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**MANNING SPECIAL FORCES IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITING, ASSESSING, AND SELECTING
SOLDIERS FOR SPECIAL FORCES TRAINING**

BY

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**MANNING SPECIAL FORCES IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITING, ASSESSING, AND SELECTING SOLDIERS FOR SPECIAL FORCES
TRAINING**

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ABSTRACT

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Special Forces entry-level training (SFELT), also known as the Special Forces (SF) pipeline, is the key to manning SF in the 21st century. The SF pipeline will have to change and adapt if it is to continue to recruit, assess, select, and train (RAST) SF soldiers with the skills, knowledge, and attributes required for SF operational detachments – alpha (SFODA) to successfully accomplish their missions. Failure to develop RAST strategies for the future now could result in a reduction of SF capabilities that cannot be made up quickly.

Recruiting, assessing, selecting, and training our entry level SF soldiers to standard in the appropriate skills while leveraging emerging technology as well as maintaining our hands-on, live fire, field training, and warrior focus is the single most important thing that we can do to assure the continued success of Special Forces in the future. Special Forces must determine what factors will affect the future requirements of the force and the impact that those factors will have on SFELT. SF must also capitalize on changes in Army recruiting strategies and be on the leading edge of assessment, training, and adult education technology and techniques in the near term (2005-2020) and will probably have to execute radical change to remain relevant in the long term (beyond 2020). We must lay the groundwork for these changes now.

This paper will recommend strategies for improving the SF pipeline. It will focus on strategies and concepts to improve recruiting, assessing, and selecting soldiers for SF training in the future. The future of SF training is beyond the scope of this paper and deserves significant analysis. However, getting the right soldiers, in sufficient numbers, to the training phases of SFELT will have a significant positive impact on the future of Special Forces.

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MANNING SPECIAL FORCES IN THE 21ST CENTURY: STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITING, ASSESSING, AND SELECTING SOLDIERS FOR SPECIAL FORCES TRAINING

“Modern U.S. SOF have evolved in response to the need for specialized forces to conduct operations at the operational and strategic levels. Their organization, equipment, training, personnel selection, and tactics have changed as the threats have changed. In this period of transition, SOF will change along with conventional forces.”

—USSOCOM Pub 1
25 JAN 1996

Special Forces entry-level training (SFELT)¹, also known as the Special Forces (SF) pipeline, is the key to manning SF in the 21st century. The SF pipeline will have to change and adapt if it is to continue to recruit, assess, select, and train (RAST) SF soldiers with the skills, knowledge, and attributes required for SF operational detachments – alpha (SFODA) to successfully accomplish their missions. Failure to develop RAST strategies for the future now could result in a reduction of SF capabilities that cannot be recovered quickly.

Recruiting, assessing, selecting, and training our entry level SF soldiers to standard in the appropriate skills while leveraging emerging technology as well as maintaining our hands-on, live fire, field training, and warrior focus is the single most important thing that we can do to assure the continued success of Special Forces in the future. Special Forces must determine what factors will affect the future requirements of the force and the impact those factors will have on SFELT. Special Forces also needs to capitalize on Army transformation and changes in Army recruiting strategies and be on the leading edge of assessment, training, and adult education technology and techniques in the near term (2005-2020) and will probably have to execute radical change to remain relevant in the long term (beyond 2020). We must lay the groundwork for these changes now.

SFELT consists of three distinct functions that must work together smoothly to produce entry-level trained Special Forces soldiers who have the critical SF performance attributes needed to perform in the operational environments of the future. These functions are: recruiting, assessment and selection, and training or RAST. RAST will also be affected by Army transformation, changes in the Army's recruiting strategy, advances in training and education techniques, technology, and strategies as well as emerging adult learning concepts and strategies.

RECRUITING:²

“One way to help ensure sufficient numbers of SF soldiers is to target and recruit the kinds of soldiers who are most likely to succeed”³

The recruiting phase of RAST is conducted by the Special Operations Recruiting Company (SORC) assigned to the U.S. Army Recruiting Command. The SORC recruits soldiers from the Army and sends them to the U.S. Army JFK Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS or SWCS) where they attend the four phases of the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC). Phase 1 is the assessment and selection phase - also known as Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS). Phase 1 is a TDY course designed to assess the soldier's “trainability and suitability for service in SF.”⁴ Those soldiers who meet the selection criteria are “selected.” These soldiers return to their units and then move to Ft. Bragg, NC on a permanent change of station (PCS) to attend the remaining three phases of SFQC. Phase 2 focuses on individual and collective combat skills training required for all SF soldiers, Phase 3 is the individual military occupational specialty (MOS) skills training phase, and Phase 4 is the SF collective skills, mission planning, and execution phase which culminates in a two week Unconventional Warfare (UW) exercise known as “Robin Sage.” Graduates of SFQC continue on to conduct language training and survival, evasion, resistance, and escape (SERE) training before they are awarded the Special Forces Tab, their new MOS, and coveted Green Beret.⁵ The newly qualified SF soldier then reports to his first operational unit to begin his service in Special Forces. The journey to the Green Beret takes from 1 to 2 ½ years. The first steps on the road begin with recruiting.

