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# **Review of Special Operations Command Australian Army**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Australian Government has been well-served with a world-class Special Operations capability within the Australian Defence Force (ADF), combining high levels of military skills with a culture of trust and integrity, to support the defence of Australia and protect the lives and safety of its people. Key elements of Special Operations Command (SOCOMD) have been almost continuously committed since 1999 to high-intensity combat operations overseas, in addition to meeting other domestic and international tasks.

By 2014-15 it was apparent that after years of constant combat deployments to Afghanistan and the Middle East, coupled with its other responsibilities, the Command was “ragged and run down”. While the outstanding operational successes the Command had achieved in the previous decade indicated the Command was by no means broken, by 2015 it was in serious danger of becoming so.

Identification of the issues within SOCOMD came as a gradual realisation between 2011-15. Problems had continued notwithstanding earlier attempts to address them. These symptoms included poor relationships both within and external to the Command. SOCOMD was reported to be a “federation of independent units”, separate from Army. Open disrespect between various “tribes” within the Command further contributed to a poor Command culture where confidence had been replaced by arrogance, elitism and sense of entitlement.

Unprofessional conduct was not being properly managed, with a preference for “mateship over leadership” and misuse of secrecy. A “warrior culture” began to emerge; formed through repeated operational rotations involving close combat. Operational outcomes became the singular focus of SOCOMD, at the exclusion of all else and, at times, command relationships between junior officers and combat-seasoned non-commissioned officers had become distorted. Collectively, these symptoms contributed to a culture that had begun to drift in adverse directions, not accountable to normal military standards. By 2015, it was apparent the Command needed urgent attention, remediation and cultural renewal.

With the problem issues identified, the Command embarked immediately on rectification, resulting in a three-year process of reform.

### **Reform Measures**

The appointment of an experienced two-star officer to command SOCOMD in late 2014 saw rapid and concerted action being taken to address the most

obvious governance, accountability and behavioural issues in SOCOMD. A series of studies were initiated to identify and quantify the more systemic problems in the Command. Subsequently a number of behavioural issues were referred to the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force for further investigation. Most important, a comprehensive strategy for both short and long term remediation measures was developed and subsequently endorsed and implemented by Army's leadership. This strategy included organisational and cultural change to ensure that SOCOMD and its constituent units remained able to meet the requirements of the Australian Defence Force and its responsibilities for national security – and that they could do so in accordance with the values and ethical standards espoused by the ADF and the Australian community at large. The strategy has been consolidated and continued under the current SOCAUST.

Reforms were quickly made to governance, contributing to a reset of the level of accountability within the Command. Structural changes were also made, including the appointment of a one-star officer tasked to oversee the Command's raise-train-sustain functions and raise accountability standards in units. Headquarters staff functions were gradually augmented with additional staff officers to increase capacity and broaden expertise in specialised areas such as logistics and personnel management. Unit structures and cultures within the Command were also analysed and "reset". The Special Operations Training and Education Centre (SOTEC) was created as a pan-Command centre for education and training that would also help address integration concerns within SOCOMD.

Efforts were also made to re-integrate SOCOMD more effectively into Army. There was a noticeable increase in SOCOMD's participation in Army's collective training exercises. Personnel reform measures increased the integration of SOCOMD personnel management with Army personnel management practices, improving the management of personnel and skills both into and out of SOCOMD. SOCOMD's senior leaders also embarked on an educational outreach program focused on educating members of Army and ADF leadership about SOCOMD and its specialised capabilities.

### **Effectiveness of Reforms**

My Terms of Reference directed me to assess these reform measures against four pillars: governance; accountability, values and perceptions. A fifth pillar, integration, was added given this issue was essential to consideration of the first four pillars.

**Governance:** The reform measures are re-establishing a robust framework and leadership culture that reinforces the importance of good governance. This is permeating throughout the Command. Governance concerns that

existed within SOCOMD in 2015 have been rectified and SOCOMD is now governed to a standard that is consistent with and in some areas exceeds Army. This is an area, however, that requires constant oversight and monitoring to prevent and detect any reversion to previous poor habits. At the same time, care should be exercised to ensure governance frameworks for SOCOMD do not unduly constrain the agility, adaptability and creativity that underpin the Command's capabilities.

That said, the Command's governance has been successfully "reset".

**Accountability:** A strong sense of accountability is now being promoted across SOCOMD, both within its current leadership and down to unit level. Audit results and feedback during focus group discussions demonstrated positive evidence of individual accountability within the Command and a leadership willing to hold its members to account for their actions. It is important that this commitment to accountability is maintained and constantly demonstrated by all leaders within SOCOMD.

Residual concerns remain within Army and the ADF that SOCOMD personnel are still not entirely accountable for their actions. This appears to be based on past SOCOMD practices of reaching beyond its mandate to influence high level policy, demonstrating a lack strategic understanding and context surrounding the Command's activities. This issue warrants continued attention. SOCOMD's leadership should ensure that its units remain within their mandated tasks and senior ADF leadership should continue to monitor SOCOMD to ensure its actions remain appropriate.

**Values:** While assessing values and culture is a highly subjective task, overall I have found sufficient examples of Army's values woven into the framework of SOCOMD's culture as to be satisfied that they are being well nested within the Command. Any cultural decline appears to have been arrested. There has been a cultural "reset" in SOCOMD and its units.

This was not quite the case with ethics, where there is more work to be done. While it was apparent that senior leaders within SOCOMD had a good understanding of military ethics and its importance in military decision-making, this was not always the case at lower levels where it was regularly conflated with compliance with the law. The Command needs to have a more considered comprehensive pan-Command approach to infusing ethical-decision-making into the daily military decision-making of its members.

**Integration:** SOCOMD's interaction with the wider ADF is now being perceived more positively than three years ago. There remains a need to ensure that SOCOMD is seen both internally and externally, as a distinctive part of Army – rather than as an entirely separate entity operating under its

own devices. Progress has been made on SOCOMD's integration within Army but further work is required not only by SOCOMD but also by Army. More effective practical integration with Army will come as the inter-activity and inter-relationships between SOCOMD and the rest of Army are expanded as part of conscious policy.

Within SOCOMD, substantial progress on integration issues has been made under a leadership team clearly committed to a united Special Operations Command that is more than a simple federation of military units. However, understanding of this intent is not yet universally reflected at lower levels.

**Perceptions:** Overall, there is a more positive perception of SOCOMD within organisations external to Defence, both within Australia and international partners. Within Defence, traces of previous negative perceptions remain, but efforts to address concerns about the Command are being positively received and supported. It can take years to change organisational cultures – and perceptions of those cultures. In 2018, I am confident perceptions are indeed changing and that trust and confidence in SOCOMD is being strengthened.

## Future Actions

Solid reforms have been achieved within SOCOMD over the past three years and, with the respite from constant combat (but not constant training and maintenance of readiness); the Command has been able to be reset. The consolidation of the reset will take both time and strong leadership.

Notwithstanding the problems of culture, accountability, attitudes and behaviour prevalent within SOCOMD prior to 2015, poor understanding within Army of the role and nature of Special Operations has been an important factor working against effective integration with Army. Equally, the sense of “separateness” that had long been fostered within the culture of some units in the Command has also contributed to this distance from Army.

Further actions that can be considered to enhance and consolidate current achievements include better clarifying the role, nature and responsibilities of SOCOMD, particularly after three years of significant internal change and restructuring. This might be achieved through the issuing a Charter Letter to SOCAUST giving a plain language description of SOCOMD and its place within the Defence Force structure,

The requirement for SOCOMD to exist and operate in an environment of substantial non-transparency raises questions as to the sufficiency of oversight and the appropriateness of the levels of non-transparency. On oversight, consideration could be given to the appointment by CDF of an



Advisor, tasked to independently monitor and advise CDF, CJOPS and CA on issues relevant to SOCOMD. On the negative impact of non-transparency, SOCAUST should institute a review of security practices within SOCOMD to identify which aspects of its capabilities could be reclassified with a view to promoting a broader understanding within the ADF and external agencies.

The need for broader understanding about SOCOMD could also be enhanced through the implementation of a comprehensive information outreach program by SOCOMD, initially focused on Army but in time, also on the wider ADF.

With a view to further entrenching the integration of SOCOMD, consideration could also be given to SOCAUST issuing a “narrative” to all members of the Command, in order to enhance understanding, particularly at lower levels within SOCOMD, of the importance of the pan-Command concept, the need for mutual respect of the specialised capabilities within SOCOMD and the benefits accrued from integrated diversity. This would demonstrate the commitment and determination of the leadership, beyond the tenure of any individual, to ensure the Command’s unity.

The process of institutional reform and modernisation is an on-going and necessary process, particularly in the rapidly changing environment in which Australia’s Special Forces must operate. A series of recommendations offer in more detail further action the Command and its units might take to ensure the reform process continues on its current positive path.

The achievements since 2015 have been the achievements of good leadership. Army and the Command’s leaders at all levels need to embrace and “own” the reform programme into the future. Careful attention must be paid in the selection and training of future leaders at all levels within SOCOMD to ensure the reforms achieved thus far are carried forward and consolidated, maintaining the Command as fit-for-purpose in its task of serving Army, the ADF and the Australian people.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Australian Government has been well-served with a world-class Special Operations capability within the Australian Defence Force (ADF), combining high levels of military skills with a culture of trust and integrity, to support the defence of Australia and protect the lives and safety of its people.

1.2. Key elements of Special Operations Command (SOCOMD) have been continuously committed since 1999 to combat operations overseas, in addition to meeting other domestic and international tasks. By 2014-15, it was becoming apparent that the sustained high tempo of successful combat operations could be having adverse consequences on the values, ethics, and the overall fitness-for-purpose of the Command.

1.3. In 2014-15, the leadership of Defence focused on concerns about the state of SOCOMD and the condition and behaviour of its constituent elements and members. These concerns included allegations or rumours of inappropriate or illegal behaviour both on operations and at home, together with other evidence of departures from the high standards of governance and accountability, and the values, expected of the Australian Defence Force. Cumulatively, these issues were contributing to an erosion of trust in SOCOMD within the broader Defence organisation.

1.4. As the issues of concern were identified, one response was the instigation in March 2016 at the request of the Chief of Army (CA) and the direction of the Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) of a formal inquiry by the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force (IGADF) into rumours and allegations relating to Special Operations Task Force activities in Afghanistan between 2005-14, particularly in respect of allegations or rumours of potential breaches of the Laws of Armed Conflict. That inquiry is ongoing and has yet to report findings.

1.5. In 2014-15, even before the IGADF inquiry was established, the leadership of Army and of the Command itself was setting in place measures to assess and address issues of concern. The result has been a three-year process of reform, involving organisational and cultural change to ensure that SOCOMD and its constituent units meet the requirements of the ADF and its responsibilities for national security – and that they do so in accordance with the values and ethical standards espoused by the ADF and the Australian community at large.

1.6. At the request of the then-Deputy Chief of Army (DCA), MAJGEN Burr, from March through August 2018, I conducted a review of the effectiveness of these reform initiatives instigated within SOCOMD and Army since 2015. In my Terms of Reference I was specifically tasked to focus on the four pillars of governance, accountability, values and perceptions of SOCOMD. It quickly became apparent, however, that these four issues could not be considered in isolation of another key issue facing the Command; namely the understanding and acceptance of the integration of SOCOMD as a part of Army and of the ADF more widely. This theme of integration necessarily runs through the Review - as a fifth pillar.

## Methodology

1.7. The purpose of my review was not to re-investigate the rumours and allegations of past behaviour, duplicating the investigations of the IGADF. Rather, I accepted as a starting point the intensive work done within SOCOMD itself since 2014 to identify and assess issues of concern and to focus on the effectiveness of remediation and reform initiatives since then.

1.8. I have been provided with full access to any information I considered relevant. This has included numerous internal documents produced since 2014, which have assessed the Command and its constituent elements. These documents have registered concerns about the Command, its capabilities and culture; as well as documents detailing remedial and reform measures designed to ensure the Command remains capable of meeting both present and future national security challenges.

1.9. Documentary research has been augmented by personal interviews. The interviews encompassed over 50 people within HQ SOCOMD, Army, the broader ADF and Heads of selected Commonwealth government agencies. Further, focus group discussions were conducted within both the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commando Regiment (2 Cdo Regt) across a variety of ranks, trades and experiences in order to ascertain some of the perspective held within the major units of SOCOMD. As a means of benchmarking the actions taken by SOCOMD, I also had the opportunity to meet with a range of personnel working with or for Canadian and UK Special Operations Forces. I estimate that the views of over 100 people were recorded and considered for this Review. While taking in the views of so many people, the findings of the Review are my own.

1.10. In the course of this Review I have developed a deeper appreciation not simply of the need for Australia to possess a highly competent Special Operations capability, but of the dedicated Australian men and women who continue to build and maintain that special capability in the service of their country. It has been an honour to work with them.

## 2. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

### Special Operations: Description

2.1. The unique or “special” nature of the Australian Special Operations capability, a discrete suite of specialised capabilities, techniques and modes of employment that are not replicated elsewhere in Australia’s national security architecture, is illustrated in the following description:

*“[Special Operations are] unique highly specialised and focused operations performed by specially selected, trained and prepared individuals and teams imbued with a creative mindset capable of producing solutions beyond conventional approaches... These activities are designed to achieve tailored operational, military and national strategic effects beyond those of conventional forces.”<sup>1</sup>*

### Special Operations: Roles

2.2. Australia’s Special Operations capability is designed to achieve special effects in support of military operations or in support of other government requirements.<sup>2</sup> In broad terms it achieves this through one or more of its four core mission types:

**Special/Strategic Reconnaissance (SR):** environmental, offensive and close target reconnaissance and battle damage assessment

**Direct Action (DA):** short duration strikes and small-scale offensive actions to seize, destroy, capture or inflict damage on enemy personnel or material

**Special Recovery Operations (SRO):** counter-terrorist operations, combat search and rescue/joint personnel recovery and non-combat recovery operations

**Support Operations:** operations conducted in support of other government departments or agencies, or as part of bilateral or multilateral initiatives to achieve political or military objectives: support for coalitions, humanitarian assistance, training, information operations and unconventional operations

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<sup>1</sup> The Army Objective Force 2030 primer, ADFHQ, 2011, p.22

<sup>2</sup> Drawn from the Section on Special Operations Roles, Australian Defence Doctrine Publication (ADDP) 3.12, Special Operations (Provisional) edition 2, 28 March 2011

## **Special Operations Command**

2.3. The Special Operations Command (SOCOMD) and its constituent elements represent an essential contribution to national defence capability. The Command was established in March 2003, bringing together the existing special force elements of the Australian Army into a separate functional command of Army.

2.4. SOCOMD is commanded by the Special Operations Commander, Australia (SOCAUST), a two-star general officer position currently held by MAJGEN Adam Findlay. As a functional commander within Army, SOCAUST manages the raise, train and sustain responsibilities for forces within SOCOMD on behalf of Chief of Army. In accordance with extant operational arrangements, elements of SOCOMD are force assigned to Chief of Joint Operations (CJOPS) for the conduct of military operations. At the same time, SOCAUST also reports directly to the Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) in respect of specified sensitive strategic tasks involving Special Operations capabilities.

2.5. When coupled with the necessarily non-transparent nature of many of the Command's capabilities and operations, this chain of command structure places a special requirement on SOCAUST to ensure that the Command's capabilities are not only matched to the ADF's military operating requirements but are also understood and effectively used in support of military operations across the ADF. At the same time, SOCAUST under current arrangements must be able to make the Command's capabilities available through CDF to the government for tasks that may lie beyond the ordinary scope of military operations, for example support to the civilian authorities.

## **Special Operations: Command Components**

2.6. SOCOMD is comprised of a headquarters element and seven subordinate units:

- 1st Commando Regiment
- Special Air Service Regiment
- 2nd Commando Regiment
- Special Operations Logistic Squadron
- Special Operations Engineer Regiment
- Parachute Training School
- Special Operations Training and Education Centre

2.7. SOCOMD also exercises operational control over 6<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment<sup>3</sup> for directed special operations tasking.

## Special Capabilities

2.8. Special Operations Forces are constituted to conduct highly sensitive military activities of both a combat and non-combat nature in a range of dangerous environments. They may operate clandestinely or covertly,<sup>4</sup> depending on the nature of the task. Operations may require acceptance of high levels of physical and political risk not associated with conventional operations.

