Signature Reduction Needed by SEALs, Marine Raiders, Leaders Say



Cmdr. Keith Marinics, commanding officer of Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Basic Training Command, places a SEAL pin, known as a Trident, on a member of SEAL Qualification Training Class 336 during a graduation ceremony at NSW Center in Coronado, California, on April 15. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Anthony W. Walker

ARLINGTON, Va. — A major factor in the power of special operations forces (SOF) — stealth — is becoming increasingly threatened by advances in sensors and other capabilities of adversaries and needs to be protected by additional measures, SOF leaders said.

Speaking May 13 in a component commanders roundtable at the Virtual Special Operations Forces Industrial Conference, Rear Adm. Collin Green, commander, Navy Special Warfare Command, and Maj. Gen. Daniel Yoo, commander, Marine Corps Special Operations Command — the Raiders, said that ways need to be found to reduce the signature of their SEALs and Raiders while they are operating in the field.

The capabilities of adversaries, including terrorists and insurgents, is becoming increasingly sophisticated as they adopt the increasingly smaller but highly capable technologies once the province of major militaries.

For example, some adversaries have been using small unmanned aerial vehicles equipped with optical and infrared sensors to make it increasingly difficult for SEALs and Raiders to remain covert during clandestine operations.



U.S. Navy special operators from Naval Special Warfare (NSW) conduct dive training in the United States. SEALs engage in a continuous training cycle to improve and further specialize skills needed to conduct missions from sea, air and land. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Eric Chan

Green said that his command has a resource strategy with lines of effort to strengthen the SEALs and special boat units as they focus on sustaining a competitive advantage in the maritime domain: “signature reduction, lethality and survivability of our maritime combatant craft” as well as “developing and expanding our undersea capability” now underway with the new Mk11 SEAL Delivery Vehicle and Dry Combat Submersible.

Yoo noted the emerging technology on low observables, digital material and uniforms, but said that “true full-spectrum signature reduction” is needed “in the information environment that we’re going to fight in.

“Being able to stay in the shadows and having freedom of movement for our people on the ground or platforms in the air … or using cyber tools to move around freely, to be able to have full-spectrum signature management, that’s an area that everybody is shooting around the target but haven’t developed where you have some kind of assurance that you are going to be able to do that.”