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“Woke” Leaders Betraying Special Operations Forces

In May 2011, an American **Joint Special Operations (JSOC)** team executed a daring raid to kill terrorist **Osama bin Laden** in **Pakistan**. Would the midnight mission have been more successful if a “diverse” team of special operators did not include shooter **Rob O’Neill**? Maybe, maybe not, but the mission would have been even more difficult if **Pentagon** diversity-crats had meddled in operational decisions.

Good thing “woke” **Army General Richard D. Clarke** was not Commander of the **U. S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM or SOCOM)** at the time. On March 28, General Clarke announced a new [SOCOM Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Plan](#) to implement “woke” ideology that is pervasive in the **Biden/Harris Administration**.

The first sentence of General Clarke’s letter covering the 20-page plan states without evidence, *“All of us understand diversity and inclusion are operational imperatives.”* We do not know that, but the SOCOM Commander’s sweeping assertion signals inverted priorities. Henceforth, **diversity, inclusion, and equity** will be elevated above **mission effectiveness** and **overall readiness**.

Diversity is a good thing, which historically has benefited our military. Long before the civilian world, an [Executive Order](#) signed by **President Harry Truman** in 1948 desegregated the military and recognized individual merit. **President Joe Biden**, however, changed the definitions of “diversity, inclusion, and equity” when he signed three executive orders within five days of his **Inauguration** on January 20, 2021.

The first Biden order forbids [“Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation”](#) in all government agencies, including the **Department of Defense**. Biden followed that with a second order [Enabling All Qualified Americans to Serve Their Country in Uniform](#).¹

A third executive order, titled [“Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#),” reversed **President Donald Trump**’s [executive order](#) removing toxic [critical race theory \(CRT\)](#) programs from the military. Biden also abolished Trump’s [President’s 1776 Advisory Commission](#), which challenged errors in the controversial *New York Times* [“1619 Project.”](#)

These ill-advised executive orders, which Secretary of Defense and retired **Army General Lloyd Austin III** fully supports, will weaken our military with percentage-based demographic quotas, heightened sexual tensions, and racist [critical race theory training programs](#) that polarize and demoralize the troops.

CRT programs are toxic because they judge all personnel by superficial characteristics such as sex, skin color, sexual orientation, gender identity, or demographic background. The ideology assumes that non-minority personnel support **“white supremacy”** and **“systemic racism.”**

Prejudicial accusations such as this are unresolvable because CRT ideology considers denials of racism to be proof of racism. How are subordinates supposed to respect commanders or trust colleagues who keep accusing each other of “systemic racism?”

CRT ideologues also demand [“anti-racist” action](#) to destroy historic monuments, the reputations of our Founding Fathers, national founding documents (including the **U.S. Constitution**), and institutions (including capitalism and the family), which they consider to be rooted in slavery and racism.

Diversity, inclusion, and critical race theory indoctrination promote the idea that America was founded on racism, not patriotism, and on slavery, not freedom. It is difficult to imagine a more divisive and destructive course of instruction for special operators and other troops who must trust and depend on each other for survival in battle.

SOCOM Plans Will Weaken Special Operations Forces

Nowhere are inverted race- and sex-conscious priorities more concerning than in elite **Special Operations Forces (SOF)** coordinated by the U.S. Special Operations Command.

Forces affected will include fighting teams in the **Air Force AFSOC**, **Army ARSOC** – which includes the **1st Special Forces Command Airborne**, the **160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR Nightstalkers)**, the **Delta Force**, and **75th Ranger Regiment** – **Navy NAVSOC (SEALS)**, **Marine Corps MARSOC (Raiders)**, and Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC). These elite forces seek out and destroy the enemy, often in covert missions that are complex, extremely difficult, and physically demanding.²

The SOCOM Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Plan irresponsibly promotes woke mandates that are toxic in a military context. Demographic group rights and percentage-based “metrics” (meaning, quotas) will replace color-blindness and individual rights that **Martin Luther King** fought for all his life.³

“**Equity**” policies that attempt to correct disparities in achievement with deliberate discrimination favoring “under-represented” groups are sharply different from **equal treatment** under the law.

