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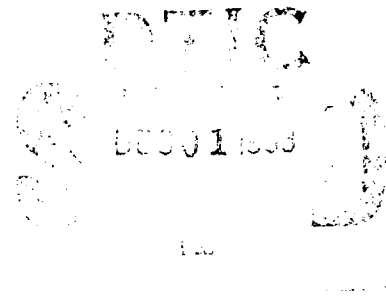
**U.S. Army Research Institute  
for the Behavioral and Social Sciences**

**Research Report 1648**

# **Information Needs of Enlisted Soldiers When Making a Special Forces Career Decision**

**Ann M. Herd**  
Marymount University

**Judith E. Brooks**  
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**October 1993**

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# U.S. ARMY RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR THE BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

**A Field Operating Agency Under the Jurisdiction  
of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel**

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Director

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**October 1993**

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## FOREWORD

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The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) and the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, have established a research program to address manpower and personnel needs of Special Forces (SF). One of the early research outcomes recommends exploration of informed decision models in SF recruiting. This particular project identifies the information that will be most useful for enlisted soldiers deciding whether or not to pursue a career in SF.

The Leadership and Organizational Change Technical Area of ARI's Manpower and Personnel Research Division conducted the research as part of the advanced development program. Support for this effort is documented in a June 1991 Memorandum of Agreement between the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) and ARI. The findings contained in this report were briefed to USASOC and USAJFKSWCS staff in April 1993. The findings are also being used to develop a prototype SF information booklet for SF recruiting purposes.



EDGAR M. JOHNSON  
Director

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The authors wish to thank all the Special Forces commanders, soldiers, and wives who provided information for this report. Special thanks go to Lieutenant Colonel Philbrick and Lieutenant Colonel Kershner from 10th Group, Colonel Pulley and Lieutenant Colonel Hiett from 7th Group, Lieutenant Colonel Paxton and Major Peska from 5th Group, Colonel Kensinger and Command Sergeant Major Weaver from 3rd Group, and Mr. Pearson from 1st Group. Special acknowledgment also goes to Lieutenant Colonel Davis, Major Perkins, Captain Conner, Major Allen, and Sergeant Major Rupert at the U.S. Total Army Personnel Command. We are grateful to Captain Goodwin, Major Martinez, Lieutenant Colonel McCracken, Sergeant Major Neale, Chaplain Neetz, Major Novitske, Manny Perry, and several others from the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School for their support and insights. In particular, we thank Sergeant Major Joe Murray for the generous amount of time he contributed in the early stages of the research. Staff in Special Forces Command, especially Chaplain Mack, were very supportive and helpful. We also gratefully acknowledge the support of Mrs. Wheeler and others in the Special Forces recruiting office at Fort Bragg.

# INFORMATION NEEDS OF ENLISTED SOLDIERS WHEN MAKING A SPECIAL FORCES CAREER DECISION

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Requirement:

The requirement was, first, to identify the kinds of additional information enlisted soldiers need when considering a Special Forces (SF) career. The authors reviewed data confirming that information gaps exist and identified key areas in which information could be more comprehensive or realistic. A second aspect of the requirement was to suggest ways to help soldiers make better-informed career decisions.

### Procedures:

The approach was to integrate research findings from several existing and new data sources relevant to SF recruiting procedures and experiences, career decision factors, and characteristics of the SF soldier and his job. The authors examined existing survey data and findings from SF recruiters and new SF recruits to identify current information gaps. In addition, they conducted structured interviews and/or surveys with enlisted SF soldiers, SF wives, and commanders and staff within the SF community to determine the specific information that recruits need.

### Findings:

The authors determined that SF job information needs improvement in four key areas: family issues, Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) and SF Group assignment procedures, training and preparation, and SF missions and activities. They suggested ways to address the information gaps in these areas and proposed an outline for an information booklet that could serve as a realistic job preview.

### Utilization of Findings:

The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) is developing a prototype information booklet based on the findings of this report. The booklet will provide realistic, comprehensive information about SF to prospective recruits and may also support SF recruiter training.

# INFORMATION NEEDS OF ENLISTED SOLDIERS WHEN MAKING A SPECIAL FORCES CAREER DECISION

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# INFORMATION NEEDS OF ENLISTED SOLDIERS WHEN MAKING A SPECIAL FORCES CAREER DECISION

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

The U.S. Army Research Institute (ARI) recently conducted a research needs analysis for the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS). The analysis, which focused on Special Forces (SF) manpower issues, identified SF recruiting as an area where systematic research could provide particularly useful information (Brooks, 1991).

Research on SF recruiting was considered important for several reasons. Recruitment is the first stage in the process of selecting, training, and retaining the quality soldiers needed to perform the demanding and increasingly important missions of SF. Because the Army is downsizing at nearly all levels, concerns arise about the ability to obtain a large enough applicant pool from which to select the high-quality soldiers needed for SF. Another concern is that future SF applicants may be less motivated and less committed to SF. This stems from the perception that soldiers may volunteer for SF, which is relatively insulated from the pressures of downsizing, simply to stay in the Army.

ARI's initial research efforts in recruiting included an examination of enlisted soldiers' SF career decision processes. An important finding was that candidates who perceive they know a great deal about what to expect in SF are more committed to the goal of joining SF. Moreover, research in the civilian sector suggests that recruits who have realistic, detailed information about a prospective job are more committed and satisfied as employees and have lower turnover rates (Wanous, 1977; 1980). Suggested reasons for these positive effects are that the information 1) "vaccinates" the employee from dashed hopes once on the job, and 2) discourages less-committed recruits from applying for or accepting the job.

Although there is reason to expect that realistic job information is related to positive effects among SF recruits, a recent analysis of SF recruiting procedures (Herd & Teplitzky, 1992) indicated that SF recruiters often lack specific knowledge about life in SF. Instead, they tend to focus their efforts on providing information about SFAS and application procedures. Although they can provide a good overview of SF missions, duty stations, areas of operation, promotion rates, and military occupational specialties (MOS), recruiters reported not having sufficient information to answer all of the recruits' questions. In particular, they lack information on day-to-day life in SF and family-related concerns.

The underlying assumption of this research was that recruits who have comprehensive, realistic information about SF will be better able to decide if they are suited for a career in SF. Good career decisions are expected to result in well-adjusted SF soldiers. Although the present study focuses on active duty, enlisted soldiers, many of the findings also pertain to active duty officers who are considering SF. In fact, the end product of this effort, a recruiting booklet for enlisted soldiers, could provide a model for developing officer recruiting materials.

### Purpose of the Research

The present research had two purposes. One was to identify the kinds of additional information soldiers need when considering an SF career. This report reviews the data confirming that information gaps exist and identifies key areas in which information could be more comprehensive or realistic. The other purpose was to suggest how we can help soldiers make better-informed career decisions. We discuss the use of a realistic job preview, in booklet form, and suggest a topical outline. In a follow-on report, we will present a prototype booklet for USAJFKSWCS's consideration.

### APPROACH

Our approach was to integrate findings from several existing and new data sources relevant to SF recruiting, career decision processes, and characteristics of the SF soldier, his job, and his professional lifestyle. Key sources of existing data were surveys administered to five SFAS classes in FY91 and FY92. Data were available from 555 active duty, enlisted soldiers from two FY91 classes (8-91 and 502-91) who responded to questions about information sources, information adequacy, and reasons for joining SF (see Appendix A for survey items). Another 741 active duty, enlisted soldiers from three FY92 classes (2-92, 3-92, and 4-92) responded to survey items about family concerns and other recruiting issues (see Appendix B).

The existing survey data and earlier findings pertaining to SF recruiting (Herd & Teplitzky, 1992) were examined in light of the current study's objective of identifying gaps in the job information available to SF recruits. In addition, we conducted interviews with 56 soldiers currently in SF and 26 wives of soldiers in SF. The interviews were primarily designed to gather general information about daily life in SF. For example, we asked respondents about the types of missions they perform most frequently, the types of jobs they have held, the amount of travel and time away from home they have experienced, and the general activities they engage in when deployed and in garrison. We also asked interviewees what prospective SF soldiers and their wives need to know about SF before deciding whether or not to join.

In conducting the soldier interviews, we ensured nearly equal representation from the five Active Component SF Groups. We interviewed wives of enlisted and officer SF personnel on an "as-available" basis. Tables 1 and 2 show pertinent characteristics of the interview participants. Appendices C and D contain the interview formats for soldiers and wives, respectively.

Table 1

Sample Characteristics for the SF Soldiers Interviewed

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<u>SF Group Assignment</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1ST	11	20%
3RD	13	23%
5TH	10	18%
7TH	12	21%
10TH	<u>10</u>	<u>18%</u>
Total	56	100%

---

Age

Mean= 32 Years  
Range= 26-44 Years

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<u>Rank</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
SGT	4	7%
SSG	12	21%
SFC	27	48%
MSG	5	9%
SGM/CSM	2	4%
WO	<u>6</u>	<u>11%</u>
	56	100%

---

Table 2

Number and Percent of Wives by SF Group

<u>SF Group</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1ST	3	11%
3RD	6	23%
5TH	1	4%
7TH	2	8%
10TH	<u>14</u>	<u>54%</u>
Total	26	100%

We also interviewed commanders and staff from USAJFKSWCS and the 3RD, 7TH, and 10TH SF Groups, and talked to five soldiers responsible for making SF personnel decisions at the U.S. Total Army Personnel Command (TAPC). The TAPC interviewees were able to describe not only SF career patterns and assignment practices, but also their SF experiences from previous assignments in the various SF Groups.

Finally, we had an opportunity to administer surveys to 82 soldiers currently in SF. Twenty-eight (34%) of these soldiers were in 3RD Group, and 54 (66%) were in 7TH Group. Items on this survey asked current soldiers to report the information sources that were influential in their SF career decisions and to retrospectively report gaps in their information during their decision process. Additional items addressed the soldiers' satisfaction with and commitment to SF. Survey questions were very similar to the types of questions that were asked during the enlisted soldier interviews. Appendix E contains the SF soldier survey.

