

The Importance of Establishing Hunter-Killer Teams in the Albanian Special Operation Command (ALBSOCOM)

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Abstract:

This article elaborates on the importance of establishing Hunter-Killer Teams in the Albanian Special Operation Command. The article takes into consideration different models of such teams, their history, and the doctrines behind their creation. He looks at the effectiveness demonstrated by these units in the theatre of war, referring mainly to the groups created by the US Armed Forces. Hunter-Killer operations combined with other measures against “safe havens” are the most fearsome as qualified by the insurgents themselves. Hunter-Killer Operations invade insurgents’ space and destroy the myth of indestructibility or the myth of not daring to attack their safe havens or their security. The special “Kill or Capture” Operations in Syria of the American Special Forces, Russia, and a small part of the Alliance, are being very successful in finding-fixing-finishing the terrorists of al-Qaeda, Taliban, al-Nusra, Ansar al-Shamit, ISIS, Boko Haram, al Shabbab, etc. The article concludes that it is now time to integrate the deployment of hunter-killer operations in the Albanian doctrine of irregular warfare and to improve its guidelines of operation against insurgency.

Key words: Hunter-Killer Teams, special operations, Special Forces, insurgency.

INTRODUCTION

In September 2010, reports on the American and Pakistani press announced that the Special Forces had undertaken a

large-scale attack in the tribal region between the Afghan-Pakistani border, which had been unquestionably authorized by the US President, with unlimited rules of engagement, without the approval of the American Command in Afghanistan and without the consent of the Pakistani Government. The purpose of such attack was to infiltrate deep into the territory, which the coalition troops had never entered, and into “the terrorists’ safe havens”, where Taliban and al-Qaeda forces used to collaborate. The second objective was to destroy their training camps, and catch and kill their main leaders. Unfortunately, attacks of such nature are short and not continuously present. They are very effective in dividing the enemy and contribute to adopting tactics for depriving terrorists of their safe havens. Eventually, following such attacks, the opponents tried to improve their tactics in order to make it more difficult for the Alliance future attacks to succeed.

The most challenging operational and strategic dilemmas for the American and NATO forces are the operations against the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, ISIS in Iraq and Syria, Boko Haram in Nigeria, al-Shabab in Somalia, etc. i.e. prevent the enemy from quickly withdrawing into its inaccessible territory, wherefrom it creates secret zones and operational basis to reform, regenerate, recruit, and undertake new attacks against the global anti-terrorist coalition forces. Adopting measures against such secret zones must also include creating and deploying Kill or Capture Teams as one of the options of challenging terrorists’ perception of security and protection they are offered by their inaccessible homes. Challenging and attacking the guerrilla and terrorists in their safe havens, enables our forces to make them leave such basis to survive. Besides, fear of attacks in such areas among terrorists in their safe havens has significant psychological effects, affecting their determination to keep fighting against us.

In any Counter Insurgency (COIN) war, the operations security lines and the anti-guerrilla activities require attacking maneuvers to prevent guerrilla from taking up space and creating their own government. One of the first objectives that a Government counter-response against any rebellion needs to achieve is to maintain and limit insurgency activities to the least vulnerable sites. To achieve such objective, the Government needs to deploy and assign its forces to static positions, keep them there at any cost, and gradually undertake maneuvers to surround and execute them. The Government needs, at the same time, to expand its security, military, paramilitary, Police, and intelligence forces in order to defeat the terrorists and establish a positive record of protecting the population from damage, attack, etc. Clearly the terrorists will try to use this moment to keep the government forces tied up, to enable them to increase their ranks and to create a greater force to attack and shake the government forces.

