

CANADIAN SPECIAL OPERATIONS

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Special operations forces are playing a greater role in modern conflicts and our government seems determined to improve Canadian capabilities in this area. Indeed, the 2001-2002 war to oust Al Qaeda and the Taliban from Afghanistan was seen as a 'special forces war' so much did they dominate the action.¹ Not only were special forces not supporting conventional forces, their traditional role; rather, conventional forces supported them.² Indeed, special forces emerged from that conflict with a status equal to the army, navy or air force in importance – they had become the fourth 'arm.'

Canada's JTF 2 contributed to that effort and the government's recent *International Policy Statement (IPS)* called for a significant enhancement of this capability. Subsequent government media announcements, independent media reports, and academic journals have added to this demand. Yet in spite of the volume of recent announcements and reports – the Canadian Military Journal devoted an entire issue to the topic – the serious observer of the Canadian military scene will find himself no better informed. Today it is difficult to determine precisely what tasks they will perform, how large the new Special Operations Group will be, how much of our defence treasure it will consume in even rough terms, or who will command it. Much of this data is necessarily imprecise because the process of transformation announced in the *IPS*

¹ Hammond, Jamie, Lieutenant-Colonel, "Special Operations Forces: Relevant, Ready and Precise," *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol 5, No. 3 Autumn, 2004; p. 10 of 20. (when "p. x of y" is used it indicates this citation is from an Internet source that did not follow the hardcopy page number but inserted PDF automatic page numbers. The pages of published articles will use the traditional "p. x." format.

² Horn, p. 3 of 20.

has only just begun. There is also a certain secrecy attached to special force developments, much of which I will argue is overdone. Finally, the development of this capability is not assisted by a small but strident amount of special forces advertising or boosterism verging on hype. This paper will, therefore, examine the tasks, size, cost, and leadership of our Canadian special forces with a critical eye and offer as concrete a set of recommendations as is possible.

What are the Tasks?

Our current special operations capability resides in JTF 2, a unit established within the Canadian Forces in 1992 to take over the domestic counter-terrorism task from the RCMP.³ The domestic nature of that task would not qualify JTF 2 as a special forces unit in the view of some. However, in December 2001 the government directed that the force be doubled and announced that its counter-terrorist task would also be performed beyond our borders.⁴ The specific hunting, targeting and attacking of terrorists in their home areas, rather than responding to their attacks at home, moved JTF 2 solidly into the special forces category. Reports also indicated they were engaged in intelligence collection against Al Qaeda and the Taliban, assumably as part of the “hunting” component of their task. Finally, the 2005 *IPS* rolled JTF 2 into a new “Special Operations Group” and added the new tasks of conducting the Non-Combatant

³ See Maloney, Sean, Dr. “Who Has Seen the Wind? An Historical Overview of Canadian Special Operations,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 3 Autumn, 2004; for a review of Canada’s rich special operations past, particularly during World War II.

⁴ Hammond, p 14 of 20.

Evacuation Operations (NEO) of Canadian nationals in peril in foreign lands and providing a Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence (NBCD) Company.⁵

Up to this point everything was clear – our special forces would conduct counter-terrorism at home and abroad, intelligence collection, NEO, and NBCD initial response. Confusion soon entered this tidy picture. In May, 2005, Chris Wattie reported in *Defence News* that the new Special Operations Groups will include a “Light Force” that will be the “backbone” of the Special Operations Group.⁶ This new Light Force, however, “will not become special forces themselves” in the view of the senior army spokesman Wattie interviewed. Rather the Canadian Light Force will be more like a US Ranger unit or British parachute regiment. I can certainly understand the logic that declares that parachute regiment-like units are not special forces, but it is difficult to then accept they will be the “backbone” of the new Special Operations Group (SOG).⁷

This terminology issue is not a dry one.⁸ By including the Light Force, the Special Operations Group would become responsible for airmobile operations (helicopter borne assault), airborne operations (parachute assault), raids, and reconnaissance. This is a dramatic increase in our special operations tasks and little logic is provided to support why these tasks should migrate from the regular Army.

