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U.S. Army Research Institute  
for the Behavioral and Social Sciences

Research Report 1629

# Minority Representation in the Enlisted Special Forces

Martha L. Teplitzky  
U.S. Army Research Institute



September 1992

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# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                          |                                                         |                                         |                                                                          |  |
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| 1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                          | 2. REPORT DATE<br>1992, September                       |                                         | 3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED<br>Final Oct 88 - Mar 92                |  |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE<br>Minority Representation in the Enlisted Special Forces                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                          |                                                         |                                         | 5. FUNDING NUMBERS<br>63007A<br>792<br>2214<br>H01                       |  |
| 6. AUTHOR(S)<br>Teplitzky, Martha L.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                          |                                                         |                                         |                                                                          |  |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)<br>U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences<br>ATTN: PERI-RP<br>5001 Eisenhower Avenue<br>Alexandria, VA 22333-5600                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                          |                                                         |                                         | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER<br><br>ARI Research Report 1629 |  |
| 9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)<br><br>---                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                          |                                                         |                                         | 10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER<br><br>---              |  |
| 11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES<br><br>---                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                          |                                                         |                                         |                                                                          |  |
| 12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT<br><br>Approved for public release;<br>distribution is unlimited.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                          |                                                         |                                         | 12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE<br><br>---                                        |  |
| 13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)<br>This research is in response to a request by the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel to examine reasons for the low proportion of minorities in Special Forces (SF). The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) identified critical stages in the application/qualification process and examined factors that might restrict the flow of minorities into SF. Analyses of the market impact of SF eligibility criteria indicated that the minimum General Technical (GT) score required in SF markedly reduces the proportion of eligible minorities. Recruiter observations and minority prerequisite failure rates indicate that the required swim test also eliminates a disproportionate number of minorities (blacks, in particular) from Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS). Black soldiers who pass the swim test do very well in SFAS. However, on the whole, minority SFAS graduates are less likely to complete the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC) than nonminority soldiers. This difference seems to arise from differences in military background characteristics (e.g., Combat Arms military occupational specialty (MOS), specialized training) across racial and ethnic groups. The report concludes with several suggestions for addressing these issues. |                                                          |                                                         |                                         |                                                                          |  |
| 14. SUBJECT TERMS<br>SF assessment<br>Minority representation<br>Race/ethnic groups                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                          |                                                         |                                         | 15. NUMBER OF PAGES<br>68                                                |  |
| SF training<br>SF prerequisites<br>SF recruiting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                          |                                                         |                                         | 16. PRICE CODE<br>---                                                    |  |
| 17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT<br>Unclassified                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE<br>Unclassified | 19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT<br>Unclassified | 20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT<br>Unlimited |                                                                          |  |

# **Minority Representation in the Enlisted Special Forces**

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Department of the Army

**September 1992**

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**Army Project Number  
2Q263007A792**

**Manpower and Personnel**

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## FOREWORD

The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) was tasked by the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (Memo, DAPE-MBI-CA, 11 October 1991, s: Special Forces Personnel Functional Assessment Issues) to examine potential reasons for the relatively small number of minority soldiers in Special Forces (SF).

This task was undertaken by the Leadership and Organizational Change Technical Area of the Manpower and Personnel Research Division in the context of ARI's broader program of research on SF personnel development issues supported by a Memorandum of Agreement between the U.S. Army Special Operations Command and ARI, 20 June 1991.

The goal of the research was to provide the first systematic, comprehensive examination of a set of issues that have been a source of continuing concern to policymakers in the Army. The report describes critical stages in the SF application and qualification process and identifies several factors that restrict the flow of minorities into SF. Discussion centers on possible methods for addressing minority representation issues.

Results of the analyses were briefed in July 1992 to LTG Carney, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel; MG Shachnow, Commanding General, U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School; and BG Jones, Director, Human Resources. The report will be a valuable resource for policymakers and recruiters charged with ensuring that SF is manned by the "best and brightest" soldiers across all racial and ethnic groups.

  
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Technical Director

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# MINORITY REPRESENTATION IN THE ENLISTED SPECIAL FORCES

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Requirement:

Currently, only about 12% of all enlisted Special Forces (SF)-qualified soldiers are minorities. In contrast, approximately 43% of the Army's non-SF Specialists, Sergeants, and Staff Sergeants are minorities. This disparity prompted the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (ODCSPER) to ask the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) to examine potential reasons for the low proportion of minorities in SF.

### Procedure:

ARI's approach to the task was to identify critical stages in the application/qualification process and examine factors at each stage that might restrict the flow of minorities into SF. The FY91 Enlisted Master List was used to examine the impact of SF eligibility criteria on minorities. ARI's Army Career Satisfaction Survey provided data on interest in SF. The Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) research database and ARI's preliminary longitudinal database were used to examine outcomes in SFAS and SF training.

### Findings:

Of all the SF eligibility requirements, only the minimum General Technical (GT) score criterion has a substantial impact on the minority composition of the SF market. The GT requirement reduces the proportion of minorities eligible for SF from about 40% to 28%. Recruiter observations and SFAS prerequisite failure rates indicate that the swim requirement also eliminates a disproportionate number of minorities (blacks, in particular). Black soldiers who pass the swim test do very well in SFAS, with lower quit rates and higher-than-average peer ratings on team events. In the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC), however, black and other minority trainees are less likely to be successful than nonminority soldiers.

#### Utilization of Findings:

ODCSPER has tasked the U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) to develop strategies for increasing the racial and ethnic diversity in SF. The findings and recommendations presented in this report will facilitate USAREC's efforts to attract qualified minority soldiers. The information will also be useful to policymakers concerned with questions of fairness and quality in manning the force.

# MINORITY REPRESENTATION IN THE ENLISTED SPECIAL FORCES

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## MINORITY REPRESENTATION IN THE ENLISTED SPECIAL FORCES

### Introduction

In October 1991, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel asked the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) to examine potential reasons for the relatively low proportion of minority soldiers in Special Forces (SF). This report describes the results of our analyses of the enlisted active duty force.

Concerns about minority representation in SF have surfaced repeatedly over the years. In October 1989, for example, the Commanding General, U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS), requested an internal study of minority representation in Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS). The USAJFKSWCS study included interviews, end-of-class candidate surveys, and analyses of select rates in four SFAS classes conducted in FY89. The data showed no evidence of subjective bias or racial discrimination in SFAS; the swim test prerequisite did, however, eliminate a disproportionate percentage of minorities. The authors recommended that USAJFKSWCS establish a more complete SFAS research database and continue to track minority outcomes.

The kind of database required for a more comprehensive examination of minority outcomes in SFAS is now available at USAJFKSWCS and ARI. ARI has also recently completed a preliminary longitudinal database that tracks SFAS graduates from FY89 through the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC). The SFAS and SFQC databases, along with two others (the Enlisted Master File (EMF) and ARI's 1990 Army Career Satisfaction Survey) were used to examine a variety of minority representation issues.

ARI's overall approach to the task was to identify critical stages in the application/qualification process and examine factors at each stage that might restrict the flow of minorities into Special Forces. The stages of the process and the central research questions asked at each stage are outlined below.

(1) Potential SF Market. Only a select group of active duty enlisted soldiers is eligible for Special Forces. Analyses in this section use the FY91 EMF to determine how the various SF eligibility criteria affect the minority composition of the SF candidate pool, or market. USAREC's Special Missions Division contributed to these analyses by providing background information on SF recruiting and SF eligibility criteria.

(2) Interest in SF. Any soldier who meets the basic SF eligibility criteria can volunteer for SFAS. Whether or not a soldier will actually apply for SF however, is determined by his perceptions of and interest in a Special Forces career. ARI's 1990 Army Career Satisfaction Survey (ACSS) was used to examine the possibility that minority and non-minority soldiers differ with respect to interest in SF. Career expectations and background factors associated with interest in SF are also examined.

(3) Recruiting and Prerequisite Testing for SFAS. Special Forces recruiters are responsible for identifying, processing, and pre-testing applicants for Special Forces. Recruiter pre-testing involves ensuring that recruits can meet the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) and swim test prerequisites for SFAS. This section of the report focuses on the impact of these prerequisites on minorities. Analyses are based on the FY91 SFAS database, and the discussion is informed by interviews with SF recruiters conducted as a part of a larger ARI study of SF recruiting (see Herd & Teplitzky, 1992, for an overview of current issues and procedures in SF recruiting).

(d) Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS). To qualify for Special Forces training, candidates must successfully complete the very demanding 21-day SFAS program conducted at Ft. Bragg, NC. Analyses in this section examine the military background characteristics of SFAS candidates in FY91, as well as performance ratings and select rates across race/ethnic groups.

(e) Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC). Before candidates are awarded the Special Forces tab, they must complete 24 to 42 weeks of training in the SFQC. This course covers both the basic branch skills required in SF and Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) training. The preliminary SFAS-SFQC longitudinal database was used to examine SFQC outcomes for minority and non-minority trainees. Military background characteristics associated with success in training are also examined.

The five stages of the application/qualification process outlined above provide the organizing framework for this report. Throughout the report, the focus is on active duty enlisted applicants for SF. Charts and tables present statistics for three race/ethnic groups - white, black, and "other" minority group members. Discussion in the text, however, highlights black vs. white comparisons because the small proportion of blacks in SF lies at the heart of the minority representation issue. The report concludes with a summary of the major findings and suggestions for addressing some of the key issues.

## Potential SF Market

### Minority Composition in SF and the Army

Table 1 shows the minority composition of the Special Forces active duty enlisted population at the end of FY91. The large majority of soldiers (88%) in SF are white. Table 2 shows the minority composition among Specialists (SPC), Sergeants (SGT), and Staff Sergeants (SSG) in the total non-SF, active duty, male population. The percentages in Table 2 are also graphically illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 1

#### Minority Composition of the Enlisted Special Forces Population By Rank

|       | WHITE<br>(N=3513)<br>% | BLACK<br>(N=158)<br>% | OTHER<br>(N=308)<br>% | TOTAL<br>(N=3879)<br>% (N) |
|-------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| SGT   | 89                     | 4                     | 7                     | 100 (241)                  |
| SSG   | 88                     | 5                     | 7                     | 100 (1276)                 |
| SFC   | 89                     | 3                     | 8                     | 100 (1738)                 |
| MSG   | 88                     | 4                     | 8                     | 100 (609)                  |
| SGM   | 63                     | 21                    | 17                    | 100 (72)                   |
| TOTAL | 88                     | 4                     | 8                     | 100 (3879)                 |

Source: EMF (SEP 91)

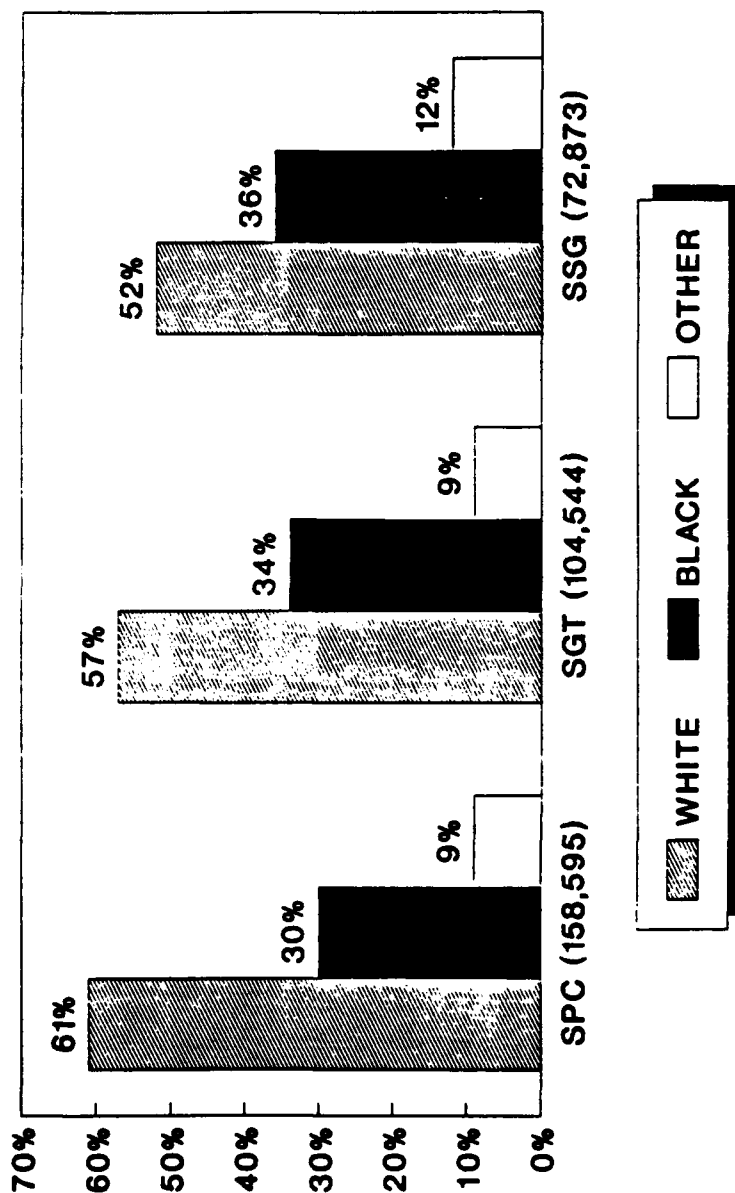
Table 2

#### Minority Composition of the Non-SF, Enlisted Active Duty Male Population by Rank

|       | WHITE<br>% | BLACK<br>% | OTHER<br>% |
|-------|------------|------------|------------|
| SPC   | 61         | 30         | 9          |
| SGT   | 57         | 34         | 9          |
| SSG   | 52         | 36         | 12         |
| TOTAL | 58         | 33         | 10         |

Source: EMF SEP 91; N=336,012

# FY91 EMF POPULATION RACE/ETHNIC COMPOSITION WITHIN RANKS (N=336,012)



ARI (JAN 92) SEP 91 EMF

Figure 1. Race/ethnic composition by rank in the FY91 male enlisted population.

As Table 2 indicates, in the non-SF, SPC to SSG population, one-third (33%) of all male soldiers are black. The disparity between this percentage and the proportion of black soldiers in SF (4%) is striking. Minorities in the "other" race/ethnic category (e.g., Hispanic, Asian, American Indian) are fairly well represented in SF (8%) relative to the population (10%).

The SPC to SSG population is targeted for analysis because these are the ranks from which SFAS candidates are drawn. Today's Specialists and Sergeants also constitute the primary SF recruiting market for several years to come. It is worth noting, in this respect, that the proportion of black soldiers is lowest among Specialists, the group that constitutes the largest candidate pool for the future. Statistics on regular Army recruiting indicate that we can expect a continued decline in the percentage of minorities in the lower ranks for the next several years. In the first quarter of FY91, only 25% of all recruits were black. During the same period in FY92, the percentage of black recruits dropped even further, to 21% (Adelsberger, 1992).

#### Special Forces Eligibility Requirements

In order to be considered for Special Forces, enlisted soldiers must meet the eligibility requirements outlined in AR 614-200. It is not possible, using ARI's extract of the EMF, to identify the subgroup of soldiers who meet all SF eligibility requirements. For example, we cannot identify soldiers who are ineligible because they are under a temporary suspension of favorable personnel action or have just received orders for an overseas assignment. We can, however, use the EMF to examine the requirements most likely to affect the size and minority composition of the SF market. These requirements include:

- a) Male
- b) SPC, SGT, or SSG
- c) High school diploma or GED
- d) Physical profile of 111221 or better (AR 611-201)
- e) Eligible to reenlist
- f) Minimum score of 110 on the General Technical (GT) component of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), or a minimum of 100 for linguists

In addition to these requirements, constraints based on currently restricted MOS and recently implemented retention control points (i.e., limits on years of service for soldiers in particular paygrades) were taken into account in defining the SF eligible population. Because of manpower shortages, SF may not currently accept soldiers from 11 specific MOS (31D, 31F, 31W, 67R, 93B, 97B, 97E, 97L, 98C, 98G, 98H). Soldiers in these MOS were thus excluded from the SF eligible sample. Also excluded were soldiers approaching their time in service limits.

Current retention control point policies require Specialists with 8 years of service and Sergeants with 13 or more years of service (15 years for SGT (P)) to leave the Army. These time limits impose some practical constraints on SF recruiters. Applicants close to their retention control points risk being separated from the Army before they can complete the application process or attend SFAS or Special Forces training. Consequently, time in service limits of 7 and 14 years, respectively, were applied to Specialists and Sergeants in selecting the SF eligible sample. A 14-year limit was also applied to Staff Sergeants because so few soldiers at this point in their careers appear interested in applying for SF. In FY91, for example, only 2% of the Staff Sergeants attending SFAS had over 14 years of service.

### The Market Impact of SF Eligibility Requirements

The market impact analyses document how the various SF eligibility requirements affect the size and minority composition of the pool of candidates eligible for SF. The baseline, or comparison, population consists of all non-SF, activity duty, male SPC's, SGT's and SSG's in the Army at the end of FY91 (Table 2).

The market analyses were conducted in three stages. First, time in service restrictions were applied to exclude Specialists with more than 7 years of active duty service and Sergeants and Staff Sergeants with more than 14 years of active service. This step eliminated 13% of the baseline SPC to SSG population. The time in service restrictions also increased the proportion of white soldiers in the SF eligible ranks by 2% (from 58% to 60%), primarily because of slight reductions (1% for SPC and SGT, 3% for SSG) in the number of eligible black soldiers (see Table 3).

