Chapter 13: Airborne, Special-Purpose Forces, and Amphibious Operations

This page is a section of FM 7-100.1 Opposing Forces Operations.

The OPFOR views airborne and special-purpose forces (SPF) as means to carry the battle into the enemyâ depth. The General Staff uses these highly mobile forces against strategic objectives or for regional power projection. It may also allocate such forces down to the operational and tactical levels. It has the capability to conduct amphibious operations, which sometimes occur in conjunction with airborne or SPF operations in a coastal area. Insertion of any or all these forces into enemy rear areas can disrupt the stability and cohesion of his defense.

Airborne and Heliborne Operations

Airborne and heliborne forces have the capability to surprise the enemy, rapidly envelop key objectives, or exploit targets weakened by the effects of deep fires. Airborne and heliborne forces are especially critical given the fluidity and rapid tempo that characterizes the modern battlefield. The OPFOR expects to capitalize on the added vertical dimension that airborne and heliborne forces provide when working in concert with ground maneuver forces.

The OPFOR also uses airborne forces as a means of projecting power in its region. Significant portions of invasion forces could consist of airborne units, which are well suited for such roles. They train for operations in a variety of geographical environments. They also train specifically to establish, defend, and expand an airhead. Their equipment is air-transportable.

Airborne forces are particularly valuable as a means to control access into the region by extraregional forces. The early seizure of ports and airfields critical to enemy deployment can be an essential ingredient in the conduct of access-control operations. Airborne and heliborne forces are especially suited for operations conducted during the transition from regional to adaptive operations. Their unique capabilities also render them especially useful in support of adaptive operations. They can serve as fixing, assault, exploitation, or deception forces when the rapid positioning of such forces in support of offensive operations is critical.

Airborne landings require many valuable assets. Therefore, only after careful consideration would a commander make the decision to use airborne forces. If other units are capable of fulfilling a given mission, they execute it instead of airborne units. Heliborne landings also require valuable assets but are often more economical than airborne landings.

Command and Control

Administratively, airborne forces are part of the Army. During wartime, to allow flexibility in employment, they are directly subordinate to the Supreme High Command (SHC), with control exercised by the General Staff. When the OPFOR establishes more than one theater headquarters, the General Staff may allocate some airborne units to each theater. A theater commander with dedicated airborne assets could further dedicate airborne units to an operational-strategic command (OSC) or, dependent upon the mission, he could also place airborne units in support of an OSC. A theater commander with constituent airborne assets can allocate them to an OSC in a constituent, dedicated, or supporting relationship. These command and support relationships ensure that airborne objectives support the overall mission of the theater or OSC to which the airborne units are allocated. Even in a supporting relationship, the commander of the theater or OSC receiving the airborne unit(s) establishes those unitsâ objectives, priorities, and time of deployment.

The landing force commander is the commander of the airborne or ground force unit forming the basis for the airborne or heliborne landing force. He is responsible for preparing and positioning troops for loading. He shares with the aviation commander the decision to proceed with the landing, based on the assessment of the situation at the drop zone (DZ) or landing zone (LZ). After the landing, the landing force commander is solely responsible for conducting the operation, until linkup with ground maneuver forces. While the landing force commander can plan the scheme of maneuver, final approval of the plan comes from the OSC or theater commander.

Missions

The OPFOR categorizes airborne or heliborne missions based on the depth and importance of the objective, the size of forces involved, and the level of command of the controlling commander. The three categories of missions are strategic, operational, and tactical. The location of enemy forces, the level of the controlling headquarters, the significance of the target, weapons systems capabilities, and geography also determine the scope of the operation. Many factors can affect the decision of where to insert an airborne or heliborne force, includingâ

- The size of the force.
- Anticipated enemy resistance.
- The air situation (presence or absence of air superiority).
- The potential for reinforcement of the force.
- The position and projected rate of advance of friendly forces designated for linkup.

Strategic Missions

In wartime, the SHC establishes strategic missions, which the General Staff controls. The outcome of a strategic mission should have significant impact on the war or strategic campaign. The use of airborne forces in a regional power-projection role is also a strategic mission.

Airborne forces conduct strategic missions against deep targets. Forces from other arms and services can also participate, but typically would not arrive in the target area until a later time. Depending on the depth of the airborne mission, linkup with ground forces may not occur for several days. Since troops on the ground receive supplies by airdrop or airlift, the operation requires substantial air combat and transport support.

Objectives of strategic missions could be national capitals or other administrative-political centers, industrial or economic centers, ports or maritime straits, or airfields. Strategic missions also may establish a new theater or neutralize one member of an enemy coalition.

Operational Missions

An OSC does not necessarily include airborne forces in its task organization. However, the SHC or General Staff may allocate such forces to an OSC for a given operation, in a constituent, dedicated, or supporting role. Operational objectives could includeâ

- Headquarters or command posts.
- Communications facilities.
- Enemy precision and nuclear weapons.
- Logistics facilities.
- Airfields.
- Ports.
- Bridges and other water- or gap-crossing sites.
- Lines of communications (LOCs).

An airborne force of brigade size is the most common force used to accomplish operational missions. Typical missions can include deception operations, blocking a withdrawing enemy, or enveloping enemy defensive positions.

Tactical Missions

While recognizing the need to limit the use of airborne forces to primarily strategic and operational missions, the OPFOR also recognizes the need for the capability to insert troops to perform tactical missions. A tactical airborne mission could have the same types of objectives as an operational mission. On occasion, airborne troops may be allocated for such missions, but the force is more likely to consist of infantry troops. In either case, the units involved would normally rely on helicopters for tactical insertions, rather than fixed-wing aircraft. The primary function of these tactical airborne or heliborne landings is to cooperate with ground maneuver forces in reaching operational or tactical objectives. In other situations, heliborne insertions can serve as a rapid means for positioning or repositioning forces on the battlefield.

