NATO STANDARD

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ALLIED JOINT DOCTRINE FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Edition B Version 1

AUGUST 2019

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

ALLIED JOINT PUBLICATION

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NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO)

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NATO LETTER OF PROMULGATION

7 August 2019

1. The enclosed Allied Joint Publication AJP-3.5, Edition B, Version 1, ALLIED JOINT DOCTRINE FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS, which has been approved by the nations in the Military Committee Joint Standardization Board, is promulgated herewith. The agreement of nations to use this publication is recorded in STANAG 2523.

2. AJP-3.5, Edition B, Version 1, is effective upon receipt and supersedes AJP-3.5, Edition A, which shall be destroyed in accordance with the local procedures for the destruction of documents.

4. This publication shall be handled in accordance with C-M(2002)60.

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RECORD OF RESERVATIONS

Chapter	Record of reservations by nation
Note: The reservations listed on this page include only those that were recorded at time of promulgation and may not be complete. Refer to the NATO Standardization Document Database for the complete list of existing reservations.	

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RECORD OF SPECIFIC RESERVATIONS

Nation	Detail of reservation
BEL	BEL notes the absence of a NATO agreed definition on NAR/UAR. BEL does not consider Personnel Recovery operations using the described NAR/UAR methods, as a subset of DA capabilities (as listed in Annex A). By absence of any other categorization mentioned in annex A, besides the principal tasks, the ability to conduct PR operations of this nature is considered as a general Level 3 capability.
DEU	With regards to the enabling function of an SOATG for basic airfield operations, maintenance and logistics facilities, DEU recognizes the enabling function only in a HQ C2 as well as in a coordinating role for enabling functions once those functions are provided by other entities. DEU does not recognize providing an integral capability package encompassing the enabling functions of airfield operations, maintenance and logistics facilities and other CS and CSS units.
GRC	AIR: Lack of Infrastructure.
USA	Reservation 1. The United States recommends removal of the text for the term ‘special operations air-land integration’. Effects are either created or generated but not delivered. This integration effort should be capable of being performed in all environments. Reservation 2. The United States recommends using the term ‘law of war’ (also known as the law of armed conflict) in place of “human rights law” or “international human rights law” as the US does recognize IHL or IHRL nor adopt their usages as interchangeable with the law of war. Reservation 3. The United States recommends removal of text characterizing a campaign as a hybrid campaign. Campaigns are not seen as hybrid; characterization sought is most likely an operation.

Note: The reservations listed on this page include only those that were recorded at time of promulgation and may not be complete. Refer to the NATO Standardization Document Database for the complete list of existing reservations.

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References

MC 133/4	*NATO's Operations Planning*
MC 319/3	*NATO Principles and Policies for Logistics*
MC 324/3	*The NATO Military Command Structure*
MC 326/4	*NATO Principles and Policies for Medical Support*
MC 334/2	*NATO Principles and Policies for Host Nation Support*
MC 0411/2	*NATO Military Policy on Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) and Civil-Military Interaction (CMI)*
MC 0422/5	*NATO Military Policy for Information Operations*
MC 472/1	*MC Concept for Counter-Terrorism*
MC 437/2	*Special Operations Policy*
MC 0560/2	*Policy for Military Engineering*
MC 582/1	*NATO Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (JISR) Concept*
MC 586/1	*MC Policy for Allied Forces and Their Use for Operations*
MC 590	*NATO Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Reach Back and Fusion Concept*
MC 653	*SOF Employment Concept in Countering Hybrid Threats*
	NATO Policy on Non-Lethal Weapons
PO 0257	*Political-military advice on the implementation of the adapted NATO structure (2018)*
AAP-6	*NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions English and French*
AAP-15	*NATO Glossary of Abbreviations used in NATO Documents and Publications*
AAP-47	*Allied Joint Doctrine Development*
AJP-01	*Allied Joint Doctrine*
AJP-2	*Allied Joint Doctrine for Intelligence, Counter-intelligence and Security*
AJP-2.3	*Allied Joint Doctrine for Human Intelligence (HUMINT)*
AJP-2.7	*Allied Joint Doctrine for Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance*
AJP-3	*Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*
AJP-3.12	*Allied Joint Doctrine for Military Engineering*
AJP-3.16	*Allied Joint Doctrine for Security Force Assistance (SFA)*
AJP-3.19	*Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-Military Cooperation*
AJP-3.4.4	*Allied Joint Doctrine for Counter-Insurgency (COIN)*
AJP-3.4.5	*Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Stabilization and Reconstruction*
AJP-3.7	*Allied Joint Doctrine for Recovery of Personnel in a Hostile Environment*
AJP-3.8	*Allied Joint Doctrine for Comprehensive Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Defence.*
AJP-3.9	*Allied Joint Doctrine for Joint Targeting*
AJP-4	*Allied Joint Doctrine for Logistics*
AJP-4.5	*Allied Joint Doctrine for Host Nation Support*

AJP-4.6	*Allied Joint Doctrine for The Joint Logistic Support Group*
AJP-4.10	*Allied Joint Doctrine for Medical Support*
ATP-8	*Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*
ATP-71	*Allied Maritime Interdiction Operations*
STANAG 5048	*The Minimum Scale of Connectivity for Communications and Information Systems for NATO Land Forces*
AD 010-020	*Authority, responsibility and obligations of Commander NATO Special Operations Headquarters and SHAPE Director of Special Operations*
AD 080-004	*Implementing NATO's contribution to a Comprehensive Approach in Allied Command Operations*
AD 080-070	*Campaign Synchronization and Joint Targeting in ACO*
AD 083-001	*Medical Support to Operations*

NATO Crisis Response System Manual
NATO Command Structure Review
Bi-SC *Capability Codes and Capability Statements*
Bi-SC *Joint Personnel Recovery Joint Operation Guidelines*
Bi-SC *NATO Command Structure Adaptation Implementation*
Bi-SC *NATO Command Structure Adaptation Annual Implementation Status Report*
Report on the Refinement of the Outline Adapted NATO Command Structure Adaptation Implementation
NATO's Minimum Capabilities Requirements
ACO Forces Standards (AFS) Volume X, *Special Operations Forces*
ACO Forces Standards (AFS) Volume XI, *Special Operations Forces Headquarters and Units Evaluation* (SOFEVAL)
JF HQ SOP 105 *Joint Headquarter Standard Operations procedures - Special Operations*

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Preface

Scope

Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-3.5(B) *Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations* is the foundational doctrine for North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) special operations. It provides doctrine to plan, conduct, and support special operations and builds on the principles described by AJP-3.

Purpose

AJP-3.5 provides joint commanders and staffs with a common framework for Allied special operations across the spectrum of conflict. It describes the characteristics, principal tasks, organization, and command and control of special operations forces (SOF), and explains how to synchronize Allied special operations in joint operations. It further provides an operational level commander the guidance and information necessary to identify, nominate, and select missions appropriate for Allied SOF.

Application

AJP-3.5 is intended primarily as guidance for joint NATO commanders and staff. However, the doctrine is instructive to, and provides useful information for, operations conducted by a coalition of NATO members and partners. If approved for release, it also provides a reference for non-NATO nations and civilian actors.

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Chapter 1 – Overview of Allied special operations

Section 1 - Introduction

1.1 Special operations are military activities conducted by specially designated, organized, trained, and equipped forces using distinct techniques and modes of employment. These activities may be conducted across the full range of military operations, independently or with conventional forces. Politico-military considerations may require clandestine operations and the acceptance of a degree of political or military risk not associated with operations by conventional forces. Special operations create strategic or operational level effects or are executed where significant political risk exists.[1]

Section 2 - Special operations characteristics

1.2 Special operations are, by nature, joint. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) special operations forces (SOF) are organized in a joint manner with land, maritime and air units from the troop-contributing nations (TCN)s, and other domain capabilities constituting a mission-specific special operations component.

1.3 NATO SOF are strategic assets to be employed to help achieve strategic and specified operational level objectives. SOF are commanded through a special operations component command (SOCC) which exist alongside other service or functional component commands with a joint staff to plan and direct special operations.

1.4 NATO will normally conduct special operations in a joint operations area (JOA) with other land, maritime and air forces. It is in this context that an operational level commander creates the greatest synergistic effect with unity of command, operational level integration of forces, and the utilization of NATO's supported and supporting relationship.

1.5 Special operations are normally conducted in uncertain, hostile, or politically sensitive environments. These operations may be conducted using clandestine capabilities/techniques and require mature and highly trained operators.

1.6 Special operations can be conducted independently or in conjunction with operations by conventional forces and may include combined operations, operations with interagency partners, and operations by, with, or through indigenous or surrogate forces. Most SOF operations require non-SOF support.

1.7 Special operations differ from other operations in the degree of political or military risk, operational techniques, modes of employment, dependence on detailed operational

[1] Solely for the purpose of this standard, the term "conventional" is used throughout to identify non-special operations forces. The use of the term "conventional" is not intended to refer to non-nuclear forces or weapons.

intelligence (INT), and use of indigenous assets. SOF personnel undergo a careful selection process and mission-specific training beyond basic military skills to achieve entry-level special operations skills. SOF organizational structures are characterized by flat hierarchies designed for rapid decision making.

1.8 Special operations are an integral part of Allied campaigns. While special operations can be conducted unilaterally in support of specific Allied objectives, the majority of special operations are designed and conducted to enhance the likelihood of success of the overall campaign. Special operations may complement, but must not compete with, nor be a substitute for conventional operations. SOF have training, means, and inherent networking capabilities which can be leveraged to prevent and resolve crises by contributing to a comprehensive approach.

1.9 The successful conduct of special operations relies on individual and small unit proficiency in a multitude of specialized operational skills applied with adaptability, improvisation, innovation, and self-reliance. The small size, unique capabilities, and self-sufficiency (for limited periods of time) of SOF units provide the Alliance with additional options for a military response that may not entail the risk of escalation normally associated with employment of inherently larger or more visible conventional forces.

1.10 Special operations can be conducted directly against an adversary by forces acting in a single engagement, such as a raid against a critical node, or indirectly, for example, by organizing, training, and supporting an indigenous force through military assistance (MA). Special operations also rely on individual competencies/talents and small unit proficiency in a multitude of specialized operational skills such as adaptability, improvisation, innovation, self-reliance and their adaptable planning capabilities.

1.11 High tempo is normally essential to SOF's ability to conduct special operations. Rapid execution of a mission allows SOF to mass precisely tailored combat power at the critical place and time, accomplish the mission and withdraw before the adversary can react. SOF must then be continuously prepared to execute another mission, based on emerging threats and rapid turnover of intelligence. A high tempo offsets small numbers and limited combat power by reducing the adversary's ability to bring its main strength to bear on committed SOF. At the same time, a high tempo provides security through speed, allowing acceptance of a higher degree of risk than would be otherwise possible.

Section 3 - Special operations and the spectrum of conflict

1.12 Special operations may be conducted across the spectrum of conflict and in support of all four operations themes (peacetime military engagement, peace support, security, and warfighting) to fulfil NATO's three essential core tasks (collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security). Special operations are conducted not only within the warfighting operations theme, but also during security, peace support and peacetime military engagement operation themes, and enhancing mutual cooperation. Special

operations missions may include a suitable combination or all of the principal tasks of MA, special reconnaissance (SR), or direct action (DA) depending on the circumstances of each operation.[2] While special operations missions may range from small unilateral actions to large-scale activities of a combined and joint nature, they are tailored to contribute to the achievement of defined strategic political and military objectives (Figure 1.1).

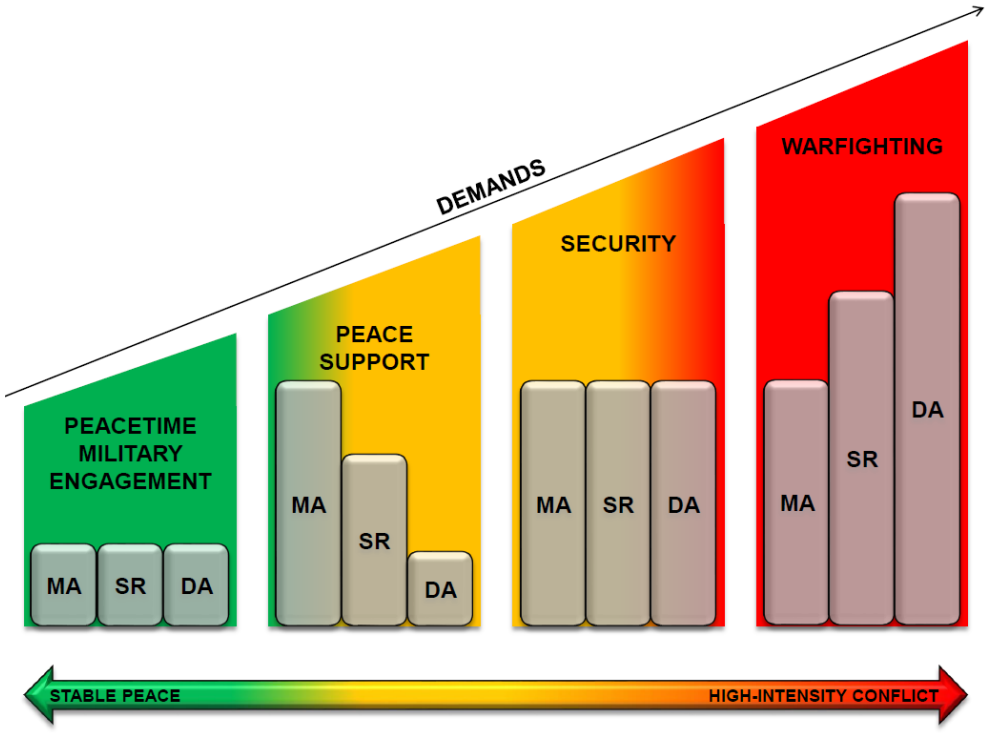

Figure 1.1 - Special operations within the spectrum of conflict (generic example)

Section 4 - Employment of special operations forces

1.13 Although SOF often use sophisticated and unique methods and equipment, the key to success lies with the individual operator. Therefore it is essential that the plans, orders, and procedures that drive their employment are clear and direct so that the commander's intent is understood even for complex operations. For optimal employment of SOF, a fundamental understanding of the following, regarding special operations, is essential:

a. **Early presence.** While a crisis is developing, or a region is potentially unstable, SOF may be deployed to establish an early forward presence and initiate military and civilian liaison, conduct area assessments, provide an early command and control (C2) capability, or advise friendly forces. This provides the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) as the Strategic Commander of Allied Command Operations (ACO) and the operational level commander with an increased understanding of a

[2] See paragraph 2.2.

developing crisis to facilitate decision making and, if required, set conditions to return stability to the region or carry out the initial entry of joint forces.[3]

b. **High value objectives.** Special operations should be employed to achieve high value, critical objectives that may entail high risk, but also have a high pay-off value. The numbers of SOF are limited and they cannot rapidly expand or be easily reconstituted once lost. They should not, therefore, be employed like or as a substitute for conventional forces which rely on manoeuvre and mass. SOF concentrate their combat power directly and indirectly, at decisive times and places. Care must be taken not to fragment the efforts of SOF against targets that are attractive but perhaps more suited for conventional forces. SOF should be assigned tasks that lead directly to the achievement of strategic and operational level objectives.

c. **Access to intelligence.** Special operations are normally planned in considerable detail, and SOF rely on accurate, current INT to ensure that plans are tailored precisely to the situation in the intended target area. Timely access to all available current, relevant, detailed, tailored, and fused all-source INT is essential for a successful operation.

d. **Pre-emption.** SOF may pre-empt an adversary by neutralizing its capabilities before a fight, either independently or in support of conventional forces. The clandestine capabilities for pre-emption may prevent initiation or escalation to a larger conflict. SOF do this through MA efforts to build indigenous defence and INT capabilities and DA on an adversary's critical operational or strategic targets. Deployed SOF can often provide the strategic or operational level commander with the understanding and awareness regarding local population perspectives, intentions, and other information.

e. **Clear command and control relationships.** Because of the nature of special operations, a clear and short chain of command is essential. It is imperative that SOF C2 be closely integrated with the C2 of the joint force, through appropriate liaison and communication and information systems (CIS) interfaces.

f. **Timely decision-making.** ACO and the operational level commander maintain SOF expertise in their special advisor groups[4] to facilitate timely decision-making and take the lead to:

(1) Advise the commander and staff on all issues pertaining to SOF.

