

## CONTRIBUTOR BIO

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*By Emily Spacek*

## **What Does Special Forces Usage Demonstrate About US Foreign Policy Goals?**

*Jack Hopkins*

### **Abstract**

This research paper focuses on the interrelatedness between the deployment of US Special Forces, in both combat and supporting capabilities, and the accomplishment of US foreign policy goals around the world. Using a qualitative methodology, this paper uses primary sources such as reports from Special Operations Forces commanders, CRS reports, and other forms of Congressional documentation to investigate the relationship. This paper will use three case studies to illustrate specific foreign policy goals: firstly, counter-narcotics operations in Columbia; secondly, counter-terror operations throughout the Middle East; and finally, counter-terror operations throughout the African continent. The implications of this paper indicate that the deployment of Special Operations Forces seeks to achieve specific goals of limiting the production of narcotics, acts of terror, threats to natural resources, threats to weak governments, and the development of advanced foreign special forces groups to act without direct US involvement.

### **Introduction**

Under recent Presidential Administrations, American Special Forces have been deployed in a variety of functions both close to home and across the globe, with the number of Special Forces deployments increasing greatly under both the Obama and Trump administrations. Author Nick Turse argues that ultimately, Special Forces are in a uniquely dangerous position as the go-to forces for important and typically dangerous operations, and they often perform with minimal support<sup>1</sup>. In his article, Turse contends that the increase in their usage has placed them in further danger, as the overuse of

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<sup>1</sup> Nick Turse, "American Special Ops Forces Have Deployed to 70 Percent of the World's Countries," *The Nation* (June 26, 2017).

Special Forces groups (SFGs) has contributed to an increase in extremism in states where extended cooperation has occurred. Turse cited the nearly fifteen percent rise in regions in Afghanistan that fall under the category of “insurgent-controlled” between 2015 and 2017 that occurred in spite of increased Special Operations Forces usage in the region.

Throughout history, military operations were conducted on a grand scale. For hundreds of years war has meant ranks of soldiers fighting on vast battlefields. After the horror of the trenches in the First World War, there was little desire to return to traditional head-to-head methods of war, resulting in the increasing use of non-conventional soldiers<sup>2</sup>. By World War II, this meant an increasing reliance on airborne troops. During the Vietnam War, the US deployed Green Berets to train the Royal Lao Army to combat Communist guerrillas. During the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the Delta Force attempted to rescue US embassy personnel trapped in Tehran. Subsequently, the 5th and 7th SFGs were deployed in both Gulf Wars to combat Iraqi forces. The ramping up of Special Operations Forces deployments has become standard following the 9/11 terror attacks, after which there was an even greater perceived need for soldiers that would not be restricted by the same protocols that conventional forces must adhere to. During the Obama administration, the number of foreign states Special Operations Forces operate in increased from sixty (during the previous Bush administration) to 120. Similarly, the US Special Operations Command has experienced a steady increase in funding, rising from \$3.1B in Fiscal Year 2001 to \$9.8B in Fiscal Year 2014 and continuing to increase in subsequent years.<sup>3</sup> This trend of heightened reliance on these unconventional forces has become increasingly clear throughout their history, and extensive development has transformed these units into one of the world’s most effective fighting forces. This trend also illustrates how the US has begun to work more secretly and selectively to combat threats, leading to the following research question: How does the strategic deployment of US Army Special Forces reveal US foreign policy goals?

In order to ascertain the relationship between the deployment of SFGs and US foreign policy, I will use a qualitative methodology that will rely

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2 United States Army Special Operations Command, “Special Forces History,” US Army (2018).

3 General Accountability Office, “Special Operations Forces: Opportunities Exist to Improve Transparency of Funding and Assess Potential to Lessen Some Deployments,” GAO (July, 2015).

on three different case studies: the first being counter-narcotic operations in Colombia, the second being counter-terror operations in the Middle East, and the third being counter-terror operations in Africa. This paper relies heavily on government documents published by Congress and the US military, as well as civilian journalism on the subject of US deployment of Special Forces. Given the secretive nature of the Special Forces, there are a limited number of publicly available sources, an issue that has made the verification of secondary source information difficult.

