

SPECIAL WARFARE

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FLINTLOCK 2016

3RD SFG(A) "BUSHMEN"
RETURN TO AFRICA

ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN
AFRICA

THE OFFICIAL PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL OF U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

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ON THE COVER

Senegalese Commandos provide vehicle security during a joint training exercise with U.S. Army Special Operations Forces and other partner-nation Special Operations Forces from Africa and Europe during Flintlock 2016.

U.S. Army Photo by Jennifer G. Angelo

See the full story starting on page 16.



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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT THE SW STAFF AT:

Commercial: (910) 432-5703

DSN: 239-5703

E-mail: SpecialWarfare@socom.mil

SUBMIT ARTICLES FOR CONSIDERATION TO:

E-mail: SpecialWarfare@socom.mil

or via regular mail:

USAJFKSWCS; Attn: AOJK-PAO;
Editor, *Special Warfare*
3004 Ardennes St, Stop A
Fort Bragg, NC 28310

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SPECIAL WARFARE

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MAJOR GENERAL JAMES B. LINDER

EDITOR
JANICE BURTON

ART DIRECTOR
JENNIFER G. ANGELO

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER
MAJOR DOUGLAS RAY



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SPECIAL WARFARE CENTER AND SCHOOL
The U.S. Army's Special Operations Center of Excellence

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GERALD B. O'KEEFE

Administrative Assistant to the
Secretary of the Army
1703305

Headquarters, Department of the Army

from the COMMANDANT




Look at the headlines: "Terror Kills As Many or More In Africa Than the Mideast," "Another Terrorist Attack In Africa. Ho Hum," "Terrorism Overshadows Internal Conflicts," "Terrorist Killed 2,000 People in Nigeria Last Week," "Terrorists Kill 22 at Beach Resort." On and on, the news of terrorist-driven attacks and death in Africa make the headlines. The story that doesn't make the headlines is that of the Special Operations Command Africa and the tireless work special operators are undertaking on a daily basis to help bring stability to the Continent.

This is a story that I know only too well. Having served alongside our African partners and the SOCAFRICA team, I have first-hand experience of the challenges of our partner nations who want nothing more than to live in safety. In this issue of *Special Warfare*, we are taking a close at Flintlock, the annual training exercise that brings a host of African nations together to train and build relationships. At the center of that exercise is the talented men and women of SOCAFRICA and the U.S. Government interagency. They are there to not only learn from our partners but to enable them to stand against the global threat of terrorism and insurgency.

SOCAFRICA is committed to the task. They understand how to reinforce relationships with our African partners and how to work with them so Africans can resolve African problems.

Our partners are hungry for stability in their homeland. They are ready to stand and fight. They know best how to embrace their local population. Exercises like Flintlock and the day-to-day engagements that go on between a global SOF community of operators will turn the tide, as it has already done in countless villages and cities throughout this magnificent Continent.


JAMES B. LINDER
MAJOR GENERAL, USA
COMMANDING GENERAL

“There is a Latin principle called "Obsta Principiis" that guides our way of thinking about the Gray Zone in Africa. In essence, Obsta Principiis means to take care of problems while they are small — before they become big issues. We have to approach understanding the Gray Zone as a continuum of risk. Our African partners are dealing with the growth of violent extremism, natural disasters, threats to public health, resource scarcity and other issues. There is no one issue that is the biggest threat to the Gray Zone in Africa.”

— Brigadier General
Donald C. Bolduc
Commander,
SOCAFRICA



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“WILL THE REAL REVISIONIST PLEASE STAND UP?” NOTES FROM THE PROJECT GRAY SYMPOSIUM RUSSIAN ENGAGEMENT IN THE GRAY ZONE

The U.S. Army Special Operations Center of Excellence Project Gray initiative seeks to engage in timely dialogue about critical issues of U.S. national security. Those efforts hit the mark in this year’s *Russian Engagement in the Gray Zone Symposium* at the National Defense University. Hosted at Fort McNair by the College of International Security, and supported locally by the College’s Joint Special Operations Master of Arts program at Fort Bragg, the event highlighted a range of scholarly, U.S. government, and partner-nation perspectives on the nature and goals of Russian foreign policy. The primary purpose was educational—directed through a configuration of active roundtable discussions and direct engagement between Maj. Gen. James B. Linder, commanding general, U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School and CISA students.

As with the Gray Zone-focused event last year, debate defined the process as much as the outcome. Whether dealing with the choice of titles — *Russian engagement vs. aggression* — or the very definition of the Gray Zone as a *place on the map, type of threat or paradigm for policy making*, participants entered into and moved the conversation into fruitful areas from the start. At its core, the symposium raised a central theme that addressed whether or not Russia is in fact a *revisionist* power, and if so, considers itself one. The heart of this question rests in part on contending perspectives about the role of historical narratives, and how they do or do not find traction within Russia’s long-standing sphere of influence.

Ukraine factored heavily into the debates, as did the Kremlin’s use of the Compatriot Policy to “protect” ethnic Russians and those who support

Russian interests living in the Baltics, Central Asia and the Caucasus. Balancing some local perspectives hostile to Russian influence operations in the region and beyond, against other local grievances against the West in favor of Russian interpretations of events, the symposium’s participants presented a nuanced picture of the complexities facing not only the United States and its partner nations in the region, but also Russian foreign policy itself.

As with other historic empires, Russian international goals have expanded from the regional hegemony of the Tsars, through the globalist empire of the Soviet Union. Today, it combines aspects of both through attempted control over the “near abroad” — that zone where Russian political, military, economic and social influence predominates local governments and other external great powers — with broader reach into Syria, the European Union and China, all with a universal anti-Western rhetoric. As a result, uncertainty remains about Moscow’s intentions and capabilities to meet them. In particular, the symposium asked what each of Russia’s imperial epochs communicates about the types and resilience of long-standing Russian interests. In posing that question, the more fundamental question arose if Russia is rather the status quo power, and the United States the revisionist challenger in contrast.

The issue of defining revisionism also touched on how the United States and Russia approach their respective interests, the policies used to achieve them and how each perceives the constraints facing their actions in a broader global context. Discus-

continued on page 06

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Subject-matter experts engaged the audience at the Project Gray, Russian Engagement in the Gray Zone Symposium, at the National Defense University October 19-20, 2016.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY JENNIFER G. ANGELO

WILL THE REAL REVISIONIST PLEASE STAND UP?

continued from page 05

sions about the role of democratic accountability in the West pointed to Russia's otherwise largely unconstrained propaganda machine, and the view that Russian policy assumes a continuation of the Cold War competition by other means. These topics then branched out into deeper analysis of Russian domestic systems, their vulnerability to democratic messaging from external actors, and ultimately, prospects for President Vladimir Putin to retain and expand his personal grasp on power at home as much as abroad.

Undergirding those debates, the place of *hegemony* as a driving force in Russian engagement in the Gray Zone arose in several panel discussions. However, one area that needs further examination is the concept of Russian hegemony as something other than overt control. Instead, it points to a form of political *opportunism* that often stymies U.S. and Western counter-narrative efforts.

First, the message from the Kremlin states clearly that the West, and the United States in particular, meddles endlessly in foreign countries, often to everyone's detriment. Accordingly, this has created the problems in Iraq, as well as failed to solve deeper problems in places like the Balkans. In contrast, Russia presents itself as a bastion of stability, with supporting evidence from counter-liberal movements springing up in Europe and the U.S. itself.

Second, this "war of ideas" is at the heart of Russian views of the current global environment, one that bears similarities to U.S. approaches, despite some very important differences. *Indirect warfare*, rather than overt matching against the otherwise superior military capabilities of the West, is the hallmark of Russian strategy. Whether it is called hybrid, state-sponsored 4th generation or political warfare, the hyper-connectivity of information and its use by state and non-state actors factors heavily into Russian influence

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Col. Patrick Duggan and Dr. Sebastian Gorka participate in a roundtable discussion on the Analysis and Implications of Russian Power Projection.
U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY JENNIFER G. ANGELO



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operations. These also find support through "lawfare" — the manipulation of existing international laws by exploiting their definitional vagaries — as much as outright military deployments through either show-of-force exercises along contested borders, or direct occupation, both appearing around Georgia, the Baltics and Ukraine.

Third, Syria shows that Russia can and will stop U.S. destabilization efforts, as defined from the Kremlin's perspective on what a good solution to the Arab Spring looks like. As one panelist described, support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime relies more on Russian interests to poke the Americans in the eye, rather than any basis of popular support from the current desolate "astroturf" of Syrian civil society. Other panelists connected the migrant crisis in Europe as another form of indirect warfare to destabilize Western consensus on everything from Russian sanctions, to the very nature of security and identity in a democratic political system.

Taken as a whole then, Russian engagement in the Gray Zone focuses on control of the imperial near abroad, shaping operations to expand a political buffer zone in Eastern Europe, all the while reaching globally for status. Facing that challenge, what can the United States and its democratic allies do in response? Most important would be to *retake the strategic initiative*.

Competitive smear campaigns against Putin personally, or against the closed and corrupt system of patronage surrounding him, will not likely yield fruitful results in either countering Russian influence operations abroad, or within Russia itself. Instead, as seen in the polarized, politicized information "wars" between the right and left in the United States, bashing only serves to reinforce the narratives each side holds about itself and the evils of the other group. Rather than go that route, a more effective method would be twofold.

First, it means recognizing the valid Russian perspective that the United States has in fact encircled the Motherland through NATO expansion in Eastern Europe, pro-Western (and by default) anti-Russian democracy building in Ukraine and Georgia, as well as U.S. counterterrorism partnerships in Central Asia. The key here is not to justify the Russian perspective, but to acknowledge the footing on which it rests in order to do the more important work of strategic communication. Specifically, the message from the U.S. should emphasize what the West does best — *responsive government and local business development*. These sound a lot like democracy and foreign aid, but the messaging distinctions are important.

Responsivity does not require the overtones of Western liberalism, instead allowing for whatever moral, philosophical, economic or ethnic makeup the electorate chooses as the basis for their political system and who governs it. At the same time, it also calls for the state to provide and protect space for

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» TC 18-01.2

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DATED: 22 November 2016

» TC 18-01.3

Unconventional Warfare Mission Planning Guide for the Special Forces Operational Detachment—Charlie Level

DATED: 22 November 2016

This series provides an Army Training and Evaluation Program-like guide to aid unit training and mission planning for unconventional warfare, and as an evaluation measure for unit, Combined Training Center and other external observer-controller evaluation. The doctrine-related series is intended to augment Army and command training guidance.

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public debate about that system and the policies it produces. Doing so sets boundaries on what can and cannot be debated, while recognizing that these boundaries have the potential to change. It thus helps to ensure the centrality of social interests and values, and that the government tasked with promoting them has restraints placed on its actions. The failure to recognize these contributed to the crisis of leadership in Ukraine that sparked the Euromaidan Revolution.

Equally importantly, local business development has less to do with macroeconomic assistance packages between states — with their deeply mixed record of success and failure — and more to do with entrepreneurship through corporate investment in small-scale joint ventures. This can also take the form of microfinance to support local market development and build community accountability between borrowers. Both efforts have deep roots in the evolution of Western capitalism and more recent Eastern variations, and thus can have broad appeal.

Second, the Donbass speaks for itself. The parts of Eastern Ukraine ravaged by Russian-sponsored war stand in stark contrast to the “democratic utopia” Russia portrays out of Crimea, despite of the latter’s clear violations of international law. Whether those regions ever return to Ukraine, as unlikely and ultimately undesired by the locals as that may be, the simple truth is that Russia broke its most effective tool of political influence — an inside track to the democratic process in Ukraine. Without the ability to support pro-Russian sentiment in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea to sway national elections, the Kremlin has resorted to less effective media campaigns and economic strong-arming. Both are certainly formidable weapons against a country struggling to find its way, even if the majority of citizens know the destination lies with the West. However, the strength of the West to counter those influences is equally, if not more so, up to the task.

Promoting legal protections for minority groups, while enshrining that majority values prevail, remains a truism of the Western world view. When combined with the “curb appeal” of life under Western systems of responsive government and local business development, presenting a better alternative to life in Russia or its destructive zones of control is not a hard sell — if the United States and its allies have the will to make the offer. As such, these issues will continue to be part of the ongoing conversation, one greatly supported by the Project Gray initiative. — *Dr. Spencer B. Meredith III, Ph.D., Fulbright Scholar, Associate Professor, Joint Special Operations Master of Arts, College of International Security Affairs, National Defense University.* 

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SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND AFRICA



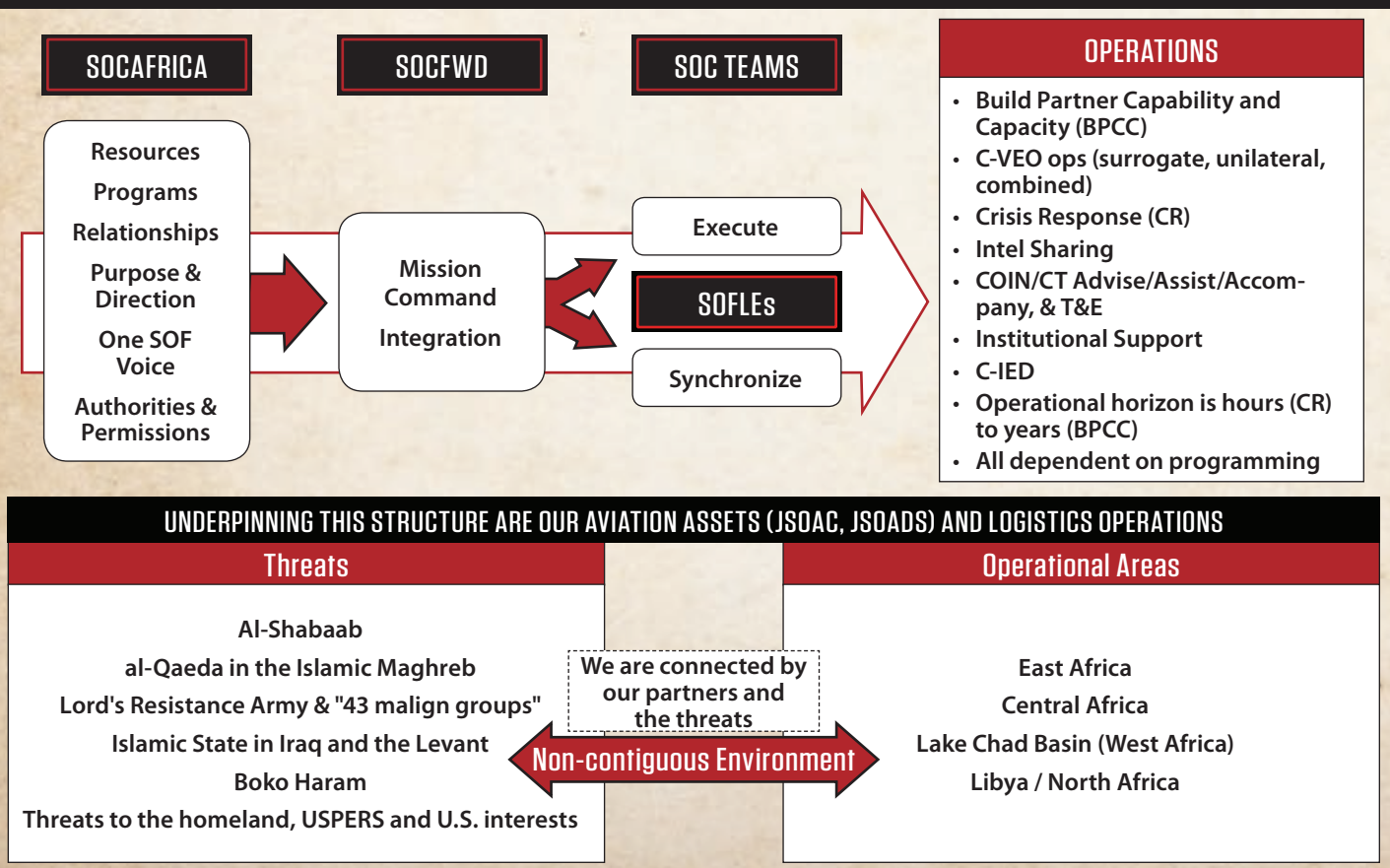
MISSION SOCAFRICA, as part of a global team of national and international partners, conducts persistent, networked and distributed special operations in direct support of the United States Africa Command to promote stability and prosperity in Africa.

