

28 January 2020



## Special Operations Forces Culture and Ethics

### Comprehensive Review – Letter to the Force

To All Members of U.S. Special Operations Command,

When our country sends SOF abroad, they send us into some of the most ambiguous situations. They do so because they trust us to handle these missions with competence and character. Trust is our currency with our leaders and the American people, and that trust has been hard-earned by you and those who preceded you. Recently, discipline issues within our force have jeopardized that trust; therefore, USSOCOM embarked on a Comprehensive Review (CR) of SOF ethics and culture with one clear goal: to make us better. **We have an incredible force, and the vast majority of you demonstrate that every day, but great organizations regularly review themselves, identify deficiencies, and correct them.**

This is a very detailed review that takes a hard look at ourselves, and it would not have been possible without your involvement. Our Review Team spent time with every component over the last six months, and your honest feedback was essential. The team found that this force does not have a systemic ethics problem. It is clear that you routinely uphold our standards of conduct in the most difficult circumstances. However, two decades of sustained combat have impacted our culture in some troublesome ways. **The bottom line is that we have disproportionately focused on SOF employment and mission accomplishment at the expense of the training and development of our force.** In some cases, this imbalance has set conditions for unacceptable conduct to occur due to a lack of leadership, discipline, and accountability.

Culture does not tend itself – it must be cultivated by leaders, and only active, consistent engagement from leaders at every level will make us better. While this report identifies institutional changes that can help, the details of the “how”, and the real work, will require all of our leadership and expertise. **You have our full support as we get after this together, and make the tough calls necessary to reinforce the trust placed in us as we continue to meet operational requirements around the globe.** Thank you for all that you do!

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**United States Special Operations Command**

**Comprehensive Review**

23 January 2020

## Introduction

On 9 August, 2019, the Commander, United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) directed a Comprehensive Review of Special Operations Forces (SOF) culture and ethics, to gather insights and observations from across the force, at all levels, without predetermined outcomes, while drawing upon unique leadership perspectives both internal and external to the SOF enterprise.

The Comprehensive Review's main effort was led by the Review Team, composed of military and civilians and led by a SOF general officer. The Review Team engaged the SOF enterprise to gather unbiased feedback while conducting numerous iterative engagements with USSOCOM senior leaders and an Advisory Team to ensure transparency and gain additional guidance. The Advisory Team was composed of former SOF, Department of Defense senior leaders, and academia subject matter experts. See Appendix A for *Advisory Team and Review Team Participants*.

The Review Team completed its report in December 2019. The research methodology, engagement strategy, findings and recommended actions are contained in this report. The report was written as an Unclassified document to allow for maximum review and release across the Department of Defense, US Government and external stakeholders.



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## Chapter 1. Executive Summary

A strong ethical and cultural foundation is essential to maintaining the trust of the Joint Force, policymakers, and the American people. After several incidents of misconduct and unethical behavior threatened public trust and caused leaders to question special operations forces (SOF) culture and ethics, USSOCOM initiated a Comprehensive Review (CR). Its purpose was to gather insights and observations from across the force while drawing upon unique leadership perspectives both internal and external to the USSOCOM enterprise in order to strengthen our values and reinforce trust at home and when deployed. See Appendix B for Commander, USSOCOM's *Special Operations Forces Culture and Ethics Comprehensive Review Memo*.

The Review Team did not assess that USSOCOM has a systemic ethics problem. The Review Team did assess that in some instances USSOCOM's cultural focus on SOF employment and mission accomplishment is to the detriment of leadership, discipline and accountability.

In 2018 and 2019, Congressional directives resulted in multiple ethics-related actions across USSOCOM. These included a February 2018 assessment of culture and accountability in SOF, a February 2019 ethics review, and an enterprise-wide 90-day focus period on ethics completed March 2019. These built on previous USSOCOM studies, such as the *Pressure on the Family and Force (POTFF)* results and implementation. The CR leveraged these existing efforts in its approach.

The CR's method and approach leveraged two teams. The first was an Advisory Team composed of former senior military leaders and academic experts. This team provided insight and external critique to both USSOCOM leaders and the Review Team. The second was a Review Team led by a SOF general officer and composed of 20 joint officers, enlisted and civilians. The Review Team's method and approach spanned 55 engagements and canvassed over 2,000 personnel across the SOF enterprise, including USSOCOM HQ, SOF-specific Service Components (e.g. US Army Special Operations Command, Air Force Special Operations Command, etc as outlined in Chapter 3 *Background*), and Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs). This engagement plan was structured around the CR's five key areas: (1) Force Employment, (2) Force Accountability, (3) Leader Development, (4) Force Structure, and (5) Assessment and Selection. These key areas were developed and approved at the CR's onset by Commander, USSOCOM, with Review Team, Advisory Team, and Component commander input. The Review Team analyzed this data against recent SOF incidents, existing academic research, and expert knowledge from SOF leadership and the Advisory Team.

The Review Team analysis revealed that a USSOCOM culture overly focused on force employment and mission accomplishment creates the contexts or situations allowing for misconduct and unethical behavior to develop within the SOF enterprise. The Review Team uncovered not only potential cracks in the SOF foundations at the individual and team level, but also through the chain of command, specifically in the core tenets of leadership, discipline and accountability. Follow-on research and analysis

revealed origins of this behavior, and why a portion of SOF leaders are not present and engaged in their leadership responsibilities, specifically those outside of tactical execution. Further exploration uncovered the normalization of an organizational culture focused on SOF employment and mission accomplishment, which in some instances occurs at the expense of disciplined, predictable and reliable SOF force generation (FORGEN) that values leadership, discipline and accountability at all levels in the SOF enterprise: institutional, organizational and individual.

In the context of this report, SOF FORGEN refers to the processes and structure that generate SOF that are ready to fulfill validated global requirements of SOF activities as outlined in *United States Code (U.S.C.) Title 10 § 167*. These processes and structure include training, education, exercises and certification. This report also identifies the importance of leadership presence and engagement to certify readiness for subsequent employment against validated requirements.

The Review Team framed its findings and recommended actions through the lens of the CR's five key areas. The Review Team's assessed individual findings and recommended actions were rarely confined to one key area. Specifically, findings from Force Employment had cascading effects across other key areas.

USSOCOM must manage the institutional bias towards employment, and reclaim resources for investment in the other key areas, by applying leadership, discipline and accountability to force employment processes and business rules. These actions will enable and complement those recommended under force accountability, focusing on



bringing discipline to FORGEN processes, emphasizing active and engaged leadership during these periods.

SOF cultural bias towards employment prompted a breakdown in FORGEN, which in turn disrupted SOF leader development. Bringing more structure and emphasis back to these areas enables USSOCOM to reinvest in leader development, and groom leaders with the required balance of character and competence. In addressing force structure, USSOCOM will institutionalize these changes, informed largely by an accurate assessment of whether the Joint Force's current SOF requirements are reflected for the USSOCOM of 2020. This assessment will impact SOF requirements for continued Counter Violent Extremist Organization (CVEO) efforts and inform USSOCOM's transition as part of broader DOD alignment towards Great Power Competition (GPC). The CR concluded that current assessment and selection pathways are mostly sufficient for their intended purposes, with some areas for further analysis and improvement.

The report recommends 16 actions to address these findings, taking a holistic approach to addressing a SOF culture overly focused on employment and mission accomplishment to the detriment of leadership, discipline and accountability. However, it is important to note that previous USSOCOM efforts to address similar factors have experienced varying degrees of success – such as the 2011 *POTFF* study – largely due to the challenges of implementation.

In order to overcome such implementation challenges, the CR's findings and recommended actions require both a strong implementation plan and the will to execute



it. Throughout the CR, the Review Team encountered SOF professionals who overwhelmingly demanded leadership, discipline, and accountability, and who embody the willpower to embrace and sustain change. If left unaddressed, the conditions outlined in the CR's findings will continue to create the conditions and contexts, where unethical behavior and misconduct place both the assigned SOF mission as well as the safety and well-being of service members at risk. Setting the appropriate SOF culture requires active investment in leadership and accountability across all levels of the SOF enterprise, coupled with a more disciplined approach to FORGEN and employment in support of Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) and Joint Force requirements. Simply put – implemented correctly, this CR will make USSOCOM better as a more credible, capable and precise force.

## Chapter 2: Structure of the Report

The *Introduction* describes the CR's origins and purpose as directed by Commander, USSOCOM. Chapter 1, *Executive Summary* provides an overview of CR's task and purpose, method and approach, findings and recommended actions, and way ahead. Chapter 2, *Structure of the Report*, provides a roadmap to the document.

Chapter 3, *Background*, provides an overview of USSOCOM and previous reviews relevant to the CR in order to provide background and context. The previous reviews highlight hard-earned lessons as well as the difficulty associated with overcoming culture and institutional inertia to implement and sustain change.

Chapter 4, *Method and Approach*, describes the study method and approach; this includes the CR's five key areas: (1) Force Employment, (2) Force Accountability, (3) Leader Development, (4) Force Structure, and (5) Assessment and Selection. It describes selection and preparation of the Review Team and captures the efforts to minimize bias and include diverse perspectives in the study. The chapter then reviews the plans for data collection, handling, and analysis. Finally, to support reader understanding and transition to findings and recommended actions, this Chapter provides initial results and context from the Review Team's incident analysis.

Chapter 5, *Findings and Recommended Actions*, contains an interpretation of the findings and recommended actions to drive and sustain institutional change across the CR's five key areas. To provide context, each area begins with a background statement to support context and understanding.

Chapter 6, *Conclusion*, closes the report by acknowledging the requirement for sustained and deliberate leadership across the SOF enterprise to implement these recommended actions.

The report was written as an Unclassified document to allow for maximum review and release across the Department of Defense, US Government and external stakeholders. Portions of the method, background research, results and analysis are in Appendices to enable the reader to rapidly read the CR main body for understanding the CR's task, method, and recommended actions.

### Chapter 3: Background

This chapter provides an overview of USSOCOM and previous reviews relevant to the CR in order to provide background and context. The previous reviews highlight hard-earned lessons as well as the difficulty associated with overcoming culture and institutional inertia to implement and sustain change. In describing USSOCOM, this report is characterizing SOF at the institutional level. In describing the Components and TSOCs, this report is characterizing SOF at the organizational level. At the individual level, SOF is characterized by small teams and individuals.

