

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

INTEGRATION OF FEMALE PILOTS IN THE
160TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS AVIATION REGIMENT (AIRBORNE) –
A CULTURE ALREADY SET-UP FOR SUCCESS

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

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12 February 2014

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Biography

Colonel Salome Herrera Jr. is assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Colonel Herrera is an Army Aviator who has served over 12 years in the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. In the 160th SOAR(A), he served in multiple duty positions to include Flight Platoon Leader, Company Commander, Battalion S3, Training Battalion Commander, and Regiment Executive Officer. He deployed multiple times between 2002-2011 with the 160th SOAR(A) in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Colonel Herrera also served in the Republic of Korea, and in Honduras. In Honduras he commanded the Aviation Battalion as part of Joint Task Force-Bravo where he deployed to Haiti in support of Operation Unified Response. His last duty assignment was as the Deputy Brigade Commander for the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade's nine-month deployment to Afghanistan from August 2012 to May 2013. Colonel Herrera is a master aviator and is rated in the CH47D, MH47E/G, and MH6C/M. Colonel Herrera's next duty assignment is at Fort Campbell, Kentucky as the 160th SOAR(A)'s Deputy Regiment Commander.

Abstract

Consistent with the recent January 2013 decision by the Secretary of Defense to lift the ban on women serving in direct combat, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) began accepting females into their ranks after 30+ years of existence. How can an organization with such a rich heroic lineage, which has been essentially all-male for so long, be successful while implementing a relatively drastic organizational change (real or perceived) of adding females to their ranks and in their cockpits? The 160th SOAR(A)'s rich heritage of mission success worldwide is due to their reliance on their standards of excellence, and selfless values that are found in their motto and creed; this same motto and creed hold the keys to the success for the 160th's female integration. This research paper will examine the unit's standards and values, and it will demonstrate that the structure and framework for successful female officer integration already exists in the 160th SOAR(A), as long as the unit's leadership proactively enforces its culture's core.

Although the 160th's female integration also includes its critical enlisted personnel (crewchiefs for the helicopters), the thesis of this paper will only focus on the officer integration. The analysis of the differences between the officers and enlisted assignment process (officer assessments vs. enlisted direct-assignment) would exceed the scope of this paper.

"Introducing females into the 160th is a next step in the evolution of a force that focuses on bringing the most talented and dedicated officers to bear on the significant problems that face our military. No one knew what would happen when we introduced females into the USMA in the 1970s, or when we lifted the prohibition on them flying Attack/Cavalry aircraft in the 1990s. In both of these instances our female Soldiers have astounded us with their focus, resiliency and dedication to mission. They bring skills and attributes that are unique to their gender and required in our force of diverse strategic leaders for today and tomorrow."

**160th SOAR(A) Commander
November 2013**

Introduction

On a cold, dark night over some of the world's most treacherous terrain in Eastern Afghanistan, a flight of two Chinook helicopters led by a senior pilot (Flight Lead (FL)), begin their mission to insert elite special operations ground forces to capture a high-value individual. Despite the hazardous zero illumination night, the pilots of the Chinooks flawlessly executed the landing and infiltration of the SOF team on time to the dusty landing zones vicinity of the target buildings. After the infil, the Chinooks planned to return to their laager landing zone to refuel and await the call for exfiltration; however, enroute to their refuel site, the Air Mission Commander (AMC) received a call from the SOF team that they had taken fire, and that they needed to execute their planned casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) contingency. The AMC and FL quickly analyzed their fuel status, and the AMC made the decision to return back to the landing zone to execute the CASEVAC. The crew completed the CASEVAC mission with no issues. At the end of the period of darkness, and close to the end of the aircrew duty day, the SOF team finally called the AMC and announced they have captured their targeted individual and the team was ready for immediate exfil. In the end, mission success equated to all friendly ground forces returned back to their home base with their detainee, all casualties stable at the proper medical facility, and the aircrews returned back to their FOB to reset themselves and their

aircraft for more of the same the following night. These missions have become routine for these crews, especially for the seasoned FL and AMC. What makes this mission different than other SOF team insertions in Afghanistan? It's not that "conventional" aircraft and crews (non-Special Operations Aviation (SOA) assets) executed the mission, but that an all-female cockpit in the lead aircraft executed the mission. The FL and AMC were both conventional female Chinook mission pilots that were executing SOF missions on a routine basis during their deployment. The primary point of this Spring 2013 vignette is to not only demonstrate that females are flying missions in combat today, but that female pilots are also already flying special operations missions in combat.

