



# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

## CAPSTONE

**UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND  
PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION**

by

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December 2013

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**UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND PROFESSIONAL  
MILITARY EDUCATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The United States Special Operations Command does not have an intermediate-level professional military education program for its officers. Current service-provided PME programs are not adequately meeting the educational goals for officers as required by USSOCOM. Through the Joint Special Operations University, SOCOM could establish its own PME program for officers of all services who are assigned to USSOCOM. Through the review of formal documents and interviews with senior officers in USSOCOM, an education gap was identified and analyzed. Three courses of action are presented as to how USSOCOM can overcome this education gap and meet Admiral William H. McRaven's intent to have the best educated force in the United States military.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTERMEDIATE LEVEL PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO SPECIAL OPERATIONS OFFICERS .....	1
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
B.	ORGANIZATION OF THE PROJECT .....	2
C.	CHAPTER ORIENTATION .....	4
1.	JPME and PME.....	4
2.	Problem Statement.....	5
3.	Review of PME Literature.....	6
4.	Current U.S. Armed Forces Intermediate PME.....	7
D.	USSOCOM SKILLS, ATTRIBUTES, AND EDUCATIONAL NEEDS FOR OFFICERS.....	8
E.	IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES.....	9
F.	METHODS: TWO RESEARCH STUDIES .....	12
II.	GAP ANALYSIS OF CURRENT EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS AND EXISTING PME PROGRAMS: STUDY ONE.....	13
A.	METHOD FOR STUDY ONE: ANALYSIS OF FORMAL DOCUMENTS .....	13
B.	ORGANIZATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF U.S. INTERMEDIATE PME INSTITUTIONS.....	14
1.	What Are the SOCOM Requirements? .....	15
2.	U.S. Navy Intermediate PME .....	19
3.	USMC Intermediate PME .....	22
4.	U.S. Air Force Intermediate PME .....	22
5.	U.S. Army Intermediate PME.....	24
C.	GAP ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION.....	26
III.	CONTENT ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS OF SENIOR OFFICERS: STUDY TWO.....	29
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	29
B.	INTERVIEW SUBJECTS .....	29
C.	METHOD FOR STUDY TWO: INTERVIEWS .....	30
D.	PERCEPTIONS REGARDING INTERMEDIATE-LEVEL PME.....	30
E.	RELEVANCE OF PME.....	31
F.	KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES .....	31
G.	DEFICIENCIES IN KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES .....	32
H.	ADDITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ATTRIBUTES.....	32
I.	USSOCOM PROVIDED PME .....	33
J.	OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES .....	34
IV.	DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	37
A.	DISCUSSION OF GAP ANALYSIS .....	37
B.	COURSE OF ACTION 1—SOCOM RESIDENT PME FOR ALL SOF OFFICERS.....	41

C.	COURSE OF ACTION 2—SOCOM RESIDENT AND DL PME FOR ALL SOF OFFICERS .....	44
D.	COURSE OF ACTION 3—LEVERAGING CAPABILITY .....	46
E.	EVALUATION OF THE COURSES OF ACTION.....	47
F.	NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL AND OTHER RESIDENT PME EQUIVALENTS .....	52
G.	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.....	53
H.	SUMMARY .....	53
APPENDIX A.	NPS IRB GUIDANCE .....	55
APPENDIX B.	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	57
	LIST OF REFERENCES.....	63
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....	67

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Force Management and Development (FMD) Division of SOCOM Headquarters.....	15
Figure 2.	FMD's education goals for Special Operations Forces Officers .....	16
Figure 3.	FMD's Special Operations Quality Goals .....	39

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## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	U.S. Armed Forces Intermediate-Level PME Institutions.....	14
Table 2.	Comparison of Intermediate-Level PME Programs .....	18
Table 3.	Course of Action Comparison Criteria .....	40
Table 4.	Criteria Values and Ratings.....	49
Table 5.	Recommended Courses of Action.....	50

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACSC	Air Command and Staff College
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
CAC	Combined Arms Center
CGSC	Command and General Staff College
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
DoD	Department of Defense
DL	distance learning
FMD	Force Management and Development
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GWOT	Global War on Terror
ILE	Intermediate Level Education
JPME	Joint Professional Military Education
JSOPME	Joint Special Operations Intermediate Professional Military Education Course
JSOU	Joint Special Operations University
MARSOC	Marine Special Operations Command
MCCSC	Marine Corps Command and Staff College
MCU	Marine Corps University
MCWAR	Marine Corps War College
MMS	Master's of Military Science
NCR	National Capital Region
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
OES	Officer Education System
PCS	permanent change of station
PME	professional military education
TDY	temporary duty
SOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOF-CAC	Special Operations Forces Combined Arms Center
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) does not currently have a designated professional military education (PME) program or requirement for Special Operations Forces (SOF) officers at the rank of major/lieutenant commander. SOCOM relies on the four armed services not only to select its officers for PME, but to provide them with resident opportunities. For the last decade, there has been an increased demand for SOF officers due to their ability to successfully plan, lead, and execute missions in ambiguous environments. Additionally, SOF missions are not projected to reduce in pace in the near future; on the contrary, the nation will rely more on small groups of special operations professionals to accomplish tasks in order to shape, deter, and prevent the escalation of hostilities around the globe.

Currently, the four armed services are reverting back to policies that will reduce the amount of resident PME opportunities for their officers. This reduction may impact the SOF community, in that fewer SOF officers will have the opportunity to attend a resident PME program. These PME programs are provided by the armed services, international partners, and institutions such as the Naval Postgraduate School. The programs of instruction at traditional service schools do not focus on special operations, nor do they offer many of the subjects required to operate in the ambiguous environments for which special operations are suited. SOCOM might well benefit from establishing its own PME program with a unique program of instruction dictated by operational needs.

Through the analysis of formal documents, and interviews conducted with eight senior SOF officers, an education gap was identified at the intermediate level of PME. Three courses of action were proposed as to how SOCOM could close this education gap. Using several different criteria, each course of action was evaluated and compared against the others. The recommended course of action would establish a distance learning intermediate PME course for all SOF officers who are not selected to attend a resident program. An increase in SOF

personnel, classes, and education tracks at each of the armed services' PME institutions also was recommended. These additional resources would provide the same SOF-specific knowledge, skills, and attributes to resident students that are provided to SOCOM distance learning students.

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# **I. INTERMEDIATE LEVEL PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO SPECIAL OPERATIONS OFFICERS**

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

The intermediate level of professional military education is critical in the career of a U.S. armed forces officer. Most officers will attend intermediate-level PME around the 10-year mark in their careers. On the scale of a 20-year career, this is the mid-career point for some officers. For many officers, intermediate-level PME will be the last formal military education course they attend in their careers before retiring. Select officers, usually those who serve in a joint military duty assignment, will attend courses such as the Joint Professional Military Education II course in Norfolk, VA. Senior U.S. military officers are selected for the highly competitive Senior Service Colleges and War Colleges at designated times in their careers. The schools are generally attended at the rank of lieutenant-colonel or commander or senior. Generally these officers have over 18 years' commissioned service and have held command positions multiple times in their careers.

For Special Operations Forces, intermediate level professional military education is generally a pre-requisite for positions of great responsibility at the 04 pay-grade level: company commander; battalion or task force operations officer; battalion or task force executive officer; and other SOF specific positions. Each U.S. armed service provides unique guidelines with regard to when, where, and how an officer will attend intermediate-level PME.

The U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) does not currently have a designated professional military education (PME) program or requirements for Special Operations Forces (SOF) officers at the rank of major/lieutenant commander. SOCOM relies on the four armed services to not only select its officers for intermediate-level PME, but to provide them with resident education opportunities. For the last decade, SOF officers have gained valuable experience

by successfully planning, leading, and executing missions in ambiguous environments. Additionally, SOF missions are not projected to reduce in pace in the near future; on the contrary, the nation is expected to rely more on small groups of special operations professionals to accomplish tasks in order to shape, deter, and prevent the escalation of hostilities around the globe. As noted by Admiral William H. McRaven in the 2012 SOCOM Posture Statement, “the global security environment presents an increasingly complex set of challenges and opportunities. By their very nature, SOF are particularly well-suited to respond to this rapidly changing environment, and I fully expect the operational demands placed upon SOF to increase across the next decade, and beyond.”<sup>1</sup> This project investigates the research question: “Is current service-provided instruction adequate to meet the specific education goals for USSOCOM officers?”

## **B. ORGANIZATION OF THE PROJECT**

This project is organized into four chapters. The first chapter presents an overview of the project, including the background of the project, the research question, and the problem statement. A brief overview of the methods used to collect data is presented. The background includes a brief synopsis of USSOCOM skills, attributes, and educational requirements for officers in special operations.

The second chapter analyzes formal documents. Titled Current Education Requirements and Existing Programs, this chapter is an examination of USSOCOM educational requirements as well as the current curricula taught by service schools. The curricula of the service-provided PME programs are compared against the education requirements established by SOCOM’s FMD.

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<sup>1</sup> William H. McRaven, “Posture Statement of Admiral William H. McRaven,” U.S. Navy Commander, United States Special Operations Command Before the 112th Congress Senate Armed Services Committee,” 2012.

Through this comparison, the differences between SOCOM's education requirements and current service-provided intermediate-level PME curricula are presented.

The third chapter focuses on interview data. The interview data collected from SOF commanders identify skills and attributes needed by the force that are not sufficiently addressed in current service schools or PME programs. These gaps, overlaps, and educational needs are the basis for investigating the question of how effectively service schools are meeting the education requirements for USSOCOM officers.

The last chapter discusses the educational shortfalls examined in Chapter II, and makes recommendations for how to overcome them. Three proposed courses of action are presented. The first is to have SOF officers exclusively attend a USSOCOM-provided PME education, possibly provided by JSOU. Another option is to examine the establishment of a USSOCOM-provided PME education for both those selected and those not selected for resident PME by their service. A third option examines the establishment of a distance-learning SOF-specific curriculum for officers not selected, and increasing the capability of existing SOF education elements at the PME institutions. These programs will be designed to provide the SOF-specific training and education identified in the gap analysis.

Also included in Chapter IV is an evaluation of the courses of action described above. The evaluation looks at the challenges of establishing and maintaining additional SOF education programs. In an environment of fiscal austerity, it is essential that changes in manpower, facilities, and funding should form the basis of comparison for establishing or bolstering education programs. After examining the tangible and intangible costs of the courses of action, a recommendation is made as how to address the education requirements for USSOCOM officers that are not being met by current service school curricula.

## **C. CHAPTER ORIENTATION**

This introductory chapter begins by explaining the difference between joint professional military education (JPME) and service-provided professional military education (PME). A brief review of the limited PME literature sources is conducted. The chapter continues with a short description of each of the four U.S. military's intermediate-level PME courses. A brief overview of U.S. Special Operations Command's education needs follows. Implementation issues with regard to courses of action are briefly examined. These issues include attendance at resident and nonresident PME programs and how each service selects only a certain quantity of officers for resident PME opportunities. The chapter concludes with a description of the two research methods used in this project.