CORE TASKS Deter and defeat transnational threats by:

- Countering violent extremism
- Strengthening the defense capabilities and regional organizations
- Protecting U.S. interests in Africa

THE GOAL To disable enemy networks by enabling partner-nation effectiveness and interoperability, to conduct operations within a larger partner-nation security structure. Providing training and equipment to partner nations helps improve their ability to organize, sustain and employ a counterterrorism force against mutual threats.

SOCAFRICA - SHARED UNDERSTANDING IN THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



SOCAFRICA AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY



THE CONTINENT

Africa is the second largest continent in the world, with 11.7 million square miles. The United States, China, India, Europe and Japan can all fit inside the continent of Africa. Its population is estimated at 1,032,532,974 or 16 percent of the world's population.

IN DEPTH



Q&A WITH THE SOCAFRICA COMMANDER BRIGADIER GENERAL DONALD C. BOLDUC



Q: The African proverb: “If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together,” is often repeated in your command. How does this passage impact the way your command operates?

A: This proverb has been in use for some time at U.S. Africa Command and Special Operations Command Africa — and we’ve certainly adopted this mantra because it perfectly describes our approach to operations in Africa. There’s nothing we do that doesn’t involve our African partners, interagency partners, non-governmental organizations or the local population.

We simply cannot operate unilaterally; SOF require the support of a variety of enablers to accomplish our mission, but more importantly, our entire mission depends on the relationships we’ve built with African partner forces, the State Department and the interagency team. That’s why if you want to go far, you have to involve a whole team of people to be successful. Presence is key, working shoulder to shoulder and being “coffee breath close” with our partners assists in maintaining and sustaining relationships. We use this proverb to help remind our staff how we’ve got a long way to go to solve the complex problems in Africa, but together we’ll continue to make progress.

Q: What are your core tasks and top priorities?

A: Our core tasks and priorities are nested in the USAFRICOM Theater Campaign Plan. These tasks naturally flow from the Combatant Commander’s objectives to achieve the goals outlined in the overall plan. It’s also important to understand our priorities aren’t only shaped by how we see the problem, but by our African counterparts. You may have heard me remind audiences — we are



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connected with our partners by the transnational threat of violent extremism. They are closest to the problem and are best able to assess the needs of their forces.

Our top priorities won’t come as any surprise to you. We’re working to provide the USAFRICOM commander with optimal special operations solutions to neutralize Al-Shabaab, degrade violent extremist organizations in the Sahel-Maghreb, counter Boko Haram, interdict illicit activity in Central Africa and support humanitarian assistance/disaster response across the Continent...all while building the capacity of African partner nations to address these issues using a regional approach.

The focus in everything we do is to: counter violent extremism by training and equipping our partners to organize, sustain and employ a special operations capability against mutual threats to enhance African regional defense capabilities and protect U.S. interests in Africa. Our operational approach is executed through program that train and equip, advise, assist, accompany, enable and support our partners. These are easy phrases to say, but I can tell you these are complex problems requiring a comprehensive approach to solve. It’s a massive undertaking, and one that keeps our SOF teams and their African counterparts busy year-round.

Q: There has been a lot of talk about SOF operating “in the Gray Zone.” In your opinion, what is the biggest threat to maintaining that middle ground between war and peace in Africa?

A: There’s a Latin principle called “Obsta Principiis” that guides our way of thinking about this issue. In essence, Obsta Principiis means to take care of problems while they’re small — before they become big issues. We have to approach understanding the Gray Zone as a continuum of risk. Our African partners are dealing with the growth of violent extremism, natural disasters, threats to public health, resource scarcity and other issues. There’s no one issue that is the biggest threat to the Gray Zone. I certainly believe the growth of violent, armed groups is a major concern, but there are a number of other threats our African partners are confronting. Individually, each of these issues is a threat...taken together they’re a crisis.

Resources are also critical to operating in the Gray Zone. These include people, relationships, intelligence, logistics, personnel recovery, dedicated SOF teams and the authorities required to conduct decentralized, distributed operations across the continent. Without all of these resources working in concert, our African partners will move along the continuum of risk to more large-scale conflicts. We must approach Africa with *Obsta Principiis* in mind; that's where SOCAFRICA and our partners can have a meaningful impact on the direction of the Continent.

Q: In Central Africa, the hunt for Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army has been ongoing. What is the progress on this mission and is it still a priority?

A: We've had a lot of progress in the hunt for Kony...progress I believe has been widely under-reported. For example, four of the top five International Criminal Court indictees have been removed from the battlefield, hundreds of fighters have voluntarily left the battlefield and the LRA's area of influence has been reduced from an area the size of California to small, remote areas with little population or governance. The LRA is clearly on the run from a determined and well-supported African task force. This is still a priority for our team; at any given moment, there are approximately 100 U.S. SOF working at SOCFWD-Central Africa to assist the African Union Regional Task Force in the pursuit for Joseph Kony. They're keeping the pressure on what remains of this armed group and we continue to see progress in the right direction.

The Counter-LRA mission has been so effective, we're now contemplating the "what's next?" for SOCFWD-Central Africa. The capability of the African partner nations in the region has continued to increase as they participate in this mission, so we don't want to lose that momentum. Our cooperation and liaison efforts with each of the respective U.S. Embassies has become stronger as a result of the counter LRA mission. MIST efforts in these areas are also robust and very effective. These are all positive strides SOCAFRICA and USAFRICOM are looking to continue in the future as we work towards enhancing cross-border cooperation in the region.

But it's important to understand, once Kony is captured, there are still a number of other violent armed groups, poachers and criminal syndicates operating in these undergoverned areas. What our mission in Central Africa will look like years from now is still coming into focus, but I'm confident it will be centered on continuing to enhance the capabilities of our African partners to address these sorts of issues and maintain stability and less about a one particular group such as the LRA.

Q: How has Boko Haram's affiliation with Daesh/ISIL changed the way they operate? How has this affiliation changed the way your SOF team seeks to counter these groups?

A: This is a trend we're seeing across Africa — violent extremist organizations are increasingly interconnected and using social media to spread their message. Boko Haram has started to refer to itself as the "Islamic State of West Africa" and has improved its social media outreach. These are clear indicators of ISIS influence. But that affiliation doesn't change how we approach the problem. Our mission in North and West Africa is to enhance our African partner nation's ability to counter the spread of violent extremism. Our approach to the problem hasn't changed; it doesn't matter what moniker these groups choose, their actions are what makes them a threat to the people of these affected countries and U.S. interests.

We've recently increased our ability to share intelligence, imagery and information to the Lake Chad Basin countries and are working to put more information-sharing capabilities in place to assist the African-led Multi National Joint Task Force. We've also stood up an ISR capability in Cameroon to provide more intelligence to African partners in the counter Boko Haram effort. The Nigerian military is also working on requirements for increased cooperation with USSOF. There are a lot of cooperative, cross-border efforts underway to stop the spread of Boko Haram, but there is also a lot of work still to be done.

Q: Your African partners appear committed. What is their biggest need and how can you meet it?

A: I agree! The African partner militaries I talk to on the Continent are committed. These forces are seeing the results from their cooperation with U.S. and international SOF and are asking for more — more training, more opportunities to develop their staff and more exercises to test their capabilities. The time they spend with our SOF teams is adding value to their operations and preparing them for the future. That's why at any given time, we've got more than 1,700 SOCAFRICA personnel working on the continent alongside their African counterparts.

The biggest need we've identified is the development of a professional NCO corps. As you know, in the U.S. military the NCO ranks are the backbone of the force, the technical experts and the people we trust to execute the most critical tasks. In Africa, many of these military units are dependent on top-down guidance where every decision and every task is managed by a senior person. This leads to inefficient operations and a long lead time to move out on an objective. We're working with our African partners to develop a professional, trusted and capable cadre of African NCOs who are able to manage their teams and train their own staff in the vital skills they'll need for today's fight.

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Brig. Gen. Amadou Kane,
Senegal Army Chief of
Staff and SOCAFRICA
Commander, Brig. Gen.
Donald C. Bolduc talk
prior to viewing a
Flintlock 2016
capabilities showcase.
U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY
JENNIFER G. ANGELO

IN DEPTH



Q&A WITH THE SOCAFRICA COMMANDER BRIGADIER GENERAL DONALD C. BOLDUC

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Q: What is your assessment of the last Flintlock exercise and what impact do you think it had on your partners?

A: Flintlock 2016 was full of “firsts” — it was the first time we incorporated riverine training into the event, the first time we incorporated law enforcement directly into Flintlock and the first time we trained African military forces on mountaineering skills. We had more than 2,220 participants from a variety of career fields, not only SOF, but also SOF enablers, planners and support staff. My assessment isn’t the most important; the assessment of the 29 participating nations is what I’m most concerned with...and they’ve let us know how valuable Flintlock training is for them because they’ve continued to increase their participation and send units back year after year. The most important impact I see from Flintlock is the relationships built between participants.

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Brig. Gen. Donald C. Bolduc talks to a Dutch Army Soldier during Flintlock 2016.
U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY
JENNIFER G. ANGELO



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African military and law enforcement units work together for three weeks during a challenging scenario, but the long-term relationship they’ve built lasts throughout the year.

We’re finding Flintlock is the type of event that creates connections between African, European and U.S. units we’re able to leverage when there’s a crisis — you’re able to pick up the phone and talk to someone you know and trust, someone who shares the same business practices and ways of operating as you do... that’s invaluable when there’s an event where you need to work together. Cross-border cooperation is key to solving many of the complex problems we see in Africa and Flintlock is an event fostering this sort of engagement. The impacts of Flintlock can’t be overstated and I only see it growing in the next iterations as more nations ask to be involved and sign up to train together.

Q: SOF is known for its ability to work in the Human Domain. It appears American forces are doing that well here. How is the switch from 10th SFG(A) to 3rd SFG(A) going to affect the relationships that have been established over the past 10 years?

A: Anytime there is a transition, there’s going to be a bit of anxiety as relationships and processes are re-established. But the handover between 10th SFG(A) and 3rd SFG(A) has been relatively seamless for our African partners and SOCAFRICA. Leadership at these units had a deliberate and measured transition, so for most people there was really no change except for some new patches on people’s shoulders. Our community is used to adapting and changing environments, so this transition simply means a new AoR and a new language to learn. For many in the SOF community, the future of their mission isn’t in Iraq or Afghanistan but in areas where we’re seeing violent extremist organizations spreading, like Africa, Europe and Central Asia. So there’s necessarily going to be some realignment of forces and adjustments to mission sets. The focus of all involved in this realignment has been to ensure the relationships we’ve built with our African partners endures and develops — and that’s exactly what I’ve seen throughout my command here at SOCAFRICA.

Q: It has been said that distance is the tyranny of Africa. How do you tackle that seemingly impossible problem in order to get personnel and supplies where they need to be when they need to be there?

A: We overcome many of the tyranny of distance challenges by employing a mission command construct that is flat, decentralized and distributed. We utilize a SOCFWD subordinate headquarters construct that integrates all SOF operations, actions, and activities through our SOF teams (the executors) and our SOFLEs (the synchronizers) to support our African partners and the country team. We underpin this structure with expeditionary logistics, SOF aviation, and a robust communications capability. Logistics is incredibly challenging in Africa. Our AoR is more than three times the size of the continental United States, with large expanses of open territory, hundreds of unimproved airstrips and teams operating in hard-to-reach areas.

We have to rely on our Joint Special Operations Air Component to bridge these distances and our joint logistics team to find innovative ways to supply our teams. They make the seemingly impossible



02

task of getting personnel, equipment and supplies to our SOCAFRICA team a relatively routine part of our planning. We're able to stand up a JCET or an exercise in a few months because of the solutions they provide. In a crisis or disaster response situation, the Airmen at the JSOAC are already devising a plan to get personnel and equipment in place as SOF are preparing their plan of action. We've got an incredible team of professionals who anticipate our needs, identify problems early and devise creative solutions to achieve the mission. The J4 directorate, contracting officers and JSOAC at SOCAFRICA are all working in concert to make the tyranny of distance a planning consideration, but not an obstacle to our operations.

Q: The United States Military is limited in what it can do in Africa. We can train partner forces, but we can't impact governance or poverty — how do you work with other government agencies and NGOs to build a full-spectrum approach to problems in the continent?

A: I don't necessarily agree with the premise — we can impact governance and poverty in Africa. Civil Affairs teams play a huge role helping to alleviate the conditions which lead to systemic poverty.

These teams are constantly working to bring government resources to under supported populations by enabling African doctors to treat people in remote areas, building clean, sustainable water sources and conducting assisting local governments to engage with target communities. Many of these activities involve partnerships with existing NGOs who have an amazing ability to multiply our efforts and provide resources the military simply can't access. All of the actions of our Civil Affairs teams seek to extend the legitimacy of the host-nation government to areas in need...these programs have a direct impact on local governance.

Also, our SOF teams integrate rule-of-law training into many of their JCETs and other training events to ensure professional military forces understand the importance of civilian control of the military and respect the human rights of citizens. We've also integrated law enforcement into our exercise programs to link military forces to first responders. This cooperation is critical during a crisis as police are typically first on the scene and will lead post-event investigations and crime scene analysis. Military and police forces are often the most direct

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Senegalese Commandos show off hand-to-hand combat skills during Flintlock 2016.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY
JENNIFER G. ANGELO

03
Senegalese Commandos conduct riverine training during Flintlock 2016, marking the first year this type of training was conducted during the exercise.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY
SPC. DAVID M. SHEFCHUK



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representation of the state in the community; it's critical these organizations are professional and lawful as they represent legitimate, sound governance on many levels. So there are a lot of ways our team can help to improve governance and address poverty in the region.

That said, we absolutely must work in concert with interagency partners such as USAID, State Department and law enforcement (FBI, DEA, etc.) to address these challenges. They're the lead U.S. government agency throughout the region and we work closely with them to ensure our activities are value-added to their efforts. In fact, SOF has embedded liaisons in many Embassies to ensure we're properly coordinating our activities and providing Ambassadors and their staff with direct access to SOCAFRICA leaders. No single organization has all the time, resources and energy to accomplish this complex mission alone. I can't stress enough how important this relationship is to our combined success — SOF has an important role, but we are not the solution. We consistently learn as much as we share. **SW**

THREAT OVERVIEW —

The African continent encompasses roughly 11 million square miles of terrain, roughly the size of the U.S., China and Western Europe combined, and is inhabited by approximately one billion people, or 1/6 of the earth's population. Fifty-four sovereign nations comprise the continent, 14 of which feature in the Top 20 of Transparency International's Fragile States Index. These massive swathes of ungoverned and under-governed space have enabled violent extremist organizations and other non-state actors and criminal organizations to proliferate their influence. From a Special Operations Command-Africa perspective, the primary threats on the continent emanate from Daesh (the most dominant global Violent Extremists Organizations), al-Shabaab (al-Qaeda's foremost African franchise), Boko Haram (the most lethal VEO in the world), and the Lord's Resistance Army (a persistent destabilizing presence in Central Africa for more than 20 years). SO-CAFRICA engagement with regional partners and involvement in security sector reform and capacity building, consistent with the four pillars of the U.S. Strategy in Sub-Saharan Africa, the National Strategy for Counterterrorism, Presidential Policy Directive 23 (Security Sector Assistance) and U.S. Africa Command's Theater Campaign Plan will only serve to mitigate these threats across Africa and help bring stability to the continent.



DAESH

In early 2015, Daesh established a stronghold in the Libyan city of Surt and its surroundings, which functioned as its regional headquarters from where it sought to expand its territorial control. Amid pressure in Iraq and Syria, Libya was becoming a burgeoning preferred destination for DAESH-aligned foreign fighters, following several social media campaigns and public calls for aspiring fighters to go to Libya rather than the Levant. Daesh intended to turn Libya into a strategic beachhead to expand terrorism into the rest of North Africa, the Sahel region and possibly southern Europe. The firm territorial base the group occupied in Libya is its most expansive outside Iraq and Syria. In addition, stalled progress in forming a functioning Government of National Agreement and lack of capabilities and cohesion of the Libyan National Army only set the conditions for Daesh's expansion in Libya.

