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THESIS

KEEPING SPECIAL FORCES SPECIAL:
REGIONAL PROFICIENCY IN SPECIAL FORCES

by

Philip A. Buswell

December 2011

Thesis Advisor:	Michael Richardson
Second Reader:	Anna Simons

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Regional proficiency is a critical capability in irregular warfare (IW). In preparation for increased engagement in irregular warfare, the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Military Services made several significant improvements in developing regional proficiency. While the DoD is attempting to create a new capability in the majority of the Total Force, Special Forces was created to succeed in an IW environment. As a result of its design, Special Forces valued and developed regional proficiency long before this became topical in DoD. Oddly, the last decade of overseas contingency operations which spurred interest in regional proficiency in DoD overall has also threatened regional proficiency development in Special Forces. An analysis of Special Forces training and development reveals that the Special Forces primary means of developing regional proficiency is through deployment experience. While the Special Forces Groups are regionally aligned, several have consistently deployed outside of their Area of Responsibility (AOR) to support combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. A survey and a series of interviews were conducted to determine the state of regional proficiency interest in Special Forces. Through survey analysis, several trends were identified. With this information this thesis concludes with a suggested strategy to improve regional proficiency in Special Forces non-commissioned officers (NCOs).

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KEEPING SPECIAL FORCES SPECIAL: REGIONAL PROFICIENCY IN SPECIAL FORCES

Philip A. Buswell
Major, United States Army
B.S., United States Military Academy, 2000

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requirements for the degree of

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December 2011

Author: Philip A. Buswell

Approved by: LTC Michael Richardson
Thesis Advisor

Dr. Anna Simons
Second Reader

Dr. John Arquilla
Chair, Department of Defense Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Regional proficiency is a critical capability in irregular warfare (IW). In preparation for increased engagement in irregular warfare, the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Military Services made several significant improvements in developing regional proficiency. While the DoD is attempting to create a new capability in the majority of the Total Force, Special Forces was created to succeed in an IW environment. As a result of its design, Special Forces valued and developed regional proficiency long before this became topical in DoD. Oddly, the last decade of overseas contingency operations that spurred interest in regional proficiency in DoD overall has also threatened regional proficiency development in Special Forces. An analysis of Special Forces training and development reveals that the Special Forces' primary means of developing regional proficiency is through deployment experience. While the Special Forces Groups are regionally aligned, several have consistently deployed outside of their Area of Responsibility (AOR) to support combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. A survey and a series of interviews were conducted to determine the state of regional proficiency interest in Special Forces. Through survey analysis, several trends were identified. With this information, this thesis concludes with a suggested strategy to improve regional proficiency in Special Forces non-commissioned officers (NCOs).

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

3C	Cross-Cultural Competence
ACFLS	Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy
ACS	Advanced Civil Schooling
AFSOC	Air Force Special Operations Command
AO	Area of Operations
AOR	Area of Responsibility
AQ	al-Qaeda
AQI	al-Qaeda in Iraq
AR	Army Regulation
ARAC	Advanced Regional Analysis Course
ARNG	Army National Guard
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
BILAT	Bilateral Exchange
CA	Civil Affairs
CASL	Center for Advanced Study of Languages
CENTCOM	Central Command
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CJCSI	Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff Instruction
CLREC	Center for Language, Regional Expertise and Culture
CNT	Counternarcoterrorism Training
COCOM	Combatant Command
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CW	Chief Warrant Officer
DA	Direct Action
DA PAM	Department of the Army Pamphlet
DATT	Defense Attaché
DLIFLC	Defense Language Institute and Foreign Language Center
DLO	Defense Language Office

DLTR	Defense Language Transformation Roadmap
DoD	Department of Defense
DODD	Department of Defense Directive
DODI	Department of Defense Instruction
DRSE	Directorate of Regional Studies and Education
FAO	Foreign Area Officer
FM	Field Manual
FOB	Forward Operating Base
FPME	Foreign Professional Military Education
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GCC	Geographic Combatant Command
GPF	General Purpose Force
HN	Host Nation
HVI	High Value Individuals
ICT	In-Country Training
ILC	Intermediate Language Course
ILE	Intermediate Level Education
ILR	Interagency Language Roundtable
IRS	Intermediate Regional Studies
IW	Irregular Warfare
IW JOC	Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept
JCET	Joint Combined Exchange Training
JP	Joint Publication
JSOU	Joint Special Operations University
KSAA	Knowledge, Skills, Abilities and Attitudes
LCNA	Language and Culture Needs Assessment
LET	Live Environment Training
LREC	Language, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities
M2M	Military-to-Military Exchange
MARSOC	Marine Special Operations Command

MISO	Military Information Support Operations
MPEP	Military Personnel Exchange Program
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NCOER	Non-Commissioned Officer Evaluation Report
NCOES	Non-Commissioned Officer Education System
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
OCONUS	Outside the Continental United States
ODC	Office of Defense Coordination
OER	Officer Evaluation Report
OJT	On-the-Job-Training
OPTEMPO	Operations Tempo
OSS	Office of Strategic Studies
PCS	Permanent Change of Station
PDP	Partnership Development Program
PDSI	Professional Development Skill Identifier
PLTCE	Partner Language Training Center, Europe
PME	Professional Military Education
PMESII-PT	Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, Infrastructure, Physical Environment, and Time
RAO	Regional Area Officer
RCLF	Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization
RPAT	Regional Proficiency Assessment Tool
RP	Regional Proficiency Skill Level
SEAL	Sea-Air-Land Team
SF	Special Forces
SFAUC	Special Forces Advanced Urban Combat
SFG(A)	Special Forces Group (Airborne)
SFODA	Special Forces Operational Detachment – A
SFQC	Special Forces Qualification Course

SLC	Senior Leader's Course
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
SODARS	Special Operations De-briefing and Retrieval System
SOF	Special Operations Force
SOFLO	Special Operations Forces Language Office
SOLO	Special Operations Liason Officers
SOS	Special Operations Squadron
SRP	Strategic Research Project
SSD	Strategic Studies Detachment
SWCS	Special Warfare Center and School
TC	Training Circular
TRADOC	U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command
TSOC	Theater Special Operations Command
U.S.	United States
USAJFKSWCS	United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School
USASFC(A)	United States Army Special Forces Command (Airborne)
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
UW	Unconventional Warfare
WO	Warrant Officer

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I. INTRODUCTION

> Competent Special Operations Forces cannot be created after emergencies occur.
>
> —SOF Truth[1]

A. FOREWORD

In 2001, Afghanistan suddenly became the most interesting place on Earth for the United States defense establishment. Raised from obscurity to the highest national priority, Afghanistan became the primary interest for our national security organizations. People with knowledge and experience in Afghanistan were suddenly some of the most valuable resources in the federal government. The United States needed people with field experience and knowledge of the region to spearhead operations in Afghanistan. The 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) (SFG(A)) was the Special Forces unit aligned with the region that included Afghanistan. Then-COL Mulholland, the commander of 5th SFG(A) at the time, stated that Special Forces lacked "precise knowledge" on Afghanistan because there had been little association with the country since the 1980s.[2]

Only a few men had the regional and operational expertise required to conduct the operation in Afghanistan. Gary Schroen, a man about to retire from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), was the most qualified of a very small group. Over the course of a career, Schroen had developed extensive regional knowledge of Afghanistan and had personally dealt with many of the Northern Alliance commanders.[3] Had the timing of 9/11 been different, Schroen could have retired and there would have been no

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[1] United States Special Operations Command, "USSOCOM Homepage," accessed 30 November 2011, http://www.socom.mil/default.aspx.

[2] John Mulholland, "Interview: Colonel John Mulholland," *Frontline: Campaign Against Terror*, accessed 10 April 2011, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/campaign/interviews/mulholland.html.

[3] Gary Schroen, *First In: An Insider's Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War On Terror in Afghanistan* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2006), 17.

one with the same ability within the federal government capable of executing the required mission. The nation was lucky to have Gary Schroen.

Another example of luck is found in the British example of T.E. Lawrence. T.E. Lawrence was already an accomplished scholar on Arabia when World War I erupted. Lawrence escaped duties as a desk officer and became the most accomplished unconventional warrior of modern times by being a military advisor to the Arab tribes.[4] What is notable about both cases is that the person's regional expertise went largely unrecognized until a crisis manifested. In the face of crisis, what was largely obscure knowledge can become one of the most significant items in a military strategy. It was only by luck that both nations had these types of individuals at hand at the right time. The United States should not have to depend on luck to meet its national security needs.

No one can predict where the next crisis might occur. Fortunately, U.S. Army Special Forces already maintains a global presence in many of the world's "hot spots." Regional proficiency is a fundamental aspect of Special Forces' strategic value and it should be deliberately developed in Special Forces. The average Special Forces Soldier is intelligent, intellectually curious and constantly seeking to better himself. As an example, despite a high operations tempo (OPTEMPO) in Afghanistan that frequently involved direct combat engagements, several of the Special Forces Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) on my Special Forces Operational Detachment–A (SFODA) were enrolled in online college courses. Given their inherent intelligence and perseverance, these NCO's completed their academic workload, even if some of the tests were interrupted by insurgent rocket attacks on our small forward operating base (FOB). Unfortunately, these studies were on American history and the Civil War. It made me wonder how much more effective and efficient Special Forces Soldiers could be if they earned college credit while they studied the regions they were likely to deploy to. It is my firm belief that if properly enabled, Special Forces can become the regional experts that the nation will need in the future.

[4] Michael Korda, *Hero: The Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010).

Equally influential in the genesis of this thesis was a visit to my Special Forces battalion by ADM Eric Olson, then-Commander, United States Special Operations Commander (USSOCOM). During his concluding comments to the gathered battalion leadership, ADM Olson observed that the last decade of combat caused an evolution within the Department of Defense and Special Operations Forces in particular. ADM Olson left us with these closing remarks, "General Purpose Forces are looking more like SOF and SOF are looking more like General Purpose Forces. Very soon there needs to be a conversation about what makes SOF SOF."[5] It is my hope that this thesis offers a small contribution to that conversation.

B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

> President Kennedy understood the indirect approach; he understood the focus had to be on the population with the primary goal of working together with host nation partners to combat violent, extremist organizations and home grown insurgents with unique local solutions. Their solutions…It is the trademark of the Green Beret, and part of President Kennedy's legacy. He understood that specially trained forces could achieve the balance of lethal force and assistance to populations that was required to create enduring successes on a global scale.
>
> —BG Edward Reeder, Commander, USASFC(A)[6]

Special Forces' roots are in unconventional warfare and its requirement to work by, with or through irregular forces.[7] This requires every Special Forces (SF) Soldier to have some regional proficiency. The theoretical framework for this research seeks to determine how an increased level of regional proficiency might be imparted to current and future Special Forces Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs).

My overarching hypothesis is that increasing regional proficiency will enhance a Special Forces NCO's effectiveness. This hypothesis is based on three items. First, regional proficiency makes a soldier more effective in irregular warfare (IW). Second,

---

[5] Eric Olson, remarks to 1-10th SFG(A) leadership paraphrased by author, Panzer Kaserne, Germany, 2009.

[6] Edward Reeder, Jr., "John F. Kennedy Commemoration Ceremony Remarks" (speech, Arlington, VA, 17 November 2011).

[7] Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-05.130, Army Special Operations Forces Unconventional Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2008), 1–2.

Special Forces is designed to be effective at irregular warfare. Third, Special Forces NCOs are capable of developing a high level of regional proficiency.

The importance of regional proficiency is found in several of the Department of Defense's principal documents on IW. *Department of Defense Directive (DODD) 3000.7* states that "IW is as strategically important as traditional warfare" and requires the improvement of Department of Defense proficiency in IW.[8] With regard to regional proficiency in particular, *Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept, Version 2.0 (IW JOC, v. 2.0)* highlights this with the statement, "The joint force must develop a thorough appreciation of the *specific* socio-cultural, political, religious, economic, and military factors involved and a detailed portrait of key segments of the population, including those who wield most influence in the society."[9] From this it can be concluded that DoD believes that regional proficiency is a vital skill for IW.

IW is the form of conflict that Special Forces is designed to excel in. Additionally, Special Forces' approach is in accordance with DoD's belief that regional proficiency is necessary for successful conduct of IW. Special Forces' requirement for regional proficiency is explicitly stated within its doctrine. *FM 3-05.20 Special Forces Operations* states:

> Special Forces units are regionally oriented to ensure they have the resident skills and knowledge of the belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits of a specific region to allow them to influence their [host nation] HN counterparts. This understanding of the region extends into the political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, information, and physical environment systems within that region and how they apply to military operations.[10]

From doctrine alone, it can be decisively concluded that regional proficiency is an important subject for Special Forces. Since regional proficiency is integral to Special Forces, improving regional proficiency should be researched.

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[8] Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Directive 3000.07* (December 2008), 2.

[9] Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare (IW): Countering Irregular Threats, Joint Operating Concept (JOC), Version 2.0* (17 May 2010), 25, emphasis added.

[10] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2011), 3–26.

While regional proficiency is important to the entire Regiment, Special Forces NCOs are uniquely suited to be the targeted population for enhanced regional proficiency. Special Forces NCOs serve the longest periods of time on a Special Forces Operational Detachment A (SFODA). According to doctrine, the SFODA "is the primary Special Forces operational unit and the building block for Special Forces operations… [and] is designed to organize, equip, train, advise or direct, and support indigenous military or paramilitary forces."[11] An SFODA is composed of ten Special Forces NCOs, one Special Forces Warrant Officer, and one Special Forces Officer. While on an SFODA, SF NCOs have the opportunity to focus on a specific region and to conduct multiple deployments to the same region. This provides an excellent opportunity to specialize. Furthermore, while they are detachment members, Special Forces NCOs have the best opportunity to exploit the regional proficiency education they have received since they are most often the ones actually engaging with the population.

Some regional education is already programmed into the Special Forces NCOs' development program. The regional education provided during initial training and during established PME will be examined. This thesis will also examine how Special Forces NCOs' experiences and on-the-job-training (OJT) could translate into acquired regional proficiency. Finally, this thesis will also determine how additional regional proficiency education could be applied to the current SF NCO career path.

C. BACKGROUND

The requirement for regional proficiency is widely recognized within the Department of Defense (DoD). Specifically defining and measuring regional proficiency, however, proves to be a complicated task and is currently under development.[12] Even prior to the publication of *The Department of Defense Language, Regional Expertise and Culture Capabilities Strategic Plan* (referred to in this thesis as the *Strategic Plan*), each

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[11] Department of the Army, *FM 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 3–20.

[12] Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, Committee On Armed Services, House of Representatives, *Beyond the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap: Bearing the Burden For Today's Educational Shortcomings* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2010), accessed 18 February 2011, http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-111hhrg61632/pdf/CHRG-111hhrg61632.pdf, 52.

Service was already taking steps to improve regional proficiency.[13] Many of these programs and discussions are focused on developing the total force (i.e., every Soldier, Sailor, Airman and Marine). Even though the Army describes Special Forces as both cultural professionals and foreign language professionals, the discussions within the Service regarding regional specialists are usually limited to and focus on Foreign Area Officers (FAO), cryptologists and linguists. Special Forces Soldiers are omitted from the Service-level discussion.[14] Many of the Services, to include the Army, view expanding FAO billets as a way to meet regional specialist needs. Omission of Special Forces from these discussions is surprising since after FAOs, Special Forces and other elements of United States Army Special Operations Forces (USASOC) best meet the descriptions of Regional Proficiency skill level (RP) 3 and below.

RP is a new ranking system developed by the Defense Language Office (DLO) and is designed to numerically rate a person's experience in a region. This is to be assessed through the Regional Proficiency Assessment Tool (RPAT). A key concept of the RPAT is that it is not a test. Rather, it is a tool used to judge an intangible ability that is not readily evaluated by performance measures. Like many things in the military (e.g., leadership potential, awards, etc.), procedures and guidelines can be applied to assist in this judgment. The RPAT methodology allows DoD to express regional proficiency in a numerical value that its DoD personnel systems can accept. This will permit the tracking and management of regional proficiency within DoD.[15]

Regional proficiency is an inherent requirement for the Special Forces' mission set. In the 2011 SOCOM Posture Statement, Admiral Eric T. Olson, Commander, United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), stated, "Understanding the operational context of the environments in which we operate is a hallmark of SOF… and

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[13] Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, Committee On Armed Services, House of Representatives, *Beyond the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap: Bearing the Burden For Today's Educational Shortcomings*, 30–31.

[14] Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: DOD, 2009), accessed 21 February 2011, http://www.almc.army.mil/ALU_CULTURE/docs/ARMYCULTURESTRATEGY-01DEC09.pdf, 71.

[15] Gary Bauleke, Associate Director, Operations and Capability, Defense Language Office, conversation with the author, 22 November 2012.

understanding the value of 'micro-regional expertise allows SOF" to succeed.[16] Yet, while SOF may be able to focus on regions, SOCOM is relying on the Services to develop their own regional proficiency strategies applicable to their respective SOF elements.[17]

Few would probably dispute that regional proficiency is more integral to Special Forces than to other SOF elements outside of United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC). According to *FM 3-05.20 Special Forces Operations*, "Regional orientation is the hallmark of Special Forces Soldiers and units, with each of the five Regular Army and two [Army National Guard] ARNG Special Forces groups regionally aligned with a [Geographical Combatant Command] GCC."[18] Despite this, Special Forces Soldiers and particularly Special Forces NCOs, do not have a structured program for improving their regional proficiency during their careers. Much of a Special Forces NCO's education on regional proficiency occurs during the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC) language phase. This is insufficient. A Needs Assessment conducted by Norwich University in 2010 determined that the SFQC provided only a limited amount of cultural training and no regional education. For instance, in January 2011, six Russian language students were tested on the nation-states of Europe. None of the six was able to correctly label more than 50% of the countries.[19]

Upon graduation, a Special Forces NCO is expected to improve his knowledge through self-study and on-the-job-training (OJT). This reliance on OJT is captured in FM 3-05.20, *Special Forces Operations* with the phrase, "Formal training and cultural immersion during repeated deployments are the vehicles for developing" regional

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[16] Eric Olson, *2011 SOCOM Posture Statement*, (Washington, D.C.: DOD, 2011), accessed 19 November 2011, http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2011_hr/030311olson.pdf, 15.

[17] William McRaven, Written Statement to the Senate, *Advanced Policy Questions for Vice Admiral William H. McRaven, USN: Nominee for Commander, United States Special Operations Command,* Senate Confirmation Hearing, 28 June 2011, 35–36.

[18] Department of the Army, *FM 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 3-5.

[19] David Walton, Department Chief, Directorate of Regional Studies and Education (DRSE), JKFSWCS, correspondence with author, 10 March 2011.

proficiency.[20] As a result of this reliance on OJT, regional proficiency is a mixed bag. Some units do it well. Other units do it poorly.

Attempts are being made to address this training and education capability gap. The United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS, from here on referred to as SWCS) recently created the Intermediate Regional Studies (IRS). The first pilot course was completed in February 2011 and was called the Intermediate Language and Culture Course. Since then, the course has been split into an Intermediate Language Course and Intermediate Regional Studies. While not a part of the SFQC, the majority of the students were recent SFQC graduates.[21] The purpose of this course is "to prepare graduates with a systems approach to understanding their area of interest to better affect the battle space."[22] The course seeks to give graduates the tools needed to analyze cultures and then apply these to their assigned region. In this manner, the course attempts to improve all three components of cultural capability.

These efforts to improve regional proficiency in USASOC are separate from the Service-level initiatives. The motivation for the reform within SWCS originated with requests by leaders in the Special Forces Regiment and the Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs). As a result, these efforts are USASOC centric and are not intended to meet DoD's RP guidelines. Examples of this separated effort and different goals are found in the description of the skill level identifiers that are awarded to graduates of the ILC. For instance, the Intermediate Level Language Skills identifier, Professional Development Skill Identifier (PDSI) D5E, requires an Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) score of 2/2, completion of ILC, or "6 semester hours [received] from a Regionally Accredited College/University in Cultural Studies associated with the language of the [assigned language] or an equivalent College/University abroad." The Advanced Level Language Skills identifier, PDSI D5F, requires an ILR score of 3/3, presumes the

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[20] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 3–26.

[21] Directorate of Regional Studies and Education, *ILC Data Review (Pilot I: Jan.-Feb. 2011)* (data review, JFKSWCS, 2011), 1.

[22] Kristin Richmond, *Intermediate Language & Culture: Analysis & Recommendations* (report, Tailored Training Programs, LLC, 2011), 3.

individual meets the requirements of PDSI D5E, and "have a minimum of two years operational experience and two deployments in the AOR of their assigned language at the SOF tactical element level." While this reform and these PDSI incentives will increase regional proficiency, they do not fully address the expectations of RP or meet the intent of this thesis to provide continued regional proficiency education for Special Forces Soldiers. [23]

D. DEFINITIONS. WHAT AM I TALKING ABOUT?

Q: What do you get when you put two anthropologists in a room?

A: Three definitions of culture![24]

Unfortunately, this joke is based in truth. Culture and most things related to culture tend to be nebulous concepts that refuse to be firmly nailed down. This proved a constant source of difficulty during research for this thesis. Not only do anthropologists and other culture professionals struggle with defining culture, but the Department of Defense is also having difficulty in creating a definitive lexicon for talking about this subject. Brian Selmeski in his paper, "Military Cross-Cultural Competence," provides a good survey of cultural terms that were in fashion in 2007.[25] Since then, even more terms have arisen. Each Service is approaching the "developing cultural capability" problem in a slightly different way and as a result different terms or terms with different meanings are in use among the different Services. The DoD has identified this problem and is taking measures to address it.[26] For clarity within this thesis, when feasible, definitions are drawn from the highest authority within DoD.

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[23] David Walton, Department Chief, Directorate of Regional Studies and Education (DRSE), JKFSWCS, correspondence with author, 10 March 2011.

[24] Brian R. Selmeski, "Military Cross-Cultural Competence: core concepts and individual development," *AFCLC Contract Report 2007-01* (16 May 2007), 3.

[25] Brian R. Selmeski, "Military Cross-Cultural Competence: core concepts and individual development," 4-5. Example list of terms: cultural savvy, cultural astuteness, cultural appreciation, cultural literacy, cultural adaptability, cultural or human terrain, cultural expertise, cultural competency, cultural awareness, cultural intelligence, cultural understanding

[26] Department of Defense, "Regional and Cultural Expertise: Building a DoD Framework to Meet National Defense Challenges," Department of Defense June 2007 Summit: DoD Regional and Cultural Capabilities, the Way Ahead (October 2007), 7.

As noted in the joke above, defining culture is a problem that still plagues professionals to this day. This thesis will not add to that debate. Rather, for the purposes of this thesis, the definition presented in the *Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy* will be used. In this publication, culture is defined as:

> The set of distinctive features of a society or group, including but not limited to values, beliefs, and norms, that ties together members of that society or group and that drives action and behavior.[27]

With culture defined, here is the way this thesis defines regional proficiency. Regional proficiency, according to the *Department of Defense Instruction (DODI) 5160.70* is:

> An individual's awareness and understanding of the historical, political, cultural (including linguistic and religious), sociological (including demographic), economic, and geographic factors of a foreign country or specific global region.[28]

This definition was introduced in *DODI 5160.70* to serve as a guideline when talking about assigning Regional Proficiency skill levels (RP). The DoD plan is to rate regional proficiency on a scale of 0 to 5 (see Table 1). The University of Maryland Center for Advanced Study of Languages (CASL) is currently developing the Regional Proficiency Assessment Tool (RPAT) to measure and assign these skill levels.[29] The RPAT will be discussed later in this thesis; here it is worth highlighting that this refers to knowledge about a *specific* region. This is relevant because while studying how to increase language and cultural expertise within the organization, DoD concluded that there are three interconnected components associated with understanding or working with foreign social groups: language, culture (general knowledge about culture), and region (knowledge of a specific area).

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[27] Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 7.

[28] Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Instruction 5160.70* (12 June 2007), 18.

[29] George Reinhart, "Assessing Regional Proficiency," (CASL Research Fact Sheet, University of Maryland Center for Advanced Study of Language, 4 February 2011), accessed 10 September 2011, http://www.casl.umd.edu/sites/default/files/TTO81234FS.pdf.

Table 1. Regional Proficiency Skill Level Definitions

REGIONAL PROFICIENCY SKILL LEVEL 0+ (PRE-NOVICE) Aware of very basic facts about the country, region, or culture: location, size, neighboring countries, what language is primary, some facts about the government, major personalities, religion(s), some recent history. Knows some facts about the relationship between the region and the United States. Knows major social norms (e.g., "do's and don'ts"). May have received familiarization training about the area. Total exposure to learning about the country, region, or culture is likely to have been brief, possibly immediately prior to assignment or arrival to the region. May have briefly visited the country or region, or have known someone from the culture. Needs assistance in understanding or dealing with nearly every situation involving the country or culture. May have basic communication skills such as a few common greetings in the primary language of the region and some other words or phrases such as: "How much?" or "Where is?" Will have difficulty understanding responses in the language if not accompanied by gestures and drawings.
REGIONAL PROFICIENCY SKILL LEVEL 1 (NOVICE) Limited exposure to the country, region, or area of specialization. Less than 1 year of experience. Knowledge comes from a combination of education/military experience, area studies, in-country assignments, travel, and specialized professional experience. Shows beginning ability to research and write summaries of events but has limited ability to explain why the events are significant. Has some level of proficiency related to a job that has relevance to a country, region, or issue, but has very limited knowledge about the country, region, or issue (e.g., an F-16 mechanic who goes to Norway to work with Norwegian F-16 mechanics but knows very little about Norway). Has a basic survival-level understanding of the culture(s) and may have equally basic communication skills in the predominant language(s).
REGIONAL PROFICIENCY SKILL LEVEL 2 (ASSOCIATE) Has 1 to 2 years of experience working in an area of specialization or focused on a country or region at least 50 percent of the time. Has a basic understanding of the region or country. May possess in-depth knowledge that is narrowly defined within a region. Unlikely to understand how specialized knowledge fits with larger regional issues (i.e., knows military threat, but does not understand economic and political infrastructure and implications). Can identify important events, but cannot explain why the event occurred or what might happen because of the event. Writes summaries and may present focused briefings on a narrow area of specialization. Knowledge comes from a combination of education, military experience, area studies courses, in-country assignments, travel, and other educational or professional experience. Has a limited understanding of culture(s). May have elementary communication skills including basic conversation ability in a language spoken in the country or region.
REGIONAL PROFICIENCY SKILL LEVEL 3 (PROFESSIONAL) Typically, 2 to 4 years of experience working in an area of specialization or focused on a country or region at least 75 percent of the time. Viewed as a knowledgeable and valuable resource for issues and trends particular to a region or area of specialization. Demonstrates in-depth understanding of a specific subject area and directly related factors that affect or influence that area**.** Has enough knowledge of the area to make judgments about it and back them up with arguments. Writes and presents overviews or focused briefings based on area of specialization. Knowledge comes from a combination of education, military experience, area studies courses, in-country assignments, travel, mentoring, and specialized professional experience. Cultural experience reflects the knowledge of someone who has lived in a region or country for 1 year or more; has been immersed in the culture. Likely to have ILR level 2+ to level 3 proficiency in at least one language spoken in the country or region.
REGIONAL PROFICIENCY SKILL LEVEL 4 (SENIOR PROFESSIONAL) Typically, 4 to 7 years in a specialized area, in addition to general experience in a broader subject area. Has a deeper knowledge and understanding of most of the components of a region or country than many or even most natives of the country. Can create and defend novel viewpoints regarding the subject matter; knows the pros and cons of these viewpoints. Consistently identifies deficiencies that affect knowledge of the subject area; designs, advises, or implements appropriate solutions. Has experience initiating the development or drafting of requirements-related documents and takes the lead in responding to requirements levied by others. Has experience developing or drafting policy-related documents or providing major input to such documents. Has experience working directly with senior U.S. military officers or directly with senior U.S. country or regional policy officers on programs that significantly affect U.S. policy in a country or region. Routinely writes and delivers substantive briefings on aspects of the

region or country. Knowledge comes from a combination of advanced graduate education, seminars, research, teaching, publishing, area studies courses, in-country assignments, travel, mentoring, and specialized professional experience. Cultural knowledge and experience allows the individual to blend easily in the culture. Almost always has ILR level 3 or higher proficiency in at least one of the languages spoken in the country or region.
REGIONAL PROFICIENCY SKILL LEVEL 5 (EXPERT) Has an in-depth, broad understanding of all aspects of the subject area with typically more than 7 years of specialized experience. Demonstrates deep understanding of issues and trends particular to an area of specialization. Anticipates problems or issues and develops solutions. Knows more than most educated people about the country or region and has a specialized knowledge of regional or country topics. Can discuss the political structure of the country in the context of abstract political theories, and can apply these theories to explain or assess behavior, or knows things about the structure most educated natives of the country would not know. Routinely writes and delivers authoritative papers and briefings to high-level officials on substantive and detailed subject areas. May have experience as a team leader or major contributor to a National Intelligence Estimate or a Theater Security Cooperation Plan related to a region or country. May have experience leading a national-level country team or serving as the DoD senior member of a national-level country team developing policy related to a country or region. Knowledge comes from a combination of advanced post-graduate education, advanced research, teaching, publishing, seminars, in-country assignments, travel, and specialized professional experience. Has the cultural knowledge of someone who is treated like a native by natives of the country; is considered very close to being their equal. Only a few, obscure, infrequent, or out-of-the way practices would be unknown. Would probably function as a member of the educated elite of that country or region. Almost always has ILR level 4 or higher proficiency in at least one of the languages spoken in the country or region.[30]

These three components are reflected in the title of the DoD's new strategy for developing cultural capability, *Department of Defense Strategic Plan for Language Skills, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities*.[31] *The Strategic Plan* does not use a broad, overarching term and instead lists the three components separately throughout the document. In other documents, however, the term cultural capability does refer to all three components. Cultural capability is defined as:

> The ability to apply culture-general knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes (KSAAs) and culture-specific knowledge to achieve mission success in culturally complex environments.[32]

Next, we come to the components that comprise cultural capability. While the term "language skills" should be self-evident. Regional expertise is:

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[30] Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Instruction Number 5160.70*, 18–19.

[31] Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Department of Defense Strategic Plan for Language Skills, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities* (2011).

[32] Defense Language Office (DLO), Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Implementation Plan for Language Skills, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities* (25 August 2011), 31.

> Graduate-level education or 40 semester hours of study focusing on but not limited to the political, cultural, sociological, economic, and geographic factors of a foreign country or specific global region through an accredited educational institution or equivalent regional expertise gained through documented previous experience as determined by the [Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel & Readiness)] OUSD (P&R) or the Secretary of the Military Department concerned.[33]

Regional expertise could be considered the region component of the cultural capability, but setting the bar for regional knowledge to have to be acquired through a graduate-level education is more suitable for FAOs. Regional competence seems more appropriate. The Army defines this as:

> A set of knowledge, skills, and attributes related to a particular country, region, organization, or social group, which enables effective interaction with and/or adaptation to that specific culture.[34]

This thesis will use regional competence to address the region component of cultural capability, recognizing that regional knowledge can come in varying degrees of depth and from different venues.

The best term for capturing the culture-general component of cultural capability is cross-cultural competence or 3C. 3C is defined as:

> Competency based on a set of knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes (KSAAs) developed through education, training, and experience that provide the ability to operate effectively in culturally complex environments. An individual's 3C can be further developed and augmented by the acquisition of cultural, linguistic, and regional proficiency, and by their application in cross-cultural environments.[35]

As Dr. Allison Greene, Associate Director for Culture in the Defense Language Office, puts it, 3C "has at its foundation a *culture-general* concept that provides the framework to learn about and adapt to <u>any</u> culture."[36] In this manner, 3C concerns itself

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[33] DLO, *Implementation Plan for Language Skills, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities*, 31.

[34] Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 31.

[35] DLO, *Implementation Plan for Language Skills, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities*, 31.

[36] Allison Greene, "Culture, 3C & Diversity in the DOD" (Briefing to the MLDC, 26 May 2010).

with teaching the concepts of culture as a theory. This is a very useful skill for the military, especially for the general purpose force (GPF), since it is an exportable skill not tied to a specific region.[37] Special Forces also make great use of this skill. In the survey for this thesis, a Special Forces Soldier provided this statement in support of 3C:

> Even though with this war we have very little time to increase our knowledge of our specific AOR my experience has shown me that no one does what we do better. I am currently deployed to Afghanistan and while other branches are trying to "be Green Berets" they are not. I have yet to see anybody else work with a host nation counterpart the way we do. So I don't think it's so much about how knowledgeable we are about our AOR but how willing we are to work with and learn about our host nation while we are in their country.[38]

While 3C is useful, competences across the components are not mutually exclusive. The relationship between language, culture, and region is shown in Figure 1. Optimum performance can be found where all three circles intersect.[39]

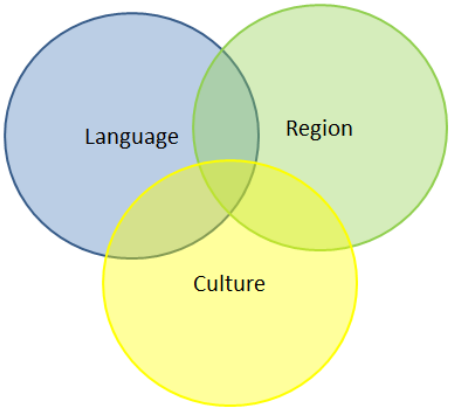

Figure 1. Components of Cultural Capability[40]

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[37] United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, *Building Cultural Capability for Full-Spectrum Operations* (Arlington, VA: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, February 2008), 11.

[38] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 5 November 2011.

[39] Regional proficiency should be put into the context of cultural capability. A review of the definitions of the RP's reveals that regional competence plays a dominating role in regional proficiency. Language and culture, however, also play important roles in regional proficiency, especially at higher skill levels. For this thesis, regional proficiency will be thought of as a circle overlapping the region circle. RP 1 and below would exist solely in the region circle, while the higher skill levels would reside in the intersections of the other circles.

[40] From Greene, "Culture, 3C & Diversity in the DOD."

Given 3C's utility, there is a growing school of thought within DoD that more emphasis should be placed on 3C and less on language and region specific knowledge.[41] The Services tend to favor developing 3C over language or regional knowledge because it is seen as a more cost-effective skill.[42] Significant research on 3C has been conducted by the United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences and several reports have been produced about how to impart 3C throughout the Army.[43] With a solid 3C foundation, a Soldier can be expected to effectively apply his KSAA regardless of the country. This makes sense for the GPF. Regional competence and language acquisition take time and resources to develop and, as a result, fewer people should focus on these skills. This relationship is best described by Maxi McFarland in his article, "Military Cultural Education." McFarland writes, "Cultural expertise takes time. Cultural literacy and competency skills will enable us to cope with most any circumstance of cultural difference. Areas of specific expertise deepen those skills and provide context to their application, but programs designed to achieve expertise in a given region or culture must begin early and be continuous."[44]

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[41] John Kruse et al., *Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military: DOD's Challenge in Today's Educational Environment* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2008), 24.

[42] Jeff Watson, "Language and Culture Training: Separate Paths?" *Military Review* (March–April 2010), 93.

[43] As an example, see United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, *Building Cultural Capability for Full-Spectrum Operations* (Arlington, VA U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, February 2008).

[44] Maxie McFarland, "Military Cultural Education," *Military Review* (March–April 2005), 67.

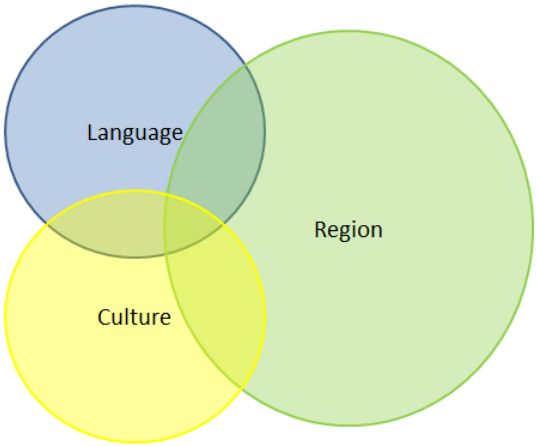

Figure 2. Regional Specialist Components of Cultural Capability[45]

Specialists, such as FAOs, Regional Area Officers (RAO), and intelligence analysts need regional education since they can be assigned to specific regions and are expected to be experts on that area (see Figure 2).[46] Special Forces, with their assigned AORs, falls within this same category.[47] It should be remembered that Gary Schroen and T.E. Lawrence, for example, were not strategically valuable because they only had good people skills. They were also experts in their regions.