[3] Early SOF employment as an enabling force (e.g. w/ activation of predeployment before other NATO forces), particularly in a counterterrorism (CT) or counter-hybrid support role, will generally require host nation (HN) consent and specific legal arrangements/agreements regarding parameters of use and activities. It may also require rules of engagement (ROE). See Military committee (MC) 653, *SOF Employment Concept in Countering Hybrid Threats*, and the *NATO Crisis Response System*.

[4] See MC 437/2, *Special Operations Policy, 2011*.

(2) Coordinate and liaising NATO SOF and national SOF structures and NATO SOF points of presence.

(3) Integrate and synchronize SOF across the full spectrum of conflict in their area of interest.

(4) Integrate a special operations planning and liaison element (SOPLE) when they are attached to the operational level headquarters (HQ).

g. **Operations security (OPSEC).** OPSEC is paramount in special operations because it prevents the adversary from gaining essential information about the type, techniques, strength, and capabilities of the forces participating in the operation. Operations information and products should be protected during all planning and sharing phases, ensuring that the "need to know" is considered. Planning staffs are kept to the appropriate size to ensure quick and agile planning. However, SOF planning should be integrated with the operational level commander's overall campaign to ensure mutual support, appropriate coordination and synchronization, as well as to avoid the risk of friendly fire. Information should be shared by all concerned with the planning of operations. INT, counterintelligence and information operations aspects should all be integrated throughout the planning and execution of special operations to enhance security and achieve surprise.

Section 5 - Special operations operational mission criteria

1.14 The following criteria should be used when evaluating SOF employment:

a. **Permissible.** The mission must be in line with the legal framework and mandate (if applicable) for the operation, including implemented rules of engagement (ROE) and host nation (HN) agreements/consent when required. The objectives have to be achievable within the legal framework given, and if the necessary ROE has not been established, they must be requested. Having the proper authority to conduct the operation is necessary before employing SOF.

b. **Appropriate.** The mission must have a unique aspect that requires the special skills and capabilities of SOF and which renders the mission unsuitable (or less suitable) for action by other assets. Missions for SOF should always accomplish or support commander's objectives by using SOF capabilities. If the mission does not require SOF capabilities to achieve its objectives, another asset should be used. Selecting the right asset for the mission is easier to identify when suitability is addressed early in the decision making process.

c. **Feasible.** The mission must be executable by the SOF assets desired for the execution. If the mission is appropriate, the SOF assets need to be available and able to accomplish the mission to achieve the objective in order to attain the desired end state. SOF element chosen should have the appropriate training, skills, equipment,

planning and rehearsal time, as well as the required INT and cultural understanding to meet the requirements of the operation.

d. **Sustainable.** The mission should be properly supported throughout all phases of an operation (planning, insertion, execution, exfiltration and recovery). Planned support is critical and every SOF asset has sustainment requirements that need to be considered before employment. Even if the target is appropriate, feasible, and vulnerable to SOF, a lack of dedicated support and resources may prevent the execution of a special operation. Considerations include but are not limited to combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) resources, availability of and avenues for resupplying the classes of supply, sufficient INT flow and communications with CIS support. Personnel availability and sustainment through life support and mission related equipment maintenance, should be adequate in order to accomplish and maintain the operation until completion.

e. **Justifiable.** Every mission has risk associated with it. Commanders should recognize the high value and limited resources of SOF employment. They need to ensure the benefits of successful task execution are measurable and in balance with the risks inherent in the task. The expected outcome should justify the potential and known risk to the SOF asset considered for employment. Assessment of risk must take into account not only the potential for loss of SOF assets and equipment, but also the risk of adverse effects on Alliance interests, should the mission fail.

Chapter 2 – Allied special operations forces principal tasks

Section 1 – Introduction

2.1 Special operations forces (SOF) offer the Alliance an additional and unique capability to achieve objectives and perform tasks to create strategic and/or operational level effects that no other forces in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are able to conduct. If, however, they perform tasks that may be conducted by other Alliance forces, they do so with a unique set of conditions and standards.

Section 2 - Principal tasks of Allied SOF

2.2 In the context of Allied joint operations, SOF conduct three principal tasks: military assistance (MA), special reconnaissance (SR), and direct action (DA).

a. **Military assistance (MA).** MA is a broad category of measures and activities conducted by SOF that support, enable, and influence critical friendly assets through training, advising, mentoring, partnering, or the conduct of combined and other operations. MA operations are often executed to increase the level of technical abilities and proficiencies of a partner to help them achieve a certain goal. The planned, agreed or expected timelines of these operations can be significantly affected by indigenous cultural and governmental interests that differ from NATOs. The range of MA includes, but is not limited to, development and improvement, or directly supporting local security forces; military engagement and interaction with non-military actors such as local, regional, and national leadership, ministries or organizations; and actions to support and influence local populations or agencies. SOF may also conduct MA in support of security sector assistance, stability policing activities, security force assistance and/or stabilization and reconstruction missions.[5] More specifically, MA activities may include:

(1) **Training.** These are activities that train designated individuals and units in tactical employment, sustainment, and integration of land, maritime, and air skills, provide assistance to designated leaders, and provide training on tactics, techniques, and procedures, thus enabling a nation to develop individual, leader, and organizational skills.

(2) **Advising.** These are activities that improve the performance of designated actors by providing expertise to designated levels of command to

[5] NATO contributes to a HN's security sector reform (SSR) through security sector assistance. SSR is a comprehensive set of programs and activities undertaken to improve the way a host nation (HN) provides safety, security and justice. See Allied joint publication (AJP) 3.16, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Security Force Assistance*, AJP 3.22, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Stability Policing* and AJP 3.4.5, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Stabilization and Reconstruction*.

achieve strategic or operational objectives. Advising activity may include facilitating, influencing (by means of counsel) and the improvement of friendly forces through the creation of a professional relationship based on trust. It also includes observation, evaluation and reporting on the performance of forces to focus efforts and resources and enable progression through the operational phases.

(3) **Mentoring.** These are activities conducted by teams of subject matter experts who are tasked to work closely with designated personnel and provide direction and guidance to support the development and growth of host nation (HN) commands, agencies, staff, or other officials. Mentoring is about leadership and relationships.

(4) **Partnering.** These are activities that foster increased partner participation in operations. This may include subject matter experts who are tasked to work closely with local personnel, units or governmental organizations to develop appropriate capabilities that are interoperable with NATO forces and structures. Partnering could also include conducting integrated military or security operations with the partnered unit.

(5) **Interagency Support.** These are activities that establish critical relationships to support HN agencies and facilitate comprehensive action between military and non-military actors across the instruments of power. When appropriate, these relationships are transitioned to civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) personnel as NATO's primary facilitators of civil-military interaction (CMI).[6]

b. **Special reconnaissance (SR).** Reconnaissance and surveillance activities conducted as a special operation in, but not limited to, hostile, denied, or diplomatically and/or politically sensitive environments to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance, led by SOF using distinct techniques and modes of employment. SR is used to collect commander's priority intelligence requirements (PIR)s by employing unique capabilities. As part of the Allied theatre intelligence (INT) collection process, SR provides specific, well-defined, and possibly time-sensitive information of strategic or operational significance. SR is also used to gain situational awareness before, during and after operations. It may complement other collection methods where constraints are imposed by weather, terrain-masking, hostile countermeasures, or other systems' availability. SR can place persistent "eyes on target" in a hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environment. SOF can provide timely information by using their judgment and initiative in a way that technical joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (JISR) cannot. SOF may conduct these tasks separately, supported by, in conjunction with, or in support of other component

[6] See Military Committee (MC) 0411/2, *NATO Military Policy on Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) and Civil-Military Interaction (CMI)*.

commands operations. They may use advanced reconnaissance and surveillance techniques, JISR assets and equipment, and collection methods, sometimes augmented by the employment of other assets. Activities within SR can include:

(1) **Environmental reconnaissance.** These are operations conducted to collect and report critical aspects of the environment, including hydrographical, geological, geographical, meteorological, and oceanographic information.

(2) **Threat assessment.** Threat assessments should, whenever possible, be based on accurate and timely INT. SR can assist the different levels of command in determining which elements of an adversary force pose a threat to operations and the friendly force, what are the adversary's capabilities for mounting attacks, what methods are likely to be employed in conducting these operations, and which friendly targets are likely to be attacked. SR also provides the option to observe a target and interpret the behaviour of population and opposing forces over an extended time.

(3) **Target assessment.** These are operations conducted to detect, identify, locate, track, and assess a target to determine the most effective application of military action. This type of operation might also include the assessment of the potential effects (to include collateral damage estimation) of engaging the target.

(4) **Post-action reconnaissance.** These activities are undertaken for the purpose of gathering information for battle damage assessment and operations assessment to measure the results of an application of military action.

c. **Direct action (DA).** DA is a short-duration strike or other small scale offensive action by SOF to seize, destroy, capture, recover, or inflict damage to achieve specific, well-defined and often time-sensitive results. DA differs from conventional offensive operations in the level of risk, techniques employed, and the degree of precision utilized to create a specific effect and usually incorporates a planned withdrawal from the immediate objective area. DA is focused on specific, well-defined targets of strategic and operational significance, or in the conduct of decisive tactical operations. SOF may conduct DA independently, with support from conventional forces, or in support of conventional forces. DA can include:

(1) **Raids, ambushes, and assaults.** These operations are designed to engage specific, well-defined, and often time critical targets, in support of strategic and operational level objectives. They are sometimes beyond the effective strike capabilities of conventional force elements. Such operations typically involve attacking critical targets; interdicting lines of communications or other target systems; capturing designated personnel or material; or seizing,

destroying, or neutralizing adversary facilities or capabilities. An opposed boarding operation is one example of a maritime assault.[7]

(2) **Terminal guidance operations.** These are operations to identify and report the precise location of targets, and to allow non-organic stand-off platforms to use their weapons to effectively engage them. This includes different kinds of communication that provides approaching aircraft or weapons additional information regarding a specific location or target.

(3) **Recovery operations.** These are operations conducted to search for, locate, identify, rescue, and return personnel, sensitive equipment, or items critical to Alliance security from non-permissive or hostile environments. Special operations recovery missions require detailed planning, rehearsal, and thorough INT analysis. These operations employ distinct tactics and techniques, discreet search, and the frequent use of ground combat elements.[8]

(4) **Precision destruction operations.** These are operations in which the avoidance of any collateral damage is given as an operational objective besides the destruction of the target. SOF use highly sophisticated weapons or timed detonation of specific amounts of explosives placed in exact locations to create desired effects. Precision destruction operations can be conducted against targets where precision-guided munitions cannot guarantee first strike success or when the contents of a facility must be destroyed without damage to that facility.

Section 3 - SOF activities within the Allied joint operations

2.3 SOF principle tasks are applied to support—but are not limited to—the activities below:

a. **Counter-insurgency (COIN).**[9] SOF can complement the overarching application of the Alliances' diplomatic, economic, military, and information instruments of power, applied in a COIN role. When preparing for COIN, SOF can provide area assessments and an early command, control, and communications capability. During COIN, SOF could conduct MA, SR, DA, or a suitable combination of these principal tasks to achieve the defined Allied political and strategic objectives. Technical exploitation operations (TEO) to include biometric collection as well as

[7] Opposed boarding operations are maritime special operations, to interdict, assault and take control of a maritime vessel or platform. The threat level for the boarding party is anticipated as very high. Opposed Boarding operations during major maritime interdiction operation (MIO) are described in Allied tactical publication (ATP) 71, *Allied Maritime Interdiction Operations*.

[8] These operations may include selected personnel recovery (PR) missions. Ref AJP 3.7, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Recovery of personnel in a Hostile Environment*.

[9] See AJP 3.4.4, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Counter-insurgency*.

document and media exploitation (DOMEX), should be included in all planning and operations to enhance the success of COIN.

b. **Counterterrorism (CT).** CT is all preventive, defensive and offensive measures taken to reduce the vulnerability of forces, individuals and property against terrorist threats and/or acts, and to respond to terrorist acts. In the frame of the NATO Comprehensive Approach, this can be combined with or followed by measures enabling recovery after terrorist acts.[10] SOF should be utilized when there is high risk, a need for special capabilities, or a requirement for clandestine techniques. SOF can operate in concert with other joint, bi-lateral, or national force efforts or operate independently through the conduct of DA (while minimizing collateral damage), SR, or MA. The success of these operations can be enhanced by the conduct of TEO.

c. **Countering hybrid threats.** NATO SOF is one Alliance tool that is timely, capable and adaptive to operate within ambiguous and sensitive environments below the threshold of military conflict. At the request of a HN, and in conjunction with other Alliance military and non-military capabilities, NATO SOF can support their strategic and operational elements to strengthen national capability development and resilience to hybrid campaigns.[11]

d. **Countering proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)s and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) materials.[12]** SOF are a significant part of NATO's counter-proliferation/trafficking objectives related to WMD and CBRN materials and conduct WMD disablement missions with other specialized elements. WMD disablement operations aim to locate, secure, characterize, eliminate, or dispose of WMD/CBRN weapons, devices and materials. Disablement also disrupts and prevents a potential adversary's capability to research, develop, test, produce, stockpile, deploy, or employ such weapons, devices, and materials. These activities are inherently complex and necessitate the employment of specially trained and equipped personnel. NATO SOF involvement in WMD disablement missions will generally be deferred to those nations possessing these specialized capabilities. In extremis, the authority to utilize other NATO forces, to include NATO SOF, to capture, deter, secure, or assist in CBRN material recovery or WMD disablement missions, might be sought.

e. **Hostage release operation (HRO).** The resolution of a hostage situation or obtaining the release of captured personnel is first and foremost a nation-to-nation responsibility. Under certain circumstances, NATO SOF may be involved in an HRO.[13]

[10] See MC 0472/1, *MC Concept for Counter-terrorism*.
[11] See MC 653, *SOF Employment Concept in Countering Hybrid Threats*.
[12] See AJP 3.8, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Comprehensive Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Defence*.
[13] Further details about HRO are discussed in MC 437/2, *Special Operations Policy*.

f. **Faction liaison.** SOF can liaise with many factions in a joint operations area (JOA) to gain a better understanding of the operating environment, situational awareness, and to collect information. The information available from different factions is often vital in support of special operations. The assignment of capable liaison officers can be especially relevant in supporting MA tasks. They are important for INT partnering/mentoring which should improve the information collection in remote areas in using indigenous elements. The information has to be integrated in the INT process/cycle to develop joint INT preparation of the battle space, disseminate assessments and reports, and support the operations planning process.

Section 4 - Maritime SOF operations

2.4 Maritime SOF tasks include any of the principal SOF tasks, thus maritime SOF units are similarly organised to land SOF units. Maritime SOF primarily conduct operations in the coastal, riverine, and maritime environments. They may utilize small, flexible, mobile units operating under, on, and from the sea. These operations are characterized by stealth, speed, and precise application of force. They may be focused on, but not restricted to, the following activities:

a. Insertion/extraction by sea.

b. Discreet beach reconnaissance (hydrographic survey) in advance of an amphibious operation.

c. Discreet route preparation in advance of an amphibious operation.

d. Coastal reconnaissance.

e. Coastal raids, ambushes, and assaults, including opposed boarding operations.

f. Recovery of ships and maritime installations.

g. Maritime counterterrorism.

Section 5 - SOF air operations

2.5 **General.** Special operations air forces conduct and support each of the SOF principal tasks. In MA, their primary mission is to build friendly nation air capabilities by employing air advisors. In SR, their primary missions are conducting intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance using aerial platforms and inserting/extracting the SR element. The primary mission for DA is providing enhanced air mobility to land and maritime SOF, but may also provide specialized ground attack air platforms not available to conventional forces. These operations, like land and maritime special operations, are not only defined by the equipment utilized, but provide commanders with the capability to reach specific objectives that may not

be achievable through conventional air capabilities and may require dedicated, specially-equipped aircraft and specially trained crews who may use nonstandard procedures (e.g. unique operational techniques).

a. **SOF air missions**. The primary mission of special operations air forces is enhanced air mobility via special air transport (AT) activities using fixed-wing, rotary-wing, or tilt-rotor aircraft. Other special air warfare activities may include air land integration (ALI), close air support (CAS), combat control team (CCT), aerial resupply, airdrop, air-to-air refuelling (AAR), personnel recovery (PR), psychological operation (PsyOp), intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), and medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) / casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) for SOF.

b. **Other air missions in direct support of SOF**. Additional aircraft from supporting air task units[14] offered by a troop-contributing nation (TCN) to a NATO operation in a direct support role, but not certified as special operations qualified, may be accepted and utilized to augment the AT, fire support, and JISR capabilities of NATO SOF. These resources offer an important additional capability that helps the NATO SOF commander address the range of threats, environments, and requirements.

c. **SOF air operations joint air tasking cycle integration**. All SOF air operations will be de-conflicted from operations of conventional forces and integrated into the joint air task cycle through coordination with the air component staff. All requests for additional air support from non-SOF resources, such as AT, CAS, electronic warfare (EW), AAR, suppression of enemy air defences (SEAD), air interdiction (AI), dynamic targeting, defensive counter-air (DCA) and JISR platforms, as a result of mission analysis and planning, will be coordinated with the conventional force through specific liaison elements.

d. **Special operations air land integration (SOALI)**. SOF may depend upon specific capabilities to conduct missions which require the synchronization and integration of air power with special operations land and maritime forces. SOALI is a discipline that orchestrates and enhances the exploitation of the full spectrum of air power, by special operations forces, in special operations environments, to achieve synergistic and extended delivery of effects for the Alliance. Many NATO nations have organized their own forces to plan, prepare and conduct integration, synchronization, and control of space and air power in support of the SOF operations. These forces require individuals who are specifically selected, trained, equipped, and organized to deliver this broad set of capabilities. These capabilities include but are not limited to:

(1) Assessment and establishment of air assault zones or airfields.