The English School of International Relations as explained by Hedley Bull is a uniquely accurate lens through which to view this research question. This paradigm addresses how states cooperate to undertake issues in their own best interest on the international stage. The core assumptions of this theory are that the anarchical nature of the “society of states” has led to international cooperation based on shared norms and goals between states, that include: security, diplomacy, free trade, and many others. States operate in this society of states through cooperation, a premise arising from the theory’s roots in Liberalism, while also using a Realist perspective to see the world as anarchical with states having vested interests in every interaction. The focus on states cooperating due to shared norms is particularly appropriate for this research question, as US Special Operations Forces typically work in conjunction with foreign forces to achieve shared goals. This collaboration is due to the continued diplomacy between state governments that allow for the building of working relationships, although each state ultimately works to pursue its own self-interest. In the International School, the need to pursue a state’s own best interest is a core assumption, arguing that this is best achieved through working as a community. In the world of military operations, no one state is able to address all threats to its stability all the time. In a globalized society threats can come from far beyond a state’s borders. When these two perspectives meet, it becomes clear why US Special Forces are deployed aggressively to build the military relationships and capabilities of other states. Several of these more recent deployments have been investigated in the following case studies.

### **Case Studies**

#### *Operations in Colombia:*

A key example of the American attempts to address threats to the US from within the western hemisphere is US action in Colombia. Plan

Colombia was a program proposed in 1998 under the Clinton administration in cooperation with the Colombian Uribe administration, which proposed to send \$280M in assistance to Colombia.<sup>4</sup> The program ultimately lasted beyond its six-year outline, maintained through a series of extension deals for US bases and personnel, later being replaced by the Obama administration with the Peace Colombia initiative in 2015. Plan Colombia sought to increase stability within Colombia by addressing the issues of long-term violence due to conflict and organized crime, as well as strengthen the Colombian state into an economic partner in the region. Plan Colombia had three distinct phases as outlined by General Charles E. Wilhelm in his 2000 testimony before the House Armed Forces Committee. The plan consisted of: 1) Assisting the Colombians and other “Partner Nations” in building counter-narcotic capabilities (Organizing, training, and equipping foreign forces), 2) Large scale “operations to neutralize organizations involved in the illicit drug trade” within drug producing regions in Andean Colombia, 3) Continuing training to maintain the readiness of Partner Nation counter-narcotic forces.<sup>5</sup> These goals are a direct outline of the US strategy to improve Colombian military capabilities and have been used as the blueprints for other capability development attempts around the world.

The plan sought to increase trust in the capabilities of state forces following the terror caused by guerilla forces and organized crime that had overwhelmed Colombian troops for decades. According to a House of Representatives report, by the end of the year 2000 there was a proposed \$185.8M in total assistance for Plan Colombia.<sup>6</sup> This funding included millions for economic and social programs, in addition to \$21.2M for training the Colombian military and national police to combat drug trafficking operations. Most interesting is the request for \$80M that was only described as being for “Classified Programs”. A broad category of actions that could include surgical strikes or programs building cooperation with differing factions within Colombia. Within Colombia, the US uses Special Forces to

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4 William J. Clinton, “Joint Communique with President Andres Pastrana of Colombia,” (Speech, White House, Washington, DC, October 28, 1998).

5 General Charles E. Wilhelm, “Posture Statement of General Charles E. Wilhelm, United States Marine Corps Commander in Chief, United States Southern Command,” Federation of American Scientists (March 3, 2000).

6 US Congress. House of Representatives. 2010. Making Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for The Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2000, And for Other Purposes. 111th Congress (August 10).

train a specialized counter-narcotics battalion, costing the US \$3.9M in 2000; the battalion intends to “conduct ground and airmobile CD operations in coordination with the Colombian National Police.<sup>7</sup> The program later grew into the Counter Narcotics Brigade that would house three battalions of 980 men each, all trained by USSF to combat narco-trafficking. Between 2000 to 2013 there have been solid gains in combating narco-trafficking: the size of the drug economy in Colombia shrunk from \$7.5B in 2008 to \$4.5B in 2013 and production of Coca dropped from roughly 160,000 hectares in 2000 to nearly 50,000 hectares in 2013.<sup>8</sup> With this being said, despite these efforts, there were rises in the production of cocaine in 2007, and there has been minimal influence on the street pricing of narcotics produced in the region such as cocaine and heroin. Similarly the quality of these narcotics has not decreased.