E. METHODOLOGY

This thesis uses process tracing and cross sectional comparison methods to analyze the current state of regional proficiency within the Special Forces Regiment. It identifies skill gaps between the current level of regional proficiency and the required level of regional proficiency.

Process tracing will describe the "chain of events" contributing to the current state of regional proficiency within Special Forces. The current professional education system for Special Forces NCOs will be examined to determine how much time is devoted to

[45] From Greene, "Culture, 3C & Diversity in the DOD."

[46] Greene, "Culture, 3C & Diversity in the DOD."

[47] Department of the Army, *FM 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 3–6.

regional proficiency within the training system. This study also uses a large-N cross sectional comparison based on a survey designed to gauge the state of Special Forces' regional proficiency and elicit insights about how better to apply improvements. In 2009 and 2010, USSOCOM's Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) commissioned a SOF Language Training Analysis Support Project. That project surveyed all USSOCOM components and also provided insight.

This thesis analyzes opportunities for improving regional proficiency. A review of existing and feasible programs, both civilian and military, was conducted. Using the insight provided by the cross-sectional analysis and survey, this thesis concludes with recommendations for improving regional proficiency.

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II. REGIONAL PROFICIENCY. SO WHAT?

> The complexity of the present strategic environment requires that SOF operators maintain not only the highest level of warfighting expertise but also regional knowledge and diplomacy skills.[48]
>
> —Admiral Eric Olson, *SOCOM Strategy 2010*

A. REGIONAL PROFICIENCY IN IRREGULAR WARFARE

The future of the U.S. military involves Irregular Warfare (IW). As stated in *Department of Defense Directive 3000.7*, "IW is as strategically important as traditional warfare" and requires the improvement of Department of Defense proficiency in IW.[49] *Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* defines IW as "a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary's power, influence, and will."[50] This definition highlights the importance of being able to influence targeted populations and employ indirect approaches.

This need for regional proficiency is further captured in the *Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept, Version 2.0* with the statement, "The joint force must develop a thorough appreciation of the *specific* socio-cultural, political, religious, economic, and military factors involved and a detailed portrait of key segments of the population, including those who wield most influence in the society."[51] The *IW JOC, v.2.0* also suggests that the majority of IW operations will be "very small-scale and non-combat in nature, but longer-term assignments, deployments, and/or repeat tours will be required for

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[48] Eric Olson, *SOCOM Strategy 2010*, 1 November 2009.

[49] Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Directive 3000.07*, 2.

[50] Department of Defense, *Joint Publication (JP) 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 31 December 2010, 189.

[51] Department of Defense, *IW JOC, ver. 2.0*, 25, emphasis added.

maximum effectiveness to sustain relationships and develop the in-depth cultural knowledge required for effective IW activities."[52] To effectively conduct these operations, the *IW JOC, v.2.0* stresses the importance of advisory personnel being proficient with both language and cultural skills.[53] The *IW JOC, v.2.0* recommends a tiered approach to specialization in skills that "provide an appreciation of the environment, as well as linguistic, social, and societal aspects of specified regions."[54] Again, all such statements make the need for regional proficiency clear. With regional proficiency, the military force can identify and exploit networks within the local social structure, which enables effective operations in an irregular warfare struggle.[55]

Cultural capabilities are especially critical because influencing the population is paramount in IW.[56] This need to focus on the population is found in the written testimony of the new USSOCOM commander, Admiral William McRaven: "USSOCOM must move from a primarily threat-focused approach to a populace-centric approach. To achieve U.S. strategic objectives, the instruments of national power, including the military, and more specifically SOF, must posture for and then execute an approach based on populace-centric engagement." [57] Within a human network there tend to be key personalities or nodes. [58] By identifying these key individuals and influencing them, one should be able to affect the entire network, which helps accomplish the goal of influencing the population. As Admiral Olson, the former USSOCOM commander, put it in the 2011 SOCOM posture statement, "SOF rarely dominate an area with their mass, so they must work with indigenous forces and the local civilian population to accomplish their missions."[59]

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[52] Department of Defense, *IW JOC, ver. 2.0*, 31.

[53] Department of Defense, *IW JOC v.2.0*, 18.

[54] Department of Defense, *IW JOC v.2.0*, 38.

[55] Salmoni et al., *Operational Culture for the Warfighter*, 111.

[56] Department of Defense, *IW JOC, ver. 2.0*, 29.

[57] McRaven, *Advanced Policy Questions*, 45.

[58] Joel Garreau, "Disconnect the Dots: Maybe We Can't Cut Off Terror's Head, but We Can Take Out Its Nodes," *Washington Post* (17 September 2001), C01.

[59] Olson, *2011 SOCOM Posture Statement*, 4.

To work with indigenous forces and the local civilian population, the military must be able to identify the local networks. For analyzing both licit and illicit networks, local knowledge, or regional proficiency, is critical. According to Barak Salmoni and Paula Homes-Eber in *Operational Culture for the Warfighter*, "understanding the roles, positions, and status of various groups and key individuals" allows the warfighter to "determine which group(s) are in power" and to "also locate those individuals and groups who are in a position to influence power holders." [60] Identifying key players and knowing how to influence them allows the military to affect many by only targeting a few. This ability is critical in irregular warfare. Identifying these key individuals, however, requires an appreciation of the manner in which the local culture group organizes relationships.

In his article, "The Decisive Weapon: A Brigade Combat Team Commander's Perspective on Information Operations," COL Ralph O. Baker highlights the importance of targeting key individuals of the population. Given only 12 months, COL Baker had to focus his influence efforts on target audiences. To do this, COL Baker studied his area of operation (AO) in Baghdad in an attempt to learn the local social structure.[61] He identified and engaged respected community members and sought to create conditions for them to serve as his interlocutors to the rest of the population.[62] Through an understanding of the local social structure, COL Baker hoped to influence the majority of the population by engaging only a few key individuals. In this manner, COL Baker sought to use the existing networks to his benefit.

Another example of the importance of understanding the local social structure can be found in the hunt for Saddam Hussein. The initial efforts proved fruitless because coalition forces attempted to track Saddam's location by targeting people who were high ranking within Saddam's former government. These high value individuals (HVI) proved to be dead ends because with the collapse of the government, Saddam separated

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[60] Barak A. Salmoni and Paula Homes-Eber, *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Applications*, 2 ed., (Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2011), 117.

[61] Ralph O. Baker, "The Decisive Weapon: A Brigade Combat Team Commander's Perspective on Information Operations," *Military Review* (May-June 2006), 15.

[62] Baker, "The Decisive Weapon," 21–24.

himself from his government officials and instead relied upon tribal and familial loyalties.[63] Through study and an appreciation of the Iraqi tribal structure and the relationships between families, analysts were able to uncover the networks that eventually led coalition forces to Saddam.[64] This example highlights some of the problems a military confronts when it lacks regional proficiency.

Without regional proficiency, a military force is inefficient in irregular warfare operations because it might never be aware of networks in its AO. As Anna Simons and David Tucker have written:

> Clans, tribes, secret societies, the *hawala* system, religious brotherhoods, all represent indigenous or latent forms of social organization available to our adversaries throughout the non-Western, and increasingly the Western, world. These create networks that are invisible to us unless we are specifically looking for them; they come in forms with which we are not culturally familiar; and they are impossible to 'see' or monitor, let alone map, without consistent attention and the right training.[65]

An ignorant, foreign military force often fails to understand the problems it is addressing and is more prone to make mistakes in its dealings with the population and the enemy. An example can be found in Terry Tucker's description of the struggle to control an Afghan village in his article, "Language, Culture, and Doctrinal Convergence of Trends in Full Spectrum Operations." Tucker describes how there are typically three components to daily life (political/administrative, religious, and security) in an Afghan village with three separate elements responsible for each (the Malik, the Imam, and men of the village, respectively). US forces unfamiliar with how Afghan culture typically works seek out and deal only with the Malik. This proves to be both an inefficient and insufficient approach, since the Taliban, their competitors for population control, are more culturally attuned and better able to more effectively influence (or coerce) the

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[63] Chris Wilson, "Searching for Saddam: A five-part series on how the U.S. military used social networking to capture the Iraqi dictator," *Slate* (22 February 2010), accessed 5 September 2011, http://www.slate.com/id/2245228/.

[64] Wilson, "Searching for Saddam."

[65] Anna Simons and David Tucker, "Improving Human Intelligence in the War on Terrorism: The Need for an Ethnographic Capability," report submitted to Office of the Secretary of Defense for Net Assessment (2004), 5.

targeted populations. In addition to not being able to properly identify the social networks within a group, U.S. forces who lack regional proficiency also expose their fellow warfighters to several common mistakes.

The first common mistake made by a foreign force is mirror imaging. This danger is highlighted in *Joint Publication 5-00.1: Joint Doctrine for Campaign Planning*: "planners may fall into the trap of ascribing to the adversary particular attitudes, values, and reactions that 'mirror image' U.S. actions in the same situation, or by assuming that the adversary will respond or act in a particular manner."[66] This is a common trap that military leaders and analysts often succumb to if not armed with regional knowledge.

One example is the U.S. military's initial efforts to map out the network al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). General Stanley McChrystal described this mirror imaging in his article, "It Takes A Network:" "Like all too many military forces in history, we initially saw our enemy as we viewed ourselves... By habit, we started mapping the organization in a traditional military structure, with tiers and rows… But the closer we looked, the more the model didn't hold."[67] Analysts eventually learned that AQI was not a military hierarchical structure, but was instead a network of nodes connected via relationships and acquaintances. This required gaining an appreciation for local conditions.

Another example of mirror imaging can be found in the US military's approach to aid projects. US forces often assume that the targeted population will want the project because the project is desirable from a U.S. perspective.[68] This is frequently not the case. Michael Flynn et al describe in their article, "Fixing Intel," how the women of an Afghan village destroyed a well built by a non-government organization (NGO) because

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[66] Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 5-00.1: Joint Doctrine for Campaign Planning* (Washington, D.C.: The Joint Staff, 2002), II-9–II-10.

[67] Stanley McChrystal, "It Takes a Network," *Foreign Policy* (3 September 2011), accessed 3 September 2011, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/22/it_takes_a_network?page=0,1.

[68] Christopher Varhola and Laura Varhola, "Avoiding the Cookie Cutter Approach to Culture: Lessons Learned from Operations in East Africa," *Military Review* (November-December 2006), 76.

it deprived them of a valued long walk to a river.[69] In "Avoiding the Cookie Cutter Approach to Culture," Christopher Varhola and Laura Varhola write based on their experience in East Africa that, "The United States cannot gain the acceptance of a population simply by spending money on social projects."[70] Rather, understanding local conditions is critical to determining what the targeted network values. In the absence of this knowledge, the warfighter will most likely project his own values onto the target to the detriment of the mission.

Beyond mirror imaging, another danger is generalization. Generalizing occurs when the warfighter simplifies the situation by "essentializing" individuals or a specific area, which means boiling everyone down to a single type.[71] By doing this, the warfighter will "fail to grasp the important interconnections between individuals and groups—information that could be critical in understanding insurgent networks, the movement of illegal goods, or ties of power and alliance in a region."[72] Often military personnel view local social structures through strictly a tribal lens. As Varhola and Varhola explain, "This analysis is tempting in its simplicity, but it is wrongheaded. The variable role of tribal identity is certainly important within the shifting mix of other factors… however, none of these factors can be examined in isolation from the other factors or under conditions that stress one factor over others."[73] Their experience in East Africa taught them that appearances are often deceiving. While a social group may appear to be acting for one reason, closer inspection reveals other factors influencing their behavior.[74]

Unfortunately, regional proficiency presents a significant challenge to the US military. Regional proficiency is knowledge about specific areas and the U.S. military is

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[69] Michael Flynn et al., "Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan," *Center for a New American Security*, (January 2010), accessed 9 December 2010, https://cle.nps.edu/access/content/group/0421ffae-9a59-4daf-986a-edfd0da9ba3e/Week%207/AfghanIntel_Flynn_Jan2010_code507_voices.pdf, 20.

[70] Varhola et al., "Avoiding the Cookie Cutter Approach to Culture," 76.

[71] Salmoni et al., *Operational Culture for the Warfighter*, 42.

[72] Salmoni et al., *Operational Culture for the Warfighter*, 42.

[73] Varhola et al., "Avoiding the Cookie Cutter Approach to Culture," 74.

[74] Varhola et al., "Avoiding the Cookie Cutter Approach to Culture," 76.

a global force with a high operational tempo. The U.S. military requires specialists in numerous and varied regions and demands can change rapidly. The Department of Defense is still struggling to capture an accurate demand signal (i.e., statement of requirements) within its bureaucratic system to reflect this need and capability.[75] The RP system will help meet both of these requirements.[76] For now, it is not uncommon to find "specialists" within DoD that have little actual expertise in their specific region.[77] Finally and most significantly, creating regional proficiency requires time and an investment in education and experience to develop.[78] As a result of all of these challenges, the DoD is still struggling to develop regional proficiency within the military despite acknowledging that it is critical in irregular warfare.

B. BACKGROUND

1. Department of Defense's Acknowledged Need

As mentioned previously, the requirement for cultural capability, and regional proficiency here specifically, is widely recognized throughout the Department of Defense (DoD) (see Figure 3). In 2005, the DoD published the *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap (DLTR)*. This *Roadmap* was DoD's initial attempt to assess and improve cultural capability within DoD. Except for the few linguist specific items, much of the roadmap is concerned with improving cultural capability across the entire DOD through mass production processes. While not specifically addressing the requirements of Special Forces NCOs, this document provides the guiding principles for improving regional proficiency throughout the Services until 2011.[79]

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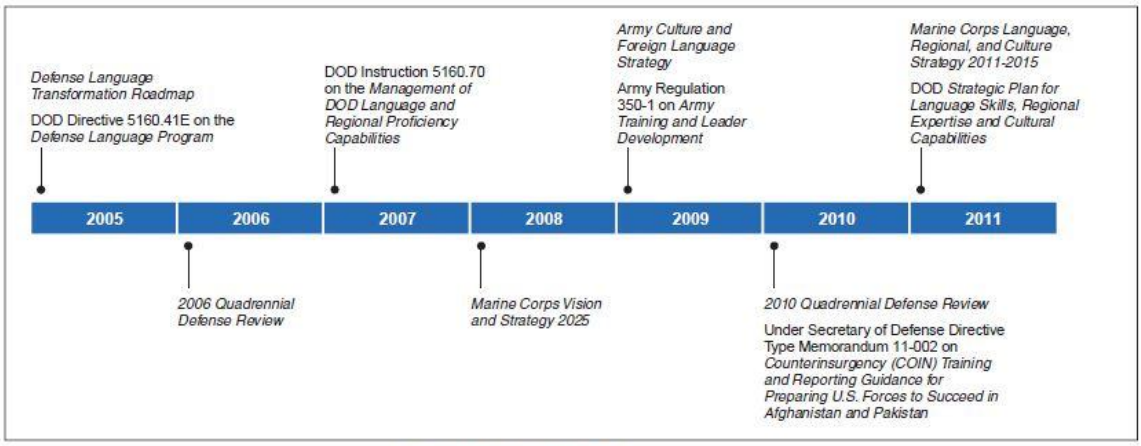
[75] Clifford Stanley, *Language and Culture: Changing Perspectives*, (white paper, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Personnel and Readiness, 28 March 2011), accessed 10 September 2011, http://prhome.defense.gov/READINESS/DLO/files/Language%20&%20Culture_Changing%20Perspective_White%20Paper_Signed.pdf, 7.

[76] Reinhart, "Assessing Regional Proficiency."

[77] Varhola et al., "Avoiding the Cookie Cutter Approach to Culture," 77.

[78] Pauline Kusiak, "Sociocultural Expertise and the Military: Beyond the Controversy," *Military Review* (November-December 2008), 74.

[79] Department of Defense, *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap* (Washington, D.C.: DOD, 2005), accessed 13 February, http://www.defense.gov/news/Mar2005/d20050330roadmap.pdf, 1–19.



Source: GAO analysis of DOD documents.

Figure 3. Selected DoD, Army, and Marine Corps Documents that Addressed the Need for Improved Language and Culture[80]

A related document is the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) *Language and Regional Expertise Planning*. The goal of this document is to provide the Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs) with a common understanding. The document defines regional proficiency as "[a]n untapped pool of officers, enlisted, and civilian personnel [which] exists that can provide some regional expertise based on their experiences with military operations."[81] A Department of Defense Instruction (*DODI 5160.70*) followed in 2007 that published regional proficiency skill level guidelines.[82] A subsequent Department of Defense Directive, *DODD 3000.07*, tasked the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to "[e]stablish policies to enable DoD-wide tracking of military and civilian personnel with skills and experience relevant to IW, including foreign language, regional expertise, and experience or expertise in training, advising, and assisting foreign security forces and institutions."[83]

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[80] From Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Military Training: Actions Needed to Improve Planning and Coordination of Army and Marine Corps Language and Culture Training*, GAO-11-456 (Washington, D.C.: May 2011), 5.

[81] Joint Staff, *Language and Regional Expertise Planning, CJCSI 3126.01*, (Washington, D.C.: DOD, 2006), accessed 13 February 2011, http://www.dtic.mil/cjcs_directives/cdata/unlimit/3126_01.pdf, D-5.

[82] Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Instruction Number 5160.70*, 18–19.

[83] Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Directive Number 3000.07*, 6.

Following up on the *DLTR* in 2008, the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, held a hearing entitled "Transforming the U.S. Military's Foreign Language, Cultural Awareness, and Regional Expertise Capabilities," which concerned itself with improving cultural capability in DoD and the Services as a whole. Each Service testified about the programs that it had or would implement to improve cultural capability. Again, many of these programs were generic machine processes designed to improve every Soldier, Sailor, Airman and Marine. While some specialists, such as Foreign Area Officers (FAO), cryptographers and linguists, were singled out in the testimonies, Special Forces' requirements and needs were barely addressed.[84]

One product from this hearing was the report, *Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military*. One of its recommendations was the concept of tracking and managing "personnel who, while not language professionals, have validated language training/skills or regional expertise."[85] Additionally, this report differentiates between regional expertise and cultural awareness. The report also mentions SOF as being "another element [besides FAOs] that traditionally [possesses] regional expertise."[86]

Another product from this hearing was the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) report, "DOD Needs a Strategic Plan and Better Inventory and Requirements Data to Guide Development of Language Skills and Regional Proficiency." The GAO recommended that DoD "(1) develop a comprehensive strategic plan for its language and regional proficiency transformation, (2) establish a mechanism to assess the regional proficiency skills of its military and civilian personnel, and (3) develop a methodology to

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[84] Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, Committee On Armed Services, House of Representatives, *Transforming the U.S. Military's Foreign Language, Cultural Awareness, and Regional Expertise Capabilities* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2010), accessed 13 February 2011, http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS121476 , 127.

[85] Kruse et al., *Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military*, 65.

[86] Kruse et al., *Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military*, 24.

identify its language and regional proficiency requirements."[87] Because DoD is a large organization, the GAO identified the need for DoD to capture its cultural requirements and its cultural capabilities in a reportable manner. As discussed previously, defining cultural terms is difficult. Quantifying cultural attributes is even more difficult. This is the task of the RP project. While some culture professionals may object to distilling cultural capability to a number, this system, while imperfect, is necessary for the DoD's bureaucracy to work. With the RPAT, DoD will be able to relate reportable numbers to both unit requirements and unit on-hand capabilities. More importantly, the RPAT will allow the DoD to track regional experts and employ them more gainfully.

The Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, convened again on 29 June 2010 to readdress the culture capability issue and to receive a progress report from DoD. The Senior Language Authority, Dr. Nancy Weaver, testified that DoD was in the process of drafting the *Strategic Plan*.[88] In accordance with the GAO's previous recommendation, DoD was developing methodologies both to assess regional skill requirements and to define and establish criteria to identify regional expertise. This would become the CASL RPAT project. The RPAT proved to be more complicated than previously anticipated and is currently still incomplete. According to the GAO report filed in conjunction with the hearing, "Military Training: Continued Actions Needed to Guide DoD's Efforts to Improve Language Skills and Regional Proficiency," the expected completion of the RPAT would be September 2011.[89] As of December 2011, the RPAT is now expected sometime in 2012.[90] The GAO researchers also noted that there are multiple terms being used across DoD. To simplify things, the GAO settled on the term "regional proficiency," which refers to "acquiring knowledge and skills to familiarize U.S. forces

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[87] Government Accountability Office, *Military Training: DOD Needs a Strategic Plan and Better Inventory and Requirements Data to Guide Development of Language Skills and Regional Proficiency*, GAO-09-568 (Washington, D.C.: 2009), accessed 18 February 2011, http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09568.pdf, cover letter.

[88] Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, *Beyond the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap*, 30–31.

[89] Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, *Beyond the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap*, 30–31, 52.

[90] George Reinhart, correspondence with the author, 9 September 2011.

with customs, traditions, and political, social, and economic conditions and other aspects of foreign countries and regions… including cultural awareness."[91] Already, however, this use of "regional proficiency" is no longer valid, since "cultural awareness" (i.e., 3C) is considered a separate component.

In February 2011, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness signed the *Department of Defense Strategic Plan for Language Skill, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities*. The *Strategic Plan* attempts to coherently address the problem of cultural competence in the DoD and establishes the "key priorities for addressing language skills, regional expertise, and cultural capabilities."[92] Significant to this thesis is the *Strategic Plan*'s Goal Two. One objective under Goal Two is to address the inefficiencies in the DOD's personnel processes that "currently hinder the development of language, regional, and cultural capabilities."[93] Another objective is to "build and improve training and education programs" that create cultural competence.[94] Currently, a supporting document, *the Implementation Plan for Language Skills, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities*, is being created to operationalize these objectives. This implementation presents end states, performance measures and initiatives for each objective found in *The Strategic Plan*. Several initiatives relevant to this thesis involve modifying personnel policies to increase career flexibility, revamp incentive structures, and develop "assignment, training, and development programs" to improve cultural competence.[95] Since these are strategic documents, the guidance provided is broad, but all of these objectives and initiatives reinforce the premise and recommendations of this thesis.

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[91] Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, *Beyond the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap*, 43.

[92] Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Department of Defense Strategic Plan for Language Skills, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities*, 5.

[93] Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Department of Defense Strategic Plan for Language Skills, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities*, 16.

[94] Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Department of Defense Strategic Plan for Language Skills, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities*, 16.

[95] Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Department of Defense Implementation Plan for Language Skills, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities*, 19.

In the *2010 SOCOM Posture Statement*, ADM Olson writes, "To prepare USSOF for the challenges ahead, we're prioritizing career development toward areas best suited for irregular environments with emphasis on specialized versus generalized operator performance."[96] He goes on, "The unique nature of special operations enables us to focus people on specific regions more so than other forces can... with specific emphasis on sub-regional and micro-regional knowledge."[97] This concern for regional proficiency has continued with Admiral William McRaven's assumption of command of USSOCOM in 2011. While talking about countering violent extremism, Admiral McRaven reiterated this requirement, "In order to do this effectively, any force, whether SOF or GPF, needs to have an understanding of the culture, and be able to build relationships with the population that promote mutual respect. A key element in the training of SOF personnel is the development of regional and cultural orientation, language capability, and an ability to interact effectively in other cultures."[98] These statements echo DoD's growing concern about regional proficiency and highlights USSOCOM's unique ability to address this concern.

Reviewing these documents makes it clear that DoD does not believe it possesses sufficient regionally proficient Soldier, Sailors, Airmen and Marines and it is taking steps to address this shortcoming.

2. Service Initiative

While DoD was developing the *Strategic Plan*, the Services developed their own plans and are at different stages of implementation. As a result, each program is slightly different. Depending on the Service, emphasis is placed on different aspects of cultural capability and different tools or venues are exploited. Despite these differences, all of the Services' approaches are focused on developing the whole force primarily through professional military education (PME) and pre-deployment training venues.

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[96] Eric Olson, *2010 SOCOM Posture Statement* (Washington, D.C.: DOD, 2010), accessed 18 February 2011, http://www.socom.mil/SOCOMHome/Documents/USSOCOM%20Posture%20Statement.pdf, 13.

[97] Olson, *2010 SOCOM Posture Statement*, 12–13.

[98] McRaven, "Advanced Policy Questions," 47.

Consequently, recognizing its importance in irregular warfare, the Army has taken several steps to improve cultural capability within the general purpose force (GPF). Creating cultural capability has become one of the major objectives of pre-deployment training for Army units. Since July 2010, four to six hours of language and cultural training has become a mandatory part of pre-deployment training for units destined for Afghanistan and Iraq.[99] Additionally, one leader in the platoon who will regularly engage with the population will receive sixteen weeks of language training at a language training detachment.[100] To promote cultural capability within the GPF, the Army is developing a plan to regionally align brigades.[101] Similar to the concept found in Special Forces Groups, this would enable brigades to focus on a particular region and to develop the necessary cultural capability.

The *Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy (ACFLS)* separates cultural skills from foreign language skills. The *ACFLS* emphasizes the development of 3C.[102] Under the *ACFLS*, regional competence falls under cultural competence and would primarily be acquired during pre-deployment training and while deployed.[103] In contrast, *AR 350-1, Army Training and Leader Development*, uses the same Venn diagram of language, region and culture described in the first chapter of this thesis. It deviates deviates from DoD's regional proficiency skill levels and develops its own, which it titles cultural awareness, cultural understanding, and cultural expertise.[104] According to *AR 350-1*, culture training will occur in blocks during PME and will be coordinated and

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[99] Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Language and Cultural Training: Opportunities Exist to Improve Visibility and Sustainment of Knowledge and Skills in Army and Marine Corps General Purpose Forces*, GAO-12-50 (Washington, D.C.: October 2011), 8.

[100] GAO, *Language and Cultural Training*, 8.

[101] Peter Bayer, statement to the House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, *Institutionalizing Irregular Warfare Capability*, 3 November 2011 (accessed 18 November 2011), http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/2011/11/institutionalizing-irregular-warfare-capabilities.

[102] Department of the Army, *Army Regulation (AR) 350-1, Army Training and Leader Development* (Washington, D.C.: DOD, 2011), 121.

[103] Department of the Army, *Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 12.

[104] Department of the Army, *Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 12–14.

developed by the TRADOC Culture Center.[105] It recognizes the importance of self-development and identifies the need to adjust the Army's reliance on institutional and operational training methods.[106] Descriptors are provided for these skill levels, but they are admittedly general and a follow-on task of determining attainment of these objectives is noted.[107] Finally, this strategy describes the Special Forces Soldier (like the FAO) as both a cultural professional, "an individual with a highly advanced level of knowledge, skills, and attributes that pertain to the culture of a particular country or region of the world" and a foreign language professional.[108]

The Air Force has not only published its strategic plan, *Air Force Culture, Region & Language Flight Plan*, but has also implemented some of its elements. The *Flight Plan* similarly relies heavily on self-study and PME to create cultural competence.[109] To assist in this, the Air Force created an *Air Force Culture, Region and Language Program* that consists of modular classes that are available online at the *Air Force Culture and Language Center Homepage*.[110]

The Navy's approach to improving cultural capability produced several significant programs that are relevant to this thesis. *The U.S. Navy Language Skills, Regional Expertise and Cultural Awareness (LREC) Strategy* outlined the intent to fully fund the Naval Postgraduate School's (NPS) Regional Security Education Program (RSEP).[111] RSEP is designed to provide specialized regional/cultural education to the Navy through training teams and distant learning. Led by a naval officer, the RSEP team typically consists of a handful of contracted civilian subject matter experts. RSEP's

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[105] Department of the Army, *AR 350-1*, 123.

[106] Department of the Army, *Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 23.

[107] Department of the Army, *Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 22.

[108] Department of the Army, *Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy*, 19.

[109] Department of the Air Force, *Air Force Culture, Region & Language Flight Plan* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Air Force, 2009), accessed 21 February 2011, http://www.culture.af.edu/PDF/flightplan.pdf, 8.

[110] Department of the Air Force, "Air Force Culture, Region & Language Program," accessed 21 February 2011, http://www.culture.af.edu/program.html.

[111] Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), *U.S. Navy Language Skills, Regional Expertise and Culutral Awareness Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: 2008), 12.

target audience is typically the command team of a naval force.[112] RSEP teams provide instruction in the form of either graduate-level lectures and seminars or regional introductions and overviews.[113] Another Navy initiative has been to expand officer participation in the Regional Security Studies Master's Degree at NPS. [114] For its part, the Navy's Center for Language, Regional Expertise and Culture (CLREC) was created to provide pre-deployment language and cultural training.[115] The Navy's concept of tapping into institutions of higher learning (in this case, NPS) for graduate studies for select number of personnel as well as to provide tailored education from regional experts offer excellent models for how to improve regional proficiency and will be explored in greater depth later in this thesis.

Perhaps the Service with the most advanced regional proficiency program is the Marine Corps. In the nascent Marine Corps Regional, Culture and Language Familiarization Program (RCLF), career Marines (officers and NCOs) are assigned a micro-region, which they are responsible for studying for the remainder of their careers. Modules are available online at the MARINENET website with separate tracks for each micro-region.[116] This regional assignment is recorded in the USMC personnel system, thereby giving a commander visibility over what regions are studied in his unit. A Marine will be expected to complete blocks of instruction throughout his/her career. Depending on the level of implementation, this education will be either completed individually or as a mandatory part of PME. Regional affiliation will not influence assignments or manning requirements. Instead, the intent of this program is to create a large pool of those with regional knowledge in the Marine Corps. The blocks of instruction are basic and the expectation is that upon completing the RCLF program, a Marine would have an RP 1 or RP 2 at best. By having a large, but shallow, pool, it is hoped that the Marine Corps will

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[112] Mark Huber, former Director of RSEP, conversation with the author, 18 November 2012.

[113] "Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture Training Opportunities," NAVADMIN 286/11, (September 2011), accessed 15 October 2011, http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/reference/messages/Documents/NAVADMINS/NAV2011/NAV11286.txt.

[114] CNO, *U.S. Navy Language Skills, Regional Expertise and Cultural Awareness Strategy*, 12.

[115] NAVADMIN 286/11.

[116] United States Marine Corps, "Official Home of the United States Marine Corps," accessed 21 February 2011, http://www.marines.mil/news/messages/Pages/MARADMIN468-10.aspx.

have sufficient regional knowledge to be able to quickly adapt to any global contingency. As an example, when a Marine Expeditionary Unit is underway for a Middle East assignment, but is re-tasked to respond to a humanitarian disaster in Haiti, there will be a handful of Marines that have studied Haiti throughout their careers and can then help commanders make informed decisions during the initial deployment.[117] This program's formalization of regional proficiency across the entire force makes it the most ambitious program among the Services.

3. Literature Review

While the Services have been developing strategies and programs to address their cultural competency shortfalls, several institutions and academics have also addressed the problem. As mentioned earlier, SWCS developed the IRS to help address the cultural capability shortfall. Beyond the IRS, SWCS has made remarkable progress in developing education opportunities for Special Forces NCOs. Admiral McRaven is intent on making USSOCOM the most educated force in DoD.[118] Last year, SWCS partnered with Fayetteville Technical Community College to create an associate's degree completion program for Special Force Qualification Course (SFQC) students. SWCS also approached several colleges to provide pathways for SF NCOs to complete their bachelor's degree (either with or without the FTCC associate's degree). The colleges that SWCS has approached to date include Norwich University, Southern New Hampshire University, and North Carolina State.[119] Programs such as the Norwich Strategic Studies and Defense Analysis curriculum appear to have been developed with Special Forces NCOs in mind.[120] Norwich's and other academic programs could be used to help develop a Special Forces NCO's regional proficiency if these curriculums concentrate sufficiently on regional studies. Ultimately, it is up to the individual SF NCO to pursue

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[117] Joseph Sinicrope, RCLF Program Officer, conversation with the author, 12 October 2011.

[118] David Walton, Department Chief, Directorate of Regional Studies and Education (DRSE), JKFSWCS, correspondence with author, 29 September 2011.

[119] David Walton, Department Chief, Directorate of Regional Studies and Education (DRSE), JKFSWCS, correspondence with author, 10 March 2011.

[120] Norwich University, "Norwich University: Strategic Studies and Defense Analysis," accessed 13 February 2011, http://www.norwich.edu/academics/degreecompletion/curriculum.html.

his own education. These bachelor degree opportunities are based on tuition assistance. The Directorate of Regional Studies and Education (DRSE) at SWCS negotiates with civilian universities and colleges to get them to accept the college credits earned at SWCS and to lower tuition to meet tuition assistance criteria. DRSE is in the process partnering with more civilian institutions and hopes to add several with strong programs in regional studies. But, again, the choice will remain with the SF NCO as to whether he wants to pursue this education.[121]

The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) is another source of education for USSOCOM. JSOU has made improvements with regard to its standing in academe. Some JSOU courses are accredited and the university continues to improve ties with certain institutes of higher learning.[122] JSOU commissioned a study by Booz Allen Hamilton which led it to produce a *Joint Special Operations University Future Concept*. The *Future Concept* concluded that "JSOU should provide single-point access to applicable civilian education and programs that are specifically tailored for joint SOF requirements."[123] JSOU's primary focus is education for the joint operational and strategic levels, which is a higher level than SFODA Special Forces NCOs.[124] Despite this, JSOU is tasked with filling educational gaps for USSOCOM that are not filled by the Service components.

Of course, regional education is not exclusively a Special Forces concern. Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs) could also benefit from enhanced regional proficiency. Much like NPS, JSOU could be used to tap into the regional expertise found in academe. In addition to creating standing courses that are accredited

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[121] David Brand, Directorate of Regional Studies and Education (DRSE), JKFSWCS, interview with author, 29 September 2011.

[122] Brian A. Maher, JSOU President, conversation with author, 24 February 2011.

[123] JSOU President's Action Team, *Joint Special Operations University Future Concept: Providing the Azimuth for Joint SOF Education -The Future Direction of JSOU*, (July 2008), accessed 18 February 2011, https://jsou.socom.mil, 11.

[124] JSOU President's Action Team, *Joint Special Operations University Future Concept*, 9.

by the state of Florida, JSOU has the ability to coordinate with civilian academics to create tailored classes to meet the regional proficiency needs of USSOCOM.[125]

In his Strategy Research Project, "Know Before You Go: Improving Army Officer Sociocultural Knowledge," LTC James Laughrey breaks from the PME model and proposes that the Army should explore leveraging civilian education initiatives to produce regional expertise. Examining both Vietnam-era and current efforts by the Army to produce regional experts, Laughrey concludes that the Army too often attempts to mass produce regional experts by courses that are too compressed to accomplish their stated goals.[126] His analysis and conclusions about the Army's Vietnam-era training and education are insightful and applicable to this thesis. Among them: the education and training needed should have included COIN theory, sociocultural education, and training specific to the area of operations and language; that this education required a significant investment; and programs that were attempted on the cheap to mass produce this expertise failed.[127] Laughrey's analysis and conclusions are relevant since a reflection of the Army's Vietnam-era efforts could be seen in some of today's efforts.

Anna Simons also comes to many of the same conclusion in "Seeing the Enemy (or Not)." Simons argues that regional proficiency is not something that can be quickly produced. Critical of current military professional development models, Simons states that regional proficiency is only possible "if people stay put for long periods of time and engage in serious, career-long study of the areas of responsibility."[128]

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[125] Christopher Jacobs, Division Chief, Regional Education & International Engagement Division, Strategic Studies Department, JSOU, interview with author, 21 September 2011.

[126] James Laughrey, "Know Before You Go: Improving Army Officer Sociocultural Knowledge," (Strategic Research Project, U.S. Army War College, 2008), accessed on 18 February 2011, http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/army/knowb4yougo.pdf, 33.

