
Army Special Operations Forces

September 2006

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Headquarters, Department of the Army

Army Special Operations Forces

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Preface

Field Manual (FM) 3-05 is an Army keystone publication and the integrating manual for United States (U.S.) Army special operations forces (ARSOF). The acronym ARSOF represents Special Forces (SF), Rangers, Special Operations Aviation (SOA), Psychological Operations (PSYOP), and Civil Affairs (CA)—all supported by the Sustainment Brigade (Special Operations) (Airborne) (SB[SO][A]).

PURPOSE

FM 3-05 describes the ARSOF strategic landscape, fundamentals, core tasks, capabilities, and sustainment involved in the full range of military operations. This manual serves as the doctrinal foundation for subordinate ARSOF doctrine, force integration, materiel acquisition, professional education, and individual and unit training. This manual is the keystone for the entire family of current and proposed ARSOF manuals (Figure Preface-1, page vi).

SCOPE

This manual describes the principles, fundamentals, guidelines, and conceptual framework to facilitate interoperability and the doctrinal foundation for the development of subsequent tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP); doctrine; and training literature. This Army keystone manual complements and is consistent with joint and Army doctrine. It provides the linkage from joint special operations (SO) and Army doctrine to ARSOF doctrine; therefore, great effort has been made to integrate joint and Army concepts and terminology into this manual. ARSOF are routinely committed to operational missions across the full range of military operations.

APPLICABILITY

FM 3-05 provides the joint and land component force commander and his staff a broad understanding of ARSOF. This manual also provides guidance for ARSOF commanders who determine the force structure, budget, training, materiel, and operational requirements necessary to prepare ARSOF to conduct their core tasks. This Service doctrine is consistent with joint doctrine.

This publication applies to the Active Army, Army National Guard (ARNG)/Army National Guard of the United States, and United States Army Reserve (USAR) unless otherwise stated.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

This manual is unclassified to ensure Armywide dissemination and to facilitate the integration of ARSOF in the preparation and execution of campaigns and major operations. Unless this publication states otherwise, masculine nouns and pronouns do not refer exclusively to men. The proponent of this manual is the United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS). Submit comments and recommended changes to Commander, USAJFKSWCS, ATTN: AOJK-DTD-JA, Fort Bragg, NC 28310-5000, or by e-mail to JAComments@soc.mil.

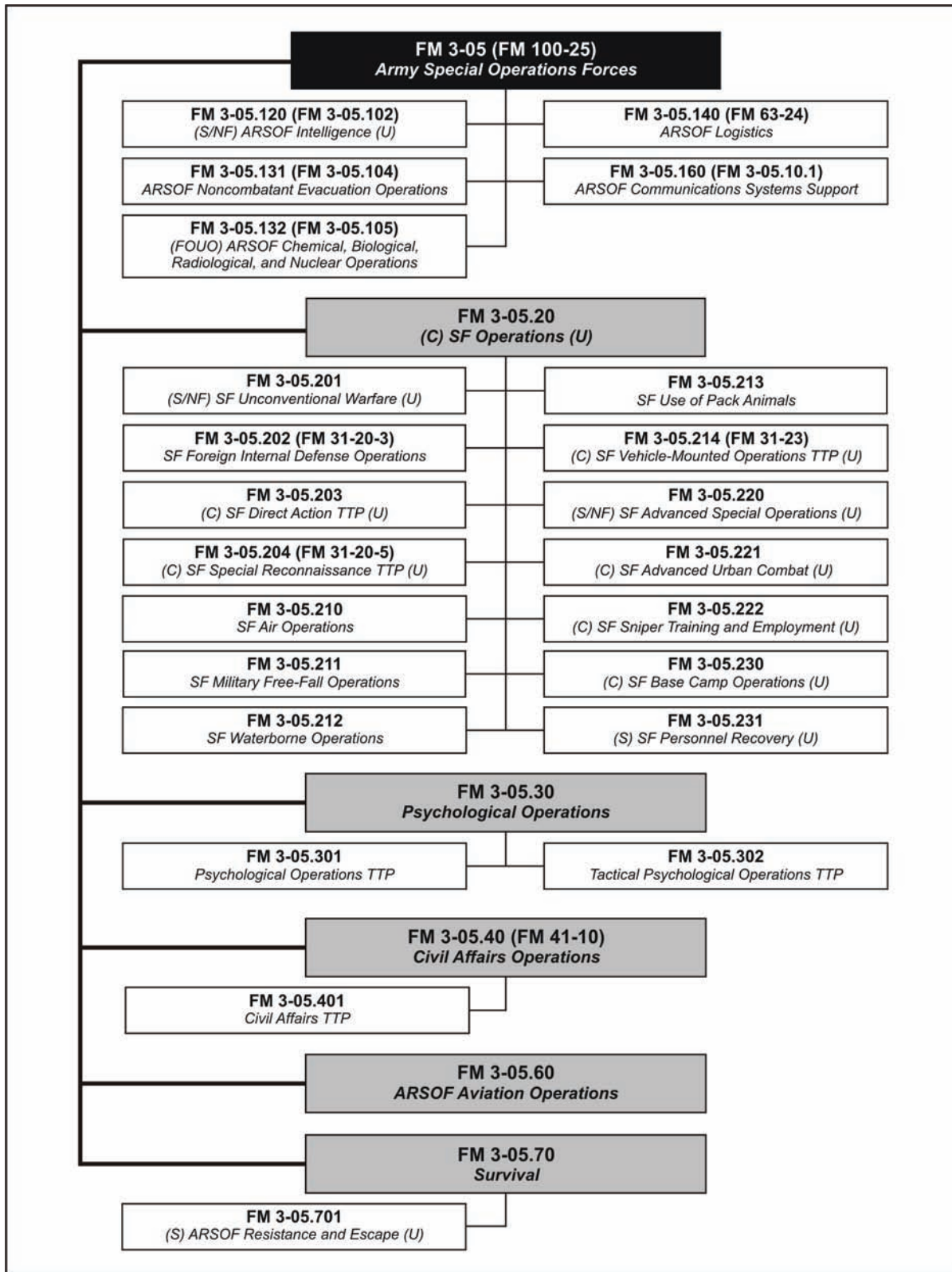


Figure Preface-1. ARSOF doctrinal and training publications architecture

Chapter 1

Overview

The world remains a dangerous place, full of authoritarian regimes, terrorist organizations, and criminal interests whose combined influences extend the realm of human suffering. They foster an environment for extremism and the drive to acquire asymmetric capabilities and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The threats to peace and stability are numerous, complex, oftentimes linked, and sometimes aggravated by natural disaster.