[14] Although NATO Allies should benefit from the NATO defence planning process (NDPP) and receive required special operations air task units (SOATU)s from the force generation process, non-SOF air units may be assigned to the SOCC by the TCNs during the force generation process, in order to complement and extend the air capabilities of SOCC.

(2) The conduct of weather observations and air traffic control (ATC).

(3) Fire support coordination and CAS.

(4) Command, control, and communications.

(5) Forward air controllers (FAC)s.

(6) Ground assisted Air Integration.

(7) Facilitate a forward arming and refuelling point (FARP).

Chapter 3 – Organization and command and control of Allied special operations forces

Section 1 – Introduction

3.1 NATO special operations forces (SOF) organization may differ from those that exist at the national levels. Additionally, SOF command and control (C2) relationships should be clearly specified to facilitate the planning process as well as the conduct of special operations.[15]

3.2 The Supreme Headquarters Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), commander of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), employs forces including NATO SOF when required. The SHAPE special operations forces advisor (SOFAD) leads the Office of Special Operations (OSO) within SHAPE and is dual hatted as the NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ) commander; provides special operations advice, theatre SOF component capabilities and other functions to SACEUR, through both the OSO and the NSHQ. OSO and NSHQ are interlinked and complimentary.[16]

Section 2 – Office of Special Operations (OSO)[17]

3.3 The SHAPE SOFAD/NSHQ Commander is the specialist advisor to the Command Group which ensures SOF unity of effort on behalf of SACEUR; provides direction to the SOFADs across the NATO Command Structure (NCS) and NATO force structure (NFS).

3.4 The OSO provides assured theatre SOF component capabilities to SACEUR; delivers situational awareness, understanding, expertise and capacity of the SOF domain for the SHAPE staff; provides special operations liaison to non-Allied Command Operations (ACO) entities and represents ACO at NATO Military Committee working groups. The OSO provides component capabilities and executes component functions, if required, through focused reinforcement from the NSHQ.

[15] The full listing of requisite capabilities that NATO requires from SOF is delineated in, of the two Strategic Commands (Bi-SC), *Capability Codes and Capability Statements*.
[16] See PO (2018) 0257, *Political-military advice on the implementation of the adapted NATO structure*, Military Committee (MC) 586, *MC Policy for Allied Forces and Their Use for Operations*, Bi-SC *NATO Command Structure Adaptation Implementation, Report on the Refinement of the Outline Adapted NATO Command Structure Adaptation Implementation (15DEC2018), Bi-SC NATO Command Structure Adaptation Annual Implementation Status Report (3DEC2018)* and ACO Directive (AD) 010-020, *Authority, responsibility and obligations of Commander NATO Special Operations Headquarters and SHAPE Director of Special Operations*.
[17] Ibid.

Section 3 - NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ)[18]

3.5 The NSHQ works in conjunction with the OSO and is under operational command (OPCOM) of SACEUR. The NSHQ commander/SHAPE SOFAD reports directly to SACEUR on all NATO SOF matters. In support of SACEUR's objectives, when required, the NSHQ provides additional focused reinforcement to the OSO, joint force commands (JFC)s and select single service commands, and it maintains primary responsibility for NATO/ACO SOF interoperability and standardization. The NSHQ, on behalf of SACEUR, develops NATO SOF policy, concepts and doctrine; maintains domain awareness; sets SOF intelligence requirements; analyses, coordinates, and advises nations on current, impending, and projected SOF use in military operations; reports available SOF capabilities to ACO; facilitates transfer and integration of NATO forces to the NCS for operations; enables NATO/Non-NATO SOF information exchange; coordinates and assesses development of SOF capability and interoperability for Allies and Partners, through the education, training, exercises, and evaluation of NATO nations SOF. NSHQ also balances strategic and operational-level planning within a comprehensive framework, to ensure the employment of relevant, ready, integrated SOF for NATO operations.

Section 4 - Allied special operations force structure

3.6 **Special operations component command (SOCC).** The SOCC is a multinational (MN) or national joint component command formed around a framework nation (FN). SOCCs are non-standing headquarters (HQ) in the NFS that are tailored for each operation according to the number of special operations task groups (SOTG)s assigned and the degree of C2 required based on the scope and type of operation (smaller joint operation (SJO), major joint operation (MJO) or MJO+).[19] A SOTG is generic and can refer to a special operations land task group (SOLTG) or a special operations maritime task group (SOMTG). The FN for an SJO SOCC normally provides the staff and enabling capabilities for the SOCC and is expected to provide at least one SOTG. The lead nation for a SJO SOCC forms the nucleus of the SOCC by providing, as a minimum, the commander, key staff personnel, and providing enabling functions to the SOCC in addition to one SOTG. The FN for an MJO SOCC normally provides the full staff and enabling capabilities for the SOCC. The FN will also be expected to coordinate the combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) functions for the component and is expected to provide at least one SOTG, one SOATG, and one SOATU to effect SOF insertion/infiltration and extraction/exfiltration. Under certain circumstances, NATO-enabled command and control information system (C2IS) may be provided to the

[18] See PO (2018) 0257, Political-military advice on the implementation of the adapted NATO structure, Military Committee (MC) 586, MC Policy for Allied Forces and Their Use for Operations, Bi-SC NATO Command Structure Adaptation Implementation, Report on the Refinement of the Outline Adapted NATO Command Structure Adaptation Implementation (15DEC2018), Bi-SC NATO Command Structure Adaptation Annual Implementation Status Report (3DEC2018) and ACO Directive (AD) 010-020, Authority, responsibility and obligations of Commander NATO Special Operations Headquarters and SHAPE Director of Special Operations.

[19] The full listing of requisite capabilities required for a SOCC is delineated in Bi-SC, *Capability Codes and Capability Statements.*

SOCC in order to facilitate, augment, or replace reliance upon the FN's organic C2IS. Nations providing SOTGs should provide staff officers/non-commissioned officers to the SOCC, commensurate with the number of SOTGs contributed. Other NATO nations can contribute personnel to the SOCC contingent upon approval from the respective FN. The SOCC commander may have operational control (OPCON) or tactical control (TACON) of SOF and can act as a supported or supporting commander as directed by the operational level commander. A special operations component is comprised of a combination of command and liaison elements, and force elements that are described in the following paragraphs. Two examples of how a SOCC commander could employ a special operations component are illustrated in figure 3.1.

3.7 SOCC commander

a. The SOCC commander is responsible to the operational level commander for making recommendations on the proper employment of SOF and additional assets assigned, attached, or made available for tasking. The SOCC commander is also responsible for planning and coordinating special operations within a SOF campaign plan, and is delegated the authority necessary to accomplish such missions as may be assigned by the operational level commander.

b. A special operations command structure should be designated as early as possible, participate in the overall campaign planning, develop a SOF campaign within, and assume the task of forming and leading the SOCC for the duration of an operation. Besides the required capabilities to qualify a nation as a FN, this nation should take the lead in:

(1) Using appropriate planning and liaison elements to contribute to the planning process.

(2) Preparing the SOF operation plan/support plan.

(3) Advising on SOF requirements.

(4) Coordinating SOF support.

(5) Participating in the joint targeting process.

(6) Establishing and maintaining liaison with the appropriate operational and tactical levels and NATO HQ.

(7) Coordinating basic support infrastructure.

3.8 Special operations component formation generic examples and abbreviations

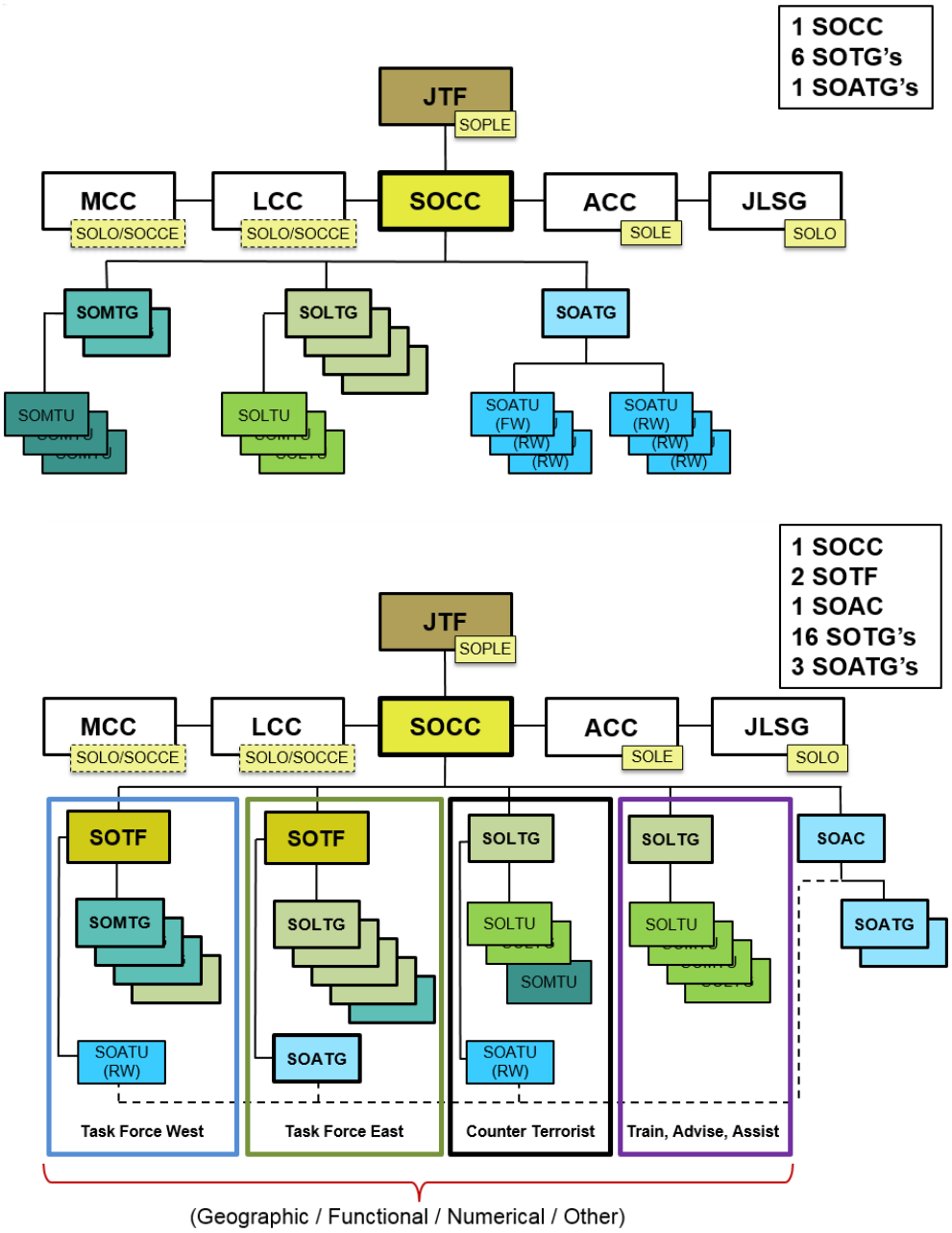

Figure 3.1 - Examples of a possible special operations component formation[20]

[20]The SOCC commander should organize his formation to meet the operational requirements. This could be geographic (east/west/north/south), functional (CT/Train, Assist, Advise), numerical or any other category for employment of SOF, as long as he can effectively C2 the formation.

JTF - joint task force	**SOPLE - special operations planning and liaison element**
ACC - air component command	**SOLE - special operations liaison element**
LCC - land component command	**SOLO - special operations liaison officer**
MCC - maritime component command	
JLSG - joint logistic support group	
SOCC - special operations component command	**SOCCE - special operations command and control element**
SOTF - special operations task force	
SOAC - special operations air command	
SOATG - special operations air task group	**SOTG - special operations task group:** The acronym "SOTG" is used here generically, and can refer to either a special operations land task group (SOLTG) or special operations maritime task group (SOMTG)
SOATU - special operations air task unit	**SOTU - special operations task unit:** The acronym "SOTU" is used here generically, and can refer to either a special operations land task unit (SOLTU) or special operations maritime task unit (SOMTU)
The full listing of requisite capabilities that NATO requires from SOF, is delineated in Bi-SC Capability Codes and Capability Statements	

Figure 3.2 - Special operations component abbreviations

3.9 **Special operations task force (SOTF).**[21] When SOF C2 requirements exceed commander SOCC's span of control and the capability to command effectively, the commander may establish a SOTF as an intermediate C2 structure. Under a SOCC, a SOTF is a modular, tailorable, and scalable HQ responsible for planning, integrating, and conducting special operations. SOTFs are delineated along geographic, functional, numerical or other considerations. Their primary function is to provide C2 of multiple SOTGs/ special operations air task group (SOATG). SOTFs are primarily resourced from SOCCs in national inventories.

3.10 **Special operations task group (SOTG)**[22,23]

a. **SOTG.** Self-sustaining, national grouping of land and/or maritime SOF, in principle generated from a single nation. The command staff fulfils the functions from personnel staff branch to communications staff branch at a minimum.

b. **MN SOTG.** When establishing a MN SOTG, a single commander will be designated. Such an SOTG requires appropriate pre-deployment training.

[21] When properly augmented with a SOPLE, SOCCE, SOLE, SOLO's and others, it could be SOCC capable.
[22] The acronym "SOTG" is used here generically, and can refer to either a special operations land task group (SOLTG) or special operations maritime task group (SOMTG).
[23] A SOTG (land and maritime) must be able to provide minimum capabilities (level 1) to conduct MA, SR, and DA to be able to create appropriate SOF effects in support of the joint operation or campaign. The capability levels, also used to describe the Bi-SC, *Minimum Capability Requirements*, are shown in Annex A.

3.11 **Special operations task unit (SOTU).**[24] A SOTU is the lowest level of a SOF tactical-level combat element that deploys by air, land, or sea and is able to conduct military assistance (MA), special reconnaissance (SR), or direct action (DA).

3.12 **SOF air structure.** Based on the scope and duration of special operations, the level of necessary coordination, and other SOF elements' C2 structure, a special air directorate (SAD), a special operations air command (SOAC) or SOATG is established to meet the operational air requirements.[25]

a. **Special air directorate (SAD).** When more than one SOAC is needed to meet the SOF air operational requirements, the SOCC commander may elect to establish a SAD within the SOCC. The SAD is responsible for the apportionment and allocation of assets, overall risk management, and force integration/standardization for the SOCC. However, mission planning, tasking, battle tracking, support coordination, and other authorities closely associated with the tactical level are delegated to subordinate elements (SOTFs).

b. **Special operations air command (SOAC).** A SOAC is normally established when more than one SOATG is operating. The SOAC will advise, plan, task and C2 the special air operations, as well as coordinate conventional air support for SOF with the other components. When a SOAC is established, the SOATGs can focus on tasking and enabling the SOATUs IOT meet the requirements of the supported SOTGs. The SOAC provides a unified tactical level C2 and point of contact for special air resources and requirements. The SOAC will normally be established from the SOCC FN and usually enabled with key elements from the organization providing the majority of SOF Air assets. It will ideally collocate with the SOCC HQ, but should have the capability to operate from a separate location.

c. **Special operations air task group (SOATG).**[26] A SOATG is a national or MN functional grouping of air assets assigned to a SOCC, under a single tactical commander, C2 and support structure. SOATGs are composed of SOATUs and other supporting air task units[27] (which may be of differing capabilities and aircraft or differing levels), to provide high sustainability and appropriate level of direct support. The SOATG may also include special operations air land integration (SOALI) elements.

