

Special Forces in International Operations, Challenge for the future.

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1. Introduction

In March 1994, General Sir Michael Rose – a former SAS (Special Air Service) officer, or ‘ex-Regiment’ in SAS-parlour - the head of UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force) in Bosnia, requested the help of a SAS-squad for a sensitive job. In Bosnia at the time there was already a SAS-squadron deployed; this was D-squadron, which was on stand-by duty. This meant that the troop could be called up for ‘significant events’ at short notice¹.

The job General Rose had in mind, however, called for reinforcements. Therefore a second SAS squadron was called up. In the spring of 1994, the Croats and Moslems in Bosnia were prepared to recognize each other’s borders on condition that their respective lines could be mapped and agreed to by April 12². For Rose, a former SAS officer, the sensitivity of the matter and the short time-frame, made it natural to turn to a force well-known for its ability to perform difficult tasks in ‘tight’ situations.

The force was sent down under cover as part of the Signals Regiment, and they operated as a so called ‘green army unit’ under the banner of the UN. The official name of the unit was United Kingdom Liaison Officers (UKLO). In reality the SAS-teams in Bosnia were used for a number of other tasks than the map-making business along the Croat-Moslem lines. In essence, the SAS in Bosnia worked as the eyes and ears of General Rose. In short, they performed classic SF tasks in Bosnia with a certain emphasis on Intelligence gathering.

At the time, the ‘secret’ of SAS involvement, and any other Special Forces (hereafter SF), was of course a very official one. SF has been used in International Operations (hereafter IO) for many years. But officially the governments using such forces as part of their IO forces have always done so behind a cloak of ‘deniability’, only reluctantly admitting the official presence of SF.

The fact that SF is used in IO is in itself not very strange; in all military operations SF has played, and will continue to play, an important role, albeit often a very small and limited one. There will always be a need for good intelligence and very often room for small forces to perform Special Operations (hereafter SO) such as hostage rescue, destroying special targets or hunting down individuals. This was the case in Bosnia during the war, and it is the case today in various theatres of operations where IO’s are active.

What the war in Bosnia showed, perhaps to a greater extent than before, was that the kind of conflicts that IO forces will be involved in, in the future, is far removed from the kind of

¹ In the way the SAS works, there are always four squadrons on active duty, so called ‘Sabre squadrons’. Of these squadrons one is on counter-terrorist duty, or CT. Another squadron is on ‘standby’ duty, ready to deploy at short notice to ‘significant events’ overseas. A third squadron is on reserve standby duty, which in practice means training. A fourth squadron devotes its time exclusively to training exercises.

² Spence, Cameron, ‘All Necessary Measures’, Penguin Books, London 1998.

traditional peacekeeping roles that the UN is still structured for³. The kind of missions that SAS, and other SF, saw in Bosnia, with an emphasis on peacekeeping and humanitarian tasks, is likely to be the kind of missions the International community will encounter in the 21st century. In addition, the peace-enforcement roles that will be seen in the future will probably be of the kind where the 'enemy' is either the kind of 'punk-soldier' seen on the streets of Monrovia to the villages in northern Macedonia or Kosovo. Or it's the kind of soldier that slips in and out of uniform in the jungles of Sri Lanka to the mountains of Kashmir. These people could be answering the calls of a warlord in Colombia as well as to a dictator in central Africa or, as we have seen in Afghanistan during the autumn months of 2001, a religious leader intent on waging a global war against the 'enemy', defined in the broadest possible terms.

What these examples have in common is that in countering such zones of conflict and human misery, small and specially trained forces might be a far more useful, and cheaper, way of dealing with at least some of the problems of IO's in such scenarios. The role of larger forces from several countries will presumably be there in the foreseeable future, but their role might diminish as focus of IO's shifts towards a more regional⁴ approach and as conflicts turn from 'Interstate' to 'Intrastate'.

In this regard, it is perhaps time to let SF out of the closet and into the daylight.

Aim and limitations of the Study

Since WWII, the growth of SF has been widespread; from its early days, when criticism and scepticism towards SF was a common feature⁵, SF has grown into an integral part of all major defence forces. These forces have played central roles in a number of major conflicts since 1945, from the Malayan insurgency to the Gulf war and beyond.

Another reason for the growth in SF is the rise of international terrorism. In several countries, including Israel, Germany and the UK, this phenomenon prompted governments to create specially trained counter-terrorist forces, which falls under the general category of SF. Various successful operations by SF's (both during WWII and afterwards) have added to the belief, often by politicians and the media, that the solution to the problem is to 'send for the SAS' (!).

It is, however, important to point out the flip-side of this coin; in most of the operations that SF's conducted, the impact on the general scene were at best marginal⁶. Despite the hype that often surrounded SF operations, the actual 'force multiplier' effect that were strived for, more

³ See UN manual on peacekeeping operations.

⁴ As an example of this 'regionalisation' of 'peace-operations' that the international community might be forced to deal with in the future, one can look at the UN operation in East Timor. Initially, troops from Australia went in for the 'peace-enforcement' part. A more multilateral, and traditional, UN operation followed when matters had calmed down sufficiently. It is fair to argue that in terms of speed, command & control and communication, a unilateral approach to such a mission (limited in scope and with a clear mandate), the Australian East Timor operation points ahead towards a model that should be emulated.

