
SOF ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING

This appendix provides details on the assessment and training process that SOF candidates undergo in the various SOF communities.

ARMY SF

All enlisted personnel and officers meeting the prerequisites may attend the SFAS, a three-week course held at Fort Bragg. The program has two phases. The first phase assesses physical fitness, motivation, and ability to cope with stress and includes activities such as psychological tests, swim tests, runs, obstacle courses, rucksack marches, and military orienteering exercises. At the end of this phase, an evaluation board meets to determine which candidates will be allowed to continue in the program. The second phase assesses leadership and teamwork skills. At the end of the second phase, another board meets to select those soldiers who may attend the SFQC, often referred to as the Q-course.

The Q-course consists of three phases. Phase I emphasizes collective training and focuses on land navigation skills, patrolling, etc. It lasts 40 days. Phase II lasts 67 days and provides specific MOS training. Phase III (36 days) again stresses collective training and includes a live exercise called "Robin Sage." After successfully completing the Q-course, soldiers are sent for functional language training (see <http://www.goarmy.com/sorc/sfas.htm>).

ARMY RANGERS

Junior enlisted personnel may become Rangers by either receiving a Ranger contract or by being recommended by their commander. Junior Rangers attend the three-week RIP after Basic Training, Advanced Individual Training, and Airborne school. Its purpose is to assess the physical readiness of the students, to indoctrinate them in the basic Ranger values and standards, and to prepare them should the Rangers deploy immediately after their arrival at the unit. The curriculum covers Ranger history, rappelling, land navigation and map reading, combat lifesaver course, and physical training (including a water survival test).

These personnel are then assigned to units to serve for between 5 and 14 months before attending Ranger school. The purpose of the Ranger school is to “teach and develop combat arms functional skills relevant to fighting the close combat, direct fire battle” (U.S. Infantry School, Ranger Course Pamphlet, Section III). The Ranger course is 61 days long, although a “zero week” is offered one week before the starting date of the class, to help soldiers prepare for Ranger school. Statistics for FY97 indicate a lower attrition rate during the first five days of Ranger training for individuals attending zero week. The first phase of Ranger training, held at Fort Benning, Georgia, emphasizes physical training and instruction in and execution of squad combat patrol operations. The second phase, held at Camp Frank D. Merrill, Georgia, provides instruction on military mountaineering tasks and techniques for operating in a mountainous environment. The third phase, held at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, builds on the students’ combat arms functional skills and teaches them how to operate in jungles and swamps. Successful completion of the Ranger course entitles the soldier to wear the Ranger Tab.

Senior enlisted personnel and officers who receive an assignment to a Ranger unit are typically already Ranger-qualified. These personnel must be recommended by their unit commander. They then attend the two-week ROP/RASP. In ROP/RASP, candidates must meet physical standards and undergo psychological and peer evaluations. A board meets to determine the overall status of each candidate. Those who are not Ranger-qualified must also successfully complete Ranger School before reporting to a Ranger unit (see <http://www.benning.army.mil/RTB/RANGER/PAMOPEN/htm>).

NAVY SEALs

Because of current manpower shortages of enlisted SEALs, all interested enlisted personnel meeting the SEAL prerequisites attend BUD/S. Interested officer candidates meeting the prerequisites are selected to attend BUD/S through an informed evaluation process. Once selected for BUD/S, each student goes to Coronado for two weeks of physical training and indoctrination, before beginning the 25-week BUD/S program. The training process is described in a Navy SEAL recruiting pamphlet as follows:

BUD/S training is broken down into three phases. First phase is the basic conditioning phase and is eight weeks in length. Physical training involves running, swimming, and calisthenics, all of which become increasingly difficult as the weeks progress. The fifth week of training is "Hell Week," which is five and a half days of continuous training with little or no sleep. This week is designed to push the students to their maximum capability both physically and mentally. The remaining three weeks are spent in hydrographic reconnaissance. Second phase is the diving phase and is seven weeks in length. Students learn combat diving, both open and closed circuit, with emphasis placed on long distance underwater dives with the goal of training students to become combat divers. Third phase is in the demolitions and land warfare phase and is ten weeks in length. This phase concentrates on teaching land navigation, small unit tactics, patrolling techniques, rappelling, individual infantry weapons, and military explosives. The final four weeks are spent at San Clemente Island where students apply techniques acquired throughout training in a practical environment. After graduation, trainees receive three weeks of basic parachuting at Fort Benning, Georgia. They will then be assigned to a SEAL or SDV Team to complete a six month probationary period before being allowed to wear the Naval Special Warfare insignia. (Navy SEALs Recruiting Pamphlet.)

AIR FORCE CCT/PJs

All enlisted candidates passing the PAST that is part of the entrance requirement attend the 12-week indoctrination course at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. An article in the *Armed Forces International Magazine* describes the indoctrination course as follows:

In addition to physical conditioning, the course also includes marksmanship training (M16 and M92), physiological training (altitude and dive chambers), and academic instruction in dive physics and metric measurements.

Upon graduation from this selection process, the airman then moves on to specialty training. This includes Army parachute training at Ft. Benning, GA; SCUBA training at Key West, FL; water survival training at Tyndall AFB, FL; remote area survival training in the state of Washington; and back to Ft. Benning for military freefall parachuting school. There the airman learns how to do HALO (High-Altitude Low-Opening) jumps.

Upon completing all this training, the airman must choose whether to be a PJ or a CCT. Pararescue volunteers next follow a path of instruction that emphasizes rescue and recovery techniques as well as advanced medical training. The Combat Controllers, on the other hand, learn about Air Traffic Control (ATC) procedures and navigation aids, and also receive additional training in small unit tactics, land navigation, communications, assault zones, demolitions, and jumpmaster procedures. Those who complete Pararescue training are awarded a maroon beret and wear an Air Force crest that reads, "That Others May Live"; Combat Controllers receive a scarlet beret and a crest reading, "First There."

These qualified airmen can all be assigned to one of the conventional CCT/PJ units under Air Combat Command, but placement in an AFSOC Special Tactics Squadron (STS) is extremely selective. It is not unusual for only about nine individuals out of a CCT/PJ class of 80, or just 10 percent, to be chosen as STS material. For those who are, the final step is several months of intense Army Ranger training. (Pushies, 1997.)

Officers interested in being a CCT must submit an application package. From this pool, a select group of officers is chosen to attend a week-long officer selection course that evaluates both physical and psychological fitness. Officers who pass the selection course are sent to Lackland to commence the training process.