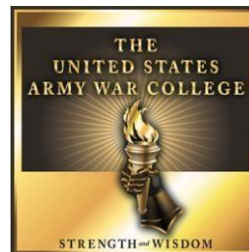# There is an Identity Crisis in Special Forces:
Who are the Green Berets Supposed to Be?

by

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The Nation expects that U.S. Army Special Forces (USASF) quickly adapt to emergent threats. What is unexpected, however, is when these temporary adaptations disfigure a unit and create mission drift away from its unique capabilities. USASF, known commonly as "Green Berets," or simply "SF," is experiencing this now. Strategic shifts over the last two decades have changed expectations of SF, and these changes are influencing the culture, behavior, and employment of Green Berets. A comprehensive review of law, policy, strategy, and doctrine yielded 25 archetypes that comprise the SF Soldier. Subsequently, over 1,200 Green Berets responded to a survey; examining the survey results through the lens of a new SF socialization model reveals a major finding – SF has an identity crisis. This crisis affects all aspects of the culture, values, and behaviors of the organization and is manifested in three distinct sub-identities. SF leadership must address the identity crisis now to restore the morale and honor of the force, enable modernization, and recapture readiness.

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(11,405 words)

Abstract

The Nation expects that U.S. Army Special Forces (USASF) quickly adapt to emergent threats. What is unexpected, however, is when these temporary adaptations disfigure a unit and create mission drift away from its unique capabilities. USASF, known commonly as "Green Berets," or simply "SF," is experiencing this now. Strategic shifts over the last two decades have changed expectations of SF, and these changes are influencing the culture, behavior, and employment of Green Berets. A comprehensive review of law, policy, strategy, and doctrine yielded 25 archetypes that comprise the SF Soldier. Subsequently, over 1,200 Green Berets responded to a survey; examining the survey results through the lens of a new SF socialization model reveals a major finding – SF has an identity crisis. This crisis affects all aspects of the culture, values, and behaviors of the organization and is manifested in three distinct sub-identities. SF leadership must address the identity crisis now to restore the morale and honor of the force, enable modernization, and recapture readiness.

There is an Identity Crisis in Special Forces:
Who are the Green Berets Supposed to Be?

At the heart of the Green Berets' identity crisis… is a generation only knowing the
Global War on Terror (GWOT), with the next generation recruited on the promise
of door-kicking raids, dynamic entries, and kill/capture methodologies.

—Green Beret[1]

U.S. Army Special Forces (USASF) quickly adapt to emergent threats that face
the Nation; this is expected. What is unexpected, however, is when these temporary
adaptations disfigure a unit and create *mission drift* away from its unique capabilities. In
fact USASF, known commonly as "Green Berets," or simply "SF," is experiencing this
now. Strategic shifts over the last two decades have changed expectations of SF twice,
from peacekeeping operations in the late 1990s to counterterrorism and
counterinsurgency operations post-9/11, and then to competition with Russia and China
circa 2015-2017. These changes have left an impact.

Public and congressional questioning of Green Beret activities, recent
Department of Defense (DoD) decisions to modify Army and SF capacity, and SF's slow
transition from the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) render the Green Berets
unrecognizable. There is an identity crisis in SF and it is influencing the culture and
behavior of Green Berets. The result of multiple changes in the expectations of SF post-
9/11, the identity crisis is no one person's fault—it has manifested over two decades.
However, strong leadership must address the identity crisis now to restore the morale
and honor of the force, enable modernization, and recapture readiness.

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[1] David Walton and Joseph Long, "Green Berets: Rebuilding the Guerrilla Leader Identity," *Small Wars Journal* (2018), accessed December 10, 2019, https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/green-berets-rebuilding-guerrilla-leader-identity.

SF: A Unique and Necessary Force

As the Nation's only Special Warfare force, trained and educated to operate within the "human terrain," SF have long served with valor at the vanguard of our Nation's irregular warfare conflicts. The reader may recall bearded men on horseback, arm-in-arm with the Northern Alliance, conducting unconventional warfare to overthrow the Taliban Regime in Afghanistan. Others will remember SF again conducting unconventional warfare with the Iraqi Kurds during the invasion of Iraq, or even their counterterrorism / counterinsurgency support to Syrian Kurdish Forces in their struggle against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This very moment, across the Baltic Nations, SF stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our allies, empowering them through security force assistance and foreign internal defense, ready to transition to unconventional warfare if Russia dares more encroachment. This service has not been without tremendous cost to the "Quiet Professionals." Since September 11th, 2001, 188 Green Berets have been killed in action (KIA).[2] 2 019 was especially fraught with sacrifice—of the 24 U.S. servicemembers listed as KIA, 11 were Green Berets.[3] This price has not gone unnoticed; since 2001, a President has awarded three Green Berets the Medal of Honor.[4] Recent moral-ethical transgressions risk overshadowing their sacrifices.

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[2] "United States Army Special Operations Command Fallen Heroes," United States Army Special Operations Command, accessed March 7, 2020. https://www.soc.mil/Memorial%20Wall/USASOC%20Fallen%20Heroes%20Home%20Page.html.

[3] "Honor the Fallen," Military Times, last modified March 11, 2020, accessed April 10, 2020. https://thefallen.militarytimes.com/.

[4] "Medal of Honor Directory," United States Army, accessed March 23, 2020. https://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/recipients.html.

Green Berets in the Media

SF provided the media plenty of headline material over the last few years.

Notable incidents include: the ambush of Green Berets in Tongo-Tongo, Niger (2017);[5]

the murder of a Green Beret in Bamako, Mali (2017);[6] and the Green Berets arrested for

smuggling 90 pounds of cocaine into the United States (2018).[7] This attention

culminated in November 2019; the American military watched with concern while the

President of the United States granted clemency to several SOF personnel embroiled in

investigations for war crimes.[8]

In 2018, Congress mandated a full review of United States Special Operations

Command's (USSOCOM) culture and accountability; this led to the 2019 publication

and issue of formal ethics guidance to all 66,000 SOF servicemembers within

USSOCOM.[9] In January 2020, General Richard Clarke, the latest Commanding General

(CG) of USSOCOM, directed a "Comprehensive Review" of the culture and ethics of all

Special Operations Forces (SOF).[10] The review did not find "a systemic ethics

problem".[11] However, it did find in units, including the Green Berets, that:

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[5] "Two-Star General and Green Berets Punished for Deadly Niger Ambush That Killed 4 U.S. Soldiers," Army Times, last modified November 5, 2018, accessed. https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2018/11/05/two-star-general-green-berets-punished-for-deadly-niger-ambush-that-killed-4-us-soldiers/.

[6] Dan Lamothe, "Troops Charged in Green Beret's Death in Mali Planned to Record Him Being Sexually Assaulted," The Washington Post, accessed 7 March, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2019/06/05/troops-charged-green-berets-death-mali-planned-record-him-being-sexually-assaulted-marine-says/.

[7] Meghann Myers, "Former Army Green Berets Sentenced in Colombian Cocaine Smuggling Plot," The Army Times, accessed March 7, 2020. https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/05/01/former-army-green-berets-sentenced-in-colombian-cocaine-smuggling-plot/.

[8] Courtney Kube and Carol E. Lee, "Trump Dismisses Murder Charge against Green Beret, Pardons Army Officer," NBC News, accessed 7 March, 2020. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/military/trump-dismisses-murder-charge-against-green-beret-pardons-army-officer-n1079941.

[9] Andrew Feickert, *U.S. Special Operations Forces: Backgroud and Issues for Congress* (Washington, D.C.: 2019), accessed April 11, 2020, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RS21048.pdf.

[10] GEN Richard D. Clarke, *Comprehensive Review* (Tampa, FL: United States Special Operations Command, 2020).

[11] Ibid., 4.

"culture overly focused on force employment and mission accomplishment creates the contexts or situations allowing for misconduct and unethical behavior to develop…The Review Team uncovered not only potential cracks in the SOF foundations at the individual and team level, but also through the chain of command, specifically in the core tenets of leadership, discipline and accountability."[12]

"Many individuals across the USSOCOM enterprise – at all levels – identified this cultural problem…perpetuating [SOF] focus on COIN [counterinsurgency] and CT [counterterrorism] while not developing SOF and SOF leaders for the full spectrum of SOF core activities and Component specific skills and capabilities."[13]

Less than one month after the review's publication, retired Army Lieutenant General David Barno and Dr. Nora Bensahel of Johns Hopkins University, called for *another* review, this time a Congressional Commission, to further investigate SOF culture and ethics.[14] These criticisms are to be expected given the ultimate finding in USSOCOM's Comprehensive Review regarding culture and core activities.

<div align="center">Mission Drift Away from Core Competency</div>

Over the past two decades, SF has experienced mission drift, and has only begun to address it. USSOCOM disbanded the SF Crisis Response Forces (CRFs) in March, 2020 to support the wider DoD's move from counterinsurgency operations to "a near-peer conflict with adversaries such as Russia and China."[15] The Army's transformational decision, perhaps owing in part to SF mission drift, to build Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs) signals a paradigm shift toward conventional

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[12] Ibid., 5.

[13] Ibid., 39

[14] David Barno and Nora Bensahel, "How to Fix U.S. Special Operations Forces," *War on the Rocks* (February 25, 2020), accessed February 28, 2020, https://warontherocks.com/2020/02/how-to-fix-u-s-special-operations-forces/.

[15] Stavros Atlamazoglou, "United States Special Operations Command to Disband Elite Green Beret Unit," Business Insider, last modified March 5, accessed March 13, 2020. https://www.businessinsider.com/army-special-operations-command-to-disband-elite-green-beret-unit-2020-3?amp.

military partner capacity building.[16] In February 2018, the Army established 1st SFAB,

the first of six, 800-Soldier units intended to train, advise, and assist foreign nation

military partners overseas.[17] Since 1952, this mission was the sole domain of the

uniquely manned, trained, and equipped Green Berets.[18] These decisions demonstrate

senior leadership's perception of SF's utility and effort to redirect mission drift back

toward traditional, appropriate, and relevant missions.

In October 2019, the USASOC CG, Lieutenant General Fran Beaudette,

acknowledged the mission drift, stating in his *Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF)*

Strategy that "To shake off the strategic atrophy" …"we must evolve."[19] He directs the

force to "shift the mindset and bring about evolutionary change"[20] through a three-

pronged approach: prioritize *people* and build trust, focus *readiness* to support the Joint

Force in conflict, and *modernize* to be the Army's force of choice in competition.[21] For

SF, this means returning to their unique, globally postured partnership role. It also

means moving away from "inhabiting secure forward operating bases to one of surviving

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[16] C. Todd Lopez, "Security Force Assistance Brigades to Free Brigade Combat Teams from Advise, Assist Mission," U.S. Army, last modified September 19, 2017, accessed April 11, 2020. https://www.army.mil/article/188004/security_force_assistance_brigades_to_free_brigade_combat_teams _from_advise_assist_mission.

[17] Security Force Assistance Command, "Operational and Organizational Concept," Security Force Assistance Command, accessed April 14, 2020. https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://fortbenningausa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/TCM_SFAB_2018.pdf__;!!OToaGQ!9A4uGHdWQCrljeXqVXlqg9_jYPnn_dWhar DbuXNFDkMZI8wI0M640obAMvUNvhF-pms$.

[18] United States Army Special Operations Command, "United States Army Special Forces Command History," last modified 2020, accessed April 11, 2020. https://www.soc.mil/USASFC/SFhistory.html.

[19] LTG Francis M. Beaudette, *Army Special Operations Forces Strategy* (Fort Bragg, N.C.: United States Army Special Operations Command, 2019).

[20] Ibid., 2.

[21] Ibid., 4.

and thriving in large-scale combat operations"[22] and "[operating] on the increasingly lethal multi-domain battlefields of today."[23]

Finally, as a career SF Officer, it was disconcerting to watch traditional partnership missions entrusted to other SOF and conventional forces in Syria and Yemen, instead of SF. The CG's call for change is justified. In struggling with the effects of "mission drift" for two decades, SF has drifted away from complex, long-duration partnerships toward more linear, short-term, transactional combat operations. Despite Lieutenant General Beaudette emphasizing partnership, many of the Green Berets who responded to this research project believe that partnership with indigenous forces—the very foundation of SF's existence—is simply not important. A senior warrant officer stated: "If we use indigenous people it is for our sustainment, our protection, or to multiply our ability to employ force. We are not trainers. Conventional forces can do that."[24] This misguided perspective is a symptom of a much larger problem—the actual SF organizational and individual identity is not aligned with the expected identity.

<div align="center">Understanding the Problem</div>

It is necessary to define the problem and clarify definitions, concepts, and ideas that have become confused and entangled in this public discussion. What is expected of SF? What is not expected of SF? What does it mean to have an identity crisis?

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[22] Ibid., 2.
[23] Ibid., 6.
[24] Edward Croot. "2020 Green Beret Survey." Survey. January 8, 2020, 68.

What is Expected of the Green Berets?

Title 10 law requires SF to possess unique capabilities that support USSOCOM

roles, missions, and functions as directed by Congress.[25] Doctrine requires SF to build,

partner, and fight "alongside indigenous combat formations in permissive, uncertain, or

hostile environments."[26] They are uniquely trained and educated in Special Warfare,

which requires a "deep understanding of cultures and foreign language"[27] proficiency to

prepare them for the "human domain" of military operations. In the most complex

irregular warfare environments, they are expected to leverage indigenous forces,

understand relevant actors, build and maintain partnerships, and create access for

interagency partners.[28] SF provides options to leadership through core Special Warfare

activities: security force assistance (SFA), foreign internal defense (FID),

unconventional warfare (UW), counterinsurgency (COIN), and counterterrorism (CT). [29]

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[25] *Title 10, United States Code Armed Forces (as Amended through January 7, 2011)*, vol. I, *Section 164, Commanders of Combatant Commands: Assignment; Powers and Duties, and Section 167, Unified Combatant Command for Special Operations Forces* (2011).
[26] Headquarters Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Publication 3-05 Army Special Operations* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 2019). 1-3.
[27] Ibid.,1-3.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 2-4 through 2-11. Definitions of the core Special Warfare activities:
Counterinsurgency (COIN): Comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneusly defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes.
Counterterrorism (CT): Activities and operations taken to neutralize terroritst and their organizations and networks in order to render them incapable of using violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies to achieve their goals.
Foreign Internal Defense (FID): Participation by civilian agencies and military forces of a government or international organizations in any of the programs and activities undertaken by a host nation government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security.
Security Force Assistance (SFA): Department of Defense activities that support the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces and their supporting institutions.
Unconventional Warfare (UW): Activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area.