⁵ For an excellent description on SF during the WWII and the preceding decades, see Trevor Royle, 'Orde Wingate-irregular soldier', Phoenix Giant, UK, London 1995

⁶ Weale, Adrian, 'Secret Warfare-Special Operations Forces from the Great Game to the SAS', 'Introduction'. Coronet Books, London 1998,

seldom appeared⁷. Furthermore, in the cases where SF's have been used as counter-terrorist forces, a 'shoot-to-kill' policy has often been used (the SAS in Northern Ireland is a good example of this). In addition to potentially criminalise a soldier, that is a policy that could also undermine government's claim as upholder of law and order, something that in the long run can affect society adversely.

These two contrasting positions are not mutually exclusive. Rather, it is important to bear this dichotomy in mind when looking at the role of SF. It is imperative to put SF into perspective, when looking at the role they can play. For the international scene, which concerns us here, the potential role of SF's in IO's are even more contentious, since more 'players' are involved in the decision-making process. The use of a SF in an IO should be limited in scope with a clear-cut mandate to match. Used correctly, this study will argue, an SF can be a real 'force multiplier' in the best and original sense of the word.

Bearing the above in mind, the aim of this study is to show how and to what effect SF can be used in IO. It is not intended as a study on SF *per se*.

The hypothesis is that such forces could be used far more openly and much more efficiently than is the case today. The limitation is that SF should be used not instead of conventional, larger forces, but as a compliment in specific, limited operations such as hostage rescue, border control, hunting down war criminals and in more limited 'peace enforcement' missions. This in addition to more traditional SF tasks such as intelligence gathering. The argument is that all these tasks should, in the frame of an IO, be conducted openly, meaning that without compromising the forces themselves, it should be demonstrated that such forces could be an integral part of an IO.

From a psychological point of view it is argued that an IO might gain far more strength if the warring parties know that an SF is deployed. If deadly force has to be used in an IO, as a last resort, it should be used with determination and as swiftly as possible, and with enough troops to carry out the mission⁸. If SF's are deployed openly from the start, one result might be that the mere presence could be enough to calm down a situation, and thus avoid 'shoot-to-kill' situations. If such policies had been implemented in the so called 'safe havens' in Bosnia, or along the Lebanese-Israeli border, a lot of civilians might have been saved⁹.

1.2. Structure of the study

The study is focused on Sweden, as well as on the conceptual parameters of using SF in IO's. The parts dealing with Sweden will concentrate on its SF units and the kind of role these forces can play in future IO's. Sweden has a long tradition of IO's and it can be expected that the kind of political consensus that has made this tradition possible will be around for some time, continuing Sweden's tradition of involvement in IO's.

⁷ One example to illustrate this suffice; in the Gulf war, several SF's deployed (among them two and a half full SAS squadrons) to take out the mobile squad missile launchers the Iraqis used, failed to destroy any missile.

⁸ The case of Srebrenica in Bosnia in July 1995 is a case in point. The city was declared a 'safe haven' under UN protection in March 1993. In July 1995, after a Serb offensive that took the town, a pathetically undermanned and under-equipped Dutch UN contingent had, after disarming the Moslem defenders, no chance to stop the victorious Serbs to carry out one of the worst massacres of the war.

⁹ On Lebanon, see Norell, "Mellanöstern: Fred utan fredsavtal?", Internationella Studier, Nr. 3, hösten 2000, Utrikespolitiska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden.

At the same time the concept of SF is, relatively speaking, of a much newer date. The official decision to integrate SF into the general order of battle (OOB) came only in 2000¹⁰, even though the forces themselves had been around for some time.

After a discussion on the kind of SF Sweden has available for IO, a more detailed look into the kind of tasks it can be expected that these forces can handle today will follow. Following this is a discussion on the political constraints for SF deployment in IO.

It is planned that a follow-up study will focus on some countries that have used SF as a more integral part of IO's than Sweden. This will give a frame of reference for Sweden as well as give a better picture of the kind of roles these forces can play. That study is, tentatively, scheduled for next year.

A conclusive chapter will discuss the future mentioned above; what kind of missions – within the framework of IO's - might be best for SF, to what extent can and should SF be used in IO's and what kind of political constraints might have to be considered.

1.3. A note on definitions

Special Operations are not difficult to come by throughout history. As is often the case the ancient Greeks were among the first to use a special operation to win a war¹¹, or at least they were among the first to write the story down.

A useful definition is necessary to grasp what is meant by a special operation and, consequently, Special Forces. For this study the definition used by the United States Special Operations Command apply:

*Special Operations are defined as operations conducted by specially trained, equipped and organised [Department of Defence] forces against strategic or tactical targets in pursuit of national military, political, economic or psychological objectives. These operations may be conducted during periods of peace or hostilities. They may support conventional operations, or they may be undertaken independently when the use of conventional forces is either inappropriate or infeasible.*¹²

In this regard it is worth pointing out that special operations, usually carried out by specially formed units or teams, are *tactical* military operations, very often with the aim of achieving a disproportionate *strategic* outcome of a campaign. From this follows that the role of SF in IO's is primarily a tactical one with emphasis on a limited role in a given mission. This point is worth stressing since the argument is to give SF a more prominent place in an IO, not to let SF take the place of more traditional force compositions in IO's.

In regard to the definitions above, 'Special Forces' are the units formed primarily to carry out special operations. From the rather broad definition, the range of tasks that SFs perform can be more easily grasped by placing them in more specific categories;

¹⁰ "Beslut avseende organisation/upprättande av Försvarsmaktens specialförband med ledning." HKV beteckning 02 300:70320, 2000-08-30.

