# Joint SOF Leadership Competency Model Explained

The Joint SOF Competency Model was developed to identify the capability requirements of joint SOF leaders based on conditions within which joint SOF would be expected to function. "Competency" refers to a meaningful aggregate of mission-driven knowledge, skills, and abilities that individuals should exhibit to successfully perform their job and organizational role. The inclusive set of competencies that define a position or set of positions is called a competency model. Figure 1 illustrates the final competency model.

Figure 1. Joint SOF Leadership Competency Model
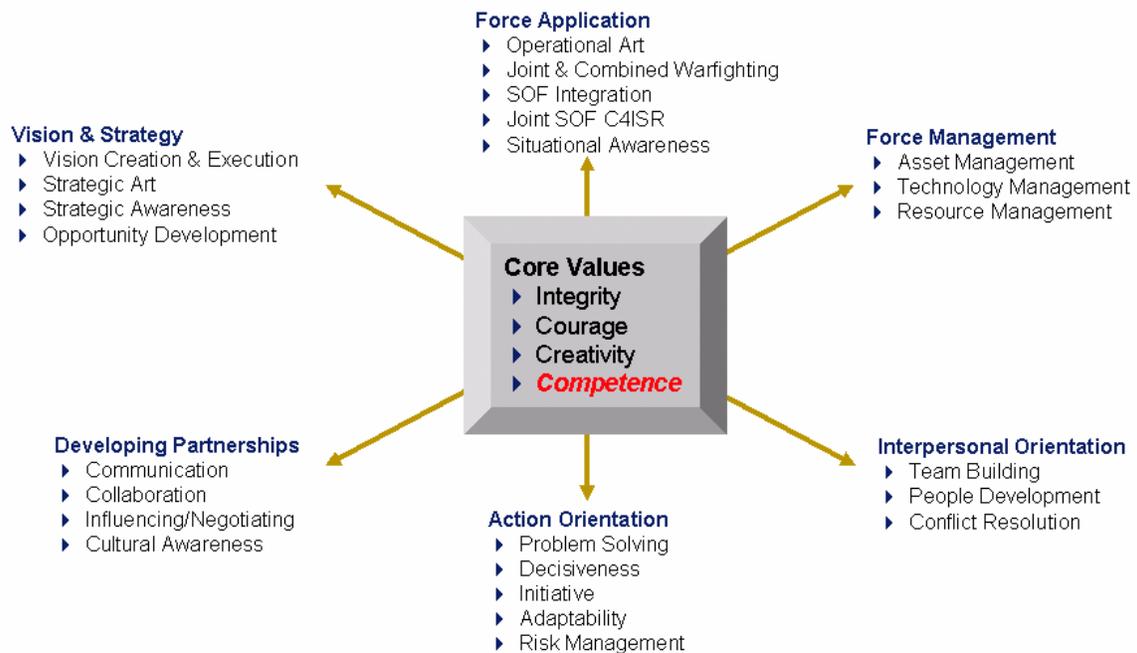
The competency model consists of 24 individual competencies (e.g., Operational Art) that are organized into six competency clusters (e.g., Force Application). The clusters are formed by grouping competencies relating to a similar theme. For example, all the competencies under Developing Partnerships contribute to the creation of networks or relationships with others, whereas each Force Application competency addresses a different aspect of the technical execution of joint SOF operations. The core values cluster in the center of the model provides a foundation on which all other competencies are based. The four core values defined by USSOCOM represent fundamental individual characteristics against which personnel may be selected to enter the joint SOF community. They were not deemed to be subjects capable of being taught; rather, they were considered inherent in the individuals.   A detailed explanation of the competency definitions and illustrative behaviors, are provided below.

Force Application

Operational Art: Orchestrates a series of effects-based, distributed operations in a campaign using the best combination of capabilities to achieve the Commander's Intent
- Understands the operational end state and its relation to national strategic goals
- Comprehends Commander's Intent and translates operational objectives into tactical actions and a comprehensive campaign that leverages information in achieving objectives
- Anticipates the correct force to be applied at the right time to meet emerging challenges within the theater
- Formulates and applies an effects-based approach to planning, conducting operations, and assessing impacts of operational decisions on ultimate goals
- Assesses and manages operational risks and force protection requirements and incorporates them into planning

Joint and Combined Warfighting: Understands and applies existing joint, Service, and SOF doctrine, concepts, and capabilities to accomplish military missions
- Integrates and creates synergies between conventional, joint, interagency, coalition, and Special Operations forces to achieve maximum effect
- Understands and applies systems analysis to achieve effects against distributed networks and targets
- Plans and coordinates effects-based force presentation and employs joint systems and capabilities at the national, theater, and operational levels
- Ensures appropriate planning and execution by all subordinate elements
- Possesses necessary interpersonal and communications skills to operate for extended periods in international, interagency, and joint force environments