Heliborne units can perform reconnaissance missions when inserted into the disruption zone or the enemy rear area. They may perform tactical security missions, or cover, delay, or defend against an enemy approach to a vulnerable flank. Heliborne units can also serve in an antilanding reserve, providing rapid reaction to the threat of enemy airborne or amphibious landings. Ambushes, raids, sabotage, and deception activities are examples of other missions suited to heliborne operations. Heliborne units can also lay and clear mines in the enemy rear.

Planning and Preparation

Planning considerations for airborne and heliborne operations include the mission, troops and support available, terrain, the depth of the operation, flight routes, air superiority, DZs or LZs, surprise, security, and the enemy situation. Deception operations are planned to mislead the enemy as to the true purpose and location of air activity. Given routine readiness conditions, the time required to prepare transport aviation and to plan a battalion-size or larger airborne mission is, as a minimum, approximately 24 hours. This planning time includesâ

- Notification of alert and moving out: 2 hours.
- Preparation of aviation units: 18 hours.
- Embarking troops and equipment and final aircraft preparation: 4 hours. When exercising a preplanned contingency or starting from an increased readiness condition, the preparation time is reduced by 5 to 8 hours.

The time required to plan for a battalion-size heliborne assault is similar. Troop embarkation times can be reduced if few or no vehicles accompany the force. The force selected to conduct a heliborne assault may require training, and this adds at least one day to the preparation time. To avoid this delay, the OPFOR trains selected infantry battalions for heliborne employment.

Preparation for an airborne or heliborne landing includes the following:

- Determining the composition, strength, and capabilities of the enemy forces in the area of the DZ or LZ (or those near enough to interfere with the landing operations and subsequent attack of the objective).
- Determining the nature of the terrain and condition of the road network.
- Locating natural and manmade obstacles that would interfere with air drop of troops and equipment.
- Selecting suitable primary and alternate DZ or LZs.

Aerial reconnaissance, clandestine agents, sympathizers, maps, signals reconnaissance, long-range patrols, or air-dropped reconnaissance teams all provide intelligence information for an airborne operation. Reconnaissance of the DZ or LZ, by both air assets and SPF, continues throughout the planning and execution stages of the operation. If enemy troops are located in the area, they are attacked and neutralized by aviation, artillery, or SPF. Reconnaissance takes place when the airborne or heliborne operation is first conceived, when troops embark, and while aircraft are en route to the DZ or LZ. Enemy armor, artillery, and air threats are of major concern. Reconnaissance activities also occur outside the projected objective area, as a deception

measure.

Airborne and heliborne operations require extensive coordination between the committed landing force and the controlling headquarters, supporting aviation, and ground maneuver forces. The following principles contribute to success:

- Surprise should be used to advantage. Extensive security measures are necessary in all phases of the operation to prevent early detection and to minimize enemy reaction time. Night airborne operations are a primary means of achieving surprise. False insertions aid deception and surprise when conducting heliborne operations.
- Landings should be in undefended areas or in areas where enemy defenses have been effectively neutralized.
- There must be effective air cover for the en route formation. Suppression of enemy ground-based air defense weapons along the flight route is imperative.
- Airborne assaults receive fire support from aircraft, surface-to- surface missiles (SSMs), and artillery, as the latter comes within supporting range of airborne forces.
- Artillery fires are essential to the support of heliborne forces.
- Attack helicopters escort lift helicopters to prepare the LZ before the landing of troops and to provide fire support once the landing force is on the ground.

13-19. A typical DZ is three by four km; a typical LZ may be smaller. An airborne brigade normally receives one primary and at least one alternate DZ. Within a brigade DZ, each airborne battalion has a designated, individual DZ. The landing force commander designates alternate zones for emergency use. Follow-on forces normally use the zones used by the initial wave. Heliborne forces use one or more LZs depending upon the situation and size of the landing force. The landing force commander designates at least one alternate LZ.

CONDUCT

The use of airborne forces in an operation depends upon whether it would enhance the likelihood of surprise, deep penetration, and rapid exploitation. Also essential is a favorable forces analysis in the DZ or LZ and the objective area. These criteria, together with the achievement of at least temporary local air superiority and the availability of airborne and airlift assets, constitute the main elements in a plannerâ decision to conduct an airborne or heliborne operation.

Air Movement

The Air Force allocates the transport aviation units required for deployment. Either transport aircraft or lift helicopters or a combination of the two can air-land airborne units or insert airborne battalions. Lift helicopters from army aviation can support heliborne landings. Aircraft of civil aviation can augment military capabilities. Civil fleet equipment consists of some medium- and long-range passenger transports and a number of short-range transports and helicopters. Staging bases and associated airfields are located at distances that protect aircraft and troop concentrations from enemy tactical aircraft and short-range SSMs. Airfields and equipment are camouflaged and concealed against aerial observation, and aircraft are placed in revetted positions.The OPFOR considers the air movement phase of an airborne or heliborne operation to be its most vulnerable phase. The OPFOR emphasizes the necessity of creating a threat-free flight corridor from the departure area to the DZ or LZ. All along the flight path, fire support assets target enemy air defenses. Fighters escort transport aircraft during an airborne operation to protect them from

enemy fighters and ground fires. Attack helicopters can escort lift helicopters during a heliborne operation to protect them from ground fires.

Passive defense measures taken during the air movement phase include conducting movement during hours of darkness, using more than one flight route, maintaining radio silence, and flying at low altitudes. The OPFOR can use electronic warfare measures during air movement, including

escort jammers, which suppress enemy air defense and surveillance systems.