Recruiting is where it all starts. Right up front SF will need to emphasize that it believes in the first of the SOF truths: “Quality is better than Quantity.”⁶ The bottom line is that SF will need to target recruiting so that fewer, higher quality soldiers are recruited. Reducing recruiting goals and “targeting” the recruiting while increasing the pool of those eligible is the formula that will produce the best results for SF in the future. The philosophy should be to recruit only the “best qualified.” Strategies for SF recruiting in the 21st century are outlined below.

Current attrition problems in SFAS stem mainly from the current recruiting philosophy which opens the door to anyone who meets minimum qualifications. This “minimum qualified” philosophy is driven by the fact that the recruiters have a hard time/cannot meet the high goals (mission) that have been placed on them.⁷ The recruiters' focus is making mission and the mission we have given them is beyond their reach. SF should reduce the mission and allow the recruiters to focus on finding quality soldiers to send to selection – in other words, change to a

“best qualified” philosophy. Under the current system recruiters cannot afford to turn away anyone that meets the minimum prerequisites - even though it is a fact that soldiers who only meet the minimum requirements have less than a 17% chance of being selected during the assessment and selection phase of RAST.⁸ This is a waste of time, energy, and money on a soldier who has little, if any, chance of being selected.

Understanding that less is better, the recruiting goal should to be reduced from 1800 (the current goal) active duty enlisted men (ADEM) to about 1000 (ADEM) while simultaneously tightening up on the prerequisites. Given that there will be more than 1000 applicants (especially if the pool of candidates is increased as discussed below), the best-qualified method can be used.

To facilitate the best qualified philosophy, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Psychological Applications Division (PAD) in conjunction with the Army Research Institute (ARI) has developed a prescreening tool for use by SF recruiters.⁹ The prescreening tool provides recruiters a simple way to evaluate recruits and assign them a point value. Using the PAD/ARI developed metrics for recruiting (and holding the recruiters feet to the fire to insure standards are enforced) could increase the selection rates in the assessment and selection phase of RAST. The goal would be to get 600-700 ADEM selectees from the 1000 best qualified recruits (60-70% select rate) instead of the 550+/- ADEM selectees, out of 1800 recruits (30-40% select rate), being selected using the current minimum qualified system.¹⁰ Using the PAD/ARI metrics the recruiters would establish an order of merit list (OML) and then only program the best candidates to attend SFAS. The savings in dollars and soldiers' time (for those soldiers who do not attend) will be significant. The benefits in quality of recruits and quality of the assessments the candidates will receive (see below), will not be quantifiable but will have an extremely positive impact on the future of the force.

Reducing the ADEM input to about 1000 also has several spin-off benefits beyond reduced costs, increased select rates, and higher quality candidates. These additional benefits are: incentive for screened-out soldiers to improve without having to go thru SFAS, reduced class size for the assessment and selection phase, higher quality assessments provided on each candidate, and the psychological impact of soldiers seeing that SF is selective right from the start.

Soldiers who do not score well on the prescreening tool will be spared the physical and emotional trauma of SFAS. Many soldiers sent to SFAS by the SORC are ill-prepared and have little chance of surviving the physical, let alone the mental and emotional, challenges of SFAS. With a best-qualified system, these soldiers might be motivated to improve themselves

physically and mentally. If they truly want to be in SF they will prepare themselves for the challenge and improve their scores on the pre-screening tests in order to get higher up on the OML to get a slot for SFAS. This would be good for SF and the Army.

