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The Strategic Utility of Small-State Special Operations Forces (SOF) as Information Collectors to Support National Decision-Making

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Background and Research Question

Small European states such as the Netherlands and Denmark, which face increasingly complex security challenges, lack the capacity to meet increasing intelligence requirements.

Since intelligence is vital to counter or prevent threats to national interests, small-state leaders must reduce these current intelligence gaps.

This study focuses on how small European states' SOF can contribute most efficiently and effectively to the national intelligence capacity to anticipate and counter threats from foreign regions. Therefore the research question is:

How can SOF from small European states most efficiently and effectively contribute to the intelligence capacity needed to forecast and counter threats from foreign regions?



SOF as information gatherers.

Method

Based on literature and interviews with Dutch and Danish civil and military officials, this study identifies and analyses ways in which SOF can contribute to national intelligence capacity.

The options include:

1. SOF training the military intelligence service;
2. SOF enabling military intelligence operations through integrated support;
3. SOF operating independently as an information provider for national decision making.

Results

Based on analysis of these options, this study suggests that a **combination** of integrating SOF into intelligence operations and allowing SOF to conduct Information collection operations independently represents the most effective and efficient way to contribute to the national intelligence capacity.

In that regard, the integrated option is more congruent with operations in non-permissive areas, and SOF as independent collectors with permissive areas.



SOF as information gatherers..



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