[24] The acronym "SOTU" is used here generically, and can refer to either a special operations land task unit (SOLTU) or special operations maritime task unit (SOMTU). The full listing of requisite capabilities that NATO requires from these elements is shown in Annex A and Bi-SC, *Capabilities Codes and Statements*.
[25] The SOCC commander should organize and C2 air assets using one, or a combination, of these SOF air structures to meet operational requirements.
[26] Like SOTG (land and maritime), a SOATG must be able to provide minimum capabilities (level 1) to conduct its missions. The capability levels, also used to describe the Bi-SC, *Minimum Capability Requirements*, are shown in Annex A.
[27] Although NATO Allies should benefit from the NDPP and receive required SOATUs from the force generation process, non-SOF air units may be assigned to the SOCC by the TCNs during the force generation process, in order to complement and extend the air capabilities of the special operations component.

The command staff fulfils the functions from personnel staff branch (J-1) to communications staff branch (J-6) at a minimum. If no SOAC is present, the SOATG must be prepared to fulfil the functions normally accomplished by the SOAC.

d. **Special operations air task unit (SOATU).**[28] The SOATU is the lowest level of combat air support element that deploys to support the SOTUs. A SOATU is comprised of special operations air forces and may include SOALI elements. A SOATU is normally composed of fixed-wing or rotary-wing/tilt-rotor aircraft, of the same troop-contributing nation (TCN), with dedicated SOF crews, a logistics and maintenance element, and a command element.

3.13 **Special operations command and control structures and liaison elements.** Two-way liaison is an essential element in the coordination of special operations. It is vital for coordination, critical information sharing, and understanding of SOF capabilities. The SOCC dispatches liaison elements with appropriate communications means to other HQ as necessary. Conversely, the SOCC may receive liaison elements from other commands or HQ, particularly in the event of tactical-level integrated or converging operations between SOF and conventional forces, or when there is a supported/supporting inter-relationship between the SOCC and another component command. Additionally, a SOCC can dispatch other liaison elements as required, as well as the NSHQ can provide planning and liaison elements on request of an operational level commander. The size, duration of employment, and scope of duties of these liaison elements will vary according to their assigned functions.

a. **Special operations component command – forward (SOCC-FWD).** A SOCC-FWD is a forward deployed portion of an activated SOCC, which acts as the SOCC commander's representative deployed forward and when required is capable of conducting limited C2 of SOF inside of an active joint operations area (JOA). The SOCC-FWD coordinates special operations across all areas of operations, synchronizing operations with all forward NATO entities, partner forces and all relevant host nation (HN) participants. If conditions warrant a more robust SOF presence and engagement, a SOCC-FWD can transition to a full SOCC.

b. **Special operations planning and liaison element (SOPLE).** A SOPLE is an element dispatched from the SOCC commander to the operational level HQ (e.g. joint task force (JTF)) during crisis response planning and execution. The SOPLE, in close coordination with the SOFAD,[29] contributes to the planning, refinement, and execution process of the joint level, synchronizing and integrating the SOF portion into the campaign plan. SOPLE and SOFAD collaboration will result in full integration of special operations throughout the campaign, sufficient understanding of SOF capabilities and procedures across the operational level HQ, and the creation of nested SOF effects in support of the operational level commander.

[28] The full listing of requisite capabilities that NATO requires from a SOATU is described in Annex A and Bi-SC, *Capabilities Codes and Statements*.
[29] For further information about the role of a SOFAD, see JTF HQ SOP 105

c. **Special operations command and control element (SOCCE).** When SOF operate directly in the area of operations (AOO) of conventional forces, or when the likelihood of integrated or converging operations with conventional forces is probable in a JOA, the SOCC commander may establish a SOCCE to plan, synchronize, de-conflict, and coordinate operations with conventional forces.[30] The SOCCE will normally collocate with the appropriate-level conventional force HQ (land or maritime). The SOCCE is a C2 node for SOF elements operating in an AOO of conventional forces (land or maritime component command).

d. **Special operations liaison element (SOLE).** The SOLE is a liaison team provided by the SOCC commander to the appropriate component air C2 organization. As such, the SOLE has no command or execution authority. The SOLE coordinates, de-conflicts, and synchronizes SOF air, surface, and subsurface operations with conventional air and space operations. Also, the SOLE ensures that special operations are appropriately represented in the various meetings, working groups, boards, teams, and cells that comprise the working routine of an air operations centre.

e. **Special operations liaison officer (SOLO).** The SOLO is a liaison officer with SOF staff experience provided by the SOCC commander to maritime or land component commands, coalition forces, governmental and non-governmental, or international organizations. A SOLO should be selected based on functional area expertise necessary to work alongside a particular element. The SOLO coordinates, de-conflicts, and synchronizes SOF operations with these elements and is an important method of maintaining close communications between the two.

Section 5 - Command and control and intelligence sharing of Allied special operations forces

3.14 **Command and control.** In NATO, nations retain full command and OPCOM of their SOTGs. Nations will transfer OPCON of their SOTGs/SOATGs through SACEUR to the highest operational level commander, normally a JTF commander, for designated NATO operations. OPCON is normally then delegated to the SOCC commander. The SOCC commander normally will retain OPCON of the assigned SOTFs/SOTGs/SOATGs, but may delegate TACON of tactical units for limited periods or specific missions. The SOCC commander reports to the highest appropriate operational level commander, as directed by SACEUR. In the event of activation of a joint task force HQ, the SOCC will be placed under OPCON of the affected joint force headquarters (JFHQ). To establish coherent C2 and maintain a common operational picture, all nations contributing SOF to the SOCC should ensure their units comply with SOCC geospatial tracking requirements, to include utilization of force trackers, if available. SOF C2IS should be executed within the SOF chain of command. In all cases, commanders exercising command authority over SOF should:

[30] The SOCC may also delegate temporary TACON authority to a SOCCE to control specific missions

a. Provide a clear and unambiguous chain of command.

b. Provide sufficient staff experience and expertise to plan, conduct, and support the operations.

c. Integrate SOF in the planning process.

d. Match unit capabilities with mission requirements.

3.15 **SOF intelligence sharing.** NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre (NIFC), NATO battlefield information collection and exploitation system (BICES) Group Executive (BGX),[31] and deployed National Intelligence Cells provide nations with the means to share their intelligence (INT) products with NATO commands and each other in a more timely fashion. This has been further improved by the establishment of the NIFC which provides actionable, network enabled, timely, and accurate distribution of military INT and information at the strategic and operational levels. Furthermore, the Special Operations Intelligence Division (SOID) is collocated and works in close coordination with the NIFC, and provides SOF with INT products, as well as forms the core of the deployed SOCC intelligence staff branch (J-2) all-source cell (ASC).

3.16 **Intelligence sharing / exchange considerations.** The sharing and exchange of intelligence and information amongst other nations is a key factor in promoting interoperability and is fundamental to the development and maintenance of common situational awareness and understanding of the operating environment. The best practice must use an operationally-driven pragmatic balance between the need and responsibility to protect intelligence and the information sources, while maintaining security; often described as – responsibility to share vs need to know. In general terms, intelligence and information gathered during the conduct of a NATO mission will be, in principle, releasable to NATO and any Non-NATO Troop Contributing Nations (NNTCN) and/or Non-NATO Multi-national Forces (NNMF) in the operation - but this is predicated on a bona fide “need to know” principle. The principle of “originator control” (ORCON) is also very important in respect of information and intelligence sharing. When a nation releases national information or intelligence to NATO, NATO staff have no-authority to release the information/intelligence to non-NATO entities without authority of the originating nation. The sharing and exchange of intelligence is based on agreements between NATO member nations or, in the case of coalition operations, bilateral or MN agreements. In coalition operations, such formal agreements may not be in place and procedures may have to be developed or modified to suit the situation. Such procedures will depend in part on nations’ respective national policies for release of nationally-acquired information and intelligence, but should be based on the following principles:

a. Maintaining the unity of effort and a common understanding of the environment.

[31] The BGX is the governing body for the NATO battlefield information collection and exploitation system (BICES).

b. Readiness to accept change and information from outside sources.

c. All necessary information and intelligence is made available.

d. Ensure sources and methods data is separate from intelligence.

e. Establishing a MN, and multi-level, intelligence process to facilitate work with staff with a range of access levels.

f. Enabling joint interoperability by maintaining agreed standards and procedures to facilitate automated information and intelligence exchange.

Section 6 - Allied special operations forces capabilities

3.17 Nations designated as a NATO SOF TCN provide the following capabilities:

a. Have SOTGs that are composed of:

(1) A HQ consisting of the J-1 through J-6 staff functions.

(2) Subordinate SOTUs.

(3) CS units.

(4) CSS elements.

b. Conduct MA, SR and DA across the spectrum of conflict.

c. Conduct infiltration/exfiltration within an operational area, ideally utilizing organic transportation assets.

d. Conduct intra-SOTG communications that have a low probability of detection.

e. Conduct CS and CSS functions to SOTGs in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas.

f. Provide C2 and INT to deployed elements.

g. Able to conduct mission planning.

h. Operate as part of a special operations component.

i. Conduct evasion and escape.

j. Deploy rapidly in accordance with established deployment timelines.

k. Conduct activities independently or in conjunction with conventional forces.

l. Conduct overt, or clandestine operations.

m. Provide protection for own forces.

3.18 Nations designated as a NATO SOF FN provide the following capabilities:

a. Deploy and establish a SOCC that can command and control all designated SOF organizations depending on the size of the operation.[32]

b. Conduct NATO J-1 through financial staff branch (J-8) and special staff functions.

c. Command and control SOF air forces.

d. Provide SOTG/SOATG and SOF fixed-/rotary-wing or tilt-rotor lift capability.

e. Conduct advanced crisis response and time-sensitive operations planning.

f. Develop operational INT and integrate SOF assets into theatre-level collection plans.

g. Develop and provide operations security (OPSEC) measures, to include restrictive procedures involving sensitive or compartmented SOF operations.

h. Operate, manage, and maintain NATO operational level C2IS to SOTG level.

i. Provide protection for the SOCC HQ, as required.

j. Be prepared to deploy appropriate planning and liaison elements to operational HQs and other component commands beginning at the initiation and orientation phases of NATO operations.

k. Be prepared to coordinate CSS functions for subordinate SOTGs.

3.19 The SOF standards as well as the evaluation criteria are discussed thoroughly in ACO Forces Standards Volumes X and XI, respectively.

[32] Refer to the *NATO Minimum Capabilities Requirements 2016*.

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Chapter 4 – Synchronizing Allied special operations and conventional forces

Section 1 – Introduction

4.1 Special operations forces (SOF) operations are characterized by small units that conduct high-risk missions in hostile, denied, and politically sensitive environments. While there may be challenges when conventional forces and SOF operate together, there are also great opportunities for the operational level commander to exploit. Synchronizing conventional forces and SOF offers unique capabilities which may be necessary to achieve objectives. Synchronization and interoperability enable the operational level commander to take advantage of conventional force and SOF core competencies and systems. Proper synchronization of conventional forces into SOF actions depending on the supporting/supported relationship through effective coordination and liaison can produce a greater effect at a higher tempo with less potential for friendly fires[33] than if operating separately. Certain special operations missions require supporting conventional personnel to receive enhanced training and/or equipment. SOF-conventional forces interdependence is best achieved when requirements are determined early, commanders gain expanded understanding of each force's capabilities and limitations, and units have the opportunity to develop relationships and procedures in advance of executing missions. These relationships are best established during combined training and exercises. Such activities can increase interoperability as well as improve operational capabilities.

Section 2 - Employment considerations

4.2 In general, supporting and supported relationships provide the best framework for integrated conventional force/SOF operations. At the component level, this relationship allows the supported commander to set requirements and allows the supporting commander the flexibility to determine methods and tactics. The degree, type, and priority of support must be not only established, but also communicated in a clear and timely manner.

4.3 Support relationships require a clear definition of relationship parameters by the higher commander.

4.4 Mission approval authority at the lowest possible level increases timeliness of support and flexibility. Supporting units must be included early in the supported unit planning process to ensure proper use and allow for full synchronization with the operation.

[33] Particular attention should be put on the prevention of friendly fires (blue on blue). This effort can only be achieved through effective coordination between SOF and other forces, particularly when they have to share the same battle space.

Section 3 - Operational area geometry

4.5 **Special operations area (SOA).** The operational level commander may establish a SOA inside the joint operations area (JOA),[34] which is a geographic operational area assigned by an operational level commander to the special operations component command (SOCC)commander to conduct special operations activities. The operational level commander may use a SOA to delineate and facilitate simultaneous use of conventional forces and SOF in the same area. When a SOA is designated, the SOCC commander is the supported commander within the designated SOA. Establishment of a designated SOA for SOF to conduct unilateral operations assists in controlling special operations and the prevention of fratricide.

4.6 **Operating in an area of operations assigned to another commander.** When operating within another commander's area of operations (AOO), a commander must comply with the AOO commander's authority. Fires, force tracking, and battlespace management must be in accordance with the direction provided by the AOO commander. SOF units operating within an AOO must keep the AOO commander apprised of locations and recognize that the AOO commander retains authority for establishing fire support coordination measures. Potential methods of SOF integration into the battlespace of the AOO commander include general de-confliction, coordination measures in which access into a specific area is regulated, and restrictive measures where access to a specific area is temporarily prohibited. The AOO commander and SOF commander should maximize information sharing while recognizing the need to maintain operations security (OPSEC).

Section 4 - Allied conventional / special operations forces synchronized operations

4.7 **General.** When properly synchronized during planning, conventional forces and SOF can capitalize on their inherent strengths to achieve the operational level commander's objectives. Successful conventional force and SOF synchronization should ideally begin during the early planning stages. Ignoring conventional force and SOF synchronization issues in planning may introduce operational complexities that either increase risk or diminish potential complementary effects.

4.8 **Unity of command.** Unity of command means that all the forces operate under one designated joint task force (JTF) commander. It requires a single commander with the requisite authority to direct all forces in pursuit of the agreed objective or end state. At the military strategic, operational and tactical levels of command, a fundamental principal of command and control (C2) is unity of command, which provides the necessary cohesion for the planning and execution of operations; this is a significant part of a principle of operations – unity of effort. Command relationships, by which commanders are delegated authority, will

[34] A JOA and its defining parameters, such as time, scope of the mission and geographical area, are contingency- or mission-specific and are normally associated with combined JTF operations.

be determined when a JTF is established. These relationships will acknowledge the constraints that are placed on the use of Allied and partner nation's components and supporting national assets and the extent of military activities of other authorities in a designated JOA. Unity of command for SOF is sometimes complex due to SOF's diverse capabilities, missions, and the small-size of their operational units. Most importantly, the designated SOF commander, with the authority to coordinate special operations among all supporting and supported units, should have command authority of all SOF who operate in a single area of operations or are assigned a specific mission or operation. When unity of command (for forces or agencies outside the JTF) is not wholly achievable, unity of effort should be established using clear coordination and information sharing arrangements.

4.9 **Conventional forces supported by special operations forces.** SOF offer specialized, yet complementary, capabilities to the conventional force commander. In NATO the execution of military operations will often be guided by the supported/supporting relationship when one organization should aid, protect, complement or sustain another force. To ensure that conventional forces are effectively supported by SOF, operational level commanders/supporting SOF commanders and their staff, should:

a. Bring SOF liaison support early into the planning and coordination process.

b. Conduct an assessment to determine if the operational mission criteria are met.[35]

c. Ensure SOF provide input on how they can support the conventional force commander's intent and operation plan.

d. Recognize the characteristics and capabilities/limitations of each other's forces, including C2/staff capacities, mobility, survivability, fires, and communications.

e. Establish clear tactical-level command relationships.

4.10 **Special operations forces supported by conventional forces**

a. Conventional forces conduct operations to defeat adversary forces and to control land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace, including populations and resources. They possess a variety of capabilities, including a greater number of personnel, equipment and infrastructure which can be used to support SOF in the accomplishment of core tasks. To ensure that SOF are effectively supported by conventional forces, operational level commanders/supporting component commanders and their staff should:

(1) Conduct a feasibility assessment to determine the viability of a proposed mission/target for conventional force employment.

[35] See paragraph 1.15.

(2) Determine if the tasking is an appropriate use of conventional forces.