For the following reasons, full implementation of SOCOM Strategic Plan could demoralize elite troops, cause missions to fail, and lives to be needlessly lost.

1. SOCOM’s Obsession with Diversity & Inclusion

Twelve times on 20 pages, the SOCOM plan asserts without evidence that “**Diversity and inclusion are operational imperatives.**” The unsupported mantra is meant to silence all dissent or questions, including this obvious inquiry:

Q: What evidence, in actual military experience, supports this assertion?

None is offered in the SOCOM Strategic Plan, which barely mentions realities of war.⁴ The document uses civilian/corporate vocabulary throughout, referring to Special Operations Forces fifteen times as “**the enterprise.**”

This business-style lexicon ridiculously implies that SOCOM fighting teams are no different than corporate enterprises that “compete” in the civilian workplace.

2. Prioritizing “Diversity & Inclusion” Inevitably Will Lower Standards

Instead of viewing the SOCOM plan as a civil rights issue, reporters and members of Congress should ask obvious questions. For example:

Q: How would demographic diversity mandates for significant percentages of women and LGBT sexual minorities strengthen the combat effectiveness of SOF combat teams?

Training requirements for special operators who engage in lethal missions are [extraordinarily difficult](#) and designed to separate the best from the rest. Tough training prepares all members of SOF fighting teams to routinely carry heavy equipment and weapons on their backs during lengthy, physically arduous missions

that are executed deep in contested territory.

Individuals aspiring to be Navy SEALs, for example, undergo intense physical conditioning, especially in preparation for **Basic Underwater Demolition/Seal (BUD/S)** training. The cold, wet, physically demanding regimen includes an exhausting **Hell Week** conducted early in the program so that less-qualified aspirants can honorably withdraw by ringing a bell.

As reported to the DACOWITS in June 2017, [attrition rates](#) in Special Operations Forces training programs are extremely high – often between **50%--80%**. Out of **1,000** aspirants each year, [only 200-250](#) [succeed](#).

The system does not waste talent; it is the best way to find and graduate only the most qualified and determined people for elite SOF fighting teams.

The Strategic Plan's new woke mantra, "*Diversity is an operational imperative*," signals that priorities have changed. Lowered standards to meet diversity goals are inevitable, even though mission requirements will not change.

3. Attitudes Are Not Free: Consequences of "Diversity" As An "Operational Imperative"

As we have seen in other formerly all-male military communities, prioritizing "diversity and inclusion" means that male/female physical standards will be redefined and "validated" at levels that are "equal" but lower than before.

The SOCOM Strategic Plan's civilian-oriented vocabulary is full of euphemisms. High training requirements and scoring systems, for example, are referred to as "**barriers**," which should be removed for the sake of diversity and inclusion. SOCOM endorses this subversive goal with "**Way Ahead**" recommendations for what officials should do:

"Build an **infrastructure** dedicated to the sustainment of **diversity and inclusion** efforts throughout the **enterprise**. Empower **trained diversity and inclusion professionals** to support and advise commanders. Train leaders who reject **limiting narratives**, who **refuse to accept the status quo**, and who aggressively **innovate to increase the diversity of the force** and create more inclusive environments." (p. 8, emphasis added throughout, page numbers may vary)

Since SOCOM has made its priorities clear, a cadre of "diversity professionals" soon will be interfering in command decisions to ensure "inclusion" of more women and **LGBT sexual minorities** in Special Operations Forces.