SOF Integration: Applies SOF principles across geographic and organizational boundaries and cultures to achieve joint and combined missions
- Strategically applies joint SOF attributes, characteristics, and capabilities related to the 9 Core Tasks (unconventional warfare, direct actions, psychological operations, etc.)
- Foresees and comprehends the impact of SOF missions and activities on operational and strategic goals
- Integrates concepts of SOF task forces (JSOTF, JPOTF, JCMOTF) into joint, combined, coalition, and interagency environments through all phases of the operation
- Adapts SOF doctrine, concepts, and capabilities to changing conditions to achieve intended effects
- Integrates capabilities and limitations of joint conventional and multi-national military operations and interagency activities with SOF operations
- Comprehends and leverages requirements, capabilities, and limitations of DoD civilians, NGOs, and contractors and integrates them into SOF missions and activities

Joint C4ISR: Employs Command and Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems to support and enable joint force application

- Understands and exploits national and theater C4ISR capabilities as they apply to joint force and SOF mission execution within the joint battlespace architecture
- Uses available tools, planning systems, and processes to meet requirements
- Understands and leverages the authorities and capabilities of C4ISR resident in environments in which SOF must operate
- Understands how to acquire C4ISR knowledge within SOF and apply it to the larger joint, combined, coalition, and interagency force
- Translates and integrates the plans and capabilities of different Services', combined, coalition, interagency and Special Operations forces into a common language

Situational Awareness: Identifies and analyzes challenges and circumstances unique to the operational environment that threaten national interests, and formulates a range of unconventional or non-traditional courses of action in response to Commander's Intent

- Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the joint SOF community
- Approaches problems with diplomacy and a clear perception of organizational, institutional, and political reality
- Plans and conducts cross-area of responsibility operations between multiple geographic combatant commands, simultaneously and in concert
- Plans and conducts operations that potentially require independence from traditional command and control arrangements, but are constrained by support and sustainment requirements or Service or regional infrastructures and funding
- Understands and balances competing Service, USSOCOM, and regional combatant command requirements
- Comprehends and uses to advantage socio-economic, political, religious and other imperatives found in a target population

Force Management

Asset Management: Acquires and administers human, material, and information resources to accomplish the mission

- Applies sound management principles, techniques, and methods to obtain, allocate, and manage assets
- Leverages new tools, technologies, and processes to improve organizational effectiveness
- Projects and justifies asset requests as needed
- Comprehends capabilities and limitations of SOF, conventional joint force, interagency, and other assets available in the battlespace and adapts them to unanticipated environments
- Recognizes, locates, and incorporates emerging or unanticipated technologies into operational and support planning

- Understands and integrates contractor and other civilian support activities into SOF missions

Technology Management: Understands and manages information-age and legacy technology, equipment, and weaponry to accomplish battlespace goals
- Comprehends the interdependencies among systems and the tools that support their management
- Understands the second and third order of effects of technology exploitation
- Identifies and takes advantage of new technologies and manages their integration into concepts and capabilities
- Maintains knowledge of and adapts existing technologies, including legacy systems and procedures, to enhance own and partner nation capabilities
- Develops and executes adaptable plans to achieve operational and strategic goals in the absence of technology or when planned technology fails

Resource Management: Acquires and administers financial and budgetary resources to accomplish the mission

- Develops and implements strategies to optimize and manage limited resources
- Projects and justifies resource requests as needed
- Understands and addresses the resources needed throughout the personnel, systems, tools, and technology life cycles
- Comprehends fiduciary responsibilities and employs effective assessment tools or creates them if absent
- Understands and applies joint and Service resource management systems to provide optimal and timely capabilities in unanticipated environments
- Integrates all available resources and is capable of managing them independently, if required

Interpersonal Orientation

Team Building: Builds trust, confidence, and cohesion by promoting cooperation within and across organizational boundaries
- Continuously strives to improve team cohesion and performance
- Fosters team spirit, pride, trust, commitment, identity, and a climate of openness
- Understands team capabilities and dynamics and leverages individual strengths as appropriate
- Breaks down polarizing or stovepiped perspectives within and across agencies and organizational boundaries
- Selflessly inspires and motivates others toward mission and goal accomplishment

People Development: Develops leadership in others through coaching, mentoring, and delegating authority
- Provides advice and guidance in a way that motivates others to build proficiency
- Creates a climate that fosters personal investment and excellence
- Provides others with opportunities, latitude, and encouragement to grow and achieve

- Conveys confidence in others' ability to achieve
- Maintains decision networks through reach-back and provides others with the tools needed to succeed
- Creates environments that allow subordinates to have appropriate levels of responsibility