Government response is often multifaceted, for example: Keeping and securing certain areas of the country's territory, maintaining legality and resolving grievances while an offensive against the insurgents. Continuing the fight against them, COIN practitioners adopt counter-terrorist operations. This implies continued war in guerrilla zones, and more armed confrontations and search-find-hit operations. Counter-organizational measures need to be taken against terrorists' armed political leaders in order to eliminate them and their political organizations. This includes the so-called "man's hunting techniques". At the tactical level, aggressive patrolling operations for locating terrorists still include the best methods of conventional war. Combined with attack, such techniques distort the enemy's balance and deprive him of choosing the time and place to attack our forces and prolong combatting. It will not be immediately easy for the anti-guerrilla patrols to reach areas that are hardly accessible, where the terrorists try to establish their basis and "**Safe Havens**". However,

maneuvering forces at the level of companies or battalions may carry out operations deep in territory “occupied” by the opponent, which are effective and take a short time¹.

Rebels enjoy the freedom of maneuvering in their “**Safe Heavens**” (bases) and along their lines of communication, in remote strategic zones in their background for their daily activities in carrying out guerrilla operations. Such security structure allows guerrilla to use this opportunity to collect, recruit, train, resupply, and increase their forces, including developing a structure for creating a larger and more powerful force. Not bothered by the interference of Government forces, guerrilla self-satisfaction about their security and protection will start to settle down among them, while specialized COIN forces are given an opportunity to operate. A very significant reference for this aspect of irregular warfare is also a publication by Mr. Michael Innes “*Denial of Sanctuary: Understanding Terrorist Safe Haven*”². One of the most effective methods to harm and attack terrorists’ safe zones is the deployment of hunter-killer teams. The purpose of this article is to examine the characteristics and attributes of safe havens, explore the options of taking measures against such safe havens, and then focus on, and analyze the historical and present deployment of hunter-killer operations of the Albanian, American, and NATO Armed Forces in their fight against the Islamic State in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Nigeria, and Egypt. The article suggests doctrine views and theory in describing the deployment of Albanian military units in taking measures against safe havens to gain an SOP for COIN hunter-killer operations in these areas. Examining such operations and how such forces have been gradually established will create the basis for meeting the doctrine principles required for deploying

¹ Colonel Joe Celeski “Hunter-Killer Teams: Attacking Enemy Safe Havens”, JSOU 2012.

² Michael Innes, “Denial of Sanctuary: Understanding Terrorist Safe Haven”
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hunter-killer missions in COIN operations and other scenarios of irregular warfare. The article concludes by suggesting how important it is to create hunter-killer groups and a structure as a very successful force against activities in enemy's safe havens in the conflict with the Islamic State in Iraq, Syria, and else. It also gives some recommendations on the creation of hunter-killer teams as part of the Albanian Special Force Command, with full capacity in the operational art of unconventional war. It is important to understand that the hunter-killer concept requires full application of the irregular warfare doctrine. For years now, our doctrines are not only directly translated from the American ones (which leads to nothing positive in my view, as we have nothing similar with the American forces in terms of operational structure, armament, equipment, budget, leadership, combat support, or foreign policy, etc.), but they never become subject to any analysis, meetings, or discussions, not even as lessons learned by commanders upon their return from their missions. It is time to make sure that mistakes of the past are not repeated and that all commanders, who have led combatting, are heard. There is a need for an accurate plan of how to structure our missions, training, and equipment of these forces, and immediately start to approve, establish, purchase, and apply them in practice. The application of these concepts in our doctrines would significantly help us understand these activities, which are very important for forces participating in COIN operations in the areas of Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, etc., as they can contribute to weakening and destroying insurgency forces while they operate in their safe havens.

The article answers the question: Is deployment of hunter-killer operations an active and very successful measure against safe havens of the Islamic State during the application of COIN operations, a doctrinal concept for the Albanian army?