#### USSOCOM: Authorities, Mission and Components

USSOCOM is a unique organization with authorities under the *United States Code (U.S.C.) Title 10 §164 and 167* with the principal function to prepare SOF to carry out assigned missions. The commander has combatant command authority pursuant to *U.S.C. Title 10 §164* and is “responsible for, and has the authority to conduct, all affairs of such command relating to special operations activities.” Additionally, under *U.S.C. Title 10 §167*, the commander has service-like functions that include developing strategy, doctrine, and tactics; preparing and submitting budget proposals; exercising authority, direction, and control over the expenditure of funds; training assigned forces; conducting specialized courses of instruction for commissioned and noncommissioned officers; validating requirements; establishing priorities for requirements; ensuring the interoperability of equipment and forces; monitoring the promotions of SOF and coordinating with the Services on personnel matters. The commander of USSOCOM is

also responsible for the combat readiness of SOF; monitoring preparedness to carry out assigned missions; and development and acquisition of SOF peculiar equipment, material, supplies, and services.

Mission Statement: USSOCOM develops and employs fully capable Special Operations Forces to conduct global special operations and activities as part of the Joint Force to support persistent, networked, and distributed Combatant Command (COCOM) operations and campaigns against state and non-state actors, and to protect and advance U.S. policies and objectives.

USSOCOM's enterprise includes the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), and four SOF-specific Service Components including U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command (NSW); U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC); U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC); and U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC). Additionally, USSOCOM maintains COCOM of seven TSOCs, which remain under the operational control (OPCON) of the GCCs. Since its establishment, USSOCOM's responsibilities evolved in their complexity. Originally focusing on training and equipping the SOF enterprise, USSOCOM is now also the coordinating authority (CA) for planning, synchronizing, and as directed, executing operations against violent extremist organizations (VEO), countering weapons of mass destruction (CWMD), and internet-based military information support operations (MISO).



## Previous Reviews

This section examines previous USSOCOM reviews. The most recent and relevant reviews are the *Pressure on the Force and Families (POTFF) Task Force Study* (2011), the 2018 assessment of culture and accountability directed by Congress, the Section 1066 Review conducted pursuant to Section 1066 of the *John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2019*, and the *90-Day Review of Culture and Ethics* completed in 2019.

### Pressure on the Force and Families Task Force

USSOCOM's internal June 2011 *POTFF* study illuminated significant issues and cascading effects associated with "mission accomplishment" culture, a lack of predictability, and the "cumulative effect on the force." The study described a side of SOF culture that is intensely focused on mission accomplishment and highly competitive, the inability to say "no," and operating at "max effort and capacity;" all of which caused "a cumulative effect on the force." Among other issues, the study characterized SOF as "fatigued, worn and frayed around the edges." This study's key findings and recommended actions suggested a new approach and a long-term strategy, while proposing "major paradigm shifts in the holistic organizational culture and behavior of the force."

Selective implementation of the recommended actions temporarily alleviated some symptoms, but the larger institutional issues (e.g., force employment, force structure, etc.), those most critical to bringing about and sustaining meaningful change,

did not receive sustained understanding, attention, or advocacy at the appropriate level. This is explored further in Chapter 5, *Findings and Recommended Actions*.

### **February 2018 Review**

In 2017, the *National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for 2018* directed DOD and USSOCOM to conduct an assessment of SOF culture and accountability. Assistant Secretary of Defense (ASD) for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (SO/LIC) and Commander, USSOCOM delivered this report to Congress in February 2018. This review included USSOCOM-wide surveys and engagements, culminating in delivery to Congressional staff members of both the Senate and House. Based on Congressional perception of areas for further explanation, the next NDAA contained guidance on conducting further reviews. See Appendix C for *NDAA 2018 Guidance on Assessment of Ethics and Accountability in SOF*.

### **Section 1066 Review**

In 2018, Section 1066 of the *John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019* directed a “comprehensive review of professionalism and ethics programs for special operations forces,” which was completed on 13 February 2019. Additionally, on 12 December 2018, the USSOCOM Commander sent an email to “ALL SOF” that contained ASD SO/LIC and Commander, USSOCOM *Guidance on Ethics*. Subsequently, the Commander directed a 90-day focus period on core values. See Appendix D for *ASD SO/LIC and Commander, USSOCOM Guidance on Ethics*.

## 90-Day Review of Culture and Ethics

This review directed the SOF enterprise to focus on the opportunities to address SOF core values in training and education commands, and during assessment and selection. This review included command climate survey trends, a summary of observations and corrective action plans from Commander and Senior Enlisted (O-5 and O-6) as a result of direct engagement with their personnel, and a summary from the Command Surgeon and Command Psychologist of additional research into the connection and correlation between operational trauma and behavioral health.

Component responses included policy letters and guidance documents to their respective commands and used sensing sessions, seminars, All Hands, and town halls with large and small groups to discuss ethics and culture. Where values and ethics were being taught, vignettes and scenarios were the preferred method of covering the subject matter. The responses identified opportunities for values-based education such as arrival to the command and when deploying.

In summary, while there were flaws in the implementation of its recommended actions, the *POTFF* study was comprehensive. The February 2018 assessment to Congress on SOF culture and accountability, the *NDAA Section 1066*, and *90-Day* reviews revealed valuable insights, best practices, and areas for improvement. However, these reviews were generally limited in scope, largely generated internally at the Component and TSOC levels, and insufficiently addressed enterprise-wide issues such as SOF employment or institutional accountability. This highlighted the need for focused

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collection and analysis of more data from across the SOF enterprise to achieve the CR's intent and objectives.

#### **Chapter 4: Method and Approach**

The purpose of the CR was to gather insights and observations from across the force while drawing upon unique leadership perspectives both internal and external to the USSOCOM enterprise in order to strengthen our values and reinforce trust at home and when deployed. Commander, USSOCOM provided the Review Team with the following guiding principles:

- Gather insights and observations from across the force at all levels.
- Solicit unbiased, candid feedback without predetermined outcomes.
- Provide unique perspectives from internal and external stakeholders.
- Identify blind spots.
- Determine actionable recommendations from recruitment through employment.
- Share broadly.
- Identify fundamental institutional changes that might be required. Nothing is off the table.

The Commander's intent and guiding principles formed the basis for the study method and approach.

The CR leveraged two teams. First, an Advisory Team composed of former SOF, Department of Defense (DOD) senior leaders, and academia subject matter experts, who provided the Commander with inputs and feedback from a variety of perspectives and expertise. Second, a Review Team composed of professionals from the SOF enterprise, conventional forces, and DOD. The Review Team's purpose was to conduct the study's



primary data collection and follow-on analysis, synthesizing the data and generating findings and recommended actions. See Appendix E *Research Method* for an expanded discussion of the research method employed by the Review Team, including review of secondary data sources.

The Review Team engaged USSOCOM Components and subordinate units with the intent of reaching a representative sample of the SOF enterprise. These engagements were designed in one-week increments, incorporating a variety of presentations and semi-structured interviews across the Component. The Review Team structured this approach around the CR's five key areas: (1) Force Employment, (2) Force Accountability, (3) Leader Development, (4) Force Structure, and (5) Assessment and Selection. These areas were derived with Review Team, Advisory Team and Component commanders' input, culminating in Commander, USSOCOM approval. Their intent was to enable a structured collection of data, to support the Review Team's method and approach, and the development of findings and recommended actions. See Appendix F *Review Team Component Engagement Strategy* for details on this approach.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted using three demographic groups: junior personnel (O-1 through O-3, E-6 and below), mid-level personnel (O-4, E-7/8), and senior leaders (O-5 Command Teams, O-5/6, E-8/9 and Senior Enlisted Leaders). To ensure analytical rigor, the same Review Team personnel conducted interviews with the same demographic groups across all Components, focusing on small group sessions of 2-3 Review Team facilitators and 10-12 unit participants (junior, mid-level, senior). To ensure consistency, the Review Team utilized Guiding Questions built around the CR's

five key areas. See Appendix G for the *Review Team Review Team Guiding Questions for Sensing Sessions*, and Appendix H for *Review Team Interview Guidelines*.

The Review Team also engaged with USSOCOM HQ across the CR's five key areas to inform follow-on analysis, particularly as data collection and analysis revealed enterprise-wide issues and themes. The Review Team also engaged with each TSOC, with a focus on how SOF are employed forward, to garner their perspective and deeper analysis.

In order to enable greater reach across the SOF enterprise, the Review Team included two additional research efforts called Tiger Teams that supplemented collection and analysis across the CR's five key areas. One examined SOF assessment and selection, and one analyzed recent SOF incidents.

#### **Assessment and Selection Tiger Team**

The Tiger Team visited initial Service entry locations where SOF candidates receive initial assessment, selection and training (e.g. Great Lakes Naval Station for the U.S. Navy and NSW). Several SOF career fields offer paths for direct accession and are segregated with other SOF candidates during initial entry level training. The Tiger Team identified that these programs possibly foster an unhealthy sense of entitlement as a result of special treatment and facilities. They further identified that an overemphasis on physical training often comes at the expense of service specific professional development and acculturation. The Tiger Team had additional concerns regarding the selection of SOF personnel (military, civilian, contractors) selected to fill assessment, selection and

initial training roles, and whether they demonstrated the appropriate balance of character and competence for these tasks.

### **Incident Analysis Tiger Team**

This Tiger Team analyzed recent incidents of individual and group misconduct across SOF that spanned the spectrum of offenses from minor misconduct to the most serious of crimes. The incidents occurred both in-garrison in the United States and while deployed in multiple GCC areas of responsibility. The Tiger Team examined these incidents dispassionately from institutional and organizational perspectives, and did not focus on tactical details, but took a broader approach to identifying contributing factors and missed opportunities for interventions that might have produced better outcomes.

When analyzing the incidents it was important to understand the units' and Components' specific FORGEN and deployment cycles. This informed understanding of intervention opportunities (or missed opportunities) by leadership and accountability mechanisms. For instance, an individual or unit with demonstrated competence and character issues on deployment was set on a path for friction and misfortune during their FORGEN cycle. During this time a present and engaged senior leadership team had opportunities to lead, mentor, train and when required, intervene and take action to address flaws prior to the deployment.