### **1. JPME and PME**

The Department of Defense states that PME:

Conveys the broad body of knowledge and develops the habits of mind essential to the military professional's expertise in the art and science of war. Functional professional community development may not be appropriately applicable within the scope of this policy.<sup>2</sup>

Professional military education is the cornerstone of the future and is key to maintaining the effectiveness created in the last decade of war. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) General Martin Dempsey declared his vision of PME in the 2012 Professional Military Education Policy:

PME—both Service and Joint—is the critical element in officer development and is the foundation of a joint learning continuum that ensures our Armed Forces are intrinsically learning organizations. The PME vision understands that young officers join their particular Service, receive training and education in a joint context, gain experience, pursue self-development, and, over the

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Defense, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy*. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, September 2012).  
[www.dtic.mil/cjcs\\_directives/cdata/unlimit/1800\\_01.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/cjcs_directives/cdata/unlimit/1800_01.pdf)

breadth of their careers, become the senior leaders of the joint force. Performance and potential are the alchemy of this growth, but nothing ensures that they are properly prepared leaders more than the care given to the content of their training, education, experience, and self-development opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

By contrast, the subject of this project is not JPME. Joint professional military education is defined as “that portion of PME that supports fulfillment of the educational requirements for joint officer management. Joint education prepares leaders to both conduct operations as a coherently joint force and to think their way through uncertainty.”<sup>4</sup> Not every U.S. Armed Forces officer is required to complete JPME. The different service staff colleges are accredited to award JPME level 1 credit to officers attending their programs.

According to the DoD’s Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP),

Intermediate education focuses on warfighting within the context of operational art. Students expand their understanding of joint force deployment and employment at the operational and tactical levels of war. They gain a better understanding of joint and Service perspectives. Inherent in this level is development of an officer’s analytic capabilities and creative thought processes. In addition to continuing development of their joint warfighting expertise, they are introduced to joint plans, national military strategy, joint doctrine, joint command and control, and joint force requirements.<sup>5</sup>

## **2. Problem Statement**

USSOCOM does not have its own intermediate-level PME program to provide education opportunities for special operations officers.

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3 Ibid.

4 Department of Defense, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy*.

5 McRaven, “Posture Statement.”

### **3. Review of PME Literature**

Admiral McRaven's posture statement presented the goals and educational needs of SOCOM forces in the future. McRaven addresses the need to tailor PME to meet the demands of U.S. Special Operations Forces while reiterating his desire for USSOCOM to become the most educated force in the nation's military. Admiral McRaven's posture statement frames the argument that SOCOM requires its own specific professional military education program.

McRaven declares a clear vision for SOCOM education and PME in his 2012 posture statement. One of his instruments for implementation could be the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) in Tampa, Florida. JSOU is a subordinate command of USSOCOM, and therefore could be given the charter to become a PME program to educate all officers assigned to SOF forces and commands. The JSOU Future Concept provides an overview of education opportunities provided by SOCOM. As noted by the Future Concept, "JSOU's current education efforts are executed in five major lines of operation (LOO). The primary line is the internally focused education of joint SOF and SOF enablers. The remaining lines of operation are externally focused: international engagement, the interagency, conventional forces, and academia."<sup>6</sup> JSOU's external focus could be shifted to become the conduit to provide intermediate-level PME for all SOCOM officers.

A thesis completed in 2007 by Naval Postgraduate student Tom Donovan highlighted the need for increased education opportunities for U.S. Navy SEAL officers in the rank of ensign to lieutenant-commander. Donovan's thesis highlighted the gaps in education for SEAL officers. As noted by Donovan, "The importance of education cannot be overstated. It is assumed that most academics, statesmen, and military leaders would agree that a strong knowledge

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<sup>6</sup> Joint Special Operations University, "JSOU Future Concept: Providing the Azimuth for Joint SOF Education—The Future Direction of JSOU," accessed February 22, 2013, [https://jsou.socom.mil/Documents/JSOU%20Future%20Report%20-%20Final%20\(Jul%2008\)%20\(Corrected%20Copy\)%20pdf.pdf](https://jsou.socom.mil/Documents/JSOU%20Future%20Report%20-%20Final%20(Jul%2008)%20(Corrected%20Copy)%20pdf.pdf)

base is critical to success in any endeavor.”<sup>7</sup> Donovan’s analysis and thesis led to the establishment of a U.S. Navy SEAL Lieutenant’s course for officers at the 0–3 level. His analysis and arguments are similar to the argument for the establishment of a SOCOM PME program.

In his 2010 thesis, Major Brad Burris of the U.S. Army recommended an Army Special Operations Command–focused educational development process applicable to the career-long education and utilization of Special Forces, Civil Affairs, and Psychological Operations professionals. His arguments were similar to this project’s, and highlighted the need for tailored and specific PME for Army Special Operations officers. This is in line with this project’s research question and the proposal for a SOCOM holistic approach to PME.

#### **4. Current U.S. Armed Forces Intermediate PME**

Each of the U.S. armed services has unique standards, cultures, and selection criteria with regard for PME. The U.S. Army places a great deal of emphasis on PME and conducts an annual board to select officers for resident and nonresident PME. All U.S. Army majors must complete PME prior to competing for promotion to lieutenant-colonel, generally during the 16<sup>th</sup> year of commissioned service. The top 50 percent of officers are typically selected for resident level training at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, or at other equivalent service schools. The remaining officers must complete PME through either distance learning or an abbreviated four-month satellite course taught at several installations across the U.S.

The U.S. Navy has a service PME equivalent school, but only requires its lieutenant commanders to complete the joint professional military education level I course via distance learning or while attending other institutions such as the

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas. A. Donovan, “Structuring Naval Special Warfare Junior Officer Professional Military Education,” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2007).

Naval Postgraduate School. The rest of the naval officer corps has no requirements to attend service-provided PME.

The U.S. Marine Corps conducts PME for its officers at the major level via the Command and Staff College (MCCSC) at Quantico, Virginia. Similar to the Army, U.S. Marine officers are selected by a board to decide who will attend resident and nonresident training. All marine majors are required to complete USMC PME through either resident or nonresident curricula.

The U.S. Air Force conducts its PME at the Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. A board selects qualified majors to attend resident PME. The U.S. Air force requires completion of a master's degree and an online Intermediate Developmental Education program in order to be considered for attendance to resident PME. Air Force majors can complete a nonresident PME program, but the U.S. Air Force does not require this.

#### **D. USSOCOM SKILLS, ATTRIBUTES, AND EDUCATIONAL NEEDS FOR OFFICERS**

According to the United States Special Operations Command 2020:

The SOF Operator will remain the strategic cornerstone of the Global SOF Enterprise. This expert warrior is regionally grounded, well-educated, diplomatically astute, and a master of the SOF tradecraft. As the integrating factor at the most fundamental level of operations and activities, the innovative, tenacious, and networked SOF Operator is hand-selected, rigorously trained, and deliberately educated throughout their career to increase their strategic vision - enabling them to better shape the environment and exploit emerging opportunities.<sup>8</sup>

Special Operations forces by nature must be comfortable operating in ambiguous environments, while mastering elements of the human domain to achieve mission goals. As described in the 2013 Comprehensive SOCOM

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Special Operations Command PowerPoint presentation, personal communication with the author, 20 May 2013.

Education Brief, “the human domain is the totality of the physical, cultural, and social environments that influence human behavior to the extent that success of any military operation or campaign depends on the application of unique capabilities that are designed to fight and win population-centric conflicts.”<sup>9</sup> The concept of the human domain is relatively new, but not specific to the units and missions of USSOCOM forces. SOCOM could establish its own PME entity in order to ensure that all of its officers were educated in how to operate in this newly defined domain that has become a core competency for SOF officers.

#### **E. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES**

As noted previously, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that PME is the cornerstone of the future. Despite the priority emplaced by the CJCS, each service maintains its own unique PME programs and selection criteria for attendance. As noted by Luis Zamarripa in his 2003 Naval Postgraduate School thesis

Because CSC [Command and Staff College] and MCWAR [Marine Corps War College] are PME schools, they are specifically addressed in various Marine Corps policies as being beneficial to officers for continued self-improvement and promotion. For example, the precepts for a recent Marine promotion board stated that PME schools are “a valuable and important aspect of a Marine officer's professional development” and “successful completion...represents a desire to prepare for positions of increased responsibility.”<sup>10</sup>

This viewpoint with regard to professional development is shared by the other service's PME institutions and policies governing attendance.

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9 Ibid.

10 Luis R. Zamarripa. The Effects of U.S. Marine Corps Officer Graduate Education Programs on Officer Performance: A Comparative Analysis of Professional Military Education and Graduate Education (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2003).

Service regulations such as the U.S. Army's pamphlet 600-3 provide the current policies and regulations in place for each of the services' intermediate-level schools and officer selection. The current U.S. Army policy is to select 50 percent of the eligible population of majors to attend a resident PME course. Colonel Thomas Climer highlights the cultural effect of selecting only a certain percentage of officers for resident ILE/PME had on the Army prior to 2001. Climer states, "prior to ILE, when Command and General Staff College [CGSC] was the field grade portion of the Officer Education System [OES], many of the instructors were themselves Majors. Because only 50% of a year group was selected to attend CGSC, these were considered the most competitive officers."<sup>11</sup> Department of the Army "Directive 2102-21" is one of the documents that highlights a service's policy shift with regards to allowing every major to attend intermediate-level education. This document shows the process for how the U.S. Army selects officers to attend resident versus nonresident programs. These policies help further define a difference in education requirements for USSOCOM officers, as fewer USSOCOM officers will have the ability to attend service schools in residence. Each service states that resident and nonresident attendance is equivalent with respect to future promotion potential, and shall not discriminate against an officer.

While each of the services states that resident and nonresident intermediate-level PME are treated equally, a 2004 GAO report says otherwise. According to the report, "PME officials question the appropriate extent to which [distance learning] should be used in nonresident education and how closely it can, or should, enable nonresident education to approximate resident

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas C. Climer, *Maintaining the Professionalism of the U.S. Army Officer Corps* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Carlisle Barracks, 2010).

education.”<sup>12</sup> This report highlights a difference in resident and nonresident PME programs in the U.S. military. This difference is important to the project, in that many SOCOM officers will be forced to complete a nonresident program. These differences affect the ability to meet the goals and standards set forth by SOCOM. The statements from each service that nonresident attendance provides the same education experience as resident attendance are further investigated in study two of this project.

