

# SHAPING TOMORROW'S SOF

## The Emerging Environment

As the Cold War came to a close in the early 1990s, few people predicted the degree to which the ancient problems of ethnic hatred, religious intolerance, and nationalist extremism would undermine the world's prospects for international stability. Though some observers argued that the changing political environment, combined with far-reaching advances in communications technology, would herald an era of unprecedented advancement and economic growth, it now appears that this prediction was overly optimistic.



SF soldier works with a Lithuanian soldier on individual movement techniques.

Sweeping political, economic, demographic and technological changes are shaping the international environment in ways that we cannot predict, and since these changes are taking place at different rates around the world, they are exacerbating the already profound differences in the relative dispersion of economic and political power. Without doubt, those seeking power will attempt

to exploit these disparities to their advantage — creating numerous challenges for the United States. The most difficult problems facing policy-makers will be deciding whether and when political and military engagement will best support our nation's interests.

## Evolving Capabilities

In this rapidly changing international environment, it may be difficult to clearly picture the role of SOF in support of U.S. national security requirements. Indeed, many of the problems that the United States will face in the future will not be amenable to military solutions. However, it is inevitable that some international problems will require a military response. In these situations, SOF, because of their unique skills, regional expertise, cultural sensitivity, and operational experience, may be the force of choice for meeting the strategic requirements of the NCA or regional decisionmakers. In the future, SOF will perform three important roles in support of the National Security Strategy.



SEALs conduct a fast-rope exercise onto the hull of a fast-attack submarine.

## Surgical Strike and Recovery

First, they will be called upon to perform those “special missions” that can neither fail nor leave the perception of failure. These surgical strike and recovery missions, ranging from rescuing hostages to preventing terrorist use of WMD, will be operations in which national decision-makers rely upon SOF unique capabilities to do high-risk, high-payoff tasks no other force can accomplish. Maintaining the ability to perform these missions will be SOF’s highest priority; not because these missions will be frequent, but rather, because no other forces at the NCA’s disposal will be equipped and trained to perform these missions within an acceptable level of risk.



SEALs conduct training exercise using underwater digital camera that sends real-time digital images to decisionmakers.

## Special Reconnaissance

Second, SOF will be called upon to perform special reconnaissance to support the strategic and operational requirements of decisionmakers and operational commanders. Because of the development of revolutionary reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities that appear to obviate the need for the “man on the ground,” SOF has had to re-evaluate its role as the eyes and ears of the theater commander. Military commanders will be extremely reluctant to employ SOF or other ground forces to perform these kinds of missions when they can be adequately performed by unmanned reconnaissance platforms. USSOCOM welcomes these new technologies. Emerging reconnaissance equipment will reduce operational risk to SOF and allow USSOCOM to concentrate on developing new concepts and capabilities that integrate advanced methods, personal judgment, and on-site analysis. This human/technological synergy will enhance SOF reconnaissance of enemy capabilities and, perhaps more importantly, the determination of enemy intentions.

## Political-Military Operations

Third, SOF will be called upon to perform missions that fall in the nexus between political and military operations. These missions, which include foreign internal defense, psychological operations, civil affairs, and humanitarian assistance, will provide a low-cost means of promoting the long-term strategic goals of the United States. At the same time, SOF will be called upon to support regional contingencies, including responding to natural disasters, assisting in the evacuation of U.S. and allied nationals in the event of regional hostilities, and operating as a vanguard for conventional military forces. Although these tasks are not very different from what SOF do today, the utility of SOF to the geographic CINCs will be greatly enhanced by emerging transportation and communications capabilities.



Soldier from the 360th Civil Affairs Brigade passes out crayons to the school children of Visegrad, Bosnia during Operation Joint Endeavor.

## Future Requirements

In the future, SOF must remain operationally unique and strategically relevant to retain their utility to national decisionmakers. To accomplish this, SOF must maintain their technological edge and continue to invest in the quality and skills of their operators. These two absolutes have served SOF well in the past and must remain fundamental commitments in order to meet the nation's security needs in the future.