Consistent with the recent January 2013 decision by the Secretary of Defense to lift the ban on women serving in direct combat, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) began accepting females into their ranks after 30+ years of existence. How can an organization with such a rich heroic lineage, which has been essentially all-male for so long, be successful while implementing a relatively drastic organizational change (real or perceived) of adding females to their ranks and in their cockpits? The 160th SOAR(A)'s rich heritage of mission success worldwide is due to their reliance on their standards of excellence, and selfless values that are found in their motto and creed; this same motto and creed hold the keys to the success for the 160th's female integration. This research paper will examine the unit's standards and values, and it will demonstrate that the structure and framework for successful female integration already exists in the 160th SOAR(A), as long as the unit's leadership proactively enforces its culture's core.

Thesis

The pathway to success for the 160th SOAR(A)'s integration of females rests with the organization's ability to maintain its culture of standards and values; the same standards and values that are rooted in the unit's legacy Night Stalker Motto and Creed.

160th SOAR(A) Past, Present, and Future

History and Pre 9/11 160th SOAR(A)

On 24 April 1980, the US executed Operation Eagle Claw which resulted in the failed US hostage rescue attempt in Iran, where tragically eight Americans lost their lives during an accident at the remote refueling site named Desert-1. After the incident, President Carter immediately stood up the Holloway Commission led by Admiral Holloway III to review the accident. The final Holloway Commission results included the transformation of the US Military, which formalized the Joint Force and codified a dedicated Special Operations Force. One component of this dedicated Special Operations Force was comprised of the Army Special Operations Aviation Force – the 160th SOAR(A).¹

The 160th's mission is to “Educate, Organize, Man, Equip, Train, and Employ Army Special Operations Aviation forces in support of contingency missions and the Warfighting Geographic Combatant Commanders.”² The Department of Defense formed the original Task Force in 1981 to execute the second hostage rescue attempt in Iran. When the Iranians released the hostages, the Army codified the unit as Task Force 160th. The 160th's nickname – Night Stalkers came to fruition due to the unit's then unprecedented and dedicated night vision goggle capability. In 1983, the 160th deployed on its first combat mission to Grenada in support of Operation Urgent Fury. Grenada became their “baptism under fire” where they suffered 12 WIAs

and their first KIA – CPT Keith Lucas. The 160th credits CPT Lucas with the unit's motto when on the first attempt to infiltrate the ground forces, the flight took heavy fire. Instead of returning back to base, the flight made a valiant second attempt after CPT Lucas said "Night Stalkers Don't Quit!" (NSDQ!) prior to being shot down and killed. Since Grenada, the 160th SOAR(A) participated in every conflict that the US partook in to include Panama, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Named-Classified Operations. The unit's instilled motto – NSDQ resonated during each of their deployments with acts of heroism, unprecedented pilot skills, and steadfast leadership.³ Glistened from its motto, the unit's Night Stalker Creed also provides a foundation for all Night Stalkers to live by (Annex A).

As with all newly formed units, the Army created a Modified Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOE) for the 160th. Based on the existing Direct Combat Assignment Rule, the MTOE did not authorize females at the Battalion level and below. The only positions that the MTOE coded as male or female were at the Regimental staff level. In other words, the MTOE did not authorize females in the Battalion's cockpits. The Battalion level authorization limitations were due in part to the 1973 Combat Exclusion Policy (CEP) which the Department of Defense formalized in 1988 as the "Risk Rule." This rule set the standard for evaluating positions for which women could serve in based on excluding women from units with "risks of exposure to direct combat, hostile fire, or capture were equal to the risk of supported combat units."⁴ Due to the 160th's mission to infiltrate special operations forces behind enemy lines, the risks listed in the rule all applied to the members of the 160th aircrews. In 1994, amongst the aftermath of females' success in Operation Desert Storm, the SECDEF rescinded the "Risk Rule" which only excluded women from "assignments to units below brigade level whose primary mission is direct ground combat."⁵ Until recently (February 2013), the Army responded

to the 1994 SECDEF recantation by prohibiting the assignment of women to “positions or units that routinely collocate with units conducting an assigned direct ground combat mission.”⁶

Again, the nature of the Night Stalkers’ mission and relationship with the ground forces (routinely collocated) prevented women from serving in the 160th cockpits.

