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TECHNICAL REPORT

National Guard Special Forces

Enhancing the Contributions of Reserve Component Army Special Operations Forces

John E. Peters • Brian Shannon • Matthew E. Boyer

Prepared for the United States Army

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Summary

This study was undertaken to help the commanding general, U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), develop options for enhancing the contributions of U.S. Army National Guard (ARNG) Special Forces by making them a “purpose-driven” force rather than simply a copy of the active component (AC) forces under his command. The intent was to provide data to inform deliberations regarding the potential future direction of ARNG Special Forces.

Key Tasks

First, we examined and described the policy framework for ARNG Special Forces. This framework establishes the latitude available to USASOC in creating a purpose-driven ARNG Special Forces.

Second, the research sought to determine the strengths and weaknesses of ARNG Special Forces Groups. This effort involved conducting surveys, interviews, and a literature review to support comparison of AC and National Guard attributes, capabilities, capacities, and authorities. This comparison is the basis for subsequent recommendations, based on a consensus between the AC and ARNG Special Forces on those missions and tasks for which the National Guard units are well suited.

Third, the research developed a menu to offer USASOC as recommendations for developing options to enhance ARNG Special Forces contributions to USASOC. These options emphasized missions (e.g., Afghanistan village security) and units (e.g., ODA and ODB) that lie within the AC/ARNG consensus on the most suitable employment of ARNG Special Forces.

Lines of Inquiry

In executing the key tasks in the research design, we pursued three lines of inquiry. First, we examined large amounts of data provided by USASOC and the ARNG. These data included:

- Records of hazardous duty pay, which assisted in tracking individual combat deployments.
- Unit deployment records, which established when specific ARNG Special Forces units were deployed, e.g., operational detachments Alpha (ODA), operational detachments Bravo (ODB), advanced operational bases (AOB), and special operations task forces (SOTFs).
- Training and qualification records, which indicated how many personnel were qualified in their primary military occupational specialty (MOS), and how many personnel pos-

essed additional skills, e.g., military free fall parachuting, sniper, scuba, and advanced special operations training (ASOT).

These data provide a basis for comparison with the AC Special Forces in terms of frequency of deployment, numbers and types of units deployed, and individual deployment histories.

Second, we conducted an online survey that asked questions about the background, prior service, qualifications and deployments of the respondents, and their views on the relative merits of ARNG Special Forces.¹ The responses to the survey helped us determine the civilian skills resident among Guardsmen respondents, their tolerance for future, additional deployments, and other factors that might be revealing of potential niches or pockets of unique, high-value contributions for ARNG Special Forces employment in future operations.

Finally, we conducted policy-level interviews in which we queried the adjutants general for the principal states hosting ARNG Special Forces units, assistant secretary of defense-level officials with reserve affairs responsibilities, and others down to and including the senior leadership of the ARNG Special Forces Groups themselves. These interviews established the participants' views of ARNG Special Forces capabilities and limitations, and their ideas for enhancing contributions from these units.

What the Research Found

- USASOC had hoped to find civilian police skills, analytical skills, and language skills that could serve as the basis for unique ARNG unit contributions within Special Forces. Although many valuable civilian skills are present within the ARNG, they do not exist in the densities that would enable the ARNG to build specific units around them. They do constitute a rich pool of individuals who might be potential volunteers for individual mobilization, but even on an individual basis, they cannot be involuntarily mobilized under current authorities because of their civilian skills.
- Language experience in the ARNG Special Forces is wide, but of limited depth. It seems doubtful the National Guard could be a significant source for language-qualified Special Forces personnel without considerable, additional effort.
- There is an important interdependence between the ARNG Special Forces competence and the AC Special Forces units' confidence in the National Guard that rests on deployments. The ARNG Special Forces must deploy at some reasonable frequency in order to be competent and to be trusted by their AC Special Forces counterparts. Insufficient deployments put the ARNG Special Forces on a spiral to irrelevance.
- There is a conditional consensus emerging between both the AC and ARNG about their niches. Those subscribing to this consensus generally believe the ARNG ODAs, ODBs, and individual augmentees are suitable for theater security cooperation activities, unconventional warfare, and foreign internal defense, perhaps with an emphasis on the "non-kinetic" aspects of the latter two. Individual augmentees can serve useful functions within SOTFs, joint SOTFs, and AOBs, according to this view.
- There is much that USASOC could do to enhance the utility of the ARNG Special Forces. Closer, more frequent coordination and greater commitment to predictability

¹ The survey and a detailed analysis of respondents' replies appears in Appendix C.

and lead time would be important next steps. Plan aggressively with the ARNG Special Forces on a time line that they can manage to overcome their DMOSQ shortfall. Finally, renew directed training affiliations and mission letters and hold more coordination conferences so that all the ARNG Special Forces have visibility into the Playbook (the USASOC planning calendar that reflects the units identified for future deployment: their assignments, the time frame, and similar details), their future deployments, and the mission-essential tasks they must master in order to be prepared.