[127] Laughrey, "Know Before You Go," 15–16.

[128] Anna Simons, "Seeing the Enemy (or Not)," in *Rethinking the Principles of War*, ed. Anthony D. Mc Ivor (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 340.

This idea of long-term commitment to regional proficiency is often repeated elsewhere. True regional proficiency cannot be established by relying upon pre-deployment training or by capricious interests in the *hot zone du jour*. Additionally, Simons offers a cautionary note when she mentions that not every soldier is inclined to work with other cultures, since it requires a mindset capable of perceiving the world through a different lens than that used by the average person.[129] This is an important consideration for designing a regional proficiency program. Not every Special Forces Soldier will have the ability or inclination to pursue this line of study. We see this in the response by one Special Forces Soldier who recently graduated from the Intermediate Language and Culture Course (ILC) pilot program in February 2011. In the remarks portion of a survey, he wrote, "One reason I have such dislike for this course is because I don't want to be here. I could be on a team and deploying, getting first hand culture...You are trying to teach people who don't want to be here or don't care about this stuff and it just doesn't work."[130] The unwillingness or inability of some within Special Forces to regionally specialize has to be acknowledged. This argues for potentially taking a more individualized approach.

The importance of individual capability and the importance of understanding specific circumstances in cross-cultural conflicts appear again in another monograph by Simons titled, "Got Vision? Unity of Vision in Policy and Strategy: What It Is, and Why We Need It." While most of the monograph is devoted to the importance of identifying military/strategic genius, Simons also introduces the idea of the Lawrence Paradox. Distilling lessons from one conflict and attempting to blindly apply them to another

[129] Simons, "Seeing the Enemy (or Not)," 341.

[130] Directorate of Regional Studies and Education, *ILC Data Review*, 8.

conflict is insufficient, since each conflict is unique.[131] This concept can be applied to the need to understand specific situations. To properly fight an asymmetric conflict, specialized knowledge is required. While a study of COIN or an understanding of culture in general are important bases of knowledge for a Special Forces Soldier, he needs detailed knowledge of a specific region to be able to properly leverage his abilities.

Varman Chhoeung and Chad Machiela's NPS thesis, "Beyond Lawrence: Ethnographic Intelligence for USSOCOM" echoes many of these ideas. In it they propose the creation of an organization of individuals who are ethnographic sensors. By acquiring language, education and regional expertise through long-term exposure to the area, these individuals would be able to provide USSOCOM with the required ethnographic intelligence. Ethnographic sensors would be very specialized individuals. While "Beyond Lawrence's" recommendation is the creation of a very small, specialized cohort, this thesis seeks to improve the capabilities of most Special Forces NCOs who are actively serving within the Special Forces Regiment.[132]

While Chhoeung and Machiela advocate select Special Forces Soldiers maintaining a permanent presence in foreign countries, Christopher Pratt advocates the stationing of all of the Special Forces Groups abroad in their respective areas of responsibility (AORs). In his NPS thesis, "Permanent Presence For the Persistent Conflict: An Alternative Look at the Future of Special Forces," Pratt argues that by being stationed within the AOR, Special Forces would be better positioned to develop cultural capability and it would improve their understanding of the operational environment.[133] To accomplish this, Pratt proposes distributing the subcomponents throughout the AOR.[134] As numerous veterans of the forward-deployed battalions (1-10th SFG(A) and 1-1st SFG(A)) indicated in my survey and interview research for this thesis, the benefits

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[131] Anna Simons, "Got Vision? Unity of Vision In Policy and Strategy: What It Is, and Why We Need It," (monograph, Strategic Studies Institute, 2010), 21.

[132] Varman S. Chhoeung and Chad T. Machiela, "Beyond Lawrence: Ethnographic Intelligence for USSOCOM," (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2009), 45–49.

[133] Christopher Pratt, "Permanent Presence For the Persistent Conflict: An Alternative Look at the Future of Special Forces," (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2009), 22.

[134] Pratt, "Permanent Presence For the Persistent Conflict," 32.

of being stationed in the AOR are substantial, especially with regard to developing cultural capability. To quote one respondent, "The best way to acquire regional expertise is to assign a SF [S]oldier to a forward deployed [battalion]. I was assigned to 1/1 [Okinawa] for three years on the same team and traveled extensively throughout my AOR for work and leisure. I am now [serving] as an Army attaché in Southeast Asia and can go toe-to-toe with every Southeast Asia Foreign Area Officer."[135] Maintaining forward deployed units in an AOR would certainly increase Special Forces regional proficiency. However, this would also be a costly and significant endeavor for Special Forces and determining its feasibility would require much more in-depth research. Despite this, Pratt's argument has merit and it should be further explored.

Eric Homan's Strategic Research Project (SRP), "Expanding U.S. Army Language and Cultural Proficiency," weaves together elements of PME and civilian education to address the regional proficiency issue. Homan proposes creating a FAO-lite program for all or most officers that would be implemented in conjunction with the Captain's Career Course.[136] Even though his analysis is officer- and FAO-centric, his recommendations are informative. They have some applicability to this thesis since they deal with developing regional specialization and are based on the FAO training program.

Another SRP that draws upon the FAO program for inspiration is COL Wade Owens' "Improving Cultural Education of Special Operations Forces." COL Owens (a Special Forces Officer) analyzes SWCS' training program and finds it lacking with regard to cultural training. COL Owens points out that, following initial qualification training, SOF personnel have "little opportunity, beyond self-study and operational deployments…to improve language and cultural expertise."[137] COL Owens proposes a FAO-inspired SOF Language and Cultural Education Program. The program would consist of three levels. The first level is basic language (ILR 1/1) and culture education during initial qualification training. The second level would be advanced training

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[135] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 11 November 2011.

[136] Eric Homan, "Expanding U.S. Army Language and Cultural Proficiency" (Strategic Research Project, U.S. Army War College, 2008), accessed on 21 February 2011, http://www.dtic.mil/cgibin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA520000&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf, 14–17.

[137] Owens "Improving Cultural Education of Special Operations Forces," 14.

through either Advanced Civil Schooling (ACS) or a theoretical USSOCOM institutional training program. This level would impart advanced language (ILR 2/2) and cultural training. The third, and final, level would be in-country immersion, which would take the form of attendance at a partner nation military school with follow-on assignment to a partner nation military training institution or unit.[138]

Hy Rothstein also highlights the need for regional proficiency in Special Forces in his book *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare*. Rothstein concludes that a UW force for the future would "require education and training beyond the current standard."[139] Stressing the importance of regional proficiency for a force designed for unconventional warfare (UW), Rothstein argues that the level of regional proficiency in Special Forces is insufficient. Critical of current rotational policies, Rothstein writes, "It takes a long time, sometimes years, to cultivate an area and to inculcate regional expertise" and Special Forces should not rotate regions every few years.[140] This idea that UW requires a high degree of regional expertise developed over time is a recurring theme in works related to UW.

The requirement for a high-level of regional proficiency in Special Forces is also found in COL Eric Wendt's article, "The Green Beret Volckmann Program: Maximizing the Prevent Strategy." COL Wendt describes a preventive strategy against al-Qaeda (AQ) that emphasizes cost-effective, proactive measures against the spread of AQ. The basis of these measures is collaboration with targeted countries through persistent engagement. This persistent engagement program would "stress the need for a few Green Berets… to be thoroughly steeped in select languages and cultures, and would produce Soldiers who are experts in individual countries and select key units (unlike foreign-area officers, who are regional experts) in support of a persistent-presence approach."[141]

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[138] Wade Owens "Improving Cultural Education of Special Operations Forces," (Strategic Research Project, U.S. Army War College, 2010), accessed on 15 October 2011, http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA518468&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf, 9.

[139] Hy Rothstein, *Afghanistan & The Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006), 181.

[140] Rothstein, *Afghanistan & The Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare*, 181.

[141] Eric P. Wendt, "The Green Beret Volckmann Program: Maximizing the Prevent Strategy," *Special Warfare* (July-September 2011), 12–13.

Similar to Chhoeung's and Machiela's ethnographic sensors, these Special Forces Soldiers would be a select, specialized cohort that would have a very high RP, ideal for working well with foreign forces. COL Wendt's training path for the Volkmann Program is a potential model for developing an extremely high level of regional proficiency in select Special Forces Soldiers.

Joint Special Operations University has published numerous reports on educating SOF. The most applicable monograph is "Educating Special Forces Junior Leaders for a Complex Security Environment" by Russell Howard. Howard argues that Special Forces captains should begin a graduate program early in their career in order to improve their cultural capability.[142] Much of Howard's article echoes this thesis except Howard focuses on the graduate education requirement of a Special Forces officer.

C. REGIONAL PROFICIENCY SKILL LEVELS

A major challenge for the Department of Defense in tracking and managing regional proficiency among its personnel is the actual assessment and documentation of a person's level of expertise. To do this, the Defense Language Office (DLO) contracted the University of Maryland Center for Advanced Study of Language (CASL) to develop an algorithm to quantify a person's experience and abilities and rate a person in accordance with the six levels of regional proficiency as prescribed by DODI 5160.70.[143] CASL identified five constructs that contribute to regional proficiency. These constructs are:

1. Language Proficiency–assessed through self-assessment and/or proficiency testing
2. Education–academic degrees, with special attention given to advanced degrees and degrees in area/culture studies and foreign languages
3. Training–military based training at all levels for officers, warrant officers, and enlisted personnel
4. Experience–deployments and overseas experiences (e.g., study abroad)

[142] Russell Howard, "Educating Special Forces Junior Leaders for a Complex Security Environment," *JSOU Report 09-6* (July 2009), 5.

[143] Reinhart, "Regional Proficiency Assessment Tool (RPAT): Assessing Regional Proficiency."

5. Individual Characteristics–psychometric assessments of tolerance of ambiguity and openness to new experiences.[144]

To calibrate the algorithm, CASL used a pool of Foreign Area Officers (FAOs) to determine what constitutes RP 3. FAOs are considered the military's subject matter experts for regional proficiency. FAOs with hypothesized levels were measured and additional FAOs were tested against this standard to validate the algorithm. A survey of the GPF is currently being conducted. CASL will then use this to determine the distinguishing traits of the lower RPs. The intent is to provide an algorithm that is academically sound and produces an accurate rating system.[145] In this manner, an RP score will have the same utility as an ILR score for commanders.[146]

The algorithm could be used in two different approaches: a top-down and a bottom-up approach. The top-down approach is referred to as data mining; with it, the algorithm would be applied to a database of personnel records and would be used to determine the RP scores of the people in that database. This would enable commanders to sift through their inventory to find the most appropriate/best suited individuals for assignments requiring a certain level of regional proficiency. The RP is not designed to be a decision tool. Instead it is meant to be a filter. If a mission requires an RP 3 for Haiti, the data mining approach could help sort through a division of 1,500 to find the twenty soldiers who meet the criteria. The commander will then be left with a manageable number of people from among whom to select.[147]

This data mining approach requires a standardized approach in personnel data entry, which has posed challenges. Culture training, language training and experience are not currently recorded in a standardized manner. Not only are there differences between Services in the management of personnel records, but there are discrepancies within a

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[144] George Reinhart, correspondence with the author, 9 September 2011.

[145] Gary Bauleke, Associate Director, Operations and Capability, Defense Language Office, conversation with the author, 12 October 2012.

[146] There will be a lot of variance within one rating, but there will be distinguishable differences between a 1 and a 2 for both ratings. This rating, which is the quantification of a person's experience, will therefore have meaning for a commander interested in evaluating personnel based on regional proficiency.

[147] Gary Bauleke, Associate Director, Operations and Capability, Defense Language Office, conversation with the author, 12 October 2012.

single Service as well. This lack of standardization in capturing cultural training was one of the issues identified by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in a recent report.[148] The DoD is working to resolve this issue and, ideally, eventually, all relevant data tied to the RP will be standardized. This will allow the data mining to be universally applied in much the same way the ILR ranking is currently applied.

The bottom-up approach, meanwhile, involves the use of the Regional Proficiency Assessment Tool (RPAT), which is based on the algorithm, but depends on an individual stepping forward to enter his information into the tool to determine his RP. In this manner, an individual self-selects himself to identify his regional proficiency and add it to his personnel file. As a result, the higher level RP candidates would typically be motivated to identify their capability.

D. FOREIGN AREA OFFICER–THE GOLD STANDARD

Since FAOs are considered to be the subject matter experts for military regional proficiency, it is insightful to review FAO training and see if any of their techniques could be applied to Special Forces. As described by *Army Regulation 600-3 (AR 600-3): Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, FAOs are "Soldiers who are regionally focused experts in political-military operations with advanced language skills, cultural understanding and the ability to advise senior military and civilian strategic decision-makers in an era of persistent conflict."[149] Their regionally focused unique skills and knowledge include a minimum Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) level 2/2 in a language, "in-depth understanding of foreign culture gained from a regionally focused graduate degree and experience living and working in a specified region," and expert knowledge of regional military forces.[150] Of note, FAO's are required to have at least a Regional Expertise rating of level 3

[148] GAO, *Language and Culture Training*, 13.

[149] Department of the Army, *Army Regulation (AR) 600-3: Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management* (Washington, D.C.: DoD, 2010), 256.

[150] Department of the Army, *AR 600-3*, 257.

(professional) as defined by CJCSI 3126.01.[151] This is the only time that the Regional Expertise (i.e., RP) rating is mentioned in *AR 600-3*.

To achieve this standard, the FAO branch developed an initial training program broken into five phases. Three of these phases are focused on creating cultural capability: language training, in-country training (ICT), and advanced civil schooling (ACS). Language training is conducted at one of the Defense Language Institutes where the FAO candidate must score a minimum of ILR 2/2. The expectation is that the FAO will continue to improve his assigned language during ICT.

ICT is an immersion program and is designed to give the FAO practical experience in his assigned region.[152] ICT is traditionally 12 months for Army FAOs, although other Services conduct only six month courses. *AR 600-3* describes ICT in the following passage:

> ICT is designed to immerse the officer, accompanied by their Family where appropriate, in the local language and culture of their assigned AOC. This can be accomplished through attendance at a host nation professional military education (PME) course or assignment to a host nation military unit. It is designed to provide advanced language studies and develop in-depth knowledge of the region through a program of travel, research, and self-study. The FAOs are expected to conduct extensive familiarization travel throughout the region and attain first-hand knowledge of national and regional cultures, geography, political-military environments, economies, and societal differences.[153]

ICT is based on developing six competencies: Regional Experience and Knowledge; US Policy Goals and Formulation; Language; Military-to-Military Experience; U.S. Military Involvement; and Embassy Administration and Offices.[154]

There is no set standard or training plan for ICT. As explained in the *Foreign Area Officer (FAO) In-Country Training ICT Handbook*, "Each of our ICT sites is

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[151] Department of the Army, *AR 600-3*, 257.

[152] Department of the Army, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3 Strategic Leadership Division (DAMO-SSF), *Foreign Area Officer (FAO) In-Country Training (ICT) Handbook*, (5 January 2008), 4.

[153] Department of the Army, *AR 600-3*, 257.

[154] Department of the Army, *FAO ICT Handbook*, 4–5.

different and it would be impossible to thoroughly explain or anticipate every scenario."[155] Given this diversity and inability to create an all-encompassing program of instruction, a great deal of latitude is given to the FAO for planning his specific ICT. The prospective FAO will be mentored by senior FAOs in their region to maximize the ICT experience, but it is largely based on individual initiative.[156] Additionally, most FAO stations have developed standard operating procedures for their particular country or region to provide initial guidance to the FAO.[157]

Latitude is again found in the Army's approach to ACS for FAOs. While the Navy and Air Force restrict most of their FAO trainee options, the Army values diversity in its approach to ACS. Army FAOs have the opportunity to select from a wide range of civilian institutions so long as the graduate degree is regionally focused. The FAO Proponent publishes an annual list of approved graduate programs, but FAOs also have the opportunity to attend other programs that provide at least 60 percent of their required credits in "the appropriate regional focus."[158] Given the latitude in what the FAO candidate can study, mentorship is again important in the ACS phase. FOAs maintain contact with their regional managers who review curricula to ensure suitability.[159]

Comparing these three phases (language training, ICT, and ACS) to a Special Forces NCO's career, several similarities emerge. Language is also an important skill in Special Forces. Over a career, most SF NCOs will acquire extensive experience in their region and some will experience prolonged deployments in their AOR that could be considered immersion training. While most SF NCOs might not achieve a master's degree, it is reasonable to assume that they will obtain a bachelor's degree and this degree could well be regionally focused. In addition to these three phases of regional proficiency development, it is important to highlight that FAO development relies upon

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[155] Department of the Army, *FAO ICT Handbook*, 3.

[156] Department of the Army, *AR 600-3*, 257.

[157] Department of the Army, *FAO ICT Handbook*, 27.

[158] Department of the Army, *AR 600-3*, 257.

[159] Department of the Army, *AR 600-3*, 257.

mentorship by veteran FAOs. Mentorship is also found in Special Forces, but whether the mentorship is applied to regional proficiency remains a question.

III. SPECIAL FORCES AND REGIONAL PROFICIENCY

> The regionally astute Special Forces Soldiers are educated to develop and sustain long-term relationships with indigenous personnel and therefore create a cadre of language and culturally astute Soldiers who provide TSOC commanders, ambassadors, and follow-on forces with critical capabilities and knowledge.
>
> —*FM 3-05.20 Special Forces Operations*[160]

A. SPECIAL FORCES *RAISON D'ETRE*.

> From my last two tours in Afghanistan, with OEF XV being totally offensive in nature (Official Partnership with ANA) to OEF XVII where I conducted Village Stability Operations[, c]learly direct action is a skill set that should be placed on the low end of the priority. Rapport building, interpersonal skills, and UW are the skills that make Green Berets great.
>
> —Special Forces Soldier[161]

The emphasis on irregular warfare (IW) with its inherent requirement for regional proficiency marks a significant organizational culture shift within DoD writ large. Despite this, some elements within DoD were specifically formed to meet the challenges of IW and already place a premium on cultural capability. Developing regional, cultural, and language skills through consistent regional alignment has always been a fundamental aspect of a number of elements of Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF), namely Special Forces (SF), Civil Affairs (CA) and Military Information Support Operations (MISO).[162] The importance placed on cultural competence, and particularly regional proficiency, makes ARSOF unique within DoD. As Major General Bennet Sacolick, Commanding General of USAJFKSWCS, stated, ARSOF "are the only [DOD] forces specifically trained and educated to work with indigenous forces" and possess a unique

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[160] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 3-24.

[161] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 23 October 2011.

[162] Headquarters, United States Army Special Operations Command, *ARSOF Capstone Concept 2010*, (9 December 2009), 8.

set of capabilities to influence targeted populations.[163] Within ARSOF, SF again stands out in its "combination of abilities to shape, prevent, deter, and influence global strategic events through persistent and sophisticated foreign indigenous engagement."[164] This ability for "persistent and sophisticated foreign indigenous engagement" is a result of Special Forces' emphasis on regional proficiency. As IW assumes a more dominant role in the global threat paradigm, Special Forces' regional proficiency will only become more valuable.

Special Forces' ability in IW is inextricably linked to its founding mission, unconventional warfare (UW). Special Forces is a direct descendant of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), whose mission in World War II was to conduct UW.[165] Needing to operate by, with and through indigenous personnel, OSS personnel had extensive cultural and language expertise in their targeted area of operations.[166] OSS veterans emphasized the importance of being fluent in the language and being familiar with the culture of the partnered forces in order to effectively execute UW.[167] When Special Forces was created with the mission of conducting UW, the OSS's experiences played an influential role in forming Special Forces' doctrine and composition.[168] Special Forces' early experiences in low-intensity conflict solidified the importance of cultural capability.

In his article, "The Seeds of Surrogate Warfare," Richard Newton highlights the fact that in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, Special Forces training included "a healthy dose of regional familiarity, local languages, cultural acumen and instructor development" in

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[163] Bennet Sacolick, "Why Foreign Defense is Important," *Special Warfare* (July-September 2011), 43.

[164] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 1-2.

[165] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, B-2.

[166] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, B-2.

[167] JSOU, *Report of Proceedings: Joint Special Operations University(JSOU) and Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Society Symposium Irregular Warfare and the OSS Model 2-4 November 2009, Tampa, Florida* (Hulburt Field, FL: The JSOU Press, 2010), 3.

[168] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, B-2.

addition to the combat skills that they employed and taught.[169] Newton goes on to say that "A Special Forces soldier had to become part anthropologist, part diplomat… and part cultural attaché as well as being an excellent soldier and trainer." [170]

Over the years, other core competencies were added to Special Forces, but UW is still considered its fundamental task and heavily influences doctrine. Several other organizations may play a role in a UW campaign, but Special Forces' role in UW is unique.[171] According to *FM 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations,* "Only Special Forces are specifically selected, organized, trained, and equipped for UW. No other Department of Defense (DoD) force has the same combination of capabilities, characteristics, and attributes as Special Forces."[172] This influence of the UW mission, with its requirement for cultural capability, can be found throughout the Special Forces organization.

Cultural capability is considered so important that it is a primary consideration in the process of assessment and selection of Special Forces Soldiers. In her monograph, "Cross-Cultural Competence and Small Groups: Why SOF are the way SOF are," Jessica Turnley examines the assessment and selection process. Of all of the major components with a selection process, only Special Forces places a heavy emphasis on assessing its recruits for their potential for cultural capability.[173] The 6th Special Operations Squadron (SOS), a minor component of Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), also selects for cultural capability, but its small size discounts it from being placed in the same category as the other major components of USSOCOM (i.e., 75th Ranger Regiment,

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[169] Richard Newton, "The Seeds of Surrogate Warfare," in *Contemporary Security Challenges: Irregular Warfare and Indirect Approaches, JSOU Report 09-03* (Hulbert Field, FL: The JSOU Press, 2009), 3.

[170] Richard Newton, "The Seeds of Surrogate Warfare," in *Contemporary Security Challenges: Irregular Warfare and Indirect Approaches, JSOU Report 09-03* (Hulbert Field, FL: The JSOU Press, 2009), 3.

[171] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 1–2.

[172] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 1–2.

[173] Jessica Turnley, "Cross-Cultural Competence and Small Groups: Why SOF are the way SOF are," *JSOU Report 11-1*, (MacDill Air Force Base: JSOU Press, 2011), 40.

SEALs, MARSOC, etc.). The fact that Special Forces requires this potential in a candidate is a significant indicator of how important cultural capability is to the organization.

Special Forces doctrine underscores that cultural capability is considered a central component in the development of a Special Forces Soldier.[174] Within *FM 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations* the term "cultural competency" is used. This is composed of four modalities: Interpersonal Skills, Nonverbal Communication Skills, Language Proficiency, and Regional Orientation.[175] These are defined in Table 2. With slight modification, they can be converted to fit the heuristic found in Chapter I. Interpersonal skills can be considered the culture component of cultural capability. Language proficiency is the language component. Regional orientation is the region component. Since there are both general and region specific aspects to nonverbal communication skills, this modality could be divided between the culture and region components. In addition to what is written in the *FM*, Special Forces published a training circular, *Training Circular (TC) 31-73, Special Forces Advisor Guide*, which highlights the importance of cultural capability in one of Special Forces primary roles, that of a military advisor. *TC 31-73* goes into some depth on the necessity of cultural capability and how it might be gained.[176]

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[174] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 1–1.

[175] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 3-25 – 3-26.

[176] Department of the Army, *Training Circular (TC) 31-73, Special Forces Advisor Guide*, (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2011), Chapter 2.

Table 2. Special Forces Cultural Competence Modalities[177]

Interpersonal Skills: Interpersonal skills are critical to Special Forces operations. They require the ability to listen with understanding, the ability to maintain an open mind, and the sensitivity to observe and grasp the essential components of a given situation. Special Forces Soldiers combine the ability to overcome ethnocentricity and to treat indigenous forces as equals, while also communicating and teaching across intercultural barriers. Special Forces Soldiers use their interpersonal skills to obtain and maintain appropriate relationships with partner nation counterparts. Obviously, interpersonal skills are difficult to define and to quantify; however, Special Forces Soldiers possess the ability to interact with indigenous personnel through charismatic and personal engagement.
Nonverbal Communication Skills: Nonverbal communications are wordless messages—the way people communicate by sending and receiving signals; for example, body language, eye movements, gestures, postures, proximity, facial expressions, and symbols. Similar to verbal communications, nonverbal communications differ across cultures although some signals are shared. The impact of a communication message can be broken down into 7 percent verbal (words), 38 percent vocal (volume, pitch, rhythm, and so on), and 55 percent body movements (mostly facial expressions). Special Forces Soldiers learn to communicate nonverbally without acquiring a foreign language through a good understanding of a population's nonverbal communication systems.
Language Proficiency: Language proficiency is a key component in cross-cultural communications. Each prospective Special Forces Soldier is tested for his language ability through either the Defense Language Proficiency Test or the Oral Proficiency Interview. The Defense Language Proficiency Test measures reading and listening skills and the Oral Proficiency Interview measures participatory and active conversation. To graduate from the Special Forces Qualification Course, each prospective Special Forces Soldier must attend language curriculum and/or pass one of these measurement tests. The desired portrait of a Special Forces Soldier is one who can gain and maintain rapport with indigenous personnel; learning a language through participatory and active conversation remains a priority over reading and listening. Though participatory dialogue remains a priority, it is not wise to discount the fact that a Special Forces Soldier may be required to translate documents or listen to intercepted conversations. This education is merely a stepping stone as Special Forces Soldiers continue to improve their language skills through routine and dedicated unit-sponsored training, immersion training, individual study, and repeated deployments to their region of orientation. As a result, all Special Forces Soldiers possess varying levels of language ability in one or more foreign languages.
Regional Orientation: Special Forces units are regionally oriented to ensure they have the resident skills and knowledge of the belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits of a specific region to allow them to influence their HN counterparts. This understanding of the region extends into the political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, information, and physical environment systems within that region and how they apply to military operations. Formal training and cultural immersion during repeated deployments are the vehicles for developing this understanding.

While cultural capability as a whole looms large for Special Forces, the requirement for regional proficiency is especially stressed. According to *DA PAM 600-3, Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, a part of the unique knowledge that SF officers possess is "an in-depth knowledge of at least one

[177] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 3-25 – 3-26.

region of the world and proficiency in at least one of the region's languages."[178] The importance placed on regional proficiency can likewise be found in Special Forces' organizational structure. The Special Forces Groups are purposefully aligned with different regions of the world (see Figure 4).[179] Theoretically, each group can divide its region into sub-regions, allowing each subordinate command to focus on a progressively smaller portion of the AOR. This regional focus allows Special Forces Groups to consistently deploy soldiers to the same regions throughout a career. Through persistent engagement, there is the potential for Special Forces Soldiers to become steeped in regional knowledge and provide critical capabilities and knowledge to a TSOC, ambassador, or conventional forces.[180]

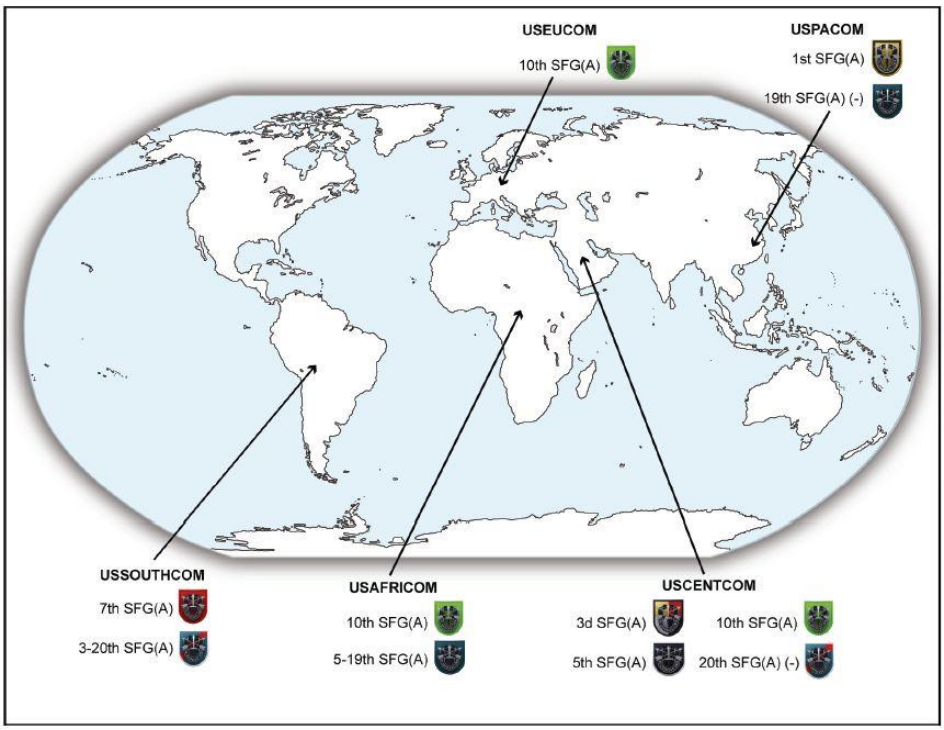

Figure 4. Regional Orientation of the Special Forces Groups[181]

[178] Department of the Army, *Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) 600-3, Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2010), 168.

[179] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 3–5.

[180] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 3–24.

[181] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 3–6.

The reason for this emphasis on regional proficiency is that selected Special Forces missions "require a detailed knowledge of the cultural nuances and languages of a country or region where employed."[182] For tasks such as COIN, UW, and FID, regional proficiency is a critical element for mission success.[183] The ARSOF Imperative—understand the operational environment— encapsulate this:

> *Understand the operational environment*. Special Forces cannot dominate the operational environment without first gaining a clear understanding of the joint operations area, including civilian influence, as well as enemy and friendly capabilities. Combat environmental research—political, economic, sociological, psychological, geographic, and military—is an essential prerequisite to influencing the environment. Special Forces must identify the friendly and hostile decisionmakers, their objectives and strategies, and the ways they interact.[184]

This clearly shows that Special Forces understands the nature of IW and that regional proficiency is essential for the successful conduct of IW. Special Forces has understood this longer than most, since they are designed to operate in small teams in hostile territory. For Special Forces their ability to influence and to understand networks is critical to survival. The study of local populations has long been tied to the Special Forces mission.

For developing this regional proficiency, SF doctrine states that it will be developed through "formal training and cultural immersion during repeated deployments."[185] Tied into this is the guidance from USSOCOM. For cultural education, *USSOCOM Manual 350-8, The Special Operations Forces Language Program*, states that the bulk of the burden of initial training for cultural education should be on the training institution. [186] In Special Forces case this is SWCS. After initial

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[182] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 1–10.

[183] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 2-4, 2-13, and 3-1.

[184] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2011), 1-11.

[185] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2011), 3-26.

[186] United States Special Operations Command, *USSOCOM Manual (M) 350-8, The Special Operations Forces Language Program* (MacDill Air Forces Base: USSOCOM, 2009), 2.

training, experience, sustainment training in operational units, and PME will enhance this capability.[187] To see how Special Forces applies its doctrine, we will now look at how regional proficiency is developed across four categories: initial training, sustainment training, experience, and PME.

B. REGIONAL PROFICIENCY DEVELOPMENT

1. Initial Training

Despite what has long been said about the importance of regional proficiency in and for Special Forces, there are surprisingly few structured programs designed to enhance regional proficiency across the Regiment. The majority of formal instruction occurs during initial training, called the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC). Of the three components of cultural capability, language instruction dominates (see Figure 5). This makes sense given the inherent difficulty of learning a language. However, instruction in the other two components is exceptionally small, especially when compared to the overall length of the SFQC. As of October 2011, there were only 12 hours of instructions devoted to region specific education in the SFQC.[188] To put that into perspective, that equates to 1.5 training days. The average length for course completion is 255-285 training days. This is not meant to be a critique of the SFQC. The SFQC is a tightly managed affair and is constantly under review for its efficiency. There, literally, is no extra time in the SFQC. Becoming a Special Forces Soldier requires mastering many essential, technical skills which include learning one of the Military Occupational Specialties (MOS), common tactical combat skills, and a language. Clearly, 12 hours can only serve as an introduction to a region and does not make anyone an expert on a region; Special Forces must thus expect its members to develop regional proficiency elsewhere.

[187] USSOCOM, *USSOCOM M 350-8*, 2.

[188] David Walton, Department Chief, Directorate of Regional Studies and Education (DRSE), JKFSWCS, correspondence with author, 24 October 2011.

Figure 5. Overview of Special Forces Qualification Course[189]

2. Sustainment Training

For people who are not self-motivated to learn about the AOR on their own, providing time with a structured result such as a paper or report may be necessary. Additionally, language, history or culture classes at a foreign school would be a huge incentive as most SF guys that I know love the immersion aspect. We just have to ensure that progress is measured and captured [to] avoid the boondoggle in a foreign country with no real results.

—Special Forces Soldier[190]

[189] From "SWCS Today," (accessed 24 October 2011), http://www.civilaffairsassoc.org/SWCS%20Today.pdf

[190] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 8 October 2011.

Once in a unit, there are few structured programs for improving cultural capability. As previously mentioned, SWCS developed the Intermediate Regional Studies (IRS) in 2011 to help fill this gap.[191] IRS attempts to address both the culture and regional components of cultural capabilities.[192] Students are exposed to 3C elements in the first seven days of IRS. The primary tool for this is the Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, Infrastructure, Physical Environment, and Time (PMESII-PT) framework. PMESII-PT is a systems approach for analyzing an area commonly used in the Army and stands for political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time.[193] Students then apply their understanding of culture to their targeted region. Approximately 50 hours of classroom instruction is devoted to this. The aim is to ensure a graduate has a thorough understanding of the PMESII-PT framework and can then apply it to any situation.[194] SWCS currently sends approximately the top 15% of the graduating class to IRS.[195]

The only other structured programs normally attended by Special Forces Soldiers for improving cultural capability are courses at the language institutes, such as the Defense Language Institute and Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) in Monterey, CA, or the Partner Language Training Center Europe (PLTCE) in Garmisch, Germany.[196] However, language courses do not significantly improve regional proficiency.

As for unit sustainment training, as the name implies this is dependent on the unit. Whether we are talking about a Group, battalion, company or SFODA, different units approach cultural capability in different ways. Because approaches are so varied, it is difficult to address this aspect in a categorical manner. Some Groups have developed

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[191] While IRS is available for all SF Soldiers, the vast majority of students are recent SFQC graduates who have not yet been sent to their units.

[192] A separate course, Intermediate Language Course (ILC) is also available for improving a Soldier's language ability.

[193] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 5-0, The Operations Process* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2010), 1–5.

[194] Lorae Roukema, IRS Instructor, correspondence with the author, 25 October 2011.

[195] "SWCS Today," (accessed 24 October 2011), http://www.civilaffairsassoc.org/SWCS%20Today.pdf

[196] JSOU sometimes provides regionally oriented courses and is developing a 3C course.

their own in-house training programs. As an example, the 5th SFG(A) recently developed its own six-month language program to allow SFODAs to send members to a language school without incurring time away from home.[197] For regional proficiency, specifically, however, there are a few tools available to encourage regional proficiency within a SFODA. Area assessments are a common task for Special Forces Soldiers and a fundamental part of the UW mission. Tied to area assessments are area studies.[198] The Special Operations De-briefing and Retrieval System (SODARS), is a document created after each deployment outside the continental United States (OCONUS) centrally managed by the J2, USSOCOM. These documents are used by Special Forces Soldiers to learn about a specific area. SFODAs who consistently deploy to that region typically maintain a detachment-internal folder on that region. This is normally a living document that is constantly updated, experiences captured by the SFODA can be passed on to new members of the SFODA. This can be an effective tool, but whether it is depends on how well the unit conducts its assessment, which in turn depends on how seriously the unit takes this specific task. As a result, the quality and use of these documents is haphazard. Some units do it well, while others do not. Furthermore, these documents depend on consistent deployment to a specific region.

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[197] Bissell, Brandon, "USSOCOM votes 5th SFG(A) language program of the year," press release on U.S. Army Special Forces Command (Airborne) Facebook page, (accessed 24 October 2011), http://www.facebook.com/SFCommand.

