

Training pipeline for a us army special forces operator essay sample

[Government](#), [Military](#)



When it comes to the secret world of the United States Army Special Forces there are a lot of questions that are usually left unanswered. Questions such as the dynamics of certain missions all the way to where much of the classified pre/post mission intelligence and sources are coming from. One thing that remains true and open to the public for the most part is the training that goes into making this special breed of present day war fighters that carrier out these highly top secret and classified missions. According to the Office of the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia it is said that this elite force comprises less than one percent of the entire active combat force of the United States Army meaning that in order to survive the cut and make it through some of the most intense mental and physical training the world has offer a soldier must be a cut above the rest.

Throughout the follow paragraphs we will take an in-depth look at the training pipeline of a Special Forces operator starting in basic training and moving all the way to when the soldier is awarded his convenient green beret. This process to become fully operational can take up to two years from start to finish depending on the specialty that is selected by the Special Forces Candidate and requires numerous different schools that must be attended as well as qualifications that must be maintained. The process to become a Special Forces operator is a long and strenuous program that requires years of dedication and plenty of blood, sweat, and tears, however the rewards last a life time and the skills learned will transform any individuals into an elite warrior. Colonel Charles Bechwith, who is credited as the original founders of the Special Forces Delta detachment, once said to a class of Delta candidates' that " I didn't say it was going to be easy, I said it

was going to be worth it" (Delta Force p. 64). This holds true to the core for the life style and training that is required to be a Special Forces operator in the United States Army.

The first step in the long and strenuous process of becoming one of America's most elite warriors starts with basic combat training also known simply as BCT. BCT is attended by all members of the United States Armed Forces and is the passage way to becoming a soldier. During basic combat training individuals learn the fundamentals and basics of the military way of life from drill and ceremony all the way to weapons training and history of their respective service. Recruits are separated by their specialty when they arrive at BCT in a process known as one station unit training where the recruit will stay in one location while receiving basic training, advance (job related) training and then lastly, specialty training. According to Goarmy.com all candidates will first " undergo the ten week process of basic skills located at one of the six installations throughout the United States" (Goarmy.com). Once the recruit completes basic training he will then attend advanced individual training.

For the pipeline of a Special Forces soldier this will lead him to Fort Bragg, North Carolina where he will participate in a 4-6 week prep course of advanced skills preparing him for the assessment and selection process. Some of the areas studied during this portion of training are strength and conditioning, history of special warfare, combatives, and techniques used by the operators. In order to even get to this phase of the training pipeline you must meet certain qualifications. According to the department of the Army:

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Special Forces overview the requirements to be selected to attempt the Special Forces pipeline is as follows, you must “ be a male between the ages of 20 thru 30, be a U. S. citizen, have a high school diploma, score a General Technical score of 107 or higher and a combat operation score of 98 on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, qualify for a secret security clearance, qualify and volunteer for Airborne training, achieve a minimum of 60 points on each event and overall minimum score of 240 on the Army Physical Fitness Test, must successfully complete the Pre-Basic Task list, and must have 20/20 or corrected to 20/20 in both near and distant vision in both eyes”(Department of the Army).

Another ideal skill to have that has shown to help most candidates is having some higher level education such as college experience. Though all of this may seem like a great deal of work, this is considered the easy part for what is to come. Former Navy Special operator Richard D. Schoenberg once stated in his book “ The only easy day was yesterday” (Schoenberg P. 2) when referring to some of the training that the Special Forces Operators endure, and that is exactly the case for the individuals about to enter the assessment and selection phase of the training pipeline.

The next step and undoubtedly the hardest is the Special Forces Qualification Course also just known as the Q-Course by those who have gone through it. This course is broken up into six phases with the first one being the Assessment and Selection phase. During the Assessment and Selection phases of the pipeline training, the SF candidate will initially undergo the Army Physical Fitness Test to make sure that he possesses the

minimal level of fitness to start training. If an individual fails to complete the minimum required times and repetitions that are provided in the guidelines he is withdrawn from the course before it even begins. Most candidates have already passed this test prior to coming selection however they are required to perform the test in front of actual SF teachers and members in order to begin training. Throughout the next 24 days the candidate will be graded on skills such as team work, leadership, IQ, land navigation, foreign language and physical fitness. According to the Army historian located at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School the washout rate within the first four weeks of training is typically 74 percent (www. soc. mil).