2.9. As a result, individuals require extremely high levels of sustained specialist training and must be deployable at short notice to meet an ever-changing range of military scenarios and other national security imperatives. Special Forces must be able to operate in small groups (sub-unit and below) either independently of other ADF force elements or in coordination with them. Where necessary, they must also be able to operate in conjunction with other Australian departments and agencies and international military organisations.

2.10. As a clandestine operating capability, Special Forces members are afforded protection to their identities under Defence policy. They are also required to meet established physical standards and successfully undergo psychological assessment so as to be able to operate in small groups for extended periods in hostile and dangerous environments. Most members of SOCOMD are recruited from other units of the Australian Army, with additional recruits from the other Services, and undergo intensive selection courses and rigorous basic training before they can be awarded the coveted beret as an "operator". Members of supporting or "enabling" elements of the Command also undergo psychological screening and in some cases, additional physical testing, beyond that required by Army, prior to posting into the Command.

2.11. Special Forces have capability-specific technical and equipment requirements that may at times be different from other elements of Army or the ADF.

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<sup>3</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment remains under full command of Commander Forces Command through 16<sup>th</sup> Aviation Brigade.

<sup>4</sup> A **clandestine operation** is an intelligence or military operation carried out in such a way that the operation goes unnoticed by the general population or specific enemy forces. A **covert operation** is plausibly deniable. A clandestine operation seeks to conceal the operation itself, while a covert operation seeks to conceal the identity of the operation's sponsor



## The Value of Special Forces

*“Special operations (SO) are military activities conducted by specially designated, organised, trained and equipped forces using operational techniques and modes of employment not standard to conventional forces. These activities are conducted across the full range of military operations independently or in coordination with operations of conventional forces to achieve political, military, psychological and economic objectives. Politico-military considerations may require clandestine, covert or discrete techniques and the acceptance of a degree of physical and political risk not associated with conventional operations.”*<sup>5</sup>

2.12. Special Operations offer governments a unique and flexible military capability to support national security and foreign policy objectives.

2.13. In the past two decades, precisely because of their combat readiness, their effectiveness in small-scale combat situations, and their perceived lower risk exposure, Special Operations Forces have been the tool of first choice for Australian governments in military deployments overseas, most notably in Afghanistan, but also in Iraq. In Afghanistan, Australia's Special Forces were used repeatedly and extensively in a highly contested and hostile combat environment, proving their value in direct action against a capable, innovative and unconventional enemy. Notwithstanding subsequent allegations coming to light, overall the military achievements of Australia's Special Forces in Afghanistan, as well as Iraq, have been impressive – and have justifiably been acknowledged publicly as such.

2.14. The need to remain at the cutting-edge, to be innovative and agile; and consequently more effective than potential opponents, has enabled Special Forces to “give back” to Army by developing and testing new operational methodologies and new equipment – an element of military innovation. Examples of the SOCOMD's innovation have directly led to the Army's adoption of improved shooting methods, modifications to Army's equipment such as personal weapons, load carrying equipment and body armour and improvements to some battlefield medical practices.

2.15. At the same time, the individual and collective skill sets of the Special Forces go beyond the combat skills of direct action. Special Forces play a major role in the maintenance and prosecution of Australia's defence alliance relationships; its principal partners being counterpart organisations

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<sup>5</sup> Australian Defence Doctrine Publication (ADDP) 3.12, Special Operations (Provisional) edition 2, 28 March 2011 paragraph 1.1

in the US, UK, Canada and New Zealand, but also with a broader range of other partners across the region. Australia's Special Forces assist, for example, in extending Australia's defence cooperation outreach across the Asia-Pacific region, a diplomatically and militarily important process of confidence and friendship building. Evidence of the importance of this role is demonstrated by the fact that SOCOMD conducts approximately 70 percent of Army's international engagement activities.

2.16. Special Forces are also a national asset for use outside of a conventional military context. They maintain a high state of readiness to respond to security incidents domestically or overseas, standing ready to supply their unique skills when called upon by the civilian authorities. They remain on constant standby for deployment, too, in the event of hostage incidents overseas involving Australian citizens. They were used in the resolution of the Tampa incident in 2001 and the Pong Su drug smuggling incident in 2003. They are available to be deployed in support of humanitarian assistance operations, particularly in remote or difficult to access areas.

2.17. Less well publicly understood are the skills and capabilities developed within SOCOMD to defend against Chemical, Biological, Nuclear and Radiological warfare – in the first instance for use on the battlefield but also, if required domestically, in support of the civilian authorities.

2.18. In short, the Special Operations Forces are a necessary and highly valued element in Australia's national security apparatus. While some of their tasks and responsibilities could be transferred elsewhere within the ADF or government, the high concentration of complementary specialist skills and operating doctrines, the constant need for training to maintain and hone those skills, indicates a continuing need for a focused, consolidated and dedicated Special Operations capability in Australia. At no time have I heard those responsible for Australia's defence and national security policies arguing otherwise.

2.19. That does not mean, of course, that adjustment to SOCOMD and its units may not be warranted. Indeed, the ending of large-scale Special Forces deployments to Afghanistan created the space to "reset" SOCOMD. That has been occurring at least since 2015 and is the subject of this Review.

## **Special Force Characteristics**

2.20. The value, roles, specialist skills, intensity of training, levels of commitment and personal attributes inherent in Special Operations combine to create a particular brand of professionalism and sense of identity

common to many special force units around the world. Other attributes also add value: the expectation that Special Forces members will be innovative and creative in finding solutions to operational problems, and will constantly improve on technology, war-fighting methods and techniques for high physical performance. The concept of military *élan* is relevant here. Identity, professional commitment, courage and *élan* are hugely positive attributes; a significant asset within the national military tool kit.

2.21. The combination of these positive attributes creates a particular or special *esprit de corps* and operating ethos that reinforces and sustains the high levels of professionalism and commitment necessary to operate on the military cutting edge. This *esprit* and ethos are essential ingredients for the value-add of Special Operations Forces. Given that *esprit* can quickly turn into arrogance, a member of Australia's Special Operations Forces has to be well-grounded and humble.

2.22. There is a danger in Special Operations units, however, that the ethos becomes the *raison d'être* of the organisation. A closely-knit, inward-looking specialist unit, conducting constant, highly praised operations, can acquire a "rock-star" mentality, thereby losing focus and unconsciously deviating from established Army values and appropriate behaviour.

2.23. The second danger is that, in attempting to correct deviations in values and behaviour, the essentially positive Special Operations Force characteristics, the professionalism, creativity and *élan*, become suppressed in the reform and modernisation process. Any reform or modernisation programme, which I take to include reform, resetting and cultural renewal, must seek consciously to avoid destroying or nullifying the unique and positive attributes of Special Forces.

2.24. Finding the balance between under-correction and over-correction has been a key challenge in the reform and modernisation process undertaken within SOCOMD since 2014-15.

### 3. ISSUES: STATE OF THE COMMAND 2015

3.1. In 2014-15 it was apparent that years of constant combat deployments to Afghanistan and the Middle East, coupled with the Command's other operational responsibilities and normal peacetime tasking and an inadequate Headquarters function, had resulted in a situation where the Command was described to me as being in a state of dysfunction, "ragged and run down" and suffering from the "beaten dog syndrome." The outstanding operational successes the Command had achieved in the previous decade or more indicated the Command was by no means broken, but by 2015 it was in serious danger of becoming so.

3.2. There were a number of key symptoms contributing to the overall assessment of poor culture and practices resident within SOCOMD, particularly in some of its sub-ordinate units. Identification of these symptoms had come as a process of gradual realisation between 2011-15, but they continued to manifest notwithstanding attempts to address them. In 2015, MAJGEN Sengelman, an experienced two-star officer, as SOCAUST, conducted a detailed and systematic assessment of the deep-seated problems resident within SOCOMD. He identified and prioritised essential reform and recalibration measures to be taken. A number of behavioural allegations were referred to the Inspector-General Australian Defence Force for further investigation.

3.3. The following description of the symptoms of this malaise is drawn from SOCOMD and Army documentation of the time and from anecdotal evidence provided by SOCOMD, Army and other ADF personnel.

3.4. These symptoms are now well understood by the senior leadership of Army. They are not dissimilar to those faced in the Special Operations Forces communities of other Western democratic nations. It is worth briefly summarising them here. Understanding the symptoms and their underlying causes is essential to any review of the reform and modernisation process in SOCOMD since 2015.

#### Poor Relationships

3.5. In 2015 a significant issue affecting the Command was that of poor relationships: evident in how the separate units within SOCOMD were relating to the Command's Headquarters, how the units were interacting with each other and how the Command and its units were interacting with the rest of Army. Focused on operational tasks, the leadership and

members of the Command had been slow to grasp the extent of the deterioration in relationship with the Army and the ADF more generally.

**3.6. SOCOMD as a Command:** The documentation and anecdotal evidence convey a picture of SOCOMD, over the period 2013-15, as a federation of several largely independent and separate fiefdoms, rather than a unified Command managing in a coordinated way the range of special capabilities that contribute to the ADF's Special Operations capability set. In part this was because of a Headquarters inadequately staffed by Army; it simply did not have enough specialist personnel to oversee and achieve coherence in a Command whose two principal elements were involved in constant rotational cycle of combat and other operations. Attempts from 2012 to increase resources for HQ SOCOMD had not been successful. It was also because the principal units during the Iraq and Afghanistan years had developed a culture of "bottom up" management, conducting their own Raise, Train and Sustain functions – often in an entrepreneurial manner – independently of Headquarters or wider Army.

*"SOCOMD did not have a Command culture; it had unit cultures."*

*"Individuals at unit level had absolute clarity as to their mission. There was no doubt as to operational capacity and skills, but when it came to the broad view for the whole command, there was more division than coordinated efforts... This manifested itself in problems with accountability and governance."*

**3.7. Sandy versus Green Berets:** One key to understanding SOCOMD's problems was the dominant sense of separate identities, and associated independent cultures, of key units within the Command. Competitive rivalry between highly professional military units is understandable and can lead to great creativity. However, many interlocutors described the relationship between SASR and 2 Cdo Regt, as reaching at times a point of highly counter-productive toxicity. In SASR, what some interlocutors assessed as akin to a caste system developed, where SASR operators were the highest caste looking down upon and disdaining those in the Command who were not of that caste; i.e. the Commandos. If you were a member of SASR, sandy beret capabilities and therefore individuals, were superior to green beret ones, particularly those within 2 Cdo Regt. 1 Cdo Regt, composed primarily of reservists, played third fiddle to the other two units. While animosity toward 1 Cdo Regt was not as strong as between the two major units of the Command it was nonetheless present, albeit as "permanent versus part-time" than as a caste



system. The fact that many reservists from 1 Cdo Regt were also deployed on combat operations and shared many of the same risks as their permanent SOCOMD counterparts was simply overlooked.

3.8. The rivalry, primarily between the two major units of SOCOMD, manifested itself in a lack of cohesion and pan-Command collaboration, poor unit relationships, competition for resources and jealously guarded mission sets. The overlap in mission sets and capabilities was a significant source of friction.

3.9. **Operators versus Enablers:** Special operations depend on many supporting elements, provided by highly trained specialists. The implied caste system also affected SOCOMD's Special Operation Engineer Regiment (SOER), even though it has its own unique specialist capabilities. It also impacted heavily on other "enablers" posted to the operational units such as signallers, medics, logisticians, mechanics and members of the technical trades, leaving them to feel unvalued and disrespected.

3.10. Difficult relationships and a lack of respect between operators and enablers made for more problematic and unhappy deployments, and for the weakening and failure of the Command's ability to realise its full potential as a single cohesive entity, notwithstanding the operational successes of individual force elements within it.

3.11. **SOCOMD and Army:** During the intense combat focus of the Afghanistan years, SOCOMD and its constituent units appeared to have drifted away from Army. Special Operations Forces were seen as maintaining an independence from other ADF force elements; avoiding national reporting requirements during deployments, preferring Coalition Special Operations Forces command arrangements.

3.12. On governance and accountability matters, Special Operations Forces were accused of marching to their own tune, ignoring or disrespecting established Army processes and rules. They were seen to be better resourced than wider Army, provoking resentment. Their equipment and modernisation processes were not fully integrated with Army.

3.13. For its part, by the latter stages of 2012-14, Army's attitude towards SOCOMD was described as one of "unconscious neglect". Army appeared to have lost trust, confidence, and to a degree interest in the Command. Focusing elsewhere, Army did little effectively to arrest the drift away of SOCOMD. Even in 2015, when it was recognised at senior levels that SOCOMD needed the assistance of the expertise in Army to correct governance and accountabilities within the Command, support was slow in coming.

## Poor Culture

3.14. A number of symptoms contributed to the overall assessment of a deteriorating culture within SOCOMD, particularly in some of its subordinate units. Identification of some these symptoms had occurred some years prior to 2015, but problems persisted.

3.15. Historically, Australia's Special Forces have, rightfully, prided themselves on their culture. In many ways, like the Command itself, there was a federation of individual unit cultures rather than a single Command culture. Nevertheless, common threads in the traditional culture of Special Forces were an ethos of humility and a constant striving for excellence, generating an aura of restless creativity that continually searched for new and better ways of doing things, but in a manner that meant they saw themselves as no better nor worse than anyone else - just different.

3.16. It was made apparent during the course of my Review, however, that this was not the culture that existed in SOCOMD in 2015. Successive operational deployments through Afghanistan appear to have significantly contributed to a distortion of Special Force culture. In some instances, arrogance began to replace confidence and its traditional ethos of humility was forgotten. Over time, SOCOMD's embedded "can do" attitude started to become, "only we can do". This attitude was accompanied by the emergence of a sense of elitism and entitlement, partly because Special Operations Forces had been doing the "heavy lifting" in Afghanistan for an extended period. This in turn both exacerbated and interconnected with a growing separateness from the ADF and Army and a heightened sense of "specialness". In fact, of course, "specialness" refers to the quality of the capability, and not the quality of the individual.

3.17. Separate command chains in operational theatres, separate operating bases with restricted access for conventional ADF forces and an explicable, yet noticeable, reluctance or inability to participate in many conventional force exercises in Australia, all contributed to an ever-growing sense of separateness and specialness within SOCOMD that went hand-in-hand with entitlement. Some very public pay disputes also served to alienate SOCOMD from Army in terms of perceptions of entitlement.

*"SOCOMD have a culture of expecting to get what they want because they are SOCOMD."*

3.18. This sense of separateness extended not only beyond SOCOMD but also within, epitomized by heightened pre-existing differences between units and people within the Command. Excessive inter-unit rivalry and the "caste" system described above all contributed to the development of

separate and unhealthy cultures, even within units. As one commentator remarked,

*"It was very much a very, very poor culture - those in a servile role and those who were there for operational purpose."*

3.19. Notwithstanding remarkable operational successes, there were repeated allegations of a lack of professionalism both on operations and in barracks. Evidence emerged of drugs and alcohol being misused, particularly on operations and often without disciplinary or accountability consequences. Attempts to address allegations of poor or unprofessional conduct were often deflected by misuse of the secrecy that surrounded much of Special Force activities. Collectively, this further encouraged a culture that at times perceived itself not to be accountable in the normal way to Army's standards.

3.20. The intense operational focus and repeated rotations into high tempo combat environments also saw the emergence of a "warrior" culture, where those who succeeded in combat were lauded above others, regardless of rank. While not evidenced, I suspect that the close bonding that occurs during combat also contributed to what some have described as an emergence of a "mateship over leadership" culture, where there was reluctance for some leaders to hold to account the behaviour and conduct of those they led, opting instead for mateship.

3.21. The papers I have examined suggest that the intensity of SOCOMD's focus on operational outcomes allowed the culture to be distorted over repeated deployments. Incremental "cutting of corners" of standing policies and practices to achieve operational outcomes accumulated to become the norm, contributing to a culture that placed operations above all else. In the words of one commentator:

*"The Command began behaving like a one trick pony and there was a deep desire within it to conduct combat operations and live vicariously through the experiences of others."*

3.22. The nature of Special Operations Forces and the manner in which they operate in the field results in considerable authority being vested in non-commissioned officers (NCOs). Successive operational rotations meant that combat experience in SOCOMD resided most deeply with the NCOs. This, coupled with the emerging warrior ethos, led to a dominating influence of some NCOs over other unit members that was impervious to rank and allowed them to undermine those who attempted to assert leadership at more junior levels.