[198] Department of the Army, *Training Circular (TC) 18-01, Special Forces Unconventional Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2010), Appendix A and B.

3. Experience and PME

The final methods for developing regional proficiency are experience and PME.[199] The first career path that will be examined is the Special Forces NCO.

As can be seen in Figure 6, an NCO can join a Special Forces SFODA between the ranks of SGT and SFC.[200] In total, an SF NCO should have at least seven years of experience on an SFODA with the potential for much more.[201] This is a significant amount of time over which an SF NCO might experientially acquire regional proficiency.

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[199] Here it is necessary to examine separately the three types of Special Forces Soldiers: NCOs, Warrant Officers and Officers since each has a distinctly different developmental model that affects both potential experience and PME. To simplify this analysis and to keep it as objective as possible, the time spent on an SFODA will be considered to be the minimum time required at each rank to successfully qualify for promotion as dictated by the Army's governing documents (*DA PAM 600-3* and *DA PAM 600-25*). For experience time, this thesis will only consider time spent on an SFODA. The reasoning is that Special Forces Soldiers are most often deployed while on an SFODA. Additionally, the SFODA-level deployment experience is most likely to impart regional experience since it is at the SFODA-level that interaction with a foreign population is most likely. Deployments at other organizational levels could also develop regional proficiency, but those experiences are too infrequent and varied to be captured in this analysis. Additionally, Special Forces careers are varied. It is possible to become a Special Forces NCO at various times in one's military career and it is possible to become a Special Forces Warrant Officer at various times in one's Special Forces NCO career. Depending on when one becomes a Special Forces NCO or Special Forces Warrant Officer can drastically affect the amount of time spent on an SFODA. Additionally, some enjoy more time on SFODAs due to a variety of factors that is beyond the scope of this research.

[200] Because of acquired time in grade in an MOS prior to joining an SFODA, a SGT or SSG could be quickly promoted while on an SFODA. Because of this, SGT experience will be discounted. To avoid discounting the experience level that most Special Forces NCOs do have on an SFODA, the *suggested* time for a SSG on an SFODA will be considered. According to *DA PAM 600-25*, before being eligible for selection for promotion, a SSG *should* successfully serve two years on an SFODA. The first rank commonly held by all Special Forces NCOs is SFC. The minimum time on an ODA is three years before he can be considered eligible for promotion. The final rank that will be considered for acquired experience is MSG, which is the rank of the ODA Team Sergeant, the senior NCO of an ODA. To be considered eligible for promotion, a MSG must successfully serve two years on an ODA.

[201] Department of the Army, *Department of the Army (DA) Pamphlet (PAM) 600-25, U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Guide* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2008), 82.

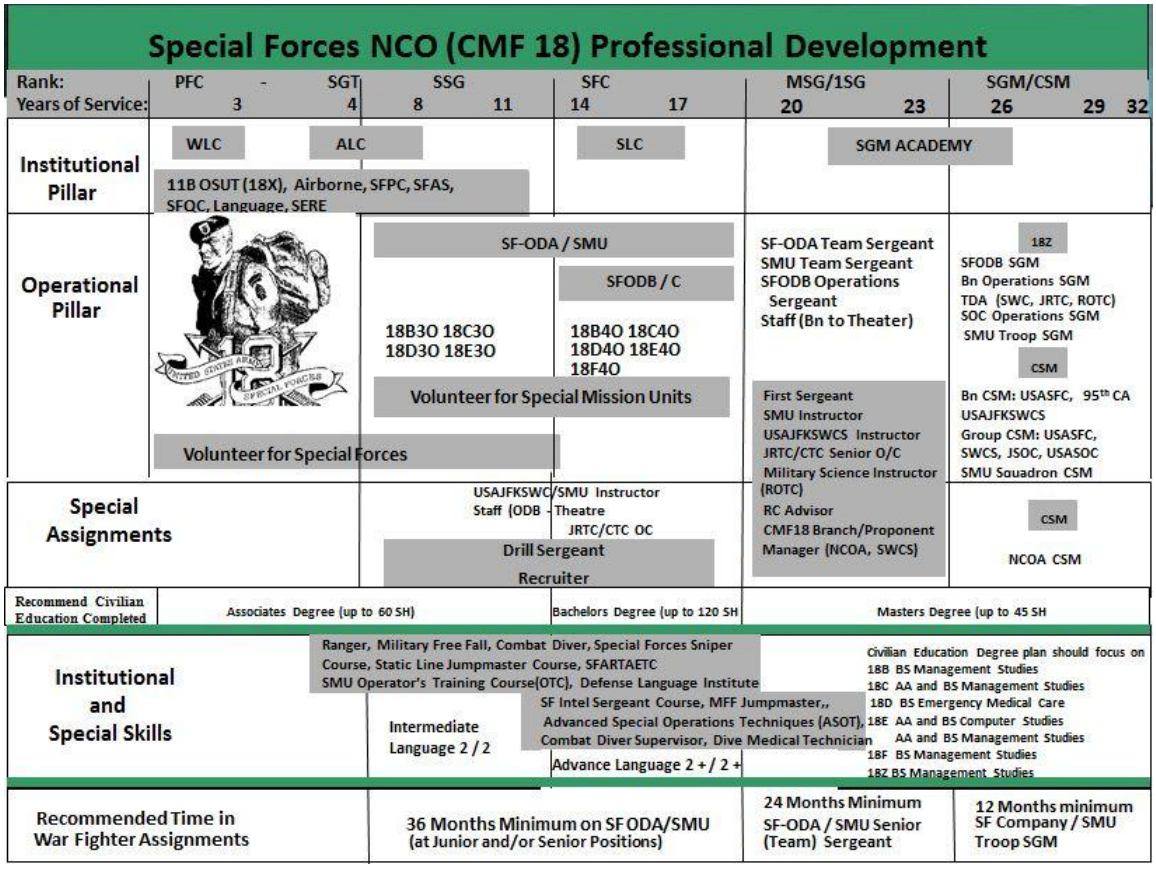

Figure 6. Overview of Special Forces NCO Career Development[202]

While SF NCOs might have plenty of opportunity to develop regional proficiency through experience, the same cannot be said for PME. Special Forces NCOs do not receive any region specific education in their PME system.[203] At the SGM Academy, students are strongly encouraged to complete a bachelor's degree and could conceivably tailor it to focus on a region but this would only be near the end of his career. Building upon an NCO background is the next category, Special Forces warrant officers.

Special Forces Warrant Officers must come from the Special Forces NCO ranks. Because of this, it is not uncommon to find WOs with vast amounts of SFODA experience. As with the SF NCO, however, there is considerable variance in WO career

[202] From Pedro Padillamendez, CMF 18 Career Manager, "NCO Career Track," 13 September 2011.

[203] David Walton, Department Chief, Directorate of Regional Studies and Education (DRSE), JKFSWCS, correspondence with author, 24 October 2011.

progression. As a result, this thesis takes only the minimum into account.[204] Factoring in the minimum amount of time as an SF NCO, an SF WO must have *at least* six years on an SFODA.[205] This is also a significant amount of time on an ODA to acquire regional proficiency.

As in the case of SF NCOs, there is currently no region-specific education in the SF WO PME system. Unlike the SF NCO, however, the SF WO has more opportunites for higher education. As depicted in Figure 7, there is an education initiative in the SF WO branch that almost mirrors the SF Officer's opportunities. While in pursuit of both his bachelor's and master's degrees, an SF WO has the potential to imporove his regional proficiency by either getting a degree in regional studies or by taking classes focused on his AOR. It is worth noting, however, SF WO's have far fewer opportunities to attend these programs than do SF Officers. This leads to the final category, SF Officers.

[204] A WO must have a minimum of three years on an SFODA as an SF NCO, before he can become a WO. As either a WO1 or CW2 (the ranks that serve on an SFODA), a WO must successfully serve for three years on an SFODA to be eligigble for promotion (see Figure 7).

[205] Department of the Army, *DA PAM 600-3*, 171.

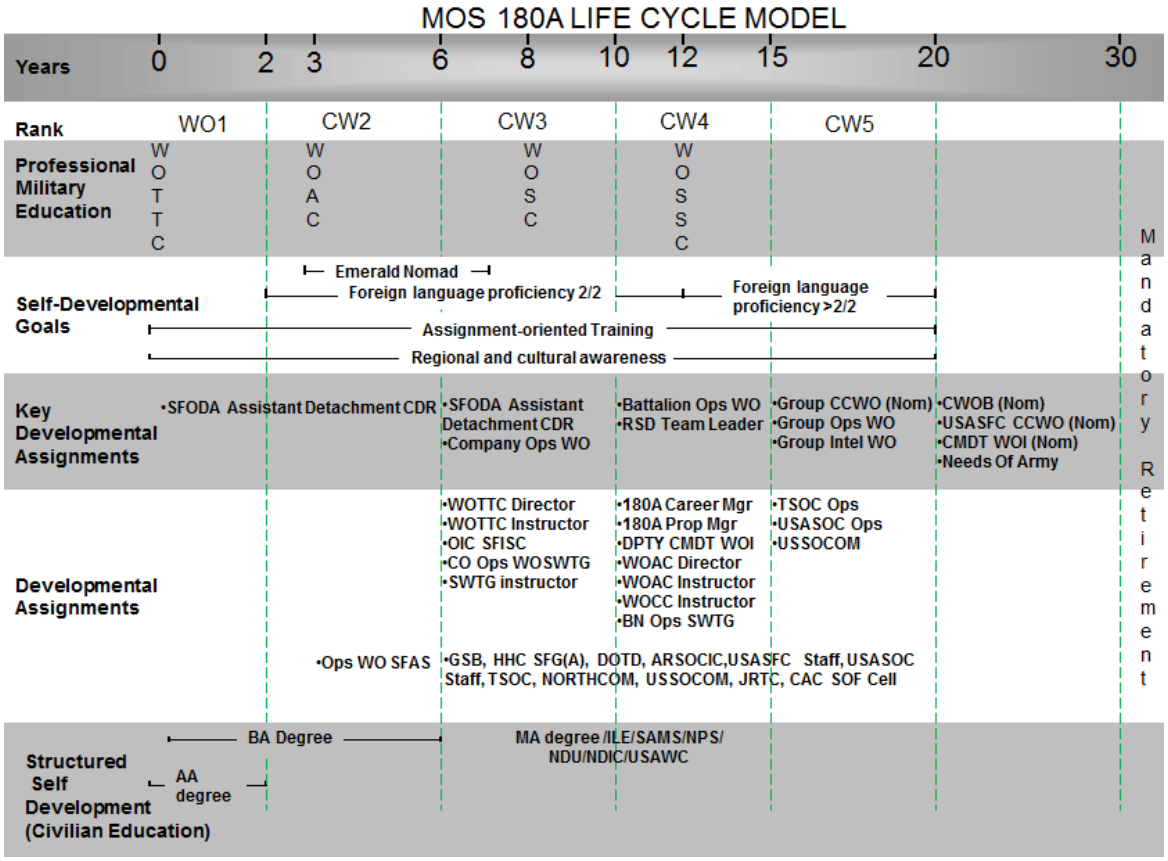

Figure 7. Overview of Special Forces Warrant Officer Career Development[206]

[206] From Terry L. Baltimore, 180A Assignment Officer, "FY12 180A Life Cycle Model," 8 September 2011.

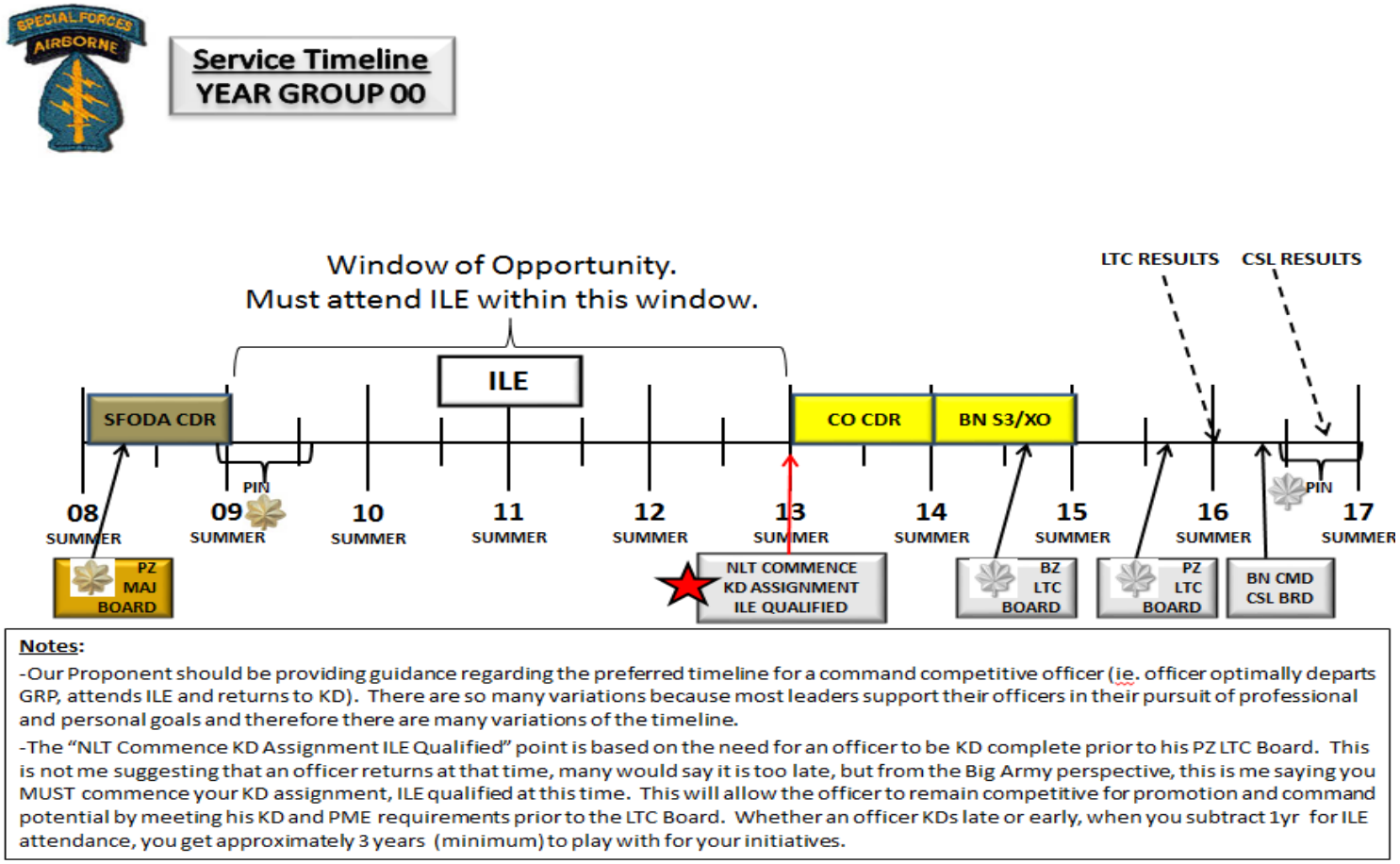

Figure 8. Overview of Special Forces Officer Career Development[207]

[207] From David Gaugush, Special Forces Captain/Junior Major Assignment Officer, "Service Timeline: Year Group 00," 1 September 2011.

Special Forces Officers have the least amount of time on a SFODA, but have the most opportunities for higher education. To be eligible for promotion, a Special Forces officer must successfully command an SFODA for at least two years (see Figure 8).[208] SF officer PME does not include any region specific education, but in contrast to WO and NCO PME, the officer's required PME, intermediate level education (ILE), offers officers numerous educational opportunities. Several ILE programs are partnered with master's degree producing programs. If an SF officer elects to focus his master's degree on regional studies or to take regionally oriented classes, the SF officer could improve his regional proficiency. Another opportunity afforded to SF officers is professional development programs, such as Foreign Professional Military Education and Regional Centers programs. These programs are designed to enhance interaction with foreign militaries and offer excellent methods by which to increase regional proficiency. The best program for increasing regional proficiency is the Olmsted Scholarship Program. The Olmsted Scholarship is designed to immerse military officers and their families in a foreign culture while "the officer studies in a foreign language in a liberal arts field of his/her choice."[209] In this program, an officer learns the targeted language at DLIFLC and then attends a foreign university. Because the program is open to all military officers, only a few SF officers are able to participate.

From this review, it can be seen that there are very few opportunities for a Special Forces Soldier to improve his regional proficiency through a structured program in his career. When SF doctrine states that regional proficiency is to be developed through formal instruction and deployments, deployment into the region appears to be the primary method by which SF Soldiers are expected to develop regional proficiency. Yet, to develop regional proficiency through experience well would require consistent deployment to each SF Soldier's assigned region. While this may be possible for some units, not all units consistently deploy their ODAs. In fact, in the last decade, deploying

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[208] Department of the Army, *DA PAM 600-3*, 169.

[209] AHRC-OPL-L, "Fiscal Year 2012 Olmsted Scholarship Program," *Milper Message Number 11-058*, 23 February 2011, accessed 28 October 2011, https://perscomnd04.army.mil/milpermsgs.nsf/ee2966d4436df73a852569a50056935d/1cfc1ca5c83d6d93852578400076b00d?OpenDocument.

outside their assigned AOR has become the norm for some units. Second, not all deployment experiences are equal. The mission and the amount of required population engagement significantly impact the development of regional proficiency. Some deployments are very useful for developing regional proficiency. Deployments as military advisors, which require immersion in the targeted culture, are excellent opportunities to improve regional proficiency. Take for an example, the Special Operations Liaison Officers (SOLO) and Special Operations Support Team (SOST) programs, which are designed to assign SOF personnel to support and enhance host nation SOF.[210] This role offers an SF Soldier a great opportunity to increase his regional proficiency as he interacts on a daily basis with counterparts from a different country. Here, too, however, it is worth considering the nature of interaction. A person relying upon host nation expediters while staying at a luxury hotel does not gain as much experience in a region as a person who is embedded in a unit.[211] Consequently, one can expect that a Special Forces Soldier conducting Village Stability Operations will develop significantly more regional proficiency than a Soldier who is based on a major forward operating base and is primarily conducting unilateral DA missions. Since experience is the dominant method on which Special Forces relies to develop regional proficiency, these differences in types of experiences play a significant role in the level of regional proficiency that a Special Forces Soldier attains.

C. EVOLUTION OF COMMANDO AND WARRIOR-DIPLOMAT ROLES

> Right now, again, in my opinion only, we as a force are very confused about what the role of Special Forces is. We are an awesome force with so much potential, but, unfortunately, it is being squandered with this perception that we are a super-infantry/Ranger/[Special Mission Unit] type unit. This has to change or I fear our traditional role as the premier UW force will be taken by another SOF element (read MARSOC/SEALs) while we continue, haphazardly, trying to figure out who we are…[212]
>
> —Special Forces Soldier

[210] McRaven, "Advanced Policy Questions," 41.

[211] Varhola et al, "Avoiding the Cookie Cutter Approach to Culture," 78.

[212] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 24 October 2011.

As the two previous sections should make clear, Special Forces doctrine treats regional proficiency as extremely important, but provides little institutional training or focus on it. This is because the demands on Special Forces are great. While the UW mission is paramount, Special Forces has numerous core tasks that compete for time, resources and attention (see Figure 9). As Special Forces evolved it adapted to the changing environment, redefining itself and adding missions and core tasks.

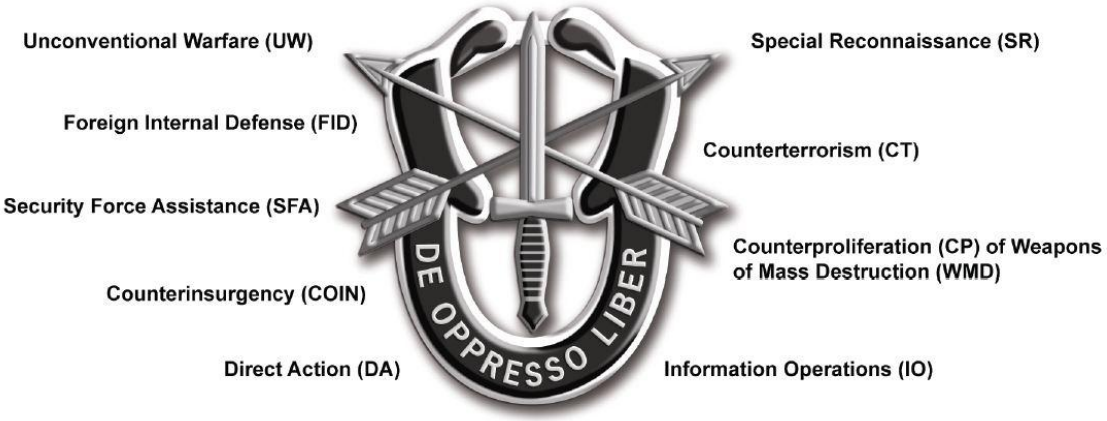

Figure 9. Special Forces Principal Tasks[213]

It is important to note that these nine principle tasks create a broad mission set. In addition to being broad and requiring mastery of numerous skills, these principal tasks pull Special Forces in different directions. To begin the discussion on how these principle tasks have affected Special Forces, it is useful to review a monograph written by then-Major Kenneth Tovo, titled "Special Forces' Mission Focus For the Future." The monograph, written in 1995, examined the doctrinal mission focus of Special Forces to meet the requirements of the post-Cold War environment. The mid-1990s was a time of drastic defense budget reductions and a changing security environment. In spite of budget reductions, the demands on Special Forces remained high and people within Special Forces expected to maintain a high operational tempo for the foreseeable future.

[213] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 2–4.

Tovo points to a dichotomy, which he explains as a dual focus, in Special Forces doctrine. On one hand, Special Forces doctrine focuses on indirect missions, which are missions that "rely on linguistic, interpersonal, and cross cultural communications skills, regional orientation, and training skills to influence indigenous forces."[214] "Warrior-diplomat" is the label normally associated with this mission set. It is important to note that warrior-diplomat is not a euphemism for non-combatant. A warrior-diplomat cannot turn in his rifle and replace it for a chai set. Even while taking an indirect approach, many of the basic skills that a warrior-diplomat relies on are combat skills. The other focus is on direct missions, which are missions that "rely on the application of firepower, technology, and technical skills in a precise and rapid manner to achieve results."[215] The label for this mission set is "commando." Doctrine expects Special Forces to do both.

This dual focus can be traced at least as far back as the Vietnam War when Special Forces found itself performing both types of missions, both working by, with, and through indigenous forces as warrior-diplomats and conducting unilateral direct action missions as commandos. The dichotomy was formalized later in Special Forces doctrine. Additionally, as the strategic environment changed in the 1970s and 80s, Special Forces continued to adapt and emphasized or added different principal tasks to ensure relevancy. For instance, after the Vietnam experience, the Army wanted to put COIN behind it and return its focus to conventional wars on European battlefields. To maintain relevancy in the Army, the dominant mission set in Special Forces during this period became direct missions suitable to supporting the conventional force.[216] Over time, Special Forces struggled to stay relevant. Today this evolution has produced the current nine principal tasks and the current dichotomy between direct and indirect missions.

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[214] Kenneth E. Tovo, "Special Forces' Mission Focus For the Future," (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1995), (accessed 23 October 2011), http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf&AD=ADA309816, 3.

[215] Tovo, "Special Forces' Mission Focus For the Future," 3.

[216] Tovo, "Special Forces' Mission Focus For the Future," 10.

Categorization of SOF Missions

Direct	Indirect
• Counterterrorism	• Unconventional Warfare
• Counterproliferation	• Psychological Operations
• Direct Action	• Foreign Internal Defense
• Strategic Reconnaissance	• Civil Affairs
• Information Operations	

Figure 10. Categorization of SOF Missions[217]

This "direct vs. indirect" dichotomy is as prevalent today as it was in 1995. It has fueled a discussion both within SF and SOF as a whole. With the advent of the Global War On Terror, the debate found new and fertile ground as proponents from both sides argued about the best approach to fighting violent extremists. In *United States Special Operations Forces*, David Tucker and Christopher Lamb analyze Special Operations Forces. By generalizing, it is possible to align the current SOF missions into direct and indirect categories (see Figure 10).

Their categorization is not meant to be a clear-cut, "black and white" delineation. Their purpose in breaking SOF missions into direct and indirect categories is to portray the diverse skill sets expected of SOF and how they require different approaches and sometimes different mentalities.[218] Tucker and Lamb argue that it is the mixture of both these skill sets that enable SOF to "operate with discrimination in complex political-military environments that are inhospitable to conventional forces."[219] In fact, the skill sets are often complimentary. For instance, a Special Forces Soldier's proficiency in the direct tasks can grant him access to conduct indirect tasks. As captured in *TC 31-73, Special Forces Advisor*, "Demonstrated professional competence in one area leads to the presumption of competence in other areas."[220] Direct skill sets are often the most easily

[217] David Tucker and Christopher Lamb, *United States Special Operations Forces* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), Kindle edition, 153.

[218] Tucker and Lamb, *United States Special Operations Forces*, 154.

[219] Tucker and Lamb, *United States Special Operations Forces*, 177.

[220] Department of the Army, *TC 31-73, Special Forces Advisor Guide*, 2–18.

demonstrated and therefore can serve as the basis of credibility for a Special Forces Soldier on an indirect mission. Additionally, the mission sets can overlap. For example, a direct action mission could be a supporting mission in a larger UW mission.

While SOF as a whole is conflicted about whether to focus on direct versus indirect skills, most units within SOF tend to specialize in one or the other. The reason for this is that units must focus their training and equipment on one mission or another.[221] Most units in SOF are able to do this thanks to a clear understanding of their role(s) and their strategic value. Special Forces, in contrast, straddles the dichotomy. The nine principle tasks of Special Forces cover the entire gamut of direct and indirect missions. As a result, there is plenty of opportunity for the dichotomy to introduce tensions into the organization. Within Special Forces, people have the latitude to gravitate to one extreme or the other. At the same time, Special Forces Soldiers only have a limited amount of time to train. Given the autonomy to determine their own training plans, people tend to select the training that will either be the most relevant for the immediate future, such as the next deployment, or that most interests them. Some in Special Forces choose to focus on the direct skill set. Others choose to focus on the indirect skill set. While developing expertise is good, when it becomes over-concentrated at the expense of other valuable skill sets, it can have a detrimental effect on the mission. The influence of this dichotomy on a Special Forces Soldier can be portrayed as two opposing forces pulling him in different directions (see Figure 11).

[221] Tucker and Lamb, *United States Special Operations Forces*, 154.

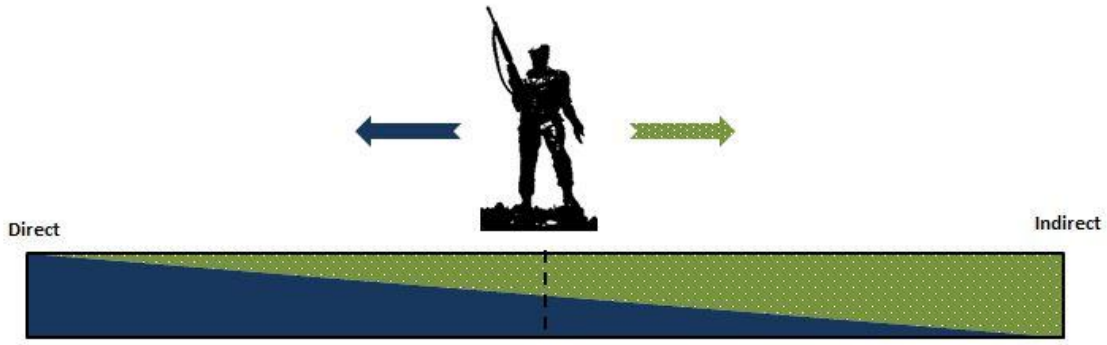

Figure 11. Direct vs. Indirect Spectrum

This raises the question where *should* Special Forces be on the spectrum. Relevant to this discussion is the notion of strategic value. Strategic value is derived from three factors: "the intrinsic and distinguishing capabilities of the forces; the nature of the most important security challenges facing the nation; and the military requirements that emanate from the nation's strategy for dealing with those challenges."[222] For SOF in general, Tucker and Lamb conclude that SOF's strategic value is best manifested when they have the strategic lead (i.e., conducting independent operations or are supported by conventional forces).[223] When SOF is in the strategic lead, both direct and indirect missions have significant strategic value. Special Forces, Civil Affairs, and Military Information Support Operations units are the most suitable for the indirect missions while other SOF units are more capable for the direct missions.

When supporting conventional forces (i.e., when not in the strategic lead), the strategic value of SOF lessens significantly. In this context, Lamb and Tucker argue that direct missions are of limited utility since they do not require the unique capabilities of SOF. Rather, direct missions in support of conventional forces, such as entering and clearing structures, tend to relegate SOF to at best an elite role, rather than conducting a truly special operation that requires the unique capabilities inherent in SOF. Tucker and

[222] Tucker and Lamb, *United States Special Operations Forces*, 144.

[223] Tucker and Lamb, *United States Special Operations Forces*, 176.

Lamb define elite units as units that are "used for the same purpose as general-purpose forces, but receive special designation, training, and resources so that they may perform at a higher level."[224] SOF, in contrast, are "not only elite but special because they conduct missions that conventional forces cannot perform, or at least not at acceptable levels of risk and costs."[225] Furthermore, Tucker and Lamb caution that an overemphasis on using SOF in an elite role places SOF at risk of losing its unconventional mentality.[226] There is a danger that SOF could begin to assume the elite persona it has been asked to temporarily perform at the expense of its SOF identity.

With this concept of what differentiates SOF from elite units, the value of the indirect role while supporting conventional forces becomes clear. While supporting conventional forces, SOF provides the most strategic value in an indirect role. SOF's indirect prowess provides conventional forces with cultural capabilities that they cannot easily replicate. This capability takes years to develop and conventional forces are not selected or trained for the cultural capability that Special Forces provides.[227] From this analysis, it can be concluded that Special Forces' strategic value is derived from its indirect capabilities, with its inherent requirement for regional proficiency.

After tracing the development of Special Forces doctrine, Tovo examined several of Special Forces tasks to determine their significance and suitability for future conflicts. In 1995, he predicted that most future conflicts "will take place in a low-technology environment against opponents much less susceptible to a firepower- and technology-based approach."[228] He also predicted that "[s]hrinking U.S. resources will cause decision makers to place a premium on the economy of force provided by Special Forces in the indirect role."[229] Tovo concluded, "that Special Forces' greatest contributions

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[224] Tucker and Lamb, *United States Special Operations Forces*, 146.

[225] Tucker and Lamb, *United States Special Operations Forces*, 146.

[226] Tucker and Lamb, *United States Special Operations Forces*, 174.

[227] Tucker and Lamb, *United States Special Operations Forces*, 161.

[228] Tovo, "Special Forces' Mission Focus For the Future," 46.

[229] Tovo, "Special Forces' Mission Focus For the Future," 39.

have been, and will continue to be, a result of indirect efforts."[230] He found that the indirect mission set was what differentiated Special Forces from other SOF and conventional forces and that, as a result of this, Special Forces should focus its efforts on the indirect mission set.[231] With the benefit of hindsight, it can be seen sixteen years later that Tovo's assessments and predictions were not far off the mark.

Indirect skills should receive the priority in emphasis, but a balanced approach is needed. The "warrior-diplomat vs. commando" dichotomy highlights the influences that pull on Special Forces. With its broad mission set, it is easy for Special Forces Soldiers to be drawn to one end of the spectrum or another. Neither extreme is beneficial to the Special Forces Regiment. In his response to Congressional confirmation questions, ADM McRaven, USSOCOM Commander stated that SOF needs a balanced approach with regard to countering violent extremism. He stated that "USSOCOM must move from a primarily threat-focused approach to a populace-centric approach," yet "while emphasizing the need for the indirect approach, we must not weaken our ability to execute direct action when necessary."[232] Though he was speaking about all of USSOCOM, this guidance could be directly applied to Special Forces. Special Forces' strategic value arises from its abilities in the indirect approach, but it must also maintain capability in the direct skills sets. Returning to the direct vs. indirect spectrum, Special Forces should seek to be just to the right of the center line (see Figure 12). Indirect skills should dominate, but Special Forces should maintain sufficient ability in direct skills to apply them when needed.

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[230] Tovo, "Special Forces' Mission Focus For the Future,"46.

[231] Tovo, "Special Forces' Mission Focus For the Future,"47.

[232] McRaven, "Advanced Policy Questions," 35–36.

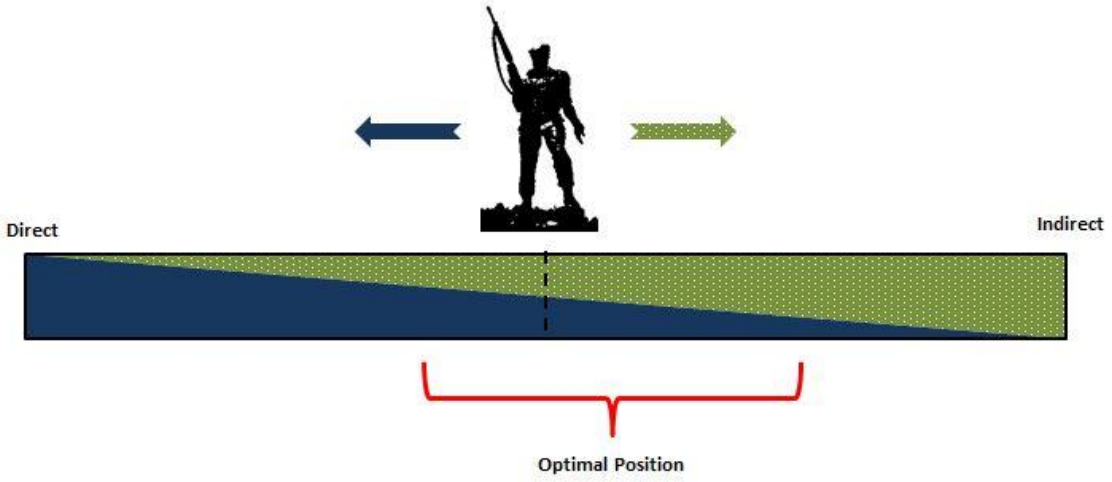

Figure 12. Special Forces' Optimal Position on Direct vs. Indirect Spectrum

This debate is especially relevant today. Special Forces has been consistently engaged in combat zones for over a decade. While the dichotomy has been present in Special Forces at least since the Vietnam War, the new norm is deployment with limited time at home station. This has led to doctrinal dissonance.

D. DOCTRINAL DISSONANCE

> Pre-Mission train-ups have become DA centric and Company or Battalion run. SFAUC is the sexy thing that drives many PMT's. But where does the cultural education and area orientation come from? Granted, combat power is central for survival and the ability to control it is a professional attribute. We don't concentrate on the basics anymore. These 18Xs are not getting a good education of what right is. How many seniors are TRULY taking their juniors under their arm, and showing them how to do business?
>
> –Special Forces Soldier[233]

Actions speak louder than words. This adage often proves true, but is especially valid when applied to the organizational behavior of U.S. Army Special Forces. There is a potential that with regard to regional proficiency, a distinct difference between written

[233] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 24 October 2011.

doctrine and organizational behavior, referred to as doctrinal dissonance prevails.[234] Doctrinal dissonance is the subject of Paul Johnston's article, "Doctrine Is Not Enough." Johnston claims that culture is more important than doctrine in determining how an army fights.[235]

The two important variables in doctrinal dissonance are doctrine and organizational culture. The Department of Defense defines doctrine as "Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application."[236] Despite appearing to guide units' actions, Johnston argues that doctrine only exercises a weak or indirect effect and that organizational culture governs a military's actions.[237] In his book, *Culture and Related Corporate Realities,* Vijay Sathe defines culture as "the set of important assumptions (often unstated) that members of a community share in common."[238] This definition of culture is relevant for this section as it applies to organizational theory. While often unstated, an army's culture can be observed through "the organization an army adopts for itself, the types of training it chooses to indulge in, and indeed, the formal doctrine it chooses to adopt for itself."[239] While doctrine is a source of culture, the experiences and value systems of the military's leaders also play important roles in determining the unit's culture.[240] When the culture of a unit does not align with the written doctrine, the unit acts in accordance with its culture. The result is doctrinal dissonance.