HISTORY AND DOCTRINE

In order for a concept of war making to be taken into consideration, it must first be embraced by the real military professionals as an acceptable means of consistent and practical use in deploying military sources³. Such concept needs to generally solve the dilemma posed by the nature of war, e.g.: undertaking attack operations to defeat the enemy's defense, or amphibian operations to take over invaded territories in the enemy's territory and to disable enemy's lines of communication. In the end, deliberate action must emphasize certain theoretical aspects of war that have resisted tests over time. One of the main objectives in this chapter is to explore why hunter-killer operations against enemy's safe havens have not been used at all by the doctrine, especially by the Albanian Ministry of Defense at a time when it (the Ministry) has not recognized or applied the Joint Operational Concepts of Irregular Warfare (COIN). As an important paragraph for continuing this elaboration, the definition given by the American Manual of Hunter-Killer Operations is indispensable: *"Hunter-Killer Operations are operations that take time, are carried out as part of the irregular warfare by a unique force that is organized in a special manner (SOF), in collaboration with the local force, against opponents that fight an irregular war, who act in their background, safe havens, enemy territory, dangerous environment, who use Orthodox tactics with the sole purpose of managing to undertake weakening and punishing acts against the enemy's personnel, leadership, and resources"*⁴.

Such definition is based on resolving problems of a non-conventional war. Non-conventionality is related with the lack of access to enemy's safe havens precisely as a consequence of

³ Colonel Dritan Demiraj, "Through the Labyrinths of the Islamic State" Page 378, Tirana, Albania 2015.

⁴ Colonel Dritan Demiraj, ALBSOFCDR Reference "Kill or capture American SOF Warriors", JSOU, March 2013.

the political factors, military restraints, and, relevance of time, season, and place of operation. In most of COIN theories, no course of action chosen to fight such irregular war, may guarantee success. Ideally, the COIN leader needs to be virtuous in applying and agreeing with the measures taken, hoping to achieve a political closure of the wall through a fair balance. Historically (and doctrinally) speaking, such measures do not include political and psychological activities only, but even some forms already mentioned above, such as clean, hold, build, find, fix, and destroy⁵. In order to manage to clean and hold during COIN operations, there is a need for some static (defensive) force. Finding, fixing, and finishing, on the other hand, require an active force, based mainly on attack components, which include counter-guerrilla forces and other specialized forces, whose purpose is to help improve the level of contact with the local population and intensify strikes against the guerrilla, who want to make time for getting more security from the local population and some functioning political solution. Guerrillas often enjoy the ability to operate in the "time and place they choose" and when they do so, the COIN operation forces already know their location and capabilities. In these cases, such situation favors the Government forces and the Special Forces. If this type of operation is carried out properly, COIN efforts in the military lines of the operations become a series of offensive measures and counter measures. These are a series of measures available for counter-guerrilla, although most of them remain at the level of tactical and technical procedures. Below, I will try to describe the continuously accepted approaches applied during irregular war, the approach taken by forces participating in COIN operations, when they attack the *time, place, and will* of the insurgents

⁵ General David Petraeus, ISAF Commander, "COIN Strategy in Afghanistan", 2011.

while simultaneously securing force-on-force options to weaken the terrorists⁶.

THE FUNDAMENTAL STRENGTH OF INSURGENTS

The theory of insurgency refers to a strategic balance among *time, space and wish* to act against the power of the Government as a means to achieve a political victory all based on the war theories of weakening or distorting the popular support for the Government. The principles of deployment during operations against terrorists' safe havens in the Islamic State in the territory of Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Nigeria, etc.⁷.

In principle, hunter-killer operations must be carried out in a brave, quick, and sudden manner against the enemy fighting an irregular war, penetrating deep into the enemy's space of action, sabotaging and destroying the assets that enable them to continue fighting, their guerrilla forces, and those helping them, affecting thus the enemy's moral, destroying its personnel, and taking initiatives. Hunter-killer operations in terrorists' safe havens are carried out by small teams of people, and specialized units that are capable of adopting the opponent's style and tactic in order to operate as an effective counter-guerrilla force. In this sense, the Albanian hunter-killer teams enable other counter-insurgency forces (COIN) to deny chances of further prolongation of the conflict. Hunter-killer operations are one of the effective measures during COIN operations to attack enemy's organizations as part of destroying or reducing the enemy military strength. One of the best products of the hunter-killer operations is the quality, accuracy, and increase of the information and

⁶ Colonel Joe Celeski "Hunter-Killer Teams: Attacking Enemy Safe Havens", JSOU 2012.