Reducing input without reducing the number of SFAS iterations conducted annually will reduce the number of soldiers in each class. Class size would drop from a current maximum of 300 candidates per SFAS down to 200+/-.¹¹ Reducing class size without reducing, and perhaps even increasing, the number of Cadre (assessors) would allow SWCS to improve assessments of the candidates.¹² SWCS might even be able to get to the point where the SFAS Cadre can give meaningful feedback to the successful candidate and to the SFQC Phase 2-4 Cadre to help them both improve training in SFQC.¹³

Special Forces wants soldiers competing to get in instead of recruiters beating the bushes to find minimum qualified candidates. There is a subtle psychological shift that is made by the statement, "you have to be good to even be considered." The impact of this shift should not be discounted. Our current policy could actually be turning away potentially successful candidates because they see that those who get accepted to SFAS are not necessarily the best or even the better soldiers in their units.

What a soldier brings to SF in terms of his personal attributes and leadership traits is at least as important and may be more important than any other measures (TIS, rank, age, military experience, etc...) that can be used to prescreen candidates. If a soldier has the qualities (attributes and traits) that SF is looking for, and he wants to join SF's ranks, then he should be recruited. The U.S. Army Research Institute (ARI) has identified 29 attributes that are critical to the SF's soldiers' effective performance.¹⁴ Of these attributes some are more trainable than others and some are very difficult, if not impossible, to train.¹⁵ Therefore SF must target its recruiting to insure that those attributes that are difficult to train (mainly cognitive and personality attributes such as adaptability, creativity, and judgment) are present in the recruited soldiers. Targeted recruiting that focuses on the attributes and characteristics as well as the physical fitness and military experience of the candidate will result in higher select rates and higher quality soldiers continuing on into the training phases of SFELT – a win-win situation for Special Forces.

Another option worth exploring is only giving recruiters "credit" for a recruit who is selected and making the recruiting mission based on the requirement for ADEM input to Phases 2-4 of SFQC. If the recruiters' use the best qualified method and strictly adhere to the PAD/ARI screening tools, the result might be even higher numbers of selected candidates than needed to

fill the force. Recruiters would really be forced to focus their efforts on quality soldiers who have a significant chance of being selected.

Increasing the pool of eligible candidates is essential to the success of Special Forces in the future. The Army could be even smaller in the near future and that smaller force will be competing for people with the many of same qualities that Special Forces is looking for. The current strategy is for SF recruiters to focus exclusively on ADEM in the grade of E4 to E6. SF will need to develop several supporting efforts to this main effort. These supporting efforts will increase the pool of eligible candidates and, if the standards for these supporting efforts are kept as high or higher than those for the main effort, will allow SF to recruit men with high potential for successful completion of SFELT and performance in SF units as well as bringing more diversity into its ranks without reducing the quality of its soldiers. There are four possible supporting efforts that merit consideration for future recruiting: 1) open eligibility to enlisted soldiers in the ranks of E1-3; 2) selectively recruit from the general population; 3) targeted recruiting from college campuses; and 4) selective/targeted recruiting among immigrant communities.

Opening SF to younger soldiers has three positive impacts on the forces. First, it can reduce attrition during selection and training. Current statistics show that younger soldiers tend to be selected at a higher rate and also tend to have a better training completion rate.¹⁶ Second, it provides soldiers who will be able to spend more time in Special Forces. A Private First Class who has less than two years of service will be able to "give back" 18 years to SF before being eligible for retirement vice a Staff Sergeant who already has 8-10 years in the Army and will only provide 10-12 productive years to SF. Finally, the young, inexperienced soldier who can complete the SFQC (a course that has proven to be difficult for older more experienced soldiers) has displayed a unique ability to learn and to perform to much higher standards than would be expected of a soldier at his level. This unique ability indicates high levels of the attributes deemed most critical to success in SF.¹⁷ This supporting effort must be very targeted and kept small so as not to erode the force's maturity and depth of military experience. However, a select few of these soldiers could provide a needed boost to SF in the long run.

Recruiting select candidates directly from the civilian population is another option for increasing the pool of eligible candidates with the requisite attributes sought by SF. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Army offered a "Special Forces enlistment option" for recruits joining the Army.¹⁸ This program was a disaster, because it did not establish any prescreening criteria and it was a major source of candidates for SF training. The attrition among these "off the

block” SF candidates – also known as “SF babies” - was terrific. Typically 80-90% of these candidates were not successful.¹⁹ However, those who made it were top notch and many of them are now some of our best NCO leaders.²⁰ In addition to the extremely high attrition, the other major problem with this program was that it was extremely costly since the candidates and their families were on a PCS move to Fort Bragg, N.C. This cost the Army untold dollars for a meager return. A targeted “off the block” recruiting effort with stringent pre-screening could identify these potentially superb SF NCOs. The benefits of this supporting effort are similar to those for the E1-E3 concept.