Policies at multiple levels of government direct SF to support interagency partners by providing long-duration interactions that develop allied military capabilities, reassure partners, maintain influence, and gain important access. The National Security Strategy (NSS) authored by the President,[30] and the National Defense Strategy (NDS) authored by the Secretary of Defense,[31] cite partnership 199 times, cementing it as a vital component of our national security. The Army recognizes the importance and value of partnership in their operating concept, Multi-Domain Operations (MDO), that directs forward presence for competition (with Russia and China), which "deters armed conflict by preventing adversaries from attempting a *fait accompli* attack on favorable terms."[32] In turn, the USASOC CG directly supports the Army, Joint Force, and interagency partners by directing SF to posture forward "on the leading edge of the Department of Defense"[33] and "remain ready and engaged against violent extremist organizations, [while] also adapting to compete against Russia and China, and preparing for war."[34]

SF can and will support "traditional" warfare efforts. But once those efforts are complete, SF are expected to return to their primary form of warfare, "irregular" warfare, which is the "violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant populations."[35] "Resistance"[36] against governing bodies,

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[30] Donald Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 2017).

[31] Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America : Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2018).

[32] Training and Doctrine Command, *Pamphlet 525-3-1: The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028* (Fort Knox, KY: Training and Doctrine Command, 2018). 17.

[33] LTG Francis M. Beaudette. 1.

[34] Ibid., 2.

[35] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 1: Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2017). I-6.

[36] U.S. Army, *Army Training Pamphlet 3-18.1: Unconventional Warfare* (2019). Resistance is defined as *efforts by individuals or groups to resist, oppose or overthrow an oppressor, usually an established government or occupying power.*

oppressive groups, or occupying powers may never grow to full traditional warfare.

Resistance is the subject of their profession[37] and what makes SF *special*.

<u>What is Not Expected of the Green Berets?</u>

Since 2001, strategic leadership expectations have driven SF from their

traditional global partnership missions toward more unilateral direct action missions.

However, the organization expected to return to traditional Special Warfare activities.

After nearly two decades of shouldering a disproportionate number of combat rotations,

some Green Berets now believe Surgical Strike is their expected core competency.

Surgical Strike is the precise capability in "hostile, denied, or politically sensitive

environments to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover or damage designated targets,

or influence threats."[38] The Surgical Strike activities are typically unilateral, short

duration, executed by specially selected small units with extensive training for extreme

risk and precise execution. The activities of Surgical Strike include: hostage rescue

(HR), unilateral direct action (DA), kill / capture operations against designated targets

(K/C), unilateral special reconnaissance (SR), counterproliferation (CP), and counter

weapons of mass destruction (CWMD).[39] Although required at times to conduct

unilateral direct action missions, SF is not expected or trained to execute Surgical Strike

missions.[40]

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[37] U.S. Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication-1: The Army Profession* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army, 2013). The U.S. Army defines profession as *a trusted and disciplined vocation, that provides a unique and vital service to the nation, develops and applies expert knowledge, establishes and upholds the discipline and standard of the profession, through professional development and certification.*
[38] Headquarters Department of the Army. 1-3.
[39] Ibid., 2-4 through 2-11.
[40] Headquarters Departent of the Army, *Field Manual 3-18 Special Forces Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2014). Pg. 3-4.

How to Model Green Beret Culture and Identity?

Any discussion of identity must begin with culture. The Army frames culture as beliefs, values, norms, and behavior.[41] Dr. Edgar Schein of MIT Sloan School of Management, undergirds the Army's definition of culture, arguing that culture is comprised of a group's shared *basic assumptions* which inform accepted *beliefs* and *values*.[42] These, in turn, inform accepted *norms* for members to adhere and enforce and ultimately manifested in behavior.[43] Schein's "Model of Organizational Culture" establishes "any group's culture can be studied at three levels,"[44] from a shallow outer level (*artifacts*), commutable middle level (*espoused beliefs & values*), and deeply embedded core level (*basic underlying assumptions*).[45]

In 2013, the Army used Schein's model to frame its organizational model for culture and its influences on defining the Army as a profession. The Army adapted Schein's model, adding *The Army Profession* to the outer layer and *The Army Ethic and Identity* to the core layer.[46] The Army Ethic "defines the moral principles that guide us" and "is the heart of our shared professional identity, our sense of who we are, our

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[41] U.S. Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication-1: The Army Profession.* A-1.

[42] Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership (4th Edition)* (Jossey-Bass Business and Management, 2010). 24.

[43] Ibid., 18.
Organizational Culture and Leadership Defined
Culture: A pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.
Basic Underlying Assumptions: Unconscious, taken—for—granted beliefs and values that determine perception, thought, feeling, and behavior.
Values: Articulated publicly announced principles and values that the group claims to be trying to achieve.
Norms: Implicit standards and values that evolve in working groups.

[44] Ibid., 32.

[45] Ibid., 24.

[46] U.S. Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication-1: The Army Profession.* A-1.

purpose in life, and why and how we serve the American People."[47] *The SF Model*

featured throughout this research paper, incorporates both Schein's and the Army's

Model to buttress the model with a strong academic and professional base (see Figure

1).
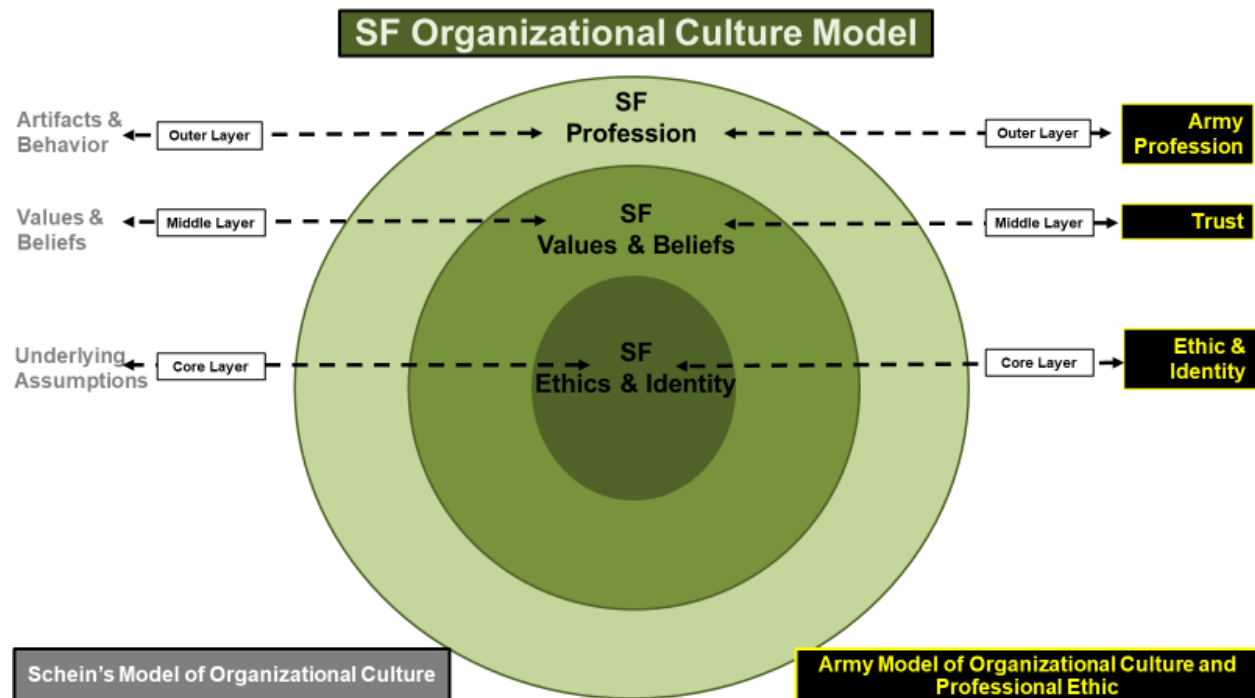
Figure 1. SF Organizational Culture Model[48]

The Outer Layer: Artifacts-Army Profession-SF Profession

Schein defines the artifact layer as "visible and feelable structures and

processes" and "observed behaviors" of an organizational culture that are easily viewed

but difficult to decipher.[49] The Army Model considers this outer layer the Army

Profession, visible in the Army flag, uniform, equipment, and practice of soldiering.[50]

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[47] Center for the Army Profession and Ethic, *The Army Ethic White Paper* (Fort Knox, KY: Mission Command Center of Excellence, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 2014), accessed April 13, 2020. 11.

[48] Figure 1. SF Organizational Model, Author Created.

[49] Edgar H. Schein. 24.

[50] U.S. Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication-1: The Army Profession*. A-1.

The SF Model considers symbols (beret, flashes, patch, and dagger), legend (JFK establishing the headgear, bearded men on horseback, John Wayne, Barry Sadler's song, etc.),[51] and mottos ("De Oppresso Liber" and "Quiet Professionals") as the outer layer. This layer also captures their service and sacrifice, transgressions, and the mission drift outlined earlier in this paper. Though this outer layer is plainly visible, it is difficult for those outside of the organization to decipher causation[52] (see Figure 2).
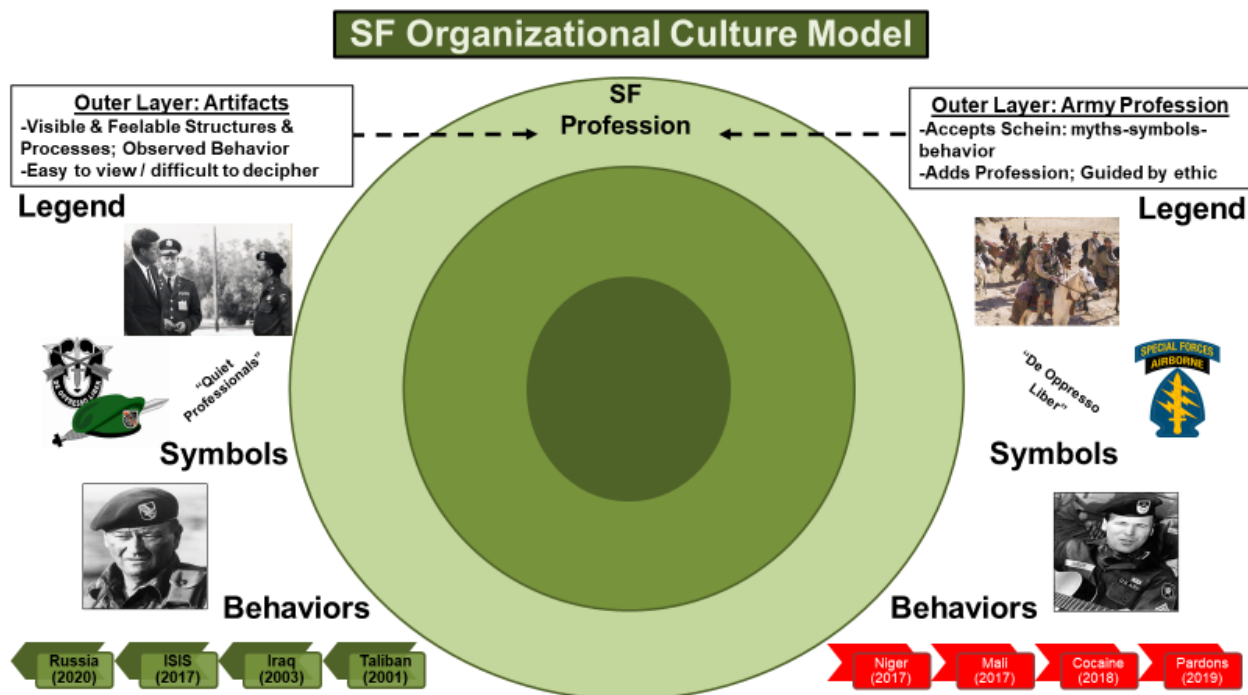
Figure 2. The Outer Layer: Artifacts-Army Profession-SF Profession[53]

The Middle Layer: Values & Beliefs-Trust-SF Values & Beliefs

Schein defines this layer as the "shared, espoused [beliefs], values, norms, and rules of behavior" that can modify through interactions and experiences but "may only

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[51] Pop History Dig, "The Green Berets," last modified March 16, 2018, accessed April 13, 2020. https://www.pophistorydig.com/topics/tag/green-berets-john-f-kennedy/.
[52] Edgar H. Schein. 24.
[53] Figure 2. The Outer Layer: Artifacts-Army Profession-SF Profession, Author Created.

reflect rationalization or aspirations."[54] The Army Model includes, in this middle layer

the, "laws, values, and beliefs embedded within the Army Culture of Trust [by codes and

creeds] that motivates and guides the conduct [behavior] of Army professionals."[55] For

The SF Model, the middle layer considers the individual and group ideals, goals, sense

of what rules ought to be, what beliefs are right or wrong, what techniques to value, and

what strategies will work or not work.[56] To have an organizational culture, the members

must be trained in the same way, using the same doctrine, and to the same skill set and

values.[57] Espoused culture and actual culture may not, and in SF's case *are not* in

agreement/harmony.[58] For example, a Green Beret trained and educated in Special

Warfare skills, may not believe language proficiency is important nor value long-term

partnership approaches. This is a key aspect of group culture and foreshadows the

importance of the dense central core layer, the basic underlying assumptions and

identity (see Figure 3).