Air Drop or Heliborne Landing

Airborne forces normally conduct combat air drops at an altitude of from 150 to 300 m. They emphasize the necessity of dropping at low altitude to minimize the amount of time individuals are in the air. Low-altitude drops also increase the likelihood that a unitâ personnel and equipment would land close together.

Forces inserted by helicopter have the advantage of arriving on the LZ as organized units. To minimize their vulnerability to ground fires, helicopters remain on the ground in the LZ only long enough to disembark troops. If the LZ is under effective enemy fire, the landing force commander, after consulting the aviation commander, may divert the force to an alternate LZ.

Drop Zone or Landing Zone Procedures

The air drop or landing and reorganization phase is the second most vulnerable period in an operation, following the air movement phase. The airborne or heliborne force must clear the DZ or LZ quickly, before the enemy arrives to counter it.

If the airborne force is dropped or landed during daylight hours, personnel either move directly to their predesignated attack positions or, if the DZ or LZ is not on the objective, first assemble in battalion assembly areas. If the drop or landing occurs at night, personnel may first assemble as companies and then move to battalion assembly areas, before occupying pre-designated attack positions.

If the DZ is under strong enemy attack, personnel Â assemble Â and move immediately to the perimeter to establish defensive battle positions. Personnel use any available light armored vehicles to reinforce battle positions, and do not sort out the vehicles until after repelling the enemy attack.

If the DZ is not on the objective and units assemble first, they try to avoid combat with enemy ground force units and hide from an air threat. If required to actively defend against an air attack, at least one entire platoon per company or one company per battalion is responsible for the mission. For a planned follow-on air landing, the initial landing force leaves a rear detachment at the DZ. This detachment provides security on the DZ for the landing of the follow-on force.

The heliborne force lands on its objective if possible. If it is not on the objective, the LZ should be as close as possible but outside of the direct fire range of enemy forces at the objective. Once on the ground, the heliborne landing force organizes rapidly in an assembly area.

Movement to Objective

Speed and security are the primary concerns during movement to the objective. If the landing force is moving at night, it can use established road networks to reach the objective before dawn. If movement is during the day, the unit moves cross-country using terrain features to provide concealment when possible. During movement, the landing force maintains radio silence until making contact with the enemy, with only the landing force commander transmitting messages.

Since the information received before departure is perishable, reconnaissance missions during the ground movement phase are extremely important. For airborne forces, these missions are performed by reconnaissance teams from the brigade and/or battalion level. These teams may have engineer or chemical defense personnel attached.

Rapid execution is especially important to the heliborne force. The force departs the assembly area with reconnaissance in the lead and on the flanks. The landing force attacks the target as quickly as possible in order to gain surprise and maintain momentum.

Offense

Once on the ground, offensive tactics of airborne forces are similar to those of similarly equipped infantry forces. Before the attack, the airborne force deploys its fire support units to provide maximum support. Airborne forces at the final objective attack to destroy the enemy or to seize control of the enemy-held area or facility. A heliborne force can be augmented with combat engineers, antitank weapons, artillery, and chemical defense troops. The force usually attempts to attack its objective from several directions at once. A heliborne force is generally assigned an objective less heavily defended than that assigned to an airborne force.

Defense

Once the landing force has seized an objective, it must defend that objective until the arrival of friendly ground maneuver forces. Usually, the landing force establishes a perimeter defense. In some cases, the terrain and the enemyâ s situation may permit establishing a defense in depth, with a small, mobile reserve. A number of factors influence the capability to remain on the objective: days of supply on hand, a secure air resupply corridor, the availability of air support, and the enemyâ s ability to respond to the landing. Heliborne forces, especially those drawn from the regular ground forces, have little sustainability, and their ability to remain on the objective is limited. Linkup with a ground maneuver force should occur as quickly as possible.

Linkup

Airborne or heliborne units either await a linkup with friendly forces or, when necessary, fight their way back to friendly lines. The rule of thumb is that the probability of overall success is greater the sooner the linkup occurs. To accomplish linkup, the unit sends a reconnaissance patrol to meet the approaching ground maneuver force units. The reconnaissance patrol provides information on the best approaches into the area, the security situation on the objective, and the enemy situation. A linkup with ground maneuver forces normally completes the mission of an airborne or heliborne force. Once linkup occurs, control of the landing force unit returns to the parent headquarters.

Special-Purpose Forces Operations

The OPFOR maintains a broad array of SPF. One of the six service components, the SPF Command, provides the capability to attack both regional and extraregional enemies throughout their strategic depth. In addition to conducting direct action, this command fields strategic reconnaissance forces with which it is able to support national intelligence requirements. It also has a capability to support operations of terrorists and other irregular forces. The SPF Command includes both SPF units and commando units. Its units provide a balanced capability including some tactical transport for use in inserting SPF or commando units.

In addition to the SPF Command, four of the other five service components have their own SPF. The Army, Naval, and Air Force SPF are intended primarily for use at the operational level and enable each service to conduct reconnaissance and direct action to the opponentâ s operational depth. The Internal Security Forces also have their own highly-trained SPF units, equipped to conduct direct-action missions in the enemyâ s rear. All of these SPF organizations provide the OPFOR a flexible and capable means of support to regional, transition, and adaptive operations.

The Air Force fields light transport aircraft for insertion of its own SPF or those belonging to other service components, within the region. The Navyâ s submarine force may also insert SPF for reconnaissance or direct action outside the region.

