



SOF News

Monthly Journal

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



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Special Operations News From Around the World

January 2021

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Front Cover Image. U.S. Special Forces trained with Lithuanian KASP during a recent irregular warfare exercise. Photo by Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR).

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Earning the Green Beret in the National Guard



Story by Sgt. 1st Class Chad Menegay.

By most composite measures, the U.S. Army owns a reputation — worldwide and historically — as the best, most powerful, strategically responsive, highly-trained and technologically advanced of armies. There are some who join or stay in the Army because they are drawn to be among the best. Motivations to serve, of course, run the gamut, and there is perhaps no clear primary motivation to serve over another. Still, it is generally accepted that while one is part of the U.S. military, one is among the best. For one to be among the best of the best, however, that is another set of measures altogether, and many will look to Special Forces as an ultimate demarcation. They might also do well to look to the Army National Guard.

Among the 336,000 Army National Guard members who make up about a third of the entire U.S. Army, there are somewhere over 1,000 Special Forces team members, so nearly 1 in 300 Army National Guard members are Special Forces. It's an exclusive group with a demanding pathway to earn the Green Beret, but the opportunity is there for those with enough ambition and heart.

Two Ohio Army National Guard Soldiers passed Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) earlier this year, qualifying them to attend the 53-week Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC): First Lt. Seth Kilian, an engineer officer assigned to B Company, 2nd Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group in Columbus; and Sgt. Elliot Timmons, a combat medic with Company C, 237th Support Battalion in Akron, Ohio. Kilian's goal is to become a Special Forces officer after the qualification course, and while Timmons is pursuing qualification as a Special Forces medical sergeant.

The two spent about six months with 19th Special Forces Preparatory Detachment (SFPD) conducting a lot of physically demanding training including running, ruck marching, pushups, situps and land navigation as part of assessment and then endured the strenuous 21-day SFAS course.

Earning the Green Beret in the National Guard (Cont)

“We meet at Fort Bragg, (North Carolina, home to U.S. Special Operations Command headquarters) and they take us to Camp Mackall (a sub-installation of Fort Bragg and primary training facility for Special Forces candidates),” Timmons said. “No cell phones. They take that when you get on the bus. You show up, download your gear, and you just start receiving orders. Day zero, you’re ready to go. You’ve got to run everywhere, which is a pain. There’s a lot of loose gravel.”

National Guard Special Forces candidates run to the point of physical exhaustion alongside regular Army candidates through a gauntlet of cadre-devised difficulties and discomforts.

“Grueling,” Kilian said. “It’s pretty terrible on your body. I’ve never seen so many men in so much pain, but it was a lot of fun. Everyone has ‘A’ personalities, and everyone is on top of one another, but it’s a good challenge to be able to work as a team and use your individual skill sets. You’re there with guys who have a bunch of different military occupational specialties. A lot of active-duty people come from an infantry background, but, especially the Guardsmen, we had the engineer background, truck drivers, electricians, carpenters, just anyone can go. So, I’m mechanically minded and was able to do a lot of the knot tying and build things and make things, so I was more of like a worker bee, and you need those people to be successful. You need people to be able to both follow, but also lead at times, and going through ‘the suck’ together brings you closer.”

Candidates are tested mentally and physically as individuals and teams. Cadre are often watching and taking mental notes, looking for the self-motivated Soldiers, as candidates practice their survival skills and run through a myriad of mental tasks designed to test their capacity for working through frustration and the ambiguity of not always having full information in their attempts to solve problems.

“You need grit to succeed in Special Forces training,” Kilian said. “There was one guy at selection who finished the long ruck and full course with a fractured ankle. That right there shows the mentality of what is necessary to go through and push and just keep going because there’s no stopping. It’s a do or die thing.”

As an officer, Kilian, who works as a furniture designer in the civilian world with an industrial and innovative design degree from Cedarville University, will need to become airborne- and Ranger-qualified prior to attending SFQC and then also complete a secondary language course.

“I’m motivated to do my best in this Army career, so I thought ‘the best would be the Green Berets, so’ there’s been a lot of setbacks, hurdles and pain, but definitely the doors have been opening, and as long as they do, I’m going to continue to pursue down this path,” Killian said.

Kilian, who always keeps a Bible in a shoulder pocket of his uniform, began developing his never-quit mental state as a leader at Canaan Christian Academy in Lake Ariel, Pennsylvania, as the captain of the school soccer team, he said.

“I liked to challenge myself and others, pushing physically and mentally,” Kilian said. “I thought of myself as a servant leader, and that’s something I return to in my mind to this day. I like to encourage others.”

Kilian, who is always looking for ways to credit others for his own success, also said he found personal encouragement from training with America’s most elite Soldiers and in working one-on-one with cadre. SFPD cadre who assess candidates are looking for humble individuals who care about the mission and have no concern for awards, said Sgt. 1st Class Philip A. Taraska, the Ohio Special Forces 19th Group SFPD noncommissioned officer in charge.

In preparing individuals for selection, Taraska said “we want you lean, trim, cut and ready to roll. You need to have more of a triathlete mentality instead of bulking up and being a crazy weightlifter, so a lot of guys will change their training routines.”

Earning the Green Beret in the National Guard (Cont)

Of course, serious physical preparation is necessary, but Timmons said, for him, mental preparation was equally if not more important for success.

“To mentally prepare for Special Forces, whether it be a training weekend or selections, I really put the worst possible scenario through my head,” Timmons said. “I’ll think ‘alright, day one I’ve already got bad blisters that are already bleeding. It’s not going to stop. It’s storming, but the mission still has to go on,’ and I’ll think ‘you’re not going to quit.’”

Timmons was in paramedic school at Cincinnati State when he took a few weeks off to attend selection, but then graduated from Cincinnati State and went on to Army Basic Leadership Course and the three-week Airborne School. Schooling has been his job lately. Timmons will now attend an 18-month qualification course that is argued to be equivalent to the training a medical doctor would receive with residencies in trauma medicine and emergency rooms, and he’ll get to learn French too.

“To accomplish this much, so far, is great,” Timmons said. “But I’m going to stay humble. I want to get the beret, and I’m going to do everything within my power to achieve that goal.”

Timmons said he has pursued Special Forces because he wanted to work with the best and wanted to improve himself physically and mentally via the military.

“There’s a lot of time sacrificed, a lot of studying,” Timmons said. “Leaving friends, family behind, missing out on birthdays and weddings. It takes a lot of determination and discipline.”

After qualification, Timmons said he will essentially be a physician’s assistant, but he plans to go back to college to earn the degree. He is a lifelong learner with a growth mindset, and said that comes from his family’s influence since he was a child.

“One phrase that I always think of is, from my grandfather, (a marine who fought on Iwo Jima during World War II and taught history) who passed away in 2015: ‘If you set your mind to it, you can accomplish anything,’” Timmons said.

Timmons and Kilian could one day find themselves accomplishing unimaginable things in Africa, Europe or Southwest Asia, speaking a secondary language with foreign leaders, advising, assisting, teaching and perhaps making mission-critical decisions that impact whole regions and ultimately the U.S. itself.

“We’re still getting out with all our counterparts and living with them across the world,” Taraska said. “That’s the bread and butter of Green Berets — unconventional warfare — working with our counterparts, living with them, getting to know them, knowing the language and being humble Soldiers at the end of the day, understanding that we’re going to accomplish a lot, and it’s not going to make the news, and that’s cool. We’re fine with that.”

Photo: Courtesy photo by Ohio Special Forces Preparatory Detachment, 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne), July 25, 2020.

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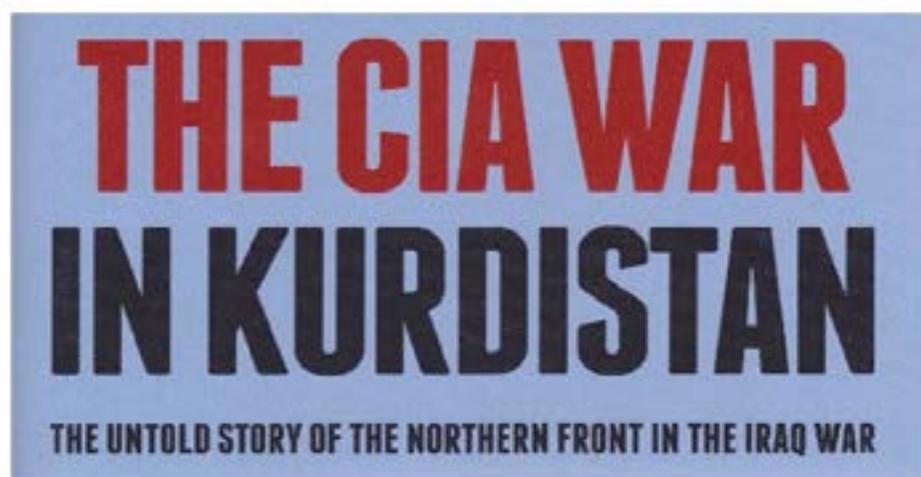
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Book Review - The CIA War in Kurdistan



A recent book, *The CIA War in Kurdistan*, details the activities of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in northern Iraq before and during the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in early 2003. The main ground effort of OIF would take place in the south of Iraq from countries along the southern Iraqi border. However, the overall conquest of Iraq would be aided by military action that would take place in northern Iraq.

Small contingents of the Central Intelligence Agency and U.S. Army Special Forces were sent in to northern Iraq before the ground war began to link up with the Kurds that lived in that region. The CIA and SF elements were to liaison with the Kurds, assess the situation, gather intelligence, train the Peshmerga, and later assist and advise them during combat operations. In addition, plans included providing assistance to the 4th Infantry Division (ID) as it rolled from Turkey into northern Iraq. This would open up a second front that the Iraqi army would have to contend with – tying down Iraqi ground troops in northern Iraq and preventing them from reinforcing the Baghdad area of operations.

The plan to assist the 4th ID went up in smoke when Turkey refused access to the unit. The 10th Special Forces did manage to get the bulk of its forces into the region via a [high-risk air movement](#). Eventually the 173rd Airborne Brigade (based in Italy) also [deployed to the region](#). The CIA and SF teams, linked up with formations of the Peshmerga, began operations to liberate the towns and cities of northern Iraq.

Sam Faddis, the author of *The CIA War in Kurdistan*, was named to head a CIA team that would enter Iraq, prepare the battlefield, work with US Special Forces teams, and assist with the entry of the 4th ID and other military units. He details the preparation of his team prior to deployment, the difficulties his team encountered in working with the Kurds, and the initial reception and ultimate acceptance by the Peshmerga. His CIA team would be on the ground in Iraq for almost a year.

Much of his book is about working with the Kurds. He provides insight into the rivalry between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). A brief history of Kurdistan and its relationship with the central Iraqi government is provided. He also includes information about the past relationship between the Kurds and the US. There was some initial hesitation on the part of the Kurds to work with the CIA and SF teams – which he and others had to overcome.

Faddis details some of the significant mistakes made by the U.S. in the first year of the war. He believes that the Iraqi ground troops were ready to surrender its forces in northern Iraq but U.S. military officers spurned the offer. He also mentions the disastrous effects of de-Baathification and dismantling of the police and military units of the Iraqi security forces – decisions made by the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad. Faddis doesn't pull any punches and is very blunt in his comments about the CIA bureaucracy back in Langley.

Book Review - The CIA War in Kurdistan (Cont)

The 10th Special Force Group had established the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – North (CJSOTF-N). The SF group was augmented with the 173rd and other conventional and unconventional organizations – totaling over 5,000 personnel. The unit, also referred to as [Task Force Viking](#), conducted artillery observation, direct action, special reconnaissance, unconventional warfare missions, and other missions. Faddis provides his perspective on the activities and accomplishments of the 10th Special Forces Group in northern Iraq during this time. This includes comments on the working relationship between the CIA teams and the SF detachments and SF command structure.

The book is chronological in nature following the timeline of major events taking place in northern Iraq in 2002 and 2003. Faddis manages to cover most of the important aspects of those two years in his book. He recounts the hunt for weapons of mass destruction, difficulties in working with the Turks, the use of propaganda, promises made and not kept, the battle to defeat Ansar al-Islam, training the Kurdish forces, some intelligence activities conducted, the air war, and the taking of Kirkuk and Mosul.

The *CIA War in Kurdistan* is a good read. A conflict as large as Operation Iraqi Freedom will get a lot of media and book coverage over the course of time. However, thus far, the war that took place in northern Iraq during OIF has not received much print. Faddis provides an account of that aspect of OIF.

About the Author. Sam Faddis is a retired CIA officer and former US Army combat arms officer. He spent decades undercover in the Middle East and South Asia. He retired from the CIA in 2008 as head of the CIA's WMD anti-terrorism unit.

The CIA War in Kurdistan: The Untold Story of the Northern Front in the Iraq War, by Sam Faddis, Casemate, Philadelphia & Oxford, 2020. Available in hardcover, audio, and Kindle on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



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.

Hybrid and Psychological Geopolitical Warfare - The Western Balkans Case



By Faruk Hadžić.

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Abstract

Undemocratic processes of hybrid and psychological geopolitical warfare blurred relations and security paradigm. The legacy of conflicts and the applied Western policies to the region is the strengthening of ethnonational discourses and the activation of regional crises. The Anglo-American project of post-Cold War spatial planning in the Western Balkans is ineffective. It would be necessary to formulate new Western policies. Balkan nationalist and separatist ideas, which resurfaced with the former Yugoslavia's break-up, should be reticent and transform within the European Union (EU).

Montenegro and, in particular, Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) is vulnerable to destabilizing Russian influences, using a complicated social, political, and economic environment, a lack of strategic orientation, and divisions over NATO integration. As for China, Arab countries, and Israel, their influence in the Balkans remains limited, primarily – but not exclusively – to economic projects. However, these impacts will continue to grow unless more severe and concrete measures are taken by the US and EU. Further weakening or eventual disappearance of the EU perspective in the Balkans could lead to new attempts to establish “Greater”- Albania, Croatia, Serbia, or even Ottoman Turkey through violent border changes in the region. Instead of democratizing, the 21st century has brought fragility in the Balkans.

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The Phenomena and the Western Balkans

The new geopolitical climate has changed the character of conflicts in which wars are fought in the name and for the benefit of other actors supported by powerful forces, which can be terrorist groups, various revolutionary independence movements. When it comes to political pressures, one usually uses one's position at the international level to force a political decision or influence one to give up already established attitudes. There is the possibility of providing support to specific groups or individuals in power to change the country's political system or cause riots and conflicts, then political embezzlement that can help violate some international agreements. Psychological – propaganda activities are a form of special operations aimed at achieving psychological effects for their benefit. By carrying out psychological actions, it seeks to “weaken and overthrow the defense of the attacked party by encouraging internal divisions, provoking mistrust and suspicion in the ranks of the defense and encouraging internal enemies of the attacking system to initiate fear, insecurity, disorganization; it serves to spread bad promises, illusions, rumors.” [1] The use of psychology for war purposes dated back to the Chinese thinker Sun Tzu's thoughts and received its real revelation in the 20th century through two worlds and the cold war. However, the form of use of psychological actions in the new information space has changed significantly. Likewise, psychological operations used to be the exclusive advantage of the state and the armed forces. However, today, in the new social information media, it is in the hands of non-governmental organizations, formal and informal groups, and individuals. In the socio-information framework, the primary means of war participation are becoming psychological activities and operations. Psychological techniques are used to realize numerous general goals of hybrid warfare, which are primarily aimed at avoiding the emergence or minimization of the duration of the regular (militarized) mode of leadership war. Confrontation in the information space has become of general importance and for the collapse of the political, economic, and social system. [2] Thus, psychological activities play a central role in hybrid geopolitical warfare.

The fact is that after the end of the Cold War, the world found itself at the epicenter of a hybrid war in which disinformation became the primary weapon of populism, right or left-wing. The penetration of fake news and various misinformation is becoming more and more powerful on social networks, and the users of these platforms are increasingly victims of deception and manipulation. The Balkans are witnessing the growing crisis of Western powers daily and the worsening populist, nationalist, and conservative US and European leaders' policies, from US President Trump to Hungarian President Viktor Orban. They nullify any European Union (EU) and The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) attempts to reform Balkan countries.

