MEMORANDUM FOR: SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES ACQUISITION, TECHNOLOGY AND LOGISTICS

SUBJECT: Middle Tier Acquisition Authorities and Guidance

1. SOF AT&L will fully implement the authorities from Section 804 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2016 and the guidance from the Under Secretary for Defense (Acquisition and Sustainment) Memorandum "Middle Tier of Acquisition Interim Authority and Guidance," dated 16 April 2018. It is my intent to dominate this middle tier acquisition space enabling rapid prototyping and rapid fielding of SO-peculiar capability.

2. These authorities are tailor-made for the SO-peculiar acquisition activities we execute. The authorities allow for rapid pursuit of capabilities without the normal schedule impacts associated with the Joint Capabilities Integration Development System (JCIDS) and DoD Directive 5000.01, "The Defense Acquisition System." However, all MTAs in support of USSOCOM will have command-validated requirements using command-approved funding sources.

3. Mid-tier acquisition strategies will be the default for the vast majority of SOF AT&L acquisition efforts. I expect all Milestone Decision Authorities operating under my authority to pursue Mid-tier acquisition strategies and only revert to more traditional approaches when required. The following guidance provides the SOF AT&L acquisition team with the framework to operate within mid-tier acquisition authorities successfully in support of USSOCOM's Components, TSOCs and, ultimately, the SOF Operator.

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SO-p Middle Tier Acquisition Guidance

Purpose: This guideline provides a construct for determining when a middle-tier acquisition (MTA) strategy should be pursued and how the MTA authority can be applied to SO-p acquisition efforts. First and foremost, the intent of a MTA is to field required capability on an accelerated schedule at a reduced cost. MTA's are aligned with a high priority military capability need and opportunity to reduce total ownership costs to include reduction in development, production, and sustainment costs as compared to development through the Defense Acquisition System (DAS). MTA's are defined by schedule: rapid prototyping efforts provide for a residual operational capability within five years of an approved requirement, rapid fielding efforts shall begin production within six months and complete fielding within five years of an approved requirement. Note that there are no dollar thresholds or ACAT thresholds associated with the MTA authority. When the SO Acquisition Team has confidence they can meet the schedule stipulations of the authority, the MDA should expect an MTA strategy. To that end, this guidance follows the USSOCOM Directive 70-1, Appendix J “Special Operations Acquisition Strategy Phase and Brief” format.

Stakeholder Analysis: As with all SOF AT&L acquisition efforts, the Acquisition Team is expected to understand the required capability, whether formally stated or not, of the user community represented by the HQ, Components and TSOCs. For an MTA strategy to be applicable, the capability must be simultaneously well-defined and broadly defined. A capability that is either defined too tightly or is subject to deviations or growth over time will negate the Acquisition Team’s ability to pursue an MTA strategy. The team must also understand the current maturity of technology within industry, labs, academia and the Services. When the Acquisition Team sees an opportunity to satisfy a known requirement with a technology that could be prototyped and/or fielded within five years, they should pursue an MTA strategy in support of the Capability Sponsor.

Facts: Given a firm understanding of the operational capability required and of the technological maturity of the proposed solution, the Acquisition Team should have a strong set of facts to work from in order to pursue an MTA. These must include the following:

- **MTA Strategy Threshold Criteria:**
  - **Rapid Prototyping:** Field a prototype that can be demonstrated in an operational environment and provide for a residual operational capability within five years of the development of an approved requirement.
  - **Rapid Fielding:** Begin production within six months and complete fielding within five years of an approved requirement.

- **Requirements Validation:** For Rapid Prototyping, the effort might precede a validated requirement and, in fact, may inform the requirement. Although the MTA authority is not subject to JCIDS, the Acquisition Team must have a validated requirement before they can apply MFP-11 resources for a Rapid Fielding. This valid requirement could come in the form of a Directed Requirement, such as a Command-directed UDA, in order to achieve schedule efficiencies opportunities. The Acquisition Team will collaborate with the Capability Sponsor and the USSOCOM J8 to rapidly staff
the requirement across the USSOCOM Enterprise to reduce risk and facilitate information sharing prior to VCDR validation.

- **Approved Resources:** In order to meet the schedule constraints of an MTA strategy, by definition, the funding resources for an MTA may not have been explicitly resourced via the POM/Budget/Spend plan process. For the current authority, there is no set-aside rapid prototyping or rapid fielding funding. The Acquisition Team must have command-approved resources to execute the MTA strategy. The VCDR will approve any required funding realignments or reprogrammings via the SPP process. Whenever possible, anticipated MTAs should be included in budget exhibits and budget briefings to Congress to ensure confidence that we are executing appropriated funds within Congressional intent. If an MTA is initiated after Budget Exhibit submission, the MDA will coordinate with SOLA to inform the PSM's from the four Defense Committees.