⁵ Government of Canada, *Canada's International Policy Statement – A Role of Pride and Influence in the World*, - Overview, Defence, Diplomacy, Development & Commerce Sections. At www.international.gc.ca as of 13 Jul 2005. Defence, p. 12. Its supporting helicopters and crews were also to be included within the Special Operations Group

⁶ Wattie, Chris, “Canada’s new ‘Ranger’ troops would fill role vacated by Airborne,” *CanWest News*, 3 May 2005 at 1 of 5.

⁷ Wattie, “Canada’s new ‘Ranger.’”: p. 1 of 5.

⁸ Major Brister’s footnotes 4 and 5 provide some clarity on this issue. He and others argue the term “Special Forces” is limited to those that are trained and equipped to conduct unconventional warfare while “Special Operations Forces” are those forces that support the more highly trained Special Forces. This view is not universally accepted. See Hammond, p 7 of 20 who makes it clear that the most Commonwealth nations treat the terms Special Operations Forces and Special Forces as interchangeable. In this article I attempt to follow Maj. Brister’s convention, but I will not attempt to make this a doctrine.

Certainly, the British have not seen fit to so transfer their parachute regiment. In addition, Wattie does not make it clear whether this transfer to the SOG from the Army's already undermanned infantry battalions will involve the full three light battalions, each containing 600 personnel, or only their three "jump" companies, each of which has 150 personnel. What is clear is that this proposed Light Force transfer to the Special Operations Group would have immediate and profound effects on the Army. The Commander of the Army has made it clear he should retain the three light battalions with the remaining nine infantry battalions in order to provide a reasonable overseas deployment rotation for all.⁹ Such a transfer will also impact General Hillier's joint vision as the same light battalions are probably the most suitable troops for the amphibious force that makes up his Standing Contingency Task Force.

Nevertheless, other officers support the transfer with Major Brister arguing that including the Light Force with the special forces provides a better recruiting pool for JTF 2 as well as an in-theatre support force.¹⁰ The same author also calls for Canada to consider focusing on the niche role of providing special forces, but only if we fully dedicate ourselves to achieving "Tier 1" status in this field – that is "a full capability, stand alone SOF grouping."¹¹ Such a "Tier 1" full capability would, assumably, involve an expansion of tasks beyond counter terrorism, intelligence collection, NEO, and NBCD and permit the Canadian Special Operations Group to perform the nine "core" tasks that comprise the "mandate" of the larger US or British special force

⁹ Pugliese, David, "Canada Plans to Improve Light Infantry Units," *Defence News*, at <http://circ.jmellon.com> as of 1 Oct 2005. (JTF 2 page – media reports.)

¹⁰ Brister, Bernard, Major, "Canadian Special Operations Forces: A Blueprint for the Future," *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol 5, No. 3 Autumn, 2004; p. 11 of 13.

¹¹ Brister, 2 of 13.

organizations.¹² This would involving adding the tasks of direct action (“short term seize, destroy, exploit, capture, damage or recovery operations”), counter proliferation (of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons), foreign internal defence (the training of foreign militaries), civil affairs, psychological operations, and information operations.¹³ Under such a construct, the civil affairs and training of local forces tasks assigned to our regular army units in the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kandahar would eventually pass to the Special Operations Group.

Again, there is little reason to transfer these tasks from the conventional army to the SOG. Admittedly the latter enjoy a more rigorous selection process, better training and more sophisticated equipment all tailored for unconventional warfare, but that skill set is hardly a basis for claiming superiority in training local forces or civil affairs. Further, there is also a real danger that the passing of an increasing number of roles to the special forces will result in skill dilution in their primary counter-terrorism mission or operator burn-out as a consequence of responding to multiple calls. This is not a theoretical problem. Prior to the 2003 Iraq War, the US found that the Afghanistan conflict had “exhausted” its 47,000 personnel SOF force.¹⁴ Every SOF unit had been committed to the event and they had to repeat that massive effort in Iraq immediately after. Canada has certainly not yet mastered the art of competently managing its troop rest cycles so it is probably unwise to expect DND to show particular strengths in husbanding its special forces. There is, therefore, a risk even an enlarged Canadian SOG would be unable to provide a strong counter terrorist response at home if it forces

¹² Horn, Bernd, Colonel, “When Cultures Collide: The Conventional Military/SOF Chasm,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol 5, No. 3 Autumn, 2004; p. 3 of 26.

¹³ These are taken from Horn, p. 3 of 26.