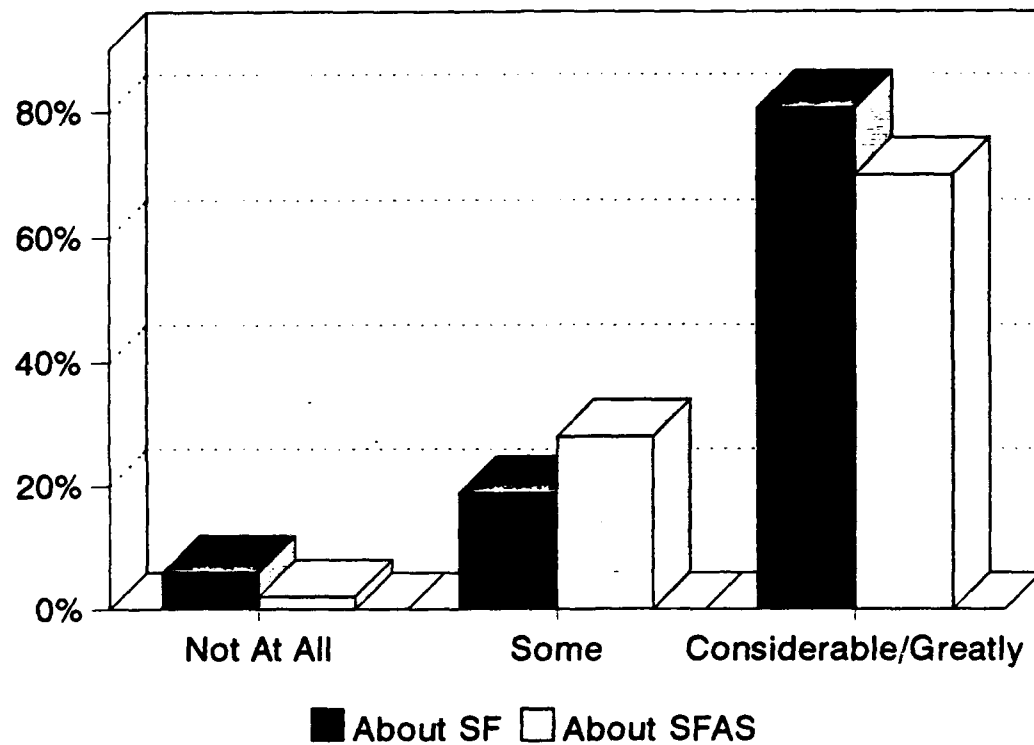
## FINDINGS

### Recruits' Information Sources

Survey responses show that the vast majority of recruits actively seek information about SF and SFAS (see Figure 1). The most commonly used sources of information about SF are SF recruiters and friends in SF (see Figure 2).

Nearly half of the SFAS candidates reported using SF recruiters as an information source either "moderately" or "a lot". However, from ARI's earlier analysis of SF recruiting procedures (Herd & Teplitzky, 1992), we know that SF recruiters

## Actively Sought Information



% of SFAS Candidates Reporting Actively Seeking Information During the Decision Process

**Figure 1. Percentage of recruits who reported actively seeking information about SF and SFAS during the decision process.**

## Sources Of Information

% Who Reported Using the Source  
Moderately/ A Lot

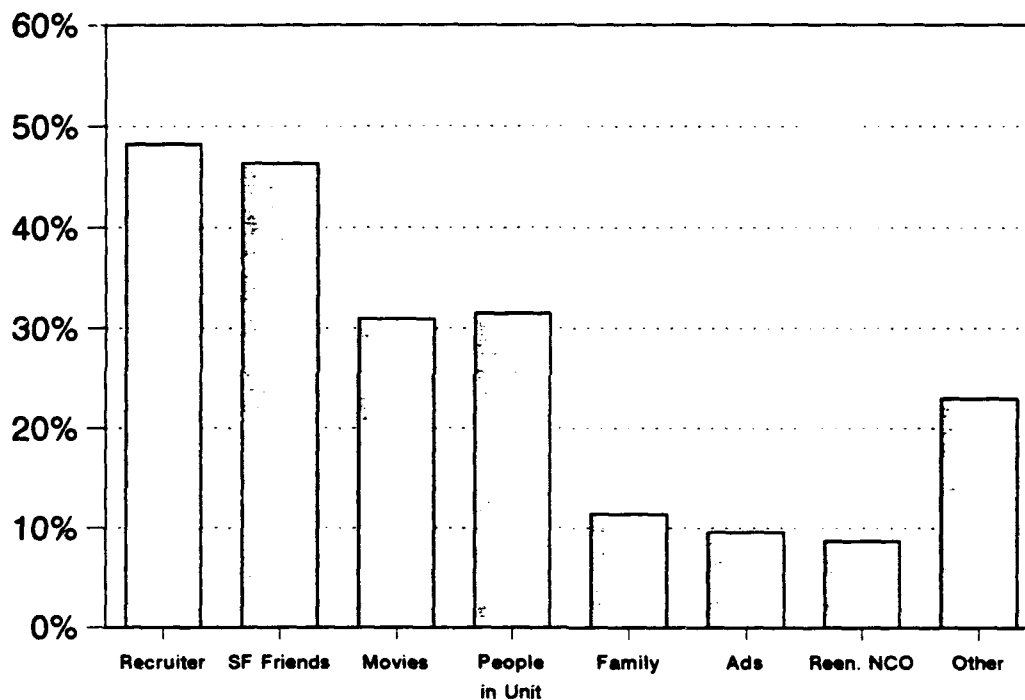


Figure 2. Percentage of recruits who reported using various information sources to learn about becoming SF-qualified.

view their primary role as facilitating the SFAS application process. Because SF recruiters are typically not SF-qualified and have no firsthand knowledge, many do not feel comfortable providing information about SF activities. In fact, many recruiters indicated they would like to know more about SF.

Recruiters reported that questions centering on family issues, deployment schedules, permanent change-of-station (PCS) moves, and time spent in the field surface repeatedly among recruits. Most recruiters reported having standard answers to these questions. However, across recruiters, the responses to some questions vary greatly. SF recruiters also tend to have a sales perspective when interacting with recruits, which has the effect of limiting the amount of realistic information provided about the potential negative aspects of SF.

Friends in SF are the next most commonly used source of information. Over 45% of recruits reported using SF friends either "moderately" or "a lot" as a source, and such friends had a relatively high degree of influence in the decision to apply. Although friends in SF can provide recruits with good information, many candidates (39%) reported knowing no one in SF (see Figure 3). These recruits, and possibly others who never complete the application process, are thus unlikely to have access to the firsthand information that SF soldiers can provide. Moreover, about one-third of the people who did have friends in SF were limited to one or two acquaintances. Reliance on the unique experiences of one or two people in SF also invites a biased perspective.

We also found that movies were reportedly used "moderately" or "a lot" as an information source by over 30% of SF recruits (see Figure 2). To the extent that movies tend to glamorize the life of an SF soldier, their information content is likely to be unrealistic, slanted, or at best incomplete.

Thus, although recruits appear to make a good effort to obtain information about SF, they are somewhat constrained. We would stress that good information is not always readily available and that the sources that recruits tend to use may not provide complete, realistic, and accurate information.



## # of People Recruits Know in SF

% of Recruits Reporting the # of People They Know in SF

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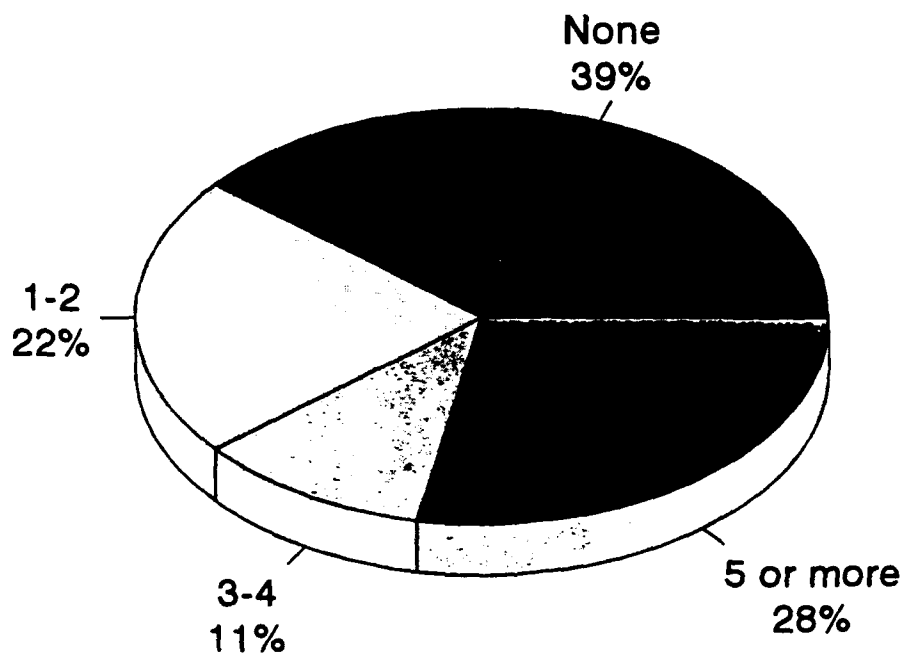


Figure 3. Number of people in SF that recruits report knowing.

### Adequacy and Quality of Recruits' Information

The data suggest that a substantial number of soldiers make their SF career decisions without adequate or accurate information. Evidence that recruits need better information about SF comes from ratings of information adequacy and consideration of known sources of information and influence in recruits' decisions.

Among the SFAS candidates surveyed, just over half (54%) agreed that they knew a great deal about what SF is all about, and 11% disagreed. On other items, 23% indicated they were not able to get all of the information they needed from the SF recruiter, and 16% indicated they were not able to get the information from other sources. In addition, about 15% of the candidates responded to an item that asked them what "major questions or concerns" they still had about SF. We note, however, that these survey respondents were still in SFAS and not in the best position to know what key pieces of information they might be missing.

Experienced SF soldiers, on the other hand, have had a chance to compare their initial expectations to reality in SF. It is noteworthy that almost half (48%) of all SF soldiers surveyed reported that the information they had at the time of their decision was less than adequate (see Figure 4). (Soldiers' specific responses to the question, "What do you wish you had known?" can be found in Appendix F.) SF commanders, cadre, and personnel administrators who regularly come into contact with prospective SF soldiers also report that many candidates seem to have unrealistic expectations and/or unanswered questions about SF.

The data also suggest that wives, although influential, may not be well informed. Many recruits (43%) in SFAS reported not being committed to joining until after they had discussed the decision with their wife or girlfriend. Previous research on Army families also has shown that Army spouses have considerable influence on the goals, attitudes, and career intentions of soldiers (see, for example, Griffith, Rakoff, & Helms, 1992). In our sample, however, wives had limited involvement in information gathering. Analyses of SFAS survey questions indicated that very few wives (6%) attended a recruiter's briefing, and only 10% talked directly with an SF recruiter. Only 31% of soldiers reported that their wives had the opportunity to talk with SF soldiers or wives. Most soldiers (88%) reported that their wives thought they had adequate information. However, many of the experienced SF wives that we interviewed reported significant gaps in their understanding at the time of recruitment, particularly with regard to family issues.

