

# Re-establishing Stakeholder Trust: Special Forces Competing in Irregular Warfare

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# A Breach of Trust: Ethics and Professionalism

## ▶ Growing Concerns

- ▶ High profile-publicized misconduct
- ▶ Congressional intervention
- ▶ USSOCOM Comprehensive Review

## ▶ Risk

- ▶ “Bias towards action” and risk adapters
- ▶ Changing risk norms - Conventional military and policy makers
- ▶ Tactical risk in CT vs strategic risk in IW

## ▶ Deliberate Disobedience

- ▶ Rebel leadership and innovation - challenging rules to create positive change
- ▶ Ethical drift and priorities - from individual to institutional
- ▶ Tailhook 91 and the NYPD scandals - scars from loss of institutional trust

## ▶ Why now?

- ▶ Public trust and confidence - recruiting and advocacy with policy makers
- ▶ Integrated and collaborative approach - suboptimal utilization



# Re-establishing Trust

- ▶ What can Special Forces do to re-establish trust in its ethics and professionalism amongst national security stakeholders?
  - ▶ Trust
    - ▶ Trust is the willingness of an actor to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations another actor will perform an action important for the trustor, regardless of the ability to monitor or control the other actor
  - ▶ Ethics
    - ▶ The examination of individual, cultural, group and professional values and principles that shape the motivation for ethical or right action
  - ▶ Professionalism
    - ▶ The state or practice of doing one's job with skill, competence, ethics, and respect to the profession
- ▶ Trust is not a behavior, it is a psychological state
  - ▶ Trust involves confidence in the capability of a partner to successfully complete a task, a belief the partner has positive intentions or goodwill, and the perception the behavior will comply with a set of mutually acceptable values.
- ▶ Special Forces characteristics and areas for change with regard to trust:
  - ▶ Operational Context
  - ▶ Relationships
  - ▶ Capability



# Characterizing Trust



- ▶ Vulnerability
  - ▶ Dependence - willingly being vulnerable to harm
  - ▶ Positions where one can do damage - same positions they must be in to help achieve success
- ▶ Entrusting
  - ▶ Entrusting as a process - positive expectations
  - ▶ Not just who you trust, but what you trust them to do
- ▶ Discretionary Power
  - ▶ Trustee has discretion to determine how to care for or look after the valued object - changes the power dynamic
  - ▶ Outside the control of the trustor - influenced by the relative costs to both actors of the breakdown of the relationship
- ▶ Principal- Agent relationship
  - ▶ Principal bears all the responsibility - even though both actors willingly assume risk and share the potential of successful outcomes
  - ▶ Control vs effectiveness: more entrusting means more discretionary power, and greater potential to achieve more. Agent must judiciously employ discretionary power respecting the principal's constraints to benefit both parties
- ▶ Trustworthiness
  - ▶ From compliance to commitment
  - ▶ Dependability - repeated cycles of successful fulfilling expectations

# Context

- ▶ Great Power Competition and Integrated Deterrence
  - ▶ US worldwide alliances and partnerships are its most important strategic asset
- ▶ Irregular Warfare and the asymmetric advantage
  - ▶ Counter adversaries' malign activities below the level of armed conflict
- ▶ Proactive Partnering and Generating Influence
  - ▶ IW is the primary task for SF - human-centric security assistance
  - ▶ Paradox of Strategic Irregular Warfare
- ▶ Risk in Irregular Warfare: Sovereignty
  - ▶ Fluid and fragile partnerships - US as the preferred partner of choice
  - ▶ Political risk: *can vs should*
- ▶ Moral Asymmetry
  - ▶ Coercive gray zone activities
  - ▶ Gold standard in professionalism and partnering