¹¹ The example is of course the Greek war against Troy and the wooden horse used to get inside, and capture, the citadel and thereby win the whole war.

¹² Weale, p. 4.

1. Intelligence and Reconnaissance.

This is probably the oldest and most traditional task that SF forces undertake. From stories of the Jewish conquest of Israel in the Bible, to present day missions during the Gulf war, the maxim, used in the British army, that ‘time spent on reconnaissance is seldom wasted’ have proved its worth time and again.

2. Direct Action.

Included here is not only ‘classic’ military action and industrial sabotage attacks against strategic targets – blowing up bridges and attacking airfields – but also rescuing prisoners of war, assassination of military and/or political leaders and capturing of key leaders.

3. Training and advice.

Since Special Forces have become such an integral part of defence forces around the world, the demand for advisors and training facilities have grown accordingly. The countries with the longest modern history of SF, Britain, the US and France, have all extensive programs for allies and friendly governments interested in setting up similar forces. This has also grown into a rather big commercial venue, where ex-special forces soldiers can make a second career.

4. Psychological operations.

‘Psyops’ is an activity that rarely gets the attention it deserves, perhaps because it’s one of the least glamorous parts of what SF does. Nevertheless, it’s an axiom today that the ‘hearts and minds’ have to be considered in any operation containing counter-insurgency or even humanitarian work in an IO. One of the best ‘classic’ examples is the British campaign in Malaya between 1948-60. A well-defined and focused policy towards helping and bettering the living conditions of the indigenous population in the jungles, in effect denied large swats of territory to the opposition.

5. Humanitarian Assistance – Force Protection.

Closely connected with ‘Psyops’, are various forms of humanitarian assistance. Both as a way of conducting ‘hearts and minds’ operations, and as a tool in preventive force protection. Different IO’s, especially during the last decade, have forced participating countries to use their military forces as police- and ‘humanitarian assistance’ units. Conflicts where IO’s have been deployed have for the most part been rather savage civil wars, or other internal conflicts where the lines between civilians and fighting units have been blurred, on purpose or as an effect of the conflict itself. What all this adds up to, is an increased need to become more ‘politically sensitive’, on part of the military forces, and as a consequence, put more effort into dealing with civilian, humanitarian issues. Preventive force protection, as defined here, in situations where the potential ‘enemy’ might wear civilian clothing and hide in refugee crowds, demands that deployed forces ‘work the crowds’ to detect and prevent attacks. Something that is difficult to do with conventional, ‘blue-berets’ forces. Humanitarian assistance, of various kinds, is one way of mitigating situations where the civilian population in the target country might turn against the peacekeeping or peace enforcing troops.

6. Counter-terrorism (International).

The newest, and perhaps most dramatic, area of SF activity is counter-terrorism. It is also one of the most controversial¹³. Three basic tasks are involved here; surveillance [of terrorists], interdiction and arrests (which also could include killings) and rescuing of hostages¹⁴.

2. Swedish Special Forces ¹⁵

In talking about Special Forces, it is important to keep in mind that there is a large difference between what is considered as the *special operations community* in for example the US, in Western Europe and in Sweden. Sweden, because of its size and the political context in which we operate, put certain limitations on the way SF can be developed and used.

Even so, SF's today are among the most engaged in operations worldwide. Among the smaller nations, Norway is a good, and for Sweden, comparable example where Special Forces has been frequently used in International Operations during the past decades in various situations. Among the larger countries, Germany, UK, France and of course the US are other good examples.

SF may, through its unique capabilities, with its own global communication system, its strategic mobility, its capacity to operate autonomously under long periods of time and with its high personnel/materiel quality, be deployed successfully in many types of Operations. The costs of SF are low compared with other forces and admit operations where specially adapted military profiles are needed.

In Sweden, the SF-concept consists of two main components; the Parachute Regiment (hereafter called FJS after it's Swedish abbreviation) and the 'Special Protection Force' (hereafter the SSG after it's Swedish abbreviation).

The FJS unit is still under construction and has been deployed, most recently, in Kosovo since September 1999. Its main task is intelligence gathering (special reconnaissance, HUMINT) and the personnel are contracted employees in the purpose built 'overseas operation force' (*utlandsstyrkan*).

The FJS also include a special unit tasked with education and support during any FJS (training) operation. There is also a unit in charge of training the recruits in more basic skills during the 15 months before the troopers are assigned to a 'semi'-active FJS-battalion. I.e. a battalion that is on a sort of 'stand-by' duty.

The SSG consists of full-time professional soldiers from all three branches of the armed forces. The FJS, in addition to 15 months of basic training, keep their soldiers on 6-12 months on a contract basis. The FJS focus mainly on special reconnaissance and also have a limited

¹³ As an illustration see SAS and the 'Gibraltar incident'.

¹⁴ Examples of this last task abound; some of the more spectacular are the SAS rescuing of hostages at the Iranian embassy in London in May 1980 and the Israeli operation at Entebbe, Uganda, in July 1976.

¹⁵ Chapter 2 is based on interviews conducted during October and November 2001 with representatives from FJS and SSG. Names withheld. Interviews were conducted using a questionnaire. This was followed up by personal interviews when needed.

direct action capability. The SSG is structured and trained for the full range of SF-tasks (with the exception of ‘psyops’, rather than ‘hearts-and-mind-ops’).