Command and Control

The SPF Command includes both SPF units and commando units. (Command and control for the SPF Commandâ scommando units is discussed under the subsection on Commandos later in this chapter.) The Army, Navy, Air Force, and Internal Security Forces also have their own SPF. Any of these various types of SPF units may remain under the command and control of their respective service headquarters or may be suballocated to operational- or even tactical-level commands during task organization.

Administrative Force Structure

The SPF Command is one of the six service components subordinate to the SHC and is thus under the control of the General Staff. The General Staff normally reserves some SPF brigades under its own control for strategic-level missions as directed by its Intelligence Directorate. Likewise, the Army, Navy, and Air Force could maintain some of their own SPF directly subordinate to the service headquarters, although most of them are intended for use at the operational level and thus can be subordinate to operational-level commands, even in the administrative force structure.

In peacetime and in garrisons within the State, SPF of both the SPF Command and other services are organized administratively into SPF companies, battalions, and brigades. These organizations facilitate peacetime administrative control and training. However, even these administrative organizations do not have a fixed structure. Each consists of a varying number of small SPF teams normally composed of 5 to 12 men each. The number of teams contained in each administrative organization depends on the team size required for specific missions that are envisioned for it. Every SPF operation is unique and unlike any other, and thus requires forces organized not in a standard fashion but rather adapted into a task organization based on the mission.

Task Organization

When the OPFOR establishes more than one theater headquarters, the General Staff may allocate some SPF units to each theater. From those SPF assets allocated to him in a constituent or dedicated relationship, the theater commander can suballocate some or all of them to a subordinate OSC.

The General Staff (or a theater commander with constituent or dedicated SPF) can allocate SPF units to an OSC in a constituent or dedicated relationship or place them in support of an OSC. These command and support relationships ensure that SPF objectives support the overall mission of the OSC to which the SPF units are allocated. Even in a supporting relationship, the commander of the OSC receiving the SPF unit(s) establishes those unitsâ objectives, priorities, and time of deployment. The OSC commander may employ the SPF assets allocated to him as constituent or dedicated as part of his integrated fires command (IFC), or he may suballocate them to his tactical-level subordinates. Even SPF units allocated to an OSC may conduct strategic missions, if required.

The SPF units of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Internal Security Forces may remain under the control of their respective services (or be allocated to a joint theater command). However, they are more likely to appear in the task organization of an OSC. In that case, the OSC commander may choose to suballocate them to tactical-level subordinates. If necessary, SPF units from any of these service components could become part of joint SPF operations in support of national-level requirements. In that case, they could temporarily come under the control of the SPF Command or the General Staff.

Regardless of the parent administrative organization, SPF normally infiltrate and operate as small teams. When deployed, these teams may operate individually, or they may be task organized into detachments. The terms team and detachment indicate the temporary nature of the groupings. In the course of an operation, teams can leave a detachment and join it again. Each team may in

turn break up into smaller teams (of as few as two men) or, conversely, come together with other teams to form a larger team (of perhaps up to 30 men), depending on the mission. At a designated time, several teams can join up and form a detachment (for example, to conduct a raid), which can at any moment split up again. This whole process can be planned before the operation begins, or it can evolve during the course of the operation.

When deployed outside the State, each SPF team or detachment is in direct communication with a higher headquarters. The controlling headquarters is at the very least an OSC, and some SPF units receive orders directly from the General Staff or theater headquarters. Thus, the chain of command during operations is simple and flexible.

Special Reconnaissance

SPF are a major source of human intelligence (HUMINT), placing â eyes on targetâ in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive territory. They gather information to satisfy strategic and operational intelligence requirements at extended distances (sometimes more than 100 km) or close to tactical reconnaissance, in nonlinear and noncontiguous situations. Their priorities includeâ

- Precision weapons.
- NBC delivery systems.
- Headquarters and other command and control (C2) installations.
- Reconnaissance,Â Â intelligence,Â Â surveillance,Â Â andÂ Â targetÂ Â acquisition (RISTA) systems and centers.
- Rail, road, and air movement routes.
- Airfields and ports.
- Logistics facilities.
- Air defense systems.

Once SPF teams locate such targets, they may simply monitor and report on activity there, or they may conduct direct action or diversionary measures.

The SPF can train and employ affiliated forces and civilians to perform HUMINT activities. They may also operate in conjunction with HUMINT agents controlled by the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff.

Direct Action

Direct action involves an overt, covert, or clandestine attack by armed individuals or groups to damage or destroy high-value targets or to kill or seize a person or persons. Examples of direct-action missions for SPF units are assassination, abduction, hostage taking, sabotage, capture, ambushes, raids, rescue of hostages (civilian and military), and rescue of downed pilots and aircrews. Implementation of direct-action missions depends on the size of the enemyâ s defenses, the element of surprise, and the assets available to the SPF unit commander.

The term diversionary measures refers to direct actions of groups or individuals operating in the enemyâ s rear area. These measures include the destruction or degradation of key military objectives and the disruption of C2, communications, junctions, transport, and LOCs. They could include misdirecting military road movement by moving road markers and generating false communications. They also involve killing personnel, spreading disinformation, destroying military hardware, and other actions to weaken the morale and will of the enemy by creating confusion and panic. Diversionary measures may contribute to the conduct of information warfare.

Missions

While SPF belonging to other service components are designed for use at the operational level,

forces from the SPF Command provide a regional and global strategic capability. Collectively, all these SPF assets can engage the enemy simultaneously to his operational and even strategic depth. They are prepared to attack enemy forces anywhere in the region, at overseas bases, at home stations, and even in military communities. They can attack his airfields, seaports, transportation infrastructures, and LOCs. Targets include not only enemy military forces, but also government agency heads, contractors, and private firms involved in transporting troops and materiel into the region or supporting enemy forces in any manner.

