NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER INITIAL TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

by

David Coleman

December 2020

Thesis Advisor: Bradley J. Strawser
Second Reader: Robert W. Tomlinson

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			*Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188*

1. AGENCY USE ONLY ***(Leave blank)***	**2. REPORT DATE** December 2020	**3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED** Master's thesis

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER INITIAL TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

5. FUNDING NUMBERS

6. AUTHOR(S) David Coleman

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, CA 93943-5000

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
N/A

10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.

12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.

12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE
A

13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

What should institutional training teach to adequately prepare newly selected captains for service in Special Forces? This thesis looks holistically at what Special Forces officers need to know before arriving to a Special Forces group and makes recommendations on where the current training pipeline can improve.

The data for this research was provided by a summer 2020 survey from the Special Warfare Center and School that surveyed 122 leaders from across the five active duty groups and contained six questions that identify the skills Special Forces officers need to be successful at operational groups and solicit critiques of the current training pipeline.

This research project accomplished two things. First, it developed a model for what a Special Forces officer needs to know before arriving at an operational group. Second, it identifies four subjects to add into or improve during the current training pipeline. These research results can improve or validate the Special Forces Regiment's current process for training officers and inform future research on the topic of Special Forces officer training and officer professional development.

14. SUBJECT TERMS
Special Forces, Special Forces officer, SF, SF officer, education, professional military education, PME, professional development, 18A, 18A Course, Army Special Operations Common Core Course, Army Special Operations Captains Career Course, ARSOFCCC, Common Core, captains career course, career course, CCC, initial training

15. NUMBER OF PAGES
59

16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	**18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE**	**19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT**	**20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT**
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	UU

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239-18

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.

SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER INITIAL TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

David Coleman
Major, United States Army
BS, Wheaton College, 2009

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS
(IRREGULAR WARFARE)

from the

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
December 2020

Approved by: Bradley J. Strawser
Advisor

Robert W. Tomlinson
Second Reader

Douglas A. Borer
Chair, Department of Defense Analysis

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ABSTRACT

What should institutional training teach to adequately prepare newly selected captains for service in Special Forces? This thesis looks holistically at what Special Forces officers need to know before arriving to a Special Forces group and makes recommendations on where the current training pipeline can improve.

The data for this research was provided by a summer 2020 survey from the Special Warfare Center and School that surveyed 122 leaders from across the five active duty groups and contained six questions that identify the skills Special Forces officers need to be successful at operational groups and solicit critiques of the current training pipeline.

This research project accomplished two things. First, it developed a model for what a Special Forces officer needs to know before arriving at an operational group. Second, it identifies four subjects to add into or improve during the current training pipeline. These research results can improve or validate the Special Forces Regiment's current process for training officers and inform future research on the topic of Special Forces officer training and officer professional development.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF TABLES

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

18A	Military occupational specialty code for Special Forces officers
AR	Army regulation
ARSOF	Army special operations forces
ARSOFCCC	Army Special Operations Forces Captains Career Course
CCC	captains career course
CNT	counter-narcotics training
CTC	Combined Training Center
CTSSB	critical task and site selection board
DA PAM	Department of the Army pamphlet
DOD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
DOT-DP	Directorate of Training, Doctrine, and Proponency
FM	field manual
GFC	ground force commander
ICTL	individual critical task list
JCET	joint combined exchange training
KD	key developmental
KLE	key leader engagement
MCCC	Maneuver Captains Career Course
MCoE	Maneuver Center of Excellence
MDMP	military decision making process
MET	mission essential task
MOS	military occupational specialty
NCO	non-commissioned officer
ODA	operational detachment - alpha
OES	Officer Education System
PME	professional military education
SFAS	Special Forces Assessment and Selection
SFC	Special Forces Command
SFQC	Special Forces Qualification Course

SOCoE	Special Operations Center of Excellence
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
SOF	special operations forces
SWCS	Special Warfare Center and School
TLP	troop leading procedures
TR	Training and Doctrine Command Regulation
WO	warrant officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis uses a Special Warfare Center and School (SWCS) survey to attempt to answer the question of what institutional training is required to adequately prepare newly selected captains for service in Special Forces. Accepting the constraint of a 73-week training pipeline for Special Forces captains, it attempts to use the survey to identify what skills must be taught and at what depth they need to be trained. The survey, by the SWCS Directorate of Training, Doctrine, and Proponency, was conducted during the summer of 2020 and collected data from over 100 respondents from the active force. Analysis of the data produced a model of 42 individual subjects grouped into 10 themes describing what an O3 level 18A needs to be successful. The survey did not show a strong preference for the levels of depth of most subjects except that mission planning and tools, domestic interactions, oral (briefing) communication, key leader engagements, written communication, and combined arms maneuver were required to be trained at the highest proficiency depth. The survey also proposed adding training on cyber threats, ground force commander skills, controlling close air support, and training management while giving no significant data that anything should be removed from the current training pipeline.

In conclusion, the thesis recommends four subject areas to be added to the Special Forces officer training pipeline at the following points during training.

- Ground force commander specific training should be increased throughout the SFQC
- Training management should be added to the ARSOFCCC
- Mission sets and type should be added to the ARSOFCCC
- SOF enterprise should be added to the ARSOFCCC

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my wife, thank you for your support, patience, and encouragement through this project. To my daughter, thank you for your ability to nap professionally. It afforded me many additional hours to work than other parents get with kids your age.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

I. INTRODUCTION

Between Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) and arriving at an operational group, a selected captain attends eight different training courses that make up 73 weeks of training to earn the designation of an 18A, a Special Forces Officer. So, what is the collective end state these eight courses are supposed to produce? Each course routinely analyzes their curriculum to provide a better outcome, but the entire training process itself is less frequently examined. What institutional training is required to adequately prepare newly selected captains for service in Special Forces? To attempt to answer this question, I will use data from the active duty force to identify the ideal finished product of a newly qualified 18A and work backward to identify how to produce this product with an emphasis on the two courses that focus specifically on officer development: the Army Special Operations Forces Captains Career Course (ARSOFCCC) and the military occupational specialty (MOS) 18A course.

Success in training a Special Forces captain takes two forms: preparing the captain to lead, train, and employ a Special Forces operational detachment alpha (ODA) and preserving the human capital investment each selected captain represents. A Special Forces captain's first goal is to command an ODA and ensure this unit succeeds in its operational missions globally. To do this, the captain will need to use leadership, managerial, and interpersonal skills to ensure the ODA is trained and succeeds operationally. However, this is not the only goal of institutional training because investment protection and future potential also weigh in heavily. Special Forces exists as a branch within the larger Army and thus is subject to the Army's regulations and policies for promotion and career development. Special Forces branch must ensure their officers are competitive for promotion to protect the investment in human capital for future service.

Therefore, before diving into the things that Special Forces captains must know, it is important to understand two forces at work that frame the process. These forces are time and the Army's officer education requirements. I will go over these two considerations carefully because they illustrate that the question is not as simple as developing a checklist

of tasks to train. Rather, they create a two-dimensional checklist: examining not only what to train but how well to train it.

A. TIME IS NOT ON OUR SIDE—THE HUMAN RESOURCING METHODOLOGY OF UP OR OUT

The Army manages the rank of all officers according to a strict timeline. This is how the Army controls the officer population and ensures a human resource environment that is "up or out." Officers in the ranks of lieutenant through major have two opportunities for selection to the next rank. If they have not been not selected for promotion after the second opportunity, then they are involuntarily separated from the Army to make room for advancing talent rising through the ranks below them.[1] Each rank, regardless of branch within the Army, has a fixed amount of time for service in that rank.

The specific branches determine what institutional training and operational experience are required for promotion. Each rank can be characterized by collecting the requisite training and branch dictated experience required for consideration for promotion. Training is run by the various centers of excellence and branches identify specific jobs as key developmental (KD) positions because the duties and responsibilities of these jobs should produce the necessary operational experience for success at the next rank. Time once again becomes a factor because, at a minimum, officers need to complete their institutional training and operational assignments prior to being evaluated for their first opportunity for promotion. This ensures these officers are given two opportunities to succeed. Failing to do this results in passively risking or deciding to force an officer out of the Army. This not only creates a loss in human resource investment, it can severely impact the officer personally if this occurs before the 20-year mark because of the large financial implications of retirement.