Table 3

#### Minority Composition Within SF Eligible Ranks After Time in Service Limits Applied

|       | WHITE<br>% | BLACK<br>% | OTHER<br>% |
|-------|------------|------------|------------|
| SPC   | 62         | 29         | 9          |
| SGT   | 58         | 33         | 9          |
| SSG   | 55         | 33         | 12         |
| TOTAL | 60         | 31         | 9          |

Source: EMF SEP 91; N=291,500

At the next step, four additional eligibility criteria were applied: education (GED or high school diploma), physical profile (111221 or better), reenlistment eligibility, and MOS. These criteria reduced the overall size of the SF eligible pool by another 15%. Examined both separately and in combination, however, these restrictions had a negligible impact (less than 1% change) on the proportion of white, black and "other" soldiers eligible for SF.

The GT score requirement was applied last. Average ASVAB test scores are typically lower for minority groups, and this fact explains the the markedly differential impact of the GT score criterion on minorities in the SF eligible pool. Only 31% of the black soldiers who were eligible for SF at the previous stage (all criteria except GT) had the required minimum score of 110. In contrast, 59% of the white soldiers and 43% of the soldiers in the "other" category met the GT cut-off.

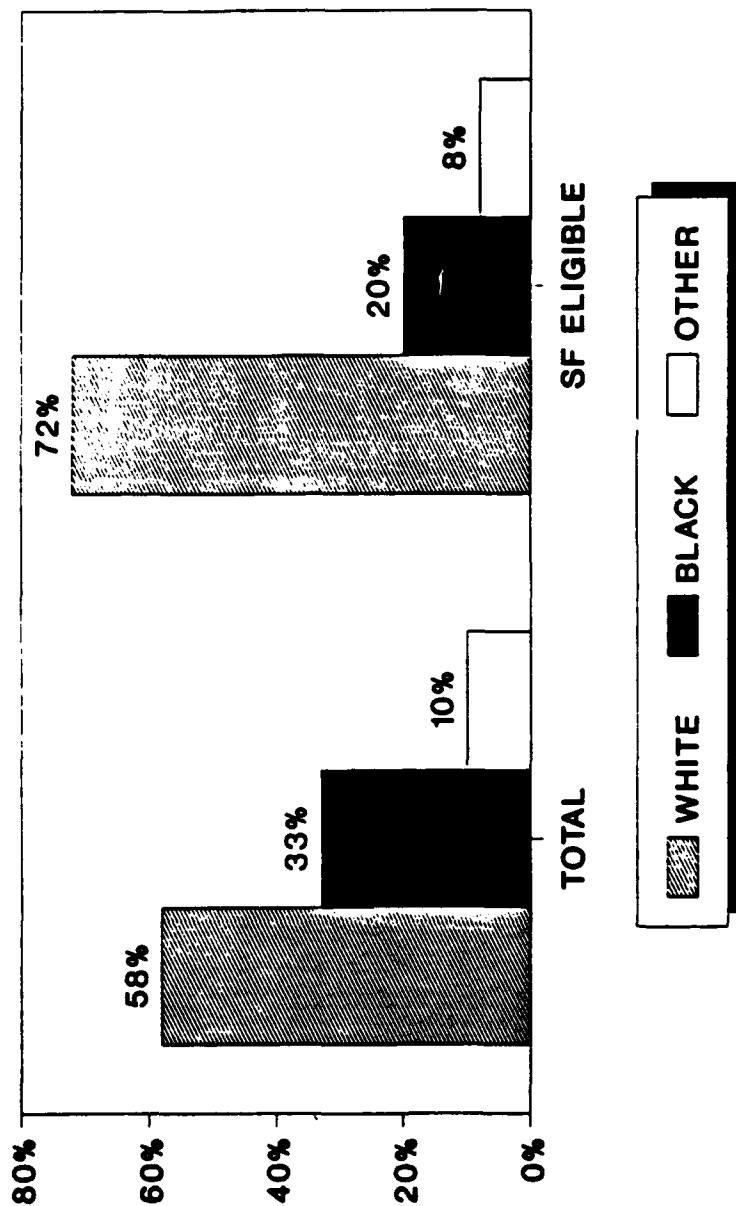
The percentages above are comparable to the percentages of white, black and "other" soldiers with GT scores of 110 or more in the baseline SPC to SSG population. In other words, the SF criteria applied in the first two stages of the analysis (time in service, education, etc.) did not alter the distribution of GT scores within race/ethnic groups.

The minority composition of the final active duty SF eligible population is shown in Table 4. The 120,837 soldiers in the final SF eligible population represent only 36% of the baseline non-SF, active duty, male, SPC to SSG population.

As the "total" percentages in Table 4 indicate, the SF eligible market is predominantly white (72%). Only 20% of the soldiers eligible for Special Forces are black, and 8% are members of other minority groups. Figure 2 provides a graphic comparison of race/ethnic composition of the total, or baseline, population and the final SF eligible population.

The minority composition percentages reflect an 11% decrease in the proportion of black soldiers eligible for SF, solely because of the GT score requirement. There are, however, noteworthy differences in the impact of the GT criterion across ranks for black soldiers. Specifically, lower ranking black soldiers (Specialists) are more likely than black Staff Sergeants to be excluded by the GT requirement. Before the GT criterion was applied, 33% of all eligible Staff Sergeants were black; after the GT requirement was imposed, 25% of all eligible Staff Sergeants were black - a decrease of 8%. Among SF eligible Specialists, on the other hand, the percentage of blacks dropped 14% (from 29% to 15%) when the GT restriction was added to the other eligibility criteria.

# **TOTAL AND SF ELIGIBLE SPC TO SSG POPULATION RACE/ETHNIC COMPOSITION**



ARI (JAN 92) SEP 91 EMF

Figure 2. Comparison of the race/ethnic composition of the total and SF eligible male enlisted populations.

Table 4

**Minority Composition Within SF Eligible Ranks  
After All Eligibility Criteria Applied**

|              | <b>WHITE</b><br><b>(N=86,762)</b><br>% | <b>BLACK</b><br><b>(N=23,857)</b><br>% | <b>OTHER</b><br><b>(N=10,218)</b><br>% |
|--------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>SPC</b>   | 79                                     | 15                                     | 7                                      |
| <b>SGT</b>   | 69                                     | 22                                     | 9                                      |
| <b>SSG</b>   | 63                                     | 25                                     | 12                                     |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | 72                                     | 20                                     | 8                                      |

Source: EMF SEP 91; N=120,837

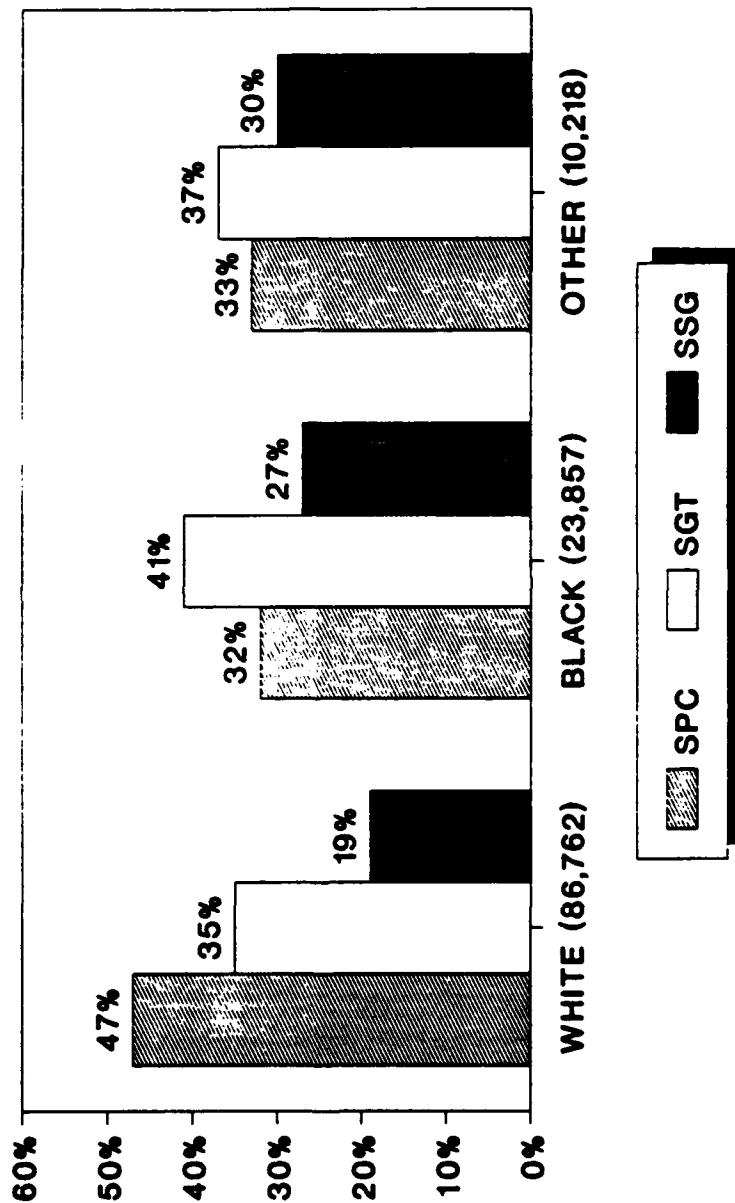
The analyses above addressed the minority composition of the total SF market. It is also instructive, however, to look within the SF eligible race/ethnic groups to see how they might differ with respect to important background characteristics. As some of the analyses reported in later sections indicate, background characteristics are related to interest in SF and success in Special Forces assessment and training.

Figures 3 and 4 show the differences across race/ethnic groups in the proportion of soldiers in different paygrades and MOS types. Figure 3 shows that minority group soldiers tend to be higher ranking than white SF eligible soldiers. For example, 27% of the black soldiers eligible for SF are Staff Sergeants, compared to 19% of the whites. Figure 4 illustrates that blacks (78%) are also more likely than whites (68%) to have non-Combat Arms MOS.

### Summary

In summary, only 36% of all active duty, male SPC's, SGT's, and SSG's in the Army are eligible for Special Forces. The requirement that soldiers have a minimum GT score of 110 is by far the most important restriction, both in terms of the total number of soldiers it eliminates and its disproportionate impact on the minority composition of the SF market. Black soldiers comprise 33% of the total population, but only 20% of the SF eligible population, largely because of the GT score requirement. More important, perhaps, is the fact that only 15% of all SF eligible Specialists are black, and these are the soldiers who will constitute the primary market for SF for the next several years.

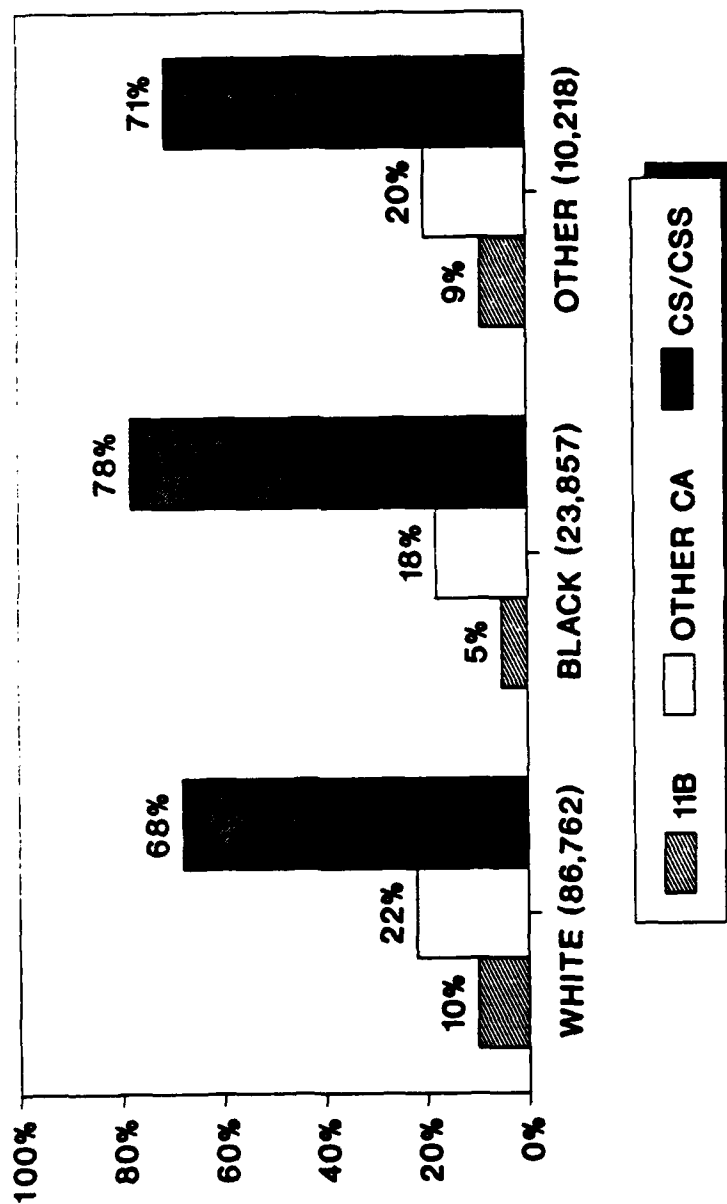
# **FY91 SF ELIGIBLE POPULATION RANK DISTRIBUTION IN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS (N=120,837)**



ARI (JAN 92) SEP 91 EMF

Figure 3. Rank distribution by race/ethnic groups: SF eligible population.

# **FY91 SF ELIGIBLE POPULATION DISTRIBUTION OF MOS TYPES IN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS**



ARI (JAN 92) SEP 91 EMF

Figure 4. MOS types by race/ethnic groups: SF eligible population.

It is important to note, however, that recruiting policies and accession trends in the regular Army today are likely to have a marked impact on the SF eligible market of the late 1990's. Reduced recruiting missions are allowing the Army to be more selective, particularly with respect to education and Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) scores. For example, in FY89, 7% of all new recruits scored in the lowest acceptable AFQT category (Category IV), whereas in the first quarter of FY92, none of the accepted fell into this category (Adelsberger, 1992). The higher standards are in part, at least, responsible for the decrease in the proportion of minorities being accepted into the Army. At the same time, however, minorities who are accepted and retained by the Army should be much more likely to meet SF eligibility requirements. It is possible that the expected increase in the proportion of minorities eligible for SF will offset the declining number of minority soldiers in the Army as a whole. If this is the case, concerted efforts to ensure that young minority soldiers are aware of the career opportunities available in SF may have a positive impact on minority representation in SF in the next decade.

### Interest in Special Forces

If all else were equal, one would expect the proportion of minority NCO's in SF (4%) to approximate the proportion of minorities in the SF eligible population (20%). The disparity in these percentages indicates that other factors are not equal, however. One possible explanation is that race/ethnic groups differ in terms of the perceived attractiveness of a Special Forces career.

Responses to an item included in ARI's 1990 Army Career Satisfaction Survey (ACSS) provide at least an estimate of the level of interest in Special Forces among SF eligible soldiers. The ACSS was administered to a very large sample of officer and enlisted soldiers during the summer of 1990. A total of 6,733 enlisted soldiers responded for a 51% response rate (see the ARI Special Report: 1990 Army Career Satisfaction Survey by Elig & Martell for additional information on the ACSS). For the purpose of this report, however, the analysis sample was limited to the 1624 soldiers who met the basic SF eligibility criteria. The section below describes how this analysis sample was selected.

### Selecting the ACSS SF Eligible Sample

The first step in creating the ACSS analysis sample was to select male, active duty, non-SF Specialists, Sergeants and Staff Sergeants with fewer than 15 years of active duty service. This resulted in a preliminary analysis sample of 3829 soldiers (64% white, 27% black, 9% "other"). Next, we merged information from

the September, 1990 EMF into the ACSS database so that additional SF eligibility criteria could be applied. About 6% of the soldiers in the preliminary sample were eliminated at this point because they had left, or were scheduled to leave active duty. In addition, 74 Specialists were dropped because they exceeded time in service limits at the end of FY90. These exclusions reduced the preliminary sample to 3524 respondents. The percentages of white, black, and "other" soldiers in this sample are in the top row of Table 5.

**Table 5**

**Minority Composition of the ACSS Sample at Three Stages  
of the SF Eligible Sample Selection Process**

|                                                                     | <b>White</b> | <b>Black</b> | <b>Other</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>I. Non-SF, AD, SPC to SSG males, within time limits (N=3524)</b> |              |              |              |
| Sample %                                                            | 63%          | 27%          | 9%           |
| Sample N                                                            | (2236)       | (962)        | (326)        |
| Weighted %                                                          | 59%          | 31%          | 10%          |
| <b>II. HS/GED, physical profile, reenlist elig., MOS (N=2917)</b>   |              |              |              |
| Sample %                                                            | 62%          | 28%          | 10%          |
| Sample N                                                            | (1808)       | (828)        | (281)        |
| Weighted %                                                          | 58%          | 31%          | 11%          |
| <b>III. GT requirement (N=1624)</b>                                 |              |              |              |
| Sample %                                                            | 73%          | 19%          | 8%           |
| Sample N                                                            | (1193)       | (303)        | (128)        |
| Weighted %                                                          | 71%          | 20%          | 9%           |

**Source: 1990 ACSS Weighted Sample**

The percentages in the "sample %" rows in Table 5 reflect the actual number of respondents in each race/ethnic group. The percentages in the "weighted %" rows are based on weighted data. The weights applied to the sample were computed by the original ACSS researchers to correct for over or under representation of key subgroups (e.g., CONUS/OCONUS; paygrade, MOS type) in the original total sample relative to the enlisted population. Because weighted statistics provide better estimates of overall population parameters than unweighted statistics, percentages reported in subsequent ACSS tables are based on weighted data.

In the next two steps of the sample selection process the additional SF eligibility criteria were applied (see rows II and III in Table 5). The race/ethnic group percentages at each stage of the sample selection process are similar to those obtained as the same criteria were applied in the EMF (Tables 2, 3 and 4).