Colonel Brian Prosser discusses why education is integral to maintaining a professional army officer corps and addresses the army’s policy for providing institutional education for majors in his 2007 paper titled “Universal ILE Policy Concept, Reality and Recommendation.” The army’s ability to fully implement its Universal Intermediate Level Education (ILE) policy and ensure 100 percent of majors attend a resident staff college has been impacted by Army Transformation efforts and the growth of major’s positions in modular units as well as the operational requirements of GWOT.<sup>13</sup> Prosser argues that 100 percent of officers should attend a form of ILE/PME. This is important to counter the argument that sending every SOF officer to a SOCOM-provided PME will saturate the services with more officers who have attended a resident program versus the goal of most attending a nonresident program. But as the services have stated, resident and nonresident PME attendance are equated equally with regard to future promotion potential and assignments. Therefore, the establishment of a SOCOM-specific program for all SOF officers should not have an effect on the service’s personnel policies.

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12 Government Accounting Office, Report to the Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, *Military Education: DoD Needs to Develop Performance Goals and Metrics for Advanced Distributed Learning in Professional Military Education*, (GAO-04-873) (2004), , accessed February 22, 2013, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GAOREPORTS-GAO-04-873>.

13 Brian D. Prosser, *Universal ILE Policy: Concept, Reality and Recommendations* (U.S. Army War College Carlisle Barrack, 2007).

## **F. METHODS: TWO RESEARCH STUDIES**

In support of the research question, the necessary and required skills and educational needs for officers in USSOCOM were analyzed and defined using documents from USSOCOM's Force Management and Development (FMD) Division.

The first study provides a brief overview of the current curricula at each of the U.S. Armed Service's command and staff colleges. Each curriculum is reviewed to see if there are specific courses, tracks, or education requirements for SOF officers at the institution. A gap analysis compares the current service-provided curricula with the educational requirements for SOCOM officers.

A second study interviewed senior special operations officers in order to further investigate the research question. The interviews targeted senior leaders with command experience assigned to USSOCOM. The senior leaders were asked to rate the importance of attending PME in order to successfully perform in SOF operating environments. The commanders and former commanders were asked to provide knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary for SOF officers at the intermediate level and whether or not they believe that the officers receive adequate levels of education in those subjects. They were asked whether or not they thought current service-provided PME was meeting the needs of SOF operational demands, and whether or not they saw merit in a SOCOM-provided intermediate-level PME program.

After reviewing the results of the two research studies, three courses of action will be analyzed with regard to the establishment of a SOCOM-specific PME program. The courses of action address the education differences that are identified by the research studies.

## **II. GAP ANALYSIS OF CURRENT EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS AND EXISTING PME PROGRAMS: STUDY ONE**

This chapter presents a description and analysis of the curricula of the four service-provided PME schools: The Army's Command and General Staff College; the Naval Command and Staff College; the Marine Corps' Command and Staff College; and the U.S. Air Force's Air Command and Staff College. A comparison of the curricula taught at each of these institutions is compared to USSOCOM education requirements through a gap analysis at the end of the chapter.

### **A. METHOD FOR STUDY ONE: ANALYSIS OF FORMAL DOCUMENTS**

The first study employs a framework for analyzing the extent to which current service-provided intermediate-level PME is meeting SOF officer requirements as defined by SOCOM. Formal documents including the academic curricula for each of the service PME institutions are analyzed. An overview of SOCOM's Force Management and Development (FMD) Division and its charter are presented in order to orient the reader with regard to where SOCOM's education requirements are created. The PME curricula are compared to the education requirements defined by USSOCOM's FMD. Each of the PME institutions are analyzed as to whether or not they have provided specific SOF electives, subjects, and education tracts in their curricula. A comparison of curricula to FMD's education goals is used to identify whether or not the current service-provided curricula are in line with the specific knowledge requirements for Special Operations officers.

A short description of each of the service-provided PME programs showcases their current curricula. The current curricula of each of the service-provided PME programs is compared against the SOF specific requirements defined by FMD to investigate whether current service-provided PME institutions are providing the required knowledge, skills, and attributes required for SOF

officers. In a subsequent chapter, interviews with senior special operations officers are also used to further examine whether or not an education gap exists.

**B. ORGANIZATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF U.S. INTERMEDIATE PME INSTITUTIONS**

Each of the U.S. armed services maintains a command and staff college responsible for providing officers with PME at the intermediate level. The Joint Forces Staff College at Norfolk Naval Base in Virginia provides joint professional military education (JPME) to officers who do not attend a service specific PME program as required by the Goldwater-Nichols act of 1986.<sup>14</sup> The syllabi for each of the intermediate-level PME programs was found on the course’s website, or was provided to the author by a school representative.

Table 1 displays the location and length of each course.

	U.S. Army Command and General Staff College	U.S. Air Force Air Command and Staff College	U.S. Marine Corps College of Command and Staff	U.S. Navy College of Command and Staff
Location	Fort Leavenworth, KS	Maxwell AFB, Alabama	Quantico, Virginia	Newport, Rhode Island
Resident Course Length	10 Months	10 Months	10 Months	10 Months
Master’s degree included in the curriculum	No. SOF students must complete additional work through the University of Kansas	Yes	Yes, though optional for students.	Yes
SOF Specific Curriculum	Yes. Mandated for every SOF officer who attends.	No. Only one elective class.	No. Only one elective class.	No. Only one elective class.

Table 1. U.S. Armed Forces Intermediate-Level PME Institutions

<sup>14</sup> Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, Joint Chiefs of Staff, accessed August 8, 2013. <http://www.jcs.mil/page.aspx?id=29>.

## 1. What Are the SOCOM Requirements?

The U.S. Special Operations Command previously did not have a published document that lists the attributes, skills, and education requirements for Special Operations officers. Analysis of formal documents is the primary method for this research study, so alternative documents were used to investigate the research question. Under Admiral McRaven's guidance, the Force Management & Development Division was established under SOCOM's headquarters. This division encompasses several staff sections. Most notably this division oversees the J1 or personnel directorate of SOCOM, the J7 or education and training directorate, and the Joint Special Operations University. Figure 1 illustrates the staff composition of this division.

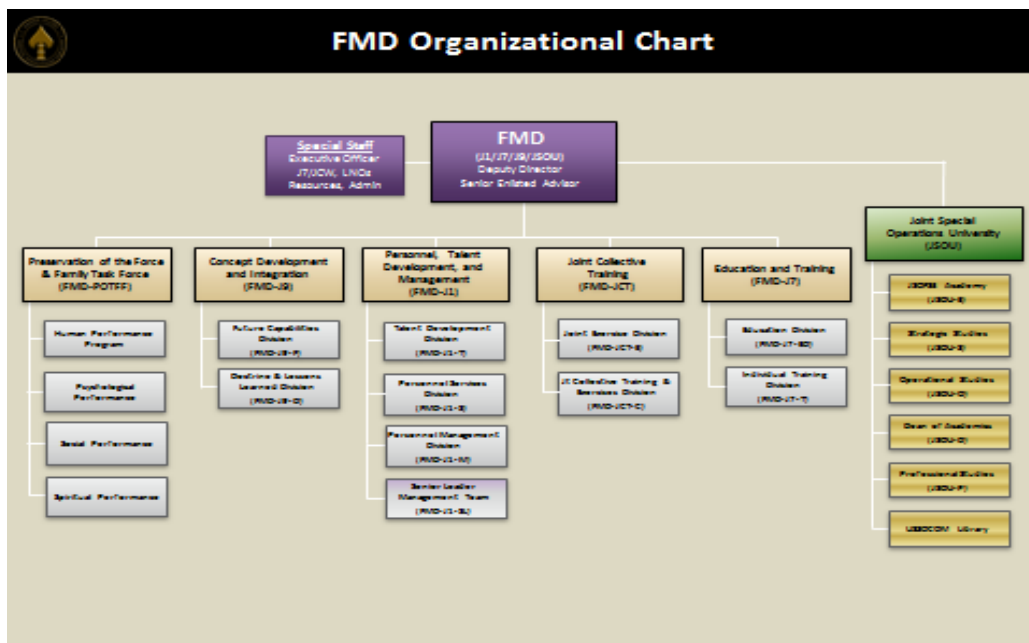


Figure 1. Force Management and Development (FMD) Division of SOCOM Headquarters<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Special Operations Command PowerPoint, personal communication with the author, 20 May 2013.

The Force Management and Development Division (FMD) of SOCOM Headquarters is charged with managing the career progression and talent management of Special Operations officers. Figure 2 displays FMD's goal to produce a quality Special Operations operator for SOCOM. These goals are used to define the required skills, attributes, and educational requirements for SOCOM officers across the enterprise. As per the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the Nunn-Cohen Amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act of 1987, SOCOM headquarters was given service like responsibilities including the ability to Monitor Special Operations officers' promotions, assignments, retention, training and professional military education.<sup>16</sup>

**Developing a Quality Force**  
*What does quality look like?*

FMD's goal is to produce Special Operators who are expertly trained, broadly educated and:

- > skilled in the art of operational design, strategic and institutional campaigning
- > expertly craft innovative solutions to complex problems
- > make sound decisions based upon less than perfect information
- > understand and can dominate/influence the Human Domain
- > understand the balance between diplomacy and force and which is most applicable to any given situation
- > understand, accept and mitigate prudent but calculated risk
- > excel in an environment typified by limited resources, political constraints, and exaggerated by a very capable, determined adversary

A tactician is one that is skilled in the art of maneuver ...  
**We need Strategists**

Figure 2. FMD's education goals for Special Operations Forces Officers<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Special Operations Command, "About US SOCOM," accessed August 13, 2013. <http://www.socom.mil/Pages/AboutU.S.SOCOM.aspx>.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Special Operations Command PowerPoint, personal communication with the author, 20 May 2013.

Based on FMD's education goals, Table 2 shows that there does appear to be a difference in the education officers are receiving at PME institutions and what SOCOM requires of its officers. This chapter further analyzes the curricula of each of the U.S. Armed Service's Intermediate Level PME institutions.

<b>U.S. Armed Forces Intermediate Level PME Instructions</b>	<b>FMD's Qualities for a Special Operations Officer</b>								
		Operational Art and Campaign Design	Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	Decision Making	Operating in the Human Doman	Diplomacy and Use of Force	Calculated Risk Management	Application of constrained resources	Understanding and defeating a determined and capable adversary
	U.S. Army	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	U.S. Air Force	X	X	X				X	X
	U.S. Marine Corps		X	X					X
U.S. Navy	X	X	X						

Table 2. Comparison of Intermediate-Level PME Programs

## **2. U.S. Navy Intermediate PME**

The United States Navy's intermediate-level PME resides at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. According to the Naval War College's website,

The core course work for the senior and intermediate resident programs consists of three trimesters of study, plus three electives, one per each trimester. The senior course consists of three equal trimesters of about thirteen weeks each. The intermediate course has one longer trimester of seventeen weeks for the study of joint maritime operations and two other eleven week trimesters.<sup>18</sup>

Special operations officers who attend the Navy's intermediate program at Newport do not have any different requirements or courses than other Navy students. SOF officers attain the same education as naval aviators, surface warfare officers, and submariners.

While attending the intermediate-level PME program at the Naval War College, students take three required courses and are allowed three electives. The required courses are Joint Maritime Operations, Strategy and Policy, and Theater Security Decision Making.

