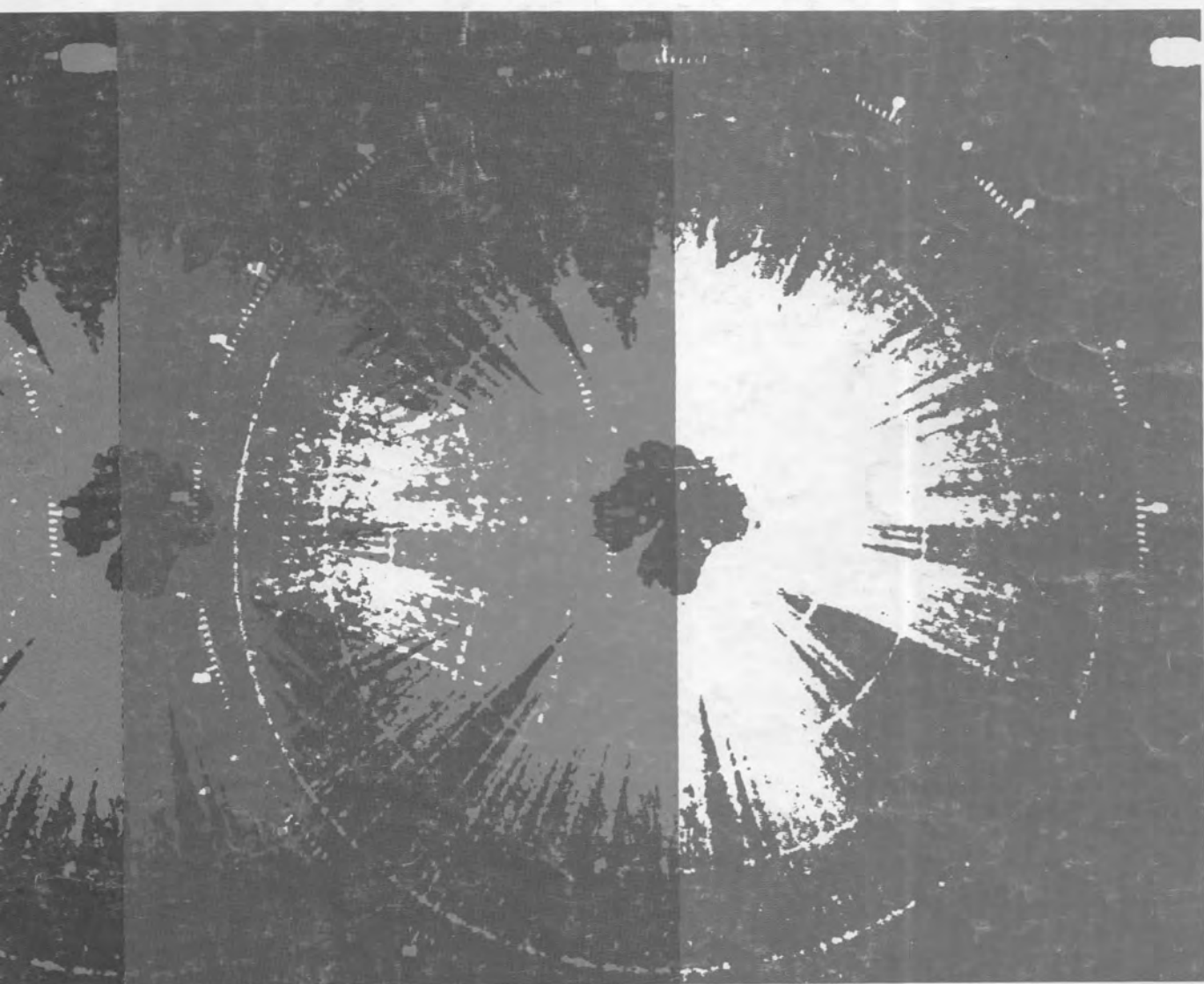


military intelligence

JAN-MAR 1982



electronic warfare

**Survive an Electronic Environment
Special Forces: A Strategic Asset**

United States Army Intelligence Center and School

Military Intelligence

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- | | |
|----|--|
| 6 | Ethics in Intelligence
by Col. William G. Hanne |
| 9 | Special Forces: A Strategic Asset
by Capt. Robert B. Adolph |
| 13 | Electromagnetic Signatures in Army Communications
by CW3 David E. Mann |
| 15 | Soviet Officer Corps Training
by Maj. Wayne A. Silkett |
| 18 | Survive an Electronic Environment
by Capt. Al Leal |
| 27 | Task Surveys Drive SQTs
by John Angle |
| 29 | Tactical Platoon an Environment for Tactical Training
by Capt. Tom Adams |
| 32 | Cuba in Angola
by Capt. Tom Adams |
| 36 | EW Division Closes Gap
by 2LT Charles Squires |
| 37 | Conducting a SIGINT/EW ARTEP
by Capt. Jeffery A. Sorenson |
| 46 | EW Training
by Robert C. Van Kirk II |

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special forces: A STRATEGIC ASSET

by Capt. Robert B. Adolph Jr.

In June, 1952, the U.S. Army created a new unit capable of conducting unconventional warfare. It was designated the 10th Special Forces Group. Today there are three Special Forces Groups and their mission has largely expanded. This article will familiarize the reader with some of the peacetime and wartime missions, the general organization, and the employment of Special Forces today and in the near future.

The basic fighting unit of Special Forces is the A-team or operational detachment. It is a 12-man team consisting of two officers and 10 noncommissioned officers. The detachment commander and executive officer are normally combat arms officers although intelligence officers often serve in these positions. The enlisted men hold military occupational specialties in operations and intelligence, infantry, mortars, engi-

neering, communications and medicine. They are all cross-trained in one other specialty, and all speak one foreign language.

There are five A-teams in a company, three companies in a battalion, and three battalions in a Special Forces Group. The Military Intelligence Company assigned to every group should be of particular interest to intelligence personnel. In this organization, there are positions for officer and enlisted order of battle, counterintelligence and signals intelligence personnel.