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[54] Edgar H. Schein. 32.
[55] U.S. Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication-1: The Army Profession*. 1-3.
[56] Edgar H. Schein. 26.
[57] Ibid., 21.
[58] Ibid., 24.
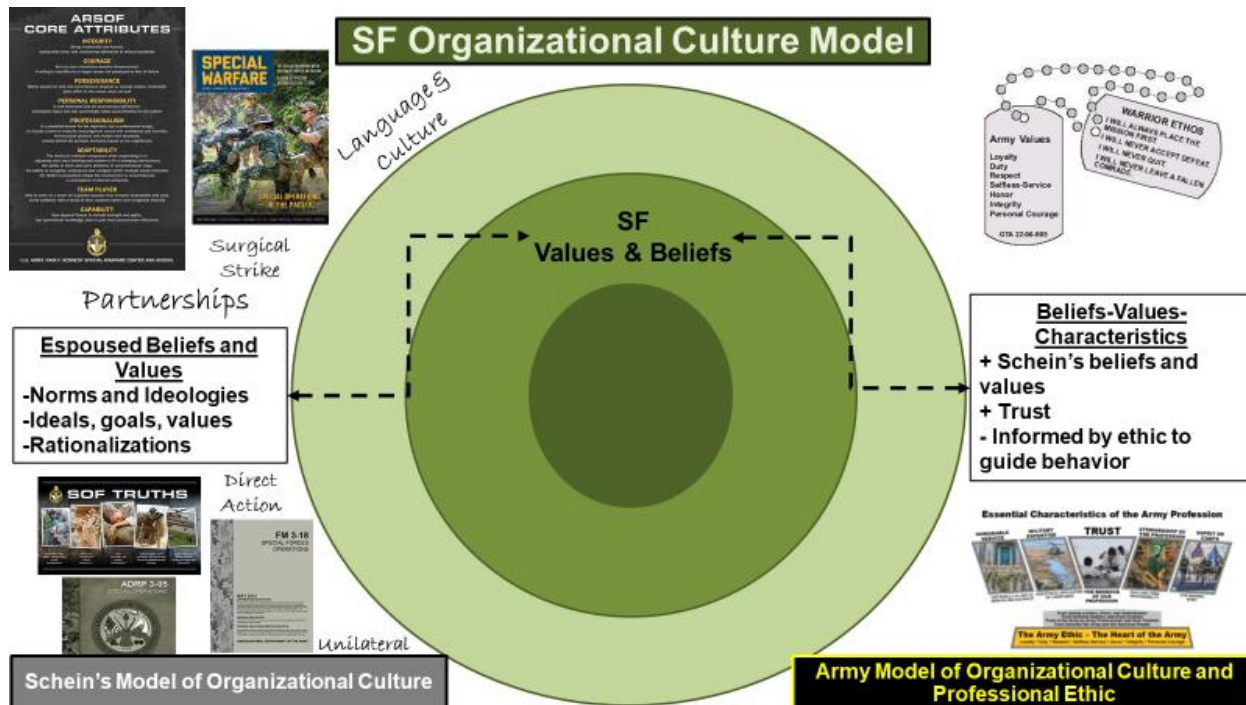
Figure 3. The Middle Layer: Values, Beliefs & Trust[59]

The Core Layer: Underlying Assumptions-Identity & Ethic

According to Schein, when beliefs and values are consistent and repeated, they come to be taken for granted, and are ingrained in the unconscious as underlying assumptions and absolute truths.[60] At the individual level, core identity (underlying assumptions of one's self) is generally set by young adulthood.[61] At the group level, individual identities coalesce, contributing to (and are influenced by) the organizational identity.[62] This "group identity [is a] key component of culture,"[63] and the shared assumptions are strongly held, guide behavior, and "tell group members how to perceive, think about, and feel about things."[64] The assumptions are so strongly held,

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[59] Figure 3. The Middle Layer: Values-Beliefs-Trust, Author Created.
[60] Edgar H. Schein. 28.
[61] Valka-Mir Human Security, *Psychosocial-Emotional Aspects of Hostnation Partner-Force Training, Advising, and Employment*, vol. 2nd Edition (January 2020). 114.
[62] Edgar H. Schein. 29.
[63] Ibid., 16.
[64] Ibid., 29.

members find any other behavior inconceivable.[65] Within an individual and culture, "changing basic assumptions is difficult, time-consuming, and highly anxiety-provoking."[66]

The Army's model adds The Army Ethic to the core layer. Soldiers arrive to the organization with their core identity formed and are further guided by this ethic, which informs their values and beliefs, and influences their professional behavior.[67] The SF Model assumes that a recruit's identity and ethic are likely formed prior to attending Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS). Individual identities gravitate to corresponding recruiting messages congruent with their underlying assumptions. An identity attracted to danger, action, and combat, or an identity attracted to partnership, autonomy, and irregular warfare, will be difficult to modify later. Also, the professional ethic will only influence the Green Beret's beliefs and behaviors if it is congruent with the individual's formed identity and ethic (see Figure 4).

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[65] Ibid., 28.
[66] Ibid., 33.
[67] U.S. Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication-1: The Army Profession*. 2-3.
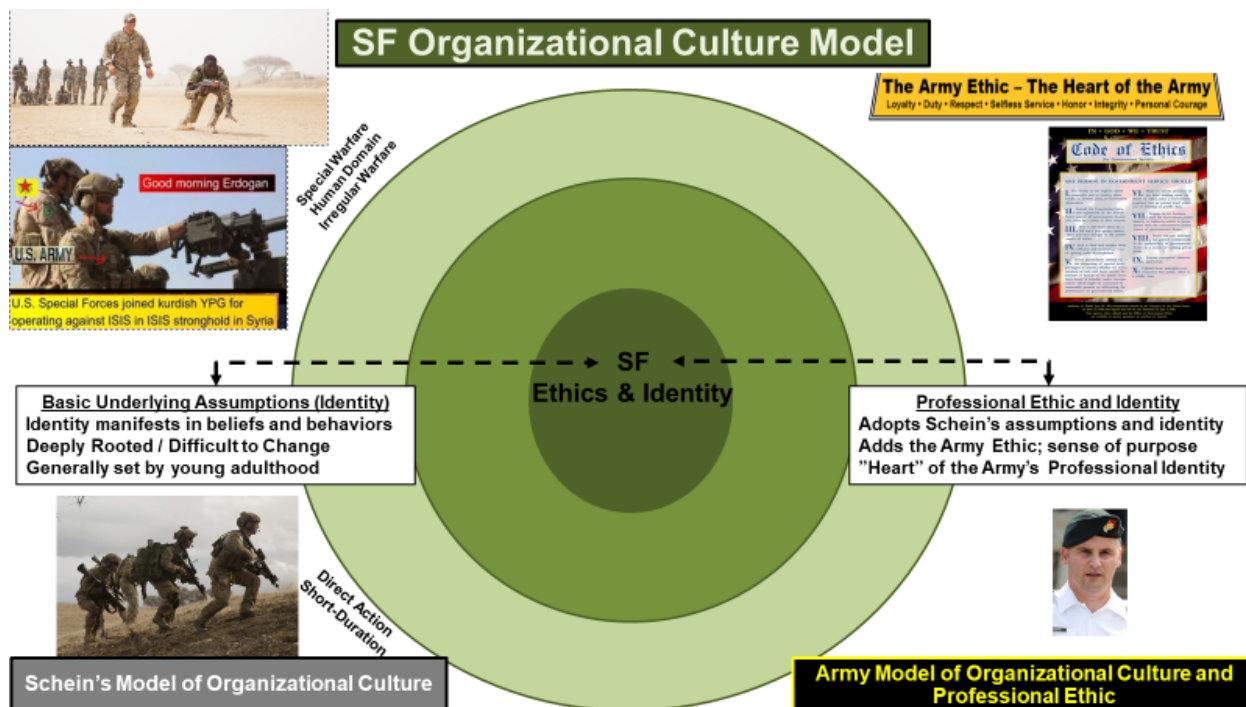
Figure 4. The Core Layer: Core-Underlying Assumptions-Identity and Ethic[68]

Culture: Structurally Binding Individuals for Protection

Cultures structure. An individual's identity, ethic, values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors are inextricably linked within that individual, the SF Model adds the premise that like-identity individuals seek to form cultures that provide structure. People need stability to make sense of their world and to create order in their lives.[69] "Disorder [and] senselessness" lead to anxiety, so people cope with that anxiety by cultivating cultures that support "consistent and predictable views of how things should be."[70] Culture ties together group assumptions, ethic, identity, values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors into a coherent whole.

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[68] Figure 4. The Core Layer: Core-Underlying Assumptions-Identity and Ethic, Author Created.
[69] Edgar H. Schein. 17.
[70] Ibid.

Cultures protect. Individuals and groups deal with conflict and ambiguity by striving toward integration that satisfies the human need for stability, consistency, and meaning.[71] Once a group of like-identity individuals achieves a sense of group identity, this culture becomes the "major stabilizing force and will not be given up easily" because group members value that stability.[72] Any challenges to identity produce anxiety and trigger cognitive and behavioral defense mechanisms.[73] Ultimately, the group culture mutually supports an individual's defense mechanisms to promote the status quo remains intact, for better or worse.

What is an Identity Crisis?

An *identity crisis* is defined as "a period of uncertainty and confusion in which a person's [or group's] sense of <u>identity</u> becomes insecure, typically due to a <u>change</u> in their <u>expected aims or role</u> in society."[74] As previously established, each time the strategic environment changed over the last two decades, the expected "aims or roles" of SF changed. Research shows that uncertainty and confusion are present in SF's culture. The question remains, have these strategic-level changes caused the SF culture to become insecure, and if so, what are the consequences and implications?

<u>Summary</u>

As the only uniquely trained and educated Special Warfare force in the military, SF are expected and directed to return to their traditional partnership roles across the globe to deter jihadist groups, compete with Russia and China, and prepare for conflict or crisis. They are not expected or directed to conduct unilateral strategic strike

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[71] Ibid., 18.
[72] Ibid., 16.
[73] Ibid., 29.
[74] Oxford English Dictionary, "Definition of Identity Crisis in English," Oxford University Press, accessed April 14, 2020. https://login.proxy.lib.duke.edu/login?url=https://www.oed.com.

operations. However, there are identity issues present within SF's culture, which likely contribute to eroding trust and negative impacts to modernization and readiness.

At the individual level, an SF recruit is attracted to a recruiting message congruent with his/her already formed ethic and identity. This deeply rooted identity will produce cognitive dissonance when confronted with incongruent organizational culture. If an individual Green Beret does possess a different identity than that of the expected and desired SF identity and culture, he/she will seek the stability and protection of a like-identity sub-culture…if one is tacitly allowed or explicitly encouraged to exist. And, if sub-identities and sub-cultures do exist at various echelons within SF, there can be no guarantee that individual and collective behavior will be consistent with any espoused (though not codified) overarching organization identity and ethic.

<div align="center">Thesis, Methodology, Literature Review, and Design</div>

<u>Thesis</u>

There is an identity crisis in SF, and it is influencing the culture and behavior of Green Berets. The result of multiple changes in the expectations of SF post-September 11th, 2001, the identity crisis is no one person's fault—it has manifested over two decades. However, strong leadership must address the identity crisis now to restore the morale and honor of the force, enable modernization, and recapture readiness.

<u>Methodology</u>

Comparing the espoused with the actual Green Beret identity and associated values, beliefs, and behaviors will illuminate any misalignment between the two identities. Ultimately this will establish if the overall culture is contributing to an identity crisis. The model of a "three-legged stool" of Green Berets' culture assists in conceptualizing the espoused and actual Green Beret identities (see Figure 5).
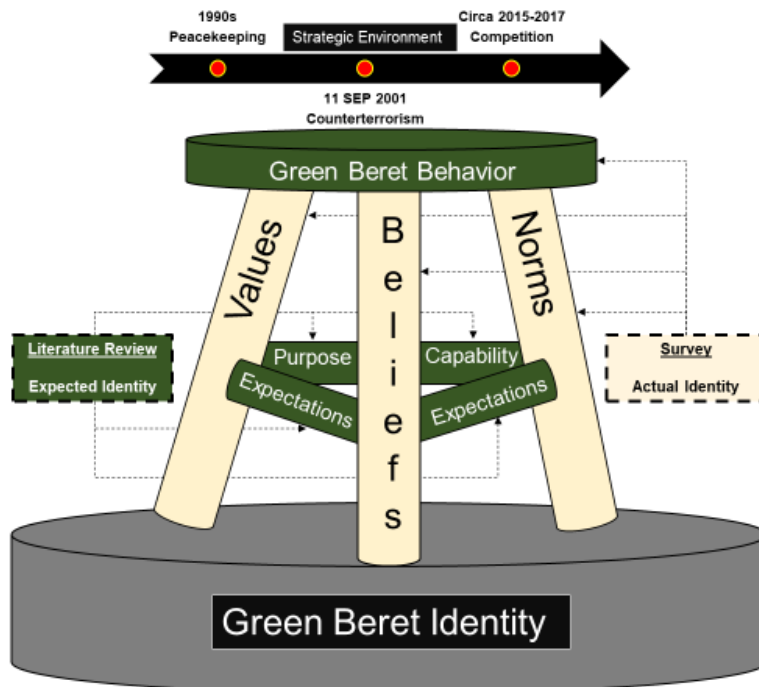
Figure 5. Research Model: 3-Legged Stool[75]

The gray base represents the Green Berets' organizational identity, providing a deeply rooted foundation. Each "leg" represents the actual Green Beret values, beliefs, and norms; informed by identity and ethic, they influence and guide behavior. The legs support the "seat," which represents behavior at the point of interaction between values, beliefs, norms, and the outside world. Finally, the "stretchers," aligning and securing the legs, represent the established purpose, capabilities, and expectations of Green Berets. The stretchers are the independent variables of the project and are established in legal, policy, doctrinal, and professional documents. The legs are the dependent variables and are established by a survey of active duty Green Beret values, beliefs, and behaviors.

Psychologist Carl Jung's culture and identity concept of *Archetypes* is used to define the independent and dependent variables. Jung explains that individual and

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[75] Figure 5. Research Model: 3-Legged Stool, Author Created.

collective identities consist of bunches of individual strands (values, beliefs, and norms) that, when combined, form a distinctive visual or audible emanation (behavior).[76] Jung names these identity strands "archetypes" and describes them as human thought strands that identify what a person is (what someone might do, say, feel, or desire).[77] Documented Green Beret *capabilities* (attributes, standards, and skills), *purpose* (competencies, activities, and tasks), and *expectations* (contemporary mission requirements) form the archetypes. When the archetypes are uniquely arranged and structured, they define the expected Green Beret identity.