¹⁴ Hammond, p. 10 of 20

are routinely deployed in multiple tasks overseas. The argument seems clear – enlarge the Canadian Special Forces but do not expand their tasks.

How Large?

Tasks necessarily drive size and by restricting the tasks of the SOG to counter terrorism, intelligence collection, NEO and NBCD response, a doubling of the size of the JTF 2 element and the inclusion of a NBDC company and a helicopter support element would suggest a 1,000 person force and no more.¹⁵ This is, nevertheless, a significant increase that should provide the force considerable depth as long as we do not expand its tasks. For reasons already made clear the Special Operations Group should not contain elements of the Army's Light Force be they either the battalions themselves or their jump companies. Rather the Light Force should remain within the Army and be available to serve as the central element of the Standing Contingency Task Force while also being available to support the SOG.

In the previous section I did not support creating the Tier 1 special operations force others had recommended because I felt there was little logic for Canada to embrace all the tasks a Tier 1 force is expected to perform. Size is also a consideration here. If one attempted to perform the additional tasks of direct action, counter proliferation, foreign internal defence, civil affairs, psychological operations, and information operations two separate personnel increases will come due. One increase will involve providing the actual operators to perform those tasks. A second, larger

¹⁵ I have no personal knowledge of JTF 2's size and have based this calculation on data provided by such sources as Canada Press' John Ward (CP 4 Oct 2001), the CBC's Martin O'Malley (CBC News Online 6 Dec, 2001, and the Defence News' David Pugliese (Defnews 23 May 2005) (All at <http://circ.jmellon.com> as of 1 Oct 2005. (JTF 2 page – media reports.)

increase will be required to man the specialist aircraft needed to achieve success in those tasks. Both the US and the UK require special warfare helicopters and aircraft fitted with air-to-air refueling, day-night, nap-of-the-earth terrain avoidance radar, armour, considerable firepower, and a fully integrated suite of radar and infra red countermeasures to deploy, support, and extract their special forces during direct action missions. I do not think Canada can adopt this inherently risky task by double-tasking our utilitarian, cargo-hauling Hercules and Griffons that have none of these equipments. In the U.S. the same Special Operations Aviation Battalions, Special Tactic Squadrons, and Special Operations Wings that provide these deep penetration aircraft also operate the equally specialized psychological operations and information warfare aircraft. This air support element is central to the US Special Forces being capable of all nine tasks. That level of support also explains why US Special Operations Command has 10,000 warriors and 37,000 uniformed support personnel.¹⁶ To have the same broad capabilities, Canada's proposed 1,000 special force warriors would need the dedicated support of an additional 3,700 personnel. Our announced defence personnel increases will not cover this single personnel bill and there are many other demands. Given Canada has yet to purchase strategic airlift, replacement Hercules and medium lift helicopters for its conventional forces, these more exotic special operations aircraft are also likely a long way away. The conclusion seems clear - enlarge the Canadian Special Forces to a maximum of 1000 personnel and do not expand their tasks.

¹⁶ Hammond, p. 11 of 20.

What is the Cost?

Given the large and, as I will show, costly, support packages that underpin the larger special forces, recent claims as to these forces' "cost effectiveness" and ability to "achieve substantial gains and successes out of all proportion to the resources employed" must be taken with a grain of salt.¹⁷ Indeed this form of advertising also disregards the higher cost of their unique equipment, the unusually high personnel costs, and the cost, both financial and otherwise, to the Army. Nor can one claim a reduced support cost by borrowing Hercules and Griffon helicopters from the Air Force or submarines from the Navy instead of, say, having dedicated air units embedded within the special operations forces as the US does.

As special operations are inherently risky no one questions their need for first class training; and air and sea units are provided on a priority basis to achieve that training. Given, however, the state and poor availability of our air transport fleet alone, the special forces training effort likely came at the cost of some other user. Certainly that has been the "opportunity cost" approach taken by Lawrence McDonough, whose paper "A Special Operations Costing Model" assigned a capital cost of \$520 million (Canadian) for the two Hercules and eight Griffon helicopters required to support an enlarged special force mission.¹⁸

I, however, doubt one can realistically expect to use essentially unmodified Hercules and Griffon aircraft for overseas special forces missions recognizing we will probably try to cobble something together to provide a special forces capability on the cheap by applying enough Canadian ingenuity to the task. Regrettably, the case of the

¹⁷ Brister, p. 11 and 12 of 13.