2.1. Current Status

Swedish SF is a security policy instrument, led from a *military strategic level* and is set up with respect to the changing conflict dynamics and are therefore well dimensioned to meet some of the more typical threat scenarios of today. SF fills an important role where Sweden earlier, more or less, lacked military capability altogether. So far, however, SF has, on an operational level, been a complement to other conventional forces.

There are some trademarks that are typical for today’s SF. These characteristics are high mobility and high quality of personnel and materiel, which creates possibilities for high-precision operations. There are also short and simple chains of command high up in the hierarchy, which gives access to proper intelligence, high operational security, good supportive resources and close connections to the strategic level. Important factors today are, for example such issues as jurisprudential case examination of RoE and task status. Finally, this structure of command gives fast and easy access to the intelligence and information of the Military High Command.

Furthermore, one of the first objectives of Swedish SF’s is to protect Swedish personnel on international duty and of military installations, in Sweden and abroad, during peacetime and crises situations.

This includes freeing of hostages (internationally, since nationally it is a function of the national police task force), strengthening the protection and security for individuals and evacuating personnel during crises situations abroad (such as embassy personnel and international monitors). In addition, it includes limited combat duties as well as intelligence gathering, arresting of individuals wanted for war crimes and for strategic intelligence gathering. SF is very suitable to be used early on in a conflict and thus “should be used as the glue holding together various stages of operations”.

Given the training and skills, SF units could, at least theoretically, also operate as a complement to the national police task force in the event of a large hostage situation. An example could be the British model with SF operating under police command¹⁶.

Today, SF units are perhaps best suited to operate, “where the law so admits”, under categories 1 (*intelligence gathering and reconnaissance*) and 6 (*counter terrorism*). As proven, SF units could be used as counterinsurgency in low intensity conflict scenarios (such as Balkan) with intelligence gathering and arresting of wanted persons.

Both FJS and SSG have had a clear and appreciated role in the low intensity conflicts that Sweden has been involved in through participation in IO’s. Most notably in Bosnia and Kosovo. The capacity of FJS consists of the operative unit’s intelligence platoon, which is a

¹⁶ See for example the ‘Princess Gate operation’ in London in May 1980, where an SAS unit stormed and rescued hostages at the Iranian embassy. Neillands, Robin, ‘In the combat zone, Special Forces since 1945’, p.218. Orion Paperback by Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London 1997.

part of the Swedish contribution to KFOR. The main task of this platoon is intelligence gathering and special reconnaissance, which first of all is important when it comes to force protection (see chapter 1.2.) It consists of two squads, where one is mainly working with reconnaissance and surveillance in urbanised environments and towards criminal activity. The other squad is mainly working with more personal based intelligence gathering (“HUMINT”). These squads are led by a C_I-team consisting of 2 men (command, control, communication and intelligence). Finally, the FJS has the capacity to undertake aid drops from a Swedish air transport carrier, with or without parachutes. In Kosovo, these platoons are part of the British brigade’s intelligence system, but it is also authorised to be used on HQ-level, should that be requested.

Before being sent on a mission to Kosovo (to take the most recent example), or any other overseas operation, there is an additional 3-month training period to be completed. The actual length of contract period is at present is 6 months.

2.2. Limitations of current operational capacities and capabilities

As of today, the most serious limitation concerning Swedish SF is a lack of manpower. As a consequence, Swedish SFs are still not fully manned, which means that operations cannot be too extensive in neither time nor space. This limitation affects tasks within category 1 (intelligence gathering and reconnaissance), 2 (direct action) and 6 (counter terrorism) especially.

Another limitation on capacities and capabilities concern training and specialist education. Today, a lot of time is spent on training and simulation exercises concerning technical systems and weapons in order to continuously have a high degree of personal and joint exercise skills. However, with limited resources of manpower, material and time, there is only so much one can do. Since this kind of training, as well as a constant need of joint international exercises, are absolutely essential for a continued high performance and quality of the SF units, limitations here will have an adverse long-time effect.

Practise should include mobility (joint exercises with supporting forces/skill training in terms of capacity of insertion with other, non-SF units as well), combat and special education, (medical care, fieldwork) as well as joint system exercises. In this aspect, there is a significant difference between the two units, since SSG personal is highly qualified in a number of insertion skills and also normally train with specially trained helicopter- boat- and aircraft crews.

In order for SF to be able to accomplish *national* tasks in co-operation with other authorities, there should be joint exercises aiming at creating an understanding of working methods and command. To be able to directly support the police and the customs there must for example be a change in preparations and certification considering a policeman’s authority. A failed intelligence mission may lead to great risks for the personnel involved and without the legal authority to meet these kind of threats, the mission will fail to reach what it aimed for. Again, the British model could serve as an example of how such joint operations might be conducted.

There is also a need for exercises where, first of all, the functions of command and communication skills are taught – in combination of joint exercises on different levels of

command up to HQ level. Here, it is important to combine the exercises with the political level as well. This would enhance the ability to make swift decisions at times of emergence.

The need for SF to participate in international practise and training, such as for example FAC (*Forward Air Controller*), intelligence duties and SF-courses, is of continued significance, as well as the exchange of experiences with foreign SFs. Education and development of techniques and methods should be prioritised.

As said above, co-operation with other SF internationally is necessary since many forms of competence and experiences may only be collected from such exercises. It is of paramount importance that joint international exercises can take place on all unit levels in order to secure requirements of experience. This eventually increases the quality assurance and the interoperability in multinational operations. Again, shortage of resources can limit these exercises.

