

Pentagon pursuing anti-terror role for secret military forces

WASHINGTON (AP) — The secret side of the U.S. military's war on terrorism is quietly growing.

The Pentagon is planning to expand its use of special operations troops, including those that operate covertly in tandem with the CIA's paramilitary force, officials and private experts say. Special operations forces played a critical role in toppling the Taliban regime in Afghanistan last fall and they almost surely would figure prominently in the earliest stages of a U.S. military action in Iraq, coordinating with local forces opposed to Saddam Hussein and hunting for Scud missile launchers.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld believes the military needs to improve its ability to find and track terrorists around the globe and to take decisive action against them. His moves toward that goal have caused some friction with the CIA and led to concern among some that the Pentagon's civilian leaders will only gather and act on those pieces of intelligence that they want to hear and deliver to the Bush White House.

Officially, the Pentagon does not discuss its covert capabilities, but indications of Rumsfeld's interest in this shadowy area are apparent in a recent study by an advisory group.

The study called for the Pentagon and CIA to develop a new capability to "evoke responses" from terrorist groups so they can be attacked pre-emptively. Covert action, psychological operations, computer attacks, special operations forces and "deception operations" would be combined in that role.

Michael Vickers, a former Special Forces soldier and one-time CIA officer, said the evolving nature of the war on terrorism makes it likely that covert military operators will be called on more often in the months ahead. Having successfully chased the al-Qaida from Afghanistan — their main operating base — the United States and its coalition partners may need more unconventional forces to chase down individual fugitives elsewhere.

"This is basically a growth industry," said Vickers, now an analyst at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

America's special forces

Numbering about 45,000, special operations forces are the most highly trained, specialized and secretive in the U.S. military. Except for the Marine Corps Force Recon, all special forces are placed under a single command structure.



Special Operations Command (SOCOM)

Officially established in 1987 with its headquarters in Tampa, Fla., SOCOM comprises all the special operations forces of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Although SOCOM is the smallest command in the armed forces, it has global responsibilities and performs the most missions. SOCOM controls its own budget and is the only command that trains, equips and deploys its own forces.



Army

Includes rapid deployment of lightly armed forces with special skills in unconventional warfare. The Army Special Operations Command has its headquarters at Fort Bragg, N.C., and includes:

- ▶ Rangers
- ▶ Delta Force
- ▶ Green Berets
- ▶ Night Stalkers (specialized helicopters)
- ▶ Psychological operations



Navy

Units operate in all environments and contribute a unique maritime capability. The Naval Special Warfare Command has its headquarters in Coronado, Calif., and includes:

- ▶ SEAL teams (Sea, Air, Land)
- ▶ Special Boat Units



Air Force

Includes highly specialized helicopters and aircraft in support of Army and Navy units. Air Force units also conduct search and rescue behind enemy lines. Air Force Special Operations Command has its headquarters at Hurlbert Field, Fla., and includes:

- ▶ Special Tactics Squadrons
- ▶ Special Operations Wings and Groups



Joint Operations

Located at Fort Bragg, N.C., the Joint Special Operations Command is a multiservice command tasked with standardizing equipment, training and tactics of special forces. Also responsible for counter-terrorism, Delta Force and SEAL Team Six operations.

SOURCES: Department of Defense; "Special Forces: A Guided Tour of U.S. Army Special Forces," by Tom Clancy; Associated Press

The CIA missile strike that killed a suspected al-Qaida leader in Yemen this week is stark evidence that the methods used to target terrorists are changing. It was the kind of pre-emptive action outside a traditional war zone that Rumsfeld wants the military to take.

Rumsfeld is considering adding billions of dollars to the \$5 billion budget of the Special Operations Command, the Florida-based headquarters that has responsibility for all of the military's special operations forces — the Army's Rangers and Green Berets, the Navy's Seals and the Air Force's special operations commandos. He also may approve increases in the numbers

of such troops, now totaling 45,000, including reservists.

The defense secretary also has asked Special Operations Command to take the lead in some anti-terrorism operations. That is a change from the arrangement of having a regional command, such as the Middle East-oriented Central Command, take the lead.

Special Operations Command is so secretive that its Defense Department Web site offers nothing about it except a likeness of its insignia (adapted from one designed by William Donovan's Office of Strategic Services, a forerunner of the CIA) and information on how defense contractors can submit proposals.

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