<u>Literature Review</u>

Analysis of eighteen legal, doctrinal, policy, and strategy documents determined which archetypes form the established identity (see Table 1). Of note, there is not a single source document that holistically defines the SF profession; this key issue will be addressed later in the paper.

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[76] Valka-Mir Human Security. 110.
[77] Ibid.

Table 1. List of Documents[78]

Law
-Title 10, United States Code: Section 164, Commanders of Combatant Commands: Assignment; Powers and Duties, and Section 167, Unified Combatant Command for Special Operations Forces (SOF)

Doctrine
-Joint Publication (JP) 3-05 Special Operations (May 2014)
-Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-05 Special Operations (January 2018)
-Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-05 Army Special Operations (June 2019)
-Army Field Manual (FM) 3-18 Special Forces Operations (May 2014)

SWCS CG Policy Literature on Capability (Assess-Select-Train-Educate)
-SWCS Placemat (16 October 2019)
-SWCS Academic Handbook FY 2019
-SWCS CG Talking Points NCR (6 November 2019)
-SWCS CG Strategy FY 2020 (21 November 2019)
-SWCS CG ARSOF FORGEN (21 November 2019)
-United States Army – Special Forces Qualifications - GOARMY.COM
https://www.goarmy.com/special-forces/qualificatios-and-benefits.html
-United States Army – Special Forces Training - GOARMY.COM
https://www.goarmy.com/special-forces/training.html (accessed 21 November 2019)
-United States Army – Special Forces Missions - GOARMY.COM
https://www.goarmy.com/special-forces/qualificatios-and-benefits.html

USASOC CG Policy Literature
-United States Army Special Operations Forces Strategy (2019)
-USASOC – Office of the Command Historian (*Veritas*) – Definition of a Special Forces Soldier (CG directed Calling Card):
https://arsofhistory.org/articles/v14n3_calling_cards_page_1.html

Strategic Leader Strategy Literature
-National Security Strategy of the United States of America (2017)
-National Defense Strategy of the United States of America (2018)

The review of the eighteen documents yielded 95 possible criteria for consideration as archetypes of the Green Beret identity. Based on a weighting of leadership priority, consistency, and frequency across the documents, 25 essential archetypes were chosen to define the expected identity and form the foundational

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[78] Table 1 List of Documents, Author Created

survey questions that expose discontinuity between espoused and actual identity (see

Table 2).

Table 2. 25 Selected Archetypes That Define the SF Identity[79]

SF Criterion
Individual: (Attributes-Standards-Skills)
Recruited-Assessed-Selected For
Above Average Physical Fitness
Above Average Intellect
Mature in Years & Experience
Trustworthiness
Trained & Educated in Special Forces Skills
Expert in Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)
Competent in Specialty Skills
Competent in Small Unit Infantry Tactics (SUIT)
Trained & Educated in Special Warfare Skills
Master Trainer
Proficient in Assigned Language
Culturally Astute in Assigned Theater
Committed to Long-Term Partnership Approaches
Trusted in Sensitive & High-Risk Environments
Collective: (Competencies-Activities-Tasks)
Core Competency: Special Warfare (SF)
Unconventional Warfare (UW)
Foreign Internal Defense (FID)
Counterinsurgency (COIN)
Security Force Assistance (SFA)
Partnered Counterterrorism (CT)
Partnered Direct Action (DA)
Partnered Special Reconnaissance (SR)
Preparation of the Environment (PE)
Core Competency: Surgical Strike (Other ARSOF)
Hostage Rescue and Recovery (HR)
Kill/Capture Designated Targets (K/C)
Counterproliferation (CP)
Counter Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD)
Strategic Leader Missions by Priority
Reassure Allies & Partners
Deter Jihadist Terrorist Group Threats
Compete Against Russia & China
Prepare for Conflict
Prepare for Crisis Response

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[79] Table 2 25 Selected Archetypes That Define the USASF Identity, Author Created

Design

      A six-part research design explores the thesis for USASOC, 1st SFC, and the Army's Special Operations Center of Excellence, John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (SWCS) at Fort Bragg, NC: (I) Survey of the SF Regiment to measure misalignment between established and actual organizational identity; (II) Survey Results; (III) Principal Finding; (IV) Analysis; (V) Implications and; (VI) Recommendations for Further Action and Research.

Part I: Survey

In consultation with the U.S. Army War College, Duke University, and USASOC, a mixed-methods comprehensive survey of 42 quantitative and two qualitative questions was developed based on the 25 selected archetypes (see Figure 6). The survey was distributed via email twice over a 30-day period, from December 2019 to January 2020, to all 6,906 Green Berets on active duty.
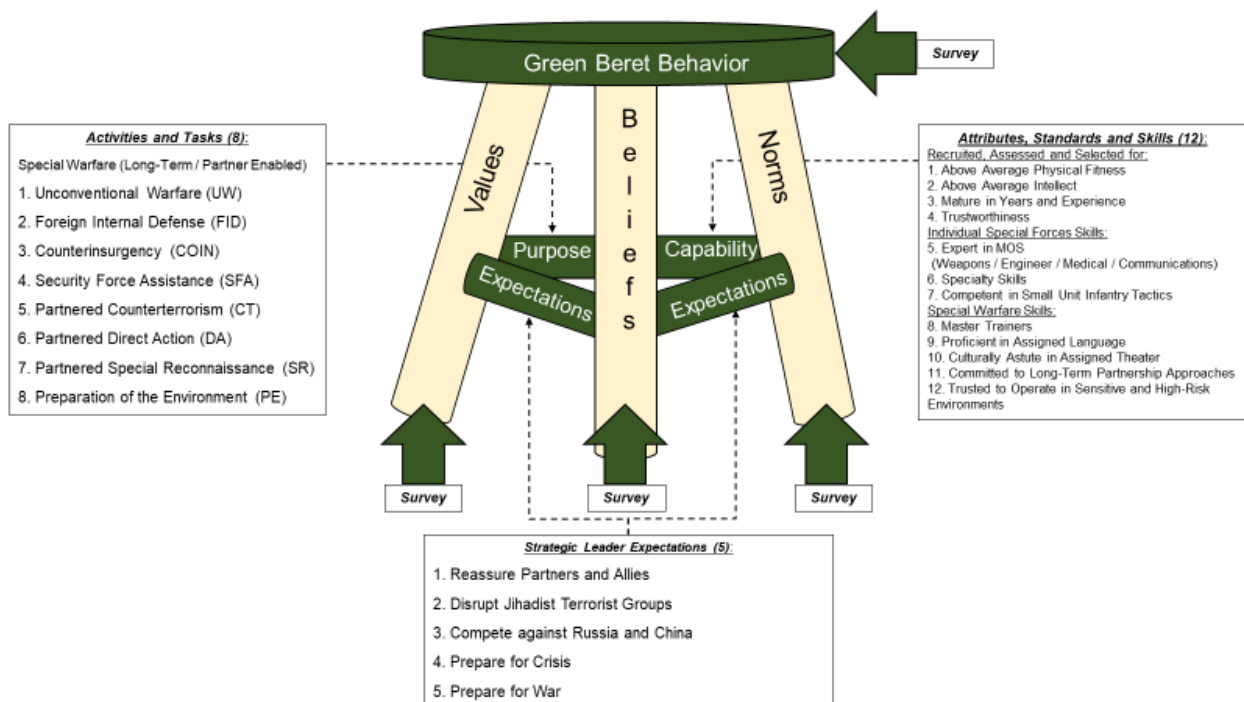
Figure 6. Research Model: 3-Legged Stool with Archetypes[80]

Part II: Survey Results

<u>Demographics and Statistical Significance</u>

The survey received 1,201 responses, or 17.3% of the total population, yielding both statistically significant quantitative data and over 100 pages of qualitative data. E7 - Sergeant First Class responded the most of any grade with 278 or 23% (see Table 3) and survey responses represented all possible duty assignments with 612 or 51% of responses coming from the operational Special Forces Groups (see Figure 7). Duke University recognized 1,100 responses and 5% population segment participation as the thresholds for *statistically significant* research results.

Table 3. Survey Demographic Data by Rank (R) and MOS (M)[81]

	SF Population	Survey Responses Received	% of Rank-MOS Population	% of Total Response Population
NCO (R)	**4,922**	**553**	**11%**	**46%**
SGT		34	6%	3%
SSG		94	17%	8%
SFC		291	53%	24%
MSG		105	19%	9%
SGM		29	5%	2%
NCO (M)	**4,922**	**553**	**11%**	**46%**
18B	1,053	79	8% / 14%	7%
18C	900	80	9% / 14%	7%
18D	775	101	13% / 18%	8%
18E	833	91	10% / 16%	7%
18F	452	68	15% / 12%	6%
18Z	909	134	15% / 24%	11%
180A	**523**	**109**	**21%**	**9%**
W1		11	10%	<1%
CW2		36	33%	3%
CW3		29	27%	2%
CW4		21	19%	2%
CW5		12	11%	<1%
18A	**1,461**	**539**	**37%**	**45%**
CPT	470	146	31% / 27%	12%
MAJ	547	188	34% / 35%	16%
LTC	294	148	50% / 27%	12%
COL	150	57	38% / 11%	5%
TOTAL	**6,906**	**1,201**		**17%**

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[81] Table 3 Survey Demographic Data by Rank (R) and MOS (M), Author Created.
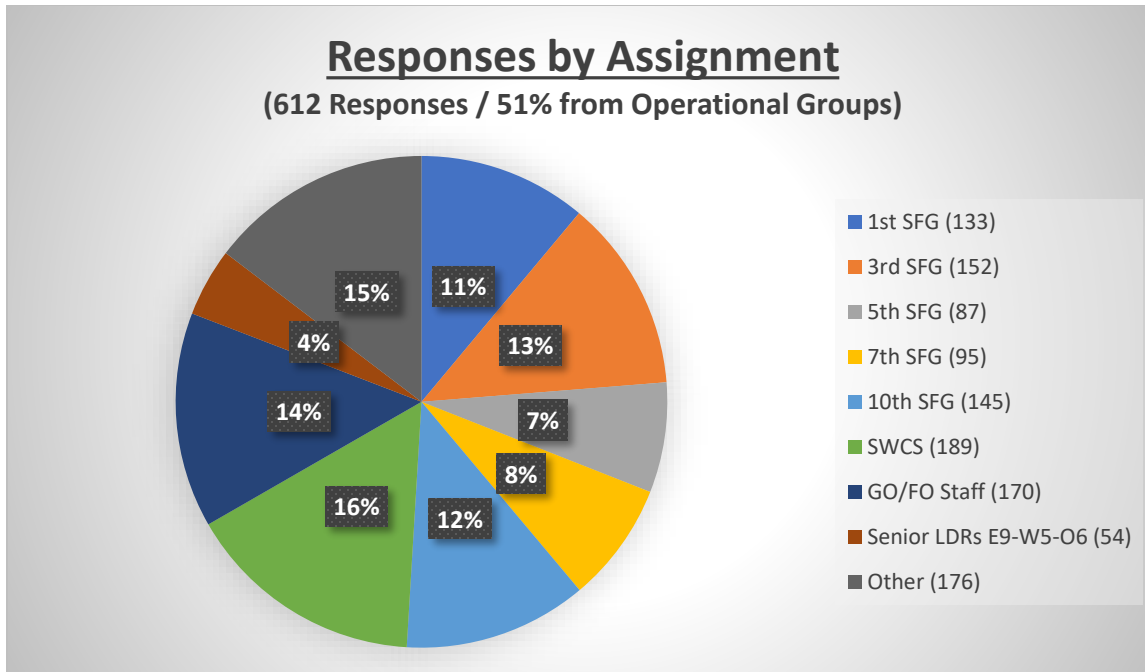
Figure 7. Responses by Assignment[82]

<u>Results</u>

For the purposes of this research paper, misalignment is indicated when 15% or more of the population demonstrates inconsistent values, norms, beliefs or behaviors with the espoused identity archetypes. There are 19 misalignments recorded, and each misalignment is identified below and in Figure 7, Survey Results by Criterion.

Twelve Individual Archetypes (Attributes, Standards, and Skills)

Seven of twelve archetypes recorded 15% or higher quantitative results indicating belief or behavior misalignment. Two archetypes reveal qualitative misalignment (see Table 4).

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[82] Figure 7. Responses by Assignment, Author Created.

Table 4. Alignment (+) / Misalignment (-) of Individual Archetypes[83]

Attributes-Standards-Skills	Beliefs / Behaviors
Recruited-Assessed-Selected For	
(1) Above Average Physical Fitness	**Behaviors (Physical Fitness)** **-43% worse since SFQC Graduation** **-54% no unit or leadership accountability**
(2) Above Average Intellect	**+**
(3) Mature in Years & Experience	**Behaviors (Not mature enough to accomplish mission)** **-27% describe peers** **-72% describe 5-12 SFODA teammates**
(4) Trustworthiness	**Qualitative misalignment only**
Uniquely Trained & Educated in Individual Special Forces Skills	
(5) Expert in MOS	**+**
(6) Competent in Specialty Skills	**+**
(7) Competent in SUIT	**Behavior** **-49% describe 5-12 SFODA teammates not competent**
Uniquely Trained & Educated in Individual Special Warfare Skills	
(8) Master Trainer	**Behavior** **-91% do not feel prepared** **-77% never trained in this skill** **-57% skill not assessed by organization or leadership**
(9) Proficient in Assigned Language	**Belief** **-29% do not believe an important skill** **Behavior** **-62% do not regularly practice** **-52% did not speak their language on their last deployment**
(10) Culturally Astute in Assigned Theater	**Behavior** **-42% not currently regionally aligned with assigned theater**
(11) Committed to Long-Term Partnership Approaches	**Belief** **-69% describe 5-12 SFODA teammates not committed** **-34% report it is better to conduct mission unilaterally**
(12) Trusted to Operate in Sensitive & High-Risk Environments	**Qualitative misalignment only**

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[83] Table 4 Alignment (+) and Misalignment (-) of Individual Archetypes, Author Created.