SPF are likely to be used against key political, economic, or population centers or tangible targets whose destruction affects intangible centers of gravity, rather than against military targets for purely military objectives. These efforts often place noncombatants at risk and aim to apply diplomatic- political, economic, and psychological pressure. The goal is to present the enemy with a nonlinear, simultaneous battlefield. Attacking such targets can not only deny the enemy sanctuary, but also weaken his national will, particularly if the OPFOR can attack targets in the enemyâ homeland.

SPF are capable of conducting the following basic missions:

- Neutralize weapons of mass destruction and precision weapons.
- Attack air defense facilities and airfields.
- Disrupt LOCs.
- Attack C2 and RISTA facilities.
- Exploit surprise to disrupt defensive actions.
- Undermine morale and spread panic.
- Disrupt Â enemyÂ powerÂ suppliesÂ andÂ transportation Â networksÂ (power utilities, POL transfer and storage sites, and internal transportation).
- Conduct reconnaissance for future ground force operations or for airborne and/or amphibious landings.
- Organize local irregular forces.
- Prevent efficient movement of enemy reserves.
- Assassinate important political and military figures.
- Provide terminal guidance for attacking aircraft, missiles, and precision weapons.

In addition to these basic missions, SPF may have specific missions in peacetime, transition to war, and wartime.

Peacetime Missions

During peacetime, the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff carefully coordinates reconnaissance programs geared to meet the intelligence requirements of the State and of the OPFOR in war. Aside from SPF troops, it maintains agent networks in the target country to support SPF operations. Some of these agents actively engage in subversion; others are â sleepers,â prepared to act on call in time of war. The SPF Command trains agents to operate as political agitators, intelligence collectors, and saboteurs. The agents establish residence near military targets such as airports, missile bases, arsenals, communications centers, logistics centers and depots, and routes used for troop movements. Just before the beginning of hostilities, SPF teams link up with agents already operating in the target area.

Clandestine SPF sabotage agents do little intelligence collection. Their job is to assimilate into the local culture, establish residences near transport and power facilities, and when ordered, emplace explosive charges in preselected targets.

Another important task for clandestine SPF sabotage agents in peacetime is to acquire houses and plots of land to prepare safe areas where sabotage teams (civilian and military) can find refuge after landing behind enemy lines in times of hostilities. These places are usually in the countryside, in forested areas near the sea, or in the mountains.

Agents provide incoming sabotage and assassination teams with safe areas, motor transport,

fuel, and supplies. They then guide the teams to their objective. Both intelligence and sabotage agents can come under the control of a theater or OSC chief of reconnaissance. The chief of reconnaissance can transfer agents from one category to the other at any time or order them to fulfill both roles.

Transition to War

Before hostilities begin, SPF conduct clandestine operations in the target area. This increases the probability of destroying key targets well before enemy force protection measures tighten. This is the most critical period because clandestine agents or teams can efficiently use the enemyâ lack of awareness as an opportunity to disorganize and disrupt troops and the local population. Since the SPF often use terror tactics, direct action during this transition period still allows plausible deniability. Missions generally include the following:

- Conduct strategic and operational reconnaissance.
- Train and assist insurgents operating in foreign countries.
- Organize local irregular forces.
- WeakenÂ theÂ targetÂ countryâ sÂ militaryÂ capabilities Â or Â will Â to Â fight through either subversion or direct action.
- Assassinate key military and political figures.
- Sabotage enemy mobilization and deployment.

The General Staff directs the planning of SPF wartime missions, which form an integral part of combined arms operations. Intended to support theater-level campaigns as well as OSC-level operations, SPF are capable of operating throughout enemy territory.

Wartime Missions

SPF play an important role in support of both the offense and defense. They may perform their missions separately, in support of strategic objectives, or in support of a theater-level campaign or an OSC-level operation. Missions generally include some of the following:

- Conduct deep reconnaissance operations.
- Conduct direct action along strategic or operational axes, including ambushes and raids.
- Destroy critical air defense systems and associated radars.
- Support follow-on conventional military operations.
- Assist local irregular forces to prepare for offensive operations.
- Provide communications, liaison, and support to stay-behind partisan operations in the defense.

The OPFOR conducts SPF operations in the enemyâ soperational and strategic depth to undermine his morale and to spread panic among the civilian population and the political leadership. Refugees can hamper enemy deployment, defensive maneuver, and logistics.

SPF allocated to an OSC often become part of the disruption force, frequently operating in enemy-held territory before the beginning of an operation or battle. They may become part of an OSCâ lFC, to assist in locating and destroying key enemy formations or systems (see Chapter 2).

Regional Operations. In operations against the Stateâ regional neighbors, Army SPF inserted in advance can support the ground forces at the operational level and conduct reconnaissance and direct action to the opponentâ soperational depth. Naval and Air Force SPF can carry out reconnaissance in support of landings or conduct raids against critical targets. The SPF Command uses its assets to conduct missions throughout the strategic depth of current regional opponents and to detect indicators of possible outside intervention in the regional conflict. The SPF can also support terrorist and insurgent operations in the region.

Transition Operations. During transition operations, when an extraregional force begins to

intervene, the SPF Command can use its regional and global intelligence-gathering capabilities to the enemyâ s strategic depth. It can use SPF teams to conduct direct-action attacks against ports, LOCs, and early-entry forces. The SPF can use terror tactics and are well equipped, armed, and motivated for such missions. The SPF can also support insurgent and terrorist operations to delay or disrupt the extraregional forceâ s mobilization and deployment.