Table 6 shows the number and weighted percentages of white, black and "other" soldiers in each rank in the final ACSS analysis sample. The final sample consists of 1624 respondents, with 303 black soldiers (19%) and 128 "other" soldiers (8%). Because of the relatively small number of minority group soldiers, subgroup analyses (e.g., responses broken out by rank or MOS type within race/ethnic group) must be interpreted cautiously. When sample sizes are small, differences across groups may be a function of sampling error and could disappear with a slightly larger or different set of respondents.

Table 6

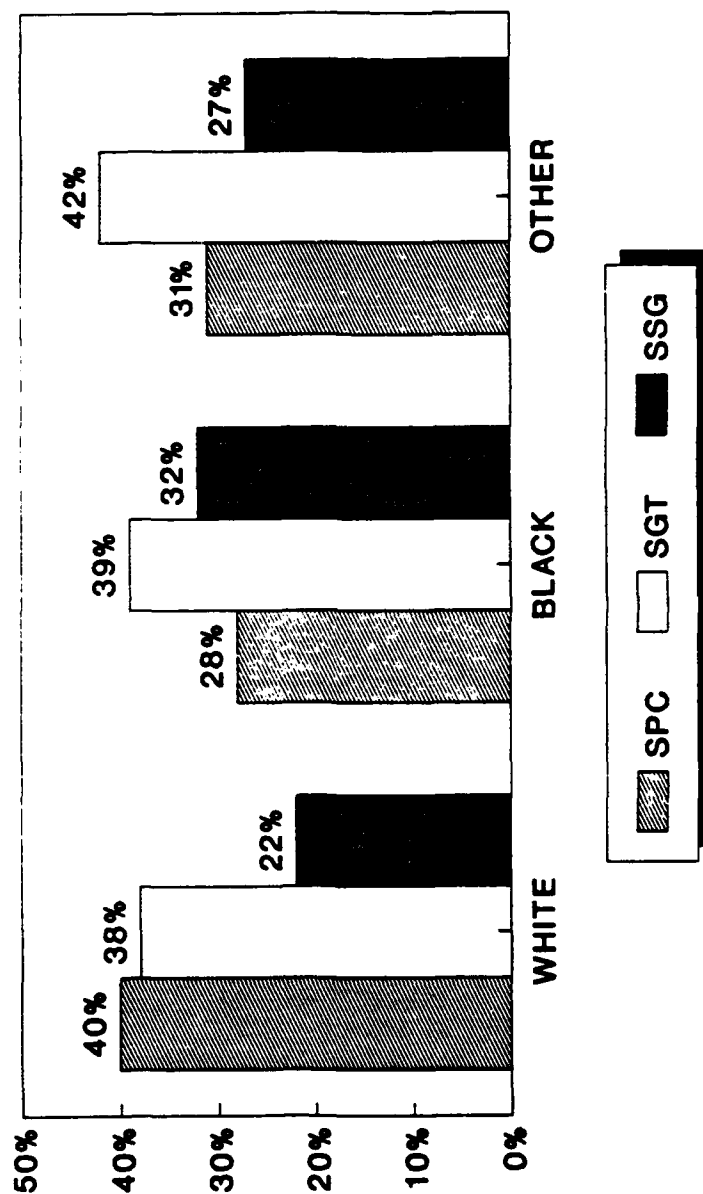
Minority Composition of the Final ACSS Analysis Sample  
After All SF Eligibility Criteria Applied

|       |                          | White         | Black        | Other       | Total          |
|-------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| SPC   | weighted %<br>(sample N) | 77%<br>(392)  | 15%<br>(62)  | 8%<br>(30)  | 100%<br>(484)  |
| SGT   | weighted %<br>(sample N) | 71%<br>(469)  | 20%<br>(121) | 9%<br>(48)  | 100%<br>(638)  |
| SSG   | weighted %<br>(sample N) | 63%<br>(332)  | 26%<br>(120) | 11%<br>(50) | 100%<br>(502)  |
| TOTAL | weighted %<br>(sample N) | 71%<br>(1193) | 20%<br>(303) | 9%<br>(128) | 100%<br>(1624) |

Source: 1990 ACSS Weighted, SF Eligible Sample

Figures 5 and 6 show how the white, black, and "other" SF eligible respondents differ with respect to rank and MOS type. As Figure 5 illustrates, black soldiers are distinguished from other groups by the relatively high percentage of Staff Sergeants and the correspondingly low percentage of Specialists. Figure 6 shows that black soldiers are also considerably less likely to be from Combat Arms MOS. These are the same trends observed in the SF eligible population selected from the EMF (Figures 3 and 4), however, in the ACSS sample they are more pronounced.

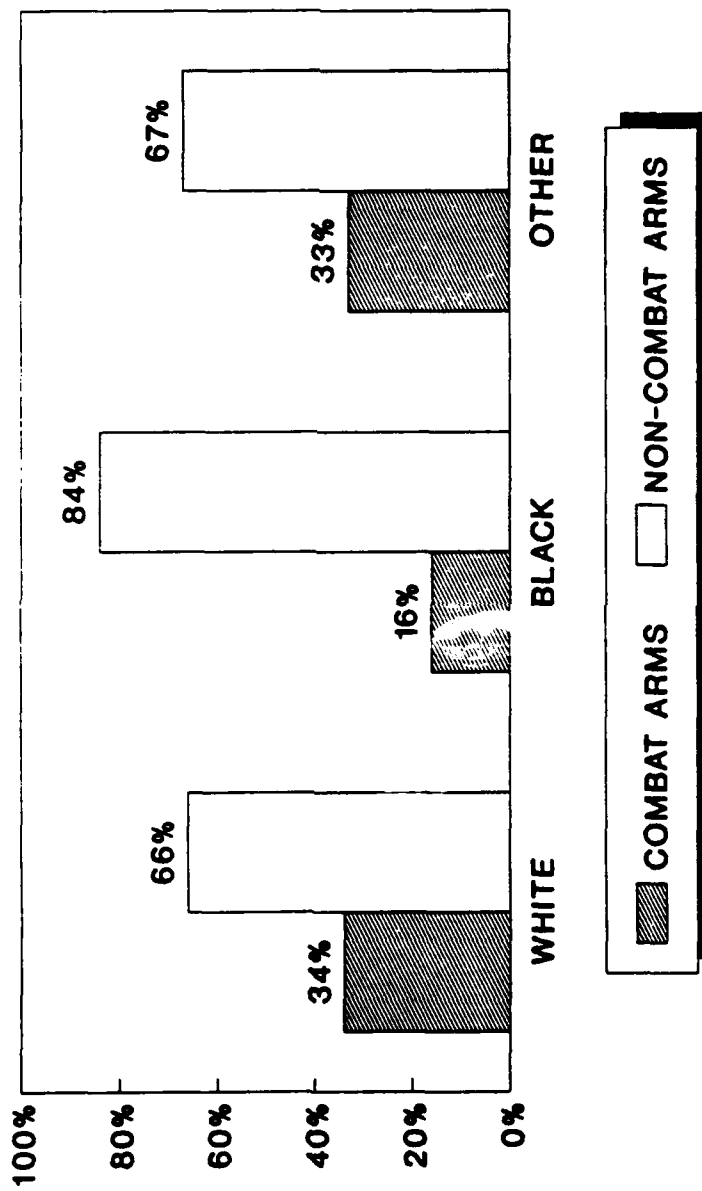
# ACSS SF ELIGIBLE SAMPLE RANK DISTRIBUTION WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS



ARI (JAN 92) 1990 ACSS  
SF ELIGIBLE WEIGHTED SAMPLE

Figure 5. Rank distribution by race/ethnic groups: ACSS SF eligible sample.

# ACSS SF ELIGIBLE SAMPLE COMBAT ARMS VS. NON-COMBAT ARMS WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS



ARI (JAN 92) 1990 ACSS  
SF ELIGIBLE WEIGHTED SAMPLE

Figure 6. MOS types by race/ethnic groups: ACSS SF eligible sample.

## Interest in a Special Forces Career

The question used to assess interest in SF asked: "Does the prospect of participation in Special Forces make staying on active duty more or less appealing?". The item had a 5-point response scale ranging from "much more appealing" to "much less appealing". Figure 7 shows the percentage of SF eligible respondents in each race/ethnic group who said that SF made staying on active duty "more appealing" or "much more appealing."

Overall, soldiers in the "other" category appear most interested in SF. With respect to black versus white differences, blacks were slightly more likely to select the "more appealing" response and slightly less likely to select the "much more appealing" response.

From a recruiting perspective, the "high propensity" market is probably best represented by the small group of respondents (10% of all blacks, 12% of all whites) who said that the prospect of SF makes staying the Army "much more appealing." Only seriously interested soldiers are likely to contact a recruiter, complete the appropriate forms, schedule the SF physical, and take and pass the required physical fitness and swim tests.

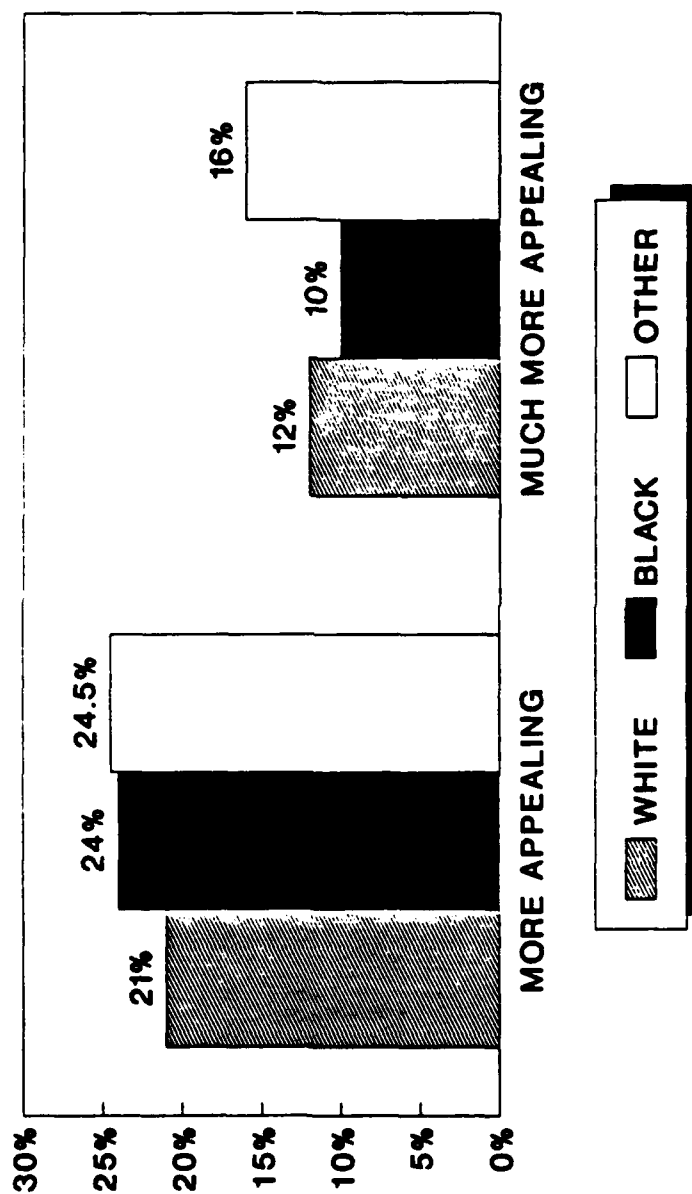
Follow-up analyses on the ACSS sample suggested that the "much more appealing" response does, in fact, appear to be the best indicator of propensity to apply for SF. Of the 2.6% (n=42, 33 white, 6 black, 3 other) of the SF eligible ACSS sample who actually attended SFAS in FY90 or FY91, 69% had indicated that the prospect of participation in SF made staying in the Army "much more appealing". Looking at the data another way, 16% of the soldiers who selected the "much more appealing" response ultimately attended SFAS, compared to only 3% of the much larger number who selected the more moderate, "more appealing" response.

## Career Variables Related to Interest in SF

In order to learn more about the soldiers most likely to apply for SF, additional analyses were conducted focusing just on the high propensity group. Figures 8 and 9 show the percentages of black, white and "other" soldiers within each rank and MOS type who said that the prospect of SF made staying in the Army much more appealing.

Figure 8 reveals a noteworthy difference between white and black soldiers in the relationship between rank and interest in SF. Among whites, Staff Sergeants were the least likely to find SF appealing (only 7%), whereas among blacks, the higher ranking soldiers were the most likely to be attracted to SF. Sample sizes for the "other" group are too small (4 to 12 respondents in each rank) to warrant conclusions about rank effects.

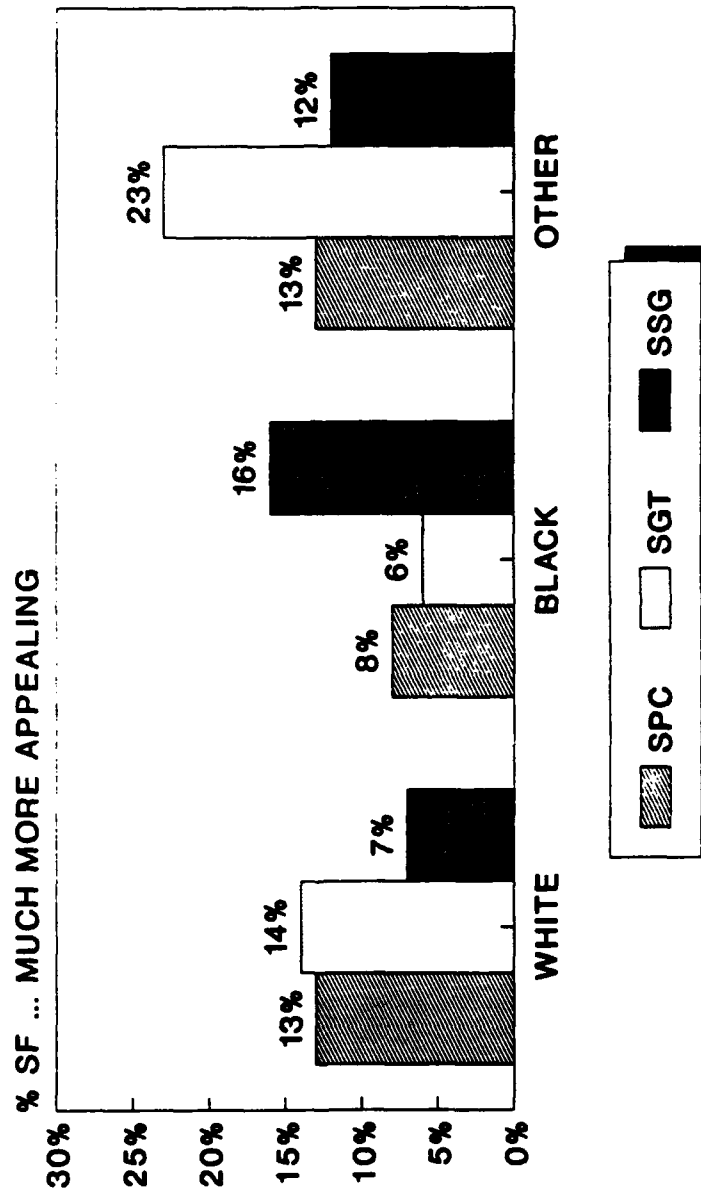
**PERCENT SAYING SF MAKES STAYING IN ARMY  
"MORE" OR "MUCH MORE" APPEALING  
BY RACE/ETHNIC GROUP**



ARI (JAN 92) 1990 ACSS  
SF ELIGIBLE WEIGHTED SAMPLE

Figure 7. Interest in SF by race/ethnic groups: ACSS SF eligible sample.

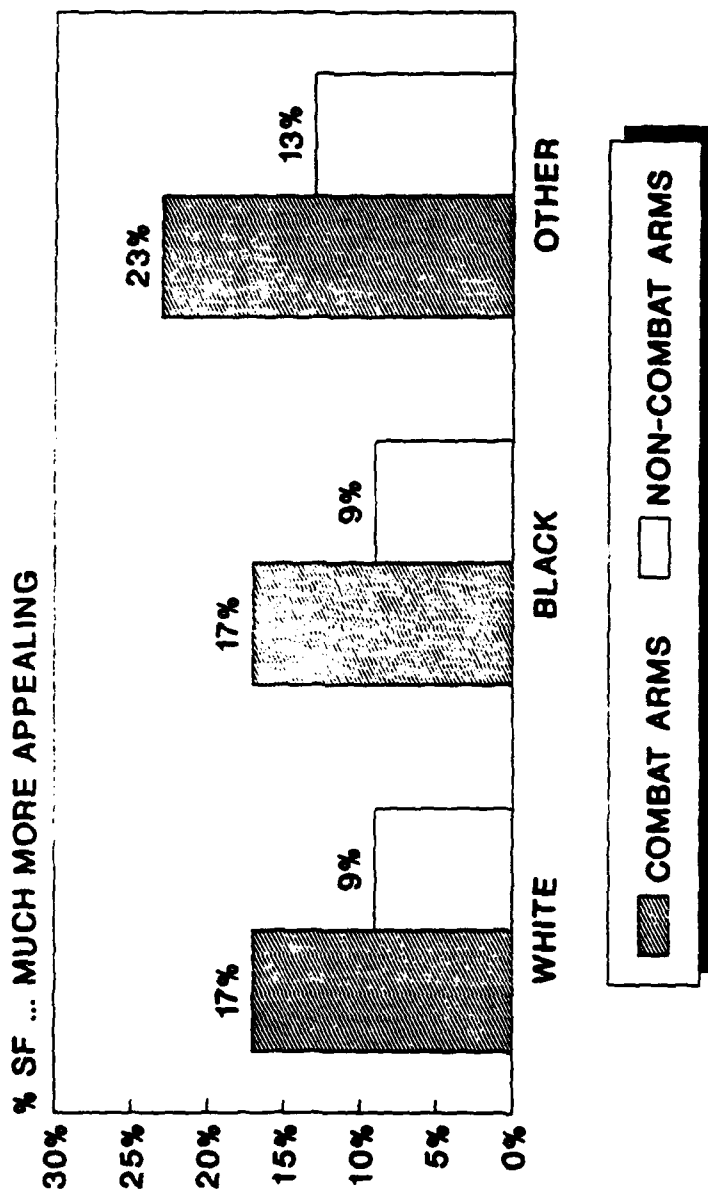
**PERCENT IN EACH RACE/ETHNIC GROUP  
SAYING SF MAKES STAYING IN ARMY  
"MUCH MORE APPEALING" BY RANK**



ARI (JAN 92) 1990 ACSS  
SF ELIGIBLE WEIGHTED SAMPLE

Figure 8. Interest in SF by rank in race/ethnic groups: ACSS SF eligible sample.

