

Special Operations/Conventional Forces

INTERDEPENDENCE:

A Critical Role in 'Prevent, Shape, Win'

As the Army reflects on the lessons of the past 10 years, we recognize that lethal and nonlethal capabilities of conventional force must work among diverse cultures to fight and win population-centric conflicts. While these capabilities “reside” in special operations forces (SOF), the lack of comprehensive special operations and conventional force (CF) interdependence impedes the Army’s ability to operationally leverage the unique cultural capabilities of special operations and inculcate them across the conventional force.

The Army’s “campaign of learning,” initiated to guide institutional change, has identified two important challenges to mitigate these gaps: improve Army capabilities to build foreign partner capacity and synchronize special operations and conventional force capabilities. To meet these challenges, the Army must use the generating force as an agent of change to institutionalize lessons learned, update the doctrinal framework with the linked concepts of the human domain and a 7th warfighting function, and expand the interdependence of SOF and CF. The Army must operationalize and institutionalize this change in order to adapt and continue to dominate unified land operations in the future.



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The incorporation of the human domain with the joint domains of air, land, maritime, space and cyberspace increases understanding of the operational environment and mitigates seams created by the physical organization of operational areas. The operational environment is the composite of the conditions, circumstances and influences that affect the decisions and capabilities of the commander in mission command. The addition of the human domain extends understanding beyond the physical environment and includes the influences that affect human behavior and are critical to success in population-centric conflicts. Operational areas designated by joint force commanders often have physical dimensions with geographical boundaries that help commanders and staffs coordinate, integrate and deconflict joint operations. The human domain, however, is not limited by physical boundaries; it interacts with and supports dominance in each of the other domains.

Human Domain

The human domain is the totality of the physical, cultural and social environments that influence human behavior to the extent that success of any military operation or campaign depends on the application of unique capabilities that are designed to fight and win population-centric conflicts. It is a critical and complementary concept to the recognized domains of land, air, maritime, space and cyberspace. Special operations-critical capabilities and associated doctrine prepare our soldiers to work among diverse populations in a culturally attuned manner. The expansion of these capabilities in the Army will better enable the force to win population-centric conflicts. The human domain focuses the Army's efforts to address the human factors external to our own forces in a manner similar to the Army's internal focus on the human dimension.

The concept of the human domain is the cognitive foundation of the 7th warfighting function's lethal and non-lethal capabilities to assess, shape, deter and influence foreign security environments. When synchronized by mission command, the employment of the new warfighting function in concert with the other warfighting func-

tions facilitates the Army's capability to effectively operate within the human domain. All of our centers of excellence need to reevaluate how the human domain affects their warfighting functions and then incorporate any effects from this domain into the updated functional concepts. By making these concepts institutional within Army doctrine, we're providing a framework to support and employ the complementary capabilities of special operations and conventional forces.

Current SOF-CF Interdependence

While special operations and conventional forces have made great strides in integrating their various capabilities, these efforts alone will not suffice for the future. In Iraq and Afghanistan, operational necessity drove battlefield synchronization and integration of the joint force founded on personal relationships. Integration that relies on personal relationships forged on the battlefield, however, is transient unless made operational and institutional and instilled in our forces from the very beginning of professional military education and throughout all planning and training. The closure of the Iraq theater and the drawdown in Afghanistan will reduce the impetus behind current interdependence initiatives and limit opportunities for shared operational experience. Unless we start now to codify and expand interdependence in the force, we risk losing momentum and reverting to pre-9/11 mind-sets.

The Challenge of Interdependence

To operationalize and institutionalize change in our Army, we must first fix doctrine. The scope and scale of challenges anticipated in the future security environment demand the institutionalization of interdependence. The Army's capacity for such a mutually reliant and operationally effective relationship originates in the generating force, which consists of Army organizations that sustain the operational force. Doctrinal, organizational, preparatory and educational changes in the Army's generating force will inform all levels of professional military education and drive changes in the operational force, whose primary mission is to conduct unified land operations. The Army's challenge is to seamlessly integrate lethal and non-lethal special operations and conventional force capabilities while maintaining the unique cultures and capabilities that support the vision of the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) to "prevent, shape, win" and enable success of the joint force on the battlefield.