# Adequacy of Information About SF

## At the Time of Decision

Current Soldiers' Ratings

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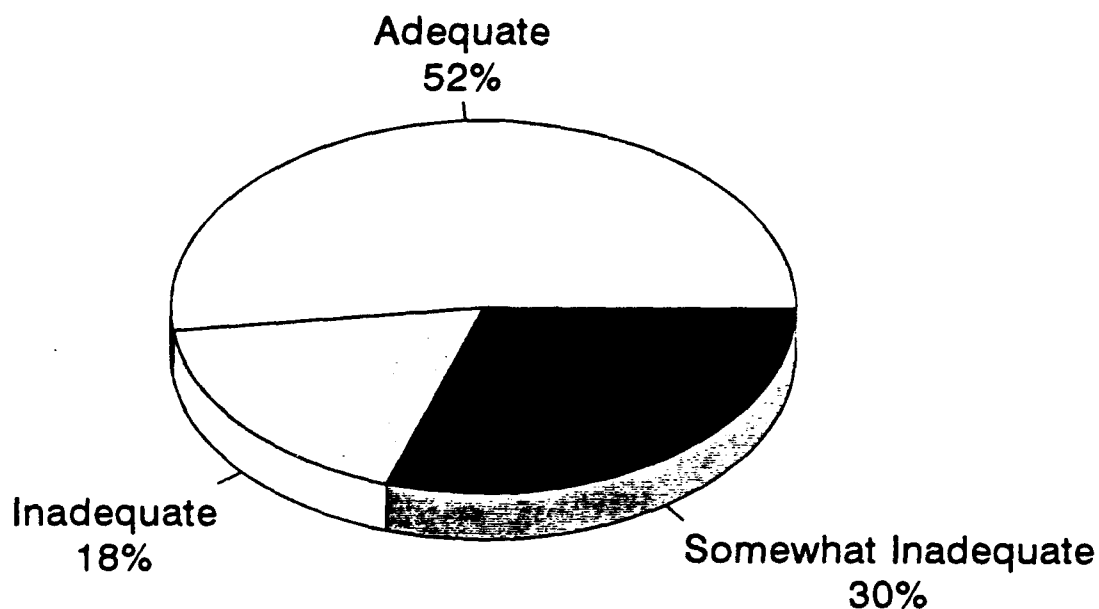


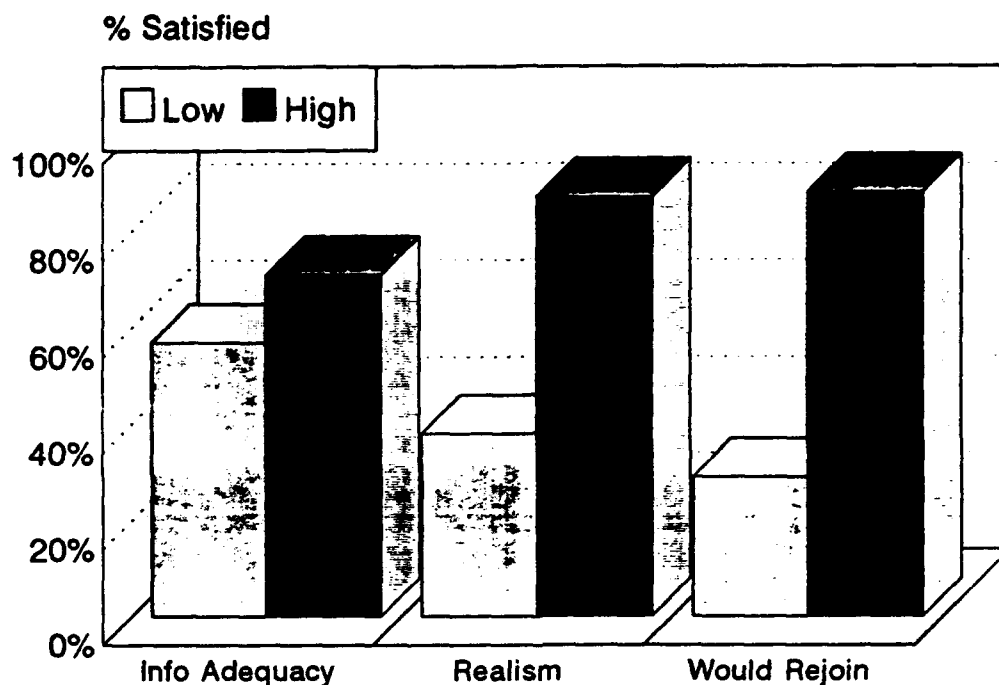
Figure 4. Current SF soldiers' perceived adequacy of the information they had at the time of their decision.

### Advantages of Adequate and Realistic Information

Data from the soldier surveys suggest that adequate and realistic information at the time of recruiting is related to later satisfaction with one's SF career. Soldiers who reported having had less than adequate information when they were making the decision to join were more likely to be dissatisfied with "life as an SF soldier" ( $r=.24$ ). Satisfaction was also related ( $r=.35$ ) to the extent to which soldiers had realistic expectations when they joined SF. Figure 5 shows the percentage of soldiers indicating they are satisfied with life in SF as a function of perceived information adequacy at recruitment, the realism of their expectations at the time they joined, and their perceived likelihood of rejoining if they were to make the decision now.

Overall, the majority of soldiers (67%) indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with life as an SF soldier. However, as shown in Figure 5, only 57% of soldiers who perceived they had inadequate information at the time of their decision are currently satisfied, compared to 71% of the soldiers who had adequate information. Moreover, of the soldiers who reported having unrealistic expectations, only 38% are currently satisfied in SF. In contrast, 87% of the soldiers who entered with realistic expectations are satisfied.

## % Satisfied With Life as an SF Soldier



Note: Figure indicates the % of current SF soldiers in each category who are, overall, satisfied with life as an SF soldier.

Figure 5. Percentage of soldiers who are satisfied with their life in SF as a function of low and high levels of: Perceived information adequacy at the time of decision, realism of their expectations, and likelihood of rejoining.

### Critical Areas Where Information Could Be Improved

Our analyses suggested four critical areas for information improvement

- family-related information
- SF Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and Group assignment processes
- training and preparation
- SF missions and activities.

These areas were identified because of their importance to the prospective recruit, and because a variety of evidence suggests that they are not covered as fully as they might be during current recruiting procedures.

Family-related information. In SFAS classes 2-92, 3-92, and 4-92, 56% of the candidates were married, and an additional 14% were engaged (see Figure 6). Importantly, 53% of the married/engaged respondents, and 46% of all respondents, reported considerable or very great concern about the impact SF would have on family life (see Figure 7). When asked, "What are the major questions or concerns you have about SF?", about 15% of them responded, and family-related concerns were cited most frequently. Sample responses included: "Where my family will fit in"; "Time away from family"; and "Family support groups".

SF recruiters also reported that family-related concerns are among the most frequently asked questions (Herd & Teplitzky, 1992). Included among these questions are the following: "Is the divorce rate in SF really high?"; "How much time in SF is spent away from home?"; "Where will my family be when I am in the Qualification Course?"; and "Does my wife go with me to all the schools in SF?".

## Recruits' Marital Status

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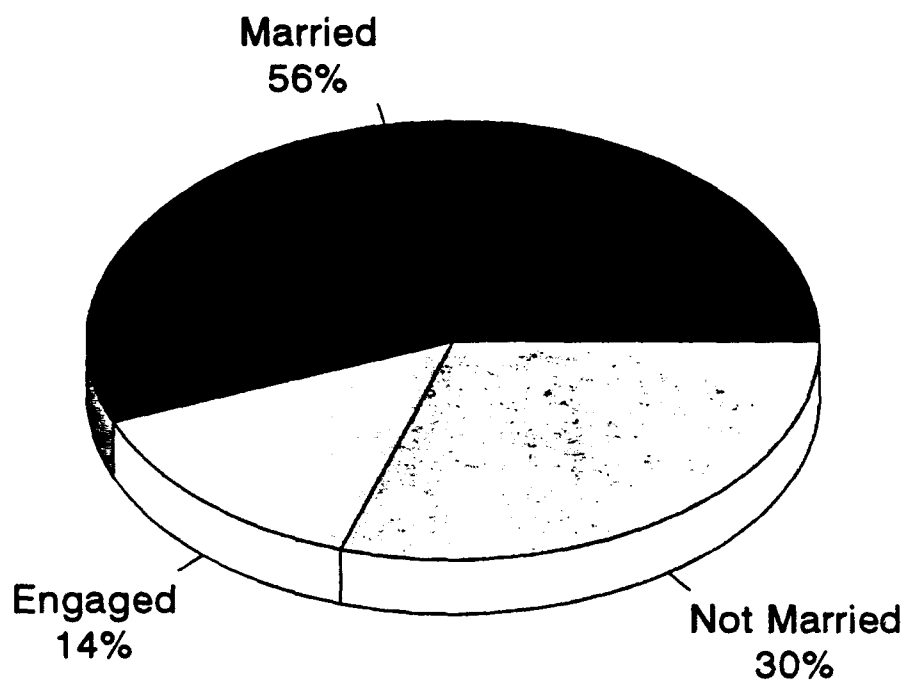


Figure 6. Marital status of SF recruits.

## To What Extent Are You Concerned About the Impact of SF on Family Life?

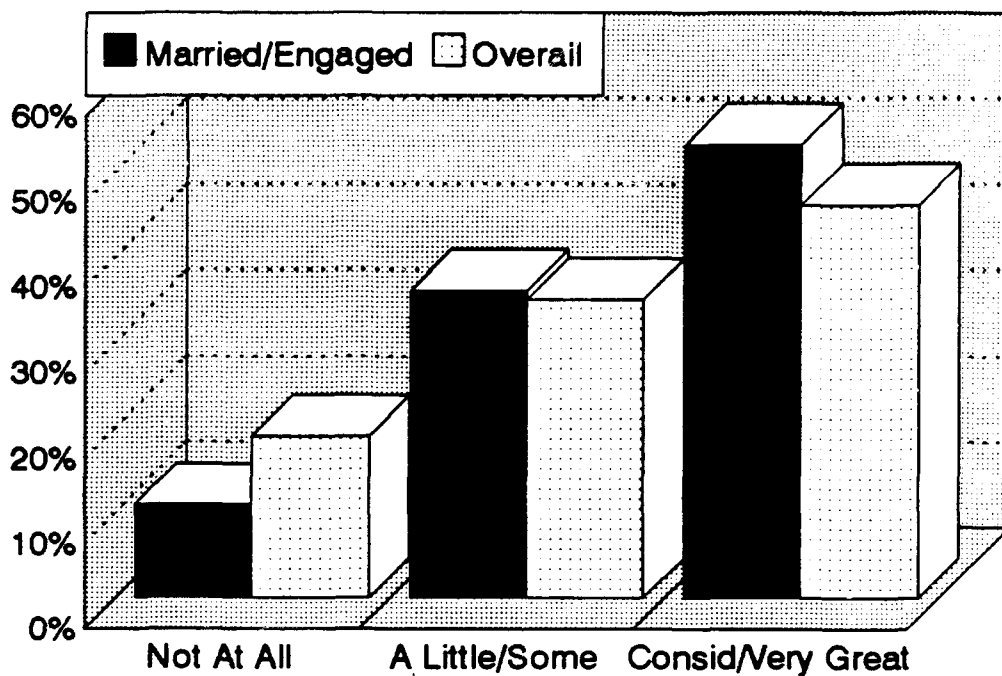


Figure 7. Extent to which recruits report concern about the impact that SF will have on their family life.



