive in theatre to conduct secret missions without informing the ‘in-place unit’. Their presence normally generates suspicion with belligerent forces who recognize ‘new players’, as well as subsequent negative consequences if SOF action occurs. However, at the end of the normally short operation, the in-place conventional force must deal with the brunt of the belligerent reaction. To add insult to injury, the need for ‘operational security’ is normally used as the reason for completely ignoring conventional forces. Yet, paradoxically,



JTF 2 troops on exercise.

DND Photo

the compulsion to ensure that they are easily recognized from their conventional military brethren, in all settings, seems to override the need for secrecy. In fact, it compels them to utilize exotic equipment, uniforms and dress codes completely apart from the normal military patterns, even when not required to do so for operational purposes. As a result, they are routinely easily identified.<sup>62</sup>

A corollary detrimental effect to their exaggerated emphasis on secrecy and refusal to work with conventional forces is the fact that SOF are often misunderstood or not understood at all. “I was appalled,” conceded former SAS Commander, Major-General Tony Jeapes, “by the lack of understanding of the Regiment’s capabilities by those in high positions.” He conceded that the “Regiment’s insistence upon secrecy in all it did had become counter-productive.”<sup>63</sup> Although operational security is of great importance, secrecy in and of itself often becomes a tool to avoid scrutiny and build barriers to the outside world. This security consciousness has also led in some cases to a refusal to use computers that are connected to the outside world. This inflated sense of secrecy is laughable at times, but, more important, it is an impediment to progress and a contributor to the gulf between SOF and conventional forces.

But it is not only practices and overt attitudes that elicit conflict. The philosophical differences inherent in the type of individuals that are drawn to SOF also create tension. “Of course, we’re all concerned with people who are different,” exclaimed a former commander of the 75th Ranger Regiment. “We are uncomfortable with it ... in particular in the military because it is so structured and when all of a sudden you have unstructured beings, people are not comfortable with them.... We had some people who had tremendous capabilities, tremendous skills, but people didn’t want to be around them ... these free thinkers. These people who did things in an unconventional manner.”<sup>64</sup> This is a major issue that is not always understood. Mavericks, critical thinkers, individuals who are capable of conceptualizing innovative tactics, equipment and methodologies that are alien to the conventional wisdom were, and still are, often marginalized. Yet, their ideas and contributions, once properly harnessed and allowed to flourish, provide incredible payback. This is the strength of SOF.

This was evident from the start. “You’d volunteered for the Commandos,” explained one recruit. “They realised that you were human beings and you had a bit of sense, that you didn’t need to be roared at and shouted at, screamed at all the time.” He added: “Not only that, if you did anything, even in training, everything was explained to you. If you’d a different idea, even as a lowly Private, you could say ‘Well, sir, don’t you think if we went that way instead of this way it would be easier?’ If you were right that was the method that was adopted.”<sup>65</sup> One SAS commander explained the concept. “I never had a roll call or kit checks before operations [in Malaya],” he stated. “If a man could not look after



A JTF 2 soldier on winter exercise

himself, our opinion was that he had no place in the SAS.” He added: “The men responded to this trust and never once did I have cause to regret it.”<sup>66</sup>

It is this philosophy that is so alien to the conventional army, but resonates so strongly with SOF. It underlines the SOF’s greatest strength, yet also the greatest cause for the chasm between SOF and conventional forces – the individual soldiers.

### THE STRENGTH OF SOF: THE MAN AND THE ORGANIZATION

Nothing better encapsulates the essence of the special operations forces soldier than an anecdote from the Vietnam War. An American Studies and Observations Group (SOG) team was completely surrounded by North Vietnamese Army (NVA) forces. In response to the Forward Air Controller’s grim assessment that “It sounds pretty bad,” the SOG team leader replied: “No, no. I’ve got them right where I want ‘em – surrounded from the inside.”<sup>67</sup> This mix of confidence, bravado and single-mindedness of purpose highlights the essence of the SOF operator.