The conduct of Special Forces in the last decade provides an excellent example of a unit straying significantly from its doctrine because of an evolving organizational

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[234] Paul Johnston, "Doctrine Is Not Enough: The Effect of Doctrine on the Behavior of Armies," *Parameters* (Autumn 2000), 34.

[235] Johnston, "Doctrine Is Not Enough," 30.

[236] U.S. Department of Defense, *JP 1-02,* 114.

[237] Johnston, "Doctrine Is Not Enough," 30.

[238] Vijay Sathe, *Culture and Related Corporate Realities: Text, cases, and readings on organizational entry, establishment, and change,* (Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin, 1985), 10.

[239] Johnston, "Doctrine Is Not Enough," 35.

[240] Johnston, "Doctrine Is Not Enough," 35.

culture. As is evident from the previous discussion, Special Forces doctrine stresses the importance of regional proficiency and the Special Forces organization is even designed to promote regional proficiency. In addition, adaptability and versatility are also themes within Special Forces doctrine. Special Forces Groups are not constrained to a particular AOR and they could be used to great effect anywhere in the world. This acknowledgement of versatility, however, does not preclude the requirement for regional proficiency. According to doctrine, Special Forces should be regionally proficient.

However, Special Forces' actions over the last decade (e.g., deploying outside of assigned AORs, not training on cultural capability) appear to contradict the importance of regional proficiency. During the *SOF Operator 2020 Workshop* hosted by USSOCOM in December 2010, several participants highlighted the effects that the last decade of combat has had on SOF. The group consensus was that the last decade was too focused on kinetic activities and that many of the younger SOF Operators were raised in a "culture of kinetics," which could be considered the "commando" mentality.[241] Many feared that this mentality would prevail in SOF and doubts were expressed about whether some SOF Operators were capable of operating across the commando-warrior-diplomat spectrum.[242] These concerns surfaced in the discussion about the lack of experience in Phase 0 and Phase I activities, which rely heavily on the indirect approach (see Figure 13).[243] While the workshop addressed SOF in general, these concerns particularly apply to Special Forces. The last decade has seen an overemphasis on direct action within Special Forces and, as a result, Special Forces indirect skills, especially regional proficiency, have atrophied.

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[241] United States Special Operations Command, *SOF Operator 2020 Workshop I Executive Summary*, December 2010, 7.

[242] USSOCOM, *SOF Operator 2020 Workshop*, 4.

[243] USSOCOM, *SOF Operator 2020 Workshop*, 4.

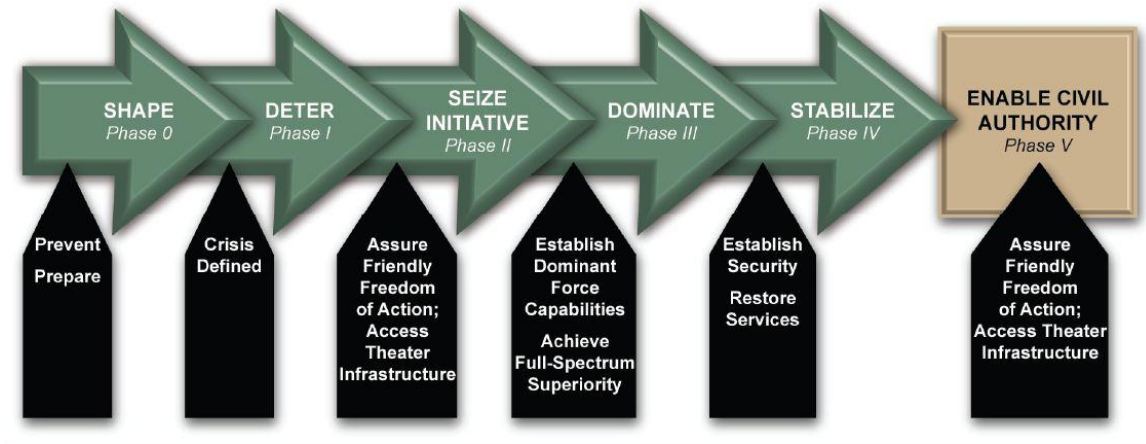

Figure 13. Phased campaign model[244]

In fact, combat operations in 2001 began with Special Forces units that had no regional proficiency in the area. In a *Frontline* interview, then-COL John Mulholland, the 5th Special Forces Group Commander, said that one of his greatest concerns about the invasion of Afghanistan was "our lack of precise cultural and tribal knowledge of Afghanistan because that is a hallmark of what we do."[245] Afghanistan was new to 5th Group. There had been little association with the country since the 1980s and 5th Group lacked regional proficiency when it went into combat.[246] Despite not knowing the language or culture, Special Forces SFODAs used their 3C skills to adapt and successfully embed with Northern Alliance military forces to overthrow the Taliban regime.

Johnston writes that a military changes its culture, or "mindset," in response to vivid experiences.[247] It is possible that 5th SFG(A)'s success in combat without regional proficiency and the follow-on successes of other Groups in combat deployments outside their AORs changed the culture of Special Forces. For the last ten years, the importance of regional proficiency has continued to be stressed in doctrine, but many within Special Forces were no longer acting to improve regional proficiency. Instead, many Special

[244] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 1-6.

[245] Mulholland, "Interview: Colonel John Mulholland."

[246] Mulholland, "Interview: Colonel John Mulholland."

[247] Johnston, "Doctrine Is Not Enough," 7.

Forces units used their valuable and finite training time to prepare for direct action combat operations in Iraq or Afghanistan. Working outside their assigned AORs became the norm. In his written testimony to Congress, ADM McRaven indicated that the high operations tempo (OPTEMPO) since 9/11 and the Central Command (CENTCOM) focus have degraded the cultural capabilities of SOF personnel. He went on to say that the compressed time between deployments has negatively impacted SOF's ability to train and educate the force.[248]

It could be argued that regional proficiency was the first victim of the high rate of deployments outside of most Groups' AORs. SFODAs were not afforded opportunities to immerse themselves in their assigned region's culture. As a result, individuals saw little point in studying a region that they knew they would never deploy to. In fact, in an effort to produce Special Forces soldiers faster, much of the regional proficiency training was eliminated from the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC). A Needs Assessment conducted by Norwich University in 2010 determined that the SFQC provided only a limited amount of cultural training and no regional education.[249] It is possible that a 10-year veteran of Special Forces has only known deployments outside of his AOR and that his training and deployments have been focused exclusively on direct combat skills. This focus on combat would mean that for almost his entire career, such a Special Forces Soldier would have never trained on regional proficiency.

Choices in training reflect a unit's culture. Currently, more emphasis is given to training for direct action missions. Many units are in a cycle of repeat deployments to combat zones. During the few months that they are in garrison, these units focus on preparing for the next combat deployment. As a result, training is dominated by Special Forces Advanced Urban Combat (SFAUC), which is often training organized at the battalion level. What little time remains is devoted to developing the advanced individual skills that will be required for the next deployment. Then, as part of a battalion, SFODAs deploy to a combat zone. Taken as a single event, this makes perfect sense and is what

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[248] McRaven, "Advanced Policy Questions," 29.

[249] David Walton, Department Chief, Directorate of Regional Studies and Education (DRSE), JKFSWCS, correspondence with author, 10 March 2011.

would be expected of any unit. Units focus their training on the next mission. The problem arises when this focus on DA and battalion level deployments becomes systemic. When this is not just one event, but the norm, there is a potential that the entire organizational culture will change. If the only thing a unit does is train on SFAUC, deploy to combat, conduct DA missions, redeploy, train on SFAUC, deploy to combat, etc., the unit could easily become DA focused, sliding to the direct extreme on the spectrum. Worse, the organization could adopt the elite mentality previously discussed and lose its sense of special operations. An indicator of this would be a lack of regional proficiency development over the past decade. This could suggest that the culture within Special Forces has shifted and, as a result, Special Forces no longer acts in accordance with its own doctrine.

Other organizational culture indicators are the values and experiences of the leaders. Current leaders in Special Forces have experienced combat in Afghanistan or Iraq which for the majority was not their assigned AOR. Successful command in combat is commonly thought to be a favorable factor for promotion to the higher positions within Special Forces. If true, this suggests that the current and future Special Forces leaders have been successful within the organization without developing or utilizing regional proficiency. As a result, it has lost some of its value within the organization as indicated by the small amount of time devoted to regional proficiency in both initial and sustainment training. This disregard for regional proficiency within Special Forces could become systemic. Johnston suggests that since leaders of organizations tend to hire and promote people who reflect their values, a culture of leaders tend to become self-replicating.[250] Leaders who have risen in the last decade could have drifted sufficiently far away from the indirect portion of the spectrum that an emphasis on direct skills will become the new norm.

This cultural shift away from regional proficiency within Special Forces is a consequence of doctrinal dissonance. Current Special Forces doctrine continues to stress the importance of regional proficiency, yet many Special Forces units and individuals

[250] Johnston, "Doctrine Is Not Enough," 6.

may no longer value it. Rather than becoming experts at understanding specific environments, some Special Forces units might devote more of their energies and resources to preparing for the next direct action focused combat rotation. Johnston's theory about doctrinal dissonance should serve as a warning. If Special Forces is to regain its orientation toward regional proficiency, it will require more than a new emphasis on its doctrine. Another cultural shift will have to occur to realign the organization closer to the doctrine. The only other option is to rewrite Special Forces doctrine and, as a result, lose strategic value. To examine the extent of doctrinal dissonance within Special Forces, the current state of the Special Forces Regiment will be examined next.

IV. STATE OF THE REGIMENT

> We (Green Berets) need more Area Familiarization. It is becoming a lost art as the older Soldiers retire. We are losing our ability to understand and organize the populace, a skill set which sets us (set us) apart from everyone else.
>
> –Special Forces Soldier[251]

A. SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES LANGUAGE AND CULTURE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (LCNA) PROJECT

Between 2010 and 2011, the Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) contracted SWA Consulting to conduct a language and culture needs assessment project. SWA Consulting interviewed and surveyed units across USSOCOM. Most of these studies concentrated on the language aspect of cultural capability, but several reports focused on cultural and regional knowledge. Some of the findings in these reports help inform the discussion about regional proficiency in Special Forces. It is important to note that these reports surveyed all of USSOCOM, not just Special Forces. I note it whenever the results apply specifically to Special Forces. Additionally, when SWA Consulting conducted its research, it did not use the cultural capability components that were identified in Chapter I. Rather, SWA Consulting framed its research around two components: language training and cultural training. Cultural training included both 3C and regional competence.

1. SOF PERSPECTIVE ON CULTURAL CAPABILITY TRAINING

The LCNA found that both SOF operators and leaders believe that cultural training should be at least moderately emphasized during training. Within ARSOF, the LCNA found that Civil Affairs (CA) and Military Information Support Operations (MISO) Soldiers value all but one cultural training topic more than Special Forces Soldiers. The exception was history of conflict in the deployment region. SWA Consulting suggested that this was either because CA and MISO require a higher level of

[251] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 22 November 2011.

cultural understanding or "SF operators think that culture is better learned in country as opposed to training, which can be inaccurate (i.e., SF operators commented that culture training was often not accurate or relevant for deployment location because of tribal or local customs)."[252]

USSOCOM's guidance is that prior to every deployment, SOF personnel should have "at least 40 hours of mixed language and cultural training."[253] The LCNA found there was a large degree of variance in the implementation of this guidance (see Figure 14).

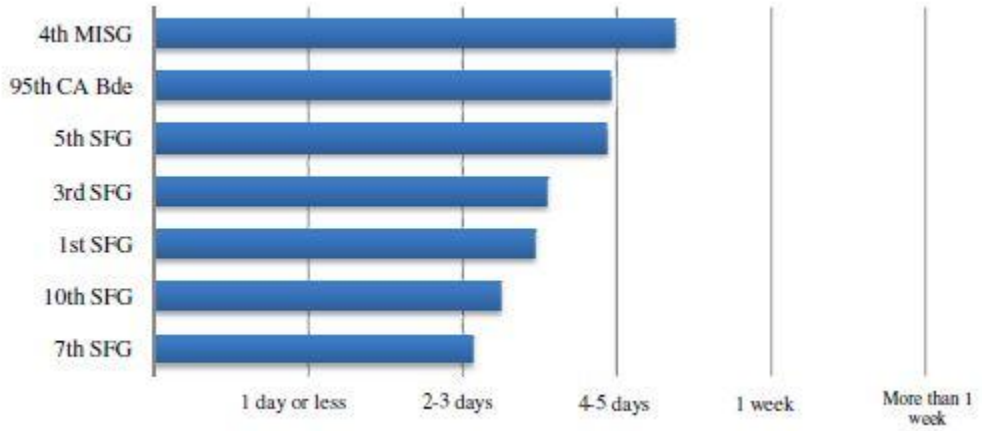

Figure 14. Average Reported Culture Training Length by USASOC Organization[254]

Explanations for this were found in the comments provided by survey respondents. One common barrier to cultural capability training was said to be a lack of time for or command emphasis on cultural training.[255] Cultural training was one of the first things to be eliminated when the unit received additional tasks. The cultural training that was received was generally thought to be effective by the recipients. The LCNA

[252] SWA Consulting, "Training Emphasis: Language and Culture," *Special Operations Forces Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project* (February 2010), 26.

[253] SWA Consulting, "Cultural Awareness and Knowledge Training," 2.

[254] From SWA Consulting, "Cultural Awareness and Knowledge Training," 12.

[255] SWA Consulting, "Cultural Awareness and Knowledge Training," 29.

noted a correlation between the length of the culture training and its perceived effectiveness; the longer the training, the more effective the training was believed to be by the participants.[256] When the training was considered ineffective the reason commonly given was that it was not immediately relevant. Cultural training that was thought to be too academic or not specifically relevant to a particular deployment was not considered useful.[257]

2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING CULTURAL CAPABILITY

LCNA found that a common recommendation for improving both language and cultural ability within SOF was to use immersion training. The focus for immersion training in the report was with regard to developing language ability, but its benefit with regard to regional proficiency was also mentioned. Immersion training could be conducted in "a country where the language is spoken, in the United States where the language is spoken in an isolated community or in a simulated environment with native speakers."[258] Immersion programs were "overwhelmingly described as effective and useful" by the LCNA surveyed population.[259] The SWA research suggests that the reported benefits of immersion training would make it an effective tool to develop cultural capability.[260] This value placed on immersion training was again found in the survey and interview research conducted for this thesis.

Another group that emphatically endorses the idea of immersion training is students interviewed for this thesis. Most believed that their instruction was insufficient and that they would only be able to develop true regional proficiency by being there or to use their term, "smelling the dirt of the place." This is telling since respondents were in the midst of receiving formal regional proficiency instruction, yet said they valued what

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[256] SWA Consulting, "Cultural Awareness and Knowledge Training," 13.

[257] SWA Consulting, "Cultural Awareness and Knowledge Training," *Special Operations Forces Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project* (November 2010), 18.

[258] SWA Consulting, "Immersion Training," *Special Operations Forces Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project* (November 2010), 2.

[259] SWA Consulting, "Immersion Training," 44.

they were not receiving (experience) more. This might have been influenced by their environment. The typical IRS student is a recent SFQC graduate. IRS is a form of purgatory. The student is no longer a SFQC student, but still does not receive the benefits or respect of being a full-fledged Special Forces Soldier. Meanwhile, his peers have been fully integrated into the SFG(A)s. IRS students said that their peers and sponsors from the SFG(A)s were telling them that their training was useless "because we will just use interpreters when we get there."[261] They urged the IRS students that they needed to hurry up and get to the SFG(A)s so that they could deploy and develop "real" regional knowledge. Research indicates, however, that immersion training is not sufficient.

SWA research suggests that formal learning (e.g., classroom instruction) and informal learning (e.g., on-the-job) play unique roles in developing cultural capability.[262] A survey of research on the subject by SWA reveals that there are several options for developing cultural capability. The report lists:

- Didactic training – information-giving training (i.e. formal instruction.).
- Cultural awareness training – identifying and comparing one's own values and cultures with other region's values and cultures.
- Interaction training – on-the-job training with a mentor.
- Experiential training – learning by doing.
- Language training – "exchanging common courtesies in the target language increases intercultural adjustment."[263]

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[260] SWA Consulting, "Immersion Training," 44.

[261] Special Forces Soldier, interview with the author, 28 September 2011.

[262] SWA Consulting, "Cultural Awareness and Knowledge Training," 27.

[263] SWA Consulting, "Cultural Awareness and Knowledge Training," 28.

The most effective method of instruction would therefore be a hybrid approach that blends both formal and informal methods. To quote the SWA report, "Experiential learning may work best for building cultural awareness, but SOF operators need to know what types of cultural information to look for, therefore, the classroom component fills that gap."[264] This is not to detract from the value of immersion training. It can be a very effective means to develop regional proficiency, especially when formal instruction is incorporated into it. Experiential training cannot, however, be relied upon as the sole means of development. Formal instruction, such as classroom education, plays an important role as well.

Interestingly, the LCNA found that SOF operators are more motivated by non-monetary than monetary incentives for language acquisition. The best non-monetary incentives are: "saving lives/force protection, mission success, supporting the team, immersion opportunities, and self-development."[265] Despite the presence of these non-monetary incentives, the LCNA notes that monetary incentives are still an "important and powerful motivational tool for most individuals" and are still related to the "proficiency acquisition and maintenance in the SOF community."[266] The LCNA suggests that the incentive structure for language proficiency should combine both monetary and non-monetary incentives. [267]

In conclusion, SWA recommends three best practices for developing cultural capability. First, cultural capability training should incorporate multiple delivery strategies. Second, the training delivery should be aligned with the training goals (i.e., training should be relevant). Finally, training should occur "prior to deployment, immediately after deployment, or both."[268]

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[264] SWA Consulting, "Cultural Awareness and Knowledge Training," 27.

[265] SWA Consulting, "Non-monetary Incentives," *Special Operations Forces Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project* (November 2010), 2.

[266] SWA Consulting, "Non-monetary Incentives," 2.

[267] SWA Consulting, "Non-monetary Incentives," 2.

[268] SWA Consulting, "Cultural Awareness and Knowledge Training," 29.

B. SURVEY OVERVIEW

> I think a decade of war has made SF guys less open-minded, not more. That is the cause of the language, cultural, and area knowledge issues we face. The SF job needs to be more clearly defined when it comes to those aptitudes, and those aptitudes need to be promoted more in the command environment. Right now, cultural and language proficiency is an afterthought at best; it is viewed with suspicion at worst.
>
> –Special Forces Soldier[269]

SWA findings were reinforced by the survey conducted for this thesis. As mentioned in Chapter I, a part of the research for this thesis was a survey administered to the current Special Forces Regiment over a two month period. The survey was created using the online survey service, Survey Monkey. The survey was administered online. A hyperlink to the survey was distributed by e-mail. Through various distribution lists, the e-mail was sent to active members of the Special Forces Regiment. The population size of the Special Forces Regiment is approximately 7,700.[270] Over 700 Special Forces Soldiers responded. Of these responses, approximately 540 responses were usable for analysis. The other responses were not usable because the survey was only partially completed and prevented the calculation of some of the values. Survey participation therefore roughly equates to 7% of the Special Forces Regiment. While the number of respondents (n = 540) was large enough to conduct meaningful statistical analysis, the percentage (7%) is relatively small. This is important to keep in mind when reading the rest of the chapter. Like all surveys, conclusions drawn from this survey should be taken with a dose of skepticism. The 7% may or may not represent the Regiment. Elicitation for the survey was straightforward and the survey itself was labeled a Regional Proficiency Survey. From the title alone, people might have self-selected and elected to not participate because they had no interest in anything to do with regional proficiency. If there was a self-selection bias, results would be skewed and it would not accurately represent the Regiment. Despite this possibility, the number of responses was still

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[269] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 18 October 2011.

[270] George McGrath, ARSOF Branch Chief, correspondence with the author, 25 October 2011 and David Gaugush, "Special Forces Branch Brief," 3 December 2010.

significant. Analysis of the survey reveals several interesting patterns. Before discussing them, let me review who participated in the survey.

1. Population Overview

> I would add that it is very difficult to dedicate the amount of time required to become well versed in various AOR's when we are deploying to and focused on Iraq and Afghanistan more than our actual AOR's… it is difficult convincing someone of the importance of learning Spanish or French when they are spending the majority of their time in Afghanistan.
>
> –Special Forces Soldier[271]

Several factors influence a person's perspective. Factors that were considered influential in the construction of the survey were a person's grade, assigned Special Forces Group (Airborne), and experience. The first category reviewed is grade (see Figure 15).

[271] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 22 October 2011.

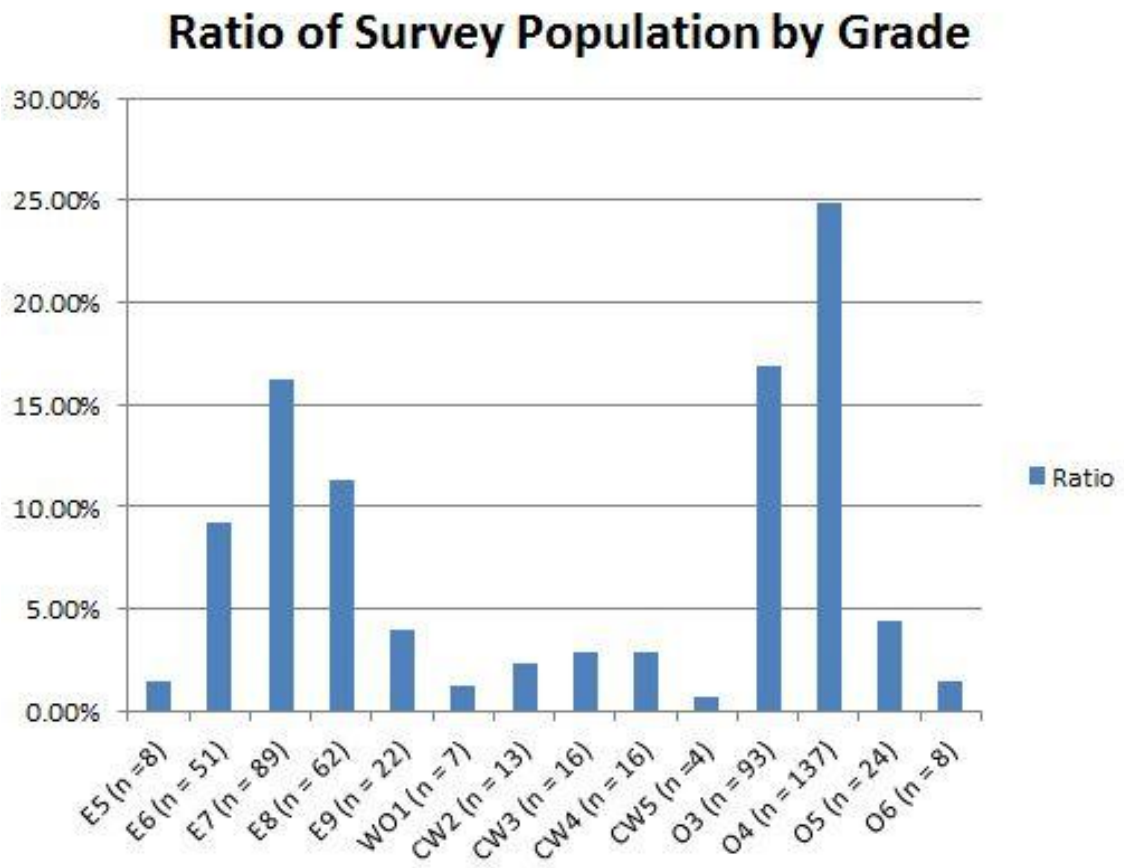


Figure 15. Survey Population by Grade

As seen in the above chart, O4s composed almost 25% of the survey population, followed by O3s, E7s, E8s and E6s.

Participation of 10th SFG(A) was significantly higher than that of the other SFG(A)s (see Figure 16). In contrast, participation by the two ARNG SFG(A)'s was relatively small. This adversely affects the applicability of the survey analysis to the two ARNG SFG(A)s.

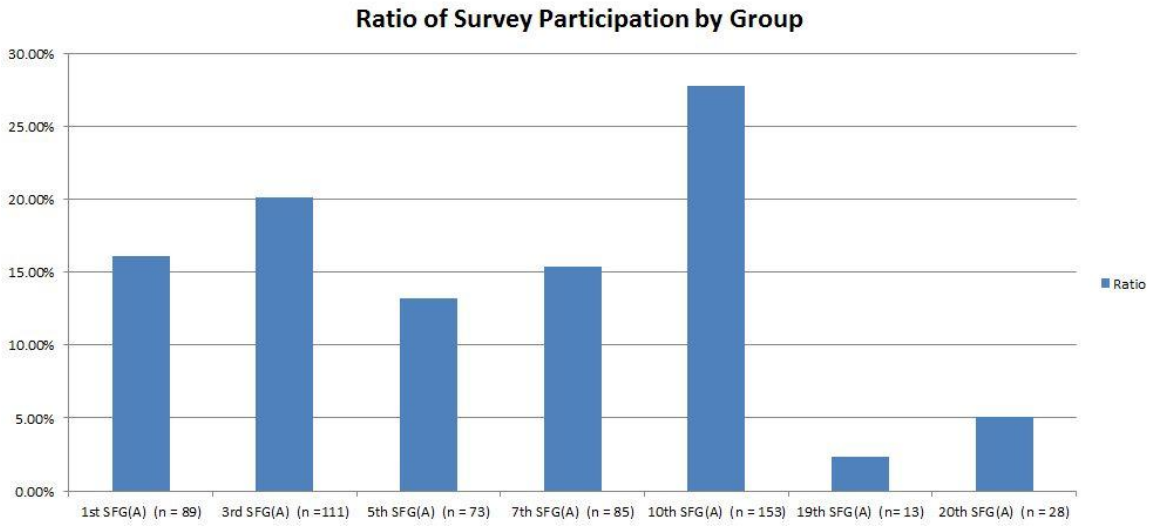


Figure 16. Survey Population by SFG(A)

"Experience" was calculated as a ratio of time spent in/outside the assigned AOR as a percentage of total time spent in Special Forces (see Figure 17).

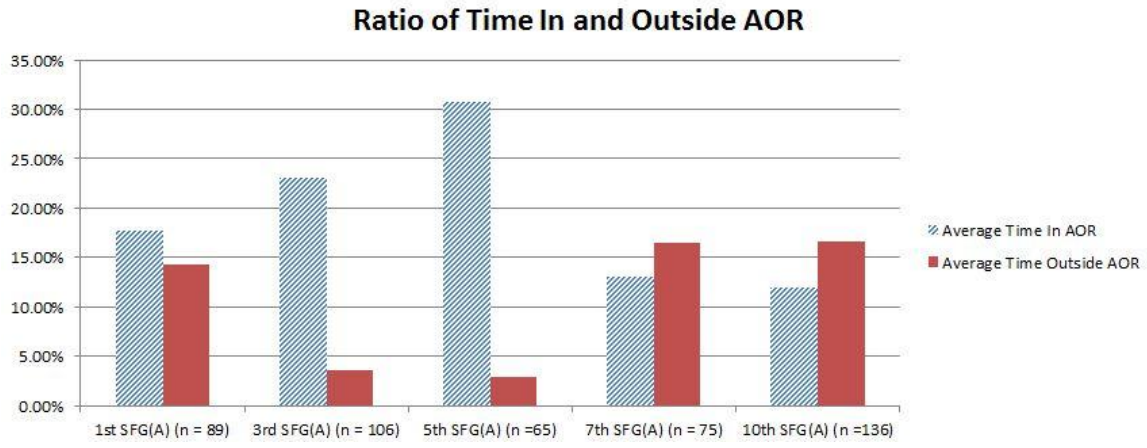


Figure 17. Ratio of Time In and Outside AOR

Soldiers who identified with 3rd SFG(A) and 5th SFG(A), the SFG(A)s with primary responsibility for the CENTCOM missions, have spent the majority of their time in their assigned AORs. Interestingly, Soldiers from the remaining SFG(A)s have spent relatively the same amount of time both in and outside their assigned AOR. Upon joining Special Forces, a Special Forces Soldier, regardless of SFG(A), spends approximately 30% of his time deployed.

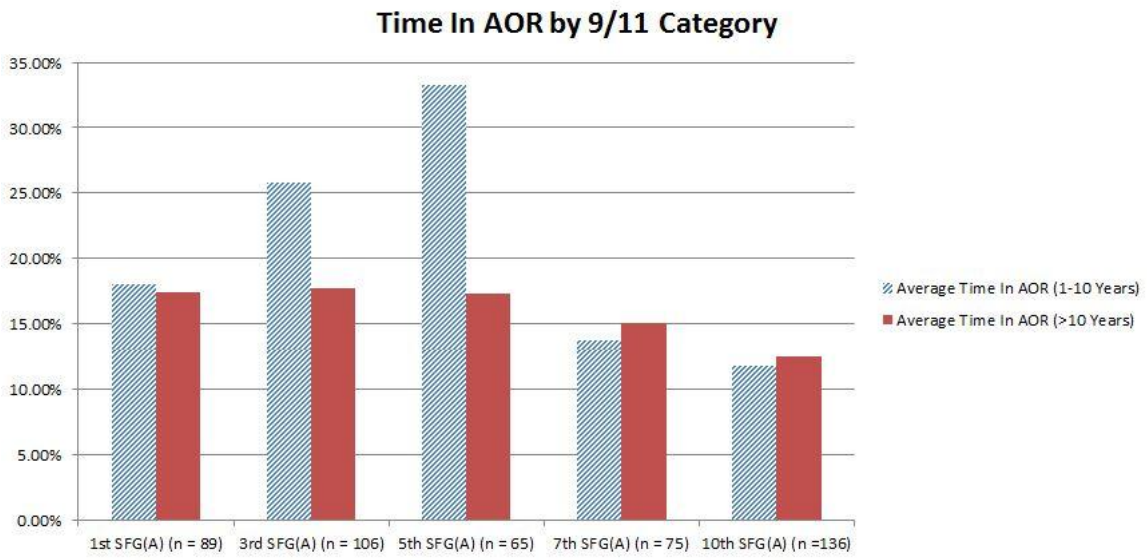


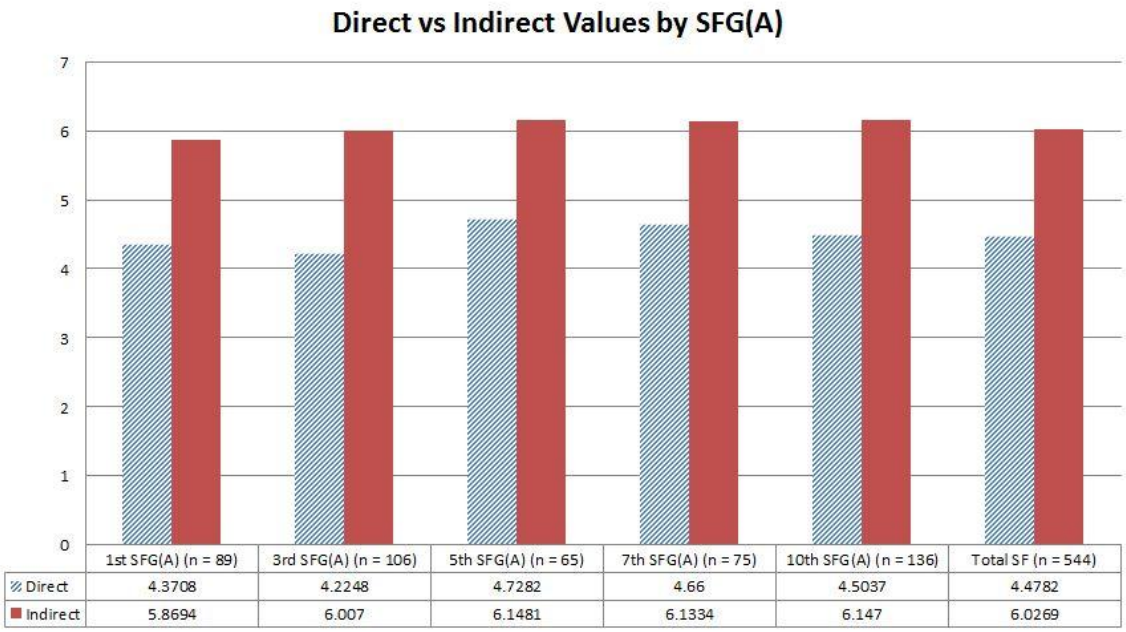
Figure 18. Ratio of Time In AOR by 9/11 Category

Interestingly, Soldiers in 3rd SFG(A) and 5th SFG(A) who joined Special Forces after 9/11 have significantly more time in their AOR than those with greater than ten years in Special Forces (Figure 18). Surprisingly, there is not a high degree of variance in the remaining SFG(A)s. This suggests that perhaps the CENTCOM deployments has not seriously affected the other SFG(A)s' experience in their AORs.

A final snapshot gleaned from the survey is the interest in higher education within Special Forces. This finding will help inform the strategy presented in Chapter V. The survey indicates that 42% of SFODA members are taking or recently took college accredited courses.

2. Direct vs. Indirect Spectrum

The next issue to be examined is perceptions about the direct-indirect dichotomy discussed in Chapter III. Special Forces Soldiers' perception about the value of direct skills vs. indirect skills is considered first by SFG(A)s (see Figure 19). What comes through is that Special Forces still places a significantly higher value on indirect over direct skills.



	1st SFG(A) (n = 89)	3rd SFG(A) (n = 106)	5th SFG(A) (n = 65)	7th SFG(A) (n = 75)	10th SFG(A) (n = 136)	Total SF (n = 544)
Direct	4.3708	4.2248	4.7282	4.66	4.5037	4.4782
Indirect	5.8694	6.007	6.1481	6.1334	6.147	6.0269

Figure 19. Direct vs. Indirect Values by SFG(A)

To represent this direct vs. indirect valuation slightly differently, the average Special Forces Soldier's position is placed on the direct-indirect spectrum introduced in Chapter III (see Figure 20).