*"The NCOs were running a parallel line of command filled with rumour-mongering."*

3.23. **External Influences on SF Culture:** While these internal influences impacted on SOCOMD's culture, there were also external influences. Coalition operational chains of command and combined operations with Coalition forces in operational theatres, as well as multiple opportunities for interaction with US and other Five Eyes SOF through postings and deployments, resulted in a strong cultural influence on SOCOMD away from Army. In some respects, elements of SOCOMD were seduced away from their Australian origins by their desire to be just like the US, both in terms of resourcing and freedom of *manoeuvre* in the conduct of mission sets. The steady increase in SOCOMD's work with other Australian government agencies also contributed to influencing the Command's culture away from Army and the ADF.

3.24. In summary, the culture of SOCOMD, under the influence of multiple factors both within and outside the organisation, became unanchored. In hindsight, it is not surprising that elements of the Command's culture began to drift in adverse directions.

### Poor Accountability

3.25. Interlocutors expressed concern at what they saw at the time as a lack of accountability within SOCOMD: how discipline issues were dealt with, resources managed and capabilities acquired and brought into service.

3.26. **Discipline:** By 2015 it was evident that there were significant discipline issues within SOCOMD. Many in Army believed there had been a reluctance within units to deal with disciplinary matters appropriately and that this allowed an attitude of "above the law" to develop. Over-familiarisation between the ranks and a prioritisation of mateship over leadership created an environment conducive to an undermining of leadership.

3.27. One observer noted there was a strong resistance to involvement with investigations and interviews. Units appeared to avoid reporting minor matters, preferring to deal with them in-house. There was a sense that the "protected identity" status within the Command was being used to hinder investigations. Observers presented a picture of disregard for "outsiders" and departures from accepted Army standards of behaviour and conduct.

3.28. **Resource management:** It was apparent from documents provided to the Review describing the problems of the past, that there had been systemic failures to apply appropriate governance measures and a disregard for applicable policy and procedure. Injudicious and wasteful practices in resource management, and poor audit results were reported. Over time, units had adopted *ad hoc* and abridged processes in deference to



an operational focus. The situation was judged sufficiently serious to warrant the issuing of a Directive from DCA in early 2015 to address the shortcomings in governance, security, safety and administration within SOCOMD.<sup>6</sup>

3.29. This led to the identification of a range of issues, for example: disjointed facilities maintenance, failure to follow basic stocktaking procedures, technical deficiencies not logged in standard logistics systems.

*"It was common (and anecdotally acknowledged outside SOCOMD) that SOCOMD worked around the system rather than through the system with its inherent checks and balance."*

3.30. **Procurement:** The rush to obtain "mission critical" equipment was often achieved at the expense of the enabling and sustaining aspects embedded in Defence's capability acquisition process. This resulted in significant problems getting equipment into service and led to subsequent sustainment issues.

3.31. SOCOMD lacked a clear whole-of-Command view, which led to a lack of clarity of purpose and discipline in defining capability requirements. By working around the system SOCOMD invariably did not get the balance right; the need to test requirements to ensure they made sense, the discipline to ensure requirements remained constant and not changed mid-way through and the effort to remain focused through the process of acquiring the right equipment. The result was potentially serious vulnerabilities in procurement decisions and significant delays in capability acquisitions.

### Inadequate staffing

3.32. The inadequacy in numbers and skills of Headquarters staff also had a major impact. SOCOMD did not have sufficient staff, with the appropriate specialist skills and experience across all of the headquarters' functions. It was assessed that there were systemic vulnerabilities in SOCOMD structure, function and resourcing.<sup>7</sup> Analysis at the time concluded that there was an imperative for both immediate internal action and subsequent force design developments.

3.33. The responsibilities and tempo of SOCOMD overwhelmed staff capacity. Structurally the Headquarters was too flat and seen as too small for its purpose. This was likely to have been a significant risk factor contributing to failures to identify and remediate the multiple transgressions

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<sup>6</sup> DCA Directive 01/15 (25 Mar 16) SOCOMD Governance Remediation

<sup>7</sup> CASAC (16 Oct 15) CASAC Noting Brief – SOCOMD Command review and Restructure



of governance, accountability and behaviour evident within the Command. Staff capacity also impacted SOCOMD's ability to develop collective training, manage its workforce, identify capability gaps and modernise through effective integration with Army.

3.34. Unit capacity was also under stress. As an example, CO SASR held concurrent responsibilities to: perform the duties of Base Commander for Campbell Barracks, perform the duties of a Commanding Officer for his unit, arguably one of the more complex units in Army; and remain on short notice to deploy as a JTF commander.

3.35. As the then-SOCAUST pointed out in 2015,

*"Over an eight-year period SOCOMD raised, trained, force prepared, deployed and indirectly sustained twenty SOTG rotations. A HQ was deploying every six months and sub-unit FE every four months."*<sup>8</sup>

### Poor Strategic Understanding

3.36. One of the concerns about SOCOMD, both within and without Army, was that dominant SOCOMD unit cultures focused on immediate operational outputs rather than future development, with a limited appreciation of strategic perspectives and the role of Special Operations in broader government policy. Divorced in practice not just from Army but from the wider Defence Organisation, SASR in particular was accused of lacking an appreciation of whole-of-government or whole-of-Defence imperatives – and where Special Operations were meant to fit in.

3.37. This may be attributed in part to the sense of separateness and specialness that had grown during the Afghanistan years, but it also sprang from the entrepreneurial approach SASR took to operational tasking.

*"SF advisors and liaison officers are more akin to enthusiastic touters and hawkers (sometimes rogue freelancers) who think they are the 'right tool' for every job."*

*"They push the limits of their legitimate mandate and/or authority to a wearisome extent."*

### State of SOCOMD in 2015

3.38. Information available to me for the purposes of this Review clearly indicated that, overall, the Command in 2014-15 was running ragged. It

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<sup>8</sup> SOCOMD Governance and Remediation Oct 2015

needed urgent attention, remediation and modernisation – away from the environment of constant combat rotations.

3.39. It is to the credit of the senior SOCOMD leadership that the problems were the subject of deep diagnosis in 2015, enabling remediation strategies to be implemented progressively.

3.40. It is to those remediation and modernisation strategies and their implementation that we must now turn.

## 4. Reform and Modernisation Measures since 2015

4.1. Upon his appointment as SOCAUST at the end of 2014 MAJGEN Sengelman quickly set in train a series of measures to address the most obvious governance, accountability and behavioural issues in SOCOMD. At the same time, he instituted a series of studies to identify and quantify the more systemic problems in the Command. He devised a comprehensive strategy for both short and long term remediation measures to address the issues that had been identified. In October 2015 he presented to CASAC his analysis of the problems and his approach to remediation. That strategy was accepted and endorsed by CASAC for implementation across Army.

4.2. When MAJGEN Findlay assumed command as SOCAUST in mid 2017, he conducted a fresh review of the progress of the reform and modernisation measures<sup>9</sup> and subsequently issued a Campaign Plan to continue and consolidate the Sengelman process, maintaining the momentum for modernisation of the Command.<sup>10</sup>

4.3. This section outlines the key measures taken under the direction first of MAJGEN Sengelman and then of MAJGEN Findlay to address the systemic problems that had been identified and to “reset” the Command.

4.4. It is clear to me that the measures taken were the result of a deep and perceptive analysis of the issues that had beset the Command, coupled with a deep understanding of their underlying institutional and cultural causes. The strategies adopted to address those issues were comprehensive, systematic and in my view, entirely appropriate.

4.5. I will take a thematic approach to describe the main components of the Sengelman-Findlay strategies of reform and modernisation. On the matrix of issues and remedies, a single reform measure often covered multiple themes

### Governance

4.6. Since 2015 a number of substantive reform measures have been implemented to address deficiencies in the governance and accountability of SOCOMD.

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<sup>9</sup> Special Operations Command – 90 Day Review of 16 Oct 17

<sup>10</sup> Special Operations Command – Campaign Plan 201-2020 of 11 May 18

4.7. Immediate action was taken to remediate identified problems in the management of such basic issues as security, equipment, uniforms, ammunition and incident reporting. This was assisted by the provision of expert support from Army to staff within SOCOMD and its units on management and accounting for resources. Quarterly Command-wide governance boards were instituted to enable accurate reporting to the Army Governance Board.

4.8. Pan-command processes were implemented to ensure that adherence to standing governance and compliance requirements was maintained and reinforced. In 2015, a professional development course was conducted, focused on governance, compliance, leadership and administration responsibilities of sub-unit commanders in response to previous failings.<sup>11</sup> There was a rigid insistence, through leadership and strengthened auditing, on proper adherence across the Command to Army's standard governance arrangements. It is understood that this adherence will be maintained on an ongoing basis by the recent creation of an EL2 Assurance Officer within SOCOMD.

4.9. The reallocation of responsibilities across the one-star officers within HQ SOCOMD also enabled reforms to occur with respect to SOCOMD's capability acquisition and sustainment processes. The dedicated focus of a Brigadier on this issue has facilitated the development of a detailed policy that integrates SOCOMD's capability and assurance processes more appropriately into those of Army and Defence.

## Structure

4.10. **Bolstering and Restructure of HQ SOCOMD:** Rather than being consciously designed, the Headquarters element of SOCOMD had grown over the years in an *ad hoc* manner, to the point where it was not as effective as it needed to be in 2015 or into the future. MAJGEN Sengelman was forced to address the fact that the functions and requirements of HQ SOCOMD had outgrown its capacity to meet them. He undertook a restructuring of the Headquarters and sought to bolster key staff functions within it.

4.11. Prioritisation was given to the creation of a stronger formation-level command structure to sit above the units of the Command. This result in the creation, of the new position of Commander Special Forces Group (COMD SFG), an additional 1-star position focused on the raise-train-sustain functions within the Command. This was complemented by the

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<sup>11</sup> The course model was subsequently adopted by Commander 3 Bde in 2016.

creation of the position of Regimental Sergeant Major Special Forces (RSM SF).

4.12. An increase in the establishment of the Headquarters was also sought. Army subsequently created 23 additional positions that were to be filled with appropriately skilled staff from outside SOCOMD. This increase in HQ specialist staff has been gradual and is still incomplete.

4.13. To relieve the pressure on the CO of SASR from his dual appointments of both commanding a regiment and managing a base, the position of Base Commander, Campbell Barracks was created and filled from outside the Command.

4.14. Structural reforms also occurred at unit level.

4.15. **SASR:** In 2017, following two years of concentrated focus on the Regiment's governance, discipline and culture, the newly appointed CO SASR issued a wide-ranging report directed at "resetting" the Regiment.<sup>12</sup> It touched upon all aspects of the Regiment: structures, its strategic focus and culture. The structure and roles of sub-units were modernised to bring them into line with more standard Army force (FORGEN) and operational (OPGEN) generation cycles. They were redesigned with a view to re-posturing the Regiment to ensure it remained fit-for-purpose to address future threats, including a reset away from the Middle East to focus on Australia's near region.

4.16. **SOER:** In similar vein, detailed analysis was conducted on the SOER's force design, leading to a restructure to enhance the force and operational generation cycles within the unit.<sup>13</sup> A particular emphasis was placed upon improving the integration of SOER's capabilities into SASR and 2 Cdo Regt operational preparedness requirements.

4.17. **SOTEC:** The pre-existing heavily Commando-oriented Special Forces Training Centre at Holsworthy Barracks was restructured and renamed the Special Forces Training and Education Centre (SOTEC) in mid 2017. The approach to training and professional military education was re-designed to help address a number of the identified problem areas across SOCOMD. It was reoriented away from the former focus on training for the SOCOMD's Commando capability, to a new role as a pan-Command centre for training and professional military education.

4.18. **Command and Control:** For many years, SOCAUST had three separate accountabilities. He answered to the CDF on Special Force for

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<sup>12</sup> SASR, CO Directive 12/17 Pilgrim Report of 2 Mar 17

<sup>13</sup> SOER, Progressing SOER – A Report by CO SOER (the Patroneus Report), of 17 Jul 17



some of the specialised aspects of the Command's operations such as cooperation with other government agencies, including in the counter-terrorism area. He answered to the requirements of CJOPS on operational matters and to Chief of Army on force generation (Raise Train and Sustain). A very recent reform has been the normalisation of command and control surrounding specialised operations conducted by SOCOMD, so that approval processes and operational command of activities are determined on a risk assessment basis. This is informed by an overall CDF intent of singularity in oversight; for operations through CJOPS; and for policy through DEPSEC SP&I.

## Integration

4.19. There are three aspects to the reform measures taken within this theme: measures to integrate SOCOMD into Army; integration of units into a pan-SOCOMD; and integration of 'tribes' within SOCOMD. Each of these aspects is described briefly below.

4.20. **Integration of SOCOMD into Army:** To address the gap that had appeared between SOCOMD and Army, a conscious decision was made to increase the interaction between the Command and other functional commands within Army. This resulted in a significant increase in SOCOMD's participation in major exercises, such as Exercise Hamel and Exercise Talisman Sabre. Further, conscious efforts were made to increase the level of awareness within Army and the wider ADF of the capabilities resident within SOCOMD and the manner in which they operate. For example, a Special Operations Familiarisation Course was conducted for junior Army Officers. SOCAUST embarked on an active education campaign of fellow senior officers across the ADF on the nature, roles and purpose of SOCOMD. This was complemented by an increased effort from officers within SOCOMD to support training courses conducted across Army with a view to educate a broader Army audience on SOCOMD, its capabilities and its effective employment. These efforts have been further enhanced by the cross-transfer of knowledge from SOCOMD into other elements of Army through activities such as the Combat Shooting program.

4.21. **Integration into a pan-Command:** Immediate measures taken to address the issue of inter-unit friction within SOCOMD stemmed from a SOCAUST narrative which focused on recognition of the "Joint Task Force" approach to operations. This approach was based on the rationale units as a single entity did not deploy on operations, rather elements of each unit were brought together to fight as an effective whole. This was subsequently enhanced through constant command messaging using a "team of teams" descriptor.

4.22. The Command recognised it had to be proactive in requiring its various elements to work together more frequently and more effectively. A pre-sub-unit command course, internal to SOCOMD, was introduced bringing together incoming sub-unit commanders of SOCOMD and representative from Forces Command. The course emphasised the need for pan-Command approaches. They facilitated relationship building between sub unit command teams and Army, while concurrently developing participants' understanding of the strategic context in which SOCOMD operated.

4.23. A most significant reform taken was the establishment of SOTEC in 2017. This was more than a simple renaming of the former Commando-centric Special Forces Training Centre (SFTC). While still in its infancy, SOTEC is a pan-Command unit. It will act as another forcing function to require elements of the command to work, learn and teach together. It will play an increasingly important role in attracting the right people into the Command and will oversee recruitment processes on a pan-Command basis.

4.24. **Integration of SOCOMD's "Tribes":** In recognition of the need to overcome the barriers that existed between the operators and enablers resident within the Command, a fundamental reform measure was the establishment of the Tactical Integration Course conducted by SOTEC. The objective is to provide pan-Command instruction and upskilling of enabling staff to support operators in a deployed environment. This measure has alleviated a training burden on individual units, enabled better bonding amongst enablers, and ensured enabling staff were skilled in a manner that assisted their more effective tactical integration upon arrival into SASR and 2 Cdo Regt. Considerable emphasis has been placed on the value of the specialist skills enabling staff bring to SOCOMD's various capabilities,

4.25. The geographic separation of the two major units in the Command remains a challenge to the pan-Command concept. Inter-unit rivalry will never be eliminated but inter-unit co-operation and a pan-Command identity can be enhanced, not only through SOTEC but also through ensuring appropriately experienced SF staff are posted to HQ SOCOMD. This is once again beginning to occur.

## Culture

4.26. Immediate disciplinary and administrative actions were taken from early 2015 to correct poor behaviour, which was both derived from and contributing to distortions of and deviations from positive cultures.

4.27. MAJGEN Sengelman encouraged members of the Command to come forward with their concerns and observations. He implemented his

“Redemption Program” in 2015. This program can be likened to a form of “Truth and Reconciliation Council” that enabled both a deeper understanding of the problems associated with the Command’s culture and helped identify measures to start to address them. This was a difficult process given the Command’s operational requirements at that time.

4.28. SOCAUST’s messaging included strong references to the need for adherence to Army values and expected standards of behaviour, with particular reference to the ADF’s “Pathways to Change” Programme 2012-17 and 2017-22 and the Chief of Army’s Directive on “Army’s Enduring Cultural Foundations”.