**“SOF have evolved and have achieved acceptance by political and military decision-makers, so the divide between SOF and conventional forces is now less of a barrier.”**

From the beginning, the SOF warrior was distinctly different from his conventional brothers. “In truth,” explained a Second World War journal, “they [SOF] have the best qualities of the modern soldier to a high degree – intelligence, initiative, skill and cool, calculating courage.”<sup>68</sup> Undeniably, SOF operators are a breed apart. “In the Regiment,” confided one SAS

member, “we thrived on impossible missions. They were our lifeblood. Our job was to make the impossible possible.”<sup>69</sup> To achieve that goal meant adaptability, intelligence, tenacity and toughness. “The reality is quiet, often tired, but determined bodies of men, working together to overcome adversity,” explained one former commando. “Their most important quality is the ability to keep going until the job is done.”<sup>70</sup>

And, it is not just anyone who is capable of such feats. The focus on the individual, and specifically his capability, is not surprising when one considers the rigorous selection process and the performance standards achieved. As such, SOF can be broken down into roughly three tiers that correspond both to the rigour of the selection standards and to the role equated with each level. For example, ‘Tier One’ SOF consists of primarily ‘black operations’ or counter terrorism. Normally, only 10 to 15 percent of those attempting selection are successful. What makes this number so impressive is that a large percentage of those trying out are already second or third tier SOF members. Organizations that fall into this category include the US 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment (Delta), the German *Grenzschutzgruppe-9* (GSG 9), the Canadian Joint Task Force-2 (JTF 2), and the Polish Commandos (Grupa Reagowania Operacyjno Mobilnego) (GROM) (Operational Mobile Response Group), to name but a few.<sup>71</sup>



A JTF 2 diver.

‘Tier Two’ SOF reflects those organizations that have a selection pass rate of between 20 and 30 percent. They are normally entrusted with high value tasks such as Strategic Reconnaissance and Unconventional Warfare. It is at this level that selection is separated from training because the skill sets are considered so difficult that the testers are looking only for attributes that cannot be inculcated. The actual skills required can be taught later during the training phase. Some examples include the American Special Forces (also referred to as Green Berets), the US Navy SEALs, and the British, Australian and New Zealand SAS.<sup>72</sup>

The final grouping, or ‘Tier Three’, consists of those units, such as the American Rangers, that have a selection success rate of 40 to 45 percent, and whose primary mission is Direct Action. At this level, selection is mixed with training. However, the quality control line is drawn here. Generally, units below this line are not considered SOF.<sup>73</sup>

Undeniably, selection is all-important. “Our assessment and selection programs,” explained General Wayne Downing, a former commander of US Special Operations Command, “are designed to get people who do things in an unconventional manner; who are accustomed to working in scenarios and in situations that are very unstructured.... Our people will generally come up with a very novel approach of how to solve problems, and many times people on the conventional side of the armed forces are very uncomfortable because our people do not do things in the traditional ways.”<sup>74</sup> Rear-Admiral Ray Smith, a former commander of the Naval Special Warfare Command, was more to the point. “We want a kid who can think, who can make decisions on his own ... under very stressful conditions.”<sup>75</sup> As such, it is no surprise then that USSOCOM commander General Charles Holland proclaimed: “The SOF warrior is one of our Nation’s great assets: superbly trained, physically tough, culturally aware, an independent thinker – a quiet professional.”<sup>76</sup>

In the end, the SOF soldier is defined by his intellect, role and philosophical approach to warfare. Moreover, he is capable of operating in an environment of ambiguity, complexity and change. Undeniably, SOF operators have evolved from the toughened commando killers of the Second World War to warriors capable of adapting and thinking through the complex environment in which the military now finds itself. These are surroundings that require a warrior ethos combined with language proficiency, cultural awareness, political sensitivity, and the ability to use Information Age technology – in essence, warrior-diplomats.<sup>77</sup>

## A HISTORY OF INSTITUTIONAL HOSTILITY

But, as already noted, there exists an historic chasm between the SOF operator and his unit, almost by virtue of their characteristics and practices, and the conventional military (and their dogmatic and limited mind-set). “Almost all of the elite units we have studied,” revealed Professor Cohen, “faced considerable bureaucratic hostility – enmity translated into effective harassment.”<sup>78</sup> Noel Koch, a key US Department of Defense proponent of SOF reform in the 1980s, resignedly acceded: “I have discovered in critical

areas of the Pentagon, on the subject of special operations force revitalization, that when they [DoD officials] say no, they mean no; when they say maybe, they mean no; and when they say yes, they mean no, and if they meant anything but no, they wouldn't be there."<sup>79</sup>

This attitude has always been the case. Even the authoritative Prime Minister Churchill had a difficult time establishing the Commandos and other unconventional organizations. "The resistances of the War Office were obstinate," reflected Churchill, "and increased as the professional ladder was descended." He explained that "the idea that large bands of favoured 'irregulars', with their unconventional attire and easy-and-free bearing, should throw an implied slur on the efficiency and courage of the Regular battalions was odious to men who had given all their lives to the organised and discipline of permanent units." He added: "The colonels of many of our finest regiments were aggrieved."<sup>80</sup> One official report acknowledged that "Home Forces have consistently used their predominating influence at the War Office to thwart the efforts of those well disposed to us."<sup>81</sup> In trying to raise the SAS in 1941, Major David Stirling complained: "I found during this and subsequent stages that the A.G. [Adjutant General] Branch was unfailingly obstructive and uncooperative."<sup>82</sup>