¹⁸ McDonough, Lawrence, Dr, "A Special Operations Costing Model," Royal Military College research paper, at <http://www.rmc.ca/academic/poli-econ/idrm/papers/McD-Spec-ops.pdf>, p. 10, as of 1 Oct. 2005.

MH 47 special operations medium lift helicopter provides a solid example of the additional cost of a special warfare capability and the limited options for cost containment. To ensure their special forces could go behind enemy lines to achieve their direct action missions and then be safely extracted, the US took a \$32 million dollar (U.S.) basic Chinook helicopter, and fitted it with the refueling, armour, weapons, terrain avoidance, and self-defence capabilities just described at the cost of an additional \$35 million per aircraft.¹⁹ The UK desired the same aircraft but balked at the cost of the full capability and cut corners. It paid some £ 259 million for eight Chinook HC 3 in 1995 only to discover three years later they were not up to the special warfare tasks being performed and that they needed another £ 130 million investment.²⁰ The final per unit cost thus approached \$ 87 million (U.S.). This is not a unique case and comparable costs have been incurred in modifying the Black Hawk and Sea Stallion helicopters to special warfare standards.²¹ Canada has an especially problematic case given it has no medium lift helicopter to modify and the popular view is that the Griffon's slow speed, limited lift, doubtful ability to carry increased protection equipment, and 150 mile range disqualify it for special operations tasks altogether. In fact it may not be suitable for any operational mission with David Pugliese recently reporting that it was deemed "not adequate" for the basic Kandahar mission and that DND was now examining sending our thirty-five year old Sea Kings in their place.²²

¹⁹ Data from <http://www.caat.gor.uk/issues/facts-figures/weapon-costs.php> as of 1 Oct 2005

²⁰ Data from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MH-47E_Chinook page 3 Of 3 as of 1 Oct 2005.

²¹ A basic Black Hawk costs \$5.9 million while a Pave Hawk, the special forces variant, costs \$10.2 million See <http://jietelin.jschina.com.cn/heli/eng/helo.htm> as of 1 Oct 2005.

²² Pugliese, David, "Military Considering Sea Kings for Afghan Mission, Insiders Say," *National Post*, 20 Jul. 2005, p. A4.

Special force personnel costs are less easy to quantify but remain considerable. Training pass rates normally range between 10 and 20 percent for candidates who have already been screened prior to training and who were better than average servicemen or women to begin with.²³ General Franks, the USCENTCOM commander during the 2003 Gulf War, reported that the US Special Forces had also enjoyed “ample training budgets, stable personnel policies (less rotation in and out than normal units), their pick of volunteers, and leaders and commanders who were already experienced company commanders.”²⁴ Readers will instantly recognize the immense value of being granted a stable personnel base as this dramatically improves the quality of unit training while driving down its costs. Special forces also enjoy a higher NCO ratio compared with regular formations.²⁵

Someone else, of course, pays this cost be it in absent NCOs, less stable personnel states, lower training levels, or the flight of the just-trained volunteer towards the special forces. Given the higher physical fitness states and advanced weapons skills resident in Army units, they usually pay the most despite the fact that they are already undermanned. Colonel Horn cites Field Marshal Viscount Slim’s still very pertinent assessment of the costs of special units:

[special units] “were usually formed by attracting the best men from normal units by better conditions, promises of excitement and not a little propaganda....The result of these methods was undoubtedly to lower the quality of the rest of the Army, especially of the infantry, not only by skimming the cream off it, but by encouraging the idea that certain of the normal operations of war were so difficult that only specially equipped corps d’élite could be expected to undertake them.”²⁶

²³ Horn, p. 17 of 26.

²⁴ Horn, p. 8 of 26.

²⁵ Horn, p. 8 of 26.

²⁶ Horn, p. 7 of 26.

Indeed, the Chief of Defence Staff has recently signaled that future special forces growth will be monitored to ensure that other units are not “drained” to support it.²⁷ This analysis fully supports that view. Any growth in size beyond the 1000 recommended and any increase in mission scope will involve high financial costs and high personnel costs to existing units, none of which was catered for in the last budget or the recent *International Policy Statement*.