This reality of human resource management affects the Special Forces branch in a unique way at the captain rank because Special Forces conducts both developmental and initial training for its captains. Special Forces is a non-accession branch, which means that

[1] Department of the Army, *Officer Transfers and Discharges,* AR 600-8-24 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2020), 99.

it does not receive new officers (i.e., lieutenants) directly from their commissioning sources. Thus, it does not benefit from the "lieutenant years" to train and introduce officers to the specific mission and role of Special Forces in the way that captains in other branches experience during their time in the rank of lieutenant. While the Special Forces Regiment enjoys recruiting officers who are more mature and come with a diversity of prior experience, it creates a potentially burdensome Special Forces specific educational requirement that must be accomplished in a limited time.

The process for producing qualified Special Forces captains occurs in two parts: assessment and selection and institutional training culminating with the award of the 18A MOS. Assessment and selection begins by recruiting and screening applicants from across the entire Army. This occurs at Special Forces recruiting stations across all the Army's world-wide posts and through a board conducted at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The board selects which officers are going to be invited to travel to Fort Bragg for an in-person interview known as SFAS. Officers attending SFAS must have already been selected for promotion to captain. Special Forces will not bother interviewing an officer who is failing to progress in their basic branch. SFAS is a three-week event that is the gate for all candidates aspiring to join Special Forces, both officer and enlisted. Candidates must not only complete SFAS, they must perform well enough to be selected. SFAS intends to determine which candidates have the character traits and innate skills required to succeed in Special Forces training.

Officers selected at SFAS now have two blocks to check professionally with respect to their institutional training. As captains managed by Special Forces branch, they must go through and pass initial training to be awarded the 18A MOS so that they can serve in Special Forces KD positions coded for 18As. However, they must also fulfill the professional military education (PME) requirements set up under the Army's Officer Education System (OES). More on the OES will follow later. The point here is that because of the initial training requirement, there is a substantial time investment in institutional training required for new Special Forces captains in comparison to other Army branches who are only further developing their personnel during the captains level PME.

The time problem is how to balance the six years between training and operational use. Officer board timelines are set by Human Resources Command and based off year group cohorts from when the officer entered active service. Currently, the board for selection to captain occurs in an officer's third year of active service and the board for selection to major occurs in an officer's ninth year of active service. This leaves six years of time spent as a captain. For example, the 2015 year-group cohort was boarded for promotion to captain in 2018. This year group now has six years to meet their institutional training requirement and collect the sufficient evaluations in active units to be competitive before their major's board which will occur in 2024. Special Forces branch must balance how much time it spends keeping its officers in training versus how much time the officers get in the force doing the job they were hired to do.

B. BACKGROUND: THE ARMY'S OFFICER EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Army is structured and methodical in how it trains and develops leaders. At the fundamental level, the Army breaks down its leadership development into three domains: operational, institutional, and self-development.[2] The OES structures the institutional domain of this process.[3] The OES as alluded to above follows a pattern of institutional education at the front end of each rank followed by assignments to the force where officers improve through operational experience and continued self-development. It is the OES that prescribes that all captains must attend a captains career course (CCC).[4]

We can now turn to the specifics of the training path for Special Forces officers. After SFAS, captains selected to become 18As attend the ARSOFCCC followed by the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC). Both courses are located at Fort Bragg. All members of the Special Forces, officer and enlisted, attend the SFQC to receive training before they can be assigned to serve in the operational groups. Officers attend all the courses within the SFQC and go through the 18A course during the MOS phase of the

[2] Department of the Army, *Army Leader Development Program,* DA PAM 350-58 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2013), 2.

[3] Department of the Army, *Army Training and Leader Development,* AR 350-1 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2017), 70.

[4] Department of the Army, *Army Training and Leader Development,* 70.

SFQC. At the end of the SFQC, officers who had been selected at SFAS are now 18As, qualified Special Forces officers. The ARSOFCCC however is a recent development with some clouded history.

Before 2013, Special Forces sent its captains to the Maneuver Captains Career Course (MCCC) at Fort Benning, Georgia, with captains from the Infantry and Armor branches, to receive credit for the CCC requirement. The MCCC is a six-month course run under the command of the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE). However, this six-month period and additional move was a large time investment. In 2013, the Special Operations Center of Excellence (SOCoE) made a big change to reclaim some of this precious time.

Sending officers to attend the MCCC at Fort Benning incurred an additional cost in money, but an even higher cost in time. Officers attending the MCCC had to move from their duty station to Fort Benning. They spent six months attending MCCC before making a second move to Fort Bragg to attend the SFQC. To reduce this time and financial cost, the Special Warfare Center and School (SWCS) created the ARSOFCCC to fulfill the CCC requirement using training already being conducted in the SFQC. Army regulation (AR) 350–1 dictates that a CCC will "provide advanced branch-specific and branch-immaterial staff process training."[5] Therefore, if the 18A course is already providing the "branch-specific" training, SOCoE could create a course that fulfilled the "branch-immaterial" requirement that would not require six months and an additional move. Thus, the ARSOFCCC became the venue to conduct the branch-immaterial training. Then, when it was combined with the branch-specific training of the 18A course, the two courses would confer CCC credit as required by the AR 350-1. This could all be accomplished at Fort Bragg, reducing the cost in time and money of sending officers to Fort Benning for the MCCC.

It followed that because the ARSOFCCC appeared to be taking the place of the MCCC, it needed to closely resemble the curriculum taught at Fort Benning to produce a similar officer. Therefore, ARSOFCCC used the MCCC curriculum as a base during its

[5] Department of the Army, *Army Training and Leader Development*, 70.

formation and continues to heavily rely on that base. However, the ARSOFCCC is not a replacement for MCCC. It streamlines the process of training officers and delivers them to the operational force before the Army's next phase of career progression forces them to move up or out. The ARSOFCCC is not its own separate course; it is a piece to a whole solution. More importantly, when the SOCoE took control of this phase of training, it gained more control over the training time of its officers.

This streamlined process did not come without cost, however. The deal struck between Special Forces and the Army was that officers in the Special Forces pipeline would not be considered CCC qualified until they had completed the MOS portion of the SFQC. This created a high stake for Army officers applying to Special Forces. If they failed out of any portion of training prior to completing the MOS phase of training, the time they spent moving to Fort Bragg and in any time spent in training there was a loss. They would have to return to their basic branch still needing to attend a career course in order to gain the CCC credit required by the AR 350-1. This added risk to attempting to become a Green Beret is not lost on the type of savvy planners that Special Forces is looking to attract.

C. THE OPPORTUNITY

As mentioned in the previous section, the opportunity created by this move is that the SOCoE has now gained control of 12 weeks of training that previously was left up to the MCoE. Viewing the ARSOFCCC as a step in the Special Forces officer training progression poses revisiting the fundamental question in order to assess what training objectives should be produced from that extra time now gained by the SOCoE. *What institutional training is required to adequately prepare newly selected captains for service in Special Forces?* Now that the SOCoE controls the ARSOFCCC, it can control the course curriculum. This has become especially relevant with the optimization of the SFQC, where the MOS phase portion lost six weeks of training. The ARSOFCCC has an increased opportunity to provide training on critical skills that the 18A course may no longer have the time to train, especially since adding eight weeks to the curriculum to make it a complete CCC. The Combined Arms Center still controls a common core component of

the OES requirement, but the SOCoE has expanded its opportunity to train on things specific to the needs of the operational force.

To answer this question, I will examine the results from a survey of over one hundred officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) from all five active duty groups. In the following chapters, I will go over the methodology of the survey and analysis of the results, present the analysis of the results, and conclude with my observations and recommendations for how we are institutionally training our 18As. My intent is to accomplish two things. The first is to provide recommendations on how the ARSOFCCC and 18A MOS course can work complementary to train new 18As based on research from the force. Second is to formally document research on what Special Forces officers need to be operationally successful coming out of their initial training. These two goals could improve or validate the regiment's current process for training officers and become a source for future research on the topic of Special Forces officer professional military education.