Armed with this information the Tiger Team analyzed these incidents and identified trends across SOF FORGEN and deployment cycles. Based on this analysis, critical intervention opportunities included the below actions, arranged by cycle:

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- Post-deployment / beginning of next deployment cycle.
  - Deliberate alignment of new personnel with positive role models.
  - Validate selection processes for leadership positions, emphasizing an appropriate balance of competence and character.
- During pre-deployment workup and training events.
  - Next level Command Team participation in critical and validating events.
  - Present and engaged leadership
    - Consistent enforcement of standards - tactical and personal
    - Accountability for actions – tactical and personal.
  - Continuous feedback mechanisms (e.g. peer evaluations and counseling).
- Before deployment.
  - Replace personnel or small units if determined they are not trained or performing to standards by their next level Command Team.
- During deployment.
  - Clear command relationships established.
  - Match force employment task to Component-assigned SOF core activity and validated unit or individual capability (per USSOCOM *Directive Number 10-1, Organizations and Functions*).
  - Avoid disaggregating purpose-built team and units.

The Review Team leveraged this incident analysis as a starting point to better understand the context or situations that created the opportunity for misconduct and

unethical behavior within the SOF enterprise. The Tiger Team refined this incident analysis in parallel with the Review Team's broader method and approach. The Review Team then combined this incident analysis with its engagement and analysis of the USSOCOM enterprise as outlined earlier in this Chapter (semi-structured interviews, Component and TSOC engagements). This combination refined the Review Team's findings and recommended actions.

### **Summary**

Data collection and analysis occurred continuously from August through November 2019. The Review Team conducted 55 command visits, semi-structured interviews and focus groups with approximately 2,000 personnel. The Tiger Teams' efforts and secondary analysis occurred concurrently. Throughout the CR, the Review Team held multiple in-progress reviews with senior SOF leaders across USSOCOM and Components, as well as Advisory Team members. These venues enabled broad feedback and expertise for incorporation into ongoing data collection and analysis. See Appendix I for the *Review Team Engagement Timeline*.



## Chapter 5: Findings and Recommended Actions

The CR structures its Findings and recommended actions around the CR's five key areas: (1) Force Employment, (2) Force Accountability, (3) Leader Development, (4) Force Structure, and (5) Assessment and Selection. Each key area contains a background statement, followed by findings and recommended actions. There are a total of 16 recommended actions for institutional change.

The Review Team began the project with healthy skepticism concerning whether saturation would be achieved across USSOCOM. However, there was remarkable similarity in the issues uncovered across the SOF enterprise despite the significant differences in units visited and participant populations. See Appendix J *Results and Analysis* for expanded discussion of the underlying findings, particularly the secondary analysis leveraged to refine Review Team efforts.

In executing the plan outlined in Chapter 4 *Method and Approach*, and through subsequent analysis the Review Team determined that the findings rarely confined themselves within any one of the CR's five key areas. In particular, the Review Team concluded that findings underneath force employment had cascading effects across the enterprise, due to SOF's cultural focus on force employment and mission accomplishment. Correspondingly, the Review Team anticipates that corrective actions taken within force employment (as a result of the recommended actions) will have cascading effects across the other key areas and broader SOF enterprise.

In order to keep the CR efforts focused on its original task and purpose, the Review Team incorporated its incident analysis throughout the broader research effort, as outlined in Chapter 4. This ensured the CR's output remained grounded in institutional, organizational and individual situations and contexts where potential interventions could have mitigated subsequent misconduct and unethical behavior.

The findings and recommended actions contained in this report are not all-inclusive, and subsequent analysis may develop additional recommended actions. During the Review Team's engagements, USSOCOM HQ and Components demonstrated they were already addressing ethical issues and implementing actions self-identified in their respective *90-Day Reviews*. All Components openly discussed challenges unique to their organizations and identified specific areas in which they requested additional Review Team scrutiny. Specific observations and findings were provided to the respective Component commanders at the conclusion of each engagement to facilitate their ongoing efforts. Throughout the CR, USSOCOM personnel were uniformly engaged, open and candid in their engagement with the Review Team.

## **Force Employment**

### **Background**

As Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Services, the President amplifies *U.S.C. Title 10 § 164 and 167* statutory roles and responsibilities through the *Unified Command Plan*. The most current (3 November 2017) designates the Commander, USSOCOM

responsible for planning and executing global special operations in coordination with GCCs, and responsible for identifying and recommending global joint sourcing solutions to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 3-05 Special Operations* identifies TSOCs as the critical planning node for theater SOF, and current GFM Implementation Guidance designates TSOCs as under the OPCON of their respective GCCs, while remaining under the COCOM Authority of Commander, USSOCOM. USSOCOM operationalizes SOF GFM functions through the Global Special Operations Synchronization (GSOS) process, through which TSOCs submit requirements through GCCs for Joint Staff validation, and for ultimate sourcing by USSOCOM. USSOCOM *Policy Memorandum 19-22* (October 2, 2019) establishes deployment duration policy, guidance to exceed those thresholds, and tracking and notification procedures to maintain accountability of deployed units and personnel.

## **Findings**

Global demand for SOF over the past 18 years challenges the above policy, guidance and processes. Current USSOCOM business rules and accountability of force employment are insufficient to accurately account for valid requirements, commitments, actual deployed forces, and define sustainable capacity.

The continuous global demand for SOF capabilities, combined with a SOF culture focused on force employment and mission accomplishment, has led to sustained high operational tempo which challenges unit integrity and leader development, and erodes readiness. The Joint Force has relied upon USSOCOM largely for countering violent

extremism (CVEO), specifically, through the core activity of counterterrorism (CT), one of the 12 SOF core activities outlined in *U.S.C. Title 10 § 167* and *USSOCOM Directive 10-1*. Given the relative ease of SOF as a sourcing solution for the Joint Force, the SOF enterprise itself perpetuated this reliance due to its focus on force employment and willingness to provide these solutions. A lack of effective GFM processes of special operations requirements risks increasing SOF's already high CVEO operational tempo, and will be compounded as DOD shifts to GPC.

The Review Team identified discrepancies associated with the origins of SOF force employment tasks, and the degree to which the generation of SOF requirements were purposely designed to gain additional SOF forces or maintain those already deployed forward in a GCC. In particular, a requirement often specifies a SOF activity (e.g. CT), knowing that the ultimate intent upon deployment into theater is to use that force as either presence, or for another SOF activity (e.g. FID). Finally, there were instances of continuation bias, where requirements from one GFM cycle were presumed valid into the next cycle – or at least afforded a bias towards validation – calling into question their true validity across requirement cycles and a resistance to confirm conditions existing for a continued SOF requirement.

The Review Team also found inconsistencies in accurate accounting of deployed SOF and USSOCOM's sustainable capacity. The use of Temporary Active Duty (TAD) and Temporary Duty (TDY) orders to deploy SOF forces forward, varying personnel tempo (PERSTEMPO) monitoring systems to track these forces, and alternating and inconsistent references to personnel, equipment, and units all offer individual pieces of



information. However, combined they obscure a consistent and accurate accounting of deployed SOF and USSOCOM's sustainable capacity. At all levels across the USSOCOM enterprise, individual members and entities associated with GFM were open and honest in describing shortfalls and offering individual solutions. However, the Review Team assesses these discrepancies require institutional attention beyond any one individual or Component.

### **Recommended Actions**

These force employment recommended actions are crafted with the intent to bring discipline and accountability to USSOCOM's existing GFM processes within Commander, USSOCOM's *U.S.C. Title 10 § 164 and 167* responsibilities. This implementation of these recommended actions creates an opportunity to reclaim resources to address items across the other CR key areas. Recommended actions to address force employment:

**Action:** Perform an independent, zero-based individual/unit level requirements review between Commander, USSOCOM, TSOCs, and GCC Commanders in order to generate a clear and unfiltered common understanding of validated special operations requirements.

**Action:** Conduct an internal audit of currently deployed SOF against current valid requirements (as identified in the previous recommended action) in order to identify forces deployed in excess of valid requirements.



**Action:** Recoup SOF forward deployed not under a valid requirement or part of a validated contingency sourcing solution in order to validate requirements, eliminate unnecessary requirements, establish priorities, and ensure readiness of SOF forces.

**Action:** Centralize force management of SOF at HQ, USSOCOM in order to fulfill Commander, USSOCOM, statutory responsibility to “ensure combat readiness,” balancing *U.S.C. Title 10 § 167* force generation and *U.S.C. Title 10 § 164* force employment responsibilities, and ensure SOF employment is sustainable for steady state, emerging requirements, and surge capacity.

## **Force Accountability**

### **Background**

*U.S.C. Title 10 §167* outlines Commander, USSOCOM responsibilities as a force provider, responsible for the training and readiness of SOF. *U.S.C. Title 10 §164* and the *Unified Command Plan* outline Commander, USSOCOM operational responsibilities for “planning and execution of global special operations activities and missions.” *Joint Publication 3-05 Special Operations* outlines the command and control (C2) of SOF, identifying the TSOCs as the normative node of theater C2, to include planning and the establishment of subordinate mission command elements.

SOF operations place small, flexible, agile, self-contained teams in denied, hostile and politically sensitive environments where SOF leaders must demonstrate and demand

exacting standards of leadership, discipline, and accountability. The SOF leader plays an equally important role in the FORGEN process, consistently present and engaged across all aspect of their tactical, administrative and managerial leadership responsibilities.

## **Findings**

A SOF culture focused on force employment and mission accomplishment has led to sustained high operational tempo and the development of an institutional incentive structure characterized by the perceived necessity for forward-deployed, career enhancing opportunities as opposed to actual validated operational C2 requirements. SOF organizational culture prioritizes the perception of force employment leadership over force generation leadership. Interruption of FORGEN periods has become routine, with an expectation that deployments will occur regardless of FORGEN interruption. Individuals and small teams are regularly and unpredictably pulled from FORGEN to support operational staffs, limited missions, and other requirements. The normalization of unit disaggregation displaces leaders from units, while degrading force management in the validation of requirements and sourcing of solutions. Additionally, a trend of disaggregation at the individual and small team levels risks employing forces where operational requirements misalign with the FORGEN validation standards.