On more than one occasion there has been queries concerning Swedish SF participation apart from the Balkan area. Our status as a non-aligned Nation, in addition to not being a member of NATO has made this kind of participation impossible. Participating with intelligence gathering early on in a mission seems to give considerable political goodwill among other nations however (see for example the Norwegian SF-operation in Kosovo in June 1999). Therefore, a serious discussion of this matter is called for.

A third limitation is the legacy of the Swedish model with compulsory military service. Primarily because there is a limit as far as training is concerned, and the possibilities to maintain the high degree of competence needed for an SF unit. In this regard, Swedish SFs are not totally comparable with other SF units if the internationally applied criteria for an SF unit are used. The SSG, however, due to its contract based system for personal with fulltime professionals do meet this criteria. A difference in the Swedish system, compared to other countries, is that the unit consist of officers who serve in roles that NCO's would fill in other armies.

Considering the highly complex and risky tasks that SFs undertake, it seems evident that soldiers from the compulsory military services cannot be used for SF-operations, at least not without additional training. There are two ways in which to become an SF soldier after compulsory service; if the FJS is chosen, personal go through approximately 16 weeks of additional training before active duty. To choose the SSG, on the other hand, personal must already be commissioned or reserve officers with time served in the army. Then there is a rigorous selection process and after that an 18 months basic training period. After that, personal is assigned to an operational part of the unit. However, the compulsory system remains as a good recruiting pool to further SF-training.

The downside is that both FJS and SSG needs to contract personnel to certain special tasks and most soldiers, when continuing within the military services, start to 'climb the ladder' by beginning their officer's training. For SF-soldiers to have an officer's degree is not always necessary. SF do not necessarily need soldiers with good leadership abilities, but rather soldiers with good judgement, good physics and mental stability as well as social competence. The best scenario from an SF point of view would be to be able to recruit from a pool of soldiers still on duty who have finished their compulsory services, but still haven't reached on to an officer's level.

In larger nations there is a functioning SF-competence in the military/political-system, which implies that they have both military and political capabilities that are mutually supportive and co-ordinated when it comes to SF. In Sweden there is a functioning military structure, but possibly and quite understandably there has been, and still is a lack of political will to tackle these problems on a more systematic level.

The fourth limitation concerns the need of proper materiel. There is a constant need of development of such high performance material as sensors, weapons and ammunition. It is essential that progress here take place in the form of *system development*, since merely developing separate components, however effective, will render material ineffective when brought to use in actual operations. “*We are really good at developing forces in Sweden, but we are lacking when it comes to system building. To bring the best out of our SF, we have to develop command and support structures at the same pace as we do our actual SF.*” (Quote from SSG interview).

Swedish SFs can, with the national resources at hand, solve the tasks that SFs from comparable countries are able to solve. But only as long as the goals are as limited as they are today. Obviously, Sweden will never be able to compare with the US or the UK when it comes to resources. When it comes to quality of personnel, however, Sweden meet criteria for SF very well. Weak spots concern the lack of manpower and resources in order to accomplish more extensive training and missions; the backup capability, such as logistics, command and support; and joint exercises both nationally and internationally between different authorities.

2.3. Future Scope of Operations

For future IO's - including peacekeeping as well as peace enforcement - the kind of political environment that peacekeeping forces will encounter are bound to create various tasks that ask for specialists with a high degree of knowledge and competence. SF troops, with a low military profile – making them a politically suitable force – and with a wide range of tasks that they can perform, make for highly suitable forces to use in IO's.

It has been said, and is worth pointing out again, that SF should be used for special purpose tasks, for a limited amount of time. For these reasons, and in the way SF are built up in general, they are especially advantageous in the initial stages of an IO; their high degree of ‘readiness’ and sustainability make it easy to inject SF into many varied areas, independent of infrastructure (or lack of it such as in Afghanistan and Somalia) and the geographical context; a more limited dependence on logistical support (as compared to conventional forces); a high degree of sophisticated C3 capacities; high level of skills, training and education, and ability to solve a wide range of tasks. Added to this is the high level of improvisation and flexibility within the SF organisation, whereby a force can be put together for a specific task, without being forced to adapt to an already existing conventional force structure.

For the same reasons, SF are ideal as advisers, technical support and as humanitarian assistance cadres, when the initial stages of an IO have been completed and time has come for a more long-term work of laying the ground for political and economic stability. The time frame supports the notion of *limited* engagement (unless we talk about individuals in advisory capacities) and to use SF in the initial stages of a peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance missions is, as explained above, most advantageous. In peace-enforcement operations, SF can be used to a larger extent over time. But in both cases, conventional forces are needed as a long-time force provider.

To prepare for missions where SF are to be used, a number of questions need to be addressed and answered beforehand. As a start, the various limitations on any SF unit deployed need to be clearly spelled out.

First is the issue of legitimacy; the nature of 'traditional' SF is in secret and well-hidden operations where the end-goals might never be revealed. This state of affairs can obviously work as an obstacle of winning acceptance among the population in the target country. This can, however be remedied if a more open approach is used. I.e. clearly spelling out that SF will participate in the operation, but under any agreed RoE that is applicable. This does not in any way hinder a more 'traditional' use of SF in for example arresting war criminals. Neither does this approach limit the ability, or need to work 'undercover' in certain missions. That kind of missions will obviously be a continued facet of any future IO.

Secondly, it needs to be taken into account that there is a limited time-frame when it comes to sustainability (even if sustainability might be higher than in an ordinary, conventional force). Therefore, given time-frames as to the longevity of the mission should be defined from the start.