The third supporting effort that SF could explore is to conduct targeted recruiting on college campuses. The U.S. Army Recruiting Command has identified trends that will make the Army’s current focus on high school students less effective in the future. The trends show that more and more high schools graduates are going on to some form of education after they graduate – up from 44% in 1974 to 65.6% in 1998. Continuation to college rates are expected to grow to over 70% by 2005. Research also shows that a significant percentage of those going to college fail to complete the program they start – 30% for 4 year colleges and 50+% for 2 year colleges.²¹ These trends have convinced the USAREC that the Army must shift its main effort to the young college student.²² Special Forces should piggy-back on this new Army recruiting focus. As the Army focuses on the college dropout market, SF can increase its pool of eligible candidates by offering select college dropouts the opportunity to “try-out” for SF. Athletes, math majors, pre-med majors, language majors, communications majors, students studying specific regions of the world, etc... who meet strict prescreening criteria could be targeted and recruited. SF could “import” some skill sets that it needs such as language, communications, medical, and/or math - to mention a few. As with the first two options for increasing the pool of SF candidates, this supporting effort could produce additional candidates who would have a good chance to be selected for and complete Special Forces Training – a win-win scenario.

The final option for increasing the pool of SF candidates is to conduct selective and targeted recruiting among immigrant communities.²³ Many of the original Special Forces soldiers that made up the first Special Forces Group (SFG) – the 10th SFG stationed in Germany – were composed of so called “Lodge Bill” men who “were recruited among refugees from eastern Europe under Public Law 597 of 30 Jun 1950. They would provide SF with language capability, area knowledge, and cultural expertise.”²⁴ Special Forces has valued this cultural awareness ever since and even today it is codified in the SF Core Values – “The organization’s essential and enduring tenets.”²⁵ The U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) has also stated that “regional focus, language skills, and political and cultural

sensitivity” are “characteristics of SOF personnel” that are “shaped by the requirements of their missions.”²⁶ A selective and targeted effort to recruit from immigrant communities or from recent immigrants to the United States could provide a positive source of personnel who possess the same type of expertise as the Lodge Bill men did. This additional supporting effort along with the others outlined above could provide a much-needed boost to SFELT production of SF soldiers at little cost and great benefit to Special Forces.

Bottom line is that it does not matter where SWCS gets quality candidates for SF from as long as they have the attributes SF wants/needs, are trainable, physically fit, and suitable for service in Special Forces.

Another consideration for recruiting is to “plant seeds.” This can be done by getting SF soldiers and/or recruiters out to high schools, out to BCT/AIT/OSUT training units, and to colleges to give presentations on who and what Special Forces are. The payoff may not be directly measurable but it could be significant if a concerted effort is made.

The conclusion for recruiting in the 21st Century is: Shift from a minimum qualified recruiting philosophy to a best qualified recruiting philosophy; reduce the recruiting goal/mission; target recruiting to those soldiers who have a reasonable chance of selection; use PAD/ARI developed pre-screening tools; and increase the eligible pool of candidates with supporting efforts. Recruiting is the key to our success. If Special Forces recruits quality people it will have higher success rates in SFAS at far less cost, there will be correspondingly higher success rates in SFQC, and the final product – the entry-level Special Forces soldier - will be a higher quality graduate. In the end SF will have validated the first SOF truth – “Quality is Better Than Quantity.”

ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION – SFQC PHASE 1 (SFAS):

Bottom Line Up Front: Better quality candidates, smaller classes, better assessor to candidate ratios, better qualified/trained assessors, more military training value, and more focus on the critical SF traits and attributes without compromising on the physical and mental demands and stressors that are put on the candidates are strategies that Special Forces must invest in for the 21st Century.

The first three (quality, class size, and cadre/candidate ratio) will be improved by the implementation of the best-qualified recruiting philosophy and the recruiting strategies outlined above. However, that is not enough. SF must implement policies and allocate the resources required to reduce class size and increase the assessor to candidate ratio. The impact of these improvements can be significant.