Field-Marshal Sir William Slim was representative of the traditional military mindset at the time. "Private armies," he proclaimed, "are expensive, wasteful, and unnecessary."<sup>83</sup> His disdain for their ideas and what they represented was clearly evident in the profile he painted. He stated that these "racketeers" were in essence of two kinds, "those whose acquaintance with war was confined to large non-fighting staffs where they had had time and opportunity to develop their theories, and tough, cheerful fellows who might be first-class landed on a beach at night with orders to scupper a sentry-post, but whose experience was about the range of a tommy-gun.... Few of them had anything really new to say, and the few that had, usually forgot that a new idea should have something to recommend it besides just breaking up normal organisation."<sup>84</sup>

The American case was no different. General Douglas MacArthur successfully refused to allow OSS operations in the Pacific.<sup>85</sup> American Army historian David Hogan observed: "Except for some isolated instances, conventional US generals discarded special operations in Europe and focused almost totally on conventional warfare once their forces had consolidated beachheads in North Africa, Italy, and France."<sup>86</sup> The institutional hostility towards SOF flourished as the war drew to a close. As hostilities neared completion, SOF organizations were quickly disbanded or at best, severely curtailed. Among the casualties were such well-known organizations as the Long Range Desert Group, the Special Air Service Regiment, Phantom, Layforce, the First Special Service Force, the Office of Strategic Services, the Rangers and Raider battalions.

**"SOF have evolved from a force of desperation, born in the initial crisis of the Second World War, to a force of choice in the aftermath of 9/11."**

Later, in the post-war period, when Colonel Aaron Banks arrived at Fort Bragg to begin work on establishing Special Forces, he was warned that he would "have to work carefully and not step on toes, since there was not only apathy about a UW [unconventional warfare] army capability but also actual resistance to elite special units."<sup>87</sup> In 1952, when Banks began recruiting, he attributed his initial difficulty to the "less than enthusiastic Army-wide support for the program."<sup>88</sup> His experience was not unique. The rejuvenated post-war SAS also found itself short of recruits because "the Regiment's reputation stood so low that Commanding Officers of other units were making it difficult for their people to go on selection course."<sup>89</sup>

This attitude was also mirrored in 1963, when the French Foreign Legion (2nd REP) attempted to radically reform some of its elements into a rapid-deployable SOF type unit. As the unofficial unit historian noted: "This was a revolutionary concept at the time and not one to please desk bound conservatives in the French military. To these officers the word 'special' conjured up nonconforming, rogue units."<sup>90</sup> Even in the depths of Africa, torn by internal strife and rampant with insurgency, hostility to new ideas still remained. Lieutenant-Colonel Ron Reid Daly, in his efforts to establish the Selous Scouts in Rhodesia, observed: "I began to get the feeling of a distinct resistance block against me personally, and the scheme as a whole."<sup>91</sup>

Even during the Vietnam War, institutional prejudices within DoD worked against SOF. General Maxwell Taylor recalled that despite President John F. Kennedy's urging, "not much heart went into [the] work [of placing greater emphasis on SOF]." Taylor, like many senior commanders, believed that Special Forces were not doing anything that "any well-trained unit" could not do.<sup>92</sup> Major-General Harold Johnson agreed. Then acting Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, he acknowledged that the Kennedy regime was pushing Special Forces and that the "Army agreed that this was a good idea." However, he also conceded that the Army "sort of yawned in backing it up."<sup>93</sup> In 1963, several attempts to transfer a list of officers with known ability and experience to Special Forces was ignored and the "talent received was almost invariably inferior."<sup>94</sup> Once the war was over, a virtual bloodbath occurred. By the mid-1970s, the Army slashed special forces manning by 70 percent and its funding by 95 percent.<sup>95</sup> At its lowest point in 1975, the SOF budget represented one tenth of one percent of the total American defence budget.<sup>96</sup>

Neither its budget nor its future improved substantially in the short term. Lingering images and hostility continued. The sentiment of antipathy towards SOF was particularly resilient. "Over the years in the United States," confessed Secretary of the Army John Marsh in 1983, "there has been resistance among leaders of conventional forces towards unconventional methods."<sup>97</sup> This was clearly evident a year later when, in the fall of 1984, a three star air force general testifying before a classified session of a Senate Special

Operations Panel, repeatedly referred to Delta Force as “trained assassins” and “trigger happy”. In addition, he aired his personal concerns that Delta might “freelance” a coup d’état in a friendly nation to the USA.<sup>98</sup> Four years later, at the activation ceremony of the USSOCOM, Admiral William J. Crowe Jr., Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, beseeched those assembled to “break down the wall that has more or less come between special operation forces and other parts of our military.”<sup>99</sup> This appeal, however, had limited impact. The Gulf War revealed that ingrained resentment still existed against the concept of SOF.