The American operations training the Colombian National Police and National Army were led by the Army’s 7th SFG, also known by their colloquial name the “Green Berets”. Their initial deployment was intended to train Colombian forces in its northern region to protect the nation’s oil-pipelines from leftist guerilla attacks, as the northern region is not responsible for any significant cocaine cultivation or manufacturing this demonstrates a secondary counterterror focus.<sup>9</sup> The 7th group was also responsible for the creation of numerous counterterror groups in the Colombian military including the Commando Brigade, Rapid Deployment Force, the Aviation Brigade, and the Urban Counter-Terror Special Force Group.<sup>10</sup> Due to the Tyler Amendment, there are caps on the number of US military personnel that can be deployed in Colombia at 500, making the achievements of these small teams all the more impressive.<sup>11</sup> The goal of combating terror tied into the Uribe Administration’s Plan Patriota initiative, which sought to eliminate the presence of leftist groups in Colombia through military force with United States support.<sup>12</sup> Through the use of counterterror

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7 op. cit., fn 5.

8 Daniel Mejía, “Plan Colombia: An Analysis of Effectiveness and Costs,” Brookings Institute (2016).

9 Jeremy McDermott, “Green Berets move into Colombia’s oil fields,” *The Telegraph* (October 12, 2000).

10 Austin Long, “Building Special Operations Partnerships in Afghanistan and Beyond,” Rand Corporation (2015).

11 Congressional Research Service, “Colombia: Plan Colombia Legislation and Assistance (FY200-2001),” CRS (July 5, 2001).

12 Kathleen T. Rhem, “U.S. Helping Colombian Military Cope with Drug War’s Legacy,” American Forces Press Service (November 29, 2005).

units, the Colombian military has waged a brutal campaign against guerilla forces such as the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN), forcing the FARC into peace talks after decades of conflict. The long-term goal of Plan Colombia was to create an effective and self-sufficient Colombian military, a goal that has clearly been achieved as the Colombian Special Forces are viewed as the dominant Special Forces group in the region, even becoming the go-to trainer for other Central American Special Forces.

Colombia demonstrates how the US uses its Special Forces to build the capabilities of regional allies to achieve several goals. Firstly, the US military combating of narcotics trafficking out of Colombia through the creation of highly effective domestic police and military personnel. For the US, this goal made up the core reasoning for the creation of the Plan Colombia initiative, and has been an overwhelming success in terms of aiding Colombia in the War on Drugs. However, the loss in Colombian drug production has been compensated for with increased production in regions of Mexico, ultimately extending the need for US cooperation with other states to combat the drug trade. Secondly, US forces combating the spread of Communism by groups such as the FARC and the ELN. This goal has been at the core of US foreign policy following the end of the Second World War and the start of the Cold War. It was during the Cold War that the US funded paramilitary organizations within Colombia to combat leftist guerillas, a decision that created further instability in the country and increased drug exports. In the enhancing of state capabilities, the US has been able to combat perceived threats to the stability of the capitalist system, all the while improving De Facto control for the Colombian government. Lastly, the creation of highly effective Special Forces groups in the region will create greater stability as states are better equipped to combat non-traditional threats such as extremist or criminal organizations. Given the long history of conflict within Colombia, the building of strong state capabilities alleviates the need for extended US support for programs, while also creating a force that will better be able to combat regional threats to stability.

#### *Operations in Africa and the Arabian Peninsula:*

As the war on terrorism has evolved, there has been a broadening of the scope of actions taken by Special Forces to combat the organizations involved in perpetrating acts of violence. This ever expanding mission has led to Special Forces units being deployed from the Philippines to Africa for

the sole purpose of combating the presence of extremist organizations. In Africa, these operations have been carefully coordinated with local ground forces. Meanwhile, US SFGs in the region work to improve the capabilities of local ground forces in combating terrorism and rebel groups that operate on the continent. Africa is a hotbed for anti-governmental conflict with many states facing some form of opposition from within their borders. For the US, the goal of combating the influence of regional terror groups aligns with partner nation's interests in maintaining regional stability. This cooperation exemplifies the ideals of the English school, as both nations experience direct benefits for their own interests through military cooperation.