Hybrid warfare is a new term by which they try to cover and emphasize all the specifics of contemporary conflicts in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. There is still no generally accepted definition of hybrid warfare, despite the great popularity in the professional field and scientific circles. Initially, hybrid warfare [3] was considered a combined application of conventional military capabilities and special forces, irregular acts, terrorist acts, and criminal activity. In the combined application of different forms, a synergistic effect is expected both in the conflict's physical and psychological [4] domains. Later, the perception of hybrid warfare is extended to all other forms, means, and ways of endangering security. In the broadest sense, hybrid war is any action by any means that undermine, hinders, damages an opposing-rival-hostile state, its economy, people, and the entire social life. In a narrower sense, hybrid warfare undermines state order in the opposing state in any way and by any means. Within the category of hybrid warfare, hybrid action, it is necessary to mention the notion of “soft power” as a weapon that threatens universalist and inclusive elements better than the conventional one. I maintain that hybrid warfare is a term used uncritically today. The very expression as a peculiarity – sui generis – has existed since the Lebanese war in 2006 and Hezbollah's strategy towards Israel and implies a combination of conventional, irregular, and information warfare. According to specific goals of interest and with the help of specific and psychological operations or the so-called, there are several traditional state strategies according to specific goals of interest, reflexive control operations to influence someone's decision-making process.

Hybrid and Psychological Geopolitical Warfare - The Western Balkans Case (cont)

The Balkan territorial-expansionist ethnopolitics' destructive power has already shown that it can destroy states, peoples, religious institutions, educational systems, scientific plants, and human dignity. In the dominant diplomatic discourse, the Western Balkans' stability and prosperity are viewed in the context of two integrative processes: the accession of the region to NATO and the EU regions and their targeted Europeanization. The newly formed countries of the region become an area of export of democracy, the object of geopolitics enlargement, political and security order, and the US and the EU's engagement, which as external actors moderate the crisis in the region. In particular, the US' policy toward the region, in which it has been active since the end of the Cold War, can be seen in the context of a complex diplomatic and military approach aimed at establishing a new geopolitical configuration in Southeast Europe. In the crisis area of Southeast Europe, the US has been present for almost three decades, and in resolving the crisis and stabilizing the region, it has continuously used a whole range of diplomatic, political, and military instruments to securely "encircle" the Western Balkans, geopolitically necessary for strategic control of the Adriatic Mediterranean and the Black Sea regions. However, after 2000, preoccupied with the "war on terror," and thus the geopolitical restructuring of the Middle East, the US was present in the Western Balkans indirectly, through the actions of Allied actors pursuing a policy of expanding security (NATO) and economic (EU, IMF and other international financial institutions) order, and with the help of which the region is identity-shaped as a western value. [5]

The US geopolitician Robert Kaplan (2017) argued that peace in the Balkans could be achieved and maintained solely with "external imperial force." According to Kaplan, in the times of the empires' (Charlemagne, the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Ottoman Empire) collapse that ruled the Balkans, the region regularly turned into battlefields. [6] A logical question arises – did the European Union become a new empire that would maintain a peace order in the Balkans? The EU's role in Southeast Europe is inconsistent between its normative potential and current problematic aspects of process implementation policies. Moreover, outside the ritual, political matrix framework, concentration on specific programs to stimulate economic, technological, social, human development, and regional integration is not progressive. [7] Although the EU adopted a new Enlargement Strategy for the Western Balkans in 2018, the potential of stability is not proven. Instead of liberalism and Europeanization, further Balkanization of the region resulted from the EU's failure and the allies' conflicting interests – the US and NATO. Such a constellation of relations has made it possible to strengthen many non-Western actors – Russia, Turkey, China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, whose presence has strongly shaped the Western Balkans' security climate for many years. After years of close cooperation, during which mostly followed EU and US peacekeeping solutions in the region, Montenegro decided to declare independence (2006), and Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence (2008) significantly damaged relations between Russia and the West. The unusually active role of the US and Western allies in the decomposition of Serbia and the region's geopolitical transformation has resulted in increased Russian engagement with the region. Ever since the Ukrainian crisis outbreak in 2014, the US and the European Union have seen Russia's presence in the Balkans as a security threat. The geopolitical clash between the West and Russia is gradually profiling itself into a conflict of interest of the great powers, which measure their influence on the region's countries through diplomacy, significant investment, and confrontational energy infrastructure projects. [8]

Because NATO is still the strongest geopolitical alliance, Russia is increasingly turning to new allies who are actively working to create a counterweight to the US as a unipolar center of the post-Cold War world. China, Iran, and Turkey, which are increasingly moving away from Western countries' influence and policies, are strengthening their own economic and political ties with Russia. Although not without risk to Turkey, the new alliance with Russia, Iran, and China has a significant impact on the region. In the Western Balkans, China is more present, especially in the sphere of economy. So far, Chinese investments in energy, roads, railways, and other 5.5 billion euros have come to Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H), Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Saudi Arabia finances numerous humanitarian centers and non-governmental organizations and provides several other investments in B&H, such as market centers and separate luxury resorts for Arab citizens. Investments are expanding widely in the region. Turkey has long strengthened its economic and political influence and seeks to establish itself as a dominant regional power. Besides, it is an indisputable fact that during the genocide and war crimes, and within the arms embargo, Iran provided the most significant possible military and diplomatic assistance to the B&H people during the war.

Hybrid and Psychological Geopolitical Warfare - The Western Balkans Case (cont)

I maintain that “negative influence” threatens universalist and inclusive elements of Balkan societies, the political and national history of these countries, intercultural diversity, and sovereignty, strengthening regional pan-nationalisms’ irredentist aspirations. Based on credible data, analyzes, and estimates that after the failures in Montenegro and Macedonia, which are today within NATO, almost all Russia’s capacities in this area are directed, i.e., Russia’s hybrid action towards Macedonia, Montenegro, and BiH. In such hybrid activities, Serbia, one of the neighboring countries, gives Russia excellent aid and plays a significant role. The fact is that representatives of the Serbian state apparatus were active in Montenegro, Macedonia, at the events’ time, which was a clear sign. At the same time, we should not rule out that such activities are very intensive towards B&H. However, Russia should not be denigrated either. It is trying to use the same means, although it succeeds to a lesser extent than the US and Western Europe combined. We have had the Snowden case and the Prizma affair, and Western spying on the states and officials, with contractual cooperation with Facebook, Google, Twitter, and Microsoft. Russia did not invent such particular warfare, even though they are merely adopting Western techniques. They also have a significant learning capacity, with a high population having a university degree.

The Balkan security dilemma’s central discourse is “who will control the land,” a piece of a particular territory within the pressure of national hegemonist ideas (Greater Serbia and Croatia). Albanians in Macedonia did not get territory but rights (they changed the Constitution, the President of the Assembly is of Albanian nationality, the right to speak in Albanian was also introduced), while in B&H, ethnicity was gained, which means increased opportunities for monopoly and power over the territory. [9] According to Jadranka Polovic (2018), the Greater Albania concept, behind all the previous post-Cold War administrations of the US and UK, has already been practically-legally realized and becoming irrelevant. The borders between Kosovo and Albania and the borders between Kosovo and western Macedonia do not exist. Formal recognition of the creation of a “Greater Albania” that reaches beyond western Macedonia, the southern and eastern parts of Montenegro (Ulcinj and parts of the municipalities of Plav and Rozaje), the Presevo Valley in southern Serbia, and southern Greek Epirus, parts of foreign countries, would cause complete chaos and a new war in the region. The Greater Albania concept’s implementation is being achieved by drawing the entire region into NATO and the EU. [10] B&H and the former Yugoslavia area with a nationalist ethnopolitics and a continuous conflict, as a dangerous “barrel of gunpowder,” become a scene of competition, collisions, and competition between most influential actors of the modern world in the first decades of the 21st century. In this constellation, violent hegemonic nationalism in the Balkans partly serves as a space of displaced European horror in which clashes of “great powers” take place, while a small number of South Slavic peoples maniacally exterminate each other, demolish places of worship, expel the population, commit mass crimes, destroy the remaining ethnically homogeneous and clean spaces. [11]

Dominant perceptions in the countries of the Western Balkans are sometimes present. It narrows the framework for observing and understanding the behavior of great powers in this region, with an unargued overestimation of their significance and importance in the plans of these great powers, and the introduction of emotional elements in the field of international relations where only interests are most valued and measured. The great powers’ mutual relations are complex, multi-layered, and pragmatic above all. The great powers in some regions or on some issues agree, coordinate actions, and even help, while in other areas or issues, there is disagreement and confrontation. In pursuing their interests, the great powers have a wide range of opportunities and resources at their disposal. The various forms of contemporary conflict are often portrayed as the result of the projection of hybrid threats and termed hybrid warfare. The wide presence and topicality [12] of the phenomenon of hybrid warfare is the reason to problematize the concept of hybrid warfare by evaluating central questions and answers of practical interest to decision-makers at the strategic level. The Western Balkans region’s importance in the two elected great powers’ strategic agendas – Russia and Turkey are evident. For years, Montenegro and other countries in the region have been a testing ground for cyber attacks and the spread of false news by which some foreign powers, primarily Russia, are trying to undermine and slow down the Euro-Atlantic integration of the post-Yugoslav states. Indeed, other great powers are closely following the development of events in the Western Balkans and possible trends and scenarios [13] of future development. In addition to the “malignant” Russian influence, the West is increasingly facing Turkey’s arbitrary policy, which, especially after 2000, is questioning the possibilities of its action in the region. Namely, Turkey, a strategically important member of NATO, until recently

Hybrid and Psychological Geopolitical Warfare - The Western Balkans Case (cont)

an unquestionable ally of the US, is trying to renew its sphere of influence in the Balkans, a region that belonged to the Ottoman Empire until the First World War. Turkey is a unique, doubly “endowed” country – with the space of its geopolitical influence, especially the control of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles as internationally important straits and the successor to the Ottoman Empire. The mutual relations between Russia and Turkey have become very topical in recent times and there is much research in this area. [14] It is a critical in this current time in the broader context of the relations of these two countries with other great powers and the conflicts in the Middle East and growing tensions in South America.

In Serbia, approaching NATO is taboo due to Serbia’s 1999 bombing to stop Kosovo’s conflict. This relationship is reflected in B&H politics. There is also a declarative commitment to European integration, which is burdened by the Kosovo syndrome. By the Kosovo syndrome, we mean Serbian politics’ burden with the belief that joining the EU means renouncing territorial sovereignty. In this way, the EU’s demands for better functioning of BiH are read in the Republic of Srpska RS (one of the B&H entities). In B&H and Kosovo’s relations, no aspect can be singled out to function at a satisfactory level. Relations remain in the realm of political rhetoric, and the problem of freedom of movement between BiH and Kosovo is directly linked to asymmetric and scarce economic cooperation. B&H is a permanent crisis state, with the world’s most complex political and public administration, the inability to create the minimum internal political cohesion needed to build a stable political identity. In the BiH’s ethnoreligious model formed by the Dayton Peace Accords (1995), the demographic remnant is unconstitutional. For the most part, a mere constitutional decor appropriately enshrined in the last indent of the discriminatory BiH Constitution’s Preamble. Therefore, the name “Others” is an unsentimental description of their position in this ethnoreligious divided society. [15] Furthermore, Chinese investments in the Western Balkans economies have brought the presence of the Chinese intelligence service MSS with them. This service deals with the interests of China’s state policy and the protection of Chinese investments. Moreover, the Chinese service, together with business people, operates not only in the Western Balkans but also throughout Europe. The German counterintelligence service has marked 10,000 German citizens in contact with fake intelligence officers from China. That is why the presence of the Chinese intelligence service on the territory of B&H, and especially in Serbia and Croatia, is very significant for the intelligence and security apparatus of B&H. [16]

The Western Balkans remain poorly connected in terms of infrastructure atomized energy market, burdened with political instability, which negatively affects the energy security of the region. The EU on the Western Balkans is focused on infrastructure projects that can significantly affect the energy sector’s decarbonization (hydropower, renewables, natural gas), while China prefers mining and thermal energy. Russia is focused on the gas and oil sector and currently fully controls areas in Serbia and B&H. [17] Some argue that strategic or religious goals drive the Arab Gulf countries’ investment interest in the Balkans. Others state that the reasons are strictly financial, a convenient location at the crossroads, competitive labor cost, and the EU joins the regions for investments. While the media’s attention is on companies from Arab countries, the crucial fact is that 80 percent of real estate investments in the region must be due to Israel. “Israel investors have concentrated on retail parks and shopping malls.” [18]

Social media has become a platform for diversity in psychological activities and processes of a coercive, deceptive, alienating, and defensive nature. People receive most of their information daily via Facebook and other online platforms. If we briefly focus on B&H, 1,500 media outlets have been proven to have published false news at least once. During one-year research and analysis of the observed media, a whole network (hub), domestic and newspapers from the environment that spread false news in an organized manner, exists. “The hub is not actually in B&H, but it consists of 14 media from B&H and 15 media from Serbia, which have been proven to share misinformation and have over ten connections in spreading various misinformation. It is alarming because they work together and operationally. Among these media is Russian Sputnik.” [19] These are elements of information warfare, as a type of special warfare, which is an essential feature of the information-communication era in which information, misinformation, false information, deception, and propaganda are on the scene. However, it is not just the states that do it, but huge companies, non-governmental organizations, and formal and informal groups.

Conclusion

The legacy of conflicts and the applied Western policies to the region is the strengthening of ethnonational discourses and the activation of regional crises. The Anglo-American project of post-Cold War spatial planning in the Western Balkans is ineffective, so it would be necessary to formulate new Western policies. Undemocratic processes of hybrid and psychological geopolitical warfare blurred relations and security paradigm. Confrontation in the information space created the ground for numerous influences on the physical and the opponent's cognitive sphere in the hybrid geopolitical warfare.

Balkan nationalist and separatist ideas, which resurfaced with the former Yugoslavia's break-up, should be reticent and transform within the EU borders. Montenegro and, in particular, B&H is vulnerable to destabilizing Russian influences, using a complicated social, political, and economic environment, a lack of strategic orientation, and divisions over NATO integration. As for China, Arab countries, and Israel, their influence in the Balkans remains limited, primarily – but not exclusively – to economic projects. However, these impacts will continue to grow unless more severe and concrete US and EU replace them. Further weakening or eventual disappearance of the EU perspective in the Balkans could lead to new attempts to establish “Greater Albania,” “Greater Croatia,” “Greater Serbia,” or even “Greater Ottoman Turkey” through violent border changes, which would unquestionably lead to new violence in the region. Thus, instead of democratizing, the 21st century has brought fragility to the Balkans.

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28th Intelligence Squadron - Contributor to SOF Mission Success



Story by Stacy Vaughn, 445th Airlift Wing Public Affairs.

At the 28th Intelligence Squadron, there's a career field that has been making strides as the squadron continues to grow. That career field is Tactical Systems Operator (TSO) specialty of the 1A8X2 – Airborne ISR Operator Air Force Specialty Code.

The 28 IS is an intelligence unit located at Hurlburt Field, Florida. It is a classic reserve associate unit supporting the 25th Intelligence Squadron in conducting airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance to provide precision geolocation, real-time battlefield awareness updates, direct threat warning, and C2 relay capabilities to Air Force Special Operations Command. The squadron is the first and only Reserve squadron with tactical systems operators. Its mission is to organize and train total force integrated personnel to deliver specialized intelligence directly to United States Special Operations Forces through providing equipment maintenance and configuration, analysis and dissemination, airborne ISR, and operational support.

TSOs are airborne intelligence operators who are qualified to fly on all light fixed wing aircraft within the AFSOC inventory, and are also able to quickly plug and play on emerging tactical assets through quick field installations of a variety of carry-on systems. These members are routinely deployed and are embedded with special operations units around the globe. Currently, the 28 IS makes up 10 percent of all qualified TSO billets in the Air Force.

This small body of TSO Airmen have dedicated themselves to supporting two continuous deployment lines in austere bases within combat locations in three major AORs. The majority of the 28th's TSOs have at least three combat deployments behind them, some even have up to ten, and they easily accumulate more combat flight hours than most fighter pilots.

TSO Airmen assigned to the 28th IS are incredibly proud to serve in their career field. Senior Master Sgt. Patience Spence, flight chief for the 28th's TSOs, has said that doing this job is the only thing that brought her back into the Air Force after completing her six Active Duty years as a 1A8X1 with the 97th Intelligence Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska.

28th Intelligence Squadron - Contributor to SOF Mission (Cont)

Spence was one of the X1s selected to do the SOF side of the job during the standup of the X2 career field and after completing four TSO deployments totaling 21 months in country over a three year period, there was no going back to the Rivet Joint life (sorry 49th!). Since coming into the 28th in May 2014, Spence has become an instructor and evaluator supporting the 25 IS and has deployed three times for the 25th as a special intelligence (SI) detachment training lead, MC-12W TSO lead, and was the first reservist to serve as an SI detachment senior enlisted advisor.