Journalist Douglas Waller observed: “No one nurtured the animosity more than CENTCOM’s [Central Command] commander General H. Norman Schwarzkopf III. ‘Stormin’ Norman Schwarzkopf despised special operators.” The reason was almost predictable. First, he had a negative image of SOF operators because of his experience with them in Vietnam and later in Grenada.<sup>100</sup> Second, “In an Army now giddy over light divisions and paratroopers,” explained Waller, “Schwarzkopf was somewhat of an anachronism – a tank officer whose first love was heavy armored units.”<sup>101</sup> As a result, he initially refused the inclusion of SOF in his force. But the animosity went both ways. Officers in USSOCOM considered Schwarzkopf a “meat and potatoes thinker, a pompous, plodding tactician who knew little about unconventional warfare and didn’t care to learn much more.”<sup>102</sup> He seemed to represent the conventional military very ably. And it would seem that the sentiment remains smouldering under the surface. As recently as the fall of 2001, General Tommy Franks, the Commander-in-Chief of CENTCOM responsible for prosecuting the war in Afghanistan, questioned the use of special forces, reportedly believing it was a conflict for “heavy metal conventional units.”<sup>103</sup>

Not surprisingly, throughout the evolutionary process most SOF operators, particularly officers and senior NCOs, felt that SOF employment was career limiting. They were not wrong. For instance: “Marine Officers assigned to the Joint Special Operations Command or to USSOCOM,” conceded one former high-ranking officer, “for the most part have not fared well before promotion boards.”<sup>104</sup> But this was not a revelation. After all, there has always existed a cultural chasm that was difficult to breach.

## CONCLUSIONS

This somewhat dismal assessment is not entirely without a happy ending. As discussed earlier, SOF have evolved and have achieved acceptance by political and military decision-makers, so the divide between SOF and conventional forces is now less of a barrier. The creation of US Special Operations Command in 1987 was an important factor. SOF now had control over their own resources so they could better modernize their organizations. They had a single commander who could promote interoperability and ensure all SOF assets could operate effectively together. Finally, the provision of a ‘four-star’ commander-in-chief and an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict gave SOF representation in the

highest councils of the DoD. Quite simply, SOF could defend themselves in the halls of power. They had come of age.

In addition, the popular image of SOF continued to improve. Internationally, in the 1980s and beyond, SOF units scored repeated success against terrorists. But of great importance, during the Gulf War of 1990-1991 Coalition SOF made a significant and publicly recognized contribution to the war effort (i.e. strategic reconnaissance, direct action raids, economy of effort activities such as deception operations, and liaison/training missions with the less advanced non-NATO coalition partners), as well as their most well known mission of ‘Scud busting’ – a strategically essential task that was critical to maintaining the Coalition by keeping Israel from retaliating against Saddam Hussein’s Scud missile attacks.<sup>105</sup> In the execution of these tasks, SOF received favourable press. Their public image soared.

Internationally, SOF were ascendant. They proved themselves effective in the murky war against terrorists, in the blowing sands of a conventional war in the Gulf, as well as in the savage peace that prevailed. Globally, they were used for the traditional roles of unconventional warfare, strategic reconnaissance and direct action raids, as well as for their other core missions. In addition, they captured war criminals in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>106</sup>

Their importance increased because political decision-makers and senior military commanders finally realized their true value. Quite simply, relatively small, highly skilled and mobile units provided the political and military leadership with a viable response to asymmetric threats. SOF could be employed in a myriad of potentially politically sensitive operations but without the risk or ‘negative optics’ of deploying a large number of troops. Mass could be replaced by quality. This was not only an economic factor, but one of effectiveness. In the volatile, uncertain and ambiguous environment of conflict, SOF were normally more agile and adaptable than their conventional counterparts. Their higher levels of intelligence, skill and ingenuity provided a better chance of success. Importantly, conventional commanders stuck in the reality of today’s complex security environment also began to realize the benefits of employing SOF. The change in momentum became obvious. Using the Americans as a case study, SOF deployments, manning and budgets have been continually growing since the early 1990s. The US SOF budget was increased yet again in 2004, reaching a staggering \$6 billion.<sup>107</sup> As of May 2003, there were approximately 20,000 special operators, representing almost half of the entire special operations force of 47,000 involved in ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq alone.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, US SOF are joined there by a large number of Allied SOF contingents.