It may be tempting to solve some of the problems listed in this chapter by proposing to remove the time constraint on captains in Special Forces. This is certainly an attractive option for Special Forces officers who want to remain on ODAs for as long as possible. This decision is a big Army decision though. This thesis comes from the viewpoint and perspective of commanders within the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), not the Secretary of the Army. While Special Forces Branch is attacking this problem from the officer timeline angle, I will approach the problem as someone who works within the system laid out in this chapter.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

II. METHODOLOGY

Any attempt to answer this question would be incomplete without first examining doctrine. However, doctrine faces two setbacks: it is general and the process to update it takes time. For these reasons, answering this question requires a more live data set. This can be found in responses from the active force. In this thesis, I will seek to answer what institutional training should teach to newly selected captains by conducting a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results of a survey conducted by SWCS in the summer of 2020. My focus will be not only what captains need to know, but also the varying levels at which they need to know it. Doctrine is a good place to start, but a closer look will highlight the need for information pulled directly from the force.

A. ARMY DOCTRINE ON SPECIAL FORCES OFFICERS

The Army maintains a vast amount of recorded knowledge through doctrine in the form of several publications. This section will examine the guiding pieces of doctrine that establish requirements for Special Forces officers at the captain rank. Existing literature on the training of Special Forces officers can be grouped into two categories: doctrine specifically relating to the role of the Special Forces captain and doctrine relating to the mission and role of the Special Forces ODA. The first category speaks directly to the training outcomes of Special Forces captains while the latter is helpful because it indirectly reveals what captains must know given their responsibility for everything the team does or fails to do.

The two guiding sources of doctrine that speak specifically of the Special Forces captain are the Department of the Army pamphlet (DA PAM) 600–3, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, which outlines expectations for officers of every branch, and field manual (FM) 3–18, *Special Forces Operations*, which specifically examines Special Forces units. The Special Forces chapter of DA PAM 600-3 details the purpose, functions, and unique features found in Special Forces and its officers. These can be summarized that Special Forces officers must understand balance between diplomacy and force to work with and through indigenous people to achieve

favorable conditions for conflict resolution.[6] Additionally, it states that prior to selection, Special Forces officers must serve as lieutenants in small-unit leadership positions in a conventional Army branch to ensure "knowledge of conventional Army operations and leadership experience."[7] Next, FM 3-18 describes a Special Forces captain by stating that the officer must be "an expert in all things related to unconventional warfare and counterinsurgency operations… an adept planner and tactician."[8] These doctrinal sources describe an end state, but they require interpretation to translate them into a training curriculum.

The second useful category of doctrine relates to the requirements of the ODA and Special Forces units at large. This creates a set of mission-oriented tasks for Special Forces officers that form a majority of the current curriculum for training Special Forces officers. This starts with the overarching doctrine of Joint Publication 3-05, which outlines the core activities for U.S. special operations forces (SOF). That doctrine is refined in subordinate publications down to FM 3-05, which outlines the core activities specifically for Army SOF (ARSOF). Finally, FM 3-18 describes core activities specifically for ARSOF in the form of nine principle tasks.[9] While all of these doctrinal sources are helpful in describing what a Special Forces captain will need to ensure his/her team is able to do, they do not go into much detail about the specific skills a Special Forces captain needs to actually accomplish these things. In addition, they are the products of past successes and reflect how the Special Forces Regiment has achieved success historically. They may not reflect the most up-to-date requirements that the Special Forces Regiment has today. Doctrine does not provide a clear listing of what Special Forces officers need in a level of detail sufficient for constructing a curriculum.

---

[6] Department of the Army, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development,* DA PAM 600-3 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2019), Special Forces Branch paragraph 3a.

[7] Department of the Army, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development,* Special Forces Branch paragraph 3a.

[8] Department of the Army, *Special Forces Operations,* FM 3-18 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2014), 4–25.

[9] Department of the Army, *Special Forces Operations,* 3–3.

Doctrine does, however, spell out what individual centers of excellence are required to do when developing and refining training. This process of refining Army schools comes from Training and Doctrine Command Regulation (TR) 350–70. This regulation mandates that centers and schools develop individual critical task lists (ICTL) from critical task and site selection boards (CTSSB).[10] These CTSSBs are staffed by members of the operating force who assess current needs of the force, balanced with mission requirements and future projections, to develop the ICTLs as guidance for schools to train soldiers. The last CTSSB for training 18As was held in November 2012. Additionally, that CTSSB only examined the 18A course specifically, not the entirety of training that goes into new Special Forces captains prior to their first day at an operational Special Forces group. The 10-week 18A course only accounts for 14% of the time that Special Forces captains spend in training prior to arriving at their ODAs. It is worth stating that this is the only course where the student body consists solely of future 18As and thus is rightfully viewed as the largest influence in producing Special Forces captains, but the other 63 weeks of training are also important in viewing the totality of a Special Forces captain's institutional training. At the time of this writing, fall of 2020, there is another CTSSB in the process for the 18A course. My goal here is to supplement the findings of that board by looking at a broader scope of training venues that 18As attend.

B. SURVEY QUESTION METHODOLOGY

To answer the question, I examined the data collected from a summer 2020 survey conducted by the SWCS Directorate of Training, Doctrine, and Proponency (DOT-DP).[11] DOT-DP distributed the survey in preparation for a CTSSB for the 18A course scheduled for fall of 2020. This survey is the best method for answering the question at hand because the responses come directly from the men who are either currently serving as detachment commanders, serve immediately with detachment commanders, or supervise detachment

[10] Department of the Army, *Army Learning Policies and Systems*, TR 350–70 (Fort Eustis, VA: Training and Doctrine Command, 2017), 33.

[11] SWCS conducts an internal approval process for conducting internal research. Using their data for this thesis was determined by the Naval Postgraduate School internal review board to not be human subject research.

commanders. The results of this survey represent the most current and live data on what skills are needed from detachment commanders. This allows the data to include emerging requirements for detachment commanders that have not yet been codified in doctrine. Furthermore, the data is heavily influenced by what capabilities exist or are deficient in the force.

The survey consisted of 27 questions and was sent to officers, warrant officers (WO), and NCOs at the ODA level and above at all five active duty groups. The survey was distributed to approximately 140 individuals and received 122 responses during the 60 days that it was open from May through July of 2020. Of these responses, 74% were from the ODA level, 19% were from the company level, and 7% were from the battalion level. These percentages roughly equate to leader distribution across the ODA, company, and battalion levels, which are 72%, 21%, and 5%, respectively, with 2% of the Regiment's leaders represented at the group level. Finally, the sample size represents 10% of the leader population within the five active duty operational groups. Six of the questions on the survey are of particular interest to my question because they focus specifically on the 18A arriving at group, critiquing the training pipeline, and surveying impression of training vs utilization balance.

The first three questions of interest ask open-endedly what new Special Forces captains need to know prior to arriving at group. Since they do not specify that the skills required to be learned need be taught in any one course, they are of particular value. Additionally, they seek to stratify levels of depth in responses using the 18A course's binning of critical tasks into the categories of proficient, familiar, and aware, which was developed by a 2019 18A working group during the SFQC optimization. The precise definitions of these three bins are defined below as the questions are listed as they appeared on the survey. It should be noted that when the questions refer to Group, survey respondents would understand this to mean any of the five operational Special Forces groups.

1. What skills do new Special Forces captains need to be proficient in before arriving to Group? (The captain must be a subject matter expert in these skills on day one at Group.)

2. What skills do new Special Forces captains need to be familiar with before arriving to Group? (The captain must fulfill a role in these skills on day one at Group.)

3. What skills do new Special Forces captains need to be aware of before arriving to Group? (The captain can develop familiarity or proficiency in these skills after arriving at Group)

These three questions establish a gradient that goes from things integral to the role of an 18A, things important for the 18A to function as a member of the team, and things safe to assume risk for on the job training.

The next two questions form a subcategory that deal with critiquing the current training process and appeared as follows.

4. Are there any skills that new Special Forces captains will need in the future that are not currently being taught prior to their arrival at Group?

5. Are there any skills that new Special Forces captains will not need in the future (or present) that are currently being taught prior to their arrival at Group?

These two questions ask what should be added to or removed from the 18A training pipeline without being specific to any one portion of the pipeline. Each of these first five questions gave respondents a free text box to respond. There were no suggested or primed answers.