Another former Regular Air Force TSO, Tech. Sgt. Lori Carlin, came to the 28th from Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, two years ago to continue her service as an X2 and has quickly proved herself to her 25th counterparts. She completed instructor qualification training and just recently was selected for evaluator upgrade. "Before becoming a TSO, I often asked myself, 'Am I doing anything that's making a difference?' Now there's no question. I have been an integral part in countless SOF missions and have undoubtedly played a key part in ensuring the safety and success of our joint and coalition partners on the battlefield," said Carlin.

"My eagerness to take the fight to the enemy," is what Master Sgt. Combs, former crew chief, said lead him to re-train to become a TSO. "I didn't mind fixing aircraft and often thought I'd be doing that for 20 years, but one day I woke up with the an urge to do more, I wanted to be the 'tip of the spear'."

In 2016, Combs made the switch and has since deployed twice as an air NCO-in charge, completed flight instructor upgrade, and dedicated himself to ensure tomorrow's TSOs are trained to be technically and tactfully proficient. "Being a TSO has broaden my perspective on not just how major operations work but also why," said Combs.

Senior Airman Joslyn Williams, one of the squadron's first non-prior service Airmen, said "It's always the best feeling in the world when you turn on the news and can say, 'Hey I was a major part of that operation.'"

Williams completed her first deployment in 2019 and gained more than 500 combat hours on that tour. Because of the skills she showed and dedication she had while on deployment, she was recently selected for upgrade to instructor by the Regular Air Force cadre at the 25 IS.

Staff Sgt. Tristan Wentworth, a former member of the 25 IS, said, "Have you ever worked on something and you never knew if it was going to go anywhere? As a TSO, I've never worked on anything that didn't have results."

Col. Kenneth Alderman, 28 IS commander, spoke highly of the men and women of his unit and all that they do.

"Our maintainers, direct support analysts, TSOs and support elements have a tremendous amount of pride in our partnership with the 25 IS. The Total Force unity of effort in this enterprise is a beautiful thing to be a part of. Barracudas deploy to austere locations as line flyers, program leads in charge of entire teams of Regular Air Force TSOs and joint personnel, and we even had our first detachment senior enlisted advisor in Fiscal year 2019."

Col. Alderman went on to say, "In garrison, the squadron not only delivers fully qualified ISR aviators to the fight, but the TSOs, ground intelligence analysts, and maintainers support ongoing efforts to stay abreast of changes in strategic competitors and rapidly evolve both technology and training environments."

This story about the 28th Intelligence Squadron by Stacy Vaughn of the 445th Airlift Wing Public Affairs was originally published as "28 IS TSOs: key contributors to SOF mission success" and posted by DVIDS on November 2, 2020.

Brecon Beacons Casualties - UK SF “Fan Dance”



By Pat Carty.

Following an official “Freedom of Information” request made to the British Government in December 2020, the Ministry of Defence has released the total number of British Armed Forces personnel, who have lost their lives in the Brecon Beacons in Wales. This is an area used for generations by Special Forces and in particular for selection, including the notorious “Fan Dance” tests.

For those unaware, the “Fan Dance” is a 15-mile (24 km) load-bearing March, which takes place at the end of the first week of SF selection. The candidates climb “Pen y Fan” – the highest mountain in the Brecon Beacons. Then descend the far side; known as “Jacob’s Ladder”. The rest of the route follows the old Roman road before going back on itself for the return leg. Candidates are given 4 hours 10 minutes to complete the route, regardless of the weather. The Fan Dance is the world’s oldest SF test and used as the first major indicator to show if a candidate has the physical and mental aptitude to complete the legendary SF Selection course.

The Freedom of Information request came from a member of the public. It followed discussions with local councilors and politicians about erecting a memorial, remembering service personnel who had lost their lives whilst training in the Beacons. One of the casualties, having been a close friend, was killed during Special Force selection.

Following the information request, the Ministry of Defence confirmed that in the period they hold records for; 1 January 1984 to 31 December 2019 (the last full year available), twenty UK armed forces personnel have died in the Brecon Beacons. I should add that those figures include all tri-Service regular personnel killed, both on, and off duty, whilst the data for reserve troops only shows those killed whilst on duty.

Brecon Beacons Casualties - UK SF “Fan Dance” (Cont)



Photos: “Fan Dance” by Avalanche Endurance Events.

The Defence Ministry also confirmed that the numbers were for all causes of death: accidents, natural causes, or coroner confirmed suicide. Plus open verdicts where the cause was not known.

Civilians can experience a civilian version of the Fan Dance test, especially those whose intention is to apply for future SF selection, which is run on similar lines to SF selection tests, but by former SF personnel.

Held in both summer and winter, again similar to SF selection, these civilian versions of the “The Fan Dance” include both “load-bearing” and “clean fatigue” categories and are also held during both day and night. The “Fan Dance Woodhouse Edition” even copies the original post-WWII Fan Dance and includes three ascents of Pen y Fan. If you are ultra keen, there is even the 50km “Blade Runner Ultra Series”, again staged in the area used for SF selection, and utilising many iconic and legendary landmarks and features, used in the world-famous SAS Aptitude phase.

More information on the various “Fan Dance” events is available from the organisers; Avalanche Endurance Events at: <https://www.avalancheenduranceevents.com/home.html>

Top Photo Previous Page: The Pen-y-Fan viewed from Cribyn. Photo by Dave Dunford.

Author: Pat Carty is a NATO accredited journalist who covers military news, events, operations, and exercises; including special operations forces. He is a contributor to SOF News as well as several other military defense publications.

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Special Tactics Airman Awarded Air Force Cross



Story by Maxwell Daigle, 27th SOW, Dec 10, 2020.

Snapped awake by the sound of belt-fed machine gun fire, then-Senior Airman Alaxey Germanovich, a combat controller assigned to the 26th Special Tactics Squadron, surveys the compound he had dozed off in after several sleepless days of combat.

“I look around and I don’t see any of my American teammates,” said Germanovich. “(At that moment I said to myself) I need to find my friends right now.”

Grabbing his helmet and rifle, Germanovich bolted out of the compound and into the fight, where he saw several of the U.S. Army Special Forces Soldiers he was embedded with huddling for cover from behind a small rock.

“I knew then that I had to go get to my teammates and help them,” he said.

Germanovich’s base instinct would quickly turn into a grueling battle for survival, but it was those selfless impulses to save and protect his teammates that proved to be the difference between life and death for many of his teammates on that fateful day.

SecAF Commends Combat Controller for Valor

The 25th Secretary of the Air Force, Barbara M. Barrett, presented the Air Force Cross to now-Staff Sgt. Germanovich during a ceremony here, Dec. 10, 2020.

Germanovich was awarded the medal, second only to the Medal of Honor, for his actions on April 8, 2017, during combat operations against enemy forces in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan.

“This Air Force Cross is a tribute to your persistence (Staff Sgt. Germanovich),” said Barrett. “You risked your life and weathered blistering enemy fire to save the lives of others.”

In attendance were Col. Matthew Allen, 24th Special Operations Wing commander, the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) team Germanovich was attached to during the combat operations, and Germanovich’s family and friends.

Following the ceremony, Germanovich led those in attendance in memorial pushups to commemorate the event, the firefight and the ultimate sacrifice paid during the clash by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Mark De Alencar, a Special Forces Soldier assigned to 7th SFG (A) and a member of the team Germanovich was assigned to.

“This battle was a case study in toughness and extraordinary competence,” said Allen. “But it was also a case study in love. The type of love that demands teammates fight for one another and give everything they have.”

Germanovich’s actions as the air-to-ground liaison for his special operations forces team were credited with protecting the lives of over 150 friendly forces and the lethal engagement of 11 separate fighting positions.

Special Tactics Airman Awarded Air Force Cross (Cont)

Facing Hell, Calling for Fire

A native of Boiling Springs, S.C., Germanovich enlisted into the Air Force in November, 2012, with two goals in mind.

"I always knew I wanted a challenge," said Germanovich. "I wanted to have a direct impact on the battlefield wherever I went."

Five years later, both of those wishes would be granted when he deployed to Afghanistan and embedded with 7 SFG (A) Soldiers and their Afghan partners.

During his tour, the joint force was tasked with clearing several valleys in Nangarhar of fighters. As the multi-day operation progressed and the coalition forces pushed the insurgents closer to the Afghan border of Pakistan, the fighting became more and more violent, and it reached a head as Germanovich sprinted through heavy enemy fire to help the Special Forces Soldiers on that fateful day.

After reaching the rock his teammates were pinned down behind, Germanovich began to call in airstrikes to try and suppress the attack.

"It was working to a degree," said Germanovich. "But we were still receiving extremely effective fire, and one of our partner force members had gotten shot."

To evacuate the wounded Afghan commando, Germanovich began to call for strikes extremely close to their position in order to create more separation between the coalition forces and the insurgents.

"As the bombs were falling out of the sky, I started screaming at everybody to run for cover," said Germanovich.

After the partner force member was evacuated, the special operations forces team launched their counter-attack. A separate unit from across the valley was able to pinpoint a key enemy bunker during the firefight, and Germanovich's element, led by De Alencar, crawled their way towards the position.

Once the fire team reached the top of the bunker, Germanovich and De Alencar dropped grenades into its entrance. Then, as Germanovich secured the opening and De Alencar and the other Special Forces soldiers

began to breach the bunker, insurgents ambushed the team from hidden positions to the south, mortally wounding De Alencar.

"The situation just became complete and utter chaos," said Germanovich. "The team and I had expended all of our ordnance engaging enemy targets. We expended all of our grenades, there was no more pistol ammunition, and we were out of ammo completely."

Lying prone with no cover from the attack, Germanovich put out a call to an AC-130W Stinger II gunship aircraft that was leaving the area in order to refuel.

"As they were leaving, I said 'if you don't come back, we're dead.'" said Germanovich.

The gunship did return and began to fire on the enemy fighters, which gave Germanovich and the soldiers the opportunity to move away and evacuate De Alencar.

"All the while, we're still taking effective fire from the enemy," said Germanovich. "We began dropping ordnance and basically bombing up this mountainside until we got to safety."

Germanovich's actions proved decisive on that battlefield and demonstrated the enormous impact of AFSOC's precision strike mission, which provides ground force with specialized capabilities to find, assess and engage targets.

"You (Germanovich) told me earlier that you did what any one of your teammates would have done in the same situation," said Allen. "But we don't know that. We do know what you did that day: face and devastate a numerically superior enemy...this is why America's enemies do not take us head on."

Germanovich's ability to enable precision strike operations and his bravery in the face of hostile fire are incredibly courageous in their own right, but it was the reason behind his valiant performance that makes him an unquestionable hero.

"It was 100% my teammates," said Germanovich. "If I'm in danger, I know without a doubt in my mind that my teammates are going to do everything in their power to make sure that I come back, and I would do everything that I could possibly do to make sure that they come back."

Special Tactics Airman Awarded Air Force Cross (Cont)

Original Story: This article by Senior Airman Maxwell Daigle of the 27th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs was originally published on December 10, 2020. See [“A Tribute to Persistence: SecAF presents Air Force Cross to Special Tactics Airman”](#).

Photo: Air Force Cross Awarded to Special Tactics Airman. Staff Sgt. Alaxey Germanovich was recognized for his heroic actions while attached to a 7th Special Forces Group SFODA in Afghanistan. Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Washburn, USAF, Dec 10, 2020.

Video. Watch an interview of SSgt Alaxey Germanovich explain the event for which he was awarded the Air Force Cross. On April 8th, 2017 he was attached to a 7th Special Forces Group and coalition team in Nangahar province, Afghanistan. When overrun by enemy forces the team fought for their lives in a grueling 8-hour battle. [Staff Sergeant Mark R. de Alencar](#), a Special Forces weapons sergeant from 7th SFG(A), died during the combat engagement. Watch the 12 minute long video here:

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/776130/falling-back-training>



The Combat Controller (CCT) specialists operate in remote, often hostile areas. Acting as a one-man attachment to other special operations teams, these highly specialized Airmen are trained in a wide range of skills, including scuba, parachuting and snowmobiling, as well as being FAA-certified air traffic controllers in order to establish air control and provide combat support on missions all over the globe. Learn more at the link below.

<https://www.airforce.com/careers/detail/combat-control>



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Irregular Warfare (IW)

Commentary (January 2021)



The last several years the term Irregular Warfare (IW) has gained increased prominence within the national defense community. It has become a buzzword meaning different things to a variety of people and organizations. Irregular warfare consists of unconventional warfare (UW), counterinsurgency (COIN), counterterrorism (CT), foreign internal defense (FID), and stability operations (SO).

The U.S. recently published the Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy – which clarifies the role of IW within the Department of Defense and other government organizations. Since the IW annex has been published (Nov 2020) national security commentators have provided their perspective on what it means for the US defense establishment. Some of their more recent articles are provided below – with a brief synopsis of the article and link to the author’s article or publication.

Reimagining IW. A career Department of Defense civilian serving in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD SO/LIC), Kevin Bilms, expresses his views on how “Irregular Warfare” needs a new market strategy that will eliminate some misconceptions and assist others in recognizing IW’s potential value in great power competition. Read [“What’s in a Name? Reimagining Irregular Warfare Activities for Competition”](#), *War on the Rocks*, January 15, 2021.

From CT to IW? Jason Criss Howk notes that the U.S. is moving from a narrow focus on counterterrorism (CT) to a broader focus on irregular warfare (IW). He says that the shift to a larger view of IW and all the tools in the government tool box is also part of a natural evolution of how CT is conducted. [“From Counterterrorism to Irregular Warfare: What Does That Mean?”](#), *Clearance Jobs*, January 15, 2021.

Critical Thinking in the Military. Steve Ferenzi, a strategic planning officer at the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), shares his thoughts about red teaming and critical thinking in the military. He argues that “traditional American military culture diametrically opposes divergent thought.” For the US military to lead through influence and tools short of armed conflict it needs a tectonic cultural shift to harness the power of divergent thought. Read his article [“The Death of Critical Thinking in the Military? Here’s How to Fix It”](#), *Real Clear Defense*, January 14, 2021.

IW and a Pentagon Bureaucracy Change. The introduction of great power competition has brought back (for some) the importance of irregular warfare (IW). The Defense Department has placed more emphasis on IW as part of a broader effort to counter Russia and China. Despite the emphasis on counterterrorism and counterinsurgency over the past two decades the US still has an overwhelming conventional force advantage with its near-peer adversaries. For that reason, Russia and others are using political warfare and irregular warfare to advance their strategic interests. It is time for the US to step up its IW game as well. The Pentagon has recently turned the Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office into the Irregular Warfare Technical Support Directorate. Read [“A small bureaucratic change at the Pentagon hints at a major shift for US special-operations units”](#), *Business Insider*, January 11, 2021.

Irregular Warfare (IW) Commentary (cont)

Dave Maxwell on IW, UW, PW, and CT. A retired Special Forces officer provides his perspective on the way forward when confronting Russia and China (as well as Iran and North Korea) in this new era of great power competition. He believes that SOF needs to focus on CT as well as on irregular warfare, unconventional warfare, and support to political warfare. He advocates some new principles both to frame special operations and communicate how the force supports the national strategy. [“The Two Special Operations Trinities”](#), *Small Wars Journal*, January 6, 2021.

IW in Competition. Kevin Bilms states that “Irregular Warfare” is not a perfect term, but it helps to understand strategic competition short of an all-out war. He proposes that IW “. . . represents one way the military can apply its power complementarily with diplomatic, economic, financial and other elements of government power to secure strategic outcomes.” Read more in [“Better Understanding irregular warfare in competition”](#), *Military Times*, January 1, 2021.

CA and IW. Three Army officers collaborate in an article on the role that Civil Affairs can play in bridging planning gaps and seams between convention and special operations forces in an irregular warfare environment. See [“Building a Bridge: Cultivating an Irregular Warfare Mindset in the 83rd Civil Affairs Battalion”](#), *Eunomia Journal*, The Civil Affairs Association, December 28, 2020.

Podcast – Breaking the Boom-Bust Cycle of Irregular Warfare. David Maxwell (retired SF) and Deak Roh (of the ASD SO/LIC office) [examine the IW Annex](#) to the National Defense Strategy of 2018 and its relevance in an era defined by great power competition. Modern War Institute at West Point, December 18, 2020, 45 minutes.