Creation of ad hoc SOF C2 structures to support the bias towards force employment increases the demand for rank-appropriate leaders to staff those structures. This often results in command teams (O-5 and O-6 commanders and their senior enlisted

leaders) and key FORGEN staff dislocated from their units and FORGEN responsibilities.

The Review Team initially focused on the most junior individual SOF unit of action – the team (including: Operational Detachment Alpha, Marines Special Operation Team, SEAL Platoon, etc). However, each of those individuals and units have commanders and senior enlisted leaders responsible to teach, train, mentor and hold them accountable. This did not appear to be happening as regularly as it should – or at least with a level of professionalism required to maintain good order, discipline and accountability, specifically during the FORGEN process.

The FORGEN process is an opportunity for engaged O-5 and O-6 level command teams, specifically during those training events where subordinate units execute tactical tasks or high risk training events, provide ready-made venues to observe and evaluate subordinate leadership teams in action. It was often very clear which command teams are present and engaged, whose units are focused, credible and capable, in comparison to those whose leadership teams are disengaged, and whose units are fractured, out of balance and incapable of precision execution. O-5 and O-6 command teams that attend training events have the opportunity to teach, train, mentor and hold subordinates accountable - on the spot. This action not only demonstrates command oversight and accountability but also sets a clear standard with regard to what is expected and demanded from subordinate unit's tactical actions and subordinate leader leadership, discipline and accountability.

SOF personnel frequently deploy on short-duration missions or tasks during the FORGEN process, which are distinct and separate from their unit's FORGEN cycle and forecasted tasking (e.g. not a Pre-Deployment Site Survey or other requirement associated with the unit tasking). These disruptions have cascading effects across the SOF enterprise: leaders are separated from their units, full spectrum training and readiness are at risk, and the organizational tolerance of this perpetuates a culture that prioritizes force employment over leadership, discipline and accountability.

Normalized unit disaggregation contributes to the erosion of leadership, discipline and accountability as SOF is employed across the operational environment. Purpose-built teams routinely disaggregate in order to achieve employment requirements, inducing risk, as these bifurcated units of action violate their organic construct and pre-employment FORGEN validation. This disaggregation is exacerbated when these smaller units are introduced to the operational environment's ad hoc C2 structures.

Current employment models disrupt purpose-built teams, consume leadership capacity, and impact individual predictability. The SOF enterprise support of ad hoc requirements contributes to the slow erosion of leadership, discipline and accountability across the SOF enterprise. The habitual disaggregation of SOF units to meet global demand strains effective present and engaged leadership. The Review Team's incident analysis complemented these findings by identifying trends of unit disaggregation down to the individual level as a causal factor across all these incidents.



### **Recommended Actions**

These recommended actions are related to force employment and leader development recommended actions. Addressing SOF ad hoc C2 structures and the interruption of FORGEN processes, and their aligned perception of force employment leadership valued over force generation leadership, sets the condition for increased SOF leader involvement in the FORGEN process. O-5 and O-6 level command teams with the fortitude to take action earlier in the FORGEN process allow subordinate leaders' to address tactical, leadership and management issues before it gets "too late" to fix a problem and the unit deploys with leadership and tactical flaws that have the potential to manifest into individual and group misconduct and tragic incidents on the battlefield and in forward deployed locations.

**Action:** Commander, USSOCOM approve operational deployment of command selected O-5 and O-6 command teams (outside of assigned GFM deployment) to ensure increased presence and engagement with their SOF formations and greater participation and influence in the FORGEN process.

**Action:** Identify the sustainable capacity of O-5 and O-6 above mission command headquarters by Component and type for each upcoming GFM cycle in order to balance C2 requirements with FORGEN and readiness. (This action expands existing USSOCOM efforts, to include the "right sizing of the TSOC" and ongoing analysis of global SOF O-6 mission command nodes.)



**Action:** Codify, establish measures of effectiveness, and subsequently enforce operational FORGEN cycles across all SOF Components in order to provide fully ready, validated and sustainable SOF to the Joint Force.

## **Leader Development**

### **Background**

*U.S.C. Title 10 §167* outlines Commander, USSOCOM's responsibility to monitor SOF promotions, assignment, retention, training, education, special pay and incentive pay – in coordination with Services. Per *USSOCOM Directive 10-1*, this is generally delegated to the Components in coordination with their respective Services. Leadership and leader development are critical to setting culture at the organizational and institutional levels that promote discipline and accountability – the type of culture that balances USSOCOM's force employment with the other areas of USSOCOM's responsibilities.

### **Findings**

Insufficient junior leader development, an unbalanced approach to professional military education (PME), and non-codified officer and enlisted career milestone requirements have weakened leadership, discipline and accountability practices within the USSOCOM enterprise. As outlined in the context of deployed SOF C2 structures, continually expanding requirements have driven senior leaders to outsource leadership

development to focus their attention up and out of the organization and fill deployed command billets that are incentivized by perceived path dependencies associated with promotion. Due in part to the aforementioned absent and misapplied leaders and senior noncommissioned officers, many junior officers and developing enlisted leaders struggle to grasp the fundamentals of officer-enlisted relationships, mentorship practices, accountability and discipline.

Junior officers and developing enlisted leaders must be prepared to confront the unique challenges of leading in SOF. Mid-career officers and enlisted must be well integrated with the larger Joint Force and armed with the appropriate knowledge to execute staff functions critical to not only precision execution of the assigned SOF task but also accountability, good order, and discipline. Enlisted and officers must be developed as professional joint SOF leaders in a manner that challenges their competence and character and their tactical and technical competence at key career milestones, specifically, prior to being assigned or selected for key leadership, staff and command team billets at the O-4, O-5 and O-6 levels of command.

From accession pipelines to their first SOF units, SOF personnel are encouraged to emulate those who have tactical deployment experience. Deployments forward, specifically to locations where combat is a possibility, are valued above all other things, and perceived as the ultimate expression of competence. In return, those who did deploy forward, specifically in some degree of combat, are held as almost an infallible standard bearer for the rest of the organization to emulate – seemingly regardless if it is a positive or negative standard. Even if professionally competent, this competence is too frequently

equated to the core tenets of leadership, discipline and accountability. There appeared to be a lack of emphasis on professional development and personal maturity with regard to the other core skills a SOF leader must have as they move forward in their careers – gaining increasing levels of authority and responsibility.

The Review Team identified an unbalanced approach to leader development across the SOF enterprise, specifically in junior officer development. Components demonstrated a dedicated approach to leader development post entry level pipeline but upon further review, many training and education venues label as professional leader development were structured primarily around tactical skills, specifically designed for the CVEO environment. While ground force commander (GFC) and fire support coordination skills are highly valued and vital to master in the early stages of a SOF leader's career, they do not adequately address the equally important leadership and management skills required for the cultural and ethical bounding that underpins leadership, discipline and accountability.

Each USSOCOM Component leverages its Service PME – some more than others based on the applicability of the core curriculum at Service schools and training courses. Joint PME provides additional leadership development opportunities for SOF personnel. Uniformly, those SOF personnel who had not yet attended PME did not perceive it as being worthwhile, primarily due to the time required to attend, while those SOF who had attended Service and or joint PME perceived it as excellent leadership development. Additionally, SOF career pathways often keep members within the SOF community, even during joint assignments. Opportunities to engage with – and be challenged by –

Joint Force peers serves an important development function for professional development and leading in a complex joint environment.

During Component command engagements, the Review Team was briefed on Component specific career milestone development and command team selection processes. In most cases Components depend on Service promotion and command boards for officers, and rely on Service and in-house boards for enlisted leaders. These processes appeared to be adequate in selecting high quality leaders for O-5 and O-6 command teams. However, there is room for exploration in elevating the processes in which USSOCOM validates leaders as they progress toward key career milestone leadership billets, especially if they have progressed in their career without having left their specific unit or having been exposed to additional tours outside of the SOF enterprise. A Component-tailored, SOF enterprise-wide, billet-based assessment and selection program would drive career-long dedication to maintaining character and competence required to lead today's and tomorrow's SOF formations.

### **Recommended Actions**

These leader development recommended actions address insufficient junior leader development, an unbalanced approach to PME, and un-codified officer and enlisted career milestone requirements that have weakened leadership, discipline and accountability practices within the USSOCOM enterprise.

**Action:** Establish a joint in-residence special operations junior officer (O-1 to O-3) course for initial entry and accession to any SOF officer career path leading units of

action (following Component-specific assessment and selection and initial training courses) in order to influence enterprise-wide leader development.

**Action:** Restore emphasis on Service-hosted mid-career PME in order to develop Joint Force understanding and leadership skills across mid and senior-level leaders.

**Action:** Codify and enforce officer and enlisted development milestones across Components in order to professionalize and prioritize leader development, proficiency, and accountability across the SOF enterprise.

**Action:** In coordination with (ICW) Services, consolidate and evaluate existing SOF officer and enlisted career incentives (monetary and otherwise) and promotion precepts in order to analyze gaps in leader development and career incentives.

**Action:** Publish SOF enterprise-wide leadership and accountability leadership lessons learned analogous to U.S. Navy's *Approach* magazine (aviation community's lessons learned) in order to identify, analyze and share leadership and management situations and contributing factors from which the SOF enterprise would derive benefit, as well as best practices.



## **Force Structure**

### **Background**

*U.S.C. Title 10 §167* outlines Commander, USSOCOM responsibilities for development of SOF strategy, doctrine and tactics and training. The *Unified Command Plan* amplifies this statutory responsibility with a focus on SOF training and readiness. *Joint Publication 3-05 Special Operations* and *Directive Number 10-1, Organizations and Functions* apply *U.S.C. Title 10 §167*-defined “special operations activities” to USSOCOM’s force structure, and provide mission guidance to Components regarding roles and responsibilities. *USSOCOM Directive Number 10-1, Organizations and Functions* ensures SOF Components are fully organized, manned, trained and equipped to execute assigned primary, secondary and supporting core activities in denied, hostile and politically sensitive environments.