Who Will Command?

This question appears to have a straightforward response with the JTF 2 website indicating that “the unit answers directly to the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff in the chain of command.”²⁸ This high level was needed, it reported, as it “allows for very timely command and control, access to strategic intelligence, and the oversight considered essential for military operations undertaken to meet national objectives.” None of this made much sense before and it makes less sense now. Throughout history “timely command and control” came from placing the commander near the unit and electronic communications have not altered that. Moreover, those forces are usually under separate operational command and separate tactical control and it is these lower orders of command that drive timeliness. In addition, JTF 2 was more likely to get meaningful intelligence from coalition partners in theatre than from NDHQ. Finally, the oversight of “military operations to meet national objectives” means absolutely nothing as it is difficult to imagine any military operation that does not “meet national objectives.” In fact alarm bells should be going off and extra oversight applied whenever a military

²⁷ Pugliese, “Canada Plans,” p. 2 of 3.

²⁸ <http://www.ops.forces.gc.ca/units/jtf2/pages> “About JTF” section p. 1 of 3 as of 29 Sep 2005. Henceforth “Deputy Chief of Defence Staff” will be abbreviated to “DCDS” as will the “Chief of Defence Staff” be reduced to “CDS.”

operation is ordered that does not “meet national objectives.”

Therefore, most observers rejoiced when a separate “Canada Command” in charge of domestic operations and “Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command” for overseas engagements were announced this year. The control of operations would now be removed from a NDHQ focused, and occasionally over-focused, on political and then strategic issues. The only discouraging note here was that the Special Operations Group appears to have partly escaped this needed reform. While the press ‘backgrounder’ for the Special Operations Group indicated “its primary focus” would be to generate forces for either Canada Command (Canada Com) or Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command (CEFCOM), it will be capable of operating as an “independent formation.”²⁹ The announcement creating CEFCOM is more precise stating it is “responsible for all Canadian Forces (CF) international operations with the exception of operations conducted solely by Special Operations Group (SOG) elements.”³⁰ Moreover, the SOG will now report “directly to the CDS.” Therefore, the Canadian Special Forces have been given the unique right to work outside the control of the new operational commanders that will direct our military operations at home and abroad. Special forces will, therefore, continue to be controlled directly from NDHQ.

There is no DND rationale provided for continuing this high level of command and control or for allowing them to operate outside Canada COM’s or CEFCOM’s operational control. Some writers support this approach and argue that “command and control” should be at the “highest strategic level” to ensure special forces are “employed

²⁹ National Defence, “Special Operations Group (SOG) Canadian Forces Transformation – From Vision to Mission,” Backgrounder, 13 Sep 2005 via *CNW Portfolio Email*, 13 Sep 2005.

³⁰ National Defence, “Commanders Designated for Expeditionary Forces Command and Special Operations Group,” 13 Sep 2005 via *CNW Portfolio Email*, 13 Sep 2005

to the greatest effect” and to preclude “misemployment.”³¹ This suggests against all prevailing evidence that the closer you get to NDHQ the better the operational and tactical direction will be. The 19-- Glassco commission found little evidence of any ability to provide command from Ottawa and that the “headquarters organization in DND is one of support rather than operational command.”³² A 1985 internal CDS sponsored study concluded “NDHQ could not be relied upon to produce effective operational plans or to be an effective base for the command and control of Canadian Forces in operations.”³³ A study for DND’s Deputy Minister and CDS produced in 1992 came to much the same assessment: “the evaluation [showed] there is a critical need for a simplified command and control structure, one which will bring to an end the current *ad hoc* approach.”³⁴ The Somalia Inquiry’s description of that operation’s command arrangements also revealed a similar pattern of unclear command chains, back-channel communications outside those chains, and selective micro-management:

...officers declared for example, that the chain of command was too convoluted; that too many officers at NDHQ were involved in the vetting of what should have been routine demands; that senior staff officers at NDHQ were calling the CAR [Canadian Airborne Regt. in Somalia] directly or vice versa.³⁵

Finally, one must question NDHQ’s overall ability to manage both the strategic and the political aspects of special operations given the bizarre conduct of Defence Minister

³¹ Brister, p. 11.