Photo: 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 in the Tashkent region of Uzbekistan, Feb. 26, 2020. 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.

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<https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

Special Forces and Irregular Warfare (IW)

<https://specialforcestraining.info/topics/irregular-warfare.htm>

“Book Review – The American Way of Irregular War”, *SOF News*, August 4, 2020. In this book LTG (Ret) Charles Cleveland provides an interesting look at the past 40 years of history of U.S. special operations. He provides recommendations for the restructuring of the U.S. special operations community and its approach to irregular warfare.

<https://sof.news/publications/american-way-irregular-warfare/>

U.S. Withdrawal from Somalia



U.S. Africa Command has announced the formation of Joint Task Force Quartz to oversee Operation Octave U.S. Africa Command has announced the formation of Joint Task Force Quartz – a mission designated to reposition forces from Somalia and continue the assistance effort in Somalia. In early December President Trump and the Department of Defense announced that the United States would remove some [700 military personnel](#) from Somalia. This is an action that Trump had mentioned several times over the past year but had not directed to take place.

Some national security observers applaud the action believing that the situation in Somalia is unsolvable. They point to decades of corruption and conflict and little to show for the millions of dollars and other sacrifices made in Somalia.

However, others say that we are ceding territory to an insurgent / terrorist group affiliated with al Qaeda. These critics say that the group poses a threat to the U.S. – pointing to the attack on [Camp Simba in Kenya](#) where Americans lost their lives and to the recent news of a potential plot by an al Shabaab member to [hijack an aircraft](#) to conduct an attack in the United States.

The withdrawal is being presented to the U.S. public as a ‘repositioning of forces’. Apparently some of these forces will move into neighboring countries. Djibouti and Kenya share a border with Somalia and have been hosts of U.S. military units and activities for many years.

Joint Task Force Quartz

Joint Task Force Quartz or JTF-Quartz is built around the headquarters of Special Operations Command – Africa. The mission is to oversee Operation Octave Quartz which will reposition U.S. forces from Somalia to other bases in East Africa. JTF Quartz is commanded by the Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAF) commander Maj. Gen. Dag Anderson.

JTF-Quartz components include:

- Joint Force Special Operations Component Command
- Joint Force Maritime Component Command
- Joint Air Component Coordination Element

JTF-Quartz priorities are:

- safely reposition U.S. forces
- protect U.S. forces through coordinated and increased force protection measures
- continue the mission to support regional partners and keep pressure on violent extremists

U.S Withdrawal from Somalia (cont)

U.S. Army General Stephen Townsend, the commander of U.S. Africa Command, met with African partners to provide reassurance of a sustained commitment to East Africa security. He says that the U.S. will continue to support enduring partners while maintaining pressure on violent extremist organizations in the region.

“To be clear, the U.S. is not withdrawing or disengaging from East Africa. We remain committed to helping our African partners build a more secure future. We also remain capable of striking Al-Shabaab at any time and place of our choosing – they should not test us.” General Stephen Townsend, commander of U.S. Africa Command, Dec 2020.

The U.S. and Somalia – Quick Timeline

Cold War. During the Cold War the Horn of Africa region was a focus of attention when it came to competition between the Soviet Union and the United States for influence and military presence. Somalia was a Soviet client state for many years (1970s).

Humanitarian Mission. In the early 1990s the United States committed US forces (including SOF) to Somalia in support of the United Nations humanitarian mission. This support ended when President Clinton ended the U.S. involvement in Somalia after the “[Battle of Mogadishu](#)” where 18 US. troops lost their lives during a raid on Somali militia leaders.

Failed State. Since the early 1990s Somalia has been a ‘[failed state](#)’. It has suffered from famine, civil war, corruption, foreign intrigue and meddling, anarchy, and more. For many years it was the center of piracy operating from the coastal area of Somalia.

Fragile State. In 2012 the formation of a federal government provided a central authority that could provide services and security for the Somalia people. However, Somalia is still afflicted with division, political infighting, and corruption and remains a ‘fragile state’.

Al Shabaab. Somalia has been fighting an insurgency by an al Qaeda-affiliated group known as al Shabaab. The group controls much of Somalia – especially in the central and southern portions of the country. Its goal is to establish an Islamic state in Somalia.

US Support. The United States , along with other international partners, are working to stabilize the country and increase the effectiveness of the security forces. The US has been a key supporter of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), provides advice and training to the Somali security forces, and conducts counterterrorism (CT) missions within Somalia against al Shabaab and the local ISIS affiliate. U.S. Army Special Forces (and other organizations) have been instrumental in standing up the elite [Danab Brigade](#).

Some Americans have lost their lives in the region including a [CIA paramilitary officer](#) (Nov 2020), a soldier [assigned to](#) 3rd Special Forces (June 2018), and contract pilots and an Army air traffic controller at [Camp Simba](#) (Jan 2020) just across the border in Kenya.

Security and Governance. The war in Somalia between government forces and al Shabaab has lasted almost 15 years. The prospects for peace is dismal. International donors are becoming reluctant to pay the expenses of the African Union forces that are deployed in Somalia to assist the government with security. Relations between Somalia and Kenya have frayed. Internal tensions exist between the different regions of Somalia are not good. The various clans and sub-clans in Somalia are constantly at odds with each other and may likely erupt into violence once again.

U.S Withdrawal from Somalia (cont)

Great Power Competition. The Defense Department is now focused on strategic competition with China and Russia. To some, that means a shift to the Pacific and Eastern Europe with an emphasis on large conventional forces with the most modern ships, aircraft, and tanks. But to others, this means the competition is more likely to take place around the world in an environment where irregular warfare (some would say political warfare) is where the real competition is.

What Comes Next?

Future of Danab? The planned withdrawal of US forces will include the Special Forces contingent tasked with supporting the Danab special operations unit. Apparently a [very small contingent](#) of the US military will remain. The US has funded, trained, and partnered with this 1,000 man unit. It is commonly known that advisor work is best accomplished with person-to-person interaction. The premise that ‘advisor work’ can be accomplished remotely is largely dismissed by most members of the military that have been advisors. Certainly emails, Zoom sessions, video conferences, and phone calls have utility but nothing compares to an advisor on the ground sharing the battlespace.

It will be interesting (and perhaps disappointing) to observe the effectiveness of Danab over the next few years. There is the possibility that U.S. intelligence organizations will maintain a presence as well as [private entities](#) providing support, instruction, and advise through contract mechanisms with the State Department or Department of Defense.

Future Prospects? The Somali government has not met the milestones for the development of its security forces – goals set by the United States and the international community. In addition, it has not taken the steps for effective governance to alleviate the root causes of insurgent and tribal conflict. According to U.S. Africa Command al Shabaab remains adaptive, resilient, and capable of [attacking US](#), Western, and partner interests in Somalia and East Africa.

The 19,000-man multinational African Union force will withdraw by the end of 2021. A withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Somalia accompanied by a reduction of ANISOM will likely increase the opportunity for al Shabaab to increase its influence and make further territorial gains. On January 20th a new president will occupy the White House. He may opt to reverse or adjust priorities in the region.

References:

Task Force Quartz. [“U.S. Africa Command stands up Joint Task Force – Quartz”](#), *United States Africa Command*, December 19, 2020.

IG Report on CT in Africa. The Defense Department posted the [quarterly report](#) for counterterrorism operations in East, North, and West Africa. This 98-page report provides information on the security situation in much of Africa to include Somalia. November 2020.

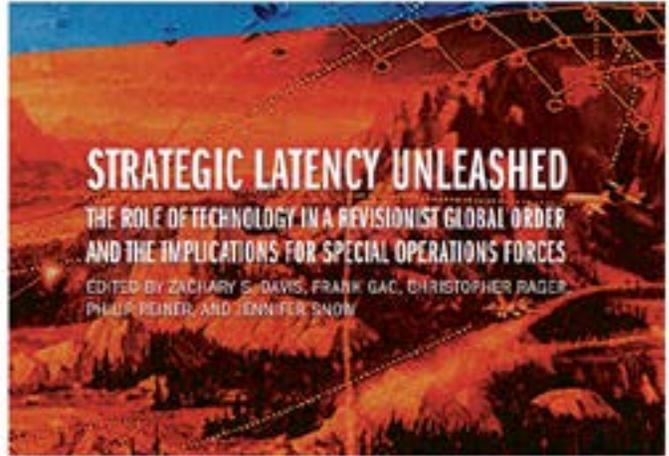
Recent Analysis and Commentary on Somalia.

[“Why the Somali Danab SOF is Vital to the US and to Defeating Al-Shabaab”](#), by Steve Balestrieri, *SOFREP*, January 13, 2021.

[“The Way Forward for the United States in Somalia”](#), by Stephen M. Schwartz, *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, January 12, 2021. Schwartz is a former U.S. Ambassador to Somalia (2016-2017).

Book - “Strategic Latency Unleashed” - SOF, Technology, and the Future

A recently published book entitled *Strategic Latency Unleashed: The Role of Technology in a Revisionist Global Order and the Implications for Special Operations Forces* is a ‘must read’ for SOF professionals. The book, published by the Center for Global Security Research of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, covers a full range of topics about technological advances that is causing sweeping global change – transforming the face of warfare.



Special Operations Forces must adapt to these changes. This book examines the technological changes affecting SOF and offers recommendations on how to meet these challenges in a complex future. “The good news is that US SOF are also built for rapid adaptation.”

The authors are a mix of leading experts from many diverse fields that were partnered with experienced special operators in their writings. The writing project took 2 years to complete – beginning in 2018. There are close to 40 chapters by almost 60 writers who provide a diverse variety of technical, geopolitical, and operational information. The book “. . . contemplates the changing conditions under which SOF must operate and the role technology plays in making their jobs harder in some ways and easier in others.”

The book’s numerous chapters are grouped in six sections:

- Geopolitics of Strategic Latency for SOF: Context is Everything
- Biology and the Body Politic: Messing with Mother Nature
- The Materials World: Possible SOF Applications
- Global Business and the Role of the Private Sector in National Security: Implications for SOF
- Digital Domains: The SOF Role
- Operational Considerations for Multidomain Warfare

SOF professionals who are interested in the future operational environment of irregular warfare and special operations will learn much from this publication. With its many diverse chapters packaged in 581 pages this book is not a quick read. The content within these pages are well worth the effort. The good news is that it is easily digestible chapter by chapter, section by section. Enjoy and learn!

Strategic Latency Unleashed: The Role of Technology in a Revisionist Global Order and the Implications for Special Operations Forces

Center for Global Security Research

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

January 2021, PDF, 581 pages, free online

<https://sof.news/books/strategic-latency-unleashed/>

CSM (R) Adkins Buried at Arlington National Cemetery



CSM (R) Bennie Adkins, a [Medal of Honor recipient](#), was buried at Arlington National Cemetery on December 14, 2020. Bennie Adkins died in April 2020 from complications with COVID-19 after a 23-day battle against the virus. The 5th Special Forces Group provided rendered honors at the burial ceremony. The story below is provided by the 5th SFG(A) Public Affairs Office.

Arlington National Cemetery, VA – Green Berets, assigned to 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), assisted Soldiers of The Old Guard with rendering honors to Medal of Honor recipient, Command Sgt. Maj. (Retired) [Bennie G. Adkins](#), at Arlington National Cemetery, 16 Dec.

Adkins died in April at the age of 86 in Opelika, AL from complications with COVID-19 after a 23-day battle against the virus.

Green Berets of The Legion, escorted CSM(R) Adkins and members of his family, from Opelika, AL to the Arlington National Cemetery. The Soldiers also assisted with the dignified transfers on and off Adkins' honor flight to his final resting place.

"The experience was an absolute honor," said MSG Kevin, a Green Beret with 5th SFG(A). "At 5th SFG(A), we are standing on the shoulders of giants when it comes to those in the past that have paved the way forward for this country and [The Legion]. Adkins was one of those giants. There is not much that I can say other than it was a true honor and privilege to act as a small part in escorting a warrior like him to his final resting place."

Command Sgt. Major (R) Adkins, is considered an Army legend, surviving three combat tours in Vietnam, as a Green Beret. In September of 2014, he was finally awarded the nation's highest award for valor, by President Obama in recognition of his actions in Vietnam 48 years earlier. During a thirty-eight-hour battle, and forty-eight hours of escape and evasion in 1966, Adkins battled against machine-gun fire, mortars, small-arms fire, grenades and more.

CSM (R) Adkins Buried at Arlington National Cemetery (cont)



Following his Military service, Adkins earned a bachelor's degree, and two master's degrees, which inspired him to start the Bennie Adkins Foundation which continues to support transitioning Green Berets with college scholarships.

Adkins is preceded in death by his wife Mary, who passed in 2019. He is survived by a daughter, two sons, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, the foundation said in a statement.

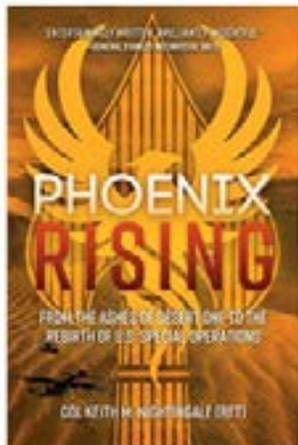
Top Photo: Green Berets, assigned to 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), conduct a dignified transfer for the final flight of Medal of Honor recipient, Command Sgt. Maj. (Retired) Bennie G. Adkins, to his resting place at Arlington National Cemetery on December 14, 2020. Photo by Staff Sgt. Aaron Knowles, 5th SFG(A) PAO.

Original Story: "5th Special Forces Group (A) renders honors to MOH Recipient CSM(R) Bennie Adkins", by Staff Sgt. Aaron Knowles, 5th Special Forces Group Public Affairs Office, December 18, 2020.



Book Review

“Phoenix Rising” by Keith Nightingale



“From the Ashes of
Desert One to the
Rebirth of U.S.
Special Operations”

By
Keith Nightingale

COL Keith Nightingale (Ret) is the author of Phoenix Rising: From the Ashes of Desert One to the Rebirth of U.S. Special Operations. The book, published in 2020 by Casemate Publishers, provides a detailed look at Operation EAGLE CLAW. This was a mission by U.S. Army Special Forces, supported by other military forces, to rescue American hostages held in the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, Iran.

The hostages were taken in November 1979 by Iranian demonstrators that gained control of the embassy grounds and were held prisoner for months. The rescue attempt by Delta Force was aborted once on the ground in Iran at a staging area – due to maintenance problems the force came up one helicopter short. Tragically, after the mission was aborted, and the rescue force prepared to depart Iran, an aircraft mishap took place killing eight servicemembers.

The failed attempt was an embarrassment for President Jimmy Carter and proved to be a major factor in his defeat in the upcoming presidential election to Ronald Reagan. The aborted hostage rescue prompted a reexamination of America’s special operations capabilities.

This book provides a first person account of the coordination, preparation, and conduct of the hostage rescue mission. Keith Nightingale, as an Army major, was the Deputy Operations Officer for Joint Task Force Eagle Claw. Based on his personal diary the book offers an inside look at the personalities, issues, bureaucratic infighting, coordination, and preparation for the mission as well as the events during and after the mission.

The book follows a logical path: covering the planning, training, execution, and aftermath of the hostage rescue mission. It concludes with a description of post-mission actions and events that would eventually lead to a reorganization of the special operations community.

The author employs a unique format: providing almost standalone vignettes relating to the mission, many only 1-3 pages long. Some of these are entitled: “Inside an RH-53”, “The Agency Men”, “The Truck Option”, “The Navigator”, “The Shrink”, “Cash and Carry”, and many more. This particular style made for an interesting and engaging read.

An important part of the book – at the end – involves the ‘politics’ of the formation of what would become the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations / Low Intensity Conflict (SO/LIC) and the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). The bureaucratic infighting and Pentagon stonewalling of the intent of Congress to increase America’s SOF capability is explained in great detail by Nightingale.

If you are a student of special operations or someone interested in military history then you will find this a worthwhile and interesting read. The book is available on Amazon in hardcover and Kindle format.

Phoenix Rising, by Keith Nightingale, Casemate Publishers, 2020

<https://www.amazon.com/Phoenix-Rising-Hostage-Rebirth-Operations/dp/1612008771/>

Podcast - Proxies and American Strategy in Africa



The U.S. withdrawal from Somalia of 700 military personnel has put the U.S. military involvement in Africa back in the news. This podcast explores what US forces are doing when they're deployed in countries across Africa. In many cases these US forces (SOF and conventional) are working with local partner forces. – which helps the United States to retain a degree of influence and situational awareness in the country. Two guests featured in this podcast provide an examination of proxy warfare in Africa.