The largest US Special Forces presence in the region is centered in Djibouti, using the existing Camp Lemonnier base as an organizing platform for the operations conducted throughout northeastern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>13</sup> Currently there are roughly 1,500 Special Operations Forces deployed to the continent. These Soldiers conduct training exercises with partner nations as well as so called "kinetically-centered counter terror operations" that fit the typical capture or kill specialty of Special Forces.<sup>14</sup> <sup>15</sup> This specialty has been particularly useful in combating the spread of groups such as the Islamic State, Boko Haram, and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, with Special Operations Forces targeting the leadership of these groups. The lingering presence of Special Forces in Africa began due the Obama administration, and later the Trump administration, adopting a more aggressive strategy to combat Islamic terror in the region. Former national security advisor John Bolton, an extreme Realist, has voiced his support for increasing US operations in Africa and the Arabian Peninsula in order to protect US regional interests from the potential damage that regional instability can bring.<sup>16</sup> According to a Senate Armed Services Committee statement, "Our vital national security interest in Africa is protecting the lives and interests of the American people by reducing threats to the homeland and abroad," illustrating the one sidedness of US support in Africa.<sup>17</sup>

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13 Kathryn Watson, "Where does the US have troops in Africa, and why?," CBS (October 23, 2017).

14 Nick Turse, "Commandos Without Borders," LobeLog (December 22, 2016).

15 General Joseph L. Votel, "Statement before the House Armed Services Committee," House Armed Services Committee (March 1, 2016).

16 Salem Solomon, "What Does John Bolton's Security Adviser Role Mean for Africa," Voice of America (March 26, 2016).

17 General Carter F. Ham, "Statement to Senate Armed Services Committee," Senate Armed Services Committee (April 7, 2011).

The one sidedness of US efforts in the region represents the reality of the continually shifting nature of power in the region, where the US has worked hard to increase the military capabilities of partner nations to act without further American assistance. While cases on continental Africa are currently secret, the very public case of Yemen has allowed for an insight into US actions in the region. In Yemen, the US has deployed Special Forces to aid the ousted government of President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi in its sustained conflict with Shiite Houthi minority rebels. Blurring the lines between genuine concern over the situation in Yemen and American regional interests is the ongoing presence of the Saudi Arabian troops in Yemen.<sup>18</sup> Saudi Arabia, a key US ally in the Middle East, views the Shiite Houthi rebels as a threat to its influence in the Arabian Peninsula as the leading Sunni power in the region. Adding fuel to this concern is the fact that the Houthi rebels are backed by Iran, a regional rival of Saudi Arabia and a country that is in direct opposition to the US involvement in the Arab world. Thus shaping the conflict in Yemen into a proxy conflict over who will be the dominant power in the Islamic Community in the region.<sup>19</sup>

Greater conflict in the Middle East, fueled by the support of larger nations, has begun to take a toll on the region. Between 2006 and 2014, the presence of US SFGs in Africa and the Arabian Peninsula increased 900%, and with this increased military presence came a spike in the number of terror attacks per year in addition to the number of militant groups active on the African continent.<sup>20</sup> As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the presence of US Special Operations Forces around the world has been increasing, but so too have the number of attacks on Special Operations Forces. These attacks are most commonly acknowledged when occurring in the Middle East, where the US has maintained an on and off presence for nearly twenty years.

### *Operations in the Middle East:*

Combat operations by SFGs in the Middle East have been a standard procedure following the 9/11 attacks, although the groups had previously

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18 Saeed Al-Batati and Eric Schmitt, "Thousands of Yemeni Forces Target Qaeda Stronghold," *New York Times* (August 6, 2016).

19 Helene Cooper, Thomas Gibbons-Neff, and Eric Schmitt, "Army Special Forces Secretly Help Saudis Combat Threat from Yemen Rebels," *New York Times* (May 6, 2018).

20 *op. cit.*, fn. 13

been active in the region carrying out humanitarian missions. The war on terrorism required extensive and continuing operations by SFGs in Iraq and Afghanistan to achieve the US campaign's goal of combating the influence of terror groups. These operations took on many different forms, focusing largely on collaboration between US forces and existing regional forces, although some took on more direct combat roles.