The Joint Maritime Operations syllabus states:

The Joint Maritime Operations course is an in-depth study of the operational level of war throughout the full spectrum of military operations. A practitioners' course, it prepares students to excel in the operational arena through an understanding of the effective use operational level planning involving joint/coalition forces and interagency partners to achieve military objectives. Although maritime operations and sea service contributions are emphasized, the capabilities of all services are studied with the ultimate focus on

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<sup>18</sup> "Resident Curriculum," U.S. Naval War College, accessed August 8, 2013, <http://www.usnwc.edu/Academics/Resident-Curriculum.aspx>.

planning and execution of joint operations at the joint/combined task force and functional/service in the maritime domain.<sup>19</sup>

This course does not have SOF specific application and is designed for officers who will primarily operate in the sea domain.

The goal of the Strategy and Policy course is designed

to teach students to think strategically and analytically in preparation for positions of strategic leadership. Strategy is the relationship between war's purpose and the means to achieve this end. The course sharpens the student's ability to assess and compare alternative courses of action to achieve overall national objectives. Students will be asked to think in a disciplined, critical, and original manner about the international environment, a range of potential strategies, and the strategic effects of joint, interagency, and multinational operations.<sup>20</sup>

This course's goals are in line with FMD's education goals. Similar to Joint Maritime Operations, this course is targeted at non-SOF officers attending PME.

The final course required of Naval War College students is Theater Security Decision Making. As reflected in the course's syllabus, the goal for this course is

designed to engage intermediate-level military officers and U.S. Government civilians in the dynamic complexities of today's national and international security environment. Although the course offers a broad curriculum in contemporary security studies that encompasses a diverse spectrum of regional and global issues, particular emphasis is given to U.S. decision making processes and challenges at the theater-strategic level of the geographic combatant commands.<sup>21</sup>

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19 "The Joint Military Operations Department Syllabus and Study Guide for Joint Maritime Operations Course," Naval Staff College, accessed August 8, 2013, <http://www.usnwc.edu/Departments---Colleges/Joint-Military-Operations.aspx>.

20 "Strategy and Policy Department, Naval War College," Naval Staff College, accessed August 8, 2013, <http://www.usnwc.edu/Departments---Colleges/Strategy-and-Policy.aspx>.

21 "Theater Security Decision Making Course Syllabus," Naval Staff College, accessed August 8, 2013. <http://www.usnwc.edu/Departments---Colleges/National-Security-Decision-Making.aspx>.

This course is slightly in line with FMD's education goals, but again is geared toward the maritime professional who is not a Special Operations officer. The final requirement for an officer to graduate from the intermediate PME course at the Naval War College is completion of 3 electives. As noted by the Naval War College,

The Naval War College Electives Program constitutes 20% of the Naval War College resident academic curriculum. The purpose of the Electives Program is to expand treatment of subjects offered in the core curriculum, offer subjects not available in the core curriculum, and provide specialized Areas of Study (AOS) that produce special competencies that can be identified and tracked by the Navy's personnel system.<sup>22</sup>

Officers attending the Navy's Command and Staff program are given the option to pursue a master's degree while in attendance. The degree, a master's in Strategic Studies, is completed in coordination with the resident program at Newport. According to the graduate program website, "In all, students must complete thirty credit hours of coursework—twenty one from the core courses and nine from elective work."<sup>23</sup>

Currently, there are no additional electives for SOF officers attending the navy's intermediate PME. As depicted above, officers attending the navy's intermediate-level PME are exposed to courses that provide education in strategic decision making and maritime operations. While these courses are ideal for Navy and Marine Corps officers who operate in the sea domain, the curriculum does not meet the education goals defined by SOCOM's FMD. While there is value added from having Naval Special Warfare Officers attend their service's intermediate-level PME, the curriculum provides different knowledge, skills, and attributes not in line with the requirements for a SOF officer.

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<sup>22</sup> "Course Catalog for 2013/2014," Naval Staff College, accessed August 8, 2013, <http://www.usnwc.edu/Academics/Catalog/RightsideLinks-%281%29/2013-2014.aspx#Electives>,

<sup>23</sup> "Graduate Degree," Naval Staff College, accessed August 20, 2013, <http://www.usnwc.edu/Academics/College-of-Distance-Education/Graduate-Degree.aspx>.

### **3. USMC Intermediate PME**

The mission of the USMC's Command and Staff College is to provide "graduate-level education and training to develop critical thinkers, innovative problem solvers, and ethical leaders who will serve as commanders and staff officers in service, joint, interagency, and multinational organizations confronting complex and uncertain security environments."<sup>24</sup>

The resident Marine Command and Staff College (MCCSC) program is a ten-month program taught at the Marine Corps University (MCU) in Quantico, Virginia. The program educates intermediate-level officers in four major courses of study: War Studies, Security Studies, Warfighting, and Leadership. Students attending MCCSC have the option of pursuing a Master's of Military Studies degree. According to MCU, "the MMS program leverages written and oral communications skills and faculty expertise to develop professional skills in areas of research, analysis, and critical thinking. Students who opt for the MMS program are required to take two elective courses."<sup>25</sup>

Special Operations officers do not have a separate curriculum at MCU. An elective that focuses on Special Operations is taught by the SOF chair, but is geared more toward non-SOF students than SOF officers in attendance.<sup>26</sup> The MCCSC program is primarily tailored to Marine officers who will continue to serve in line regular Marine formations and staffs.

### **4. U.S. Air Force Intermediate PME**

U.S. Air Force officers attend their service-specific PME at the Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama. According to the ACSC website:

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<sup>24</sup> "U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College Mission Statement." U.S. Marine Corps University, accessed August 8, 2013. <https://www.mcu.usmc.mil/csc/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> SOF chair, MCCSC, personal correspondence with author, 20 August 2013.

ACSC prepares field grade officers of all services, international officers, and U.S. civilians to assume positions of higher responsibility within the military and other government arenas. Geared toward teaching the skills necessary for air and space operations in support of a joint campaign as well as leadership and command, ACSC focuses on shaping and molding tomorrow's leaders and commanders. The college's academic environment stimulates and encourages free expression of ideas as well as independent, analytical, and creative thinking.<sup>27</sup>

ASCS's resident program is ten months long and consists of 33 semester hours that culminates in a Master of Military Operational Art and Science degree as well as granting an officer PME credit for their respective service. According to the Air Command Staff College's Academic Guide, the ten-month program requires twelve courses. Each course grants three semester hours of credit to a student. The focus of the courses range a myriad of topics: leadership and warfare; airpower studies; and joint planning and operations.<sup>28</sup>

Similar to the navy's PME program, SOF officers attend the same curriculum that other air force officers attend. Officers are given the option to pursue their own research interests during the two research elective periods; however, SOF officers are not required to focus their research on a particular area that supports the education goals defined by FMD. The learning objectives for the air force's PME program produce students from ACSC with the ability to:

- a. lead and command in complex, dynamic, and ambiguous operational environments;
- b. apply military theory in general and airpower theory in particular to the development of operational-level strategies;
- c. plan for the integration and employment of joint forces at the operational level in whole-of-government operations across the spectrum of war and conflict;
- d. articulate capabilities and limitations of service and joint organizations in the conduct of war at the operational level;

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<sup>27</sup> "Welcome to the Air Command and Staff College," U.S. Air Force Command and Staff College, accessed August 8, 2013, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/acsc/aboutACSC.asp>

<sup>28</sup> "Air University Catalog 2012–2013," U.S. Air Force Command and Staff College, 67, accessed August 8, 2013, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/catalogs.asp>.

- e. apply research methodologies and critical-thinking skills to analyze issues of concern to the war fighter and/or broader defense community;
- f. forge professional relationships that facilitate efficient, effective, and collaborative accomplishment of assigned tasks.<sup>29</sup>

As with the navy and marine corps PME programs, the air force's intermediate-level PME provides a different education experience for officers, but is not in concert with FMD's education goals. Attendance at the Air Command and Staff College will provide officers with different knowledge, skills, and attributes than those required by SOCOM. The Air Force program is geared toward officers who predominantly operate in the air domain, not in the environments that Special Operations officers typically find themselves.

## **5. U.S. Army Intermediate PME**

In contrast to the other service's intermediate-level PME programs, the army does provide a focused curriculum for Army Special Operations (ARSOF) officers while attending the Command and General Staff College. According to the "Army's Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management" pamphlet, DA 600-3,

ILE is the Army's formal education program for majors. It is a tailored, resident education program designed to prepare new field-grade officers for their next 10 years of service. It produces field-grade officers who have a warrior ethos and a joint, expeditionary mindset, who are grounded in warfighting doctrine, and who have the technical, tactical and leadership competencies to be successful at more senior levels in their respective branch or functional area. ILE consists of a common-core phase of operational instruction offered to all officers and a tailored education phase (qualification course) tied to the technical requirements of the officer's branch or functional area.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>30</sup> "Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management," U.S. Army, accessed August 8, 2013. [www.apd.army.mil/pdffiles/p600\\_3.pdf](http://www.apd.army.mil/pdffiles/p600_3.pdf).

The standard Army CGSC curriculum is divided into three modules: Common Core, the Advanced Operations Course, and Electives. The three modules combine to provide graduates with 11 months of resident education. Instruction is provided by academic departments who

conduct instruction in their areas of emphasis to enable ILE students to use military forces competently up to the operational level of war. In ILE, students become field-grade proficient in doctrine, concepts and terminology necessary for visualizing, describing and directing effective military operations. ILE contains instructional blocks from the departments of military history, leadership, tactics, logistics and resource operations and joint, interagency and multinational operations.<sup>31</sup>

The Army's Command and General Staff College is the only service PME institution that does not have the SOF Chair appointed by SOCOM headquarters. As noted in the 2013 "U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School" academic handbook,

the mission of the Combined Arms Center SOF Directorate is to facilitate collaboration, integration, interoperability, and interdependence of ARSOF at the CAC in the areas of leader development, individual training and education, doctrine development, future concepts and lessons learned. The Directorate comprises one office—the office of the director—and three subordinate divisions: SOF Mission Command Training Program, SOF Leader Development and Education, and SOF Mission Command Center of Excellence.<sup>32</sup>

The SOF-Combined Arms Center (CAC) Cell is responsible for managing the curriculum that an ARSOF officer attends at CGSC as well as providing instruction to intermediate PME and other courses conducted at the U.S. Army's Combined Arms Center. According to Lieutenant-Colonels Paul Schmidt and Brian Petit of CGSC,

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31 Paul Schmidt, and Brian Petit, "ARSOF Education at Fort Leavenworth," *Special Warfare Magazine*, January–March 2012.