The spectrum of likely operations describes a need for ARSOF in joint, combined, and multinational formations for a variety of missions—from humanitarian assistance to major theater wars, including conflicts involving the potential use of WMD. ARSOF are responsive and dominant at every point on the spectrum. They provide to the Nation an array of deployable, agile, versatile, lethal, survivable, and sustainable formations, which are affordable and capable of rapidly reversing the conditions of human suffering and decisively resolving conflicts.

ARSOF IN SUPPORT OF THE WAR ON TERRORISM

1-1. The U.S. military is engaged in one of the most challenging periods in its history. ARSOF are, and will be for the near future, continuously engaged against terrorists whose goal is the destruction of American freedoms and the American way of life.

1-2. United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) is the lead combatant command (COCOM) for planning, synchronizing, and, as directed, executing global operations against terrorist networks in coordination with other combatant commanders (CCDRs). Commander, United States Special Operations Command (CDRUSOCOM) leads a global collaborative planning process leveraging other COCOM capabilities and expertise that results in decentralized execution by both USSOCOM and other COCOMs against terrorist networks. Internally, USSOCOM considers its role in the process of synchronizing Department of Defense (DOD) efforts in the War on Terrorism (WOT) to be a core task of its headquarters (HQ), with specific responsibilities including—

- Integrating DOD strategy, plans, intelligence priorities, and operations against terrorist networks, as designated by the Secretary of Defense (SecDef).
- Planning campaigns against terrorist networks and exercising command and control (C2) of operations in support of selected campaigns, as directed.
- Prioritizing and synchronizing theater security cooperation activities, deployments, and capabilities supporting campaigns against designated terrorist networks in coordination with the geographic combatant commanders (GCCs).
- Providing military representation to U.S. national and international agencies for matters related to U.S. and multinational campaigns against designated terrorist networks, as directed by the SecDef.
- Planning operational preparation of the environment (OPE); executing OPE or synchronizing the execution of OPE in coordination with the GCCs.

1-3. ARSOF support the WOT by providing forces trained and equipped to support the USSOCOM effort to the WOT. ARSOF support the USSOCOM's strategy for winning the WOT by conducting SO to find,

fix, and finish terrorists globally. ARSOF employ their forces to shape the global informational and geographic operational environment by conducting SO to influence, deter, locate, isolate, and destroy terrorists and their support systems. ARSOF's strategic imperatives are—

- Fight the WOT.
- Maintain force readiness.
- Transform for the future.

1-4. ARSOF must face four persistent and emerging challenges in this new, more uncertain era. Often, no hard boundaries distinguish one challenge from another. Indeed, the most dangerous circumstances are those where ARSOF face, or will face, multiple challenges simultaneously. These challenges may be—

- *Traditional*: Challenges posed largely by states employing legacy and advanced military capabilities and recognizable military forces in long-established, well-known forms of military competition and conflict.
- *Irregular*: Challenges arising from the adoption or employment of unconventional methods by state and non-state actors to counter stronger state opponents, such as terrorism, insurgency, or civil war.
- *Catastrophic*: Challenges involving the surreptitious acquisition, possession, and possible terrorist or rogue employment of WMD or methods that produce WMD-like effects.
- *Disruptive*: Future challenges emanating from competitors developing, possessing, and employing breakthrough technological capabilities intended to supplant ARSOF advantages in specific operational domains.

1-5. ARSOF are a key enabler in the WOT by conducting SO, which obtain actionable intelligence. Such intelligence assists commanders in determining the appropriate force package and in preparing the force to destroy terrorist networks. The force could be unilateral special operations forces (SOF), SOF combined with surrogate forces, or SOF combined with joint conventional forces. ARSOF provide joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) forces with organized, trained, and equipped elements. These elements can operate in hostile, denied, or sensitive environments to collect, monitor, or verify information of strategic or operational significance, often requiring low-visibility techniques. The results of these activities may be fed directly to a commander or Country Team or may be input into the intelligence process for processing, analysis, and dissemination to military and other government agencies (OGAs).

RANGE OF MILITARY OPERATIONS

1-6. The United States employs ARSOF capabilities at home and abroad in support of U.S. national security goals in a variety of operations. These operations vary in size, purpose, and combat intensity within a range of military operations. These operations extend from military engagement, security cooperation, and deterrence to lesser contingency operations and, if necessary, major operations and campaigns (Figure 1-1, page 1-3). Use of ARSOF capabilities in military engagement, security cooperation, and deterrence activities helps shape the operational environment and keep the day-to-day tensions between nations or groups below the threshold of armed conflict while maintaining U.S. global influence. Many of the missions associated with lesser contingencies, such as logistics support and foreign humanitarian assistance (FHA), do not require combat. But others, such as Operation RESTORE HOPE in Somalia, can be extremely dangerous and require a significant effort to protect U.S. forces while accomplishing the mission. Individual major operations and campaigns often contribute to a larger, long-term effort—for example, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, as part of the WOT. The nature of the security environment is such that ARSOF are often engaged in several types of joint operations simultaneously.



Figure 1-1. Range of military operations

GLOBAL NATURE OF OPERATIONS

1-7. ARSOF have global reach and are capable of engaging threats and influencing potential adversaries with a variety of capabilities. However, global reach and influence are not just the purview of nation-states. Globalization and emerging technologies allow small groups to use asymmetric approaches, to include criminal activity, terrorism, or armed aggression on a transnational scale, with relative ease and with little cost.

1-8. Adversaries place greater emphasis on developing capabilities to threaten the United States directly and indirectly. Increased interdependence of national economies and rapid movement of information around the world create significant challenges in the defense of U.S. interests. Identifying potential threats (nations and non-State actors) operating independently or in loose coalitions, determining their intent, and determining the best course of action (COA) to counter their actions are interagency and multinational challenges for the United States.

