



Army

Building on Beersheba

Future Capability Discussion Paper Six: Special Operations Capability

Strategic Plans Branch
Army Headquarters
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Executive Summary

This issue paper highlights the Australian Defence Force Special Operations (SO) capability priorities and presents opportunities that will enable a system level approach for SO development and improve the delivery of response options. A contemporary SO capability is sought, enabled through integrated Joint and Whole of Government (WOG) capabilities and international partnerships, providing rapid response and persistent support to a broad range of regional and global contingencies.

The key SO capabilities for consideration are:

1. Joint enabler development and access, including consideration of the establishment of an SO Joint Capability Manager (JCM).
2. Establishment of a SO Capability Assurance Program within an updated Defence Capability Program.
3. Capability growth in critical enablers, including personnel growth within Special Operations Command (SOCOMD).
4. Enhancement of regional engagement mechanisms to build capacity aligned to mutual threat streams and to align WOG and multilateral efforts.

Strategic Environment

1. The ADF SO Capability continues to provide ready and relevant response options. Deliberate SO proactive posturing enables strategic anticipation and can offer effective crisis response options to Government. The utility of SO can be demonstrated across the four Principle Tasks including very short notice responses in unpredictable and complex environments, notwithstanding with a dependency on access to critical Joint enablers that are effectively integrated. SO are ideally suited to help protect and advance Australia's interests in an increasingly complex geostrategic environment. SO offer innovative, relatively low-cost and small-footprint approaches to secure national interests and the shared interests of strategic partners.

Key Issues

Joint Enabler Development

2. SOCOMD, as a functional command within Army, requires timely support from effectively managed and coordinated Joint assets. This requires a clear understanding of the application and limitations of Joint enablers in terms of capability and readiness. There is a requirement for improved access and integration of enablers, and establishment of a habitual relationship between SOCOMD and the supporting Defence Group. SO capability has an enduring reliance on critical enabler support, the priority enablers being:

a. **Joint force projection.** Access to a broad range of projection capabilities is essential to SO preparedness and regional responsiveness. It includes the requirement for unique SO modifications to existing capabilities and enhancements that enable full spectrum SO effects. Examples include but are not limited to:

i) Niche Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) capabilities on RAAF C17, C130 and C27J aircraft to provide enhanced situational awareness.

ii) Improved access to the full spectrum of existing Army Aviation capabilities and recognition of the need for a light specialist utility aircraft. Adjustments to existing Army Aviation command and control (C2) and management arrangements should be considered.

iii) Improved access to maritime surface and sub-surface vessels and associated supporting capabilities. A littoral watercraft capability enabling range extension options from Major Fleet Units or independent littoral manoeuvre is required.

b. **Joint fires and effects.** The SO capability requires improved access and integration to Joint fires within current and future maritime, air and land environments.

3. **Capability Management.** Current management of SO capability is achieved under Army C2 with CA designated as the SO Capability Manager. While this arrangement offers excellent alignment with Raise/Train/Sustain (RTS) functions and land force development, it is not optimised for effective consideration of critical Joint SO enabler requirements, which are managed by other Service Chiefs. A number of options exist to improve SO Joint capability management, ranging from enhancing CA's ability to leverage joint development, to the establishment of a new Joint Capability Manager, such as VCDF or CJOPS. It is anticipated that this can be achieved without modifying extant Army C2.

Defence Capability Plan

4. Chiefs of Staff Committee endorsed the development of an ADF SO Capability Assurance Program (SOCAP). A dedicated SOCAP within DCP15 would enable resource requirements to achieve options identified in this paper. The SOCAP would:

- a. Assist in adopting a more integrated, broad mission system level approach to SO capability modernisation.
- b. Provide a line of funding to support unique SO modifications to critical enablers.

Capability Growth

5. **Battlespace awareness.** The SO Capability requires specific support to enhance battlespace awareness. Identified capability requirements are as follows:

- a. **ISTAR.** Specialist ISTAR capabilities are required, as an additional requirement to those outlined under Joint force protection. These include:
 - i) Establishment of an ADF staffed ISTAR capability based on an existing RAAF platform.
 - ii) Acquisition of a beyond-line-of-sight, medium altitude, long endurance UAV capability, primarily for employment in an over-land support role.
 - iii) Provision of a supporting high bandwidth ICT architecture to store, analyse and disseminate high definition imagery and data for tactical and operational use.
- b. **Exploitation.** Support development of exploitation capabilities, particularly data management and distribution. This could be achieved by evolving the Counter Improvised Explosive Device Task Force to establish a WOG organisation that develops and promotes key exploitation capabilities. The establishment of an ADF Exploitation Task Force would significantly enable SO and broader evidence based operations.
- c. **Information Activities (IA).** Full spectrum SO, particularly pre-conflict shaping operations, require information effects and therefore priority support from IA providers. Information effects could be better achieved and coordinated through the establishment of a Joint IA organisation.

6. **Personnel.** SOCOMD is seeking growth in personnel; IAW the Command's extant Personnel Pressures Priority List (P3L). Growth will contribute directly to modernisation of ADF's SO capability.

Enhanced Regional Engagement

7. Shaping and capacity building activities within the region, and as a broader global contribution, develop important relationships that can underpin successful future actions. The SOCOMD relationship with allied SO partners and regional countries assists the coordination of international engagement effects and enables the development of common, mutually beneficial engagement objectives while also expanding the global SO network in preparation for short notice contingencies. In turn, these activities support both the Defence International Engagement Plan and the Regional Campaign Plan, and are important contributions to better understanding of the environment. SOCOMD has identified the following key elements for successful execution of regional engagement:

- a. Understanding Human Terrain
- b. Understanding and influencing the regional narrative
- c. Promoting persistent engagement through small-footprint, distributed operations
- d. Building sustainable partner capacity and interoperability
- e. Establishing a network amongst our regional partners.

Conclusion

8. The integration of key Joint enablers is essential to provision of SO effects. Improved coordination of Joint enablers through more effective SO Joint capability management will ensure well networked and responsive SO effects. ADF SO capability will continue to provide Government with unique options across the full spectrum that enable effective regional and global understanding, and provide short notice contingency response options. This issue paper identifies opportunities and resource requirements to support modernisation. A dedicated DCP entry would see allocation of resources to preserve and modernise ADF SO capability in an integrated, sustainable and deliberate manner.