**PERCENT IN EACH RACE/ETHNIC GROUP  
SAYING SF MAKES STAYING IN ARMY  
"MUCH MORE APPEALING" BY MOS TYPE**



ARI (JAN 92) 1990 ACSS  
SF ELIGIBLE WEIGHTED SAMPLE

**Figure 9. Interest in SF by MOS type in race/ethnic groups: ACSS SF eligible sample.**

Figure 9 shows interest in SF broken out by Combat Arms and non-Combat Arms MOS. Overall, Combat Arms soldiers are about twice as likely as non-Combat Arms soldiers (18% vs. 9%) to be interested in Special Forces. This trend holds across all race/ethnic groups, although the sample sizes for the black (n=43) and other (n=34) Combat Arms groups are very small.

Additional analyses were conducted to see if (a) interest in SF is related to soldiers' career interests and expectations, and (b) if minority status moderates, or changes, the relationship between interest in SF and the career variables. The four career related items examined in this report include:

(1) "How likely is it that you will be targeted to leave the Army involuntarily?" (5-point likelihood response scale);

(2) "I would stay in the Army for 20 or more years even if I could retire" (5-point agree/disagree scale);

(3) "The kind of work I enjoy most is available..."

- (a) only in the military,
- (b) primarily in the military,
- (c) equally in military and civilian world,
- (d) primarily in the civilian world,
- (e) only in the civilian world;

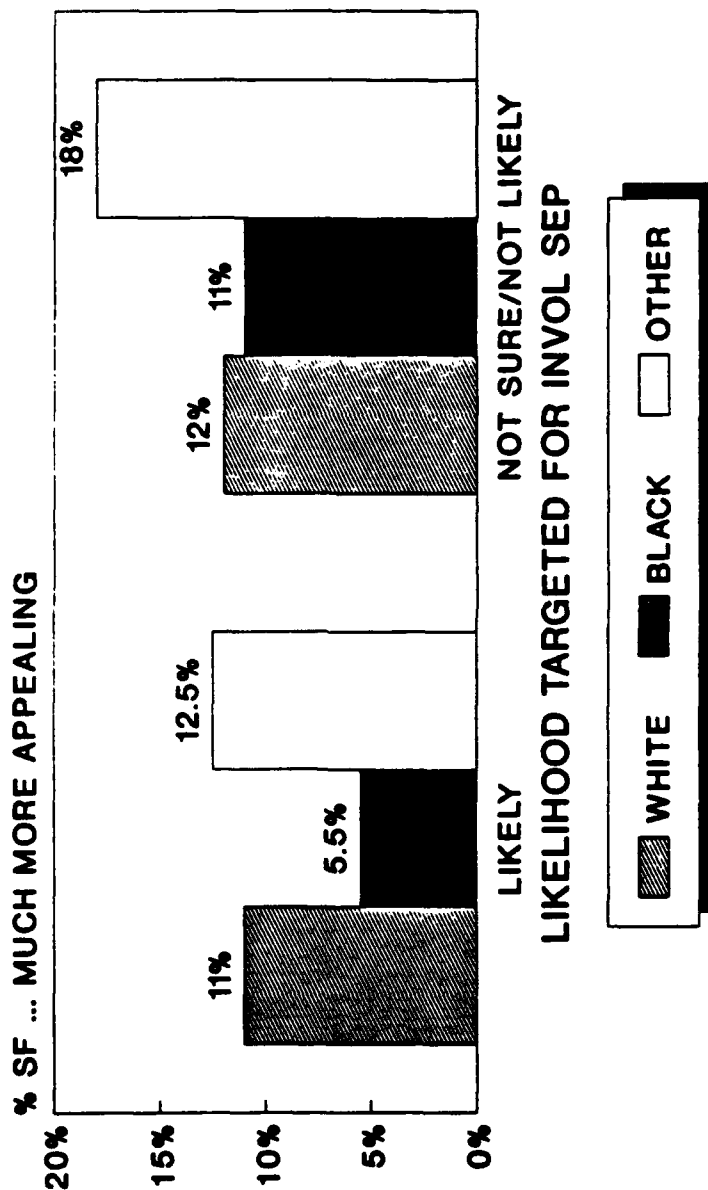
(4) "If you could reenlist tomorrow, what MOS would you select? (respondents specify the MOS they would select if it is different from their current primary or secondary MOS).

Responses for the first three items were collapsed for the analyses so that the percentages reported in Table 7 include both "likely" and "very likely" responses for the first item, "agree" and "strongly agree" for the second item, and responses (a) and (b) for the third item.

Results indicate that minorities are more likely to want to stay in the Army until retirement, yet are more likely to expect to be targeted for involuntary separation. Fewer than one third of the soldiers in any race/ethnic group say that the kind of work they prefer is available mainly or only in the military.

Figures 10 through 12 show the percent in each race/ethnic group who selected the "much more appealing" response to the SF question within response categories for the career related items. Figure 10 suggests that the perceived likelihood of being involuntarily separated from the Army has little effect on the appeal of Special Forces for white soldiers. Yet among black and "other" respondents, those who do not expect to be targeted for separation are more likely to say that the prospect of SF makes staying in the Army much more appealing.

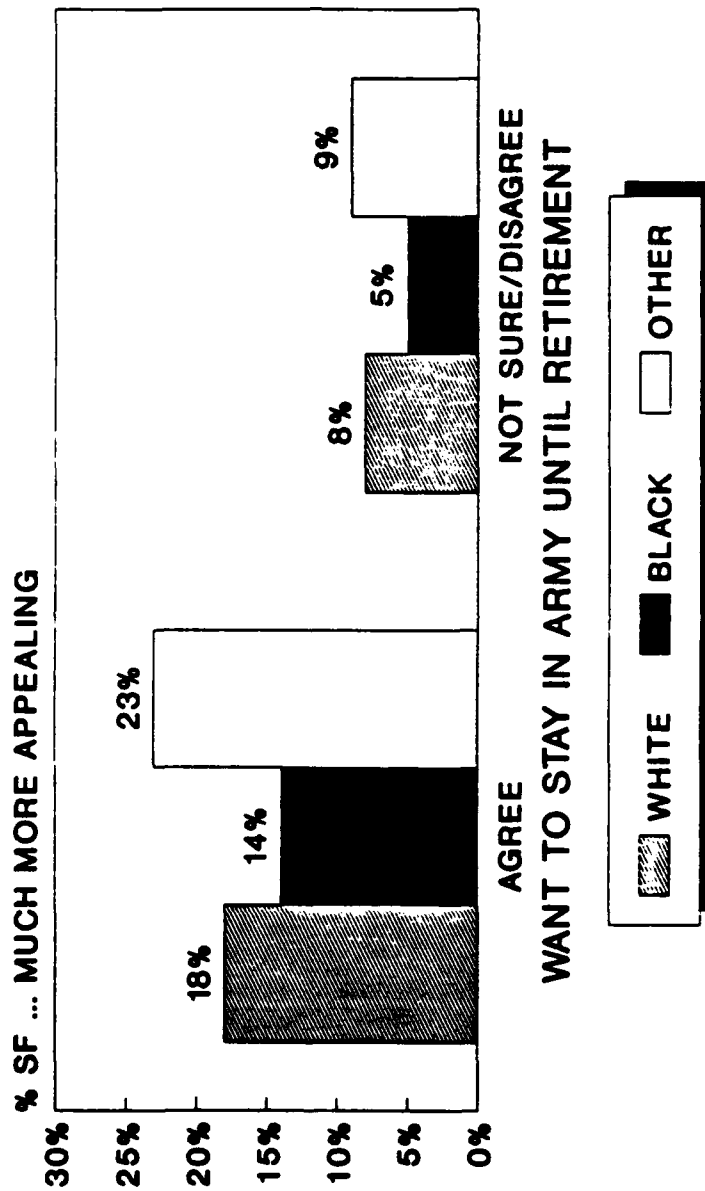
**PERCENT SAYING SF MAKES STAYING  
IN ARMY "MUCH MORE APPEALING"  
BY LIKELIHOOD INVOL SEPARATION**



ARI (JAN 92) 1990 ACSS  
SF ELIGIBLE WEIGHTED SAMPLE

**Figure 10. Interest in SF by likelihood of being targeted for involuntary separation: ACSS SF eligible sample.**

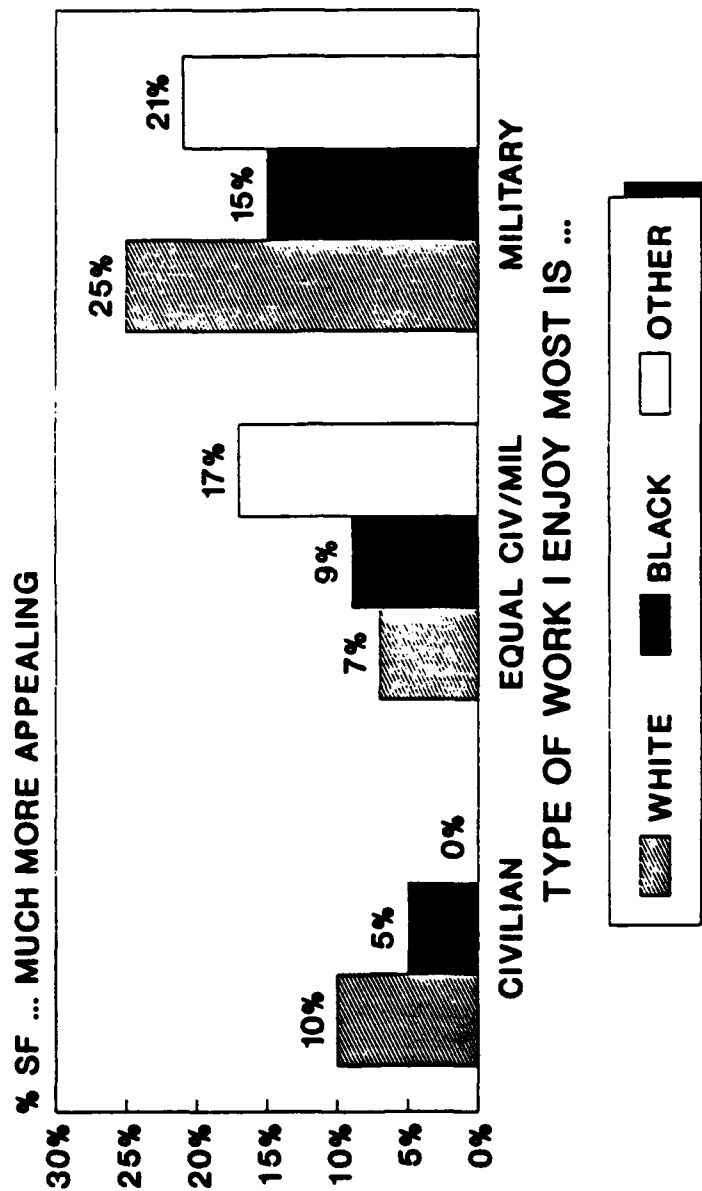
**PERCENT SAYING SF MAKES STAYING  
IN ARMY "MUCH MORE APPEALING"  
BY DESIRE TO STAY IN THE ARMY**



ARI (JAN 92) 1990 ACSS  
SF ELIGIBLE WEIGHTED SAMPLE

**Figure 11. Interest in SF by desire to stay in the Army: ACSS SF eligible sample.**

**PERCENT SAYING SF MAKES STAYING  
IN ARMY "MUCH MORE APPEALING"  
BY TYPE OF WORK ENJOYED MOST**



ARI (JAN 92) 1990 ACSS  
SF ELIGIBLE WEIGHTED SAMPLE

**Figure 12. Interest in SF by type of work enjoyed most: ACSS SF eligible sample.**

Table 7

**Responses to Career Related Items Within Race/Ethnic Groups  
in the Weighted ACSS SF Eligible Sample**

|                                                 | WHITE<br>% | BLACK<br>% | OTHER<br>% |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| "LIKELY" TO BE TARGETED<br>FOR INVOL SEPARATION | 17         | 30         | 28         |
| WANT TO STAY IN ARMY<br>UNTIL RETIREMENT        | 41         | 57         | 57         |
| PREFER MILITARY WORK                            | 22         | 18         | 30         |
| SPECIFY 18 SERIES MOS<br>AS PREFERRED MOS       | 5          | 2          | 6          |

Source: ARI, ACSS (1990) SF Eligible Weighted Sample

Figure 11 shows interest in SF as a function of desire to stay in the Army until retirement. Across all race/ethnic groups, soldiers who want to stay in the Army are more likely to be attracted to Special Forces. The kind of work the soldier prefers is also related to interest in SF (Figure 12). Not surprisingly, soldiers in all race/ethnic groups who favor military over civilian work are more interested in SF.

The final career-related item asked soldiers to specify the MOS they would choose if they could re-enlist tomorrow. Five percent (5%) of the white and 6% of the "other" soldiers specified an 18 series MOS. Only 2% of the black soldiers, however, specified one of the four SF MOS. This could be construed as evidence of a lack of serious interest in SF. Another explanation is that black soldiers are simply less likely to know the specific MOS available in Special Forces. SF eligible black soldiers are concentrated in the non-Combat Arms MOS, and thus may have had less exposure to SF. It is also possible that few know anyone in SF because of the very small number of SF qualified black soldiers.

### Summary

In summary, the ACSS analyses suggest that blacks are slightly less likely than whites to be seriously interested in Special Forces (10% vs. 12%). Soldiers in "other" minority groups appear most interested (17%). Results also suggest that

Combat Arms soldiers, and soldiers who want to stay in the Army, do not expect to be forced to leave, and enjoy military work are the most likely to be attracted to Special Forces.

The relationship between rank and interest in SF varies across race/ethnic groups. Among blacks, the more experienced soldiers are most interested in SF, whereas among whites, higher ranking soldiers are least interested. There is no clear explanation for this disparity. One might speculate, however, that lower ranking blacks are less interested in SF because they know less about it, and that interest in SF increases as black soldiers acquire more career knowledge and experience. Another possibility is that the older, more experienced black soldiers have always been more oriented toward a military career than their younger counterparts. Additional data on interest in and perceptions of SF across ranks and race/ethnic groups could facilitate recruiters' efforts to attract qualified minorities to Special Forces.

Recruiters might also consider trying to provide potential applicants with information about SF earlier in their careers. This could encourage both minority and non-minority soldiers to explore their options in Special Forces and consider whether or not they are suited for SF before they make other career plans. Efforts to include black SF qualified soldiers in high visibility positions on important recruiting trips might also enhance awareness of, and interest in SF among minorities.

## **SFAS Recruiting and Prerequisite Testing**

### **The Recruiter's Role in Prerequisite Testing**

Currently, the enlisted soldiers eligible for SF are actively recruited for SF by a team of about 20 recruiters assigned to USAREC's Special Missions Division. SF recruiters send out mass mailings to SF eligible soldiers, make site visits and offer presentations focusing on SFAS. During their presentations or informal talks with interested soldiers, recruiters discuss two important pre-requisites for SFAS: the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) and the swim test. In order to be eligible for SFAS, applicants must achieve a minimum total score of 206 on the APFT, and at least 60 points on each component (run, sit ups, push ups), based on 17 to 21 year old standards. In addition, applicants must be able to swim 50 meters in boots and fatigues.

The goal in recruiting is to have recruiters administer the APFT and swim tests in the field and certify that all applicants can meet standards before they are scheduled for SFAS. This is

not always practical or possible, however. Recruiters are generally responsible for a large geographic area and do much of their work on the road. Schedule conflicts, time constraints, or the lack of swimming pools can make it impossible to test all applicants prior to SFAS. For example, in one recent SFAS class (2-92), only about two thirds of the active duty enlisted candidates reported that they had taken recruiter administered prerequisite tests. The SF recruiting liaison NCO's at Ft. Bragg give similar percentages, estimating that roughly 60% to 65% of all active duty applicants are pre-tested on SFAS prerequisites by recruiters in the field.

Data from the recent survey of candidates in the 2-92 SFAS attest to the importance of recruiter pre-testing. Among active duty enlisted candidates who said they were field tested by a recruiter, only 8% failed the swim or physical fitness tests in SFAS. Candidates who were not pre-tested by recruiters, however, had 20% to 22% failure rates on these events.

When recruiters were asked to comment on minority representation issues during interviews conducted in the fall of 1991, several indicated that black soldiers are more likely than whites to be concerned about the swim test. Although precise numbers are not available, recruiters generally agree that more black than white candidates are either dissuaded from applying for Special Forces or are disqualified prior to SFAS because of the swim test.