1-9. The elusive nature of adversaries and the ever-increasing speed of global communications and the media demand greater adaptability and networking from ARSOF, particularly communications and intelligence resources. Consequently, SOF conduct some operations on a global, not theater, scale (for example, SO in the WOT) as part of the U.S. security strategy to prevent direct or indirect attacks on the U.S. homeland and other national interests. These operations are conducted in depth, focusing on the threat source across geographical regions, including forward regions, approaches, and the homeland. The divisions among the three regions are not absolute and may overlap or shift, depending on the situation and the threat.

MILITARY ENGAGEMENT, SECURITY COOPERATION, AND DETERRENCE

1-10. These ongoing and specialized activities establish, shape, maintain, and refine relations with other nations and domestic civil authorities—for example, state governors or local law enforcement. Security cooperation involves all DOD interactions with foreign defense establishments to build defense relationships that promote specific U.S. security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations, and provide ARSOF with peacetime and contingency access to a host nation (HN).

1-11. Joint actions, such as nation assistance, are applied to meet military engagement and security cooperation objectives. Nation assistance may include foreign internal defense (FID), security assistance, and humanitarian and civic assistance; antiterrorism; DOD support to counterdrug operations; show-of-force operations; and arms control. ARSOF's role during military engagement in support of the WOT is to develop an unconventional warfare (UW) network by developing indigenous or surrogate capabilities. This allows capable HN forces the ability to defeat terrorist threats within their sovereign borders unilaterally or in conjunction with ARSOF. Security cooperation is a key element of global and theater-shaping operations and is a pillar of WMD nonproliferation.

Note. Military engagement occurs as part of security cooperation, but also extends to interaction with domestic civilian authorities.

LESSER CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS

1-12. ARSOF are often used to respond to a crisis that does not require large-scale combat operations to resolve. A lesser contingency operation can be a single small-scale, limited-duration operation or a significant part of a major operation of extended duration involving combat. The associated general strategic and operational objectives are to protect U.S. interests and to prevent surprise attack or further conflict. A lesser contingency operation in response to a crisis includes all of those operations for which a joint operation planning process is required and a contingency or crisis plan is developed. The level of complexity, duration, and resources depends on the circumstances. Included are operations to ensure the safety of American citizens and U.S. interests, while maintaining and improving U.S. ability to operate with multinational partners in deterring the hostile ambitions of potential aggressors. Many of these operations involve a combination of conventional and unconventional forces and capabilities in close cooperation with OGAs and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). A crisis may prompt the conduct of FHA, logistics support, noncombatant evacuation operations (NEOs), peace operations, strikes, raids, or recovery operations.

MAJOR OPERATIONS AND CAMPAIGNS

1-13. When required to achieve national strategic objectives or to protect national interests, the U.S. national leadership may decide to conduct a major operation or campaign involving large-scale combat, placing the United States in a wartime state. In such cases, the general goal is to prevail against the enemy as quickly as possible, to conclude hostilities, and to establish conditions favorable to the HN and the United States and its multinational partners. Such operations typically consist of multiple phases.

Note. Some specific lesser contingencies may not involve large-scale combat, but they could be considered major operations or campaigns, depending on their scale and duration.

TYPES OF MILITARY OPERATIONS

1-14. Army doctrine addresses the range of full spectrum operations across the spectrum of conflict, as described in FM 1, *The Army*. Army commanders at all echelons may combine different types of operations simultaneously and sequentially to accomplish missions. For each mission, the joint force commander (JFC) and Army component commander determine the emphasis Army forces place on each type of operation (Figure 1-2).

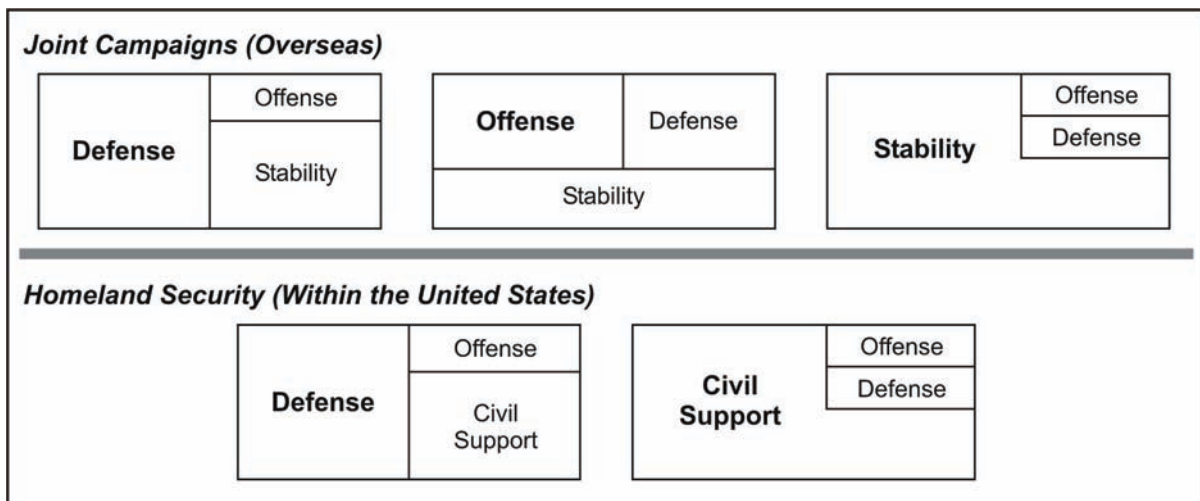


Figure 1-2. Types of military operations

ARMY FULL SPECTRUM OPERATIONS

1-15. Missions in any environment require ARSOF to be prepared to conduct any combination of offensive, defensive, stability, and civil support operations, described below:

- *Offensive operations* destroy or defeat an enemy. Their purpose is to impose U.S. will on the enemy and to achieve decisive victory.
- *Defensive operations* defeat an enemy attack, buy time, economize forces, or develop conditions favorable for offensive operations. Defensive operations alone normally cannot achieve a decision.
- *Stability operations* promote and protect U.S. national interests by influencing the threat, political, and information dimensions of the operational environment through a combination of peacetime developmental, cooperative activities and coercive actions in response to crises. ARSOF can also be employed to assist civil authorities (foreign or domestic) in responding to crises and in relieving suffering.
- *Civil support operations* address the consequences of man-made or natural accidents and incidents beyond the capabilities of civilian authorities. Army forces do not conduct stability operations within the United States—under U.S. law, the federal and state governments are responsible for those tasks. Instead, Army forces conduct civil support operations when requested, providing Army expertise and capabilities to lead agency authorities.