It was clear from interviews with recruiters that there is little agreement on how these questions should be answered. For example, recruiters differ in the estimates they give of time away from home. Most recruiters reported telling soldiers that they can count on being away a total of six months out of the year. Others tell soldiers that they will be gone less than if they were in traditional combat units, while others say there is no way of knowing. Recruiters also varied in the nature of their general response to family concerns. Many invited wives to the SF recruiting briefings. On the other hand, a few recruiters said they often responded to family concerns by asking soldiers, "Who runs your life, anyway...you or your wife?".

Our interviews with experienced SF enlisted soldiers and officers confirmed that there are important gaps in family-related information. For example, SF soldiers' advice to prospective volunteers often pertained to family considerations. SF soldiers most often said that they would advise a recruit to consider the potential for long deployments and to discuss the decision with his wife. Some stressed that families need to be aware of short-notice separations where, for example, there is a one-week or less notice of a lengthy deployment. Wives also need to be prepared for a lack of information regarding missions and deployment locations when secrecy is required. Other comments focused on the importance of the wife's commitment to SF.

Of the SF wives interviewed, 63% indicated they were satisfied, overall, with their lives in SF, and most were supportive of their husband's career choices. Many wives, however, reported unrealistic expectations or insufficient knowledge about SF. The greatest surprise and area of adjustment reported by nearly every wife pertained to the amount of time the husband was away from home. As one wife put it: "It's hard to imagine that you can adjust to having your husband be away so much if you've never had that experience." Even wives whose husbands were often gone in their previous units (e.g., Ranger, Airborne, or Infantry units) reported that the varying lengths of separation made for difficult adjustment. A related comment mentioned by nearly every wife pertained to the "dual life", or different roles the wife experienced depending upon whether her husband was deployed or at home. Most wives spoke of stress when making the transition between these roles.

Another surprise reported by most wives was that their husbands often preferred to be away from home because they loved their jobs so much. In addition, many wives had not expected their husbands to grow so close to their fellow team members. They had not realized the amount of time that their husband would spend with the team even while in garrison.

Many wives spoke of the characteristics required to be successful as an SF wife. Among these characteristics, independence, self-sufficiency, and flexibility were mentioned most. When asked what advice they would give to wives of soldiers considering SF, many wives stressed the importance of a basic understanding of SF missions, organization, and operations. As one wife advised: "Learn about his career and the people he works with, because it becomes your information link." Wives also stressed the importance of realizing their husbands may be away from home for long stretches of time. Regarding these lengthy separations, wives' comments included: "Be prepared to spend a lot of time alone. If you can deal with being alone, the rest will follow"; and "Be prepared to be a single parent. Your husband will be gone most of the time." Many wives stressed the importance of having outside interests, and several emphasized the importance of a positive attitude.

In summary, the findings clearly suggest a need for more family-related information. Critical areas for improvement include: number, length, and notice of separations, adjustments during deployment transitions, adjustments to team culture, and the need for wives to be independent and self-sufficient. Since available written recruiting materials contain little information tailored to family issues, additional materials pertaining to this topic may prove useful. Such materials might emphasize the existence and nature of family support mechanisms in SF (e.g., Family Support Groups) and how they typically differ from supports in the conventional Army.

MOS and Group assignment processes. The SFAS survey data showed that candidates' lingering questions about SF frequently pertained to MOS and Group assignment procedures. Examples of survey responses in this category included: "Will I get the MOS I want?"; "Getting 18D"; "Relation of 18D and PA"; "Where, when, and how are you assigned to a Group?"; and "Will I have a choice of duty stations?".

The survey data also suggest that these assignments are an important concern for SF recruits. When asked which SF MOS they preferred, only 4% of SFAS candidates stated that they had no preference. Sixty-one percent (61%) of candidates reported that getting a particular MOS was extremely or very important to them, while only 10% rated their MOS assignment as slightly or not at all important (see Figures 8 and 9). Furthermore, 57% of recruits disagreed with the following SFAS survey item: "Wearing the Special Forces tab is much more important than the SF MOS I get." Thus, for about half of all recruits, getting the right MOS may be just as important as getting into SF.

## MOS Preferred By SFAS Candidates

% of Recruits Indicating They Preferred A Specific MOS

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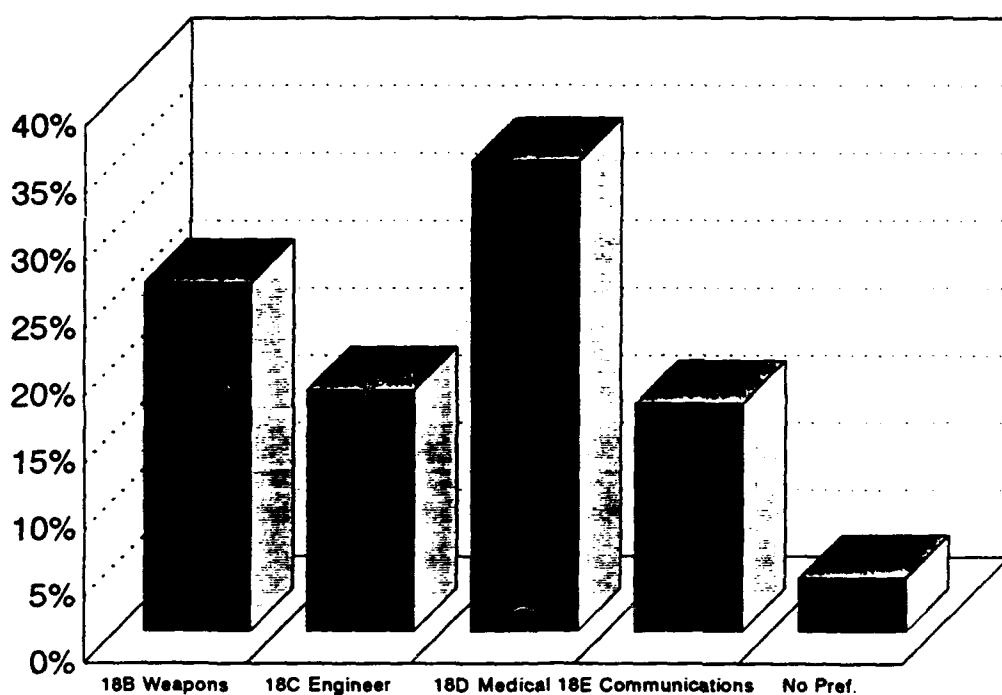


Figure 8. Recruits' preferences regarding SF Military Occupational Specialty (MOS).

# Importance of Getting the Preferred MOS

% of Recruits Rating the Importance  
of Getting Their Preferred MOS

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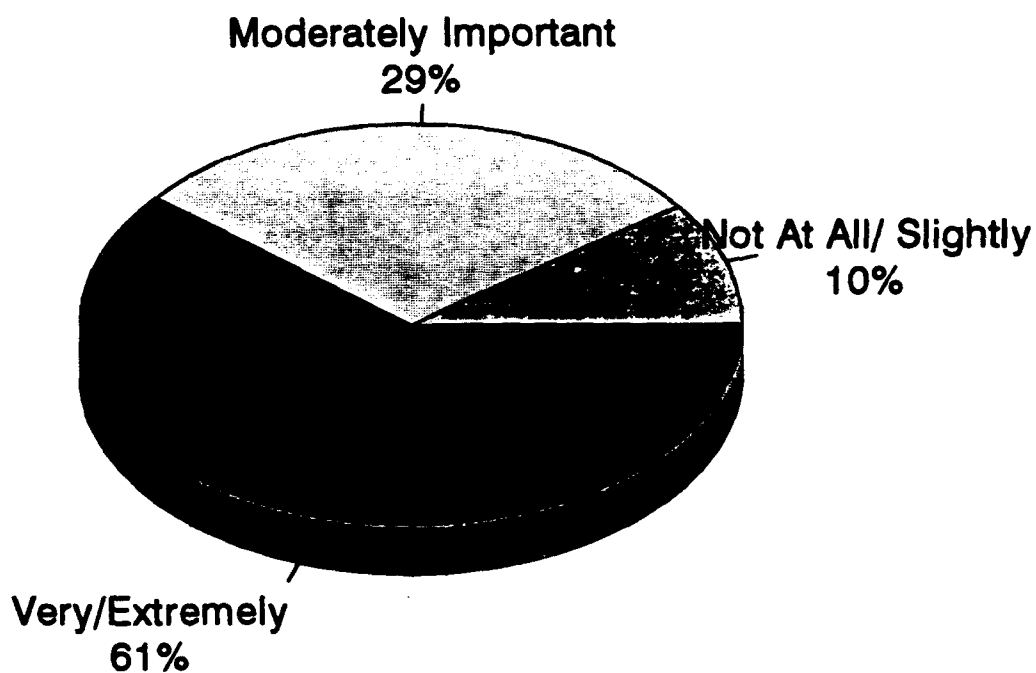


Figure 9. Percentage of recruits reporting that getting their preferred MOS is "Not At All/A Little Important," "Moderately Important," or "Very/Extremely Important."

SF recruiters also report that questions about MOS and Group assignments are among recruits' most frequent concerns (Herd & Teplitzky, 1992). To address these questions, recruiters include in their briefings an overview of each MOS on an SF Operational Detachment "A" team (ODA), as well as an overview of each of the five Active Component SF Groups and their associated duty stations and world areas of operation. This overview information is also provided in the written materials given to all recruits during the SFAS application process. In addition, recruiters state during the briefings that MOS and Group assignments are based on aptitude, preference, and the needs of SF. All recruiters reported pointing out to recruits that there were no guarantees of obtaining preferred assignments. Some of the commanders and staff within USAJFKSWCS also emphasized the importance of telling recruits that the needs of the force come ahead of individual soldier preference.

In summary, recruits consistently question and express concerns about MOS and Group assignment processes, even though they are informed during SF recruiting briefings and conversations that MOS and Group assignments are based on aptitudes, preferences, and the needs of SF. Since recruits rate their assignments as important and continue to question how they are made, this information may require reiteration and verification within additional sources.

Training and preparation. Several of the data sources suggested a need for more complete information on the post-SFAS training that makes the soldier qualified to serve on an ODA. Recruiters, for example, reported that they tend to focus on SFAS and that, by comparison, little information is available on what occurs after the soldier is selected. SF soldiers frequently mentioned that they would have liked more information about the qualification training phases, noting that such information would offer a greater opportunity to prepare.

Several of the SF commanders and staff that we interviewed had suggestions for information improvement in this area. A point of emphasis was that recruits need to understand the requirement for foreign language training. Some stressed that the choice of language is often not up to the individual soldier and that language assignments are based on the needs of the Army, the regional orientation of the assigned group, language aptitude, and any foreign language proficiency that the soldier already has. Another point raised by USAJFKSWCS staff was that opportunities for retraining or recycling in the qualification course (particularly the MOS phase) vary and will depend on current policy.

One implication for new recruiting materials is to lay out the post-SFAS training sequence in some detail so that recruits get a fuller picture of the qualification process beyond SFAS.