Recruiter observations about the swim test are consistent with data from a 1989 TRADOC study on the swimming ability of entry level soldiers (see Appendix A). Out of the 705 male soldiers tested across six installations, fully 74% of the blacks were classified as non-swimmers, compared to only 19% of the whites and 37% of the "other" soldiers. In other words, among entry level soldiers, blacks are almost four times as likely as whites to fail a basic swim test. These data are also consistent with the SFAS prerequisite failure rates for FY91 reported below.

#### SFAS Prerequisite Failure Rates

The first three days of SFAS are devoted to in-processing and prerequisite testing. Early the first morning, all candidates take both the APFT and the swim test. The tests are administered by SFAS cadre under conditions designed to be as standardized as possible, and cadre are scrupulous about neither encouraging nor berating candidates. Candidates who fail either test are given a second opportunity the morning of the third day. If a candidate fails only the APFT, he only repeats the APFT. However, if a candidate fails the swim test he must repeat both tests to replicate conditions of the initial test.

One might assume that few SFAS candidates would fail these tests in light of the emphasis recruiters report that they place on SFAS prerequisites in their recruiting presentations. A fairly high percentage of candidates (about 15%) do fail, however.

Figure 13 shows the SFAS prerequisite test results within race/ethnic categories for enlisted, active duty candidates attending SFAS in FY91. The disparity between minority and non-minority swim test failure rates is striking. Almost 11% of all black candidates are eliminated solely because of the swim test, in contrast to only 1.3% of the white candidates. Adding in candidates who failed both the swim and PT tests brings the total swim fail rate for blacks to just over 16%, compared to less than 3% for whites, and 7.5% for "others". The relatively high number of blacks who fail both tests could be due, in part at least, to an expectation that performance on the second swim test will be no better than performance on the first. Candidates who expect to be eliminated from SFAS for failing the second swim test may not do their best on the mandatory APFT re-test.

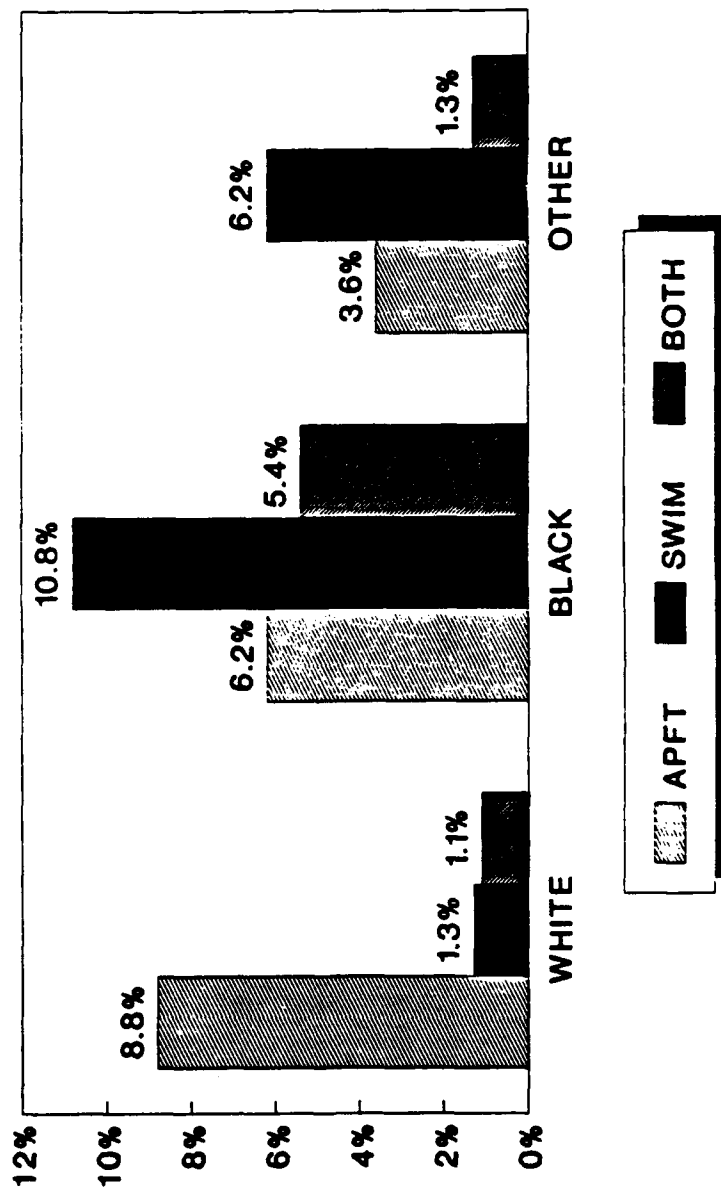
The total percentages of white, black and "other" candidates in FY91 who (a) were dropped during the first three days for failing to meet prerequisites, and (b) who were ultimately selected for SF training are shown in Figure 14. The prerequisite failures include the small percentage of soldiers dropped for medical or administrative reasons during in-processing, in addition to those who failed the APFT or swim tests.

As Figure 14 illustrates, black candidates were more than twice as likely as other candidates to be eliminated from SFAS during this in-processing stage. In light of their high (28%) prerequisite failure rate, it is remarkable that the overall success rate for blacks (40%) is identical to that of other candidates. The reasons for this are explored in the next section through analyses that compare SFAS performance and assessment outcomes across race/ethnic groups.

### Summary

It is apparent from several different data sources that black soldiers have more difficulty passing swim tests than non-black soldiers. The reasons for this are not clear, although socio-economic disadvantages, and cultural, geographic, and physiological differences have all been suggested as factors. The consequences cannot be disputed, however. A conservative estimate is that over twice as many black as white candidates are eliminated from SFAS because of the swim test. It is not known how many more qualified black soldiers never even make it to SFAS because they fail recruiter administered tests or decide not to apply because they cannot swim.

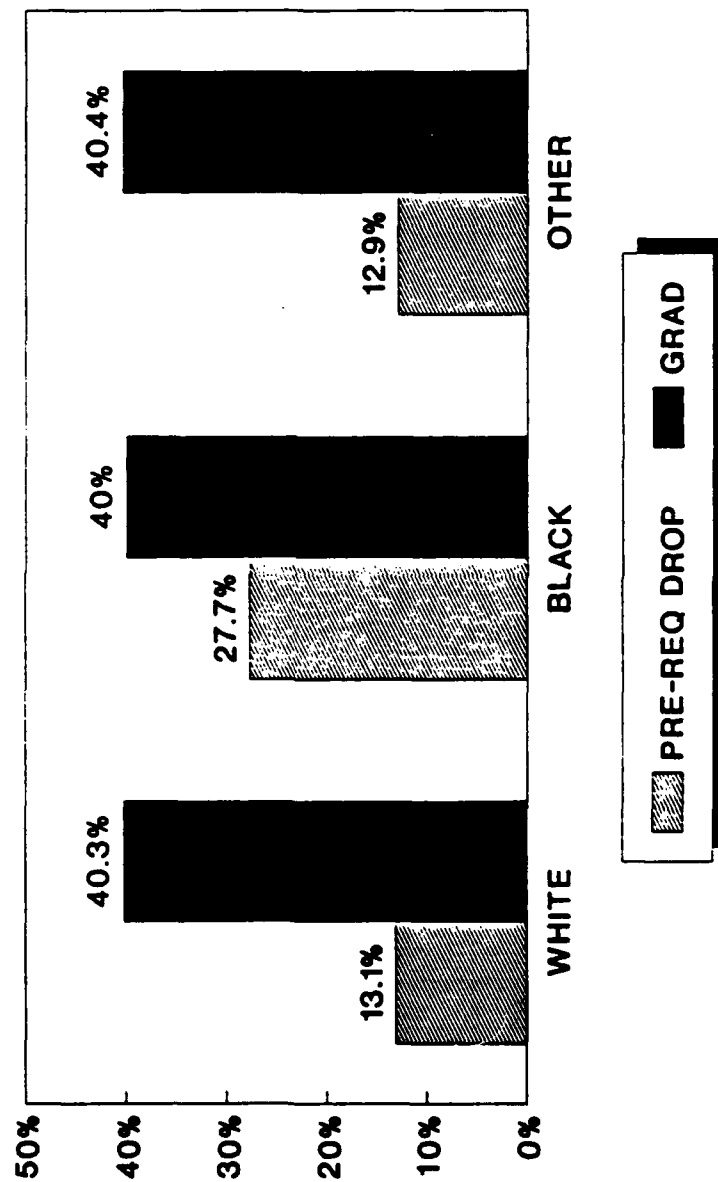
# SFAS FY91 ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED PERCENT FAILING APFT AND SWIM TEST WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS



ARI (JAN 92) SFAS DATABASE

Figure 13. Percent failing APFT and swim tests by race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY91.

# **SFAS FY91 ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED PERCENT PRE-REQ DROPS AND GRADS WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS**



ARI (JAN 92) SFAS DATABASE

Figure 14. Percent prerequisite failures and graduates by race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY91.

It is difficult to predict what effect, if any, the high prerequisite failure rate among blacks may have on efforts to recruit within the black SF eligible market. One could speculate, however, that as black candidates return to their units with news of their demoralizing experience, other black soldiers, particularly the weak swimmers, might abandon any thoughts of joining Special Forces.

Concerted efforts to ensure that all candidates are adequately tested prior to SFAS would reduce the overall number of prerequisite failures and might eliminate the disparity in the swim test failure rates of black and white candidates. If realistic field testing were combined with efforts to make sure that weak swimmers (a) know the conditions under which they will be tested at SFAS, (b) are aware of the steps they can take to improve their swimming ability, and (c) have plenty of time to practice before they are scheduled for SFAS, the proportion of blacks who volunteer for and successfully complete SFAS might be appreciably increased.

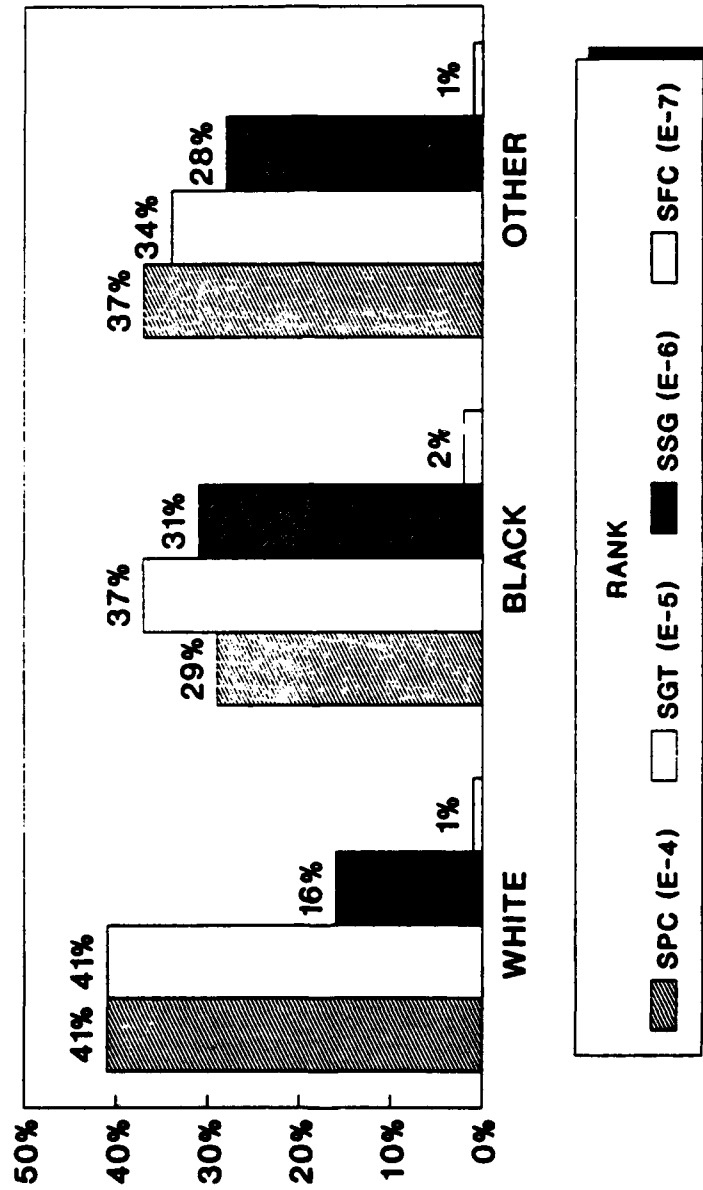
Specific suggestions offered by USAREC and USAJFKSWCS staff for addressing the swim test problem range from eliminating the swim test for SFAS and making it a prerequisite for the SFQC instead, to bringing weak swimmers to Ft. Bragg early for several days of intensive swimming classes. USAREC has also expressed an interest in collaborating with the swimming proponent at Ft. Benning to develop a swimming program nonswimmers could complete at Ft. Benning or another site en route to Ft. Bragg. At a minimum, however, it appears that it would be wise to require that all candidates pass a recruiter-administered swim test before they report to Ft. Bragg. Adequate pre-testing would ensure that all candidates are at least aware of their weaknesses. Then with some encouragement and assistance from recruiters, those motivated to improve would be afforded the time to do so before they were sent to SFAS.

## Special Forces Assessment and Selection

### SFAS Candidate Demographics

In SFAS, a soldier's military background and experience can be an important factor in his ability to successfully complete the program. Four variables worth examining in this respect are rank, years of service, type of MOS, and special training. Figures 15 through 18 show differences across race/ethnic groups on these variables for the active duty enlisted candidates attending SFAS in FY91.

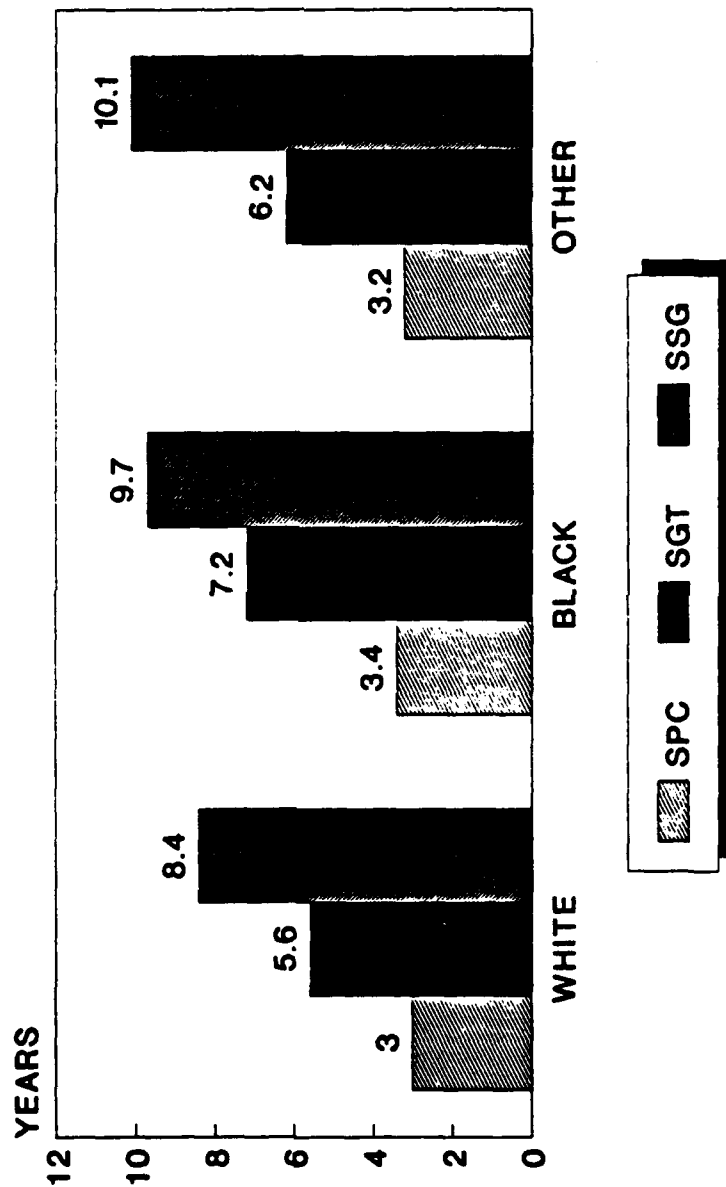
# SFAS FY91 ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED RANK DISTRIBUTION WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS



ARI (JAN 92) SFAS DATABASE

Figure 15. Rank distribution by race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY91.