1-16. When conducting full spectrum operations as part of an overseas joint campaign, commanders combine and sequence offensive, defensive, and stability operations to accomplish the mission. The JFC and the SO component commander for a particular mission determine the emphasis ARSOF place on each type of operation. Throughout the campaign, offensive, defensive, and stability operations occur simultaneously. As missions change from promoting peace to deterring war and from resolving conflict to war itself, the combinations of and transitions between these operations require skillful assessment, planning, preparation, and execution. Within the United States and its territories, Army forces support homeland security operations. Homeland security has two components. The first component is homeland defense. If the United States comes under direct attack or is threatened by hostile armed forces, Army forces under joint command conduct offensive and defensive operations as part of homeland defense. The other component is civil support, which is the fourth type of Army operation. Operations designed to accomplish more than one strategic purpose may be executed sequentially or simultaneously. Joint doctrine describes the employment of U.S. forces in joint operations. ARSOF commanders are either subordinate to a JFC or are designated as a JFC.

1-17. ARSOF can support the JFC at all levels:

- *Strategic.* The strategic level concerns the broadest aspects of national and theater policy. Decisions at this level reflect national and multinational goals, integrate all the instruments of national power, provide forces, and determine constraints on their use. The President or the SecDef and the GCCs determine the strategic-national and strategic-theater objectives and the manner of use of military means to achieve them. The President or the SecDef and the GCCs may directly or indirectly (through subordinate commanders) employ ARSOF in pursuit of these objectives.
- *Operational.* The operational level focuses on theater campaigns and major operations. JFCs determine operational objectives that lead to the attainment of strategic-theater objectives. These objectives are attained through the design, organization, and conduct of campaigns and major operations that, in turn, guide tactical events. A GCC, subordinate unified command commander, joint task force (CJTF) commander, Service component commander, or functional component commander may employ ARSOF as part of a joint force to attain these operational objectives.
- *Tactical.* The tactical level focuses on battles and engagements. Decisions at this level apply combat power to create advantages while in contact with or close to the enemy. ARSOF may support tactical actions (offense, defense, and stability actions) designed to have significant effect in attaining operational objectives. Tactical actions may directly attain tactical, operational, and strategic objectives simultaneously.

WAR

1-18. War involves regular and irregular forces in a series of connected battles and campaigns to achieve vital national, tribal, or ethnic objectives. War may be limited, with some self-imposed restraints on resources or objectives. It may also be general, with the total resources of a nation or nations employed and the survival of the nation at stake.

1-19. ARSOF can support a JFC in war through the conduct of a variety of offensive, defensive, and stability actions. These actions may either directly accomplish JFC objectives or indirectly attain these objectives through the directed support to other subordinate forces of the JFC.

Principles of War

1-20. SO missions may require unorthodox approaches, but these approaches do not negate the nine traditional principles of war. Rather, they place a different emphasis on their combination or relative importance. In some SO missions, surprise achieved through speed, stealth, audacity, deception, and new tactics or techniques can be far more effective and efficient than traditional conventional tactics based on massed firepower and tactical maneuvers. The following discussion of the principles of war highlights their application to ARSOF.

1-21. **Objective**—*Direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective.* ARSOF objectives are as much political, economic, and informational as they are military in nature. ARSOF planners must avoid adding a secondary objective by balancing risks versus gain. They must have a clear understanding of the capabilities and limitations of ARSOF. The addition of objectives erodes the definition and decisiveness of the primary objective.

1-22. **Offensive**—*Seize, retain, and exploit the initiative.* ARSOF are inherently offensive in nature because they seek to strike or engage the enemy to compel, deter, or counter enemy actions. The strike or engagement conducted by ARSOF may take place alongside or by effect of a surrogate force. This force may be one previously trained or currently being trained by ARSOF. Civil Affairs operations (CAO) exploit the initiative by gaining the support of the civilians in the area of operations (AO).

1-23. **Mass**—*Concentrate the effects of combat power at the decisive place and time.* Commanders mass the effects of overwhelming combat power at the decisive time and place to overwhelm the enemy or to gain control of the situation. ARSOF concentrate the effects of combat power at critical times and discriminate selected targets to produce decisive results that accomplish the commander's objectives.

1-24. **Economy of Force**—*Allocate minimum essential combat power to secondary efforts and employ all combat power available in the most effective way possible.* ARSOF are an essential economy of force when military objectives are subordinate to political, economic, and informational objectives.

1-25. **Maneuver**—*Place the enemy in a disadvantageous position through the flexible application of combat power.* ARSOF conduct maneuvers in the traditional sense on strategic and operational environments. ARSOF possess a tremendous capability to gain a position of advantage for the GCC, particularly when applying decisive combat power in the enemy's "secure operating environment."

1-26. **Unity of Command**—*Ensure unity of effort under one responsible commander for every objective.* Theater special operations command (TSOC) commanders under the COCOM of the GCC can either tailor the C2 architecture for ARSOF operations under the direct control of the TSOC or recommend subordinate joint force command relationships to ensure unity of effort of SOF. PSYOP and CA forces and staff are not generally under operational control (OPCON) of the TSOC. Therefore, integration, synchronization, and unity of effort for these forces are incumbent upon commanders and staffs at every level.

1-27. **Security**—*Never permit the enemy to acquire an unexpected advantage.* ARSOF can provide security to the JFC by denying the enemy the ability to use his "expected" advantages. ARSOF provide security through various intelligence-collection methods, force protection, and force applications.

1-28. **Surprise**—*Strike the enemy at a time and place or in a manner for which he is unprepared.* ARSOF can deceive the enemy, inhibit his decision making, or restrict his capability to react to the commander's operations or campaign.

1-29. **Simplicity**—*Prepare clear, uncomplicated plans and concise orders to ensure a thorough understanding.* ARSOF use unorthodox and sophisticated methods and equipment. The plans and procedures the force employs must be simple and direct to facilitate understanding, to withstand the stress of operational environments, and to allow for rapid adaptation to changing situations.

Other Principles

1-30. Other principles to consider are restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy. These principles are discussed in the following paragraphs.