During transition operations, Army SPF conduct raids against enemy logistics sites, LOCs, and vulnerable military targets in the region. The Navy and Air Force can also insert Naval and Air Force SPF to conduct raids against critical installations within the region. The SPF Command can conduct attacks to the enemyâ s strategic depth, to divert enemy resources to protect politically or ecologically sensitive targets and to undermine the enemyâ s will to enter or continue the fight. Although these attacks are characteristically part of transition operations, they are also conducted during regional and adaptive operations if required.

Adaptive Operations. During adaptive operations, substantial gaps may exist between the positions of dispersed OPFOR units. In these gaps, the OPFOR may use SPF to destroy key systems, cause politically unacceptable casualties, harass the enemy, and maintain contact.

Air Force SPF provide air base security in State territory or other areas occupied by the OPFOR. They can conduct raids against enemy air bases and installations within the region. They may also take part in joint SPF operations coordinated by the SPF Command as part of strategic operations. The Navy could use its submarine force to insert SPF for direct action against a high-payoff target outside the region.

During adaptive operations, the OPFOR may increase the level of SPF actions in the enemy rear area. The national-level SPF Command provides the ability to attack both regional and extraregional enemies throughout their strategic depth. Strategic reconnaissance by SPF in support of national intelligence requirements is an essential element of access-control operations. In addition to its own direct action against enemy forces and installations, the SPF Command can also support operations of irregular forces.

The OPFOR has trained SPF as alternate means of delivering nuclear, biological, or chemical (NBC) munitions packages it may develop for them. This provides a worldwide strategic means of NBC delivery that is not limited to the range of the missiles of the Strategic Forces.

Integrated Fires Command

An IFC may include an SPF unit as one of its many components (see Chapters 2 and 7). At OSC level, the SPF component provides the OPFOR the ability to attack both regional and extraregional enemies throughout their strategic depth. They conduct operations to achieve strategic military, political, economic, and/or psychological objectives or to achieve tactical or operational goals in support of strategic objectives. Such operations may have either long-range or immediate impact on the enemy.

Commandos

The SPF Command also includes elite commando units. Like SPF units, commandos normally operate in territory not controlled by the State. Normally, personnel selected for commando units come from soldiers who have already served 3 to 7 years in other combat arms. In addition to proficiency in various infantry-type tactics, they receive training for more specialized commando missions, with emphasis on infiltrating and fighting in complex terrain and at night.

Command and Control

In the administrative force structure, commando battalions are subordinate to the SPF Command. For administrative purposes, these battalions may be grouped under a commando brigade headquarters. However, commandos are employed as battalions, companies, platoons,

and squads or as small teams, depending on the type of mission. Commandos are elite units, specially trained for missions in enemy territory. When assigned such missions, the commando units may disperse into small teams (typically 5 to 12 men). These small teams are harder to detect during infiltration and provide the ability to attack many targets simultaneously to achieve maximum effect. However, based on factors such as the enemy situation and the size of the target, the individual teams may come together temporarily to form commando detachments. If necessary, they can reform into platoon- to company-size units to perform attacks against critical military and civilian targets.

Commando units can be allocated in a constituent or dedicated status to be task organized as part of an OSC or of a division or brigade tactical group (DTG or BTG) based on a regular ground forces organization. Even is such cases, however, the reason for incorporating a commando unit into such an organization normally would be to perform specialized commando missions that contribute to the overall mission for which that task organization was created. In other cases, commando units may be allocated in a supporting relationship, while remaining under the command of their parent commando unit or the SPF Command.

Infantry-Type Missions

Sometimes, particularly in defensive situations, commandos may be called on to perform regular infantry missions, filling gaps between dispersed regular forces. In this case, commandos would typically fight as companies or battalions, using tactics similar to those of regular infantry units.

Commando Missions

Commando units generally conduct various types ofÂ reconnaissance and combat missions in the disruption zone or deep in enemy territory, during larger operations or tactical actions that are either offensive or defensive. The reconnaissance missions include actions such as surveillance, monitoring, and searches. Commando units are expected to conduct reconnaissance within the context of any combat mission. Conversely, when employed as reconnaissance forces, the commando unitsâ activities are not limited to reconnaissance. They are also tasked with assaulting and destroying military or civilian targets.

Commandos provide the OPFOR with flexible, lethal forces capable of employment in a variety of roles. Typical missions that are assigned to the commandos include but are not limited toâ

- Collecting information on deployment of enemy forces and reserve unit movement.
- Collecting information on logistics facilities and seaports.
- Collecting information on enemy aircraft operating from forward airfields.
- Conducting reconnaissance of terrain and enemy forces, in support of the offense.
- Locating and destroying enemy weapons of mass destruction.
- Conducting team- or platoon-size raids and ambushes and destroying critical military or civilian targets in enemy territory.
- Conducing larger-scale (company- or battalion-size) raids and ambushes in the disruption zone or in enemy territory.
- Clearing LOCs for use by supported regular ground force units during the offense or defense.
- Clearing or emplacing obstacles.
- Conducting surprise attacks on enemy forces and create disturbances after infiltrating into enemy territory.
- Acting as a disruption, fixing, assault, exploitation, or security force.
- Acting as an antilanding reserve.

Offense. Commandos are employed as infiltration units during the offense. Following overland, airborne, seaborne, or waterborne infiltration, commandosâ operatingindependentlyâ may perform various reconnaissance and combat missions described above. However, they may also act in conjunction with regular ground forces. In the latter role, commandos can conduct the following missions to ensure the success of the overall offensive action:

Commandos can act as a disruption force, or as part of such a force. In addition to reconnaissance missions, they can be tasked with creating confusion in the disruption zone or in enemy territory byâ

- Removing or emplacing obstacles.
- Raiding and destroying headquarters, LOCs, and tactical missile firing locations.
- Occupying key terrain features (in advance of regular ground forces).
- Occupying ambush positions on enemy withdrawal routes.