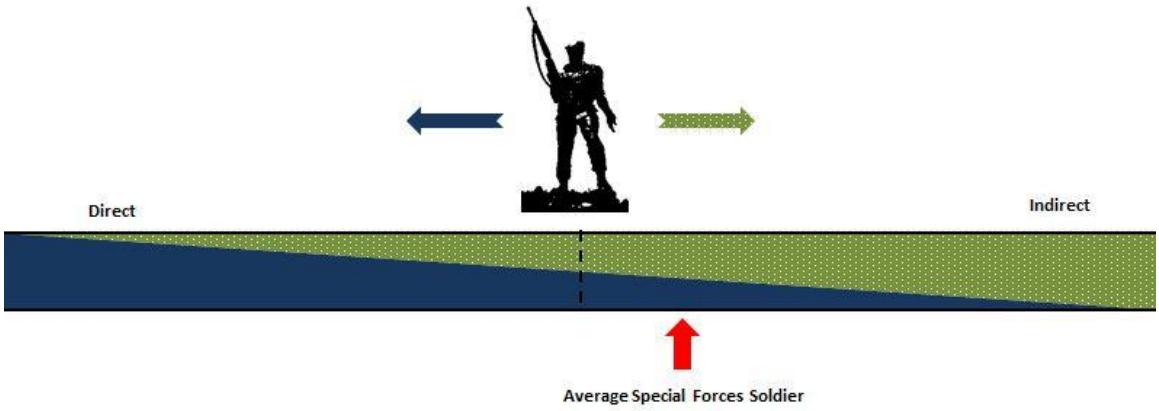


Figure 20. Average Special Forces Soldier Value of Direct vs. Indirect Skills

In aggregate, Special Forces Soldiers' opinion about the value of direct over indirect skills falls well to the right of the middle, within the optimal zone. When this is reconsidered by unit level, interesting differences reveal themselves (see Figure 21)

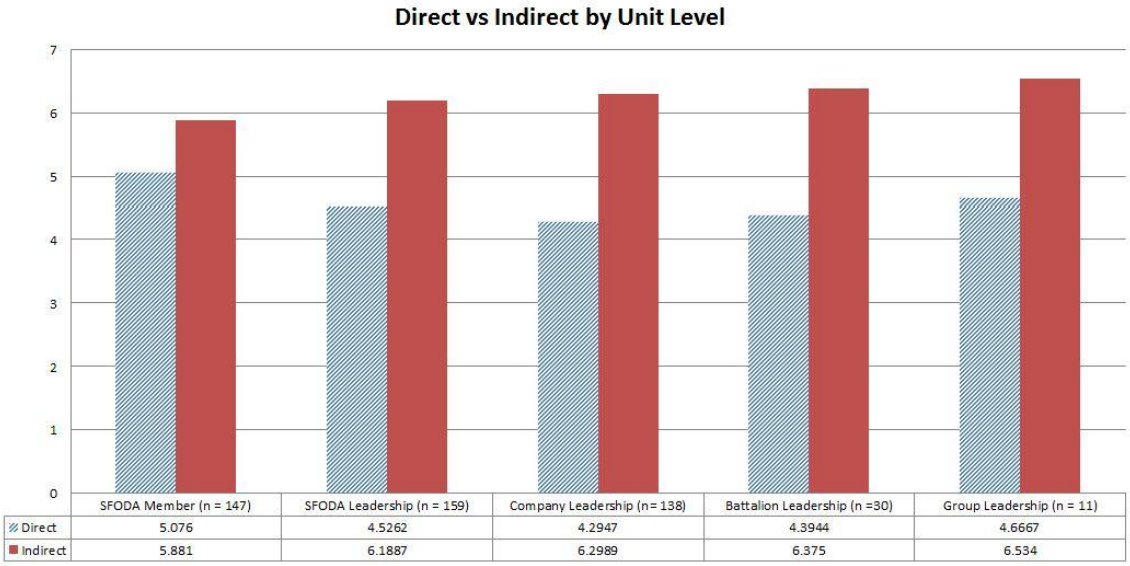


Figure 21. Direct vs. Indirect Skills by Unit Level

Although still valuing indirect skills more, the gap is closest in unit level, SFODA members. When presented on the spectrum, the difference between SFODA members and the average Special Forces Soldier (all unit levels) becomes clear (see Figure 22).

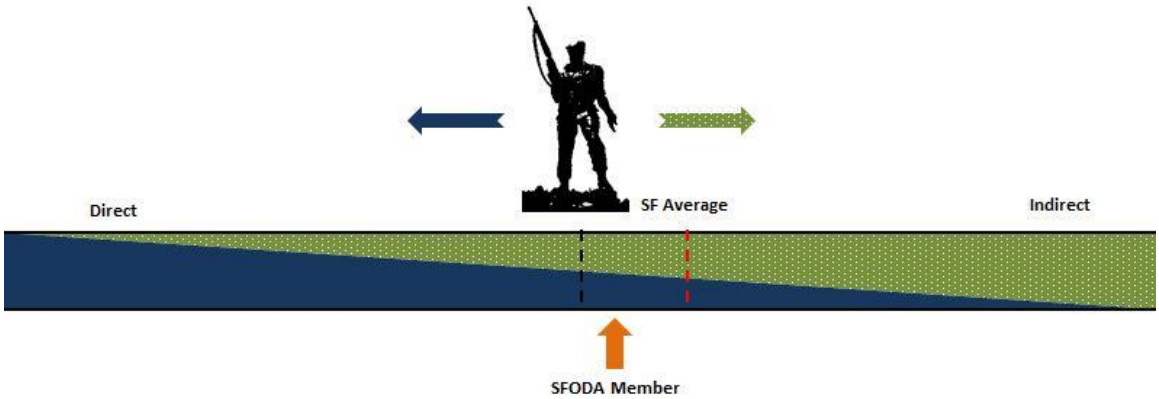


Figure 22. SFODA Member Value of Direct vs. Indirect Skills

It is interesting that SFODA members, who are the individuals who interact the most with the population are also the closest to the direct side of the spectrum. Perhaps this is because SFODA members are also the ones most likely to be involved in combat. Beyond this initial explanation, the drift towards the direct side of the spectrum could also reflect the experiences and interests of those more junior in rank and/or this drift toward direct skills could be a manifestation of the doctrinal dissonance previously mentioned.

C. TREND ANALYSIS

The first thing that was noticed while conducting statistical analysis is that each Special Forces Group does indeed exhibit unique characteristics. The idea that each Special Forces Group has its own personality is a commonly held belief within the Regiment and it is often the source of good natured ribbing and inter-Group rivalries. The uniqueness of each Group revealed itself in the survey data when it was analyzed to determine patterns and trends. Given the peculiarities of each Group, the focus of this thesis is the Special Forces Regiment as a whole. As a result the discussion will attempt to remain at the Regiment level except when the discussion warrants an examination of a specific Group.

Despite the brevity of the survey, a large amount of data was gathered that opened the possibility of examining numerous aspects of Special Forces and its relationship with cultural capability. To remain concise and focused, the survey analysis will be limited to the interest in regional proficiency within Special Forces. An important distinction needs to be made. Except for language scores, performance was not measured. The survey measured people's beliefs and interests. While reviewing the data and analysis it is important to remember that these numbers do not represent actual capability in regional proficiency. Rather, they measure people's interests and beliefs.

When designing the survey, it was necessary to hypothesize which factors contribute to a Special Forces Soldier's interest in regional proficiency. From this list of factors (or independent variables) a model was created (see Figure 23).

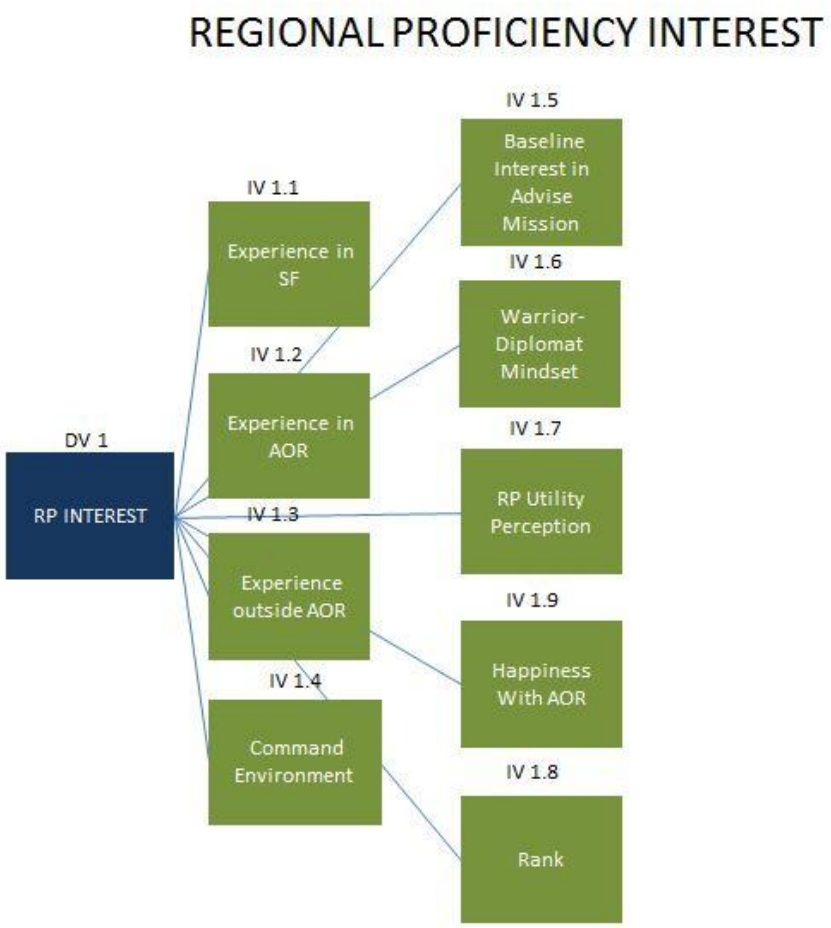


Figure 23. Regional Proficiency Independent Variables

Hypothesis 1 was that a person's inclination (direct versus indirect) would influence his regional proficiency. Hypothesis 2 was that interest in regional proficiency would be influenced by a person's experiences in Special Forces. Hypothesis 3 was that a person's happiness with his AOR would affect his interest in learning about his AOR.

This model proved to be reasonably accurate. In regression analysis, the R-squared value for this system was high enough (.7154) to be statistically significant (see Table 3). While some of the results were expected, other relationships that the analysis revealed were surprising.

Table 3. Regional Proficiency Interest (Total SF)

Regional Proficiency Interest (Total SF)	Coef	$R>\|t\|$
Experience in SF Value	-.027	.218
Time In AOR Value	-.011	.375
Time Outside AOR Value	-.035	.008
Command Environment Value	-.026	.138
Interest in Advise and Assist Value	-.010	.610
Warrior-Diplomat Score	.206	.000
Regional Competence Utility	.620	.000
Rank Value	-.018	.567
Happiness With AOR Value	.129	.000
Number of Observations: 495	R-Squared: .715	

1. Personal Inclination

Hypothesis 1 was validated by the analysis. If a Special Forces Soldier's inclination is towards the indirect side of the spectrum, he is more likely to be interested in regional proficiency. A person's inclination was measured in several different ways (see Appendix B). The two dominating factors in determining a person's interest relate to his beliefs: his belief in the indirect approach (i.e., warrior-diplomat score), and belief in the utility of regional competence. Of the two, belief in regional competence played a significantly larger role. The relationship between regional competence utility and interest in regional proficiency is obvious and this helps explain the strong correlation.[272] Special Forces Soldiers are pragmatic. If a Special Forces Soldier thinks regional

[272] This close relationship could also have been a result of selection bias or poor survey design. Some Special Forces Soldiers could believe that regional competence is useful and still have no interest in developing it themselves. Exploring this relationship further requires another survey better designed to mask its intent to draw out a person's belief on these two closely related topics.

knowledge is useful then he will be interested in developing it. From this, one can conclude that to increase regional proficiency the relevance of this knowledge needs to be made clear to the Special Forces Soldier.

The significance of the influence of the warrior-diplomat score, meanwhile is that the more the Special Forces Soldier values the indirect mission, the more likely he will be to be interested in regional proficiency. Therefore, to increase interest in regional proficiency, the importance and value of indirect missions should be stressed to Special Forces Soldiers.

Another interesting result of the analysis is the statistically insignificant role that interest in the "advise and assist" mission has on interest in regional proficiency. To find the role that interest in this mission played, analysis for the warrior-diplomat mentality had to be conducted.

Given the importance of the warrior-diplomat mentality in determining interest in regional proficiency, a model for the warrior-diplomat mentality was constructed (see Figure 24). This R-squared value was low (.34), indicating that the model did not fully capture the elements that influence the warrior-diplomat mentality (see Appendix B). Of the elements evaluated, three variables were statistically significant. In contrast to interest in regional proficiency, interest in the "advise and assist" mission did influence a person's warrior-diplomat mentality. In addition, command environment also played an important role in determining a person's warrior-diplomat mentality. One peculiarity of the analysis is the minor influence that time outside an AOR has on the warrior-diplomat mentality. According to the regression analysis, the more time a person spent outside his AOR, the more likely it is his warrior-diplomat score will be slightly higher. This relationship is peculiar and is not easily explained. It is possible that for most Special Forces Soldiers, deployment outside of their AOR meant deployments to Afghanistan or Iraq. This trend could imply that these experiences gave Special Forces Soldiers a slightly better appreciation for indirect skills.

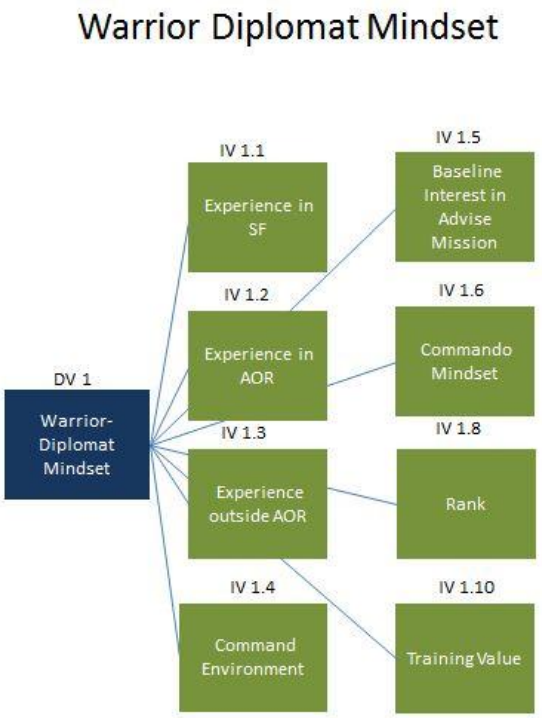


Figure 24. Warrior-Diplomat Independent Variables

2. Experience

One surprising result was the influence that a person's experience has on his interest in regional proficiency. As discussed in Chapter III, deployment outside of the assigned AOR has had a detrimental effect on regional proficiency within Special Forces. An assumption is that in addition to having a negative impact on regional proficiency capability, deploying outside the AOR would have a negative impact on interest in regional proficiency as well. Surprisingly, however, experience did not significantly shape a person's interest in regional proficiency. In addition to this, time spent in his AOR did not significantly influence a person's interest in either direction. From this it could be concluded that interest in regional proficiency is not dependent upon personal experience, but upon the command environment and personal interests.

3. Happiness with AOR

While time spent in or outside of an AOR did not shape a person's interest, contentment with their AOR did influence individual's interest. Each AOR is unique. The fit between the person and his assigned AOR influenced whether he was interested in regional proficiency. In other words, if the person was happy with his AOR, then he was more likely to be interested in regional proficiency.

4. Incentives

In addition to testing these hypotheses, the survey also polled participants on various means that might be used to incentivize Special Forces Soldiers to improve regional proficiency. A simple rank ordering provides some insight into what would be valued (see Figure 25).

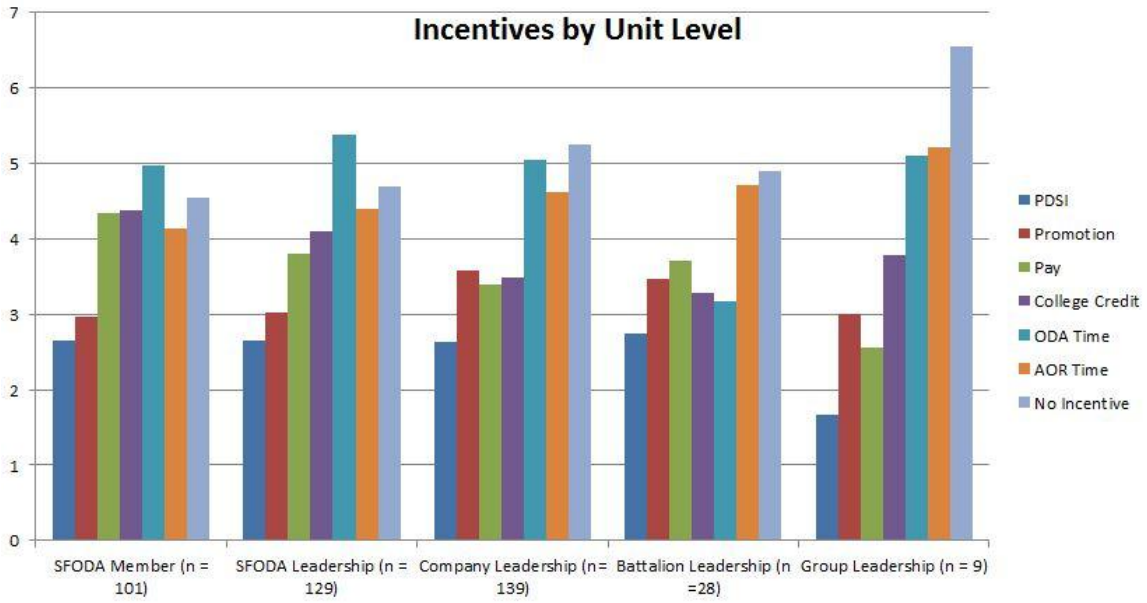


Figure 25. Incentives by Unit Level

Interestingly, the appeal of incentives appears to be influenced by the person's position in his career. Those on an SFODA or who have recently left an SFODA (i.e., company level) value SFODA time the most. Those with the least pay, namely SFODA members, value incentive pay the most. Additionally, those with typically the lowest

level of education, typically SFODA members and SFODA leaders, value college credit more than do others. Notably, the "no incentive" option was tied to a sense of professional responsibility. This was either the highest or second highest option selected across the entire Regiment.

5. Command Environment

> [C]ommand must highlight it more often and from their first days at SWCS. SF soldiers must understand that understanding the operational environment is at least as important as hitting a bulls-eye and how many pushups they can do. New SWCS students need also to be presented with concrete case studies on how regional proficiency affects mission accomplishment.
>
> —Special Forces Soldier[273]

Beyond these incentives, another influence on Special Forces with regard to interest in regional proficiency is leadership. In regression analysis, the command environment proved to be a more influential motivator than any of the incentives listed above (see Appendix B). This correlation between command environment and regional proficiency was found throughout the research of this thesis. As mentioned previously, the LCNA found a major hindrance to cultural training was lack of command emphasis. Commenting on a negative command environment, one survey respondent wrote:

> There needs to be a true commitment by the Groups and their leadership to put some kind of regional studies/language enhancement program in place. Currently, regional studies/language receives very little, if any, priority for training; mainly because the command puts no priority into language/regional studies. I actually had a battalion commander stand in front of us and say there was no need for language. He said, "I learned Egyptian Arabic 15 years ago and never needed it, so worry about shooting and killing bad guys." Essentially, the atmosphere is to learn "5.56 with 9mm slang."[274]

This vignette is disturbing. Thankfully this poor command environment is an exception. According to the survey, most Special Forces Soldiers experience a moderately positive

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[273] Special Forces Soldier, correspondence with the author, 22 November 2011.

[274] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 22 October 2011.

command environment with regard to regional proficiency (see Figure 26). While positive, this does not mean there is no room for improvement. A commander's influence can not be underestimated. When determining how to increase interest in regional proficiency, the command environment should be the prime consideration.

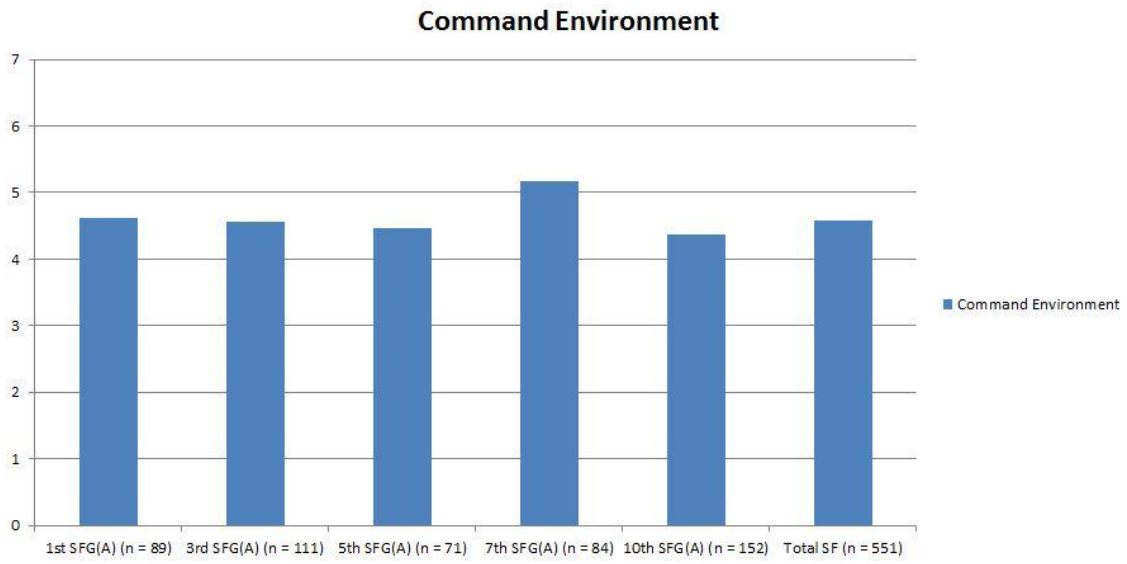

Figure 26. Command Environment by SFG(A)

V. IMPROVING REGIONAL PROFICIENCY: A STRATEGY

> In today's operating environment, the demand is much greater for SOF operators with varying languages, more cultural attunement, and regional expertise.
>
> —ADM William McRaven, Commander, USSOCOM[275]

Regional proficiency is complex and Special Forces is a large and diverse organization. There is no one magical lever that can be pulled to fix this problem. Rather, Special Forces should adopt a strategy with several sub-components. Ideally, all sub-components would be implemented, but failing that, implementing only a few would still be progress towards increased regional proficiency. This strategy is based on the concept described by Arthur F. Lykke, Jr. in the *U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy*. According to Lykke, *Strategy = Ends + Means + Ways*. Ends are the objectives of the strategy. Means are the resources required for the strategy. Ways are the courses of action for achieving the strategy.[276]

Developing regional proficiency does not occur in a vacuum. Special Forces Soldiers are busy. To quote a survey respondent:

> Although I consider being knowledgeable about my AOR to be a professional responsibility, SF Soldiers are expected to maintain multiple proficiencies simultaneously (language, physical fitness, cultural understanding, weapons, demolition, communications, medical, etc.). There are only so many hours in the day, and very few days in between deployments, JCETs, and schools/courses.[277]

Taking these demands seriously, I designed the strategy with modest goals. Furthermore, most of the means suggested are intended to accomplish multiple objectives. Finally, these methods will not require excessive changes from normal operating procedures.

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[275] McRaven, "Advanced Policy Questions," 30.

[276] Arthur F. Lykke, Jr., "Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy," in *U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy*, edited by Joseph R. Cerami and James F. Holcomb, February 2001. (accessed 13 November 2011), http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/army-usawc/strategy/13lykke.pdf, 180.

[277] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 25 October 2011.

A. ENDS–THE OBJECTIVE

> Language and cultural skills are important if we are to maintain our historical relevance. These areas have been set aside due to the necessities of the current conflicts. As that need passes we need to look at going back to our traditional bread and butter, or relook at what it means to be SF in a world full of "SOF".
>
> –Special Forces Soldier[278]

The goal of this strategy is to create two RP 3-qualified Special Forces Soldiers on each SFODA. There are three factors in this objective, the level (SFODA), the quality (RP 3), and the quantity (two). Why SFODA level? Because this is Special Forces primary operational unit and is the level most likely to engage with a foreign population. Why RP 3? Because an RP 3–qualified individual possesses sufficient in-depth knowledge on an area to understand the environment, advise senior officials and to make informed judgments. It is reasonable to assume that a veteran Special Forces Soldier should be capable of acquiring sufficient education and experience to meet the RP 3 criteria. The quantity of two was selected because while RP 3 is obtainable, it would still be difficult to obtain. Regional proficiency is not for everyone. Realistically speaking, every Special Forces Soldier would not be capable or interested in achieving RP 3. Also, as with all other units in the military, there is a constant rotation of personnel on SFODAs. Not everyone on an SFODA will be a veteran. Only a few SFODA members generally have sufficient experience in Special Forces to even be eligible for RP3, let alone sufficient experience in a particular region. The idea is that while there would only be two RP 3s, there would be several Special Forces Soldiers who would be RP 2, ideally in the process of becoming RP 3. Another reason to strive for two per team is redundancy, which is inherent to the SFODA's design.

[278] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 12 October 2011.

B. MEANS–WHAT CAN BE USED

> AOR knowledge and experience takes a vast amount of time both through mission in the AOR with host nation militaries and through academic study and language programs in those countries. More time on small study visits by teams or parts of teams would enhance the knowledge about an AOR. These study trips, 3-6 months in duration, at local universities would help build a deeper understanding and attachment to the AOR.
>
> –Special Forces Soldier[279]

Improving regional proficiency, as we have seen is not a new concern. Both within Special Forces and across DoD as a whole, various programs and approaches have been developed to improve regional proficiency. To better catalog these available means, I will use the same categories that SWCS uses to outline its lifelong learning project. These are: experience, training, and education. Experience is "the sum of all our activities or exposure to events or people over a period of time."[280] Training is "task-specific learning under controlled conditions to a predetermined standard."[281] Education is "the acquisition of knowledge specifically designed to foster diverse perspectives, critical analysis, comfort with ambiguity and abstract reasoning with respect to complex non-linear problem solving." [282] For the purposes of this thesis, training will generally consist of the instruction provided by military institutions. Education will generally consist of the instruction provided by academic institutions. This is not to suggest that education does not occur at military institutions. As noted by SWCS, "training and education are not mutually exclusive."[283] The simplification is merely intended to separate the approaches.

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[279] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 14 November 2011.

[280] David Walton, "SWCS Education Program," briefing to JSOU Conference on Education, 9 September 2011.

[281] Walton, "SWCS Education Program."

[282] Walton, "SWCS Education Program."

[283] Walton, "SWCS Education Program."

1. Experience

Experience in foreign countries has long been considered by USASOC to be an excellent means by which to develop regional proficiency. The value USASOC places on experience can be found in the Investment line of effort in the *ARSOF Capstone Project 2010*:

> Global ARSOF presence is a key supporting effort to the Department of State and GCCs' strategies in semi-permissive and unstable areas of the world. The ARSOF Investment line of effort is primarily realized by small teams of ….personnel studying, living, and working for extended periods of time in overseas locations to gain understanding, acquire regional expertise, and develop relationships… Additionally, the Investment line of effort allows for the development and sustainment of long-term relationships with indigenous personnel and enables a cadre of language-capable and culturally relevant Soldiers who provide Ambassadors, GCCs, and follow-on forces with critical capabilities should emergencies arise or contingencies develop.[284]

Experience is developed through major deployments supporting named operations (i.e., Operation NEW DAWN, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, etc.), individual assignments overseas, engagement events, and so on. Engagement event is an umbrella term for a collection of programs with various missions and funding sources, to include Partnership Development Program (PDP), Bilateral Exchange (BILAT), Counternarcoterrorism (CNT) Training, and Military-to-Military Program (M2M). The most common program is the Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET). Despite different goals and funding sources, most engagement events share the same characteristics. They typically consist of one to two SFODAs and typically last 30-60 days.[285] Not only are these engagement events designed to further GCC goals by strengthening partner nations' militaries, but the engagement event allows SFODA's to practice their training skills and improve their regional proficiency.[286] Critical to

[284] USASOC, *ARSOF Capstone Concept 2010*, 7.

[285] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, C-1.

[286] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, C-2.

developing regional proficiency through experience are the concepts of consistent deployment, persistent engagement, and immersion.

a. Consistent Deployment

> If the Regiment wants regional proficiency then we cannot continue to change unit AORs every month or with every command change. In 3 years my team's AOR has changed 5 times. I could dedicate every hour of every day to regional proficiency and still not be able to cover 5 AORs.
>
> –Special Forces Soldier[287]

In the last ten years, Special Forces did an admittedly poor job of deploying units consistently to their assigned AORs.[288] Engagements in CENTCOM necessitated a constant rotation of different units into that one AOR. Overwhelmed by the demands of the CENTCOM missions, some units consistently deployed *outside* of their AOR. To help compensate for the increased demand for Special Forces, Special Forces grew, adding a fourth battalion to every active duty SFG(A). [289] Additionally, the SFG(A)s were re-aligned to reflect CENTCOM's operational demand.[290] Considering these measures, the withdrawal from Iraq, and the drawdown in Afghanistan, it is reasonable to assume that the next decade will not be like the last decade with its overwhelming CENTCOM focus. It is reasonable to assume that the Special Forces Regiment will be able to resume its method of consistently deploying units to the same region within aligned AORs. Ideally, Special Forces Groups will be able to assign regions to subordinate battalions, which will in turn assign smaller regions to companies. With specific regions to focus on, Special Forces Soldiers will be able to concentrate their efforts on developing regional proficiency. By specializing and consistently deploying to the same area, Special Forces Soldiers will once again profit from experiential learning and develop regional proficiency.

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[287] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 22 October 2011.

[288] McRaven, "Advanced Policy Questions," 29.

[289] McRaven, "Advanced Policy Questions," 35–36.

[290] McRaven, "Advanced Policy Questions," 30.

b. Persistent Engagement

> I think the future of the long war or Global War on Terror will predominantly be persistent operations in countries with which the U.S. is not at war, leveraging locals… And so the key will be to have a distributed global presence where we are working with lots of locals to suppress this global insurgency down to very low levels.
>
> –Michael Vickers[291]

Tied to the concept of consistent deployment is the idea of persistent engagement. As mentioned before, most engagement events tend to involve at least one SFODA and be of a short duration, but with a high level of activity. At times this approach is the only feasible way to engage a particular country. Nonetheless, methods that emphasize a more persistent approach should be explored. Outside of the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the SFG(A)s already persistently engage in several other regions of the world, most notably in the Philippines and Columbia. In these countries, 1st SFG(A) and 7th SFG(A), respectively, have maintained a persistent presence for years while also deploying forces to the CENTCOM AOR. As a result, these SFG(A)s came to develop regional proficiency despite the demands of the last decade. In addition to these large commitments, Special Forces also maintains smaller elements in numerous countries worldwide. This small number of Special Forces Soldiers serve in a variety of functions. An example would be the Special Operations Liaison Officers (SOLO), but there are numerous other individual or pair assignments all over the world.[292]

To increase regional proficiency in the Regiment, opportunities like these should be expanded. As mentioned in the literature review, several people have already written about the value of persistent presence and have proposed ways to accomplish this (more forward deployed units, the Volkmann Program, more country team positions, etc.). In addition, Special Forces could improve its persistent presence approach with three additional methods: country team augmenters, mini-JCETs, and foreign instructors.

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[291] Michael Vickers, statement to the House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee, Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee, *Assessing U.S. Special Operations Command's Missions and Roles*, 29 June 2006, accessed 18 November 2011, http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2006_hr/soc.pdf.

[292] Olson, *2011 SOCOM Posture Statement*, 16.

(1) Country Team Augmenter. Special Forces Soldiers already work closely with several country teams in specialized roles. Unlike these individuals, the country team augmenter would be in-country to develop regional proficiency. He could be attached to either the Defense Attaché (DATT) office or the Office of Defense Coordination (ODC). He would serve a military purpose by being the SFG(A)'s representative for coordinating future engagement events. In other words, he could provide short term help, which would make him interchangeable and allow a constant rotation of new soldiers into the country. This flow would enable a Special Forces unit to provide several Soldiers with regional experience. In addition to improving his regional proficiency, the augmenter could develop relationships with the host nation military and gain valuable experience in the Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational (JIIM) environment.

(2) Mini-JCET. Typically, a JCET consists of an SFODA conducting short, but intense training with a partner nation force. A mini-JCET would take the opposite approach and would be a long term training event (about three months) done at a more measured pace and involving only a fraction of an SFODA (two to four personnel). The longer and more deliberate pace would allow the SFODA members to conduct more specialized and in-depth training on a specific task. For example, two Special Forces medics would be able to train a cohort of partner nation medics to a much higher standard over the course of three months than they would if they were providing medical training as part of a much shorter JCET that had several other training objectives. The extended length of time would facilitate cultural immersion and would facilitate the development of regional proficiency by the SFODA members. Additionally, the element's small size would obviate the negative effects that the longer deployment time would have with regard to unit OPTEMPO. Potential disadvantages are that two to four Special Forces Soldiers cannot provide the same level of security, communication, and resources that is inherent to a whole SFODA and mini-JCETs would therefore not be appropriate for some regions. Despite this, the mini-JCET would surely be appropriate for permissive environments.

(3) Foreign Instructor. The most comprehensive approach to developing regional proficiency would be a Special Forces Soldier making a permanent change of station (PCS) move to the country and live there for one to three years to serve as a guest instructor at one of the host nation's military schools. The precedent for this already exists. As highlighted by COL Owens in his SRP, Special Forces Soldiers from 7th SFG(A) have attended and served as instructors in the Columbian Lancero Course. Beyond the enhanced regional proficiency an individual would gain by serving as an instructor, the relationships that he would develop through this partnership would greatly strengthen the ties between the two militaries.[293]

c. Immersion

> Groups need to immerse their Soldiers within their AORs. Some Groups do this well, others not so much. This cultural immersion not only provides the Soldier better language ability and cultural knowledge, but provides the Group with experts in various countries for which it is responsible. These Soldiers would be [go-to] guys for future operations in the countries for which they were immersed and that knowledge would be retained at Group. This immersion needs to go beyond just having a small team work out of the embassy, but live with families throughout the country, extensive travel throughout the country, etc. These immersion events need to vary in length due to the high demand for SF teams to conduct operations throughout the world, however, should be no less than one month IOT allow Soldiers to listen to the language, conduct travel/recon etc.
>
> —Special Forces Soldier[294]

Immersion is the third method by which Special Forces Soldiers might improve their regional proficiency. Immersion is separate from persistent engagement in that the Special Forces Soldiers' primary purpose would be to live within the other culture. The three methods by which immersion could be accomplished are live environment training (LET), the military personnel exchange program (MPEP), and intercultural exchange program.

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[293] Owens "Improving Cultural Education of Special Operations Forces," 17.

[294] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 24 October 2011.

(1) Live Environment Training (LET). LET is a training program that already exists within USSOCOM. Its guidelines are outlined in USSOCOM Manual 350-8, *SOF Language Program*. [295] The primary purpose of LET events is to improve language skills through immersing the student in an area where the targeted language is spoken. While language-centric, LET guidelines could easily be modified to include the improvement of regional proficiency as well.

(2) Military Personnel Exchange Program (MPEP). MPEP is an existing program, which allows for the one-for-one exchange of personnel between the U.S. Army and a partnered nation. MPEP objectives are to enhance alliances, build partner capacity, increase cooperation and prepare officers and NCOs for future multinational assignments.[296] Under the one-for-one exchange, a Special Force Soldier PCSs to a partner nation and works with its SOF, while his counterpart does the same in the United States. Not only does the Special Forces Soldier develop a high level of regional proficiency and relationships that will serve him throughout his career, but his foreign counterpart is able to do the same in the U.S. The benefits go well beyond the two individuals involved and would significantly strengthen the ties between both militaries.

(3) Intercultural Exchange Program. Depending on the country and the level of commitment that is sought, MPEP may not be the correct answer. An intercultural exchange program offers a less intense version. Like a militarized student exchange program, agreements could be reached with various countries to host Special Forces Soldiers in exchange for our hosting their own soldiers. To keep costs down, soldiers could be garrisoned at military installations, using existing agreements. This would differ from the MPEP in that the exchange soldiers would not be fulfilling a role in the partner military. This could offer greater flexibility and lessen commitment requirements.

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[295] USSOCOM, *USSOCOM M 350-8*, Appendix H.

[296] Department of the Army, *AR 614-10, Army Military Personnel Exchange Program with Military Services of Other Nations* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2011), 3.

d. Strategic Studies Detachment

The Strategic Studies Detachment (SSD) is a potential enabler for leveraging Special Forces' experiences. Currently, each regional Military Information Support Operations Battalion has an SSD attached. An SSD consists of "Army civilian [MISO] analysts who provide area expertise, linguistic skills, and an organic social research capability to the regional [battalion]."[297] In addition, SSDs are responsible for conducting thorough and timely research and analysis of targeted regions.[298] The existing SSDs could be expanded and moved to USASOC to support Special Forces Groups in numerous ways. First, SSDs would serve as resident subject matter experts (SME). As organic SMEs, SSDs could provide detailed briefings to deploying SFODAs. SSDs would offer continuity to the SFG(A)s. Beyond providing research and analysis, they would be the organization's long-term memory about region-specific engagements. By serving as the clearinghouse for deployment reports, their historical knowledge would allow them to identify research gaps in an SFG(A)'s AOR. They could then suggest specific topics that deploying SFODAs could focus on during their deployments. This clearinghouse role would help reinvigorate the use of SODARS and area assessments and ensure that quality reports about an AOR are produced. By being the keepers of the knowledge, SSDs would be ideally positioned to pass along hard won lessons learned to new Special Forces members.