The last question of interest within the survey asks respondents to give an ideal balance between the amount of time a captain spends in training vs. utilization. The question appeared as seen below and had a drop-down menu response with percentages in intervals of 10%. For example, 10% training and 90% utilization.

6. What is an appropriate balance of time investment for a Special Forces captain to spend in initial training vs. time spent in utilization at Group (understanding that some training will occur at Group during utilization)?

This question provides useful insights into the cultural impressions that exist among Special Forces soldiers about the training/utilization dilemma expressed in Chapter I.

C. POTENTIAL CRITICISMS

Three potential criticisms exist with using this data set: survey respondents provided their answers in their free time rather than as a dedicated working group, the survey was attached to questions regarding the 18A course specifically, and some responses are broad topic answers thus making it difficult to determine what the respondent actually intended. However, these three criticisms do not prevent harvesting useful insights from the data provided.

Criticism 1: The survey questions ask a lot from someone with a day job fulfilling a tasking as an additional duty. Respondents to this survey are serving in the active force and thus already have a day job. Therefore, a complex open-ended question such as what a person needs to know is very unlikely to receive a lot of research and contemplation before being answered. While this is true, there are two counter points to consider: the data's value comes in the aggregate and the respondents are subject matter experts. While no one individual's response truly gets at the totality of what an 18A needs, each response is a puzzle piece to a larger picture. Respondents emphasizes certain aspects or parts of the picture with which they have had strong experiences, positive or negative. Furthermore, each respondent is a senior enlisted soldier who has spent years working under various commands of 18As, a field grade officer who has been a detachment commander and now supervises them, or is currently a detachment commander under the demands of the job. This gives each of the respondents a subject matter expertise that provides useful insights in even off-the-cuff responses to these questions. These two pieces ensure that there is still quite a bit of value in the aggregated data from these subject matter experts.

Criticism 2: The questions, which ask the respondent to think without respect to one individual school within an officer's training pipeline, were situated inside a survey about the training outcomes of the 18A course. This is perhaps the most valid criticism because it follows that respondents would be primed to focus on the 18A course specifically. While there are multiple examples of critiques of the 18A course specifically

in the data, most respondents appear to have read and answered the questions at face value. There are even several responses where individuals reference training received at the ARSOFCCC that illustrate respondents were thinking holistically as the question leads.

Criticism 3: Broad responses or single word responses make it difficult to determine the intent of the respondent. Again, there are two factors mitigating this criticism of the data. The first is that the researcher is coming from within the community; from my perspective of having spent 6 years within this community, I could conclude that most responses showed clear intent. However, when that failed, the second mitigation technique was the option to simply discard the response. With over 100 answers each to the first three questions, losing a handful of incoherent responses would not affect the integrity of the data source.

D. DATA ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

I conducted analysis on the data in three sections. The first section included the first three questions regarding skills captains needed to be proficient, familiar, and aware. Analysis began with an initial pass to code the responses. During this first coding pass, I liberally allocated subjects for responses. If one response mentioned the military decision-making process (MDMP) and another mentioned troop leading procedures (TLPs), I kept these two subjects separate during the first pass. After completing the first pass, I analyzed the subjects for each question and developed a model where some of the subjects could be combined into themes. For example, MDMP and TLPs could be combined into a mission-planning theme. Once the themes were established, I returned to the data for a second pass of coding. This time, I coded each original response under the themes that had been developed from the first pass. Single responses could code under several themes given the applicability of those responses to multiple themes. For example, a response about briefing Department of State (DOS) personnel could score for interagency knowledge and communication. This provided a numerical value for number of occurrences each theme appeared in the responses. With this data, I could construct a model of themes with corresponding subjects of instruction accompanied with numerical values to quantify the level of depth.

The other two sections followed a simple coding methodology. The second section consisted of the two questions critiquing the current training pipeline. These responses required only a single coding pass and were coded in the same fashion as the first pass described above. This produced a list of subjects the force was requesting to add and remove at some point during the 18A training pipeline. Finally, the third section was the final question quantifying the balance between training and utilization. The responses to this question came back in a quantitative form that did not require further analysis.

III. RESULTS

The results of the survey revealed a multitude of tasks required for 18As and little majority conclusion on depth for these subjects. The value of the survey is developing a full picture of what skills an 18A needs to succeed as a captain. In practice, the survey questions were like asking respondents to list out what topics should be included in an encyclopedia of U.S. history. No one respondent in this analogy is going to provide a definitive listing of all things that should be included in the encyclopedia. Although, a large enough sample size would provide diverse enough responses to sufficiently cover the subject. This is what happened with the SWCS survey. There were few subjects that appeared in a majority of responses, but the responses are helpful if viewed as a myriad of different puzzle pieces that, when aggregated, can provide a complete picture of what a new 18A needs to learn. I will present the data from the survey and analysis in three parts. The first will be to detail the demographics of the respondents and total response counts for each question. The second will be to present a model for an 18A built from the first three questions of the survey with an accompanying analysis. The third and final part will be to present the data from the second set of three questions that critique the current training pipeline and address perceptions on the time vs. utilization constraint.

A. RESPONDENTS

Respondents to the survey can be seen on the Table 1. Of the 122 total respondents, not all the respondents provided answers for the five fill-in-the-blank questions discussed in the previous chapter. Table 1 organizes the respondents based on their command level (ODA, company, and battalion), then their position or grade within that command level, and shows percentages of total respondents by position (percentage) and command level (block percentages). Table 2 subsequently shows the number of responses collected for each of the six questions.

Table 1. Survey Respondents

Command Level	Position (Grade)	Responses	Percentage	Block Percentages
ODA / Team Level	Captain (O3)	32	26.2%	73.8%
	Warrant Officer (WO1/CW2)	5	4.1%	
	Operations Sergeant (E7/E8)	53	43.4%	
Company Level	Commander (O4)	9	7.4%	18.9%
	Operations Warrant (CW3)	2	1.6%	
	Sergeant Major (E9)	12	9.8%	
Battalion Level	Commander (O5)	4	3.3%	7.4%
	Operations Warrant (CW4)	3	2.5%	
	Sergeant Major (E9)	2	1.6%	

Table 2. Question Response Count

Question	Responses
Q1—Proficient	113
Q2—Familiar	107
Q3—Aware	102
Q4—Not taught in current training pipeline	96
Q5—Remove current training pipeline	81

B. THE MODEL FOR AN 18A

Using the responses from the first three questions of the survey, I constructed a model of skills that need to be addressed during an 18A's initial instruction. The model includes 42 individual subjects grouped into 10 themes that fit into three categories. The model is displayed in Table 3 and the Appendix. Each individual subject displays a numerical value (x/y/z) next to it that represents the number of responses for proficient,

familiar, and aware, respectively. These subjects should ideally form the basis for a holistic 18A individual critical task listing that can be accomplished at any point throughout the training pipeline. Tables 4 through 6 display the distribution of responses for each subject across the range of depths of proficient, familiar, and aware. Note that these three tables are showing a percentage distribution of the total number of times a response for a subject was recorded, they do not reflect the quantity of responses for each subject.