1-31. **Restraint**—The purpose of restraint is to limit collateral damage and to prevent the unnecessary or unlawful use of force. A single act could cause significant military and political consequences; therefore, judicious use of force is necessary. Restraint requires the careful and disciplined balancing of the need for security, the conduct of military operations, and the national strategic end state. For example, the exposure of intelligence-gathering activities, such as interrogation of detainees and prisoners of war, could have significant political and military repercussions and therefore should be conducted with sound judgment. Excessive force antagonizes those parties involved, thereby damaging the legitimacy of the organization that uses the force and potentially enhancing the legitimacy of the opposing party.

1-32. ARSOF commanders at all levels must take proactive steps to ensure their personnel are properly trained in the rules of engagement (ROE) and are quickly informed of any changes. Failure to understand and comply with established ROE can result in fratricide, mission failure, or national embarrassment. ROE in some operations may be more restrictive and detailed when compared to ROE for large-scale combat to address national policy concerns, but they should always be consistent with the inherent right of self-defense. ROE should be unclassified, if possible, and widely disseminated.

1-33. Restraint is best achieved when ROE issued at the beginning of an operation address most anticipated situations that may arise. ROE should be consistently reviewed and revised as necessary. Additionally, ROE should be carefully scrutinized to ensure that the lives and health of military personnel involved in joint operations are not needlessly endangered. In multinational operations, use of force may be dictated by coalition or allied force ROE.

1-34. Commanders at all levels must take proactive steps to ensure an understanding of ROE and ways to influence changes to them. Since the domestic law of some nations may be more restrictive concerning the use of force than permitted under coalition or allied force ROE, commanders must be aware of national restrictions imposed on force participants.

1-35. **Perseverance**—The purpose of perseverance is to ensure the commitment necessary to attain the national strategic end state. Measured, protracted ARSOF military operations must be prepared for in pursuit of the national strategic end state. Some joint operations may require years to reach the termination criteria. The underlying causes of the crisis may be elusive, making the achievement of decisive resolution difficult. The patient, resolute, and persistent pursuit of national goals and objectives is often a requirement for success. This effort frequently involves diplomatic, economic, and informational measures to supplement military efforts.

1-36. **Legitimacy**—The purpose of legitimacy is to develop and maintain the will necessary to attain the national strategic end state. Legitimacy is based on the legality, morality, and rightness of the actions undertaken, as well as the will of the U.S. public to support the actions. Legitimacy is frequently a decisive element. The perception of legitimacy by the U.S. public is strengthened if obvious national or humanitarian interests are at stake and American lives are not being needlessly or carelessly placed at risk. Other interested audiences may include foreign nations, civil populations in the AO, and participating forces.

1-37. Committed ARSOF must sustain the legitimacy of the operation and of the host government, where applicable. Security actions must be balanced with legitimacy concerns. All actions must be considered in the light of potentially competing strategic and tactical requirements and must exhibit fairness in dealing with competing factions, where appropriate. Legitimacy may depend on adherence to objectives agreed to by the international community, ensuring the action is appropriate to the situation, and fairness in dealing

with various factions. Restricting the use of force, restructuring the types of forces employed, and ensuring the disciplined conduct of the forces involved may reinforce legitimacy.

COMBAT POWER

1-38. Combat power is the ability of Army forces to fight and win. It underlies success in all operations, with or without lethal force. Combat power is the total means of destructive or disruptive force, or both, that a military unit or formation can apply against the adversary at a given time.

1-39. The elements of combat power are warfighting functions tied together by leadership (Figure 1-3). They are the means by which a commander visualizes, describes, and directs the generation and employment of combat power. Leadership is the least tangible and most dynamic element of combat power. Confident, audacious, and competent ARSOF leadership focuses the other elements of combat power. It serves as the catalyst that creates conditions for success. ARSOF leaders inspire Soldiers to succeed. They provide purpose, direction, and motivation in all operations. Leadership is crucial. It often makes the difference between success and failure, particularly in small units.

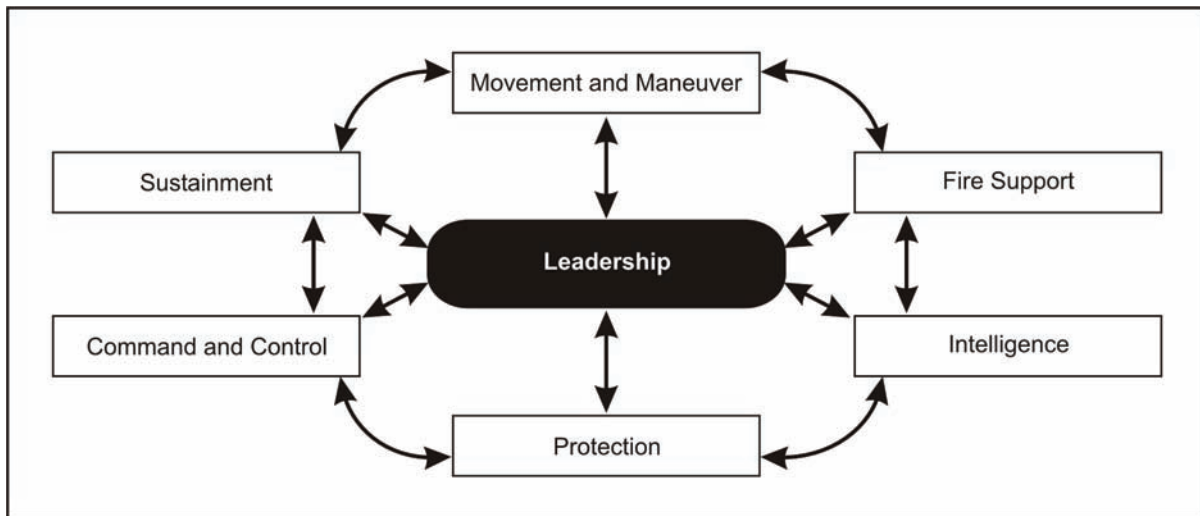


Figure 1-3. Elements of combat power

1-40. A warfighting function is a group of tasks and systems (people, organizations, information, and processes) united by a common purpose that ARSOF commanders use to accomplish missions and training objectives. The warfighting functions are—

- *Movement and maneuver*, the related tasks and systems that move forces to achieve a position of advantage in relation to the enemy. This function includes those tasks associated with employing forces in combination with direct fire or fire potential (maneuver), force projection (movement), and mobility and countermobility.
- *Fire support*, the related tasks and systems that provide collective and coordinated use of Army indirect fires, joint fires, and offensive information operations (IO).
- *Intelligence*, the related tasks and systems that facilitate understanding of the enemy, terrain, weather, and civil considerations. This function includes those tasks associated with intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.
- *Protection*, the related tasks and systems that preserve the force so the commander can apply maximum combat power. This function includes those tasks associated with survivability; defensive IO; air and missile defense; and chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or high-yield explosive counterproliferation (CP) and consequence management actions.
- *Command and control*, the related tasks and systems that support the commander in exercising authority and direction. This function includes acquiring friendly information, managing all relevant information, and directing and leading subordinate.