4.29. Broader reform measures impacting on the culture of the Command included reinforcement of Army values through the 2017 SOCOMD Strategic Plan and the issuing of a directive on the support mechanisms for families of members of the Command (with a view to emphasising a positive and supporting pan-Command culture with respect to families).

4.30. At unit level, particularly within SASR, unit attributes, standards and ethos were re-set and codified through the issuing of a code of conduct. Unit idioms, which had become distorted in meaning, were redefined and promulgated. For example, the unit motto, “*Who Dares Wins*” had been twisted to mean an ability to disregard an authorised direction given by a superior when that direction did not suit an individual. Its true meaning was reiterated, namely, it is applied in an operational setting when a thorough course of action has been developed and it is assessed that some added risk is acceptable and necessary to complete the mission successfully.

4.31. Action has also been taken to dilute the culture of “specialness” through the normalisation of many aspects of the Command’s activities, bringing them in line with Army’s other functional commands as demonstrated by the introduction of the Special Operations Program, Capability and Assurance Framework (SOPCAF) and impending changes to command and control arrangements for specialised operations conducted by SOCOMD.

4.32. The need for greater adherence and anchoring in ethics and values has been recognised through changes in the selection processes for both SASR and 2 Cdo Regt, with a view to increasing the ability to test these attributes in candidates. A start has been made in more effectively integrating ethical and values considerations into pan-Command and unit training. I observed renewed emphasis has been placed on the attribute of humility in messaging from leaders across the Command.

4.33. Two further reform measures are worth noting. One was the introduction of a confidentiality and disclosure directive. This measure was intended address the creeping disregard for the Command's operational security by unit members who were increasingly suspected of speaking to people outside Defence Force. The other was the establishment of business rules across the Command for recognition of individual honours and awards. This had been a cause of contention within SOCOMD.

4.34. Additional ongoing measures include the role of SOTEC in Special Operations professional military education, which is envisaged as underpinning a culture within the Command of the "continual pursuit of excellence."

## Personnel

4.35. Considerable attention has been given to reform measures in the area of personnel. Conscious efforts were made to identify "adverse influencers" within units and across the Command who were not either adhering to Army values or were consistently demonstrating poor behaviour or unprofessional conduct. These members were essentially "managed out" of either SOCOMD (if still assessed as suitable for service within Army) or out of Army.

4.36. SOCOMD leaders recognised the need to introduce into the Command more of the specialist expertise existing in broader Army. Staff positions across SOCOMD were reviewed and all positions that could be filled by non-SF staff were identified. Many of these positions have subsequently been filled by non-SF staff during subsequent posting cycles. High-performing personnel in specialised areas such as the logistics and personnel management streams have been hand-picked for posting within the Command.

4.37. The calibre of leaders within SOCOMD was subjected to close scrutiny. The previous Command practice of permitting officers in sub-unit command appointments to deploy away from the Command was stopped. This ensured continuity across command teams and a reassertion of officer-leadership at sub-unit level.

4.38. Additional attention is now being given to the selection of officers and senior NCOs prior to their appointment to command positions within SOCOMD to ensure that only individuals who have demonstrated understanding of and consistent adherence to Army values and unit attributes are to be selected. SOTEC now plays an increasing part in the recruitment and selection processes across the Command

4.39. In 2015, SOCOMD began a process of aligning its personnel management practices with those of Army. Subsequent SOCAUST Directives have sought better to align the Command's approach to personnel and career management with Army standards.<sup>14</sup> An additional SF-qualified Warrant Officer position was established within the Directorate of Soldier Career Management to focus on SF personnel issues. Career management messaging from Army has been emphasising the career benefits of SF-qualified personnel seeking postings outside the Command, in order to enhance their career profiles and thus their competitiveness for further promotion and key appointments. A number of SF-qualified Warrant Officers are currently in RSM appointments outside SOCOMD. The value of cross-pollination through posting SF-qualified personnel to positions within Army, where they were likely to be of value and a positive influence, has long been recognised but is now being more consistently considered during posting cycles.

4.40. Measures have also been taken in the area of transition out of Army. In recognition of the long-term nature of service within SOCOMD as well as the impact of repeated operational deployments on the mental and physical health of its members, SOCOMD has developed a Transition Support Project Plan.<sup>15</sup> This Plan identifies the difference in the weight of effort applied to the recruitment, selection and training of Special Operations Forces personnel compared to the level of support provided to its members who transition from service. It seeks to rebalance these efforts with a view to enhancing support to transitioning members through both supporting other initiatives and trialling its own. A key aspect of the Project is its focus on integrating with the work undertaken within Army, the ADF and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

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<sup>14</sup> SOCAUST Directive 5/17 Strategic Plan to Support HR Management in SOCOMD; SOCOMD Directive 01/18 SOCOMD Performance Management and Reporting.

<sup>15</sup> Special Operations Command Transition Support Project Plan Version 1.0



## 5. Effectiveness of Reform Measures

### Governance

5.1. The reform measures implemented within SOCOMD since 2015 to correct deficiencies identified in the Command's governance have been appropriate. There has been a clear and concerted effort to establish a robust framework and leadership culture that reinforces the importance of good governance and this is permeating throughout the Command. In my view the Command has been successfully "reset".

5.2. I believe that leadership within Army, the ADF and even the wider Australian Community can be satisfied that governance concerns that existed within SOCOMD in 2015 have been rectified and SOCOMD is now governed to a standard that is consistent with and in some areas exceeds Army.

### General Observations

5.3. **HQ SOCOMD:** The strengthening of HQ SOCOMD has enabled it to exercise its "command" function more effectively. There will always be room for improvement.

5.4. Structural changes made to the Headquarters, and specifically the establishment of Commander SF Group, have not only facilitated increased and ongoing oversight of governance within units of SOCOMD, but has also generated the creation of additional policy and procedural frameworks to enable that oversight to be exercised. For example, COMD SF Group has established a practice of conducting quarterly governance boards within SOCOMD with a mandate to report and review management and accounting processes across units of the Command.

5.5. The infusion into Headquarters, if somewhat belated, of high performing specialist officers in areas such as logistics and personnel management has had a positive impact. These individuals have brought with them knowledge and skills of how governance is conducted to the "Army standard" and have subsequently replicated much of Army's best practice within SOCOMD. The impact has been demonstrated in recent positive audit results. As one Army officer only recently posted into SOCOMD remarked, in respect of administration and governance there had been an exponential rise in compliance across the units in SOCOMD compared to previous years. A review of military justice audits conducted by IGADF over the past three years has provided evidence SOCOMD's

governance in this area was appropriate and generally consistent with the approaches taken by Army.

5.6. The improvements in SOCOMD's governance have been recognised within Army, with one commentator even remarking that SOCOMD now had a tendency to over-report issues in the field of sensitive and strategic personnel issues. Previously, SOCOMD's practice had been to try to manage many of these issues "in house", until they reached a point where external intervention was required. The commentator assessed that this was no longer the case; rather, there had been an overall increase in understanding of why issues of this nature were required to be reported higher.

5.7. During interviews and focus group discussions within units, it became apparent that the messaging from SOCOMD's leadership on the importance of governance and the need for constant adherence to governance standards was not only being heard, but also being implemented. The mantra of "Army standard is the minimum standard" appears to have been adopted into SOCOMD. There is evidence, too, the ethos of the continual pursuit of excellence appears to be now influencing the manner in which governance is conducted. The impression conveyed to me across a range of levels within SOCOMD, was there was not only an understanding of the need for adherence to Army's governance standards, but also a desire to seek to build and improve upon those standards.

5.8. Care must be taken to ensure the reforms implemented continue to be implemented into business-as-usual and are not eroded over time through a lack of attention or through well-meaning personnel lacking in understanding of the background as to why certain practices are in place.<sup>16</sup> It will also be important to ensure that reform measures implemented continue to be appropriately resourced to sustain their effectiveness, including where necessary, the provision of additional staff.

### **Governance of Procurement: SOPCAF**

5.9. One of the more important reform measures has been the development and implementation of the Special Operations Program Capability Assurance Framework (SOPCAF), which establishes a rigorous and integrated governance framework around the ADF SO Program governing procurement and sustainment of material capability. The Program expressly recognises that behaviours in the past have warranted

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<sup>16</sup> For example, it is understood that consideration was being given during the course of this Review to the reallocation of supervisory responsibilities over Barracks security personnel from the Base Commanding Officer to the Regimental Executive Officer of SASR. While likely posed as a good initiative, implementation of such a proposal would immediately erode the effect of diverting base-governance issues away from SASR to enable them to focus on their core business rather than base management issues.

the establishment of a robust, transparent governance process. This appears to have been achieved through SOPCAF. The Framework clearly delineates responsibilities and accountabilities within SOCOMD and importantly, establishes identified points of integration with Army and the broader Defence organisation relevant to Capability Acquisition and Sustainment. This integration allows the generation of efficiencies. Supporting working-level documents provided to the Review were notable in their recognition of the essentiality of transparency in approach on issues. The framework emphasises the need to make existing systems work, rather than “working the system” which appears to have been a practice in past years.

## **Health**

5.10. Further governance initiatives were taken in SOCOMD with respect to health. Attention to health issues is doubly important given the physical and mental stressors associated with the conduct of Special Operations. These reforms covered both physical and mental health and included the introduction of clinical governance audits, conducted in the presence of AHQ observers both to ensure transparency and to address adverse external perceptions.

## **Transition**

5.11. As discussed in the previous section, in 2017 SOCOMD initiated a project plan to explore ways in which to enhance the support provided to personnel transitioning from service. Initiatives of this nature are important, particularly for an entity such as SOCOMD as it can have a significant impact on the ethos and morale of the Command and, therefore, on the commitment of its people. While this is the case for any member of the ADF, it is a particularly relevant need for personnel who are subject over their careers not only to the intensive physical and mental rigours of military operations, but also constant high levels of readiness and, over the past ten years, constant deployments.

5.12. While still in a developmental stage, initial reports on some of the initiatives taken by the Project have been positive and are likely to result in further cross-transfer to Army and the ADF.

## **Specialised Capabilities**

5.13. There is one particular area of governance which needs special, if brief, mention. Elements of SOCOMD conduct cooperative activities with a number of other government agencies, both within the Defence Portfolio and externally. Some of these operations and the capabilities needed to conduct

them are necessarily highly classified and compartmented. This compartmented activity is subject to a specific directive of the CDF.

5.14. I have examined the governance arrangements for this important area of the Command's contribution to the national interest. I am satisfied that the governance arrangements are both adequate and appropriate – and that the CDF's requirements are being observed.

### **Legality**

5.15. My terms of reference directed me to examine governance within SOCOMD in terms of adherence to the law - in the context of both the ADF and the broader Australian community. During the course of my Review, I found no evidence of unlawful activities within SOCOMD. To the contrary, a consistent theme throughout my discussions across all levels of the Command was a renewed emphasis on the need for adherence to the law.

**Recommendation 1:** There is a need for constant oversight and monitoring of governance within SOCOMD. This should be conducted both internally as well as externally with a view to preventing and detecting any recidivism back to poor governance. SOCOMD's leadership should continue to insist on an active commitment to good governance that is, at a minimum, consistent with Army standards.

**Recommendation 2:** Army's senior leadership, when considering further reform and modernisation, should ensure that the governance framework within SOCOMD does not unnecessarily constrain the agility, adaptability and creativity that underpin the Command's capabilities. To do otherwise would be to the detriment of the positive elements of SOCOMD's operational capabilities and culture.

### **Accountability**

5.16. While there may still be some residual concerns within Army and the broader ADF as to the observance of accountability within SOCOMD, I found a strong sense of accountability is now being promoted across SOCOMD, particularly within its current leadership down to unit level.

### **General Observations**

5.17. Reinstitution of a culture of accountability within SOCOMD was one of the major focuses of reform from early 2015. The "redemption initiative" instigated by MAJGEN Sengelman provided unit members with an opportunity, unique within Army, to confess to transgressions in the past and to hold themselves to account for their actions. The subsequent "managing-out" of personnel within the Command who were assessed to



have conducted themselves in ways that were inconsistent with Army values also contributed to a re-setting of accountability within SOCOMD.

5.18. Accountability was reinforced by a concerted effort from SOCOMD's leadership to correct minor misdemeanours. As one commentator remarked,

*"It was as much about justice being seen to be done as actually doing it. These actions were fully supported by most of the unit because they were aware of and watching the transgressions but had not taken any action [previously] to correct."*

5.19. Collectively, these measures set the foundation for the re-emergence of a sense of personal accountability for individual actions.

5.20. In focus groups, Warrant Officers and SNCOs across the Command consistently expressed to me the need for individuals to be held to the highest professional standards in the conduct of their duties and their behaviour, and for misdemeanours to be corrected instantly. At the unit level, a good understanding was demonstrated of the leadership tools available to commanders to hold unit members to account, as well as an appetite to do so. Anecdotally, this was previously not the case.

5.21. An example of the sense of awareness of accountability requirements that now appears to be permeating through the Command came from an anecdotal remark made by a Sergeant within SOCOMD who acknowledged, if he were sufficiently trusted to undertake strategically sensitive tasks, then it was entirely appropriate that he be held to account for the conduct of those tasks. Language that mirrored this sentiment was frequently repeated during focus group discussions conducted within the Command when the issue of accountability was discussed.

5.22. Accountability is a difficult concept to measure in tangibles. However, audit results both for resources and military justice performance are useful indicators that help demonstrate levels of accountability. These have been increasingly positive.

5.23. For example, attestation to an improvement in the sense of accountability within SOCOMD came from the Australian Defence Force Investigative Service (ADFIS). From historical, and admittedly anecdotal, reports of elements of SOCOMD claiming they were "not subject to the Defence Force Discipline Act (DFDA)" and actively resisting attempts by ADFIS to perform its duties, the Command has apparently reformed to the extent that elements within it are now pro-actively requesting ADFIS involvement. Senior leaders within SOCOMD are being fully engaged with ADFIS on matters that warranted ADFIS' attention. Overall, I was advised there was now a good level of engagement between ADFIS and SOCOMD,



although there is still some room for improvement below the level of mid-ranking officers.

5.24. I believe that SOCOMD is getting the message on accountability. Notwithstanding this assessment, there is an ongoing need for constant reinforcement of being accountable for actions and decisions within SOCOMD. This is evidenced by the assessment of one commentator who reflected a continued need to formalise instructions, particularly to units within SOCOMD, so as to be able to hold them to account.

5.25. Outside SOCOMD, there remains a perception within Army and Defence generally that aspects of SOCOMD are still not entirely accountable. One senior ADF officer remarked that he did still did not have a sufficient, “due diligence” understanding of what was occurring in SOCOMD. Others observed at times SOCOMD appeared to “work the system” to its advantage in using alternate processes and approaches to raise proposals that were not consistent with the appropriate chain of command. Examples were given of attempts by SOCOMD to over-reach, that is, to go beyond its mandate as a functional command nested within Army, and instead seek to shape and directly influence high level policy in a manner favourable to its interests.

5.26. These remarks are consistent with SOCOMD’s own assessment that some of its officers lack strategic understanding and context surrounding the operational activities of SOCOMD. This issue warrants attention.

5.27. Notwithstanding these observations, I found, overall, there was recognition of an increased sense of accountability within SOCOMD and a willingness of its leadership to hold its members to account for their actions.

**Recommendation 3:** The current action within SOCOMD to hold its personnel to account for their behaviour and actions across all areas must be maintained. Accountability needs to be demonstrated constantly by all leadership levels within SOCOMD.

**Recommendation 4:** SOCOMD’s leadership should ensure that its units do not unduly seek to reach beyond their mandated tasks other than through normal ADF and Army processes in order to avoid the creation of perceptions that SOCOMD is an entity that is separate from Army or the ADF.

**Recommendation 5:** There is a need for senior ADF leadership to continue to monitor the command and control arrangements across all of SOCOMD’s operations to ensure SOCOMD remains accountable to the correct commander – that is, actions undertaken by SOCOMD do not fall between the gaps that exist in its command and control structures.

## Values

5.28. My Terms of Reference required me to examine SOCOMD's culture and values with a view to assessing whether they were properly nested with Army. While assessing values and culture is a highly subjective task, overall I have found sufficient examples of Army's values woven into the framework of SOCOMD's culture so as to be satisfied that they are well nested within the Command. Any cultural decline appears to have been arrested. There has been a cultural "reset" in SOCOMD and its units.