Post 9/11 160th SOAR(A)

Due to the 160th’s early success in the Global War on Terror (GWOT), and eventual popularity within the Pentagon, the unit authorizations doubled in size since 9/11; however, there was zero growth in female authorizations. After the post 9/11 growth, and after years of aircraft procurement, the unit is now comprised of over 3,200 personnel and 192 aircraft organized into four battalions, a training Battalion (SOATB), two UAV Companies, and an Acquisition Directorate (SIMO).⁷ Despite significant and unprecedented growth, the 160th female authorizations did not rise; the female authorizations have remained unchanged for the past 30+ years.

It is worth highlighting that the 160th struggles to meet its recruiting goals to fill their cockpits every year. The organization hangs its hat on one of the SOF Truths – “Quality is better than quantity.”⁸ Principally, the unit will do without before it accepts lower quality personnel in order to maintain their level of excellence. Since 2010, the 160th missed its recruiting goals (defined as the number of assessment packets received) by approximately 10-15% every year. This is especially critical because the unit’s recruiting goals continue to grow with their authorization increases; and subsequently the packet to actual assignment to the unit rate is only at approximately 27% (i.e., it takes about 4 packets to get one aviator trained and into the cockpit). At this rate, all recruiting goal shortfalls exasperate the unit’s cockpit manning shortages.⁹ There are a multitude of inter-related reasons for not receiving enough packets

annually; however one reason is the limited pool of experienced active duty male aviators (the targeted recruiting pool). Notwithstanding the SOF Truth of quality is better than quantity, the addition of experienced active duty female aviators does increase the potential recruiting pool.¹⁰ Despite the assist that the females can provide to the 160th recruiting efforts, the 160th still faces the reality of actually integrating females into the organization.

160th Future

As it stands today, and as referenced by the 22 March 2013 United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) Commander's memo, USSOCOM is conducting a three prong assessment of female integration into SOF which include the 160th's integration (SOCOM DOTMLPF-P review, JSOU social science study, and an independent RAND Corporation analysis). Admiral McRaven expects these studies to be complete by July 2014, and he plans to provide DoD SOCOM's female integration execution strategy no later than April 2015.¹¹ In the meantime, the 160th has begun its female recruiting and assessment initiatives. Thus far the 160th sent out over 50 assessment packets to qualified female officers; they received 20 packets back; and they scheduled two female aviators for an assessment. In mid-2013 the 160th favorably assessed both female officers (1x1LT and 1xCW2s (P)) whom are to begin initial qualification training in the summer of 2014.¹² Now that the flow of females in the 160th pipeline has begun, how can the unit ensure successful integration during initial training and into the Battalions? The 160th must rely on pre-existing elements that have made them successful for the past three decades; that is, they must continue to depend on on their culture of standards and values, and not focus on any of the friction.

160th – An Existing Culture of Standards and Values

Culture Defined ... and Cohesion

The pathway to success for the 160th SOAR(A)'s integration of females rests with the organization's ability to maintain its culture of standards and values. To properly understand what lies at the center or core of the 160th culture, which isn't always visible, this paper will analyze the unit with two organizational culture models: Edgar H. Schein's "Three Levels of Culture", and Joanne Martin's "Three Perspective View."