Eight Special Warfare Archetypes (Competency, Activities, and Tasks)

Unanimous alignment, and strongest agreement, was expected from Green Berets and the Special Warfare partnership approaches of UW, FID, COIN, CT and SFA. However, Green Berets responded that UW (89%), FID (88%), COIN (77%), CT (64%) and SFA (57%) were appropriate activities; far from unanimous agreement. Five of eight Special Warfare archetypes recorded quantitative results of 15% or higher indicating belief misalignment, and all four Surgical Strike archetypes inappropriately recorded 15% or higher belief misalignment (see Table 5).

In contrast, the other ARSOF core competency, Surgical Strike, is intended for other specifically identified ARSOF small units with extensive training for extreme risk and precise execution. The unilateral strike activities of HR, K/C, CT, SR, and DA, the highly technical activities of CP and CWMD, and PE to enable strike and technical activities are not appropriate or expected of SF. Therefore, alignment with unilateral Surgical Strike activities was not expected. However, Green Berets responded that HR (24%), CWMD (29%), CP (30%), and K/C (47%) were appropriate SF activities.

Table 5. Survey Results for Special Warfare and Surgical Strike Archetypes[84]

Competencies-Activities-Tasks	SF Survey Responses	
	Believe Appropriate Activity for SF	Believe Activity Expected by Strategic Leadership
Core Competency: Special Warfare (SF)		
Expected Result	*100%*	
Unconventional Warfare (UW)	**89%**	**81%**
Foreign Internal Defense (FID)	**88%**	**85%**
Counterinsurgency (COIN)	**77%**	**78%**
Security Force Assistance (SFA)	**57%**	**61%**
Partnered Counterterrorism (CT)	**64%**	**63%**
Partnered Direct Action (DA)	**68%**	**69%**
Partnered Special Reconnaissance (SR)	**79%**	**67%**
Preparation of the Environment (PE)	**86%**	**72%**
Core Competency: Surgical Strike (Other ARSOF)		
Expected Result	*0%*	
Hostage Rescue and Recovery (HR)	**24%**	**7%**
Kill/Capture Operations against Designated Targets (K/C)	**47%**	**32%**
Counterproliferation (CP)	**30%**	**10%**
Counter Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD)	**29%**	**9%**

Five Strategic Leader Mission Expectations

Strategic Leaders expect SF to provide a persistent global presence that

contributes to five contemporary missions: reassure partners and allies, degrade jihadist

terrorist group threats, compete against Russia and China, and prepare for crisis or war.

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[84] Table 5 Survey Results for Special Warfare and Surgical Strike Archetypes, Author Created.

Green Berets are expected to recognize that all five requirements are appropriate

missions, with the reassurance of partners and allies as the top priority. Further, survey

results were expected to produce unanimous understanding that SF's contribution to all

five missions is through partnership approaches and a nuanced understanding that the

access and placement gained by any of the five partnership approaches (UW, FID,

COIN, CT, or SFA), enable SF to contribute to all five missions at once. Finally,

USSOCOM leadership expects that Green Berets are prepared for the five

contemporary missions upon graduation from the Special Forces Qualification Course

(SFQC).

Survey results illuminated unexpected misalignment between SF beliefs and

leadership expectations of SF toward the contemporary missions. 16% of respondents

indicated that they do not believe degrading jihadist terrorist groups and competition

with Russia and China are appropriate SF missions. When asked to rank order the

missions by priority, only 15% of respondents ranked the foundational mission for SF,

reassurance of partners and allies, as the most important. Degradation of jihadist

terrorist groups and competition with Russia and China are best accomplished

unilaterally, according to 16% and 18% of respondents, respectively. Finally, 67% of

Green Berets believe they are least prepared to compete with Russia and China, with

many qualitative responses stating that they do not understand how Green Berets

compete with Russia and China (see Table 6).

Table 6. Survey Results for Contemporary Mission Archetypes[85]

Mission Requirements by Priority	SF Survey Responses			
Special Warfare long-term partnership approaches (UW, FID, COIN, or SFA) provide access & placement platforms to:	Believe Appropriate Mission	Chose as Mission Priority	Believe Mission Best Achieved Unilaterally	Believe Least Prepared to Accomplish
1. Reassure Allies & Partners	✓	**15%**	**Not Surveyed**	**3%**
2. Deter Jihadist Terrorist Group Threats	**X** **(16% No)**	**25%**	**16%**	**7%**
3. Compete Against Russia & China	**X** **(16% No)**	**25%**	**18%**	**67%**
4. Prepare for Conflict	✓	**26%**	**Not Surveyed**	**9%**
5. Prepare for Crisis Response	✓	**9%**	**Not Surveyed**	**14%**

To summarize Part II: Survey Results, the survey confirms a total of 22 misalignments between expected and actual archetypes of the Green Beret identity (see Figure 8 and Table 7).

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[85] Table 6 Survey Results for Contemporary Mission Archetypes, Author Created.
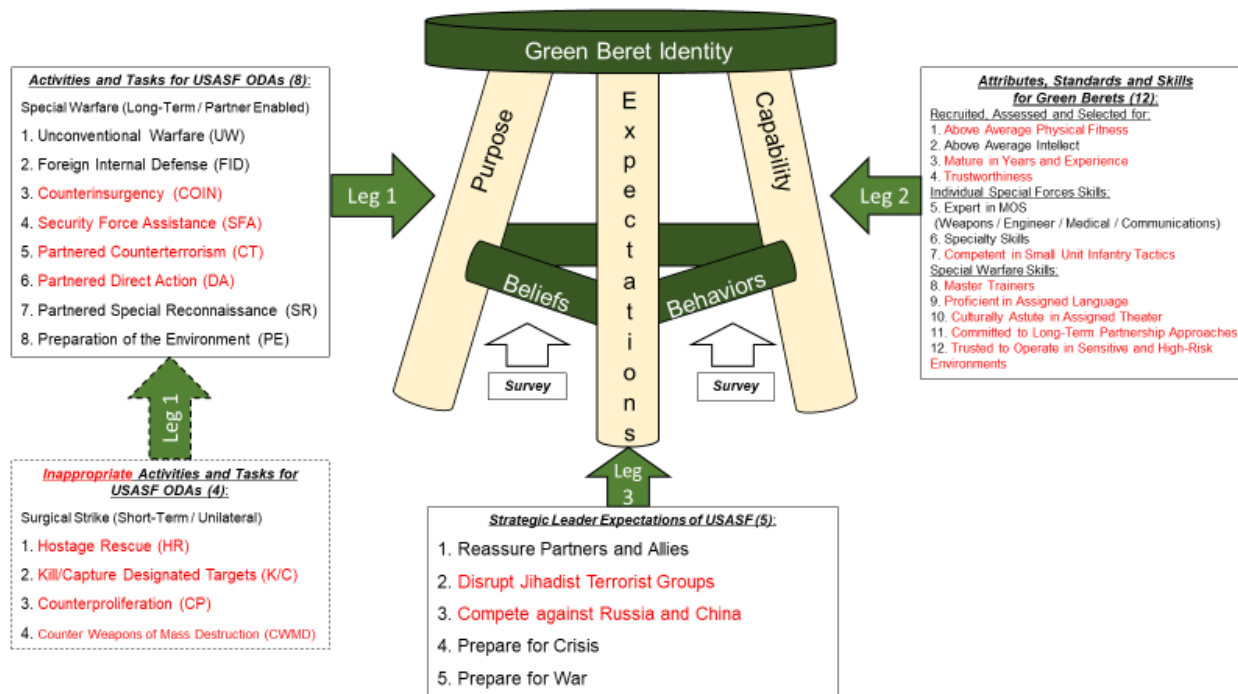
Activities and Tasks for USASF ODAs (8):

Special Warfare (Long-Term / Partner Enabled)

1. Unconventional Warfare (UW)
2. Foreign Internal Defense (FID)
3. Counterinsurgency (COIN)
4. Security Force Assistance (SFA)
5. Partnered Counterterrorism (CT)
6. Partnered Direct Action (DA)
7. Partnered Special Reconnaissance (SR)
8. Preparation of the Environment (PE)

Inappropriate Activities and Tasks for USASF ODAs (4):

Surgical Strike (Short-Term / Unilateral)

1. Hostage Rescue (HR)
2. Kill/Capture Designated Targets (K/C)
3. Counterproliferation (CP)
4. Counter Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD)

Green Beret Identity

Purpose | Expectations | Capability

Leg 1 | Leg 2

Beliefs | Behaviors

Survey | Survey

Leg 3

Attributes, Standards and Skills for Green Berets (12):

Recruited, Assessed and Selected for:
1. Above Average Physical Fitness
2. Above Average Intellect
3. Mature in Years and Experience
4. Trustworthiness

Individual Special Forces Skills:
5. Expert in MOS (Weapons / Engineer / Medical / Communications)
6. Specialty Skills
7. Competent in Small Unit Infantry Tactics

Special Warfare Skills:
8. Master Trainers
9. Proficient in Assigned Language
10. Culturally Astute in Assigned Theater
11. Committed to Long-Term Partnership Approaches
12. Trusted to Operate in Sensitive and High-Risk Environments

Strategic Leader Expectations of USASF (5):

1. Reassure Partners and Allies
2. Disrupt Jihadist Terrorist Groups
3. Compete against Russia and China
4. Prepare for Crisis
5. Prepare for War

Figure 8. 22 Archetype Misalignments[86]

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[86] Figure 8. Archetype Misalignments, Author Created.

Table 7. Survey Results by Archetype[87]

SF Criterion			
Individual: (Attributes-Standards-Skills)	**Belief**	**Behavior**	**Description**
Above Average Physical Fitness	+	**-43%**	**Fitness lower post SFQC**
Above Average Intellect	+	+	
Mature in Years & Experience	+	**-27%** **-72%**	**Peers immature** **5-12 Teammates immature**
Trustworthiness	+	**-**	**Qualitative responses**
Trained & Educated in Special Forces Skills			
Expert in MOS	+	+	
Competent in Specialty Skills	+	+	
Competent in SUIT	+	**-50%**	**5-12 Teammates not competent**
Trained & Educated in Special Warfare Skills			
Master Trainer	+	**-24%** **-53%**	**Not a Master Trainer** **Never taught or assessed**
Proficient in Assigned Language	**-29%**	**-62%** **-52%**	**Practice** **Try to use**
Culturally Astute in Assigned Theater	+	**-17%** **-45%**	**Do not maintain** **Assignment not aligned**
Committed to Long-Term Partnership Approaches	**-34%**	**-28%**	**Not committed**
Trusted in Sensitive & High-Risk Environments	+	**-**	**Qualitative responses**
Collective: (Competencies-Activities-Tasks)	**Belief**		**Description**
Core Competency: Special Warfare (SF)			
Unconventional Warfare (UW)	**-11%**		**Believe inappropriate: DA Identity**
Foreign Internal Defense (FID)	**-12%**		**Believe inappropriate: DA Identity**
Counterinsurgency (COIN)	**-23%**		**Believe inappropriate: DA Identity**
Security Force Assistance (SFA)	**-43%**		**Believe inappropriate: DA Identity**
Partnered Counterterrorism (CT)	**-36%**		**Believe inappropriate: Legacy Identity**
Partnered Direct Action (DA)	**-32%**		**Believe inappropriate: Legacy Identity**
Partnered Special Reconnaissance (SR)	+		
Preparation of the Environment (PE)	**-12%**		**Believe inappropriate: DA Identity**
Core Competency: Surgical Strike (Other ARSOF)			
Hostage Rescue and Recovery (HR)	**+24%**		**Believe appropriate: DA Identity**
Kill/Capture Designated Targets (K/C)	**+47%**		**Believe appropriate: DA Identity**
Counterproliferation (CP)	**+30%**		**Believe appropriate: DA Identity**
Counter Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD)	**+28%**		**Believe appropriate: DA Identity**
Strategic Leader Missions by Priority	**Belief**		**Description**
Reassure Allies & Partners	+		
Disrupt Jihadist Terrorist Group Threats	**-16%**		**Believe inappropriate: Legacy Identity**
Compete Against Russia & China	**-16%** **-67%**		**Believe inappropriate** **Do not feel prepared**
Prepare for Conflict	+		
Prepare for Crisis Response	+		

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[87] Table 7 Survey Results by Archetype, Author Created.

Part III: Principal Finding: An Identity Crisis

Quantitative and qualitative survey data reveal misalignment between the espoused Green Beret identity with actual Green Beret values, beliefs, and behaviors. This misalignment is causally linked to the formation of an uncertain, confused, and insecure Green Beret identity. Unexpectedly, the uncertainty and confusion enabled individuals to self-determine their professional beliefs and behaviors, and left unchecked by leadership and absent a professional identity anchoring document, like-identities aggregated into three distinct identity sub-groups: Direct Action Identity (26%), Legacy Identity (28%), and Modern Identity (46%) (see Figure 9).
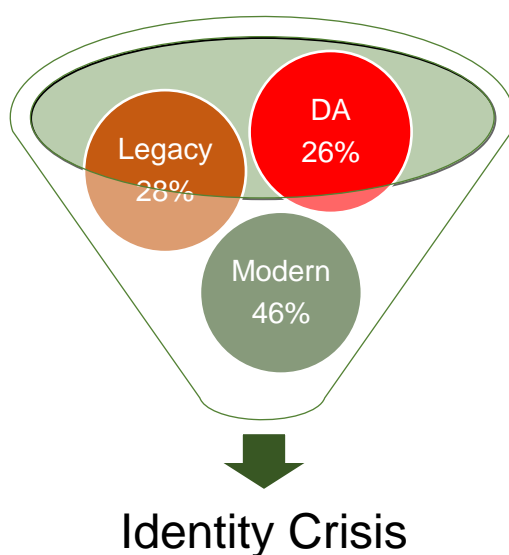

Identity Crisis

Figure 9. Identity Crisis: Three Sub-Identities[88]

The Three Sub-Identities Defined

Direct Action Identity

Approximately 26% of the SF population makes up this segment. This group is aligned with all four individual attributes, and all three Special Forces Skills, established

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[88] Figure 9. Identity Crisis: Three Sub-Identities, Author Created.

for Green Berets. However, this group does not believe in the individual skills of language (29%) or long-term partnership approaches (34%) that build the human domain expertise required for Special Warfare. They also undervalue or reject the established Special Warfare activities of UW (11%), FID (12%), COIN (23%), SFA (43%), and PE (12%). Further, this group believes that the unilateral Surgical Strike activities of HR (24%), K/C (47%), CP (30%), and CWMD (28%), are appropriate and expected activities of SF. With regard to the contemporary missions, this segment believes that the deterrence of jihadist terrorist groups (16%) and competition with China and Russia (18%) are missions best conducted unilaterally.