5.29. This was not quite the case with ethics, where I believe there is more work to be done.

5.30. **Values:** There was unequivocal understanding demonstrated by the leadership elements of SOCOMD that Army values were SOCOMD values. Even at lower levels within the units of SOCOMD, there was conscious recognition that a failure to adhere to Army values warranted a review of retention of an individual, not just within SOCOMD, but within Army. I understand this has not always been the case in recent years.

5.31. A good example of the efforts to embed Army values within SOCOMD was demonstrated by the Code of Conduct that has been generated by SASR.<sup>17</sup> This document clearly establishes Army values as the unit's values and then uses those values as a foundation upon which to set other characteristics such as ethos and attributes intended to contribute to the unit's culture. While not as "codified" as SASR, it was clear from time spent with the majority of other units in the Command, that there was a solid understanding of Army values, their application and the manner in which they contributed to identity of the unit and its effectiveness within SOCOMD.

5.32. Given the unique nature of SOCOMD, there may be merit in giving consideration in the future, as to whether there is a need for SOCOMD to develop a list of its own values supplementing those of Army. In Canada, CANSOFCOM has taken an approach of cascading values. Overall values are established by CANSOFCOM, but individual units develop their own additional and unique values which reflect the role and culture of each unit. While I see this as being entirely a matter for the SOCAUST of the day, the creation of a set of pan-Command values and a SOCOMD Code of Conduct, may enhance the integration of units into the Command.

**Recommendation 6:** SOCAUST consider issuing a revised statement of values and code of conduct for SOCOMD, emphasising pan-Command

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<sup>17</sup> CO SASR (2017) *Code of Conduct*

values and expectation leaders within the Command will exemplify, promote and strengthen observance of the Command's values.

5.33. **Ethics:** I encountered different levels of understanding within the Command about the importance of military ethics and their consideration as an element of war-fighting. While it was apparent that senior leaders within SOCOMD had a good understanding of military ethics and its importance in military decision-making, this was not always the case at lower levels. In exploring this topic during discussions, military ethics were regularly conflated with compliance with the law, specifically the laws of armed conflict.

5.34. Assurances were offered to me that training was conducted within units in ethics. However, limited evidence was provided to support those assurances. Verbal examples were given as to how candidates undergoing selection for both SASR and Commandos were "tested" on their ethical decision-making skills. While this is important, testing candidates at the point of entry into Special Forces cannot be equated to embedding an understanding of military ethics within members of SOCOMD, nor guarantee their application in combat. Overall, I am concerned the Command does not yet have a comprehensive pan-Command approach to infusing ethical-decision-making into military decision-making.

5.35. My concern on this issue is heightened when examined in the context of the current international security situation and forecasts on the concept of future warfare. It is apparent there is an increased blurring in the peace-war divide, which is only like to be exacerbated with time and international instability. While there is a rigid international framework around the manner in which wars are fought (*jus in bello*), more uncertainty surrounds conflicts falling below the threshold of warfare.

5.36. Future conflicts are now just as likely to occur in environments where there will be a lack of clarity as to which "rules" apply. In these circumstances appropriate decision-making will increasingly be guided by an individual's values and ethics. Given the likelihood of new and harder ethical challenges being faced by military forces, it is logical, in the same way physical skills are taught and practised, so too should the skills of ethical decision-making.

**Recommendation 7:** A more systematic and considered programme for the education, training and exercising of ethical decision making be introduced across SOCOMD. Ethics training should be conducted in a manner that is embedded in the day-to-day work-life of members of SOCOMD – not very occasional lectures from distinguished academic ethicists or padres. This could be further supported by codification of

individual unit values which in turn, build upon Army and SOCOMD values but identify what is important within each particular unit. There is also an ongoing need for the continued demonstration of ethical leadership by SOCOMD's senior leaders.

## **Integration Issues**

5.37. While closely inter-related with perceptions, the practical integration of the concept of pan-Command into SOCOMD, and SOCOMD into Army and the wider ADF warrants ongoing attention.

Despite the aspiration of some members of SOCOMD, particularly at the middle and lower levels, for Special Forces to be constituted formally as a fourth armed service, my conversations with the senior ADF leadership indicated there is no prospect for the foreseeable future of SOCOMD becoming a command or service that is independent of Army. My review has been conducted on that basis. That this aspiration persists within the Command (and was occasionally echoed outside the Command) needs to be addressed.

5.38. Based on my understanding of the intent of the current senior leadership to maintain the structure and positioning of Australia's Special Operations capability, many of my recommendations have been framed with the effective strengthening of SOCOMD's integration into or nesting within Army in mind.

5.39. The concept of integration has more than one aspect. It applies not only to SOCOMD's integration with the ADF and with Army, but also to the effective integration of units within SOCOMD to form a united and coherent Command embodying a range of special military capabilities.

## **General Observations**

5.40. SOCOMD's interaction with the wider ADF was perceived positively. Good progress has been made on SOCOMD's integration within Army but further work is required not only by SOCOMD but also by Army.

5.41. Within SOCOMD, substantial progress has been made under a leadership team clearly committed to the pan-Command intent. However, understanding of this intent is not yet universally reflected at lower levels, where loyalties, identity and culture will invariably still tend to coalesce around the individual unit. There remains a need to ensure that SOCOMD is seen both internally and externally, as a distinctive part of Army – rather than as an entirely separate entity operating under its own devices.

5.42. For clarity, I have divided the issue of integration into three levels and will address each level separately.



5.43. **Integration of Units within SOCOMD:** As described in Section 3, SOCOMD has previously suffered problems derived from internal tribalism. Some of these were attributed to the ongoing rivalry between the Command's two major units, SASR and 2 Cdo Regt. Some were attributed to the disrespect shown by "operators" towards "support staff" and "enablers". Collectively, these issues had led to a description of SOCOMD in 2015 as a "federation of fiefdoms", rather than a unified functional command within Army.

5.44. Conscious reform measures were introduced with a view to addressing both of these issues. Those measures have met with some success.

5.45. **Pan-Command Concept:** In relation to the unification of SOCOMD, the leadership has given a strong demonstration of the importance of the pan-Command concept. The realisation of this concept has not been at the expense of individual unit identities, which remain valued. Rather it has been an additional layer of cohesion intended to unify Army's Special Operations capabilities into a consolidated whole, rather than disparate units.

5.46. Notwithstanding the achievements so far of SOCAUST and COMD SFG, implementation of the pan-Command concept is a work-in-progress. Striking the best balance between natural inter-unit rivalries (which need not in themselves be unhealthy) and reaping the benefits of a unified and coherent Command remains an ongoing challenge.

5.47. Progress has also been made in improving the relationships between the units of the Command. At the unit command level there was consistent expression of recognition and respect of the unique skills resident within each unit, particularly between SASR, 2 Cdo Regt and SOER, with many officers describing the relationship as the best they had ever seen it.

5.48. Particular attention needs to be paid to developing a better understanding below unit command level of the pan-Command model, to promote buy-in or ownership of the model at those levels as at lower rank levels there is still some evidence of inter-unit animosity. This was most evident between SASR and 2 Cdo Regt and noticeably emerged in areas where there was either an assessed duplication in capability or competition for resources. Management of these friction points is an on-going process. Greater clarification of the roles of each unit and identification of a capability lead in areas of overlap between units through messaging that is accessible and understood by all members of the Command could assist in mitigating this friction.



5.49. Increased opportunities for unit inter-action within SOCOMD should also enhance the concept of pan-Command cooperation and cohesion. To some extent, the result of greater unit inter-action is demonstrated within the Parachute Training School (PTS), which was described as an integrated unit founded on unity of purpose – parachuting. While it is as not feasible for a similar pan-Command singularity of purpose given the range of capabilities within SOCOMD, the absence of inter-unit issues within PTS demonstrate that there are ways successfully to integrate SOCOMD's units.

5.50. **SOTEC:** The creation of SOTEC, one of the major reform initiatives intended to aid in addressing inter-unit integration, holds the potential to be another means of achieving greater integration across SOCOMD.

5.51. While still only in the early stages of its implementation, acceptance within units of the pan-Command training concept is patchy. Perceptions still exist within SASR that SOTEC is really only relevant to Commandos and there was limited value in the concept for "the West" outside of SOTEC's role in training support staff. Within Commando units, there was a perception that members from SASR were not willing to support (through postings) a pan-Command approach to common training. It is notable that these issues do not appear dissimilar to the issues faced by Canadian Special Forces (CANSOFCOM) during the early phases of the establishment of its Special Operations Training Centre (SOTC), which they now recognise as a key unifying element of their Command.

5.52. While recognising unique special capabilities still need to be trained within units, ongoing attention should be paid assisting SOTEC to achieve the pan-Command goals set for it. This will require continuing commitment and decisive Command leadership to ensure both the pan-Command concept and individual units derive the greatest benefit from more unified training.

5.53. **East versus West:** the geographically dispersed nature of units within SOCOMD has long been a complication in the process of unifying the Command. SASR is well established in Western Australia, geographically isolated from the rest of the Command in the eastern states. Relocating SASR to the eastern states is not a serious option, given the costs and political implications of relocation. The most practical answer lies in more movement between east and west, including cross-postings, even at the cost of some personal inconvenience for SOCOMD personnel who have become anchored with their families in their respective locations.

5.54. **Integration of "Enablers":** It was apparent to me messaging from the senior leadership and the reform measures initiated on the issue of integration of "support staff" and "operators" are having a positive effect.

5.55. Much of the language used by leaders across SOCOMD on the importance of support staff was mirrored during my focus group discussions with subordinates. Junior “operators” openly explained their recognition of the value of support staff in enabling them to conduct their duties. Junior “support staff” described the culture within the major units as increasingly welcoming and inclusive. Consistent reference was made to the desirability of retaining within SOCOMD support staff experienced and trained in the needs of the Command. So too was the value to the individual units of the training provided by SOTEC to “enablers”, specifically, the Tactical Integration Course.

5.56. The good work undertaken on this aspect of integration has gained traction and is addressing the main issues of concern identified in 2015. But a risk of recidivism will remain for some time. This aspect of integration within SOCOMD should be the subject of careful monitoring.

5.57. While recognising unique special capabilities still need to be trained within units, ongoing attention should be paid assisting SOTEC to achieve the pan-Command goals set for it. This will require continuing commitment and decisive Command leadership to ensure both the pan-Command concepts and individual units derive the greatest benefit from more unified training.

5.58. **Summary:** There will always be rivalry between high performing units and specialists with highly valued but different skills. Overall I assess the current level of integration across SOCOMD is relatively healthy. Previous friction between “operators” and “support staff” appears to have been more effectively addressed and from the perspective of my Review, relationships are beginning appear more inclusive. Inter-unit relationships at higher rank levels also appear to be effective, where there is a consciousness of the need to understand and respect the roles of others. More work needs to be done, however, to promote understanding of the pan-Command concept at lower rank levels to address a persistent undercurrent of distrust and suspicion of others in the Command, which can distort healthy inter-unit rivalry back into dysfunctional animosity.

### **Integration of SOCOMD in Army**

5.59. Interlocutors identified a number of areas in which initiatives have been taken to improve the integration of SOCOMD with Army.

5.60. **Collective Training:** The first of these has been SOCOMD’s participation in collective training conducted by Army. The regular and visible participation of SOCOMD’s force elements in Exercises Hamel and Talisman Sabre during recent years was consistently recognised and welcomed within Army’s leadership. However some still questioned the

current levels of participation and the training value that SOCOMD's participation brought to the exercise. If this initiative is to be continued (and it should), there is a need for SOCOMD's participation to be meaningful and demonstrative of the value proposition offered by the Command in achieving operational outcomes. The onus lies with Army and SOCOMD to ensure this occurs.

5.61. **Cross-transfer of Knowledge:** The cross-transfer of knowledge from SOCOMD to Army since 2015 on matters such as tactics, techniques and procedures has also assisted the concept of integration. The example most frequently cited to me was the Combat Shooting Program that was developed within SOCOMD and subsequently transferred and rolled out across Army. There was a consistency of positive views from both SOCOMD and Army on the value of this type knowledge and skills transfer, illustrating a particular value-add for Army; i.e. the ability of Special Forces to be an incubator of new ideas and military techniques that can have wider application SOCOMD leaders should be constantly on the look-out for, and Army appropriately receptive to, other opportunities for cross-transfer of training or operational practices that will aid Army's development.

5.62. **Increase in non-SF Personnel:** A further measure with implications for integration with Army was the decision to increase the number of non-SF personnel into positions within SOCOMD as a means of improving SOCOMD's processes, establishing a consistency in practice with Army as well as improving SOCOMD's integration with Army. These objectives are being achieved – albeit to varying degrees of acceptance within SOCOMD units.

5.63. **Cross-Posting Policies:** As discussed elsewhere in this Report, Army cross-posting policies have had a significant impact in the areas of governance, logistics and personnel management within SOCOMD. The integration of SOCOMD and Army has also been improved as non-SF personnel posted into the Command gain an understanding of the capabilities within SOCOMD and the reasons why some aspects of the Command need to be different from Army. As one non-SF officer observed, he arrived into the Command with a healthy dose of cynicism but has since been impressed with the manner in which the Command conducts its business. Equally, the increased exposure of SF personnel to high-performing specialists from Army has assisted a better appreciation within SOCOMD that, while organisational sub-cultures may differ, the level of professionalism does not.

5.64. A significant factor hindering the progress made in this area is the issue of allowances. I was advised that in many, if not all cases, SF members posting outside of SOCOMD incur a significant reduction in their

allowances. This acts as a financial disincentive to move beyond SOCOMD. As such it is an obstruction to the broadening of the experience base in SOCOMD. It is an issue warranting further consideration.

5.65. Overall this has been a positive series of initiatives, but cross-posting practices still require attention. For example, higher-than-usual friction was identified between units and areas of HQ SOCOMD where it was perceived that non-SF staff officers did not fully understand the capabilities resident within SOCOMD and their unique needs. The friction is being addressed by SOCOMD through arranging staff visits to units. This remedy appears to be *ad hoc* and, understandably, subject to resourcing and higher priority tasks. It may be desirable to look at some of the measures used by CANSOFCOM when introducing non-SF personnel into their Command, for example through the conduct of obligatory dedicated induction courses conducted by their SOTC, as a means to address frictions.

5.66. **Career Management:** There has also been progress in the integration between SOCOMD and Army on the issue of career management and postings in and out of the Command. SOCOMD are reported to have gained a deeper appreciation of the value of postings outside the Command for SF personnel. Posting of this nature have noticeably improved the understanding of those individuals of broader issues within Army and also enhanced their career profiles for future promotion. Perpetuation of this practice will encourage the ongoing cross-transfer of knowledge between SOCOMD and Army. For example, the creation of an additional SF-coded Warrant Officer career management appointment within Army's career management agency has proven to be a valuable opportunity for SF personnel to learn about career management issues and for CM-A personnel to gain a better understanding of SF related personnel issues.

5.67. **Educational Outreach:** An important area in which SOCOMD has actively sought opportunities to improve its integration into Army has been through educational outreach. While this has occurred primarily on an opportunity basis, efforts have been made to raise the profile and understanding of SOCOMD within the general Army audience. Presentations by SF personnel on SOCOMD and its capabilities to Army promotion and all-corps training courses were reported as having been well received. Similarly, classified presentations on SF capabilities to senior leadership groups within Army also received positive comment, with one interlocutor observing that he wished he had known the information imparted when he had been a formation commander. Whether initiated by Army or by SOCOMD, regular updates to CASAC on SOCOMD issues and holding CASAC meetings in SOCOMD facilities should be encouraged as a



visible demonstration of SOCOMD as one of Army's three functional commands.

### **Integration within the ADF**

5.68. Using perceptions as a measure of the level of integration, it appears that there are fewer integration concerns between SOCOMD and the ADF than there are between SOCOMD and Army, or indeed, within SOCOMD itself. The other Service Chiefs expressed views that, while keen for further opportunities to contribute to the ADF Special Operations capability, based on the current points of intersection between their Service and SOCOMD, the relationship was effective and appropriately integrated.

5.69. Within HQJOC, there was an overall positive view of the manner in which SOCOMD was integrating into the planning and conduct of joint operations – although it was recognised that there was scope for improvement in relation to an increased understanding within HQJOC of Special Operations capabilities.

**Recommendation 8:** Army and SOCOMD engage with relevant authorities with a view to mitigating current financial disincentives to SF personnel posting away from SOCOMD.