32 "2013 Academic Handbook," U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School," accessed August 8, 2013, <http://www.soc.mil/swcs/academichandbook.html>

All ARSOF officers who attend ILE complete a comprehensive special-operations curriculum that complements the Army Professional Military Education. SOF courses are instructed by resident, active-duty SOF faculty throughout the academic year. SOF studies are composed of the SOF Preparatory Course (P940), SOF studies (mid-year) and SOF electives (end-of-year).<sup>33</sup>

In addition to the CGSC and ARSOF curriculum, select ARSOF officers will have the opportunity to pursue a master's degree from the University of Kansas' Interagency Studies Program (ISP). According to Schmidt and Petit, "The KU-ISP curriculum is designed to immerse the SOF student in a broad, interagency-focused education. Students receive six credit hours for their ILE courses and take 27 hours of graduate classes with KU, for a total of 33 hours of graduate-level work."<sup>34</sup>

The SOF-CAC Cell has developed an intense, focused curriculum of study for an ARSOF officer that is designed to meet the specific challenges of Special Operations and ambiguous operating environments. This program stands alone in comparison to the other service-provided PME institutions, and could potentially serve as a model for the proposed SOCOM resident PME program.

### **C. GAP ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION**

After comparing FMD's education goals to the current service-provided PME curricula, it appears that a gap does exist. Each of the curricula provides expertise in different areas depending on the nature of their parent services. Three of the four service PME programs do not provide additional education for SOF officers attending their program. While the army's program provides the most robust education for SOF officers, only a select portion of officers are able to attend the resident portion and receive the additional SOF courses. Each of the resident courses provides the opportunity to pursue a graduate degree, but other than the Army's Interagency Studies Program through the University of

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<sup>33</sup> Schmidt and Petit, "ARSOF."

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Kansas, the degrees are generic in scope and not specific for SOF officers. While the resident PME programs are designed to teach war fighting at the tactical and operational levels, they do not focus on strategic-level decision making. This is not a requirement for most officers attending PME, but SOF operations are often conducted at the strategic level.

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### **III. CONTENT ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS OF SENIOR OFFICERS: STUDY TWO**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on interview data collected in order to investigate the research question. The interview data collected from SOF commanders identified skills and attributes needed by the force that are not sufficiently addressed in current service schools or PME programs. The commanders also listed several areas where current SOF officers were proving to be exceptional. Based on these interviews the gaps, overlaps, and educational requirements identified are sufficient to cast strong doubt on the assertion that service schools are meeting the education requirements for Special Operations forces commanders. Indeed, if this necessarily limited sample is representative, then actions should be taken to meet the expressed needs identified in the previous chapter.

#### **B. INTERVIEW SUBJECTS**

As part of the research design, eight senior special operations officers from within SOCOM were selected as a convenient sample to be interviewed about intermediate-level PME. As per the guidance of the Naval Postgraduate School's Internal Review Board, only eight subjects were interviewed. The Internal Review Board's Interim Guidance is found as Appendix I at the end of this project. The criteria for the interview subjects were to have held command or still be in command at the 06 pay grade level. The interview subjects included: four U.S. Army Special Forces colonels; one retired USAF colonel; one U.S. Navy SEAL captain; and two U.S. Army general officers with extensive service within SOCOM. A full list of questions is provided in Appendix II.

The interview subjects were male officers and each had at least 20 years' service in the U.S. armed forces. Eight of the officers interviewed had more than 20 years' experience in the special operations community as well. Each officer was in command or had previously commanded at the 06 pay grade level and

had supervised majors and lieutenant-commanders from other services. Also, each officer had commanded more than one special operations organization throughout their career. All but one of the subjects had attended a resident intermediate-level PME program provided by a U.S. armed service. The one exception did not attend intermediate-level PME as it is not required by his service.

### **C. METHOD FOR STUDY TWO: INTERVIEWS**

Each of the senior officers was contacted by either telephone or email to request their voluntary involvement in this research study. Due to the dispersed locations within USSOCOM, only three of the interviews were conducted face to face. One interview was conducted at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Two interviews were conducted at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. The remaining five interviews were conducted via telephone. The telephonic interview subjects were located at three different installations: Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Coronado Naval Base, California; and MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Each interviewee was asked 17 questions which are discussed further below.

### **D. PERCEPTIONS REGARDING INTERMEDIATE-LEVEL PME**

After answering general demographic questions, the interview subjects were asked to answer questions (questions 6 through 11) regarding intermediate-level PME. The first question asked the officers to rate the importance of sending a SOF officer to intermediate level education before employing them in the operational force. All but one of the officers responded to the question as extremely important, the highest rating on a five-point scale. One Naval Special Warfare officer rated the answer as somewhat important, the second answer from the bottom. His reasoning for his answer was that current service-provided intermediate-level education is not providing the knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary for SOF officers to be successful. The Naval

Special Warfare officer saw more value in sending officers back to units to be operationally employed rather than sending them to current service-provided intermediate-level PME.

#### **E. RELEVANCE OF PME**

The second question asked the senior officers if the current armed service's command and staff colleges were providing adequate education that was relevant to SOF commanders' needs. All but one of the interview subjects said no. The one exception stated that he was very happy with the SOF education that officers were receiving at the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College. By contrast, Major General Sacolick, the Director of SOCOM's Force Management Directorate, disagreed and stated that the current command and staff colleges are "focused on lethality and maneuver. SOF officers need to focus on engagement and non-lethal operations."<sup>35</sup> Sacolick compared sending SOF officers to current service-provided intermediate-level PME as "sending a doctor to a dental academy."<sup>36</sup>

#### **F. KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES**

Question Three asked which specific knowledge, skills, and abilities the officers they supervised were proficient at employing. The answers varied with respect to the actual attributes and knowledge, but some common answers were apparent. One interview subject said that officers were proficient at the military decision making process, planning, and crisis management. Another officer said that SOF officers were proficient at the tactical level of war, especially within their specific SOF occupational specialty. Sacolick stated that "there is no substitute for intellect. SOF officers are creative, imaginative, collaborative, intuitive, and innovative."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Major General Sacolick, personal communication with author, October 10, 2013.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

## **G. DEFICIENCIES IN KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES**

Question Four asked senior officers which specific knowledge, skills, and abilities the officers they supervised were not proficient at employing. Eighty percent of the officers said that SOF officers were lacking in several areas. The first of three deficiencies was cross-cultural communication and language skills, and the second most common deficiency was interagency and Department of Defense interoperability. SOF officers need to understand the authorities, roles, and capabilities of not only SOF, but each of the U.S. Armed Services and the agencies of the federal government. One Army Special Forces officer said that as the war in Afghanistan winds down, he expects to see less interagency involvement at the service-provided command and staff colleges due to declining budgets and manning levels. The final deficiency was in reference to the operational level of war and campaign planning. Six of the officers stated that SOF officers, while very proficient at the tactical level, lacked understanding and ability to synchronize tactical operations to strategic goals through operational plans and campaigns.

## **H. ADDITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ATTRIBUTES**

The final question of this section asked the senior officers to list any additional knowledge, skills, and attributes that they required as commanders in the special operations community. Two officers echoed each other by stating that SOF officers need a diverse array of skills to be successful. They stated that more officers need diverse backgrounds with skills that are found in MBA programs. Their frustrations as commanders were not with operations, but were with staff and administration needs that SOF officers often overlook. Six of the eight officers reiterated that SOF officers were continuously undereducated with

regard to interagency capabilities and the joint doctrine. Sacolick stated that SOF needs a “graduate level course in operational design. We need guys who can react when the battlefield disrupts our plans.”<sup>38</sup>

## **I. USSOCOM PROVIDED PME**

The next set of questions (12 through 15) focused on the establishment of a SOCOM-provided PME program. Question 12 asked the senior officers if they saw a need for the establishment of a SOCOM-provided intermediate-level PME program. All but one of the senior officers said yes. The exception said no due to the fact that he believes SOF officers should be grounded in their service doctrine and that by attending their own service’s PME programs they can educate and provide knowledge to other non-SOF personnel. While this answer is a deviation from the others, this point cannot be discarded as not being relevant.

Question 13 asked if a SOCOM intermediate-level PME program should be established as a substitute for all SOF officers or in addition to existing service-provided PME. The answers were evenly split down the middle. Half of the senior officers said SOF officers should only attend a SOCOM-specific PME program; whereas the other half said that a SOCOM program should be in addition to existing programs. One officer noted that conventional force officers should be given the opportunity to attend the SOCOM-specific PME program in addition to SOF officers. All of the officers stated that interagency and international partner attendance is a must if a SOF specific PME program were to be instituted. Half of the officers stated they would like to see the bulk of SOF officers attend a SOF-specific PME program, but that officers should still attend service-specific programs. The officers all reiterated that continued support to diverse programs such as NPS’ Defense Analysis program, the National Defense

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38 Ibid.

University's master's program at Fort Bragg, and other civilian education opportunities are necessary as well.

Question 14 asked whether or not a SOCOM-provided intermediate-level PME program should be instituted using distance learning. Only one officer supported a distance learning option. The majority of those interviewed were not in favor of distance learning at all. One of the arguments for not using distance learning is that it would take away family time from SOF officers who need a break from the operational force. The other argument was that distance learning is not effective at all. One Army Special Forces officer stated that you cannot replace the value of in-residence education with an online or distance learning opportunity. The officer stated that, based on his experience, distance learning courses tend to receive the lowest priority of effort when competing with family time, the rigors of assignment in a unit, and the challenges of operations and deployments.

Question 15 of this section, asked if attendance to a SOCOM specific PME opportunity should be limited only to those officers selected by their parent service to attend a resident program. All but one of the officers stated that all SOCOM officers, including those not selected for resident PME, should attend the SOCOM PME program. The one exception, another Army Special Forces officer, stated that the SOCOM-specific PME should be reserved for the top performers in SOCOM, and that the remainder of the officers should attend traditional PME programs provided by their services. The officer based this answer on the need to challenge officer talent and to develop performers rather than designing a program to bring everyone to the lowest common denominator level.

## **J. OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES**

The final questions (16 and 17) provided an opportunity for the SOF senior officers to provide open-ended feedback regarding intermediate-level PME. Question 16 asked the senior officers if they had any additional comments to

add. Almost all of the interview subjects took the opportunity to reiterate the importance of education for SOF officers and how education opportunities have to become the priority over operational assignments. Major General Sacolick stated that he would like to see “every SOF officer have a master’s degree by the time they reach the pay grade of 05.”<sup>39</sup> Another senior officer stated that now was the time to “push the envelope” with regard to SOF PME and ensure that international and interagency partners get buy-in to a future program rather than being treated as an afterthought.

Question 17, the final question of the interview, asked senior officers whether they thought the career timing for intermediate-level PME was correct and how much value added they saw in the current mix of service-provided PME opportunities. All of the officers agreed with the current career timing of intermediate-level PME. Two of the officers saw value in the current mix of opportunities, but six saw a need to expand the opportunities. One officer stated that SOF needs to avoid groupthink, and therefore needs to send officers to as many different educational opportunities as possible. Sacolick stated that he would like to see a model for SOF where “25 percent of officers attend a traditional form of PME, and the other 75 percent attend civilian institutions and other diverse educational opportunities.”<sup>40</sup>

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39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

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## **IV. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter discusses the results presented in study one and study two that strongly indicate an education gap exists. Based on the indicated education gap, three courses of action are explored. Each course of action is unique and distinct, providing different options for SOCOM to address the PME education gap through resident and distance learning mediums.