The tragic terrorist attack of 9/11 finalized the transformation of the perception of SOF, and represented the culmination of their acceptance as a core element of any modern military force. Although the future is not certain, SOF have evolved from a force of desperation, born in the

initial crisis of the Second World War to a force of choice in the aftermath of 9/11. Once considered as a nuisance to real soldiering, SOF have become the workhorse of the future. They will provide decision-makers with the needed political and cultural astuteness and military finesse required in an increasingly complex and chaotic world.

However, traditional barriers and prejudices do not die easily. Although the cultural divide seems to have been

breached, it is but a footbridge that must be carefully maintained and improved upon. This will take the continued efforts of both the conventional and SOF communities. To progress, both must understand the characteristics, needs and roles of the other. Only if a more cooperative, informed and transparent relationship develops will the chasm be permanently closed.



## NOTES

1. William Walker, "Shadow Warriors – Elite troops hunt terrorists in Afghanistan," *The Toronto Star*, 20 October 2001, p. A4.
2. Tom Clancy, *Special Forces* (New York: Berkley Books, 2001), p. 3. See Bernd Horn, "Special Men, Special Missions: The Utility of Special Operations Forces," in Bernd Horn, David Last, Paul B. de Taillon, eds., *Force of Choice: Perspectives on Special Operations* (Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, 2004), Chapter 1, for a discussion on the many definitions and perspectives on the meaning of SOF.
3. Thomas K. Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action. The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), p. 7. Canada has adopted the NATO definition for Special Operations, which are "military activities conducted by specially designated, organized, trained and equipped forces, using operational techniques and modes of employment not standard to conventional forces. These activities are conducted across the spectrum of military operations independently or in co-ordination with operations of conventional forces." Colonel W.J. Fulton, DNBCD, "Capabilities Required of DND, Asymmetric Threats and Weapons of Mass Destruction," Fourth Draft, 18 March 2001, pp. 16-22.
4. CT measures are the offensive measures, whereas anti-terrorism (AT) measures are the defensive measures. SOF CT operations encompass both CT and AT.
5. US Special Operations Command, *US Special Operations Forces. Posture Statement 2000* (Washington, D.C.: DoD, 2001), p. 5. In 2003, USSOCOM decided to drop the six collateral activities that included: Coalition Support, Combat Search and Rescue, Counter Drug Activities, Humanitarian De-mining Activities, Security Assistance, and Special Activities. Special Operations Commanders' Conference, 14 April 2003.
6. Adams, p. 162.
7. Julian Thompson, *War Behind Enemy Lines* (Washington D.C.: Brassey's, 2001), p. 2.
8. Clancy, *Special Forces*, pp. 3-4.
9. Philip Warner, *Phantom* (London: William Kimber, 1982), p. 11.
10. Major General David Lloyd Owen, *The Long Range Desert Group* (London: Leo Cooper, 2000), p. 12. The LRDG were publicly described as "the pick of the seasoned desert fighters of the Eighth Army." "Long Range Desert Patrol," *Illustrated*, 24 October 1942, pp. 14-15.
11. Eric Morris, *Churchill's Private Armies* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), p. 90.
12. Field Marshall Sir William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory* (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1956), p. 547.
13. Brigadier T.B.L. Churchill, "The Value of Commandos," *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 65, No. 577, February 1950, p. 86.
14. John A. English, *A Perspective on Infantry* (New York: Praeger, 1981), p. 188.
15. Tom Clancy, *Airborne* (New York: Berkley Books, 1997), p. 54.
16. See Eliot A. Cohen, *Commandos and Politicians* (Cambridge: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1978), pp. 56-58.
17. Slim, p. 546 and Morris, *Churchill's Private Army*, p. 243.
18. Command Sergeant Major Eric L. Haney, *Inside Delta Force. The Story of America's Elite Counterterrorist Unit* (New York: A Dell Book, 2002), p. 97.