(3) Determine if required resources are available.

(4) Bring conventional forces early into the planning and coordination process.

(5) Recognize the characteristics and capabilities/limitations of each other's forces, including C2/staff capacities, mobility, survivability, fires, force protection, and communications.

(6) Establish clear tactical-level command relationships.

b. When the SOCC is appointed by the JTF commander as supported component the other components can provide a variety of capabilities. The SOCC will determine the support required from the supporting commands. In particular but not limited to:

(1) Ensure SOF freedom of manoeuvre.

(2) Provide mobility for rapid deployment of SOF.

(3) Increase SOF situational awareness through surveillance and reconnaissance.

(4) Provide consultation, command and control (C3) platforms.

(5) Provide combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) (e.g. logistics, communication and information systems (CIS), Fire Support and specialists like explosive ordnance disposal / improvised explosive device disposal (EOD/IEDD), civil-military cooperation (CIMIC), chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) defence, electronic warfare (EW), unmanned aircraft system (UAS) and counter UAS).

(6) Provide force protection.

(7) Cordon SOF operation areas.

4.11 **Conventional forces specialists supporting special operations forces.** Above and beyond organic assets and CSS elements, SOF will routinely require support from specialists due to the scope of the tasks related to their mission. For example, when explosive hazard or mobility tasks exceed their organic capabilities, conventional forces may provide specialists to support them. Normally these specialists will be assigned to non-conventional groupings and specific command relationships. This support is normally required during insertion and extraction but could also be required for other specific parts of SOF missions.

This support includes, but is not limited to, medical, CIMIC, CBRN defence, military engineering (MILENG),[36] logistics, military police, intelligence, EOD/IEDD, EW, cyberspace operations, and law enforcement professionals.

4.12 **Other participants supported by special operations forces.** To accomplish their mission, SOF can support HN governments/ or local authorities or security entities in line with a comprehensive approach.

4.13 **Special operations forces supported by other participants.** SOF can collaborate with host nation (HN) or local authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGO)s, agencies, and international organizations to make the most of their knowledge of the environment. This activity should be coordinated with the appropriate elements and liaisons within the JOA.

[36] See Military Committee (MC) 0560/2, *Policy for Military Engineering* and Allied Joint Publication (AJP) 3.12 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Military Engineering*.

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Chapter 5 – Allied special operations planning considerations

Section 1 - Planning considerations

5.1 A key consideration of special operations planning is that the mission should be planned by the operational element that will execute it, to include the non-special operations forces (SOF) support forces (e.g. intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), fires, close air support (CAS)).

5.2 **Operations security (OPSEC).** The decision to employ SOF may hinge on the need for a rapid, low-prominence response of limited size, scope, and duration. OPSEC measures must be integrated from the first stage of operations planning, including mission specific training and exercises. Force protection is a key planning consideration for all SOF operations. SOF products should be shared on a need to know basis and designed as such, however all key actors should be involved. Compartmentalized planning procedures may be utilized at all levels as required.

5.3 **Complete mission planning.** Prior to an employment decision, the task should be comprehensively planned and should include development of the profiles for insertion/infiltration, resupply, and extraction/exfiltration of the forces. Emphasis on pre-planning for extraction/exfiltration is critical, because by the time it is required, the speed and means of extraction/exfiltration could offset any loss of the element of surprise, particularly in short-duration operations. Specific employment parameters and coordination procedures should be provided by specialist staffs and included in the relevant campaign and operation plans. Contingency planning should always be an integral part of SOF mission planning, covering procedures for emergency extraction/exfiltration, personnel recovery (PR), medical evacuation (MEDEVAC), CAS, and any other foreseeable contingency. Also, the rehearsal is considered as an important phase of a special operation and it should be taken into account during the planning process. The nature of the target, threat and friendly situation, and environmental characteristics of the operational area are key planning factors. There are several factors of special operations mission planning. These include:

a. **Timely planning.** Timely articulation of how special operations can help achieve the operational level commander's objectives leads to effective utilization of SOF and optimizes use of the military instrument through integration of SOF with conventional forces and/or other entities. However, special operations typically require timely and detailed intelligence and detailed planning, which is why there are normally inviolate requirements to special operations planning periods.

b. **Planning priorities.** Generally, all targets or mission assignments for SOF should contribute substantially to the strategic and operational objectives, within the lines of operation being executed. Limited resources and the extensive planning required dictate that an operational level commander selectively employs SOF for high priority operations. Further, the sensitivity of many SOF missions may dictate that

specific political, legal, time-of-day, geographic, or force size constraints be placed upon the supported and supporting forces.

c. **Comprehensive approach.** The complexity of contemporary crises involves multiple responders; military means, although essential, are insufficient to deal with them alone. These challenges demand the practical implementation of a comprehensive approach. Comprehensive approach provides the framework for unity of effort and recognizes the contributions of non-military actors. SOF commanders are empowered to conduct necessary cooperation and coordination to execute operations throughout the spectrum of conflict. They should proactively build mutually beneficial and trust-based relationships to achieve effective collaboration. This includes working with international, indigenous, and local authorities and actors facilitated through civil-military interaction (CMI).[37] These relationships are founded on shared understanding and a commitment to work towards a comprehensive solution. These relationships must be structured, timely, and at the appropriate level to ensure consistency of message and reduce the risk of misperception. This emphasizes the need for close synchronization of SOF and civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) activities throughout an operation.[38] CIMIC[39] supports SOF with respect to a comprehensive understanding of the civil environment. This understanding will help to identify where coordination and cooperation is likely to be achieved and where relationships should be developed.

d. **Synchronization.** Special operations mission planning must be supportive of, and supported by all applicable aspects of the operation plan (OPLAN). During an on-going crisis or during combat operations, synchronization of special operations with conventional targeting and fires is essential because time on target is extremely limited and may affect SOF mobility corridors, infiltration routes, hide sites, PR, or target areas. Coordination between SOF and conventional force planners must occur during the early planning stages to facilitate synchronization and integration of all assets and allocation of conventional resources to support and augment SOF activities, and vice versa.

Section 2 – SOF employment considerations

5.4 SOF should be primarily employed in critical or decisive operations. There are limitations to the use of SOF. Improper use of SOF can rapidly lead to unnecessary depletion of SOF capabilities. SOF cannot be easily replaced, nor can their capabilities be rapidly expanded. SOF logistic support is often required in austere locations and their extended sustainment may require innovative logistics solutions. Though SOF operate with conventional forces in the operating environment, SOF should not be employed as a

[37] See military Committee (MC) 0411/2, *NATO Military Policy on Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) and Civil-Military Interaction (CMI)*.
[38] See ACO Directive (AD) 080-004, *Implementing NATO's contribution to a Comprehensive Approach in Allied Command Operations*.
[39] See Allied Joint Publication (AJP) 3.19, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-Military Cooperation*.

substitute for conventional forces nor in roles for which they have neither the depth to sustain themselves or the specific training.

Section 3 - Intelligence considerations

5.5 **General.** The nature of special operations generally requires intelligence (INT) support that is more detailed and time sensitive than that needed by conventional forces. The scope of special operations may require information on the political, military, economic, social, infrastructure and information (PMESII),[40] and cultural dynamics of the operating environment. To obtain the requisite intelligence support, SOF planners and operators should utilize both Alliance and national collection analysis and production agencies. These INT relationships and interfaces should be established in peacetime to facilitate SOF access to the complete range of INT available during crisis response operations. Timely, detailed, and fused products are vital as INT often drives and/or enables current operations. SOF INT requirements may necessitate unique organic or permanently designated analysis and fusion capabilities for/within SOF. SOF mission planning incorporates INT from national sources, strategic allied agencies (e.g. NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre (NIFC)), and self-generated reconnaissance. INT sharing procedures amongst Alliance members should be agreed upon and implemented early in the special operations component command (SOCC) planning process. Special capabilities, such as linguists, tactical interrogators, materiel exploitation specialists, or liaison personnel, must be considered at the earliest stages of the planning process.

5.6 **Time-sensitive nature.** The compressed decision-making cycle, under which some special operations missions are planned, requires early identification of priority intelligence requirements (PIR)s to provide focused collection, analysis, and production. The INT specialist's participation in the planning process from the onset is critical in formulating PIRs. Within a constrained timeline, INT specialists need to be permanently integrated into planning groups for future operations.

5.7 **Intelligence fusion.** The fusion of INT from various sources will be accomplished in SOCC intelligence staff branch J-2 all-source cell (ASC). Breaking down barriers for INT sharing is crucial in providing critical and timely INT, to the lowest executing level. It should be facilitated by participation of analysts and representatives of the Special Operations Intelligence Division (SOID), foreign disclosure capabilities, special operations task groups (SOTG)s, and other INT/supporting agencies with access to the theatre and national INT architecture, feeds, databases, and reach-back capabilities with appropriate protocols for disclosure of INT to partners.

5.8 **Joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (JISR)**. The JISR process, in addition to supporting joint operations, also provides direct tailored support to land, maritime, air, space and SOF requirements. JISR results support the production of all-source

[40] The engagement space, as relevant part of the strategic environment, can be initially viewed through several conceptual models. The most common in NATO are the six PMESII systems listed above.

intelligence, which contributes to advance planning and crisis response planning processes and the execution of operations. Commanders, staff and operators benefit from sharing information and intelligence derived from JISR capabilities because it enables informed, timely and accurate decision making. The process demands constant collaboration and communication between requesters and the intelligence and operations staffs to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of available capabilities.

Section 4 - Information environment (IE) considerations

5.9 IE is comprised of the information itself, the individuals, organizations and systems that receive, process and convey the information, and the cognitive, virtual and physical space in which this occurs.[41] A comprehensive and systemic understanding of the IE is required to effectively identify opportunities and risks resulting from SOF actions. This understanding is derived from knowledge development across the PMESII spectrum (including traditional all-source INT from a wide variety of unclassified military and civilian sources), and subsequent analysis of audiences, their social context and bias, relevant actors' objectives, centres of gravity, critical themes, information systems, and media. Analysis and assessment of the IE should be continuously updated and refined to ensure military information activities and related capabilities are correctly employed to maximize their effects. Lethal and non-lethal effects within the IE may also be required against targets in support of an operation. Actions may involve protecting information, denying access to information, or controlling the release of information, via enabling compartmented or collateral means. Understanding, managing and influencing the information flow within cyberspace will also be critical in creating effects within the IE.

Section 5 - Targeting considerations

5.10 **General.** Targeting is a process of selecting and prioritizing targets and matching the appropriate response to them taking into account operational requirements and capabilities. The aim of targeting is to create a specific effect in order to achieve military objectives and attain desired end state using lethal or non-lethal means. SOF must participate fully in all aspects of the targeting process at all levels to ensure the coordination of SOF tasks as in part of the operational level commander's targeting effort.

5.11 **Basic process.**[42] SOCC commanders consolidate and validate their own target nominations, ensuring that they do not conflict with the restricted target and no-strike lists before sending these targets to their SOF representative of the joint targeting coordination board (JTCB). The JTCB fuses all component nominations, reviews all targets to ensure compliance with the operational level commander's current guidance and objectives, and prioritizes targets and assigns them to the best available/most suitable engagement assets. It is particularly important to anticipate and accommodate national caveats and rules of engagement during this process. Nominated and prioritized targets will be presented to the

[41] See MC 0422/5, *Military Policy for Information Operations*.
[42] See AJP 3.9, *Allied Joint Doctrine for joint Targeting*.

joint task force headquarters JTCB for validation via Joint Target Nomination List (JTNL) and the draft of the joint prioritized target list (JPTL) respectively. These lists are formally validated by the operational level commander and usually issued as an annex to the joint coordination order (with the updated JPTL available on the joint targeting system). Targets validated and assigned to SOCC are derived from the JPTL and form the SOCC prioritized target list (PTL). SOCC INT production managers, utilizing the PTL, will enhance and analyse the data available in the target folder, tailoring it to the needs of the tactical element that will execute the mission. During the mission planning phase, the tactical element refines its concept of operations against the designated target and executes the mission following the mission execution order.

5.12 **Time sensitivity of targets**

a. Time sensitivity can play an important part in categorizing a target and determining its appropriateness as a special operations target.

b. Time sensitive targets (TST) are those targets requiring an immediate response because they pose (or will soon pose) a danger to friendly forces or are highly lucrative, fleeting targets of opportunity whose successful engagement is of high priority to achieve campaign or operational objectives.[40]

c. TST categories for each campaign or operation are prepared by operational level (joint force command (JFC)) and approved by North Atlantic Council (NAC). Based on the NAC approval, the JTCB develops a TST matrix, which is approved by the JFC commander.

d. Significant SOF contributions against TST are clandestine special reconnaissance (SR) and terminal guidance missions. If required, SOF can be employed to destroy, disable, or otherwise affect a time-sensitive target.

5.13 **Methodology.** SOF often target key individuals and networks with lethal and non-lethal means, using an array of organic or available human and technical ‘enablers’. SOF use all available intelligence (e.g. human intelligence (HUMINT), signals intelligence (SIGINT), measurement and signature intelligence (MASINT) and open-source intelligence (OSINT)) and JISR assets to find and fix a target, then various methods to finish it. Subsequently, SOF rapidly exploit the target with technical equipment and tactical procedures developing follow-on targets to create intended effects. The SOF targeting methodology is described further in Annex B.

Section 6 - Combat support considerations

5.14 Combat support (CS) units from within SOF and conventional forces, provide dedicated conventional assets during training, exercise and operations. These units could include aviation (e.g. ISR, CAS, and conventional mobility), fire support and operational

assistance,[43] special operations boat task units, military working dogs, military engineering (MILENG) including explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) defence, quick reaction force (QRF)/cordon forces and force protection units. Specialists from chemical, MILENG, intelligence, cyberspace operations, and signal fields might also be necessary to increase the effectiveness of a SOCC or its subordinate units. These combat support unit and specialist capabilities, are normally sourced from conventional units which require early identification for proper planning.

Section 7 - Combat service support considerations

5.15 **General**. Combat service support (CSS) provides essential capabilities, functions, activities, and tasks necessary to sustain the combat support units. Effective CSS is fundamental to the success of special operations and must be an integral part of operations planning. CSS may include, but is not limited to, administrative services, chaplaincy, civil affairs, financial, legal, medical and health services, military police, supply, maintenance, transportation, construction, acquisition and disposal of real estate, facilities engineering, topographic and geodetic engineering, food services, graves registration, laundry and dry cleaning services, sanitary installations, and property disposal.[44] SOF operating within adversary-controlled territory cannot expect normal sustainment; therefore, SOTGs are expected to be self-sufficient. Common usage supply items, such as food, water, fuel, and ammunition, will be provided in accordance with the established procedures for the mission and the technical agreements with the SOF framework nation (FN) and host nation (HN). SOF may operate theatre-wide in small elements often apart from established logistic support areas. The SOCC, therefore, may have to obtain host-nation support (HNS)[45] agreements, contractor support to operations, and tailored support arrangements and HN medical support. Resupply of deployed SOF elements in remote or denied areas is planned and executed as operational tasks and frequently requires the use of SOF aviation assets.

5.16 **Logistic support.** For successful and well-coordinated logistic support of SOF units, the following considerations should be applied accordingly:

a. **National Support.** The logistic support of SOF units is the responsibility of the troop contributing nation, normally provided through national support elements, except where otherwise provided for by HNS agreements or other directives or agreements or contracted support.

b. **MN Support.** SOF missions could require MN logistics planning and execution. In this case, a joint logistic support group (JLSG) will coordinate operational level logistics for a larger joint force. The logistic support for SOF units is coordinated

[43] Some nations have opted to create additional units within the SOTG. They can consist of highly trained light infantry, commando, or airborne troops who regularly train with and support SOF.
[44] A SOCC normally collocates with the respective operational level command and relies on its services for real life support as well as medical support, beyond role 1.
[45] See MC 334/2, *NATO Principles and Policies for Host Nation Support*, and AJP-4.5(B), *Allied Joint Doctrine for Host Nation Support*.

through the SOCC. Operations planning will determine the specific logistic requirements and the associated logistic command and control (C2) structures for each operation. SOF also have special support considerations such as operating outside of normal theatre support areas and security-related issues.