It may also help to provide hints on preparation for the qualification course (e.g., trainees should be aware that they are expected to enter having mastered Skill Level I land navigation). Emphasis should be placed on the foreign language requirement. Language information could include the possibilities and uncertainties associated with particular language assignment, length of training, and training location.

Our results highlighted the need for information on post-SFAS training. However, we should also mention previous ARI research findings that bear on preparation for SFAS. If our goal is to help soldiers decide whether or not to apply for SFAS, then informing soldiers of the physical prerequisites and the possibilities for SFAS preparation also serves a useful function. For example, Teplitzky (1992) has reported that a relatively high percentage of black soldiers fail the swim test when they report for SFAS. Moreover, many interested and otherwise qualified black soldiers who are non-swimmers may decide not to apply because of the swimming prerequisite. For minorities in particular, information about methods non-swimmers have used to learn to swim may be very useful. Similarly, it might be helpful to emphasize the availability of the Physical Training Handbook which lays out a five-week program to physically prepare soldiers for the rigors of ruckmarching in SFAS (see Teplitzky, in preparation).

SF missions and activities. Some recruits appear to have unrealistic expectations about the missions and activities in which they will be involved. For example, recruits' reported reasons for joining SF indicate that they are anticipating adventure, excitement, and real-world missions. Several of the concerns listed by SFAS candidates refer to the challenge and excitement of SF missions. Examples included: "If I'll get to do extensive traveling and work with foreigners"; "Will I get on an active A team?"; and "Am I going to get the chance to really operate in enemy territory?". Similar responses pertained to day-to-day activities in SF (e.g., "variety of assignments"). Anticipated differences in SF such as "I do not want a bored repetitive life" also suggest their expectations for adventure.

The commanders and staff at USAJFKSWCS, TAPC, and in 3RD, 7TH, and 10TH Groups also suggested that soldiers often come into SF with unrealistic expectations about the quantity and types of missions that they will likely experience. Many commented that soldiers often do not realize that teaching and service-oriented missions are more predominant than direct action missions. In addition, they often do not realize the preparation, planning, and training involved in each mission. Rather, recruits assume they will be moving from one exciting mission to the next with little downtime or boredom.

The SF commanders and staff who were interviewed suggested that reasons for these unrealistic expectations include the image of SF in the conventional Army and in our society. Soldiers who believe the "Rambo" image of SF are likely to be disappointed when they realize that SF does not include many heroic one-man missions within enemy territory. Rather, SF soldiers work well in teams and are ideally "quiet professionals".

Interviewed SF soldiers also mentioned gaps in their information about SF missions and other activities during recruitment. Several indicated that they would have liked more realistic information to counter the exaggerated impressions they had obtained about SF from various sources. As one soldier put it: "I wish I had known what really goes on and not the advertising hype." Similar comments included: "It is not as high speed as I thought"; "It's less exciting overall than what I expected"; and "I'm not really doing what I saw in the movies and books. I had high expectations." Specific reported mismatches between expectations and reality pertained to missions, travel, and training. For example, the predominance of foreign internal defense (FID) missions was generally unanticipated, and soldiers' experiences in foreign countries often differed from their expectations.

Other specific comments referred to soldiers' experiences with team members. Some expressed surprise that not all teams are as close-knit as anticipated. The more senior people that we interviewed pointed out that teams vary considerably, depending on the mix of individual personalities. While teams tend to be close-knit, turnovers and other factors can make it difficult to develop the anticipated long-term relationships. Others made the point that team members are not always deployed together. Sometimes they deploy as a unit, but they also may deploy individually.

Although many comments by SF soldiers revealed unrealistically high expectations, several reported that they had gotten more out of SF than expected. Their comments included, "Promotions turned out to be much better than I expected" and "It's everything I thought it would be and more." Overall, they indicated that they would have liked better descriptive information about SF Groups, duty assignments, organization, missions, MOS, deployment time, types of teams, and team life. Several soldiers mentioned that they would have liked information about SF's role in relation to the rest of the Army, and about the differences between SF and conventional Army units.

When asked what advice they would give to recruits, soldiers often stressed the importance of commitment. Some advised: "Do not join SF because you want to impress somebody"; and "Don't do it just for the green beret." A related theme was the importance of realistic expectations about SF missions (e.g., "SF soldiers

are teachers, not warriors") and deployments (e.g., "The travel is great, but it is to bad places--not highly developed areas"). SF soldiers emphasized that the prospective volunteer should be mature, self-motivated, self-sufficient, results-oriented, flexible, and able to be diplomatic when dealing with others.

In summary, evidence from recruits, SF commanders, and SF soldiers strongly suggests gaps in recruits' information about SF missions and activities. We noted earlier that current recruiting materials do provide an overview of SF mission types. However, little information is available about the variability a soldier can expect in how often he will work on various kinds of missions, and how much excitement and adventure he will experience while deployed on missions and while preparing for missions. Information pertaining to SF organization, teams, training, and other activities is also lacking in current recruiting materials.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our research findings and our understanding of the SF recruiting system, we can suggest a few avenues for providing more realistic and comprehensive information than is currently available for most SF recruits. One avenue is to ensure the accessibility of qualified SF personnel to answer questions and discuss concerns that recruits may have. For example, SF noncommissioned officers could be present or available to answer questions during SF recruitment briefings. Another possibility is to establish an SF information "hot line" or phone number that a recruit may call to reach one or more SF soldiers. The SF soldier could then provide the recruit realistic information based on his experiences, particularly for the soldier who knows no one in SF.

Another avenue that we strongly recommend is to develop new materials to specifically address the information gaps identified in this report. These materials may be conceptualized as a realistic job preview, a method that has been used in both civilian and military organizations to help prospective or new employees form accurate expectations of the job and organization (see Ilgen & Seely, 1974; Meglino, DeNisi, Youngblood, & Williams, 1988; Wanous, 1977; 1980). Generally, it involves presenting fairly detailed information about both the positive and negative aspects of a job. Recently, ARI has examined the feasibility of using a realistic job preview in the Army recruiter training process to improve recruiter performance, retention, and ability to deal with job stress (Pond, Powell, Norton, & Thayer, 1992). A realistic job preview may take the form of an oral presentation or be prepared in a booklet and/or video format. We recommend written and/or video materials, since they have the advantage of consistency and control in the presentation of the information.



Primarily, a realistic job preview would be an additional information source for soldiers and families who are considering an SF career. It may be most helpful if provided early in the recruitment process, so that soldiers who realize that SF is not the right career for them could self-select out before they begin the lengthy application process. Even for soldiers who have already volunteered, however, it may prove beneficial. Armed with a better idea of what to expect, soldiers may cope more effectively with the challenges of SFAS and SF. In addition, presentation of realistic information should help ensure that soldiers who decide to apply for SF are more motivated and committed. Greater commitment tends to result in more satisfied, long-term SF career soldiers, overall.

Based on the findings of this research, we have outlined the material that a realistic job preview booklet might include. The outline shown in Table 3 is meant to be relatively comprehensive and, in particular, to address the specific information gaps that we have identified. The booklet's level of detail is intended to be consistent with an unclassified document that highlights the key information within each topic.

Table 3

Proposed Topical Outline for SF Information Booklet

---

Information for the soldier

- Differences between SF and the conventional Army
- Common misperceptions about SF
- Common characteristics of SF soldiers
- SFAS and SFAS preparation
- MOS assignment processes
- Qualification course and language training
- Group assignment processes
- Group duty stations
- Group regional orientations
- Typical missions/training by SF Group
- Time away from home
- Typical garrison duties
- Typical training conditions
- MOS-specific tasks
- Career progression
- Job satisfaction
- Overall characteristics of the SF career experience

Information for the family

- Common characteristics of SF wives
  - Common family adjustment issues in SF
  - Reported coping strategies
  - Family support mechanisms in SF
  - Characteristics of the overall SF family experience
- 

A realistic job preview could also be used to enhance recruiter training which is another avenue that USAJFKSWCS and USAREC may want to pursue. A carefully developed booklet would be a low-cost way to help orient new SF recruiters and to augment the training of experienced SF recruiters who want to know more about SF. Such a booklet would probably be most effective as part of a larger program to support the ability of SF recruiters to perform their jobs. For example, recruiters who are newly assigned to SF recruiting may benefit from more intense interaction with SF soldiers to familiarize them with SF. For areas of information that are especially troublesome (e.g., how

much time to expect away from home), policy decisions may need to be made as to the best possible answer. Agreed-upon "best" answers would ensure consistency among new recruiters and reduce the chances of imparting inaccurate information.

Finally, a broad and fundamental avenue to consider is to examine recruiting goals and recruiter incentives and to ensure, through policy decisions, that the two are in alignment. The improved recruiting materials and recruiter training mentioned above will have a positive impact to the extent that recruiters are rewarded for painting a complete, accurate picture of SF and for getting high-potential candidates to SFAS. New or modified policies toward recruiters and their missions may be required to identify and attract those unique individuals who have the potential for a successful career in SF.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This report identified the kinds of additional information needed by soldiers who are considering a career in SF. Based on multiple sources of interview and survey data, we determined four key areas in which information needs improvement. The areas pertain to family issues, MOS and Group assignment processes, training and preparation, and SF missions and activities. Within each area, we identified the specific information that soldiers and others in the SF community believe is important to share.

We also considered several avenues for providing improved job information. These had to do with the accessibility of qualified SF personnel to prospective applicants, the development of a realistic job preview, recruiter training, and a review of recruiter incentives in the context of recruiting goals. Our current focus, in keeping with sponsor priorities, is on the development of a realistic job preview in booklet form. We proposed a topical outline and are developing a prototype booklet, based on this outline, for consideration by USAJFKSWCS and USAREC. Providing realistic, comprehensive information about SF to prospective recruits has the potential to improve the overall quality, commitment, and retention of soldiers in SF.

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Appendix A

SFAS Candidate Survey Items About  
Information Sources and Reasons for Joining SF  
(Classes 8-91 and 502-91)

**Part A. Decision Sources.**

Below, please CIRCLE the number which best indicates the extent to which the following sources were influential when you were making your decision to volunteer for SF.

	Not At All Influential	A Little	Somewhat Influential	Considerably	Extremely Influential	Not Applicable
a) SF recruiter's briefing.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
b) Letters from SF recruiter.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
c) Calls/ meetings with SF recruiter.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
d) SF videotape (shown during SF briefing).....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
e) Reenlistment NCO.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
f) Friends who were in SF.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
g) People in your unit.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
h) Command support in your unit for SF.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
i) Family members.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
j) Wife or girlfriend.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
k) Movies (such as "The Green Beret").....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
l) Books, television.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
m) Newspaper articles about SF missions.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
n) Army Times.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
o) SF Magazine and other military magazines.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
p) SF recruiter booklet and packet.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
q) Posters.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
r) Being around an SF team or SF unit.....1	2	3	4	5	NA	
s) Advertisements (please specify) _____1	2	3	4	5	NA	
t) Your own research (please specify) _____1	2	3	4	5	NA	
u) Other (please specify) _____1	2	3	4	5	NA	

3. To what extent did you actively seek out information on your own:

About SFAS?