When it comes to the chain of command when operating in joint International Operations, the Swedish SF is a military strategic resource and should therefore always have a direct link to the Swedish military strategic level. OPCOM may in certain cases be delegated, but the preferred routine would be TACOM/TACON. This applies to Swedish forces as well, when co-operating in CJSOTF structures. These disciplines are also part of NATO standard as far as strategic SF-units are concerned (see for example the British 22 SAS, the US DELTA-force and the German KSK).

3. Type of future International Operations

Today, most conflicts where IO's have been undertaken can, in one way or another, be defined as intra-state and low-intensity with primarily regional consequences. These conflicts are characterised by a high degree of civil strife and a lack of clearly defined actors. Instead, there is often a multitude of actors that are undisciplined and difficult to control even within the fractions that are in conflict. More often than not, various agreements, painstakingly negotiated by one or more 'external parties', are broken before the ink has dried. There is often a breakdown of law and order because the central authorities are imploding or unable (or unwilling) to maintain even the rudiments of a state structure.

There are constant transgressions of human rights and the lines between guerrilla warfare, terrorism and pure criminal activity are constantly blurred. Time and again, this leads repeatedly to clashes between peacekeepers and local actors.

This picture is very often complicated even more by the presence of NGO's and GO's who all have their own agendas, often detrimental to other similar organisations. To be able to function at all, these organisations have to seek support by one or several of the warring parties, adding to the confusion on the ground and exacerbating the difficulties of the peacekeeping forces¹⁷.

The breakdown of the central and civil infrastructure can also lead to a large number of refugees, both internally displaced persons and refugees having to flee the country altogether. A factor that is often severely undermining any efforts to solve the conflict on a more long-term basis. Since conflicts tend to follow the refugees, armed incursions into the Area of Operation (AoO) from neighbouring countries make it difficult to clearly define the AoO.

As a consequence, the 'traditional' scene for a (UN) peace operation, with clear and well-defined actors giving their consent for the International community to interfere, is long gone. Yet, the International structure for such operations is still primarily geared towards these more traditional conflicts. This is also underlined by the fact that future wars, or armed conflicts, might be fought over issues such as drugs and illegal immigration, as well as over more 'traditional' issues such as territory or political influence. In addition, various combinations of the above are also likely to appear¹⁸. To deal with such conflict situations, or to use a common term; 'OOTW' (Operations Other Than War), the international community needs a multifaceted toolbox, including a combination of military, social, economic and political tools. In sum; old, traditional myths and ideas of how the world order works do not apply any longer¹⁹.

These changes in the conflict pattern has come about so fast that the International 'peace-keeping structure' have been unable to adapt, even if changes have begun to take hold following experiences from recent UN-missions. The International community today, as defined by the UN, have no real military C2 mechanism, no logistical resources or jointly trained forces that are able to handle sustained combat operations.

¹⁷ A good illustration to this problem can be found in 'Soldiers of God, with Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan', by Robert Kaplan. Vintage books, NY, November 2001, p. 36-37.

¹⁸ See 'Gamla myter, nya krig' by Zaki Laïdi, 'Dagens Nyheter', p B8, November 28, 2001

¹⁹ Ibid.

In addition, a larger influx of NGO's (see above) will demand a higher level of cooperative efforts on part of the peace forces, both to work with various NGO's as well as a capacity to act according to military needs, and at the same time keep a political focus as concerns the more long-time solution.

Consequently, and as is very often the case today, it is probable that future IO's will be initiated without the full consent of the warring actors, or preceded by a peace agreement.

This will put heightened pressure on any force taking part in such operations. These forces will need a flexible and adjustable structure to meet all the challenges borne out of such complicated operations. Future IO's will have to include forces with a high degree of flexibility and capacities to adapt to changes in the AoO. Since various local conflicts within the AoO can escalate quickly, the readiness level must be high and the need for the right kind of material is paramount.

Since a more traditional perspective on conflict management and conflict cannot be applied to the conflicts of today and tomorrow, new methods will have to be developed further (i.e. to speed up already existing research and development in these areas) to meet these challenges. A prime example here is the Intelligence component. With more complex conflicts, including more actors and less 'traditional' structure, the need for real-time and accurate Intelligence will only increase. Use of SF units, where capacity to collect, collate and distribute such Intelligence is part of the speciality, will be necessary in the future. Not the least because it might save lives and prevent the escalation of violence.

3.1. Likely scenarios for Swedish Special Forces

To sum up the needed capabilities in the kind of future IO's discussed above, all point to a need for more highly specialised forces to participate in such operations. Not instead of conventional forces (who will always be needed), but as a necessary compliment to meet new challenges. Challenges that the present international community (as defined by the UN) has not yet fully acknowledged²⁰.

Furthermore, future peace support operations (PSO) need forces that can be swiftly inserted into the target area without any specific preparations, as an *initial* response to a [global] crisis. There has to be full interoperability rendering possible joint operations with a multinational force. This will also include full overseas C3 capacity.

Enhanced capability to gather relevant, and real-time information and intelligence – including political intelligence – must be prioritised. Tied into this area, will be capacity to conduct anti- or counter-terrorism missions as well as partake in operations to capture war criminals and protect individuals and property of national importance (such as embassy personnel).

Finally, there has to be a capability and capacity to tackle a multitude of tasks, from humanitarian aid to severe and heavy combat duties. In this regard, it is also of great relevance to be able to work closely with NGO's in order to reach an acceptable 'end-goal'.

