

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.

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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.

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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

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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.