## People

The importance of having the right people in SOF will grow in the future as they are employed against difficult problems in increasingly hostile and challenging environments. Operating independently, SOF personnel will need to have exceptional character and integrity. Operating in arduous environments, SOF personnel will need to maintain the highest levels of fitness. Since they will be called upon to make critical on-scene decisions, they will need to be knowledgeable and self-disciplined. In addition to all of this, SOF personnel will need to be highly intelligent to operate increasingly sophisticated equipment and to perform operations in a technologically advanced threat environment, while remaining masters of the low- and no-technology environments.

## Technology

Although people are undoubtedly SOF's most important asset, maintaining and improving material capabilities remains SOF's most difficult challenge. SOF must keep its equipment up to date, while keeping the costs for sustaining its war-fighting systems under control. Failing this, SOF will not have the resources required to be able to develop the truly revolutionary hardware solutions needed to maintain SOF as an effective and readily useful instrument for supporting or implementing our nation's policy objectives.



Computer-generated imagery system allows planners and crews to prepare flight routes and missions in three-dimensional target areas prior to mission execution.

SOF will depend on leading-edge technology to provide the critical advantage and to support participation in a growing number of technologically complex and challenging missions and operations. One of the cornerstones supporting all 21st century operations will be the effective use of information. SOF will also look to emerging, leading-edge technologies in such areas as mobility, sensing and identification, miniaturization, secure communications, advanced munitions, stealth, human enhancements, and robotics to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its operators and platforms.

# The Future Concepts Working Group

The challenges of preparing for the future require that USSOCOM develop a process that allows for purposeful change to be ready for an uncertain future. Therefore, USSOCOM is institutionalizing a process to implement the vision described in *SOF Vision 2020* and its supporting detailed guidance, *The Way Ahead*. To meet this challenge, USSOCOM has established a Future Concepts Working Group (FCWG) to develop a comprehensive process for new concept development, validation, and long-range planning. The FCWG uses a structured long-range planning process designed to facilitate development of new concepts into SOF future capabilities.