²⁰ Attempts in this regard have been forthcoming, for example in Kosovo where NATO has been 'accredited' by the UN to partake in operations.

As the Swedish SF structure looks today, there are several limitations as to what kind of operations than can be handled. With the present set-up, bearing in mind the small cadre of personnel and limitations in material, participation in IO's is possible, but for a limited time and on a limited scale. This could include intelligence gathering; limited humanitarian assistance; protection tasks as well as smaller defensive combat duties (direct action) and *limited indirect* combat actions, such as FAC-missions and taking out snipers threatening aid-personnel or monitors. Keeping in mind these limitations, the response-time is still short. I.e. these forces could be deployed with short notice.

For longer and larger operations, more personnel must be made available (the final numbers are of course dependent on what kind of role the political and military planners foresee for the SF units). Such personnel must also be tied to the SF unit on a more long-term basis (3-5 yrs). A preferred model is contract employment where all personnel are full-time employees. Where such a model to be implemented, a larger pool of personnel – contracted for possible international duties – would be available. This would also make more direct combat duties possible, such as hostage rescuing and raiding parties to hunt down suspected war criminals.

4. Summary and Conclusions

At the time of writing (November 2001) the war in Afghanistan is drawing to a close, at least as far as the larger international role is concerned. For these last missions, carried out in the final stages in the war against Usama bin Laden and the Taliban leadership, the bulk of the fighting (as far as non-Afghans are concerned) is carried out by SF (including US Marines) of various kinds.

This war - where the enemy was not a state but a loose network of international groups and individuals - is an example of the kinds of conflicts we will meet in the future; asymmetric warfare where the 'rules of war' have changed beyond recognition or are constantly broken by one or several of the participating actors. It is a kind of conflict or war where large conventional armies do not always have an obvious role to play.

It is therefore no coincidence that the forces used for ground combat were SF. The scope of the mission, the terrain, the opponents and the political constraint, all made these forces ideal for the mission at hand.

In the aftermath of the war, some kind of international force will probably be used to help Afghanistan regain some of its 'pre-war' equilibrium and give the various factions a possibility to get a working political solution off the ground (most likely under a UNSCR mandate). SF will not be used for these missions, other than maybe as 'advisers' but not using their true 'colours'. Having borne a fair amount of the fighting, SF will be lifted out and conventional forces will be called in to perform a conventional form of peacekeeping mission.

Furthermore, the smallness of an SF deployment does not necessarily mean a weaker 'deterrent factor'. On the contrary, the knowledge that one is facing highly skilled and trained SF troops can be a powerful deterrent in itself. Also, if armed violence is unavoidable – in full accordance with the RoE that governs any international mission – the chances of limiting the fighting, and thereby the casualties, are better with a well-trained force that can perform the mission swift and with a minimum of violence.

SF, as shown in Afghanistan and other places, are well suited to perform special missions, including peacekeeping and peace enforcement, on a *limited level*. SFs are often better trained, better equipped and, at least as far as Sweden and other comparable countries are concerned, better educated and therefore well prepared to handle sensitive missions. It is also an important point, too often neglected, that a *limited and smaller*, but well-prepared, presence of 'foreign' troops can achieve more in terms of conflict management and even humanitarian help, than a larger force that too often 'overstays' the invitation. This is mainly due to the fact that a smaller force, comprised of highly trained and skilled individuals such as SF, will have to work closer with the very people one is there to help. A more sensitive approach towards the local population, and their needs, can build a long-term solidity that make a renewal of fighting less likely²¹. One can also avoid some of the possible traps that can come with a prolonged UN mission where the end-result too often turns out to make the receiving population dependent on aid instead of building up a more long-term, self-sustained

²¹ See as an example Nordquist, Kjell-Åke, "*Peace after War – On Conditions for Durable Inter-State Boundary Agreements*", Report No. 34, Doctoral thesis at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, 1992.

political and economic structure.²² It should also be pointed out that this in no way means that SF ought to take the place of conventional forces. It is still a question of complimentary actions. But the argument can certainly be made that SF can and should play a larger role than have been the case so far.

All these factors points to the need to reassess the role of SF in International Operations, from the tactical level to a more strategic, political level where the mission itself is determined.

It is argued that with the types of conflicts plaguing the world today - conflicts that are likely to be part and parcel of the conflict scene for the foreseeable future as well - SF is a neglected tool that can be of far more use than hitherto has been the case.

For the Swedish scene, the two major SF contingents we have, FJS and SSG, are well suited to perform the above-mentioned tasks, albeit on a limited level. Both forces have qualified intelligence and reconnaissance resources. These can be enhanced to increase the capacity in combat (Direct Action). There is also a capacity for carrying out tasks under the umbrella of Humanitarian Assistance and to some degree Training and Advice.

Major limiting factors for an expanded role are first, obviously, the fact that resources still are limited. Another factor is the Swedish compulsory military system, making it difficult to employ personnel for longer periods. The new FJS concept of combining the intelligence platoons with contractual service increases the possibilities to reach qualitative goals that are necessary for swift action. If this will have any major impact in the long run remains to be seen. But it is a step in the right direction if one wants a serious increase of capacity in this regard.

Moreover, Sweden have good organisational and educational traditions and our compulsory military services have at least the capacity to create soldiers with a high degree of educational standard, for example concerning language abilities. Something that is very useful in IO's.