The Office Of Strategic Services (OSS) had a highly effective assessment and selection process during World War Two.²⁷ The quality of the men and women assessed by the OSS assessment staff was “in the middle and upper ranges of the distribution curve of general effectiveness. OSS standards, in other words, were somewhat higher than those of the majority of institutions which make use of screening devices.”²⁸ The quality of the OSS candidates themselves was predictive of the success of the selection system as measured by the performance of selectees in OSS units in operational environments and combat.²⁹ The OSS assessment staff consisted of 74 personnel at its height – of which 57 were assessors and 12 were support staff.³⁰ The current number of assessors assigned to the SFAS program in SWCS is approximately 24 SF NCOs with about 4 support staff.³¹ The OSS assessors were located at two main sites and two lesser sites. They were more or less evenly distributed at about 20 assessors per major site with the rest at the minor sites.³² The OSS assessment program brought groups of about 18 men to the major sites for 3 days of assessment.³³ That equates to a normal assessor to candidate ratio of 1:1. Compare that to the SFAS course length of about 24 days, current class size of 250 to 300 candidates, and assessor to candidate ratio of 1 assessor to 12 candidates!³⁴ If Special Forces is truly serious about its assessment and selection program, it must invest heavily in recruiting quality soldiers and in the human resources required to conduct meaningful assessments.

The remaining three strategies (better quality/trained assessors, military training value, and focus on critical attributes) are outlined below.

Of the 57 OSS assessors 30 had PhDs, 9 had Masters degrees, and 12 were MDs. The support staff consisted of 7 executive and secretarial staff and 5 consultants – 4 with PhDs and 1 with a Masters degree.³⁵ The assessor staff never had more than one member who was an experienced OSS operator.³⁶ All of the assessor staff were trained psychologists and psychiatrists.³⁷ The current SFAS assessor staff consists of 24 SF NCOs with a support staff of 2 SF Officers (CDR and XO), 1 SF SNCO (1SGT), a Supply SGT, and 1 civilian administrative assistant. The contrast is striking to say the least!

The SF NCOs assessors are required to complete an ARI developed assessor training program.³⁸ However, the SF NCOs serving as assessors in SFAS are not professionally trained to observe and assess candidate behavior or to write meaningful assessments. Meaningful assessments could provide data that can be used not only to select candidates for training but to assist the selected candidate improve his weaknesses and sustain his strengths as well as provide valuable information for the training Cadre in SFQC to allow them to tailor training for

the student soldier. SF NCOs selected for duty as assessors should be required to attend specially designed training courses taught at college level to prepare them to perform at higher levels. SWCS should contract for this training along with a cadre of professional civilian "assessors." If the quality of the SF soldier is truly the center of gravity for Special Forces, then no expense should be spared to insure that the right soldiers are selected for SF training.

In order to maximize the potential of SFAS, SWCS must augment its SF NCO assessor staff with at least as many trained civilian or military professionals with degrees in and experience in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and human behavioral sciences.

The military training strategy is based on using military training events like land navigation, obstacle courses, leadership reaction courses, patrolling, etc... as the vehicles for inducing mental and physical stress while making assessments of candidate performance. These military events would allow assessors the opportunity to observe candidate performance and make informed assessments based on realistic situations. Military training events also allow assessments of performance in team situations that require interaction.

The Army and the candidates, selectee and non-selectee alike, will benefit from this training. If possible, the land navigation and/or small unit tactics (SUT) portion of SFQC Phase 2 could be incorporated into SFAS and selectees who meet the SFQC standard would not have to repeat that training in the "Q" Course. Even those candidates who do not meet the SFQC standard would benefit from this experience and be better prepared for phase 2 of SFQC – especially those soldiers who do not have extensive combat arms experience.

The caveat to using military training is that meeting the standards of the military training, that is to say getting a "go", is not the endstate the assessors are necessarily looking for. The military training is the vehicle for the assessments of the candidates against the desired traits and attributes and provides the necessary physical and mental stress. For example, a candidate may not meet the land navigation standard of "x" number of points in "y" time over "z" distance and still get selected because he displays the attributes and traits we want in an SF soldier and he shows that he is trainable and suitable for Special Forces. In fact, most selectees will probably not meet these objective training standards if they are based on current SFQC standards. SWCS would maintain its own internal selection criteria (based on the selection attributes and traits) that are not known to the candidates and not published or provided outside of SWTG. The point is that some of the candidates will be able to meet a SFQC training standard in SFAS thus allowing the SFQC Cadre in the training phases, especially Phase 2, to accelerate their training or provide them with additional training modules. SFAS Cadre will need to be careful in the application of this concept because the tendency

could be to make selection contingent on some military skills instead of the desired attributes and traits. If this is allowed to occur then SFAS will select out many high quality candidates who have the desired attributes and traits and the ability to learn the critical SF skills but are just not in an MOS or unit that requires that particular military skill or set of skills.