Schein uses his "Three Levels of Culture" to analyze organizations on different planes. The three planes range from the very perceptible ("Artifacts Level"), to the norms and rules that members use to depict their culture ("Espoused Beliefs Level"), to the "deeply embedded, unconscious, basic assumptions that ... (are) the essence of culture ("Basic Underlying Assumptions Level")."¹³ The elements of the Artifacts Level are at the surface, and "includes all the phenomena that (one) would see, hear, and feel" when encountering a culture.¹⁴ These artifacts also include observed behavior, structures, processes, and the climate of an organization.¹⁵ Despite being very visible, these artifacts don't define the inner values of a culture. "It is dangerous to try to infer the deeper assumptions from artifacts alone because a person's interpretations will inevitably be projections of his or her own feelings and reactions."¹⁶ The next level, Espoused Beliefs Level (EBL), comes closer to the core of an organization's culture.

The EBL comprises the "beliefs and ethical rules ... (that) are explicitly articulated, (and) they serve the normative... function of guiding members of the group ... in training new members how to behave."¹⁷ The EBL is where an organization's ideals, goals, aspirations and

vision reside.¹⁸ All members of the organization have adopted these beliefs...beliefs rooted and nested in the next level – the Basic Underlying Assumptions Level (BUAL).

The “unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values ... that determine behavior, perception, thought and feeling” are found in the BUAL.¹⁹ These assumptions rest and root themselves in the unconscious of every member of the organization. Schein elaborates by stating that one will “find little variation within a social unit, (and that) this degree of consensus results from repeated success in implementing certain beliefs and values.”²⁰ Otherwise put, the artifacts and espoused beliefs are more superficial aspects of a culture and the basic assumptions define the core of a culture that have essentially contributed to the success of an organization.

Martin utilizes her Three Perspective View of culture to interpret how cultural manifestations, or indicators, relate to each other. Similar to Schein’s Artifact Level, Martin’s “Cultural Forms” indicators rest on the periphery and include organizations’ rituals, jargon, physical arrangements, and stories. These forms “provide important clues to what (members) are believing and doing.”²¹ Martin’s second view of cultural manifestations is an organization’s “Practices (Formal and Informal).” The practices include a group’s structure, task, formal rules and procedures, and unwritten social rules.²² These practices and cultural forms embed themselves in an organization’s “Content Themes (External and Internal).” A content theme “is a common thread of concern that underlies interpretations of several cultural manifestations... and can be cognitive (beliefs/assumptions), or they can be attitudinal (values).”²³ The content themes are at the center of what connects the indicators of the cultural forms and practices, which reinforce each other. Different than Schein, Martin likes to look at all three perspectives simultaneously to interpret a culture; however, she does articulate that the ultimate analysis of an

organization will “approach the (appropriate) depth of understanding that Schein terms ‘basic assumptions’,”²⁴ - the core of a culture.

In addition to the themes and assumptions being the core of a culture, Unit Cohesion is critical in enabling a culture such as the military to succeed. The military “demands that unit members become totally dependent on each other over a sustained period of time in order to complete their mission and optimize their chances of survival. Members ... must meet the STANDARDS of combat effectiveness. If one or more members are unable to perform, for whatever reason, individual and group survival are jeopardized. Cohesion is therefore essentially based upon the presence of TRUST among group members ... if too many group members are unable to perform adequately, the group becomes dysfunctional.”²⁵ Any degradation in standards breaks down trust and ultimately erodes the cohesion of an organization which creates dysfunction and the inability of a military entity to endure under difficult circumstances. If standards are a part of a culture’s themes and assumptions, then cohesion is built from this culture’s core ... more significantly, it’s not built on a culture’s Artifacts/Cultural Forms (i.e., it is not a culture built on gender).

160th’s Culture’ Assumptions and Themes ... and Cohesion

“If we fail to apply the same rigid standard, or modify it in ways that favor female candidates because of their gender, then we will have a hard time fielding the right force, maintaining the trust of our supported units and keeping faith with our own formation.”

160th SOAR(A) Commander

Shein and Martin’s models can boil down the 160th SOAR(A) culture to its essence and core. Beginning at the surface (Artifact/Forms) the 160th is a highly selective group of male aviators who provide precise rotary wing assault and fires for elite SOF worldwide. Outsiders may view the members of the unit as a bit cocky but mission focused; play hard and work hard;

have cool toys (helicopters, facilities, and uniforms) and have plenty of resources for training/TDY (sleep in hotels, not in the field); and at times they can be seen as a “good ole boys club.” All of this describes the units observed behavior, but as Schein stated, “these artifacts don’t define the inner values of a culture ... because a person’s interpretations (of artifacts) will inevitably be projections of his or her own feelings and reactions.”²⁶ So what are the 160th’s deeper level of Espoused Beliefs and Practices? Those can be found in the Night Stalker Creed.