Table 3. Model for an 18A

Be	***Know***	***Do***
Leader -Principles of Mission Command (23/7/4) -Decision Maker (5/0/1)	**Doctrine** -Special Forces Core Activities (23/11/1) -Conventional Force Integration, Interoperability, and Interdependence (2/8/1)	**Train** -350-1 Series Publications (6/9/3) -Battle Focused Analysis (BFA) / Long Range Training Calendar (LRTC) (13/13/7) -Funding / Resource Management / Training Briefs (13/16/8)
Manager -NCO Professional Development (1/3/3) -WO Professional Development (1/1/1) -Counseling / Evaluation Reports (2/3/2) -Command Supply Discipline (2/0/3)	**Organization** -SOF Enterprise (12/17/21) -Special Forces Advanced Schools (0/1/5) -Command Relationships (10/3/1) -Staff Functions (3/2/3) -Interagency / DOS / Embassy (9/11/7)	**Plan** -Mission Planning & Tools: TLPs, MDMP, OPORDs, CONOPs, and staffing processes (63/12/8) -Operations Continuum (4/1/0) -Enabler integration (2/4/7)
Professional -National Defense Policy (10/6/5) -Regional Familiarity (7/3/9) -Language (7/4/0) -Basic Soldier Skills (12/12/10)		**Operate** -Combined Arms Maneuver: tactics and patrolling (26/5/4) -Mission Sets / Types (21/16/10) -Ground Force Commander (18/17/3) -Risk Management (4/2/1) -Employing Enablers (7/10/8) -ASO (3/17/15) -Targeting (1/8/2) -OPFUND (1/4/2)
Interpersonal -Surrogate Leadership (14/5/2) -Key Leader Engagements (27/6/1) -Domestic Interactions (34/7/7) -Negotiation, Influence, Persuasion (23/10/2)		**Communicate** -Oral (34/6/4) -Writing (27/3/5) -Mediums: radios and computers (3/5/7)

Table 4. Distribution of Responses by Depth for the "Be" Category

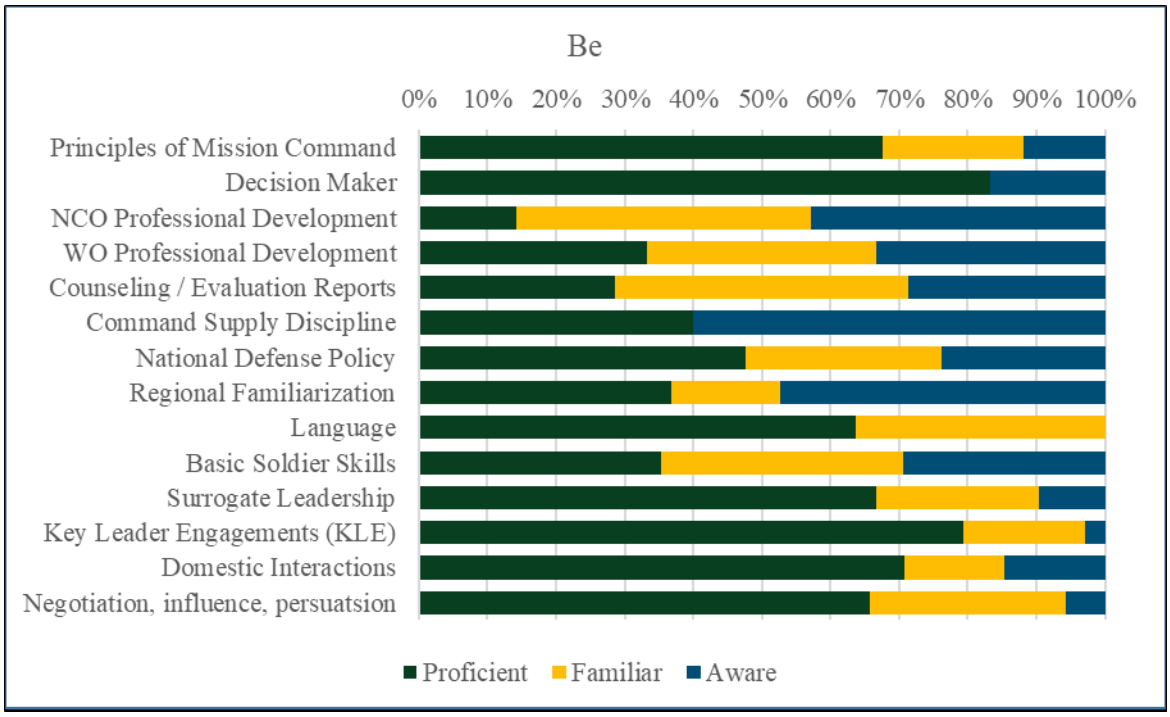


Table 5. Distribution of Responses by Depth for the "Know" Category

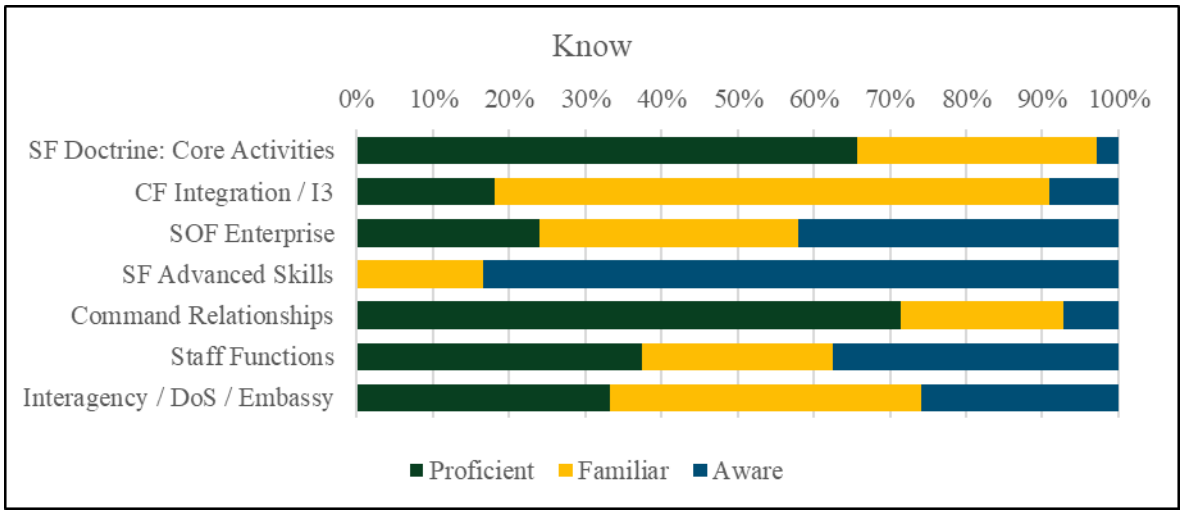
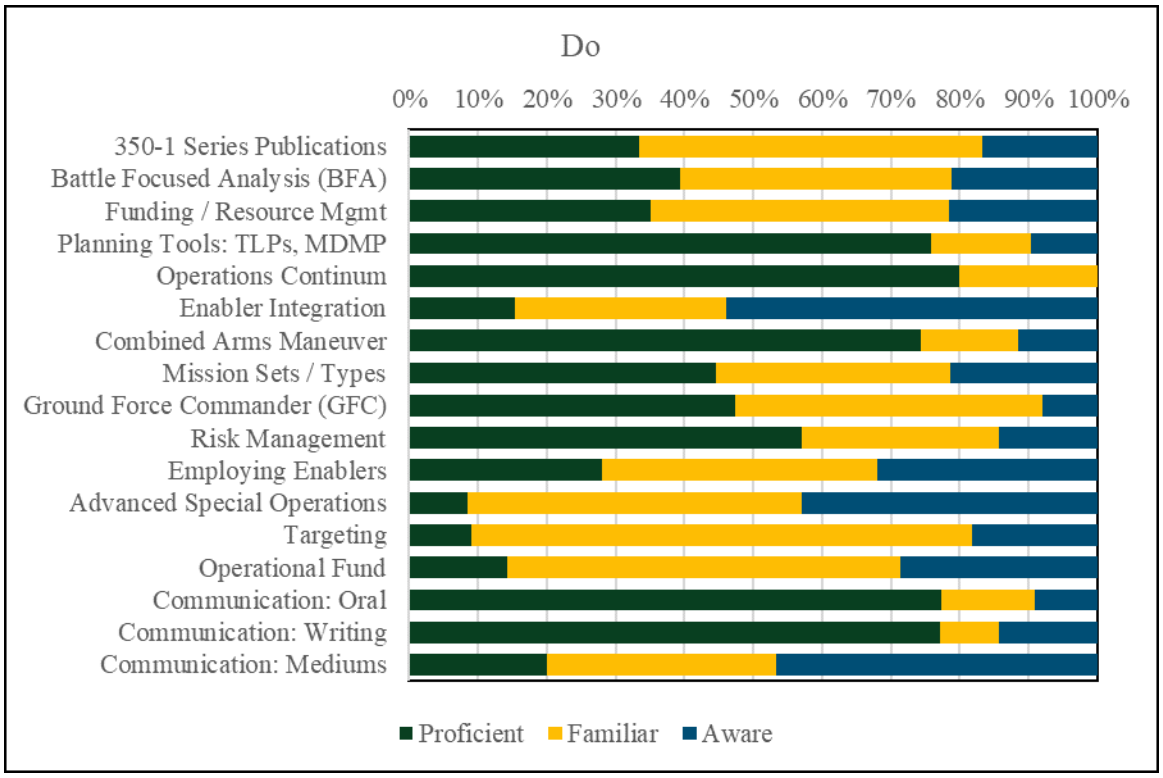


Table 6. Distribution of Responses by Depth for the "Do" Category



The "be" category relates to the intangible aspects of a Special Forces captain. Much of the training for these subjects comes in the forms of mental or character trait tools and techniques rather than instruction on particular procedures or skills. This category has four themes that include leader, manager, professional, and interpersonal skills. Every Special Forces officer must be a leader, but leadership does not necessarily encompass tasks associated with being a good manager. An officer could be a good manager without succeeding as a leader and vice versa. Professional skills relate to those things that deal solely with the Special Forces officer himself/herself, such as personal knowledge or individual skills. Interpersonal skills could appropriately be categorized as a subject under the professional theme, but it includes a diverse number of components that deserve their own theme. As many as one-third of the survey respondents included specific references to interpersonal skills.