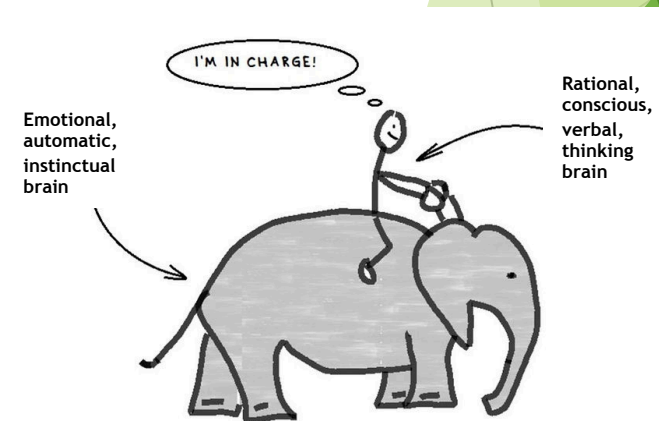
# Relationships

- ▶ Irregular Warfare as a collective endeavor
  - ▶ All instruments of power, integrated Whole of Government approach
- ▶ Competition Continuum: *The Great Game*
  - ▶ Keeping the game going, always tipping the strategic balance in US favor
  - ▶ Comprehensive success - US and its partners
- ▶ Re-defined *Winning* in Irregular Warfare
  - ▶ The process of winning and losing, building and maintaining relationships
  - ▶ Interagency - competing with not against
- ▶ A Community of Practice for National Security
  - ▶ No one party has jurisdiction on national security
  - ▶ An informal collective body of knowledge, like-minded practitioners
- ▶ Supporting from the *Tip of the Spear* - the value of assists
  - ▶ Putting the needs of the principal/customer first
  - ▶ Demonstrate value by enabling interagency partners goals



# Capability

- ▶ Identity Conflict
  - ▶ Back to the basics - Partnering and the human domain
  - ▶ Adapt wealth of partnering experience - refresh skills (i.e. language)
- ▶ More than just highly skilled - highly professional
  - ▶ Being good isn't enough
  - ▶ Ethics - good judgment in the ambiguous ethical landscape of Irregular Warfare
- ▶ The Rider and the Elephant
  - ▶ Knowing and doing the right thing
- ▶ When and how to train ethics
  - ▶ Initial entry force generation vs operational force
  - ▶ Early and continuous - vaccinate towards immunity
- ▶ Ethics as the priority
  - ▶ Ethical development is commanders #1 duty
  - ▶ Making ethics the way of life for the culture



# Regarding Trust

## ▶ Context and Trust - (Do the right work)

### ▶ Vulnerability - *Respecting responsibility*

- ▶ Reliance >> Dependence - Discretionary power (depending on you to do your part)
- ▶ Position to do most gain and most harm - Influence, US network of allies and partners

### ▶ Intent to act in goodwill - *Strategic understanding*

- ▶ Entrusting - customer's bandwidth of trust (Political risk: can vs should)

## ▶ Relationships and Trust - (Do it with good intentions)

### ▶ Relational Trust - *I'll be there for you*

- ▶ Mutually beneficial outcomes- Allies and partners entrusting US, national security stakeholders entrusting SF
- ▶ Acting with positive intentions or goodwill - Placing needs of stakeholders first

### ▶ Interdependence - *Reputation matters*

- ▶ Perceived probabilities and positive expectations - focus on assists (competing with not against)
- ▶ Trustworthiness - More entrusting, more delegation of discretionary power, likelihood of others to extend trust

## ▶ Capability and Trust - (Do it the right way)

### ▶ Confidence in capability - *The right tool for the right job*

- ▶ Successfully accomplishing tasks- National Partner Force - Partnering to generate political capital

### ▶ Mutually acceptable or shared values - *Investing in professionalism*

- ▶ Perceived probabilities (breaking cynicism) - control and compliance >> empowerment (reaching full potential)
- ▶ Commitment and identity-based trust - culture of trust: ethics as the way of life

Trust involves **confidence** in the capability of a partner to successfully complete a task, a belief the partner has positive intentions or goodwill, and the perception the behavior will comply with a set of mutually acceptable values.



# The *Flywheel* of Trust

- Entry level and operational force training
- Develop multi-year ethics program

Review Ethics Development

Develop strategic partner engagement strategy

Develop Commander led ethical training

- Ethical development as #1 priority
- Collaborate with other agencies, academia

Institute a COP for National Security

Prioritize Partnering: SFA/FID

- Invest in language and geopolitical education
- Develop combined and joint training exercises

Develop language for "winning" in IW

- Providing political leverage for stakeholders
- Quantify value of supporting actions and assists

- Inform interagency on SF capabilities to support to IW
- Collaborate on strategic goals and risks

- Identify practitioners with collective national security goals
- Host forums focused on partnering and lessons learned

Persistent and compounding effort focused on ethics, relationships and professionalism to build dynamic momentum. Until a breakthrough moment when trust is restored, and the sustainable momentum of trustworthiness is consistent inside and out.

Best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago ... second best time is right now.

# Future Studies

- ▶ 1- COP for National Security
- ▶ 2- Developing a Code of Ethics for Army Special Forces
- ▶ 3- How does deliberate disobedience apply to Special Forces