### **Perceptions**

5.70. Perceptions are subjective and emotional, frequently not grounded in fact. Nevertheless, perceptions are important and they have had a major impact on the provisioning, interoperability and ultimately, the use of Australia's Special Forces. Negative perceptions of SOCOMD impact upon the levels of trust afforded to SOCOMD and its force elements. These have the potential to impact adversely upon the contribution SOCOMD can make to the ADF's overall mission.

### **Public Perceptions**

5.71. Until allegations of inappropriate or even illegal behaviour surfaced a few years ago, published information about the Special Forces painted a highly favourable picture. Amongst political leaders, the rapidly deployable, relative low-cost, low-political risk and high-outcome reputation of Australia's Special Forces made them an attractive "go-to" option in responding to defence imperatives overseas. Similarly, Australia's Special Forces are held in high regard by alliance partners for their professionalism, military capabilities and willingness to take considered risks in the pursuit of joint objectives. The SF's reputation with Australia's regional partners makes them valuable instruments of defence diplomacy.



5.72. In short, the overall external perception of Special Forces in 2018 was of a highly professional and dedicated organisation serving Australia's interests in difficult operating environments very well indeed.

### **Perceptions: Other Government Organisations**

5.73. Interviews were conducted with Heads of a number of Commonwealth Agencies in working relationships with SOCOMD in order to ascertain their perceptions of the Command and whether they had observed any changes over recent years in their dealings with them.

5.74. Again, the overall perception of the individuals interviewed was positive. This positive perception of Australia's Special Forces was echoed by allied counterpart organisations.

5.75. One agency head commented that what had begun as a relationship underpinned with caution and some inherent suspicion, had evolved over the years into a mature working relationship founded on trust. SOCOMD was described as a "valued contributor" to the efforts of that agency.

5.76. There was also recognition that SOCOMD's distinctive culture was a core value in its interagency work: "We want them to look at different ways of doing things, we want them to be innovative." "They are now much more professional, better governed and with a better culture." (This was offered in the context of an acknowledgement that, with respect to interagency work, there had been rapid change in recent years.)

5.77. At the same time, some government interlocutors identified scope for improvement. As is noted in other parts of this report, there was an inference of frustration in not knowing, or being allowed to know, more specific details of the capabilities resident within the Command. This was from the perspective of greater knowledge potentially enabling more effective use of those "unknown" capabilities.

5.78. The strongest and most consistent perception expressed however was along the lines of:

*"The absolute value of cooperation, collaboration and exchange of ideas. We learn from their ability to push the capabilities beyond the boundaries of their ordinary use."*

5.79. The current positive perception amongst government organisations and alliance partners working with Special Forces augurs well for continued cross-agency collaboration in the national interest, particularly in the counter-terrorism space.

## Perceptions: Defence

5.80. While the perceptions drawn from external agencies were overtly supportive, the perception within the Department of Defence was more nuanced. There was no questioning of the perceived value of the capability itself or the ability of SOCOMD to achieve operational outcomes, but some concerns were expressed as to the way in which the Command had conducted itself in the past.

5.81. One view was that SOCOMD and its units had appeared to see themselves as operating practically independently of the wider Defence organisation, drawing upon their “entrepreneurial” and persuasive skills.

*“They are very good at marketing themselves, particularly to politicians ... they have a great reputation with politicians which is fostered and nurtured.”*

5.82. Concern was expressed about ensuring confidence was maintained in SOCOMD and its ability to perform consistently as an element of Australia’s military power:

*“Statecraft requires the use and exercise of tools in a very deliberate and thoughtful way and if you have one tool that you are not confident in its use, you must use it in a very careful and calibrated way. Statecraft is very vulnerable to the consequences of a mis-calibrated tool... We want the tool, (but), ... we must be able to use the tool in accordance with the direction of government through the CDF.”*

## ADF Perceptions: Inherited

5.83. All ADF interlocutors to whom we spoke agreed on the essentiality of the ADF maintaining a competent, high-end special operations capability, as an integral element of Australia’s overall defence posture. All acknowledged the high standard of military skills inherent in the unique military capabilities resident in SOCOMD. They were also admiring of the outstanding military achievements of the Special Forces on deployments overseas, their significant contribution to Australia’s defence alliances, and to international engagement more generally. Collectively, there was no doubt as to the operational effectiveness of the capability and its ability to achieve directed operational outcomes.

5.84. Equally consistent, however, were lingering concerns about SOCOMD, based on past experience. Perhaps the most persistent of these concerns was derived from negative perceptions of the behaviour of some elements of Special Forces and their interactions with the rest of the ADF, particularly with Army.

5.85. **Reliance on Special Operations Forces:** Many ADF interlocutors acknowledged that in the later years in Afghanistan there may have been an over-reliance on Special Operations Forces, denying the Army the opportunity to develop its own skills and combat experience – and the individual rewards and recognition that go with that. Some attributed this over-reliance as having been generated by SOCOMD itself and its ability politically to market its operational attractiveness to higher levels of government. There was concern, too, that the focus on direct action tasks in Afghanistan had led to the degradation of other essential Special Force capabilities which are important parts of the *raison d'être* of the SOCOMD. Valid or not, these sorts of perceptions (and resentments) can linger.

5.86. **Separateness:** The separateness of Special Forces during the conduct of their Afghanistan deployments appears to also have been another source of concern, impacting upon ADF perceptions. Many interviewees remarked on the lengths that SOCOMD forces had gone to build a sense of separation from conventional ADF forces deployed into that theatre. There was a perception of a SOCOMD that had more in common with the Special Forces of our foreign allies than with deployed ADF force elements and of a desire by SOCOMD to emphasise and reinforce this separation. This separateness manifested itself in many ways – some petty, some more significant: separate and closed compounds within existing ADF bases, separate catering contracts, special arrangements for transit into theatre and a unit culture which was interpreted as elitism and even arrogance towards the rest of the ADF. There was a consistent concern expressed that SOCOMD had been allowed to stray too far from Army and was perceived to have “lost its way” as a consequence.

*“Their perception of specialness is a very real issue. It creates a perception of untouchability and breeds a path for deviations from norms.”*

5.87. **Command and Control:** A number of interlocutors expressed disquiet at the command and control arrangements for Special Operations, particularly in Afghanistan. Some commented that, during the earlier years of the Afghanistan campaign, Australian commanders at various levels did not have a complete understanding of the nature and extent of operations being undertaken by Australian Special Forces due to their reporting arrangements largely back through the Coalition Special Operations Forces. This, compounded by their physical separation from other ADF force elements, contributed to frustration and mistrust when the Special Forces operated under arrangements not visible to the Australian Task Force commanders and their staffs.

5.88. The combination of separatism and secrecy can complicate necessary oversight and accountability through normal military processes. The Special Force commitment to secrecy was seen by some as excessive, manipulative by others, and the reasons for it were not well understood outside and in some cases, even within the Command.

5.89. Some of the reactions against the perceived behaviour and culture of some Special Forces units may have seemed trivial, have become exaggerated in the telling, or even resulted from jealousy of the consistent combat achievements of the Special Forces. The perceptions may also be evidence of a lack of understanding amongst many ADF members of how the SF should characteristically operate. During the years of high tempo operations neither SOCOMD nor Army appeared to recognise these negative perceptions nor seek to correct them.

5.90. Separateness, secrecy and the projection of arrogance and elitism invariably create an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion. Although the examples cited are now historical, perceptions generated during this time continue to influence today's perceptions with a residual concern that they may surface again in future operations.

### **Actions Taken to Address Negative Perceptions**

5.91. As one very senior interlocutor said, "Highly sensitive capabilities require a high level of trust." The challenge of reversing negative perceptions, justified or not, and rebuilding trust and confidence in the Command has been a key objective of the SOCOMD reform and modernisation programme since 2015.

5.92. The process of confidence-building is complex. It has involved developing and asserting the leadership role of HQ SOCOMD, "resetting" Command and unit priorities, ensuring that the Command and its units are integrating their capabilities more visibly, effectively and regularly within the overall ADF military capability, including by participating actively and meaningfully in military exercises. Greater openness about capabilities and operations, to the extent possible in such a sensitive Command, also helps build confidence and trust.

5.93. Particularly important have been efforts to address the negative elements which had clearly developed within the culture of some SOCOMD units, and consequent behaviour of their members. Decisive leadership at Command and unit level has been required to address the behavioural and cultural issues which emerged during the Afghanistan years. These actions have been recognised and are positively influencing external perceptions of SOCOMD.



5.94. **Information Sharing:** The roles of SOCAUST and other senior leaders within the Command in reaching out, sharing more information and relating more actively with counterparts in Army, other elements of the senior ADF leadership and the broader Defence Organisation have been critical in slowly improving perceptions. The efforts of the Command and its individual units, notwithstanding the requirements of secrecy, to increase understanding more broadly within Army and the ADF of Special Force capabilities has been acknowledged. This was noticeable, for example, with HQ SOCOMD's interaction with areas of HQJOC.

5.95. **SOCOMD's Support to Military Operations:** An most important factor in restoring confidence and trust will be the continuing demonstration by Special Forces of their understanding that, while they provide support to other government agencies and must maintain close working relationships and interoperability with other allied special operations commands, they are still required to support military operations; i.e. the provision to the ADF of specialised high-end military capability for use within the Australian joint operational environment. There is a continuous need to demonstrate SOCOMD are a collaborative, willing and integrated element of the Army, working in support of the ADF's task of meeting Australia's national defence requirements. They may not operate as part of a combined arms team, they may conduct national security tasks in cooperation with other organisations, but they remain an integral part of the overall joint effects achieved by the ADF - and remain nested within Army.

5.96. Perceptions will also be influenced by the extent to which, in their interactions with the ADF and with Army, SOCOMD and its subordinate elements conduct themselves in a manner that demonstrates their understanding of the broader operational and strategic context in which they play but one of the many roles.

5.97. An examination of the orders and directives, and the action taken thus far, indicates the SOCOMD leadership clearly understands the imperatives of addressing the perception issue. Consistent demonstration of the ethos of humility coupled with sustaining their well-recognised ability to achieve operational outcomes will go some distance in changing any residual negative perceptions.

### **Current Perceptions**

5.98. While many interlocutors in 2018 still harboured concerns about aspects of SOCOMD and resistance to change among its collective culture, a consistent theme was acknowledgement of the value of the Special Operations capability set and a desire to see that capability set fully integrated into the wider ADF effort. Leaders across Army expressed strong



support for the objectives and progress of SOCOMD's modernisation campaign. ADF interlocutors acknowledged and welcomed the changes they could see taking place. They are willing it to succeed.

5.99. As one senior ADF leader observed:

*"There has been recognition of the need for greater transparency, particularly at senior levels, and the level of openness has increased. There has also been an increased understanding that reputation matters. They are on the road to improvement and leadership is key."*

5.100. Of course, many had comments and suggestions about improvements still needed, but the conclusion to be drawn from extensive conversations with senior leaders is their perceptions of SOCOMD have been moving in a much more positive direction over the past three years. This is a direct result of the three-year reform and modernisation process within SOCOMD under an assertive and focused senior leadership.

5.101. A characteristic of subjective perceptions is that they can linger long after the root causes have begun to be addressed. Success in changing perceptions is gradual. It can take years to change organisational cultures. In 2018, I am confident perceptions are indeed changing and that trust and confidence in SOCOMD is being strengthened.

5.102. For the present, the movement is in the right direction. The challenge, as with all the other SOCOMD reform and modernisation measures, is to sustain the confidence-building process over the next five crucial years. With strong leadership and support from Army I am confident that goal will be achieved.

## 6. Into the Future

6.1. Solid reforms have been achieved within SOCOMD over the past three years and, with the respite from constant combat (but not constant training and maintenance of readiness), the Command has been able to be reset. The consolidation of the reset will take both time and strong leadership.

6.2. In assessing the effectiveness of the reform and modernisation process, I have made recommendations about aspects still needing some attention. These are summarised separately. In this section I raise some broader issues Army's leadership may wish to consider.

### A Charter for SOCAUST

6.3. Good progress has been made since 2015 on the reform and modernisation of SOCOMD and its constituent elements. External perceptions of the Command are more positive than they were three years ago. But some misperceptions and lack of understanding persist in both the ADF and Army, with the potential to impact adversely upon effective integration of Special Force capabilities into Army.

6.4. Equally importantly, some misperceptions continue at various levels within the Command itself, on such issues as the "separateness" and "specialness" of units within the Command and the nature and extent of SOCOMD's relationship with Army. This lack of clarity can be unsettling to good governance, integration with the rest of Army and an impediment to the longer term success of the Command's reform and modernisation programme.

6.5. To establish absolute clarity of the role and positioning of SOCOMD, I propose CA issue a clear statement, endorsed by CDF and CJOPS, who are part of SOCOMD's unique command and control structure. Such a statement should set out the role and place of SOCOMD within Army and CA's expectations of SOCAUST. While there have been numerous directives issued over the years, I have not been shown an easily digestible document setting out senior leadership expectations, able to be disseminated both within the Command and more widely within Army and the ADF. The purpose of such a document would be to give a plain language description of SOCOMD and its place within the Defence Force structure, particularly after three years of significant internal change and restructuring.

6.6. I envisage such a statement take the form of a Charter issued to SOCAUST by CA and endorsed by CDF and CJOPS. It should:

- clearly identify SOCOMD as a functional command of Army;
- entrust SOCAUST with the command of Army's Special Operations capability; in essence the custodian ship of Australia's SO capability;
- authorise SOCAUST to engage with other government agencies and departments and foreign authorities, in accordance with direction of CA and CDF, keeping CJOPS informed of such activities where necessary;
- define SOCAUST's relationship with CDF, CA and CJOPS, including the framework by which SOCAUST is accountable to these appointments and direct that each be kept informed of SOCOMD activities; and
- emphasise adherence to Defence and Army values, while recognising the value of the unique attributes of SOCOMD.

6.7. The Charter should be unclassified and send a clear message not only to members of SOCOMD but to the wider Defence establishment of the value, role, structure, accountabilities and place of SOCOMD within Army.

6.8. A suggested working draft of such a Charter is included at Annex B.

**Recommendation 9:** That CA issue a Charter Letter to SOCAUST that is endorsed by CDF and CJOPS in order to provide clarification both within SOCOMD and Army as to the role and responsibilities of SOCOMD.

## **Special Forces: Oversight and Transparency**

6.9. The capabilities resident within SOCOMD requires very high levels of training and a readiness to deploy at extremely short notice. A further key element of these capabilities is the ability, where necessary, to conduct operations either covertly or clandestinely. It is imperative, both for force preservation and operational effectiveness, that the actual capabilities of the Special Forces (their skills, technologies and operating methods) remain highly classified. In similar vein, the identities of members of SOCOMD associated with those sensitive capabilities must be protected, for reasons both of operational security and the personal safety of officers and their families.<sup>18</sup>

6.10. As a result, there is a need for much of the information arising from work that Special Forces undertake, to be handled in accordance with strict Need-to-Know principles. SOCOMD's capabilities and the manner in which

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<sup>18</sup> Defence Security Manual, Part 2, 2.24 - Protected Identities

they are used are not generally transparent to the general public, to broader Defence, or to the majority of the ADF itself.

6.11. The requirement for SOCOMD to exist and operate in an environment of non-transparency raises two important questions:

- whether existing ADF command and control mechanisms are sufficient for the effective oversight of non-transparent capabilities, characterised by heavy compartmentalisation and strict application of need-to-know principles; and
- whether excessive non-transparency is counter-productive and there is scope for increasing slightly the level of transparency surrounding some capabilities, particularly within the ADF?

### Oversight

6.12. High levels of secrecy militate against effective normal methods of oversight – and increase the risk of inappropriate behaviour and errors of judgement, poor governance or simple mismanagement going undetected and uncorrected. Effective and independent oversight able to penetrate the veils of operational secrecy, while still maintaining security, increases the possibility of issues of potential concern being identified earlier and in a manner that enables them to be nipped in the bud.

6.13. I discussed with a range of senior ADF officers the need for and possible form of an independent oversight function appropriate for a highly classified command, such as SOCOMD. There was consensus on the value of such a proposal, although there was less consensus on the ways in which this effect could best be achieved.

6.14. In the first instance I looked at oversight models within the Australian Intelligence Community (AIC) for organisations with similar high-level security requirements as SOCOMD.