5.17 **Medical Support.** Effective medical support is critical to the overall success of special operations and must be integrated in all operational and tactical planning. As such it is compulsory that SOF Commands have a medical advisor/medical director and joint medical (JMED) staff that are incorporated into the headquarters (HQ). Medical support planning should address medical command and control, CIS, treatment, evacuation, force health protection, preventive medicine, medical intelligence and medical logistics.

a. Individual SOF operators should be trained, at a minimum, as SOF advanced first responders capable of performing tactical combat casualty care (TCCC) and limited mitigation for possible exposure to CBRN agents.

b. The nature of special operations missions relies heavily on an organic first response capability provided mostly by special operations combat medics (SOCM)s due to the independent attributes of SOF. These SOCMs need specific, enhanced medical training and national authorizations to perform treatments and procedures outside the normal scope of practice of non-medical personnel. Additionally, the short response times expected of SOF will require robust medical force protection measures to be maintained.[46]

c. SOF will require a deployed medical support capability with similar agility to the supported force, with high mobility and a limited deployed footprint. This will normally consist of a special operations resuscitation team providing primary healthcare, specialized first aid, triage, and damage control resuscitation (DCR). Additional skills such as damage control surgery, preventive medicine, and CBRN decontamination and exposure treatment will be provided by small specialized teams supporting the Role 1 medical treatment facilities mission.

d. The challenging SOF environment will require specially trained credentialed medical professionals that integrate and regularly train with SOF. A credentialed medical professional is a provider with prescribing authority outside a strict protocol. It applies, but is not limited to physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners. These providers may need specific national authorizations to perform treatments and procedures outside their normal scope of practice due to the independent nature of SOF. Due to the nature of SOF operations and limited deployed footprint, well-defined evacuation routes and procedures will also be required. This requires special attention be paid to the ability of MEDEVAC/ casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) to reach the

[46] For further explanation about special operations medical support, see AJP-4.10, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Medical Support*.

appropriate higher level of medical treatment in a timely manner. Therefore, the respective timelines of medical treatment could be key constraints for planning.

e. Depending on the mission and type of operation, SOF may require a trained and integrated mobile damage control surgical capability known as special operations surgical teams (SOST)s. The SOST is designed and configured to provide life and limb saving surgery in an austere and hostile environment when standard medical timelines cannot be met. The SOST is utilized to decrease combat casualty morbidity and mortality in forward and austere operations. At a minimum, the SOST must be able to provide DCR, laparotomy/thoracotomy, field anaesthesia, amputation completion, vascular shunting and recognition/mitigation of possible exposure to CBRN agents, and is dependent on evacuation capability to a medical facility providing the full scale of Role 2 or higher.

5.18 **Financial Management**. Where offensive and defensive tasks are designed to defeat forces, stability operations are designed to shape civil conditions and secure a lasting peace. Financial managers should have an understanding as to the unique financial requirements associated with special operations and must be prepared to provide funding support to stability operations. Special Operations financial managers are required to provide the commander the ability to implement actions in coordination with other staff elements as part of working groups to provide funding support for but not limited to:

a. Establish civil security.

b. Establish civil control.

c. Restoring essential services.

d. Support to governance.

e. Support to economic/infrastructure development.

5.19 **Statement of requirements**. Logistic execution and requirements determination begin with the receipt of the mission and subsequent analysis. Requirements determination is critical to coordinating theatre support. The most important aspect of the statement of requirements process is identification of requirements in sufficient time to allow for the necessary coordination, planning and funding.

Section 8 - Personnel recovery considerations

5.20 The SOCC commander is responsible for the planning and execution of PR operations for the component and/or within their area of operations (AOO). This function will normally be performed through a component PR coordination cell (PRCC), the responsibilities of which include coordination with the joint personnel recovery centre (JPRC) and other component

PRCCs. The SOCC PRCC can be established at SOCC HQ level, but can also be delegated to a subordinate command.[47]

a. If designated by the joint task force (JTF) commander, the SOCC will establish the JPRC. In this case, the SOCC also retains a PRCC capability to conduct component PR missions in addition to its JOA-wide responsibilities. Within subordinate units, PR points of contact will be designated to serve as the primary coordinator for all PR issues.

b. When conventional assets are not able or suitable, non-conventional assisted recovery (NAR) using SOF, non-governmental organizations (NGO)s, agencies, international organizations, surrogate forces, or other types of assistance, may be utilized.

c. The SOCC commander is responsible for unconventional assisted recovery (UAR) which are special operations recovery missions using pre-established indigenous networks. These missions are coordinated and de-conflicted through an unconventional assisted recovery coordination cell (UARCC). The UARCC, which is typically established as a compartmented staff cell alongside the SOCC PRCC, directs SOCC UAR operations and provides coordination for NAR when applicable.

Section 9 - Legal considerations

5.21 Because special operations frequently involve a unique set of complex and sensitive issues, SOF commanders should seek legal review during all levels of planning and execution of operations at all levels. Legal advisors must be available throughout all the phases of planning and execution of an operation to advise the commander on operational law issues which include but are not limited to, International law (Law of Armed Conflict and Human Rights Law), mandates, rules of engagement (ROE) and Status of Forces Agreements. Legal advisors have to be properly trained not only in the respective fields of law, but also in the applicable military planning procedures, and consideration should be given to assign them to certain operational boards and cells where feasible. For many operations, the legal basis for SOF activities will be the consent of a HN. In that event, appropriate coordinating agreements and arrangements should be put in place before employing SOF.

Section 10 - Strategic communications (StratCom) considerations

5.22 SOF are by their very nature, StratCom tools; the very presence of NATO SOF, together with their employment (or the implied threat of their employment) can be used to influence key audiences and decision makers. It is therefore essential that the strategic messaging capabilities of SOF employment are fully understood and integrated into the Alliance's broader operations in the IE.

[47] See AJP 3.7, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Recovery of Personnel in a Hostile Environment*.

5.23 NATO SOF activities are likely to generate significant interest and can influence the perception of the Alliance at both the local and global level. Therefore to maximise SOF contribution to operational success, and to protect both OPSEC and the cohesion of the Alliance, it is essential that the StratCom considerations are placed prominently in planning, execution, and assessment of SOF activities.

5.24 The operational level commander is responsible for StratCom at the operational level and SOF leadership must ensure they are nested into the operational level StratCom plans.

Section 11 - Communication and information systems considerations

5.25 NATO is responsible for the extension of secure and non-secure CIS connectivity down to and including the component command in theatre.[48] The FN of the SOCC is responsible for providing internal CIS and extending them to the highest level of command of all assigned, attached, and supporting elements (e.g. special operations task forces (SOTF)s, SOTGs, special operations air task group (SOATG)s, special operations air command (SOAC)). The SOCC is also responsible for ensuring that CIS is provided to all liaison teams to meet the SOCC's information exchange requirements. Nations are responsible for providing their own internal CIS.

5.26 The following CIS capabilities should be available at SOCC HQ level, subordinate units and dispatched elements:[49]

a. Secure access to classified data resources and applications in NATO Secret (NS) and mission specific secret networks.

b. Secure access to NATO Unclassified (NU) network and internet.

c. Secure access to NS and mission specific secret networks voice and video services.

d. Access to worldwide voice communication.

e. Network security monitoring.

5.27 Troop-contributing nation (TCN) should consider beyond line of sight (BLoS) communications ultrahigh frequency (UHF) tactical satellite communications (TACSATCOM) and high frequency (HF) as invaluable means to support a redundant and secure C2 capability.

[48] The SOCC HQ will receive "To" connectivity, which provides access for the Minimum Military Requirement for end-user devices (laptops, printers, phones) for NATO Secret (NS), Mission Secret (MS), and NATO Unclassified (NU).
[49] See of the two Strategic Commands (Bi-SC), *Capability Codes and Capability Statements*.

5.28 Secure CIS are utilized by NATO and NATO SOF to provide interoperable, secure communications for all levels of SOF coordination. Secure CIS provides secure voice, data, and video services up to NS for C2, collaboration and INT sharing at strategic, operational and tactical levels. Currently, the NATO SOF community utilizes the NATO battlefield information collection and exploitation system (BICES) to provide these services. For this reason it is highly desirable that TCNs provide deployable BICES to their SOF units, especially to the SOCC.

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Annex A - Levels of Allied special operations forces capabilities[50]

A.1 Generic NATO SOF capabilities

a. The following list of capabilities is intended to assist planners and leaders of troop contributing nations, and Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) in ensuring sufficient sourcing of operational requirements during the force generation (FORGEN) process. Operational requirements are seldom the same from one operation to another; by matching the combined joint statement of requirements (CJSOR) with the capabilities of Allied special operations forces (SOF) units based on the Level 1 through 3 system below, risks can be identified and mitigated by SACEUR for each operation.

b. Special operations task groups (SOTG)s and special operations air task groups (SOATG)s are intended to act as the nucleus of tactical SOF formations. Special operations land task groups (SOLTG)s and special operations maritime task groups (SOMTG)s differ in one aspect significantly from that of an SOATG; SOLTG and SOMTG consist of command and control (C2) and tactical units, whereas SOATGs are a C2 and combat service support (CSS) capability and enabling functions only, postured to accomplish the mission through the use of assigned (air task) units, which are highly likely to be of different nationality due to the need to concentrate scarce aviation resources. It will be task-organised during FORGEN based by the actual operational requirements using individual special operations air task units-fixed wing (SOATU-FW)s or special operations air task units-rotary wing/tilt rotor (SOATU-RW/TR)s and/or other units and attachments (e.g. supporting air task units, force protection, SOALI, aviation services). SOLTGs and SOMTGs employ land or maritime special operations task units (SOTU)s for specific tasks and periods of time.

[50] These levels are used to describe *NATO's Minimum Capabilities Requirements* (2011) and of the two Strategic Commands (Bi SC), *Capabilities Codes & Capabilities Statements* (2016) in order to specify the qualitative aspects for the required capabilities.

c. The implementation of special operations air land integration (SOALI) capabilities has to be inherent to all SOTG/SOATGs, whether by the use of assigned units or by habitual relationship with highly specialized forces (e.g. combat control teams (CCT)s, forward air controllers (FAC)s).

d. It is incumbent upon commanders and subordinate leaders to conduct frequent readiness evaluations of SOF personnel to maintain a full operational capability. A self-evaluation at the unit level should be performed during the pre-deployment training phase or during the NATO Response Force (NRF) stand-up period. Self-evaluation is equally important throughout In-Mission Training, and should certify the serviceability and availability of mission-specific equipment, as well as required training levels in each SOTG. No less important is follow on official readiness evaluation (Special Operations Forces Headquarters and Units Evaluations (SOFEVAL)s) conducted by national and NATO authorities. As for the NATO SOF as a whole, collective self-evaluation may be effectively assessed during a 6 to 8 day exercise based on the specific mission environment. This collective exercise should require the application of most of the capabilities, organization and skills presented in this Annex.

e. Along with the prescriptions carried within of the two Strategic Commands (Bi-SC) Capability Codes and Capability Statements, as well as in the ACO Allied Forces Standards publications, the tables below together with the Bi-SC Capability Codes and Capability Statements will assist planners and other key personnel at the tactical, operational and strategic levels, as well as within the troop contributing nations to ensure the proper deployment of a fully mission-capable SOF contingent. Required SOF capabilities will be designated in a CJSOR; deploying SOF units must be capable of fulfilling these tasks, and troop contributing nations are responsible for providing SOF personnel fully capable of meeting these requirements. The Level 1 capabilities listed in the following tables are to be considered as the minimum capability requirements for NATO SOF. Level 2 and Level 3 capabilities may be required to meet operational requirements, so achieving these levels are highly desirable.

A.2 Special operations land task group

Special operations land task group (SOLTG)	
Level 1	**General:** 1. Capable of planning and conducting the full spectrum of special operations (military assistance (MA), special reconnaissance (SR) and direct action (DA)) in the land environment, across the full spectrum of military operations unilaterally and independently as directed by a special operations component command (SOCC) or in support of other component commanders. 2. Capable of conducting the essential staff area functions, commanding and controlling subordinate SOTUs, combat support (CS) and CSS units / elements (including role 1 medical capability for HQ personnel and subordinate units), being able to deploy in support of joint NATO operations in accordance with established deployment timelines with all classes of supply and establishing liaison element at the appropriate level. 3. At this level, an SOLTG is capable of employing, as a minimum, the key enablers such as Air/Aviation, Joint Fires and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities placed in direct support and/or attached to the SOLTG. **At the SOLTG HQ level:** 1. Command and control up to six subordinate SOLTUs, as well as CS and CSS units/elements. 2. Provide appropriate staff planning, control and evaluation of Allied special operations across the full spectrum of special operations. 3. Deploy liaison elements at the appropriate levels using lightweight and reliable equipment, including secure communications. 4. Coordinate the employment of SOF-supporting enablers (e.g., aviation assets).

	Common, fundamental level 1 capabilities mandatory for all SR, and/or DA and/or MA missions: 1. Self-sustain (to include ammunition and other supplies) with own personnel and equipment (and limited self-recovery capability) for up to 10 days mission in an austere environment. 2. Enter and depart the operational area by day and night, in all weather conditions, by ground, water, and air using organic or available enabler assets. 3. Establish internal and long-range secure communications with all employed subordinate elements. 4. Capable of planning, tracking and coordinating insertion and extraction. 5. Infiltrate into and exfiltrate from hostile environment using all available means of transportation with all mission-specific required equipment. 6. Conduct limited civil-military interaction (CMI) and civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) activities and interact with other cultures and societies, in coordination with the substantive civilian component of specific Operation / Mission. 7. Capable of clandestine modes of deployment and employment. 8. Conduct Site Exploitation; capable of utilizing all resources available necessary to perform the core exploitation activities of detect, collect, process, analyse, and disseminate at or near the point of encounter or site of the event. Integrate and synchronize all exploitation activities through deliberate planning and in coordination with appropriate staff functions and tasks. 9. Capable of conducting the core exploitation activities of detect and collect biometric data from individuals and material in accordance with the commander's guidance and be capable of making that data available to be processed, analysed and cross-matched in support of Identity Intelligence. 10. Capable of employing selective friendly force tracking capabilities (e.g. clandestine mode tracking) and battle tracking procedures for own forces. 11. Capable of employing knowledge management, information technology and communication systems to support the requirements of superior's HQ as well as of subordinate assets (including, but not limited to tools for planning, mapping, battle-tracking, intelligence processing and reporting).

	12. Capable of request for information (RFI) management and prioritised collection of intelligence in support of targeting including time-sensitive as well developing Target Intelligence Packages. 13. Capable of integration medical planning and retaining medical ROLE 1 capability including establishing and implementing medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) / casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) procedures as well ensuring subordinate units have appropriate medical capabilities. **Special reconnaissance (SR):** 1. Capable of conducting environmental reconnaissance, threat assessment, target assessment, post-strike reconnaissance for extended periods (up to 10 days) with minimal external support in austere and hostile environment. 2. Capable of conducting optical surveillance and area reconnaissance of targets by day and night, and in adverse weather conditions. 3. Capable of preparation of landing sites to allow reinforcements by land, maritime, and air forces. 4. Capable of detecting moving personnel with specific ISR assets by day and night. 5. Identify, track and locate targets for the air to ground or indirect fires. **Direct action (DA):** 1. Capable of conducting raids, ambushes, and direct assaults which involve attacking High Value and High Pay-Off targets. 2. Capable of capturing designated personnel or materiel. 3. Capable of independently destroying, or neutralizing adversary forces, facilities or capabilities. **Military assistance (MA):** 1. Capable of training, advising, mentoring and partnering host nation or indigenous security forces up to level 1 NATO SOF capability, in a permissive environment.

Level 2	**General:** 1. As a prerequisite to meet level 2, the minimum capabilities of level 1 must have been attained. Level 2 capabilities apply to all SOLTG principal tasks (SR, DA and MA) where the requirement for that level of capacity is specified. 2. At this level, an SOLTG is capable of employing Technical exploitation operations (TEO) /biometrics capabilities placed in direct support and/or attached to the SOLTG. **At the SOLTG HQ level:** 1. Deploy and establish SOLTG HQ with capabilities based on the assigned mission from the SOCC and with a staff configuration which is organized in array of staff functions similar to that of the SOCC structure. 2. Plan and coordinate the employment of key enabler skills such as air/aviation, joint fires, ISR, TEO/biometrics capabilities. 3. Support planning operations designated to counter proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)s and biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) materials. 4. Capable of Commanding and Controlling one subordinate SOATU-RW/TR or SOATU-FW, or supporting Air/Aviation task unit. **Special reconnaissance (SR):** 1. Capable of conducting surveillance of a target using remote sensors and optics, conducting surveillance of a target using persistent ISR (e.g. unmanned aerial vehicles), as available. **Direct action (DA):** 1. Capable conducting air terminal control tasks to NATO standards, directing terminal guidance control of precision guided munitions (air-to-ground and indirect fires), consistent with the procedures of the nation providing the support while minimizing collateral damage. 2. Capable of conducting deep operations against adversary High Value and High Pay-Off targets.