On a tactical, national level, Sweden will always have a rather limited number of active SF personnel. The nature of the forces will assure that. For both SSG and FJS, however, an increase when it comes to numbers, i.e. personnel would obviously be an improvement and enhance the scope of operations and tasks they could perform.

The actual number of active personnel will have to be determined by the role these forces will be geared towards. But it is clear that with future conflicts, the 'new wars' to use Ignatieff and Kaldor²³, highly trained and skilled forces will have a role to play, that more conventional forces, built up to face a threat that is no longer there, will not be able to face successfully.

From July the 1st 2003 FJS will undertake a process of recruiting, organising and educating one more intelligence platoon (The final decision has yet not been taken). FJS has suggested that the squads operating in Kosovo today should be part of a resource that may be used in

²² See as examples the UNIFIL mission in Lebanon and UNOSOM II in Somalia, where the author Dr. Norell has first hand experience. Special reports for the Swedish Military Intelligence 1994, 1995 and 1996. Classified.

²³ For further reading see: Ignatieff, Michael *"Krigarens Heder – Etniska krig och det moderna samvetet"*, (*"The Warrior's Honour. Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience"*), Media Print AB: Uddevalla, Sweden, 1999, Ignatieff, Michael *"Det virtuella kriget – Kosovo och därefter"* (*"Virtual War – Kosovo and beyond"*), Media Print AB: Uddevalla, 2001 and Kaldor, Mary *"Nya och Gamla Krig – Organiserat våld under globaliserings era"*, (*"New and Old Wars. Organised Violence in a Global Era"*), Media Print AB: Uddevalla, 2000.

Kosovo as well as within the framework of other, similar NATO-operations. These efforts would create higher flexibility, and a more rational educational system.

In a longer perspective the goal with FJS is to, as a minimum, maintain the current size of the two platoons. This number of personnel could be increased given the proper resources. This increase in numbers could enhance capabilities in combat ability (Direct Action). The judgement within both FJS and SSG is that FAC-capacity together with enhanced and advanced skills in [offensive] combat in small units, such as skirmishes and sabotage, are needed areas for development.

In short, Intelligence Gathering, Training and Advice as well as Humanitarian Assistance seem to be the most suitable tasks for Swedish SFs, given the Swedish tradition of non-alignment. From a political point of view, these kind of tasks may also be accomplished without a high degree of 'risk taking'. However, as Sweden becomes more and more involved in various forms of joint defence exercises and if our participation in international operations is kept on a high level, questions might arise in the not-so-distant-future how deeply involved we are prepared to let ourselves become in future, more sensitive operations.

For Sweden, then, it would seem that the decision to be taken concerning Special Forces, mainly concern what kind of structure that will provide for future personnel and material to enable engagement in International Operations; Either units with a mixture of a smaller full-time employed core and a larger pool of reservists and/or drafted personnel. An alternative here could of course be a larger part of the personnel being contracted for a longer period (3-5 yrs. as exemplified earlier).

Or, the choice is made to create units consisting of a more professional (including officers and Nco's) with better leadership capabilities and larger operational width. This choice must be determined by properly identified national priorities within the parameters that decide the main tasks for the Swedish Defence Forces.

Further and expanded Swedish participation in International Operations will in all likelihood help to determine which model Sweden chooses. Examples of such tasks could be freeing hostages and provide for full protection of Nationals involved in embassy work or international monitoring.

Suggested structural components to bring future and likely missions to a successful conclusion are:

- A flexible unit structure to ensure long-term sustainability, overseas leadership capability for an extended period of time (C2 and C3) and the widest possible competence with enough personnel, backup and proper materiel to carry out the mission.
- Enhanced capacity in various specialist areas such as medical aid, languages, cultural and political knowledge of the target area and the necessary tools to carry out needed Intelligence and information work.
- A certain emphasis on experienced personnel that can handle 'tight' situations with possible severe political repercussions for the mission as a whole.

- Clear and simple lines of communication with both the tactical and strategic level. This goes for the national HQ as well as for the tactical and strategic levels of the IO at hand.
- Enhanced *strategic* role as force multiplier. I.e., as a force, SF units should be used ‘across the board’; taking in all the various tasks that SF can do, offensive as well as defensive.
- To maximise the longevity and sustainability of an SF unit, a rotation principle should be created whereby enough time is set aside for recuperation, preparation and actual insertion [into the target area].
- Despite the arguments for a more ‘open’ attitude to the use of SF, certain basic precautionary efforts ought to be implemented to protect identities of serving individual personnel, such as avoiding identifiable uniform details. Overall, a more ‘open’ approach as towards the use of SF can still be maintained.
- In certain contrast to Sweden’s non-aligned status, efforts should be made to ensure interoperability with forces from other nations. Not the least, this asks for greater sensitivity towards issues such as ‘safe’ communications with national HQ’s and, at the same assuring the best possible inter-operational success. In addition here, knowledge and capability of working with NGO’s should be developed even more.

That Sweden, currently undergoing thorough changes in the development of its Armed Forces, has capabilities to engineer changes in the set-up of its SF, is evident. Increased Swedish participation in different peace operations – be it peacekeeping, peace-support or peace-enforcement – demands the very special skills that SF are trained for. For this to become reality, some, perhaps radical structural changes are needed, as outlined above. What this study has hopefully shown is that Sweden has both the means and the methods to oversee and manage such changes. This provided that the political will is there and that the structural changes within the Armed Forces are continued and expanded.