³² Glassco Commission as cited by Bland, Douglas, in *Chiefs of Defence – Government and the Unified Command of the Canadian Armed Forces*, (Toronto: CISS, 1995): 204-208. CDS: 12.

³³ Cited in: Canada, Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of the Canadian Forces in Somalia, Dishonoured Legacy – The Lessons of the Somalia Affair, (Executive Summary), (Ottawa, Public Works and Government Services, 1997): ES-19..

³⁴ Cited in: Canada, Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of the Canadian Forces in Somalia, Dishonoured Legacy – The Lessons of the Somalia Affair, (Chapter 2), (Ottawa, Public Works and Government Services, 1997): 420.

³⁵ Canada, Dishonoured Legacy, (Chapter 2): 422.

Eggleton in January 2002. After being briefed on JTF 2's role in capturing Al Qaeda and Taliban fighters, he and the Prime Minister initially denied this was taking place leading to charges of misleading the House of Commons on two occasions and of failing to inform the Prime Minister of the operation. This led the Alliance party to suggest the Minister's initial denials were motivated by the fear that the issue of Canada turning prisoners to the US would "divide the Liberal caucus."³⁶

Certainly, the US has learned that the strategic direction of special forces is fraught with danger after the 3 October 1993 failure by those forces to arrest Mohammed Farah Aideed, a prominent Somali warlord. The decision to use over one hundred special forces to achieve this was taken at the Presidential level after "detailed review" and over the objections of the operational commander, Central Command's General Hoar (CINCCENT), who accurately predicted defeat.³⁷ At the same time, the US administration was seeking to begin a draw down of US forces in Somalia, and this led to a decision to deny that mission the traditional AC 130 Spectre gunship support and the use of armor.³⁸ In addition, the special forces operated within a chain of command separate from the other US forces in the area, and there was strong evidence US and UN commanders on the ground were not kept informed of the operation for security reasons, thus limiting the options for support, and later, rescue.³⁹ Ultimately

³⁶ _____ "Liberals End Eggleton Inquiry – Defence minister accused to lying to Commons over POW capture." *Canada Press*, 14 May, 2002.

³⁷ _____, "Interview with General Anthony Zinni," *Ambush in Mogadishu*, at <http://www.phs.org/wgbh/pahgees/frontline/shows/ambush/interviews> p 10 of 15, as of 1 Oct 2005.

³⁸ Ecklund, Marshall V., Major, "Analysis of operation gothic serpent: TF Ranger in Somalia," Copyright John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, 2004; p. 9 of 14.

³⁹ Ecklund, p.2 of 14, 6 of 14 and 9 of 14. See Also Maj. Clifford E. Day, "Critical Analysis on the Defeat of Task Force Ranger," (A research paper presented to the Research Dept. of the Air Command and Staff College., March, 1997) p . 33..

some 16 US special forces died alongside some 1,000 of their Somali attackers, and Aided escaped.

The US now has subordinate Special Operations Commands working for each of its five regional commanders (such as Commander Central Command) to ensure special force missions are coordinated with others. Given our parallel creation of Canada COM and CEFCOM to achieve the same thing at a smaller scale, there seems to be no military reason behind the decision to allow the SOG to operate outside the authority of these, our operational commanders.

Indeed one suspects the motivations to control special forces at the strategic level stem more from political and bureaucratic factors than military ones. Dr. Lucien Vandebroucke's analysis of the decision-making behind such events as the failed special forces operation in Somalia suggests an unhealthy process can develop where senior policy makers "become insidiously attracted to strategic [special] operations" as they appear to provide "the only solution to otherwise intractable major foreign policy problems."⁴⁰ Given that the US administration held the two contradictory goals of seeking mission success in Somalia while also drawing down the US military contribution there, a small special forces attack on Aided appeared the only choice.

