A Solution to WMD Proliferation

by Michael W. Parrott

> ***Nation-state efforts to develop or acquire weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems, or their underlying technologies constitute a major threat to the security of the United States, its deployed troops, and allies. Use of chemical weapons in Syria by both state and non-state actors demonstrates that the threat of WMD is real.***
>
> ***— James R. Clapper, Worldwide Threat Assessment (2016)[1]***

Summary

Current and future U.S. interagency and military efforts to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) throughout the world are thwarted by the complexity of the contemporary global security environment. For brevity, I use the Department of Defense definition of WMD—"chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear weapons or devices capable of a high order of destruction and/or causing mass casualties."[2] Both the Department of Commerce and U.S. Special Operations Command's (SOCOM) mission priorities are focused on counterterrorism and counter-WMD (CWMD). This article examines the pros and cons associated with embedding Commerce Export Enforcement Officers and analysts in each of the Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs) in an effort to counter the proliferation of WMD ideas, materials, technologies, and products by state and non-state actors throughout the world. I contend that embedding Department of Commerce Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) Export Enforcement Officers and analysts at each of the seven TSOCs would increase the both Department's CWMD/counterproliferation efforts exponentially, improve interagency collaboration, and provide a useful model for other interagency departments to emulate.

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Background

Today's security environment is complex. The transregional nature and "diverse spectrum of WMD threats" prevent any one agency or department in the U.S. government from attacking the problem alone.[3] In 2014, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel said, "The pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and potential use by actors of concern pose a threat to U.S. national security and peace and stability around the world."[4] Shortly thereafter the Pentagon ordered the transfer of the Department of Defense's CWMD Coordinating Authority role from U.S. Strategic Command to SOCOM.[5] The Pentagon recognized SOCOM is uniquely positioned and postured to leverage the breadth of the Defense Department's CWMD capabilities and resources in a mutually supportive comportment to the interagency's counterproliferation efforts. Subsequently, SOCOM developed its WMD Pathway Defeat approach, an adaptive framework that facilitates unity of effort and constant vigilance in order to disrupt WMD development and protect the homeland from coercion and attack from existing and emergent threats, as seen in Figure 1.[6] SOCOM relies on its TSOCs to plan CWMD operations and conduct activities that prevent proliferation and disrupt/defeat WMD pathways.

SOCOM has aligned its seven TSOCs with each of the Geographic Combatant Commands to facilitate the Department's and U.S. Special Operations Forces' desired end-states. (See Figure 2, next page.) TSOCs are the special operations headquarters element under operational control of their respective Geographic Combatant Commands, yet remain under the administrative control of SOCOM. TSOCs provide support to their respective Geographic Combatant Commands' special operations planning, logistics, and operational command and control requirements.[8] TSOCs, sub-unified commands, are permanent command and control structures that provide Special Operations Forces with a persistent theater posture and headquarters, in comparison to task