Espoused Beliefs “guide members of the group in how to deal with key situations, and in training new members how to behave;”²⁷ and Practices are the formal and informal rules, tasks, and procedures that organizations execute. These all reside in the unit’s Night Stalker Creed (Annex A). The 160th requires that each member of the Night Stalkers memorize the Night Stalker Creed during initial training. The Creed includes the following elements (Beliefs and Practices): Mission/Alert Focused; SOF “Precious Cargo” Focused; Adaptive/Resilient; Service oriented volunteer; Character - Honor and Integrity; Humility – Quiet Professional; Physically and Mentally Fit; Competent/Trained – arrive anywhere on time +/- 30 seconds; Secrecy as a way of life; Courageous; Unwavering loyalty to the unit and fellow members – “leave no comrade behind”; and Respectful for the Fallen Night Stalkers.²⁸ The tested Creed has provided a way for all Night Stalkers to live and operate; furthermore, it has provided Night Stalkers a list of espoused beliefs and practices that the organization takes pride in and hangs their hat on for their day to day operations. However this still doesn’t define the unit’s culture core. The core can be found in the Night Stalker Motto and the last line of the Night Stalker Creed.

Night Stalkers Don’t Quit! and “Night Stalkers ... would rather die than quit.” These two statements provide the essence of the culture of the 160th – their standards and values. The standard of never quitting (Content Theme - strive for a standard of excellence), and the selfless

value of dying instead of failing (Basic Underlying Assumption) is shared by each and every Night Stalker. This value and standard are “a common thread” for all Night Stalkers. Not quitting and selflessly willing to die are part of all the member’s “unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values ... that determine (their) behavior, perception, thought and feeling.”²⁹ It is NSDQ that lies at the foundation of the long held successful reputation of the entire organization (Summarized Diagram – Annex B).

Along with a defined 160th core culture, Unit Cohesion bases itself on a “mutual trust and respect between Soldiers” and it is a “key morale factor that (a) leader can influence before, during and after combat”³⁰ Cohesion in the 160th also rests on the mutual trust by all members that everyone will meet the standards and values of the organization. The lack of adherence to unit standards and values results in a breakdown in trust amongst its members which ultimately will destroy cohesion. Cohesion especially cannot rely on cultural artifacts/forms such as gender; and consequently, the enforcement of the unit’s basic underlying assumptions and content themes, ...i.e., the enforcement of the Night Stalker Motto and Creed to all genders, will preserve the trust and cohesion of all members of the 160th which will retain the existing successful level of excellent warfighting capability of the Night Stalkers.

160th Culture Enforcement and Friction Mitigation

160th Instilling and Enforcing Standards and Values

When asked what are the keys to success for 160th female integration:

"No standard degradation." - 160th Recruiting Officer

"Enforcing high standards already in place...the exact same Standards are applied to every Aviator regardless of grade or gender." – 160th Assessment Officer

"The standards for acceptance into the Regiment need to remain universal regardless of sex/gender." -160th Psychologist

BLUF – the framework for instilling and enforcing the unit's core culture of critical standards of excellence and selfless values of the 160th already exists. The 160th's Assessment and Selection Process ("Assessment Week"), Initial Qualification Training ("Office Green Platoon" – OGP), and Continuation Training (Fully Mission Qualified/Flight Lead Training) are systems and processes that are already in place to inculcate all Night Stalkers on the high standards of excellence and the selfless service values found in its motto and creed.³¹