Special Forces has a good idea of the traits and attributes required for success in SFQC and on an operational SF unit.³⁹ ARI and PAD have helped SFAS develop ways to assess for these.⁴⁰ In the future SFAS will need to focus more on these traits and attributes and be more refined in its assessment of them. Quality candidates, smaller class size, better assessor to candidate ratio, and better/more qualified assessors will help improve this process. Unfortunately, SFAS has focused on the physical fitness attributes to the detriment of the cognitive, personality/interpersonal, and communications attributes. ARI studies show that "the attributes most extensively assessed in SFAS are the physical-fitness attributes."⁴¹ In contrast, the OSS selection, which was selecting personnel who would more than likely be going directly into operational or combat situations, focused almost exclusively on cognitive, personality and interpersonal, and communications attributes.⁴² There were no runs, rucksack marches, long-range navigation courses with heavy rucksacks, or other physically grueling events on the schedule. An obstacle course was about as physical as it got. Yet the program was extremely successful.

Assessment of cognitive flexibility needs to be increased. The way to look at it is that there are some attributes/traits that are more trainable than others. Some may not be trainable at all and we should be looking for candidates that already possess them. Mental flexibility, agility, and capability deserve special consideration. SFAS should devise more tools for assessment of the cognitive flexibility of candidates. These may simply be designed to provide more meaningful feedback for future training or to complete the "picture" of the candidate to aid selectors when considering borderline candidates.

Physical and mental stress needs to remain an integral part of the process. However, SWCS can make SFAS so physically demanding that only a very few will survive and complete the course. SFAS needs to evaluate how much stress is enough and when it starts to "select out" otherwise qualified candidates based on a physical failing that may not affect his ability to be effective on an SFODA. How many men have been hurt, sent home, or non-selected for physical failings that have nothing to do with success on an SFODA? How many men with high potential to become great SF Soldiers have had excessive blisters on their feet or simply could not walk fast enough to keep up with their buddies, and were involuntarily dropped from the course? An even more fundamental question is this: how many SF soldiers on an ODA today

could make it thru selection?⁴³ SFAS needs to strike a balance and keep in mind that the physical fitness attributes tend to be highly trainable whereas the communication attributes are somewhat trainable, and cognitive and personality attributes tend to be least trainable.⁴⁴

CONCLUSION:

The strategies that will be most productive and relevant for SF in the 21st century are those that emphasize quality over quantity. Targeted recruiting of fewer higher quality soldiers as the main effort while increasing the pool of eligible candidates by tapping into several low-number, high-yield, and high-payoff supporting efforts are strategies that will serve SF well into the 21st century. In keeping with the "less is better" philosophy, SFAS can profit from smaller classes which leads directly to higher assessor to candidate ratios. The addition of highly trained, professional, civilian assessors to the superb core of SF NCO assessors will positively impact both the assessor to candidate ratio as well as the quality of assessments and selection decisions. Using military training in SFAS as the vehicle for creating physical and mental stress while providing a superb laboratory for assessing the candidates performance will benefit not only SF but the Army as a whole. Striking a balance between highly trainable physical attributes such as the need for "moving in excess of 180 kilometers with a (45-65 lbs) rucksack,"⁴⁵ with the attributes that SF has determined to be more difficult to train yet just as important to success in SF operational units will provide the biggest bang for the buck and insure that the best soldiers will attend the training phases of SFQC.

Implementation of these strategies will require that Special Forces as an organization gets to the point where it can accept higher select rates as the norm in SFAS. Given an ADEM recruiting mission of about 1000 and strict compliance with the pre-screening tools and the OML/best qualified recruiting philosophy; SFAS can expect 60-70% select rates for ADEMs. Select rates for the soldiers recruited from the supporting efforts may be even higher based on even stricter prescreening efforts and a no-waiver policy. This could be a hard sell to the force - most of them will remember the days of 30-40% select rate norms. Special Forces would have to do a good job getting the word out and preparing the force for high select rates and even higher training completion rates.

Special Forces must continue to assess its recruiting, assessment, and selection programs and make informed decisions about the future. Future RAST strategies will require changes in philosophy and investment of resources that need to be planned for now. The budgeting and POM process require SWCS to input requirements now in order to assure

funding in 2005 and beyond. Failure to plan and program for the resources now will cause future commanders to scramble for funding and personnel to support the RAST of the future.

The USAJFKSWCS Director of Training and Doctrine (DOTD) is the appropriate agent within SWCS to assess the current SF entry level training pipeline and recommend changes to the current training philosophy and methodology. SWCS must also look out beyond the execution year and develop the RAST strategies for the future. This paper provides some points of departure for consideration.