### **Findings**

Adaptation of USSOCOM’s force structure to the demands of CVEO drove a SOF culture focused on force employment and mission accomplishment, and created a vicious cycle that normalized this culture. As USSOCOM adapted to CVEO requirements, individual FORGEN periods were habitually broken, and purposefully-built teams disaggregated. Fundamental to force structure is the FORGEN process enabling leader development and purpose-built teams in order to support the maximum number of CVEO requirements. These disruptions were exacerbated by habitual employment of SOF teams as interchangeable counterinsurgency (COIN),

counterterrorism (CT), and direct action (DA) units, regardless of assigned purposeful-generation across Component FORGEN in accordance with USSOCOM *Directive Number 10-1, Organizations and Functions*.

The normalization of this behavior in turn normalized SOF culture, particularly at the organizational and institutional levels, as leaders developed within training and deployment environments focused solely on COIN, CT, and DA core activities – more specifically, unilateral and foreign partnered raids and execution of the find, fix, finish, exploit and analyze (F3EA) targeting cycle. Many individuals across the USSOCOM enterprise – at all levels – identified this cultural problem to the Review Team. Despite that, there appears to be a lack of leadership and training management emphasis on addressing a perpetuating SOF force structure that focuses on COIN and CT while not developing SOF and SOF leaders for the full spectrum of SOF core activities and Component specific skills and capabilities.

As USSOCOM looks towards the future operating environment, SOF has responsibilities to support the Joint Force as it shifts towards Great Power Competition. These growing requirements are challenging a SOF culture with a bias towards force employment in support of CT and COIN core activities. While conducting Foreign Internal Defense (FID) missions to Build Partner Capacity (BPC) in support of GCC Commanders, the force exhibits – at times – high risk behavior which has contributed to some of the recent incidents of misconduct and unethical behavior. As SOF adapts to this shift, present and engaged leadership applied consistently through FORGEN and force

employment is essential to ensure USSOCOM readiness and sourcing across *U.S.C. Title 10 §167*-defined special operations activities.

### **Recommended Actions**

These force structure recommended actions are designed to rebalance USSOCOM FORGEN, readiness, and set conditions to refocus the force on the standards, discipline, and accountability required to execute the full spectrum of SOF core activities and Component specific skills and capabilities in denied, hostile and politically sensitive environments. Recommended actions to address force structure:

**Action:** Restore SOF unique capabilities through validated training and exercises across *U.S.C. Title 10 § 167* activities in order to ensure USSOCOM readiness across prescribed SOF activities and provide full spectrum SOF capability to the Joint Force, across environments ranging from CVEO to GPC.

**Action:** Review SOCOM *Directive Number 10-1, Organizations and Functions* to validate SOF Component core activities and lead Component responsibilities to ensure each Component is fully organized, manned, trained, and equipped to execute SOF core activities and assigned additional Component-specific skills and capabilities in denied hostile and politically sensitive environments.

## **Assessment and Selection**

### **Background**

*U.S.C. Title 10 §167* outlines Commander, USSOCOM responsibilities for personnel development in coordination with the Services. *USSOCOM Directive 10-1* designates Components as responsible for recruiting personnel into SOF, and subsequent training pathways. *USSOCOM Directive 10-1* further designates Components as primary, secondary or support across the 12 special operations activities defined in *U.S.C. Title 10 §167*. This statutory and USSOCOM guidance sets conditions for assessment and selection criteria and pathways into SOF. There are variations by Component; NSW conducts assessment and selection directly from initial entry into the Navy, while MARSOC conducts assessment and selection from the Marine Corps' operating forces; USASOC conducts assessment and selection from the operating force, with limited direct assessment and selection from initial entry into the Army, while AFSOC varies based on specialization, with a range of assessment and selection from the operating force as well as initial entry into the Air Force.

### **Findings**

The current construct and process of Service recruiting and assessment and selection into SOF training is mostly appropriate for designed force core capabilities. However, the Review Team identified several opportunities for improvement.

Negative aspects of SOF segregation and entitlement were identified in certain Component recruiting, preparatory courses and early entry training. Overemphasis on physical training often comes at the expense of Service-specific professional development and acculturation. A lack of exposure to Service foundation and culture combines with “specialized” attention and amenities risks creating a sense of entitlement – most prevalent in pathways recruiting directly from the civilian population. Finally, there was clear variance across Components in quality control applied to assigning personnel (military, civilian, contractors) to units conducting assessment and selection, and follow-on initial SOF training. It is vital that Components ensure that from recruiting to entry level training, and through pipeline courses, new SOF personnel are exposed to instructors and staff that demonstrate the highest levels of competence and character.

#### **Recommended Actions**

These recommended actions are intended to preserve those attributes which are currently sufficient for SOF enterprise assessment and selection. They suggest areas for further USSOCOM and Component analysis to address areas of possible improvement.

**Action:** ICW Services, USSOCOM Component commands will conduct further analysis of the SOF assessment and selection programs, specifically focused on those personnel recruited by the Services from the public (non-prior service), in order to provide all Components and the USSOCOM Commander best practices regarding inculcating both Military Service and SOF culture and professional ethics during their initial entry into SOF.



**Action:** ICW Services, evaluate processes to assign trainers, instructors and mentors to institutional force generating Commands, with a focus on assessment, selection and training pathways in order to ensure SOF personnel (military, civilian, contractors) with the right degree of competence and character are assigned to institutional entry-level through initial SOF qualification courses.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

### Implementation

As USSOCOM's experience with the 2011 *POTFF* study indicates, implementation of sustainable change is often more difficult than identifying problems. Implementation requires firm Commander's intent and swift, transparent accountability actions at all levels. This cannot be delegated to existing staff structures or through the creation of processes that will simply become new ways to arrive at old problems.

An empowered Comprehensive Review Implementation Team (CRI Team) will assist the Commander in sustaining implementation and provide the Commander with independent assessments of progress and issues. Recommend the CRI Team be led by a USSOCOM 3-star general or flag officer with a dedicated core staff responsible for conducting detailed implementation planning, execution and reporting.

Structured and scheduled updates to the Commander, and potentially external updates to DOD and across the Joint Force, will help ensure transparent accountability. Components demonstrated to the Review Team those corrective measures they were already implementing to address self-identified issues. These serve as starting points for implementation, which USSOCOM must leverage to lead and sustain change. See Appendix K for the *Review Team Implementation Recommended Actions*.

## Summary

The SOF Components provided overwhelming support and access throughout the effort. Across the SOF enterprise, the CR encountered professionals dedicated to a life of demanding service and actively engaged in taking responsibility and confronting challenges in difficult circumstances. These are joint SOF Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and civilians who thrive on leadership, discipline and accountability. Harnessing and leveraging this highly capable force requires USSOCOM dedication and sustained leadership.

SOF has a history of adapting to emerging threats, meeting the needs of the nation, and filling crucial gaps in capability. USSOCOM's ability to continue the proud legacy of the men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice is contingent on our ability to recognize when and where organizational drift has occurred, hold ourselves accountable, own the problem, take corrective action, and implement controls. This effort will ensure USSOCOM remains postured to provide SOF unique capability and sustainable capacity in support of the Joint Force, contribute to increased readiness, and guide long-term investments that will allow us to learn, act, and evolve more quickly than our opponents while sustaining the trust of the American people. Simply put – this CR makes us better as a more credible, capable, and precise force.

Appendix A: Advisory Team and Review Team Participants

Advisory Team
(b)(3):10 USC § 130b; (b)(6)
Review Team
(b)(3):10 USC § 130b; (b)(6)

Appendix B: Special Operations Forces Culture and Ethics Memorandum



**Special Operations Forces Culture and Ethics**

**Comprehensive Review**

To All Members of U.S. Special Operations Command,

The American people must trust those who protect them, including the special operations professionals in this Command. This trust is paramount and must never be compromised. Our culture—the very fabric of our beliefs and values—is deeply rooted in a history of honor, duty, and sacrifice. Our ethics—the principles that govern our behavior—are the foundation for values-based decision-making at home and when deployed in the most complex environments.

Recent incidents have called our culture and ethics into question and threaten the trust placed in us. As a result, I am initiating a comprehensive review of Special Operations Forces (SOF) culture and ethics. The review will gather insights and observations from across our force and will draw upon the unique perspectives of leaders from internal and external entities. In addition to an overall assessment of SOF culture and ethics, the review will focus on our recruitment, how we assess and select SOF professionals, how we grow leaders, how we educate and train our force to operate ethically with the same excellence with which we operate tactically, and how we address ethical failures when they occur.

The review will begin immediately and conclude in the fall of 2019. Specific details and schedules for unit visits across the USSOCOM enterprise will follow. I expect you to expend every effort to facilitate access and support the review team's efforts. Be open and candid in your feedback to the team. We will also publish the results and discuss them broadly. ***This is about making us better.***

Most importantly, recognize this review as an opportunity to strengthen our values and reinforce trust. We are the nation's special operations force and we remain intensely focused on accomplishing our mission while upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct—each and every day, as individuals and teams, at home and while in harm's way.

(b)(6)

Richard D. Clarke  
General, U.S. Army  
Commander



Appendix C: *NDAA 2018* Guidance on Assessment of Culture and Accountability in SOF

OTHER MATTERS

Assessment of Culture and Accountability in Special Operations Forces

The committee is aware of the integral role that Special Operations Forces play in the defense of our Nation. Special Operations Forces enjoy a stellar reputation as brave, competent and quiet professionals. The committee is concerned, however, that recent allegations of personal misconduct by a limited number of service members may be detracting from the honorable service of the vast majority of Special Operations Forces. These allegations of misconduct include reports of sexual assault and other sexual misconduct, as well as drug use. Additional concerns have been raised about increased public exposure of Special Operations Forces activities and operations via unauthorized books and media.

Therefore, the committee directs the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict and the Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, to provide a briefing to the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives not later than January 1, 2018, on the Department's assessment of the culture and accountability within Special Operations Forces.

Appendix D: ASD SO/LIC and Commander, USSOCOM *Guidance on Ethics*

## United States Special Operations Forces

10 November 2018

## Guidance on Ethics



For 51 years, U.S. special operations forces have conducted thousands of missions, operating jointly around the globe. Together—Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines—we conduct the most sensitive missions in defense of our country. To this end, the American people have entrusted us with the Nation's security and the lives of their sons and daughters, their greatest treasure.

