

Special Operations Forces (SOF)



Special Ops Forces – Talking Points & Takeaways

President Obama has opened new fronts against terrorism through Special Operations Forces. If you want to defeat a shadowy enemy like al Qaeda, you have to be able to fight in the shadows. That's why Obama has expanded the budget of America's Special Operations Forces, and deployed them to more countries, so they can stop terrorism before it starts.

Small Numbers, Big Skills. There are 13,000 Special Operations Forces deployed in 75 countries overseas, including 9,000 divided evenly between Afghanistan and Iraq. Special Operations Forces receive highly specialized military training, and they acquire wide-ranging language and cultural skills so they can blend into their environments.

Special Ops Forces Have Lots of Specialties, and they hail from all branches of the military. The Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and the Air Force have unique Special Operations Forces that fill different roles, from paratroopers and Navy SEALs, to psychological operations and training foreign militaries.

More Special Ops Forces is a good thing, but their ranks cannot be expanded quickly. In 2006, Democratic leaders in Congress called for a doubling of US Special Operations Forces. This is a good project, and a long term one, because it takes a great deal of time to provide the specialized training that is necessary to the Special Operations Forces.

Special Ops Forces Are a Unique Part of the Military



SOF are unique because they are trained with a broad and specialized range of capabilities for specialized missions. They are NOT a substitute for conventional forces, but a necessary adjunct to existing conventional capabilities.

Obama has given Special Operations Forces a major role in combating terrorism

The US cannot deploy its regular military everywhere, and the presence of US troops sometimes leads to accidents or civilian casualties that prompt friends and family of the victims to take up arms against the US. Deploying SOFs can help defuse that problem, while also expanding the fight against terrorism. That's why President Obama has expanded a largely secret war against al Qaeda and other radical groups.

Bigger budget, present in more countries. Obama has asked for a 5.7 percent increase in the Special Operations budget for fiscal year 2011, for a total of \$6.3 billion, plus an additional \$3.5 billion in 2010 contingency funding. SOFs are currently in 75 countries, up from 60 at the start of 2009. Countries include Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yemen. Of about 13,000 Special Operations forces deployed overseas, about 9,000 are evenly divided between Iraq and Afghanistan.

Smoother relations between Pentagon and State Dept & more White House access. Former defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld treated SOFs as an independent force, approving missions in some countries that were so secret that the U.S. ambassador was not told they were underway. The close relationship between Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton appears to have smoothed out the process. SOF commanders have also been granted greater direct access to the White House

Organization of Special Operations Forces

Special Forces are organized **within each military branch, and in a joint "Special Operations Command"** that ensures interoperability and develops joint tasks across branches.



Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF). Consists of Special Forces (Green Berets), Delta Force, Ranger, Special Operation Aviation, Psychological Operations, Civil Affairs as well as Signal and Combat Service Support units. Army Special Operations Command trains, equips, deploys and sustains Army special-operations forces for worldwide special operations supporting regional combatant commanders and country ambassadors.



Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC). As the US Marine Corps component of USSOCOM, it trains, organizes, equips and, when directed by the Commander, deploys task organized, scaleable, and responsive US Marine Corps special operations forces worldwide in support of combatant commanders and other agencies.

Organization of Special Operations Forces



Naval Special Warfare (NSW). The major operational components of Naval Special Warfare Command include Naval Special Warfare Groups ONE and THREE in San Diego, CA, and Naval Special Warfare Groups TWO and FOUR in Norfolk, VA. These components deploy SEAL Teams, SEAL Delivery Vehicle Teams, and Special Boat Teams worldwide to meet the training, exercise, contingency and wartime requirements of theater commanders.



Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC). Including Pararescuers, AFSOC is America's specialized air power. AFSOC's core tasks have been grouped into four mission areas: forward presence and engagement, information operations, precision employment and strike, and special operations forces mobility.

Organization of SOF: Joint Command and Joint Training Across Branches



Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC). Joint Special Operations Command is a joint headquarters designed to study special operations requirements and techniques; ensure interoperability and equipment standardization; plan and conduct joint special operations exercises and training; and develop joint special operations tactics.



Joint Special Operations University (JSOU). Joint Special Operations University's primary purpose is to teach the integrated and synergistic application of SOF functions in accordance with joint special operations doctrine and to ensure that future leaders of SOF understand the joint employment of this potent force to satisfy operational and strategic objectives.

Characteristics of Special Operations Forces

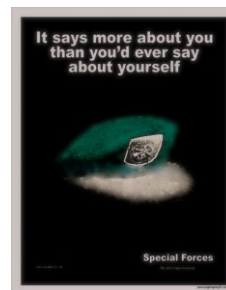
Selection & Training. Undergo careful selection processes or mission-specific training beyond basic military skills (and therefore difficult to quickly expand personnel or capabilities).

Multiple Specialties. Maintain a high level of expertise in more than one military specialty with cross-cultural communication skills are routine training.

Clandestine. Frequently clandestine in nature in order to ensure mission success.

High Level of Readiness. Maintain a very high level of pre-conflict readiness.

The First In. Often in the first echelon of any commitment of US Forces



Special Operations Forces: Basics



Small Units. Encompass the use of small units in direct or indirect military actions focused on specifically defined objectives.

Specialized Training. Require units with combinations of trained specialized personnel, equipment, and tactics that exceed routine capabilities.

Politically Sensitive. Characterized by politically sensitive missions, where only the best equipped and most proficient forces are deployed to avoid detection and possible mission failure that can result in damage to US prestige and interests.

Special Operations Forces have 9 Principal Missions

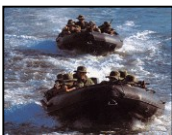
Nine activities have been designated as “Special Operations Principal Missions”



Mission #1: Direct Action (DA). DA operations are short duration strikes and other small scale offensive operations principally undertaken by SOF to seize, destroy, capture, recover, or inflict damage on designated personnel or material.



Mission #2: Counter Terrorism (CT). CT is a highly specialized, resource-intensive mission which includes recovery of hostages or sensitive material from terrorist organizations, attack of terrorist infrastructure, and reduction of vulnerability to terrorism.



Mission #3: Foreign Internal Defense (FID). FID is participation by the United States in actions taken by another government to free and protect its own society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. SOF’s primary contribution in this interagency activity is to organize, train, advise, and assist host nation military and paramilitary forces.

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Mission #4: Unconventional Warfare (UW). UW includes guerrilla warfare, subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, evasion and escape, and other activities of a low visibility, covert, or clandestine nature. When UW is conducted independently during conflict or war, its primary focus is on political and psychological objectives.



Mission #5: Special Reconnaissance (SR). SOF conduct a variety of information gathering activities. SR complements national and theater intelligence collection systems by obtaining specific, well-defined, and time-sensitive info when other systems are constrained by weather, terrain-masking, hostile countermeasures, or conflicting priorities.



Mission #6: Psychological Operations (PSYOPs). PSYOPs aims to shape foreign attitudes and behaviors in line with US objectives and interests. It does so by conducting operations to convey selected information to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals.

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Special Operations Forces have 9 Principal Missions



Mission #7: Civil Affairs (CA). CA is about the relationship between the military and local civilians. It facilitates military operations and consolidates operational activities by assisting commanders in establishing, maintaining and influencing relations between military forces and civil authorities and the civilian population in an area of operation.

Mission #8: Information Operations (IO). IO refers to actions taken to affect adversary information and information systems – such as communications networks – while defending one's own information and information systems.

Mission #9: Counter-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (CP). CP refers to the actions taken to seize, destroy, safeguard, capture, or recover weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

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