⁷ Colonel Dritan Demiraj, ALBSOCOMCDR "Through the Labyrinths of the Islamic State" Page 381, Tirana, Albania 2015.

intelligence collected during the time of operation in the enemy territory. Hunter-killer operations may vary depending on the time, operational zone, and types of units taking part in such operations. However, their main purpose is and remains to reduce the level of irregular war by the terrorists. This requires a secondary operational principle, which needs to be taken into consideration for each operation: they are carried out by penetrating into the opponent's space of action and if such space is "denied" or "half denied". This is what should start to be planned by the Defense Intelligence Agency, which unfortunately has no idea about this aspect.

The hunter-killer operations in the conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Africa, etc. are carried out in collaboration with the "SF punishing" expeditions, but their approach must be always carefully chosen, because if they are not carried out properly, such (hunter-killer) force risks turning into a force intended for covering the back or to carry out special counter-intelligence missions for purposes of large conventional forces. Such forces should never be created by converting the infantry forces, as they are not infantry attack forces. Usually, infantry units, commandos created as hunter-killer forces do not manage to undertake tactic or operational strikes when deployed for short-term attack purposes. What is most important is that hunter-killer operations must contribute to achieving operational and strategic objectives of the military campaign.

The principles of deployment of these forces help us examine and consider the operations that have already taken place in the past by our American, British, Australian, and other colleagues in formulating the doctrine, and they include the following:

a. Operational **environment**. Ideally, hunter-killer teams (HKT) must be deployed during irregular war (in territories that are under the invasion of influence of the Islamic State) where the opponent confronts NATO allies, and they must

consist of irregular forces in large numbers needed for such confrontations with them and their supporting forces when locating terrorists' safe havens (protected by them) to capture them. Commanders leading such operations might have to make difficult decisions when it comes to "offensive territorial" operations to achieve the desired effects against "safe havens".

b. **Command-Control.** Hunter-Killer operations require independent maneuvers in the enemy territory, and active measures to be taken to avoid fratricide between our units when dealing with operations by NATO combined units (like the ones we carried out in Afghanistan). Graphic control measures, such as the Unconventional War Operation Areas (UWOAs) and the application of technology through the computers of the Blue Force Tracker (BFT) helps us significantly familiarize with the location of other units and limit unexpected events. Consideration must be given to creating fire-free areas in order to create flexibility for the hunter-killer teams. Hunter-killer teams are required to use unique techniques of crossing the enemy line. Clear rules of engagement need to be considered in order to give hunter-killer teams better opportunities to be taken against the enemy. Command-control needs to be fully decentralized in the hands of the team commander. In operational terms, the hunter-killer teams must be under the operational control of the Special Forces if such teams are from the Command battalion or other units of the infantry battalion, which reports directly to the JFC.

c. **Composition of hunter-killer forces.** Hunter-killer operations (HKO) do not need to be created on *ad hoc* basis. They are specialized standby forces, specialized and with unique characteristics for successfully carrying out hunter-killer operations in an environment of irregular warfare. Hunter-killer organizations need to be non-traditionally organized based on a counter-guerrilla context or action in an irregular warfare environment. Great care must be taken to

make sure that the highest Command supports its non-traditional deployment. There is a need for as few traces as possible (maximum secret) in creating such teams. The operators that are going to be part of the hunter-killer teams need to be carefully selected, be professional, self-confident, and capable of adapting to the operational environment and the enemy's tactic and approach. They must think independently, be masters at using ambushes, and be highly prepared psychologically for carrying out operations that require being heartless and lethal. Knowledge of the language and culture, traditions, and customs of the area where they will have to carry out their operations, are extremely desirable. They must also be very capable of working or collaborating with the local forces as part of a structured organization. Hunter-killer teams will also have to have self-organizing skills to maintain their adoptability. As such operations require high resilience; such forces will have to be in perfect physical conditions and perfectly trained to live in the open.