In the case of Afghanistan, the Army's 5th SFG received orders to deploy to the region within two days of the 9/11 attacks. This quick response illustrated the US eagerness to take action in reprisal following the devastating attack.<sup>21 22</sup> According to a report written by Major Isaac J. Peltier analyzing the usage of SFGs in Iraq and Afghanistan, "5th SFG immediately began preparations for deployment and on 10 October 2001, less than a month after 9/11, the 5th SFG main body arrived at Karshi Kanabad (K2), an old Soviet airbase in Uzbekistan".<sup>23</sup> The 5th group was deployed to help coordinate and organize counter-Taliban operations with regional militias, as well as the numerous American and allied forces. The regional forces were comprised of several different tribes made up of ethnic minorities such as the Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras, each had large established militias with forces numbering in the several thousands. Following the insertion of Special Forces teams, the regional commanders asked their new allies to conduct air strikes, a tactic that would become a hallmark of SFG operations in the region and became infamous for the number of civilian deaths that they brought. These air strikes, carried out by American forces, took many forms. The usage of AC-130 planes allowed for more targeted strikes using .50 caliber guns on board to attack Taliban positions, whereas the usage of BLU-28 Daisy Cutter bombs were used to inflict massive damage to Taliban forces.<sup>24</sup> In the wake of these attacks, the new regional allies were far more willing to work with the small number of American forces to combat the Taliban's hold over the Northern region of Afghanistan, choosing to target the city of Mazar-e Sharif which served as a Taliban stronghold. By November 2001 the newly allied militias began their assault on the city,

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21 MAJ Isaac J. Peltier, "Surrogate Warfare: The Role of U.S. Army Special Forces," School of Advanced Military Studies (May 26, 2005).

22 Deirdre Tynan, "US Special Forces Shop Outside Afghanistan," Center for Security Studies (2018).

23 *op. cit.*, fn. 21.

24 "Task Force Dagger – Operation Enduring Freedom," American Special OPS (2018).

fighting from the South into the city under the cover of airstrikes targeted by US forces, driving Taliban forces out of the city on November 10th just five days later. This initial victory illustrated the benefit of unconventional warfare in combating forces in areas where a larger conventional ground force would be unable to operate due to a lack of facilities. In Iraq, the main issue with using conventional forces was the lack of airstrips for the landing of troop carrying planes as conventional forces are not intended to maintain extended operations by aerial insertion.

The lessons gleaned from Task Force Dagger in Afghanistan were applied to Task Force Viking, an effort by the 10th SFG to aid conventional ground forces in combating the Iraqi Army immediately after the invasion in March of 2003. Task Force Viking operated largely in the northern Kurdish region of the Iraqi state, working with Peshmerga militias to force the Iraqi army out of the Kurdish region and alleviating pressure on conventional forces to the South. The Kurdish forces were a uniquely helpful partner, as opposed to tribal forces in Afghanistan where the loyalty of militia leaders required millions of dollars to be achieved. The previous humanitarian operations by the 10th group in the wake of Saddam Hussein's attacks on Kurds built a rapport between US forces and Kurdish leaders. These operations, named Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, were said to have saved roughly 500,000 Kurds from death by providing humanitarian aid and protection.<sup>25</sup> The strong bond between these forces allowed for the 10th group to make use of the nearly 70,000 Peshmerga soldiers active in the region to achieve its goal of combating Iraqi forces, ultimately only 7,000 Peshmerga forces came to be the main assault force working with the 10th group. Following successes in pushing back Iraqi forces the assault force retook the city of Kirkuk, a major city in the Kurdish regions and a key portion of the Iraqi oil production network. Due to suspicions on the part of neighboring Turkey surrounding the possible creation of a Kurdish state, whose historical borders cross into current Turkish territory, the Kurdish forces were initially unable to maintain a lasting presence in the city. During its short operational period, Task Force Viking was responsible for retaking Kirkuk and Mosul, dealing a major blow to the Iraqi government's hold in the region.

As the war on terrorism has continued, US Special Forces have been responsible for numerous operations in a variety of countries throughout the

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<sup>25</sup> US Army, "10th SFG History," United States Army Special Operations Command (2018).