AL-SHABAAB

Al-Shabaab continues to focus its efforts on garnering support from the local populace in an attempt to fill its ranks with new recruits and discredit the Somali government and its international supporters. Al-Shabaab also aspires to conduct attacks in neighboring countries Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti due to their involvement in the conflict in Somalia. Additionally, AS will most certainly continue to capitalize on its extensive freedom of movement and easy access to large urban areas to stage small-scale yet high impact asymmetric attacks against targets of opportunity. Although the group has likely been pressured by key territorial and leadership losses since mid-2015, its operational tempo has been mostly unhindered, evident in the group successfully overrunning a Kenya forward operating base in January 2016, in addition to its ongoing attacks on prominent hotels and restaurants in Mogadishu and Mogadishu International Airport. The nascent Somali National Army continues to lack the will and capacity to combat the group unilaterally and the Somali government continues to have little influence outside the capital.

—AFRICA

BOKO HARAM

Boko Haram, rebranded under the name Islamic State-West Africa after the group pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in March 2015, remains the most lethal VEO on the continent. Despite its new name, its primary goal remains consistent. The group intends to establish a caliphate across northern Nigeria that adheres to strict Sharia law. IS-WA also clearly prioritizes self-preservation, sustainment of operations through weapons procurement and revenue generation, maintenance of its cross-border logistics and safe-haven accesses. Although the Nigerian military eroded the group's paramilitary strength in northeast Nigeria, IS-WA most likely still intends to defeat the Nigerian government militarily and carve out a safe haven for itself within Nigerian territory. Finally IS-WA's continued attacks against civilians — including markets, mosques and large gatherings — indicates the group wants to ensure that civilian populations in northern Nigeria do not collaborate with government authorities. Given the group's preference for asymmetric attacks over the past year — such as the widespread use of female suicide bombers — IS-WA in a weakened state has proven just as lethal as when it controlled vast areas of Borno State in early 2015.

LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY

Lord's Resistance Army: Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army have terrorized parts of Central Africa for years, carrying out brutal killings and kidnappings and engaging in ivory poaching operations. Kony and his top lieutenants were indicted by the International Criminal Court in 2005, but it was not until 2012 that the group rose to international notoriety after the advocacy group Invisible Children highlighted his crimes in the "KONY 2012" video seen by millions online. This put the group squarely in the spotlight and led to the U.S.'s implementation of Operation Observant Compass. LRA fighters have proven themselves highly mobile over the years, exploiting ungoverned spaces in a volatile region to stage abductions and regroup. The insurgency started in Uganda in the 1980s and after the Ugandan military stepped up pressure in 2006 the rebels moved first to South Sudanese territory and then shifted westward to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. Fewer than 200 LRA rebels are still active in parts of Central Africa, where they operate in jungle terrain that covers the size of France. 

SYMBOLOLOGY



DAESH

Commonly known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or ISIL. Their flag features a line that reads "La 'ilaha 'illa-Allah," meaning "There is no god but God," and the white seal reads "God's Messenger Mohammed."



AL-SHABAAB

The official seal of AS. Their war flag is the same as the one used by ISIS, though their "administration" flag uses the opposite colors—black inscriptions with a white background.



BOKO HARAM

The former symbol used by BH. After rebranding under the Islamic State in 2015 the group primarily uses the Daesh flag or variations of it.



LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY

This flag is commonly used as the symbol of the LRA. However, some sources say the LRA flag is likely a bicolor horizontal red over yellow or yellow over red, similar in color to the Ugandan Flag, their country of origin.

In Africa *It's All*



01
A typical street scene in Senegal, Africa. Vendors of all types line the busy corridors in hopes of selling their wares to passersby.
U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY JENNIFER G. ANGELO

Relative



FLINTLOCK 2016



BY JANICE BURTON

*“Mes amis! Mes Amis! Come here!
I am Picasso — the artist.
Come, let me show you my art!”*

This is the constant chant of a young street vendor, whose shop is set up across from a popular hotel and restaurant in Thies, Senegal. Stepping into the hut that houses Picasso’s treasures, one is confronted with an array of intricate carvings and butterfly drawings. Picasso’s constant chatter continues, asking the buyer to name a price.

The offer of \$12,000 CFA (Senegalese currency) is met with disbelief.

“My father made these carvings. He has a fine shop in the city. There they sell for \$80,000 - \$120,000 — no way,” he says.

“But this isn’t a fine shop. It is a tin building on a dirt road,” countered the buyer, “Look, there is a pig standing in doorway.” That is relative to Picasso, as is much of what one encounters in Africa.



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For military and other government agencies operating throughout the Continent, it is imperative to keep that perspective. Yes, the weapons of African partners are more than 25 years old, but the soldiers who carry them maintain them to the best of their ability. Yes, a vast majority of the African soldiers do not know how to drive, but they are proud that they have vehicles. It's all relative.

In a land where everything can be an enemy from unending dust to the burning sun or the swarm of mosquitoes or the mind-numbing poverty of many and the never-ending supply of terrorist threats, the development of a well-trained military is an imperative. To that end, the U.S. African Command hosts the annual Flintlock Exercise, which brings partner militaries from more than 30 countries together to cement partnerships, focus operations and build interoperability between the U.S., European and African partners.

At its core, Flintlock is a high speed counter-terrorism event. While the event changes locations annually, it remains focused on terror threats like those posed by Daesh and its African affiliate, Boko Haram.

According to Col. William D. Rose, the 2016 Flintlock exercise director, the Flintlock Exercise is one of many run throughout the year, all of which are designed to engage and build relationships with African partners while building their capability and capacity.

"It is difficult for us and our partners to be

everywhere all at once," continued Rose, noting that U.S. Special Operations Forces working in conjunction with their partners enjoy relative freedom of movement and can often blend with the populace. We have learned through good partnerships with our African and European partners that we can establish a network that helps counter violent extremists organizations and terrorist threats."

The changing face of the threats, and the ability of terrorists organizations like Boko Haram to garner support, training and resources from more developed organizations, has partner nations facing more proficient enemies. That has not; however, lessened their resolve to eliminate the existing threats and stop the growth of new threats.

"While some report that there is more radicalization among existing terrorist cells, it has not impacted the militaries of our African partners," said Rose. "In fact, quite the opposite has happened. First and foremost, they are dedicated to deterring the terrorist threat, containing it and eliminating it. There are no religious or ethnic issues within our partner militaries. It is not part of the equation."

Instead, the dedication of the soldiers is gaining them respect with their western partners. "Our partners are very receptive to their African partners and how they are reacting. They see them as sophisticated, relevant, competent forces who are looking to refine their tactics, techniques and procedures by learning

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Senegalese Special Operations soldiers conduct a rehearsal for a high value target extraction exercise in St. Louis, Senegal. The HVT exercise is the culmination of a week-long training on water and land operations as part of Flintlock 2016.
U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SPC. DAVID M. SHEFCHUK

02
The harsh African terrain itself can pose a threat to military forces operating in the continent.
U.S. ARMY PHOTO COURTESY OF 3RD SFG(A) PAO





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01 Senegalese Commando soldiers conduct a briefing with partner nation forces during Flintlock 2016.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SPC. DAVID M. SHEFCHUCK

02 A dancer performs a traditional dance at a crop storage facility dedication in Kedougou, Senegal.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. KULANI J. LAKANARIA

03 A Senegalese Navy Special Operator stands guard on a captured boat as it docks during a maritime drug interdiction exercise in St. Louis, Senegal.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY JENNIFER G. ANGELO

04 Senegalese SOF pull security during a high value target (HVT) extraction exercise.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SPC. DAVID M. SHEFCHUCK

05 Senegalese soldiers participate in the opening ceremonies of Flintlock 2016.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO

from each other as well as their Western partners.”

Key to that growth is the numerous exercises conducted throughout the year (more than 20 large exercises) that focus on various areas of development for the force. The growth in capability and capacity of partner forces is further bolstered by ongoing Joint combined exchange training and joint planning and assistance teams. While smaller than the exercises, the JCETs and JPATs focus on individual partners for longer periods of time, while a large-scale exercise like Flintlock serves as a combined training rotation, which puts all of the forces together for a large multinational training event.

The JCETs and JPATs fall under the authority of the Special Operations Commands-Forward, an evolution of the Joint Special Operations Task Forces, that are under the command and control of the 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne). Currently, there are three SOC-Forward elements. SOC-Forward North and West took the place of JSOTF-Trans-Sahara; SOC-Forward Central Africa; and SOC-Forward Eastern Africa.

Prior to 2002, 3rd SFG(A), known as The Bushmen, were regionally aligned to Africa. With the onset of continuous Afghanistan deployments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) took on the regional orientation for Africa. In September 2014, the orientation was changed and 3rd SFG(A) returned to its roots.

“There is a bit of a learning curve for 3rd Group to come back into Africa,” said Rose. “They are very eager to get back to their roots, although for many of the Soldiers within the group, this Flintlock Exercise is their first trip to the Continent.”

Rose noted that the transition was easier due to the professionalism of the 10th SFG(A). He explained that the transition was phased in at natural splits, such as a team’s deployment, which allowed the Soldiers of the 10th Group to introduce their 3rd

Group brothers to their African partners.


“This is definitely a first for a lot of these 3rd SFG Soldiers, but a lot of their senior leaders and NCOs, in particular, have time in and around Africa. It is their heritage and tradition, so a lot of these younger Soldiers are eager to be back here,” said Rose.

Among the many challenges faced by U.S. troops operating in Africa is logistics. “There is always a challenge in sustaining the force and at times, it is the biggest challenge for us to overcome,” said Rose, who noted that despite more than a year and a half of planning, there have still been logistical challenges with Flintlock 2016. “Africa is ruled by the tyranny of distance. It’s a problem for all of our partners. It takes time to project anywhere.”

With that being said, Rose noted that Senegal, the host for this year’s event did a great job of providing the logistics support needed to make Flintlock a success.

“We helped identify requirements, but this year’s event is really a partner-led effort. The Senegalese Army has done a really excellent job of identifying resources and supplies for everyone here and the Senegalese military has proven that they are fully capable of providing for the exercise.”

It is proven partnerships, like those with Senegal and many other African partners, that are valuable to the Special Operations Command-Africa.

“We value partnering with leadership. Good partners who can set up a base of support are always a partnership in which we will invest,” concluded Rose. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Janice Burton is the editor of *Special Warfare*.



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FLINTLOCK 2016

JOINT MULTINATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL DAVID J. GREEN



In a loud robust voice, Capt. Malick Sadji (Senegal Infantry Officer) ordered “ATTENTION IN THE JOC!” At once, everyone in the Joint Operations Center stopped what they were working on and listened closely to the announcement that troops downrange had been injured by enemy forces and a medical evacuation was urgently requested. The entire center sprang into action to provide assistance.

Even though this was a Flintlock 2016 training exercise, everyone in the JOC worked feverishly to ensure a quick reaction force and all logistical requirements were expeditiously underway. Flintlock is the premiere annual theater engagement training exercise for the U.S. Africa Command. During this mission, the Special Operations Detachment - Africa (Airborne) and the Naval Reserve Special Operations Command - Africa unit provided the Command and Control of the Joint Multinational Headquarters in Senegal for more than 2,000 special operations forces from 30 African and Western partner countries. The SOD-Africa (ABN) is a unit in the Texas Army


National Guard and the NRSOCAFRICA is SO-CAFRICA's Navy Reserve support unit under the U.S. Special Operations Command in Tampa, Florida. Both are responsible for conducting expeditionary command and control of joint and combined special operations in support of Special Operations Command - Africa. The typical Soldier or Sailor of these small units has more than 15 years of military experience and 90 percent have combat experience. Common skillsets include Special Forces, SEALs, Ranger, Airborne, SERE C and HALO and joint theater-level planning expertise. Over half of the members in the units are fluent in multiple languages. In addition, these Soldiers and Sailors continue to balance one of the most demanding mission sets in the Reserve Components alongside equally demanding and successful civilian careers. Many are law enforcement professionals, doctors, lawyers or serve in the Intelligence community. One is a professional Mixed Martial Arts fighter (Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Kennedy). All Theater Special Operations Commands have U.S. Army National Guard “SODs” and U.S. Navy Reserve units assigned to their AORs.

The NRSOCAFRICA mission commander, Commander John Jones (a Navy SEAL), explained that Flintlock 2016 provided joint and coalition interoperability and cooperation among regional and international security forces to combat terrorism across national borders such as Boko Haram,



al-Qaeda and other violent extremist groups operating in North West Africa.

The SOD-A(ABN) mission commander, Lt. Col. Tim Ochsner (Army Special Forces) explained that these missions are integral for sharing best practices for joint and coalition operations mission planning and execution from a headquarters perspective. All staff sections are jointly manned working together to issue an operation order and subsequent fragmentary orders to 13 subordinate units out stationed throughout Senegal and Mauritania. During the training exercise, instructions critical to the planning process were provided covering a range of military subjects such as civil-military operations (taught by the United Kingdom), riverine operations (taught by the Nigerian Navy) and air-load delivery (taught by Italian Airborne Infantry) and counter-insurgency and the Military Decision Making Process (taught by the U.S. Army).

Flintlock improves interoperability and cooperation among regional and international security forces. SOD-Africa and the NRSOCAFRICA were an integral part of this process. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lt. Col. David J. Green is a Special Forces officer in the Texas Army National Guard.



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The Joint Operations Center conducts a shift-change brief. The JOC is manned 24 hours a day by representatives from most of the 30 countries taking part in Flintlock 2016. All presentation materials, charts and briefings are provided in the two main languages of the exercise — French and English.

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The JOC is a constant hub of activity with breakout groups in different areas of the center going over maps, mission plans and tracking troop movement.

U.S. ARMY PHOTOS BY JENNIFER G. ANGELO



03

The Last Tactical

11 MILLION MILES

A look at the unique challenge of providing logistics in Africa.

BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL MICHAEL A. SABB

Synchronizing logistics to advanced special operations forces objectives across Africa is an intricate patchwork of specialized know-how, creative thinking and a whole lot of elbow grease.

The Special Operations Command Africa J-4 (Logistics) out of Stuttgart, Germany, coordinates everything from contracts, movement, supply, maintenance, sustainment and even property and equipment management across the vast African continent.

It's on this varied and often hostile environment, SOCAFRICA conducts some of the largest air deliveries in the Department of Defense in support of SOF's most challenging and unique mission sets. In addition, the J-4 team provides over-land logistical support, contracting and oversight of myriad operations and exercises requiring SOF-specific equipment and supplies.

It is in these uncertain and undefined areas, otherwise known as the Gray Zone, where logisticians have to truly develop novel and unconventional approaches to solve some of their most trying problems. Operationally speaking, the Gray Zone is that area between peace and war; the logistical Gray Zone is that area between supply hubs and the actual locations SOF operate.

Solutions are not always clear when traversing across triple canopy jungle, through the desert, up mountains and over swamps, but it is

this creative approach to supporting SOF that keeps SOCAFRICA Logistics a no-fail mission.

"So we have to have a back-up plan and then a back-up plan to the back-up plan," said U.S. Marine Corps Col. Archibald McLellan, the SOCAFRICA J-4, citing the SOCAFRICA Logistics team as one of two missions deemed infallible by the SOCAFRICA commander. (*The other "no-fail" mission for SOF in Africa, according to the SOCAFRICA commander is communications.*)

The movement of forces and equipment via airlift can be complex and cumbersome, according to members of the SOF Mobility and Sustainment Cell, which conducts all air planning for the command, to include the deployment and redeployment of forces and the movement of resupply cargo. According to Maj. Mieke Bruins, Chief, SOF Movement and Sustainment Cell, "We consistently face issues because we operate in a low volume, low frequency capacity with airframes that are meant either for large volume or extremely low volume."