HALO stands for high altitude-low opening free fall parachuting. SCUBA/UWO stands for self-contained underwater breathing apparatus/underwater operations. All A-teams are static line parachute qualified; but selected teams are trained in HALO, SCUBA/UWO, or rough terrain parachute infiltration techniques.

The 5th, 7th and 10th are the three active duty Special Forces Groups. The 5th Group and two battalions of the 7th Group are located at Fort Bragg, N.C. The third battalion of the 7th Group is forward-deployed in Panama. Two battalions of the 10th Group are stationed at Fort Devens, Mass. with the first battalion forward-deployed in Bad Toelz, West Germany.

Forward-deployment is considered to be essential for improving the combat readiness of the Special Forces Groups in CONUS. For example, the soldiers of the first battalion of the 10th Special Forces Group are living in and near where they might have to deploy in war time; plus being able to practice their second language regularly.

Special Forces primary mission is the conduct of unconventional or guerrilla warfare (defined as warfare in denied areas or behind enemy lines by people indigenous to that country or region). Special Forces detachments fight with, assist, and support those indigenous forces.

Special Forces are also used in a counterinsurgency role; supporting legal governments against guerrillas, as in El Salvador. Special Forces personnel are training Salvadoran government troops to fight the Marxist insurgents troubling that land today.

In wartime, Special Forces perform Direct Action missions requiring deep penetration behind enemy lines and special infiltration techniques such as HALO or SCUBA. These missions are designed to destroy key enemy facilities, or perform

other missions of strategic importance.

Special Forces is a tool of American Foreign policy in the Third World through the use of Special Forces detachments as mobile training teams. The MTT travels to a host country at the request of that country's government to train portions of its military. Mobile training teams have performed missions in Asia, South America, the Middle East and Africa. The training objectives of a MTT are normally limited. The time taken to achieve objectives range from a few weeks to many months. Subjects taught include, but are not limited to, light and heavy weapons, demolitions, communications, medicine, and small unit to battalion size tactics. Special Forces are intensively trained in methods of instructing people from other societies and cultures. Since the inception of the MTT program, A-teams have established a record of successful mission completions.