Like **Soviet Union**-era political commissars, SOCOM's "trained diversity and inclusion professionals" likely will force SOF instructors and commanders to reach down and elevate minimally qualified candidates who otherwise would have failed. Anyone who doubts this should read the SOCOM manifesto. The following are excerpts that give a sense of how far SOCOM intends to go with this:

- Line of Effort 1: "Identify **barriers to diversity and inclusion** in cultural norms, narratives, programs, **processes, and procedures** and work to create a more inclusive organizational climate." (p. 9)
- Line of Effort 1, Strategic Objective 2, Goal 1: "**Ruthlessly self-assess our cultural norms**, narratives, programs, **processes, and procedures** and work to create a more inclusive organizational climate." Goal 2: "Eliminate all **exclusive** language, behaviors, narratives, **norms, and practices** from the command." (p. 12)

- Line of Effort 1, Strategic Objective 3, Goal 2: “Provide **safe spaces** for USSOCOM team members to identify exclusive practices without fear of retribution.” (p. 12)
- Line of Effort 2, Strategic Objective 1: “Identify **diversity gaps** in SOF career fields and use SOF key leadership positions to leverage resources to **fill gaps by refining, maintaining and sustaining reliable databases and dashboards** to continually monitor **data and demographics**.” (p. 12)
- Line of Effort 2, Strategic Objective 3, Goal 5: “Develop **accountability mechanisms** to hold leadership accountable for facilitating **recruitment, assessment, and selection of diverse SOF**.” (p. 13)
- Line of Effort 4, Strategic Objective 1, Goal 4: “**Integrate diversity and inclusion principles within operational planning and mission execution** to create more culturally competent teams and engage adversaries more effectively.” (p. 14)
- Line of Effort 4, Strategic Objective 3, Goal 3: “**Increase hiring rates of diverse applicants**.” Goal 4: “Monitor attrition rates of **target demographics**.” Goal 5: “Develop a culture of **leader accountability** focused on the intentional development of personnel through innovative talent management practices.” (p. 15)

All of these mandates raise questions about how commanders with careers on the line will implement them:

Q: Will officers who induct or promote better-prepared candidates be denied promotions if their choices fail to increase gender and sexual minority diversity metrics?

In view of what the Strategic Plan mandates for all SOF communities, trainers and commanders who “ruthlessly” re-assess standards to meet diversity quotas will be rewarded in their careers, but those who do not will be punished accordingly.

4. Special Operations Forces Are Not So “Special” That Nothing Will Go Wrong

In September 2015, Army **General Joseph L. Votel**, who was JSOC Commander at the time, should have joined then-Marine Commandant **General Joseph Dunford** in asking for exceptions to the **Obama Administration**’s orders to include women in all combat arms communities, including the **infantry** and Special Operations Forces.

It is possible that in 2015, SOCOM leaders thought that their training was so tough, gender integration would never become a problem. Under General Clarke’s current leadership, however, SOCOM has changed the paradigm to promote diversity, inclusion, and equity first. This means that individuals belonging to “under-represented” groups may be deemed *qualified*, even if they are not as *competent* as others who do not fit desired diversity goals.

In the Army, a few women made it through Ranger training, but not without controversy.⁵ Numbers of female Ranger school graduates have increased, but to date only three have qualified to serve in the 75th Ranger Regiment, with none in the Delta Force, Marine Raiders or Navy SEAL teams.

Claims that standards are “gender neutral” will deter questions about compromises made to achieve gender diversity quotas. As we have seen in recent years, officials likely will re-define training standards, change scoring systems, drop the toughest events, or substitute easier alternatives.

These actions demonstrate the “[Dempsey Rule](#),” named for former Joint Chiefs Chairman **General Martin Dempsey**. In January 2013, General Dempsey admitted at a Pentagon briefing that if women could not meet a particular standard, officials would ask, “*Why is it that high? Does it really have to be that high?*”

Under the Dempsey Rule, someone is sure to ask, “*Is it really necessary for SEAL trainees to do PT with heavy wet logs on the beach?*” Accommodations to favor diverse personnel would gradually erode the SOF communities’ tradition of excellence and mutual trust for survival and mission accomplishment.

5. The Army’s Experience with Gender-Neutral Combat Fitness Test Standards

After the Obama administration changed policies regarding female soldiers in 2015, Army leaders confidently promised that women would qualify for physically demanding specialties such as the infantry under gender neutral standards identical to men. Since then, however, undeniable realities have shattered illusions of gender equality.