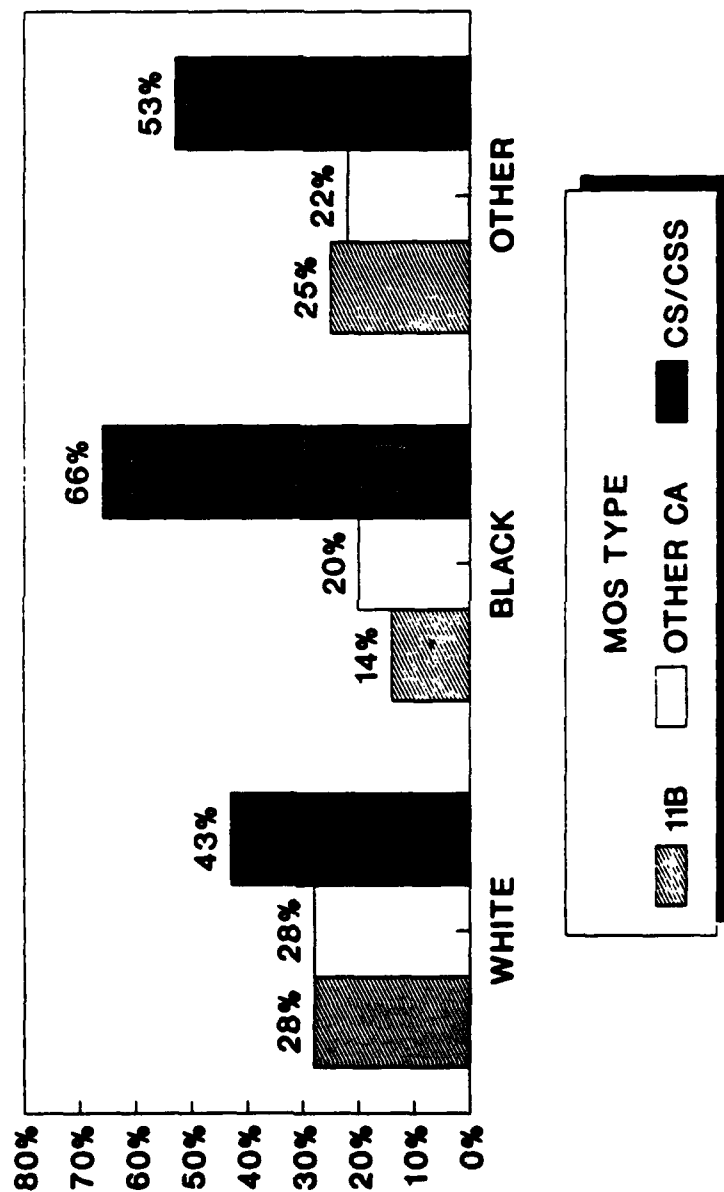
# SFAS FY91 ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED AVERAGE YEARS SERVICE ACROSS RANKS WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS



ARI (JAN 92) SFAS DATABASE

Figure 16. Average years of service across ranks by race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY91.

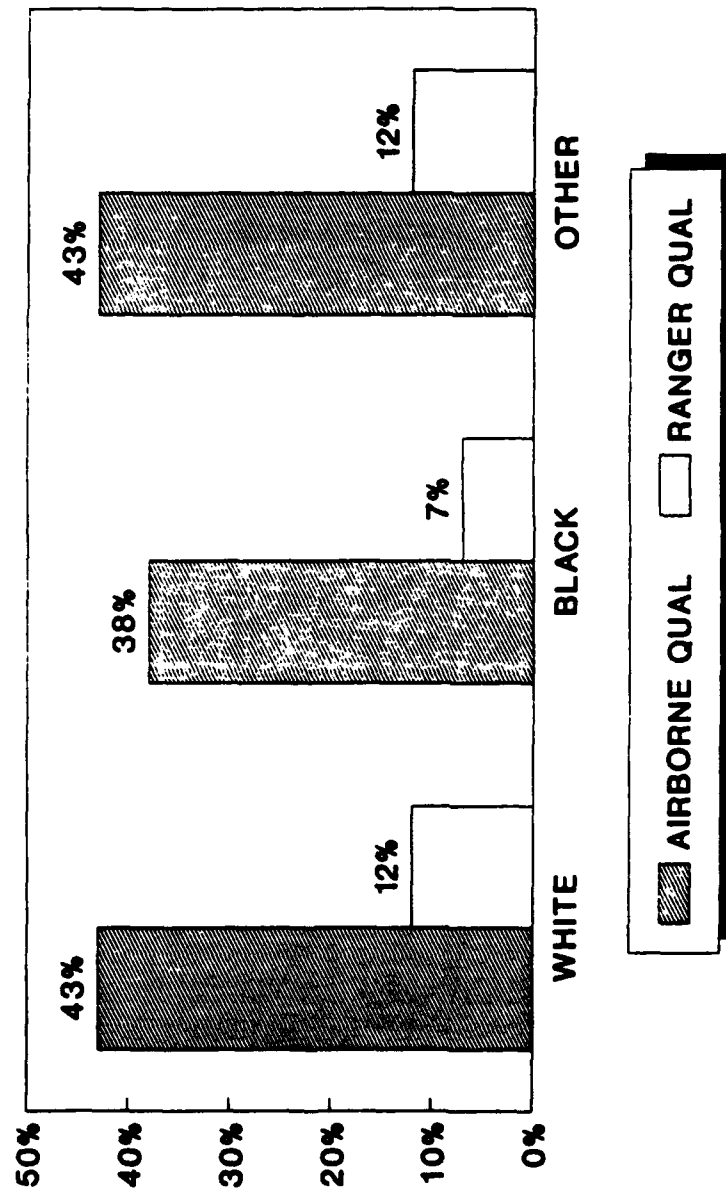
# SFAS FY91 ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED DISTRIBUTION OF MOS TYPES WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS



ARI (JAN 92) SFAS DATABASE

Figure 17. MOS types by race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY91.

**SFAS FY91 ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED  
PERCENT RANGER, AIRBORNE QUALIFIED  
WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS**



ARI (JAN 92) SFAS DATABASE

**Figure 18. Percent Ranger/Airborne qualified by race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY91.**

Black SFAS candidates tend to be higher ranking (Figure 15) and more experienced (Figure 16) than candidates in other race/ethnic groups. In fact, in FY91, black candidates were almost twice as likely as whites (31% vs. 16%) to be Staff Sergeants, and within ranks blacks tended to have more time in service. The relatively high proportion of black Staff Sergeants in SFAS is consistent with both the higher proportion of black Staff Sergeants in the SF eligible population, and the tendency for higher ranking blacks to be more interested in SF than lower ranking black soldiers.

With respect to MOS type, Combat Arms soldiers in all race/ethnic groups are overrepresented in SFAS (by a factor of 1.5 for blacks to 1.75 for whites) relative to their proportion in the population. This is consistent with the ACSS data showing greater interest in SF among Combat Arms soldiers.

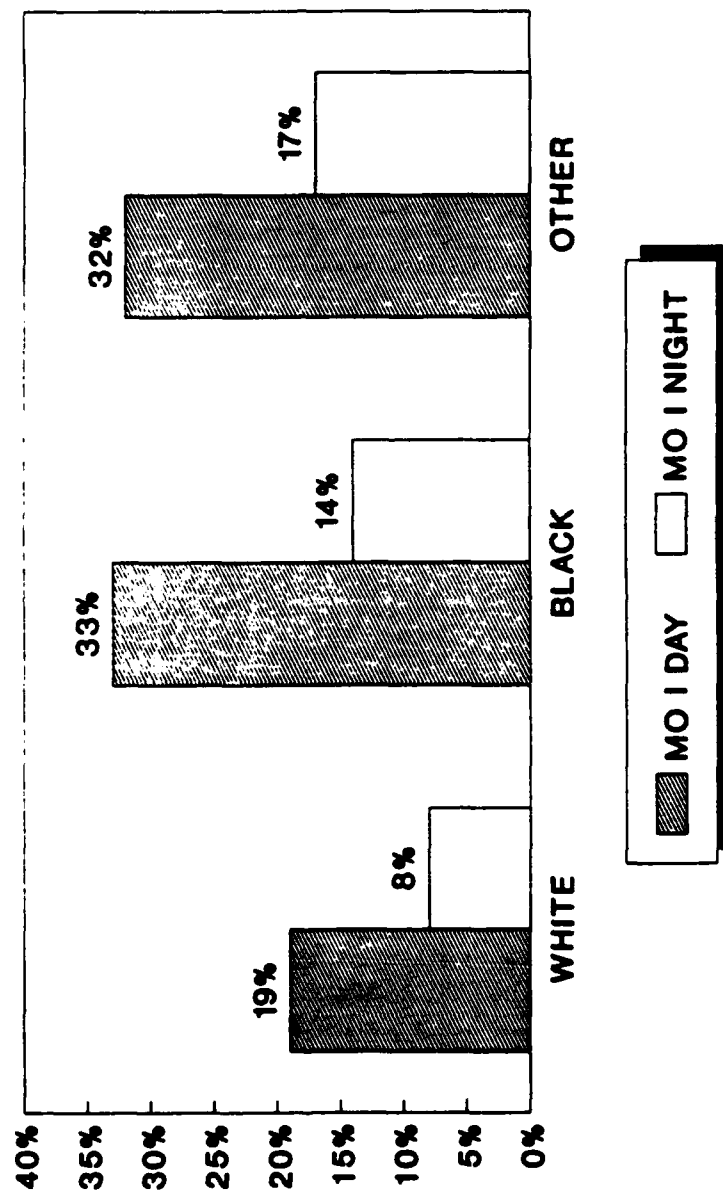
It is important to note, however, that there is still a significant disparity in the military backgrounds of white and black SFAS candidates. Only about one third of all black SFAS candidates have Combat Arms MOS, compared to 57% of the white soldiers and 47% of the "other" soldiers (Figure 17). Their relative lack of combat arms experience can place black soldiers at a disadvantage in assessment and training events requiring basic skills in areas like land navigation, patrolling and rucksack marching. In FY91, for example, the overall SFAS select rate for active duty, enlisted, Combat Arms soldiers was 48%, compared to only 31% for non-Combat Arms soldiers. There are also slightly fewer Ranger qualified black soldiers, and Rangers have a clear advantage in SFAS (71% of the Rangers vs. 35% of the non-Ranger candidates were selected).

#### SFAS Performance and Assessment Outcomes

The most problematic events for black soldiers in SFAS (once they have conquered the swim test) are the military orienteering events conducted at the end of Phase I. Figures 19, 20, and 21 show the percentages of white, black, and "other" candidates with unsatisfactory times on each of the six military orienteering (MO) events. Across all events, a higher (7% to 16%) percentage of black than white candidates received unsatisfactory ratings.

The high percentage of unsatisfactory MO ratings among both black and "other" soldiers is reflected in the Board I outcomes. As Figure 22 illustrates, only 5% of the white candidates were dropped by the selection board convened after Phase I, compared to almost 12% of the black and "other" soldiers. The outcomes of the final SFAS selection board were more similar across race/ethnic groups (7% to 10% dropped across race/ethnic groups).

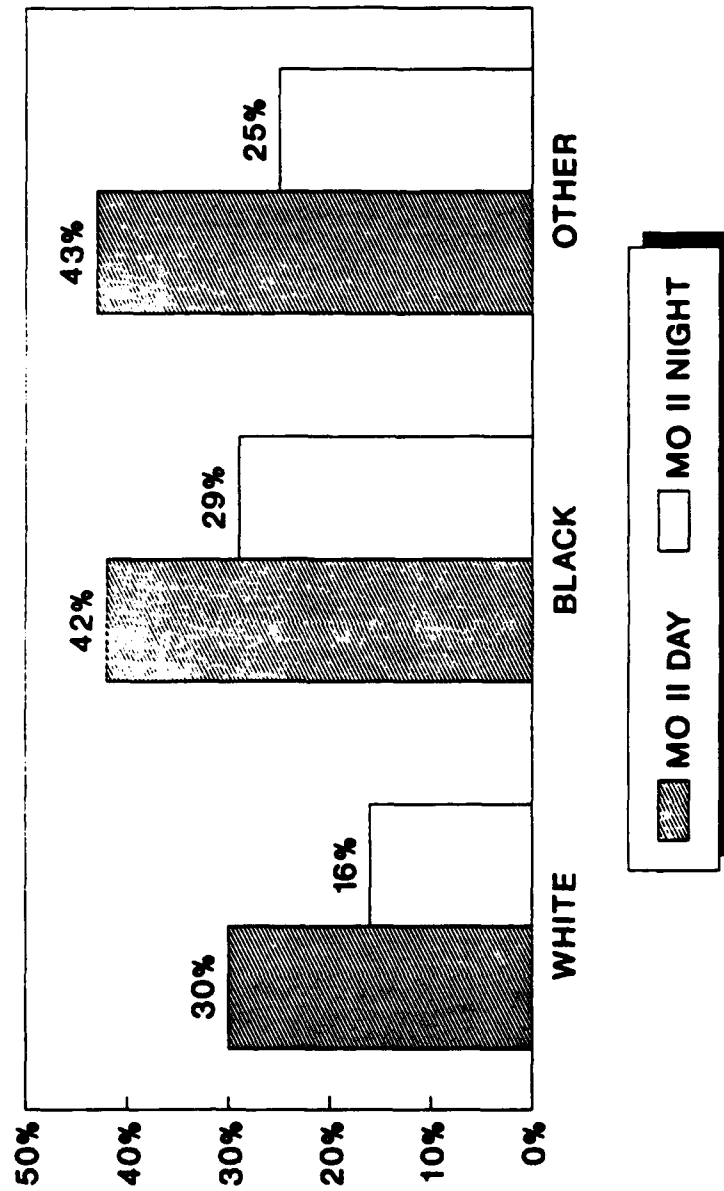
# SFAS FY91 ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED PERCENT UNSAT ON MIL ORIENTEERING WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS



ARI (JAN 92) SFAS DATABASE

Figure 19. Percent unsatisfactory ratings on Military Orienteering I (day and night) events by race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY91.

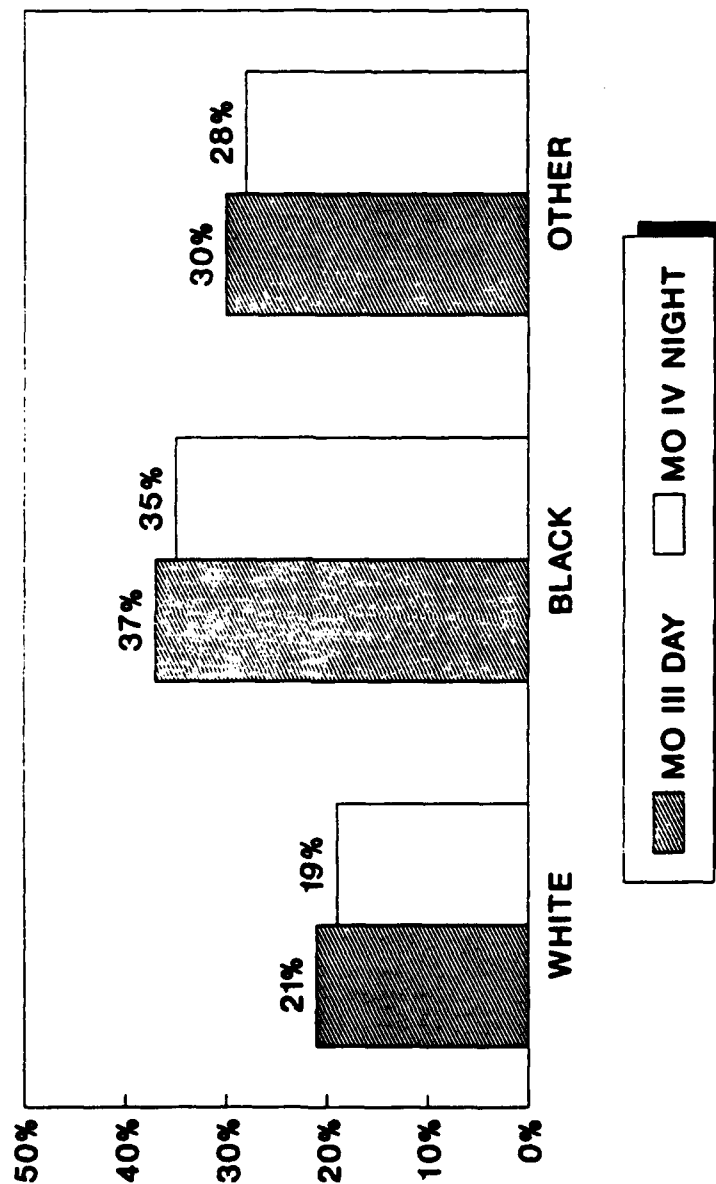
# SFAS FY91 ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED PERCENT UNSAT ON MIL ORIENTEERING WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS



ARI (JAN 92) SFAS DATABASE

Figure 20. Percent unsatisfactory ratings on Military Orienteering II (day and night) events by race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY91.

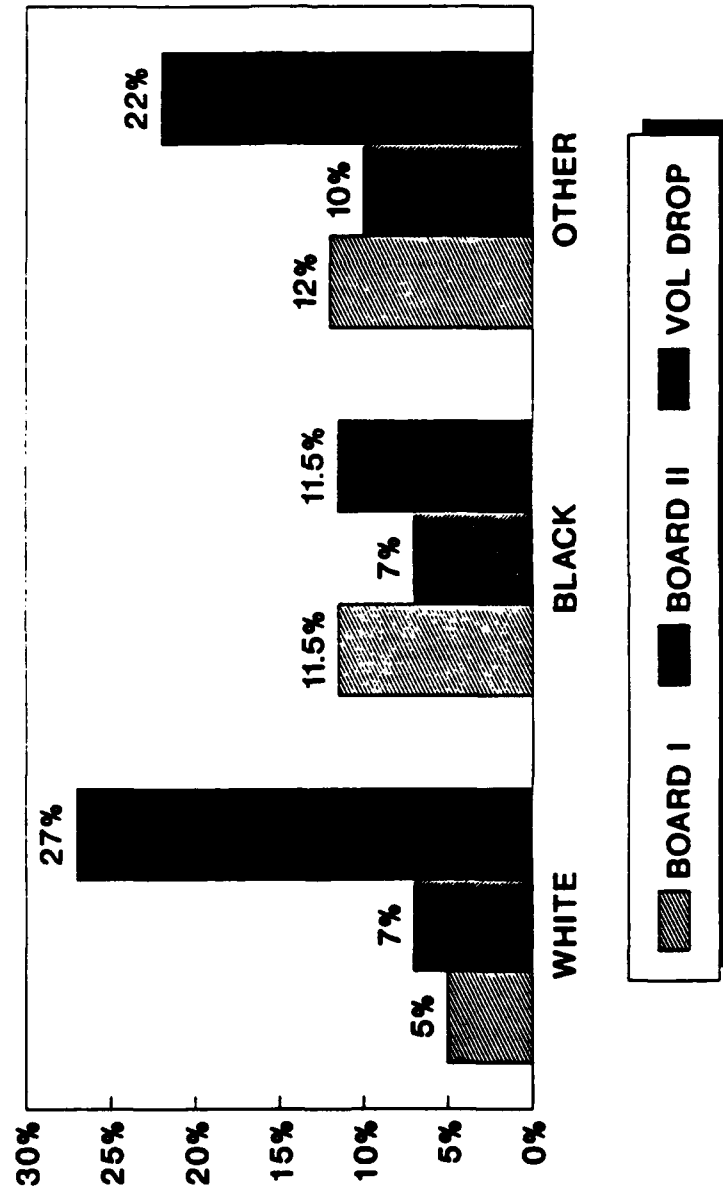
**SFAS FY91 ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED  
PERCENT UNSAT ON MIL ORIENTEERING  
WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS**



ARI (JAN 92) SFAS DATABASE

Figure 21. Percent unsatisfactory ratings on Military Orienteering III and IV events by race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY91.