d. **Local and irregular forces.** Hunter-Killer Operation (HKO) can achieve very good results when they collaborate with the local forces within a certain organization (CJSOFTF). This may also be done by collaborating with the opponent's former forces (who have turned to collaborate with our force helping us find their former colleagues), informants, local recons and other forces in large numbers. The best thing to do would be to train a local hunter-killer team to increase partnership capacities. Such teams could then be deployed as a partner or through paramilitary representation when the participation of our country or the USA is not wanted, or needs to be secret or clandestine.

e. **Leadership.** In order for the leadership to be above the level of command of the hunter-killer organizations, it has to be very supportive to ensuring the survival of an unconventional organization within the Albanian military structure. The very specialized units (Special Force Command) enjoy very little

control today in NATO armies and states, but extensive freedom to act in case of independent operations, and a significant freedom when it comes to maneuvering. They sometimes risk creating ‘a traditional anger, as they are often seen as persons, who act alone and with what appears to be ‘a lack of discipline’”. Within the hunter-killer teams, the leaders of the missions and teams must be selected based on their knowledge and experience with unconventional operations (experienced with military operational deployment, and not as selected today by Kodheli’s leadership, i.e. with ‘loyalty to the Socialist Party’ being the only criterion), courage, leadership skills, and independent decision-making skills. Leaders must prove that they are capable of carrying out unconventional and innovative tactics. The successful leaders of hunter-killer operations have demonstrated that they are very charismatic and aggressive⁸.

f. **Specialized training.** The hunter-killer teams need specialized training on enemy’s tactics and accurate knowledge of enemy’s armament, long-term remote operations, successful infiltration and exfiltration techniques, and knowledge of combatting techniques, which are mostly used during irregular warfare. Advanced training must also be provided to them on government overthrowing techniques, and coordinated sabotage techniques, measures of psychological action, interrogation, etc. Being that the hunter-killer operations are going to be long-term military actions in the enemy line, there will be a need for adequate training for improving specialized skills (excellent knowledge of the area and language, special reconnaissance, use of explosives, first aid, use of snipers and long-distance attacks in different weather conditions, advanced use of anti-aircraft and antitank warfare, safe communication equipment for long distances, and advanced skills in driving and maintaining vehicles, advanced and safe reconnaissance

⁸ Colonel Dritan Demiraj, Defense Magazine “Albanian SOF Lessons Learn in Afghanistan Eagle1-7” Jan 2012.

equipment, high level of operational planning, survival skills through combatting, etc.). When it comes to combat skills, each member shall be required to master different skills as much as possible, considering that for many reasons, one will have to replace their partner. One should keep in mind that the number of members of these teams shall be very limited and fully confidential. The entire training must take place in very real conditions, identical with those that they are going to encounter. All this means more budget support for ALBSOCOM (which is completely missing after September 2013)⁹.

g. Mobility. The Hunter-Killer Teams (HKT) need to have the same or superior maneuvering and mobility skills as the enemy in order to be successful. It is already known that after September 2014, when ISIS invaded the city of Mosul and Tikrit, they were using very advanced and bullet-proof mobility technique, high-level maneuvering, and modern American weapons of about 2500 HMWW, bullet-proof vehicles, tanks, cannons, etc. By successfully using this technique and relevant explosion tactics (filled with explosives), they reached major tactical success in facing Iraq, Syrian, and Peshmerga barriers¹⁰.

Our troops will need to be faster than the enemy's tactic vehicles, and when needed, they will also need to be fast to escape every attempt of the enemy to execute them. The most favorite method is the use of bullet-proof 4x4 vehicles, which ensure high penetration in long distances, and which are capable of carrying a significant amount of equipment and armament for a long time, and which are also equipped with additional platforms for carrying weapons of a very high fire range. Aviation support by planes or helicopters for such units is vital in terms of CAS, MEDEVAC, UAV, transport, re-supply,

⁹ Colonel Joe Celeski "Hunter-Killer Teams: Attacking Enemy Safe Havens", JSOU 2012.