One of the greatest challenges for air planners is getting airlift support outside of the several C-130J military transport aircraft dedicated solely to the continent. This is especially true when mission-critical missions do not meet the larger carrying capacity standard of these aircraft. According to Air Force Capt. Cynthia Rodriguez, the Joint

Operation Planning and Execution System and air planning for SOCAFRICA, resupply missions and time-sensitive deliveries remain a struggle for logistics. For example, the assigned C130s require either 5.6 short tons or 25 passengers per request, but quite often in the SOF world the requirement is only for two passengers or two short tons.

The SMSC coordinates with other directorates to attempt to meet the AFRICOM requirements, but often times it means delaying the mission. Alternately, the Non-Standard Aviation assets can only transport up to 3,000 pounds of cargo and passengers and no pallets, meaning if there are vehicles or larger capacity loads the NSAv cannot provide support. The management of these limited assets for inter and intra-theater lift can be difficult.

This is where the back-up plans enter the scene. Often times, these smaller deliveries are best suited for smaller, NSAv aircraft. These are cost-effective for the command, but limited by the total number of flying hours committed to the handful of pilots — as such, these solutions can't be leaned on to accomplish every mission.

"That's where we have to get creative," said U.S. Army Maj. Gerardo Pulido, East/Central Branch Chief J43. "The equipment must arrive on time....food, fuel and munitions must arrive on time....we spend a lot of time coming up with

01 Senegal Commandos move through the countryside during Flintlock 2016. The rugged and vast African terrain is just one of the many challenges facing logisticians who supply military forces operating in the continent. U.S. ARMY PHOTO COURTESY OF 3RD SFG(A) PAO



ways to get items to remote areas using non-standard means.”

Plus, the challenge of moving equipment to the final destination can prove difficult considering the limited infrastructure in most locations and the high risk associated with moving equipment into instable locations that could lead to theft or damage.

Amidst all the various challenges to the movement of forces and equipment throughout Africa, the air planners do all they can to ensure success by using every resource available.

One such success story came out of the Special Operations Command Forward – Central Africa area of operation when they were faced with the challenge of extending their operational reach for logistics where no airfield existed. To do that, they created bundles of food, water and fuel and established a logistical hub in direct support of operations in the countries of Central Africa including Uganda, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the

Congo. Approximately 300 cases of MREs, 1,200 cases of water and more than 140 55-gallon barrels of jet fuel were bundled and air delivered, making a win for air supply and a win for those working on the ground.

Further successes across the land comes with even more creative thinking, according to leadership. The use of the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement promotes interoperability, readiness and effectiveness of both U.S. and partner-nation military forces.

During Flintlock 2016, the ACSA allowed the Senegalese Army to plan and execute logistics support for forces at five different training sites during the exercise and even empowered them to provide additional top-notch service.

The Senegalese were able to step up to the plate and deliver their own resources and methods, even going beyond the normal scope and bringing a little morale booster during the exercise. While inspecting the mess hall, the Senegalese cooks saw that they could provide a mobile



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bakery to prepare and deliver fresh bread daily to the participants. Though not a requirement, just the smell of fresh baked bread was a welcome addition to the daily rations.

These types of successes come with creating and maintaining solid relationships with partner-nation counterparts. Relationships can really be the difference between success and failure when it comes to providing critical logistics support on the continent.

“It’s really about relationships,” said Army Maj. Marcus L. Jordan, who worked during this year’s Flintlock Exercise as the Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and Integration Officer in Charge. One of the hurdles Jordan faced was adapting to the way the host-nation logisticians operate. His ability to form meaningful relationships, and overcome cultural differences allowed him to develop solutions to unique challenges that he faced during the exercise.

In addition, Jordan was able to expose the host-nation’s logisticians



THE SECOND LARGEST CONTINENT WITH A SIZE OF ABOUT 11.7 MILLION SQUARE MILES; THE UNITED STATES, CHINA, INDIA, EUROPE AND JAPAN CAN ALL EASILY FIT INSIDE THE CONTINENT OF AFRICA



to the way SOCAFRICA conducts logistics creating a learning environment that was mutually beneficial.

“A cultural difference is what we struggle with every time we go to Africa,” explained Jordan, who is with the 528th Sustainment Brigade (SO) (A), a six-man Army SOF Liaison Element embedded in SOCAFRICA. “We make things more difficult for ourselves when we approach it with a Western point of view where a contract means everything. On the Continent, we’ve got to slow down, socialize more, drink chai and acknowledge the legitimate authority of individuals on a face-to-face basis.”

This “relationship first” aspect is what got SOCAFRICA members streamlined entry into the country during Flintlock. Basically with a handshake and a nod, service members were routed around customs and were allowed to be picked up planeside.

Jordan said they’re already preparing for Flintlock 2017 in Chad, as the more austere environment will come with its own logistical challenges.

Some of those challenges will come with contracting for the exercise. Contracting is often times the primary logistics solution for SOCAFRICA operations. This is largely due to country team limita-

tions on the Continent, no assigned forces for the command and a lack of forward SOF basing.

“Contracting in Africa is hard,” said Air Force Lt. Col. Dax Presuto, the SOCAFRICA contracting officer, “but contracting for SOF in Africa is really hard.”

Challenges include the “tyranny of distance.” It is the second largest continent with a size of about 11.7 million square miles; the United States, China, India, Europe and Japan can all easily fit inside the continent of Africa.


Language barriers and a lack of U.S. military linguists to support efforts to find vendors and negotiate contracts remains a constant battle. Often there is a lack of skilled labor, tribal and cultural boundaries, a lack of Internet access (and resultant inability to reach/find many vendors), and an inability for vendors to accept credit cards for payment. Something as common as being able to make a credit card transaction can increase the difficulty of providing sustainment support.

This is when novel thinking and back up plans become king and those relationship-building skills are most sought after to create the leverage and equity needed to get the job done to support the mission on the ground.

“These distributed, decentralized SOF are supported by expeditionary, scalable, flexible logistics and contracting,” said McLellan. “Our ability to operate in the logistics Gray Zone supports the speed, flexibility and effectiveness of SOF.”

The SOF-minded logistician of air and land operations is further supported by liaison elements that improve interoperability and Seabee support that improves construction needs throughout the SOCAFRICA area of operation.

It takes a total team effort to provide logistical support in Africa, according to leadership. Logisticians at the Special Operations Command Forwards, SOCAFRICA and United States Special Operations Command all provide world-class support that enables SOF operators to conduct special operations.

Every day they take on the challenge and provide logistical solutions that are adaptive, responsive, attainable and sustainable for SOF operations that are often emergent and continuous at the same time. These logisticians live up to the mantra of the fifth SOF truth: “Most special operations require non-SOF support,” and they ensure special operations missions will always have the logistical support needed to ensure mission success. 

Sgt. 1st Class Jessica Espinosa contributed to this report.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lt. Col. Michael A. Sabb is a logistics officer assigned to SOCAFRICA.

01

U.S. Army Riggers and Air Force personnel load aerial resupply bundles for distribution to a forward area in Cameroon during a joint training exercise.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. JUSTIN P. MORELLI

02

An aerial resupply bundle touches down on the plains of Senegal, Africa, during Flintlock 2016.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO COURTESY OF 3RD SFG(A) PAO

SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

BY STAFF SERGEANT KULANI J. LAKANARIA

NORTH AND



FORWARD — WEST AFRICA



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Special Operations Command Forward–North and West is a subordinate command of Special Operations Command–Africa, headquartered in Smith Barracks, Baumholder, Germany.

As a subordinate command to SOCAFRICA, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) is a force provider and the lead for SOCFWD–NWA with support from all branches of the Department of Defense. SOCFWD–NWA is threat-focused and designed to move where the threats are in the region. Special operations forces enable the U.S. Africa Command to reduce strategic risk and still achieve campaign objectives.

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Senegalese Commandos conduct vehicle mounting drills during Flintlock 2016. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY JENNIFER G. ANGELO

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SOC Forward–North and West Africa's area of responsibility spans 12 countries in the Maghreb, Chad River Basin and the Sahel regions in North and West Africa.

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A remote village in Senegal. African partner countries have vast areas to defend with large, geographically dispersed populations making it a challenge to provide security for the entire populace.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SENEGAL ARMY DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS (DIRPA)

02
Canadian military forces conduct medevac training with African partner forces during Flintlock 2016. Limited medical resources combined with the challenging geographic environment and threats from the enemy, force medical personal operating in Africa to think outside the box on how to handle medical emergencies. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SPC. ANDREA SERHAN

03
A Senegalese Army medic and SOCAFRICA medics perform a dental procedure on a Senegalese woman. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SENEGAL ARMY DIRPA

North and West Africa remains a significant source of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq, some of whom are starting to return with greater capabilities. Violent extremist organizations and foreign fighter flows; illegal immigration; and trafficking in narcotics, weapons and people, threaten allies on Europe's southern flank, which will create new opportunities for violent extremist organizations to expand their reach.

"Militarily the top threats to our African partners are Boko Haram, which is now known as Islamic State-West Africa, Islamic State in Libya and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb," said Command Chief Warrant Officer 5 Robert L. Davis, 3rd Special Forces Group(A). "These threats do have non-military contributing factors such as lack of a stable economy, distrust of governments by some sectors of society, and inability of the governments to provide security to all areas within their countries. Some of the top threats to the military structures within our AOR are consistent with what is seen in most countries in which we work. These threats include a completely officer-centric force where NCOs are not afforded the same authorities or opportunities that you see with American military NCOs."

Understanding how to bring a military that is under immense pressure to bring its capabilities and confidence so it can effectively identify, locate, close with and destroy its enemies is invaluable.

"You have an enemy operating heavily in rural areas that are similar to Afghanistan," said Col. Robert A. Wilson, former 3rd SFG(A) commander. "They prey upon the population and do an immense amount of damage, take advantage of borders to thrive and fuel its organizations. You see the damages and toll that these violent extremists organizations take on society. Each African country is unique and extremely different than Afghanistan; the violence and the effects it has on the most vulnerable part of populations is something the Soldiers in 3rd SFG(A) can find familiar."

It's the tyranny of distance that plays a critical role to the African populations. Partner countries have vast areas that they have to defend and have large populations that are scattered and dispersed throughout their respective countries. It is challenging for the countries to protect their entire populace.

"The austere level of support to U.S. military forces in Africa has caused us to operate differently, the first thing that we have done is change the way that we train our Soldiers to respond to medical emergencies," said Col. Wilson. "In Afghanistan, the focus was to provide critical support until the point of medical evacuation, which normally came very rapidly. Overall we had a mature robust theater toward the end of the war that could provide all kinds of medical support relatively effectively. We are now operating in an area that is much larger and has more potential



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WE ARE
SPREAD OUT
WITH LIMITED
MEDICAL
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IN A VERY
CHALLENGING
ENVIRONMENT

illnesses. Prolonged field care and sustaining a casualty for a very long time is something very different than what we find in the continental United States. We are spread out with limited medical resources in a very challenging environment with tremendous threats from not only the enemy but also from the geography, which is new to us. Our surgeons and our Special Forces medical sergeants are doing a phenomenal job taking a new approach medically. It affects our mission and how we prepare for our mission.”

“The second thing is logistics. We are constantly looking for ways that we can better support ourselves without external support so we can stay out in the field as long as possible with our African partners,” said Col. Wilson. “We are looking at how we do water purification in a place where you just can’t buy pallets of bottled water. We are tasking and evaluating water purification equipment and building packages to build command and control nodes with enough infrastructure to be able to set up in the middle of nowhere and operate as a command and control node. Those are some of the things that we are doing different from Afghanistan.”

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Davis has had experience in Africa before the realignment, and with the shift from United States Central Command to United States Africa Command there has been changes in the area of responsibility from the ‘90s.



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“A majority of the military problems that existed centered on internal civil wars and numerous coups,” said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Davis. “It seems as if one of the biggest changes were that some of the insurgent groups that were in existence during the ‘90s in Africa have assimilated into the main VEO threat streams (AQIM, IS-L and IS-WA) that our partners are facing today. In some ways, the threat has matured to a point where they are able to seize



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A Burkina Faso Armed Forces soldier participates in Flintlock 2016 in Thies, Senegal. Soldiers from Burkina Faso partnered with Dutch Army Special Forces commandos to strengthen their infantry tactics, medical evacuation procedures and intelligence gathering methods.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY
STAFF SGT. CHRISTOPHER KLUTTS

02
Senegalese commandos conduct a rock drill prior to a mission during Flintlock 2016. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SGT. STEPHEN S. CLINE

03
A Senegalese soldier pulls security outside of a room being cleared during training near Thies, Senegal, during Flintlock 2016. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. JOHN NICOLAS

04
Senegalese Commando soldiers conduct a briefing with partner nation forces during Flintlock 2016. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SPC. DAVID M. SHEFCHUCK

05
Partner-nation forces work together during Flintlock 2016. U.S. ARMY PHOTO

and hold terrain. On the positive side, it does appear that many of the militaries that we were working with have also matured. They may not be where they need to be as of yet; however, they do seem to be more professional and eager to learn in some ways.”

3rd SFG(A) is the lead force provider for SOCFWD-NWA. However, SOCFWD-NWA is a joint environment and forges a working relationship with personnel from all services.

“Our relationships with other SOF in our area of responsibility have never been better. We have SOF from the all services that conduct operations within our AOR,” said CWO 5 Davis.

Under the Special Operations Command and Control Element-Lake Chad Basin there are elements of the Army and Navy conducting the same mission sets. There are some areas within North and West Africa where Army units are under the tactical control of one of our sister services and some areas where our sister service SOF teams are under the tactical control of Army SOF.

“The group was originally formed in 1963 to provide an SF element to focus on the African Continent,” said CWO 5 Davis. “When we were re-constituted in 1991, it was with a focus on the Caribbean, Africa and the Middle-East. The focus on Africa was mostly North and West Africa with some focus in the Horn of Africa. Much of what we did in those days was focused on developing the military forces or even *gendarmes* where we worked to conduct peacekeeping and peace enforcement. Two of the major initiatives that we worked in the 1990s were the African Crisis Response Initiative, throughout West Africa, and Operation Focus Relief in Nigeria. The forces we



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trained during that time frame have been used on numerous operations throughout Africa in support of the African Union. Other operations centered on humanitarian assistance, demining and providing medical care throughout the continent. As I see it, 3rd SFG(A)’s return to Africa is a good thing. There are numerous challenges across the continent that exists, ranging from countering VEOs to improving stability and professionalism of partner nations. Our Soldiers are completely prepared to meet them head on. Even though our nation’s eyes are on the Middle East, we cannot lose sight of what is happening in Africa. Instability in Africa could be a catalyst for instability to develop in Europe and from there it is only a short distance away from the U.S.”

SOCFWD-NWA’s area of responsibility spans 12 countries in the Maghreb, Chad River Basin and the Sahel regions in North and West Africa. The countries included in this area of responsibility are Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Tunisia and Cameroon.

“SOCFWD-NWA benefits the overall AFRI-COM mission and objectives by providing a headquarters that is solely focused on synchronization of programs and operations in the north and west Africa region. SOCFWD-NWA also functions as a tactical headquarters that, in addition to the synchronization aspects of the mission, oversees the execution of the episodic and enduring events, thus ensuring a cohesive and concurrent long-term strategy for achieving



U.S. military objectives in support of our partner nations in NWA,” said Davis.

The 3rd SFG(A) was realigned into the African Continent and assumed the responsibility of SOCFWD-NWA. The African continent realignment is a major step for 3rd SFG(A). Historically the group was designed to focus on the dynamic and complex African Continent.

“For about 14 years 3rd SFG(A) has been primarily responsible for providing a preponderance of Special Forces units and Soldiers to Afghanistan,” said Col. Wilson. “Previously to that, we had primarily been operating in Africa. After 9/11, and the ensuing 14 years of war, we had become the group focused on Afghanistan. We have been doing very precise and specific missions in Afghanistan. As that mission was winding down, a decision was made that came rather sudden to us. We shifted focus of our area of responsibility from Central Asia back to Africa over the course of a year. While it was very unexpected, it was an exciting and daunting change of mission for us all because for more than a decade we had been focused on a narrow part of the world with a challenging and complex mission in an entirely different environment.”

With the transition back to Africa, 3rd SFG(A) did thorough preparations to better understand the unique mission.