The 160th only invites officers to their assessment week who have received approvals from the Regiment Command group on their assessment packets. The assessment week provides a five-day initial snapshot of the officer while he conducts a myriad of evaluation events: Physical Assessment (APFT); Swim Test; Psychological Screening; General Knowledge Aviation Exam; Flight and Navigation Assessment; and a formal Assessment Board that results in an official out brief and a communicated final decision on the assessee's disposition. The 160th enforces Army and unit standards during all the events, to include (and arguably) the psychological screening. The APFT uses the Army standards, the Swim Test uses the Navy Class II Swim Test standard, the flight assessment utilizes the organization's Aircrew Training Manual

standards, and the aircraft navigation utilizes the unit's +/- 30 second 160th standard. The formal board does allow some subjectivity on the trainability of the officer, the moral character of the officer, and the ability of the officer to start at the bottom of the totem pole; however, from the beginning of the assessee's exposure to the 160th it is made clear that standards carry the day. The formal out brief at the assessment board details to the assessee all standards that were met and not met. A successful assessment earns the officer an assignment to the 160th's initial training phase - Officer Green Platoon.³²

In OGP the 160th exposes the officers to a litany of training standards that must be met to successfully complete the course. The entire OGP training is a 26-28 week long process. The training is demanding, and Night Stalker standards are abundant throughout the training. In OGP the officers begin with Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) training at Fort Bragg, NC; then they proceed to Officer Combat Skills (OCS), or "ground phase." OCS consists of four weeks of intense training which includes Physical Fitness/Road Marching, Medical, Land Navigation, Aquatics, Combatives, and Advanced Weapons Training. All training events focus on executing formal standards before moving on to the next phase. After a successful completion of OCS, the officers begin Basic Skills, or "BNAV" – Basic Navigation training. BNAV is where all aviators learn the critical basics and standards of Mission Briefs, Mission Planning, and Advanced Air Navigation. The final exam for BNAV is an intense long range navigation route (200+ miles) to a target. The students must arrive at their target on their planned time +/- 30 seconds; and the students must execute their navigation route with only a pair of NVGs, the aircraft compass, a clock and a paper map. The final flight exam incorporates all standards learned by the students on briefing, planning, and executing long range navigation. The last phase of OGP - Advanced Skills, is the actual aircraft qualification of the students into their

mission aircraft (M/AH-6 Little Bird, MH60 Blackhawk, or MH47 Chinook). The aircrew training manuals dictate the training standards, which includes environmental training (Desert, Mountain, Overwater, Aerial Refueling, Urban, Gunnery and Deck Landings). In addition to the robust framework of training standards of excellence, OGP also provides the foundation for the selfless values of the unit.³³

The 160th begins the introduction of the unit's values in OGP. In the ground phase all OGP students receive their Night Stalker history class. The class not only addresses the genesis of the 160th SOAR(A) and all the missions and operations the unit executed, it also teaches the students about the impetus and history of the Night Stalker motto – Night Stalkers Don't Quit!, and the importance of all the elements of the Night Stalker creed. Another part of the indoctrination of the selfless value of dying rather than quitting is a class at the Night Stalker Memorial about all the fallen Night Stalkers who gave their life while defending their country. Lastly, it must be noted that every instructor (contractors) that the 160th uses to train the new Night Stalkers are former Night Stalkers. They are the nation's heroes of the past conflicts of Grenada, Panama, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq to name a few. These instructors are the first impression and the beginning of the exposure of new members to the organization. They have proven to be effective in instilling the NSDQ standards and values because they live and embrace them themselves; as a result, the framework already exists to initially enforce the 160th culture of standards and values in OGP.³⁴

After successfully completing OGP, the new Night Stalkers arrive to their assigned units. They bring their newly learned skills to the organization and begin their duties as Basic Mission Qualified pilots. All pilots strive for the next level to become Fully Mission Qualified (FMQ); and only the very few reach the prestigious Flight Lead Qualification (FL). The road to FMQ and

FL is full of training exercises, deployments, and mission support where the unit continues to enforce standards of briefing, planning, and mission execution. Most notably, during unit continuation training the 160th exposes new Night Stalkers to the elite special operations ground forces, “the precious cargo”. The introduction and relationships built with the forces continue to enforce the Night Stalker motto -NSDQ and the Night Stalker creed’s standards of excellence and selfless values. These are the same “elite forces” that are specifically mentioned in the creed.³⁵ Although the framework for instilling the critical standards and values already exists in the 160th, the organization still can expect friction during female integration that only proactive leadership can mitigate.