The second category of “know” includes subjects in which a Special Forces officer must have a base of knowledge. This category includes the themes of doctrine and organizational knowledge. Organizational knowledge is a massive theme as the responses coded for this subject included knowledge about the various MOSs within an ODA, organizational structure of a Special Forces battalion and group, and structure and capabilities of joint force special operations. Special Forces captains must know who and where to execute their interpersonal and communication skills to get their teams on mission and know who and where to find resources to ensure those missions succeed. Of note, many of the subjects within this theme ranked higher among the familiar depth than proficient depth.

The last category of “do” includes subjects relating to specific tasks that Special Forces officers will have to accomplish in the operational groups. They will have to train, plan, operate, and communicate. Subjects in this category made up more than 50% of the total responses across all respondent’s answers and includes the top subject of mission planning. Other notable entries within this category were oral communication and combined arms maneuver, which includes patrolling and tactics. Many responses stressed a need for a mastery of tactics and patrolling through either experience or training such as Ranger school.

Most of the subjects within the model are intuitive, but there are a few subjects that would benefit from further clarification. These subjects are domestic interactions, operations continuum, and enabler integration vs. employing enablers. Furthermore, “permissions and authorities” came up several times throughout the survey responses and it would be helpful to clarify where these responses are represented in the model since they did not get a subject of their own.

Domestic interactions as a subject under the interpersonal theme encompasses interpersonal interaction with other U.S. personnel from senior commanders to ODA teammates. A multitude of responses referenced a captain’s ability to interact positively with members on the ODA. Still other responses referenced interactions with higher level U.S. commanders or DOS engagements. These higher-level interactions also scored for the interagency and communication subjects, but they scored for domestic interactions to

encompass the vast interactions conducted outside of formal briefings and written communication. The subjects of surrogate leadership and key leader engagements (KLEs) refer to non-US civilian, military, or partner forces interactions.

Operations continuum under the plan theme references the range of military operations that ODAs can be deployed in support of and the types of missions that ODAs can expect to have to plan. Responses coded here included references to the range of military operations but for a planning purpose. The mission types subject under the operate theme may appear similar, but it pertains to specific mission sets, permissions, and authorities such as joint combined exchange training (JCET) and counter-narcotics training (CNT) missions. The operations continuum subject is intended for understanding planning of operations to include urban assaults, rural raids, partner assisted operations, and unilateral operations in peace and wartime environments.

The two subjects of enabler integration and employing enablers, under the themes plan and operate, recognize the difference between understanding enabler capabilities and the practical aspect of using those enablers. Survey responses that emphasized the importance of understanding how integrating enablers could benefit the mission, such as military working dogs or signals intelligence capabilities, more appropriately fit into the plan theme. Survey responses that emphasized the practical aspect of employing close air support or using intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets to battle track fell into the operate theme.

Lastly, many responses simply included the words “permissions and authorities.” I categorized these responses into two subjects judging from the context of the response. The first subject is mission types because they deal with legal authorities for executing actions planned or done in support of the broad or overarching mission set. These include understanding the authorities and permissions of a combat mission with advise, assist, and accompany permissions and understanding authorities relating to advanced special operations during a JCET. Permissions and authorities also applied to the ground force commander (GFC) role. Here, they become specific to actions taken during an engagement or event within a larger mission. Examples of this include understanding the legal authority

of persons designated special status when invoking collective defense or understanding the construct for release authority of close air support used offensively and defensively.

C. ANALYSIS OF THE MODEL

The data collected shows a clear trend for a proficiency depth requirement in mission planning and tools, domestic interactions, oral (briefing) communication, KLEs, written communication, and combined arms maneuver. Each of these skills appeared in more than 20% of the responses for proficiency and their proficiency score outweighs their scores in familiarity or awareness by four to nine times as much. Therefore, they have both a high incident rate in responses and occur disproportionately within the proficiency depth compared to their occurrences at the other depths.

Though, beyond these skills, it does not become as clear cut to identify depth requirements for each individual subject. This therefore requires more subjective interpretation by the analyst. For example, beyond the six skills listed above, the next most frequent proficient response was knowledge of Special Forces doctrine and core activities. However, for this subject the ratio of responses for proficient to familiar drops to only two to one, a significant decrease given the next highest subject (combined arms maneuver) was weighted four to one. This creates less emphasis on this skill needing to be trained to the proficiency level. Additionally, the GFC skills subject ranked nearly equal for proficient and familiar (18/17). This closeness of scores in the data is insufficient to declare quantitatively that GFC skills should be taught to proficient or familiar level. Although qualitatively, I would argue that this is a skill captains need to be proficient in since the legal authority of this burden will rest solely on them. These two examples just point out the difficulty of using the survey data to conclusively place each of the subjects neatly into one of the three depth bins.

This lack of decisive trends is possibly the most fascinating aspect of the data collected from the survey and constitutes the first potential criticism of the survey results. No one subject or even collection of subjects is found across a clear majority of the answers. As stated above, the most common answer on the proficiency question was mission planning, but this only appeared in 56% of the responses. I would have expected

this incident rate to be far higher. The next most common subject after this was a tie between domestic interactions and oral communication, with each subject appearing in only 30% of the responses. Simply put, there was no one subject that appeared in most responses at any depth. I expected that there are at least some skills that nearly everyone would agree captains had to master. This relates back to a criticism first visited in the previous chapter that the answers provided on the survey may be incomplete because the survey responses are an additional task and not a product of a dedicated study or working group.

The value of this data, however, is not in the strict numerical interpretation of the responses but rather in the breadth and scope of the responses. Erring on the side of collective value, I have not removed any responses to assist some subjects with a more commanding percentage. For example, one response to the proficiency question was “new Special Forces captains should be proficient in communication skills and application.” Surely there are more things that Special Forces captains need to be proficient in than communication skills. It is tempting to discount responses such as these as invalid because they seem clearly incomplete. However, there is still value in this response. Communication skills and application means written and oral communication, but also has interpersonal and communications mediums aspects. While the response seems simple, it contains a lot of context, even if it is not all encompassing of the skills an 18A should be proficient. Data points such as this example are what account for the seemingly low percentages of the critical skills such as planning, but they still provide value to the aggregated picture of a Special Forces officer.

There could be another objection to the results of the survey by examining the population of the survey respondents. Table 1 states that 74% of the respondents came from the ODA level. These are O3s, WO1/CW2s, and E7/E8s. It is tempting to say that since senior leadership are only providing 26% of the responses, there is going to be a lack of strategic vision in the data. This is a legitimate criticism and a key point not to overlook. Respondents to the survey are overwhelmingly among the individuals who are currently living the life of or on the ODA with Special Forces captains. While there is some weigh in from senior leaders, the responses represent ground truth of what Special Forces is doing

and needs now at the ODA level. The questions directed respondents to discuss skills for entry level O3s, not the totality of an 18A's career.

Many responses included strongly worded references to trusting NCOs. This is perhaps unsurprising considering 55% of the survey respondents were NCOs. This is interesting because the questions asked what skills should be trained. I coded these responses under mission command and domestic interactions because they align to the mission command principles of build cohesive teams through mutual trust and accept prudent risk as well as deal with intra-team interpersonal dynamics. The interesting question here is whether this is a skill that can be trained. I am prone to say it can only be honed through experience and any training would be limited towards demonstrating the effectiveness of teams who trust one another. It becomes a completely different subject to begin to discern how to communicate that trust and draw a prudent line between micro-management and oversight. This is something I believe leaders and subordinates at all levels struggle with and development occurs through experience rather than education.