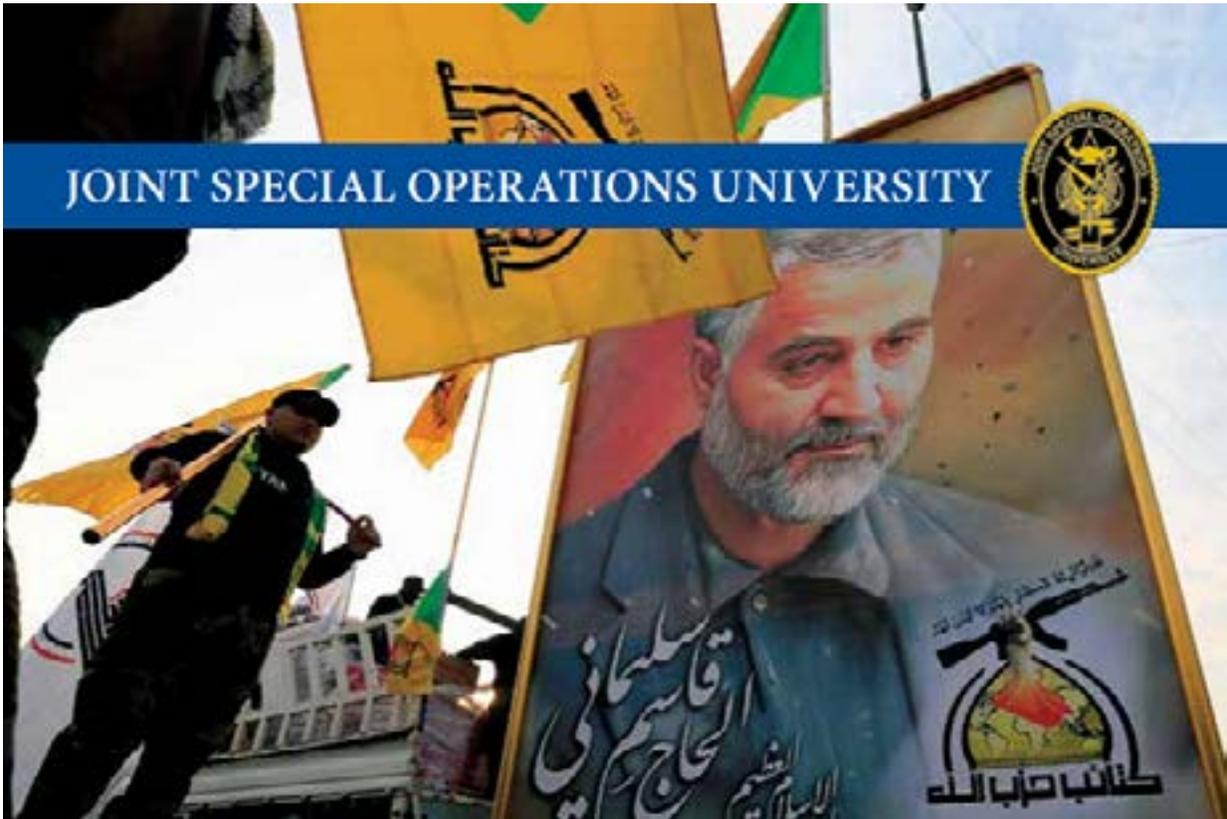
Retired [Maj. Gen. Marcus Hicks](#) was the former commander of Special Operations Command Africa from 2017 to 2019. In that role he was responsible for all Special Operations Forces conducting counterinsurgency operations and foreign internal defense (FID) across the continent of Africa. Hicks is a command pilot with more than 3,000 flying hours in AC-130H Spectre and AC-130U Spooky aircraft. He has commanded units within the special operations community and conventional Air Force at all levels.

Dr. Eli Berman is the co-editor of the book [Proxy Wars: Suppressing Violence through Local Agents](#). He is a professor at the [University of California San Diego](#) and has served as the Research Director for International Security Studies at the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation.

Irregular Warfare Podcast, December 23, 2020, 56 mins.

<https://mwi.usma.edu/mwi-podcast-proxies-and-american-strategy-in-africa/>

JSOU Paper: Iranian Proxy Groups in the Middle East



The Iranian regime maintains a network of proxies including Lebanese Hezbollah, various Shiite militias in Iraq, the Houthis in Yemen, and foreign fighters in Syria. This paper by the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) provides a look at the problem of states using proxy forces to advance their foreign policy objectives.

The three main chapters of the paper outline the different groups and factors that influence Iranian military and political strategy for Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. The proxy / host country relation is described. The report provides an assessment of vulnerabilities that could be exploited by U.S. special operations forces.

Iran will continue to use their proxy network to frustrate U.S. Middle East strategy and diminish U.S. influence. However, the U.S. is not without appropriate responses. This paper advances the argument that terrorism, counterterrorism, and proxy conflict are inherently political in nature and need not be addressed with a kinetic solution alone.

The authors of this paper are:

- Dr. Diane Zorri – an assistant professor of security studies at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
- Dr. Houman A. Sadri – deputy director of the International Policy and Analysis Center (IPAC)
- Dr. David Ellis – Resident Fellow at Joint Special Operations University (JSOU)

Iranian Proxy Groups in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen: A Principal-Agent Comparative Analysis, Joint Special Operations University, JSOU Report 20-5, 2020.

https://jsou.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=58950053

Afghan Conflict Update



“Afghan Conflict Update - January 2021”

News, analysis, and commentary about the war in Afghanistan. Topics include security, Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), Resolute Support, peace negotiations, governance, development, podcasts, videos, and more. Each month SOF News does a roll up of the news, commentary, and analysis on the Afghan conflict and provides a comprehensive update at the end of the month. The links to news articles, reports, and publications are grouped by category. Read what you want to read and skip what you are not interested in.

Afghanistan has seen more than 40 years of conflict – with no end in sight. It is one of the world’s poorest countries and is afflicted with corruption in its government and security forces at every level. The Taliban are in control of much of the rural areas while the central government remains in control of most of the major cities and towns. Millions of refugees and internally displaced persons are reliant on assistance from the international community. The Afghan government relies on donor nations to fund its government, security ministries, and the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF). While almost everyone agrees that a political settlement is the only way to stop the conflict – the road to success in peace talks between the Taliban and Afghan government is paved with obstacles.

Read the rest of the article in [“Afghan Conflict Update - January 2021”](#), SOF News, January 29, 2021.



“Afghan Conflict - A Look Back at 2020”

News, analysis, and commentary about the war in Afghanistan from the past few months of 2020. Topics include security, ANDSF, Resolute Support, peace negotiations, governance, development, podcasts, videos, and more.

The Taliban hold more territory than ever before – not since before September 2001 have they held this much of Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) still have a presence in Afghanistan. Peace talks are continuing with no real progress and with the Taliban apparently driving the train. The U.S. troop complement is significantly downsized and will be at 2,500 at some point in January 2021. It remains to be seen what President-elect Biden’s Afghanistan policy will be. He may opt for the situation that President Trump has left him – leaving 2,500 troops in country. He may decide to keep a counterterrorism capability within Afghanistan. Or he could withdraw completely in May 2021 in accordance with the U.S.-Taliban withdrawal agreement.

Links to articles with commentary about the peace process, US policy options, Afghan government power sharing, living under Taliban rule, militants and the drug trade, book and movie reviews, ghost policemen, and much more.

Read the rest of the article in [“Afghan Conflict - A Look Back at 2020”](#), SOF News, January 5, 2021.

ACCIDENTAL EVILS (2017) VILE MEANS (2014) THE Einstein Proxy (2015) Covert Matters (2008)

Steve Dimodica

Novels by Steve Dimodica

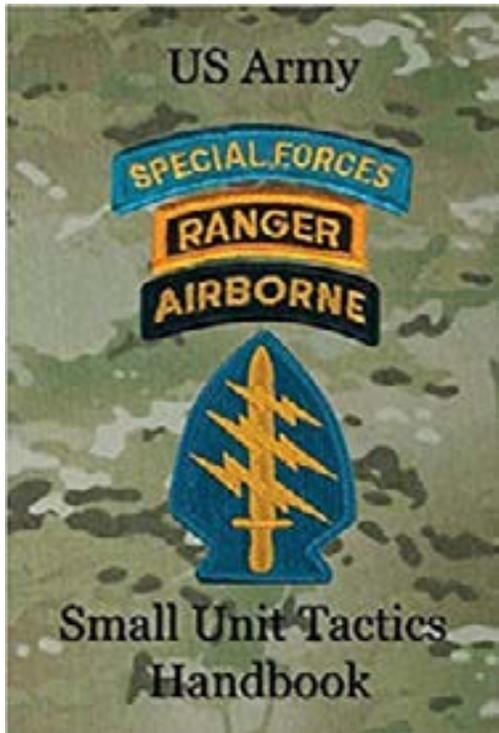
Available in print and e-delivery at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Indy book stores.



[Air Commando Foundation](#)



[Boston Frogman Swim](#)



A conceptual 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.

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:

[Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)



www.civilaffairsassoc.org



Check out career opportunities with the CIA

<https://www.cia.gov/careers/>

SOF News



SOCOM's MRAD. The US Special Operations Command will be acquiring the Multi-Role Adaptive Rifle (MRAD) for several of its subordinate components. Manufactured by Barrett it is chambered in three calibers. Deliveries should be ongoing – beginning in early 2021. See [“New sniper rifle for the Army , Marines, and SOCOM”](#), *Army Times*, January 29, 2021.

IG Project Announcement for USSOCOM. The Department of Defense Office of Inspector General has announced that it will [begin an evaluation](#) to determine the extent to which USCENTCOM and USSOCOM have developed and implemented programs in accordance with DoD Law of War requirements to reduce potential law of war violations when conducting operations. (DoDIG, Jan 25, 2021).

LMG-M Virtual Industry Day. SOFWERX will be hosting a Lightweight Machine Gun – Medium Industry Day to foster the [development of the new machine gun](#) sought by US Special Operations Command. (*The Firearm Blog*, Jan 29, 2021).

Sentinel. Chapter 78 of the Special Forces Association (Southern California) has posted its [latest issue](#) (Feb 2021). Some interesting reading for the SF crowd. John Stryker Meyer provides a perfect example of the Special Forces brotherhood in his profile of Studies and Observations Group (SOG) legend Khanh “Cowboy” Doan and his service with SF during the Vietnam conflict. There is also a book review of *Phoenix Rising* authored by Col Keith Nightingale (Ret). Kenn Miller reviews *The Exile of Sergeant Nen* – the story of a Vietnamese ARVN paratrooper who eventually finds his way to America.

Tip of the Spear. USSOCOM's [monthly periodical](#) (Dec 2020). is available online. Some news from SOF events and happenings from around the world. (PDF, 40, DVIDS).

Former Acting SECDEF Miller and Blunt Talk. Former Green Beret Chris Miller was only on the job for a few months but he managed to provide some excitement for the press corps with his ability to speak the truth as he saw it. Read more in [“Future Secretaries of Defense Should Take a Cue From Chris Miller”](#), by Steve Balestrieri, *SOFREP*, January 20, 2021.

Chris Miller's Shadow. A journalist spent a [week embedded](#) with Acting Secretary of Defense Miller during one of his last weeks at the Pentagon. An interesting read of the last days of Miller's brief stint as SECDEF. (*Vanity Fair*, Jan 22, 2021).

Upgrade for ASD SO/LIC. One of the first actions taken by Acting Secretary of Defense Miller was to have the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict report directly to him. Read more about [ASD SO/LIC](#).

SOF, Resilience, and Neurophysiological Stress. An article in *Physician's Weekly* [explores the relationship](#) between resilience and neurophysiological stress in special operations forces combat service members. (Jan 14, 2021).

SOF News (cont)

SOCOM's Mk 17. Peter Suci reviews the performance of a weapon used by U.S. special operations forces over the past several years. [“Mk17: The U.S. Special Forces Special Assault Rifle”](#), *19fortyfive.com*, January 20, 2021.

SOCOM and Recruiting Tech Talent. The U.S. Special Operations Command has partnered with Coding It Forward to bring student interns to work on technical programs and to bring new talent into the force. Read [“How SOCOM tapped college students to work on new tech”](#), *FedScoop*, January 22, 2021.

Keeping Roger Carstens On Board. An opinion piece by Jason Rezaian argues that the Biden administration should keep Roger Carstens on board as the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs. Carstens is a retired Special Forces officer. [“Biden shouldn't replace this Trump administration official”](#), *The Washington Post*, January 12, 2021.

“SOF Trinities”. Col (Ret) Dave Maxwell, a Special Forces officer, explains the current focus of special operations forces on counterterrorism (CT) operations as well as irregular warfare (IW), unconventional warfare (UW), and political warfare (PW). He states that advanced CT and other high end SOF capabilities combined with this SOF trinity is where SOF must invest in organization, manning, equipping, training, and education. According to Maxwell, the second SOF trinity is the comparative advantage of SOF: governance, influence, and support to indigenous forces and populations. Read [“The Two Special Operations Trinities”](#), *Small Wars Journal*, January 6, 2021.

DoD Support to CIA. Abraham Wagner, a national security practitioner and commentator, provides his perspective on the possibility of the Department of Defense cutting back on support to the Central Intelligence Agency's counterterrorism missions. Read his thoughts in [“Pentagon must continue military support to CIA's counterterrorism operations”](#), *The Washington Times*, January 6, 2021.

Should “GPC” become “SC”? Kevin Bilms is a Department of Defense civilian serving as the Irregular Warfare team chief in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations & Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD SO/LIC). He argues that “. . . allowing ‘great power competition’ with Russia and China to dominate the discourse was too narrowly focused and shortsighted, focusing excessively on high-end capabilities while denying the United States the framework for competing with and leading through its influence and other tools short of armed conflict.” He suggests that “strategic competition” may sound similar to the term “political warfare” of the Cold War years. Read more in [“Avoid ‘Great-Power Competition’ in Future Security Strategies”](#), *The National Interest*, January 6, 2021.

SOF Teams at Breaking Point. Increased in-garrison workload with things like inspections, meetings, requirements, taskers, and training have helped to put SOF teams to the breaking point. Read [“How to build more resilient and innovative US special operations teams”](#), by Lt Col Kaveri Crum and Emma Moore, *Task & Purpose*, December 16, 2020.

SOF and Ethics. Three writers collaborate on an article that advocates the reimagining of ethical decision-making as a foundational aspect of leadership and leader development in the context of the future SOF environment. [“Ethics in Special Operations and the Joint Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy”](#), *Small Wars Journal*, December 25, 2020.

SOF, CT, and the Tyranny of Distance. David Kilcullen advocates for a persistent forward presence of special operations forces. [“Enhancing Special Operations for Sustained Counterterrorism Operations”](#), Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), December 15, 2020. Special Forces officer.

International SOF News



Task Force Takuba. A special operations task force formed up by France consisting of units from 7 European nations will become fully operational in 2021. [Task Force Takuba](#) has a three year mandate that will enable more tactical wins against terrorist groups in the Sahel region of Africa. But will it make a difference? Read [“Counter-terrorism in the Sahel: Can Task Force Takuba be a Game Changer for France”](#), *Global Risk Insights*, January 30, 2021.

India’s SF Origins. The first Indian-attributed SF unit was the Meghdoot Force – with its Raising Day on July 1, 1966. However it was actually established in 1965 and is credited with initiating the utilization of unconventional warfare by India’s state forces. Read about the early beginnings of this force and its actions in combat in [“Meghdoot Force: The Birth of the Para SF”](#), by Siddhant Hira, *The Defence Archive*, January 31, 2021.

LTG Wendt Retirement. Lieutenant General Eric Wendt is retiring. His last assignment was as commander of the NATO Special Operations Forces (NSHQ). A [change of command ceremony](#) was held at NSHQ on January 29, 2021. He is returning to the United States to retire after 34 years of active duty commissioned service, including 30 years in the US Army Special Forces. A separate virtual assumption of command ceremony will take place after Wendt’s successor is approved by NATO and is confirmed by the US Senate. (NATO, Jan 29, 2021).

Peer Ranking – SAS Australia. A reality TV show in Australia puts a group of 17 Australian celebrities through various mental and physical challenges – simulating SAS selection. One of the aspects of the show is peer ranking. This article delves into the aspects of peer ranking and its usefulness in the military at large. Read more in [“SAS Australia – Does being ranked against your peers work?”](#), *The Cove*, January 28, 2021.