	Military assistance (MA): 1. Capable of training, advising, mentoring and partnering with host nation or indigenous security forces up to level 2 NATO SOF capability, in a permissive and non-permissive environment.
Level 3	**General:** 1. As a prerequisite to meet level 3, the minimum capabilities of level 2 must have been attained. Level 3 capabilities apply to all SOLTG principal tasks (SR, DA and MA) where the requirement for that level of capacity is specified. 2. At this level, an SOLTG is capable of employing organic Air/Aviation, ISR assets, and TEO/biometrics capabilities. 3. Capable of gathering signals intelligence (SIGINT) during operations. **At the SOLTG HQ level:** 1. Deploy and establish a competent SOLTG HQ, capable of providing combined and joint staff structure. 2. Command and control the employment of organic air/aviation ISR, and TEO/biometrics assets/capabilities. 3. Command and control of at least one assigned/organic SOATU-RW/TR or –FW. 4. Command and control hostage release operation (HRO) 5. Command and control the employment of organic cyberdefence assets/capabilities. 6. Command and control unconventional and/or non-conventional assisted recovery (UAR/NAR) operations.[51] **Special reconnaissance (SR) :** 1. Capable of conducting CBRN recce using accredited metering system. **Direct action (DA):** 1. Capable of conducting precision destruction operations. 2. Capable of conducting SOLTG level manoeuvre operations using integral tactical mobility and support weapons.

[51] Recovery is part of the DA principle task as outlined in Military Committee (MC) 437/2, *Special Operations Policy.*

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	3. Capable of conducting HRO. 4. Capable of conducting UAR/NAR operations. **Military assistance (MA):** 1. Capable of training, advising, mentoring, and partnering with host nation or indigenous security forces up to level 3 NATO SOF capability, in a permissive, non-permissive and hostile environment.

A.3 **Special operations maritime task group**

Special operations maritime task group (SOMTG)	
Level 1	**General:** 1. An SOMTG has to meet the level 1 requirements of an SOLTG. Additionally the below listed capabilities are required. 2. Capable of planning and conducting the full spectrum of special operations (MA, SR and DA) in the maritime environment, across the full spectrum of military operations unilaterally and independently as directed by a SOCC or in support of other component commanders. 3. Capable of conducting the essential staff area functions, commanding and controlling subordinate SOTUs, CS and CSS units / elements, (including role 1 medical capability for HQ personnel and subordinate units) being able to deploy in support of joint NATO operations in accordance with established deployment timelines with all classes of supply and establishing liaison element at the appropriate level. 4. At this level, an SOMTG is capable of employing, as a minimum, the key enablers such as Air/Aviation, Joint Fires and ISR capabilities placed in direct support and/or attached to the SOMTG. **At the SOMTG HQ level:** 1. Deploy and establish a complement SOMTG HQ. 2. Command and Control up to six subordinate special operations maritime task units (SOMTU)s, as well as CS (including special operations boat task units (SOBTU)s) and CSS units/elements. 3. Provide appropriate staff planning, control and evaluation of Allied special operations across the full spectrum of special operations (SR, DA and MA). 4. Deploy liaison elements at the appropriate levels using lightweight and reliable equipment, including secure communications. 5. Coordinate the employment of SOF-supporting enablers (e.g., aviation assets).

	Common, fundamental level 1 capabilities mandatory for all SR, and/or DA and/or MA missions: 1. Self-sustain (to include ammunition and other supplies) with own personnel and equipment (and limited self-recovery capability) for up to 10 days mission in an austere environment. 2. Enter and depart the operational area by day and night, in all weather conditions, by ground, water and air, using organic or available enabler assets. 3. Establish internal and long-range secure communications with all employed subordinate elements. 4. Capable of planning, tracking and coordinating insertion and extraction of subordinate units/elements. 5. Infiltrate into and exfiltrate from hostile areas using all available means of transportation with all mission-specific required equipment. 6. Capable of conducting combat swimming operations using closed circuit breathing apparatus. 7. In compliance with the authorized mandate, polices, principles and practices conduct limited CMI and CIMIC activities and interact with other cultures and societies, in coordination with the substantive civilian component of specific Operation / Mission. 8. Capable of clandestine modes of deployment and employment. 9. Conduct Site Exploitation; capable of utilizing all resources available necessary to perform the core exploitation activities of detect, collect, process, analyse, and disseminate at or near the point of encounter or site of the event. Integrate and synchronize all exploitation activities through deliberate planning and in coordination with appropriate staff functions and tasks. 10. Capable of conducting the core exploitation activities of detect and collect biometric data from individuals and material in accordance with the commander's guidance and be capable of making that data available to be processed, analysed and cross-matched in support of Identity Intelligence. 11. Capable of employing selective friendly force tracking capabilities (e.g. clandestine mode tracking) and battle tracking procedures for own forces. 12. Capable of employing knowledge management, information technology and communication systems to support the requirements of superior's HQ as well as of subordinate assets (including, but not limited to tools for planning, mapping, battle-tracking, intelligence processing and reporting).

	13. Capable of RFI management and prioritised collection of intelligence in support of targeting including time-sensitive as well developing Target Intelligence Packages. 14. Capable of integration medical planning and retaining medical ROLE 1 capability including establishing and implementing MEDEVAC / CASEVAC procedures as well ensuring subordinate units have appropriate medical capabilities. **Special reconnaissance (SR):** 1. Capable of conducting environmental reconnaissance, threat assessment, target assessment, post-strike reconnaissance for extended periods (up to 10 days) with minimal external support in austere and hostile environment. 2. Capable of conducting optical surveillance of targets and area reconnaissance by day and night, and in adverse weather conditions. 3. Capable of preparation of (beach) landing sites to allow reinforcements by land, maritime, and air forces. 4. Capable of detecting moving personnel with specific ISR assets by day and night. 5. Identify, track and locate targets for the air to ground or indirect fires. 6. Capable of conducting overt and clandestine (underwater delivery) SR mission (e.g. over the beach, over the horizon, beach obstacle and explosive ordnance disposal recce) using handheld equipment, in the coastal riverine and maritime environments. **Direct action (DA):** 1. Capable of conducting raids, ambushes, and direct assaults (including airborne assaults) in the coastal, riverine and maritime environments, including opposed boarding operations, which involve attacking High Value and High Pay-Off targets. 2. Capable of capturing designated personnel or materiel. 3. Capable of recovery of ships and maritime installations. 4. Capable of independently destroying, or neutralizing adversary forces, facilities or capabilities. 5. Capable of using low prominence techniques by air, land, or sea, inclusive underwater operations.

	Military assistance (MA): 1. Capable of training, advising, mentoring and partnering host nation or indigenous security forces up to level 1 NATO SOF capability, in a permissive environment.
Level 2	**General:** 1. As a prerequisite to meet level 2, the minimum capabilities of level 1 must have been attained. Level 2 capabilities apply to all SOMTG principal tasks (SR, DA and MA) where the requirement for that level of capacity is specified. 2. At this level, an SOMTG is capable of employing Technical exploitation operations (TEO) /biometrics capabilities placed in direct support and/or attached to the SOMTG. **At the SOMTG HQ level:** 1. Deploy and establish a competent SOMTG HQ, capable of providing a Joint staff similar to that of the SOCC structure. 2. Plan and coordinate the employment of key enabler such as air/aviation, joint fires, ISR, TEO/biometrics, SIGINT capabilities. 3. Support planning operations designated to counter proliferation of WMD and CBRN materials. 4. Capable of Commanding and Controlling one subordinate SOATU-RW/TR or SOATU-FW, or supporting air/aviation task unit. **Special reconnaissance (SR):** 1. Capable of conducting swimming operations using swimmer delivery systems to enhance range and payload. 2. Capable of conducting surveillance of a target using remote sensors and optics, conducting surveillance of a target using persistent ISR (e.g. unmanned aerial vehicles), as available. 3. Capable of conducting SR using technical systems to record and report littoral profiles as well as gather and report intelligence of the target area (ex target data, global positioning system (GPS) coordinates).

	Direct action (DA): 1. Capable of conducting air terminal control tasks to NATO standards, directing terminal guidance control of precision guided munitions (air-to-ground and indirect fires), consistent with the procedures of the nation providing the support while minimizing collateral damage. 2. Capable of conducting deep operations against adversary High Value and High Pay-Off targets. 3. Capable of conducting underwater demolitions with man-pack explosive devices employing fuse system. **Military assistance (MA):** 1. Capable of training, advising, mentoring and partnering with host nation or indigenous security forces up to level 2 NATO SOF capability, in a permissive and non-permissive environment.
Level 3	**General:** 1. As a prerequisite to meet level 3, the minimum capabilities of level 2 must have been attained. Level 3 capabilities apply to all SOMTG principal tasks (SR, DA and MA) where the requirement for that level of capacity is specified. 2. At this level, an SOMTG is capable of employing organic Air/Aviation, ISR assets, and TEO/biometrics capabilities. 3. Capable of gathering SIGINT during operations. **At the SOMTG HQ level:** 1. Deploy and establish a competent SOMTG HQ, capable of providing combined and joint staff structure. 2. Command and Control the employment of organic air/aviation ISR, and TEO/biometrics assets/capabilities. 3. Command and Control of at least one assigned/organic SOATU-RW/TR or –FW. 4. Command and Control HRO. 5. Command and control the employment of organic cyberdefence assets/capabilities. 6. Command and Control UAR/NAR operations.[52]

[52] Recovery is part of the DA principle task as outline in MC 437/2, *Special Operations Policy*.

	Special reconnaissance (SR): 1. Capable of conducting CBRN recce using accredited metering system. 2. Capable of conducting amphibious advance force reconnaissance either remotely or without using surface swimming, using technical systems based on advanced differential GPS or inertial navigation systems. **Direct action (DA):** 1. Capable of conducting precision destruction operations. 2. Capable of conducting SOMTG level manoeuvre operations using integral tactical mobility and support weapons. 3. Capable of conducting offensive maritime attack/interdiction operations with Fast Attack/Special Operations Crafts with support weapons and/or standoff weapon systems in the coastal, riverine, and maritime environments. 4. Capable of conducting HRO. Capable of conducting UAR/NAR operations. **Military assistance (MA):** 1. Capable of training, advising, mentoring, and partnering with host nation or indigenous security forces up to level 3 NATO SOF capability, in a permissive, non-permissive and hostile environment.

A.4 Special operations air task group

Special operations air task group (SOATG)
Capabilities common to all levels **Overall capabilities:** 1. Capable of planning and conducting the full spectrum of special operations (SR, DA or MA), utilising assigned forces. 2. Capable to operate in the land and/or maritime environments through the provision of special operations air activities, across the full spectrum of military operations, unilaterally and independently or as directed by a SOCC or in support of other component or designated commanders. 3. Establish internal and long-range secure communications with all employed subordinate elements. 4. Capable of employing selective friendly force tracking capabilities (e.g. discrete mode tracking) and battle tracking procedures for own forces. **HQ capabilities:** 1. Capable of conducting the essential staff area functions, commanding and controlling SOATUs, CS and CSS units/elements (including role 1 medical capability for HQ personnel and subordinate units), being able to deploy in support of joint NATO operations in accordance with established deployment timelines, with all classes of supply and establishing liaison elements at the appropriate level. 2. Advise the SOCC commander on Allied special air operations and be prepared to assist with air-specific C2 functions (e.g. apportionment of assets and effort, coordination with supporting air/aviation elements). 3. Capable of enabling the deployment and sustainment of assigned units, through coordination and/or provision of supporting functions. 4. Capable of enabling and coordinating basic airfield operations, as well as maintenance and logistics facilities and activities, in order to provide support to operations for SOATUs, including both FW and RW/TR.

5. Capable of employing knowledge management, information technology and communication systems to support the requirements of higher's HQ as well as of subordinate assets (including, but not limited to, tools for planning, mapping, battle-tracking, intelligence processing and reporting).
6. Capable of RFI management and prioritized collection of intelligence in support of deliberate and dynamic targeting as well developing Target folders.
7. Capable of integrating medical planning and capabilities including establishing and implementing MEDEVAC / CASEVAC procedures.

Force capabilities:

1. Assigned forces must be enabled and capable to enter and depart the operational area of / operate in austere and extreme environmental conditions (day and night, in low illumination, in all terrains and environments, to austere/confined locations and/or vessels, in adverse weather conditions, including cold and extremely hot temperatures, low visibilities, low cloud ceilings, and high winds), as well as to operate in potentially high-risk operational areas, in militarily and politically sensitive environments, by using low prominence plans and by adopting advanced and/or special tactics, techniques and procedures, and by fostering habitual relationship with other SOF.
2. Capable of planning and performing or enabling SOALI over tactical operating zones as well as staging areas for aircraft, through the use of assigned assets. This includes the capability of planning and/or enabling a degree of control and coordination of air to ground fires through the use of assigned assets usually in support of the SOLTG/SOMTGs operations.
3. Capable of employing assigned units in support of SOF teams by clandestine infiltration / insertion / resupply / extraction / exfiltration, through habitual working relationships, to austere/unprepared locations/vessels, in militarily and politically sensitive environments, using low prominence plans.

Special reconnaissance (SR):

1. Capable of enabling SR conducted by other SOF.
2. Capable of planning and controlling the use of organic/supporting/assigned ISR assets.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Direct action (DA):
1. With assigned forces, capable of planning and conducting DA operations as directed through the provision of special operations air support and enabling other SOF conducting DA.

Military assistance (MA):
1. Capable of performing MA in the field of air/aviation capabilities at the tactical level (including essential staff area functions), with assisted partners and/or enabling other SOF providing MA.

Recommendations for force planning and force generation: It is recommended that nations which provide an SOATG should establish it as an integral capability package, comprised of a HQ, dependant units (at least one SOATU-RW/TR and one SOATU-FW), SOALI and other CS and CSS units, as well as with robust logistic and aviation technical services to ensure a strong framework to provide sufficient operational autonomy and effectiveness, as well as readiness to incorporate other units and attachments.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Level 1</td><td>General:
1. In addition to capabilities common to all Levels, must be capable of planning and conducting special operations, utilizing assigned forces
2. Capable to enable operations conducted by other SOF, within the three principal tasks (DA, MA, SR).

HQ capabilities:
1. Capable of commanding and controlling a minimum of two (2) SOATUs as well as CS and CSS units/elements.
2. Capable of enabling and coordinating basic airfield operations, as well as maintenance and logistics facilities and activities, in order to provide support to operations of assigned forces.

Force capabilities for level 1:
1. Capable of planning and performing or enabling survey, preparation and information/advisory over tactical operating zones as well as staging areas for aircraft, in a permissive environment, and capable of sustaining up to 24 hours of operations, through the use of assigned assets.</td></tr>
</table>

	2. Capable of planning and/or enabling the observation and the direction of air to ground fires through the use of assigned assets. 3. Capable of integrating medical planning and retaining ROLE 1 capability including the provision of CASEVAC as well ensuring subordinate units have appropriate medical capabilities. **Special reconnaissance (SR):** 1. Capable of planning and controlling supporting ISR assets during SR operations. **Direct action (DA):** 1. Capable of enabling and supporting DA conducted by other SOF. **Military assistance (MA):** 1. Capable of training, advising, mentoring and partnering with host nation or indigenous A forces up to level 1 NATO SOF capability, in a permissive environment.
Level 2	**General:** As a prerequisite to meet level 2, the minimum capabilities of level 1 must have been attained. Level 2 capabilities apply to all SOATG principal tasks (SR, DA and MA) where the requirement for that level of capacity is specified. **HQ capabilities:** 1. Capable of commanding and controlling a minimum of four (4) SOATUs as well as CS and CSS units/elements. **Force capabilities for level 2:** 1. Capable of planning and performing or enabling survey, preparation and information/advisory over tactical operating zones as well as staging/refueling areas for aircraft, in a contested environment,[53] and be capable of sustaining up to 72 hours of operations, through the use of assigned assets.

[53] Prominently controlled by friendly forces and/or governance, but with control likely to be disputed through force and/or legitimacy of governance, potentially jeopardizing the security and/or the legitimacy of own operations.