“Upon receipt of the change of focus, we informed everyone and did a very good mission analysis to understand the things that would be asked of us on the African Continent,” said Col. Wilson. “We determined that the best way to assume this mission was to initially take charge of the command and control element first which would allow our line units, which comprise our operational detachments, companies and headquarters, sufficient time to get a deep understanding of the areas to which they would eventually deploy. We prepared for that as a headquarters by mission analysis, traveling and talking to people in the Department of Defense, AFRICOM, CIA, State Department and other places to get a good understanding of the mission and U.S. interests and how they meet them on the African Continent.”

The relationship with the State Department is critical, according to 3rd SFG(A) leadership. The U.S. military can’t achieve its military objectives in any country without the help of the State Department. SOCFWD-NWA supports the national security objectives, which require a “whole-of-government” approach. There are some aspects that are heavy on the military element of national power; however, there is nowhere in Africa that the U.S. is at war; our African partners are. What SOCFWD-NWA does in support of its partners requires the concurrence and a close working relationship with the Department of State.

“I found our partners in the State Department and interagency are extremely helpful. They got us on board to help us understand the mission much more effectively” said Col. Wilson “The synchronization of effort with the other agencies shows how we play a piece in public diplomacy. That is very refreshing to see and it showed the value of the approach the U.S. takes in support of its partners in Africa.”



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Training 3rd SFG(A) personnel to conduct the new mission set was a priority to ensure that all personnel fulfilled their requirements.

“We trained the headquarters after having visited the Special Operations Command Forward-North and West Africa headquarters, at the time manned by 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne),” said Col. Wilson. “We’ve done a great deal of training at Fort Bragg on all the systems we would have to use in order to have effective command and control. One of the things that we looked at is our ability to sync with the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Commander’s priorities to operationalize the CONUS base. I’ve determined, as we took this mission, that the headquarters will be value added to the enterprise regardless if I was forward or the staff was forward or not. It was working to change the paradigm so that this headquarters was relevant to the special opera-

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tions missions on the continent. At the end of August, I deployed with the core of my staff to Germany where the SOCFWD-NWA headquarters is located. I was collocated with the Theater Special Operations Command, SOCAFRICA and AFRICOM in Stuttgart. We immediately took responsibility for that mission.”

Over the last decade, SOCFWD-NWA was staffed by 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne). During the Global War on Terror, 3rd SFG(A) was reallocated to Afghanistan to tackle its unique problem sets.

“I have a great preexisting relationship with Col. Brian S. Petit, the retiring deputy commander of 10th SFG(A), who was the SOCFWD-NWA commander at the time,” said Col. Wilson. “We served together in Afghanistan and I knew him pretty well. I took the opportunity to go forward with key members of my staff and met with him for a long time and talked to him on a daily basis to get a better understanding of the mission. That equates a pivotal role in the transition. At the time the 10th SFG(A) Commander, Col. George K. Thiebes, and his successor Col. Isaac J. Peltier,

YOU KNOW YOU'RE GOING TO BE A PART OF A LONG PROGRESSION OF 3RD SFG(A) PEOPLE WHO ARE GOING TO WORK HARD AND BE AT THE TABLE OF EXPERTS ON AFRICA



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agreed to provide some of the core staff so that we had continuity. One of his battalion commanders became my deputy commander in the SOCFWD-NWA, which ensured that we had someone with experience in Africa and someone who had worked with the preponderance of forces on the continent. That really helped to make a seamless, smooth and effective transition.”

Transitioning from Afghanistan to Africa initially had a few challenges but the 3rd SFG(A) adapted to the new mission set and was able to use lessons learned from central Asia and cater them to their needs in Africa.

“We were by no means complacent in Afghanistan over the last 14 years,” said Col. Wilson. “To be complacent is to risk disaster. We had grown very familiar and comfortable with the Afghanistan mission. We knew the people, terrain and the enemy. That played into the calculus on how to prepare for that mission and how we executed it. Most people in the group have never served in Africa. Africa is tremendously larger and more complex than Afghanistan. The geographic vastness of it is enormous. It takes your breath away. We were all daunted by the complexity of the mission. We were going into a new mission where most of us have no experience and we know by the time you leave this organization and the job you’re in, you will only have scratched the surface. That, in itself, is daunting. You know you’re going to be a part of a long progression of

3rd SFG(A) people who are going to work hard and be at the table of the experts on Africa: I think that was a big change. Going from a place where you’re side-by-side in combat with your Afghan counterparts to a place where the United States is not at war, but our partners are, is daunting as well. In Afghanistan, for the most part, the United States military had the primacy to conduct operations. In Africa, you are working very closely with the country team and the U.S. Ambassador has primacy of the mission in whatever country to which you are assigned. People expected that 3rd SFG(A) having been in combat for 14 years would find this mission a challenge. It’s true we did, but there is a lot of things that we do in Africa that are identical to what we had to do in combat in the last 14 years. Everything that we do to succeed or fail is by, with and through our African partners. We are not going to win these conflicts alone or achieve the African partner’s objectives alone. Everything we do has to be done through our partners. It was the same thing in Afghanistan. Helping our partners to reach their capacity is extremely important. Recognizing the linkages between the military component and what’s going on in the societal component is critical in Afghanistan but equally important in Africa. Our mission is very complex and different but there are many things that are interchangeable.”

In Africa it is critical to show our African partners the value of working with the U.S.

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Senegalese Commandos and a 3rd SFG(A) team member review training plans during Flintlock 2016. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY JENNIFER G. ANGELO

02
A 3rd SFG(A) Soldier conducts repelling operations with an African partner nation Solider during Flintlock 2016. U.S. ARMY PHOTO

03
Senegalese Navy Special Operations Forces practice combatives on each other during Close Quarter Battle drills in St. Louis, Senegal. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SPC. DAVID M. SHEFCHUCK



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military. SOCFWD-NWA has to help partner nations achieve their interests as well as the U.S. national interests.

"We show our African partners the benefits of our professional military, the synchronization of operations, intelligence, logistics and other resourcing, mission planning both at the operational and tactical levels. Additionally, because we're looking at North and West Africa, we provide that unique perspective, so all the other regional partners understand what others are doing and how the reactions and counter-reactions affect what they are doing against the problem set," said Col. George W. Sterling, the former SOCFWD-NWA deputy commander.

FLINTLOCK

SOCFWD-NWA is responsible for the annual Flintlock Exercise. The Flintlock Exercise started in 2005 across the Sahel Region of Africa. Participating nations are members of the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership. The exercise is planned by African partner-nation SOF and SOCAFRICA to develop the capacity and collaboration among African security forces to protect civilian populations.

"The Flintlock exercise, at its core, is a special operations counterterrorism exercise," said Lt. Col. William D. Rose, Flintlock 2016 exercise director, with SOCAFRICA. "It is designed specifically to train and exercise regional forces by country among our African partners specifically focused on North and West Africa to

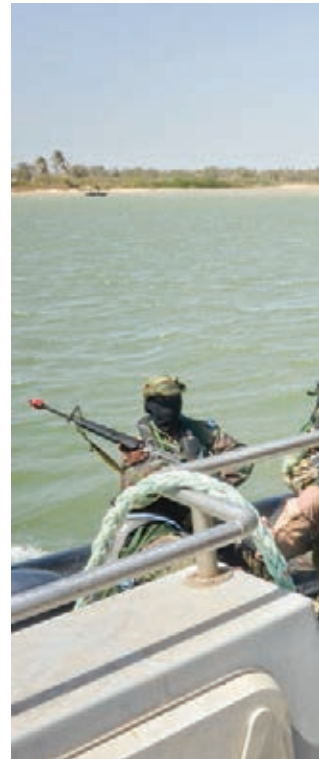
counter the relevant threats that they are dealing with today."

Flintlock 2016 was hosted in Senegal with outstations in Mauritania during the month of February.

"Flintlock this year was full of 'firsts' — it was the first time we incorporated riverine training into the event, the first time we incorporated law enforcement directly into Flintlock and the first time we trained African military forces on mountaineering skills," said Brig. Gen. Donald C. Bolduc, SOCAFRICA commander. "We had more than 2,220 participants from a variety of career fields, not only SOF but also SOF enablers, planners and support staff. My assessment isn't the most important; the assessment of the 29 participating nations is what I'm most concerned with... and they've let us know how valuable Flintlock training is for them because they've continued to increase their participation and send units back year after year. The most important impact I see from Flintlock are the relationships built between participants. African military and law enforcement units work together for three weeks during a challenging scenario, but the long-term relationship they've built lasts throughout the year."

Although SOCFWD-NWA primarily serves as trainers, personnel also take back lessons learned from their peers.

"From a U.S. standpoint specifically, we are learning as much as we are bringing to the table," said Rose. "Our African partners are just that — they are partners and our peers. What



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Senegalese Soldiers raise the flag of Senegal during the opening ceremony for Flintlock 2016 in Thies, Senegal. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SPC. DAVID M. SHEFCHUCK

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Senegalese Navy Special Operations Forces and Dutch Special Operations Forces conduct a maritime drug interdiction exercise in St. Louis, Senegal, during Flintlock 2016.

04
A troop of Senegalese Commandos put on a combatives display at Thies, Senegal, during Flintlock 2016.

U.S. ARMY PHOTOS BY JENNIFER G. ANGELO



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they have learned on a daily basis they bring to this event, share it with us, and we learn how we can integrate our assets and our resources and efforts into countering these regional and terrorist threats that they may face."

"Flintlock is the type of event that creates connections between African, European and U.S. units that we're able to leverage when there's a crisis — you're able to pick up the phone and talk to someone you know and trust, someone who shares the same business practices and ways of operating as you do. That's invaluable when there's an event where you need to work together. Cross-border cooperation is key to solving many of the complex problems seen in Africa, and Flintlock is an event fostering this sort of engagement. As Flintlock grows its impacts can't be understated," Bolduc explained.

"Flintlock 2016 was a resounding success to the interoperability and continued development of relationships between not only numerous African nations that participated but the numerous other nations as well," said CWO5 Davis. "The overall importance of continuing annual exercises like Flintlock centers around the African nations continuing to develop trust and share best practices amongst each other. The problems that exist in African nations with VEOs and instability do not typically end at any one border. They are regional problems and all the nations in our AOR must work together to solve them." 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Staff Sgt. Kulani J. Lakanaria is a Public Affairs NCO assigned to 3rd Special Forces Group (A).

Return to AFRICA

Lessons Learned from the 3rd Special Forces Group's Return to Africa

BY MAJOR ALEXANDER B. LAZATIN

In the Spring of 2015, members of 3rd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) transitioned from support to Operation Enduring Freedom to Resolute Support in Afghanistan. Upon arrival back home to Fort Bragg, the men of Co. A., 3rd Bn., 3rd SFG(A), received the order that the unit was transitioning back to Africa as the regionally aligned force responsible for operations on the Continent in support of security and national interests.

Having spent the past 14 years fighting in Afghanistan, there were different reactions among the force. Although, several questions surfaced within the company concerning the transition, three questions were the most frequently asked. First, what type of missions was anticipated in the new area of responsibility? Second, what are the threats, and finally, how capable are the African partner nations in deterring threats? Some of those questions were answered during the company's participation in Flintlock 2016; however, continued exposure to the Continent will grow the group's understanding of the complexity of operating in Africa.

FLINTLOCK: THE BEGINNING

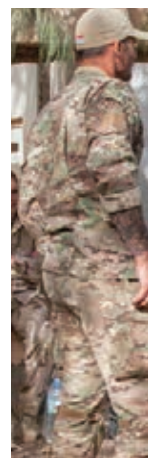
In September 2015, the company was tasked to participate in Flintlock, providing an Advanced Operational Base and four operational detachment-alphas. Although, the preparation and planning for the exercise was already well underway prior to the official tasking, the company took ownership of the mission. The company transitioned to the role of AOB 3310 during planning, preparation and execution. Because Flintlock was an unknown to the men in the unit, it was imperative that the AOB establish a baseline understanding of the mission of Flintlock, its reach and goals. As Flintlock is a Joint Chief of Staff exercise, it is one of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's primary tools in achieving joint- and multinational-training. Additionally, the exercise provides the Geographic Combatant Commander the primary means to train joint staff and for the staff to understand the functions of each section in a joint and combined environment. Although, the definition is broad in nature it gave the Green Berets a perspective of the exercise and an understanding of their new role in partnership



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with the Western and African partners. The role of the AOB was more of a collaboration of techniques, tactics and procedures between participating nations. During the execution of the Flintlock exercise, each ODA partnered with a Western SOF unit and served as the primary lead in advising African partners. The new role required the ODAs to adjust its role, which for 14 years had been as the lead partners to military units of the host nation. The ODAs experience in counterterrorism impressed both the Western and African partners, while their experience in combat became a foundation for building relationships and sharing learned TTPs.

Understanding the threats in the new AOR became of primary importance for all Soldiers in the unit. Familiarity with al-Qaeda and the Taliban was necessary operating in Afghanistan and neighboring countries, although we never called ourselves experts since the enemy continues to evolve. The threat in Africa is multifaceted in nature, there is not a single entity or influence that commands and controls other violent extremist organizations. An ODA in Africa can deploy to a country with a specific threat focus then deploy to a neighboring country that has a different threat. This is a daunting problem set, which was put to the test during the company's participation in Flintlock 2016. Each ODA conducted its respective planning and analyzed threats in support of the exercise. Once again, their previous experience proved valuable in using lessons learned. They not only identified potential enemy threats in Senegal and neighboring countries, but also identified other threats that could affect the effectiveness of the ODAs. A consideration was taking precautionary measures to ensure the health of team members due to the diseases that were endemic in the region. Exposure to mosquito infested places was the number one concern. The other threats were animals that are venomous, such as snakes and scorpions. Finally, we considered the threat of food borne illnesses.

Finally, the capabilities of the host nation in deterring threats were identified during mission planning. During the



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A Green Beret from 3rd SFG(A) stands in formation at the opening ceremony for the Flintlock 2016 exercise in Senegal.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SGT. STEPHEN S. CLINE

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U.S. Army Special Forces team member works with Senegalese soldiers in Thies, Senegal.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY ANDREA K. SERHAN

03

Senegalese Navy Special Operations officers conduct a CQB drill brief with 3rd SFG(A) team members and other partner-nation forces at St. Louis, Senegal, during Flintlock 2016.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SPC. DAVID M. SHEFCHUK

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3rd SFG(A) team members demonstrate range techniques to Senegalese Navy Special Operations officers, at St. Louis, Senegal during Flintlock 2016.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY JANICE BURTON



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company's involvement in Flintlock 2016, the question was somewhat answered on the observed capability of the host nation. Although it was an indirect way of answering the threat question, it gave the AOB and ODAs an idea of how the host nation dealt with enemy threats in the area of operations. Although Senegal is a permissive country, there were still violent extremist organizations that continue to affect the security of the country. The VEOs affect other Islamic fundamentalist in the area either directly or indirectly. That is either through the transportation of supplies to terrorist organizations or facilitation of terror acts in the region. The threat level in Senegal may be lower than other African countries that fall under the area of operation of 3rd Special Forces Group (A), but it definitely gave the unit confidence in how the Senegalese security force handled the situation. The Senegal security forces may be a fraction of the size when compared to other nations, never the less, they are capable of analyzing threats. This was proven during Flintlock's culmination exercise; the Senegalese Intelligence Section was well versed regarding threats from enemies that could affect their security. They were able to conduct their version of intelligence preparation of the battlefield during the culmination exercise and inject realistic scenarios to the participants in the training. Their capability at the tactical- and operational-level of operations to track and analyze threats may differ from U.S. standards, but it is definitely working. An example of this was the ability to identify a potential terrorist act that the Government of Senegal was able to counter in January 2016 before the start of Flintlock. The Senegalese authorities apprehended more than 500 people who were suspected of planning terrorist acts as part of a security crackdown after terrorist attacks in neighboring Burkina Faso and Mali.

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The transition of 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) to Africa has several questions that continue to surface because of lessons learned from previous deployments. This will continue to cycle until the unit becomes familiar with the challenges in Africa. Some of the questions that were answered due to the company's participation in the exercise were just a fraction of request for information that each ODA asked during its preparation for deployment. Additionally, Senegal is one of 12 countries in the AOR and answers that may be pertinent to Senegal may not be applicable in other countries. Flintlock 2016 was definitely a great introduction to the AOR giving the company a taste of what may come in future deployments.