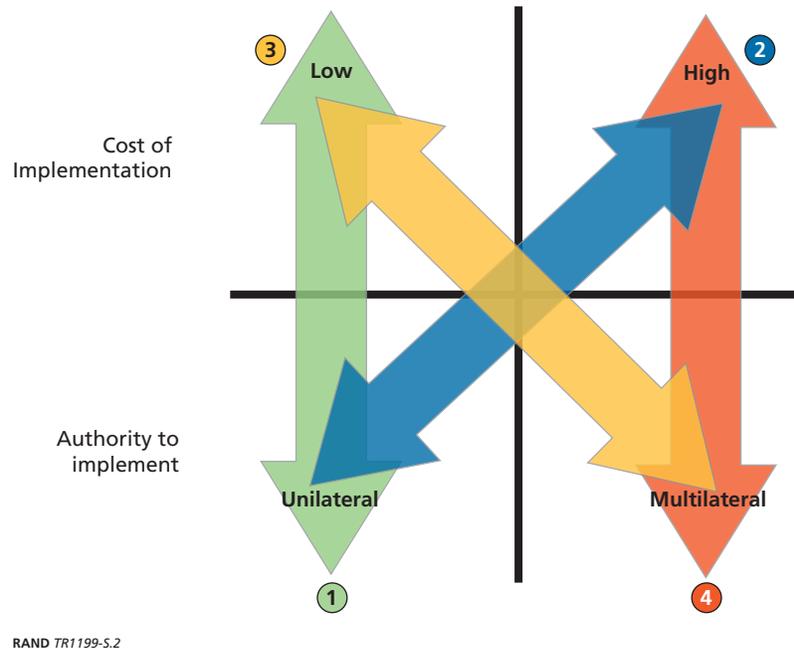
The study's ultimate recommendations appear below in Figures S.1 and S.2. The colored numbers to the left of each listing in Figure S.1 suggest an order of implementation, based upon a logic reflecting the authorities available to USASOC and the costs of implementing each option. Figure S.2 illustrates. According to Figure S.2, USASOC should implement those actions whose costs are low, and that can be done on the organization's own authority.

These include employing ARNG Special Forces for tasks including theater security cooperation (TSC), joint combined exchange training (JCET), foreign internal defense (FID), unconventional warfare (UW), Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa Building Partner Capacity operations, and extended training operations. They also include employing ARNG Special Forces to ease the operations tempo (OPTEMPO) for the AC units. These recommendations also consider the appropriate units for employment, emphasizing ODA, ODB, and SOTFs as the most appropriate size formations for ARNG Special Forces to command and control. When USASOC seeks to tap individual skills, it could operate an Internet website to solicit volunteers based upon their civilian skills. Finally, the inexpensive, unilateral recommendations advocate for the renewed use of mission letters to specify mission-essential tasks for each ODA, and to ensure that all ARNG Special Forces undergo some minimum number of operational deployments to maintain their skills and the confidence of their AC counterparts, with whom they typically operate when deployed.

Figure S.1 Recommendations

- 1 • Employ ARNG Special Forces for recommended tasks (TSC, JCET, FID, UW, Horn of Africa–like, Afghan village security, etc.)
 - Deploy to manage active component OPTEMPO
 - Emphasize employment of ODA, ODB, and SOTF
 - Operate Internet site to solicit volunteers based on their civilian skills
 - Renew use of mission letters
 - Guaranteed deployments to maintain skills
- 2 • Regular Army advisors at SF company level
- 3 • More Special Forces Qualification Course quotas and support
 - Extended Playbook
 - Revitalize directed training alignment (DTA) relationships
 - Sponsor more coordination and planning conferences
 - Sponsor nominative assignments for promising senior ARNG Special Forces officers
- 4 • Seek authority for access to ARNG Special Forces for non-named operations
 - Create mobilization sites at DTA active component home station
 - Create proportionate force structure to facilitate rotations

Figure S.2
Implementing the Study's Recommendations



The second class of recommendations—those that are unilateral but expensive—contains a single recommendation. USASOC should return to the practice of assigning Regular Army advisors at Special Forces company level. Virtually everyone we encountered had a positive view of this practice and saw it as a very effective way to transmit recent operational experience and tactics, techniques, and procedures into the ARNG.

The third category of recommendations includes those actions that are relatively inexpensive but require multilateral agreement and coordination. There are five such actions. The first of these is for USASOC to send the ARNG more Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC) quotas and to task U.S. Army Special Forces Command (USASFC) to work with the ARNG units and state adjutants general to prepare Guardsmen candidates, support them and their families during the course, and produce a higher graduation rate. The second recommendation in this category is for USASOC to extend the Playbook and share its contents earlier so that ARNG units have better insight into when they will be mobilized next, where they are likely to be deployed, and what missions they are likely to perform. Third, USASOC should revitalize directed training alignments (DTAs) between the AC and ARNG Special Forces. Ideally, the ARNG mobilization sites should be co-located with their DTA AC unit and they should deploy together. Falling short of that, the Regular Army company-level advisors should come from the DTA AC unit, and the DTA units should coordinate all collective training with the ARNG units aligned with them. Fourth, USASOC and USASFC should sponsor more conferences to conduct planning and coordination with the ARNG units. For example, force generation conferences and the process of building the Playbook should involve the ARNG Group commanders. Finally, in order to enhance senior leader (lieutenant colonel and above) capabilities within the ARNG Special Forces, USASOC/USASFC should sponsor nominative assign-

ments that would afford promising ARNG officers the opportunities to deploy in AC staff and command jobs and to gain experience under the direct supervision of AC seasoned experts.

The final category of recommendations—both expensive and requiring multilateral coordination and agreement—includes three actions. USASOC should seek authority to access its ARNG Special Forces involuntarily for non-named operations.² Such authority would make it much easier to employ the ARNG to manage AC operations tempo. Second, USASOC/USASFC should create mobilization sites at the DTA home stations so that the ARNG Special Forces would mobilize and fall in on their AC counterparts. Third, insofar as USASOC must sustain a smooth rotation of forces in overseas contingency operations and direct interchangeability of units is desirable, USASOC should create proportionate units in the ARNG. Finally, USASOC in cooperation with the National Guard Bureau might offer financial incentives for active duty Special Forces separating from the Army to join an ARNG Special Forces unit. This would help increase DMOSQ ratings.

² At the time of this report, there were broader efforts ongoing by the Department of Defense to review and potentially change the legal hurdles with involuntarily mobilizing reserve component units for non-named operations.