For this reason, special operations forces are expected to operate with the highest standards of ethics and honor. Trustworthiness and accountability are foundational to conducting our nation's most complex and high risk operations—this ethos is at the core of our lethality and readiness, and essential to strengthening alliances. We will hold ourselves and each other accountable to these high standards every day because lives are on the line.

Remain vigilant. Do not allow a sense of personal entitlement or the desire for privilege or benefit to cloud your judgment. As Secretary Mattis has said, "play the ethical midfield." Do not run the ethical sidelines where one misstep will put you out of bounds.

Small actions can have large impacts, particularly when the results become highly visible on the national and international stage. We routinely operate around the world in environments where the exposure and temptations to be influenced by local norms are a reality. Never give the American people or our allies cause to doubt our will to execute at the highest standards of tactical and moral excellence.

We train for and operate in dynamic, complex and ambiguous environments. You are empowered and trusted. When tough calls need to be made, do your best in the light of our American values. You have consistently proven that your empowerment and trust is warranted. When we fall short, take thorough and effective corrective action on behavior that does not meet with DoD, Service or USSOCOM standards.

Continue to serve with honor and integrity, on and off the battlefield.

(b)(6)

Raymond A. Thomas III  
General, U.S. Army  
Commander  
United States Special Operations Command

(b)(6)

Owen West  
Assistant Secretary of Defense  
Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict

## Appendix E: Research Method

### **Study Design and Rationale**

The study was designed as a qualitative organizational ethnography. This approach first developed an appreciation of the organizational context, including hidden dimensions, through primary research conducted through sensing sessions and semi-structured interviews during Review Team engagements across USSOCOM HQ and Components. Secondary research included a recruiting tiger team that visited recruiting and initial entry locations, analysis of relevant SOF incidents, examination and analysis of previous studies, analysis of internal USSOCOM policies, procedures and business rules, analysis of USSOCOM congressional testimony from 1999 to 2019, and analysis of over 800 enlisted academy essays. This design enabled a holistic understanding of the organization at all levels. The secondary research provided additional details to complete a composite description and understanding of the SOF ecosystem, understand issues, and develop recommended actions for institutional change.

### **Review Team Selection and Preparation**

Review Team selection and preparation was a crucial component of the study. The Review Team needed to gain the trust of the SOF community while maintaining a prescribed timeline for primary research. Additionally, varied perspectives were required to avoid blind spots, manage bias, and support the analysis required to understand the organization. The Review Team was purposefully developed to include members from USSOCOM, Components, and conventional forces, while including civilian

representation and a member from the ASD SO/LIC team. Finally, the Review Team included male and female members as well as junior and senior enlisted and officer personnel. Additional academic support was received through the faculty of the Joint Special Operations University.

After Review Team selection, all members traveled to Tampa, Florida for a week of preparation prior to primary research. This preparation period was used to issue equipment for the study, conduct an in-brief, receive opening remarks from the team leader, provide certain aspects of the background and approach, conduct personal reflection exercises and discussion, and provide training on the data collection procedures to support travel and collection through September and October. This period was also used by the lead researcher to evaluate the members for the purpose of building balanced teams during the site visits. Some Review Team members functioned as participant-observers while others provided valuable outsider perspectives. This preparation period set conditions for high quality data collection and analysis.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Primary research data was collected beginning with Review Team meeting in Tampa in late August 2019, and continued through engagement across the SOF enterprise in September and October 2019. During these engagements, notes were collected from Review Team members at the close of each day, with additional group debriefs at the end of each day. These were treated as separate sources of data (i.e., individual notes, group discussions and debriefs), for subsequent correlation and analysis. As engagement across



the USSOCOM enterprise continued in September and October, the Review Team collected information at the individual, organizational and institutional levels, supporting an integrated understanding of the ecosystem and its dynamics.

The secondary research consisted largely of documentary data, with collection and analysis beginning as the threads were identified and team members assigned. Research of previous studies, USSOCOM congressional testimony, as well as JSOU enlisted essays, focused primarily on document review and analysis. All information was coded to facilitate comparison between levels, across communities, and integration into the whole. Qualitative data analysis software was used to code larger amounts of textual data associated with certain aspects of the secondary research. These methods enabled research into a broad data set, while ensuring qualitative analysis in support of the CR task.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

The study design incorporated elements intended to contribute to the overall trustworthiness. The use of multiple sources of data, insider and outsider perspectives on the Review Team, structure of the Review Team, and compartmentalization of tasks allowed for triangulation and contributed to the study's credibility and dependability. The use of a diverse Review Team, a purposeful sampling strategy, and the maintenance of SOF community trust were key components of authenticity. Member checks contributed to additional trustworthiness and additional opportunity to bolster trustworthiness throughout the study.



Confirmability was anticipated to be the most difficult element of trustworthiness to manage due to the applied nature of the study, intense interest, and involvement of numerous individuals spanning power differentials. Simply put, the Review Team members were potentially bringing their own biases into the study, and this required mitigation via the research design. Inclusion of insider and outsider perspectives, and sourcing the Review Team from both internal and external to the SOF enterprise, mitigated these concerns. Advisory Team engagements acted as an additional mitigating factor, ensuring the Review Team avoided confirmation bias and abided by the CR mandate of “no predetermined outcomes.” Additionally, the lead researcher maintained an audit trail and journal beginning with the initial request for the study and Review Team preparation in order to manage both individual and group biases.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethical concerns associated with the study required deliberate attention. Trust needed to be earned and maintained during and after the study. The Review Team received guidelines concerning the discussion of personal situations, pending matters, medical situations, avoidance of undue command influence, and handling of *Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)* violations. Protecting participant and respondent confidentiality was emphasized throughout the study. Review Team guidelines are included in Appendix H.

No personally identifiable information (PII) was included in data collected. A majority of Review Team members conducting primary research were not involved in or

aware of the secondary research most likely to include PII. This compartmentalization both protected the more sensitive data and preserved the study's authenticity and dependability. The two most sensitive areas of inquiry were the essay review and the incident analysis. The lead researcher used an auxiliary member to anonymize the essays which were then accessed only by the lead researcher and team leader. Similarly, the raw incident data was handled by a dedicated individual who extracted relevant information for analysis by a small team.

This study used a qualitative organizational ethnographic method to create a composite description of the SOF ecosystem, identify contributing causes to incidents, and develop and evaluate recommended actions for institutional change and interventions. The deliberate selection of a diverse Review Team, use of an Advisory Team, and compartmentalization of research efforts, and purposeful sampling all contribute to trustworthiness. Additional ethical procedures ensured the protection of data and the trust placed in the Review Team to conduct this study.

## Appendix F: Review Team Component Engagement Strategy

USSOCOM Component engagements were the Review Team's main effort. Each engagement was a week-long effort with Component leadership teams providing unfettered access and professional support to the Review Team. The engagement began by reviewing the Component's policy and guidance implementation IAW USSOCOM directed 90-day focus on core values completed in March 2019. This enabled the Review Team to understand actions the Component had already initiated and provided the opportunity to gain Component senior leader perspective. Semi-structured sensing sessions then were initiated across the Component from the most junior levels of SOF and support personnel to O-6 level commands and Component headquarters staffs to include the civilian workforce.

A factor identified during the Review Team's first engagement at the NSW Command eventually became sustained throughout all Component engagements. SOF enterprise members wanted to engage and wanted to be heard. The semi-structured interviews were expanded to accommodate this factor.

The Review Team's engagement plan included daily close-out sessions where each member openly discussed and shared the results of their semi-structured sensing session which were captured and recorded. Each Component engagement was closed out by the aggregation of collected information along the lines of the Comprehensive Review's five focus areas and a final engagement with the Component senior leaders. Component commanders and their senior enlisted leaders were provided a "Quick Look"

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document representing Review Team's initial findings and recommended actions specific to their Component.

## Appendix G: Review Team Guiding Questions for Sensing Sessions

1. Assessment and Selection
  - a. What are the most important assessment and selection criteria for success in your organization and what are the defining characteristics of your assessment and selection process?
  - b. How would you describe the integrity of your assessment and selection process?
  - c. What are the challenges you face in assessment and selection?
  - d. How do you evaluate and prioritize character and competence in assessment and selection?
2. Leader Development
  - a. What makes a good leader in your organization?
  - b. When and how does leadership development begin / occur in your organization?
  - c. How are leaders selected within your organization?
  - d. What leadership challenges do you see in your organization?
3. Force Structure
  - a. What is the basis of your force structure (why is it that way)?
  - b. How does your force structure affect predictability?
  - c. How does your force structure affect leader development and accountability?
4. Force Employment
  - a. What does being part of Special Operations Forces mean to you?
  - b. What is the ideal application of your force and talent?
  - c. What challenges do you face or what competes with finding time to lead?
  - d. What are your thoughts on force employment priorities within USSOCOM?
5. Force Accountability
  - a. Does your organization hold people accountable for their actions?
  - b. Do you trust the accountability systems in place?
  - c. What challenges do you see with accountability mechanisms within your organization?



## Appendix H: Review Team Interview Guidelines

### Guiding Principal

The goal is to gather insights and observations from across the force and at every site visited. Therefore, any conduct or questioning which will chill candor is to be avoided to the degree possible.

### General Guidelines

**Final Product:** The final product will be unclassified, so if classified matters come up in discussions, any written products must be reduced to an unclassified level.

**Classification:** Information that cannot be reduced to an unclassified format must be handled via appropriate channels.

**End-of-Day Briefs:** Conduct end-of-day debriefs with the review team, to make sure any follow-on requirements are addressed at the next availability.

**Personal Situations:** Situations personal to an interviewee should not be discussed in an open group format. If relevant to the review, an individual interview can be conducted outside of a group setting.

**Written Statements:** Note-taking of what interviewees discuss during sensing sessions is encouraged, but recommend avoiding obtaining written statements from participants.

**Pending Matters:** Any pending matter (Art 138/EEO complaints, requests for redress, disciplinary matters, etc.) should not be discussed. Those items may inform responses to the Review Team's questions, but should not be probed.

**Respondent Confidentiality:** Participant anonymity will be protected to the maximum extent possible and it is intended that the content of their statements will not be attributed to any specific individual, but these sessions are not confidential nor privileged. *This must be announced to all participants before any individual or group discussion begins.*

### Interviewing Guidelines

**Open Ended Initial Questions:** Opening questions should not imply an answer, but should be open-ended and allow the respondent to fully explain their thoughts and experiences. Questions that prompt a yes/no response should be avoided.