US SOF in the Maldives. SOF operators deployed to the Maldives for three weeks to train with the Maldives National Defense Force. (Editor’s note: some trips are better than others.) Read [“US Special Operators Flex Their Diplomatic Muscle in Maldives”](#), *Sandboxx*, January 27, 2021.

Netherlands SOF Getting New Training Centres. By the mid-2020s the Dutch special forces will have two new [facilities to train in](#). (*Shepard Media*, Jan 18, 2021).

Book – Pilgrim Days. Alastair MacKenzie served in some of the world’s most elite special forces. In the 1970s he was a member of the British Parachute Regiment, and then later, as a member of the Special Air Service. Read an [extract from his new book](#) published by Osprey Publishing.

SOCPAC Element Trains in Maldives. U.S. Special Operations Forces deployed to U.S. Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC) completed a three-week [military-to-military event](#) with the Maldives National Defense Force (MNDF) in early January 2021. (SOCPAC, DVIDS, Jan 8, 2021).

The “Shetland Buss” and Improving Our Maritime Covert Capabilities. The historical example of the “Shetland Bus” could provide ideas for improving our maritime covert capabilities. Article by Christopher Booth. [“The Modern Shetland Bus: The Lure of Covert Maritime Vessels for Great-Power Competition”](#), *War on the Rocks*, December 29, 2020.

International SOF News (cont)

Rwandan SOF in CAR. A special forces unit of the Rwanda Defense Force (RDF) has been operating in the Central African Republic (CAR). Rwanda has a large peacekeeping contingent serving with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA). However, the SF unit is not part of [MINUSCA](#), but instead is conducting 'force protection' operations. Read more in "[Inside the Rwandan special forces' operation in CAR](#)", *The New Times (RW)*, January 2, 2020.

Ethiopia's 'Regional Special Forces'. The northern part of Ethiopia has seen a lot of conflict over the past year. One aspect of the fight is the emergence of 'special forces' units on a regional basis. Read more in "[Regional Special Forces: threats or safeties?](#)", *The Reporter*, January 2, 2021.

Russia's SOBR Teams. Like many European elite police units, the basis for the 'Special Squad, Rapid Reaction' (SOBR) teams was laid in the 1970s following the attacks on the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. The elite unit specializes in hostage negotiations and rescue and deals with the majority of terrorism incidents in Russia. Read more in "[Russia's Secret Special Forces Unit Isn't So Secret Anymore](#)", by Charlie Gao, *National Interest*, December 4, 2020.

C-SOCC Now Fully Operational. Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands declared their Composite Special Operations Component Command (C-SOCC) headquarters as [fully operational](#) in early December 2020. (NATO, Dec 7, 2020).

New SOF Base in Baltics. A new special operations site that will allow elite U.S. and NATO troops to expand operations in the Baltic region is up and running in the Latvian capital of Riga. See "[US Special Operations Site Activated in the Heart of the Baltics](#)", *Stars and Stripes*, December 4, 2020.



Photo: A Dutch Special Forces sniper takes aim at targets down range at the High Angle Sniper Course. SOCEUR, January 2021.

ARSOF News



Photo: Instructor addressing students during Mountain Phase of Ranger School.

Silver Star Awarded. Fallen Green Beret James Moriarty was posthumously awarded the Silver Star on Wednesday, January 27, 2021 (his birthday), for his gallantry in which his actions were directly responsible for the survival of another Green Beret. His family accepted the reward. On November 4, 2016 three Special Forces NCOs of the 5th SFG [were killed in Jordan](#).

Scroll or Tab? The discussion about the term “Ranger” is still ongoing in the media. The controversy was sparked by a *Salon* [article](#) that criticized Senator Tom Cotton for saying that he was a U.S. Army Ranger in his campaign literature. Other media outlets (Newsweek, etc.) piled on with the same message. Cotton was not assigned to the 75th Ranger Regiment but he is a Ranger School graduate. Some observers say that the Newsweek and Salon articles appear to be political attacks to discredit a conservative Senator. It was noted by some media watchers that *Newsweek* edited a [2015 story about female Army Rangers](#) to conform to the information presented about Tom Cotton. One retired officer to [weigh in on the topic](#) is BG James Nixon (Ret) – a former commander of 75th Ranger Regiment. (Hugh Hewitt Show, transcript and audio, Jan 25, 2021). Col (Ret) Leland Liebe (former J2 for SOCSOUTH and Ranger School graduate) also [provides his thoughts](#). And then there is the U.S. Army Ranger Association that has provided their stance on the subject in [“Who Is a Ranger?”](#)

Impending Extradition of Former Green Beret to Japan. U.S. Army Special Forces veteran Michael Taylor and his son will soon be handed over to Japan after the U.S. State Department approved their extradition. It is alleged that they were involved in the escape of Carlos Ghosn from Japan. Ghosn is a former Nissan and Renault chief executive who is now in Lebanon. Critics say that Ghosn

ARSOF News (cont)

would not receive a fair trial in Japan and that the case against him was weak. U.S. prosecutors say the Taylors helped Ghosn flee Japan on December 29, 2019 – hidden in a box on a private jet to Turkey. He then took a flight from Turkey to Lebanon. The lawyers representing the Taylors have argued that there is no law in Japan for helping someone “bail jump” and that they would face the prospect of relentless interrogations and torture in Japan. Mike Taylor served with the 10th and 11th Special Forces Group. He served with the 10th SFG in Lebanon. After his service with Special Forces he spent a career in the security industry and was a commentator on Middle East affairs for many years on various news media outlets. See [“U.S. judge allows extradition of two men accused of aiding Ghosn escape”](#), *Reuters*, January 28, 2021.

20th SFG Evaluation Event. Competitors competed for a number of prizes in an event that provided some [physical fitness competition](#). The event participants took part in push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups, a run, and a march at the Haw Ridge Trailhead, in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The event was open for people ages 18 through 35. In addition to offering a chance to compete some of the participants were ‘looked over’ for [possible recruitment into the 20th Special Forces Group](#). (*Oak Ridger*, Jan 29, 2021).

Iran and Going Irregular. A U.S. Army Special Forces officer argues that US policy toward Iran should be recalibrated. The last four years the US has had an aggressive approach with Iran – pressuring it via economic, overt military action, and rhetoric. The intent for this policy was to modify Iranian behavior in the region – but it has failed. Alex Deep believes that an irregular warfare campaign would be a more effective means to change Iran’s behavior. Read [“A Super-Max Failure and the Case for Going Irregular: Recalibrating US Policy Toward Iran”](#), Modern War Institute at West Point, January 29, 2021.

Upgrade for SF Dive School. The U.S. Army Special Forces Underwater Operations School is getting some work done on some of its facilities. A new maintenance facility for the repair of SOF hard-hulled and soft-hulled watercraft will be built. See [“NAVFAC Southeast awards contract for SOF facility at NAS Key West”](#), DVIDS, January 21, 2021.

“Robin Sage” – the Final Test. Stavros Atlamazoglou details the [field training exercise](#) held in central North Carolina where aspiring Green Berets test their mettle and skills. (*Business Insider*, Jan 12, 2021).

Long Tab Brewing is Recognized. Dave Holland, a U.S. Army Special Forces veteran, established his brewery in January 2020. It was absolutely the wrong time to open up a business that required people to gather and mingle together socially. But Dave adapted and [Long Tab Brewing](#) are still in business. He found support with the Small Business Administration’s Paycheck Protection Program. [“The Spirit of the American Entrepreneur”](#), *Small Business Administration*, December 28, 2020.

Green Beret Business Listings. A new website is listing firms and businesses owned and operated by former Special Forces soldiers. <https://greenberets.biz/>

7th SFG Soldier Dies. On January 14, 2021 Warrant Officer [John Wirka](#) died from a non-combat related incident. He deployed multiple times in support of USSOUTHCOM, USNORTHCOM, and to Afghanistan.

Bold Reform Needed for Civil Affairs. Adam Steinwachs, a Captain serving in Civil Affairs, argues that the future of CA hinges on reformation that ensures the regiment is in the position to lead within the human domain. Read his article in [“The Future of Civil Affairs”](#), *Eunomia Journal*, The Civil Affairs Association, January 16, 2021.

ARSOF News (cont)

Role of CA Bn S2. A short essay argues that the Intelligence Officer of a Reserve Component Civil Affairs Battalion does not follow a traditional model of intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) posited by military intelligence doctrine. [“Overcoming Limitations: The Role of the S2 in a CA Battalion”](#), *Eunomia Journal*, Civil Affairs Association, January 14, 2020.

SF Officer Looks Back on His Career. Tyler Mac, a Special Forces officer, shares his past with us – the good and the bad times. Read [“The Things I Carried: A Special Forces Officer Reflects”](#), *The Havoc Journal*, January 8, 2021.

5 Facts about SF. The history, missions, and organization of the U.S. Army’s Special Forces is highlighted in this article entitled [“5 Facts About the U.S. Special Forces”](#), *U.S. Army Airborne & Special Operations Museum*, Jan 2021.

Green Beret Completes Thai Ranger School. A U.S. Army Special Forces [soldier graduated](#) from the 72-day long Royal Thai Ranger School in late December 2020. The SF soldier was the first U.S. servicemember to attend in more than 40 years. The school consists of different phases: mountain, forest, swamp, maritime, and urban combat. (DVIDS, 1st SFG, Jan 5, 2021).

“Project Galahad”. The 75th Ranger Regiment has run an [experimental military design cell](#) that investigated novel solutions to tomorrow’s warfighting problems. (*Coffee or Die Magazine*, Jan 6, 2021).

Bolduc on the Scars of War. MG (Ret) Don Bolduc, a retired Green Beret officer, comments on the need to treat those within the special operations force with Post-traumatic Stress (PTS) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). He cites the recent case of a former 1st Special Forces Group commander who now faces charges of domestic violence as one where the chain of command is guilty of malfeasance by general officers. Read [“Colonel Owen Ray’s Case Reminds Us That No One is Immune to Trauma”](#), *SOFREP*, January 10, 2021.

SF Culture and Business Startup Ventures. The Special Forces community has a formal and rigorous selection process to assess individuals into SF units. The assessment process continues throughout the Special Forces career through a variety of ways. E.M. Burlingame – a former 1st SFG(A) and now 20th SFG(A) enlisted man – is a Silicon Valley techpreneur and investment banker with an emphasis on very early-stage technology companies. He argues that the founders of a business startup should develop a formal and rigorous selection process for employees and to codify the culture of the organization in the early days of its existence. Read [“Imperfections, Special Forces, and Entrepreneurship”](#), *Havoc Journal*, January 8, 2021.

CA – Preventing Conflict and Promoting Stability. Assad Raza, an Army Civil Affairs officer, sees an opportunity for the Civil Affairs community to take a lead role in establishing coordination and communication structures at the operational levels to advance conflict prevention and stabilization in fragile states. Read his article entitled [“Civil Affairs: A Collaboration Tool for the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability”](#), *Eunomia Journal*, January 8, 2021.

Memorial for MG (Ret) Eldon Bargewell. A memorial is planned to honor MG Bargewell in his home town of Hoquiam, Washington. Bargewell earned many honors during his service to the nation – including the Distinguished Service Cross, 6 Bronze Stars (3 with V), and 4 Purple Hearts. He was a recipient of the [2010 Bull Simons Award](#) given by the U.S Special Operations Command. Learn how to donate to the memorial at the [Eldon Bargewell Memorial Group](#).

160th SOAR’s SOA-ATT. The Special Operations Aviation – Advanced Tactics Training (SOA-ATT) is a cutting-edge rotary-wing training pipeline for the 160th Special Operations Air Regiment. SOA-ATT prepares the 160th aircrews and staff to operate in contested and denied environments against sophisticated adversaries. Read [“Special Ops Aviation Unit Hones Tactics in Desert”](#), Association of the United States Army, January 5, 2021.

ARSOF News (cont)

SF Doctor Recognized. Lt. Col. Larry Wyatt, the director of the U.S. Special Operations Command's medical clinic, [received the Soldier's Medal](#) for his actions during a recent motorcycle accident where he provided life saving aid to others even though he was severely injured by a motorcycle that struck him. (*Task & Purpose*, Dec 30, 2020).

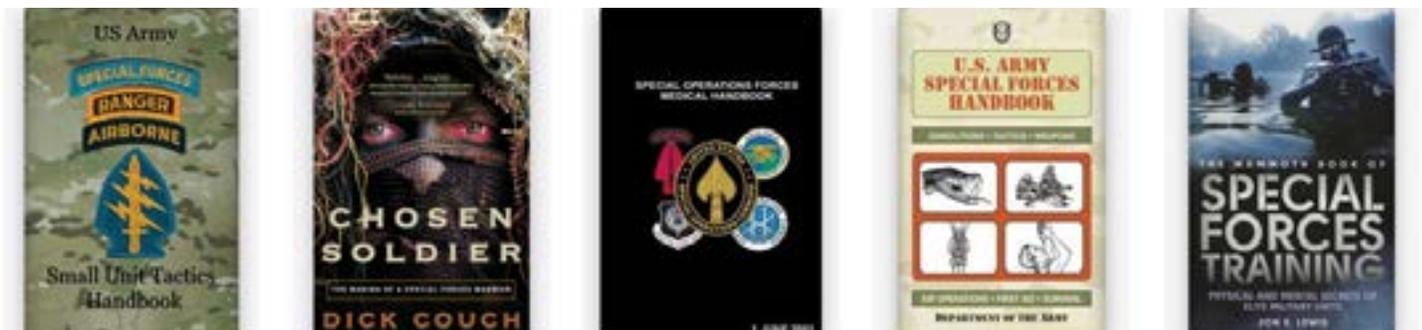
SFCDQC at Key West. Abraham Mahshie fills us in on the latest at the Special Forces Combat Diver Qualification Course. Read ["Waging war below the waves: Special Forces combat diver school is in session"](#), *Washington Examiner*, December 26, 2020.

SFA Membership Drive. The [Special Forces Association](#) is in the middle of a 90-day effort to increase its membership. Each of the 89 SFA Chapters spread across the nation (and world) are reaching out to current, inactive, and SF Alumni to invite them to participate in chapter events and activities. Currently the active SFA membership is over 10,000.

U.S. SF 'Hard Target Defeat' Companies. Read an interesting article about 1st Special Forces Command's new (or revised?) DA units. The move is possibly a shift in mission that will prepare for higher-end fights with Russia and China. ["The Army is Training Specialized Companies of Green Berets to Crack Hard Targets"](#), by Joseph Trevithick, *The WarZone*, December 2, 2020.

More ARSOF News. A member of the Special Forces Regiment, CWO4 (Ret) Harry D. Rider, Jr., [has passed away](#). A 7th SFG(A) soldier [died suddenly](#) after an illness. A woman who [graduated from Ranger School](#), Lt. Col. Lisa Jaster, talks about earning respect. A recent article about MoH recipient and SF soldier Roy Benavidez [provides details on his mission](#) in Cambodia during the Vietnam War.

CA NCO on Perspectives of Success. A Civil Affairs NCO (and former CA team leader) believes that accurate reporting on the operational environment will assist the command in making the right decisions. Read ["Unsolicited Advice from a Former Team Sergeant"](#), *Eunomia Journal*, The Civil Affairs Association, December 14, 2020.



AFSOC

Training to be one of the Air Force Elite. Logan Nye describes the training events Air Force combat controllers undergo to become qualified. After basic training they attend a two-week screening course. Those selected go on to the Combat Control Operator Course, Airborne School, Basic Survival School, Combat Control School, Special Tactics Advanced Skills Training, Military Free Fall Parachutist School, Combat Divers School, and Underwater Egress Training. Read a description of each course in [“Here’s what training is like for the Air Force’s elite”](#), *We Are The Mighty*, January 29, 2021.

919 SOCES Fire Dawgs. The 919th Special Operations Civil Engineer Squadron’s fire fighters trains for wartime deployments. Many of the members of the reserve unit are employees of civilian fire and emergency medical services departments – so their skills are very up to date. See [“919 SOW Firefighters on the flightline”](#), 919th SOW, January 29, 2021.

USAF SERE School Adjusts Training – Attrition Rate Lowers. The elite survival school used to be a demanding course where half of the students would wash out. Some [adjustments to the training style](#) and culture has brought the attrition rate to a very low level. (*Military.com*, Jan 17, 2021).