¹⁰ Colonel Dritan Demiraj, ALBSOCOMCDR "Through the Labyrinths of the Islamic State" Page 386, Tirana, Albania 2015.

evacuation of injured members, and infiltration and exfiltration from the enemy's territory.

h. **Firepower.** Such units should be provided with the most modern types of armament. All their armament systems must be equipped with the relevant accessories, thermal cameras, and the most modern day and night optical binoculars of the 4th generation, silencers, tactical and infrared flashlights, etc. Their armament should include, first of all, the most modern anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons, because, as emphasized above, ISIS is using bullet-proof cars against our personnel. As for weapons with a large rate of power, these units must use HK G-28 snipers, SAKO 42 or SAKO MI 10 of caliber 338 Lapua, 300 Win Mag, which enable the team for up to 1800 m distance, H&K 40 mm, H&K MG-4, H&K MG-5 and FN 7.62 mm, and 50 Browning machine guns built-in vehicles, and HK 416, Beretta SF 160-A2, FN 5.56 mm/7.62 mm machine guns, all equipped with grenade launchers 40 mm and pistols of caliber 45 Auto or 9x19 mm Glock 17 Gem4, Glock 21 Gem4, H&K Mark 23, H&K P-12, SIG SAUER 226 Combat 9x19 mm, which have a large capacity and a significant amount of ammunition. However, in cases of contact with a large number of guerrillas, support from air by CAS will be necessary, or the use of platforms of (UAV/UAS) unmanned planes, which have a rocket attack capacity programmed as part of hunter-killer operations. The use of artillery with a large rate of power is very limited, because they have a small mobility capacity and very slow movement speed. The Rapid Reaction Force will be largely a force, which in certain cases; will be available for hunter-killer operations to reinforce the areas where the situation escalates¹¹.

i. **Support by the state-of-the-art technology.** The Hunter-Killer Teams (HKT) must be supported by state-of-the-art technology to improve their presence, resistance, and

¹¹ Colonel Dritan Demiraj, ALBSOCOMCDR Defense Magazine "Albanian SOF Lessons Learn in Afghanistan Eagle1-7" March 2012.

defense during combat. The hunter-killer doctrine for their deployment must change similarly to how the efficiency of find-fix-finish combat is maintained. This requires a modernization of equipment in order to gain quick advantage in the battlefield. In addition, the hunter-killer forces must be provided with the latest capacity of sensors and anti-sensors to expand their notification ability and enable them to undertake operations for economizing their forces.

j. **Intelligence.** This type of teams will need to have a very large amount of intelligence available about the enemy's activity and the geography of their operational territory. Intelligence support platforms dedicated exclusively to these forces, combined with collection/detection capacity would significantly increase the quality of their military action, as well as the survival rate of our troops in combat, which would help with gaining control of the terrorists' safe havens.

k. **Means of support and living.** Hunter-Killer Operations must be planned for a long time, long distances, and very often, outside the area of operation of our units or those of NATO. Restrictions of support for combat services must be factored in when planning. This is about the measures taken for the hunter-killer teams to be able to live and fight for a long time in a territory dominated by the opponent, and be able to be self-sufficient. This, however, does not exclude the possibility of having food and armament also provided by the enemy force. This is already possible, but it is very challenging and at a very-high risk, which puts a big question mark on the survival capacity of our forces. The contemporary technology, and the modern vehicles and their accessories enable our troops to have sufficient mobility and support for a certain period. Support from air, however, is the most important when it comes to support capacity during hunter-killer operations, regardless of what platform is used for such support. These forces will need to have special materials available (like golden coins, collaborators among the organization of the Islamic State, al-

Nusra, al-Qaeda, etc., as well as documents in the enemy's language, and valuables for exchange in the enemy's territory), as well as reliable materials to support their organization. Maintenance capacity for a large number of light weapons, vehicles, radio sets, etc. will be very necessary when a unit is deployed to enemy's territory. Hunter-killer organizations need very fast organic equipment capacities and direct procurement to buy the latest logistic assets in order to increase their combat capacity.