**Follow-On Questions:** Follow-on questions should be similarly open-ended, but at some point may reach a yes/no response, which is acceptable as long as the interviewee's response is understood.

**Question Framing:** Employ different ways to frame a question if the answer you are being provided is not on point with the topic you are probing. People will vary in the

way they interpret questions and different wording can aid them in forming answers. This is where over-arching questions and topic areas will be helpful.

**Possible Participant Hostility:** Any untoward situation (uncooperative/hostile participation) should be referred to the command with immediate authority over the member.

**Medical Situations:** (including ideations of suicide/self-harm) should be referred to appropriately trained individuals available at the location. The Review Team Psych can be used as an initial resource, but the member should ultimately be turned over to his/her command for action.

#### Specific Areas of Concern

Avoiding Undue Command Influence (UCI)

Reported *Uniform Code Military Justice (UCMJ)* violations

#### Avoiding UCI:

**Avoiding Direct Questions on Specific Criminality:** Questions concerning criminal misconduct should be generic or hypothetical. In other words, questions should not seek to discover what a respondent knows about a specific criminal act or publicized misconduct investigation.

**Pending Case Avoidance:** Avoid discussions of pending UCMJ/misconduct cases. Focus on gathering impressions/information, not conveying the Review Team's thoughts on a military justice matter.

#### Reported UCMJ Violations:

Article 31(b) rights advisement is generally NOT required...nor desired...it will be counterproductive to the purpose of the review. Questions should not direct a respondent to provide details of their involvement in misconduct matters.

In the event a respondent makes an admission that causes the questioner to suspect their involvement in, or knowledge of, a crime, questioning on that topic should cease immediately. The matter should then be referred to the appropriate chain of command responsible for the respondent. Further questioning about other topics is permissible.

If the Review Team receives a report of a crime, the identity of the source should be noted and the matter referred to the command for follow-up.

**Contact the Review Team JAG if any of these scenarios arise or if you have other questions.**

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**Appendix I: Review Team Engagement Timeline**

<b>USSOCOM CR Review Team Engagement Timeline</b>		
<b>August</b>	9 <sup>th</sup>	Commander, USSOCOM CR Memo to Force Operation Order (OPORD) Sent to Component Commanders
	9-15 <sup>th</sup>	Outreach to Advisory Team
	12 <sup>th</sup>	CR Internal In-Progress Review (IPR) with Commander, USSOCOM
	16 <sup>th</sup>	Read-Ahead Packets Sent to Advisory Team
	20 <sup>th</sup>	Fragmentation Order (FRAGO) to OPORD Sent to Component Commanders
	21 <sup>st</sup>	CR Internal IPR with Commander, USSOCOM
	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Advisory Team Meeting
	28 <sup>th</sup>	CR Internal IPR with Commander, USSOCOM
	28 <sup>th</sup>	Advisory Team Meeting
	28-29 <sup>th</sup>	Review Team Prep Session MacDill Air Force Base (AFB)
<b>September</b>	3-6 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC) Visit</b>
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	CR Team In-Brief to NSWC Commander SEAL Team Five / Training Detachment One Sensing Sessions (O5-O6 & E8-E9; O3-O4 & E6-E7; O1-O2 & E1-E5; Civilians) Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
	4 <sup>th</sup>	Assessment and Selection Key Force Accountability (KFA) Brief Naval Special Warfare Center (NSWCEN) Sensing Sessions (O5-O6 & E8-E9; O3-O4 & E6-E7; O1-O2 & E1-E5; Civilians) Leader Development KFA Brief Special Boat Team 12 Sensing Sessions (O5-O6 & E8-E9; O3-O4 & E6-E7; O1-O2 & E1-E5; Civilians) Force Structure KFA Brief Force Employment KFA Brief BGen office call with Rear Admiral Upper Half (RADM) Green Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
	5 <sup>th</sup>	Accountability KFA Brief Benevolence and Entitlement KFA Brief Special Reconnaissance Team - One Sensing Sessions (O5-O6 & E8-E9; O3-O4 & E6-E7; O1-O2 & E1-E5; Civilians) NSWC Headquarters Sensing Sessions (O5-O6 & E8-E9; O3-O4 & E6-E7; Civilians) Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
	6 <sup>th</sup>	Quick Look/Out-Brief to NSWC Commander
	10-11 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Initial Entry Joint Base San Antonio - Lackland AFB, Texas Visit</b> Basic Military Training (37 <sup>th</sup> Training Group) Sensing Sessions Battlefield Airmen Training Group (350 <sup>th</sup> Training Squadron, 353 <sup>rd</sup> Training Squadron, Detachment 1) Sensing Sessions



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	9-13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) Visit</b>
(b)(3):10 USC § 130b; (b)(6)		Office Call with MARSOC Commander
ember	9 <sup>th</sup>	CR Team In-Brief with MARSOC Commander MARSOC 101 Brief MARSOC 90 Day Ethics Review Update Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
	10 <sup>th</sup>	Recruiting Methodology Brief and Round Table Discussion Marine Raider Training Center (MRTC) Leadership Round Table Discussion MRTC Staff Round Table Discussion (Senior Non-Commissioned Officer (SNCO)/Officer split between Critical Skills Operator (CSO)/Special Operations Officer (SOO)/Special Operations Capabilities (SOC) pipeline instructors) Student Round Table Discussion (SOO/CSO/SOCs students) Individual MRTC Staff/Student Interviews Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
	11 <sup>th</sup>	Marine Raider Regiment (MRR)/Marine Raider Support Group (MRSO) O6 Level Command Team Round Table Discussion MRR/MRSO O5 Level Command Team Round Table Discussion NCO Round Table Discussion (CSO, SOC) SNCO Round Table Discussion (CSO, SOC) SOO Round Table Discussion (Team Commanders, MSOC Commanders) MRSB Officer Round Table Discussion Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
	12 <sup>th</sup>	Component Ethics Initiatives/Marine Special Operator Insignia Revocation/General Schedule/Contractor Round Table Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
(b)(3):10 USC § 130b; (b)(6)		Office Call with MARSOC Commander
2	13 <sup>th</sup>	Quick Look/Out-Brief to MARSOC Commander Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
	17-18 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Initial Entry 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment, Ft. Benning, GA Visit</b> Recruit Training Command; 75 <sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment (Ranger Assessment and Selection Program I & 2 candidates and cadre, Small Unit Ranger Tactics Instructors, and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ranger Battalion junior and senior enlisted) Sensing Sessions
	18-20 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) Visit</b>
	18 <sup>th</sup>	CR Internal IPR with Commander, USSOCOM
		CR Team In-Brief to AFSOC Commander 492 Special Operations Wing (SOW) & "Making of an Air Commando" Brief 6 Special Operations Squadron (SOS) Overview Brief 492 SOW Sensing Session (O4 & E7s/Company Grade Officers & E4-E6) AFSOC HQ Sensing Session (O5-O6; E8-E9; O3-O4s; E7s-Civilians)
(b)(3):10 USC § 130b; (b)(6)		meeting with 6 SOS
	18 <sup>th</sup>	24 SOW Overview Brief 24 SOW Sensing Session (O3-O4 & E4-E6 & E7-E8) United States Air Force Special Operations School (USAFSOS) Commandant and Senior Instructors/Course Directors Interviews AFSOC Leadership Development Course Visit Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
	19 <sup>th</sup>	6 SOS Visit at Duke Field - (b)(3):10 USC § 130b; (b)(6) Kinetic Strike Sensing Session (Squadron Commanders, Directors of Operations, SELs (O4-O5 & E9), CGOs/E4-E8)

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(b)(3):10 USC § 130b; (b)(6)		Office Call with AFSOC Commander
September		Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
	19 <sup>th</sup>	<b>USASOC 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group (SFG) Visit</b> 7 <sup>th</sup> SFG Command Overview Brief 7 <sup>th</sup> SFG Senior Sensing Session 7 <sup>th</sup> SFG Sensing Sessions Junior/Mid-Level Sensing Session Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
	20 <sup>th</sup>	Quick Look/Out-Brief to AFSOC Commander
	24 <sup>th</sup>	CR Internal IPR with Commander, USSOCOM
	24 <sup>th</sup>	Advisory Team Meeting
	24 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Initial Entry U.S. Navy, Great Lakes, Illinois Visit</b> Recruit Training Command, Preparatory Course, Naval Service Training Command, & "Warrior Challenge" Recruiting Program Sensing Sessions
	24-27 <sup>th</sup>	<b>United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Visit</b>
	(b)(3):10 USC § 130b; (b)(6) Office Call with USASOC Commander	
	24 <sup>th</sup>	CR Team In-Brief to USASOC Commander USASOC 90-Day Review Brief USASOC Headquarters Sensing Sessions (x3) Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
	25 <sup>th</sup>	Special Warfare Center and School (SWCS) Overview Brief SWCS Sensing Sessions (x3) 1 <sup>st</sup> Special Forces Command (SFC) Brief 1 <sup>st</sup> SFC Sensing Sessions (x3) Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
September	26 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> SFG Overview Brief 3 <sup>rd</sup> SFG Sensing Sessions (x3) 4 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Overview Brief 4 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> PSYOP Sensing Sessions (x3) 160 <sup>th</sup> Overview Brief 160 <sup>th</sup> Sensing Sessions (E4-E6s & E7-E8s & E9-O4s (with Warrant Officers) 75 <sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment Overview Brief 75 <sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment Sensing Sessions (junior/mid-level/senior) Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
	27 <sup>th</sup>	95 <sup>th</sup> Civil Affairs (CA) Overview Brief 95 <sup>th</sup> CA Sensing Sessions (x3)
	(b)(3):10 USC § 130b; (b)(6) Led O6 Level Command Team Round Table SVTC	
		Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)



