

Foreword

Every day, there is deep admiration for what our people and teams are doing to solve our Nation's hardest problems. We are challenged with institutionalizing irregular warfare (IW) as a key modernization priority, and our Special Warfare Institution is undertaking one of the most substantial revisions of Army Special Operations Forces (ARSO) doctrine since 2014. Our country faces a decisive decade marked by compounding strategic challenges, and we must ensure we are capturing the right lessons learned. SOF has been the pathfinder of IW since its inception

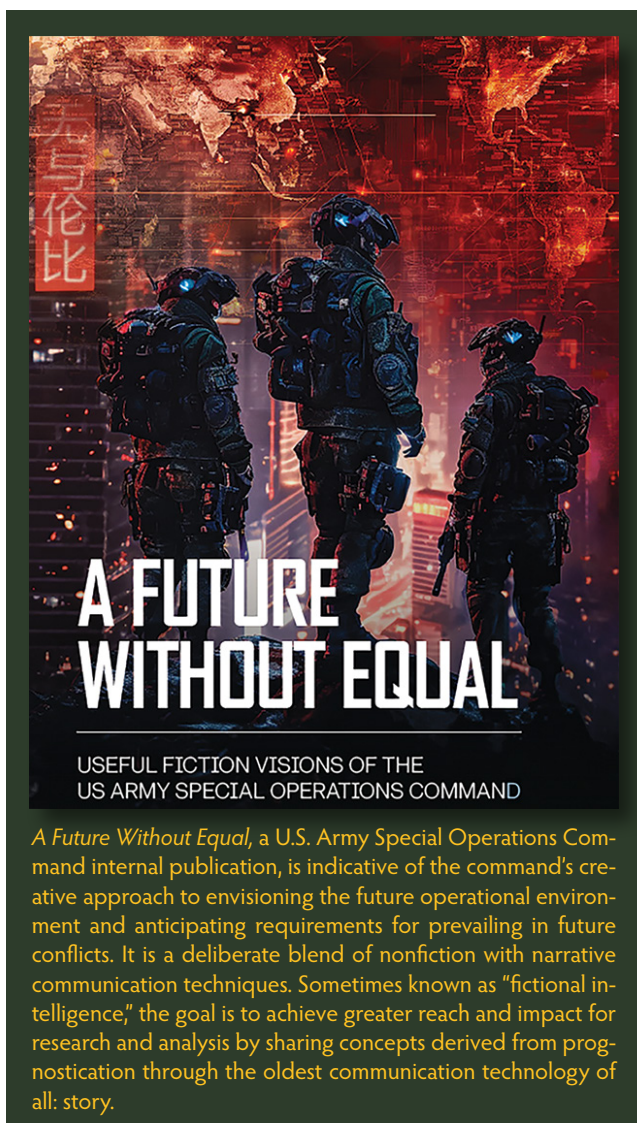
dating back to the creation of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Our irregular approach is unique to the joint force and a critical component of the *National Defense Strategy*. It is important to remember that in our doctrine, IW occurs in concert with



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conventional warfare and large-scale conflict and spans the entire competition continuum. People are our platform, and our adaptive and innovative culture provides asymmetric advantages toward strategic objectives. Maj. Gen. William "Wild Bill" Donovan, founder of the Office of Strategic Services, reminds us of the importance of this culture: "The OSS is not a club, it's a way of thinking."

In modern conflict, the decisive advantages in the information, cyber, and space dimensions will become even more critical in both conventional warfare and IW. Our competitors undermine peace and stability through overt aggression as well as operations in the "gray zone." Technology is expanding the scope of strategic competition. For instance, China has intensified its actions in the South China Sea, particularly around disputed territories in the Spratly Islands. In the Middle East, Iranian-backed militia groups are armed with theater ballistic missiles threatening our sea lines of communication and international shipping lanes. In Europe, the Russia and Ukraine conflict demonstrates the transformation of robotic autonomous systems with their unprecedented capabilities for surveillance, precision strikes, and swarming techniques to



A Future Without Equal, a U.S. Army Special Operations Command internal publication, is indicative of the command's creative approach to envisioning the future operational environment and anticipating requirements for prevailing in future conflicts. It is a deliberate blend of nonfiction with narrative communication techniques. Sometimes known as "fictional intelligence," the goal is to achieve greater reach and impact for research and analysis by sharing concepts derived from prognostication through the oldest communication technology of all: story.

overwhelm offensive and defensive operations. In all these cases, the use of advanced technology—particularly robotic autonomous systems capabilities and information operations—plays a crucial role in escalating tensions below the threshold of armed conflict. The future of warfare will see a greater reliance on these systems, with AI and autonomous decision-making playing a central role in shaping the battlefield of tomorrow. The character of warfare is rapidly evolving, where achieving dominance requires proficiency across a broader spectrum of capabilities, allowing for more versatile and integrated operations that can address the diverse challenges posed by contemporary threats.

With the resurgence of great power competition, the character of IW has expanded to include more sophisticated strategies aimed at countering the influence and actions of rival states. My message to the force has been consistent and clear: ARSOF has a critical role in shaping the theater to gain, maintain, or improve the strategic competitive advantage to win the fight. For ARSOF to succeed, we simultaneously need to (1) innovate faster by developing new capabilities and prepare for all-domain high-end conflict, (2) compete today in the “gray zone” to deny our adversaries’ goal to win without fighting, and (3) strengthen our partnerships and alliances to influence shared security

interests, improve resilience, and seize opportunities for progress. We must have a concerted effort with SOF and convention forces working hand in hand at every opportunity during irregular approaches in the competition environment. Placing IW subject-matter experts as the institutional pathfinders will enable combatant commanders to perform IW tasks necessary to achieve their campaign objectives.

In this edition, we have the perfect opportunity to delve into the activities of IW and how it shapes the strategic landscape of modern conflict. The articles in this edition are directly influencing our doctrine. With the advent of multidomain operations as the Army’s operating concept and similar all-domain warfighting concepts emerging in joint doctrine, our ARSOF capstone doctrine will align with multidomain operations while adapting to the changing character of warfare in the twenty-first century. I hope the ideas in publications compel us to think more deeply, challenge our existing perspectives, and encourage us to overcome barriers from outdated processes. By sharing lessons learned laterally and vertically, professional writing fosters a culture of continuous improvement, and essential for driving meaningful change. Together we must be threat informed, strategically driven, operationally focused, and tactically prepared. ■

Sine Pari!

Without Fail, Without Fear, Without Equal

Jonathan P. Braga

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Lt. Gen. Jonathan P. Braga, U.S. Army, is the commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command. His previous assignments include deputy commanding general of U.S. Army Pacific and the commander of Special Operations Command Pacific. He holds a master’s degree from the Naval War College and served as an Army War College Special Operations Fellow at the Naval Post Graduate School in Monterey, California. Braga has completed numerous deployments and humanitarian relief operations throughout the Caribbean, Central America, and South America, as well as operational assignments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Willing Spirit in Colombia.

Summer-Fall 2024 New Release

SUMMER/FALL 2024 | VOLUME 37 ISSUE 2

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