This chapter concludes with an evaluation of the courses of action described above using several different criteria. The evaluation examines the costs of establishing and maintaining additional SOF education programs, quality of life impacts, as well as estimated effectiveness of the programs. After examining the tangible and intangible costs of the courses of action, a recommendation is provided as how to address the education requirements for USSOCOM officers that are not being met by current service school curricula.

### **A. DISCUSSION OF GAP ANALYSIS**

Study One analyzed the formal curricula taught by each of the service-provided intermediate PME programs. When compared against FMD's special operations quality goals, the evidence strongly indicates that there is an education gap. The service-provided PME programs are focused on their service's domain-specific knowledge, and are not intended to provide a SOF-specific education to SOF officers. FMD's goals provide a demand signal that is not being met by each of service-specific PME programs. In order to meet these goals several changes in service policies regarding the selection and criteria for attendance to a PME program would have to be addressed. These issues are addressed in the course of action comparisons that follow.

Study Two used interviews with senior SOF officers to ask questions regarding intermediate-level PME and their thoughts and perceptions about a potential SOCOM intermediate PME program. Despite a relatively small sample size, the interview answers support the view that current service-provided

instruction is not adequate to meet the specific education goals for USSOCOM officers. The officers interviewed were overall in favor of a SOCOM-provided intermediate-level PME program. All agreed that current service-provided PME is not meeting the demands of SOF forces. While some agreed that all SOCOM officers should attend a SOCOM-provided program, others were in favor of a diverse mix of options in order to provide the SOCOM enterprise with a wide array of education experiences. The answers provided by the interview subjects were incorporated into the course of action comparison criteria in Table 3.

The results of Study One and Study Two seem to provide support to answer the research question of whether or not current service-provided intermediate PME instruction is adequate to meet the specific education goals for USSOCOM officers. When taken together as a whole, the results of the formal document analysis and the interview answers strongly indicate that an education gap does exist between what is currently taught at PME programs, and what SOCOM requires for its officers corps.

**Developing a Quality Force**  
*What does quality look like?*

FMD's goal is to produce Special Operators who are expertly trained, broadly educated and:

- skilled in the art of operational design, strategic and institutional campaigning
- expertly craft innovative solutions to complex problems
- make sound decisions based upon less than perfect information
- understand and can dominate/influence the Human Domain
- understand the balance between diplomacy and force and which is most applicable to any given situation
- understand, accept and mitigate prudent but calculated risk
- excel in an environment typified by limited resources, political constraints, and exaggerated by a very capable, determined adversary

**A tactician is one that is skilled in the art of maneuver ...  
We need Strategists**

Figure 3. FMD's Special Operations Quality Goals<sup>41</sup>

In order to address the education gap, SOCOM should consider three courses of action explored below. Each course of action is distinct, unique, and ultimately meets the goal of providing the education required for SOF officers as identified by FMD and the senior officer interviews. Table 3 shows the evaluation criteria used to evaluate the courses of action. Included in the table is a short description of how each course of action impacted each of the criteria.

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<sup>41</sup> U.S. Special Operations Command PowerPoint presentations, personal communication with author. 20 May 2013.

<b>Evaluation Criteria for SOCOM PME Courses of Action</b>							
<b>Budget Impacts</b>	<b>Manpower Costs</b>	<b>Facilities Costs</b>	<b>Service Regulation Changes</b>	<b>Curriculum Design and Implementation Costs</b>	<b>Quality of Life Impacts</b>	<b>SOF PME Effectiveness</b>	<b>COA</b>
Requires a large investment of SOF Specific Funds to establish a SOF program	Requires a large investment of increased manpower to serve as instructors and staff	Could utilize current JSOU facilities	Yes. Would require each service to change policies to grant SOCOM PME equivalency.	Would require a brand-new 10-month curriculum design	All SOF students would PCS to attend this course	All SOF students would receive 10-month resident SOF PME	COA1
Requires a moderate amount of SOF Specific funds to establish both a resident and DL program	Requires a large investment of increased manpower for DL and resident instruction and staff	Could utilize current JSOU facilities	Would not require a regulation change; status quo for all SOF officers with regard to PME selection and credit	Would require design and implementation of a new distance learning and resident curriculum	All SOF students would complete via distance learning or in resident.	Would require most officers to take DL courses while performing normal duties	COA2
Requires a moderate increase in SOF specific funds to establish a DL program	Requires an increase of SOF manpower at each service PME institution for instruction and staff	Would not require any new facilities	Would not require a regulation change; status quo for all SOF officers with regard to PME selection and credit	Would require new curricula at 3 of the 4 service-provided PME schools and a DL SOF program	Very little impact. One PCS to PME school for resident select officers.	Some SOF officers would receive 10-month resident education, but most would complete DL while performing normal duties	COA3

Table 3. Course of Action Comparison Criteria

## **B. COURSE OF ACTION 1—SOCOM RESIDENT PME FOR ALL SOF OFFICERS**

The first course of action, named Universal SOCOM PME, would have all SOF officers attend a USSOCOM-provided PME program. SOF officers would no longer attend their service-specific PME staff colleges. The SOF education elements at the service-provided institutions would provide instruction on SOF to non-SOF students.

The first proposed course of action for a SOCOM-provided PME opportunity is the most budget- and manpower-intensive option. This course of action entails having all SOF officers from each of the services attend a resident PME program designed and conducted by SOCOM. Each of the services would provide a special operations instructor to their respective command and staff colleges. The SOF instructors often teach SOF electives to non-SOF personnel and also serve as subject matter experts for all SOF for their respective institution. The first course of action would retain the SOF instructors at the intermediate-level PME institutions. The SOF instructors would retain their focus to teach SOF electives and SOF introductory courses to students attending PME who were non-SOF. Also included in this population are students who will be assigned to SOF units as administrative and support personnel upon completion of PME such. SOF instructors would provide the necessary links to the SOF community for the students at the service-provided PME institutions. This model would divert all SOF officers to attend a SOCOM resident PME program.

All SOF officers under SOCOM would attend the resident SOCOM PME program. This resident program would grant the appropriate command and staff college credit to students for each of their services, as well as provide instruction on SOF specific skills, attributes, and education requirements identified in the gap analysis. The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) would be a natural fit for a SOCOM PME institution. As per its mission, JSOU is designed “to educate Special Operations Forces executive, senior, and intermediate leaders

and selected other national and international security decision-makers, both military and civilian, through teaching, research, and outreach in the science and art of Joint Special Operations.”<sup>42</sup> JSOU is already home to a number of SOF-specific courses including the Joint Special Operations Pre-Command Course and the Joint Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy. A program tentatively titled the “Joint Special Operations Intermediate Professional Military Education Course” (JSOPME) could easily be instituted under JSOU. The JSOPME would require personnel from each of the armed service’s SOF career fields to serve as instructors and course directors. As JSOU is already established at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida, existing facilities could be utilized to teach this course. An alternative location could be located in the National Capital Region (NCR) to leverage interagency participation. U.S. federal agencies often lack flexibility to move their prospective students to attend service PME around the country. Instituting a SOCOM PME program in the NCR not only facilitates interagency involvement, but also provides proximity to other civilian institutions to help leverage the education value. As with other PME institutions, JSOPME would offer two starts a year: a summer and a winter cycle. These cycles would provide SOF units with a steady stream of PME qualified officers throughout the year.

A new SOF-specific resident intermediate PME curriculum would need to be designed and implemented for course of action 1. Based on the educational goals required by SOCOM’s FMD, this curriculum would provide students the SOF specific knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary to operate effectively in ambiguous global environments. The development would have large upfront costs for design and implementation, and minor future costs for updating and maintaining the curriculum.

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<sup>42</sup> “Our Mission Is,” Joint Special Operations University, accessed August 13, 2013, <https://jsou.socom.mil/Pages/Default.aspx>.

Implementation of this course of action would impact student's quality of life. This course would require all SOF officers to conduct a permanent change of station (PCS) move to the location where JSOPME is taught. This additional move to attend a ten-month course often disrupts families' lives. Some officers would ultimately attend this course without moving their families, while others would have to transfer their dependents to the course location.

A major issue with establishing a SOCOM-provided PME institution is the current service policies with regard to resident PME selection. The U.S. Army and Marine Corps both adhere to selection models for officers to attend PME. Each year, a board meets to decide which officers will be offered the chance to attend resident PME. Generally, the top 50 percent of officers from each of the branches are provided resident PME opportunities at either their own service's school or a sister service PME entity. The proposed model for SOCOM PME would require a change in service policy to allow all army SOF officers the opportunity to attend SOCOM resident PME rather than facing a selection board. According to the U.S. Army's guidance on ILE attendance, "The manner in which you complete your ILE (PME) will not be a discriminator. Currently, promotions are not tied to completion of ILE. What will matter in the future is whether an officer has completed their education or not."<sup>43</sup> Similarly in the USMC, while a board is held to decide who will attend resident PME, all marine officers are required to attend a form of PME. A necessary change in regulation would be needed to allow all MARSOC officers to attend the SOCOM resident PME rather than facing a selection board.

The U.S. Air Force has more stringent ILE selection policies. Historically, the U.S. Air Force selects around 20 percent of its eligible major population for some form of resident intermediate-level education. In order for all AFSOC

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<sup>43</sup> "AO-Level FAQ's for OILE," U.S. Army Human Resources Command, accessed August 8, 2013, [https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/assets/PDF/Posted\\_FAQs\\_v3.pdf](https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/assets/PDF/Posted_FAQs_v3.pdf).

officers to attend a SOCOM provided PME program, U.S. Air Force regulations would have to be adjusted as well.

The U.S. Navy also conducts an annual board to select students for attendance at the resident intermediate program. According to the Naval War College, “each annual board convened to select officers for promotion to lieutenant commander then proceeds to choose candidates for the College of Naval Command and Staff from among those lieutenant commander selectees.”<sup>44</sup> Different from the other services, the U.S. Navy only requires its officers to complete JPME. There is no requirement to complete a distance learning service-provided PME if not selected to attend the intermediate-level PME. A change in service regulation would not be needed in order for all Naval Special Warfare officers to attend a resident SOCOM PME program.

This course of action is rated as highly effective. Every SOF officer would receive the SOCOM required knowledge, skills, and attributes by attending the JSOPME course in residence. A trade-off to this course of action would be the lack of attendance to other PME opportunities. This centralized PME would dilute the experience and knowledge base that SOF officers bring to the other service-provided PME institutions. In order to address this, JSOPME could open the course to a number of non-SOF students from each service. This would help mitigate the loss of SOF experience at each service PME program.