In 2018, **Training & Doctrine Command (TRADOC)** announced plans for a six-event **Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT)** to be a “gender-neutral” replacement for the longstanding **Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT)**. The APFT, which was relatively easy to administer and pass, had training requirements and scoring systems that allowed for significant differences in men’s and women’s physical capabilities.

At the same time, however, civilian leaders of the various services pushed for gender quotas of **25%**. Pressures to achieve that demographic, percentage-based gender diversity metric make it impossible to maintain “gender neutral” standards in the combat arms.

Consider the Army’s difficulty in implementing the ACFT, which is widely perceived to be a fiasco.⁶ Problems first became apparent when unofficial pass/fail records of **3,206** soldiers in 11 battalions performing the test resulted in an **84%** failure rate among female trainees and **30%** among male trainees.

The Army has been trying to fix the ACFT without setting women up to fail, but gender-neutral standards have not worked. Officials substituted a two-minute plank exercise for the more difficult “leg tuck” event, but higher failure rates persisted. On **ACFT 2.0**, Army data showed a **65%** failure rate for females and **10%** for males.

The latest plan, dubbed **ACFT 3.0**, attempts to account for biological differences by establishing “blind scoring,” which would rate women against other women in “percentile” bands without displaying individual scores.

With names, photos, and other gender-identifiers omitted, a blind scoring system would compare women’s percentile bands with men’s rankings in separate male percentile bands. This means that the **top 5% of women** will be considered essentially the same as the **top 5% men**.

In the real world of SOF, no such “equality” exists. Disassembling tactics and delusions such as this could cost lives and cause missions to fail.

6. “Diversity” Quotas Distort Personnel Decisions

There are many differences between SOF fighting teams and big city police and fire fighting forces, but consequences of gender diversity mandates in the **New York Fire Department (FDNY)** are a cautionary tale and relevant to what could happen in Special Operations Forces.

Would-be firefighter **Wendy Tapia** [failed the FDNY qualification test](#) six times. She was allowed to conditionally graduate from the Fire Academy in May 2013, even though she had failed the running test. She

quit the force without having worked a tour of duty. In 2015, however, FDNY officials gave Tapia another chance.

According to sources quoted by the *New York Post*, this time “*the fix was in.*” The FDNY quietly [eased its standards](#) to admit more women and avoid a gender-discrimination lawsuit. As is always the case when standards are re-defined, adjusted, edited, or lowered to meet quotas, an FDNY spokesman insisted, “*All who enter the academy must meet the same requirements in order to graduate.*”

A female FDNY lieutenant who objected to Tapia’s special treatment was barred from promotion for months. FDNY Deputy Chief [Capt. Paul Mannix](#), who formed a group called **Merit Matters** to oppose quotas, was censured, docked 50 days’ pay and forced into silence.⁷

Lessons learned are important and relevant to Special Operations teams. Dishonesty about double standards involving women (**DSIW**) lowers standards for all. Officials will punish insiders who try to tell the truth about what is happening because mandatory groupthink allows no option for dissent.

SOF teams are being re-defined as “enterprises” that will not allow “diverse” individuals to fail. Missions may fail, but “woke” leaders who elevated risks for all will not be held accountable.

7. Sexual Tension Weakens Military Cohesion and Readiness to Deploy

Conditions experienced by Special Operations Forces on land or in water are exceptionally harsh. Personnel carry on their backs heavy weapons, ammunition, minimal nourishment, and equipment. There is no room for blankets or creature comforts.

As a commander at the Navy SEAL base near San Diego explained to the 1992 **Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces**, there are times when special operators must huddle together, skin-to-skin, sharing body heat to survive. He added that regardless of personal intentions, the introduction of sexual tension in such units would be enormously disruptive.

These realities of SOF life suggest another obvious question:

Q: How would the introduction of female and LGBT sexual tension into Special Operations Forces teams increase concentration, readiness, and chances of mission success?