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The experience in Senegal touched on several events and became helpful for future deployments. Some of these lessons learned are planning considerations for future missions in Africa, deployment requirements, area familiarization, resources available, necessary resources, redeployment, necessary support personnel and other factors that could help develop a sound plan. Although, Senegal is a beacon of peace and stability in West Africa and a strong economy in the region, it also shares a border with Mali, where AQIM is principally based in the Sahara Desert. The exercise in Senegal gave every Green Beret in the company a perspective on what to prepare and train for in future engagements in the AOR. The planning for Flintlock 2016 required the same commitment and received the same amount of attention 3rd SFG(A) dedicated to previous deployments. The big take away was that some elements that we took for granted when planning a mission in Afghanistan will not be favorable in Africa if we use the same approach. A good example is resources; the network of support established in Afghanistan obviously will not be the



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01 A 3rd SFG(A) Soldier conducts repelling operations with an African partner nation Soldier during Flintlock 2016. U.S. ARMY PHOTO

02 A 3rd SFG(A) team member works with Senegalese Commandos at the range during Flintlock 2016. U.S. ARMY PHOTO

03 3rd SFG(A) team members integrate with Senegalese Commando counterparts during Flintlock 2016. U.S. ARMY PHOTOS BY JENNIFER G. ANGELO

04 A Senegalese Commando and a 3rd SFG(A) team member work together at the range during Flintlock 2016. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY ANDREA K. SERHAN

05 A 3rd SFG(A) team member talks with his Senegalese counterparts during Flintlock 2016. Working together throughout the exercise helps build important relationships between partner nations. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY JENNIFER G. ANGELO

same as in any part of Africa. Food and water and other necessary supplies and services to self-sustain were very critical. Finding the right source and potentially the right organization to support the ODAs throughout the mission is a huge factor of successful planning. The challenges faced during the exercise were manageable, but it definitely was work intensive in ensuring the correct supplies and support were delivered on time and in the correct amount. A good back up plan will also be necessary just in case the primary plan does not supply the ODAs with the essential items. The resource constraints we experienced during the exercise were definitely a big challenge, which must be considered by an ODA preparing for deployment in the region. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maj. Alexander B. Lazitan is a Special Forces officer, who served as the AOB Commander during Flintlock 2016.



OPERATIONAL CULTURE IN AN OPEN, PERMISSIVE ENVIRONMENT

01

Airfield Operations Observations from Exercise Flintlock

BY CAPTAIN CALEB SLAYTON

TASK VERSES THE GREATER MISSION

You're a SOF operator, collaborating in an exercise or sustainment environment with 10 other African partners and just as many non-African partners. You have one central bed-down location but your daily sorties take you to 10 other airfields in several separate Sahelian countries. Your daily mission is anything from airlift to airdrops to airfield surveys and area reconnaissance; moving equipment, emplacing personnel, training host-nation partners and supporting exercise and real-world missions. Let me suggest this to you: the expanded list of "missions" should be recognized merely as small "tasks" serving greater strategic objectives. Your greater SOF mission exceeds route planning and tactical savvy. The Special Operations Command-Africa mission, an integral part of the U.S. Africa Command mission, is to build long-term partnerships, enabling honest rapport while sharing military expertise and effort toward common interests and against mutual threats.

The seasoned aircraft operator catalogues every contingency, preparing for every tactical maneuver or possible austere landing scenario. What are the physical conditions of the landing zone and the aircraft? What are the threat trends and the acceptable levels of risk? Where do I refuel? What are the airspace restrictions? The operator has thought out the "mission," but has yet to address the greatest objective. The real mission is long-term and involves an understanding of operational culture. What are the language challenges? What is the cultural concept of time? What is the proper method of displaying respect in official and unofficial engagements? What are the host-nation operational rules; written and unwritten? How does one respect the airspace of a sovereign nation aside from the manuals tucked in the flight bag or saved to the iPad? These are the challenges to SOF operations in Sub-Saharan Africa and they hold the key to mission and strategic success in the long term.

CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE IMPACTS OPERATIONS

Many of the following observations come from Flintlock exercises hosted in Niger and Chad, but including participants and observers from Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Algeria, Cameroon, Morocco, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and nearly two dozen other African and Western partner nations. Flintlock is a yearly counterterrorism capacity-building exercise

focused on building partner-nation military capabilities through austere training and sharing of information. The end goal is to leave African militaries more capable in addressing regional threats like al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Boko Haram and the Movement for Unity and Justice in West Africa. Flintlock is crucial not only to building military skills but also focusing on population-centric strategies. Violent extremist groups will not be defeated through military action alone, but through the combined front of a united military-civilian social offensive garnering mutual respect.

There are two huge challenges to addressing operational culture; time and time. The first “time” is pre-deployment preparation. Only a handful of operators are able to dedicate sufficient time to learning local language customs and greetings. It takes time to research the current events, history and most important of all, the host-nation perspective of the cultural touchstones. The answers are not found in intelligence threat data and analysis. In fact, too much threat data can easily obscure the operational mission; overemphasizing hurdles and ignoring cultural bridges. The second “time” challenge occurs during the operation itself. Is there time planned into the schedule for host-nation relationship building, air traffic control coordination, host-base rapport-building investments and contingency contract negotiations?

Exercises like Flintlock take a lot of planning and coordination. Through dozens of host-nation meetings and engagements, contracts are signed and agreements solidified to address all the potential needs of players involved. A lot of hard work goes in to scouring over past after action reports and building on the expertise of all nations involved. These are all political transactions that can look good on paper but are not able to completely foresee how future events will unfold. The weather never cooperates. Information does not flow out of meetings into the field as planners might expect either. One air traffic control team receiving all the non-standard flight plan specifics may pass the file to the next shift without more than a high five for a changeover. Planning is important, but it is in the contingency realm where operators prove their worth.

Operators all too often can meet their task but with the greater mission left to the wayside. In the Sahel, and much of Africa, it’s not that time is relative; the truth is that relationship is of utmost importance. Your schedule must be padded to include greetings with chauffeurs, fuel services, the hangar manager, base ops and the unexpected host-nation two-minute salutation. Western culture is task oriented. As such, your host-country Special Operations Liaison Element or Defense Attaché expect direct questions and will provide prompt execution without “unnecessary” rapport building. However, considering the high-rate of foreign military personnel turnover, it is not unreasonable for a host-nation partner to desire to understand a military counterpart.

Be careful, however, to make rapport-building a genuine effort. The Continent of Africa knows all too well what insincere relationship efforts look and feel like. During the Colonial era, empires, merchants and militaries took advantage of Africa’s trust and generosity and gave little back in return. Political strategists also took advantage of Africa’s internal tensions, playing upon ethnic rivalries while simultaneously accentuating tribal identities. The colonizers signed legitimate treaties with numerous African leaders. However as a secondary and tertiary strategy some African leaders were strong-armed into agreements or even tricked into signing away land and property, all for the expedient self-interest of the colonizer.⁰¹

It has been 50 plus years since independence for most of the Continent and many countries are still on the relational mend with their former colonizers. Short-term solutions can be brutal to long-term strategies. The African host-nation will be friendly and generous, but be sure not to take selfish advantage of the gesture. There will be instances when time is short and the task is pressing. Do not be tempted to strong-arm a deal or force what you consider a “logical” agenda. The strong-arm method may work once. Getting red in the face may achieve success the second time, but over the long-term relationships will crack and crumble. The best way to present an offer to

01
U.S. and Partner nation military forces call for medevac air support during a joint training exercise at Flintlock 2016.

02
A Senegalese Solider shakes hands with a Special Forces team member during Flintlock 2016.

U.S. ARMY PHOTOS BY
SPC. ANDREA SERHAN



02



01

your African partner is to outline the proposal, provide adequate time and multiple engagements to meet an agreement.

In any open and honest relationship, there must be a steady flow of information. For Flintlock 2014 in Niger, the Niamey military aircraft apron was beyond max capacity. The civilian control tower experienced a 400 percent increase in its airspace activity while adjusting to at least seven different Western Partner aircrews and one new local drop zone. In the indirect manner of Sahelian subtlety, both the Nigerien military base leadership and the ATC asked for more information. They needed to be in the loop on everything, regardless of whether or not they would be in tactical control. For the base commander, it was enough to receive a daily email on the activity, take-off-times, refueling plans and services that would be occurring on *his* ramp. Providing information is a sign of trust and is well worth the time and effort.

The Chadian 2015 context was arguably even more challenging. Through multiple planning conferences, culminating in December 2014, the

aircraft activity appeared at manageable level. The cordial aircraft parking agreements were generous. By February 2015, at the start of the exercise, Chad was at war. Formerly forgotten aircraft were pushed to their limits in coalition efforts against Boko Haram. Every inch of military ramp was focused on real-world coalition operations. Negotiating any aircraft movement for an exercise required sensitivity to daily combat realities. The Chadian hosts proudly carved out limited parking for its exercise partner aircraft while simultaneously loading munitions and down-loading casualties from their own.

The Nigerien Air Force, Police Force and military as a whole were excessively generous and welcoming to U.S. and partner-nation military presence. Due to, and despite, challenges in cross-cultural communication, the Niger military went to great lengths to accommodate the fast-paced, advanced technological level of non-Nigerien methods. What were normally half-day Fridays to accommodate Friday prayers and a longer weekend were swallowed by a seven-day ops tempo normally running well into night-time hours. Where there were normally 18 total officers to run the Niger Air Base activities, there were two, total. The rest were manning exercise out-stations or local exercise command positions. The base manager, a major (O-4) equivalent, stashed a mattress in his office anticipating the late nights and early mornings. SOF operators should think twice before under-estimating host-nation efforts or capabilities. If you get

WHEN SOF UNITS FOCUS TOO MUCH ON THE "TASK" AND NOT THE "GREATER MISSION" THERE IS OFTEN LITTLE LEARNING PASSED BETWEEN OPERATORS

frustrated and openly impatient before your African partner, you may be completely missing the great strides taken to meet your standards.

NO SHORTCUTS ON STANDARDS OR COMMUNICATION

When the SOF operators approached the Nigerien base operations office to approve the first-ever U.S. C-130 Forward Arming and Refueling in Niger, three elements should take priority. One, all paperwork and survey data needed to be completed and signed.⁰² Second, as Western military capabilities might be foreign to some African partners, it's courteous to explain in detail tactical procedures. Finally, it is important to think about how the host-nation might perceive the action overall. The Nigeriens were initially offended at the thought that the FARP would replace their huge effort at meeting all the fuel needs. U.S. planners were concerned about technical data; while the host-nation, all ready to approve any and every exercise need, felt slighted fuel would be provided by a more "capable" source. Complete data, information dissemination and understanding the cultural nuances are three elements necessary to display trust and a respect between any two partners. In the end, it was easy to explain the FARP procedures as a win-win to African stakeholders once planners understood their counterpart's point-of-view.

Of the three essential elements, information dissemination may be the most important to SOF operators. The purpose of many SOCAFRICA engagements in Africa is to build host-nation capabilities. When SOF units focus too much on the "task" and not the "greater mission" there is often little learning passed between operators and the African partner. It took time and extra effort to meet with the ATC before completing unfamiliar air drop operations, but it was time well spent. It took one more extra email and perhaps a personal trip to deliver by hand the bed-down, parking and sortie times for the next day's aircraft to the base commander, admittedly overwhelmed by the process. All it takes to ensure mission success is a little tact and patience to ensure host-nation partners buy in to your plan of action.

Overall, the air executions achieved their objectives. Experienced aircrew from multiple units participated in the exercise supported by an air component commander and airfield liaisons. One such example of patient information dissemination leading to long-term success was witnessed at one of the outstations. Dedicated Nigerien personnel staffed the austere airfield. Despite their competence, the staff was unaccustomed to the high ops tempo of a major military exercise. The U.S. air liaison for the exercise took time to build rapport with the Nigerien personnel, sharing ATC responsibilities and allowing for flexibility in exercise hours. It takes a SOF warrior-diplomat to sync the two cultures. Operation-

al culture teaches how to gain exponentially from considering cultural dynamics, putting the mission before the task. Incidentally, language and cultural barriers are a challenge far beyond radio communications on aircraft approach. If it is any consolation to the U.S. pilot, your American accent is very difficult for an African ATC to understand as well.⁰³

NEGOTIATING IS MORE THAN PERSUADING

Most SOF operators in the Sahel will tell you Africans are very forgiving. It is true. It's always easier to negotiate with a friend rather than a stranger. If the environment and mission permit, SOF should make it a priority to meet and greet counterparts. Whether you are landing in N'Djamena, Chad for a 30 minute troop pick-up or building long-term rapport with an austere air field fuel manager, there are three ways to make a quick friend. Have a friendly face meet your host-nation reception before they even have a chance to approach your vehicle or aircraft position. Provide a friendly handshake and a greeting in the local language. In doing so, you transform your intimidating presence into a relationship enabler. You shatter any negative misperception with unexpected kindness and you display a willingness to depart from the shelter of English into the heart language of your newest friend. It is always more difficult to ask a bribe of a friend.

You cannot bank on the fact that a contract or pre-signed agreement has made its way in paper to where you are working. The contingency in this case requires extensive operational cultural insight. In examples from Flintlock, it was enough for local authorities to hear "U.S. Embassy" or "Flintlock Exercise" for them to accommodate your request. This shorthand is testimony to the relationship building

01
Partner nation forces load onto a helicopter during Flintlock 2016.
U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY
SPC. ANDREA SERHAN

02
U.S. Army Special Operations Soldiers meet with partner nation military forces during Flintlock 2016.
U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY
JENNIFER G. ANGELO



02



01

prior to the main exercise body arrived. In more dictatorial political environments, a command from the “top” or the proper signature is the only method of assured access. Your interaction sets the tone for every future engagement with an individual or location after you depart. The next C-130 or CV-22 crew interacting with your host-nation contacts will either thank you or “defriend” you based on the relational foundation you’ve engineered.

COURTEOUS IN EVERY CASE

Despite Status of Forces agreements, contracts and local chauffeurs, there is always the chance of running in to local law enforcement or getting hung up on a local regulation. The stereotype of rampant corruption is not always correct. Whether you are being asked to pay a landing fee or forced to pay a parking ticket, check yourself. One: be as humble and respectful as possible. Using the local equivalent for “please” “thank you” “sir” and “ma’am” is a good start. Two: ask yourself, “What is the rule and did I break it?” There are ways to find the rules, written and unwritten, for every operational context. Combining research with Embassy assistance and a host-nation friend is a good way to figure it out.

NOTES 01. M. E. Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, Second ed. (London and New York: Longman, 1999). 02. Waivers can be considered, if necessary, after full disclosure and agreement with the Host Nation. 03. As an added aid and a cultural bridge to the host nation military partner, Flintlock looked for a few call signs in the local language. They were easy for everyone to pronounce and made the host-nation proud. (It’s also easier than having to spell “ANVIL” with the phonetic alphabet every time you address the Control Tower). 04. It was a small shock to many aircrew members to see multiple civilians of all ages with smart phones at even the most remote airfield locations taking pictures and videos of the “curious” events.

SOFA’s do not make military members infallible; but they should make them more humble.

The business approach to any process in the Sahel, from civilian airport security to customs agents to gate guards, often hits a dead end. A familiar face holds more credibility than a badge or military rank. Keeping to the rules is always the first step. But when the rules are unwritten or unclear, it was the familiar face that could guide unfamiliar exercise participants and unprepared journalists through the maze of would-be hassles and confiscations.

It takes more energy and preparation to be a warrior-diplomat than a tactical savant. Host nation military and civilian authorities will respect you for making an effort to honor and respect their position. To fully complete your mission, be prepared to leave a small token of thanks with your newest African partners (and hopefully life-long friend). Something as simple as a t-shirt, unit coin or trinket is an acceptable gift. Even though smart-phones and camera-phones are widespread, printed pictures are still harder to come by and are a cherished gift for African partners to put in their home or office.⁰⁴ The best gifts are practical or showcase a unique find in the heart of the Sahel. Presentation is everything. Make the occasion as friendly yet formal as possible. Some enduring mission sets in Africa have navigated the local artisan markets and crafted gifts to include local wares. As a bonus, these types of innovative gifts contribute to the local economy and materially illustrate your interest in local customs and culture.

