

## **THE NATURAL UNION: SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES & THE OBJECTIVE FORCE**

**The evolution of Special Operations and transformation of the army to the Objective Force holds great promise for future military operations. An important aspect of military transformation is to ensure our military capabilities remain dominant and serve our nation well into the future. In the increasingly complex security environment it will be critical to integrate and synchronize the ongoing Special Operations evolution with the leap ahead capabilities of the Objective Force. To be relevant to combat tomorrow's conflicts, both the Objective Force and Special Operations Forces must complement each other across the full spectrum of operations. The natural union of the Objective Force and SOF will occur in three key areas; during pre and post conflict positions, when maximizing combat multipliers, and when creating an overmatch against all threats.**

**Pre and Post Conflict Positions: We do not engage in war merely to defeat an opponent but to achieve a larger strategic goal. Before a conflict begins our nation has engaged in diplomatic, economic and perhaps even certain military activities to avoid war.**

**If conflict is inevitable our military engagement aimed at establishing relations with critical nations will be crucial in determining what our start point is in the war. SOF, particularly the Army's Special Forces, are critical in establishing a positive posture of engagement prior to any conflict. Special Forces through Foreign Internal Defense, Joint Combined Exercises for Training, Security Assistance, Civil Military, and Peace Keeping Operations, continually engage and train foreign indigenous forces, counter subversive elements, and generally promote positive relations. As subject matter experts already in place, Special Forces are the Global Scouts who can act as the vital link for follow-on forces with historical and current information needed to create or establish the Common Operating Picture for the joint force. Additionally, long-standing military to military programs, usually evident through ground forces, often set the conditions for creating regional allies. This allows us access to and through areas into the theater of operations.**

**Special Operations Forces lay the groundwork for local cooperation by fostering military alliances and providing vital links within coalitions. As a crisis builds, SOF inherently are the first element in the country at crisis, carrying out critical tactical reconnaissance or direct action missions that establish the conditions for decisive operational outcomes. While satellites, electronic signatures and other technological intelligence is important, having "eyes and ears" on the ground provides critical information on enemy intent and operations. The current war in Afghanistan bears this out as indigenous and Human Intelligence (HUMINT) sources for information are the number one reliable method of gaining hard intelligence to capture or kill Al Qaeda members, find weapons caches, and disrupt support networks and auxiliaries which support Al Qaeda.**

**This capability applies to future conflicts as well. Future enemies will rely on anti-access threats to delay or deny joint forces entry into theater. Finding, confirming and reducing those threats will fall in part on SOF either in tactical reconnaissance, direct action or by calling in joint firepower. Hostile forces will seek to hide in urban areas amongst the population. Identifying friend from foe and combatant from civilian will not be easy and mandates interaction with the population to root out the enemy. Technology can aid these missions but cannot do it alone. Frankly, the man on the ground, whether it is a Special Operations soldier with advanced cultural insight or a dismounted scout, is required because only a human can determine intent. The Objective Force will rely on SOF to identify an adversary's intent or other changes in the operational environment and SOF will rely on the agility of the Objective Force to rapidly transition as needed to dominate the adversary.**

**While our military can punish any adversary, it is only ground troops that can restore order and set the conditions for lasting peace and stability. SOF ground forces not only train foreign indigenous military forces, they contain the civil affairs proponents that can provide full spectrum advanced civil military operations with interagency integration needed for stability, demobilization and to bring about conflict resolution. Objective Force units will also have the ability to rapidly shift from war to peace when needed. They also have the ability via Psychological Operations units to conduct information operations to sway the local populace and adversaries. The inherent versatility of both Army SOF and The Objective Force continues to serve the nation because it links directly to long-term U.S. National level interests such as regional stability, building democracy, and promoting self-sustainment. Objective Force units and SOF will contain a similar operational focus that takes the long-term view**

### Combat Synergy/Multiplication:

A key tenet of The Objective Force is to develop the situation out of contact. This applies not only at the tactical level where we do not commit maneuver elements until we have situational clarity, but also at the operational and strategic level. LTG Brown of SOCOM has stated "When the Army's Objective Force gets to the Line of Departure, I want Army SOF standing there waiting for them", reflects how the SOF can set The Objective Force up for success. We speak of gaining and maintaining initiative and attacking at a time and place of our choosing. SOF will help us pick that time and that place. Special Operations Forces will serve as the trim tab that enhances the flexibility and agility of the Objective Force to adjust while on the move.