These principles create unified concepts for building a framework for the doctrinary deployment of hunter-killer operations. Today, when operations against the IS, al-Nusra, al-Qaeda, etc. are more than ever taking place as an asymmetrical and irregular war, knowledge and experience of hunter-killer activities is increasing on daily basis and the trend of such threats (like the IS) continuing for at least one more decade obliges us to move fast toward that direction. What is important is that we have to be ready to carry out hunter-killer operations in a hybrid battlefield or in an urban terrain¹². In the USA, the combat strategy during irregular warfare includes hunter-killer operations of different effects as asymmetrical versions of search and destroys behind the enemy line and their 'safe' havens. These types of operations and the tactics of using these (hunter-killer) teams in the case of the Albanian army must be integrated into the doctrine of the SF¹³).

CONCLUSION

All the effective security operations against insurgency and terrorists represent an accurate orchestration of the offensive

¹² Colonel Dritan Demiraj, ALBSOCOMCDR "Through the Labyrinths of the Islamic State" Page 385, Tirana, Albania 2015.

¹³ Colonel Dritan Demiraj, ALBSOF Doctrine, September 2013, Tirana Albania.

and defensive measures to defeat an armed action of the rebels and the capacity of terrorist organizations to choose a time and place for undertaking combative action against democracy¹⁴. Offensive action enables our force to control the pace of combat during operation, destroy the insurgents' balance, and prevent a prolongation of the conflict. Offensive action enables our anti-insurgency and anti-terrorist force to break into the enemy's decision-making cycle. Offensive action requires planning to consider depriving the opponent of their bases and area of operation, their support systems, safe havens, and reducing or destroying their human will and power. This is the enemy's power, which is also unable to protect itself. There are several anti-guerrilla defense options, which enable anti-insurgency force to neutralize, isolate, prevent, or manage the territory given in by the insurgents, but the most effective measures are the powerful offensives against the enemy, applying different forms of the *find-fix-destroy* model. Hunter-killer operations are offensive by nature and one of the methods to *find-fix-destroy*¹⁵. The hunter-killer operations combined with other measures against the 'safe havens' are the most fearsome as qualified by the insurgents themselves. The hunter-killer operations invade the insurgents' space and destroy the myth of them being unbreakable or unattackable in their safe havens. Attacking insurgents at home destroys their capacity to try to recover, or to re-organize themselves in full capacity. This may lead to isolating the population supporting insurgents. Operations carried out by effective units have a major psychological effect and significantly scares those, who would never think that they would not be safe in their area of action. Also, hunter-killer operations destroy the enemy and take them out of the game by

¹⁴ Colonel Dritan Demiraj, ALBSOCOMCDR "Through the Labyrinths of the Islamic State" Page 387, Tirana, Albania 2015.

¹⁵ Colonel Joe Celeski "Hunter-Killer Teams: Attacking Enemy Safe Havens", JSOU 2012.

reducing the pace of combatting, and increasing contacts between our forces and those of the enemy.

Recently, during the “Enduring Freedom” Operations in Afghanistan 2001-2014, later in Iraq 2003-2011, and 2014-onwards, and some special “Kill or Capture” operations in Syria of the American Special Forces, the Russians, and a small part of the Alliance, FOS are being very successful in the form of hunter-killer operations to find-fix-destroy the terrorists of al-Qaeda, Taliban, al-Nusra, Ansar al-Shamit, ISIS, Boko Haram, al Shabbab, etc. These operations are offensive techniques combined with a deep penetration in the enemy’s territory. In terms of doctrine, the deployment of hunter-killer operations falls into the techniques of COIN operations proven by the historic experience and found also in other forms in the recent years within the doctrine of irregular warfare. I think that this book in general, and this chapter in particular, will serve as a framework for further developing the doctrine of deployment of hunter-killer operations against the defense measures taken to protect the enemy’s safe havens and for the Albanian SF in the future.