A hidden or contradictory set of motives is then easily connected to the second bureaucratically introduced factor - security. By keeping operational planning confined to the strategic level one gains a small element of security by excluding the operational and tactical chains of command. One also isolates critics of the plan including in the Somalia case the operational commander, General Hoar, who predicted that the

⁴⁰ Vandebroucke, Lucien, S, Dr. *Perilous Options: Special Operations as an instrument of US Foreign Policy*, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993). P. 4 and as cited in Eckland p. 8 of 14.

existing poor intelligence on the target reduced the chance of mission success to twenty-five percent.⁴¹ Strategically imposed security also eliminated the chance for tactical coordination with conventional forces that might have speedily reinforced the special forces when they ran into serious trouble.⁴²

In Canada's case, former Defence Minister Eggleton's continued reticence reinforced the accusation that he was attempting to hide the fact that Canadian Forces were turning over terrorist prisoners to the US from the public. Thus the government had the conflicting goals of wishing to be seen to support its US ally but not doing it so wholeheartedly as to be seen actually turning over captured Al Qaeda or Taliban members. Special forces operations, sufficiently cloaked in secrecy, had the potential for achieving the two contradictory goals. Mr. Eggleton's silence also appeared to have little to do with operational security given he had announced the month before that forty JTF 2 members were deployed and based in Kandahar.⁴³ It also made little sense to cloak JTF 2's anti-terrorist objective in secrecy when DND made very public the fact that Canadian naval ships and a battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry were being deployed to perform the same task

One must acknowledge, however, that special forces, by their small numbers and often-exposed location, are especially vulnerable to counter attack and can require slightly higher levels of operational security than conventional forces engaged in the same task. Yet special forces themselves frequently add to their own security problem. Horn cites Major-General Jeapes, a former SAS commander, who conceded the "Regiment's insistence upon secrecy in all it did had become counter-productive" with

⁴¹ _____, "Interview with General Anthony Zinni," p. 10 of 15 and see: Eckland, p. 8 of 14.

⁴² Ecklund, p.2 of 14, 6 of 14 and 9 of 14. See Also: Day, p. 33.

⁴³ Ward, Kevin, "Un commando d' elite se trouve à Kandahar," *Presse Canadienne*, 19 Dec 2001.

few in the British military aware of their capabilities and many resultantly ill-prepared for coordinated operations with them.⁴⁴ Horn also points out that the special forces' "exaggerated emphasis on secrecy" and "inflated sense of secrecy" were being undone by those forces very public fondness for the "exotic equipment, uniforms, and dress codes" that would set them apart from their fellow soldiers.⁴⁵

The clearest statement on precisely what secrecy and security is required for special operations comes from Admiral McRaven, a US Navy SEAL, and author of *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations*:

The purpose of tight security is to prevent the enemy from gaining an advantage through foreknowledge about the impending attack....It is not so much the impending mission that must be concealed as the timing and, to a lesser extent, the means of insertion.⁴⁶

In light of this our blanket approach to security does seem to merit the "exaggerated" and "inflated" tags. It also supports the view that much of Canada's security concerns in this area are the result of political and bureaucratic motivations.

This introduces the third factor – institutional survival. The special forces are well aware that their unique status and generous resources provoke envy in the conventional forces. As a result, newly formed special forces often need some initial high-level bureaucratic protection in the form of direct links to the DCDS, or, better yet, CDS, all of which is easily cloaked in a murky requirement for "strategic command" and tight security.⁴⁷ Horn also points out special forces are not reticent in using their "special connections" to the powerful to short-circuit the chain of command, and they did

⁴⁴ Horn, p. 15 of 26.

⁴⁵ Horn, p. 15 of 26.

⁴⁶ McRaven, William, H. *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations: Theory and Practice* (Novato, Calif.; Presidio Press, 1996, p.14-15; and as cited in Eckand p. 5 of 14.

⁴⁷ Horn spells this out with particular clarity. See his pages 12 to 14 of 26.

so regularly in Bosnia “when they didn’t like what they were told.”⁴⁸ David Pugliese’s reports of Canadian Special Forces going on a “multi-million dollar spending spree” this fall may slightly exaggerate the case as no dollar figures are provided, but the process he describes is typical of the approach Horn has outlined:

Unlike the regular forces, which obtain their equipment through the ponderously slow federal procurement system, JTF2 is able to cut through much of the red tape and quickly get approval for gear from both the military and political leadership. The unit does not have to deal with the usual rules on government accountability and its purchases are considered secret.⁴⁹

Pugliese also points out it has resulted in JTF 2 getting relatively immediate access to armoured vehicles in Afghanistan while the Canadian infantry in the same location facing the same threats waited for several years for our procurement process to deliver their own.

