

**Executive Summary**  
**The OSS Model and the Future of the SOF Warrior Seminar**  
**11-12 January 2011**  
**MacDill Air Force Base, Florida**

It has been some 70 years since the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) quietly came into being as a small, nearly invisible, Washington, DC-based organization whose unique capabilities and strategic reach resulted in decisive outcomes within World War II European, Chinese, Southeast Asian and other theaters of operations. Today the record of the OSS survives as far more than a topic of historical curiosity. As a result of its dramatic successes and failures, the OSS has developed a legacy of mission accomplishment that survives as a practical touchstone for the (SOF) Warriors of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

In fact, the OSS Model continues to provide fresh insights and practical relevancy to the concept of persistent engagement as practiced by today's United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). In speaking about the OSS veteran, a contemporary Special Forces officer observed that "we must understand who he is, not just what he did."

As part of his Commander's Guidance for 2011, Admiral Eric T. Olson, Commander, USSOCOM, directed that a study be undertaken to address if and how the OSS Model could serve as a source of inspiration to incorporate into USSOCOM efforts to select, organize, resource and develop authorities for SOF of the future. Specifically, the study was intended to identify ways to promote agility in the command through leveraging the OSS selection process, modeling its streamlined organizational structure, using the OSS simplified resourcing authorities, and adapting its charter and authorities to conduct seamless intelligence and operations. Admiral Olson highlighted the OSS attributes of expertise, ability to leverage networks and creativity to guide JSOU's efforts.

JSOU engaged selected members of the USSOCOM Staff, OSD, CIA, USASOC, USAJFKSWCS and the OSS Society to assist in the development of recommendations for Admiral Olson's review. JSOU organized the participants into four study groups addressing both OSS and USSOCOM approaches to the Selection, Organization, Resourcing, and Authorities of SOF. The study groups began their discussions following the Innovation Workshop conducted at USSOCOM on 16 November 2010. Three principles guided the proceedings of that Innovation Workshop and subsequent discussions:

- Understand the nature of the operational environment;
- Recognize the need for a small, innovative footprint for forces engaged within the operational environment; and
- Ensure sufficient flexibility in the relevant authorities to allow for the innovation necessary within the operational environment.

These principles were amplified by the following thoughts:

- The expertise of the OSS allowed members of the organization to understand the operational environment; to understand the language and culture; and to understand the nature of the enemy's purpose or at least their objectives. The OSS recruited regional

experts to apply their skills as operators and to be the “reach back” for additional resources and knowledge as needed. The SOF community has similar requirements today, and USSOCOM expects current and future SOF warriors to have the same level of expertise as the OSS warrior.

- The OSS members’ ability to leverage a multitude of personal and professional networks was instrumental to their operational success. The OSS leadership recruited by relying on contacts with business leaders, social elites, university academics and other professionals. Those operators sent overseas leveraged the networks within their areas of operation to work against enemy networks. Today’s SOF warrior is not as focused on or as skilled in leveraging or exploiting networks for a variety of reasons, including the relative lack of advanced language and cultural awareness skills.

- Creativity enables the innovation that is required during operations for successful outcomes. While expertise and leveraging can be taught or developed, creativity is a trait not easily replicated. It is, however, a character trait expected in SOF warriors as they are placed in situations where creativity means the difference between success and failure.

Each of the workgroups presented their recommendations and thoughts to those attending the seminar on *The OSS Model and the Future of the SOF Warrior* on 11-12 January 2011. As a result of those contributions and subsequent discussion, the following recommendations, organized by issue, emerged for developing SOF that demonstrate flexibility and are able to adapt to the changing security environments SOF encounters.

### **Selection Process**

Seek authorities for USSOCOM J-1 to monitor, influence and coordinate all personnel issues, including recruitment and selection, related to the entire SOF force and not just limited to USSOCOM command and staff as is the current situation.

- Expand the Human Capital Plan so that it not only addresses the rapid acquisition of new expertise, but one that exploits existing skill sets and experience residing in persons now retired from the active force, but still available through the concept of “SOF for Life”.

- Modify and strengthen the Human Capital Plan to manage more effectively the career tracks for SOF personnel and to develop further and harness the regional, cultural, and linguistic expertise of both organic SOF operators and personnel with service-provided capabilities.