Middle East. Following the initial deployments of Special Forces to topple the governments in Iraq and Afghanistan, Special Forces have conducted operations to combat the presence of violent extremist organizations in the region. Currently there are efforts in Syria by the Army's 75th Ranger regiment to sustain the gains made by government opposition groups, the Rangers being the Army's premier quick combat force specializing in rapid operations in difficult terrain.<sup>26</sup> There are likely many more operations currently occurring in the Middle East outside of the public purview. Due to their uniquely specialized nature, SFGs conduct operations in the shadows so as to not compromise their tactics or Soldiers which make these groups so effective. The recent publicity of Special Forces, after the 2012 raid that resulted in the death of Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, has increased the opinion that unilateral action by these forces is the most concise method to addressing American counterterrorism objectives. The history of the Special Forces in the Middle East exemplifies the benefits that can be achieved through continued cooperation between these Soldiers and local forces, rather than more popular unilateral strikes. Between 2002 and 2013 the US granted \$62.8B in aid for security to the Afghan government, not including the millions provided by the CIA and other US branches have given to non-government forces.<sup>27</sup> In return for their large investments in the region, the US has managed to limit the influence of violent extremist organizations, although this has not improved the overall stability in the region. Ultimately the US goal of retaliating against the influence of Al-Qaeda and protecting the oil infrastructure of Middle Eastern states drove the US military policy in the region. During its time in the Middle East, there has been a record of a lack of shared interests between the US and its allies in the region, illustrating the realist perspective present in the International School as all parties in the region collaborated to achieve their own goals.

## **Conclusion**

The recent deployment of Special Forces has highlighted US foreign policy goals throughout the world, focusing on protecting American security and resource interests abroad.

Combating the distribution of drugs is not a strategy intended to aid

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<sup>26</sup> Adam Linehan, "US Army Rangers are operating on the ground inside Syria," *Business Insider* (March 8, 2017).

<sup>27</sup> Charles Michael Johnson Jr., "Afghanistan: Oversight and Accountability of US Assistance," US General Accountability Office (June 10, 2014).

states that have been ravaged by the presence of drug organizations, but instead the US seeks to prevent the flow of drugs into its own markets and to eliminate possible sources of funding for groups it actively views as threats. In resource rich areas, the protection of key infrastructure and support for government capabilities is aimed at the protection of US resource suppliers--particularly true for oil. This is exemplified by the US involvement in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia, a major oil exporter, has managed to use its considerable influence over US foreign policy to direct the flow of troops into a conflict that it otherwise would have been unlikely to engage in. Finally, the US goal of maintaining regional stability is achieved through establishing greater capabilities for foreign governments in regions currently experiencing, or on the verge of experiencing, internal conflict. By hedging its bets the US is able to pick and choose which governments it feels should continue to remain in power, as is the case in Syria where US forces have trained and armed anti-government forces in the hopes of overthrowing the Assad government.

It should be noted that the findings in this paper are incomplete due to the highly secretive nature of special operations and the need to maintain informational security regarding sensitive subjects. With greater access to classified military documents, there would be a greater amount of evidence to these findings. It will likely be several decades before documentation surrounding the full usage of Special Forces in the past two decades will come to light, and until then continued vigilance regarding the impacts of greater usage of Special Forces will be required.

The case of Colombia illustrated the US interests in narcotics and in protecting the foothold of Capitalism around the globe. For this particular goal, the deployment of SFGs has been greatly successful given the small amount of resources required on the part of the US to work with the Colombian military. In the Middle East and Africa, US forces have been extremely successful in regime change and the dismantling of terrorist networks. While these overt goals have been achieved with a degree of success, the far more subtle goal of securing resources for the US has been a landslide victory. The protection of key infrastructure has ensured that the US will not face market pressures and is able to sit on its vast domestic emergency supply for far longer. Where there has been success there is also failure. The goal of dismantling drug organizations and terrorist groups has been successful, but with organizations such as these there is always another group seeking to take over where another has failed. Similar to a hydra,

each group that is eliminated spurs the growth of another cartel seeking to reclaim markets or another terror group with similar aims. In this sense, the US's frequent deployment of SFGs has made maintaining the successes of these security goals into a greater challenge, with goal posts that continue to move every time an inch of ground is covered. For the US to maintain its accomplishments there is a need for a more Liberal approach of international cooperation to address the root causes of the issues, rather than a Realist attempt to quash the threats at hand.