One would not deny the special forces their specialized equipment as one awaits the eventual reform of the government’s procurement system. This analysis does, however, make it clear that a process that allows the special forces direct access to the leadership and with that the ability to short-circuit the operational commanders and to invoke doubtful calls for high security is a politico-bureaucratic one. It is also clear that that process has nothing to do with military requirements. Rather, the current process confounds sound military practice. Putting the tactical control of units at the strategic HQ takes the decision-maker further away from the action, encourages short circuits of the chain of command, confounds in-theatre coordination, and allows the entry of partisan politics into operations.

⁴⁸ Horn, p. 12 and 14 of 26.

⁴⁹ Pugliese, David, “Military Accused of Favouritism ‘Double Standard’ Critics fear elite soldiers gaining at regulars’ expense.” *National Post*, 8 Oct. 2005, p. A 4.

Therefore, the commander of Canada Command should control all Canadian special forces involved in domestic operations as should the Commander of Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command for those operations overseas. They should be advised by special operations cells set up within each of these HQ. When a Standing Contingency Task Force requires special operations, it too must be provided a special operations cell and the operational or tactical control authority to direct and coordinate their operations.

Quite separate from this command chain are the administrative links that today place the responsibility for the force generation of units – that is their manning, training, and equipping – under the commanders of the army, navy and air force. In recognition of both the unique nature of these issues for special forces and the fact that those forces are indeed evolving into the “fourth arm” in the militaries of our main allies, the special operations group commander should enjoy direct access to the Chief of Defence precisely as the other service commanders do. This, however, is a link that is for the administrative purposes of training and equipping and not operations although his advice would be sought, much like the operational advice of the service commanders is sought. This ensures the responsibility for directing operations and coordinating the army, navy, air force and special operations elements rests exclusively with the commanders of Canada Com and CEFCOM or their subordinate joint force commanders.

Conclusion

This paper has supported the government's doubling of the special forces in Canada. Further, the anti-terrorism, intelligence collection, non-combatant evacuation and nuclear, biological and chemical response tasks appear well matched to the enlarged Special Operations Group called for by the *IPS*. It was also argued any size increase would be wasted if one added yet more tasks to the special forces. Here there was a very real risk of skill dilution in the anti-terrorist mission and potentially exhausting deployment ratios. Parallel arguments to roll elements of the army's Light Force were also rejected. While it could provide an additional manning pool and occasional operational support for JTF2, these would very likely involve greater costs to an already pressed Army. In tandem with this finding, the analysis could also find no logic behind transferring tasks competently performed by the Army, such as internal defence training, to the special forces.

The paper also found little to support claims of special force cost effectiveness. Such claims appeared to ignore their own very high support costs and the sacrifices borne by other units to maintain JTF2's justifiably high training and manning priority. The discussion of costs necessarily returned to tasks as it was soon clear that task expansion beyond the current four to develop special forces as a 'niche' Canadian capability had the potential to dramatically increase both financial costs and those indirect costs to other Canadian Force units. Again, no compelling military reasoning appeared to support this enlargement.

The examination of special force command suggests current arrangements that allow special force operations to be controlled and directed at the strategic level reflect

political and bureaucratic motives that compete with and largely overturn military needs. In one case this practice was the principle cause of one of ⁵⁰our ally's largest special force defeats. In Canada this same practice has fostered an "inflated" sense of secrecy around special force operations and encouraged the end-running of the chain of command all without providing any discernible military benefit. In operations it will confound the ability of the new Canada Command and Canadian Expeditionary Command to coordinate and direct our forces at home and abroad. The paper necessarily calls for those commands to direct all special force operations, as they will all air force, army, navy and joint forces.

Some may suggest this analysis represents 'old think' set on minimizing or restricting the future contribution of Canadian Special Forces. Others, and it is hoped they are a majority, will recognize the goal has been to ensure that an enlarged special force capability can be fully integrated into future Canadian military operations. The need to reform this aspect is particularly acute. The defence component of the *International Policy Statement* has provided a vision for the Canadian Forces that has as its theme the integration of the various elements of our forces under joint commanders leading joint task forces. This reform has been adopted by all our allies and is long overdue here. Yet those who enjoy the comfort of their old, separate ways and the benefits their uniqueness provided will oppose this vision. This paper has demonstrated that there are no military arguments for excluding the special forces from that vision.
