



The Strategic Utility of U.S. Navy Seals

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The current insurgency in Iraq has necessitated the overwhelming use of special operations forces (SOF) in operational and tactical roles. With an expected draw down in Iraq, it is time to refocus SOCOM on the strategic utility of SOF, specifically on the Maritime arm of SOCOM, the SEALs. SEALs bring unique capabilities based on their comparative advantage in direct action and their familiarity with the maritime domain. This comparative advantage contributes to their strategic utility as a short duration, direct action force working from land and sea. The SEAL culture, based on the history of the organization, their recruitment, selection and training, has historically focused on direct action operations. Insistence of indirect action will atrophy the skill sets of these maritime commandos. Historic research will illustrate successful strategic uses of SEALs in an effort to provide guidelines to decision makers. These decision makers must incorporate a balanced approach to the war, where an over-reaction and over commitment of forces to one mission set will likely imperil, not help, U.S. strategy. The Navy SEALs have an historic and proven comparative advantage in direct action based operations and best serve SOCOM's strategy fulfilling their strategic utility.

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