In a military so concerned with the number of sorties, PAX, cargo movements and extremist networks dismantled, it’s a difficult adjustment to quantify relationship building, information dissemination and genuinely mutual education. However, investing in relationships and moving forward together with African partners will ensure tactical and strategic mission success. **SW**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Captain Caleb Slayton is the director for the USAFRI-COM Theater for SOF course out of the United States Air Force Special Operations School, Hurlburt Field, Florida. Capt. Slayton grew up in East Africa and has traveled and deployed to numerous other African countries. Capt. Slayton received his Masters in Middle East & Africa Security Studies from the Naval Post-Graduate School and is proficient in French, Arabic and Portuguese, making ready use of these skills while serving on the African Continent.

01

A U.S. Army Special Operations Soldier talks with an African partner nation Soldier during Flintlock 2016. Relationship building is one of the primary goals of joint military training exercises. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY JENNIFER G. ANGELO

02

A 3rd SFG(A) 18D teaches a combat lifesaver course during Flintlock 2016. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SPC. ZAYID BALLESTEROS



02

18D: THE LIFELINE

The Importance of the 18 Delta in SOCFWD-NWA.

BY SERGEANT BENJAMIN NORTHCUTT

Think back to a time when a loved one was injured and needed immediate medical treatment. Emergency Medical Technicians were the first personnel to respond and react to the situation. With a call to 911, the help arrived within minutes and the person transported to the nearest hospital in the city. They had an ambulance fully stocked with tools and medicine needed to provide care until they arrived at the emergency room. What would have happened if the ambulance did not have everything needed, there was only one EMT and the nearest place to receive immediate care was hundreds of miles away?

The 18 Delta has a more vital role as the primary prolonged field care provider in the AFRICOM area of responsibility.

For 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), Africa is now the main area of responsibility. The continent is 11,668,599 square miles. With such a massive area of responsibility, one of the focuses of 3rd SFG(A) is medical care and the complications that come from such a vast and harsh environment.

In CENTCOM we tried to apply the "golden hour," which means from the time of injury to the receipt of the nine-line MEDEVAC request the injured will be at the surgeon within one hour, said Lt. Col. David A. Baker, the 3rd SFG(A) surgeon.

There is a very limited patient hold capability in the AFRICOM AOR and instead of getting the patient to a surgeon within that hour, it now takes multiple hours, said Baker.

"To paint a picture, imagine being injured in Miami, and the nearest surgical asset is in New York City for stabilization followed by higher-level care in Los Angeles," said Baker.

To go along with the problems of distance and the amount of time the patient has to wait for higher levels of care comes the wide variety of diseases present throughout the AOR.

"When we do the tropical medicine course with our guys, you can open the thick tropical med book and go to any page, and those diseases are present within our AOR," said Master Sergeant Rick Hines, 3rd SFG(A) senior enlisted medical advisor.

Due to having so many diseases present the 18 Delta has to shift from being primarily trauma-oriented to a clinical aspect. The 18 Delta gets to see some diseases that doctors in the U.S. do not even get to see, said Hines.

"It is imperative to get those guys and their mindset back toward clinical medicine and still keeping their trauma skills," said Hines.

To help mitigate some of the risks and issues involved with providing higher level care in remote areas, the 3rd SFG(A) medics had to change their mindset from trauma care to prolonged field-care training.

"What we require our 18 Deltas to do is the key tenants of prolonged field care," said Baker. "Including resuscitation, performing minimum surgeries to save a life, protecting the airway and maintaining ventilation, keeping the patient comfortable through normal analgesia and monitoring along with trending the patient's vital signs to determine if they are getting better or are about to get worse and crash."



01

"Normally in CENTCOM there was a team of medical staff to do this, however, in AFRICOM we are expecting our 18 Deltas to accomplish all of these tasks by themselves," said Baker.

Prolonged field care incorporates an entire ODA team through cross training and teaching everyone how to assist the 18 Delta, explained Baker.

Partnerships with some organizations in the U.S. also assist in cross training and helping to teach the 18 Delta's skills needed to sustain prolonged field care.

"Duke University and the University of Alabama at Birmingham are key training partners in the 18 Delta's medical proficiency training," said Baker.

One useful tool that 18 Deltas trained on through the partnerships is the use of ultrasound machines and how to identify bleeding in the abdomen, collapsed lungs, broken bones and foreign objects, he said.

The use of ultrasound machines was limited to a doctor, but now with the training from partners, the 18 Delta has a new method of helping to make critical decisions about a patient.

The weight of an ultrasound machine is so much smaller and more portable than an x-ray machine, and the x-ray can only take x-rays.


"By modifying our non-trauma logic, we can focus on what nonspecific field care we need for AFRICOM," said Hines. "All of the training they get is in preparation for the prolonged field care exercise for their PMT before deployment."

Another component of the switch in AORs for the 18 Delta is the gear shift from primarily another person for combat power to having to focus on being the expert on preventative medicine and being a medic for the team.

"We don't have enough doctors to push out to each ODA team and each location," said Hines. "That's why we train 18 Deltas the way we do. It is because they are part doctor, part nurse, part preventative medicine guy, part mad scientist and are able to improvise and create things they wish they had."

The 18 Delta still does more than just medicine, they are part of a team and still have an essential job to do before being a medic. The biggest challenge the 18 Delta is going to face is complacency and getting into a mindset of, well nothing happened last time so let's skip this training or that, said Hines.

With the shift in areas of responsibility and the focus on tactical field care, the 18 Delta has become more vital to the health and safety of an ODA team. The 18 Delta is now the doctor, nurse and sole caregiver for any team member who gets sick. They must provide that lifesaving care in a prolonged environment, hundreds of miles across Africa, and keep the patient stable and alive until they reach that next level of care or do what is necessary when that next level of care is not available.

"I believe that we are on the right path," said Col. Sterling. "We still have a significant distance to go to where I think that we are truly exploiting the potential that special operations forces bring. Even though 3rd SFG(A) is the one-unit solution to the command and control and mission command of SOCFWD-NWA, we have our joint partners with us Marine Special Operations Command, Naval Special Warfare Command and the Air Force Special Operations Command. The critical-thinking and problem-solving skills that are resident in United States SOF is significantly put to use here. This is not an easy problem set. There are some different factors notwithstanding the cliché tyranny of distance. In our small footprint, I think that we are exponentially successful proportioned to our footprints on the ground." 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sgt. Benjamin Northcutt is a Public Affairs NCO assigned to 3rd Special Forces Group (A).

THEY MUST PROVIDE THAT LIFESAVING CARE IN A PROLONGED ENVIRONMENT, HUNDREDS OF MILES ACROSS AFRICA, AND KEEP THE PATIENT STABLE AND ALIVE

01
A 3rd SFG(A) 18D conducts medical training during Flintlock 2016. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SPC. ZAYID BALLESTEROS

02
Small teams operating in austere environments with limited supplies, far from medical assistance is the norm for ARSOF in Africa. U.S. ARMY PHOTO COURTESY OF 3RD SFG(A) PAO



THE LOSS OF THE GOLDEN HOUR

02

Medical Support for the Next Generation of Military Operations

BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL JAMIE RIESBERG, MAJOR DOUG POWELL

AND SERGEANT FIRST CLASS PAUL LOOS

The views presented are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Defense Department or the U.S. government.

Sweat pours off the advanced medic's forehead and drips onto his watch. The truck lurches and hits another hole in the dirt trail they are travelling to get to the airfield. He curses. Still over four and a half hours until the aircraft lands that will transport his patient to surgical care. His teammate is now in shock from blood loss in his pelvis and abdomen after a vehicle rollover in the remote area where they were operating. The injured man's moans are barely audible over the roar of the engine as the driver guns the throttle, hoping to get to the airfield as quickly as possible...

This is the reality of Prolonged Field Care (PFC). Defined as "field medical care, applied beyond doctrinal planning timelines, by a Special Operations Combat Medic or higher, in order to decrease patient mortality and morbidity. Utilizes limited resources, and is sustained until the patient arrives at an appropriate level of care,"⁰¹ this will become the medical reality in the next decade of military conflict. Gray Zone conflict is "not quite open war but more than regular competition" and encompasses activities ranging from information warfare and economic conflict to transnational crime and terrorism.⁰²

In such a paradigm of conflict, it is unlikely that a large conventional force

will enter the theater. It is equally unlikely that the expeditionary medical footprint modeled by U.S. Army forward surgical teams or a combat surgical hospitals, which collectively contributed to the lowest mortality rate of any conflict in history, will be deployed in support of such Gray Zone operations.⁰³ Indeed, a complete paradigm shift in how we plan and execute medical support for hybrid conflict will be required. The key problem: The Gray Zone model of conflict prohibits forward staging of definitive medical support in all operating areas due to wide geographic dispersion of high numbers of small teams/units performing low-intensity operations.

WHAT WE KNOW:

1. Globalization has resulted in potential for widespread Gray Zone (hybrid) conflict. Hybrid conflict by definition does not imply a large conventional military force response. In other words, we have greater potential for low density of critical casualties widely dispersed across remote operating areas with less readily available military medical support. In addition, mechanisms of injury and wounding patterns may be different.

2. Transporting critically ill or injured patients to advanced (ie, surgical or physician-based) medical

care within one hour saves lives. Early initiation of treatment and resuscitation of critically injured and sick patients improves outcomes.⁰⁴

3. The 2015 National Military Strategy states, “We are more likely to face prolonged campaigns than conflicts that are resolved quickly...that control of escalation is becoming more difficult and more important...and that as a hedge against unpredictability with reduced resources, we may have to adjust our global posture.” This is what General Votel termed, “The Gray Zone” model of conflict.

4. Rapid medical transport capability and forward medical support staging is impossible in the model of low-intensity, widely dispersed Gray Zone conflict due to a simple problem of numbers. There are not enough medical and evacuation assets to ensure one hour evacuation times. In addition, the infrequent occurrence of injury in any given area of operations cannot justify the deployment of such resources even if they are available in sufficient quantity. Prolonged field care is now the norm, not the exception. As the DoD adjusts its global medical posture, more responsibility for prolonged, resuscitative care in austere environments will fall on SOF medical assets.

5. SOF medics have always had the mission of providing far-forward medical care without surgical support or robust medical supply/support. This skill set has fallen into disuse. Sustainment of robust SOF medical skills has also proven to be

problematic.⁰⁵ We must refresh and refocus this skill set after 14 years of acute trauma-centric care in a mature medical environment that assured sub-one hour evacuation to definitive surgical care. Fortunately, SOF medics have a rich history of solutions to far-forward care in the absence of surgical support that dates back to World War II.

6. The U.S. Special Operations Command’s troop strength doubled from 2001-2014: With about 33,000 personnel in 2001, it was estimated to reach 72,000 in 2014. USSOF are currently deployed to more than 100 countries.⁰⁶ Many of these areas have inadequate U.S. or partner force medical support and failed host-nation medical infrastructure.

SOLUTIONS (USING THE DOTMLPF-P MODEL IN DOD DOCTRINE):⁰⁷

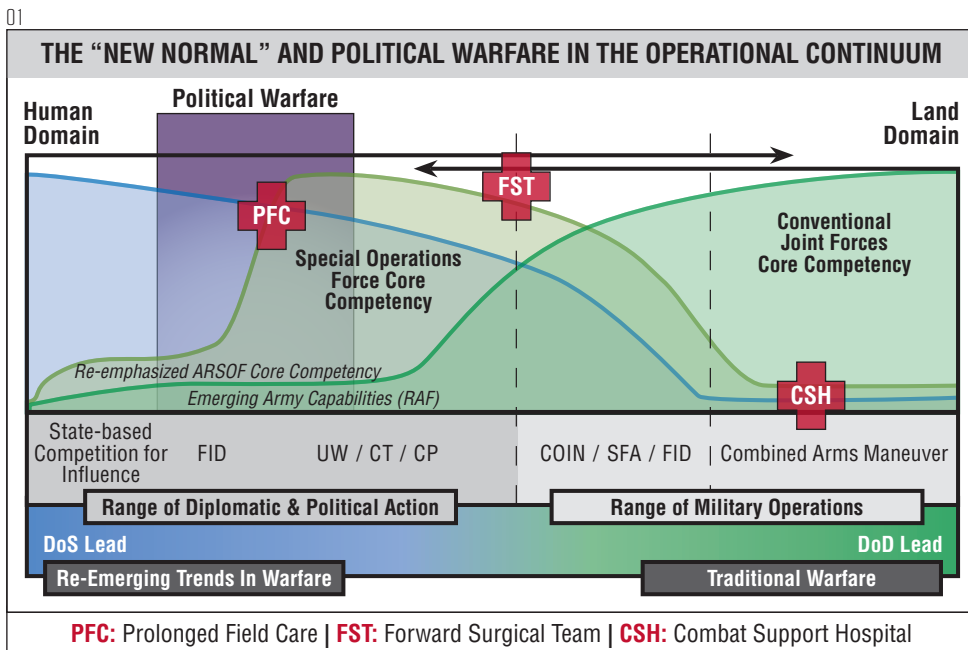
Gray Zone conflict will be prosecuted in a wide range of tactical, geographic and political environments. The goal of Prolonged Field Care medical strategy is to establish key capabilities that guide the development of solutions that can be individualized to specific environments.

DOMAIN – Leadership: Study key principles of Golden Hour trauma care — what interventions are responsible for the drop in Case Fatality Rates? Is it damage control surgery? Care by a trauma team versus a single medic? Robust blood product availability? Advanced monitoring and resuscitation techniques? In

short, what are the key interventions within the first hours of trauma care that dramatically reduce mortality, and how can we push those interventions forward into Gray Zone models of conflict/deployment? Leaders will require the best available medical research in order to shape their willingness to assume risk in hybrid conflict operations. For example, Dr. Kotwal’s comprehensive review of data from the Afghanistan conflict from 2001 to 2014 suggests that the rapid availability of blood transfusion for critically injured Service Members had a significant positive effect on survival.⁰⁸ The rapidly progressing capability of field blood transfusion is an excellent example of how leaders have partnered with researchers to ensure advanced procedures can be safely performed by medics in austere settings.

DOMAIN – Operations: The DoD will need to develop alternatives to the robust medical transport chain that has been so successful in the Middle East theater of operations. The global patient movement system, while an absolute model of success in the last decade, cannot efficiently support the types of operations that will come to typify the next decade — hybrid conflict with small team deployments and uncertain locations/timelines.

DOMAIN - Training: The most important domain for providing immediate mitigation of the risks posed by operating in immature medical environments is training. SOF Medics will need to train to provide care to critically injured and sick casualties for up to several days. Training should be guided by the Core 10 Capabilities of PFC in order to reduce morbidity and mortality in environments with no existing or planned Role II medical support or rotary evacuation.⁰⁹ Non-medical personnel must be medically trained to participate in “trauma team” care of critical injuries. Requirements for Tactical Combat Casualty Care should evolve to a more advanced level, similar to the U.S. Army Ranger Regiment’s Ranger First Responder. Training programs developed for



Adapted from “ARSOF NEXT: A Return to First Principles.”


⁰¹ In the Operational Continuum medical support is least available when special operations are at their peak. As conventional force numbers increase so does access to care.

Unconventional Warfare units such as the Special Operations Force Austere Care Course (SOFACC, for non-medics) and the Regional Support Medic Course (RSM, for SOF medics) should be studied for adoption into conventional SOF units. To facilitate cross-training of non-medical team members, medical scenarios should be incorporated into every possible training event. Research must be conducted to develop new training models to simulate the physiology of critically injured and sick casualties that can withstand field training in harsh environments. SOF physicians and physician assistants should have opportunities to learn and train critical care skills in top civilian trauma centers.

4. DOMAIN – Material: PFC in austere, sometimes semi-permissive or non-permissive environments presents significant challenges for medical logistics and planning. SOF medics and teams must integrate medical logistics and planning into training, tailor training to expected deployment environments and conditions and test logistics and planning as thoroughly as possible prior to deployment and upon arrival. SOF must continue to push existing DoD and civilian research to provide training and technological solutions for the inherent loss of capability generated by global hybrid conflict and loss of the Golden Hour. Promising technology that is being currently validated includes remote telemedicine support through the Virtual Critical Care Consultation service. VC3 represents one of many innovative strategic solutions that brings surgical or critical care consultation forward to austere environments.