The SOF Strategic Plan says nothing about the harsh SOF warfare requirements, including human dynamics that affect discipline, morale, and readiness to deploy and fight as a cohesive unit.

8. Outside Political/Activist Influence

The SOF Strategic Plan calls for “*conversations with internal and external diversity and inclusion subject matter experts in corporate, academic, and operational fields.*” The document recommends the involvement of “*affiliated affinity groups to advise, assist, and support diversity and inclusion efforts.*” It also calls for “**Diversity and Inclusion Officers**” at SOCOM Headquarters and all service components and commands. (p. 14, emphasis added)

Q: Will the referenced “conversations” “support” and “assistance” be conducted on the public record, and will SOCOM invite the one-sided participation of advocates of critical race theory (CRT) training and “LGBT Pride month events at SOCOM facilities?”

The [initial hiring](#) of since-reassigned **Richard Torres-Estrada** to be SOCOM’s first “Diversity & Inclusion Officer”⁷ indicates that SOCOM is creating what could become a growth industry for outside consult-

ants, contractors, LGBT “affinity groups,” and woke “experts” in critical race theory, such as [Ibram X. Kendi](#).

These advisors and activists likely will operate without public disclosure, except on occasions such as “**LGBT Pride Month**” in June, which used to take place at the Pentagon and some military bases during the Obama/Biden administration.

Conclusion

Some observers have suggested that America’s Special Operations Forces should follow the lead of countries like **Norway**, which established an experimental all-woman unit called the [Jegertruppen](#), or **Hunter Troop**, in 2014. But Norway’s Hunter Troop does not engage in deliberate offensive action against the enemy, and other **NATO** countries depend on American fighting forces to take on the toughest missions.

Imposition of woke ideology, with career penalties for non-compliance, could do irreparable harm to our Special Operations Forces, weakening America’s ability to fight and defeat all potential adversaries in an increasingly dangerous world. Practices that have made SOCOM and its affiliated commands the best in the world are being turned upside down, and potential adversaries have reason to celebrate.

Congress, which has the constitutional responsibility to make policy for the military, should ask tough questions and take immediate action to restore sound priorities in America’s Special Operations Forces.

¹ On March 31, Secretary Austin publicized something called the **International Transgender Day of Visibility** by announcing reinstatement of Obama-era directives to implement the order. See CMR News Release: [Reinstated Obama/Biden Transgender Policies Disrespect the Troops](#).

² SOCOM also governs [Civil Affairs](#) and **Psychological Operations** units, Marine **female engagement teams (FETs)**, and **cultural support teams (CSTs)**, sometimes called “**Lionesses**.” These units serve “in harm’s way” performing humanitarian missions or intelligence gathering with civilian women in war zones, but these are not the forces of primary concern.

³ As stated in the Executive Summary, “Successful implementation of this plan requires that USSOCOM leaders, at all levels, leverage their **diversity and inclusion practitioners**, force managers, recruiting specialists, and innovation centers to develop actionable improvements that measure performance and tools to track progress. **Leaders must integrate diversity and inclusion efforts into unit goals, mission objectives, talent management initiatives, and operational priorities for a successful implementation.**” (p. 4)

⁴ Similar claims in the [Task Force One Navy \(TF1N\) Report](#) are thinly supported with references to studies in civilian financial firms, not military operations. (p. 8, footnotes #1 and #2)

⁵ CMR: [New Book: What Military Social Justice Warriors Have Done to Our Military](#)

⁶ CMR: [New Army Combat Fitness Test: 84% of Women Fail](#)

⁷ Mannix voluntarily shut down the group Merit Matters, saying in a statement, “[M]y intention was not to cause divisiveness – or enmity toward any group or individual, but to honor my commitment to the FDNY’s noble past, present, and future . . . We strongly supported diversity in the department, but we did disagree about how best to accomplish that goal.”

⁸ SOCOM’s first **Diversity & Inclusion Officer, Richard Torres-Estrada**, was quickly reassigned but not fired when he was found to have posted several Trump-hating Facebook messages, one of them comparing Trump to Hitler.