	2. Capable of enabling the control of air to ground fires through the use of assigned assets. 3. Capable of provision of patient evacuation capabilities with assigned forces. **Special reconnaissance (SR):** 1. Capable of planning and conducting SR by controlling supporting and or assigned ISR assets, including non-ISR dedicated platforms. **Direct action (DA):** 1. Capable of conducting DA missions with reliance on supporting assets. 2. Capable to support personnel recovery (PR). **Military assistance (MA):** 1. Capable of training, advising, mentoring and partnering with host nation or indigenous aviation forces up to level 2 NATO SOF capability, in a permissive and non-permissive environment. 2. Capable of providing aviation leadership advisory at tactical and operational level.
Level 3	**General:** As a prerequisite to meet level 3, the minimum capabilities of level 2 must have been attained. Level 3 capabilities apply to all SOATG principal tasks (SR, DA and MA) where the requirement for that level of capacity is specified. **HQ capabilities:** 1. Capable of commanding and controlling a minimum of six (6) SOATUs as well as CS and CSS units/elements.

	Force capabilities for level 3: 1. Capable of planning and performing or enabling survey, preparation and control over tactical operating zones as well as staging/refuelling areas for aircraft, in a hostile or highly politically sensitive environment, and be capable of sustaining up to 72 hours of operations, through the use of assigned assets. 2. Capable of integrating a special operations surgical team (SOST) into operations of assigned forces. 3. Capable to support CBRN recce operations and operations to counter proliferation of WMD and CBRN materials. 4. Capable of supporting or gathering SIGINT during operations. **Special reconnaissance (SR):** 1. Capable of planning and conducting SR by controlling supporting, assigned and organic ISR assets. **Direct action (DA):** 1. Capable of planning and conducting DA with a combination of assigned and supporting assets. 2. Capable to support HRO. **Military assistance (MA):** 1. Capable of training, advising, mentoring, and partnering with host nation or indigenous aviation forces up to level 3 NATO SOF capability, in a permissive, non-permissive and hostile environment. 2. Capable of providing aviation institutional advisory to assisted forces' leadership at tactical and operational level.

Annex B – Allied special operations forces targeting

B.1 Component commanders and their staff may use different activities/steps like the decide, detect, deliver and assess (D3A) process to interact with the joint targeting cycle managed by the operational command. Throughout, the process is dependent on the clear direction and guidance of the operational commander to the component commander and is particularly suitable where component commanders have been given responsibility for an area of operations and a degree of autonomy in the conduct of their operations. For SOF it can be summarized in the following sections.

B.2 The special operations component command (SOCC) develops a true understanding of the operating environment and maps out all the friendly, opposing and neutral actors. Without the knowledge of how all of these elements work, how they are linked, and the relationship that one has to another, it is impossible to determine the true effect of potential operations. Fundamental to this process is the requirement to conduct detailed threat network and target analysis. There are various tools and methods that can be utilized to develop this picture. Examples are the joint intelligence preparation of the operating environment (JIPOE) and the process of find, feel, understand, influence, and disrupt (F2UID).

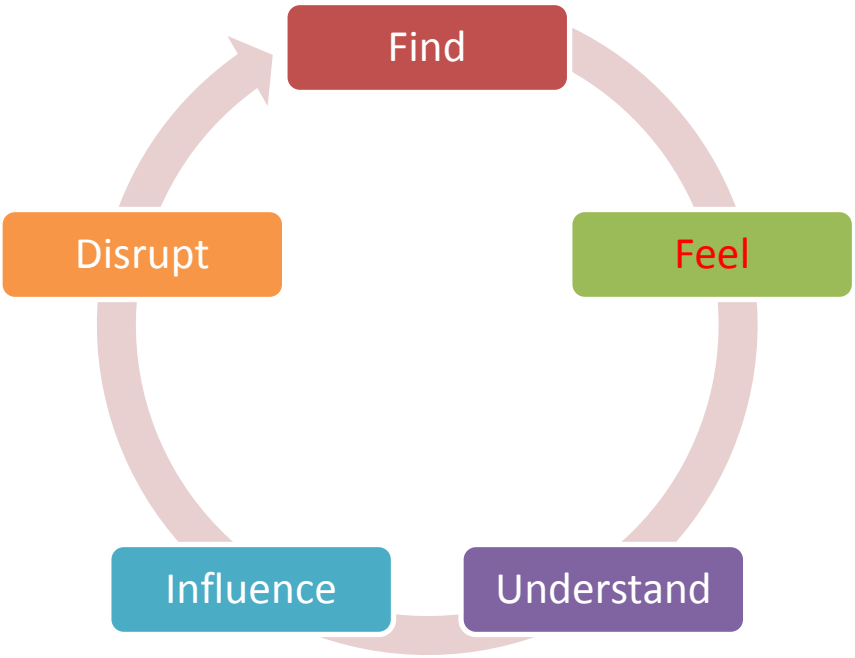

Figure B-1. F2UID process

B.3 This is not a quick process. Time and resources must be invested to ensure the relevance of information and products. If the process is done successfully, the overall level of operational effectiveness may be greatly improved.

B.4 F2UID can be utilized at various SOF levels to develop a picture and to describe the operating environment. It provides the baseline understanding of the indigenous population and the complex network of connections forced by family, tribes, economics, crime, and internal conflict. Once the information is displayed and processed, it allows the user to develop ways to influence and disrupt the target through lethal or non-lethal means using the find, fix, finish, exploit, analyse and disseminate (F3EAD) targeting activity cycle. This cycle relates to the concept that the targeting process is intelligence driven, but command led. The cycle needs to be continuously reviewed and refocused to coordinate with operational developments, operational intent, and updated PIRs. The F2UID process can be seen as a rigorous cultural intelligence model. All available sources must be used to build a comprehensive picture of the area of operations (AOO)/area of responsibility.

B.5 It can be detrimental to leap directly into the targeting process using the F3EAD cycle, particularly in a theatre with conflict (Fig B-2). The SOCC therefore needs to implement a comprehensive approach which advocates that all actors, military and non-military, be considered during the course of action (COA) development. This activity cycle is applicable for any high pay-off target.

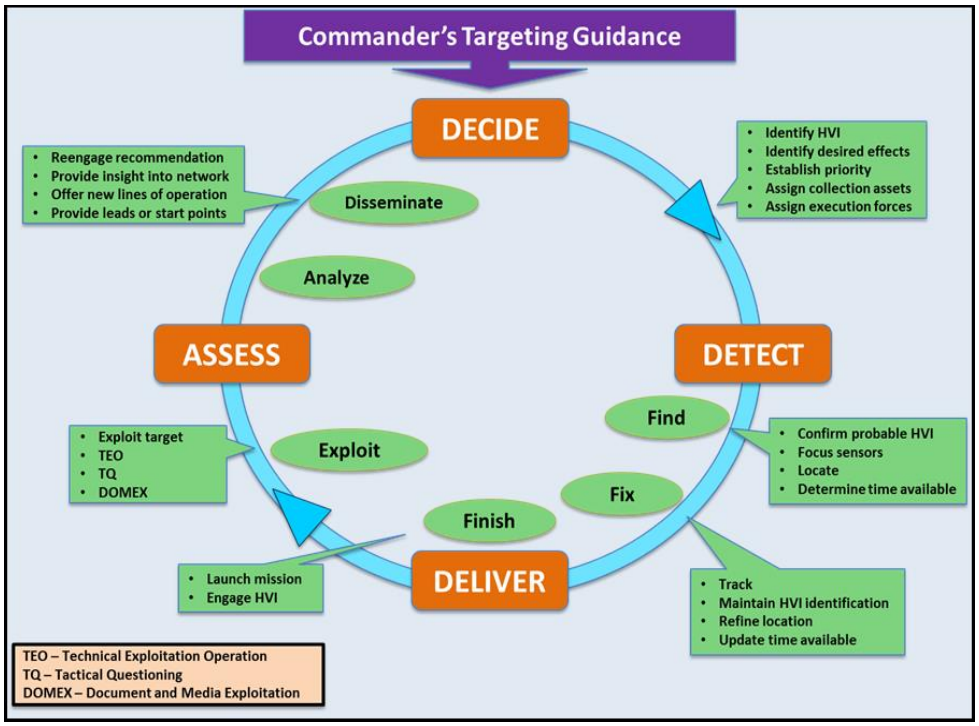

Figure B-2. F3EAD Cycle within D3A

B.6 The vital link between intelligence and operations in targeting assures that well informed decisions based on the F2UID process are leading to a potential high tempo F3EAD process targeting, for instance, high value targets or entire threat networks which are mainly dynamic or even time sensitive by nature. The same rule applies for the find, fix, track, target,

engage, and assess (F2T2EA) dynamic targeting process when prosecuting a time sensitive target.

B.7 To achieve the desired results, time must be spent utilizing all available intelligence and information sources (civilian and military) to build a multi-layered picture of the operating environment. Only then can SOF truly determine the effect they are going to create.

B.8 The SOCC must ensure that the objectives on targets complement or support strategic and operational objectives. This requires a predictive approach to ensure that the follow-on effects are anticipated and fully considered. It also may require effects to be mitigated prior to, during, and after mission execution. The ability to analyse second and third order effects is essential to evaluating measures of effectiveness as part of the assessment phase of targeting.

B.9 Target prioritization is required to take place at all levels of operational activity. Key to the process is that each level of prioritization can be linked back to operational objectives outlined in the operation plan (OPLAN) or support plan. Unless a target can be defined in relation to these objectives, it is difficult to justify and is unlikely to be selected for approval by the appropriate authority.

B.10 F2T2EA dynamic targeting process may be used to prosecute and engage a time sensitive target (Fig B-3). Depending on the type and nature of a time sensitive target the use of pre-approved concept of operations (CONOPS) is suitable to reduce the time between detecting and engaging a time sensitive target.

Figure B-3. Dynamic Targeting (F2T2EA process)

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Lexicon

Part I – Acronyms and abbreviations

AAR	air-to-air refuelling
ACO	Allied Command Operations
AJP	Allied joint publication
AOO	area of operations
ASC	all-source cell
AT	air transport
BGX	Battlefield Information Collection and Exploitation System Group Executive
BICES	battlefield information collection and exploitation system
Bi-SC	of the two Strategic Commands
C2	command and control
C2IS	command and control information system
CAS	close air support
CASEVAC	casualty evacuation
CBRN	chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear
CCT	combat control team
CIMIC	civil-military cooperation
CIS	communication and information systems
CJSOR	combined joint statement of requirements
CMI	civil-military interaction
COIN	counter-insurgency
CS	combat support
CSS	combat service support
CT	counterterrorism
D3A	decide, detect, deliver and assess
DA	direct action
DCR	damage control resuscitation
EOD	explosive ordnance disposal
EW	electronic warfare
FAC	forward air controller
FARP	forward arming and refuelling point
FORGEN	force generation
FN	framework nation
F2T2EA	find, fix, track, target, engage, and assess
F2UID	find, feel, understand, influence and disrupt

F3EAD	find, fix, finish, exploit, analyse and disseminate
GPS	global positioning system
HN	host nation
HNS	host-nation support
HQ	headquarters
HRO	hostage release operation
IE	Information environment
IEDD	improvised explosive device disposal
INT	Intelligence
ISR	intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance
J-1	personnel staff branch
J-2	intelligence staff branch
J-6	communications staff branch
JFC	joint force command
JISR	joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance
JLSG	joint logistic support group
JOA	joint operations area
JPRC	joint personnel recovery centre
JPTL	joint prioritized target list
JTCB	joint targeting coordination board
JTF	joint task force
MA	military assistance
MC	Military Committee
MEDEVAC	medical evacuation
MILENG	military engineering
MJO	major joint operation
MN	multinational
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NAR	non-conventional assisted recovery
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCS	NATO Command Structure
NDPP	NATO defence planning process
NFS	NATO force structure
NIFC	NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre
NS	NATO Secret
NSHQ	NATO Special Operations Headquarters
NU	NATO Unclassified

OPCOM	operational command
OPCON	operational control
OPLAN	operation plan
OPSEC	operations security
OSO	Office of Special Operations
PIR	priority intelligence requirement
PMESII	political, military, economic, social, infrastructure and information
PR	personnel recovery
PRCC	personnel recovery coordination cell
PTL	prioritized target list
RFI	request for information
ROE	rules of engagement
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SAD	special air directorate
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
SIGINT	signals intelligence
SJO	smaller joint operation
SOA	special operations area
SOAC	special operations air command
SOALI	special operations air-land integration
SOATG	special operations air task group
SOATU	special operations air task unit
SOATU-FW	special operations air task unit-fixed wing
SOATU-RW/TR	special operations air task unit-rotary wing/tilt rotor
SOCC	special operations component command
SOCC-FWD	special operations component command – forward
SOCCE	special operations command and control element
SOCM	special operations combat medic
SOF	special operations forces
SOFAD	special operations forces advisor
SOID	Special Operations Intelligence Division
SOLE	special operations liaison element
SOLO	special operations liaison officer
SOLTG	special operations land task group
SOLTU	special operations land task unit
SOMTG	special operations maritime task group
SOMTU	special operations maritime task unit
SOPLE	special operations planning and liaison element
SOST	special operations surgical team
SOTF	special operations task force
SOTG	special operations task group

SOTU	special operations task unit
SR	special reconnaissance
SSR	security sector reform
StratCom	strategic communications
TACON	tactical control
TCN	troop-contributing nation
TEO	technical exploitation operations
TST	time sensitive targets
UAR	unconventional assisted recovery
UARCC	unconventional assisted recovery coordination cell
UAS	unmanned aircraft system
WMD	weapon of mass destruction

Part II – Terms and definitions

ambush
To conduct as a surprise attack from concealed positions on a moving or temporarily halted enemy. (NATO Agreed)

assault[1]
The climax of an attack; closing with the enemy in hand-to-hand fighting. (NATO Agreed)

assault[2]
A short, violent, but well-ordered attack against a local objective, such as a gun emplacement, a fort or a machine-gun nest. (NATO Agreed)

clandestine operation
An operation planned or conducted in such a way as to assure secrecy or concealment. (NATO Agreed)

counter-insurgency (COIN)
Comprehensive civilian and military efforts made to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances. (NATO Agreed)

counterterrorism (CT)
All preventive, defensive and offensive measures taken to reduce the vulnerability of forces, individuals and property against terrorist threats and/or acts, and to respond to terrorist acts. Notes: In the frame of the NATO Comprehensive Approach, these measures can be combined with or followed by measures enabling recovery after terrorist acts. (NATO Agreed)

direct action (DA)
A short-duration strike or other small scale offensive action by special operations forces to seize, destroy, capture, recover or inflict damage to achieve specific, well-defined and often time-sensitive results. (NATO Agreed)

exfiltration
The removal of personnel or units from areas under hostile control by stealth, deception, surprise, or clandestine means. (NATO Agreed)

extraction
The removal of forces from a hostile or potentially hostile area. (NATO Agreed)

infiltration
A technique and process in which a force moves as individuals or small groups over, through or around enemy positions without detection. (NATO Agreed)

insertion
The introduction of forces into a hostile or potentially hostile area. (NATO Agreed)

military assistance (MA)
A broad range of activities that support and influence critical friendly assets through training, advising, mentoring or the conduct of combined operations.
Notes: The range of military assistance is considerable and includes, but is not limited to: capability building of friendly security forces; engagement with local, regional, and national leadership or organizations; and civic actions supporting and influencing the local population. (NATO Agreed)

overt operation
An operation conducted openly, without concealment. (NATO Agreed)

personnel recovery
The sum of military, diplomatic and civil efforts to effect the recovery and reintegration of isolated personnel. (NATO Agreed)

raid
An operation, usually small scale, involving a swift penetration of hostile territory to secure information, confuse the enemy, or destroy his installations. It ends with a planned withdrawal upon completion of the assigned mission. (NATO Agreed)

special operations
Military activities conducted by specially designated, organized, trained and equipped forces using distinct techniques and modes of employment. (NATO Agreed)

special operations air-land integration (SOALI)
Discipline that orchestrates and enhances the exploitation of the full spectrum of air power, by special operations forces, in special operations environments, to achieve synergistic and extended delivery of effects for the Alliance. (This is a new term and definition and has been submitted for NATO Agreed status by TTF [2017-0176].)

special reconnaissance (SR)
Reconnaissance and surveillance activities conducted as a special operation in, but not limited to, hostile, denied, diplomatically and/or politically sensitive environments to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance, led by special operations forces using distinct techniques and methods. (This term and definition modifies an existing NATO Agreed term and/or definition and has been processed for NATO Agreed status via terminology tracking file [2008-0664].)

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