It is now time to include the deployment of hunter-killer operations in the Albanian doctrine of irregular warfare, and improve its anti-insurgency operations manual. How should a hunter-killer team be organized? Obviously it will have to be organized in line with the context and the demand and scenarios that an irregular warfare might present, but it could as well be organized following the requirements below. Referring to the experience of the American, British, and Australian teams, they must be composed of platforms of mobile teams that are able to infiltrate and operate for a long time, as well as exfiltrate from the operational area. The attack teams will have to be composed of reconnaissance teams and heavy weapons. The local friendly forces must be attached to the attack teams in order to provide interpreters, recons and fighters appropriate to the nature of such operations. When

necessary, the commander of a hunter-killer team might be provided with a group of commandos or trained infantry teams under his tactic or operational control for reinforcement in assisting the Task Force and joint operations.

ANALYZING THIS ARTICLE, WE CONCLUDE AS FOLLOWS:

a. The creation and continued preparation of the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) of hunter-killer operations, and their update in the doctrinary aspect, as well as the expansion of the understanding of the features and attributes of the secret places that are under the control of terrorists will be enabled by a careful study of the past experiences with the conflicts in Iraq (2003-2011), Afghanistan (2001-2016) and the operations against ISIS (June 2014 and onwards) in order to identify the best practices of the allied American army, learn from their experience¹⁶ and a detailed study of the books “Doctrine of the Albanian Special Operation Forces”, September 2013, “Afghanistan – A difficult peace”, September 2014, “Through the Labyrinths of the Islamic State”, October 2015, “The Army of the Khalifat of Terror-Strategy and Tactics”, September 2016 (all written from our experience in these countries), which explain in details the reasons of these conflicts, and the diplomatic, economic, and military, security, and intelligence implications. They also show which could be the most effective and successful ways and approaches to defeat the IS, al-Nusra, al-Qaeda, al Shabbab, Boko Haram, etc. in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Nigeria, Yemen, Somalia, and everywhere else.

b. Exploration of the visibility for creating these special teams for the first time in our army. In recent years, the American, British, Australian, Norwegian, and other SF have

¹⁶ Colonel Dritan Demiraj, ALBSOCOMCDR International Magazine “Albanian SOF Lessons Learn in Afghanistan Eagle 1-7” Jan 2015.

played this role as a result of the specialized training, appropriate equipment, and complete organogram of teams with a high and long-distance mobility. Such teams cannot be organized by the conventional forces. They require specialized training, very high costs, modern equipment, full operational autonomy, nonconventional leadership (non-infantry, but SOF) and freedom of action under a commander of combat experience. The only approach is to create such teams from the SF, composed by SF, Commando, and members from the State Intelligence Service, Military Intelligence Agency under the leadership of the SF.

c. Purchase, supply, and use of additional assets for the army such as new technology like aviation, bullet-proof vehicles for special operations, pilot-free planes, modern armament with higher fire range, thermal and night vision equipment, more powerful logistic support, safe communication equipment, sensors, and surveillance systems, and payments for out of country service and monthly remuneration, etc. these would all increase significantly the capacity of the Albanian hunter-killer teams, and improve their resistance and persistence¹⁷.

d. Creation of the future Strategy against the Global Terrorism to enable our Alliance partners with the necessary capacity, doctrine, and procedures. Such strategy must be developed in order for the SOFs to be created, equipped, and local forces to be deployed to our hunter-killer teams.

e. Enables an exploration of the dynamics of the hunter-killer operations in cooperation with the human operations in order to implement activities of psychological action to achieve the expected effects on the local population (Iraq and Syria), enemy's leadership, and any foreign insurgency.

Hunter-killer teams are an attack component of irregular warfare. They must be deployed according to the doctrine principles and enable irregular warfare forces a 'weapon' to

¹⁷ Colonel Dritan Demiraj, ALBSOCOMCDR "Through the Labyrinths of the Islamic State" Page 389, Tirana, Albania 2015.

attack deep into the enemy's strategic remote bases. They must take place outside the populated areas. The success of the enemy's strategy allows them to consolidate into safe areas for their operations. However, the offensive FOS and COIN forces, and the hunter-killer teams will be needed to attack deep into the enemy's operational area, destroying the enemy and his safe havens.

Combat through such teams would be the most effective way to fight directly in the field against the Taliban, al-Qaeda, al-Nusra, ISIS, Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, etc., and their terrorist units.

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