  - **Rapid Prototyping:** For RDTE to support Rapid Prototyping efforts, USSOCOM currently resources an Engineering Analysis line for advanced concept development and prototype development in the “SOF Advanced Technology Development” R1. This funding is specifically intended to mature technology in preparation for fielding. All program 6.7 R1 line descriptions should address rapid prototyping explicitly in support of the program acquisition strategy. If resources for a rapid prototyping effort are not available within the SOST R1 or the appropriate commodity-based R1, then a reprogramming action will be required. An ATR will likely not be responsive enough to meet the schedule constraints of an MTA. For BTR actions, we will use the SPP to ensure full transparency and approval of any funding reprogrammings in support of an MTA.

  - **Rapid Fielding:** For PROC and O&M to support Rapid Fielding, all P1 lines descriptions should address rapid fielding. Again, if resources are not available within the appropriate P1, the Acquisition Team will pursue an SPP-approved BTR.

  - **Transition:** If a Rapid Prototyping effort does not transition to fielding or Rapid Fielding effort fails to adhere to the MTA schedule requirements, the residual technology can transition to a traditional acquisition program.

- **Reporting Requirements:** All MTA’s must provide the following as defined by USD(A&S)’s guidance for MTA implementation:

  1. Name of the Program
  2. Capability Gap or Problem
  3. Definitive Source for the Capability Gap or Problem
  4. Capability Characteristic or Solution
  5. Date Funds Approved for Initiation
  6. Funding Source
  7. Program Result (Transition or Termination)
  8. Date of Transition or Termination
  9. Reason for Transition or Termination
  10. Program Budget
  11. Vendor Name

Items 1-6 should form the basis for requirements validation. Items 7-11 follow program initiation. This data will be shared across the Department via an open and collaborative Department-managed tool and internally via the SOF AT&L Acquisition Management System.

Additional facts bearing on an MTA strategy follow the guidance in App J, USSOCOM Directive 70-1.
Framing Assumptions: The three framing assumptions central to the decision to pursue an MTA strategy are:

- **Capability Definition**: The Capability Sponsor can articulate the capability required with sufficient fidelity to give the Acquisition Team confidence that a material solution is possible to achieve the capability within the time constraints of the MTA authority. The Capability Sponsor can also be expected to consider trading capability for schedule as long as threshold KPP’s are met to ensure MTA schedule constraints are met. Furthermore, the Capability Sponsor must consider how to define an appropriate MTA fielding quantity. The traditional concept of FOC may not apply to a capability that will rapidly spiral as a result of commercial technology advancements.

- **Technology Maturity**: The technology is already at sufficient maturity (Rapid Fielding) or can be rapidly advanced to a greater maturity (Rapid Prototyping).

- **Funding Stability**: When USSOCOM commits to an MTA fielding strategy, funding resources will be committed to ensure fielding can be completed within five years without changes in the POM causing a delay past the five-year window.

Risk/Opportunity Analysis: Given that the MTA authority emphasizes schedule above cost and performance, the Acquisition Team should plan for the mitigation of any identified Risks to schedule and plan for the pursuit of any Opportunities that increase their ability to achieve the required schedule. Each member of the Acquisition Team should consider risks and opportunities within their functional areas: program management, contract management, financial management, test planning and logistics management.

Transition to Planning: Once a Rapid Prototyping effort transitions to Fielding or upon the initiation of a Rapid Fielding effort, the Acquisition Team incorporates the results of their Stakeholder, Facts, Framing Assumptions and Risk/Opportunity Analysis to recommend an MTA strategy to the MDA. Each member of the Team has a unique role and responsibilities to ensure the schedule constraints of an MTA can be met. These responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- **Program Management**: The PM will recommend a tailored management strategy by considering what products, reviews and decision events are required to effectively manage an MTA. At a minimum the MDA will require the following documentation:
  - **Acquisition Decision Memorandum (ADM)**: Signed by the AE, designating the effort as a mid-tier acquisition.
  - **Simplified Acquisition Management Plan (SAMP)**: Following a successful Acquisition Strategy Brief, the Acquisition Team will complete a SAMP.
  - **Fielding and Deployment Release (F&DR)**: Before fielding a mid-tier acquisition capability, the Acquisition Team will achieve a successful F&DR or Conditional F&DR.
• **Contract Management**: The KO supports the PM’s MTA strategy by providing contracting solutions that best address the schedule constraints. This contract strategy could be FAR or non-FAR-based or a combination of both and consider the tools that are available to SOF AT&L such as the PIA, OTA’s, Grants or Cooperative Agreements, IDIQ’s, other transactions for research (10 USC 2371), experimental authority (10 USC 2373) and FAR Part 12 procedures where appropriate.

• **Financial Management**: The greatest challenge for the BFM, in support of the PM, will be to identify appropriate funds for the initiation of an MTA which may be required in the execution or budget years. The BFM must also ensure stability of funds in the subsequent POM build to ensure fielding is achieved on schedule.

• **Test Plan**: An MTA Strategy must account for the capability receiving an F&DR or CF&DR before fielding. The Test Officer will play a critical role in ensuring that appropriately tailored test events are planned, documented in the SAMP, resourced and executed to ensure the capability is safe, suitable and effective on schedule.

• **Logistics Management**: The PSM is equally responsible for a successful F&DR or CF&DR decision before fielding and must develop an appropriately tailored Life Cycle Sustainment Plan as part of the SAMP for the capability prior to fielding.