

# MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS

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## **STRATEGIC LEVERAGE: INFORMATION OPERATIONS AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES**

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**Master of Science in Defense Analysis-March 1999**

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Special Operations Forces (SOF) have assumed a unique and expanded role as a strategic asset of the United States. The conjunction of a changing political and security environment and new technologies present both challenges and opportunities for SOF. Special Operations Forces provide the National Command Authority (NCA) a variety of unique capabilities and expanded options for achieving strategic goals with minimum costs. The recent drawdown has placed even more value on the capabilities and leverage provided by SOF. Additionally, the rapid pace of technological change – the “information revolution” – has opened the door for a potential “Revolution in Military Affairs” (RMA). New approaches to “warfare” like Information Operations (IO) are beginning to emerge from the RMA.

Information operations, like SOF, can also provide a means to leverage limited resources. In general terms, there are two general categories: IO in support of special operations (SO), and SO in support of IO. Each has distinct implications for SOF. In either case, the object of the supporting operation is to generate or expand a window of opportunity for the supported operation. Separately, both SO and IO can provide economy of force. Properly employed, this leverage is multiplied and offers a tremendous strategic asset.

**DoD KEY TECHNOLOGY AREAS:** Other (Information Warfare, Information Operations)

**KEYWORDS:** Information Operations, Special Operations, Special Operations Forces