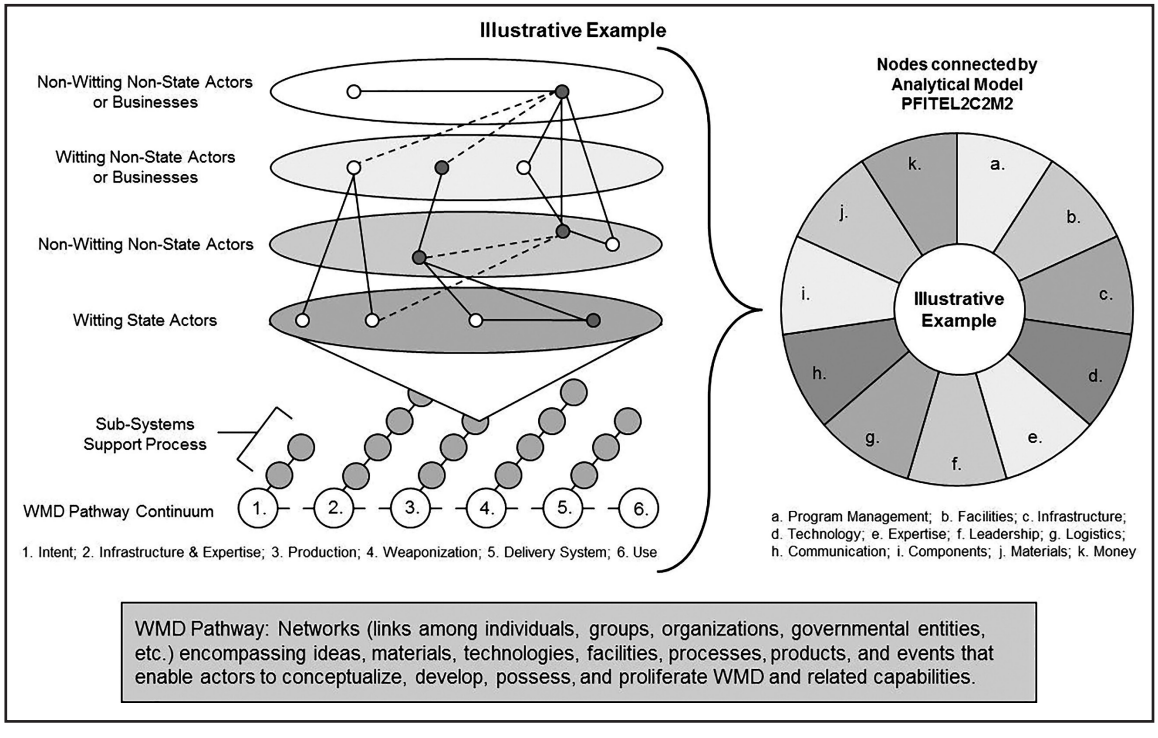

Figure 1. WMD Pathway Diagram, U.S. Army Special Operations Command[7]

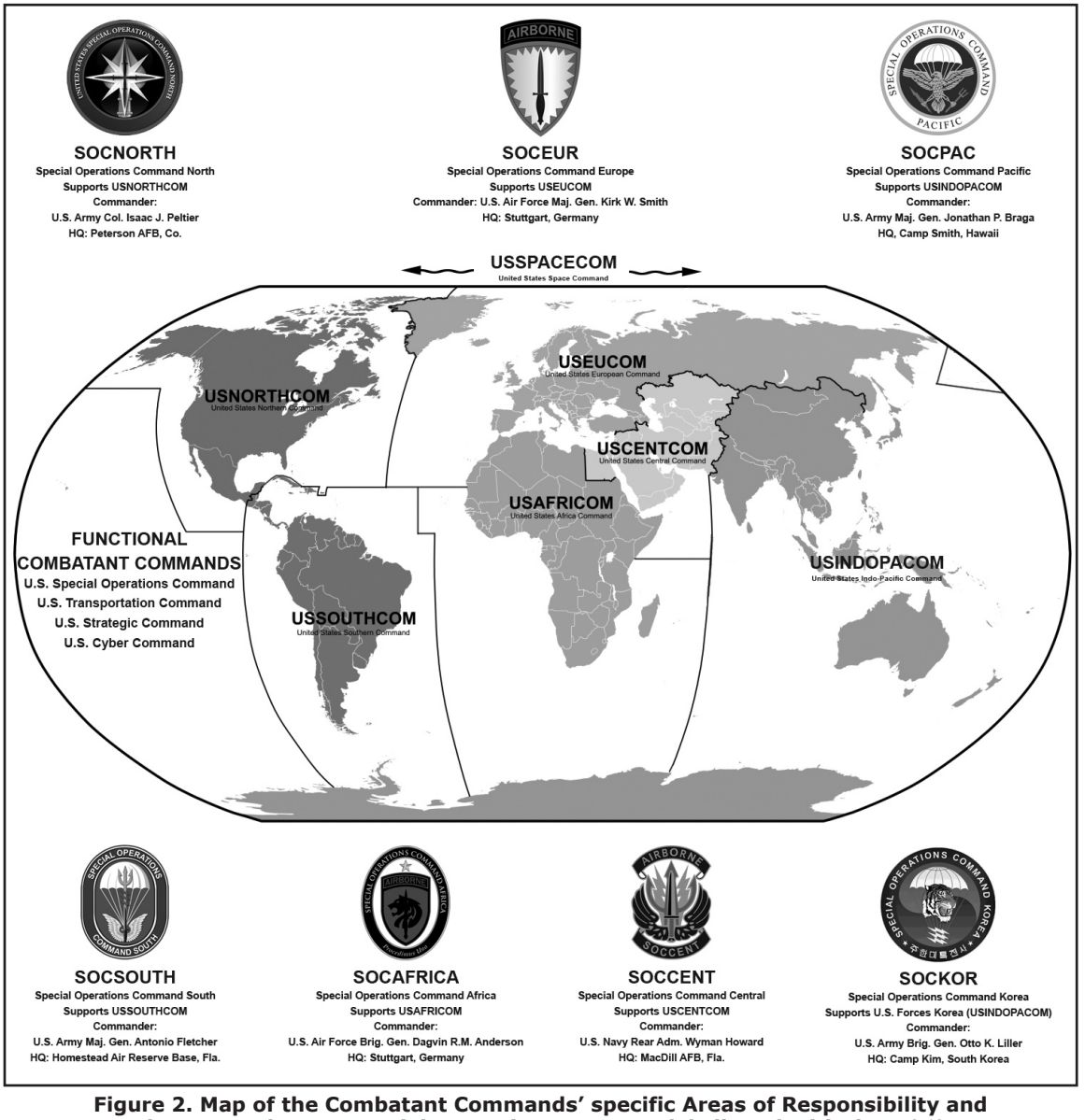

Figure 2. Map of the Combatant Commands' specific Areas of Responsibility and the seven Theater Special Operations Commands' aligned with them [9, 10]

forces that are *ad hoc* formations. The TSOC's permanency enables the employment of Special Operations Forces in a deliberate manner against multi-year objectives, which is necessary to conduct CWMD Pathway Defeat operations.