- *Sustainment*, the related tasks and systems that provide support and services to ensure freedom of action, to extend operational reach, and to prolong endurance. This function includes those tasks associated with maintenance, transportation, supply, field services, explosive ordnance disposal, human resources support, finance management, health services support, religious support, band support, and related general engineering.

1-41. ARSOF commanders use combat power to meet constantly changing requirements and to defeat an enemy. Defeating an enemy requires increasing the disparity between friendly and enemy forces by reducing enemy combat power. ARSOF commanders accomplish this objective by synchronizing the elements of friendly force combat power to create overwhelming effects at the decisive time and place. Focused combat power ensures success and denies an enemy any chance to maintain coherent resistance. Massed effects created by synchronizing the elements of combat power are the surest means of limiting friendly casualties and swiftly ending a campaign or operation.

NATURE OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS WARFARE

1-42. The nature of SO warfare is characterized by a number of factors. These factors, described in the following paragraphs, apply to ARSOF across the range of military operations.

PREEMPTION

1-43. ARSOF can preempt the enemy by neutralizing the enemy's capabilities before the fight, either directly or in support of conventional forces, through—

- FID and UW efforts to build indigenous defense and intelligence capabilities.
- PSYOP directed at the enemy's leadership, armed forces, and populace.
- Civil-military operations (CMO) in areas brought under friendly control.
- CP activities to slow or inhibit development of a capability.
- Direct action (DA) missions against the enemy's critical operational or strategic targets.
- Counterterrorist operations.

Note. Deployed ARSOF often provide the GCC or subordinate JFC with first-hand information on local population perspectives, intentions, and other information.

DISLOCATION

1-44. ARSOF can dislocate the enemy force from chosen positions, either by forcing it to move from these positions or by rendering its strength useless or irrelevant to the fight. DA missions may force the enemy to reposition combat forces away from the main battle area to protect lines of communications and other vulnerable areas. PSYOP, as part of IO, may support deception operations that will cause the enemy to deploy in a manner favorable to friendly forces. ARSOF possess the capabilities to organize and direct large indigenous forces that cause the enemy to spread its forces thin (through UW) or to assist an HN in creating a military shield (through FID), behind which OGAs can operate to remove the causes of insurgency.

DISRUPTION

1-45. ARSOF can disrupt the enemy through attacks against strategic and operational targets and centers of gravity (COGs), possibly precluding the enemy from conducting successful countermoves. ARSOF can disrupt the enemy through—

- Special reconnaissance (SR) support of operational actions by conventional forces.
- DA strikes against critical operational targets.
- IO to disrupt enemy decision makers.
- PSYOP directed at civilian and military leaders, military forces, and the enemy population—as well as an enemy's political, economic, or military allies.

1-46. Indigenous forces, trained through UW operations, can attack an enemy directly, thus disrupting its operations. When employed, ARSOF seek to avoid enemy strengths and to create and attack enemy vulnerabilities.

EXPLOITATION

1-47. ARSOF can provide the JFC multiple means to attack the enemy's will to resist. Exploiting psychological vulnerabilities can demoralize enemy troops, weaken the resolve of enemy leaders, separate the civilian population of an enemy nation from its leadership, and reduce or eliminate any external source of support. DA and UW can create the impression that too many forces exist for the enemy to counter effectively. With no safe areas, and enemy forces in rear areas subject to attack at any time, enemy morale can be significantly weakened.

MAIN EFFORT

1-48. The SOF joint task force (JTF) commander designates a main effort for every operation. The activity, unit, or area determined by the commanders constitutes the most important task at the time. As the situation develops, the commander should be prepared to change a main effort to exploit opportunities or to handle crises as they arise. Generally, the main effort should be aimed at some critical enemy vulnerability (object or characteristic) that if attacked will contribute most directly to accomplishing the mission.

INTELLIGENCE

1-49. ARSOF require timely, responsive, and accurate intelligence support to overcome their relative lack of size and firepower. Initially, ARSOF commanders use intelligence to find enemy weaknesses or vulnerabilities and to avoid enemy strengths. Perfect intelligence is rarely obtainable, but adequate, timely intelligence is a prerequisite for successful operations. Leaders must be able to act with less-than-perfect intelligence.

DECENTRALIZATION

1-50. Although ARSOF personnel must be included in centralized planning at the CCDR and subordinate JFC levels, successful ARSOF require decentralized planning and execution for individual missions. Independent judgment and effective coordination by ARSOF leaders at every echelon are vital to successful SO.

INITIATIVE

1-51. ARSOF encourage the ability and willingness to make independent, time-critical decisions using all available information and guidance presented in the higher HQ's commander's intent. ARSOF leaders foster an environment that encourages trust, freedom of action, and initiative in subordinates. Successful missions result from subordinate leaders at all echelons exercising disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to accomplish missions.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS OPERATIONAL MISSION CRITERIA

1-52. The employment of ARSOF in support of the joint force campaign or operation plan (OPLAN) is facilitated by five basic criteria. These criteria provide guidelines for conventional and ARSOF commanders and planners to use when considering the employment of ARSOF.

1-53. The following set of five basic operational mission criteria has evolved to provide clear guidance to commanders for planning and executing ARSOF (see Joint Publication [JP] 3-05.2, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Special Operations Targeting and Mission Planning*):

- *Is the mission appropriate?* ARSOF should be used to achieve effects that require ARSOF's unique skills and capabilities. If the effects do not require those skills and capabilities, ARSOF should not be assigned. ARSOF should not be used as a substitute for other forces.