D. CRITIQUING THE CURRENT TRAINING PIPELINE

Questions 4 and 5 related to critiquing the current officer training pipeline. These questions asked if there were things that needed to be included or removed from the current pipeline. Results of these two questions are presented in Table 7 and following discussion. As with the first three questions, there were no decisive subjects that stood out with any clear majority. Table 7 includes only those subjects or skills that received four or more mentions from the total 96 responses to the question.

Table 7. Responses, Counts, and Percentages for the "What to Add" Question

Subject	# Responses	% of Total Responses
Nothing, No, No Change, N/A	19	19.8%
Cyber Threats	12	12.5%
GFC Training	8	8.3%
Unknown, Unfamiliar with Captain Training Pipeline	7	7.3%
Controlling Assets / Close Air Support	6	6.3%
Training / Resource Management / BFA	6	6.3%
Interagency Relationships / Interaction	4	4.2%
Non-US Partner Engagements	4	4.2%
Permissions and Authorities	4	4.2%
Advanced Special Operations	4	4.2%

The top four things requested were cyber threats, GFC training, controlling close air support, and training management. Of these four, cyber is an interesting response because it is like saying that Special Forces officers need to understand air warfare. It is too broad of a one-word answer by itself. Many of the responses coded for this simply said "cyber" but some of the responses conveyed the idea of Special Forces captains knowing how to prevent enemy cyber offensive operations from interfering with the ODA conducting its mission. It should be noted though that there was no mention of cyber during the previous three questions seeking to definitively ask what skills Special Forces captains needed. Alternatively, ground force commander specific training, controlling close air support assets, and more training management enjoy the reinforcement that they are related to skills identified in the model by the first three questions.

Answers for question five regarding what should be removed from the Special Forces officer training pipeline are far less helpful. When asked if there are any skills that new Special Forces captains will not need in the future (or present) that are currently being taught prior to their arrival at group, military free fall was the top subject with an impressive three mentions out of the 81 total responses. 57% of the responses (46 of the 81) indicated

that nothing needed to be removed from the training and another 12% (10 of the 81) stated they were unfamiliar enough with the training captains received to offer a critique. The data collected from this question is insufficient to give any meaningful conclusion.

The final survey question regards force perception of the appropriate balance between time spent in training and time spent in utilization. Table 8 details the results of this question.

Table 8. Responses, Counts, and Percentages for the "Training vs. Utilization" Question

Initial training vs. Utilization	# Responses	% of Total Responses
10% training vs. 90% utilization	3	2.5%
20% training vs. 80% utilization	8	6.6%
30% training vs. 70% utilization	53	43.4%
40% training vs. 60% utilization	21	17.2%
50% training vs. 50% utilization	22	18.0%
60% training vs. 40% utilization	8	6.6%
70% training vs. 30% utilization	5	4.1%
80% training vs. 20% utilization	2	1.6%
90% training vs. 10% utilization	0	0.0%

The 30/70 split for training and utilization has a clear lead though there is a close tie between 40/60 and 50/50. Using the 30/70 split, this means 93.6 weeks of time available for training assuming a captain has six years as explained in Chapter I. The current optimized SFQC is 53 weeks in duration with an additional 20 weeks spent at the ARSOFCCC for a total of 73 weeks of training once the captain arrives at Fort Bragg. Also, a captain must travel to and attend SFAS then move to Fort Bragg. SFAS is a three-week event and the move could take anywhere from four to eight weeks depending on where the captain is moving from and how much personal leave they use in conjunction with the

move. Finally, there is a final move at the completion of training from Fort Bragg to the captain's operational group, which will vary from between one to five weeks. With a small buffer built in for recycles or medical convalescence from injuries sustained during training, the current training pipeline time allotment aligns with largest segment of the force's perception of what is appropriate, though not quite a majority.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This project began as an exercise to discover what skills Special Forces captains needed to know, then use depth of knowledge to prioritize the amount of time each skill should receive during the training pipeline (between the ARSOFCCC and SFQC). The survey data gave a wonderfully complex answer to the first part of the question, by leading to a model of the skills required of an entry level 18A and suggesting additions to the 18A training pipeline. The data however fell short on the second part of the question. There was little consistency beyond the top six skills to suggest that the rest of the skills in the model decisively belonged in one of the three depth bins. In this chapter, I will propose four additions to the 18A training pipeline that are supported by the data of the survey. After introducing and explaining the four subjects, I will propose points during the training pipeline where these skills can be included.

A. FOUR SUBJECTS TO ADD

The Special Forces officer training pipeline can benefit from enhancing the emphasis of four subject areas:

- GFC specific training: battle tracking, painting the picture for higher, and release criteria
- Training management: 350–1 series publications, unit assessment and enumeration, training opportunities, and resourcing
- Mission sets and types: legal authorities, value by stakeholder, and funding
- SOF enterprise: organization and capabilities within the Special Forces groups and across ARSOF and Special Operations Command (SOCOM)

These four subjects appeared in the survey both as requirements for new Special Forces officers and as suggestions for additions to the training pipeline. The subjects of training management, mission sets and types, and SOF enterprise, apply to not just Special

Forces officers, but also to Civil Affairs officers and Psychological Operations officers. For this reason, these three subjects are prime candidates for integration into the newly expanded ARSOFCCC as referenced in Chapter I. GFC training has a narrower applicability to just Special Forces officers and therefore is more appropriate to integrate into the SFQC.

GFC skills are not something captains should learn on the job at their unit. They are deceptively simple and largely a reflection of the contemporary operating environment where ODAs fight on a battlefield stacked with enablers and assets. It includes decision making, battle tracking, controlling enablers/assets beyond the ODA, and communicating with higher for situational awareness and legal liability. GFC skills are not being overlooked, they just do not have the complexity and repetition throughout the SFQC to ensure that captains are proficient in one of the most important and consequential roles they fulfil on an ODA. Throughout the SFQC, captains execute duties of a GFC in a resource constrained unconventional warfare environment. As such, they do not use the same sophisticated means of battle tracking a partner force nor get exposed to the near instant contact with a higher command element and the resources that element provides. Captains are therefore left to drink from a fire hose during their first full mission profile at an operational group when they suddenly have the multitude of assets available to them as is typical in the contemporary operating environment. It is critical to train new captains in both resource constrained and unconstrained environments when conducting GFC duties throughout training.

Likewise, training management requires more attention than it currently receives, particularly on the practical aspects of how it works at units. The Combined Arms Center block of instruction on training management taught during the CCC common core is insufficient for Special Forces officers. It covers using MDMP to identify the skills a unit will require for a specific mission and developing a plan to train them. This is a basic step but falls far short of adequately preparing captains to assess, plan, and *manage* training at the level the operational force expects, particularly if the captain goes to a team without a WO.

Training resources and approvals differ slightly from unit to unit but educating captains further on fundamentals common to U.S. Army Special Operations Command would greatly enhance his/her ability to advocate for training resources. This starts with the 350–1 series of publications from the Army through 1st Special Forces Command (SFC), then the Army's Objective T training methodology and how to use the combined arms registry to enumerate mission essential tasks (METs) levels of proficiency. Next is conducting a battle focus analysis where the captain, along with his/her ODA senior leadership, can assess the team's capabilities and plan to improve certain METs through building a training calendar. Instruction for this section needs to include introductions to various large training venues from major, large scale training events like combined training center (CTC) rotations and Jade Helm to joint force training exercises such as Red Flag, Have Ace, and Northern Strike. An awareness of these events prior to arriving on a team will greatly improve a captain's ability to advocate for training events and build a team's training calendar.

However, draft training calendar in hand, captains further need to understand the resourcing requirements to ensure these events on that training calendar occur. This includes funding arrangements (group sustainment funds, CTC funds, joint force funds, etc.), options for transportation of men and equipment to and from the event (line haul, air, FedEx, etc.), the impacts to dwell time for certain training events, and approvals to conduct realistic military training concepts to name a few. Finally, captains need to have an awareness of how their ODA's training calendar factors into the larger semi-annual training brief through the command levels where these resource requirements are communicated and committed. Delving into these subjects would far better equip a captain to maximize the first training cycle after arriving on the ODA.

