

## **CHAPTER 6 : CONCLUSION**

Overall, this study managed to draw some key conclusions. US SOF reinforce, augment, supplement, and complement conventional forces before, during, and after a conflict, thereby increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the US's military effort. Analysis on several operations reveals that, SOF may be most effective in conducting economy-of-force operations, generating strategic advantage disproportionate to the resources they represent. SOF can locate, seize, or destroy strategic targets; obtain critical intelligence; test an enemy's defenses; diminish his prestige; disorganize, disrupt, and demoralize his troops; and divert important resources. SOF may also be called on to speed the transition to a post-conflict government and economy. When prosecuted in concert with conventional forces, such missions maximize the capabilities of both, which contributes to a synergy of operational effectiveness. On the whole, the results are mixed. Not all missions reveal US SOF as effective and successful in playing its role.

SOF expand the options of the United States National Command Authorities, particularly in crises and contingencies such as terrorism, insurgency, subversion, and sabotage that fall between wholly diplomatic initiatives and overt use of large conventional forces. SOF allows decision makers the flexibility to tailor U.S. responses to encompass this wide range of possibilities. Its small size, ability to react rapidly, and relatively self-sufficient nature provide the United States with military options that do not entail the risk of escalation normally associated when larger, more visible, conventional forces are employed.

These roles have been demonstrated in the case study of Grenada. The first coordinated use of SOF in an intervention had seen mixed results, with some missions succeeding and some failing. However, the overall result was successful. This operation has seen some shortfalls in certain planning stages, equipment and intelligence. The whole Grenada operation was mounted so swiftly that no national or international opposition could be mobilized to resist it. The actual attack, even though it took longer than anticipated, was over before anything more dangerous than words could be aimed at the US Administration. It was a real military success and one which the SOF acquitted themselves well.

Decisionmakers may choose the SOF option because it provides the broadest range of capabilities that have direct applicability in an increasing number of missions, whether military, humanitarian, or peace operations in support of U.S. foreign policy. SOF training is some of the most rigorous in the world, and it produces some of the most professional and expert military operators. They are mature forces who demonstrate superior performance in small groups or as part of an integrated U.S. response with other military forces as well as non-Department of Defense government and civilian agencies. The small, self-contained units can work swiftly and quietly without the noticeable presence of conventional military troops.

In an era of regional focus, reduced forward-based forces, decreasing resources, and growing uncertainty, SOF play a critical role in U.S. defense strategy by providing strategic economy of force, expanded options and unique capabilities. SOF give the United States efficiency without compromising effectiveness and flexibility to respond

to the unforeseen and unexpected. SOF provide remarkable capabilities for the US government, not just as commandos and force multipliers for the Defense Department, but also as warrior-diplomats increasingly in demand to help carry out foreign policy assignments around the world. Such roles enhance its relevance in the future, despite there could be drawbacks. In the Somali peacekeeping operation, the SOF was used in an offensive mode rather than assisting civilian humanitarian efforts. They were used to arrest General Aidid and his warlords. Here the SOF was misused in an international policing role. They culminated in their disastrous defeat by Somali militia in Bakara Market. Here, 18 US SOF and military personnel died. They lacked precise intelligence reports, lacked logistic support, lacked heavy weapons support and used in a wrong situation. However, the SOF superior fighting qualities managed to shine through. If not for their superior training, the casualties would have been much higher.

Special Operations Forces (SOF) is a positive approach to US's national security strategy as an offensive foreign policy tool. Special operations can be used effectively to preempt or to resolve political and military problems, but they are no substitute for effective foreign policy and military decision making. Special operations have an important place among the US foreign policy options, extending its diplomatic powers into the military and paramilitary spheres. On the other hand, it can also through various missions undertaken, tarnish the image of American involvement simply due to its offensive nature. US SOF have always operated throughout the US areas of responsibilities and national interests. They have operated in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and even in the Arctic. SOF have long been involved in advising friendly armies in Asia, Africa and Latin

America. They have thus tended to be always on the edge of the limelight, occasionally being exposed by the media as for example, recently in the Philippines, where the US Green Berets were seen in Midanao, during the kidnappings of hostages from Sipadan Island, Malaysia. They were aiding the Philippines SOF or and have helped in rescue operations.

It is likely that US SOF will be a crucial part of the US military's order of battle and will remain there for a very long time, protecting US's interests, defending the freedom of democracies in the world and making the world safe from oppression. The revolution in military affairs (RMA) is also likely to enhance their role. With terrorism and other challenges, their role will be seen as even more crucial. During the end of this dissertation, the world saw the wrath of terrorism, when New York's Twin Towers and US Penatgon was attacked by terrorists. AT the time of writing it was believed that about 6,000 innocent lives were killed. It is interesting to note that some local dailies had reported that US SOF will likely be the tip of the spear in America's war against terrorism<sup>1</sup>. It is also noted that if US were to attack Afghanistan, US SOF will be send in to capture the main suspect hiding there, Osama Bin Laden<sup>2</sup>.

### ***“De Oppresso Liber”<sup>3</sup>***

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<sup>1</sup> “Crack troops deployed”; The Malay Mail; Kuala Lumpur, Monday, September 17, 2001; p 6.

<sup>2</sup> “First strike targets in Afghanistan”; The New Straits Times; Kuala Lumpur; Wednesday, September 19, 2001; World News section, p 2.

<sup>3</sup> The US Army Special Forces motto, literally means, “Freedom from oppression”.