Similarly, the Department of Commerce has established overseas office locations. The Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security has six Export Enforcement office locations abroad. The offices employ special agents as Export Control Officers that report directly to their respective embassies and receive their direction and oversight from Export Enforcement.[11] The unique positioning of Export Control Officers in Russia, India, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, and two locations in China makes partnering with U.S. Special Operations Forces and specifically the TSOCs a mutual necessity for BIS and SOCOM.[12] I explain the rationale, and the pros and cons of this partnership, in the next section.

Pros and Cons

Special Operations Forces' reach dwarfs that of the BIS's Export Enforcement office's international presence. In 2017, Special Operations Forces accounted for 70,000 of the 1.3 million U.S. service members and deployed to 149 countries. In total Special Operations Forces deployments occurred in 75 percent of the world's countries.[13] Special Operations Forces have placement and access to a multitude of locales that BIS lacks the manpower to cover. Likewise, three of six BIS's Export Control Officers are located in Russia and China—both are top threats to the U.S.—where Special Operations Forces are denied access. Both can benefit from cooperating with one-another to accomplish their specific CWMD, counterterrorism, and national security priorities by sharing information, leveraging each other's placement and access, and coordinating their respective efforts.

Both, SOCOM and BIS's mission priorities include CWMD/counterproliferation. Some of the BIS's primary activities include "administering and enforcing controls on exports and re-exports of dual-use items (i.e., those having a commercial and potential military or proliferation application) and various types of military items to counter proliferation of WMD, prevent destabilizing accumulations of conventional weapons, [and] combat terrorism..."[14] Likewise, Special Operations Forces are required to "be educated/trained for WMD [and counterterrorism] related operations" and "capable of tracking, monitoring, and countering WMD" proliferation.[15] Special Operations Forces members train, advise, and assist foreign partners in counterterrorism/CWMD activities and operations that deny violent extremist organizations safe havens, freedom of action, and movement throughout the globe. Special Operations Forces counterterrorism/CWMD operations provide a wealth of information and are a great resource for BIS Export Control Officers and analysts seeking connections that can identify WMD proliferation pathways, actors, and networks across the WMD pathway continuum.

However, Commerce's Export Enforcement officer and analyst personnel strengths are extremely small, 180-200 in total, in comparison to Special Operations Forces' 70,000 members in 2017. In 2015, the BIS Export Enforcement Officer requested funding for two additional GS-13 analyst positions totaling $178,066 for yearly salaries.[16] In comparison, two Department of Defense Intelligence Analysts with six-years of experience each at the E-6 paygrade is a mere $72,000 in annual salaries.[17] The vast pay and budget discrepancies between the Departments of Defense ($495.6 billion) and Commerce ($14.6 billion) in 2015, may be a factor in Commerce's small Export Enforcement workforce that consists of roughly 200 agents and analysts.[18] Despite their differences, both Departments are creating mutually supportive partnerships.[19]

TSOCs, Geographic Combatant Commands, and SOCOM have embedded liaison officers and analysts within the interagency and at various joint centers to reduce the burden on Department of Commerce and fellow interagency members. One such center is the Export Enforcement Coordination Center, "established to coordinate and deconflict... export enforcement activities... to protect national security through enhanced export enforcement and intelligence exchange."[20] The Export Enforcement Coordination Center has members from every major U.S. Department,

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and it "serves as a conduit between federal law enforcement agencies and the U.S. Intelligence Community for the exchange of information related to potential U.S. export control violations."[21] Export Enforcement Coordination Center's unity of effort provides Commerce, SOCOM, and participating TSOCs opportunities to prevent threat actors development, acquisition, and use of WMD.

Recommendations and Conclusion

SOCOM, as the Defense CWMD Coordinating Authority, must continue to collaborate with Commerce to prioritize CWMD/counterproliferation efforts that mutually support both Departments' requirements. CWMD/counterproliferation efforts within each TSOC. Additionally the SOCOM CWMD Fusion Center should conduct a study to determine the best way or ways to fund and integrate interagency CWMD elements into TSOCs to ensure a concerted whole-of-government approach is levied in support of the current U.S. National Security Strategy. The National Security Strategy clearly states an aggressive posture alongside our allies and partners is the best form of defense against violent non-state actors.[22] What better way to stay on the offensive; than a TSOC/BIS partnership focused on counterterrorism/CWMD priorities. Both have similar missions and requirements to counter the proliferation of WMD by threat actors. The European based Export Control Officer and Special Operations Command Europe are ideally poised, positioned, and capable of providing SOCOM and both Departments, the necessary proof of concept for a successful partnership. Embedding BIS Export Enforcement Officers and analysts at the seven TSOCs will increase Department of Defense and Commerce CWMD/counterproliferation efforts exponentially, improve interagency collaboration and info-sharing, and provide a useful model for other interagency partners to emulate. ***IAJ***

Notes

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