The individuals that make up these SFGs experience great stress from numerous deployments and dangerous situations, but are also extremely effective at working collaboratively with foreign forces. The continuing advantages of greater collaboration leads me to believe the US must pursue greater educational roles instead of combat roles for its Special Forces. Previously exhibited through the support based approach used in Colombia, which built greater military capabilities for allies, that allows for the accomplishment of foreign policy goals with minimal deployments of US forces. An example of this perspective is the continued training efforts between the US and India, who already possesses some of the best trained SFGs, in order to allow India greater capabilities to curb the anti-American regime in Pakistan. These forces are trained in unconventional warfare and maintain skills far above the typical soldier, and as such they should be viewed as the force of last resort for the US, only necessary when conventional forces or partner nations are unable to take action.

It should also be noted, there will likely be a shift in the deployment of SFGs away from oil rich states if the 2014 British Petroleum report prediction that the world has only fifty-three years of oil reserves remaining proves true.<sup>28</sup> Current deployments are heavily concentrated in oil rich regions, and typically surround oil production infrastructure, as the US sees protecting friendly oil production capabilities as a part of national security interests in spite of recent claims that the US will be more self-sufficient in terms of oil production. In an age focused on the production of highly efficient renewable power sources, SFGs will likely be redeployed to ensure a steady supply of Lithium and Cobalt, two key materials for the construction of rechargeable Lithium-ion batteries. Cobalt poses far more of an opportunity for US involvement; top producers Zimbabwe, a relatively safe state with few threats to its sovereignty, and the Democratic Republic of

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<sup>28</sup> Nasdaq, "How Much Oil is Left in the Earth," Nasdaq (December 27, 2017).

Congo, a state suffering from internal conflict that the government appears unable to quash, could benefit greatly from cooperation with the advanced resources provided by US SFGs.<sup>29</sup> This will likely lead to a greater number of deployments, particularly to the DRC, in order to ensure that cobalt mining infrastructure remains secured for US interests.

The deployment of SFGs also have been used, and will continue to be used, to combat threats to the future of capitalism. The United States, being the architect of the Liberal World Order, is in a unique position to ensure its long term viability. As a result, SFGs have been deployed to combat zones to aid forces that see the potential existence of capitalism as a boon to the local populations. This was made clear by the deployments to fight Baathist regimes in Syria and Iraq, as well as training the Colombian military to combat leftist guerrillas. The Baathist political platform is based on a socialist ideology, although the regimes who implement it tend to use this ideology to use the government to prop up friends and powerful industries. In Colombia, a history of conflict between the Capitalist government and a variety of both socialist and communist guerrilla groups has lasted for nearly sixty years. While it would be easy to say Special Forces are deployed to help promote Democracy and American values in these cases, the only concrete goal that I have been able to perceive is the expansion of Capitalism into regions where it was perceived to be under threat. As a result of this trend it is clear that should forces friendly to Capitalism arise in Socialist states, particularly resource rich Socialist states, the US will lend the support of SFGs to better ensure their success.

In summary, American Special Forces have become known as one of the greatest tools in the American Army's command. These forces receive highly extensive training in combat, survival, language, and more by the US and through training with other highly specialized foreign special forces. As a result, they are uniquely capable of conducting operations effectively with minimal troop numbers, making them a highly cost effective force for the US. These troops will continue to carry this high reputation, but they should continue to be viewed as the highly specialized resource they are, not as a force that can be deployed for any mission that is perceived as difficult for standard forces. With advances in AI weapon systems that can operate in the dangerous conditions previously reserved for Special Forces, SFGs should be viewed first and foremost as a human asset. They are especially

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<sup>29</sup> "Cobalt," Royal Society of Chemistry (2019).

well qualified for collaboration with local forces, acting as a force multiplier in combat operations and as a valuable source of combat knowledge. While it may be popular to use these forces more frequently, making them a conventional force will set a dangerous precedent for the overuse of specialized forces for non-specialized tasks.