Commandos can act as a fixing force. In this role, they can set up ambushes or emplace obstacles to prevent further enemy forces from coming to the aid of the target the regular forcesâ attack. They can occupy key terrain features that control choke points that hinder enemy reserve unit movements. Such choke points may be valleys, bridges, and crossroads that are critical for the enemy movement.

Commandos can act as part of an assault force. In this role, they can conduct raids and surprise attacks against C2 sites, logistics elements, fire support units (to include attack helicopter units), and other high-priority civilian and military targets. They also conduct attacks against other objectives or seize terrain that hinders enemy reserve unit movements or hampers his withdrawal.

As part of an exploitation force, commandos may attack a withdrawing enemy force from his flank and rear. Commando units can be air-inserted ahead of the withdrawing enemy force to establish ambush positions along the enemyâ withdrawal route.

Defense. During a defensive operation conducted by an OSC, commando units allocated to the OSC can support the action primarily in reconnaissance and security roles. Commando units can conduct reconnaissance in the OSC disruption zone or deep in enemy territory. They may also act as a security force in the OSC support zone. When acting as a security force, commandos are normally employed as companies or battalions. The commando unit can be augmented with vehicles and/or additional forces (such as tank or mechanized units, fire support, or aviation) to act as an assault force in limited-objective attacks against enemy airborne, air assault, or special operations forces units.

A commando battalion or company is seldom used as a combat force in the battle zone because of organization, equipment, and limited firepower. However, if the defensive mission is more important than reconnaissance or security, it may act as a combat force, using regular infantry or motorized infantry tactics. Commando units may fill gaps between the battle positions of regular forces. When performing such infantry-type missions, commandos are normally employed as companies or battalions.

When OSC maneuver forces are forced to withdraw from an area, commando units can remain deployed in the OSCâ original disruption zone and battle zone to perform reconnaissance, raids, and ambushes. The stay-behind commandos attempt to maneuver in small teams to conduct reconnaissance and limited-objective attacks against enemy targets such as C2 sites, isolated combat units, LOCs, and logistics units.

Amphibious Operations

The Navy has a limited amphibious capability that allows it to insert either naval infantry or regular ground forces or SPF from the sea. It also fields a submarine force that could insert naval infantry to conduct raids against critical installations within the region. The Navy also fields its own Naval SPF that are able to conduct reconnaissance in support of landings or raids against critical targets. Thus, amphibious operations can play an important role in regional, transition, or adaptive operations.

Missions

Amphibious landings can be either operational or tactical in scale. However, either type can influence the outcome of a larger operation or strategic campaign.

Operational Missions

Amphibious operations can occur when the objectives are of critical value and the enemy surface warfare capability allows. Although these operations may be conducted independently of SPF or regular ground forces, they may have air, naval gunfire, and missile support. Thus, it is possible for an operational amphibious landing to have major strategic consequences.

These operational missions may have the following objectives:

- Conduct Â operations Â in Â concert Â with Â groundÂ forcesÂ toÂ envelopÂ and destroy enemy positions in a coastal area.
- Seize or destroy ports, islands, peninsulas, and/or straits, radar sites, and other important objectives in coastal areas.
- Interdict enemy LOCs within the coastal areas.
- Conduct combined operations with or in support of airborne and SPF units landed deep within enemy territory.
- Contribute to deception operations with amphibious landings mounted as a feint to mislead the enemy about the direction of the OPFOR main effort.
- Block the approach routes of enemy reserves or counterattack forces that might influence the outcome of the main operation or campaign.
- Establish coastal defenses on occupied coasts as other OPFOR forces move deeper into enemy territory.

These objectives can be accomplished by conducting an unopposed, surreptitious insertion of amphibious forces within striking distance of a lightly defended target.

Tactical Missions

Tactical amphibious landings probably are the most frequent form of OPFOR amphibious operation. Their purpose is to attack the rear area or flank of any enemy force along a coastline or to seize islands, naval bases, coastal airfields, ports, and other objectives on an enemy-held coastline. This diverts enemy attention and resources away from the decisive area of the battlefield. The amphibious landing force can be up to a detachment, operating independently or with ground force units.

In an offensive operation, tactical amphibious landing forces can seize bridges or road junctions near the coast and hold them until the arrival of the main land forces. Such landings can stop or delay enemy reinforcements or cut off his line of retreat. They may also help to maintain the tempo of the OPFOR ground forcesâ advance, or they can be for deceptive purposes. Thus, landings that are tactical in scale may nevertheless have important operational repercussions.

Reconnaissance and Sabotage Missions

Reconnaissance and sabotage amphibious landings are in a special category. Seaborne raids may perform the multiple functions ofâ

- Conducting reconnaissance.
- Damaging or destroying high-value installations located near a coast.
- Disrupting the enemyâ C2 and/or logistics.
- Tying down substantial numbers of enemy troops in the defense of long, vulnerable coastlines.

Sea-delivered SPF teams may also perform deep reconnaissance and sabotage tasks of operational or strategic importance.

Command and Control

In the administrative force structure, naval infantry forces are part of the Navy. However, they may conduct amphibious landings in support of an OSC or theater command as part of joint and combined arms operations. The SHC or theater command may allocate naval infantry units to an OSC in a given operation.

Some amphibious landings are conducted by naval infantry delivered by naval transport, without support from or coordinated action with other services of the Armed Forces. In this case, a naval commander could exercise overall C2 of the amphibious operation.