Even if a Special Forces candidate makes it all the way through the first phase of training he may not survive the initial physiological evaluation test performed on the last day of the Assessment and Selection phase. The first phase of becoming a green beret is an extremely physical process however it is also an extremely mental process as well. SF candidates that don't make the cut the first time around will have an option if they choose to try again between 12 and 24 months later down the road, however individuals that choose to self-eliminate from training are labeled as NTR's which stand for never to return. The selection board is looking for the individuals that best portray the SF warrior's ethos because when it comes down to it General George Patton said it best " The more your sweat in training, the less you bleed in battle" and all Special Forces operators will experience the truth behind this first hand at one point in their career.

For those SF candidates that make it through the first phase of training have officially earned the right to so called “ride the pipeline” and are then enrolled into phase two. Phase two of the Q-Courses is more geared towards team dynamics as well as determining what your specialty will be amongst the ranks of the SF operators. These specialties can range from combat engineers to weapon specialist all the way to trained field medics. All of these specialties are identified by the number 18 followed by the letter depending on their MOS. For instance, an officer candidate will automatically be entered into the 18A course while the enlisted force structure will comprise a wish list in preference order from B through E. During the second phase of the SF course candidates will also list in preference order what language they would like to specialize in as well as what group they would like to serve under, either the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 10th Special Forces Groups. This phase of training is an intense 24 weeks of training consisting of language classes followed by specialty training and of course physical conditioning. At the end of phase II candidates will undergo an oral assessment board where they must show fluent proficiency in the language assigned as well as critical core task that must be checked off before they can move on.

Upon completion of phase II candidates will automatically be enrolled into phase III, which is considered to be one of the hardest requirements prior to becoming an official Special Forces Operator. Phase III training consist of small unit tactics and SERE training, which stands for survival, evasion, resistance, and escape training. According to former operator Andy McNab

the rate of students that drop out or fail this phase of training can be as high as 30%, which at this portion of training can be a devastating number to the training. Aside from the survival training that consist of 3 and a half weeks of level C, this portion also teaches “ students how to properly plan these operations using Warning Orders, Operations Order, and Frag Orders, as well as other mission planning techniques”(Moore P. 43). The students will plan, present, lead and execute these operations according to the Special Forces doctrine and if they fail any portion of this stage they will be recycled or withdrawn from the course.

After completion of this training the candidate will then begin their final phase of training prior to graduation. During this portion they will finish up their specialty training per their MOS as well as putting everything together into one final 4 week long exercise that will demonstrate everything that the candidates have learned to date. The range of phase IV can be between 16 through 48 weeks long depending on which rating the trainee receives. There fore by the time that the final field training exercise wraps up the average candidate will have attended and survived roughly over a year of training with out counting the breaks and waits between each class. Upon the completion of Phase IV of training the candidates will officially receive their Convenient Green Beret, However they still will have to complete some of the most intense upgrade training the military has to offer before they are considered fully operation Special Forces Operators.

The final parts of Special Forces training consist of specialty schools that will give the operator full dynamical dominance over his enemies during

operational missions. Depending on time frames and assignments out of phase IV of training candidates will immediately start to begin schools such as US Army Sniper school, HALO parachute jump school, combat diver school, ranger leadership school, mountaineering school, advance special tactics school, and many other foreign services school. To really sum it all up the average US Army Special Forces Operator is never done learning during his time in the service. Even during breaks in deployments Operators will continue to further their training whether it is military or civilian related.

Finally, since the primary mission of the Special Forces operator consists of activities such as training foreign forces as well as disrupting enemies well within the confinements of their nation they will continue to go to teaching and instructing schools. They truly are amongst the world's most highly trained professionals. In conclusion, the pipeline to become a Special Forces operator is not for everyone, in matter of fact it's really on for a selected breed of true warriors. As you have read the pipeline goes from a crawl to walk all the way to a run type of training. Whether it starts from initial assessment or your all the way on your final field exercise op out in the country side of North Carolina nothing comes easy for those seeking to be the best of the best. General Colin Powell once stated, " that in order to be the best you have to out train the rest"(Powell) and that remains the truth for the training and life of a Special Forces Operator in the United States Army.

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