Friction Mitigation

“This has been and likely continues to be an emotionally charged issue for many individuals. Until guys can stop resisting and come to accept that women are going to integrate into the line companies, the barrier to effective integration will remain.”

160th SOAR(A) Psychologist

As Schein states, any change to culture or change to basic assumptions is “highly anxiety provoking,” and “the most central issue for leaders is to...deal with the anxiety that is unleashed when those assumptions are challenged.”³⁶ Leadership must directly involve themselves. In the case of the 160th’s integration of women into their ranks, the core culture of the 160th isn’t changing because the standards and values represented in NSDQ/Creed are not changing. What transpires is a perceived change of culture by many members of the organization because what they will see as changes to assumptions and themes are only changes to the superficial artifacts and forms. The currently all-male Battalions may complain for various reasons: they may believe females will distract them from their jobs; they have to watch what they say; they can’t

walk freely around with little clothes on; they can't look at girl posters/magazines; higher HQs are changing standards; females won't be able to physically handle the job and stress; etc...

Some unit members may perceive this list of items as a cultural change, but it is a far cry from the 160th assumptions and themes of standards of excellence and selfless values. Unfortunately, if the unit doesn't directly address the misperceptions, then the mutual trust of the members of the organization will break down, thus disintegrating the cohesion that is necessary on the battlefield. All these potential misperceptions, or friction, will be real for the leadership; and a proactive approach will be absolutely necessary for mitigation. The proactive leadership initiative must include the following: the continual enforcement of already existing standards; a two way communication plan which enforces and reminds all members that the 160th is a culture of standards and values (not gender) that rests in their motto - NSDQ!; and that any and all non-conformers will and must depart the unit.

Recommendations for the 160th

The conditions for successful female integration already exist in the 160th. The following recommendations to the leadership of the 160th can ensure that the existing culture prevails in the face of potential friction during integration.

- **#1 – Enforce the Culture.** Continue enforcing the standards of excellence and selfless values throughout the spectrum of the organizational processes (Assessments, OGP, Continuation Training, and Mission Execution). This enforcement will protect and preserve the core of the 160th culture of underlying assumptions and content themes of standards of excellence and selfless values; and it will sustain the cohesion amongst all members of the unit.

- **#2 – Proactive Communications.** All leadership levels of the unit must engage in a two-way communication plan with the current members of the 160th, and open a direct communication link with the assigned females. The commander must remind the current members of the organization that the 160th has succeeded for 30+ years due to their standards and values found in NSDQ!/NS Creed, and not on superficial items like gender or artifacts. Standards and selfless values provide the mutual trust and cohesion that enables the unit to thrive. Additionally, the females must have a direct venue to express any and all concerns they may have in order for leadership to have the opportunity to swiftly address. A consistent message, and open communication with the assigned females will not only refresh all unit members on the importance of the 160th culture, but will also provide critical feedback; thus mitigating friction before it manifests.
- **#3 – Remove Non-Conformers.** All Night Stalkers that cannot adapt and cannot lean on the core of the culture of the 160th as being the keys to the unit's success will only breed mutual mistrust and incohesion. The unit must swiftly address inflexible and non-adaptive members of the unit. If directive or coercive leadership doesn't prevail in changing the non-conformers, then despite their years of selfless service to the nation's elite 160thSOAR(A), the unit must ask them to leave. The removal of a seasoned, experienced SOA aviator is the lesser of the two evils when compared to the damage of a non-conformer during female integration.

Conclusion

“Night Stalkers Don’t Quit!” and “Night Stalkers ... rather die than Quit!” both provide the core of the culture of the 160th SOAR(A). They are the underlying assumptions and content themes that engrain themselves in every Night Stalker for the past 30+ years. This culture has ensured cohesion; thus it has ensured mission success. Despite the inevitable friction that will come from a perceived culture change, the organization can continue its mission success with proactive leadership. Eventually, long term 160th female integration success (and elimination of the friction) will be realized when female NS pilots retire from the 160th and become part of the primary flight trainers in OGP. A female OGP instructor teaching the organization’s standards and values to their new members can ultimately eliminate any perception of culture change. Females in the 160th can and will be the norm, but the only way to get there is for the entire organization to embrace its pre-existing culture of standards of excellence and selfless values found in the Night Stalker Motto and Creed.