# SFAS FY91 ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED PERCENT BOARD AND VOLUNTARY DROPS WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS



ARI (JAN 92) SFAS DATABASE

Figure 22. Percent board and voluntary drops by race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY91.

The factor that appears to explain the comparable overall select rates of black candidates (despite their poorer performance on the swim test and military orienteering events) is their commitment to the program. Only 11.5% of all entering black candidates voluntarily withdrew from SFAS, compared to 27% of the white and 22% of the "other" minority group candidates. This trend held across all ranks, however, black Staff Sergeants appeared particularly loath to quit - only 1 of the 41 (2.4%) black Staff Sergeants who attended SFAS in FY91 voluntarily withdrew, in contrast to 21% (13 out of 63) of the "other" and 28% (72 out of 261) of the white Staff Sergeants. There is no obvious explanation for this phenomenon, however, it is possible that the senior ranking black soldiers in SFAS may feel an added responsibility to serve as role models for their peers. Blacks comprise a small, but visible minority in SFAS (the number of blacks per class in FY91 ranged from 4 to 23). Black Staff Sergeants may be especially cognizant of the impact they could have on the motivation of lower ranking black soldiers if they were to quit.

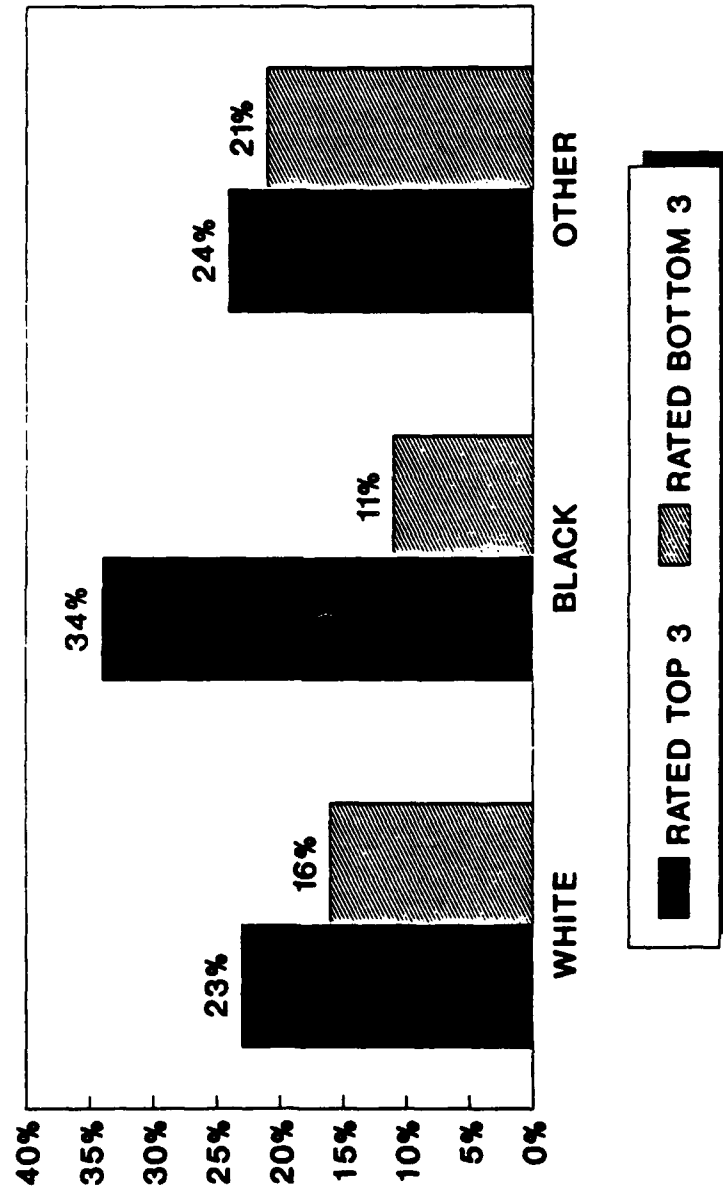
Peer ratings following the SFAS team events in Phase II suggest that black candidates do, in fact, excel in leadership. Figure 23 shows that one third (33%) of all black candidates were rated by their peers as being first, second or third in their 12 to 13 man teams in terms of leadership potential. In contrast, fewer than one quarter of all other candidates were rated as being among the top three in their groups. Similarly, more white and "other" candidates received ratings that placed them in the bottom three categories.

### Summary

The large majority of black soldiers attracted to SF appear to be physically fit and motivated to succeed in SFAS. They are considerably less likely than their white counterparts, however, to have had experience in the MOS associated with success in SFAS. This, no doubt, contributes to the relatively poorer performance of blacks on the military orienteering events.

At the same time, a higher percentage of black candidates are Staff Sergeants, and the maturity and leadership experiences of these soldiers may offer certain advantages. The strengths of black candidates in the team and leadership events, combined with their determination to complete the program appear to compensate for weaknesses in swimming and military orienteering. As the percentages in Table 8 indicate, the proportion of black graduates in FY91 was equal to the proportion of blacks entering SFAS, despite their much higher (28%) pre-requisite failure rate.

**SFAS FY91 ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED  
AVERAGE PEER RATINGS  
WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS**



ARI (JAN 92) SFAS DATABASE

Figure 23. Average peer ratings by race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY91.

Table 8

Minority Composition of Soldiers Reporting for SFAS,  
Meeting Prerequisites, and Graduating in FY91

|               | WHITE<br>% | BLACK<br>% | HISP/OTHER<br>% |
|---------------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| Entering      | 81.8       | 6.7        | 11.5            |
| Pass Pre-reqs | 82.6       | 5.7        | 11.7            |
| Graduate      | 81.8       | 6.6        | 11.6            |

Source: SFAS FY91 Database

It does appear, however, that it might be worthwhile to try to ensure that soldiers from non-Combat Arms MOS understand what will be expected of them in terms of military orienteering and land navigation skills. It is assumed that all candidates for SFAS and the SFQC have achieved and retained skill level I in land navigation. For soldiers in non-Combat Arms MOS, however, this assumption may not be warranted. Providing applicants with a realistic preview of the specific skills required and perhaps some kind of self-study guide or reference booklet could help all soldiers prepare for SFAS. More importantly, it would allow highly motivated soldiers from the "soft skill" MOS to compensate for any deficiencies they might have in skill areas required in Special Forces assessment and training.

#### The Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC)

##### SFQC Database and Sample

The SFQC analyses are based on active duty enlisted candidates who completed SFAS in FY89 and attended the SFQC during FY89, FY90, FY91 or the first class conducted in FY92. The preliminary longitudinal database used in these analyses was built from SFQC class records in the Army Training Records and Reservations (ATRRS) database and the SFAS FY89 research database. Several variables from the EMF were also added to the file (e.g., race/ethnic group, AFQT score, active duty status). The EMF race/ethnic variable was used for the minority analyses.

In all, there were 703 active duty enlisted SFAS graduates in FY89. Three graduates, however, were missing in the EMF and did not have race data in the SFAS file. This reduced the sample for the minority analyses to 700. According to ATRRS files for FY89 through FY91, 658 of these SFAS selectees (94%) eventually attended the Qualification Course. Blacks (10.3%, n=6) were slightly more likely than whites (5.5%, n=32) or "other"

candidates (6.3%, n=4) to fail to appear for SFQC. According to the EMF, 36% of the candidates who did not report for SFQC had left the Army by the end of FY90, and a total of 43% had left the Army by the end of FY91.

Table 9 shows the minority composition of the group of soldiers who (a) were SFAS graduates (i.e., selected for SFQC) in FY89, (b) attended the Qualification Course sometime during FY89 through FY91, and (c) had graduated from the SFQC by the end of the first class conducted in FY92 (class 1-92). As the table shows, black and "other" soldiers are slightly underrepresented among SFQC graduates relative to the proportion entering SFQC.

Table 9

SFAS FY89 Active Duty Enlisted:  
Minority Composition of SFAS and SFQC Graduates

|              |     | White | Black | Other | Total |
|--------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| SFAS FY89    | %   | 82.5% | 8.3%  | 9.1%  | 100%  |
| Graduates    | (N) | (578) | (58)  | (64)  | (700) |
| Entered SFQC | %   | 82.9% | 7.9%  | 9.1%  | 100%  |
|              | (N) | (546) | (52)  | (60)  | (658) |
| SFQC         | %   | 85.8% | 6.1%  | 8.1%  | 100%  |
| Graduates    | (N) | (477) | (34)  | (45)  | (556) |

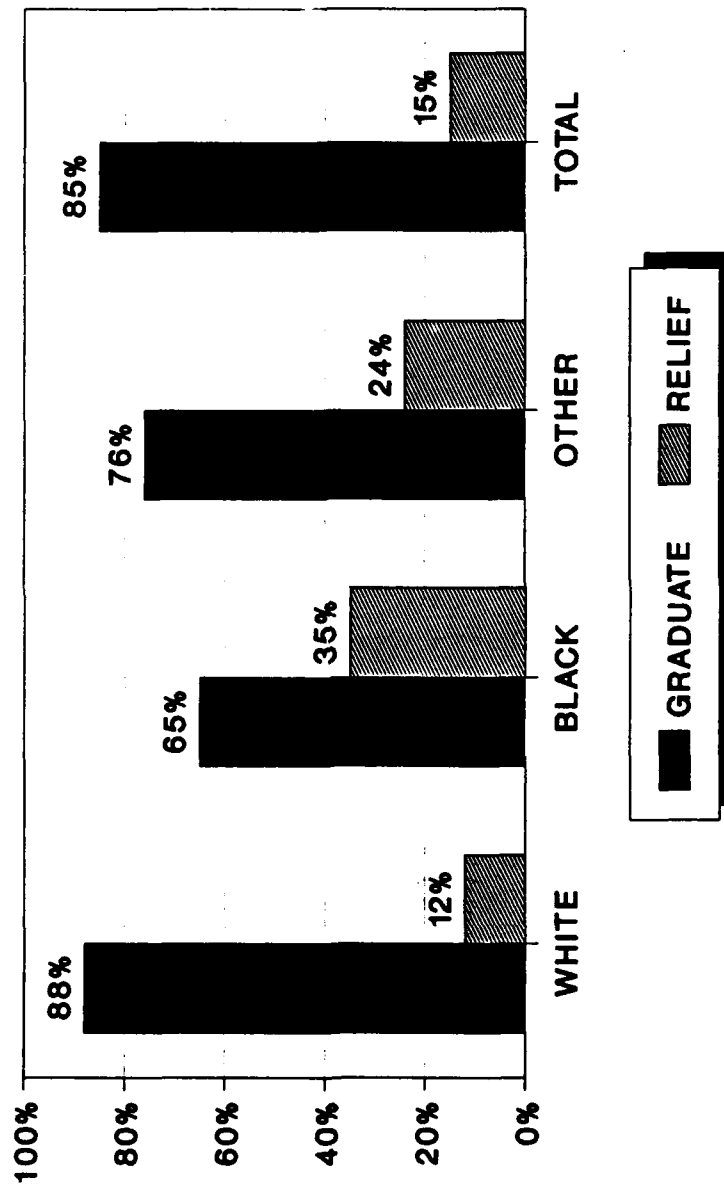
Source: ARI FY89 SFAS-SFQC Database

SFQC Outcomes in Demographic Groups

Figure 24 shows the percentages of soldiers within each race/ethnic group who had graduated or had been relieved from training as of the first class of FY92. There were three trainees (all medics) who were excluded from the analyses because their final status could not be determined from ATRRS. This resulted in a sample size of 665 (556 graduates and 99 reliefs).

Figure 24 shows very clearly the discrepancy in white and minority graduation rates. Among the white soldiers who attended the SFQC, 88% ultimately graduated, compared to only 65% of the black trainees and 76% of the soldiers in "other" race/ethnic groups.

# **SFAS FY89 GRADS ATTENDING SFQC** **SFQC OUTCOMES AS OF CLASS 1-92** **WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS**



ARI (AUG 92) SFAS-SFQC DATABASE

**Figure 24. SFQC outcomes by race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY89 graduates.**

In an effort to uncover reasons for the relatively low graduation rate for black soldiers, several demographic factors were examined in relation to success in training. The results of these analyses can only be considered suggestive at this point, however, because there are so few minority soldiers in certain groups. As SFQC outcomes become available for FY90 SFAS graduates the trends described below can be confirmed or disconfirmed.

Military background is one factor related to success in the SFQC and appears to account in part, at least, for the lower graduation rate among black trainees. Overall, 88% of all Combat Arms soldiers graduated, versus 80% of the soldiers from non-Combat Arms MOS. As indicated in Figure 25, black SFQC trainees (like SF eligible blacks in general) are considerably more likely to come from non-Combat Arms MOS (58%) than whites (35%).

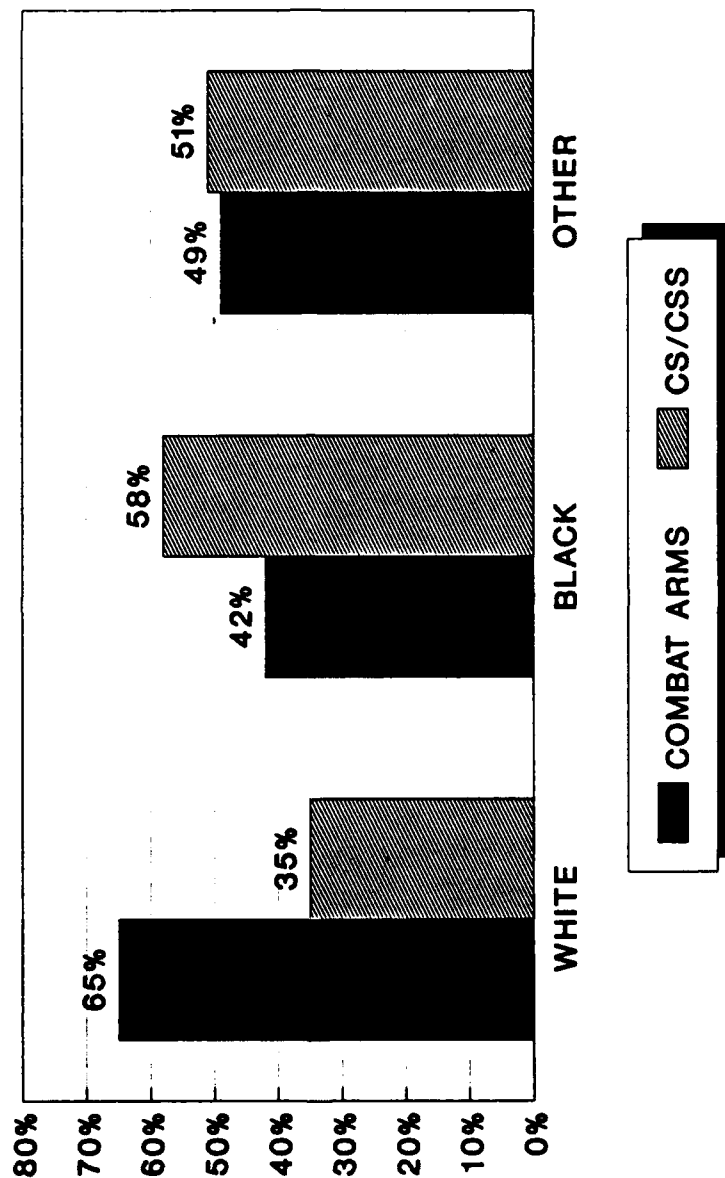
Figure 26 shows the graduation rates for white, black and other soldiers broken out by Combat Arms vs. non-Combat Arms backgrounds. The graduation rate for black Combat Arms soldiers (71%) is still quite low compared to whites with Combat Arms backgrounds (89%), however, blacks from Combat Support and Combat Service Support MOS clearly have the most difficulty in SFQC, with a graduation rate of only 59%.

Specialized training is also strongly related to success for black soldiers, although it makes little difference for white and "other" trainees (see Figure 27). Just under half (48%) of all blacks and just over half of all white (52%) and "other" (54%) trainees were either Ranger or Airborne qualified. Among blacks, those who were Airborne or Ranger qualified had a strong advantage (80% graduated) relative to blacks without this kind of experience (52% graduated).

Success in the SFQC was also strongly related to rank for black soldiers, although, again, similar effects are not found for white and "other" soldiers. As illustrated in Figure 28, black Specialists and Sergeants were 22% more likely to be SFQC graduates than more senior NCO's. Interestingly, rank has the opposite effect among white and "other" soldiers - higher ranking soldiers are slightly more likely to graduate.

A clear profile of the successful black SFQC candidate emerges from these analyses - he is likely to be a Combat Arms Sergeant (those from MOS 11B appear to be especially successful) who has completed Ranger or Airborne training. Graduation rates for soldiers in this highly qualified group are close to the overall graduation rates for white soldiers. It is not clear from the analyses, however, why black soldiers without this background fare so poorly in the SFQC relative to white and "other" soldiers in the same situation.