2. Training

a. Intermediate Regional Studies (IRS)

As previously mentioned, SWCS already developed the Intermediate Regional Studies (IRS) course to help address deficiencies in regional proficiency education. This course is being refined and should be sustained. Currently most of the students are recent SFQC graduates who have not yet conducted permanent change of

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[297] Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-05.30, Psychological Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2005), 3–6.

[298] Department of the Army, *FM 3-05.30*, 8-7.

station (PCS) moves to their SFG(A)s. They are generally in the top 15% of their graduating SFQC class. The focus on recent graduates makes sense given the length of the IRS course (5.5 weeks) and the mandate from SOCOM to frontload cultural training in initial acquisition training. Even better would be if the entire Special Forces Regiment were afforded the opportunity to increase regional proficiency through this training. The IRS should be expanded to accommodate more students, and opportunities should be made available for veteran Special Forces Soldiers to participate. At the cost of increasing time away from the SFG(A)s, IRS could be incorporated into SLC.

b. Advanced Regional Analysis Course (ARAC)

SWCS once offered a regional analysis course that was available to MISO, CA and SF Soldiers. This course was eliminated in the early 2000s as part of an efficiency initiative. DRSE contemplated re-introducing a revamped course in 2010, but could not due to a lack of funding and manpower. The stated goals of the proposed course included: demonstrating country and regional knowledge, analyzing regional events and issues, applying cultural awareness, and presenting analysis in oral and written form. The proposed course was to be 12-weeks long. This course was designed to be academically rigorous and prerequisites for admission include holding the rank of Sergeant First Class or above, one year within USASOC and a bachelor's degree. Reviving this course would be ideal for creating RP 3-qualified soldiers.[299] The precedent for this type of course in SWCS exists already. Finding additional funds and manpower is never easy, especially when SWCS is under constant pressure to produce more Soldiers faster. But if the importance of regional proficiency in irregular warfare is to be taken seriously, SWCS should find the resources to reintroduce this course and USASFC(A) should motivate Soldiers to attend.

[299] David Brand, "Advanced Regional Analysis Course Proposal," Powerpoint brief, 20 February 2011.

c. Professional Military Education (PME)

(1) Online Regional, Cultural, Language, Familiarization Program. The Marine Corps RCLF Program represents a fully developed online regional proficiency program. Its goals are modest and reasonable. Special Forces could adopt the Marine Corps RCLF Program and incorporate it into the PME system. Similar to what the Marine Corps is contemplating, completion of certain blocks could be mandatory requirements at certain stages of a Special Forces NCO career. Since Special Forces Soldiers are regional professionals and the RCLF Program was designed for general purpose Marines, a realignment of the blocks of instructions would be in order. For example, junior NCOs (E6-E7) could be expected to complete the Marine Corps NCO blocks and senior NCOs (E8-E9) could be expected to complete the Marine Corps officer blocks. The RCLF Program will not produce an RP 3-qualified soldier, but will ensure that there is a baseline level of regional knowledge within the Special Forces Regiment. This program already exists and is easily delivered without undue stress to the system.

(2) Foreign Professional Military Education (FPME). As mentioned earlier, exchange programs with foreign militaries offer excellent opportunities for developing regional proficiency. The value of attending a FPME, which develops regional proficiency and regionally-focused relationships, is widely acknowledged. ADM McRaven stressed the importance of FPME at his congressional confirmation hearing as USSOCOM Commander.[300] Currently, FPME is targeted for mid and senior grade officers. Few militaries have NCO development systems equivalent to the United States. For those countries that do, exchanges could prove beneficial not only for developing regional proficiency, but for creating enduring partner relations. Currently, the United States hosts numerous foreign officers who attend the officer basic courses, yet the U.S. does not send new lieutenants to foreign basic courses. A Special Forces NCO is expected to "organize, train, assist, direct, or lead indigenous forces up to company size."[301] Why couldn't a Special Forces NCO attend a foreign officer basic

[300] McRaven, "Advanced Policy Questions," 35–36.

[301] Department of the Army, *FM 3-05.20*, 3–28.

course? Doing so would provide an SF NCO several benefits to include: regional proficiency, relationships with foreign partners, and increased understanding of a foreign military. Sending an NCO to a foreign officer school is a delicate issue, however, since most militaries are rank conscious. At the very least, the potential benefits from FPME warrant investigating whether an NCO-level FPME is possible in any of the countries deemed important by GCCs.

3. Education

a. Regional Studies Bachelor's Degree

SWCS is already aggressively pursuing an education initiative. SWCS' goal is to provide every Special Forces Soldier the opportunity to complete their bachelor's degree at approximately the same time he completes his Senior Leader's Course.[302] NCOs with the rank of Sergeant First Class generally attend the Senior Leader's Course as part of the NCO Education System (NCOES). Several institutions of higher learning have already partnered with SWCS and SWCS is constantly expanding its partnerships. This education initiative could be dovetailed into increasing regional proficiency. Most Special Forces Soldiers are already interested in higher education. If partnered institutions offered applicable regional studies curriculums, it would be possible for a Special Forces Soldier to improve himself professionally while achieving a personal goal.

To achieve this synergy, the Special Forces Soldier would have to be personally motivated to choose a relevant regional studies curriculum over whatever academic interests he might have. Because SWCS degree program is based on tuition assistance, the choice in degree will always remain with the soldier. Despite this, academic credit for military training would certainly help make the regional studies degree attractive. Area studies could easily turn into academic papers. An unclassified military task, such as determining the social structure of a Tuareg tribe in North Africa, could easily become a Special Forces Soldier's term paper for a sociology or history

[302] Walton, "SWCS Education Program."

class. The overlapping benefits would be significant. For instance, a military report would likely become more extensive and detailed if it was going to be converted into "for credit" paper. Faculty should gain something from this in turn, since Special Forces Soldiers spend time in far flung places of the world where most academics are either unwilling or unable to go. By encouraging this intersection between military training/tasks and academic credit, regional studies could become the favored curriculum among Special Forces Soldiers. Regional studies would be even more enticing with the introduction of unit-level regionally focused short courses.

b. Regionally Focused Short Courses

Receiving academic classes from civilian subject matter experts is hardly a new concept in the DoD. The Marine Corps sends Marines to San Diego State University and Coastal Carolina Community College for language classes.[303] With this precedent, it would be but a small leap for Special Forces Soldiers to receive regional proficiency training at local or online colleges. If institutions of higher education, either near the homes of the SFG(A)s or online, offered regional studies courses for the applicable AORs, a program similar to the USMC precedent might be implemented. Beyond language training, the best example of leveraging academia to improve cultural capability is the Navy's Regional Studies Education Program (RSEP). Under the RSEP, civilian academics provide units with tailored education about regions of interest. Special Forces could leverage this unique resource through either JSOU or SWCS. Special Forces units with long term interests in a specific region could commission leading academics on this area to provide an academic short course to its personnel. This would provide quality academic instruction to Special Forces Soldiers on their specific region and make them more proficient at their tasks. Additionally, if certified short courses were accepted by a partnered institution, the synergy mentioned in the previous section would be capitalized on and Special Forces Soldiers would be that much closer to earning their degrees while becoming better at their jobs.

[303] GAO, *Language and Culture Training*, 22.

C. WAYS – HOW TO DO IT

1. Command Climate

> It has been my experience that leaders verbally emphasize AOR knowledge, but do not allow time, resources, or opportunity to conduct the training.
>
> –Special Forces Soldier[304]

Fortunately, the most important tool for improving regional proficiency within Special Forces is neither labor nor resource intensive. Improving regional proficiency begins with the command climate within Special Forces. As indicated in the survey analysis, most people in Special Forces (commanders and Soldiers alike) feel that regional proficiency is important. Unfortunately, because regional proficiency is such an intangible, it is often relegated to the figurative back burner with the idea that it will somehow be acquired along the way.

Commanders and what they value have significant impact on the behavior of their units. A common comment made by Special Forces Soldiers during the research phase of this thesis was that the only time their commander expressed interest in cultural capability in his unit was when someone was delinquent on his Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT). The extent of the concern was merely the issue of staying current, not improvement, sustainment or even qualification (ILR 1/1).[305] Soldiers' perspective often is, "If the commander doesn't care, why should I?" Commanders can help improve regional proficiency within their units by providing a purpose and clear direction with regard to regional proficiency.

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[304] Special Forces Solder, 12 October 2011.

[305] Special Forces Soldiers, interviews with the author, 26–28 September 2011.

a. Purpose

> Purpose gives subordinates the reason to act in order to achieve a desired outcome. Leaders should provide clear purpose for their followers and do that in a variety of ways.
>
> - *FM 6-22, Army Leadership*[306]

Commanders can provide purpose to Special Forces Soldiers by highlighting the importance of regional proficiency for irregular warfare (IW). Special Forces Soldiers should understand why it makes sense to devote so much of their time to understanding a particular region in the world. The Special Forces Soldier is a professional; accomplishing the mission is the primary motivator. If Special Forces Soldiers understand that they are expected to learn about the region, they will accomplish the mission and probably exceed expectations. It is the commander's responsibility to explain the reason for regional proficiency to his Special Forces Soldiers.

b. Clear Direction

> Providing clear direction involves communicating how to accomplish a mission: prioritizing tasks, assigning responsibility for completion, and ensuring subordinates understand the standard.
>
> —*FM 6-22, Army Leadership*[307]

Tied directly into providing a purpose is providing clear direction. Commanders set priorities. Special Forces Soldiers and units are expected to do an enormous amount in a finite period of time. In addition, as discussed in Chapter III, Special Forces doctrine pulls in two directions. A common comment in the survey was that Special Forces Soldiers would improve their regional proficiency if given enough time.[308] To quote a respondent, "There is a finite amount of time right now and no incentive can trump a command's focus on operations in Afghanistan and Iraq."[309] Unfortunately, tasks in the military tend to have the same properties as gas; they will expand to fill the volume of the

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[306] Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 6-22, Army Leadership*, (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2006), 1–2.

[307] Department of the Army, *FM 6-22*, 1–2.

[308] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 24 October 2011.

[309] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 22 October 2011.

container. Simply finding more time is not the answer. Commanders need to set priorities and determine where regional proficiency is on their priority list. A SWCS instructor highlighted the importance of priorities this way: "Every day, I am expected to do a hundred different things. I do the twenty that are reported to the commander."

In addition to priorities, commanders need to assign responsibility for developing regional proficiency. While regional proficiency is an individual skill, commanders can hold subordinates accountable for the development of regional proficiency within their units. Strong evaluation reports require quantifiable data. If RPs were implemented, commanders could use them as a measurement of excellence within a unit. For example, an increased number of RPs or an improvement in an RP could justify an excellence block on a non-commissioned officer evaluation report (NCOER) or a supporting sentence to justify an above center of mass mark for an officer evaluation report (OER).

Clear direction also means ensuring that subordinates understand the standard. One standard was offered in the ends section of this chapter. Another would be the standard that commanders set for reports such as SODARS and area assessments. Increased visibility by commanders on reports would ensure that SFODAs consistently produce high quality reports. As explained in Chapter III, quality reports help promote regional proficiency within SFODAs.

2. Personnel Policies

> One hopes, we would no longer see even the smallest military assistance groups shared out between the different Services and we would no longer see the constant renewal of inexperience by the senseless enforcement of the principle of rotation even in cases where unique expertise vital for continuity is thereby dissipated.
>
> –Eddward N. Luttwak, "Notes on Low-Intensity Warfare" [310]

Army personnel policies are a major hindrance to developing regional proficiency in Special Forces. Although Special Forces are expected to be specialized and perform a unique function within the Army, Special Forces are still beholden to policies designed

[310] Edward N. Luttwak, "Notes on Low-Intensity Warfare," *Parameters*, Vol. XIII, No. 4 (December 1983), 17.

for the general purpose force. To be competitive for promotion, Special Forces Soldiers are encouraged to hold several positions that are considered valuable in producing a "well-rounded" Soldier. If a Special Forces Soldier assumes a "non-standard" career track, he risks adversely affecting his promotion potential.[311] To quote a survey respondent, "The difficulty with incentivizing regionally-oriented language and cultural skills is that these capabilities are not valued by our parent organizations… Assignments which develop these skills are career-killers."[312] This inadvertent discouragement of "non-standard" careers hampers the development of regional proficiency. Many of the items mentioned in the ends section of this thesis require long-term commitments and divergence from the "non-standard" career track. Currently, there is potential that a Special Forces Soldier who volunteered to devote several years to living in another country and who specialized in one region would not be as competitive as his peer who moved every three years and held a variety of positions to become "well rounded."

The adverse effect of general purpose force personnel policy on SOF is not new. For several years ADM Olson addressed the issue with the Services and DoD.[313] To improve the situation, DODD 5100.01, "Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components" was modified to require Military Services to coordinate with USSOCOM on personnel management policy.[314] In his congressional testimony, ADM McRaven was optimistic that this modification would provide enough influence to allow USSOCOM to properly develop and train SOF personnel.[315] As mentioned in Chapter I, regional expertise is expensive and requires a long term commitment. Additionally, as mentioned in Chapter II, regional proficiency is acknowledged DoD-wide to be an important capability to meet future irregular warfare threats. In a Congressional hearing on institutionalizing irregular warfare, Congressman Mac Thornberry expressed concern that while irregular warfare had been captured in doctrine, the organizational culture,

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[311] Eric Olson "Implementation of Department of Defense Directive 5100.01 Requirements for Military Personnel Policy and Plans," memorandum for Secretary Of the Army, 23 June 2011, 1.

[312] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 22 October 2011.

[313] Olson, "Implementation of Department of Defense Directive 5100.01," 1.

[314] Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Directive 5100.01*, December 2010, 27.

[315] McRaven, "Advanced Policy Questions," 27.

expressed in "promotions and dollars spent," might not have changed, and was still resistant to irregular warfare. MG Bayer, the Army representative, responded that the Army culture had indeed changed, and that the Army expects more irregular warfare and that the Army is changing to meet these challenges. Paraphrasing others, MG Bayer said, "If we are the same Army ten years from now that we are today, then we have not learned a thing and shame on us."[316] Ideally, the Army will now, in fact, fully support personnel policies that promote Special Forces development of regional proficiency.

3. Motivation

> Motivation supplies the will to do what is necessary to accomplish a mission. Motivation comes from within, but is affected by others' actions and words. A leader's role in motivation is to understand the needs and desires of others, to align and elevate individual drives into team goals, and to influence others and accomplish those larger aims.
>
> –*FM 6-22, Army Leadership*[317]

Since regional proficiency is an individual skill that requires personal interest and commitment, properly motivating Special Forces Soldiers to improve their regional proficiency is critical. Currently, several Special Forces Soldiers do feel incentivized to develop regional proficiency. To quote one survey respondent:

> There is currently no incentive for soldiers to be more culturally aware than their peers. It takes time to study countries and to become a SME. It largely comes down to professional pride and other unit priorities force language and AOR study to occur "after-hours." If soldiers have a choice between spending time with families or AOR study, most will choose their families, especially with the high OPTEMPO. Language training is an afterthought and soldiers are not deployed to locations where they have the best cultural and language capabilities. They are sent largely based on manpower needs and personal reputation as opposed to verified skills and ability. [318]

The survey asked the participants to rank several incentive methods: sense of professionalism, recognition, promotion, incentive pay, college credit, SFODA time, and

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[316] Bayer, *Institutionalizing Irregular Warfare Capability*.

[317] Department of the Army, *FM 6-22*, 1–2.

[318] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 6 October 2011.

time in AOR. This list is not exhaustive, but does represent some of the trends discovered during research for this thesis. As suggested by the LCNA project, an approach that melds multiple incentives would be the most effective.

a. Sense of Professionalism

> It is my professional responsibility to prepare myself for deployments to my assigned AOR and my Unit's responsibility to ensure I do.
>
> –Special Forces Soldier[319]

A Special Forces NCO is a professional. This sense of professionalism is perhaps the most powerful motivator in the incentive structure. As mentioned in Chapter IV, LCNA's research found that non-monetary incentives were more influential than monetary incentives for language proficiency. Of the five non-monetary incentives it cites, three can be attributed to a sense of professionalism: saving lives/force protection, mission success, supporting the team. The sense of professionalism also loomed large in my results. The vast majority of respondents replied that they did not need an incentive to improve their regional proficiency because they considered it a professional responsibility.

Properly applied, this sense of professionalism could help increase regional proficiency in Special Forces. If leaders made it clear to their subordinates that regional proficiency is considered a key attribute of a professional Special Forces Soldier and directly affects mission success, most Special Forces Soldiers would rise to the challenge. Special Forces Soldiers would endeavor to improve their regional proficiency if they knew this was what was expected of them.

However, as one critic of the survey noted, relying on a sense of professionalism is "a[n] illegitimate option for any competent leader as it puts the entire responsibility at the Soldier level."[320] In his view, the unit and commander's should be more proactive in developing their Soldiers.

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[319] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 3 October 2011.

[320] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 7 October 2011.

b. Recognition

> I believe that all SF [S]oldiers given an incentive, based on challenges that drive the pursuit of professional development, will produce the best product for the [R]egiment. There is something to be said for a tangible product for a [S]oldier to be proud of…
>
> –Special Forces Soldier[321]

The survey analysis indicates that recognition plays a minor role in motivating a Special Forces Soldier to improve his regional proficiency. The concept of recognition was presented in the form of a Professional Development Skill Identifier (PDSI), which is used to represent special skills in the personnel system. Despite its relatively low level of influence, recognizing excellence is a basic principle of leadership. The concept is again closely tied to the command climate. Recognition is a public demonstration of what the unit values. Recognizing excellence in regional proficiency, either through awarding a PDSI or via simple public acknowledgement, conveys to the Soldiers of the unit that regional proficiency is important.

c. Promotion

Numerous survey respondents indicated that they did not join Special Forces to be promoted and that a promotion incentive would have no effect on them. However, others did indicate that promotion opportunities could be an incentive. A promotion incentive for regional proficiency would be incorporated in much the same manner as other special skills. There are several skills and qualifications that indicate that a Special Forces Soldier has excelled in a certain aspect of his profession. While viewed favorably, none of these special skills guarantees promotion. They are only one of many factors considered by a promotion board. For this reason, it would make sense to treat regional proficiency similarly, which it would have to be if it was considered by promotion boards to be a hallmark of excellence in the profession.

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[321] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 6 November 2011.

d. Incentive Pay

As discussed in Chapter IV, monetary incentives play a role in language proficiency. Monetary incentives could play the same role with regard to regional proficiency. If Special Forces Soldiers could receive incentive pay for the higher RPs, they would be more inclined to devote his energies to improving or maintaining his RP. Qualifying on an annual test is required to receive the foreign language proficiency bonus. The RPAT will also factor in time. A person's RP will degrade the longer he is away from the region. Incentive pay would help incentivize Special Forces Soldiers to find deployments to the region to maintain or improve their RP.

e. College Credit

Most Special Forces Soldiers want to earn their bachelor's degree. As discussed earlier, providing opportunities to improve one's regional proficiency while also earning academic credit would represent a win-win.

f. SFODA Time

> More ODA time could be used to motivate me to do just about anything.
>
> -Special Forces Soldier[322]

Special Forces Soldiers join Special Forces to serve on an SFODA. SFODA time is one of the most prized duties within Special Forces. As indicated by the survey analysis, additional SFODA time would play a major role in motivating Special Forces Soldiers to improve their regional proficiency. Managing manning requirements is a difficult task in any organization. Given its large size, varied requirements, and varied commitments, Special Forces is an organization that makes managing manning requirements a very complicated affair. Despite these challenges, one item in Special Forces' favor is that the vast majority of Special Forces billets fall within USASOC. This grants USASOC considerable control in forming Special Forces-specific manning policies. Clearly, using extra SFODA time as an incentive would have to be done

[322] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 24 October 2011.

judiciously to avoid detrimental ripple effects in the personnel system. One potential incentive would be to promise a Special Forces Soldier an extra year on a team if he achieved a certain RP by a specific time. A variation on this would be conferring a protected status on SFODA members who are RP 3 qualified. Special Forces Groups are tasked each year to provide a certain number of Special Forces Soldiers to fill manning requirements (e.g., SWCS instructor, etc.) outside of the SFG(A). The pool from which leaders consider whom to send typically include SFODA members who have been on a SFODA for more than three years. If an RP 3 qualification made a Special Forces Soldier exempt from that consideration for another year, most Special Forces Soldiers would attempt to earn the RP 3 qualification.

g. Time in AOR

> If the ODA/AOB's competency level was taken into account when being assigned missions by the Group, I feel the ODA/AOB would work harder to better understand the language/culture.
>
> —Special Forces Soldier[323]

Most Special Forces Soldiers joined Special Forces to deploy to and work in foreign lands. Deploying is considered a rewarding experience. This desire to spend time in the AOR should be used as an incentive to develop regional proficiency. If a person's regional proficiency made him more likely to deploy to his AOR, either as part of a SFODA or as part of one of the programs discussed earlier in this chapter, a positive feedback loop could be created. A high RP would result in more deployments to the AOR, which would result in a higher RP, which would result in still more deployments. The effectiveness of this incentive would depend on how it is implemented. While most Special Forces Soldiers enjoy deploying, Special Forces Soldiers get burned out and desire time with their families just like any other Soldier. Opportunities do exist for a Soldier to PCS with his family to his AOR, but these are limited to only certain AORs and countries. To quote a survey respondent, "If I was not married with children, I would

[323] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 24 October 2011.

very much want to live in many places overseas. Unfortunately, there are few places I would want my children living other than the US."[324]

[324] Special Forces Soldier, survey response, 24 October 2011.

VI. CONCLUSION

A. KEEPING SPECIAL FORCES SPECIAL

Who am I? Why am I here?

–VADM(ret.) James Stockdale[325]

Conventional forces are looking more like SOF. SOF are looking more like conventional forces. There needs to be a conversation about what makes SOF SOF. [326]

–ADM Eric Olson
Commander, USSOCOM
2009

What we have recognized, really, is that the general purpose forces can do some of the mission sets that are commonly associated with irregular warfare and it's not the exclusive domain of special operations forces… We have general purpose forces that can actually do counterterrorism missions in a counterinsurgency environment. So part of it is we have to blend those forces together in terms of mission profiles… The other thing I think as we look forward to Phase 0 activities (Prevent), it's being able to commit to the combatant commanders forces, general purpose forces, to augment the Special Operations Forces that have very finite levels of language, cultural, advise and assist-type capabilities, but to take some of the burden off the development of security capacity and use general purpose forces to do security force assistance… basic skill transference 101 and our regionally aligned brigade concept… is aimed at trying to do that.[327]

–MG Peter Bayer
Director of Strategy, Plans and Policy
3 November 2011

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[325] Wikipedia, "James Stockdale," (accessed 14 November 2011), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Stockdale.

[326] Eric Olson, remarks to 1-10th SFG(A) leadership paraphrased by author, Panzer Kaserne – Germany, 2009.

[327] Bayer, *Institutionalizing Irregular Warfare Capability*.

DoD recognizes that irregular warfare will continue to play a major role going forward. Those who understand irregular warfare understand that regional proficiency is critical to the successful prosecution of this type of warfare. Across DoD, units are changing to meet the challenges irregular warfare poses.

MG Bayer notes in his epigraph above, general purpose forces are adapting to the new security environment. Thanks to the last decade of conflict, GPF have become more precise and more lethal. Engaging with the population is now considered a fundamental part of the mission and a GPF commander would be considered negligent if he did not attempt to work with the population. With looming budget cuts and with the drawdown of forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, GPF will look to apply their hard won experience and will continue to attempt to assume some of the responsibilities customarily associated with Special Forces. There probably are some situations that only require "basic skill transference 101." For instance, Army NCOs, regardless of MOS, are some of the best trainers in the world. An infantry platoon with interpreters could teach a foreign military basic rifle marksmanship. If that is the only goal of the engagement and it is cost-effective, it might make sense to commit an infantry platoon to the mission in lieu of a SFODA.

On the other hand, if the engagement with another country has multiple objectives, one might reconsider the choice. If, besides basic rifle marksmanship, the purpose of the engagement is to have a small specialized cohort of regional experts who were selected and trained for their cultural capability deploying to the country to improve their knowledge of the region, to foster and maintain personal relationships, and to practice their wartime mission of working with foreign forces, then the standard infantry platoon might not be the best choice for the mission. Special Forces would be more suitable. This leads to the question raised by ADM Olson in the epigraph above: what makes Special Forces special? Special Forces are elite and they do have significant direct action capabilities. But so do SEALs, MARSOC and the Ranger Regiment. Also, as suggested by MG Bayer, the direct skills capabilities divide between SOF and GPF is shrinking. So, what does make Special Forces special?

One argument this thesis has made is that Special Forces' unique blend of skills *in conjunction with regional proficiency* makes Special Forces the preeminent irregular warfare force. Other units in DoD may attempt to adapt and develop irregular warfare capabilities, but irregular warfare is Special Forces' *raison d'etre*. In this time of dwindling resources and increasing competition, what Special Forces needs to do is concentrate on strengthening its core characteristics. For this reason, among many, regional proficiency should not be left to chance. A deliberate regional proficiency strategy should be adopted to ensure that the Special Forces Regiment is prepared to meet any future contingency. Only by refocusing on its core values, will Special Forces be better prepared to meet the future challenges of irregular warfare than any other force – friend or foe.

When determining the importance of regional proficiency and one's strategic value, a Special Forces Soldier should contemplate the philosophical line immortalized by ADM(ret.) Stockdale, "Who am I? Why am I here?"

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Both Special Forces and regional proficiency are complicated topics. Combining the two into a research project created a very intricate problem. The pursuit of an answer to one question often raised two more questions. Thankfully, this thesis had a deadline which rescued the author from several rabbit holes. There were several paths not taken and several research lessons learned that might be useful for follow-on researchers.

The first path not taken has to do with the command environment for regional proficiency. The command environment is a significant factor in influencing regional proficiency interest in Special Forces. This begs the question of what constitutes a command environment that is conducive to developing regional proficiency. Further research into this area is warranted. Determining what is the right mix of direct and indirect skills for Special Forces would be beneficial. Additionally, analyzing current attitudes toward direct and indirect skills could be revealing. Unfortunately, this was beyond the scope of this thesis.

Another question that deserves consideration is: what is a region? How big or small should the region be to be useful? Numerous organizations in DoD have wrestled with this question and each has come up with a different answer. It would be worthwhile to determine what the optimal regional breakdown is for DoD.

The next item worth further study is a follow-up on trends exposed during the survey. The most striking revelation from the survey was the distinctiveness of each Special Forces Group. Further analysis of the characteristics of each Special Forces Group and the reasons for this would doubtless be revealing. Another topic that the survey probed, but that was not analyzed was the influence that an individual's baseline interests have on forming his interest in direct and indirect skills. Finally, deserving further attention is a comparison of external versus internal perceptions of the purpose of Special Forces. While my survey did gather a lot of information, it could be improved upon which leads me to my lessons learned.

I designed the survey to be concise. Being concise, it was also direct. The survey was titled a "regional proficiency survey" and on page seven was a series of questions that dealt with regional proficiency (see Figure 32). Because it was presented as a regional proficiency survey, people might have opted not to take it which would have skewed results. Also, with several regional proficiency questions appearing in a row, respondents might have unconsciously altered their answers, or to use a courtroom drama term, the line of questioning could have "led the witness." It would probably be better to mask the intent of the survey and add several more innocuous questions and terms. Finally, the delivery of the survey proved problematic. The survey was created through the online service Survey Monkey and delivered by email. This link was sometimes not compatible with some filters used by DoD and a portion of the survey population was not able to open it on a government computer and as a result the opportunity to receive their input was lost.

APPENDIX A.

Within the Department of Defense, different organizations categorize the world in different ways. The Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC) do not align with the Army FAO regions, which do not align with the Marine Corps RCLF regions, which do not align with DoD RP regions. For reference throughout this thesis, the DoD RP regions are listed below.

Table 4. Regional Proficiency Geographic Area[328]

North America				
Canada	Greenland	USA		
Central America				
Belize	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras
Mexico	Nicaragua	Panama		
South America				
Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colombia
Ecuador	Falkland Islands	French Guinea	Guyana	Paraguay
Peru	Suriname	Uruguay	Venezuela	
Caribbean				
Anguilla	Antigua & Barbuda	Aruba	Bahamas	Barbados
Bermuda	Cayman Islands	Cuba	Dominica	Dominican Republic
Grenada	Guadeloupe	Haiti	Jamaica	Martinique
Montserrat	Netherlands Antilles	Puerto Rico	Saint Kitts & Nevis	Saint Lucia
Saint Pierre & Miquelon	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	Trinidad & Tobago	Turks and Caico Islands	Virgin Islands, British
Virgin Islands, U.S.				
Western Europe				
Andorra	Austria	Belgium	Croatia	Cyprus

[328] Common Human Resources Information Standard, "Person Regional Experience Geographic Area / Country Tabular Business Rule," accessed 30 November 2011, http://www.prim.osd.mil/Documents/TBRs/Person_Regional_Experience_TBR.pdf.

Denmark	Estonia	Faeroe Islands	Finland	France
Germany	Gibraltar	Greece	Guernsey	Holy See (Vatican City State)
Iceland	Ireland	Isle of Man	Italy	Jersey
Latvia	Liechtenstein	Lithuania	Luxembourg	Malta
Monaco	Netherlands	Norway	Portugal	San Marino
Slovenia	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	Turkey
United Kingdom				
Eastern Europe				
Albania	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Bosnia & Herzegovina
Bulgaria	Czech Republic	Georgia	Hungary	Macedonia, The former Yugoslav Republic of
Moldova, Republic of	Poland	Romania	Russian Federation	Serbia & Montenegro
Slovakia	Ukraine			
South Asia				
Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives
Myanmar	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	
Southeast Asia				
Brunei Darussalam	Cambodia	Indonesia	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Malaysia
Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Timor-Leste	Viet Nam
East Asia				
China	Japan	Mongolia	North Korea	South Korea
Central Asia				
Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Middle East / North Africa (MENA)				
Algeria	Bahrain	Egypt	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Iraq
Israel	Jordan	Kuwait	Lebanon	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Morocco	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	Syrian Arab Republic
Tunisia	United Arab Emirates	West Bank & Gaza Strip	Yemen	
West Africa				
Benin	Burkina Faso	Cape Verde	Cote d'Ivoire	Gambia
Ghana	Guinea	Guinea-Bissau	Liberia	Mali

Mauritania	Niger	Nigeria	Senegal	Sierra Leone
Togo	Western Sahara			
Sub-Saharan Africa				
Angola	Botswana	Burundi	Cameroon	Central African Republic
Chad	Comoro	Congo	Congo, Democratic Republic of the	Djibouti
Equatorial Guinea	Eritrea	Ethiopa	Gabon	Kenya
Lesotho	Madagascar	Malawi	Mauritius	Mayotte
Mozambique	Namibia	Reunion	Rwanda	Saint Helena
Sao Tome and Principe	Seychelles	Somalia	South Africa	Sudan
Swaziland	Tanzania, United Republic of	Uganda	Zambia	Zimbabwe
Western Oceania				
Australia	New Zealand	Norfolk Island		
Eastern Oceania				
American Samoa	Cook Island	Fiji	French Polynesia	Guam
Kiribati	Marshall Islands	Micronesia, Federated States of	Nauru	New Caledonia
Niue	Northern Mariana Islands	Palau	Papua New Guinea	Pitcairn
Samoa	Solomon Islands	Tokelau	Tonga	Tuvalu
Vanuatu	Wallis & Futuna			

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APPENDIX B.

A. THE SURVEY

Images of the survey used in this thesis research are included below. To facilitate the discussion on the computation of the various values used in the survey analysis, questions have been labeled.

Regional Proficiency Exit this survey

Regional Proficiency Survey Consent

*You are invited to participate in a research study entitled Regional Proficiency In Special Forces.
The purpose of this thesis research is to determine methods to increase regional proficiency within U.S. Army Special Forces (SF) to generate policy recommendations for increased operational performance. You may indirectly benefit from this research through improved regional proficiency training. I will outline the findings of this research in a written report to the Commanding General, U.S. John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School in Fort Bragg, NC, the Commanding General, U.S. Army Special Forces Command in Fort Bragg, NC and the President, Joint Special Operations University in MacDill Air Force Base, FL .

This survey should take around 20 minutes to complete. Whether at work or home, you may take this survey whenever you have free time. Your participation is voluntary. If you participate, you are free to skip any questions or stop participating at anytime without penalty. The alternative to not participating is not participating and there will be no negative repercussions. Your responses are anonymous. Any demographic information requested is only to gain a snapshot of the overall survey population to ensure proper distribution across ranks and experience levels. Results of the survey will be used responsibly and protected against release to unauthorized persons.
The survey is hosted on a separate Survey Monkey account that is password protected. Only the investigators will have access to the password. Individual surveys will not be available for publication or review in the student thesis, only overall tabulated data. Once the survey results are tabulated all data will be stored on a password protected computer. Only the researchers will have access to the computer. Individual names will not be associated with the data. The potential risk of participating in this study is mismanagement of the information that you provide. This could result in any answers you provide being attributable to you. The assessed risk is minimal since the questions you will be asked and the answers you would provide are common subjects that you could potentially talk about during a normal business day. Approximately 1,000 participants are expected to take this survey.

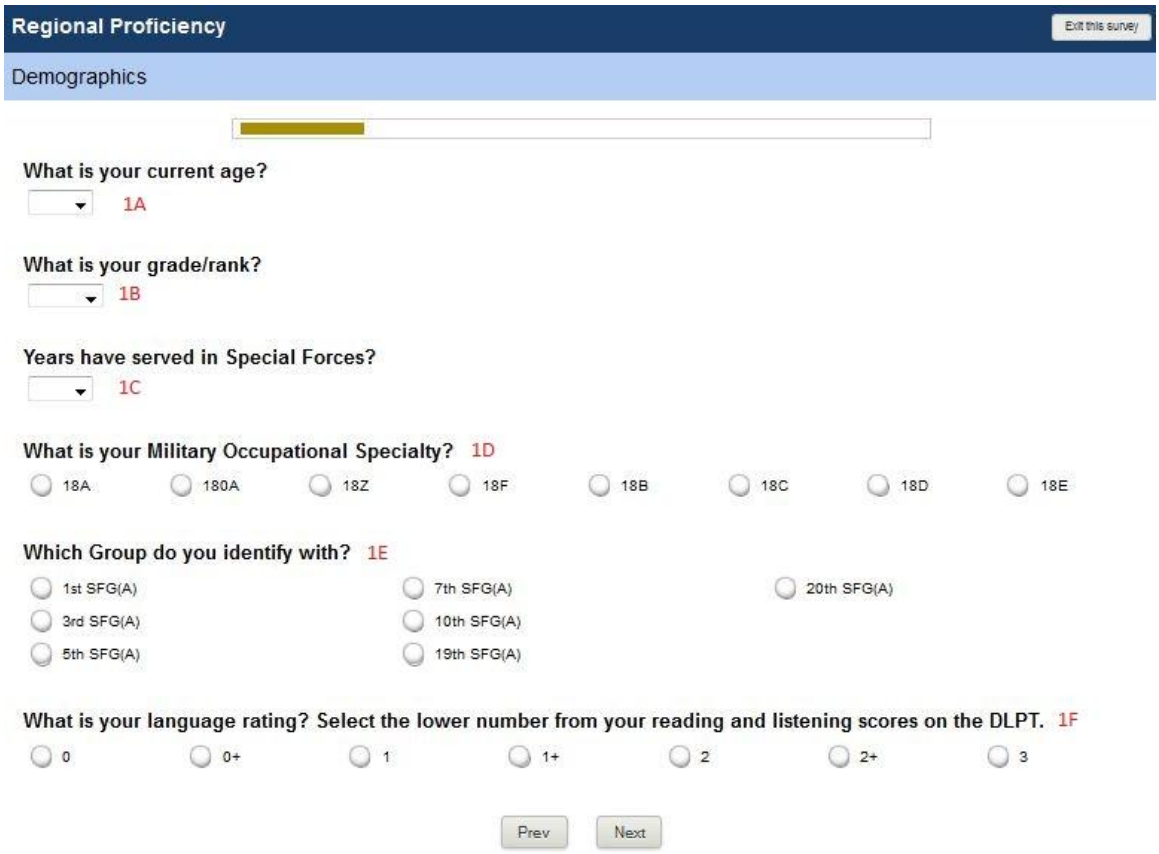
The principle investigator is LTC Michael Richardson, mrichard@nps.edu, 831-656-2991. If you have questions regarding the research, contact Major Philip Buswell, pabuswel@nps.edu, 831-920-3513. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the Naval Postgraduate School IRB Chair, CAPT John Schmidt, jkschmid@nps.edu, 831-656-3864.