- a) not at all
- b) to a little extent
- c) to some extent
- d) to a considerable extent
- e) to a very great extent

About Special Forces?

- a) not at all
- b) to a little extent
- c) to some extent
- d) to a considerable extent
- e) to a very great extent

6. How helpful was the SF recruiter in getting you the information you needed about SFAS and SF?

- a) not helpful at all
- b) a little helpful
- c) somewhat helpful
- d) helpful
- e) very helpful
- f) NA - did not go through SF recruiter

13. How adequate was the information you had (about SFAS) to make the decision to volunteer for Special Forces assessment?

- a) Extremely inadequate (I had almost no information)
- b) Inadequate (I needed more information than I had)
- c) Somewhat inadequate (I could have used more information)
- d) Adequate (I had most of the information I needed)
- e) Extremely adequate (I had all the information I needed)

## Part B. Reasons for Joining SF

1. Please indicate how important each factor listed below was in your decision to volunteer for Special Forces.

	Unimportant	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	Not Applicable
a) Extra pay. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
b) Fast promotions. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
c) Career opportunities . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
d) Opportunity for school/education/training. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
e) Time spent training. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
f) Travel . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
g) Prestige/Being part of an elite unit . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
h) Challenging assignments. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
i) Reenlistment bonus . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
j) Minimal paperwork and bureaucracy. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
k) Esprit de corps and camaraderie. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
l) Real-world missions. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
m) Job security . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
n) Opportunity to use skills. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
o) Opportunity to work in a tight-knit group. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
p) Autonomy and control over own work . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
q) Respect based on competence, not rank. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
r) Use of unconventional warfare techniques . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
s) Adventure and excitement . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
t) Opportunity to better serve country. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
u) Opportunity to stay in the Army. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
v) Opportunity to work with other cultures. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
w) Opportunity to teach . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
x) Coworkers who are professional . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
y) Time spent away from home. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
z) Work that matches own self-image . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
aa) Opportunity to help and serve others . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
bb) Opportunity to work in a specific MOS. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
cc) Comfortable working conditions . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA
dd) Other (please specify)_____ . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Appendix B

SFAS Candidate Survey Items About  
Family Concerns in SF  
(Classes 2-92, 3-92, and 4-92)



### Part C. Special Forces Career Considerations

1. When you were making the decision to volunteer for SF, were you ...

- a) married
- b) engaged or in a serious relationship
- c) not involved in a serious relationship

2. Did your wife/girlfriend...

- |                                                                                 |     |    |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|----|
| a) attend the SF recruiter's briefing?                                          | yes | no | NA |
| b) talk with an SF recruiter?                                                   | yes | no | NA |
| c) read booklets you got about SF?                                              | yes | no | NA |
| d) have a chance to talk about SF with any SF soldiers or their wives?          | yes | no | NA |
| e) think that you had enough information about SF to make the decision to join? | yes | no | NA |

3. What are the major concerns or questions your wife/girlfriend has about Special Forces?

4. To what extent...

- |                                                                                                      | <i>Not At All</i> | <i>A Little</i> | <i>Some</i> | <i>A Considerable Extent</i> | <i>Very Great Extent</i> | <i>Not Applicable</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| a) was your <u>recruiter</u> able to answer your most important questions about SF? . . . . .        | 1                 | 2               | 3           | 4                            | 5                        | NA                    |
| b) were you able to get the answers you needed from <u>other</u> sources? . . . . .                  | 1                 | 2               | 3           | 4                            | 5                        | NA                    |
| c) was your decision to volunteer for SF influenced by someone who was or is <u>in</u> SF? . . . . . | 1                 | 2               | 3           | 4                            | 5                        | NA                    |
| d) was your decision to volunteer for SF influenced by a recruiter? . . . . .                        | 1                 | 2               | 3           | 4                            | 5                        | NA                    |
| e) were you committed to joining SF <u>before</u> you talked to a recruiter? . . . . .               | 1                 | 2               | 3           | 4                            | 5                        | NA                    |
| f) were you committed to joining SF before you discussed it with your wife or girlfriend? . . . . .  | 1                 | 2               | 3           | 4                            | 5                        | NA                    |
| g) are you concerned about the impact SF will have on your family life? . . . . .                    | 1                 | 2               | 3           | 4                            | 5                        | NA                    |

7. What Special Forces MOS would you prefer?

- |                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| a) 18B - Weapons        | e) NA - no preference |
| b) 18C - Engineer       | f) NA - officer       |
| c) 18D - Medical        |                       |
| d) 18E - Communications |                       |

8. How important to you is it that you get this MOS?

- a) not at all important
- b) slightly important
- c) moderately important
- d) very important
- e) extremely important
- f) NA

9. What are the major concerns or questions you have about a career in Special Forces?

Please circle the alternative that best indicates the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

12. I know a great deal about what Special Forces is all about. . . . . 1 2 3 4 5 NA

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Neither Agree nor Disagree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree  
Not Applicable

13. I have obtained a great deal of information about SFAS . . . . . 1 2 3 4 5 NA

Appendix C  
SF Soldier Interview Format

Structured Interview  
SF Soldiers

I. Introduction and Purpose of the Interview.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research project is to assess information needs of soldiers considering entering Special Forces. The project is being sponsored by the Army Research Institute to find ways to improve SF recruiting. We're interviewing some SF soldiers as part of this project to get information on your perceptions of SF and your decision to join, and what day-to-day life in SF is like.

**Time:** The interview will take about 30 minutes to 1 hour.

**Agenda:** I have about 30 questions to ask you, in a somewhat structured format (I'll be making sure to ask everyone I interview the same questions). First I will ask you about your decision to enter Special Forces, and then I will ask you about your experiences in SF. At the end of the interview I'd welcome any other insights you might have about what information soldiers need to make the decision to join SF.

**Note-Taking:** I'll be taking notes throughout the interview so that I can get as much information as possible. Please don't let this distract you.

**Confidentiality:** Your answers to the questions are strictly voluntary, and will be kept completely confidential. Only group information will be used in this study -- no individuals will be identified in any way.

**Security:** Please do not reveal any secure information during the interview.

**Questions:** Do you have any questions about the interview?

**Informed Consent Form:** Please read and sign the informed consent form.

## II. Decision to Join SF.

Before I talk to you about your experiences in SF so far, I'd like to ask you about how you made the decision to join Special Forces. Can you think back to the time you first began considering joining Special Forces, and tell me about this time in your life.

1. What branch of the Army were you in? What was your MOS?  
What was your job at that time? What did you feel about your job and the way your career was going at that time?  
(on scale 1=very dissatisfied to 5=very satisfied)
  
2. What were your sources of information about SF?
  - a) To what extent were various sources influential in your decision to join SF? (on scale 1=not at all, 2=a little, 3=somewhat, 4=considerably, 5=extremely influential)
    - SF recruiter
    - Friends who were in SF
    - People in your unit
    - Your chain of command
    - Family members
    - Wife or girlfriend
    - Movies, television
    - Books, magazines, newspaper articles
    - Being around an SF team or unit
    - Your own research
    - General impressions
  - b) To what extent did you actively seek out information on your own about SF? (or was there a lot of info readily available).
  
3. How much information did you have about Special Forces when you were making your decision to enter SF? (on scale 1=very little to 5=very much).
  - a) What kind of information did you have about SF to make your decision (e.g. did you find out about how often SF goes to the field, or what it's like to work on an SF team, etc.)?
  
  - b) What information about SF was important to you in making your decision?

c) What other information would you like to have had about Special Forces (but it was not available to you at the time you made the decision to volunteer for SF)? i.e. Was there anything you were wondering about the job of an SF soldier when you made the decision? (What were the questions in your mind at that time?)

4. Why did you decide to join SF?

a) If you had to make a list of pros and cons about going SF (in your mind at that time), what were the pros and what were the cons? (get at least 3)

Pros:

Cons:

5. What did you think SF would be like?

6. Were there incentives (\$, promotions) for you to join?

7. How different did you think SF would be from what you had experienced in the Army up to that time?

8. What, specifically, did you anticipate would be better for you in SF? What did you anticipate would be worse?

9. To what extent did you discuss your decision with other people? Who did you talk to? What factors did you discuss, specifically?

10. How did other people react when they learned of your interest in Special Forces? (To what extent were they supportive?)

- your wife or girlfriend
- your friends
- your senior NCO's
- your company commander
- your battalion commander
- chain of command's view, overall, of SF

a) Can you give me some examples of the things they said?

b) How supportive was your chain of command about SF? (e.g. time off to train for SFAS, etc.)

11. To what extent did family considerations influence your decision to enter SF?

12. To what extent did your wife play a part in making the decision?

### III. Experiences in SF.

Now I'd like to ask you about your experiences in SF, and your perceptions of what life in SF is like.

1. Do you see yourself as a typical Special Forces soldier? How so? Why or why not?

a. What are the characteristics of the typical SF soldier?

b. What skills and qualities are required to be a successful SF soldier?

2. Based on your experiences, to what extent is SF different from the conventional Army?
3. What Group are you in? What are the main missions for your Group?
4. What jobs have you held while in SF and where have you been stationed? (job name, dates, places)
5. For your particular MOS, what is the typical career progression for an SF soldier (e.g. in terms of jobs held, promotions attained, etc.)? Are the jobs you've held so far typical for your MOS?
  - a) Is it possible for SF soldiers to switch from Group to Group?
  - b) Is it possible for SF soldiers to change MOS's?
  - c) How important is it for SF soldiers to know a language?
6. How long were you (have you been) on a team? What was your MOS on the team? What jobs did you hold while on the team?



7. Where have you traveled? Did you travel a great deal while you were on a team?
8. While you were on a team, what deployments did your team go on each year? Be specific about which deployments were regularly-scheduled training deployments, which were real-world missions, etc.)
9. Describe your typical duties while you were on a team. How did you spend your time? (general activities while deployed/ in the field, and while in garrison/ at home, % of time spent in each)
10. While you were on a team, how often were you in the field and how often were you in garrison? (i.e. what % of your time (in 12 months) was spent at home, and what % of time were you away?) (Try to get exact breakdown of # of weeks away and at home for each year on a team).

11. How does a career in SF affect the soldier's family life?
12. What types of family difficulties are experienced by SF soldiers? Have you experienced any family difficulties because of your career in SF? How have you handled these?
13. What are the characteristics of a typical SF wife? What does it take to be an SF wife?
14. How would you describe the SF community? To what extent are there support mechanisms for soldiers and families? To what extent is the SF community different from those in the conventional Army?
15. Are most of your friends in SF? When you are not deployed, to what extent do you spend time with people who are not in SF? Do your wife and children associate mostly with people in SF?

IV. Retrospect.

1. How close is the reality of SF meeting the expectations you had when you were first making the decision? (i.e. Is it what you expected?)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. If you were advising a soldier who was considering applying to SF, what would you tell him?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What information do soldiers need to know about daily life in SF, while deployed and while at home?  
  