### **C. COURSE OF ACTION 2—SOCOM RESIDENT AND DL PME FOR ALL SOF OFFICERS**

The second option, Alternative SOCOM PME, examines the establishment of a USSOCOM-provided PME education that is an additional requirement to current service-provided PME. Current service selection criteria for attendance to PME would remain the same based on the officer’s branch of service. This option would not increase the SOF education elements at any of the service-provided

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<sup>44</sup> “College of Naval Command and Staff,” U.S. Naval War College, accessed August 13, 2013, <http://www.usnwc.edu/Departments---Colleges/College-of-Naval-Command-and-Staff.aspx>.

PME institutions. All SOCOM officers would attend this program in residence or distance learning regardless of whether they had been selected to attend a resident program by their parent service.

Officers who are selected to attend their parent service's resident program would continue to attend the legacy courses. As an example, if a U.S. Army Special Forces officer was not selected to attend the Army's Command and General Staff College in residence, he could then attend the SOCOM resident PME program conducted by JSOU. Another example is if a Naval Special Warfare officer attends the Naval Command and Staff College in residence, he would still attend the JSOPME upon completion of the Navy's program. The officer would have the option of completing this course in residence or via distance learning. This approach allows SOF officers to continue to attend resident service-provided PME programs while ensuring those not selected for resident courses receive the necessary skills, attributes, and education requirements identified by the gap analysis. This course of action would not require adjustments to existing service-provided curriculums, as all SOF officers would attend the SOCOM PME course via residence or distance learning. To institute this course of action JSOU would have to establish a resident and distance learning PME program.

Less resource-intensive than Course of Action 1, this option still requires a moderate amount SOF-specific funds in order to establish both a resident and distance learning SOF PME program. This course of action would also require an increase in manpower similar to course of action 1, but on a lesser scale. The criteria for facilities, curriculum design, and service regulation changes remain the same as in course of action 1. Other than the smaller SOF-specific funds investment, the only other criteria difference between the first two courses of action is the impact on students' quality of life. Course of Action 2 would not require as many PCS moves, therefore allowing SOF officers to remain co-located with their families and providing stability while attending the JSOPME via distance learning. A small portion of SOF officers would have to attend the SOF

specific PME course in residence, but this course would probably be taught as a temporary duty (TDY) assignment in lieu of a PCS. The majority of SOF officers would attend this course via distance learning, as it would be in addition to current service PME requirements.

Course of Action 2 is rated as moderately effective. This course of action would require a large portion of SOF officers to complete the distance learning JSOPME course in addition to their normal duties in a Special Operations unit.

#### **D. COURSE OF ACTION 3—LEVERAGING CAPABILITY**

The third option, Leveraging SOF Capability, examines the establishment of a distance-learning only SOF-specific curriculum for all SOF officers not selected for resident PME. In addition to distance learning, the current SOF education elements at each of the service-provided PME institutions would be modeled after the U.S. Army's SOF CAC cell. This reorganization and investment would create SOF-specific programs at each of the service-provided institutions. Those who are not selected to attend a resident-provided program will receive this education via the distance learning. This program would be designed to provide the SOF-specific training and education identified in the gap analysis.

In the this course of action, the SOF instructors at each of the service PME institutions would become separate departments that provide not only elective instruction, but instruction in the identified skills, attributes, and education requirements desired by SOCOM. Currently, the SOF chair at the service-provided institutions is usually a senior SOCOM officer. This course of action would require the assignment of several officers, SOCOM civilians, and possibly non-commissioned officers to assist in the instruction and administration requirements for SOF officers. JSOU would have to institute a distance learning program for those officers not selected by their parent service to attend a resident program. Selection board from each of the services would continue to select SOF officers to attend service-provided PME opportunities.

This course of action would require additional personnel at each of the service-provided PME programs in order to bolster the existing SOF staff members. An increase in personnel would be needed under JSOU in order to administer the DL program. The increase in personnel would be less than required for the first two courses of action. Inherent costs for this program would lie in the technology needed to support a DL program, and the instructors and course managers to facilitate the program. As with the other courses of action, a new curriculum would need to be designed for the distance learning JSOPME course. Existing facilities would be used similarly as the previous courses of action.

In contrast to the first two courses of action, service regulations would not need to be addressed, as this course of action would not impact resident versus nonresident selection. As noted in Chapter III, most of the senior officers interviewed were not in favor of a distance learning PME program for SOCOM. However, this course of action provides the least amount of impact on SOF officers' quality of life. Only those SOF officers selected to attend a service-provided PME program would be required to conduct a PCS. All other SOF officers would attend the JSOPME via distance learning, therefore reducing the quality of life impact on families.

This course of action is rated as moderately effective. Similar to course of action 2, a small portion of SOF officers would still attend their service-specific PME programs. These programs would now be bolstered by increased SOF instructors and more electives and education tracks at each of the service-provided PME programs. The remaining portion of SOF officers would attend the JSOPME course via distance learning while assigned to a SOF unit.

## **E. EVALUATION OF THE COURSES OF ACTION**

It is necessary to examine the costs of establishing and maintaining additional SOF education programs. In an environment of fiscal austerity, it is essential that changes in manpower, facilities, and funding should form the basis

of comparison for establishing or bolstering education programs. The need to change service regulations, the challenges of designing and implementing a SOF-specific curriculum, and the additional impacts on SOF officers should also be examined. Finally, the overall estimated effectiveness of the program would be used as a basis of comparison.

When comparing the three courses of action several criteria are applied.

The first set of criteria will consist of overall budget impacts for the course of action. Included in these criteria is TDY funding, funding for operations of courses, and tuition costs for SOF officers. The second criteria examine additional manpower, both civilian and military, and if growth is necessary for the course of action. The third criteria examine facilities and locations, and whether or not current facilities are feasible.

Some of the courses of action may require changes in each of the armed services' personnel regulations in order to be feasible. The challenge of designing and implementing new SOF-specific courses and the impacts on SOF officers are examined. Some SOF officers may have to add an additional permanent change of station move in order to receive SOF-specific PME. The overall estimated effectiveness is based on input from the senior officer interviews and their feedback with regard to establishing a SOCOM specific PME institution or program. Seven of the eight senior special operations officers interviewed were not in favor of distance learning programs.

The senior officers did not believe, based on their experiences that distance learning venues provided value or were effective in providing education to officers.

Each of the criteria was assigned a value as explained in Table 4. The values ranged on a scale of one to five. The rating of one was the least favorable or effective criteria. The rating of five was the most favorable or effective criteria. Each course of action is provided a total score; the highest score is the most favorable course of action and the lowest score is the least favorable given the set of criteria.

<b>Values and Ratings</b>	
Value of 1 but less than 2	Least Favorable/Effective
Value of 2 but less than 3	Not Favorable/Effective
Value of 3 but less than 4	Moderately Favorable/Effective
Value of 4 but less than 5	Favorable/Effective
Value of 5 or greater	Most Favorable/Effective

Table 4. Criteria Values and Ratings

Evaluation Criteria for SOCOM PME Courses of Action								
Budget Impacts	Education Value X 1.5	Manpower Impacts	Facilities Impacts X .5	Service Regulation Change	Curriculum Design and Implementation	Student Impacts	Estimated Effectiveness	COA and Score
1 Least Favorable	(5 x 1.5) 7.5 Most Favorable	1 Least Favorable	(5 x .5) 2.5 Not Favorable	1 Least Favorable	5 Most Favorable	2 Not Favorable	5 Most Effective	COA 1 Score:25
3 Moderately Favorable	(3 x 1.5) 4.5 Moderately Favorable	1 Least Favorable	(5 x .5) 2.5 Not Favorable	1 Least Favorable	5 Most Favorable	3 Moderately Favorable	3 Moderately Effective	COA 2: Score 23
3 Moderately Favorable	(3 x 1.5) 4.5 Moderately Favorable	2 Not Favorable	(5 x .5) 2.5 Not Favorable	5 Most Favorable	4 Favorable	5 Most Favorable	3 Moderately Effective	COA 3: Score 29

Table 5. Recommended Courses of Action

The three courses of action are analyzed in Table 5. The education value factor was provided a weight of one and half to the provided score. This weight shows the importance of education value in relation to the other factors. The facilities impacts criteria were given a weight of half a point to show that it is less important than the other criteria. All other comparison criteria were equated equally. When analyzed utilizing the above factors, the recommendation is to institute COA 3: Leveraging Capability. This course of action would allow most SOF officers to attain the SOCOM required knowledge, skills, and attributes through a distance learning medium. This course of action also allows officers attending the legacy service-provided PME courses to receive SOF-specific education through an enhanced and robust SOF education element, based on the model of the army's SOF-CAC Cell. Even though that seven of the eight senior officers were not supportive of a distance learning option, it was included as a recommendation. Based on the small impact to student quality of life and the ability to reach all officers in the SOCOM enterprise without major service regulation changes, distance learning is a feasible factor for implementing a SOF-specific intermediate PME program. The proposed distance learning option for SOCOM will not resemble current distance learning programs. Special emphasis would be placed on instructor to student ratios; the importance of writing articles and papers for publication; and achieving the stated education goals of SOCOM rather than maximizing student throughput.

COA 3 offers SOCOM a diverse mix of education opportunities such as the Naval Postgraduate School, each of the armed services' command and staff colleges, as well as a SOF-specific PME opportunity to provide the special operations knowledge, skills and attributes required by SOCOM. COA 3 would require the establishment of a separate distance learning course taught by JSOU. The ten-month-long distance learning course would provide SOF officers the opportunity to receive the same knowledge, skills, and attributes via distance learning that their SOF counterparts were receiving in service-provided resident programs.

## **F. NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL AND OTHER RESIDENT PME EQUIVALENTS**

A counter-argument can be made that SOCOM already has an established program for PME instruction. The Defense Analysis department of the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, provides graduate-level education to personnel from USSOCOM, partner nations, and the inter-agency. According to the Defense Analysis department's webpage:

The Special Operations and Irregular Warfare curriculum provides a focused curriculum of instruction in irregular warfare. Courses address counterinsurgency, terrorism and counterterrorism, unconventional warfare, information operations, and other "high leverage" operations in U.S. defense and foreign policy. The core program also provides a strong background in strategic analysis, decision modeling, organization theory, and formal analytical methods.<sup>45</sup>

The Defense Analysis program generally hosts 100 students annually. Similar to PME attendance, DA students are selected by their service to attend the program. The program is 18 months long, and culminates in a Master's of Science degree in Defense Analysis. Officers attend the Navy's Command and Staff program at NPS to earn JPME 1 credit. The U.S. Army grants service PME credit to those officers who attend the Naval Command and Staff program.

The DA department at NPS was not resourced to handle all SOCOM officers. An estimated 1,000 officers annually needing SOCOM specific education alone would eliminate NPS as a viable option to meet FMD's educational goals. In 2013, the DA department was named the USSOCOM Think Tank by Admiral McRaven. This development showcases the strategic thinking and problem solving taught to students and its demand across the SOCOM enterprise. SOCOM should continue to use the DA Department as a highly competitive education opportunity to create critical strategic thinkers for the

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<sup>45</sup> "Special Operations/Irregular Warfare (699)," Naval Postgraduate School, accessed August 27, 2013, <https://www.nps.edu/Academics/Schools/GSOIS/Departments/DA/Academics/SpecOps.html>.