19. Andy McNab, *Immediate Action* (London: Bantam Press, 1995), p. 381.
20. Slim, p. 546.
21. Philip Warner, *The SAS. The Official History* (London: Sphere Books, 1971), p. 1.
22. Tom Clancy, *Into the Storm. A Study in Command* (New York: Berkley Books, 1997), p. 119.
23. Cohen, p. 61.
24. Hilary St. George Saunders, *The Green Beret. The Story of the Commandos 1940-1945* (London: Michael Joseph, 1949), p. 193; and Lieutenant-Colonel Robert D. Burhans, *The First Special Service Force. A History of The North Americans 1942-1944* (Toronto: Methuen, 1975), p. 162.
25. Philip Warner, *Special Forces of World War II*, (London: Granada, 1985) p. 17.
26. Adrian Weale, *Secret Warfare* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1997), p. 104.
27. Denis and Shelagh Whitaker, *Dieppe. Tragedy to Triumph* (Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson, 1992), p. 48, and Saunders, pp. 82-101.
28. Cohen, p. 56.
29. A.B. Feuer, *Commando! The M/Z Unit's Secret War Against Japan* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1996), p. 159.
30. Susan L. Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare. Rebuilding US Special Operations Forces* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1997), p. 23.
31. Christopher Hibbert, *Anzio – The Bid for Rome* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970), pp. 75-76.
32. John T. Carney and Benjamin F. Schemmer, *No Room for Error* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002), pp. 236, 283.
33. "Ground troops cream of crop," *The Toronto Star*, 21 October 2001, p. A9.
34. Charles A. Cotton, "Military Mystique", Canadian Airborne Forces Museum files, no publication information available.
35. Cohen, p. 74. Although the term 'elite' is consistently used, the study was specifically on SOF type units. This is a common phenomenon. The term elite is often used interchangeably with SOF by authors.
36. General Sir Peter de la Billière, *Looking For Trouble. SAS to Gulf Command* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), p. 117.
37. Eric Morris, *Guerillas in Uniform* (London: Hutchinson, 1989), p. 15.
38. Weale, p. 154.
39. Cameron Spence, *All Necessary Measures* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 43.
40. Haney, p. 20.
41. Anthony Kemp, *The SAS at War* (London: John Murray, 1991), p. 11.
42. Charles M. Simpson III, *Inside the Green Berets. The First Thirty Years* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1983), p. 14, and Charles W. Sasser, *Raider* (New York: St. Martins, 2002), p. 186.
43. William O. Darby and William H. Baumer, *Darby's Rangers. We Led the Way* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, reprint 1993), p. 184.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
45. De la Billière, p. 236.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
47. Greg Jaffe, "A Maverick's Plan to Revamp Army is Taking Shape," *Wall Street Journal*, 12 December 2003.
48. John Talbot, "The Myth and Reality of the Paratrooper in the Algerian War," *Armed Forces and Society*, November 1976, p. 75; Cohen, p. 69; and Donna Winslow, *The Canadian Airborne Regiment in Somalia. A Socio-cultural Inquiry* (Ottawa: Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia, 1997), pp. 135-141.
49. Spence, p. 43.
50. Interview with former SOF member, September 2002.
51. Interview with Canadian infantry captain, 25 October 2002.
52. Donna Winslow, *The Canadian Airborne Regiment in Somalia: A Socio-Cultural Inquiry*, (Ottawa: Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia, 1997) pp. 126-133.
53. Allan Bell, presentation to the RMC Special Operations Symposium, 5 October 2000 and WS 586 class, 19 March 2004. This mindset has created potential failures. For instance, some analysts have suggested that the US military may have missed chances to capture Mohammad Omar (Taliban Leader) and Ayman Zawahiri (Deputy to Osama bin Laden) during the past two years because restrictions on Green Berets in favour of Delta Force and SEAL Team Six. As a result, during several credible sightings of the fugitives, even though a Green Beret team was just minutes away and ready to deploy, commanders called on Delta Force, which was hours away in Kabul. See Gregory L. Vistica, "Military Split on How to Use Special Forces in Terror War," *Washington Post*, 5 January 2004, p. A1.
54. Clancy, *Special Forces*, p. 281.