While deployed:  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
While in garrison:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What information do soldiers need to know about SFAS and the Q Course?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What information do soldiers' wives need to know about SF?

6. Overall, what would you say are the pros and cons of life in SF?  
Pros: Cons:

V. Background.

Group?  
Length of time in SF?  
Where have been stationed in SF?  
Job history in SF?  
Length of time on SF team? MOS?  
Current job?  
Length of time in Army?  
Rank?  
Age?  
Married? How Long?  
Children?  
Education level?  
Special training? (e.g. Ranger, Scuba, other)  
  
General satisfaction with life as an SF soldier?  
on scale: 1=not at all satisfied  
2=dissatisfied  
3=neither satisfied nor dissatisfied/ neutral  
4=satisfied  
5=very satisfied

Do you expect your career to remain in SF at this time?

VI. Conclusion.

Okay, that concludes our interview. Do you have any other insights about your decision to enter SF or about the information needs of potential SF soldiers? Thank you very much for your time. As I said before, I will just be summarizing your responses, and then summarizing them again along with others' responses in the final report. No identifying information will be used in any way.

Informed Consent Form: Sign again.

Appendix D  
SF Wife Interview Format

Structured Interview  
SF Spouses

I. Introduction and Purpose of the Interview.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research project is to assess information needs of soldiers considering entering Special Forces. The project is being sponsored by the Army Research Institute to find ways to improve SF recruiting. We're interviewing some SF wives as part of this project to get information on their perceptions of SF and what day-to-day life in SF is like.

**Time:** The interview will take about 30 minutes to 1 hour.

**Agenda:** I have about 25 questions to ask you, in a somewhat structured format (I'll be making sure to ask everyone I interview the same questions). First I will ask you about the decision to enter Special Forces, and then I will ask you about your experiences in SF. At the end of the interview I'd welcome any other insights you might have about what information soldiers and their wives need to make the decision to join SF.

**Note-Taking:** I'll be taking notes throughout the interview so that I can get as much information as possible. Please don't let this distract you.

**Confidentiality:** Your answers to the questions are strictly voluntary, and will be kept completely confidential. Only group information will be used in this study -- no individuals will be identified in any way.

**Security:** Please do not reveal any secure information during the interview.

**Questions:** Do you have any questions about the interview?

**Informed Consent Form:** Please read and sign the informed consent form.

II. Decision to Join SF.

Before I talk to you about your experiences in SF so far, I'd like to ask you about how the decision was made for your husband to join Special Forces. Can you think back to the time your husband first began considering joining Special Forces, and tell me about this time in your lives.

1. Tell me about your situation at that time. How long had you been married at the time your husband was first considering SF?
  
2. What branch of the Army was your husband in? What jobs had he held previously? Was he/ were you happy with the situation?
  
3. What were your sources of information about SF?
  - a) To what extent were various sources influential in your feelings/views of SF at that time? (on scale 1=not at all, 2=a little, 3=somewhat, 4=considerably, 5=extremely influential)
    - husband
    - SF recruiter
    - other Army wives
    - your friends
    - written materials (brochures, magazine articles)
    - husbands' coworkers
    - husbands' friends
    - husbands' commander/ mentor
    - own research
    - general impressions
    - other
  
4. How much information did you have about Special Forces during the time your husband was considering joining SF? (on scale 1=very little to 5=very much)
  - a) What information about SF was important to you?

- b) How adequate was the amount of information you had about Special Forces while your husband was making the decision to join SF? (on scale 1=very inadequate to 5=perfectly adequate)
5. What other information would you like to have had about Special Forces (but it was not available to you at the time the decision was being made to volunteer for SF)? (i.e. What were the questions in your mind at that time)?
6. To what extent did you play an active role in the decision to enter SF?
- a) Did you influence your husband's decision to go into SF? In what way? (e.g. encourage/discourage)
7. What did you think SF would be like?
8. How different did you think SF would be from your current situation at that time? What did you expect to be different about SF from your prior Army experience?
- a) Did you think your situation would be better or worse after the move to SF? (or Did you have positive or negative feelings about the move?)
9. To what extent did family considerations influence the decision to join SF?
- a) Did you and your husband talk about the effect of the move on the family? What were your thoughts on this?



10. How much time did you think your husband would be away?  
Where did you get this information?

III. Experiences in SF.

Now I'd like to ask you about your experiences while your husband has been in SF, and your perceptions of what life in SF is like.

1. Do you see yourself as a typical SF family? How so?  
Why or why not?
  - a. What would you say are the characteristics of the typical SF wife?
  - b. What skills and qualities are needed to be an SF wife?
2. Based on your experiences, to what extent is SF different from the conventional Army?
3. What Group is your husband in? Where have you been stationed while your husband has been in SF? (job name, dates, places)
4. How long was your husband on a team? What other jobs has he held while in SF?

5. While your husband was on a team and in other SF jobs, how often was he in the field and how often was he in garrison? (i.e. what % of his time (in 12 months) was spent at home, and what % of time was he away?) (Try to get exact breakdown of # of weeks away and at home for each year on a team and while in other jobs in SF).
6. How does a career in SF affect family life?
7. What types of family difficulties are experienced by SF wives? Have you experienced any difficulties because of your husband's career in SF? How have you handled these?
8. How is your life different when your husband is deployed from when your husband is in garrison (at home)?
9. How do you and your husband handle the separations?

10. How would you describe the SF community? To what extent are there support mechanisms for soldiers and families? To what extent is the SF community different from those in the conventional Army?
11. Are most of your friends in SF? To what extent do you associate with other SF wives? Do you spend a great deal of time with the other team wives (when your husband was on a team)?
12. To what extent does the wife of an SF soldier play a part in his career?

IV. Retrospect.

1. How close is the reality of SF meeting the expectations you had when making the decision to join SF? (i.e. Is it what you expected?)
2. If you were advising a wife whose husband was considering applying to SF, what would you tell her?
3. What information do wives of SF soldiers need to know about daily life in SF, while deployed and while at home?

4. Overall, what would you say are the pros and cons of life in SF?

Pros:

Cons:

V. Background Information.

How long married?

Occupation?

# children?

Age?

Education level?

Husband's Group?

Husband's rank?

Length of time husband has been in SF?

How long while married has husband been in SF?

How long until husband retires?

Where have been stationed while in SF?

Husband's job history in SF?

Length of time husband was on an SF team? His MOS?

Husband's current job?

Length of time in Army?

General satisfaction with life as wife of an SF soldier?

on scale: 1=not at all satisfied

2=dissatisfied

3=neither satisfied nor dissatisfied/ neutral

4=satisfied

5=very satisfied

Do you expect your husband to remain in SF at this time?

VI. Conclusion.

Okay, that concludes our interview. Do you have any other insights about the information needs of potential SF wives? Thank you very much for your time. As I said before, I will just be summarizing your responses, and then summarizing them again along with others' responses in the final report. No identifying information will be used in any way.

Informed Consent Form: Sign again.

Appendix E  
SF Soldier Survey

# **SURVEY OF SF SOLDIERS**

## **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

- 1. This information is being collected by the Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences as part of our on-going program of research on Special Forces. The purpose of this research project is to assess information needs of soldiers considering entering Special Forces and to develop information aids to improve SF recruiting.**
- 2. Your answers to survey questions will be completely confidential. No one within the Special Warfare Center or Special Forces will ever see your individual responses. Only group data will be used and reported for research purposes only. We are not requesting any specific identifying information, and we are requesting general background information only so that we can link your responses with other data.**
- 3. It is not anticipated that volunteers will receive any immediate benefit from participating in this study. However, it is anticipated that future Special Forces candidates and their spouses will benefit as a result of the information gathered during this project. A brief write-up of the results of this project will be made available to any interested volunteers. There are no foreseeable risks arising from your participation in this project.**
- 4. Please take some time to complete the questionnaire as honestly and thoughtfully as you can. There are no right or wrong answers, and you will not be judged by your answers in any way. Completion of the survey is voluntary and you will not be penalized if you refuse to respond or participate. The accuracy of our conclusions, however, depends on our having input from everyone. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.**
- 5. Any questions about this project or your participation in this project may be directed to: Dr. Judy Brooks, ARI, AV 284-5584, Com. (703) 274-8119.**

***Thank you for your participation.***

1. Your Group (circle one):      1st      3rd      5th      7th      10th
2. Your age in years: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your rank: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Number of years you've been in SF: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Your current job: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Number of years you've served on an ODA (altogether): \_\_\_\_\_
7. Your MOS: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Where have you been stationed while in SF? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What jobs have you held while in SF? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Your highest level of education completed (check one):    \_\_\_ H.S.       \_\_\_ Some college    \_\_\_ College  
                                                                                                   \_\_\_ Some graduate work    \_\_\_ Master's degree
11. Current marital status (check one):    \_\_\_ Single, never married    \_\_\_ Divorced, living alone  
                                                                                                   \_\_\_ Divorced, and remarried    \_\_\_ Married    \_\_\_ Separated    \_\_\_ Widowed    \_\_\_ Other
12. If currently married, how many years have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_
13. # of children: \_\_\_\_\_
14. If currently married, your wife's current employment status (check one):    \_\_\_ Unemployed outside home  
                                                                                                   \_\_\_ Employed part-time    \_\_\_ Employed full-time    \_\_\_ Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_
15. Do you intend to remain in SF at this time? (check one)    \_\_\_ yes       \_\_\_ maybe/ not sure    \_\_\_ no

1. Think back to the time when you were making the decision to enter Special Forces. Below, please CIRCLE the number which best indicates the extent to which the following sources were influential when you were making the decision to volunteer for SF.

**E-3**

2. Looking back, how adequate was the information you had (about SF) to make the decision to volunteer for SF?

- a) Extremely inadequate (I had almost no information)
- b) Inadequate (I needed more information than I had)
- c) Somewhat inadequate (I could have used more information)
- d) Adequate (I had most of the information I needed)
- e) Extremely adequate (I had all the information I needed)

3. Looking back on the time you were deciding to join SF, what information would you like to have had about SF, but it was not available to you? That is, what do you wish you had known? (Please answer in the space below. Use the back of the paper if necessary.)

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### Part C. Experiences in SF.

1. When Group assignments were made, did you get your first choice?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I am in the Group I wanted to be in.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I wanted to be in \_\_\_\_\_ Group because: \_\_\_\_\_

2. When MOS assignments were made, did you get your first choice?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I got the MOS I wanted.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I wanted MOS \_\_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_\_

3. For each of the SF missions/activities listed below, please indicate how many times in your SF career you have personally been involved in working to accomplish the specific mission in a real-world situation.