- *Does the mission support the campaign plan?* If the mission does not support the JFC's campaign or major OPLAN, more appropriate missions available for ARSOF should be considered instead.
- *Is the mission operationally feasible?* ARSOF are not structured for attrition or force-on-force warfare and should not be assigned missions beyond their capabilities. ARSOF commanders and their staffs must consider the vulnerability of ARSOF units to larger, more heavily armed or mobile forces, particularly in hostile territory.
- *Are required resources available for the mission?* Some ARSOF missions require support from other forces for success. Support involves aiding, protecting, complementing, and sustaining employed ARSOF. Support can include airlift, intelligence, communications, IO, medical, logistics, space, weather, and numerous other types of support. Although a target may be vulnerable to ARSOF, deficiencies in supportability may affect the likelihood for success or may entirely invalidate the feasibility of employing ARSOF.
- *Will the outcome of the mission justify the risk?* ARSOF have high-value and limited resources. Commanders must make sure the benefits of successful mission execution are measurable and in balance with the risks inherent in the mission assessment. Some operations that ARSOF can execute make only a marginal contribution to the JFC campaign plan and present great risk to personnel and materiel. Commanders should recognize the high-value and limited resources of ARSOF. Risk management considers not only the potential loss of ARSOF units and equipment, but also the risk of adverse effects on U.S. diplomatic and political interests if the mission fails. Risk assessment consists of the first two steps of the risk management process—identify hazards and assess hazards.

ARSOF CAPABILITIES

1-54. The unique capabilities of ARSOF are a function of the quality of ARSOF Soldiers, the training and education of those Soldiers, and the mission profiles the Soldiers must execute. The competitive ARSOF selection process, coupled with technological training and education, produces an ARSOF Soldier who is adaptable, mature, innovative, culturally aware, self-assured, and self-reliant. Thus, policy decision makers use ARSOF as a force to expand the range of available options.

1-55. ARSOF are specially organized, trained, and equipped military forces. They conduct SO to achieve military, political, economic, or informational objectives by generally unconventional means in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas. Decision makers may choose the ARSOF option because ARSOF provide the broadest range of capabilities that have direct applicability in an increasing number of environments. Politico-military requirements frequently cast ARSOF into clandestine or low-visibility environments that require oversight at the national level. ARSOF operations differ from conventional force operations by their degree of acceptable physical and political risk, their modes of employment, and their operational techniques. ARSOF allow the unified commander or JFC to perform critical small-unit missions that directly strike or engage the aim or objective of his operational mission.

1-56. Early use of ARSOF in an operation may prevent or limit conflict and conserve national resources. When conflict is imminent, ARSOF may be used in a variety of prehostility missions to signal determination, to demonstrate support to allies, and to begin the complicated processes of positioning forces for combat and shaping the AO.

1-57. During conflict, ARSOF may be most effective in conducting strategic or operational economy-of-force operations, generating military and diplomatic advantages disproportionate to the resources they represent. ARSOF can locate, seize, or destroy strategic or operational targets and obtain critical intelligence. They can analyze an enemy's defenses and diminish enemy morale. ARSOF can disorganize, disrupt, and demoralize enemy troops. They can also divert the enemy's important resources.

1-58. ARSOF expand the options of the President, the SecDef, and GCCs, particularly in crises and contingencies that fall between wholly diplomatic initiatives and the overt use of large conventional forces. The small size, rapid reaction, and self-sufficient nature of ARSOF elements provide military options that do not involve the risk of escalation normally associated with larger, more visible conventional forces. The

use of ARSOF enables decision makers to prevent a conflict or to limit its scope. Therefore, decision makers can better control committed U.S. forces and resources. ARSOF may be the best choice for actions requiring a rapid response or a surgically precise, focused use of force.

1-59. Selected ARSOF need not use lethal force in a mission. Language skills, cross-cultural training, regional orientation, and understanding of the political context of the operational environments make ARSOF unparalleled when operating in complex environments. ARSOF skills enable ARSOF to work as effectively with civilian populations as with other military forces to influence situations favorably toward U.S. national interests. This ability to apply discreet leverage is a very important ARSOF contribution to the national military strategy.

CHARACTERISTICS

1-60. To ensure missions selected for ARSOF are compatible with their capabilities, commanders must be familiar with the following SO characteristics:

- ARSOF personnel undergo careful selection processes or mission-specific training beyond basic military skills to achieve entry-level SO skills. Being proficient in these skills makes rapid replacement or generation of personnel or capabilities highly unlikely.
- Mature, experienced personnel make up ARSOF. Many maintain a high level of competency in more than one military specialty.
- Most ARSOF are regionally oriented for employment. Cross-cultural communication skills are a routine part of their training.
- ARSOF conduct specific tactical operations by small units with unique talents that directly strike or engage strategic and operational aims or objectives.
- Planning for SO may begin at the unified, joint, or interagency level for execution that requires extensive, rigorous rehearsal.
- SO are frequently clandestine or low-visibility operations, or they may be combined with overt operations. SO can be covert but require a declaration of war or a specific finding approved by the President or the SecDef. ARSOF can deploy at relatively low cost, with a low profile less intrusive than that of larger conventional forces.
- Selected ARSOF units often conduct SO at great distance from operational bases. These units employ sophisticated communications systems and means of insertion, support, and extraction to penetrate and return from hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas.
- SO occur throughout the range of military operations.
- SO influence the will of foreign leadership to create conditions favorable to U.S. strategic aims and objectives.
- SO are often high-risk operations that have limited windows of execution and require first-time success.
- Employment of SO may require patient, long-term commitment and support to achieve U.S. national goals in an AO. SF are ideally suited to perform SO with, through, or by indigenous personnel.
- SO require theater and, frequently, national-level intelligence support.
- Selected SO require a detailed knowledge of the cultural nuances and languages of a country or region where employed.
- SO are inherently joint and sometimes multinational, requiring interagency and international coordination. The contribution of ARSOF to national security is greatest when ARSOF are fully integrated into the JFC's plan at the earliest stages of planning.
- ARSOF can be task-organized quickly and deployed rapidly to provide tailored responses to many different situations.
- Selected ARSOF can gain access to hostile and denied areas.
- ARSOF can provide limited security and medical support for themselves.