Annex A

Night Stalker Creed

Service in the 160th is a calling only a few will answer, for the mission is constantly demanding and hard. And when the impossible has been accomplished, the only reward is another mission that no one else will try. As a member of the Night Stalkers, I am a tested volunteer, seeking only to safeguard the honor and prestige of my country, by serving the elite Special Operations Soldiers of the United States. I pledge to maintain my body, mind and equipment in a constant state of readiness for I am a member of the fastest deployable Task Force in the world - ready to move at a moment's notice anytime, anywhere, arriving on target plus or minus 30 seconds.

I guard my unit's mission with secrecy, for my only true ally is the night and the element of surprise. My manner is that of the Special Operations Quiet Professional, secrecy is a way of life. In battle, I eagerly meet the enemy for I volunteered to be up front where the fighting is hard. I fear no foe's ability, nor underestimate his will to fight.

The mission and my precious cargo are my concern. I will never surrender. I will never leave a fallen comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy and under no circumstances will I ever embarrass my country.

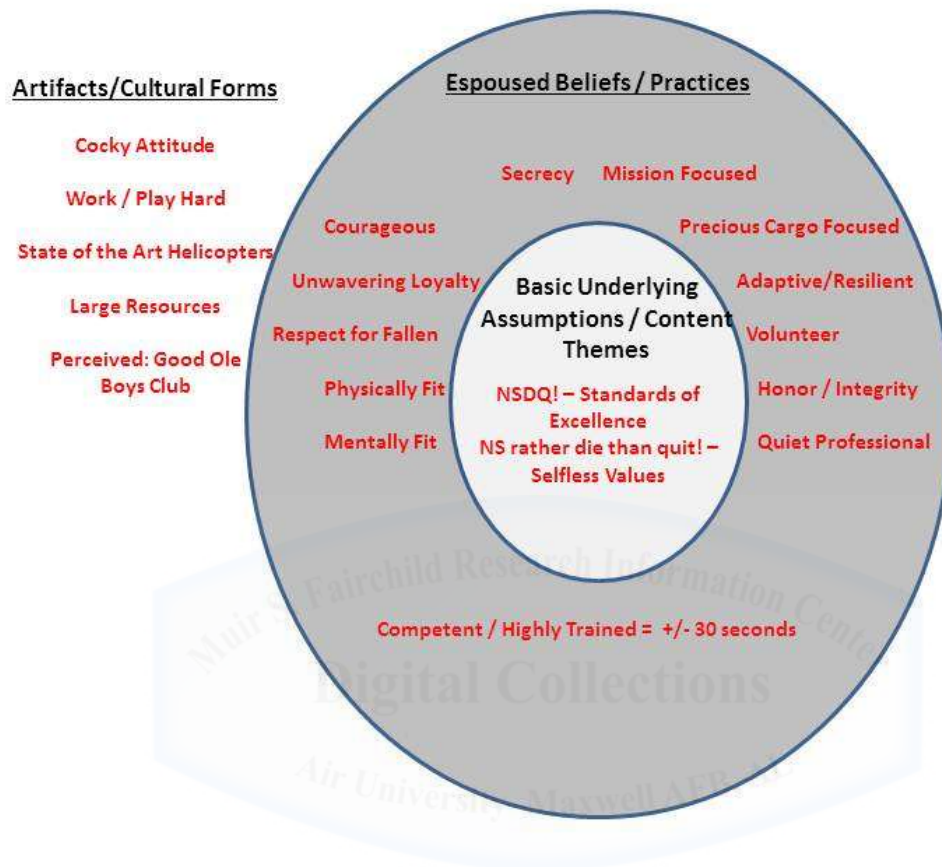
Gallantly will I show the world and the elite forces I support that a Night Stalker is a specially selected and well trained Soldier.

I serve with the memory and pride of those who have gone before me for they loved to fight, fought to win and would rather die than quit.

Night Stalkers Don't Quit!

But God knows the way I take, and when He has tested me, I will come out as gold" - Job 23:10

Annex B



Notes

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