However, most landings by naval infantry are part of a larger joint operation or campaign in which they operate in conjunction with forces of other services. When sufficient naval infantry forces are not available, the amphibious landing force may consist of ground forces or SPF units that are transported by naval vessels. In these cases, the OSC or theater commander normally organizes and controls the amphibious operation, with expert advice from the chief of littoral warfare on his functional staff. The OSC or theater commander coordinates the joint actions of the naval and/or ground forces conducting the landing with supporting actions by airborne, SPF, Air Force, and air defense forces. The commander of the naval transport unit and the commander of the transported unit usually share responsibility for overall control during loading, transport, and landing.

The landing force commander is the commander of the naval infantry, ground force, or SPF unit forming the basis for the amphibious landing force. He is responsible for preparing and positioning his troops for embarkation on naval craft that will transport them to the shore. He must coordinate with the commander of the naval unit providing transport. After the landing, the landing force commander is solely responsible for conducting the operation. While the landing force commander can plan the scheme of maneuver, final approval of the plan comes from the OSC or theater commander.

Conduct

The preference for smaller-scale landings reflects the limited and subordinate role amphibious landings play in OPFOR thinking. Also, the OPFOR does not use its naval infantry in exactly the same way as other countries use their marines. For the latter, the seizure of a beachhead is often merely a prelude to extended action ashore. The OPFOR, by contrast, generally intends to use its specialized naval infantry troops only to secure a beachhead (and perhaps to raid inland). Any buildup of effort is by ordinary infantry or mechanized infantry units, with supporting artillery and staying power. The OPFOR withdraws naval infantry from combat as soon as possible to keep it available to ensure the success of subsequent landings. This, along with coastal defense, is the primary role of OPFOR naval infantry.

Joint Forces and Combined Arms

An amphibious landing usually takes on a joint and combined arms character. Its success normally requires at least temporary local air and naval superiority. (The exception would be small-scale raids conducted under conditions of limited visibility.) Against all but the weakest of enemy defenses, a heavy fire preparation is also necessary to suppress the enemy. Naturally, much fire is air-delivered, including using fires of accompanying helicopters. Also, the main ground forcesâ long-range artillery and/or naval gunfire may be able to provide support for shallow landings.

An airborne or heliborne landing normally precedes or accompanies any important amphibious landing. If the amphibious landing is to be small in scale and shallow, a heliborne force may suffice. However, a major deep landing probably requires the aid of an airborne drop. These air-delivered forces may either seize a beachhead or port, interdict the approach of enemy reserves, or attack important targets.

For successful amphibious and supporting air landings, the OPFOR must have an accurate picture of what enemy land, air, and naval forces are in range to intervene. Intensive intelligence-gathering always precedes the landing.

In a landing conducted jointly with sea-delivered ground forces, naval infantry units constitute the assault force. They have responsibility for breaching antilanding obstacles in the water and on the shore, for seizing a beachhead, and for securing the approach of the exploitation force to the landing area. Once ashore, naval infantry units employ standard OPFOR tactics as they fight their way forward to link up with air-landed troops. Their immediate mission is to provide protection for the landing and deployment of exploitation forces.

After the naval infantry secures a beachhead, infantry or mechanized infantry units can land and take over the battle. They normallyÂ replace, rather than reinforce, the assault force, even if the latter has taken only light casualties. Thus, the naval infantry remains available to spearhead additional landings. Once that is accomplished, the assault force assists the exploitation force in achieving the overall objective of the landing.

As pointed out, the OPFOR expects to commit infantry or mechanized infantry units through a secure beachhead to perform combat missions inland. However, these units may share in the assault landing role as well. If so, the OPFOR recognizes the need for at least a degree of special training. The ground force units may have attached naval infantry personnel to help overcome the special problems of an assault landing.

Regional Operations

Against a regional opponent, the OPFOR may be able to conduct amphibious landings as operational-level missions. In this case, a landing force of battalion or even brigade size, once landed, could conduct large-scale operations employing fixing, assault, and exploitation forces, as described in Chapter 3.

The OPFORâ naval infantry forces may be capable of forcible entry against regional opponents. Amphibious operations may entail the landing of a naval infantry battalion or brigade as the assault force. The exploitation force, consisting primarily of infantry or mechanized infantry troops, follows to exploit the opportunity created by the assault force.

Even in regional operations, larger-scale amphibious landings are risky. Therefore, the OPFOR normally would not attempt them outside the range of land-based air cover and support. Linkup with a ground maneuver force should occur as quickly as possible.

Transition Operations

When an extraregional enemy has only early-entry forces deployed, OPFOR naval infantry forces may still be capable of forcible entry. Their insertion can complete the envelopment of a small enemy force. It could also help control further enemy deployment from the sea.

Adaptive Operations

The OPFOR does not have the capability to conduct opposed amphibious operations against a fully deployed extraregional force. It does, however, have the capability to transport up to a regular infantry or naval infantry battalion by sea, with limited amounts of supplies and heavy weapons. The unit is then landed unopposed at a predetermined site, away from the enemyâ sÂ mainforces. In some cases, SPF or airborne troops may be inserted in lieu of using conventional infantry or naval infantry.

During adaptive operations, amphibious operations typically comprise small-scale landings conducted in detachment strength. These operations include raids, ambushes, reconnaissance, and assaults, with detachment-strength actions being the norm. The raids and ambushes in this

case would be small-scale actions conducted in a manner similar to those described for SPF earlier in this chapter, against isolated small enemy forces. Because of the extraregional forceâ â smodern RISTA means, only shorter-range landings conducted during hours of darkness have a chance of achieving the surprise that is critical to success. Normally, linkup with friendly forces is planned to occur within hours after the landing.