55. Colonel J.W. Hackett, "The Employment of Special Forces," *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 97, No. 585, February 1952, p. 41.
56. Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy* (London: Greenwood Press, 1996), pp. 151, 156.
57. Aaron Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets: the Birth of Special Forces* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1986), p. 147.
58. Quoted in Susan L. Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare. Rebuilding US Special Operations Forces* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1997), p. 6.
59. Hackett, p. 35.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
61. *Ibid.*
62. One need only look at recent pictures from Afghanistan or Iraq to understand the point. Long hair, beards, no rank epaulets, no military headress (although ball caps are often a favourite), mixed dress – civilian and military, fashionable sunglasses, and an array of exotic weaponry and equipment normally give away the secretive SOF operator.
63. Major-General Tony Jeapes, *SAS Secret War* (Surrey: The Book People Ltd., 1996), p. 12.
64. Quoted in Marquis, p. 7.
65. Will Fowler, *The Commandos at Dieppe: Rehearsal for D-Day* (London: Harper Collins, 2002), p. 29.
66. John Leary, "Searching for a Role: The Special Air Service (SAS) Regiment in the Malayan Emergency," *Army Historical Research*, Vol. 63, No. 296, Winter 1996, p. 269.
67. John L. Plaster, *SOG* (New York: Onyx, 1997), p. 246.
68. "The Long-Range Desert Group," *The Fighting Forces*, Vol. XIX, No. 3, August 1942, p. 146.
69. Spence, p. 151.
70. Hugh McManners, *Commando. Winning the Green Beret* (London: Network Books, 1994), p. 12.
71. See Colonel C.A. Beckwith, *Delta Force* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1985), pp. 123 and 137; Interview with Major Anthony Balasevicius, former SOF standards officer (and recognized expert on SOF selection and training theory and practice); Leroy Thompson, *The Rescuers. The World's Top Anti-Terrorist Units* (London: A David & Charles Military Book, 1986), pp. 127-128; General Ulrich Wegener, presentation to the RMC Special Operations Symposium, 5 October 2000; and Victorino Matus, "The GROM Factor," <http://www.weeklystandard.com/content/public/articles/000/000/002/653hsdpu.asp>, accessed 18 May 2003.
72. Actual selection pass rates vary somewhat between different sources. However, even with the variances, the groups all fit into the Tier Two range. See Judith E. Brooks and Michelle M. Zazanis, "Enhancing U.S. Army Special Forces: Research and Applications," ARI Special Report 33, October 1997, p. 8; General H.H. Shelton, "Quality People: Selecting and Developing Members of U.S. SOF," *Special Warfare*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Spring 1998, p. 3; Marquis, p. 53; Commander Thomas Dietz, CO Seal Team 5, Presentation to the RMC Special Operations Symposium, 5 October 2000; Leary, p. 265; James F. Dunnigan, *The Perfect Soldier* (New York: Citadel Press, 2003), pp. 269 and 278; and Michael Asher, *Shoot to Kill. A Soldier's Journey Through Violence* (London: Viking, 1990), p. 205.
73. It is for this reason that airborne forces are more often than not considered SOF. Contemporary airborne success rates are approximately 70 percent. See Colonel Bill Kidd, "Ranger Training Brigade," *US Army Infantry Center Infantry Senior Leader Newsletter*, February 2003, pp. 8-9. However, this can be problematic as airborne units generally share some attitudinal, cultural and philosophical traits – i.e., tenacity of purpose, no mission too daunting, disdain for those outside the group, etc. In addition, many early airborne units also had rigorous selection and training standards that would easily fall into the Tier Three and sometimes Tier Two levels.
74. Marquis, pp. 47-48.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
76. General Charles Holland, USAF, "Quiet Professionals," *Armed Forces Journal International*, February 2002, p. 26.
77. General Peter J. Schoomaker, *Special Operations Forces: The Way Ahead*, (Washington, D.C.:USSOCOM, 2000), p. 7.
78. Cohen, p. 95.
79. Quoted in Marquis, p. 107.
80. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War. Their Finest Hour* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), p. 467. See also Saunders, *The Green Beret*, pp. 29-30.
81. "Role of the Special Service Brigade and Desirability of Reorganization," p. 2. Public Record Office, DEFE 2/1051, Special Service Brigade, role, reorganization, 1943-1944.
82. Kemp, p. 10.
83. Slim, p. 548.
84. Field Marshals Alan Brooke and Archibald Wavell and General Sir Bernard Paget were three prominent British Commanders who deeply resented SOF organizations. See Charles Messenger, *The Commandos 1940-1946* (London: William Kimber, 1985), p. 408; Morris, *Churchill's Private Armies*, pp. 172 and 243 and Brigadier T.B.L. Churchill, "The Value of Commandos," *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 65, No. 577, February 1950, pp. 85-86.