6.15. **Australian Intelligence Community Oversight:** It is well-accepted government agencies in the law enforcement and national security arena require significant levels of non-transparency for their effective operation - particularly where their sources, capabilities and methods, actual activities and sometimes the identities of their personnel must be withheld from the public. Some agencies, for example, are deliberately exempted from the application of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) and the identities of their staff members are protected by legislation.

6.16. It is also well-accepted in western democracies that such agencies, precisely because of their non-transparency, must have adequate, independent and effective oversight. This oversight should give the Government and the public a high level of assurance that the special powers

and capabilities of these agencies are being used legally, appropriately and only to the extent necessary. The response to this need has generally been to provide special or additional mechanisms to oversight the use of such powers and capabilities.

6.17. For the intelligence and law enforcement communities, Australia has developed an “ecosystem” of oversight and safeguards – a combination of legislation, the Ministerial responsibility system, parliamentary committees, the judicial system, Ombudsmen and Auditors, and in the case of the Australian Intelligence Community (AIC) a statutorily independent monitor. Within this ecosystem there is provision for public visibility for some of the AIC’s activities, but also for the absolute protection of classified information. A key element of the AIC’s ecosystem is the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security.


**6.18. The Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security**

**(IGIS):** IGIS is a uniquely Australian response to the need for additional independent oversight of necessarily non-transparent intelligence agencies. The Inspector-General is an independent statutory office holder who reviews the activities of AIC agencies (and the AFP in relation to counter-terrorism), “to ensure that the agencies act legally and with propriety, comply with ministerial guidelines and directives and respect human rights.” The IGIS has significant powers which include requiring the attendance of witnesses, taking sworn evidence, copying and retention of documents and entry into an Australian intelligence agency’s premises. It can initiate its own inquiries and conduct regular inspections. It is, in effect, a standing royal commission into the AIC. At the same time, IGIS can perform a direct advisory role on intelligence matters to the Government and to the heads of individual agencies. I particularly valued this advisory and alerting role during my tenures as Head of two Australian intelligence agencies.

6.19. **Oversight for Special Operations Command:** The ADF also has its own “ecosystem” of oversight. Military commanders are empowered in the ADF with a variety of tools that enable them to maintain and enforce military discipline and achieve directed outcomes in accordance with the law. These tools come with obligatory reporting responsibilities. There are also internal mechanisms for oversight of the activities of the wider Department Organisation, ranging from the investigative functions undertaken by the Inspector-General of the ADF (IGADF) and ADF Investigative Services (ADFIS), and standard audit functions undertaken by Defence’s Audit and Fraud Control Division and by the single services.

6.20. Many of the Defence oversight mechanisms parallel or replicate aspects of the AIC ecosystem. [REDACTED]





there would be a similar advantage in an independent means of overseeing and monitoring SOCOMD – in terms of the provision of assurance for Defence, for the Government and, indirectly, for the public at large.

6.21. A principal purpose of such a mechanism would be to provide separate assurance through the CDF to the Government that, despite the lack of transparency, Australia's Special Forces act lawfully and with propriety, and comply with military orders and defence policy. One senior ADF leader saw such a mechanism as conducting "a regular pulse, testing the waters and gaining a sense of the culture" within the Command – and providing advice accordingly. A number saw the value of the mechanism in its advisory and mentoring role.

6.22. An independent oversight and advisory mechanism should focus on the whole spectrum of Special Operations involving SOCOMD; both Raise Train and Sustain and operational activities, with a particular emphasis on governance, accountability, culture, values and propriety.

6.23. The functions of such a mechanism might include:

- regular monitoring in respect of compliance, accountability and propriety within SOCOMD, and the manner in which it interacts with other government and international agencies and conducts its operational activities;
- an inquiry and audit function (on direction from the CDF, CJOPS or Chief of Army);
- early warning and advice that alerts ADF, Army and SOCOMD leadership to issues or concerns before they develop into systemic problems which then require major remedial action; and
- an advisory and mentoring role within Army and within the Command itself.

6.24. I place particular importance on the last of these functions: the advisory role. The mechanism should have advisory responsibilities only and no authority to interfere with the normal chain of command.

6.25. To be successful, the proposed oversight and advisory mechanism would need operating authorities not dissimilar to those provided to by IGIS, including:

- access to records and information (regardless of classification) and personnel in order to review accountability; and
- ability to conduct inquiries, including to compel military witnesses and the production of records.

6.26. Three possible models for the proposed mechanism are described below.

6.27. **Option One: Extend the Current Functions of the IGADF:** One option would be to extend the current functions of the IGADF to encompass the independent monitoring role I envisage.

6.28. This option leverages an existing statutorily independent mechanism created for the express purposes for internal audit and to provide an avenue, independent of the chain of command, to examine and expose issues requiring remediation. The proposed functional extension of the remit of the IGADF is fundamentally different from its current functions. It would require regulatory amendment in order to extend its purpose beyond its current military justice mandate. It may also require a redesign of current structures within IGADF to ensure it is appropriately resourced with skills, knowledge and ability to conduct these additional functions, necessitating a suite of new resources to be embedded within an existing organisation that is not inherently designed to review operational activities of the ADF, or to perform an advisory function. It would also permanently embed the function into an existing, relatively rigid, regulatory structure that does not easily allow flexibility or for the advisory and mentoring function I consider most important.

6.29. **Option Two: Creation of a Special Forces Monitor:** The creation of a Special Forces Monitor would offer the advantage of a bespoke entity rather than requiring modification and augmentation to an existing entity. It would almost certainly involve legislative amendment to create a statutorily independent entity tasked to undertake the functions described above and empowered accordingly. It would also have the full authority and credibility arising from a statutory appointment.

6.30. While resource implications are likely similar to those described above in Option One, this option would also generate the bureaucratic overlay that is associated with statutory officers. Special care would need to be taken to avoid overlap with or the erosion of the powers of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security, who also has some oversight of

SOCOMD in respect of its cooperation with other agencies, for example in counter-terrorism.

**6.31. Option Three: Appointment of Advisor – Special Forces:**

Rather than create a new formal investigative mechanism that might cut across tried and tested chains of command, the desired effect could be achieved through use of the inherent powers of the CDF to appoint an appropriate person to undertake an advisory role for the Command – an advisor and not an inspector or auditor.

6.32. The job description might read:

- to provide additional independent oversight and advice, for the purposes of assurance to Army, the ADF and the Australian public, as to the lawfulness and propriety of the activities of SOCOMD and its personnel; and
- to provide independent advice to CDF, CA, CJOPS and SOCAUST on other issues relevant to the Command including on culture and values.

6.33. The individual could be empowered through direction of the CDF and potentially, as necessary, appointment under the *Defence (Inquiry) Regulations 2018*, where circumstances warrant formal inquiry powers. Given the proposed breadth of functions to be performed by the Advisor, it is anticipated that the appointment would need to be supported by a small cadre of staff for administrative, monitoring and inquiry purposes. It is further envisaged that the Advisor would report directly to the CDF and/or through the Chief of Army.

6.34. The key advantage of this option lies in the flexibility that is generated through its authority being derived from command powers rather than legislative/regulatory power. It can be modified at any time in accordance with CDF's directions. This enables temporal flexibility; for example, a trial or interim period, as well as an ability easily to adjust and improve functions as needed.

6.35. A further substantive advantage it offers is the ability for the Advisor to take on a mentoring-type role within SOCOMD. Based on my own experience, I have found access to this type of support to be invaluable when holding senior leadership appointments. The value of such a role, particularly for incoming SOCOMD leaders, was also remarked upon by more than one senior officer during the review process.

6.36. In the event consideration is to be given to the implementation of this recommended option, attributes of the Special Advisor might include, *inter alia*:

- a senior (2 or 3 star) ADF officer, with experience of command and a thorough understanding of military procedures and governance (previous SF experience need not be a prerequisite – and may be a disadvantage);
- retired from full-time service but able to serve on a part-time basis;
- able to be deployed into overseas theatres as required; and
- with appropriate high-level security clearance.

6.37. The Advisor – Special Forces concept would also require a small permanent staff, appropriately cleared, able to support relevant staff and review functions and engage at all levels across the Command. In this respect, a staff member with previous Tier C RSM experience would be a valuable inclusion enabling direct interaction with Warrant Officers and SNCOs across SOCOMD.

6.38. I prefer this model because of its flexibility, speed of implementation, and ability to bring to bear an independent perspective based on military wisdom and past experience; including on subjective issues such as Army culture and values.

**Recommendation 10:** That CDF consider the appointment of an Advisor Special Forces to assist in oversight of SOCOMD and to provide independent advice to CDF, CA, CJOPS and SOCAUST on issues relevant to the Command. The ongoing requirement for this appointment could be reviewed in the future.

## Transparency and Understanding of SOCOMD

6.39. A persistent complaint echoed by many interlocutors was lack of transparency in SOCOMD and its units about the capabilities, activities and state of the Command. Components of SOCOMD kept to themselves behind walls of secrecy and a heightened sense of separateness. This made cooperation with the Command and its effective integration into wider Army and ADF activities more difficult. It has also contributed to the sense of distrust and lack of confidence in the Command noted in an earlier chapter. While that situation is changing under the policies of the current and immediate past SOCAUST, more work needs to be done.

6.40. **Excessive Secrecy?** The excessive practice of secrecy within an organisation can be significantly counter productive. Within the Command, as within the AIC, excessive secrecy can become an obstacle to normal oversight and effective administration. It can breed an over-reliance on the ethos of self-sufficiency; namely, everything must be developed in-house, procurement cannot be managed or coordinated by entities outside the Unit,



and so on. And it can be used to hide evidence of malfeasance or inappropriate behaviour. Some interlocutors cited instances where a reliance on secrecy had in the past obscured important information relevant to the effective operational employment of SOCOMD's capabilities.

6.41. Excessive secrecy can lead to mistrust and a lack of confidence in an organisation that ultimately depends on coordination and support from organisations outside the Command – beginning with Army. A combination of lack knowledge of capabilities and lack of trust can militate against effective use of SOCOMD's unique and special competencies – to the detriment of the planning and conduct of operations. ASD for example, have expressed a wish to know more about SOCOMD's capabilities in order to be able to use them more effectively. This thread of concern emerged in interviews with a number of senior ADF personnel.

6.42. Sensible management and leadership should be able to ensure security requirements are implemented without damaging either SOCOMD's reputation or its effective integration within Army and the wider ADF. There is a case for SOCAUST to direct a review of the security requirements of the capabilities resident within SOCOMD and the operational effects they can achieve, with a view to identifying how security requirements might be managed in order to promote better understanding of the Command and its capabilities – increasing knowledge and confidence but without compromising absolutely essential security.

**Recommendation 11:** SOCAUST should institute a review of the security requirements of the capabilities resident within SOCOMD and the operational effects they can generate, with a view to identifying how security requirements may be better managed to promote a broader understanding within ADF and external agencies.

6.43. **Information Outreach from SOCOMD:** Both the current and immediate past SOCAUSTs have placed emphasis on explaining SOCOMD to external stakeholders, in particular with Army and the wider ADF. This has been an important confidence-building exercise which my interviews indicated was having positive results. Information outreach should be an ongoing programme across the whole Command.

6.44. Understanding of the Command and its capabilities, and its position within the overall national defence capability framework, remains important for the effective integration of Special Operations capabilities into Army and the ADF. Over the past three years, SOCAUST and his senior leaders have been active in promoting understand of the Command and its capabilities. I think more could be done.



6.45. To this end, SOCAUST should consider developing a comprehensive Strategic Communications Plan to systematise SOCOMD's current ad hoc educational outreach to entities outside the Command. The objective should be to increase understanding, particularly within Army, of the role of the Command, its particular (if not always specific) capabilities and operating requirements. To be effective the Plan should not simply be implemented at very senior levels only; rather, it should be followed at all contact points between the Command (including individual units) and the wider ADF.

6.46. The Plan should include consistent and understandable messaging. Part of its implementation would involve incorporating the Command's information objectives into relevant points of interface with Defence, the ADF and Army, including the educational exchanges with other elements of Army, participation by SOCOMD personnel in external training courses and, where appropriate reverse participation by Army in SOCOMD training – suggestions which are made elsewhere in this report.

**Recommendation 12:** SOCAUST should consider developing a comprehensive information outreach programme, initially focussed on Army, to increase understanding of the nature and role of SOCOMD within Army and the wider ADF.

### **SOCAUST Narrative for the Command**

6.47. The reform and modernisation process in SOCOMD has been underway since early 2015, although the comprehensive strategy for the reforms was not comprehensively endorsed until late in 2015. With his own systematic Campaign Plan for SOCOMD, issued in May 2018 now in full implementation, consideration might be given for SOCAUST to issue a plain language narrative recognising the progress achieved through the Command's reform initiatives and confirming his future vision for the Command. The purpose of the narrative would be to reinforce within the Command understanding of the reform objectives and its ultimate outcome: a unified Special Operations Command nested within Army.

6.48. Such a document should be designed to enhance understanding, particularly at lower levels within SOCOMD, of the importance of the pan-Command concept, the need for mutual respect of the specialised capabilities within SOCOMD and the benefits accrued from integrated diversity. It should set out clearly SOCAUST's view on the allocation to the units of responsibilities for particular capabilities within the Command. It should also provide a vehicle to reinforce Army's values as SOCOMD's values, to identify additional values unique-to-SOCOMD; and reiterate SOCOMD's place as a functional Command within Army. It would remind

all “tribes” within SOCOMD that they remain accountable, through their chain of command, to SOCAUST and ultimately to Chief of Army, to work collectively to achieve the capability outcomes required of SOCOMD and to do so in accordance with Army values. This requirement is unlikely to change.

6.49. The narrative might cover all elements of the Campaign Plan, but making the following points in clear language understood by all ranks:

- SOCAUST and members of SOCOMD remain the “custodians” of the ADF’s Special Operations capability.
- SOCOMD’s primary role is to provide Special Operations capability in support of the ADF’s military objectives.
- SOCOMD will remain firmly “nested” within Army, accountable to CA for its raise, train and sustain functions, to CDF for unconventional operations capability and to CJOPS for the conduct of operations.
- SOCOMD units have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, which are of equal value.
- SOCOMD is a unified Command embracing a common culture, ideology and outlook.
- SOCAUST is committed to ensure the Command maintains and develops the special operations capabilities –outlining his view of the valued characteristics of the Command: cutting edge innovation, adaptability and creativity, Army values and the Command ethos of the pursuit of excellence with humility – the Command’s *esprit*.
- SOCOMD’s operational cooperation with other government departments and with overseas partners is highly valued, while the Command remains firmly committed to upholding Army values.
- Positive recognition of the achievements reached to date in the reform and modernisation of the Command.
- A frank appreciation of where SOCAUST believes work still needs to be done.

6.51. A SOCAUST narrative will not by itself produce reforms or make the Command fit-for-purpose. That is the task of decisive professional leadership. But good communications demonstrating the commitment and determination of the leadership, beyond the tenure of any individual, to ensure the Command’s operational readiness and unity, is in effect an example of good leadership.

**Recommendation 13:** SOCAUST consider issuing a plain language “Narrative” to all members of the Command, communicating his views on the state of the Command, implementation of the reform and modernisation programme and his vision for the future.

### **Leadership within the Command**

6.52. This review has looked at actions taken to reform and modernise SOCOMD and its constituent units. My overall judgement is that the actions taken since 2015 are appropriate and have been instrumental in restoring SOCOMD’s fitness-for-purpose. They have also laid a basis for further modernisation and an ability for the Command to quickly re-orient and adapt to military and other challenges likely to be faced into the future. Order has been restored without smothering SOCOMD’s creativity, agility and adaptability.

6.53. It will, however, take time and continued good leadership for the reforms and the “reset” of SOCOMD to be consolidated. In my view, the achievements since 2015 have been the achievements of good leadership. It may sound elementary, but no amount of formal restructuring, systemic change and exhortations from above can succeed in reshaping values, ethos and behaviour without the exercise of good leadership throughout the Command. The Command’s leaders at all levels need to embrace and “own” the reform programme into the future. They need to exemplify Army values and actively support the exercising of appropriate and timely disciplinary measures where there is back-sliding.

6.54. I have noted elsewhere the particularly valuable role that SOCOMD plays in the management and promotion of Australia’s alliances and military relationships in the region. High levels of integration and inter-operability with allied Special Operations Forces contributes significantly to Australia’s ability to achieve military effects. At the same time careful leadership needs to be exercised to ensure that such cooperation reflects Australian interests and does not detract from the essential Australian attributes of Australia’s Special Operations Forces. (There are times when the kool-aid needs diluting).