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ENDNOTES

¹ The Author is indebted to the Cadre (Officers, Warrant Officers, and NCOs) of the 1st BN, 1st Special Warfare Training Group (SWTG) with whom he served from 1997-1999. The SWTG is responsible for SFELT. Many of the concepts presented in this paper were discussed at length with the 1st BN Cadre and many of the ideas presented here were first suggested to the author during those discussions. This paper is dedicated to the SF NCO Cadre of the 1st BN, 1st SWTG, who work miracles with limited resources to train the future of Special Forces. Their selfless service is not in vain nor forgotten.

² Note that this paper will discuss SFELT as it pertains to the Active Duty Enlisted Men (ADEM) population only. The SORC also recruits officers and reserve component soldiers for SF. These populations are not considered within the scope of this paper.

³ Judith Brooks and Michelle M. Zazanis, Editors, "Enhancing U.S. Army Special Forces: Research and Applications," ARI Special Report 33, (October 1997), pp 12 – "Special Forces Recruitment and Manpower Planning", Judith E. Brooks.

⁴ Robert W. Marrs, "Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) Redesign: 'A New Means of Conducting Business,'" an article that is to be published in Special Warfare Magazine, (Fall 2001).

⁵ CG, USAJFKSWCS briefing to USAWC SOF students on the redesigned SFQC, 31 OCT 2000.

⁶ USSOCOM Pub 1, "Special Operations in Peace and War", United States Special Operations Command, (25 January 1996), pp 2-27.

⁷ USAJFKSWCS Research Database, AOJK-DT-DMO, as of 10 OCT 00. Slides provided to the author, JAN 2001. The SFAS summary table shows that the SFRC was unable to meet its recruiting goal of 1500 ADEM in FY 96-98. In FY 98 it met its goal by recruiting 1512 ADEM. The goal was then raised to 1800 for FY 00 and the SFRC was able to recruit 1790 soldiers. Of note is that the attrition rate went from 52.2% in FY 98 to 58.7% in FY 99 and then increased sharply to 70% in FY 00. While the SFRC increased its input to SFAS the actual raw numbers of selected soldiers fell from 654 in FY 98, to 625 in FY 99 and dropped to 537 in FY 00. Thus SF found itself in the interesting position of "more in = less out." Also of note is that the database shows that while the average recruit PT score increased from 239/239 in FYs 97/98 to 250 in FY 00, the average GT score fell from 118 in FY 95/96 to 113 in FY 00 the average FA score fell from 119 in FYs 95/96 to 113 in FY 00, and the average Test of Adult Basic Math Grade Level (TABE) fell from 12.4/12.3 in FYs 95/96 to 11 in FY 00. Thus while the measures of recruits' physical fitness was improving, the measures of their intelligence was decreasing. These data make the point that the recruiters have been "recruiting" lower quality soldiers for SFAS because SF has given them a mission that they cannot attain without the lower quality soldiers.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Michelle M. Zazanis, Gary A. Hazlett, Robert N. Kilcullen, and Michael G. Sanders; "Prescreening Methods for Special Forces Assessment and Selection", ARI Technical Report 1094, (May 1999).

¹⁰ SWCS Research Database.

¹¹ Author's personal knowledge of the programmed maximum SFAS class size for ADEM based on two years in command of the 1st BN, 1st Special Warfare Training Group (SWTG), SWCS from 1997 to 1998.

¹² Ibid. Company G, 1st BN, 1st SWTG, which is the company responsible for the assessment and selection phase of SFELT, has a TDA strength of only 24 Cadre assigned of which only 20 are assessors and the unit is rarely up to full strength.

¹³ Ibid. Current feedback is very basic and does not provide the non-select soldier with a good idea of what to do to improve himself so that he can succeed if he returns. More importantly it does not provide feedback to the selected soldier on his strengths and weaknesses in sufficient detail that would allow him to prepare himself for phases 2-4. The assessment data is not used to assist the SFQC phase 2-4 Cadre preparing for and focusing in on areas where the soldier needs help. This is primarily a manpower issue that smaller classes and more assessors would alleviate. Bottom line is that there aren't enough assessors for the number of candidates for SWCS to be able to make better use of the assessment data.

¹⁴ Michelle M. Zazanis, Robert N. Kilcullen, Michael G. Saunders, and Doe Ann Crocker, "Special Forces Selection and Training: Meeting the needs of the Force in 2020," Special Warfare, (Summer 1999), pp 22.

¹⁵ Ibid. pp28.

¹⁶ SWCS Research Database.