Improvements in AFSOC Pilot Training. A new program entitled “Pilot Training Next” has been implemented to improve pilot training. The program includes virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and data analytics in its instruction. [“AFSOCs historic first PTN team takes flight”](#), 492d Special Operations Wing, January 11, 2021.

POL Keeps AFSOC Aloft. Read up on the activities of POL Airmen of the 27th Special Operations Logistics Readiness Squadron and how they keep AFSOC’s planes flying. [“Petroleum, Oil, and Lubricants: Fueling the Force”](#), DVIDS, January 12, 2021.

23rd STS and Hurricane Relief. Members of the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron responded to humanitarian situations in Central America. The region was suffering from the effects of Hurricanes Eta and Iota. [“Special Tactics augments hurricane relief effort in Honduras”](#), AFSOC, December 17, 2020.

AFSOC Airman is “Communicator of the Year”. U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Brett Majesky earned the [Special Operations Forces Communicator of the Year Award](#) for his performance in 2020 by providing significant contributions to the special operations forces mission. (DVIDS, Nov 25, 2020).

Helicopter upgrade. The 512th Rescue Squadron of the 58th Special Operations Wing at Kirtland Air Force Base will be [getting some upgraded](#) helicopters.



MARSOC News



Marine Recon and AF Special Operators Train in Pacific. A select group of Airmen from the 320th Special Tactics Unit recently trained with Marines from the 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion at the Jungle Warfare Center on Okinawa. Read [“How the Air Force is making Marine recon better”](#), *Air Force Times*, January 22, 2021.

MARSOC – “Enabling Strategic Success”. Paul Bailey, a U.S. Marine officer with experience in both conventional and SOF operations, argues that MARSOC has an opportunity to understand and shape violent, fragmented, and political competition and conflict. He says that MARSOC should recognize some current deficiencies that will allow it to win in long-term strategic competition and conflict. [“Enabling Strategic Success: How MARSOC Can Help Overcome ‘Simple-Minded’ Militarism”](#), *Small Wars Journal*, January 11, 2021.

MK-13 Sniper Rifle. Marine Scout Snipers, Marine Recon, and MARSOC operators are using the MK-13 as a primary weapons system to hit targets beyond 1,000 meters. Read [“What Makes the Marine Corps’ MK-13 Sniper Rifle So Deadly?”](#), *The National Interest*, January 5, 2021.

SOF, Marines, EABO. Gordon Richmond, a Special Forces officer assigned to the 1st Special Forces Group, wrote an article that argues SOF and the Marine Corps should collaborate on Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO). [“The Marines and America’s Special Operators: More Collaboration Required”](#), *War on the Rocks*, December 29, 2020.



NSW News

1st Navy SEAL Passes Away. A man that some recognize as [‘the first Navy SEAL’](#) has died. Harry Beal died at the [age of 90](#). He entered the Navy in 1948 and became part of the underwater demolition team in 1955. According to many newspaper accounts he was the first person to volunteer for the U.S. Navy SEALs.

SEAL Training Area Approved. A number of state parks in Washington state have been approved for Navy SEAL training by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. The approval came in a 4-3 vote. There were some opponents to the training concept. One concerned citizen said that the proposal didn’t fit the state parks’ core values of preservation, public enjoyment, excellence, transparency and kindness. See [“Navy gets approval for state park training”](#), *Peninsula Daily News*, January 30, 2021.

Navy SEALs Training in Washington State Parks? The Navy would like to conduct special operations training in 28 Washington State parks. The Sierra Club of Washington is opposed to the proposal. Many people commenting on the SEALs training in state parks feel that it would be a ‘creepy’ situation. The proposal is under review by the state parks commission. See [“Coming soon to a Washington state park near you: Navy SEAL training exercises?”](#), *Tri-City Herald*, January 22, 2021.

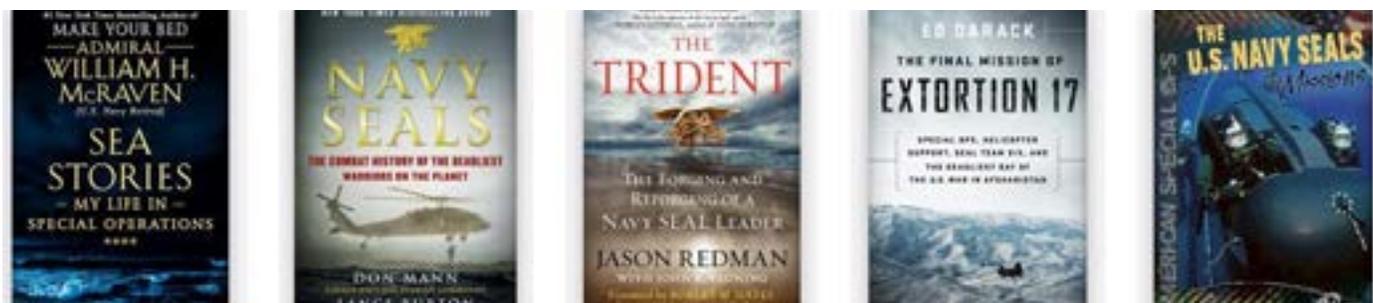
SEALs and Army Helicopters. An interesting article about the raid to kill Osama Bin Laden and how the SEALs got into and out of Pakistan. [“A Detailed Look at the Helicopters Used by Navy SEALs”](#), *Hotcars*, January 18, 2021.

A Brief on Navy SEAL Training. Read about the training that Navy SEALs undergo to be assigned to a SEAL team. [“All US special operators train for combat diving, but Navy SEALs take it to another level”](#), *Business Insider*, January 17, 2021.

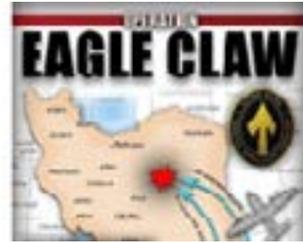
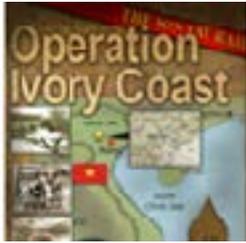
USSOCOM’s CCA’s. A detailed article provides a description of the United States Special Operations Command’s Combat Craft Assault. Very good description and some good photos about the key features of the CCAs. [“USSOCOM Combat Craft Assault Photo Reveals Some Key Features”](#), *Naval News*, December 28, 2020.

Navy SEAL Legacy Boats. See also: an informative article about some of the [legacy small boats](#) that SEALs have used in the past for training and operations. (*Naval News*, Jan 30, 2021).

Navy SEAL Officer Selection. Stavros Atlamazoglou describes the four different traditional paths to become a Navy SEAL officer. [“Navy SEAL Officer Selection: Everything You Need to Know”](#), *SANDBOXX*, December 21, 2020.



SOF History



Confederate Rangers and Captured Generals. An audacious rebel raid into Union territory during the Civil War netted two distinguished Union general officers. [“Looking Back 1865: How Cumberlanders Saw McNeill’s Rangers Raid”](#), *Cumberland Times-News*, January 25, 2021.

British Resistance Networks – WWII. A video provides some history about the Auxiliary Units that would resist a German occupation of Britain. The 46-minute long film tells the story about Churchill’s secret resistance army. There were over 5,000 auxiliary units established in the early 1940s. The video is titled [“Welcome to Hitler’s Britain”](#). An introduction to the video is provided by Alan Malcher, a military historian and defence journalist (Jan 26, 2021).

1st Ranger Battalion. On January 31, 1974 the first battalion-sized Ranger unit since World War II was activated. 1st Ranger Battalion 75th Infantry was formed to be an elite, light, and very proficient infantry unit.

6th Ranger Battalion. On January 30, 1945 a combined force of 6th Ranger Battalion, Alamo Scouts, and Philippine guerrillas rescued over 500 prisoners of war at the Cabanatuan POW camp in the Philippines. Read a detailed account in [“Rescue at Cabanatuan”](#), *Veritas*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2018.

“Ballad of the Green Beret”. 55 years ago (Jan 30, 1966) Barry Sadler performed this song on television on The Ed Sullivan Show. SSG Sadler served with 7th Special Forces Group as an SF medic. It was the number 1 song for [several weeks in 1966](#).

Tet Offensive. In late January 1968 the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong launched a country-wide offensive that caught U.S. and South Vietnamese troops by surprise. U.S. special operations personnel were active participants in this months-long battle and several lost their lives. Several Special Forces camps were besieged and a few were overrun.

Dissecting Operation Eagle Claw. The attempt to rescue 52 hostages held captive in the American Embassy in Tehran, Iran in 1980 was aborted as a result of mechanical failures with the helicopters. Edward Chang digs into the circumstances of the helicopter failures and says “What if?”. Read more in [“How the Iran Hostage Rescue Was Supposed to Go Down If It Hadn’t Ended Early in Disaster”](#), *The Drive War Zone*, January 28, 2021.

Podcast – Analysis in Combat: The Story of Desert Storm. In 1991 22 CNA analysts and field representatives deployed to the Persian Gulf to provide support to the military. They served on Navy ships, Marine Corp forward bases, and Joint command centers. They tell their stories in Episode 78 a CNA who deployed with the Navy discusses his role in the conflict. Center for Naval Analysis (CNA), January 13, 2021, 35 mins. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/cna-talks/id1198761728>

MACV-SOG Established. On Jan 24, 1964, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Studies and Observations Group was established in South Vietnam to conduct special operations throughout Southeast Asia. The special operations task force was commanded by a U.S. Army Special Forces colonel. Many Central Intelligence Agency programs were transferred to SOG. SOG members came principally from Special Forces but also included Navy SEALs, USAF, Marine Force Recon, and CIA personnel. Missions included SR, DA, sabotage, PR, PSYOP,

SOF History (cont)

counter-intelligence, and bomb damage assessments (BDAs). SOG had three geographical commands – CCN, CCC, and CCS – Command and Control North, Central, and South.

https://www.army.mil/article/216498/macv_sog_history

A Little PSYOP History. On January 23, 1918 the Psychologic Subsection of the War Department was created. It came under MI-2, Military Intelligence Branch, Executive Division, War Department General Staff. Another organization was the Propaganda Section under G-2, General Headquarters, American Expeditionary Forces in France. Over 50 million leaflets were delivered in modified artillery shells and leaflet bombs dropped from airplanes on enemy units on the Western Front. Psychological operations has been used by the U.S. to influence

the enemy and destroy their will to fight for over 100 years. Read more about the early history of PSYOP in [“100 years of subterfuge: the history of Army psychological operations”](#), *Army.mil*, June 28, 2018.

Deactivation of 6th Rgr Bn – 75 Years. In December 1945 the 6th Ranger Battalion held its deactivation ceremony in Kyoto, Japan. Their Acting Battalion Commander, Major Arthur ‘Bull’ Simons, took the final report from his senior enlisted leader during the last formation. The 6th Ranger Battalion took part in several combat actions during World War II. [“75th Anniversary of the deactivation of the 6th Ranger Battalion”](#), USASOC History Office, January 6, 2021.

Historic Camp Mackall. The Special Forces community is very acquainted with Camp Mackall – a training base for SF located west of Fort Bragg, North Carolina. This camp has over 8,000 acres of land with about eight major training sites. Camp Mackall had an important role to play during World War II. In 1943 it was home to three newly formed units of the 11th, 13th, and 17th Airborne divisions. [This article](#) explores the WW II history of Camp Mackall as well as its modern day mission of training Special Forces soldiers and units. By Lt. Col. (Ret) Robert P. Curtin, *Pine Straw Magazine*, (date unknown).

OSS and the Congressional Country Club. The US government leased a golf club from 1943 to 1945 to train OSS commandos, saboteurs, and spies for World War II. [“Where Soldiers Trained in the Art of Sabotage During World War II”](#), *Coffee or Die Magazine*, January 5, 2021.

James Richardson – RIP. One of the last surviving members of the World War II jungle fighting unit known as Merrill’s Marauders has died at age 99. [“James Richardson, soldier in Merrill’s Marauders, dies at 99”](#), *AP News*, December 30, 2020.

Operation Ivory Coast – 50 Years. On the night of November 20-21, 1970 (50 years ago) a group of Green Berets supported by aviation crews conducted a raid on a POW camp in North Vietnam. There were no POWs in the camp but the raid prompted the centralization of the POWs and morale improved for the prisoners.

MG (Ret) Victor Hugo – RIP. The Office of Strategic Services Society has put together a tribute to [Major General Victor J. Hugo, Jr.](#) who was recently laid to rest on November 13, 2020 in Arlington National Cemetery. He was a key player in the special operations community for decades. View the video at this link: <https://vimeo.com/477261473/5ec5854d98>

History of 11th Special Forces Group. Robert Seals is a historian in the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) History Office. He is requesting assistance with his historical research into the [11th Special Forces Group](#). Seals is writing a historical article for [Veritas Magazine](#) of the 11th and would like to hear from any of it’s former soldiers. He is looking for historical facts, interesting stories, and some good pictures.

Desert Storm History



Photo: Air Force SOF conducted the first rescue of Operation Desert Storm when an MH-53J Pave Low from the 20th SOS rescued a downed USN F-14 pilot deep within Iraq's borders. In this photo, U.S. Navy Lt. Devon Jones, left, running towards the Pave Low, piloted by U.S. Air Force Capt. Thomas J. Trask.

Thirty Years Ago. The 30-year anniversary of Operation Desert Storm has arrived.

Air Campaign. In January 1991 the United States and other Coalition forces commenced an air campaign designed to destroy the Iraqi Air Force, its air defense network, command and control network, and other strategic targets. Almost 3,000 aircraft took part in the air campaign. Once the strategic targets were hit and air superiority was acquired the air attack on tactical units on the ground near the Saudi – Kuwaiti border began.

SOF and the Air Campaign. SOF air units took part in the air campaign – both rotary and fixed wing aircraft providing vital support. Special Forces units provided Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) support from various air bases in Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations. In addition, an element of the 10th Special Forces Group attached to Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) provided CSAR support from bases in Turkey (Incirlik, Batman, and Diyarbakir).

The 30-Year War. Steven Leonard, a former senior military strategist and author / writer, reflects on his service in Iraq spanning a few decades. [“Chasing Shadows in the Desert: The Legacy of the Other Thirty Year’s War”](#), *Clearance Jobs*, January 19, 2021.

Video – The Rescue of Slate 46. One of the most famous missions of Operation Desert Storm was the Combat Search and Rescue (SAR) performed by the 20th Special Operations Squadron on January 21, 1991 to recover two pilots who had been shot down by an Iraqi SAM in the first hours of the morning of the fourth day of the war. “SOF Stories” by Global SOF Foundation, January 14, 2021, 1 hour.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jW52m7gRt8Y>

Rescue of SOF Team. Read an account of an F-16 pilot coming to the [rescue of a special operations team](#) 400 miles behind enemy lines in Iraq in 2003. (*The War Zone*, Dec 18, 2020).

Things That Keep SOF PAOs Busy

More SOF News – But in a Bad Way. The last few months have seen some tragic events take place in the special operations community. Many of these events have put the SOF community in an extremely bad light and have no doubt kept the SOF public affairs officers busy into the evening.

GB Shoots Up a Bowling Ally While on Leave. A 7th SFG(A) NCO has been [arrested in connection](#) with the death of three people in a shooting in a [bowling ally and bar](#) in Illinois on December 27, 2020.

Former Group Cdr Arrested. A former 1st SFG(A) group commander was arrested on charges of domestic violence on December 27, 2020 after a [two-hour long standoff](#) with police officers. COL Owen Ray was armed with [a rifle and pistol](#) when the police arrived at the family residence. Ray currently is the Army's I Corps chief of staff.

Derogatory Comments. The battalion commander overseeing Ranger School's Mountain Phase in Georgia has been [relieved over 'derogatory comments'](#).

The Military and the Elections. General (Ret) Tony Thomas, former commander of JSOC and USSOCOM, called out LTG (Ret) Mike Flynn over his inappropriate call for the [military to overturn](#) the presidential election.

ND by 10th SFA(G) GB. The [first female Green Beret](#) had the misfortune of having her first negligent discharge with a weapon. Apparently it happened in her off post dwelling on December 12, 2020 and the handgun round [entered her neighbor's dwelling](#) – no injuries fortunately. She faces a [civilian misdemeanor charge](#) for the incident. So . . . if a ND happens in the office or team room it would be called a [Desk Pop](#); but what is it called if in your private home?