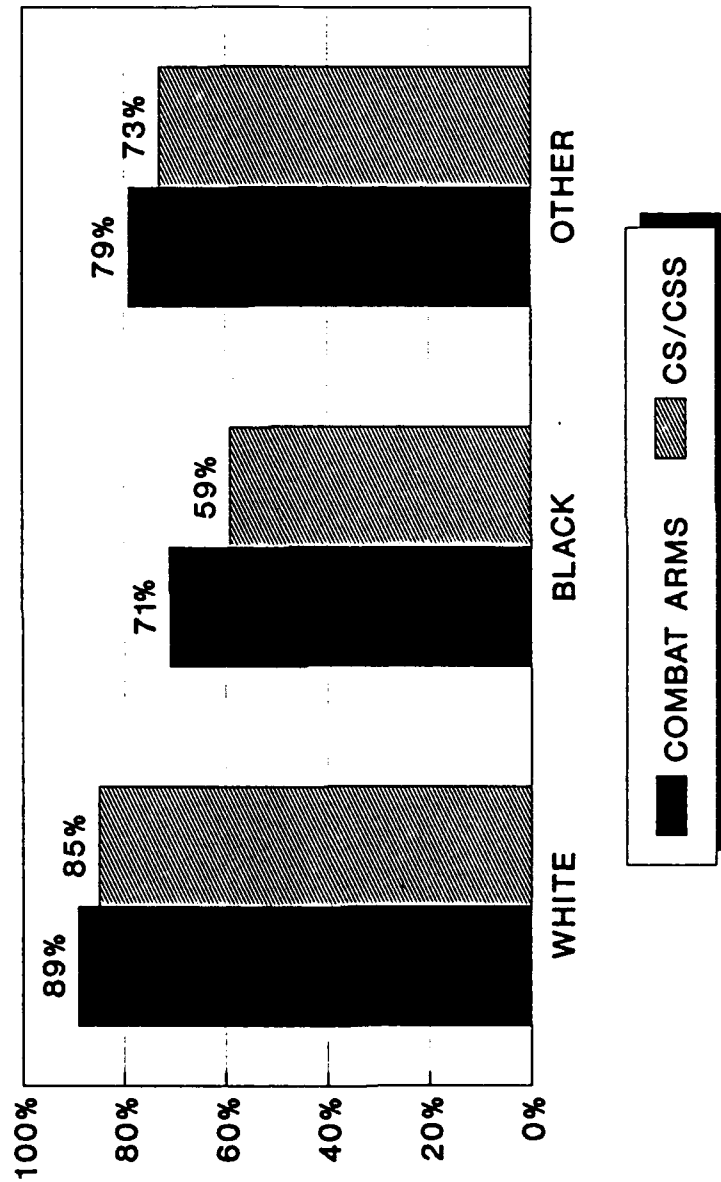
# **SFAS FY89 GRADS ATTENDING SFQC** **DISTRIBUTION OF MOS TYPES** **WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS**



ARI (AUG 92) SFAS-SFQC DATABASE

**Figure 25. MOS types by race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY89 graduates.**

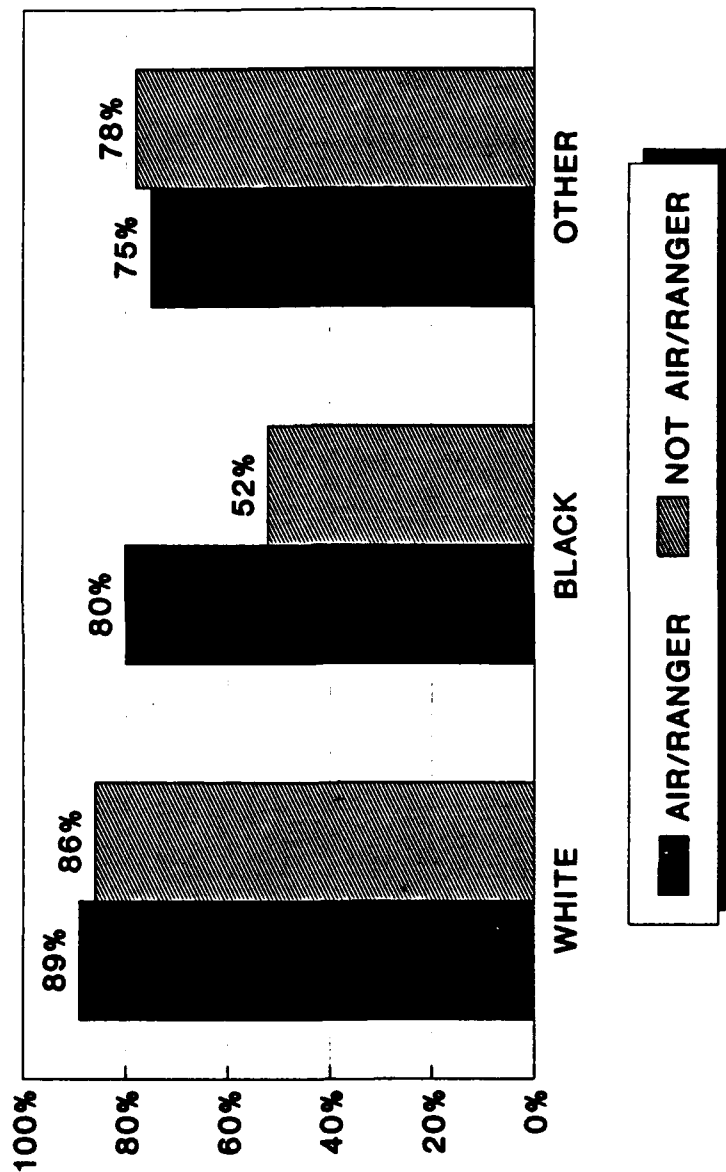
**SFAS FY89 GRADS ATTENDING SFQC  
PERCENT GRADUATING SFQC  
BY MOS TYPE WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS**



ARI (AUG 92) SFAS-SFQC DATABASE

**Figure 26. Percent SFQC graduates by MOS type in race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY89 graduates.**

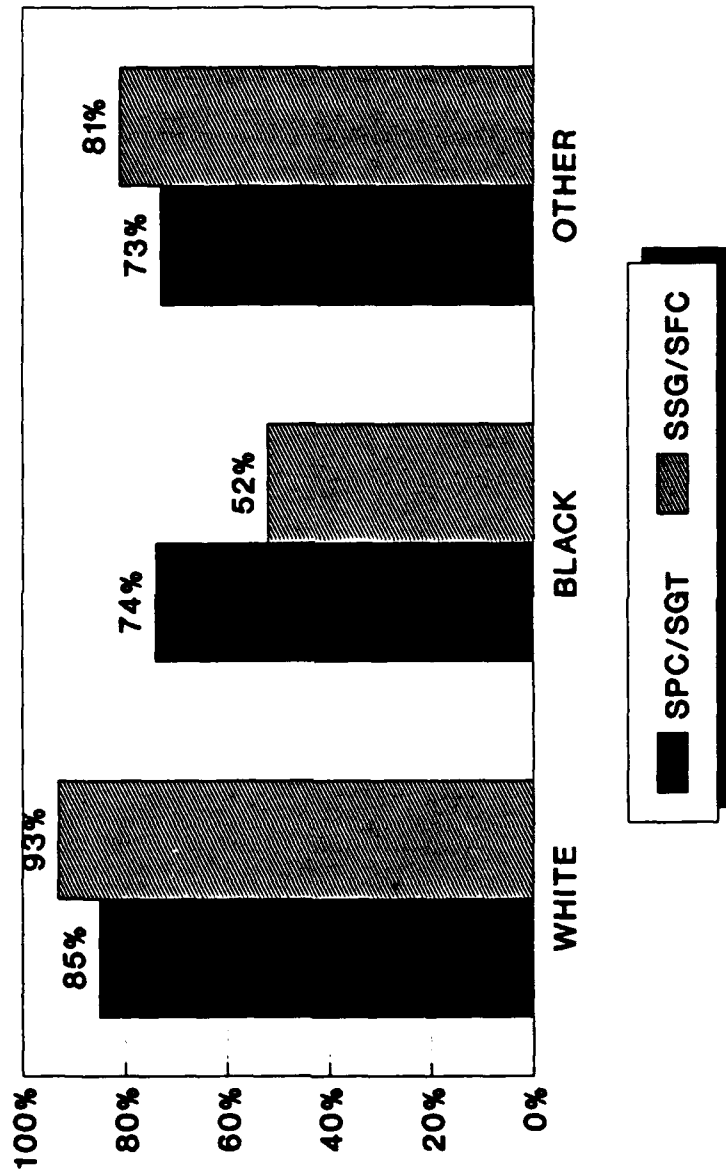
**SFAS FY89 GRADS ATTENDING SFQC  
PERCENT GRADUATING SFQC BY AIRBORNE/  
RANGER QUALIFIED IN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS**



ARI (AUG 92) SFAS-SFQC DATABASE

**Figure 27. Percent SFQC graduates by Ranger/Airborne status in race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY89 graduates.**

# **SFAS FY89 GRADS ATTENDING SFQC PERCENT GRADUATING SFQC BY RANK WITHIN RACE/ETHNIC GROUPS**



ARI (AUG 92) SFAS-SFQC DATABASE

**Figure 28. Percent SFQC graduates by rank in race/ethnic groups: SFAS FY89 graduates.**

One factor worth examining in this respect is a possible discrepancy in the academic capabilities of white and non-white soldiers. The SFQC is very demanding intellectually, and this is the reason for the requirement that soldiers score at least one half standard deviation above the mean on the GT composite of the ASVAB. It is possible that this test or this particular cut-off does not effectively screen out soldiers who are likely to have difficulty in SF training.

An examination of AFQT scores by race/ethnic groups for SFAS FY89 graduates who attended SFQC indicates that black soldiers are concentrated at the lower end of the distribution. Half of all black SFQC trainees and 57% of all "other" trainees in the sample scored in the lowest two AFQT categories (IIIB and IV), compared to only 16% of the white trainees. Similarly, only one fourth (25%) of the black trainees (and 23% of the "others") scored in the top two categories compared to 61% of the white soldiers. Among trainees scoring in the top two AFQT categories graduation rates were uniformly high across race/ethnic groups (85% for blacks, 87% for whites, 92% for "other"). These preliminary results (trends need to be confirmed with larger samples) suggest that poorer academic preparation may be one of the most critical underlying reasons for the lower minority SFQC graduation rates. ASVAB composites other than, or in addition to the GT may facilitate efforts to identify minority soldiers likely to be successful in the SFQC.

### Conclusions

The analyses conducted for this report offer several explanations for the low proportion of black soldiers in Special Forces. First, SF eligibility requirements, particularly the minimum GT score, reduce the proportion of black soldiers in the SF eligible market from approximately 33% to 20%. If all other factors (i.e., interest in SF, assessment and training outcomes) were equal, one would expect that blacks would comprise about 20% of all SF qualified Sergeants and Staff Sergeants.

Other factors are not equal, however. The ACSS analyses suggest that blacks are slightly less likely than whites (10% vs. 12%), and considerably less likely than other minority group soldiers (17%) to indicate that the prospect of Special Forces makes staying in the Army "much more appealing". Although these differences are not large, if they reflect the proportion of soldiers likely to actually apply for SF within each group, the "high propensity" SF market includes an even smaller proportion of black soldiers (16% black, 12% "other" and 72% white). These estimates are derived by multiplying the number of SF eligible soldiers in each race/ethnic group by the percent expressing a strong interest in SF, and then recalculating minority composition percentages to reflect the "high propensity" market.

The slightly lower level of interest blacks show in SF, however, cannot account for the fact that only 7% to 8% of all SFAS candidates are black. Interviews with recruiters suggest that the swim test may be responsible for at least part of the discrepancy between the percentage of blacks who are eligible for SF and the percentage who actually apply and qualify for SFAS. The relatively high percentage of black soldiers who fail the swim test once they report for SFAS lends credence to these observations. It is likely that many interested and otherwise qualified black soldiers know they cannot pass the swim prerequisite and thus decide not to apply for SF.

Black soldiers who pass the swim test appear to have trouble with the military orienteering events, but otherwise do very well in SFAS. In fact, among soldiers who pass the prerequisites, blacks have a slightly higher overall select rate than soldiers in other race/ethnic groups. In the SFQC, on the other hand, the overall black graduation rate is 22% lower than the graduation rate for whites.

Unfortunately, the current SFQC research database is limited in that it only contains overall outcome data; we cannot yet examine performance on specific events or phases of training. The Special Warfare Center, however, reports that poor performance on land navigation during the field phase of the SFQC is a primary reason soldiers fail and are recycled. The fact that non-Combat Arms soldiers are less likely to be proficient in this area, combined with evidence that black soldiers are more likely to fail military orienteering events in SFAS, suggests that land navigation may be at least partly responsible for the smaller number of black SFQC graduates. Differences across black and white SF candidates in military background as well as academic ability or aptitude clearly warrant further research as possible explanations for the relatively low graduation rate among black soldiers in the Qualification Course.

### Recommendations

Several options for addressing factors that have an adverse impact on black candidates for SF were briefly discussed in the text. None of these options involved lowering standards or granting preferential treatment to minorities. The intent is to ensure that all highly motivated, qualified candidates (a) learn about SF early enough in their careers to allow them to plan and prepare for this option if they feel they are suited for Special Forces, and (b) have an opportunity to learn about and compensate for factors that might place them at a disadvantage in Special Forces assessment or training, before they report for SFAS. Specific strategies recruiters or the Special Warfare Center might consider adopting include the following:

(1) Target SF eligible soldiers earlier in their careers to allow them to plan to acquire the kinds of training and experiences that will help them in Special Forces assessment and training. At the same time, provide potential recruits with specific information about SF requirements, specialties, and career paths to encourage thoughtful, informed, career decisions.

(2) Distribute hand-outs describing the SFAS swim test and ways soldiers can learn to swim and prepare for the test (e.g., classes on post or at civilian facilities, use weights if you cannot practice in boots and fatigues).

(3) Provide time and funds in the recruiting program to allow recruiters to identify weak swimmers and provide the instruction or practice time they need to pass the swim test.

(4) Do not schedule any recruit for SFAS until a recruiter or qualified substitute (e.g., an SF qualified soldier, lifeguard at the post swimming pool) certifies that the soldier can pass the swim test.

(5) Provide all SFAS graduates with information on what they are expected to know with respect to military orienteering in SFAS and the land navigation phase of the SFQC, and encourage non-Combat Arms soldiers to study/practice in advance. Perhaps administer diagnostic tests during SFAS that candidates can use to identify weaknesses.

(6) Provide time and funds to allow teams of two or three SF qualified soldiers (e.g., SFAS and SFQC cadre) to participate in special SF recruiting trips, and include minority soldiers on these teams whenever possible.

(7) Examine the GT score in relation to other test scores as a predictor of academic performance in SFQC. Determine whether or not another test or combination of tests might exclude fewer minorities and result in fewer SFQC failures.

(8) Survey or interview black SF eligible soldiers to learn how to better reach this market and address any specific concerns they might have about a Special Forces career.

Most of the efforts described above should require little in the way of additional resources relative to the potential benefits. These suggestions are aimed at ensuring that motivated candidates across all race/ethnic groups, ranks, and MOS have the information they need to evaluate and prepare for a Special Forces career. As the size of the SF eligible pool shrinks along with the Army, the strength of the Army's Special Forces will become increasingly dependent on their ability to attract and select the "best and brightest" soldiers in all race/ethnic groups.

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APPENDIX A: TRADOC SWIMMING STUDY



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES ARMY TRAINING AND DOCTRINE COMMAND  
FORT MONROE, VIRGINIA 23601-0000



DEPT TO  
ATTENTION OF

ATTG-1 (351)

2 Aug 89

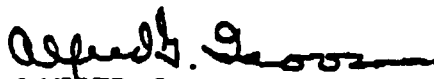
MEMORANDUM FOR HQDA (DAMO-TRO), ATTN: LTC Hayford, WASH DC  
20310-0450

SUBJECT: Swimming Ability of Entry Level Soldiers

1. Reference HQDA message, 231935Z Mar 89, SAB.
2. Attached at enclosure is the baseline information on the ratio of entry level soldiers classified as swimmers and nonswimmers.
3. Information requested was procured from 6 installations to include 3 installations conducting officer basic training.
4. A total of 1,279 soldiers were assessed. The data depicts the total number of swimmers and nonswimmers categorized by race and sex.
5. HQ TRADOC POC is SFC Glascock, AUTOVON 680-2211.

FOR THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR TRAINING:

Encl

  
ALFRED G. ISAAC  
Colonel, GS  
Director of Enlisted Training

| MALE               | NR TESTED | NR SWIMMERS | %    | NR NONSWIMMERS | %    |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------|------|----------------|------|
| White              | 502       | 405         | 80.6 | 97             | 19.4 |
| Black              | 144       | 37          | 25.6 | 107            | 74.4 |
| Others             | 59        | 37          | 62.7 | 22             | 37.3 |
| Total              | 705       | 479         | 68.0 | 226            | 32.0 |
| FEMALE             |           |             |      |                |      |
| White              | 310       | 239         | 77.0 | 71             | 23.0 |
| Black              | 241       | 69          | 28.6 | 172            | 71.4 |
| Others             | 23        | 17          | 73.9 | 6              | 26.1 |
| Total              | 574       | 325         | 57.0 | 249            | 43.2 |
| TRADOC Total 1,279 |           | 804         | 63.0 | 475            | 37.0 |