Mission sets and types would enhance an officer's understanding of authorities within missions. The nine Special Forces core activities are essential doctrine, but Special Forces captains require an understanding of the legal authorities and funding nuances that govern ODAs deploying to conduct these core activities. New Special Forces captains need institutional instruction on the various types of missions that ODAs deploy to support. Examples include JCETs, CNTs, subject matter expert exchanges, and combat missions,

among others. Each of these mission types needs to be addressed with a frame of reference for how they assist U.S. national/foreign policy from various stakeholder positions such as Department of Defense (DOD), DOS, the Army, and Geographic Combatant Commands. Additionally, the funding nuances for each of these missions is important. Understanding the funding streams for these activities reveals stakeholders and provides depth of purpose for these operations. If captains understand these aspects when they arrive at a unit, it allows them to better guide planning, conduct more effective pre-deployment site survey engagements, and understand their operating environment when on the mission.

Finally, as the commander, lead planner, and representative of the ODA, captains must also have a deep familiarity with and exposure to the greater SOF enterprise. This subject starts at the ODA level and progresses through the capabilities of a Special Forces company, battalion, and group, the other 1st SFC tribes of Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations, ARSOF organizations of the 75th Ranger Regiment and 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, to the SOCOM forces of Naval Special Warfare, Marine Special Operations, Air Force Special Operations, and Joint Special Operations Command. A formal understanding of these units, their role and function, and organizational structure not only assists in interoperability, but fulfills a doctrinal understanding purpose to highlight what unique capabilities Special Forces possess in comparison to other U.S. SOF elements. This would greatly improve communication across the joint force as Special Forces captains would have a better understanding of who they were working with during deployments. It would also enhance representation of SOCOM with DOS engagements because captains could more clearly enumerate the value or purpose of one SOF formation from another to DOS audiences who view DOD elements with little differentiation.

B. WHERE TO MAKE THE ADDITIONS

As mentioned earlier, training management, mission sets and types, and the SOF enterprise are applicable and beneficial to all ARSOF, making them ideal to be added into the ARSOFCCC. Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations officers would benefit equally from any training management procedures that occur at the 1st SFC level and higher, furthermore events such as semi-annual training briefs are common to most units

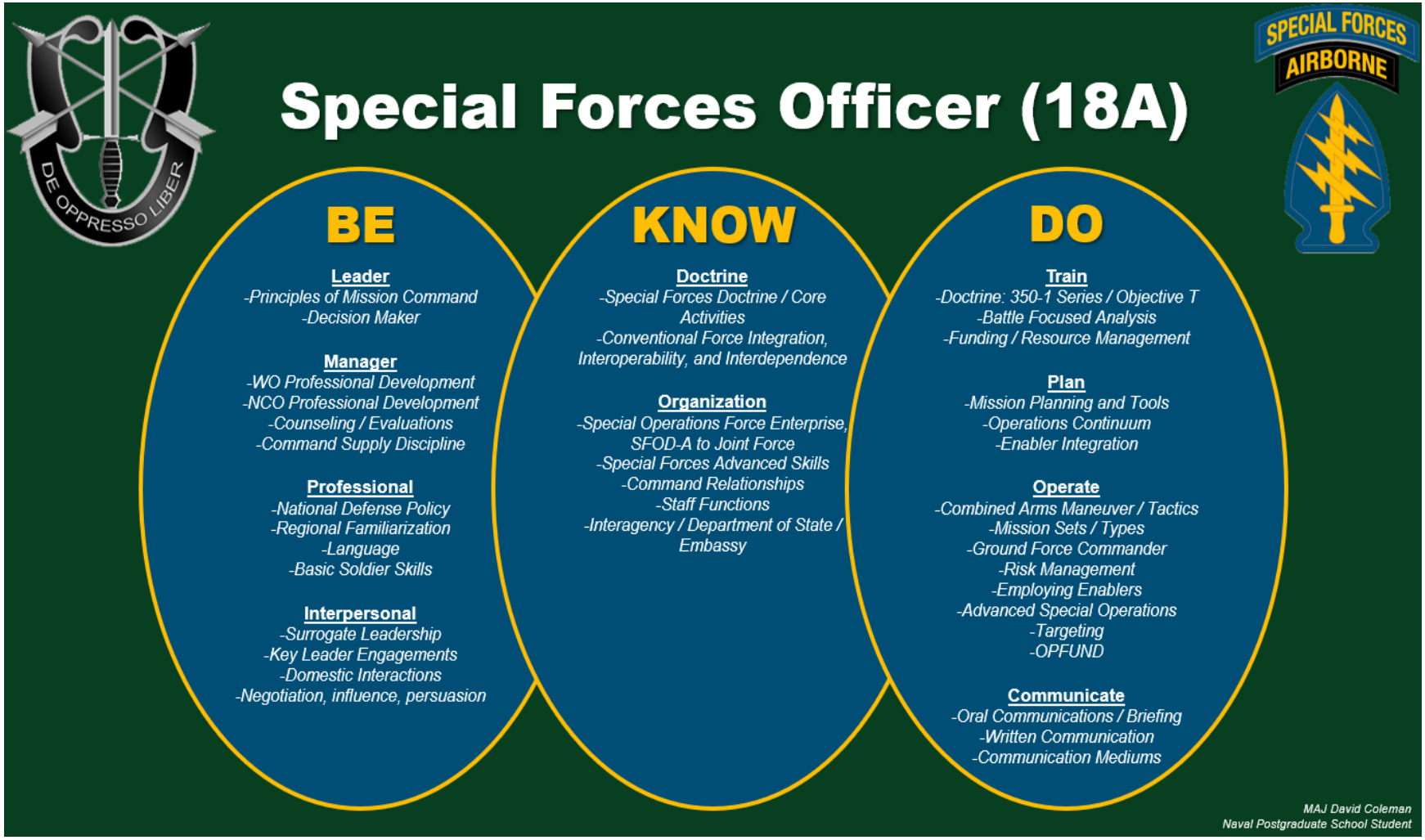
in the Army. Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations officers would equally benefit from an understanding of mission sets and types, a subject that could be expanded within the ARSOFCCC to include mission sets and types fulfilled by Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations units. This would be intimate cross training at an early stage across the three 1st SFC tribes. Additionally, understanding the SOF enterprise is equally as crucial for Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations officers. GFC skills however are more applicable to the Special Forces officers who have a direct combat mission.

GFC skills must have a two-part instruction within the SFQC: conceptual understanding and practical application. Conceptual understanding must explain the purpose and value of maintaining an accurate common operating picture for a fight and communicating that picture to higher as well as discussion on the various levels of control/freedom GFCs can have over assets not organic to the ODA. This must be done with an understanding that each command element a captain serves under will have operational differences, but it is crucial for captains to understand the concepts governing how these structures are established.

The practical application can come in the form of each fight or battle during the SFQC where the captain serves as the commander. This is where the SFQC needs to become more complex. The missions during small unit tactics and Robin Sage are fought in an absence of outside enablers. They are designed to simulate the austere environments of an unconventional warfare campaign. The problem is that they differ dramatically from what a captain will experience following graduation when he/she arrives in Afghanistan or Syria. Special Forces' ability to fight in austere environments must never atrophy, but the complex and resource rich contemporary fighting environment presents its own challenges that must be honed.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

APPENDIX. SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER MODEL GRAPHIC



THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF REFERENCES

Department of the Army. *Army Leader Development Program*, DA PAM 350-58. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2013.

———. *Army Learning Policies and Systems*, TR 350–70. Fort Eustis, VA: Training and Doctrine Command, 2017.

———. *Army Training and Leader Development,* AR 350-1. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2017.

———. *Commissioned Officer Professional Development*, DA PAM 600-3. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2019.

———. *Officer Transfers and Discharges*, AR 600-8-24. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2020.

———. *Special Forces Operations*, FM 3-18. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2014.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Defense Technical Information Center
   Ft. Belvoir, Virginia

2. Dudley Knox Library
   Naval Postgraduate School
   Monterey, California