SF MSG Found Dead on FBNC. MSG William Lavigne was found dead along with one other person on a Fort Bragg training area on December 2, 2020. He was assigned to USASOC. CID is investigating. Read a press [release by USASOC](#) for more info. A [death certificate](#) filed for the soldier indicates he was a victim of a homicide – having died of multiple gunshot wounds. In March 2018 LaVigne shot to death SFC Mark Leshikar – a fellow Green Beret. The slaying was ruled as “justifiable homicide”. LaVigne was due to appear in court in January 2021 on a ‘hit and run’ charge.

Former Green Beret to be Extradited. An ex-Special Forces soldier, Mike Taylor, is facing the prospect of jail in Japan for his alleged role in the escape of Carlos Ghosn from Japan to Lebanon. According to his lawyers, the case against Taylor is suspect - there is no law that prohibited his activities in Japan. His lawyers also cite poor prison conditions and instances of mistreatment and torture in Japanese prisons. See [“Pompeo extradites former Green Beret Mike Taylor to Japan”](#), *Connecting Vets*, October 29, 2020. Another article provides even more details – [“Give the Rambo Who Got Ghosn out of Japan a Medal”](#), *Asia Times*, December 30, 2020.

‘MARSOC 3’ to Face Trial. Two Marine Raiders and a Navy corpsman from the 3rd Marine Raider Battalion are facing trial on charges that include involuntary manslaughter and negligent homicide. The charges stem from an incident on New Year's Day 2019 and the death of a former Green Beret on a contract assignment in Iraq. The trials [are scheduled for](#) March and April 2021. (*The Daily News*, Jan 25, 2021).

Navy SEAL Sentenced to Prison. The SEAL who choked a Green Beret to death has pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter and will spend the next ten years in prison. He also was reduced in rank to E-1, lost pay and allowances, and will be dishonorably discharged. Navy SEAL Chief Petty Officer Tony DeDolph had strangled to death Army Staff Sgt. Logan Melgar, a Special Forces soldier assigned to the 3rd Special Forces Group. They were part of an intelligence operation in Mali supporting CT efforts against an al Qaeda local affiliate. Read more in [“Navy SEAL Who Choked Green Beret to Death Sentenced to 10 Years”](#), *Daily Beast*, January 23, 2021.

SOF and Great Power Competition

SOF, GPC, and the Future. A short article about special operations and great power competition. [“Great Power War: How U.S. Special Operations Forces See the Future”](#), *Defence Aviation Post*, December 28, 2020.

CA, SOF, GPC, IW, and Training. Three Civil Affairs officers provide their perspective on the role that Civil Affairs can play in bridging planning gaps and seams between conventional and special operations forces in an Irregular Warfare environment. They specifically take a close look at the training the 83rd CA BN is conducting to fulfill this important role. [“Building a Bridge: Cultivating an Irregular Warfare Mindset in the 83rd Civil Affairs Battalion”](#), *Eunomia Journal*, The Civil Affairs Association, December 28, 2020.

Espionage in 2020. The past year has seen several high-profile espionage cases hit the headlines. As expected, China and Russia made the top of the list for their exploits in targeting the United States in order to acquire information and technological know-how. These cases include China’s “Thousand Talent Program”, the penetration of the Department of Energy, recruiting of U.S. citizens for spy purposes to include a [Special Forces officer spying for Russia](#), and Russian SolarWinds Orion software exploit. Read more in [“The Top 5 U.S. Espionage Cases of 2020”](#), *Clearance Jobs*, December 30, 2020.

Sweden and NATO. The Swedish parliament has voted in favor of a ‘NATO option’ which will allow the country to join the alliance in the future. Joining NATO would be a big policy shift for Sweden – ending 200 years of Swedish military neutrality. Russia, of course, plays a big part in the national security environment of Sweden. [“Sweden edges closer to NATO membership”](#), *Politico*, December 22, 2020.

China, SOF, and GPC. Kaley Scholl provides an interesting and informative essay on US SOF and competition with China. Read [“The Use of US Special Operations Forces in Great Power Competition: Imposing Costs on Chinese Gray Zone Operations”](#), *Small Wars Journal*, December 7, 2020.

IW and GPC. The Defense Department’s [Irregular Warfare Annex](#) to the National Defense Strategy has generated a wealth of articles about IW and the role it plays in great power competition. Kevin Bilms, the IW team chief in the [Office of ASD SO/LIC](#), provides his views on the topic in [“Better understanding irregular warfare in competition”](#), *Military Times*, January 1, 2020.

Russian Cyber Attack. In December 2020 it was revealed by U.S. government and private cyber security organizations that Russian penetration of computer networks had taken place for several months. This attack by the Russians was seen as sophisticated and damaging. Cyber security experts say that the targeting of government and private sector information technology (IT) networks was accomplished through software provided by SolarWinds – a firm that makes IT management products for business and government customers. [Read more](#) in *SolarWinds Attack – No Easy Fix*, Congressional Research Service (CRS), December 18, 2020, pdf, 3 pages. The widespread [Russian cyber infiltration](#) across U.S. government networks are a sign of how great power competition will play out in the 21st century. (*Lawfare Blog*, Dec 18, 2020). Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that Russia was “pretty clearly” the responsible party for the infiltration of nuclear laboratories and various agencies of the Pentagon.

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Books, Reports, and Publications

Book Excerpt – A Trip to Dover. Jessica Donati is the author of *Eagle Down: the Last Special Forces Fighting the Forever War*. Read a short excerpt of her book where a visit to Dover to meet a fallen warrior is described. See [“The hidden cost of America’s forever war: Young love lost”](#), *Air Force Times*, January 21, 2021.

Book Review: *Eagle Down*. Carl Forsling [reviews a book](#) by Jessica Donati that highlights the difficulties of Special Forces teams fighting in remote areas of Afghanistan with constraining rules of engagement and limited support. Read the review of *Eagle Down: The Last Special Forces Fighting the Forever War*. (*Coffee or Die Magazine*, Jan 8, 2021).

Book Review – *Three Wise Men*. The book tells the story of the three Wise brothers – a Navy SEAL, a Green Beret, and a Marine. Two of the brothers die in Afghanistan. One was working as a security contractor on a high-profile CIA mission and the other from wounds sustained in an intense firefight. Read the review in [“Three brothers: a Navy SEAL, Green Beret and the Marine sole survivor”](#), *Marine Corps Times*, January 5, 2021.

Report on IS in the Philippines. A [62-page report](#) helps us to understand the evolving nature of Islamic State-linked activity in the Philippines and its regional implications. Read *Rising in the East: the Evolution of the Islamic State in the Philippines*, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, December 30, 2020.

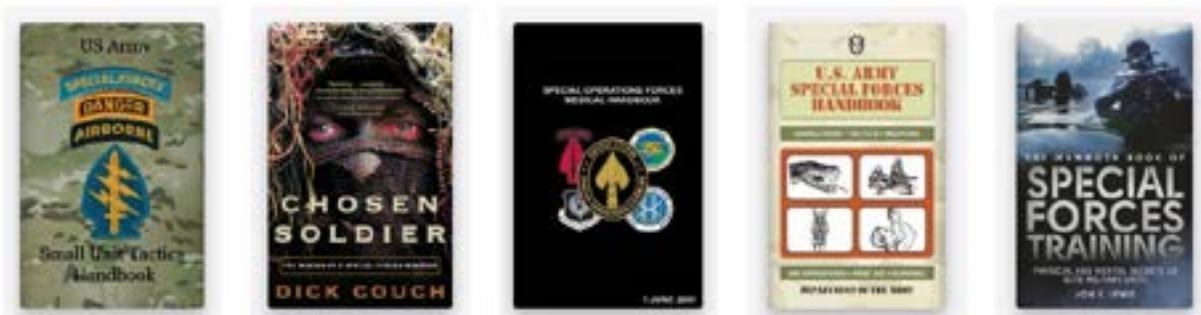
Marine Corps Gazette. There are several [SOF related articles](#) in this latest issue. These include “Intelligence-Driven Operations”, “A Letter from the MARSOC Commander”, “Green Water SOF”, “Irregular Warfare”, and “SOF and the ARG/MEU”. January 2021, PDF, 108 pages.

Infantry Magazine. The Winter 2020 issue is now available. The 68-page PDF has a number of [interesting articles](#) to include “Advising Lethality: What the SFAB Brings to the Fight”.

Transformation Through Training. The [December 2020 issue](#) of the magazine of NATO’s Joint Force Training Centre (Bydgoszcz, Poland) is now online.

CRS Report on SOF. The Congressional Research Service published a 12-page report entitled *U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress*, CRS, December 3, 2020, PDF. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RS/RS21048>

Book Review: *Across an Angry Sea: The SAS in the Falklands War*, *Small Wars Journal*, November 28, 2020. [Read the review](#) by Matthew Hughes.



Podcasts, Videos, and Movies



Podcast – SOF and GPC. Tim Ball, a Special Forces officer and fellow in FPRI's National Security Program, presents his views on national security priorities and the role that special operations forces will likely play in great power competition. *Chain Reaction*, January 26, 2021, 25 minutes.

<https://www.spreaker.com/user/foreignpolicyresearchinstitute/jan-26-tim-ball-mixdown>

Video – Psychological Operations – Narrative. Col. Jeremy Mushtare, Dr. Ajit Maan, and LTC (Ret) Brian Steed discuss the concept of narrative and its impact on influence. *The Indigenous Approach*, 1st Special Forces Command, January 29, 2021, 1 hour.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2-m9CHG7sw>

Movie Trailer – Boss Level. A retired special forces officer is trapped in a never ending time loop on the day of his death. This action / Sci-fi film looks to be entertaining (based on the trailer) and comes out in March 2021. (YouTube, Dec 14, 2020, 2 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=At5FI9wRLII>

Podcast – CSM (Ret) Rick Lamb – Green Beret and Ranger Legend. The experiences of Rick Lamb (from Operation Eagle Claw to GWOT) and his thoughts of special operations forces are explored in this 2-hour long [podcast](#). *Global SOF Foundation*, Episode 10, Jan 2021.

Podcast – Command Team Corner: Engaged Leadership. Brig. Gen. Steve Marks, the Deputy Commanding General of 1st Special Forces Command, presents his [thoughts on engaged leadership](#). The *Indigenous Approach Podcast*, January 22, 2021, 13 minutes.

Movie – Ashley's War. The story of women serving on Coalition Support Teams (CSTs) that supported special operations forces elements in Afghanistan is coming to the big screen. Gayle Tzemach Lemmon's book is the basis for the movie. The [author is interviewed](#) on why she wrote the book and about the upcoming movie. (*Military Times*, Jan 12, 2021).

Video – SOF Horsemanship. Green Berets from the 5th Special Forces Group participated in a Special Operations Force Horsemanship Course at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, California. The purpose of the advanced horsemanship course is to teach SOF personnel the necessary skills to enable them to ride horses, load pack animals, and maintain animals for military applications in remote and dangerous environments. U.S. Marine Corps video by Lance Cpl. Colton Brownlee, Twenty Nine Palms, DVIDS, posted January 10, 2021, 2 mins.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/779698/sof-horsemanship>

Video – Hurlburt Field 2020 Year in Review. The 1st Special Operations Wing looks back at key events that took place in 2020. December 29, 2020.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/779064/hurlburt-field-2020-year-review>

Podcasts, Videos, and Movies (cont)

Video – 10th Special Forces Group Highlight Video. A short clip depicting all areas of readiness of the 10th SFG(A). DVIDS, 2 mins, Dec 4, 2020.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/776818/10th-special-forces-group-highlight-video>

Podcast – Artificial Intelligence in Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency. Retired Gen. Stan McChrystal and Dr. Anshu Roy discuss the role that information and intelligence play in CT and COIN. They explore how artificial intelligence can assist in tracking and identifying insurgent and terrorist activity. *Irregular Warfare Podcast* at Modern War Institute at West Point, January 1, 2021, 51 minutes.

<https://mwi.usma.edu/artificial-intelligence-in-counterterrorism-and-counterinsurgency-with-retired-gen-stan-mcchrysal-and-dr-anshu-roy/>

Podcast – Shots from the Field with Col Allison Black. Air Force Colonel Black, a pioneering aviator in Air Force special operations, started out as an enlisted SERE specialist, became an officer and AC-130H navigator, and now is a leader in AFSOC. Listen to her discuss her career, “mission first” philosophy, and more. *SOFCast*, USSOCOM, December 15, 2020, 1 hr 30 mins.

<https://www.spreaker.com/user/sofcast/sofcast-s01-e08-col-black-v07>

Podcast – General Joseph Votel – The Basics Matter. Gen. (Ret) Votel, a former commander of USSOCOM and CENTCOM, provides a candid discussion on decision-making, risk management, and leadership. From *The Green Notebook*, January 3, 2021.

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/1410526/7113775-general-joseph-votel-the-basics-matter>

Video – Special Warfare Training Wing Human Performance. Air Force Special Operations Command is hoping to recruit Airmen to enter the elite group of medical professionals that help train USAF special operators. DVIDS, December 30, 2020, 4 mins.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/763865/special-warfare-training-wing-human-performance>

Video – US Army Military Free Fall HALO Training. Filmed in October 2019 but released by DVIDS on December 21, 2020, this 5 mins long video has some nice jump scenes. B-Roll, DVIDS, Yuma Proving Ground, AZ.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/778011/us-army-military-free-fall-halo-training-b-roll>

Video – MARSOC uses drones in support of training exercise. Watch the launch of a [RQ-21 Blackjack drone](#) in support of a Marine Raider exercise held in December 2020 at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, NC. DVIDS, Dec 11, 2020, 1 minute.

Video – Get to Know Your General. Lt. Gen. Slife, Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) commander is interviewed. He answers questions about himself, his personal interests, and offers words of wisdom to the special operations community. DVIDS, 27th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs, December 30, 2020, 5 mins.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/779191/get-know-your-general>

Video – 352 SOW Winter 2020 Baltic Deployment Wrap-up. The 352nd Special Operations Wing deployed to the Baltic region to train with Danish, Swedish, and Estonian special operations forces. DVIDS, 352nd SOW PA, Dec 30, 2020, 3 mins.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/779013/352-sow-winter-2020-baltic-deployment-wrap-up>

OSS Society Videos. Watch five interesting video events by the Office of Strategic Services Society that explore the history and impact of the OSS and the future of SOF.

https://www.ossociety.org/oh_so_social.html

Podcasts, Videos, and Movies (cont)

Podcast: “*Breaking the Boom-Bust Cycle of Irregular Warfare*”, Modern War Institute at West Point, Dec 18, 2020, 46 mins. Features David Maxwell (SF Col, Ret) and Deak Roh (DASD for SOCT).

<https://mwi.usma.edu/breaking-the-boom-bust-cycle-of-irregular-warfare/>

Podcast: Digital Civil Reconnaissance. Dr. Carrick Longley and Stephen Hunnewell of IST Research discuss Digital Civil Reconnaissance and how it supports Civil Affairs missions. (Dec 14, 2020, 45 mins)

<https://www.civilaffairsassoc.org/podcast/episode/252eb4db/digital-civil-reconnaissance-with-carrick-longley-and-stephen-hunnewell>

Podcast: *The U.S. Withdraws from Somalia*. Tom Joscelyn and Bill Roggio discuss President Trump’s decision to order the withdrawal of a small American force from Somalia. 63 minutes, December 16, 2020.

<https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2020/12/ep-36-the-u-s-withdraws-from-somalia.php>



<https://sof.news/article-submission/>

Guest writers are welcome to submit articles for publishing. Follow the simple and easy guidelines at the above link for more information. A wide range of articles are accepted - to include the topics of special operations news, organizations, training, exercises, and events worldwide. Articles about current conflicts, national security, commentary, and more are welcome as well.



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Unconventional Warriors, The Legacy Endures

The primary mission of the SOA is to unite fraternally, Veterans or members of a branch of the US Armed Forces Special Operations Community who have conducted Special Operations as an operational combat element or provided direct support to that element within an assigned area of operations.

Our members include combat veterans from all wars including WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Panama Grenada, the Balkans, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, as well as those from our most recent conflicts in the global war on terrorism.

MEMBER BENEFITS

The SOA Reunion is held in October in conjunction with the Annual Membership Meeting. The reunion, SOAR, fosters an environment for camaraderie and fellowship to strengthen those friendships forged in battle and the opportunity to make new ones. The 4-day event culminates with the annual banquet celebrating our members and honoring our fallen.



We had a special kind of brotherhood. We would have given our lives for each other, and in some cases, we did. -Jim Butler, SOA Founder

Other programs and services include Scholarships, Video History Project, SOA Riders and the POW/MIA Committee working toward a full accounting for missing and unaccounted for personnel.

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