The Objective Force, with its enhanced forcible entry capabilities and operating as part of a joint force, can provide a lethal and maneuverable land force that can take full advantage of the knowledge and insight the Special Operators have already gained and could provide. Special Operations Command and Control elements and or Operational Detachments can quickly link to Army or Joint headquarters or decentralized units while en-route or on the ground and provide valuable time sensitive information, which can ultimately achieve the desired end-state at the region in crisis. SOF can also provide a valuable link to other U.S. agencies that will enhance critical cultural, social and military intelligence.

In the early part of a campaign a well-established Special Operations Task Force, combined with early arriving joint forces may prove decisive in operations short of all out war. In a scenario where an enemy may have multiple sites of Weapons of Mass Destruction the combination of SOF strikes, precision air strikes and rapid seizure by Objective Force units could forestall devastating enemy action. In some cases merely destroying these facilities would be counterproductive from a humanitarian and environmental standpoint and mandate physical occupation. This is a mission well suited to Army Rangers and Navy SEALs that can rapidly deploy to conduct Forced Entry operations from the section to battalion level (Rangers) in the form of deliberate attacks, raids on key facilities / C2 nodes, and larger scale targets of opportunities. Such attacks could precede or be conducted in conjunction with Objective Force assaults. The on board firepower of the Objective Force units plus their embedded links to joint firepower could rapidly expand the capabilities of any committed Special Operations unit on the ground. Conversely, a Special Operations unit may vector in an element of the Objective Force to a target area.

In areas where ethnic strife and internecine warfare is the rule, the cultural and social-economic insights of the Special Operational Detachments, combined with the precision maneuver capability of The Objective Force,

could prove overwhelming to any foe. Conversely, if the mission is the delivery of humanitarian aid, SOF can rapidly focus aid delivery based on detailed knowledge of the situation. In each case, the goal is dominance of the situation and the Special Operations/Objective Force lash-up is critical in achieving that dominance. The combination gives the National Command authority a potent and flexible tool in the non-linear and low intensity conflicts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century security environment.

#### Providing Overmatch:

SOF are designed to create a far greater impact than their relatively small numbers might indicate. They bypass or overcome the power of the state or local force using guile, deception, tenacity and strategy. When we unleash SOF on an enemy state or non-state actor these actors are forced to take certain steps to retain coherency of effort such as consolidate forces, increase security, demonstrate a presence, or conduct operations to find the SOF adversary. In doing so he presents certain vulnerabilities to the conventional forces.

Army Objective Forces can take advantage of the chaos that SOF creates for the enemy. Rapidly deploying and employing elements of the Objective Force can mass either forces or firepower against a foe trying to fend off real or expected SOF attacks. Objective Force units can gain a position of advantage on the ground that overwhelms any enemy. Coupled with lethal precision strike, this provides our joint commander with a combat overmatch against the enemy.

Conversely, an enemy that disperses or digs in surrenders the initiative. He becomes vulnerable to both effective SOF direct action/unconventional warfare, or operations conducted by SOF-led indigenous forces, or a combination of SOF operations and Objective Force offensive operations that defeat the dispersed enemy in detail. In all cases the combination of SOF and transformed ground forces takes the initiative, builds momentum and rapidly finishes an enemy.

The Common Factor: Special Operations and the Objective Force have a common denominator, the soldier. The intense training, emphasis on innovation and decentralized nature of Special Operations are all characteristics of the Objective Force soldier. Both forces will utilize similar technologies, but remain the ultimate sensor and shooter on the ground. Both will rely on HUMINT, whether it is a personal relationship built up with a local indigenous leader, or a scout reporting real time sensitive and critical intelligence. Both will operate in dispersed locations but work towards achieving decisive results. Both will be the product of intense realistic field training and be equipped with the latest technology.

**The complementary relationship of Special Operations Forces and the Objective Force creates a natural union of capabilities that fosters confidence and synergy.**

**The evolution of SOF will continue parallel with the development of The Objective Force. In all regards this will be a mutually supporting development focused on carrying out the most difficult but rewarding military missions this century.**