Please acknowledge consent by checking the block below.

- I have read the terms above and wish to participate in this survey
- I do not consent to participate in this survey

Next

Figure 27. Survey Page 1



Regional Proficiency

Exit this survey

Demographics

What is your current age? 1A

What is your grade/rank? 1B

Years have served in Special Forces? 1C

What is your Military Occupational Specialty? 1D

18A 180A 18Z 18F 18B 18C 18D 18E

Which Group do you identify with? 1E

1st SFG(A) 7th SFG(A) 20th SFG(A)
3rd SFG(A) 10th SFG(A)
5th SFG(A) 19th SFG(A)

What is your language rating? Select the lower number from your reading and listening scores on the DLPT. 1F

0 0+ 1 1+ 2 2+ 3

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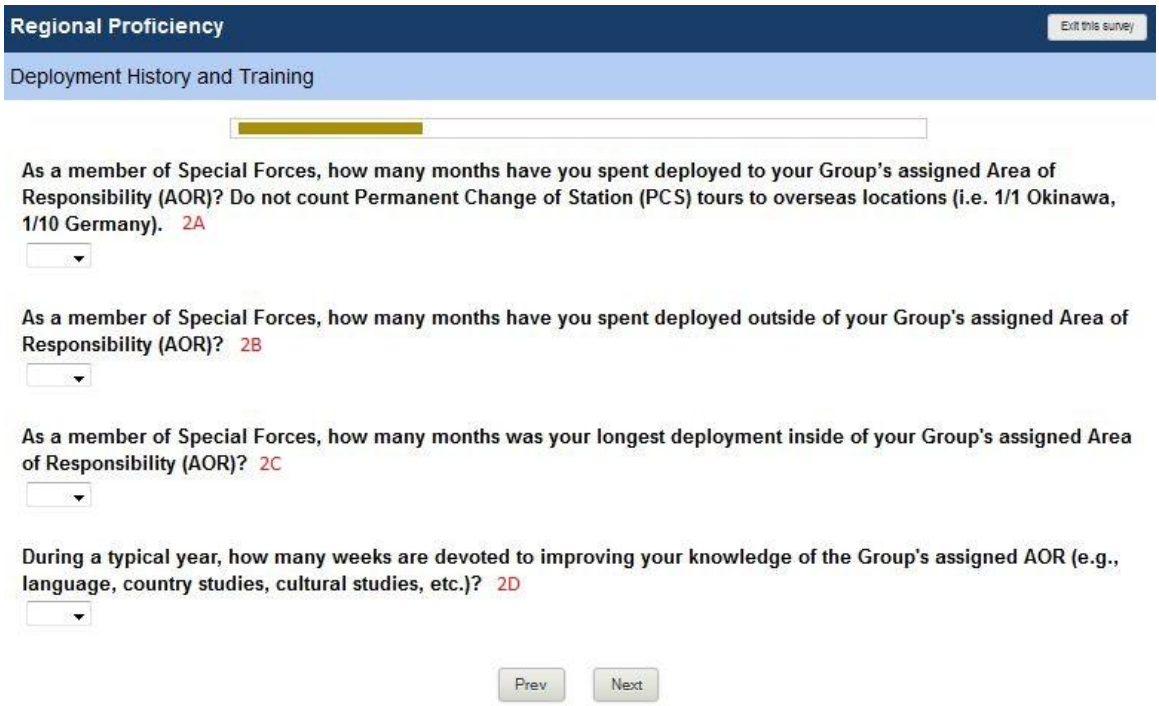
Figure 28. Survey Page 2



Regional Proficiency

Exit this survey

Deployment History and Training

As a member of Special Forces, how many months have you spent deployed to your Group's assigned Area of Responsibility (AOR)? Do not count Permanent Change of Station (PCS) tours to overseas locations (i.e. 1/1 Okinawa, 1/10 Germany). 2A

As a member of Special Forces, how many months have you spent deployed outside of your Group's assigned Area of Responsibility (AOR)? 2B

As a member of Special Forces, how many months was your longest deployment inside of your Group's assigned Area of Responsibility (AOR)? 2C

During a typical year, how many weeks are devoted to improving your knowledge of the Group's assigned AOR (e.g., language, country studies, cultural studies, etc.)? 2D

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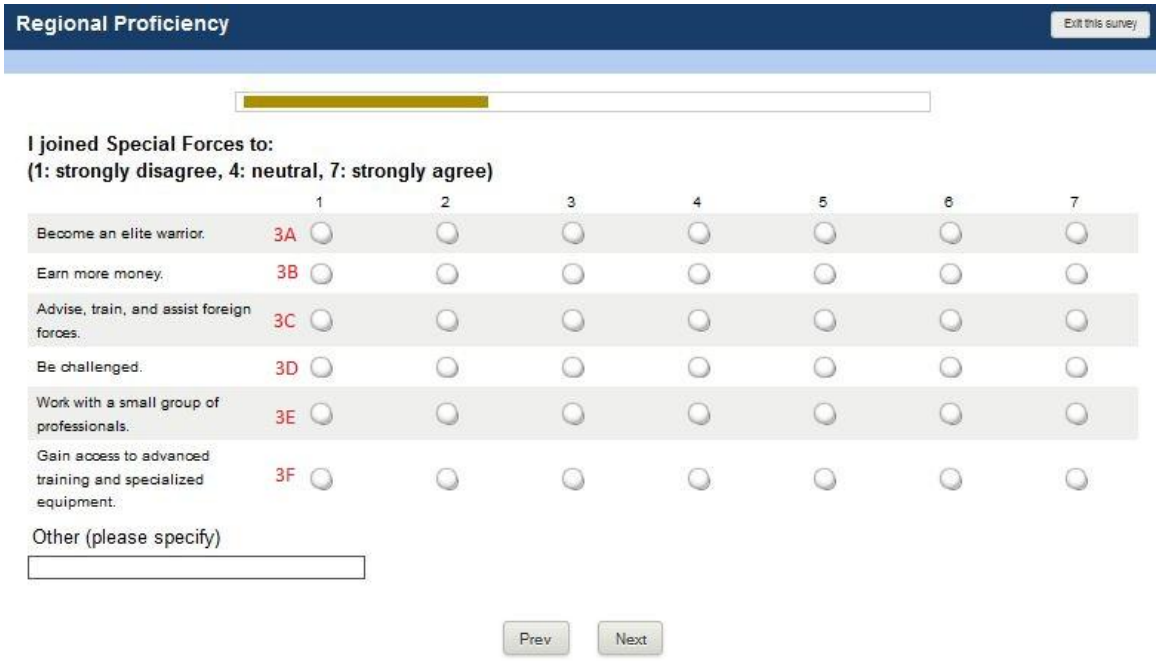
Figure 29. Survey Page 3



Regional Proficiency

Exit this survey

I joined Special Forces to:
(1: strongly disagree, 4: neutral, 7: strongly agree)

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Become an elite warrior.	3A							
Earn more money.	3B							
Advise, train, and assist foreign forces.	3C							
Be challenged.	3D							
Work with a small group of professionals.	3E							
Gain access to advanced training and specialized equipment.	3F							

Other (please specify)

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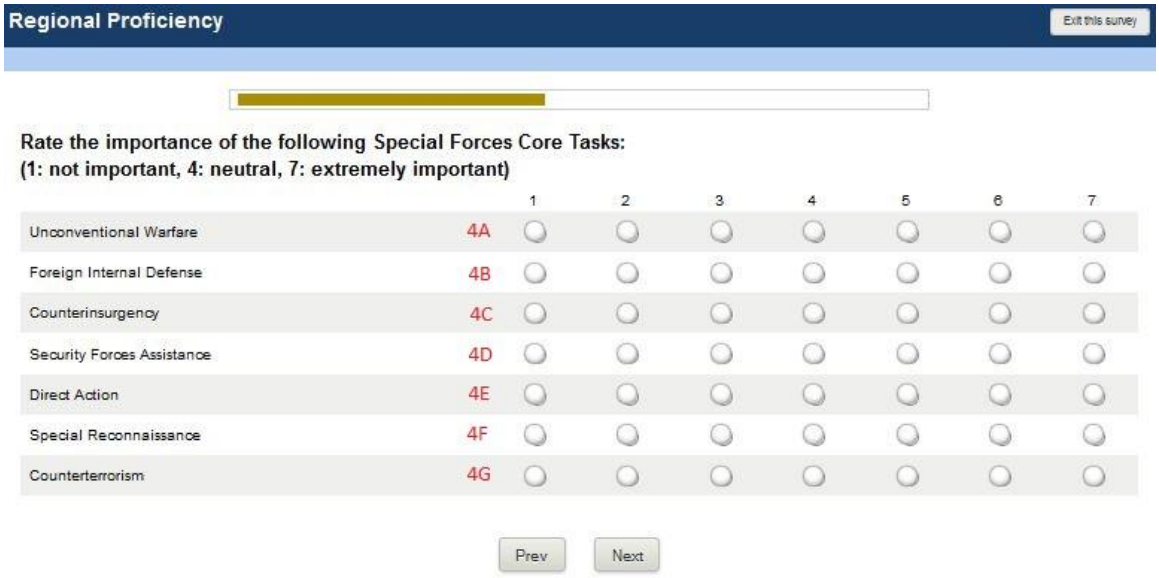
Figure 30. Survey Page 4



Regional Proficiency

Exit this survey

Rate the importance of the following Special Forces Core Tasks:
(1: not important, 4: neutral, 7: extremely important)

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unconventional Warfare	4A							
Foreign Internal Defense	4B							
Counterinsurgency	4C							
Security Forces Assistance	4D							
Direct Action	4E							
Special Reconnaissance	4F							
Counterterrorism	4G							

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Figure 31. Survey Page 5

Regional Proficiency Exit this survey

I feel that to be an effective Special Forces Soldier, I need to excel in:
(1: strongly disagree, 4: neutral, 7: strongly agree)

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a. Warfighting (definition below)	5A							
b. Training (definition below)	5B							
c. Clandestine Infiltration and Exfiltration (definition below)	5C							
d. Interpersonal Skills (definition below)	5D							
e. Nonverbal Skills (definition below)	5E							
f. Language Proficiency (definition below)	5F							
g. Area and Cultural Orientation (definition below)	5G							

Warfighting: SF Soldiers are tactically competent and have advanced training in operations, intelligence, medical skills, engineering, communications, and heavy and light weapons. The SFODA is fully versed in light infantry TTP through battalion level. Their patrolling skills—carried out in unilateral, combined, or joint operations—include all aspects of combat patrolling.

Training: SF Soldiers are fully competent to assess unit and individual requirements, develop and implement programs to address identified needs, and evaluate the results of those programs. Most important, these assessments, programs, and evaluations are focused on the actual mission needs of the force to be trained.

Clandestine Infiltration and Exfiltration: SF Soldiers maintain proficiency in a wide variety of low-visibility and clandestine infiltration and exfiltration techniques. Although SF is a ground-oriented force, it is competent in air, sea, and land infiltration and exfiltration methods using any suitable and feasible modes of transportation.

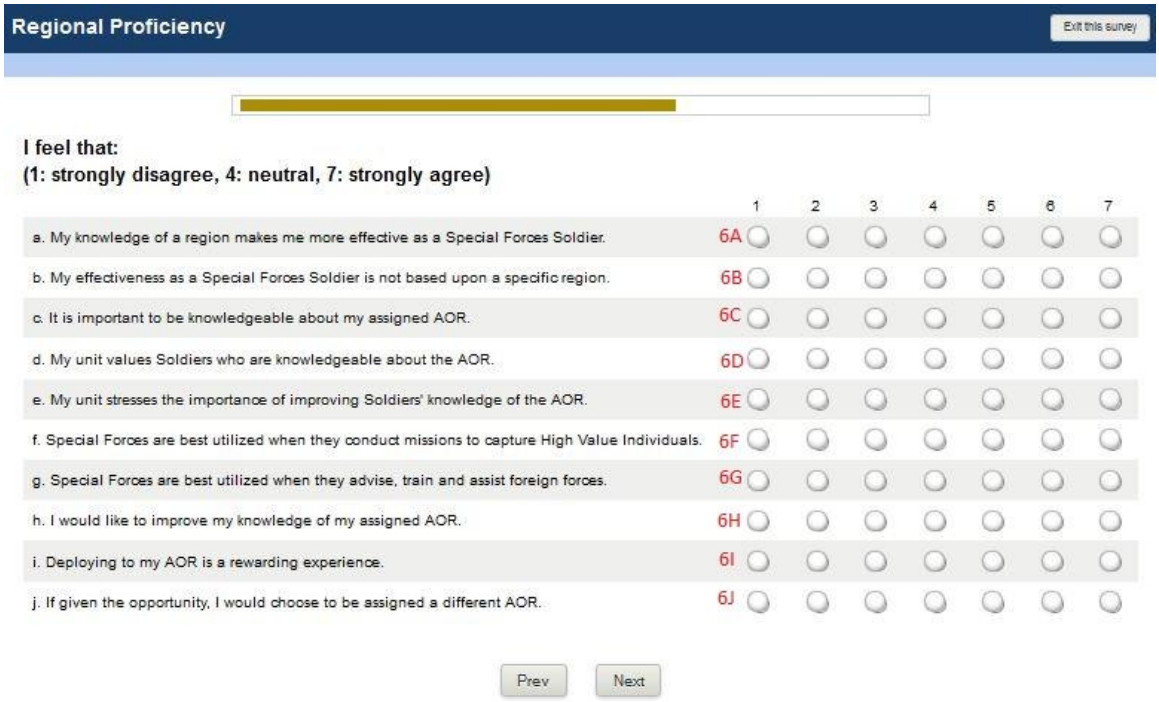
Interpersonal Skills: SF Soldiers listen with understanding, maintain an open mind, and observe and grasp the essential components of a given situation. SF Soldiers overcome ethnocentricity and treat foreigners as equals, communicating and teaching across intercultural barriers. SF Soldiers use interpersonal skills to get the desired action from a foreign counterpart.

Nonverbal Skills: SF Soldiers understand intercultural dimensions of nonverbal gestures and behaviors are half of all human communication. Nonverbal communication requires an understanding of the gestures applicable to each culture. The SF Soldier's regional orientation permits him to focus on the nonverbal "vocabulary" of a specific region and to be sensitive to nonverbal communication.

Language Proficiency: SF Soldiers must achieve an established Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) rating and demonstrate language proficiency to be qualified in their military occupational specialty (MOS). SF Soldiers continue to improve their language skills through unit-sponsored language training, repeated deployments into the region of orientation, and self-study.

Area and Cultural Orientation: SF Soldiers develop a thorough understanding of the cultural and religious history, and the social, political, and economic dynamics of the population. Their understanding of the operational area extends to the physical factors of geography and climate within the specified region. Formal training and cultural immersion on deployments develops this orientation and understanding. SF Soldiers recognize the importance of and cultivate personal and professional contacts within their region.

Figure 32. Survey Page 6



Regional Proficiency

Exit this survey

I feel that:
(1: strongly disagree, 4: neutral, 7: strongly agree)

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a. My knowledge of a region makes me more effective as a Special Forces Soldier.	6A							
b. My effectiveness as a Special Forces Soldier is not based upon a specific region.	6B							
c. It is important to be knowledgeable about my assigned AOR.	6C							
d. My unit values Soldiers who are knowledgeable about the AOR.	6D							
e. My unit stresses the importance of improving Soldiers' knowledge of the AOR.	6E							
f. Special Forces are best utilized when they conduct missions to capture High Value Individuals.	6F							
g. Special Forces are best utilized when they advise, train and assist foreign forces.	6G							
h. I would like to improve my knowledge of my assigned AOR.	6H							
i. Deploying to my AOR is a rewarding experience.	6I							
j. If given the opportunity, I would choose to be assigned a different AOR.	6J							

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Figure 33. Survey Page 7

Regional Proficiency Exit this survey

Please rank the following statements.
I feel that I would concentrate on improving my knowledge of my assigned AOR:
(1: lowest; 7: highest)
(This question is using forced ranking. One number per row. One number per column.)

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a. If a Professional Development Skill Identifier reflected my level of knowledge.	7A	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. If my level of regional knowledge was a factor considered by promotion boards.	7B	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. If I received incentive pay based upon my level of regional knowledge.	7C	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. If my studies were accredited college courses.	7D	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. If a high level of knowledge afforded me more time at the ODA level.	7E	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. If a high level of knowledge afforded me opportunities to be stationed in my AOR.	7F	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
g. I do not need an incentive. I consider being knowledgeable about my AOR a professional responsibility.	7G	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Additional Comments:

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Figure 34. Survey Page 8

Regional Proficiency Exit this survey

A report to non-military personnel attempts to succinctly describe all elements within U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). To distinguish each unit from the others, the author uses one sentence to describe each unit. Special Forces is described with this sentence:

"Special Forces soldiers—also known as the Green Berets—are trained in various skills, including foreign languages, that allow teams to operate independently throughout the world."

I feel that this is an accurate description.
(1: strongly disagree 4: neutral, 7: strongly agree)

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7

Additional Comments:

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Figure 35. Survey Page 9

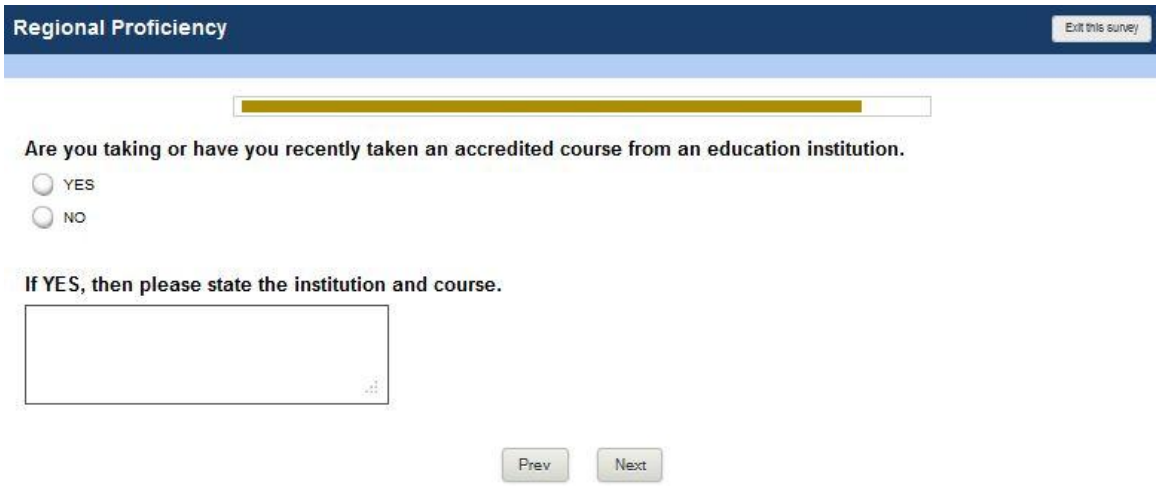

Figure 36. Survey Page 10

Figure 37. Survey Page 11

B. VALUES

1. Warrior-Diplomat Score

The Warrior-Diplomat Score was calculated based upon the average between two values. The first value was the average of the Special Forces Core Tasks that were categorized as indirect in Chapter III. The second value was the value given for the "advise, train and assist foreign forces" question.

$$\text{Warrior-Diplomat Score} = \left(\frac{\frac{(4A+4B+4C+4D)}{4}+6G}{2}\right)$$

2. Commando Score

The Commando Score was calculated based upon the average between two values. The first value was the average of the Special Forces Core Tasks that were categorized as direct in Chapter III. The second value was the value given for the "HVI" question.

$$\text{Commando Score} = \left(\frac{\frac{(4E+4F+4G)}{3}+6F}{2}\right)$$

3. Regional Proficiency Interest

The Regional Proficiency Interest value was the average of the scores for "It is important to be knowledgeable about my AOR" and the "I would like to improve my knowledge of my AOR" questions.

$$\text{Regional Proficiency Interest} = \left(\frac{5G+6A}{2}\right)$$

4. Command Environment Score

The Command Environment Score was the average of the responses pertaining to perception of how the command viewed the utility of knowledge of the AOR.

$$\text{Command Environment Score} = \left(\frac{6D+6E}{2}\right)$$

5. Regional Competence Utility

The Regional Competence Utility value was the average of the scores for "Area and Cultural Orientation" and the "knowledge of a region makes me more effective" question.

$$\text{Regional Competence Utility} = \left(\frac{5G+6A}{2}\right)$$

6. 3C Utility

The 3C Utility value was the average of the scores for "Interpersonal Skills" and the "my effectiveness is not based upon a specific region" question.

$$\text{3C Utility} = \left(\frac{5D+6B}{2}\right)$$

7. Language Utility

The Language Utility value was simply based upon the response for Language Proficiency.

$$\text{Language Utility} = (5f)$$

8. Value of Language Score

The Value of Language Score was determined by categorizing the responses into seven categories and assigning values to each. The premise was the language score, the higher the value. The categorization is below:

Language Score	Value of Language Score
0	1
0+	2
1	3
1+	4
2	5

2+	6
3	7

Table 5. Value of Language Score Table

9. Happiness with AOR

Happiness with AOR was determined by averaging the value given for "deploying to my AOR is a rewarding experience" and the value of "I would switch AORs" subtracted from 8.

$$\text{Happiness With AOR} = \left(\frac{6I+(8-6J)}{2}\right)$$

10. Experience in SF Value

The Experience in SF Value was determined by categorizing the responses into 8 categories and assigning values to each. The premise was the higher level of experience, the higher the value. The categorization is below:

Years have served in SF ≤1	0
5≥Years have served in SF>1	1
10≥Years have served in SF>5	2
15≥Years have served in SF>10	3
20≥Years have served in SF>15	4
25≥Years have served in SF>20	5
30≥Years have served in SF>25	6
Years have served in SF >30	7

Table 6. Value of "Years have served in SF" Table

11. Rank Value

The Rank Value was determined by categorizing the responses into 8 categories and assigning values to each. The ranks were categorized by what level of unit the rank typically served in. The premise was the closer the rank was to serving on a SFODA, the higher the value. The categorization is below:

O9	0
O8	1
O7	2
Group Leader (CW5 and O6)	3
Battalion Leader (CW4 and O5)	4
Company Leader (E9, CW3, and O4)	5
SFODA Leader (E8, WO1, CW2, and O3)	6
SFODA Member (E5,E6,and E7)	7

Table 7. Rank Value Table

12. Time In AOR Value

The Time In AOR Value was determined by first normalizing the time spent in AOR against the person's time in SF. This was done by calculating a ratio, dividing the Time In AOR, which was converted into years, by the person's years in SF. This ratio was then assigned a value. The premise was that the higher the ratio, the higher the value. The categorization is below:

Time In AOR ratio ≤1	0
.05≥Time In AOR ratio >.01	1
.10≥ Time In AOR ratio >.05	2
.15≥ Time In AOR ratio >.10	3
.20≥ Time In AOR ratio >.15	4

25≥ Time In AOR ratio >.20	5
.30≥ Time In AOR ratio >.25	6
>.30	7

Table 8. Time In AOR Value Table

13. Time Outside AOR Value

The Time Outside AOR Value was determined by first normalizing the time spent in AOR against the person's time in SF. This was done by calculating a ratio, dividing the Time Outside AOR, which was converted into years, by the person's years in SF. This ratio was then assigned a value. The premise was that the higher the ratio, the higher the value. The categorization is below:

Time Outside AOR ratio ≤1	0
.05≥Time Outside AOR ratio>.01	1
.10≥ Time Outside AOR ratio >.05	2
.15≥ Time Outside AOR ratio >.10	3
.20≥ Time Outside AOR ratio >.15	4
25≥ Time Outside AOR ratio >.20	5
.30≥ Time Outside AOR ratio >.25	6
Time Outside AOR ratio >.30	7

Table 9. Time Outside AOR Value Table

14. Training Value

The Training Value was determined by categorizing the responses for amount of weeks devoted to improving cultural capability into 8 categories and assigning values to each. The premise was the higher amount of training time, the higher the value. The categorization is below:

Weeks of Training = 0	0
2≥ Weeks of Training >0	1
4≥ Weeks of Training >2	2
6≥ Weeks of Training >4	3
8≥ Weeks of Training >6	4
10≥ Weeks of Training >8	5
12≥ Weeks of Training >10	6
Weeks of Training >12	7

Table 10. Training Value

C. ANALYSIS TABLES

1. Reading the Tables

When reading the tables below, it important to understand the meaning of the different values. The first value is the R-square value, which is also called the coefficient of determination. This value indicates the fit of the model used. The scale is zero to one with one being a perfect fit and zero indicating no relation between the dependent variable and independent variables. The relation between the variables is expressed in two ways: magnitude (or size) and reliability (or truthfulness). Magnitude (i.e., coef) measures the amount that the independent variable affects the dependent variable. Reliability (i.e., $R > |t|$) is the accuracy of the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The number represents the chance that the relation is a fluke, so the lower the number is the better. As a general rule of thumb, when the p-value is .05 or lower, the result is statistically significant.[329]

[329] Thomas Hill and Paul Lewicki, *Statistics: Methods and Applications* (Tulsa, OK: StatSoft, Inc., 2006), accessed 30 November 2011, http://statsoft.com/textbook/.

2. Regional Proficiency Interest

Regional Proficiency Interest (Total SF)	Coef	$R>\|t\|$
Experience in SF Value	-.027	.218
Time In AOR Value	-.011	.375
Time Outside AOR Value	-.035	.008
Command Environment Value	-.026	.138
Interest in Advise and Assist Value	-.010	.610
Warrior-Diplomat Score	.206	.000
Regional Competence Utility	.620	.000
Rank Value	-.018	.567
Happiness With AOR Value	.129	.000
Number of Observations: 495	R-Squared: .715	

Table 11. Regional Proficiency Interest (Total SF)

Regional Proficiency Interest (1st SFG(A))	Coef	$R>\|t\|$
Experience in SF Value	-.025	.743
Time In AOR Value	-.074	.082
Time Outside AOR Value	-.092	.058
Command Environment Value	-.062	.302
Interest in Advise and Assist Value	.012	.828
Warrior-Diplomat Score	.214	.040
Regional Competence Utility	.581	.000
Rank Value	-.043	.652
Happiness With AOR Value	.167	.012
Number of Observations: 84	R-Squared: .757	

Table 12. Regional Proficiency Interest (1st SFG(A))

Regional Proficiency Interest (3rd SFG(A))	Coef	$R>\|t\|$
Experience in SF Value	-.101	.053
Time In AOR Value	-.020	.461
Time Outside AOR Value	-.017	.757
Command Environment Value	-070	.101
Interest in Advise and Assist Value	.072	.179
Warrior-Diplomat Score	.176	.027
Regional Competence Utility	.546	.000
Rank Value	-.069	.392
Happiness With AOR Value	.101	.038
Number of Observations: 95	R-Squared: .732	

Table 13. Regional Proficiency Interest (3rd SFG(A))

Regional Proficiency Interest (5th SFG(A))	Coef	$R>\|t\|$
Experience in SF Value	-.105	.056
Time In AOR Value	-.026	.454
Time Outside AOR Value	-.018	.666
Command Environment Value	.002	.949
Interest in Advise and Assist Value	-.040	.492
Warrior-Diplomat Score	.065	.583
Regional Competence Utility	.904	.000
Rank Value	-.062	.377
Happiness With AOR Value	.067	.111
Number of Observations: 65	R-Squared: .798	

Table 14. Regional Proficiency Interest (5th SFG(A))

Regional Proficiency Interest (7th SFG(A))	Coef	$R>\|t\|$
Experience in SF Value	-.002	.977
Time In AOR Value	-.018	.608
Time Outside AOR Value	.040	.213
Command Environment Value	.003	.947
Interest in Advise and Assist Value	-.080	.073
Warrior-Diplomat Score	.187	.043
Regional Competence Utility	.568	.000
Rank Value	.086	.264
Happiness With AOR Value	.228	.001
Number of Observations: 75	R-Squared: .714	

Table 15. Regional Proficiency Interest (7th SFG(A))

Regional Proficiency Interest (10th SFG(A))	Coef	$R>\|t\|$
Experience in SF Value	.052	.265
Time In AOR Value	-.023	.387
Time Outside AOR Value	.002	.937
Command Environment Value	.033	.303
Interest in Advise and Assist Value	-.040	.368
Warrior-Diplomat Score	.312	.000
Regional Competence Utility	.673	.000
Rank Value	.055	.401
Happiness With AOR Value	.091	.038

Number of Observations: 137	R-Squared: .717

Table 16. Regional Proficiency Interest (10th SFG(A))

3. Warrior-Diplomat Score

Warrior Diplomat Score (Total SF)	Coef	R>|t|
Value of Rank	.024	.607
Experience In SF Value	.033	.293
Time In AOR Value	.003	.878
Time Outside AOR Value	.040	.026
Commando Score	-.018	.597
Training Value	-.022	.249
Command Environment Value	.161	.000
Interest in Advise and Assist Value	.329	.000
Number of Observations: 502	R-Squared: .34	

Table 17. Warrior-Diplomat Score (Total SF)

Warrior Diplomat Score (1st SFG(A))	Coef	R>|t|
Value of Rank	.024	.607
Experience In SF Value	.033	.293
Time In AOR Value	.003	.878
Time Outside AOR Value	.040	.026
Commando Score	-.018	.597
Training Value	-.022	.249
Command Environment Value	.161	.000

Interest in Advise and Assist Value	.329	.000
Number of Observations: 502	R-Squared: .34	

Table 18. Warrior-Diplomat Score (1st SFG(A))

Warrior Diplomat Score (3rd SFG(A))	Coef	$R>\|t\|$
Value of Rank	.247	.052
Experience In SF Value	.100	.179
Time In AOR Value	-.021	.574
Time Outside AOR Value	.106	.141
Commando Score	-.172	.033
Training Value	-.006	.888
Command Environment Value	.223	.000
Interest in Advise and Assist Value	.361	.000
Number of Observations: 97	R-Squared: .379	

Table 19. Warrior-Diplomat Score (3rd SFG(A))

Warrior Diplomat Score (5th SFG(A))	Coef	$R>\|t\|$
Value of Rank	.045	.610
Experience In SF Value	.048	.481
Time In AOR Value	.011	.802
Time Outside AOR Value	.002	.966
Commando Score	-.056	.376
Training Value	.013	.708
Command Environment Value	.018	.707

Interest in Advise and Assist Value	.358	.000
Number of Observations: 66	R-Squared: .511	

Table 20. Warrior-Diplomat Score (5th SFG(A))

Warrior Diplomat Score (7th SFG(A))	Coef	$R>\|t\|$
Value of Rank	.051	.661
Experience In SF Value	.040	.632
Time In AOR Value	--.008	.8766
Time Outside AOR Value	.025	.593
Commando Score	-.050	.615
Training Value	-.149	.006
Command Environment Value	.255	.002
Interest in Advise and Assist Value	.240	.000
Number of Observations: 77	R-Squared: .33	

Table 21. Warrior-Diplomat Score (7th SFG(A))

Warrior Diplomat Score (10th SFG(A))	Coef	$R>\|t\|$
Value of Rank	-.186	.035
Experience In SF Value	.013	.827
Time In AOR Value	-.006	.870
Time Outside AOR Value	.010	.706
Commando Score	.070	.221
Training Value	.044	.245
Command Environment Value	.028	.516

Interest in Advise and Assist Value	.290	.000
Number of Observations: 138	R-Squared: .359	

Table 22. Warrior-Diplomat Score (10th SFG(A))

4. Incentives

When reading the regression analysis for incentives, there are several important considerations to bear in mind. First, command environment was added as an independent variable since, like an incentive, it is a variable that could be adjusted by the command to increase interest in regional proficiency. This leads to the next consideration. It is important to bear in mind the tenses used in the questions. Regional proficiency and command environment were values derived from the present situation. Therefore, a positive relation means that it is likely that a high command environment means there will also be a high interest in regional proficiency. The phrasing for the incentive questions were for a hypothetical future (i.e., "I would improve my knowledge, if…"). This comes into play when negative relations are found between interest in regional proficiency and an incentive. This negative relation does not mean that the incentive has a negative effect on interest in regional proficiency. Rather, the negative relation means that a person with a high interest in regional proficiency would likely rate the incentive lower. Conversely, a person with a lower interest in regional proficiency would rate the incentive higher.

Variable	Mean	Std Dev
Regional Proficiency Interest	6.24	1.15
Command Environment Value	4.57	1.63
PDSI	2.63	1.69
Promotion	3.22	1.73

Pay	3.78	1.81
College Credit	3.89	1.73
ODA Time	5.17	1.69
AOR Time	4.44	1.87
No Incentive	4.88	2.17

Table 23. Incentive Descriptive Statistics (Total SF)

Regional Proficiency Interest (Total SF)	Coef	$R>\|t\|$
Command Environment Value	.153	.000
PDSI	-.116	.007
Promotion	-.097	.025
Pay	-.064	.091
College Credit	-.086	.050
ODA Time	-.022	.624
AOR Time	-.023	.603
Number of Observations: 376	R-Squared: .108	

Table 24. Incentive Regression Analysis (Total SF)

Variable	**Mean**	**Std Dev**
Regional Proficiency Interest	6.29	.99
Command Environment Value	4.41	1.62
PDSI	2.54	1.60
Promotion	2.92	1.62

Pay	4.36	1.82
College Credit	4.45	1.65
ODA Time	5.04	1.67
AOR Time	4.18	2.00
No Incentive	4.51	2.29

Table 25. Incentive Descriptive Statistics (SFODA Member)

Regional Proficiency Interest (SFODA Member)	Coef	R>|t|
Command Environment Value	.035	.540
PDSI	-.187	.010
Promotion	-.282	.000
Pay	-.055	.376
College Credit	-.207	.005
ODA Time	-.109	.110
AOR Time	-.042	.504
Number of Observations: 98	R-Squared: .252	

Table 26. Incentive Regression Analysis (SFODA Member)

Variable	**Mean**	**Std Dev**
Regional Proficiency Interest	6.21	1.14
Command Environment Value	4.48	1.68
PDSI	2.67	1.69
Promotion	3.03	1.54
Pay	3.77	1.92

College Credit	4.06	1.82
ODA Time	5.40	1.71
AOR Time	4.39	1.79
No Incentive	4.68	2.13

Table 27. Incentive Descriptive Statistics (SFODA Leader)

Regional Proficiency Interest (SFODA Leader)	Coef	R>|t|
Command Environment Value	.134	.029
PDSI	.053	.478
Promotion	.071	.362
Pay	-.180	.007
College Credit	.008	.907
ODA Time	.-.080	.332
AOR Time	.117	.125
Number of Observations: 121	R-Squared: .165	

Table 28. Incentive Regression Analysis (SFODA Leader)

Variable	**Mean**	**Std Dev**
Regional Proficiency Interest	6.21	1.15
Command Environment Value	4.48	1.68
PDSI	2.67	1.69
Promotion	3.03	1.54
Pay	3.77	1.92
College Credit	4.06	1.82

ODA Time	5.40	1.71
AOR Time	4.39	1.79
No Incentive	4.68	2.13

Table 29. Incentive Descriptive Statistics (Company Leader)

Regional Proficiency Interest (Company Leader)	Coef	R>|t|
Command Environment Value	.235	.002
PDSI	-.052	.556
Promotion	-.072	.350
Pay	-.211	.01
College Credit	-.010	.893
ODA Time	-.064	.459
AOR Time	-.072	.405
Number of Observations: 90	R-Squared: .208	

Table 30. Incentive Regression Analysis (Company Leader)

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