¹⁷ Zanasis, Kilcullen, Saunders, and Crocker, pp 24.

¹⁸ TRADOC Systems Analysis Activity Report, "Training Attrition Problem", Institute For Military Assistance, (March 1981), Ch 3. The report shows that up to 37% of the candidates were attrited during "in-processing" by failing the swim test and APFT. Also, the author's personal knowledge and experience. When I entered SF training in Jan 83, over half of my class consisted of soldiers who had been recruited, gone to Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training, basic Airborne School, and then straight to the SFQC. They had never spent a day in any Army unit, had no soldiering experience (other than BCT/AIT/ABN School), were very young, and did not last long. However, those that did make it were top notch, have been some of our finest SF NCOs over the years, and are now in senior NCO leadership positions in SF units.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ U.S. Army Recruiting Command, Vision and Transformation Strategy, (17 Dec 1999), pp 4-5. Data is based on DAPE-PRS data as of 30 Sep 99.

²² Ibid.

²³ This idea was first suggested to the author by COL Charles A. King, DCSPER, USASOC, during an interview for this paper at Fort Bragg, N.C., 3 Jan 2001.

²⁴ Ian D.W. Sutherland, "Special Forces of the United States Army: 1952-1982", (R. James Bender Publishing, San Jose, Ca., 1990), pp 25.

²⁵ Special Warfare, Vol. 13, No. 2, (Spring 2000), pp 9. SF core values are: Warrior Ethos, Professionalism, Innovation, Versatility, Cohesion, Character, and Cultural Awareness.

²⁶ Brian E. Sheridan and Peter J. Schoemaker, "United States Special Operations Forces Posture Statement 2000 – Providing Unique Solutions for a Changing World," pp 1.

²⁷ The OSS Assessment Staff, "Assessment of Men", (Rinehart & Company, Inc., New York, 1948), Ch, IX – "The Evaluation of Assessment."

²⁸ Ibid. pp 23.

²⁹ Ibid. Ch. IX – "The Evaluation of Assessment."

³⁰ Ibid. pp v-vii and pp 3.

³¹ Author's personal knowledge of the TDA and normal manning of Company G, 1st BN, 1st SWTG – the company responsible for SFAS.

³² The OSS Assessment Staff, pp v-vii, 3, and 24.

³³ Ibid. pp 24.

³⁴ Author's personal knowledge of the TDA and normal manning of Company G, 1st BN, 1st SWTG – the company responsible for SFAS. Note that the 1:12 ratio is based on a fully manned company (which is rarely the case) with all assessors present for duty.

³⁵ The OSS Assessment Staff, pp v-vii.

³⁶ Ibid. pp 25.

³⁷ Ibid. pp 3, 23, and 25.

³⁸ Judith Brooks and Michelle M. Zazanis, Editors, "Enhancing U.S. Army Special Forces: Research and Applications," ARI Special Report 33, (October 1997), pp 29-30, "Special Forces Assessment", Michelle M Zazanis

³⁹ Ibid. pp 24.

⁴⁰ Judith Brooks and Michelle M. Zazanis, Editors, "Enhancing U.S. Army Special Forces: Research and Applications," ARI Special Report 33, (October 1997), pp 19-26, "Selection Measures for Special Forces", Robert N. Kilcullen, Gilad Chen, and Sheila T. Simsarian and pp 27-40, "Special Forces Assessment", Michelle M Zazanis

⁴¹ Michelle M. Zazanis, Robert N. Kilcullen, Michael G. Saunders, and Doe Ann Crocker, "Special Forces Selection and Training: Meeting the needs of the Force in 2020," Special Warfare, (Summer 1999), pp 25.

⁴²The OSS Assessment Staff, Ch. II – "Principles of Assessment."

⁴³ The Author, as CDR of the 1st BN, 1st SWTG, and the BN CSM conducted quarterly "new Cadre training" sessions from 1997-1999 during which the newly assigned Cadre began the day with the SFAS obstacle course. It was not unusual that more than half of the new Cadre participating could not complete the course within the time standard required of SFAS candidates. Yet these SF soldiers had just left assignments in SF operational units where they had been successful operators!

⁴⁴ Michelle M. Zazanis, Robert N. Kilcullen, Michael G. Saunders, and Doe Ann Crocker, "Special Forces Selection and Training: Meeting the needs of the Force in 2020," Special Warfare, (Summer 1999), pp 28.

⁴⁵ Robert W. Marrs, "Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) Redesign: 'A New Means of Conducting Business'," an article that is to be published in Special Warfare Magazine, (Fall 2001).

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