6.55. In the same vein, SOCOMD plays an important role in supporting other Australian government agencies in a range of national security related areas, including counter-terrorism. There is always a danger however, that these activities can unduly draw SOCOMD’s attention from its primary responsibility; the provision of military capability to the ADF. This too requires careful leadership.

6.56. I am conscious of the hugely important role played by long-experienced Warrant Officers and SNCOs in the maintenance of SOCOMD's Special Operations capabilities. In the Special Operations context, the working relationships and lines of authority between these senior soldiers and the commissioned officers in command of them have appeared in the recent past to have been an issue of concern. I am not able to make any firm recommendations on this matter, but I draw attention to it as something that may need to be addressed, particularly in SASR.

6.57. Finally, good leadership is also required within Army to ensure the functional elements of Army understand the requirements of SOCOMD and are able to provide effective RTS support to them, as well as ensuring appropriate SOCOMD participation is factored in to Army training and exercises.

**Recommendation 14:** Careful attention must therefore be paid to the selection and training of suitable future leaders at all rank levels within SOCOMD, who are able to carry forward the consolidation of the SOCOMD reset and maintain the Command as fit-for-purpose.

## 7. Conclusion

7.1. Australia needs a Special Operations capability to support military and other activities. The value that SOCOMD brings to Army and the ADF operating capabilities was unanimously recognised by all senior leaders across Defence and government interviewed. Given that assessment, it is important they can be assured SOCOMD is fit-for-purpose.

7.2. The current governance and the sense of accountability within SOCOMD is appropriate and accords with Army's standards and values. While legacy perceptions about SOCOMD continue to linger, overall, there is recognition of the changes that have been implemented and the positive effects they are achieving. The Defence Organisation wants and needs the reform and modernisation of SOCOMD to succeed.

7.3. Solid progress has been made on integration within SOCOMD and the unification of its disparate units as a Command. However, there is still further work required. This is also the case with respect to SOCOMD's integration into Army. There is a need for both SOCOMD and Army to continue conscious efforts to improve the level of integration, in order firmly to embed SOCOMD as one of Army's functional commands.

7.4. Army's senior leadership need to be cognizant of the achievements to date, but constantly alert to the need for further action. The reform measures taken thus far need time and attention to become set in concrete; back-sliding is always possible. Continued support from Army is necessary to ensure this does not happen.

7.5. Overall, the past three years have seen the cultural decline of SOCOMD arrested. I believe that the Command and its principal units are undergoing a genuine cultural "reset". In this context, it is important to recognise SOCOMD has been the subject of extensive review, and remains under review for certain behavioural allegations from the past. It is a Command that needs to be allowed to move beyond these legacy issues and be given time to consolidate the reform measures that have been implemented.

7.6. The current leadership within SOCOMD is successfully carrying forward the process of modernisation. Consistently high quality leadership at all levels will be required to maintain the momentum, enabling the Command to adapt and innovate in ways allowing it to meet a constantly changing operating environment, and best serve Australia's national interests.



**REVIEW INTO EFFECTIVENESS OF CULTURAL AND GOVERNANCE  
REFORMS AFFECTING SOCOMD**

**Terms of Reference**

1. Fundamental to the effectiveness and public trust of the Australian Army and, more particularly, Special Operations Command (SOCOMD) is the strength and vitality of our ethical culture. This culture reflects the complex relationship between the military, government and Australian societal ethics, which includes the reality that, by its nature, national defence involves the controlled use of military force for justifiable cause. In the past, the strength and vitality of the ethical culture within Australia's Special Forces was a foundation which fostered trust with Army, government and the Australian public, particularly for the undertaking of expeditionary operations.
2. Since 1999, in multiple, concurrent theatres, SOCOMD has been continuously committed to sustained expeditionary combat operations. This has occurred while maintaining domestic and overseas counter terrorism response arrangements, intensive preparation, training and activities, and expanding key relationships within the international and national security community. The performance of its personnel and the results they have achieved, together with the resolve of their families, has been widely acclaimed.
3. However, over time, incidents, reports, organisational performance and anecdotal stories indicated the impact of such a high tempo had triggered unintended and until recent years, unnoticed consequences. The cumulative effect of these consequences was a subsequent erosion of trust in SOCOMD by the broader Defence organisation.
4. This erosion of trust and its causal symptoms was noted at the Chief of Army Senior Advisory Committee (CASAC) in 2015, and a number of reforms, in combination with broader ADF cultural reviews and inquiries, were embarked upon. The progressive implementation of these reforms has sought to address the causal symptoms and as part of the continual improvement of the ADF and Army, it is timely to conduct an assessment of the various reforms undertaken since 2015 as they pertain to SOCOMD. Accordingly, the purpose of your review is to form an independent view of the effectiveness of the reform initiatives instigated within SOCOMD and Army. This view, combined with the effect of broader ADF reforms, will assist Army leadership in ongoing deliberations as to the success or otherwise of current reforms and any iterative implementation action required.
5. Specifically, your findings and recommendations will serve to assist Army and Defence leadership ascertain the extent of progress achieved internally and external to the Command in correcting these symptoms and their causes. It will also enable an assessment as to what further action is still required to complete the cultural reform and restoration of trust and confidence in SOCOMD. Specifically, these findings should address:

**Values.** Whether the culture of SOCOMD is nested within Army's ethos to promote the values and behaviours that should be expected of a modern Special Forces. What are the valuable elements of SOCOMD's culture and ethics that should be recognised and maintained.

**Governance.** The extent to which SOCOMD currently operates within a clear framework of governance; to the law, the wider ADF and the Australian community.

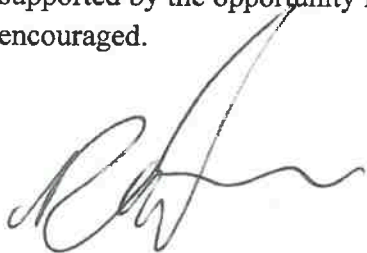
**Accountability.** Whether the SOCOMD organisation – from its leadership direction from Government, through Defence and Army, down to the tactical level, including external interlocutors – values accountability and embraces change.

**Perceptions.** What are the perceptions of SOCOMD and its reform initiatives. Are the reform initiatives and their achievements understood and supported by the broader Australian Army and ADF senior leadership.

6. This Review is running parallel to a number of other inquiries and investigations, which may be impacted by the conduct of your Review. If you are uncertain whether any action you propose to undertake may prejudice these concurrent inquiries or investigations, you are to obtain further guidance from me in relation to the conduct of that aspect of your Review.

7. Army will facilitate an initial meeting with key leadership across the Department of Defence, Army and SOCOMD, and provide relevant documentation in support of you undertaking a literature review in order to inform your approach. Army will dedicate staff to assist you with coordination and you will have unimpeded access to the areas and people you require.

8. A report outlining your findings, recommendations and the evidence on which they are based, is to be submitted to the Chief of Army by 31 August 2018. This report may be supported by the opportunity for verbal briefings, and regular progress reports are encouraged.



RM Burr, AO, DSC, MVO  
Major General  
Deputy Chief of Army

27 March 2018

**Charter Letter**  
**Major General XXXXXX**  
**Special Operations Commander Australia**

**Preamble**

1. In accordance with my appointment and Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) direction, I command the Australian Army. I am directed to deliver Defence Program 1.3 – Army capabilities - including providing combat ready land and special operations forces and to raise, train and sustain the Army by proper stewardship of its people, financial and other resources.
2. I exercise my command and administrative authority, subject to any direction from the Minister for Defence and the CDF, to contribute to achieving Government's Defence mission - "Defending Australia and its national interests" – in particular, Army's mission to prepare land forces for war in order to defend Australia and its national interests.

**Accountability**

3. You are directed to achieve the outcomes outlined in this Charter Letter within the guidance set out below. Specific direction to you is contained in my CA Directive 08/18. You are accountable to me for your performance and for the performance of those you authorise, or to whom you delegate authority, having regard to the responsibilities of all parties. Your priorities will be reviewed and set annually by me in the form of a Performance Agreement. I will measure your performance and provide feedback against these priorities.

**Outcomes and Guidance**

4. You are the Special Operations Commander Australia (SOCAUST) and, subject to my command and direction, you are to command Special Operations Command (SOCOMD). As an Army functional command, SOCOMD maintains Army's values to inculcate a positive SOCOMD culture, which incorporates the unique attributes underpinning the concept of special operations. SOCOMD, as the core of the ADF's special operations capability, integrates with critical joint enablers from all Services and Defence Groups, to collectively form the ADF special operations capability. This capability provides very short notice, rapidly deployable force elements that are organised, trained and equipped to successfully deliver the full suite of specialist missions, that no other Australian organisation can undertake, in uncertain and unpredictable situations, domestically, regionally and globally.
5. You are the custodian of the ADF special operations capability. As SOCAUST you are to:
  - a. deliver, as your foremost priority, special operations capability in support of military operations;
  - b. by direction of CDF, maintain an ADF unconventional operations capability;
  - c. ensure the readiness and availability of special forces elements in support of domestic response requirements reporting through Chief of Joint Operations (CJOPS) to me and CDF;
  - d. prepare and maintain special forces for contingency responses in accordance with my direction;
  - e. be my, CJOPS and CDF's principal advisor on special operations matters and:
    - i. be accountable to me for raising, training and sustaining Army special forces – the core of your Army functional command responsibilities;
    - ii. be accountable to CJOPS for the conduct of military operational planning – reflected in your force assignment order to CJOPS - for the conduct of campaigns, operations, joint exercises and other activities as directed; and

- iii. be accountable to CDF for specified sensitive strategic tasking – detailed separately.
  - f. you will balance competing operational and force generation demands by ensuring your three principal commanders remain fully informed of issues within SOCOMD.
  - g. ensure correct stewardship of financial and human resources allocated to you, maintain Command governance and oversight of the wellbeing and welfare of assigned personnel; and
  - h. lead capability development of special operations through Head Land Capability and jointly in conjunction with CASG.
6. As the SOCAUST you are authorised to liaise and engage across Defence, other government agencies and departments and foreign military authorities to achieve these results. You are to keep me and where required CJOPS and CDF, informed of liaison with other government agencies and departments and foreign authorities. You will only commit forces or resources where authorised by me, CJOPS or CDF.
7. You will pursue these results through effective leadership and management, ensuring your actions are always prudent, lawful and ethical. Your actions and those you empower are to be consistent with Government policy, Defence direction and Army values.

**Directed**

**Acknowledged**

Lieutenant General Richard M Burr, AO, DSC, MVO  
Chief of Army

September 2018

Major General Adam Findlay, AM  
Special Operations Commander

September 2018

**Authenticated**

Air Marshal Mel Hupfeld, AO, DSC  
Chief of Joint Operations

September 2018

**Endorsed**

General Angus J Campbell, AO, DSC  
Chief of the Defence Force

September 2018

## Summary of Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** There is a need for constant oversight and monitoring of governance within SOCOMD. This should be conducted both internally as well as externally with a view to preventing and detecting any recidivism back to poor governance. SOCOMD's leadership should continue to insist on an active commitment to good governance that is, at a minimum, consistent with Army standards.

**Recommendation 2:** Army's senior leadership, when considering further reform and modernisation, should ensure that the governance framework within SOCOMD does not unnecessarily constrain the agility, adaptability and creativity that underpin the Command's capabilities.

**Recommendation 3:** The current action within SOCOMD to hold its personnel to account for their behaviour and actions across all areas must be maintained. Accountability needs to be demonstrated constantly by all leadership levels within SOCOMD.

**Recommendation 4:** SOCOMD's leadership should ensure that its units do not unduly seek to reach beyond their mandated tasks other than through normal ADF and Army processes in order to avoid the creation of perceptions that SOCOMD is an entity that is separate from Army or the ADF.

**Recommendation 5:** There is a need for senior ADF leadership to continue to monitor the command and control arrangements across all of SOCOMD's operations to ensure SOCOMD remains accountable to the correct commander – that is, actions undertaken by SOCOMD do not fall between the gaps that exist in its command and control structures.

**Recommendation 6:** SOCAUST consider issuing a revised statement of values and code of conduct for SOCOMD, emphasising pan-Command values and expectation of leaders within the Command to exemplify, promote and strengthen observance of the Command's values.

**Recommendation 7:** A more systematic and considered programme for the education, training and exercising of ethical decision making be introduced across SOCOMD.

**Recommendation 8:** Army and SOCOMD engage with relevant authorities with a view to mitigating current financial disincentives to SF personnel posting away from SOCOMD.



**Recommendation 9:** CA issue a Charter Letter to SOCAUST, endorsed by CDF and CJOPS in order to provide clarification both within SOCOMD and Army as to the role and responsibilities of SOCOMD.

**Recommendation 10:** CDF consider the appointment of an Advisor Special Forces to assist in oversight of SOCOMD and to provide independent advice to CDF, CA, CJOPS and SOCAUST on issues relevant to the Command. The ongoing requirement for this appointment could be reviewed in the future.

**Recommendation 11:** SOCAUST should institute a review of the security requirements of the capabilities resident within SOCOMD and the operational effects they can generate, with a view to identifying how security requirements may be better managed to promote a broader understanding within ADF and external agencies.

**Recommendation 12:** SOCAUST should consider developing a comprehensive information outreach programme, initially focussed on Army, to increase understanding of the nature and role of SOCOMD within Army and the wider ADF.

**Recommendation 13:** SOCAUST consider issuing a plain language "Narrative" to all members of the Command, communicating his views on the state of the Command, implementation of the reform and modernisation programme and his vision for the future.

**Recommendation 14:** Careful attention must be paid to the selection and training of suitable future leaders at all rank levels within SOCOMD, who are able to carry forward the consolidation of the SOCOMD reset and maintain the Command as fit-for-purpose.

**Interviewee List**

**Defence Senior Leadership**

ACM Binskin, AC  
Mr Moriarty  
VADM Griggs, AO, CSC  
VADM Johnston, AO, RAN  
VADM Noonan, AO, RAN  
LTGEN Frewen, AM  
AIRMSHL Davies, AO, CSC  
MAJGEN Bilton, AM, CSC  
MAJGEN Gilmore, AO, DSC  
MAJGEN F. McLachlan, AM  
MAJGEN P. McLachlan, AO, CSC  
MAJGEN Sengelman, (Retd), DSC, AM, CSC  
Mr Dewar  
Mr Hamilton  
WO Spinks, AM

**ADF Members**

CDRE McCormack, RAN  
BRIG Bayliss, AM  
BRIG Coyle, DSM, CSC  
BRIG Duncan, DSC and WO1 Dunbavin, OAM and WO1 Letch  
BRIG Furini, AM, CSC  
BRIG Gabriel, DSC  
BRIG Johnstone, CSC  
BRIG Kenny, DSC, DSM  
BRIG Khan, DSC and Bar  
BRIG McDaniel, DSC, AM, DSM  
BRIG Rawlins, DSC  
BRIG Shortt, DSC, CSC  
BRIG Spalding, AM  
AIRCDRE Lancaster, CSC  
COL King  
COL Langford, DSC and Bars  
COL Lowe, AM, DSM  
COL McBaron  
LTCOL Beeson  
LTCOL Boulton, CSC  
LTCOL Croser, DSC, DSM and WO1 Duff  
LTCOL De Pyle  
LTCOL Kidd, DSM and Bar, CSM and WO1 Weekes

LTCOL Lawson, CSC  
LTCOL Leech, DSM and Bar  
LTCOL Wakelin  
LTCOL Long and WO1 Luchterhand  
LTCOL Lowe and WO1 Carey, OAM  
LTCOL Scudamore  
LTCOL Stapleton, DSC, DSM and WO1 Griffiths  
WGCDR Lewis  
MAJ McMahon  
MAJ Philpotts

SOCOMD Focus groups conducted with representatives from SASR and  
2 CDO REGT consisting of over 50 personnel

**Other Government Agencies**

Mr Burgess  
Mr Lewis, AO, DSC, CSC  
Mr McOwan, AO, DSC, CSM  
Mr Richardson, AO  
AC Stewart  
Mr Symon, AO  
Mr Warner, AO

**United Kingdom**

LTGEN Lorimer, KCB, DSO, MBE  
Dr Sanders  
Mr Dominic Walker  
Representatives of the UK SOF community

**Canada**

MAJGEN Dawe, OMM, MSM, CD  
Representatives of CANSOFCOM

**Other Persons**

Dr Cromptvoets

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