

28 January 2020



Special Operations Forces Culture and Ethics

Comprehensive Review – Letter to the Force

To All Members of U.S. Special Operations Command,

When our country sends SOF abroad, they send us into some of the most ambiguous situations. They do so because they trust us to handle these missions with competence and character. Trust is our currency with our leaders and the American people, and that trust has been hard-earned by you and those who preceded you. Recently, discipline issues within our force have jeopardized that trust; therefore, USSOCOM embarked on a Comprehensive Review (CR) of SOF ethics and culture with one clear goal: to make us better. **We have an incredible force, and the vast majority of you demonstrate that every day, but great organizations regularly review themselves, identify deficiencies, and correct them.**

This is a very detailed review that takes a hard look at ourselves, and it would not have been possible without your involvement. Our Review Team spent time with every component over the last six months, and your honest feedback was essential. The team found that this force does not have a systemic ethics problem. It is clear that you routinely uphold our standards of conduct in the most difficult circumstances. However, two decades of sustained combat have impacted our culture in some troublesome ways. **The bottom line is that we have disproportionately focused on SOF employment and mission accomplishment at the expense of the training and development of our force.** In some cases, this imbalance has set conditions for unacceptable conduct to occur due to a lack of leadership, discipline, and accountability.

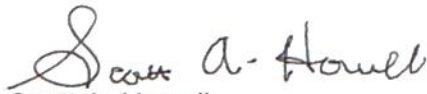
Culture does not tend itself – it must be cultivated by leaders, and only active, consistent engagement from leaders at every level will make us better. While this report identifies institutional changes that can help, the details of the “how”, and the real work, will require all of our leadership and expertise. **You have our full support as we get after this together, and make the tough calls necessary to reinforce the trust placed in us as we continue to meet operational requirements around the globe.** Thank you for all that you do!

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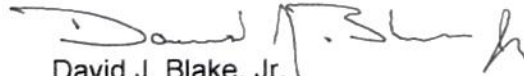
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory A. Smith".

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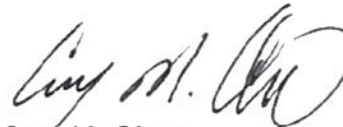
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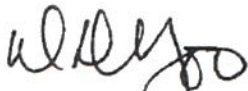
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