Legacy Identity

Approximately 28% of the SF population makes up this segment. This group is aligned with all four individual attributes, all three Special Forces Skills, and all five Special Warfare skills established for Green Berets. This group also accepts the established Special Warfare partnership activities of UW, FID, COIN, SFA, and PE and appropriately recognizes that the unilateral Surgical Strike activities are inappropriate for SF.

While this group believes SF is overinvested in CT (36%) and DA (32%), 16% do not believe deterrence of jihadist terrorist groups, and competition with Russia and China are appropriate missions. This group calls for a shift away from deterring jihadist terrorist groups and cautions against supporting ongoing efforts to compete with China and Russia. This group advocates a return to the pre-GWOT mission focus on the Special Warfare partnership activities of UW, FID, COIN, and SFA and are focused only on reassuring partners and allies and preparing for war or crisis.

Modern Identity

Approximately 46% of the SF population makes up this segment. This group's beliefs are aligned with all established SF archetypes surveyed. This group believes the expectations established by law, doctrine, SOF Senior Leaders, the SFQC, and Strategic Leaders are appropriate for SF. This group understands how the twelve individual archetypes build expertise in the human aspects of military operations (Special Warfare) and how to leverage indigenous partners through the contemporary missions of reassuring partners and allies, deterring jihadist terrorist group threats, competing against Russia and China, and preparing for crisis or war. This group understands that the access and placement gained by any of the four partnership approaches (UW, FID, COIN, or SFA) enable SF to contribute to all five missions at once (see Table 8).

Table 8. Survey Results by Sub-Identity (+ Aligned)[89]

SF Criterion	Identity		
Individual: (Attributes-Standards-Skills)	DA	Legacy	Modern
Recruited-Assessed-Selected For			
Above Average Physical Fitness	+	+	+
Above Average Intellect	+	+	+
Mature in Years & Experience	+	+	+
Trustworthiness	+	+	+
Trained & Educated in Special Forces Skills			
Expert in MOS	+	+	+
Competent in Specialty Skills	+	+	+
Competent in SUIT	+	+	+
Trained & Educated in Special Warfare Skills			
Master Trainer	+	+	+
Proficient in Assigned Language	**-29%**	+	+
Culturally Astute in Assigned Theater	+	+	+
Committed to Long-Term Partnership Approaches	**-34%**	+	+
Trusted in Sensitive & High-Risk Environments	+	+	+
Collective: (Competencies-Activities-Tasks)	DA	Legacy	Modern
Core Competency: Special Warfare (SF)			
Unconventional Warfare (UW)	**-11%**	+	+
Foreign Internal Defense (FID)	**-12%**	+	+
Counterinsurgency (COIN)	**-23%**	+	+
Security Force Assistance (SFA)	**-43%**	+	+
Partnered Counterterrorism (CT)	+	**-36%**	+
Partnered Direct Action (DA)	+	**-32%**	+
Partnered Special Reconnaissance (SR)	+	+	+
Preparation of the Environment (PE)	**-12%**	+	+
Core Competency: Surgical Strike (Other ARSOF)			
Hostage Rescue and Recovery (HR)	**+24%**	+	+
Kill/Capture Designated Targets (K/C)	**+47%**	+	+
Counterproliferation (CP)	**+30%**	+	+
Counter Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD)	**+28%**	+	+
Strategic Leader Missions by Priority	DA	Legacy	Modern
Reassure Allies & Partners	+	+	+
Deter Jihadist Terrorist Group Threats	**+16%**	**-16%**	+
Compete Against Russia & China	**+18%**	**-16%**	+
Prepare for Conflict	+	+	+
Prepare for Crisis Response	+	+	+

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[89] Table 8 Survey Results by Sub-Identity (+ Aligned), Author Created.

Sub-Identity Group Rank and Unit Distributions

No single rank or unit dominates a sub-identity. The sub-identities generally reflect ranks and units equivalently, consistent with survey population segment sizes. A 2% tolerance value was used to measure rank and unit variance between survey population and sub-identity group sizes. Minor variances are highlighted below (see Table 9).

The DA identity group was 11% higher for NCOs (7% from the Sergeant First Class segment) than expected, with warrant and commissioned officer segments within 2% tolerance for their respective population sizes. This sub-group was 5% higher for 7th SFG (A) and 3% lower for 3rd SFG (A) segments.

The Legacy identity group was 21% higher for NCOs (14% from the Sergeant First Class segment and 6% from the Staff Sergeant segment), 20% lower for officers than expected, and warrant officers were within 2% tolerance for their respective population sizes. The Legacy group was 13% higher for the "Other" category and 4% higher for 7th SFG (A) segments. 1st SFG (A) (7%) and 10th SFG (A) (8%) were lower than expected for their respective population sizes.

Table 9. Sub-Identity Characteristics (Rank and Unit)[90]

Identity by Rank and Unit	Identity (2%>X>2% Tolerance)		
Rank	DA	Legacy	Modern
Total	312 Total	336 Total	553 Total
Non-Commissioned Officer	57% (46%)	67% (46%)	
SGT / E5	6%	4%	
SSG / E6	7%	14% (8%)	
SFC / E7	31% (24%)	38% (24%)	
MSG / E8	9%	10%	
SGM / E9	4%	1%	
Warrant Officer	9%	8%	
W1	2%	1%	
CW2	3%	4%	
CW3	1%	2%	
CW4	1%	1%	
CW5	2%	0%	
Commissioned Officer	34%	25% (45%)	
CPT / O3	6%	6% (12%)	
MAJ / O4	9%	10% (16%)	
LTC / O5	15%	7% (12%)	
COL / O6	4%	2% (5%)	
Unit	DA	Legacy	
1st SFG(A)	9%	4% (11%)	
3rd SFG(A)	10% (13%)	15%	
5th SFG(A)	6%	9%	
7th SFG(A)	13% (8%)	12% (8%)	
10th SFG(A)	10%	4% (12%)	
SWCS	18%	15%	
GO / FO Staff	15%	13%	
Other	19%	28% (15%)	

[90] Table 9 Sub-Identity Characteristics (Rank and Unit), Author Created.

Summary

One in four Green Berets identify with short-term and unilateral direct action approaches; one in four identify with long-term partnership approaches, but do not believe they are appropriate for the contemporary deterrence and competition missions; two of four identify with long-term partnership approaches and recognize that traditional skills and activities demonstrated by SF are necessary and applicable to the contemporary missions required today. Green Berets evince the sub-identities without respect to rank or unit. This identity crisis and the presence of three sub-identities is consistent with Schein[91] and other leading experts' organizational culture models. But does this matter? Should three sub-cultures be allowed to coexist within SF? Part IV analyzes the implications of the identity crisis for SF.

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[91] Edgar H. Schein. 24.

Part IV: Analysis

I was recruited to SF with the promise of killing or capturing terrorists; my NCO assessor at selection described our purpose as partnership; I participated in the ROBIN SAGE UW Exercise; upon arrival at my SFODA, my Team Sergeant focused on DA, Team Leader on UW, Company Commander on competition with China and Russia (whatever that means), and my Battalion Commander seemed most concerned with language currency. "Who am I supposed to be?"

—Notes from Interview with Departing Green Beret[92]

The frustration in this Green Beret's response captures the essence of the identity crisis. His organizational socialization experience, confused at multiple echelons by key influencers, each with a different identity narrative, highlights the central problem for SF; there is no single established definition of the SF profession accepted across all components of the institution. The absence of a common organizational purpose, formalized in a manner such as doctrine, has several major implications. Without a centering mechanism, institutional components project their sub-identity over the profession's desired identity and self-determine how best to support objectives. Since there is no unity of purpose across the recruiting command, training base, and operational force, the resulting degraded organizational socialization aggravates the identity crisis. The USASOC CG cannot realize the three focus area goals absent a coherent organizational socialization process.

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[92] Edward Croot. "2020 Green Beret Survey." Post Survey Phone Interview. December 19, 2019.

SF Socialization Model

Before addressing the implications, it was necessary to establish a new model as a framework to help visualize the convergence of the identity crisis, organizational socialization, and institutional components, and the resulting impact on the USASOC focus areas (see Figure 10). The three sub-identity groups were brought forward from the findings and represented across the new model: Direct Action (26%), Legacy (28%), and Modern (46%). Remember, the DA identity rejects Special Warfare as a core competency, the Legacy identity accepts Special Warfare but rejects the contemporary deterrence and competition missions, and the Modern identity is fully aligned with the desired organizational identity.
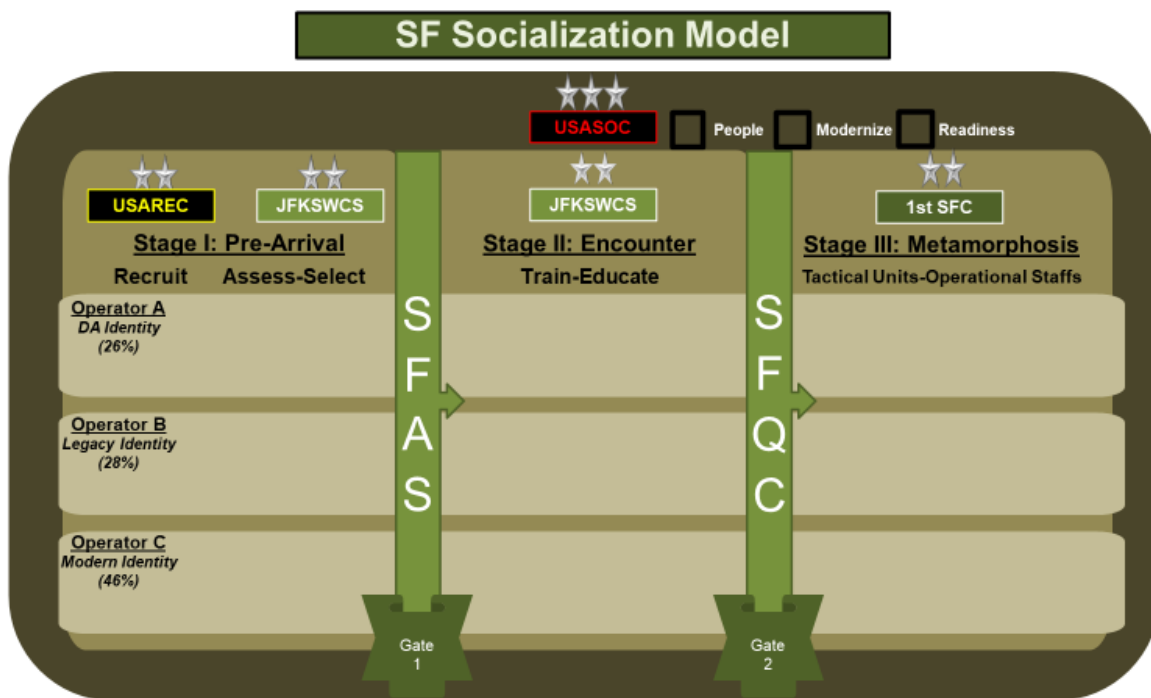
Figure 10. SF Socialization Model[93]

It is also important to apply these concepts from the SF Organizational Culture Model: (1) an individual's identity is formed by early adulthood; (2) the individual will be drawn to like-identity recruiting messages; (3) despite enculturation by the organization, the individual's core identity and ethic will remain difficult to modify and; (4) when faced with an incongruent culture, the individual will seek a congruent sub-culture if one exists, remain in the culture albeit frustrated and unsatisfied, or reject and depart the culture altogether.

Organizational Socialization

Organizations enculturate through socialization, the process of moving a "naïve outsider to a fully socialized insider" of the organization.[94] This is how the organization "transmits" their desired identity and culture to the members.[95] Socialization occurs in three stages: pre-arrival[96], encounter[97], and metamorphosis[98]. Within the SF Socialization Model, the SF socialization elements are organized within the established academic stages: recruitment, assessment, and selection (pre-arrival); training and education (encounter); and organization integration (metamorphosis).

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[94] Cynthia D. Fisher and Jeff A. Weekley, *Socialization in Work Organizations* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University, 1982), accessed April 14, 2020, https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a113574.pdf__;!!OToaGQ!4hmTZwO_9-p1a0vEVVMKguHnlvXfAzZyN0WBU1ma6xY-rypNaxSmqp7pU--7gWHIl5w$. 28.

[95] Ibid., 94.

[96] Stephen H. Konya and Rob Johnson, *Organizational Culture: Anticipatory Socialization and Intelligence Analysts* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 2007), accessed April 14, 2020, https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/analytic-culture-in-the-u-s-intelligence-community/chapter_8_organizculture.htm__;!!OToaGQ!4hmTZwO_9-p1a0vEVVMKguHnlvXfAzZyN0WBU1ma6xY-rypNaxSmqp7pU--7VTIwPN0$.

[97] Cynthia D. Fisher and Jeff A. Weekley. 31.

[98] Ibid., 32.

Institutional Components

As the three-star headquarters, USASOC oversees the three two-star headquarters responsible for SF's stages of socialization: The United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (SWCS), and the 1st Special Forces Command (1st SFC). USAREC is responsible for the non-prior service recruiting or 18X Program (approximately 40% of the annual recruiting mission). Within SWCS, the Special Operations Recruiting Battalion (SORB) is responsible for in-service recruiting (approximately 60% of the annual recruiting mission). SWCS has overall responsibility for assessment, selection, training, and education. The pre-arrival stage assessment and selection occur in the 24-day SFAS Course and serve as the first socialization gate. The encounter stage occurs throughout the 54-week SFQC and serves as the second socialization gate. 1st SFC is responsible for the metamorphosis stage of organizational integration. With the SF Organizational Culture and SF Socialization Models established as guideposts, it is time to consider implications of the identity crisis.