- Establish a selection process for non-operator and service-provided capabilities (formerly referred to as “enablers”).

Build and maintain a SOF workforce that represents the rich diversity of the world we live in: a workforce that reflects different cultural backgrounds, ethnicities and heritage, languages, races, gender, orientation, abilities and ideas.

- Extend, expand and strengthen the current Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) Law—similar to the Lodge Act—to encourage the recruitment of foreign nationals or other recent immigrants seeking U.S. citizenship through military service.

- Expand recruitment efforts in specific ethnic neighborhoods and enclaves in the United States where immigrant groups have settled.

- Review existing USSOCOM programs against OSS practices to attract native speakers and to expedite procedures for obtaining security clearances in order to bring their skill more rapidly into the fight.

Make even greater use of a common SOF assessment process by having candidates complete a battery of psychological and aptitude assessments to determine the specific characteristics required for success in today's SOF.

Apply a 360-degree feedback mechanism as part of the assessment process to add to its effectiveness in measuring the "whole man" (similar to the OSS process).

Continue to strengthen recruitment efforts through the use of current SOF personnel to "get the word out" to current service members, those who are considering joining the services, and those who possess the attributes or specific skill sets that will contribute to the SOF mission.

### **Organization**

Compare and contrast OSS Morale Operations with current Military Information Support Operations (MISO) and Civil Affairs (CA) structures to determine ways to increase team integration from planning to execution and subsequent synchronization with SOF ground units to develop a regional orientation.

Introduce on-the-job training approaches to increase CA skills for those members engaged in sewage treatment plant, oil field operations and other functions, similar to the training concept employed by SOF medics.

Study the OSS employment of women in operational positions with respect to the current gender restrictions on all SOF organizations to determine if any modifications can be applied to today's Combat Support Team (CST) approach.

Review Security Assistance Force (SAF) structures employed by forward-deployed SF battalions to address the concept of "bolt-ons" to increase capabilities and unit cohesion in regional operations.

Update Interagency Task Force (IATF) plans to determine other ways to leverage economic tools ("follow the money") in the current fight against terrorists and their networks by considering how the OSS employed its economic warfare capabilities.

### **Resourcing**

Accelerate SOF-to-Service common acquisitions to reduce duplicative acquisition costs and increase economies of scale.

- Establish a SOF integrated Research and Development battle laboratory to develop Irregular Warfare capabilities and other relevant technologies.

- Develop ways to better leverage and manage existing commercial R&D capacities and products.

Further investigate the ability to concentrate SOF resources on select persistent engagement activities to respond more effectively within the international security environment.

## **Authorities**

Pursue changes in DoD oversight; manage USSOCOM more as a “Special Capability” with appropriate funds as contrasted to a Service-like entity, to streamline the numbers of reviews, reports, and decision layers.

- Request Congressional authority for USSOCOM to operate with appropriate funding similar to the OSS’s un-vouchered funds to reduce overhead and increase USSOCOM’s ability and flexibility to meet urgent needs.
- Educate relevant USSOCOM staff on Section 1206/1207/1208 funding and authorities, thus enabling a more rapid ability to support partner nations. Seek legislative support to expand and extend Section 1208 beyond Fiscal Year 2013.
- Increase and clarify the appropriate authorities enabling USSOCOM roles in intelligence operations.

The Authorities Group recommended seeking senior contract status at SES level for needed civilian expertise instead of a senior-level direct commission capability. For the ability to direct commission at any rank, USSOCOM must obtain individual service agreements from the appropriate service to bring individuals on active duty as commissioned officers. Furthermore, these commissions would most likely require staff or non-line officer status. USSOCOM is interested in the authority to grant a uniformed commission at senior level rank (O-6) and above for specific purposes and limited durations to meet specific urgent SOF needs.

Refine USSOCOM roles and responsibilities in synchronizing plans for global operations, and develop Joint SOF Doctrine to support such efforts.

## **Summary**

It is important to remember that the OSS was, in essence, an experiment that lasted only a few years. The fact that the OSS did not reach full maturity and did not become constrained by predictable bureaucratic limitations provides an important record of both success and failure. This serves as a reach back as to how contemporary and future SOF can learn from and exploit the OSS legacy. The recommendations above are intended to provide SOF Warriors with an agile, sustainable and effective “Way Ahead” to confront the inevitable uncertainties of the evolving international security environment.