85. Adams, p. 40.
86. Gray, p. 223.
87. Bank, p. 155.
88. Alfred H. Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare. Its Origins* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1982), p. 148.
89. De la Billière, p. 102
90. H.R. Simpson, *The Paratroopers of the French Foreign Legion* (London: Brassey's, 1997), p. 39. The author noted a similar mentality in the Pentagon which tended to "label U.S. Special Forces 'snake eaters' and to shortchange the budget for Special Operation Forces."
91. Peter Stiff, *Selous Scouts. Top Secret War* (Alberton, South Africa: Galago Publishing Inc., 1982), p. 54. Only 15 percent of candidates passed the Selous Scouts selection course. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
92. Quoted in Adams, pp. 70, 148. See also Michael Duffy, Mark Thompson, and Michael Weisskopf, "Secret Armies of the Night," *Time*, 23 June 2003, Vol. 161, Issue 25.
93. Adams, p. 75.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
95. Marquis, pp. 4, 35, 40 and 78. Special Forces manning went from the tens of thousands to 3,600 personnel.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
97. Terry White, *Swords of Lightning: Special Forces and the Changing Face of Warfare* (London: Brassey's, 1997), p. 1.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
99. Major-General J.L.Hobson, "AF Special Operations Girds for Next Century Missions," *National Defense*, February 1997, p. 27.
100. Clancy, *Special Forces*, p. 12; Douglas C. Waller, *The Commandos: The Inside Story of America's Secret Soldiers*, (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1994) p. 231 and D.C. Waller, "Secret Warriors," *Newsweek*, 17 June 1991, p. 21.
101. Waller, *Commandos*, p. 231; and D.C. Waller, "Secret Warriors," p. 21.
102. Waller, *Commandos*, p. 230. In the end, despite his initial reluctance to use SOF, he later singled out those forces as critical to the allied victory. Approximately 7,705 SOF personnel participated in all.
103. Robin Moore, *The Hunt for Bin Laden. Task Force Dagger* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), pp. 21, 31-32.
104. Colonel (retired) W. Hays Parks, "Should Marines 'Join' Special Operations Command?" *Proceedings*, Vol. 129, May 2003, p. 4. See also Tom Clancy, *Shadow Warriors. Inside Special Forces* (New York: Putnam, 2002), p. 221.
105. See Department of Defense, *United States Special Operations Command History* (Washington DC: USSOCOM, 1999), pp. 34-42; Waller, *Commando*, pp. 225-352; Marquis, pp. 227-249; Adams, pp. 231-244; Carney and Schemmer, pp. 224-236; B.J. Schemmer, "Special Ops Teams Found 29 Scuds Ready to Barrage Israel 24 Hours Before Ceasefire," *Armed Forces Journal International*, July 1991, p. 36; Mark Thompson, Azadeh Moaveni, Matt Rees, and Aharon Klein, "The Great Scud Hunt," *Time*, 23 December 2002, Vol. 160, No. 26, p. 34; William Rosenau, *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Ground Targets: Lessons from Vietnam and the Persian Gulf War* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001), and Cameron Spence, *Sabre Squadron* (London: Michael Joseph, 1997). Although no Scuds were reportedly destroyed, the provision of the Coalition's best troops provided the Israelis with the confidence that everything possible was being done to eradicate the threat.
106. DoD, *USSOCOM History*, pp. 44-69; Carney and Schemmer, pp. 245-282; *US SOF Posture Statement 2000*, pp. 15-23; Robin Neillands, *In the Combat Zone. Special Forces Since 1945* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997), pp. 105-154, 298-315; Adams, pp. 244-286.
107. James C. Hyde, "An Exclusive Interview with James R. Locher III," *Armed Forces Journal International*, November/December 1992, p. 34; Lieutenant-General Peter J. Schoomaker, "Army Special Operations: Foreign Link, Brainy Force," *National Defense*, February 1997, pp. 32-33; Scott Gourlay, "Boosting the Optempo," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 14 July 1999, p. 26; Hyde, p. 34; Ray Bond, ed., *America's Special Forces* (Miami: Salamander Books, 2001); Kim Burger, "US Special Operations get budget boost," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 8, 20 February 2002, p. 2; Glenn Goodman, "Expanded role for elite commandos," *Armed Forces Journal*, February 2003, p. 36; Duffy et al, "Secret Armies of the Night; Harold Kennedy, "Special Operators Seeking A Technical Advantage," *National Defense*, Vol. 87, No. 594, May 2003, p. 20; and *US SOF, Posture Statement 2000*, p. 41. Despite the significant capability they represent, proven by their steadily growing operational tempo and record of success, their funding envelope still represents only about 1.3 percent of the (DoD) total budget. Burger, p. 2.
108. Roxana Tiron, "Demand for Special Ops Forces Outpaces Supply," *National Defense*, Vol. 87, No. 594, May 2003, p. 18. There were more than 12,000 deployed to Iraq and approximately 8,000 deployed to Afghanistan.