Special Operations community. The proposed SOCOM PME program, while not considered subpar to NPS, should be used to educate the bulk of the SOCOM force.

## **G. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

After the brief examination of the comparison criteria costs for each course of action it is clear that COA 3 is the recommended choice for SOCOM. The Leveraging Capability COA is the only course of action that can provide SOCOM with a diverse mix of service-provided PME and intellectual capital to 100 percent of SOF officers. COA 3 can provide the knowledge, skills, and attributes identified by SOCOM's FMD and confirmed by the senior SOF officers interviewed. This course of action allows SOF officers to continue to interact with their parent service counterparts, while still receiving a SOF-specific education to give them the operational and strategic foundation necessary for success in ambiguous environments. Additionally, those officers not afforded the opportunity to attend a resident program will be able to attain the required knowledge, skills, and abilities through a distance learning experience. Ultimately, the Leveraging Capability COA will provide a better educated officer corps to the USSOCOM Commander as well as to the United States as a whole.

## **H. SUMMARY**

This project strongly suggests that current service-provided instruction is not adequate to meet the specific education goals for USSOCOM officers.

By examining the current curricula taught by each of the service-provided intermediate-level PME institutions, and comparing it to FMD's measure of quality, it appears that an education gap does exist. Further illustrating this gap are interviews conducted with senior officers from SOCOM. Their responses suggest that current service-provided PME is not adequate for SOF officers. They further agreed that SOCOM needs its own form of intermediate-level PME.

Three courses of action have been proposed to meet the goals of providing SOCOM specific knowledge, skills, and attributes to SOCOM officers. The recommended course of action for SOCOM is to institute a Leveraging Capability program where officers who are not selected to attend their service specific programs attend either a distance learning program provided by JSOU. In addition, those selected by their parent services to attend a PME program would receive their required SOF education through a bolstered SOF education element at each of the service provide PME institutions.

Even if SOCOM does not pursue the recommended course of action with regard to its own intermediate-level PME, changes should be initiated to the current service-provided PME programs. Current service-provided PME appears to not provide the SOF specific requirements for SOCOM to become the best educated force in the Department of Defense. SOCOM and the United States cannot afford to allow its special operations officer corps to revert to policies, which limit education opportunities.

## APPENDIX A. NPS IRB GUIDANCE

### NPS Institutional Review Board (IRB) Interim Guidance on Human Subjects Research Involving Surveys, Questionnaires, Interviews, and Focus Groups

(drafted on 25 April 2013)

There are multiple organizations at NPS that engage in data collection using surveys, questionnaires, interviews, or focus groups. The NPS IRB reviews only those data collection activities related to human subjects research. To ensure NPS is in compliance with applicable DoN, DoD, and Federal survey policies (all of which consider questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups equivalent to surveys), an NPS survey policy is needed. This requirement has been discussed with the NPS Chief of Staff. Until such time as an NPS survey policy has been written and promulgated, the IRB plans to operate under the guidelines and principles outlined below.

Decisions made by the IRB must balance the needs, responsibilities, and risks related to the research subjects, the student, staff, and faculty researchers, and the institution. NPS is unique in that it is the only institution in the Navy that confers graduate degrees in a wide variety of academic disciplines. In order to maintain its standing and credentials, students, staff, and faculty must engage in research and publish their findings. A significant portion of this research involves collecting data from human subjects. The NPS IRB reviews well over 100 protocols each year and more than 70% of them involve the use of surveys, questionnaires, interviews, or focus groups. Inordinately constraining survey policies will negatively impact completion of student theses and capstone projects and jeopardize the research of faculty members whose careers depend on such research. Further, survey policies only limit access to potential research subjects; they do not offer any additional protection or risk reduction to the subjects. The protection of subjects is assured by the policies enforced by the IRB.

The NPS IRB is responsible for ensuring NPS researchers comply with all applicable human subjects research policies. Current human subjects research policies make reference to survey policies but do not require the IRB to monitor compliance with the survey policies. Therefore, until such time that NPS develops and distributes a survey policy, the IRB intends to review human subjects research protocols based on the existing IRB policies. If the protocols include a survey, the IRB will review the survey to ensure the following:

- Questions are appropriate;
- Information obtained will be safeguarded properly;
- Researcher has obtained permission from the local commander/director to administer the survey;
- Subjects provide their consent and that consent is documented;
- Subjects have the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

The IRB also will inform researchers of the applicable (DoN, DoD, and Federal) survey policies and encourage them to seek whatever approval may be required based on the number of subjects to be surveyed and the organizations by which the subjects are employed. The IRB will only monitor compliance with IRB policies; at present, the IRB is neither staffed for, nor charged with, monitoring compliance with survey policies.

Drafted by:

Lawrence G. Shattuck, Ph.D., Colonel, U.S. Army, Retired, Chair, Institutional Review Board

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## **APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Interview Questions in support of Major Robert M. Dexter's Thesis  
Naval Postgraduate School  
Defense Analysis Department  
Monterey, California

Hypothesis: Current service-provided instruction is not adequate to meet the specific education goals for USSOCOM officers

### **Background**

In order to support the arguments made for the above hypothesis, it is necessary to conduct interviews with senior officers within the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM). The expertise provided by the interviews will confirm or deny whether an education gap exists between the education goals SOCOM has set for its officers and the education that students receive through current service-provided instruction. It is important to get feedback from senior officers within SOCOM with regard to PME as their supervisor input directly impacts the education opportunities available to majors and lieutenant-commanders in the armed services.

The target population size for the interviews is eight senior officers within USSOCOM who have had command experience supervising O4 level officers from the Joint SOCOM community. This experience is needed to be able to professionally judge the performance, skillsets, and potential of officers who have attended the different armed service's resident command and staff programs.

The interviews may be conducted in person, via telephone, or via video teleconference (VTC). The interviewees will be informed as to the nature of the interview prior, but will not be provided a copy of the interview questions ahead of time. The initial estimate is for the interviews to last at least 30 minutes but no longer than one hour. Interviewees will be asked for their permission to record

the interview via audio device or video in the case of a VTC. The interviews will not be conducted anonymously. All answers provided during the interviews will be attributed to the interviewees in the thesis document. Interviewees will be provided a consent form via email prior to the conduct of the interview. At the request of the interviewee, an executive summary of the completed interviews will be provided to their office.

## **Instructions**

If possible interviews will be conducted in person. The interviewer will be responsible for securing available space to conduct the interview. Interviewees are asked to please not bring cell phones or other electronic devices to the interview. Interviewees may bring their own recording device, but please ask permission prior. The interviewee may stop the interview at any time.

If the interview is conducted via teleconference, please do not allow others to attend the interview. Likewise, if a telephone call is used to conduct the interview, please do not allow others to listen in on the interview.

## **Demographic Questions**

**Question 1:** What is your current rank and position? (Estimated length of response less than one minute.)

**Question 2:** How many years have you served in the U.S. Armed Forces? (Estimated length of response less than one minute.)

**Question 3:** How long have you served as a Special Operations officer? (Estimated length of response less than one minute.)

**Question 4:** Have you commanded more than one Special Operations organization? (Estimated length of response less than one minute.)

**Question 5:** How many times have you supervised majors or lieutenant-commanders from services other than your own? (Estimated length of response less than one minute.)

**Question 6:** Did you attend a resident PME program provided by a U.S. armed service? If so, which program did you attend? (Estimated length of response less than one minute.)

These demographic questions provide the framework for the interviewees' expertise as senior SOF officers. Their years of service coupled with their time in special operations showcases their relevance to the thesis topic. The interviewees' command experience and supervisory terms directly relates to the thesis hypothesis. The questions regarding the interviewees attendance transitions the interview to the next set of questions dealing with PME programs at the armed service's staff colleges.

### **Professional Military Education Questions**

**Question 7:** How would you rate the importance of sending a SOF officer to professional military education before employing them operationally? Extremely important, Important, somewhat important, not at all important. Why? (Estimated length of response 5 to 8 minutes.)

**Question 8:** Based on your experience commanding SOF officers, are the armed service's command and staff colleges providing adequate education that is relevant to SOF commanders' needs? Why or why not? (Estimated length of response 5 to 8 minutes.)

**Question 9:** What SOF knowledge, skills, and abilities did the officers you supervised excel at? (Estimated length of response 5 to 8 minutes.)

**Question 10:** What SOF knowledge, skills, and abilities did the officers you supervised need additional training in? (Estimated length of response 5 to 8 minutes.)

**Question 11:** What additional knowledge, skills, and abilities not discussed previously did you require as a commander of Joint Special Operations Forces? (Estimated length of response 5 to 8 minutes.)

These questions show the importance of professional military education from the viewpoint of experienced SOF commanders. The questions highlight whether or not commanders were satisfied with the education that the officers

they supervised had received. Questions 9, 10, and 11 give the commanders the opportunity to provide recommended knowledge, skills, and abilities that they believe should be added to existing PME programs in order to compliment operational experience.

### **USSOCOM Provided PME Program**

**Question 12:** As a senior officer in special operations, do you see the need for the establishment of a resident SOCOM provided professional military education program? (If the answer is no, proceed to question 14). (Estimated length of response 5 to 8 minutes.)

**Question 13:** If a resident SOCOM professional military education program were to be established, should it be in addition to existing service-provided resident PME or as a substitute for all SOCOM officers? (Estimated length of response 3 to 5 minutes.)

**Question 14:** Should SOCOM provide a distance learning opportunity to SOCOM officers upon completion of service-provided resident PME? (Estimated length of response 3 to 5 minutes.)

**Question 15:** If SOCOM establishes a distance learning post-PME program, should all SOCOM officers attend this program, or only those not selected for a resident service-provided program? (Estimated length of response 3 to 5 minutes.)

This final set of questions establishes the need to build a separate SOCOM PME opportunity or to maintain the status quo based on the experience of SOCOM senior officers. If the interviewees do not see a need for a separate resident program, the follow on questions establish the need for distance learning opportunities for SOCOM officers in addition to already provided service education programs. Alternative programs could be a knowledge sharing website or community of practice that is established and monitored by USSOCOM, but allows field grade officers to exchange information and best practices.

## Open Ended Conclusion

**Question 17:** Is there anything you would like to add with regard to current or future PME opportunities for SOCOM officers based on your experience as a SOF commander?

**Question 18:** How much variability do you believe exists in the current service-provided programs with regard to when students attend, and what they are exposed to at the time of attendance?

This final question allows the interviewee to provide any final thoughts or anecdotes relevant to JPME for SOCOM officers. This question will conclude the interview. The interviewee will be thanked for their time and assistance. If the interviewee requests, a transcript of the interview will be provided to them.

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