- Selected ARSOF can live in austere, harsh environments without extensive support. For long-duration operations, ARSOF require support from the Army Service component command (ASCC).
- Selected ARSOF can survey and assess local situations and rapidly report these assessments.
- Selected ARSOF work closely with regional military and civilian authorities and populations.

TRUTHS

1-61. ARSOF are not a substitute for conventional forces. They are, however, a necessary adjunct to the capabilities of existing conventional forces. Depending on requirements, ARSOF can operate independently or with conventional forces. ARSOF can assist and complement conventional forces so they can achieve an objective that otherwise might not be attainable. The special skills and low-visibility capabilities inherent in ARSOF also provide an adaptable military response in situations or crises requiring tailored, precise, and focused use of force.

1-62. ARSOF provide capabilities that expand the options available to the employing commander; however, ARSOF are not the ideal solution to all problems requiring a military response. The best means of employing ARSOF is usually with conventional forces, in which each force fulfills the role it is optimally designed to accomplish.

ARSOF IMPERATIVES

1-63. The following paragraphs discuss the ARSOF imperatives. Although the imperatives may not apply to all types of ARSOF, ARSOF commanders must include the applicable imperatives in their mission planning and execution.

UNDERSTAND THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

1-64. ARSOF cannot dominate the operational environment without first gaining a clear understanding of the theater, including civilian influence, as well as enemy and friendly capabilities. Combat environmental research—political, economic, sociological, psychological, geographic, and military—is an essential prerequisite to influencing the environment. ARSOF must identify the friendly and hostile decision makers, their objectives and strategies, and the ways they interact. The conditions of conflict can change, and ARSOF must anticipate these changes in the environment and exploit fleeting opportunities.

RECOGNIZE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

1-65. Many SO are conducted to advance critical political objectives. ARSOF must understand that their actions can have international consequences. ROE provide a framework that considers political implications. However, ROE cannot anticipate every situation. ARSOF must understand the intent of the ROE and act accordingly, despite any military disadvantage that may result. The advancement of the political objective may take precedence over the military disadvantages.

FACILITATE INTERAGENCY ACTIVITIES

1-66. ARSOF support and complement U.S. and multinational civilian programs driven by nonmilitary considerations. ARSOF can also operate in the ambiguous and complex political environments found in coalition operations or alliances formed to avert situations that would lead to human tragedy.

ENGAGE THE THREAT DISCRIMINATELY

1-67. ARSOF are a limited resource that cannot be easily replaced. ARSOF mission objectives require careful application of “when,” “where,” and “how.”

CONSIDER LONG-TERM EFFECTS

1-68. ARSOF must consider the political, economic, informational, and military effects when faced with dilemmas, since the solutions will have broad, far-reaching effects. They must accept legal and political constraints to avoid strategic failure while achieving tactical success. ARSOF must not jeopardize the success of national and theater long-term objectives by their desire for immediate or short-term effects. SO policies, plans, and operations must be consistent with the national and theater priorities and objectives they support. Inconsistency can lead to a loss of legitimacy and credibility at the national level.

ENSURE LEGITIMACY AND CREDIBILITY OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS

1-69. Significant legal and policy considerations apply to many SO activities. Legitimacy is the most crucial factor in developing and maintaining internal and international support. The United States cannot sustain its assistance to a foreign power without this legitimacy. The concept of legitimacy is broader than the strict legal definition contained in international law. The concept also includes the moral and political legitimacy of a government or resistance organization. The people of the nation and the international community determine its legitimacy based on collective perception of the credibility of its cause and methods. Without legitimacy and credibility, SO will not gain the support of foreign indigenous elements, the U.S. population, or the international community. ARSOF legal advisors must review all sensitive aspects of SO mission planning and execution.

ANTICIPATE AND CONTROL PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

1-70. All SO have significant psychological effects, some specifically produced and some based on perceptions. ARSOF must integrate PSYOP and public affairs (PA) into all their activities, anticipating and countering propaganda and disinformation themes, as needed, to allow for maximum control of the environment.

APPLY CAPABILITIES INDIRECTLY

1-71. The primary role of ARSOF in multinational operations is to advise, train, and assist indigenous military and paramilitary forces. The supported non-U.S. forces then serve as force multipliers in the pursuit of U.S. national security objectives with minimum U.S. visibility, risk, and cost. The long-term self-sufficiency of the foreign force must assume primary authority and accept responsibility for the success or failure of the mission. All U.S. efforts must reinforce and enhance the effectiveness, legitimacy, and credibility of the supported foreign government or group.

DEVELOP MULTIPLE OPTIONS

1-72. ARSOF must maintain their operational flexibility by developing a broad range of options. Keys to operational flexibility include—

- Developing contingency plans that anticipate problems during critical events.
- Using a collaborative, deliberate, and interactive planning and rehearsal process.
- Having the same people plan, rehearse, and execute the mission. These types of actions on the objective become a common point of departure, not inflexible blueprints.

Note. Under these circumstances, the participants understand all the critical elements of the plan, as well as alternate COAs, reasons for discarding alternate COAs, and unstated assumptions underlying unexpected difficulties.

ENSURE LONG-TERM SUSTAINMENT

1-73. Resourcing of ARSOF varies with each mission. ARSOF must demonstrate continuity of effort when dealing with political, economic, informational, and military programs. They must not begin programs that

are beyond the economic, technological, or cultural capabilities of the HN to maintain without U.S. assistance. Such efforts are counterproductive. SO policy, strategy, and programs must, therefore, be durable, consistent, and sustainable.

PROVIDE SUFFICIENT INTELLIGENCE

1-74. Success for ARSOF missions dictates that uncertainty associated with the threat and environment must be minimized through the application of intelligence operations and procedures. Because of the needed detailed intelligence, ARSOF typically must also access theater and national systems to alleviate shortfalls and to ensure that timely, relevant, accurate, and predictive intelligence is provided. The key to effective intelligence support is for ARSOF to use the entire intelligence support system and architecture fully. ARSOF units also provide intelligence through area assessments, SR, and postoperational debriefing of units. HUMINT is often the only source that can satisfy critical ARSOF intelligence requirements, whether from overt or controlled sources.

BALANCE SECURITY AND SYNCHRONIZATION

1-75. Insufficient security may compromise a mission. Excessive security may cause the mission to fail because of inadequate coordination. ARSOF commanders must constantly balance the two and resolve these conflicting demands on mission planning and execution.