5. DOMAIN - Doctrine: Instead of relying solely on conventional DoD medical support, SOF must also forge novel relationships with Department of State, other U.S. Government agencies, international allies and perhaps even non-governmental organizations. Consider the potential of an enduring relationship between USSOF and U.S.

Embassy medical assets to mitigate the lack of robust theater medical support. This achieves both the protection of American citizens abroad and leverages contingency medical/surgical care for USSOF. This is an example of what the 2015 NMS advocates in “adjusting our global {medical} posture.” Improvised treatment techniques, planning and supplies must be studied, trained and new doctrine/ guidance developed to support and share across SOF. An example of advancing medical doctrine for the Gray Zone environment is the partnership between the PFC Working Group and the Institute of Surgical Research at San Antonio Regional Medical Center to develop PFC-specific clinical practice guidelines for some of the most complex medical and trauma conditions. Additionally, NATO and our allies are collectively training and working on shared advanced medical resuscitative efforts to elevate the level of austere medical support across multi-lateral partnerships.

In summary, the nature of hybrid conflict demands that we redesign our approach for medical support in the DoD. The loss of the Golden Hour foreshadows significant challenges in caring for wounded or critically ill Service Members, and current assumptions on low mortality and historical injury patterns may not hold in novel strategic environments. Our military will meet this challenge successfully only through leadership emphasizing a new approach to training, planning and interagency cooperation. Special Operations medicine has a rich historical database of supporting hybrid conflict that must be explored for previously proven solutions. At the same time, military leaders will need to think innovatively to exploit new technologies and reinforce training that will ensure capable medical support during hybrid conflict. Significant forward thinking and courage to change accepted medical paradigms will be required if the DoD is to achieve similar medical outcomes to the historically low mortality rates achieved in OIF and OEF. 

THE TEN PROLONGED FIELD CARE CAPABILITIES:

1. Monitor the patient
2. Resuscitate the patient
3. Ventilate/Oxygenate the patient
4. Gain definitive control of the patient’s airway
5. Use sedation and pain control effectively
6. Use physical exam and diagnostic measures to gain awareness of potential problems
7. Provide nursing/hygiene/comfort measures
8. Perform advanced medic-level surgical interventions
9. Perform teleconsultation
10. Prepare the patient for flight

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lt. Col. Jamie C. Riesberg is the Special Operations Combat Medic Course Director at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Dr. Riesberg is a Family Medicine physician with recent deployments to Afghanistan and Africa.

Maj. Doug Powell is the 4th Battalion 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) Surgeon at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Dr. Powell is a Board Certified Critical Care physician at Womack Army Medical Center and has deployed to Afghanistan.

Sgt. 1st Class Paul E. Loos is the Special Forces Medical Sergeant Course Surgery, Anesthesia, Records and Reports Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. SFC Loos is a Special Forces Medical Sergeant and Advanced Tactical Paramedic with deployments to Iraq, Africa and Europe.

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SLEEP YOUR "GOLDEN TICKET" TO OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE



BY KATHRYN THOMPSON, MS, CSCS, CC-AASP
SOCEP Cognitive Performance Coach

Sleep is sometimes a rare commodity in the everyday operations of an ARSOF Soldier. High physical, technical, tactical and cognitive demands can push sleep to the wayside. However, sleep is a vital part of maximizing your physical and mental performance.

Sleep Myths:

Myth #1: You can get by with just four hours of sleep.

Researchers have discovered there is indeed a gene that helps to explain why some people can function very well on only four hours of sleep. It is important to note that this same gene has also been linked with heart disease and diabetes. In order to stay fit, healthy and alert, most of us need 7-8 hours of sleep each night.⁰¹

Myth #2: You can catch up on your sleep during the weekend.

Getting too little sleep during the week causes "sleep debt," or chronic sleep loss. Studies have shown that getting a few extra hours of sleep on the weekend may not be adequate to "pay back" your debt. One night of extra sleep can bring performance back up to normal levels for about six hours after waking, but after that performance deteriorates dramatically — reaction times become 10 times slower than they were earlier in the day.⁰³

Myth #3: Energy drinks are a substitute for sleep.

The caffeine and sugar content in fizzy drinks certainly can give you a temporary energy boost, but it comes at a high cost: that dreaded energy crash 1-2 hours after consuming the drink. Decades of research indicates that caffeine — when used correctly — can be effective for increasing performance; however, many Soldiers overdo energy drinks. Those who drink multiple energy drinks per day reported getting less than four hours of quality sleep at night, which leads to even greater daytime sleepiness and impaired performance.⁰⁷

Myth #4: Alcohol helps you sleep better.

Alcohol tricks people into thinking they are getting better sleep because it is a depressant and can induce sleep. The overall quality of sleep you get after drinking alcohol is greatly reduced. Alcohol decreases Rapid Eye Movement sleep, which can lead to disruptions in sleep cycles, migraines, poor emotional stability and morning crankiness.⁰⁵



03

Sleep and Performance

If you are not getting enough quality sleep, your physical and mental performance suffers significantly. There are two types of sleep deprivation that are common among Soldiers:

1. **Acute total sleep deprivation (ATSD)** - no sleep or a severe reduction in sleep, usually lasting 1-2 day.
2. **Chronic partial sleep deprivation (CPSD)** - when the individual routinely sleeps less than the amount of sleep required for optimal functioning.

Research shows that strength, endurance, reaction time, short- and long-term memory, attention and decision making are just some of the physical and mental capabilities that are adversely affected by both types of sleep deprivation.⁰² In fact, the negative effects of sleep deprivation on performance have been shown to be equal to performance decrements experienced due to alcohol intoxication.⁰⁴ [See Figure 02]

4 Tips to Improve Your Sleep In order to maximize your physical and mental performance, find ways to get more, better quality sleep. Here are some simple tips to help improve your sleep habits:

Tip #1: Create a “sleep routine.”

Let your brain and your body know it’s time to wind down and prepare for sleep by incorporating relaxing activities into your evening routine, such as reading or taking a warm shower or bath.

Tip #2: Avoid bright screens 1-2 hours before bedtime.

The blue light emitted from electronics such as cell phones and TV suppress melatonin, a natural sleep aid. Try to minimize your exposure to these, as well as other sources of bright light in order to get better quality sleep.

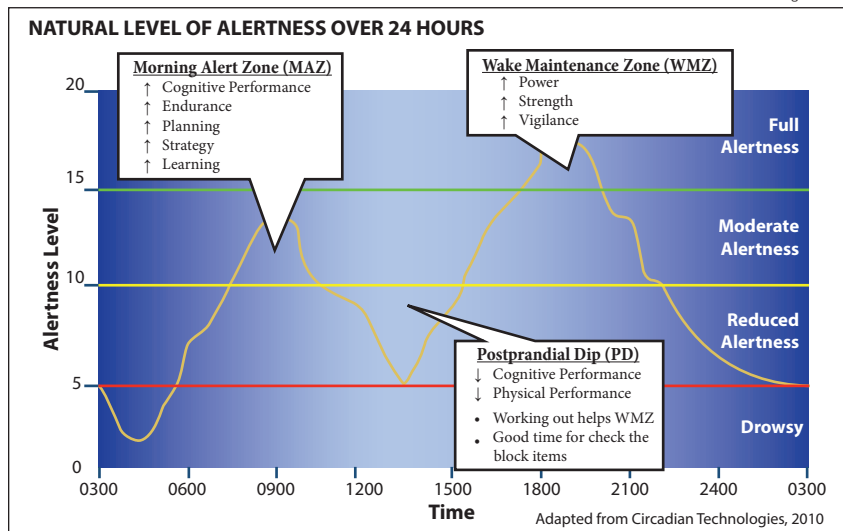
Tip #3: Avoid using caffeine 4-6 hours prior to bedtime.

Caffeine temporarily blocks sleep-inducing chemicals in the brain and increases adrenaline production, and it can have a stimulating effect as quickly as 15 minutes after consumption. But it takes about six hours for half the caffeine to be eliminated from the body, so minimize caffeine consumption in the afternoon so it won’t affect sleep.

Tip #4: Work around your body’s natural circadian rhythm.

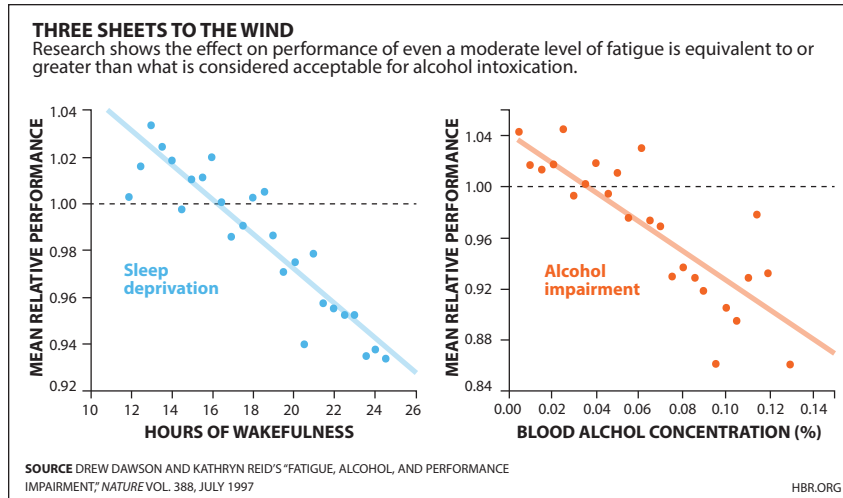
Try to go to bed and get up around the same time every day; this helps your body sync its internal alarm clock, which helps you wake up more alert. Your alertness levels naturally ebb and flow over the course of the day; try to engage in activities that match your natural alertness levels so you can maximize your physical and mental performance throughout the day. [See Figure 01]

Figure 01



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Figure 02



03
If Soldiers do not get enough quality sleep, physical and mental performance suffers significantly.
 DoD PHOTO BY DAVID VERGUN



01



02



SENEGAL COMMANDOS: — MEN OF COURAGE —

The writing on the gates of the Senegalese Battalion de Commando compound in Thies, Senegal, says it all: *Goor Fit*, which roughly translates to Men of Courage. The Senegalese Battalion de Commando is an equivalent to the U.S. Army's Ranger Regiment.

The Commando Battalion is comprised of four companies, with each company focusing on a unique skill set. The 1st Company is an airborne company. The 2nd Company is a nautical company, the 3rd focuses on combat and the 4th Company is the command company. The 4th Company has a subordinate support company that falls under its auspices.


The mission of the Commando Battalion is three fold: to acquire land, to attack in strategic zones and to counter enemy actions. The force can deploy throughout the country and, upon direction of the president, to other countries in support of partner-nation operations or UN operations.

Soldiers entering the Commando Battalion do so following completion of their initial boot camp. But before they can become Commando qualified, they must pass a rigorous selection and qualification course.

Known as Formation 11, the training company trains soldiers coming straight from boot camp. Commando Basic Training, known as Level 1, is divided into two phases. The first phase is conducted in Thies, the home of the Commandos. This phase includes combatives, obstacles courses and weapons qualification.

The second phase, a two-week course, is held on Ngor Island. Ngor is off the coast of Dakar. It is 800 meters long and 800 meters from the mainland. It is known for the Ngor Right, which is a combination of waves hitting the island, making it a mecca for surfers and the ideal place for water training. This training includes the combat life savers course, close combat drills, a high-risk obstacle course and culminates with a 70-kilometer hike from Dakar to Thies. If the students pass, they move on to the next level of training.

Level 2, follows the basic training, and is also broken down into two phases, with one phase in Thies and the other in Dakar. The four-week course goes into more advanced skills than those taught in Level 1 and also culminates in a 70-kilometer hike from Dakar to Thies.

Officers follow a similar training schedule, but are also sent to advanced command training in either France or Togo. 

01
Senegalese Commandos practice vehicle mounting techniques during Flintlock 2016.

02
The wall of the Senegal Commando's training compound in Thies, Senegal proudly displays their logo and motto "Goor Fit" or Men of Courage.

U.S. ARMY PHOTOS BY
JENNIFER G. ANGELO

MILITANT ISLAMIST IDEOLOGY: UNDERSTANDING THE GLOBAL THREAT

Many Westerners and non-Arabic speakers have a limited understanding about the motivations and ideology of Militant Islamic terrorist organizations. *Militant Islamist Ideology: Understanding the Global Threat*,


by Commander Youssef H. Aboul-Enein, United States Navy, helps bridge the gap and build understanding regarding the differences between mainstream Islam and the militant variety espoused by terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Born in Mississippi and raised in Saudi Arabia, Commander Aboul-Enein uses his personal experience and scholarly knowledge of Islam to educate and enlighten the reader. His credentials as an adviser at the Joint Intelligence Task Force for Combating Terrorism further makes Aboul-Enein an ideal authority to discuss radical Islamist ideology against the backdrops of Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom and beyond.

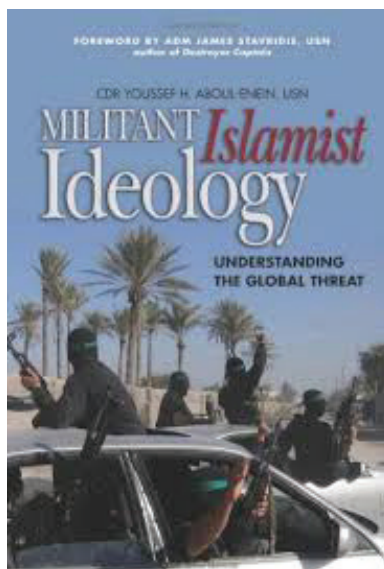
Aboul-Enein first establishes clear definitions of Militant Islamist, Islamist and Islam in order to differentiate among those Muslims who support radical objectives through violence, those who support radical objectives peacefully through a sanctioned political process and mainstream Muslims who do not subscribe to Islamist or Militant Islamist ideology. The book highlights how Militant Islamists conveniently ignore the peaceful aspects of the Prophet Mohammed's life in favor of passages within the Koran taken out of context to promote violence. Aboul-Enein stresses the historical facts that Mohammed collaborated with Christians and Jews, favored negotiation and arbitration over fighting and encouraged interaction with various cultures rather than isolating the Muslim world.

Aboul-Enein further suggests messages that the United States should employ against Militant Islamic propaganda while amplifying voices of Islamic clerics and leaders who actively challenge radical elements.

While this book was written prior to the death of Osama Bin Laden, one chapter provides an interesting analysis of Bin Laden's motives and the reasoning underlying al-Qaeda's mission and purpose. Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's current leader, is also heavily scrutinized by Aboul-Enein regarding his failure to successfully defend al-Qaeda's killing of innocents and his lack of support from any credible Muslim religious scholars regarding the organization's activities. The book further profiles several prominent Islamist and Militant Islamist groups with descriptions of their origins, capabilities and influences. Additionally, the book's glossary describes several key terms relevant to Militant Islam.

Militant Islamist Ideology: Understanding the Global Threat presents an outstanding framing of the issues surrounding radical Islam by defining and highlighting key differences among Militant Islamists, Islamists and the majority of Muslims who denounce violence. The book discusses several important distinctions regarding the Prophet Mohammed and portions of the Quran that Militant Islamists intentionally ignore as these revelations directly conflict with their ideology. Aboul-Enein's book is ideal for all special operations

forces and is particularly imperative for influence practitioners wanting an enhanced understanding of how to formulate messages that effectively counter Militant Islamist propaganda. 



BOOK DETAILS

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REVIEWED BY

Lt. Col.

Thomas R. De La Garza, PhD
a Psychological Operations officer
and chief of the Commander's
Initiative Group at the U.S. Army
John F. Kennedy Special Warfare
Center and School.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
JFK SPECIAL WARFARE CENTER AND SCHOOL
ATTN: AOJK-PAD
3004 ARDENNES STREET, STOP A
FORT BRAGG, NC 28310-9610

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DRONE TRAINING | FLINTLOCK 2016 | THIES, SENEGAL



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