Special Forces is a proven human intelligence collection asset. No matter how advanced U.S. technology becomes, there will always be a need for men to report on items of intelligence interest that cannot be collected through the electromagnetic spectrum or photo-intelligence. In Vietnam, A-teams infiltrated deep behind enemy lines to report on the movements of major enemy units and were highly effective. Unlike other collection assets, Special Forces can collect and send its intelligence regardless of terrain and weather considerations. Only Special Forces, with its long range AM/HF communications, has this unique capability. A-teams are thoroughly trained in accurate intelligence reporting procedures for this vital mission.

For the conventional commander, Special Forces is a special asset in its economy of force role. Special Forces detachments conducting acts of sabotage deep behind enemy lines force enemy commanders to pull more and more front line





troops away from the main battle areas and place them in rear area protection missions.

At one time in Vietnam, Special Forces maintained 80 camps and controlled more than 60,000 indigenous troops. The Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG), as they were called, were a potent weapon against the Viet Cong both as combat troops and HUMINT collectors. These troops consisted of the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Nungs, Kha and Meo ethnic minorities to name a few.

Special Forces can also act in a civil affairs role. A-team medics, highly-trained medical technicians capable of acting as physician substitutes, can perform diagnosis and treatment,

field dentistry, minor surgery, and provide advice and assistance to indigenous personnel on preventive medicine and sanitation. Detachment engineers can build bridges and homes while also providing the technical expertise to assist farmers with agricultural irrigation projects. Medical and engineering projects of these types won Special Forces the respect and admiration of the people they supported in Vietnam, and other Southeast Asian countries.

A-teams can perform in jungle, desert, mountain, and Arctic operations. Special Forces is a truly multi-mission capable unit.

A number of military and political theorists believe that a full scale nuclear exchange between the Soviet Union and the United States is extremely unlikely. Destruction of that magnitude serves

no one. A conventional conflict on West Germany's Fulda Plain is more likely but is also improbable. The possibility of escalation to nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons* is too great.

The global military struggle for world supremacy has begun, but it does not involve weapons of mass destruction or conventional armies. The upcoming decade could well be the decade of the guerrilla.

The Soviet Union has pledged to support what they term "wars of national liberation". Recent examples of Soviet support for movements of this type include Vietnam, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Angola, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. It is reasonable to assume that the Soviet Union will continue to support insurgencies worldwide as long as such support is in their national interest.

*The Soviet Union classifies these as weapons of mass destruction.

This is particularly true since they have enjoyed such great success through their assistance to these insurgencies. The Soviet union now possesses strategic military bases in Southeast Asia, the Horn of Africa, and possibly for the first time in Central America. All this is due to their support of Marxist insurgencies in those regions.

The Reagan administration considers the Soviet policy of support to "wars of national liberation" a clear and present danger to the security of the United States and its allies. The actions America can take to counter this threat are numerous. One possible countermeasure is the deployment of U.S. Army Special Forces.

Special Forces in peacetime serves not only as a ready combat force and training cadre but also acts as a symbol of our national resolve. By committing

an A-team to assist a friendly nation experiencing an insurgency, we demonstrate our willingness to risk American lives to secure that friendship. This is a statement far more meaningful and profound than the simple sale of arms and technology.

President Reagan has already demonstrated his determination to attempt to halt the further spread of Marxist movements in Central America by committing Special Forces soldiers in El Salvador. This action is particularly meaningful. It could signal a partial end to the trauma Americans

suffered in the post-Vietnam era, and demonstrates to the countries of the Third World America's willingness to support its allies. Special Forces can play a central role in this effort, and others like it in the upcoming decade.

The missions mentioned are by no means all-inclusive, but are considered to be some of the primary missions of Special Forces today.

