

**REPORT OF AN AUDIT  
BY 8271914 MAJGEN J.P. CANTWELL, AO  
OF  
SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND PROCESSES  
FOR FORCE PREPARATION AND CERTIFICATION**

**KEY FINDINGS OF THE AUDIT**

1. Chief of Army directed Major General John Cantwell, AO to conduct an audit of Special Operations Command's (SOCOMD) process for force preparation and certification.
2. The audit drew upon extensive discussions with commanders and relevant staffs, personal observation of a Mission Rehearsal Exercise for a SOCOMD Force Element undergoing preparations for deployment, and the review and analysis of documents gathered in the course of the audit.

**Summary of Findings**

3. My findings are listed below.
4. I did not make any findings on the force preparation of Force Element – (FE ) in 2008, additional to those made by Vice Admiral Ritchie in his Inquiry.
5. I did not make any findings on the certification of FE in 2008, additional to those made by Vice Admiral Ritchie in his Inquiry.
6. With regard to the current SOCOMD force preparation and certification process, I found the following:
  - a. The overall concept of SOCOMD force preparation is sound and is appropriately sequenced.
  - b. Directives and Orders related to current force preparation are comprehensive documents which provide appropriate guidance.
  - c. The Special Operations Mission Essential Task List (METL) provides a suitable and effective basis for the force preparation of deploying SOCOMD force elements and is understood by those responsible for the preparation.
  - d. The extensive use of mentors during SOCOMD force preparation is a particular strength and is a model for non-SOCOMD force preparation procedures.
  - e. The Mission Specific Training and Mission Rehearsal Exercise used to confirm the force preparation are high quality, effective activities.
  - f. The establishment of an Exercise Control organisation to manage the Mission Rehearsal Exercise works well, providing a realistic and challenging training environment for the deploying force.

- g. The current SOCOMD certification process provides a suitable and effective basis for the determining the readiness of deploying forces.

7. With regard to past and current SOCOMD force preparation and certification processes, I found the following:

- a. The deficiencies evident in the preparation of FE in 2008 have been fully remediated in SOCOMD force preparation since.
- b. Current SOCOMD force preparation processes are well planned, executed and supervised. FE completing the process are well prepared for their mission in Afghanistan.
- c. SOCAUST has taken particular care to ensure that the current FE has received the best possible preparation, consistent with that provided to all other SOCOMD force elements deploying on operations.
- d. In contrast to the certification process used for FE in 2008, the current certification process is coherent, fully informed, based on appropriate measures, and overseen by experienced senior officers.

8. With regard to the non-SOCOMD force preparation and certification processes, I found the following:

- a. The force preparation process is robust, well understood, well practiced, well documented, appropriately overseen, and effective.
- b. The force preparation process is able to adapt to the broad range of unit types and specialist skills present in the conventional force.
- c. The METLs used for non-SOCOMD forces provide appropriate tasks, training objectives, conditions and standards.
- d. The certification preparation well documented, and based on inputs from appropriate unit commanders and subject matter experts.

9. With regard to a comparison of SOCOMD and non-SOCOMD Army force preparation and certification processes, I found the following:

- a. There are few substantial differences in the challenges of preparing and certifying force elements, between SOCOMD and non-SOCOMD.
- b. Differences, where they exist, are a product of the different missions, organisations and available staff effort between the two groups.
- c. Due to their significantly operational different roles and tasks, it would not be appropriate to combine or standardise the force preparation and certification processes used in SOCOMD and non-SOCOMD organisations.

10. I found that the Special Operations Commander has implemented a systematic and effective regime of command oversight of force preparation and certification.

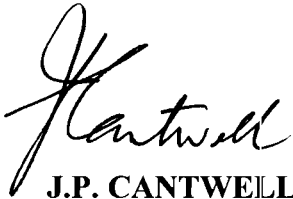
11. I found that SOCOMD Mission Rehearsal Exercises are appropriately resourced, are supported by key non-SOCOMD and non-Army assets where possible, and where shortfalls occur these are overcome by simulation or surrogates.

12. I found that the assessment tools used by SOCOMD are appropriate, are based on the opinions of informed senior personnel, and provide a clear picture of the readiness of the force and the areas of residual training to be addressed in theatre.

13. I found that SOCOMD employs appropriate and effective measures to identify and manage training liabilities identified during force preparation and certification.

14. I found that SOCOMD employs appropriate and effective measures to identify and manage risks during force preparation and certification processes, supported by high quality Risk Management documentation.

15. I did not find any evidence suggesting that any person has committed a criminal or disciplinary offence.



**J.P. CANTWELL, AO**  
MAJGEN

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