



The Other Quiet Professionals

Lessons for Future Cyber Forces from the Evolution of Special Forces

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With the establishment of U.S. Cyber Command, the cyber force is gaining visibility and authority, but challenges remain, particularly in the areas of acquisition and personnel recruitment and career progression. A review of commonalities, similarities, and differences between the still-nascent U.S. cyber force and early U.S. special operations forces, conducted in 2010, offers salient lessons for the future direction of U.S. cyber forces.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What lessons do the history and development of U.S. special operations forces and U.S. Special Operations Command hold for the contemporary cyber force?
- How can U.S. Cyber Command organize to ensure that needed cyber capabilities are acquired rapidly and efficiently?
- What types of authorities will U.S. Cyber Command require to ensure that joint, service, and warfighter needs are met?



KEY FINDINGS

The Experiences of U.S. Special Operations Forces Offer Valuable Lessons for the Nascent U.S. Cyber Force

- The history of U.S. special operations force evolution, culminating in the 1986 establishment of U.S. Special Operations Command, has much to offer by way of lessons for the contemporary cyber force, including U.S. Army cyber forces.
- An analogy can be made between the special operations and cyber communities, but it is important to assess their differences as well as their commonalities and similarities.
- Like U.S. special operations forces prior to the establishment of U.S. Special Operations Command, U.S. cyber forces need advocacy and a joint organizational home.

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U.S. Cyber Forces Also Have a Unique Set of Needs and Requirements

- Although it is much more dependent than early SOF on technical acquisition choices at the joint force level, the cyber force also needs better funding support and a rapid acquisition capability.
- In contrast to U.S. Special Operations Command, U.S. Cyber Command needs nontraditional personnel authorities, particularly to facilitate the recruitment of highly skilled personnel from the private sector.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- The U.S. Department of Defense should empower U.S. Cyber Command as the joint home for the cyber community.
- The U.S. Army should support U.S. Cyber Command as the lead force coordinator and empower U.S. Army Cyber Command to develop clear career trajectories for Army cyber forces.
- It is critical for the Army to recognize the “precarious value” of the cyber force and provide ample support for these capabilities. For this reason, it is important to provide the Army’s cyber force with nontraditional authorities.
- Cyber forces need a rapid and flexible ability to acquire cyber-specific tools. It could be modeled on the U.S. Special Operations Command rapid acquisition approach.



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