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October	1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>Initial Entry MARSOC, Camp LeJeune, North Carolina Visit</b> Individual Training Course (ITC) Trainees (Officer and Enlisted), Cadre for ITC, Assessment & Selection (A&S), Senior Operator Course (SOC), and Team Commander Course Sensing Sessions
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>Initial Entry USASOC, Fort Bragg, North Carolina Visit</b> Special Forces (SF) Training, Medical/Non-Select SF Assessment and Selection Candidates in holding, Post-Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) Training Pipeline SF Qualification Course (SFQC), Language Program SFQC Candidates and SFQC Instructors Sensing Sessions
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Quick Look/Out-Brief to USASOC Commander
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	USSOCOM Commander's Decision Round Table (CDRT) – CR Brief
	4 <sup>th</sup>	Post-CDRT Meeting with Commander, USSOCOM USSOCOM SJA USSOCOM Global Special Operations Synchronization USSOCOM J1 USSOCOM J3
	8-9 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) Visit</b>
	8 <sup>th</sup>	Unit #1 Command Brief Unit #1 Sensing Sessions (E9-O4, E5-E8) Unit #1 Sensing Session (Civilians) Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
	9 <sup>th</sup>	Unit #2 Command Brief Unit #2 Sensing Sessions Operator (E9-O4, E5-E8) Unit #2 Sensing Sessions Enabler (E9-O4, E5-E8) NSW Group Two Command Brief NSW Group Two (E8-O6 with (b)(3):10 USC § 130b; (b)(6)) Review Team Daily Close Out Meeting (Internal Only)
	21 <sup>st</sup>	Special Operations Command South (SOCSOUTH) Secure Video Teleconference (SVTC)
	22 <sup>nd</sup>	Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) SVTC Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) SVTC
	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAF) SVTC
	24 <sup>th</sup>	Special Operations Command South (SOCNORTH) SVTC
	25 <sup>th</sup>	CR Internal In-Progress Review with Commander, USSOCOM
	31 <sup>st</sup>	Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC) SVTC Special Operations Command Korea (SOCKOR) SVTC
November	13 <sup>th</sup>	CR Internal IPR with Commander, USSOCOM Component Commanders and SELs Meeting
	14 <sup>th</sup>	CR Executive Summary (EXSUM) Final Draft Mailed to Advisory Team
	20 <sup>th</sup>	Advisory Team Pre-Brief with (b)(3):10 USC § 130b; (b)(6)
	21 <sup>st</sup>	CR Internal IPR Review with Commander, USSOCOM Advisory Team Meeting
December	2 <sup>nd</sup>	CR Internal IPR with Commander, USSOCOM
	7 <sup>th</sup>	Full Draft of Comprehensive Review to Commander, USSOCOM
	12 <sup>th</sup>	CR Internal IPR with Commander, USSOCOM

## Appendix J: Results and Analysis

### Secondary Results and Analysis

Additional data sources were crucial to understanding SOF as an organizational system and triangulating systemic issues. Secondary results and analysis were those derived from sources outside of those directly collected by the Review Team. Some of these sources were analyzed concurrently with the collection of primary data; however, in all instances, the Review Team leader and the primary researcher compartmentalized areas of inquiry to preserve comparative value and integrity of the results. The primary research provided a deep understanding of the organizational context spanning the SOF enterprise. Secondary research and analysis provided additional means for triangulating findings, understanding the historical and institutional dynamics, identifying opportunities for intervention, and theory testing.

### Enlisted Academy Essay Review

The Joint Special Operations University Enlisted Academy (JSOU-EA) offers a continuum of four courses to prepare SOF noncommissioned officers for the demands of leading in modern environments. These courses provide a valuable opportunity for the students to reflect on their service, build a peer network, and further develop their capacity for critical, creative, and ethical thinking. Responses to an essay question regarding the impact of unethical leadership and decision making from a two-year span (2017 – 2019) were stripped of identifying information and analyzed. This rich data set

composed of a large volume of individual student responses from a cross-section of senior noncommissioned officers from the Services and Components.

The essays paint an intimate picture of SOF leaders trying to make the best of difficult choices in complex environments, often struggling with careerism and political maneuvering at higher echelons, little support and ample administrative burden, pressure to craft “creative” solutions, corrupt or unethical partner forces, and leaders who are at times absent and unaccountable. These essays put a personal touch on the insights gained from the component visits and other areas of secondary research. The mechanism of these issues was evident in the next area of analysis: the command narrative as captured in a review of posture statements and previous studies.

#### **Previous Studies and USSOCOM Posture Statements**

USSOCOM Congressional testimony and posture statements from 1998 – 2019 were analyzed to identify any changes in the organizational narrative over time. The USSOCOM Commander provides posture statements in order to inform Congress and gain support for the SOF enterprise to meet current strategic guidance and direction. Looking holistically over time, USSOCOM posture statements offer an opportunity to understand shifts in the enterprise’s guidance, priorities and resourcing. It was expected that significant change, if any, would be seen following the attacks of September 11, 2001, or the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Review Team was surprised at the alignment of the narrative and emerging reflections elsewhere in the analysis.

In March 1998, General Peter J. Schoomaker testified that “USSOCOM has taken the initiative to ensure a ready force for the future by studying the effects of high tempo on our forces.” The resulting PERSTEMPO Impact Survey aimed to develop “a baseline for future comparisons, determining how high PERSTEMPO affects the soldier and how this may manifest itself (morale, retention, etc.).”

In 1999, a study contracted by USSOCOM expanded on the PERSTEMPO Impact Survey. The researchers conducted a literature review and an analysis of three existing sources of Army data to clarify definitions, measures, and study the effects of PERSTEMPO. The study highlighted the challenges associated with accurately measuring the effects of PERSTEMPO and discussion on “who should be tracked, what measures... should be used, and what outcome measures should be used” (Stich, Sadacca, DiFazio, Knerr, 1999, p. 75). Additionally, the authors noted the natural limitations of the quantitative study as confined to the quality of the data sources used.

Though interest in SOF increased with the commencement of operations in 2001 (Afghanistan) and 2003 (Iraq) and there was an increase in discussion of SOF growth pursuant to the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), the most significant shift in narrative occurred between the years 2011 and 2014. The 2011 USSOCOM posture statement is largely focused on organizing, training, and equipping SOF, force generation, capability, and readiness. Force employment activities such as ongoing operations and deployed forces are acknowledged, but occupy a relatively small amount of the testimony; the Commander states, “I will defer to the regional commanders to



highlight the contributions of Special Operations Forces in their theaters” (USSOCOM, 2011, p. 4).

As discussed in the background, the 2011 *POTFF* Study characterized SOF as “fatigued, worn and frayed around the edges.” Key findings and recommendations of that study suggested “a new approach and a long-term strategy: and proposed “major paradigm shifts in the holistic organizational culture and behavior of the force.” The command undertook significant initiatives to implement the changes necessary to address the concerns raised in the report. SOF professionals and their families receive amazing services and support as a result of *POTFF* and the support provided by Congress. However, little was done to address a SOF culture intensely focused on mission accomplishment, highly competitive, and operating at max sustained effort and capacity.

Beginning 2012, USSOCOM’s posture statement narratives began to shift. The 2012 posture statement leads with 10 pages about global SOF operations, the indirect approach, persistent engagement and continued SOF deployments at capacity and in anticipation of continued QDR growth. Only thereafter does the posture statement discuss the 2011 *POTFF* study and the issues concerning predictability, PERSTEMPO, and reintegration, in addition to remedies involving PERSTEMPO tracking, local training venues, and professional military education.

The 2013 posture statement followed a similar pattern: focusing on global SOF employment, and thereafter transitioning to other areas. *POTFF* is again mentioned later in the statement, emphasizing individual SOF members and their families. According to



the posture statement, PERSTEMPO issues are being addressed by a system that will ensure “commanders from the O-5 level and above will have a near real-time common operating picture of SOF readiness,” a 2013 prediction not yet realized in 2019. The 2013 posture statement also includes the first mention of “SOF deployed in over 75 countries on a daily basis.” Subsequent posture statements in 2014 and 2015 would amplify this force employment focus, highlighting the number of countries where SOF is present, number of SOF personnel forward, and number of DOD operations with SOF support. This developing focus on force employment correlated with the Review Team’s primary research and analysis.

The 2015 posture statement begins with a focus on *SOF Ethic and Culture*, with PERSTEMPO falling towards the end as an issue that is being managed and monitored to improve readiness. As apparent in nearly all areas analyzed, the combination of an incentive (i.e., promotion) motive for force employment and a passive system to monitor force health combined with an equally intelligent, driven, and creative force rendered passive controls ineffective. The 2011 *POTFF* findings were realized to the degree they treated the individual symptoms of a fraying force, but left unchecked the organizational and institutional shortfalls that perpetuated these challenges.

## Appendix K: Review Team Implementation Recommended Actions

**Implementation.**

In an effort to transition the CR findings and recommended actions to USSOCOM and Components, the Review Team crafted the below implementation recommendation table to serve as a starting point for decision-makers. These recommended actions are crafted around the core tenet of an empowered flag officer leading a permanent implementation team.

<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>OPR</b>	<b>OCR</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Timing</b>
Establish DCOM-Led Comprehensive Review Implementation Team (CRI-TEAM)	CDR, USSOCOM	DCOM USSOCOM staff	Empowered team dedicated for 12 months to CR implementation	-Sourcing options: HQ USSOCOM & beyond Must be <u>full-time</u> duty -Consider “branding” the team	Next CDRT
Require Component Commanders to brief CR implementation plans at next CDRT	Components	CRI-TEAM	Component Commanders brief Commander, USSOCOM		Next CDRT
Commander, USSOCOM brief intent to recoup deployed SOF forces to GCC, CJCS, SECDEF	CDR, USSOCOM (CRI-TEAM)	DCOM USSOCOM J3 USSOCOM J5	Brief intent to recoup	Communicate to Higher and Lateral HQ	
Periodic audits and compliance checks	CDR, USSOCOM (CRI-TEAM)	USSOCOM IG USSOCOM J1 USSOCOM J3	Periodic briefings to Commander, USSOCOM	Leverage existing data sources (DTS, routine reporting)	
Enforce accountability across GFM	CDR, USSOCOM (CRI-TEAM)	USSOCOM J1 USSOCOM J3 USSOCOM J5	Control sourcing of SOF requirements	Consistent and transparent discipline for violating business rules	
Commander, USSOCOM attend unit-level training events	Cmd Grp	USSOCOM J3 USSOCOM CAG Components	Demonstrate value to leadership	ICW Components	Immediate