\_\_\_\_\_ Foreign Internal Defense

\_\_\_\_\_ Special Reconnaissance

\_\_\_\_\_ Humanitarian Civic Action

\_\_\_\_\_ Direct Action

\_\_\_\_\_ Security Assistance/ Mobile Training Team

\_\_\_\_\_ Search and Rescue

\_\_\_\_\_ Counternarcotics

4. Below please estimate, for each of the last four years, the number of months you spent during that year in garrison, and the number of months you spent away from home (for training, missions, schools, etc.). (Note: If you were not in SF during all four past years, make your estimations only for the years you were in SF.)

# Months in Garrison

# Months Away

1989: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1990: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1991: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1992: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



5. Based on your experiences, to what extent is SF different from the conventional Army? Please explain.

- a) SF is not at all different \_\_\_\_\_
- b) A little different \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Somewhat different \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Considerably different \_\_\_\_\_
- e) SF is different to a very great extent \_\_\_\_\_

6. To what extent is SF different from what you expected when you made the decision to join? That is, how close is the reality meeting your expectations? What aspects, specifically, are different from what you expected? Please explain.

- a) SF is exactly what I expected it to be \_\_\_\_\_
- b) SF is somewhat different from what I expected \_\_\_\_\_
- c) SF is not at all what I expected \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Part D. Family Experiences.**

Please answer the following questions if you are, or have been, married while in SF.

1. What kinds of family difficulties have you experienced while in SF? (Check those that apply)

- ☐ I have not experienced any family difficulties
- ☐ Financial difficulties
- ☐ Communication difficulties with wife and/or children
- ☐ Marital difficulties due to extended time away from home
- ☐ Difficulties due to the unpredictability of time away from home
- ☐ Difficulties staying in touch with the children
- ☐ Difficulties handling transitions between going-away and coming-home times
- ☐ Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

2. What kinds of coping strategies have you found useful in handling the above family difficulties? What would you recommend to other SF soldiers who are experiencing the above family difficulties?

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3. To what extent.....

a) does your wife support your career in SF?

Not at all	A little	Some	Considerable	To a very great extent
1	2	3	4	5

b) does your wife have outside interests (career, hobbies, etc.)? 1

2 3 4 5

## Part E. Job Satisfaction.

Listed below are various aspects of your current job in SF, and of your experiences in SF as a whole. Please CIRCLE the alternative indicating how satisfied you are with the following aspects of your SF experiences.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
a. The amount of personal growth and development I get doing my job. 1	2	3	4	5	
b. The amount of job security I have. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
c. The amount of pay I receive. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
d. The amount of benefits I have. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
e. Opportunities for promotion. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
f. The physical work environment while in the field. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
g. The physical work environment while in garrison. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
h. The degree of respect and fair treatment I receive from my boss. . . 1	2	3	4	5	
i. The feeling of worthwhile accomplishment I get from doing my job. . 1	2	3	4	5	
j. The chance to get to know other people while on the job. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
k. The amount of support and guidance I receive from my supervisor. . 1	2	3	4	5	
l. The degree to which I am fairly paid for what I contribute. . . . . 1	3	4	5	5	
m. The amount of independent thought and action I exercise in my job. 1	2	3	4	5	
n. The friendliness of the people I work with. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
o. How secure things look for me in the future in SF. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
p. The amount of challenge in my job. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
q. The respect I receive from the people with whom I work. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
r. The chance to help other people while at work. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
s. The overall quality of the leadership where I work. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
t. The variety of different types of real-world missions I've done in SF. . 1	2	3	4	5	
u. The number of real-world missions I have gone on while in SF. . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
v. The types of training exercises I've been on while in SF. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
w. The number of training exercises I've been on while in SF. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
y. The amount of travel I have done in SF. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
z. Opportunities to learn and work with other cultures. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
aa. Opportunities to teach others. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
bb. Opportunities for military schools. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
cc. Opportunities to pursue civilian education while in SF. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
dd. The amount of adventure and excitement I have experienced in SF. 1	2	3	4	5	
ee. The opportunity I've had to use my skills and develop as a soldier. . 1	2	3	4	5	
ff. Opportunities I've had to use unconventional warfare techniques. . . 1	2	3	4	5	
gg. The variety of assignments I've had while in SF. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
hh. The camaraderie and team spirit on my ODA. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
ii. The prestige of SF and feeling part of an elite group. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
jj. The professionalism and competence of my SF coworkers. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
kk. Time and flexibility for family activities while in garrison. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
ll. Amount of family support in SF. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
mm. Amount of time I've spent away from home while in SF, overall. . 1	2	3	4	5	
nn. Amount of time I've spent on an ODA. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
oo. The flexibility and control I've had to request job assignments in SF. 1	2	3	4	5	
pp. The Group I am assigned to. . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	
qq. My satisfaction, overall, with life as an SF soldier . . . . . 1	2	3	4	5	

# **Part F. Overall.**

1. Overall, what would you say are the pros and cons of a career in SF, particularly in the Group you are in?

Pros:

Cons:

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2. Knowing what you know now, if you had to decide all over again whether to join SF, what would you decide?

- a) I would decide definitely not to join SF.
- b) I would have second thoughts.
- c) I would decide without hesitation to join SF.

3. Below, please CIRCLE the number indicating the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
a) I am happy with the duty stations I've been assigned in SF. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
b) I've had some control over my SF duty station assignments. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
c) I could request a different job in SF and be reasonably certain of getting it. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
d) I understand perfectly what it takes to succeed in SF. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
e) I would describe my wife as independent. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
f) I am committed to a career in SF. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
g) I find that I tend to live, eat, and breathe my job. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
h) Most of my close friends are in SF. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
i) I feel guilty because I have to miss family activities because of work. .	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
j) I feel frustrated because I don't have enough time for the personal activities that are important to me. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
k) I am happy with the Group I am in. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
l) I would stay in the Army even if I could not be in SF. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
m) I feel I don't have enough time to myself. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
n) I feel I am being pulled in opposite directions by my work and family. .	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
o) I socialize outside of work a great deal with people in SF. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
p) I am happy with the MOS I have. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
q) I would be happier in SF if I could switch Groups. . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
r) I would be happier in SF if I could go on more real-world missions. . .	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
s) When I joined SF, I had a realistic picture of what it was like. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	
t) SF is all that I expected it to be. ....	1	2	3	4	5	NA	

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

Appendix F

Summary of Soldiers' Answers to the Survey Question:  
"What other information would you like to have had  
about SF at the time of your decision?"

B3. LOOKING BACK ON THE TIME YOU WERE DECIDING TO JOIN SF, WHAT INFORMATION WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE HAD ABOUT SF, BUT IT WAS NOT AVAILABLE TO YOU? THAT IS, WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN?

- 001 Restrictions and limitations: once qualified, an SF soldier is more or less "stuck" in SF because of the high cost of training (different from Rangers, Airborne, and other "elite" US Army units)--unless an SF soldier wishes to commit "career suicide" by leaving under other than honorable conditions. Assignments are limited to Ft. Bragg, Ft. Devens, Ft. Campbell, and Ft. Lewis with little chance of overseas duty--the rest of the US Army can serve anywhere in the world but SF is extremely limited in choices of geographic location. "Field duty under spartan living conditions" sounds glamorous but can become tiring after a few years of family separations, hardships (both physical and economic), low budget travel, viewing disease and third world poverty and hunger, and interacting with third world people.
- 002 If I would have known the amount of funds SF gets to preform missions I would never have joined!
- 003 The amount of stress -- related from missions spent away on foreign soil.
- 004 The time to talk with senior NCO's who were in SF.
- 005 Periods of total boredom; schools hard to get; money not available for MTT's.
- 006 Why is it going conventional?
- 007 I think that the sense of not knowing what was going to happen next was the spice that kept my level of expectation high throughout the period.
- 008 N/A
- 009 Training schedule for Q course. Up to date info on what goes on within an ODA.
- 010 The information I had was adequate.
- 011 More information put out on MOS, ex. 18C, 18D.
- 012 NA
- 013 NA
- 014 NA
- 015 When I joined I wish I would have known the different missions of SF.
- 016 I served in an SF Signal Company, so I knew what I was getting in to.
- 017 More detail in what happened during the different phases of training.
- 018 Being in SF was a military goal.
- 019 Experiences from actual A-Tm members, not recruiters, who were just SF qualified.
- 020 NA
- 021 NA
- 022 How much time spent doing make work. Ratio of missions an A-Team may do in a year.

023 Mission statement of SF.  
024 N/A  
025 N/A  
026 Didn't need it. SF had a well earned reputation and didn't need to advertise! I tried for SF because I wanted to see if I could make it. I felt SF soldiers were the absolute best in the service and really didn't expect to make it.  
027 The fact that SF does more than any other unit but gets paid the same.  
028 What SF is really like.  
029 No remorse, no desires; I feel that one's character and level of motivation or desire is best reflected when he enters a situation of extreme stress with little or no forwarning/preparation! This is an organization, for the most part, in which one really doesn't know what he is getting into. One begins to realize his role in the organization only after spending some "ground" time.  
030 They did not tell us the breakdown of Teams like scuba, halo, rucksack & Tm R.S. and job descriptions.  
031 NA  
032 Where I was going to be sent so I could study my language.  
033 No CMT.  
034 NA  
035 To have had a start on a specific language would have helped.  
036 I knew everything I needed.  
037 Information given was sufficient.  
038 N/A  
039 NA  
040 NA  
041 NA  
042 What exactly was I going to do.  
043 Some of the team missions, individual job taskings.  
044 Length of deployments (6 mo, 2mo, etc)  
045 NA  
046 NA  
047 NA  
048 More info on how to prepare physically for pre-phase trng.  
049 NA  
050 NA  
051 Would like to have known sooner that I was going to be an 18E so I could have started studying morse code before school started.  
052 A detailed job description.  
053 What really goes on and not the advertising hype.  
054 NA  
055 That we would become a primary FID group (BN).  
056 PT.  
057 More actual SF recruiters coming to talk to recruits. People that are on teams not being kicked off and put into recruiting.  
058 NA

059 NA  
060 That SF was becoming more conventional. We are only teachers, not many (few) real world missions.  
061 What being on a detachment was really like.  
062 None.  
063 NA  
064 How some of the conventional army mentality was getting to SF via the recruitment of Sr. NCO's and officers from conventional units.  
065 How bureaucratic (extremely) it was.  
066 NA  
067 That I really could not influence what group I went to and the group different missions. I was lucky I got the group I wanted.  
068 More complete idea of SF job in relation to army.  
069 More information on duty assignments, rotations and the possibility of changing assignments.  
070 NA  
071 NA  
072 I wish I had known the commanders of SF were not selected as SF personnel but because it was a command and thus know nothing of our capabilities.  
073 Too much stress was placed on past accomplishments e.g. Vietnam, and not enough on today's mission.  
074 No other.  
075 What really take place in an A-team and the behavior that you need to have..  
076 About the same time I volunteered to branch transfer to SF, it had just became a branch, and there were so many rumors and uncertainties at the time. My chain of command in the Infantry said it was a dead end. I didn't know because the Branch was too new.  
077 NA  
078 I had no written info.  
080 The work that is conducted at team level.  
081 What my job was like once I left the Q course, (on a team).  
082 Not important.