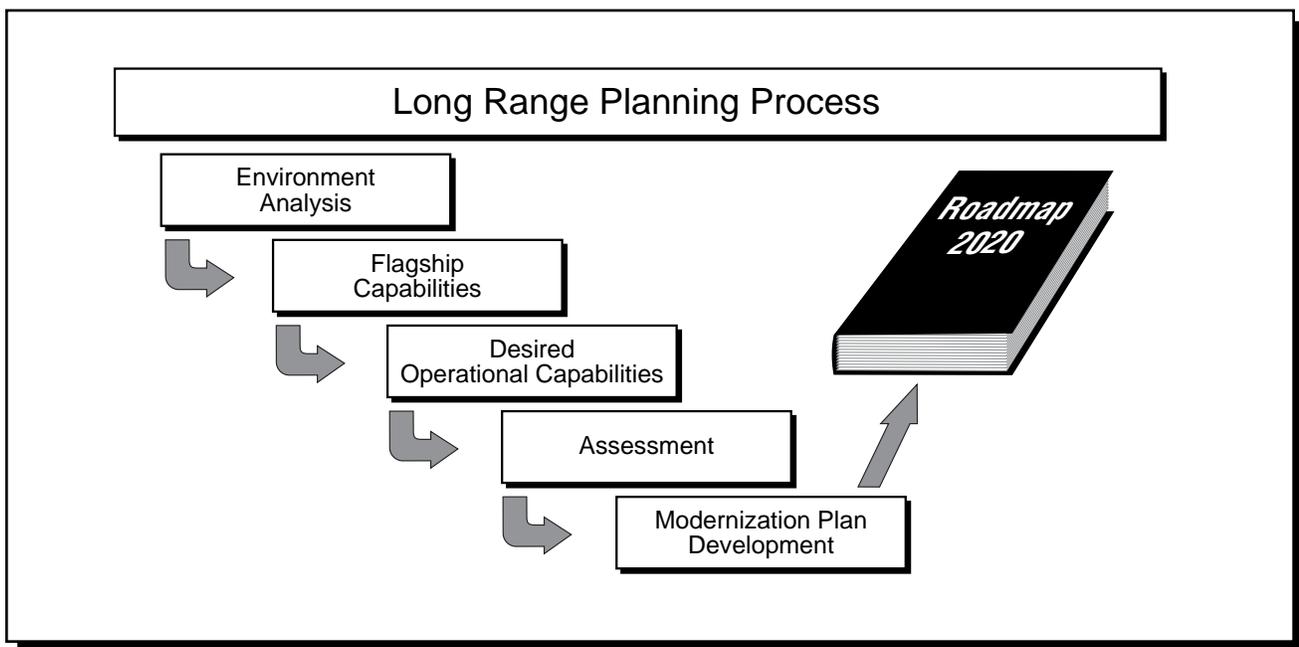
# The Long-Range Planning Process

The Long-Range Planning Process is a disciplined and systematic approach to identify, refine, and present concepts and initiatives related to future capabilities and requirements. It provides USSOCOM with a vehicle to identify future desired operational capabilities and



When delivered, the CV-22 will provide deep-penetration infiltration and exfiltration mobility with vertical-lift capability.

requirements for programmatic and resource consideration. This enables SOF to provide an array of enhanced options to the NCA and geographic CINCs while maintaining the strategic economy of force that further defines the relevance of SOF. As the process develops solution sets, which define the roadmap for 2020 and beyond, only SOF's core values (integrity, creativity, competence, and courage) are permanent and non-negotiable. Force structure, organizations, and legacy programs will be assessed. This five-phase approach provides USSOCOM with a vehicle to analyze the future environment and identify future capabilities that will support SOF flagship capabilities. This capability-based approach is illustrated below.



## Evolving to Meet Future Challenges

USSOCOM has initially identified eight flagship capabilities for SOF that support operational concepts outlined in the CJCS's *Joint Vision 2010*. These flagship capabilities also provide the foundation for more detailed operational capabilities necessary for the development of solution sets designed to create the SOF of the future. These capabilities include strategic agility, global access, ubiquitous presence, regional expertise, information dominance, continuous secure connectivity, self-sufficiency in austere environments, and full-spectrum integrated operations.

## Desired Operational Capabilities

The next step in achieving the flagship capabilities is the development of Desired Operational Capabilities (DOCs). DOCs provide the means to carry out the objectives of the flagship capabilities. They are operational level capabilities that will lead to the identification of specific initiatives and programs. The current DOCs are briefly described in the following chart.

### Desired Operational Capabilities

- **Personnel survivability** – improve the survivability of personnel operating in hostile areas
- **Counter WMD** – improve the capability to perform SOF counterproliferation missions
- **Mobility in denied areas** – improve the capability to conduct undetectable ground, air, sea, and (possibly) space mobility operations in areas conventional forces are denied
- **Recruitment and leader development** – improve the capability to recruit, select, assess, train, and retain SOF leaders with strong legal, ethical and moral foundations
- **Information avenues** – improve effective use of information technologies across a wide range of SOF capabilities
- **Sensory enhancements** – improve capability to augment human sensory systems to provide increased performance
- **Organizational design** – improve the ability of the SOF organizational structure to integrate, operate, and sustain activities with DoD forces, and national and international agencies
- **Space and UAV utilization** – improve capability to fully interface and operate within the space surveillance network
- **Remote reconnaissance** – improve the capability to utilize advances in technology for remote reconnaissance and mission situational awareness
- **Versatile weapons** – improve multi-role/multi-purpose weapons with target discrimination and broader range of effects

## Relevant for the Future

In the future, SOF must be ready to deal equally with the demands of both its peacetime and warfighting roles. To prepare for this future, today's SOF are focusing on both traditional activities and emerging missions, while developing a strategy and structured process to build the integrated, combat-ready force necessary to face the challenges that lie ahead.

To achieve this, USSOCOM must continue its structured transformation, while maintaining readiness required to shape and respond to today's security challenges. The goal is to identify the changes that will best enable SOF to achieve its Desired Operational Capabilities in support of *SOF Vision 2020*, the *Chairman's Joint Vision 2010*, and the geographic CINC and NCA requirements.



Artist's conception of Advanced SEAL Delivery System during underwater operations.