



Going Big by Getting Small: The Application of Operational Art by Special Operations in Phase Zero

Brian S. Petit

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Going Big by Getting Small examines how the United States Special Operations Forces apply operational art, the link between tactics and strategy, in the non-wartime, steady-state environments called Phase Zero. With revised and innovative operational art constructs, US Special Operations offer scalable and differentiated strategic options for US foreign policy goals. This book analyzes light footprint special operations approaches in Yemen, Indonesia, Thailand, and Colombia. When a large military presence may be inappropriate or counterproductive, Colonel Brian Petit makes the case for fresh thinking on Phase Zero operational art as applied by small, highly skilled, joint-force teams coupled with interagency partners. The past decade (2002-2012) of operations focused on large-scale, post-conflict counterinsurgency. Less publicized, but no less important in this same decade, was the emerging application of nuanced campaigns, actions, and activities in Phase Zero. These efforts were led or supported by special operations in countries and regions contested, but not at war. This book fills a gap in the literature of how to adapt the means, method, and logic of US military foreign engagements in a diplomacy-centric world with rapidly shifting power paradigms. Going Big by Getting Small is not a yarn on daring special operations raids nor a call for perpetual war. It is the polar opposite: this book contemplates the use of discreet engagements to sustain an advantageous peace, mitigate conflict, and prevent crises.

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