Part V: Implications

The identity crisis will continue unless it is countered by an established,

understood, and shared definition of the SF profession. Without a centering mechanism,

institutional components self-determine how best to support objectives, which in many

instances are not congruent with the organization's desired identity, and this degrades

the socialization process. Without proper socialization of the desired SF organizational

culture, the identity crisis will continue to thrive and prevent the USASOC CG from fully

realizing his goals to prioritize people and build trust, modernize to be the Army's force

of choice in competition, and focus readiness to support the Joint Force in conflict.

<u>Failing to Recruit and Retain the Nation's Best Special Warfare Talent</u>

The USASOC strategy directs a focus on "21st Century Talent Management" that

attracts and retains the Nation's best performers,[99] and for SF, this means the best

Special Warfare talent. Lacking a shared professional definition to guide marketing, the

nearly five-minutes long official U.S. Army Special Forces recruiting video repeatedly

dramatizes direct action skills, but only hints at irregular warfare, unconventional

warfare, and the concept of partnership.[100] Also, the recruiting pages present a total of

16 pictures; one portrays SF engaging with indigenous peoples, while fifteen display

unilateral and direct action activities.[101] These initiatives to recruit Green Berets present

misleading direct action themes in lieu of more desirable partnership themes (see

Figure 11).

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[99] LTG Francis M. Beaudette. 5.
[100] U.S. Army, "Special Forces Recruiting Video," accessed April 4, 2020.
https://www.goarmy.com/careers-and-jobs/browse-career-and-job-categories/combat/special-forces-candidate.html.
[101] U.S. Army, "Special Forces Recruiting Page," accessed April 4, 2020.
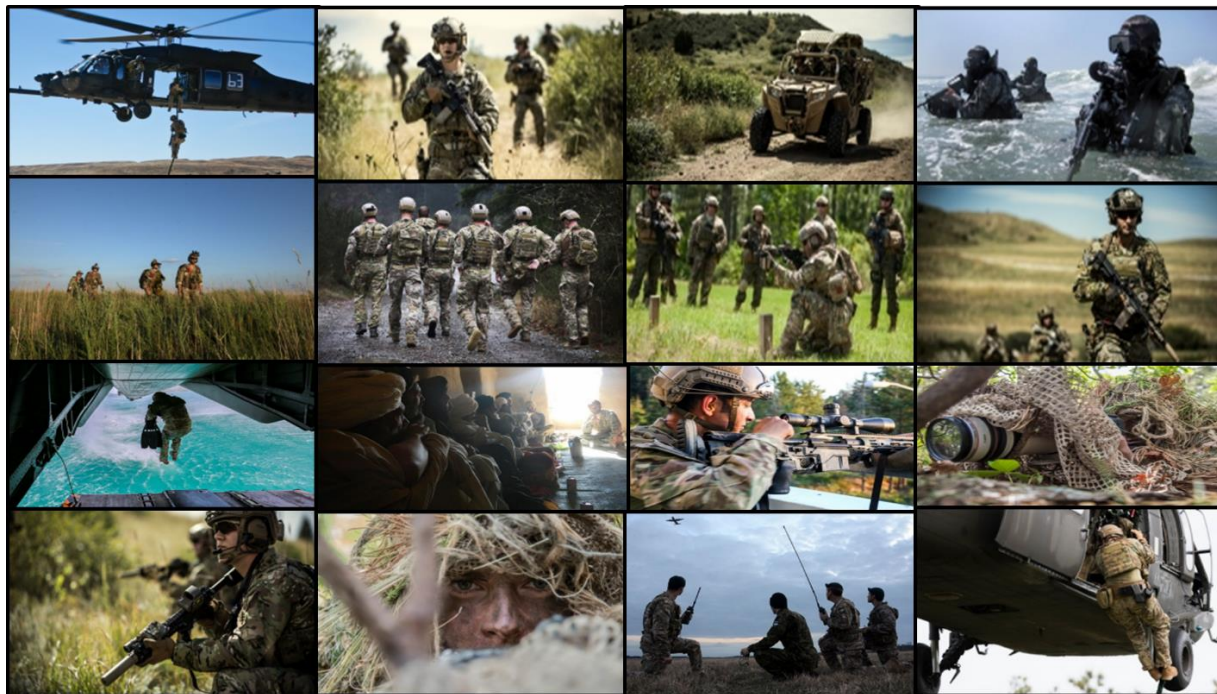https://www.goarmy.com/special-forces.html.

Figure 11. GoArmy.com Special Forces Recruiting Pictures from 4 April 2020[102]

The conflicting recruiting messages and goals set conditions for SF socialization

failure. In the pre-arrival stage, individuals form their expectations of an occupation and

determine congruence between the organization and their needs and desires.[103] In turn,

the organization establishes its "organizational selection"[104] criteria to include desired

member identity and marketing strategy to attract the right applicant. Finally, effective

matching of the individual's desires and expectations with organizational reality will

simplify "the transition from nonmember to member."[105] Within SF, this stage serves as

the first gate to the organization, includes the recruitment of Green Berets by USAREC

and the Special Operations Recruiting Battalion (SORB), and assessment and selection

by JFKSWCS in the 24-day SFAS Course.

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[102] Figure 11. GoArmy.com Special Forces Recruiting Pictures from 4 April 2020, Author Created.
[103] Cynthia D. Fisher and Jeff A. Weekley. 31.
[104] Ibid., 28.
[105] Ibid., 31.

However, because Green Beret socialization does not begin with an authentic recruiting message, and only given 24-days to assess candidates, SFAS cannot accurately select all individuals with the desired organizational identity. It is likely that many in the 26% Direct Action sub-group were attracted by a DA recruiting message, entered SF already valuing and desiring a DA profession, and will not modify this DA identity in the future.

Many survey respondents confirmed this assessment by describing the SF recruiting narrative, pictures, and videos as "*disingenuous*" and "*biased*" toward Direct Action and Surgical Strike. A Master Sergeant currently serving in SWCS proclaimed, "While doctrine states that we are looking for people to do [the Special Warfare activities], that is not who we select. The current Assessment and Selection system is broken. As is recruiting. We are recruiting the wrong people, for the wrong reasons."[106] A CW3 on staff stated: *"*We acquire soldiers under [the] false premise of DA/CT/HR. Our posters and recruiting [are] focused on the kinetic activity and not the professional soldier who is selected to run guerrilla or counter-guerrilla operations and integrate or fight directly against a resistance/insurgency by enabling partners.*"[107]*

A Sergeant First Class currently serving on an SFOD-A summarized the impact of failed socialization in the pre-arrival stage and its impact:

> "It seems most SF Soldiers are recruited with the promise of conducting DA against terrorists. This causes frustration and a lack of desire [and] appreciation for Irregular Warfare. Many…don't care about the Human Domain. This marks a failure to understand what SF's role and purpose is. The culture and values of SF have been slowly eroding due to this. The

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[106] Edward Croot. "2020 Green Beret Survey." Survey. February 10, 2020, 78.
[107] Ibid., January 17, 2020, 80.

professional implication is that the force doesn't know what its purpose is. And if it doesn't know its purpose, then how can it be effective?"[108]

Another Sergeant First Class from the operational force stated: "We have forgotten what we were designed to be. Recruiting and retention are less than stellar for CMF-18. Why are the NCOs of the regiment disgruntled? Maybe it is because they were recruited to become door kickers with beards and not overthrowing strategic level entities. When was the last time someone said De Oppresso Libre with pride?"[109] Yet another Sergeant First Class commented: "Special Forces is experiencing an identity crisis in a few ways. [New] SF soldiers coming to the regiment today believe they are joining something that mirrors Delta Force. This is affecting the quality of individuals we are receiving and is largely affecting retention."[110]

Authentic recruiting messages and accurate selection practices are necessary to ensure congruence between personal and professional identities. One must recruit, assess, and select the congruent identity that will imbue the beliefs, values, and norms of the profession. One cannot simply overlay the beliefs, values, and norms of a profession *on* a person with an incongruent and pre-formed identity. Failure to get recruiting right in the pre-arrival stage of socialization will not attract now, or retain later, the best Special Warfare talent.

At this point in the socialization process, the identity crisis begins for the DA identity group, who joined the organization under false pretenses. Conversely, the Legacy and Modern identity groups were attracted to the organization by different influences and are aligned with the desired identity at this stage.

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[108] Ibid., December 17, 2020, 113.
[109] Ibid., January 9, 2020, 95.
[110] Ibid., January 9, 2020, 91.

<u>Failing to Modernize for Competition</u>

The USASOC strategy directs the force to "sustain Counter-VEO operations while shifting focus to near-peer competition"[111] and "out-maneuver adversaries in the competition space."[112] But without a shared professional definition to center the training base, the misguided DA identity group continues to reject Special Warfare's approaches, and the uninformed Legacy identity group struggles to appreciate Special Warfare's relevance to the deterrence and competition mission requirements; both tendencies indicate inadequate SF socialization.

The underlying principle of socialization is that the organization repeatedly exposes the individual to the desired culture that includes expected identity, values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors. If an individual is exposed to contrary versions of the culture, such as DA identity, or is not exposed to critical components of the culture, such as contemporary missions, effective socialization cannot occur. A Major and recent company commander, observes the effects of the identity crisis on his formation and its impact on modernization objectives:

> *Across my company, it is not universally clear what our purpose is. Some are very comfortable with the counterterrorism mission, some believe our purpose is to remain focused on Unconventional Warfare readiness, and some believe we should be spread across our theater competing with Russia and China in the grey-zone. What [should] set us apart from all other military forces is our unique ability to establish lasting and meaningful partnerships. With partnership as our foundation, we should be viewed as an enormous strategic asset and the USG's force of choice for deterring jihadist groups, competing in the grey-zone, and preparing the environment for war. Unfortunately, the Green Berets in my company didn't graduate the SFQC with this understanding, and they don't hear it from leadership.*[113]

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[111] LTG Francis M. Beaudette. 4.
[112] Ibid., 5.
[113] Edward Croot. "2020 Green Beret Survey." Post Survey Phone Interview. January 3, 2019.

Failure to orient the force toward contemporary missions during the encounter stage sets conditions for reduced readiness and modernization. In the encounter stage, individuals begin to learn their role, master tasks, develop relationships, and confirm or deny their expectations of the organization.[114] This stage is considered the "most crucial for effective socialization,"[115] because the individual's primary goals are learning the rules of the culture and gaining acceptance, and most frequently leads to "blind obedience and conformity."[116] Within SF, this stage serves as the second gate to the organization and includes training and education by SWCS in the 54-week SFQC.

From the survey, 42% of respondents claimed not to have received adequate training or education on the contemporary operating environment and were not prepared upon graduating from the SFQC. They cited a lack of advanced strategic studies and education to help them bridge cultural awareness with the nuances of the strategic environment. Many NCOs share this MSG's belief that officers should not have a monopoly on strategic education and opportunities at SFQC, universities, or abroad and surmise that the lack of strategic study opportunities limits their appreciation of the contemporary deterrence and competition missions. This claim is consistent with 20% more NCOs populating the Legacy group as highlighted in Table 9 of Part III of this research paper. A Master/Team Sergeant from Group lamented, "The SF operators are expected to know and understand the current operating environment, however, in the SFQC they do not teach the National Security strategies and U.S. priorities to the operators"[117] and only to the officers.

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[114] Cynthia D. Fisher and Jeff A. Weekley. 31.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Edward Croot. "2020 Green Beret Survey." Survey. December 18, 2020, 112.

A large group of survey respondents, CT (36%) and DA (32%), believe SF is overinvested in deterring jihadist groups and should shift away from these activities and missions. A Sergeant First Class from the Legacy identity group demonstrated this sentiment:

> "Deter jihadist terrorist group threats should be other organizations like [national units], SEALs, MARSOC, and Rangers. They train on Direct Action. Green Berets have unique and special skills of working with people. Quit chasing the shiny and cool object we call counter-terrorism. A successful GB doesn't even have to go on the objective to have desired effects. If a GB wants to shoot people, then he should just go to a SMU."[118]

Further, 16% of survey respondents do not believe competition with Russia and China is an appropriate mission for SF, and a much greater 67% do not understand or feel prepared for the competition mission. A Master Sergeant from Group stated, "In my opinion, zero SFQC graduates are fully prepared to execute competition with Russia and China…the base-line trained Green Beret graduate of the SFQC does not get this training."[119] A Captain from a different Group noted:

> "I rank order preparation for competing against Russia and China as low…we do not discuss how this is accomplished (against near peer enemies) in the Q-course. [I understand] there are ways to accomplish this task through actions we are already conducting, but we did not discuss this as a critical focus during the course."[120]

A third Green Beret noted, "We need to have the SFQC teach that DoD is not the government agency [with] primacy to compete against China and Russia. We support the interagency competition efforts…right now, most GBs I meet [still] think killing people is [all that] we do".[121]

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[118] Ibid., January 19, 2020, 107.
[119] Ibid., January 9, 2020, 93.
[120] Ibid., January 13 2020, 83.
[121] Ibid., December 16, 2020, 123.

At this point in the socialization process and given that 46% of the surveyed population (Modern identity group) is fully aligned with the desired Green Beret identity, it is apparent that the SFQC successfully socializes nearly one-half of SFQC students. Also, drawing from the SF socialization model, the DA identity group (26%) will not modify their identity even under proper socialization conditions. Finally, socialization in the SFQC is not adequately integrating the contemporary irregular warfare environment, which largely manifests in the Legacy identity group (28%).