The Generating Force as an Agent of Change

The generating force organizes and develops the Army's capacity for interdependence and drives integration of operational forces and synchronization of effects on the battlefield. Within the generating force, the Army must establish and reinforce the systems and processes that expand interdependence between conventional and special operations forces. Institutionalized changes in the generating force drive change in the operational force, where units train to-

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gether to develop the capability for mutual support and meet the challenges of joint integration and synchronization. Operational integration enables synchronized operations and a seamless front on the battlefield. One example of this interdependence is the partnership among the special operations, intelligence and mission command centers of excellence to develop a concept for unified exploitation that will integrate exploitation activities in Afghanistan.

Institutionalizing Lessons Learned

The foundation of future interdependence begins with the institutionalization of observations, insights and lessons collected by both special operations and conventional force organizations, including developing a shared understanding of special operations and conventional force capabilities, integrating mission planning, and aggressively exchanging liaison officers. Our history, however, shows that these lessons quickly fade unless reinforced in doctrine, organizations, training, leadership and education.

As the Army codifies lessons learned in the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR), we must also expect new challenges as our nation shifts focus to the Pacific Rim. Initiatives that integrate and synchronize Army capabilities with those of special operations—village stability operations in Afghanistan, for instance—serve as a guide for enhanced interdependence in the joint team and among our interagency partners. These lessons also spur the development of future initiatives that enable the generating and operational force to synchronize unified action on the battlefield.

Updating the Warfighting Function Framework

The Army's warfighting function construct must be updated to reflect the requirements of the future operational environment to assess, shape, deter and influence foreign security environments. Reorganizing these lethal and non-lethal activities under the 7th warfighting function will institutionalize the capabilities and skills necessary to work with host nations, regional partners and indigenous populations.

This integrated effort by the Special Operations Center of Excellence (SO CoE) with the other centers of excellence and the Army Capabilities Integration Center (ARCIC) is the first step in expanding special operations and conventional force interdependence in the institutional Army. The SO CoE will write the functional concept for the new warfighting function, including important portions of the building partner capacity concept and incorporating interdependence among the other functional concepts.

ARCIC will lead the integration into a coherent, synergistic campaign of learning reflected in the Army capstone and operating concepts. Once these changes are codified in doctrine, they will inform all levels of professional military education and training. As the nation's force of decisive action, we must maintain our momentum and adapt to the realities that challenge the status quo to continue to dominate in unified land operations.

Driving Change in the Operational Force

In the operational force, special operations and conventional force units must train together to institutionalize mutual support in joint operations. Generating force interdependence in doctrine, organization, training, leadership and education provides a common framework that enables operational integration. Conventional force formations, organized by warfighting function, will change to account for new capabilities developed by the generating force. The addition of a new functional cell that governs and synchronizes conventional and special operations forces' capabilities to assess, shape, deter and influence foreign security environments will draw SOF and CF operational frameworks closer and thus provide a means to integrate their capabilities for the joint force commander.

Operational integration, enabled by doctrinal and organizational interdependence, is the arrangement of military forces and actions to create a force that conducts operations as a whole. Integrated training and operations improve the Army's capacity for operational integration. At the unit level, integrated training is conducted through home station training and rotations at the combat training centers that include conventional and special operations forces.

Headquarters integration is developed in many venues, including geographic combatant command exercises and mutually supported component exercises. Integration in operations is developed through clearly defined command and support relationships with extensive liaison exchange executed across the range of military operations, from security cooperation initiatives to major combat operations.

Outcomes of Interdependence

The ultimate goal of special operations and conventional forces interdependence is to increase operational effectiveness by enabling the joint force to present a seamless front to our enemies and a united face to our friends and partners. Clearly defined and routinely practiced command and support relationships with extensive exchange of liaisons enable battlefield synchronization, built on the foundation of generating force interdependence and operational integration. Commanders must become more comfortable utilizing supported/supporting relationships to create unity of effort for the joint force commander. Enhanced interdependence, driven by changes in the generating force, enables a joint force that is more capable of preventing and deterring conflict, shaping the environment, prevailing in war and succeeding in a wide range of contingencies.

To continue the development of special operations and conventional force interdependence, we must use the generating force to drive change through codified lessons learned and updated doctrinal frameworks. The Army must operationalize and institutionalize change in order to adapt and continue to dominate unified land operations in the future. Our joint challenge is to seamlessly integrate the unique cultures and capabilities of special operations and conventional forces to support the CSA's vision of "prevent, shape, win" and enable success of the joint force on the battlefield. ★