<u>Failing to Improve Force Preservation and Readiness</u>

The USASOC CG is focused on improving readiness by protecting and preserving a healthy force that "no longer deploys to redline," with a goal of "1:2 deployment to dwell ratio."[122] To achieve this, he directs leadership and staff to "[maximize] predictability, [reduce] uncertainty, protect [Soldier's] time…divest of legacy missions, and exercise discipline in sourcing [missions]." [123] Unfortunately, identity-conflicted leaders and planners over-employ and misallocate the force and thus disrupt the CG's goal of improving readiness through more disciplined force employment. As cited earlier, this is also a major finding of the USSOCOM Comprehensive Review. These practices have strategic consequences for SOF and other services, as summarized by these comments from a sitting Team Sergeant and Major on staff, respectively:

> "We are deployed all over the world doing missions outside of our scope. Generals and policymakers seem to think that USASF can do anything… SOCOM on down either agrees or doesn't know how to say no…SF is trying to be too many things to too many people…we have become jack of all trades and masters of none."[124] — "By taking the approach of 'we'll do

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[122] LTG Francis M. Beaudette. 5.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Edward Croot. "2020 Green Beret Survey." Survey. December 19, 2020, 110.

it! what is it?' we cannot reliably deliver what we sell as our capabilities to senior leaders, and we are undercut by other services who more narrowly scope their capabilities and then perform them better."[125]

Drawing from the SF Socialization model, 1st SFC is responsible for the metamorphosis stage of organizational integration and is expected to cultivate an individual identity and culture congruent with the desired organizational identity and culture. In the metamorphosis stage, individuals learn how things "really work" on the inside and are most concerned with what it takes to become a "fully accepted member of the organization."[126] The individual "settles into new values and behaviors consistent with prevailing norms" of the organization.[127] It is in this stage that if new members find congruence with their individual identities, they are satisfied.

However, if faced with an incongruent identity and culture, the individual will seek a congruent sub-culture if one exists, remain in the culture albeit frustrated and unsatisfied, or reject and depart the culture altogether. An SF organization that fails to synchronize unified purpose, personnel assignments, and appropriate missions, prevents individuals from ever becoming Special Warfare experts. This reduces the organization's effectiveness and leads to job dissatisfaction.

Many survey respondents are frustrated with the incongruent organizational culture within the operational force. Leaders and planners with the DA mindset value short-term, transactional relationships. Moreover, this mindset gravitates toward unilateral actions, and seek missions with promise of enemy contact such as

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[125] Ibid., December 17 2020, 117.
[126] Cynthia D. Fisher and Jeff A. Weekley. 32.
[127] Ibid.

counterterrorism operations against jihadist terrorist groups. Many in SF are frustrated with leaders from the DA identity group (26%), as expressed in the following sentiments:

> "SF is the National Partner Force, not the National Mission Force." "We have a holdover era of leaders from Iraq [and Afghanistan] that wants to spend 90% of their [training] time on CT, DA, and SR through SFAUC, Combat Management Marksmanship Skills (CMMS), and MFF." "It is really frustrating because our Company has regional engagements, not combat rotations, scheduled for the next several years."[128]

Another Green Beret stated, "One of the greatest frustrations of a Green Beret is that you sign up to do this great task and mission of UW, yet are constantly employed doing [other missions]."[129]

Leaders with the Legacy identity undervalue regional alignment and persistent presence that reassure allies and partners and compete with Russia and China. From the survey, 42% of respondents reported that they are not assigned to a regional unit not aligned with their target language and 52% report their last deployment was to a country not aligned with their assigned region. This misalignment sends the message that language and culture are not important to leadership or mission accomplishment, resulting in 62% of respondents not valuing or practicing their language routinely.

A Team Sergeant explained that "In eight years on an SFODA I deployed to the region of my language one time for a two-month JCET; now, I am a Team Sergeant in a different Group assigned to a different region. I think language should be important but why bother when leadership doesn't consistently assign us to units or missions aligned with our language?"[130] A Sergeant First Class currently serving on an SFOD-A commented, "We, as a force, are not committed to long-term anything because we

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[128] Edward Croot. "2020 Green Beret Survey." Survey. December 26, 2020, 107.
[129] Ibid., December 16 2020, 122.
[130] Ibid., December 31 2020, 93.

infrequently deploy to the same place/mission twice. How can anyone become a master in their field if they can't even devote sufficient time…to one AOR?"[131]

The Direct Action and Legacy identities are at variance with the contemporary Special Warfare missions and activities and incur opportunity costs. Energy expended toward activities not assigned to, or expected of, a unit, will compete with opportunities to increase readiness in those activities that are assigned and expected to be performed. When SF are used for non-SF missions, there are several undesirable effects: SF does not divest from legacy missions; leaders and planners do not exercise discipline in sourcing; and SF are not available for appropriate SF missions. The identity crisis adversely impacts all of USASOC's readiness objectives.

At the conclusion of the socialization process, members from the DA identity will migrate to a DA sub-identity group, if one exists. If not, they will become dissatisfied, increasing the likelihood of their departure. The Legacy identity group will behave in the same manner as the DA group, albeit for different reasons. Members of the Modern identity group have the best chance (46%) of working with and for like-identity individuals. However, even though this group is aligned completely with who and what a Green Beret is expected to be today, it may not matter; when they are smothered by misaligned leaders or teammates with DA and Legacy identity group paradigms, values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors, they also experience frustration and job dissatisfaction.

To summarize Part IV, without a sanctioned <u>common definition</u> of the <u>SF profession,</u> the identity crisis within SF will continue. Without a centering mechanism, institutional components self-determine how best to support objectives, which are in

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[131] Ibid., December 17, 2020, 113.

many instances not congruent with the organization's desired identity, and this weakens the socialization process (see Figure 12).
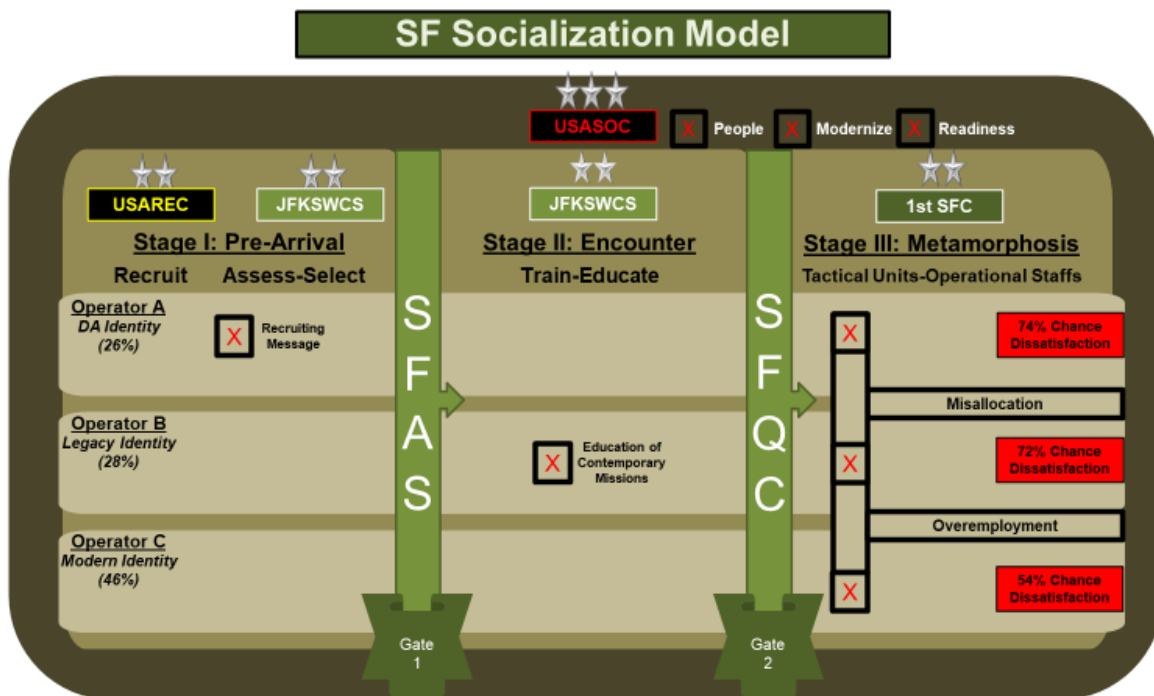

Figure 12. Identity Crisis Impact on SF Socialization[132]

The DA sub-identity prevents authentic recruiting efforts to attract the right talent and causes damaging effects on trust and Soldier wellness. The identity crisis disrupts modernization goals by preventing some from gaining a nuanced understanding of Special Warfare in the contemporary environment. Finally, the DA and Legacy sub-identities undermine Special Warfare readiness with issues of opportunity cost and degrade force preparation and readiness through overemployment and misallocation.

Where does USASOC begin to address the identity crisis within SF? Are there potential lessons for other cohorts within USSOCOM who are possibly struggling to understand their identity, culture, and ethical transgressions? These questions are the

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[132] Figure 12. Identity Crisis Impact on SF Socialization, Author Created.

subject of Part VI, which provides initial recommendations for consideration by USASOC and USSOCOM Leadership.

Part VI: Recommendations for Further Action and Research

USASOC leadership must assess and define the Green Beret profession, in a foundational doctrinal document similar to the Army's ADP 1 and ADRP 1, to ensure alignment across all institutional components of the SF enterprise. Defining the profession in ADP 1-18 *Special Forces Profession* will establish one identity "down and in" to recalibrate and unify SF.

For a military profession to lose its sense of identity and purpose is nothing new. A decade of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan and Iraq left the Army underprepared for land warfare with nation-state peer armies and the Army's Chief of Staff GEN (R) Raymond Odierno recognized the "period of strategic transition" and that change was necessary.[133] When faced with changes in the strategic environment, Army leadership acknowledged it had lost its sense of purpose and identity. It then boldly and holistically initiated recovery and transformation by focusing on reassessing and redefining its core[134] and promulgated ADP 1 – *The Army,* which included a chapter specifically defining *Our Profession*[135]. Subsequently, in 2013, it published ADRP 1 – *The Army Profession*, to reassess its purpose, redefine its profession, and describe Army culture.[136] It further addressed questions about the Army Ethic as the foundation for developing the moral *identity* of Army Professionals.[137] The Army White Paper notes "that the essential characteristic *Trust* is based on adherence to the Army Ethic in the performance of *Duty* and in all aspects of life." [138]

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[133] Center for the Army Profession and Ethic. i.
[134] Ibid., 1.
[135] U.S. Army, *Army Doctrine Publication-1: The Army* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army, 2012).
[136] U.S. Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication-1: The Army Profession*.
[137] Ibid., 4-2.
[138] The Army Ethic White Paper Center for the Army Profession and Ethic. 2.

Anchoring the profession in ADP 1-18 *Special Forces Profession* will provide the centering mechanism to ensure unity of purpose and effort across the institutional segments. It will ensure authentic recruiting messages are rooted in the profession's core purpose and align recruit expectations with the SF profession. It will remove ambiguous readiness requirements for SF by directing the organization's attributes, skills, competencies, activities, and missions. It will enable leaders and planners to analyze contemporary mission requirements and decline tasks and missions misaligned with Special Warfare capabilities, ultimately protecting the force from inappropriate commitments. Finally, ADP 1-18 will build consensus at higher levels by accurately and coherently communicating the value of SF "up and out" to the Army, Joint Force, and interagency partners. Only when the profession is clearly defined, and shared, by all SF Green Berets, can the organization overcome the identity crisis and fully realize the USASOC CG's objectives for the force.

USSOCOM should consider organizational identity in any future reviews of cohort culture or ethics. Although this was an active duty Green Beret research project, the lessons likely apply to other USSOCOM cohorts struggling to understand their identity, culture, and ethical transgressions. General Clarke's Comprehensive Review of the culture and ethics of SOF did not find a systemic ethics problem,[139] but did find cultural problems."[140] This seems inconsistent with published academic studies and the Army's understanding of the interdependence of identity, culture, and ethic.

Therefore, understanding the beliefs and behaviors of the individual, and how they impact the shared beliefs and behaviors of the individuals that make up the group's

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[139] GEN Richard D. Clarke. 4.
[140] Ibid., 39.

identity and culture, are essential to changing a culture[141] and not mutually exclusive

from ethical decision making. "Professionals are guided by their ethic; the set of

principles which they practice, in the right way, on behalf of those they serve –

demonstrating their *Character*…this [ethic] is their *identity*."[142]

Perhaps the real problem, one that addresses the ethics issues, can only be

addressed by taking a hard look at the underlying assumptions and identity beliefs of

the cohort cultures across USSOCOM. The existence of a problematic culture, without

ethical and identity problems, is unlikely. Identity, culture, and ethical decisions are

inextricably intertwined. The identity crisis is impacting SF culture and ethical decision

making. It is likely that similar identity crisis issues exist within other cohorts of

USSOCOM and impacts their cultures and organization's ethics. The ethic enables the

professional to understand the purpose of their profession, "that the ethical practices are

the professional standard and that unethical practices must not be tolerated."[143]

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[141] Edgar H. Schein. 33.
[142] Center for the Army Profession and Ethic. i.
[143] Ibid., 2.

Conclusion

The Green Berets have a proud history, rich heritage, and a historic ethic of service to the nation and willingness to sacrifice. However, there is one very hard "truth" for senior SF leadership from this research project: The Green Berets have an identity crisis.

U.S. strategic leadership reactions to 9/11 and subsequent events resulted in changing expectations for Green Berets, and this dialectic has manifested itself in three distinct identities within the Force. Through their beliefs and behaviors, some currently serving Green Berets are no longer embracing the doctrinal role of SF by rejecting long-term partnership operations in favor of short-term unilateral approaches. Others do not understand or accept our current value to the Army, Joint Force, and interagency partners. A third group, even though aligned completely with who and what a Green Beret is expected to be today, is often smothered by misaligned leaders or teammates. How will SF leadership identify the hazards and manage the risks associated with the established identity crisis?

Cultural fragmentation in an organization will eventually tear the organization apart from the inside. Leadership must recognize and acknowledge the dysfunctional elements of the existing culture and manage the necessary cultural evolution in a way that enables the group to survive in a changing environment. If leaders do not become conscious of the sub-cultures within their organization, "those cultures will manage them"[144]. Understanding identity and culture "is essential to leaders if they are to lead."[145]

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[144] Edgar H. Schein. 22.
[145] Ibid.

We must reflect on the experiences of the past 20 years and assess the impact on the identity of the force. If we are a learning institution, it is imperative that we *see ourselves* clearly and honestly so we can determine how we should define our profession. Senior SF leadership must begin by acknowledging this crisis and commit to understanding and defining *who* Green Berets are and what Green Berets *do*.

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