Conflict Resolution: Resolves individual and organizational differences to achieve a unified effort both internal and external to the team
- Actively listens to and strives to understand competing interests to develop and analyze options for resolving conflicts
- Defines barriers and mediates differences to reach acceptable and viable solutions
- Creates an environment in which conflicts can be identified and resolved
- Understands and applies the institution's resources to resolve conflict appropriately

Action Orientation

Problem Solving: Applies inductive and deductive reasoning to understand, analyze, evaluate, and resolve complex problems and situations
- Is cognizant of all activities surrounding the mission and identifies opportunities and potential costs
- Distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical decisions
- Evaluates alternative viewpoints and options
- Synthesizes information to formulate solutions to individual and organizational problems

Decisiveness: Exercises good judgment by making sound and well-informed decisions
- Adapts decision making (e.g., centralized versus decentralized) and leadership approaches (e.g., direct, peer, collaborative) based on the complexity of the problem, organization, and command and control method
- Perceives the impact and implications of decisions, using decision matrices as necessary
- Makes timely and effective decisions even when data are limited or solutions could produce unpleasant consequences
- Motivates others to participate in and share responsibility for the decision making process when appropriate

Initiative: Creates opportunities and takes appropriate action without waiting for instructions
- Leads from the front
- Fully comprehends the commander's intent and judges when and how to make difficult decisions in the face of challenges and uncertainty
- Rises above organizational and battlespace constraints to create new means of achieving desired effects

Adaptability: Responds quickly and effectively to ambiguous or emerging conditions, opportunities, and risks
- Continuously assesses surrounding environment, people, and circumstances
- Rapidly adjusts attitudes and behaviors to new information, shifting roles, dynamic battlespace conditions, etc.
- Operates consistently and effectively under complex, ambiguous, and uncertain conditions
- Seeks quick, audacious, surprised, and controlled exploitation of gaps, seams, and opportunities
- Effectively serves and influences at levels above own rank or position

Risk Management: Calculates, embraces, and controls opportunities and risks for own forces in order to achieve advantage
- Initiates actions that involve deliberate, calculated risk
- Seeks to avoid unnecessary risks by planning for change and anticipating opportunities
- Balances the introduction of change with continuity of ongoing operations, mitigating the fallout from unsuccessful risk when necessary
- Creates an environment that supports others' risk taking and pursuit of alternative approaches to solving complex problems
- Comprehends the high risk/high gain character of SOF operations

Developing Partnerships

Communication: Conveys and describes facts or ideas in a clear, logical, and comprehensive manner both orally and in writing
- Expresses complex and/or technical subject matter at a level appropriate for the intended audience and topic
- Fosters an atmosphere of open communication by encouraging others to share diverse perspectives
- Actively listens and responds to others while demonstrating an understanding of their comments and questions
- Expresses intent to all levels of command

Collaboration: Develops and fosters social networks and coalitions
- Builds alliances and collaborative relationships within and across groups (e.g., joint SOF, external organizations, indigenous populations)
- Knows which stakeholder groups are needed in a given situation and involves them at the appropriate time and place
- Leverages personal contacts to enhance mission accomplishment

Influencing/Negotiating: Explores and articulates alternatives to gain support and acceptance for ideas, obtain resources, and elicit commitment and/or agreement
- Develops and presents compelling rationale or evidence in support of position
- Persuades others to accept recommendations, cooperate, or change their behavior
- Facilitates outcomes that are mutually beneficial to involved parties

Cultural Awareness: Understands cultures beyond own national and organizational boundaries and is able to interact and lead in interagency, national, international, and inter-organizational domains

- Collaborates across geo-political boundaries by finding common ground and using contacts to build multicultural networks
- Comprehends, plans for, and employs appropriate cultural and linguistic skills
- Understands strategic implications of employing surrogate forces
- Understands how ideology and communications are used strategically to influence foreign audiences and shape the environment in order to turn opportunity into advantage
- Seeks to achieve operational and strategic goals through socio-political means, thereby reducing potential application of force
- Displays cultural sensitivity when pursuing operational objectives

Vision & Strategy

Vision Creation and Execution: Discerns new insights of the battlespace, develops responsive plans, and applies innovative, unexpected operational, or organizational solutions to accomplish mission objectives

- Builds a shared vision by obtaining buy-in and support from stakeholders
- Designs and implements new or cutting edge programs, processes, and strategies, or adapts existing capabilities to fit with unusual or unanticipated environments
- Understands strategic complexity and comprehends when change is required
- Shapes the culture of the organization to enable change and influences others to translate the vision into action

Strategic Art: Comprehends the level of war at which a nation, either alone or as part of a group of nations, determines national or multi-national (alliance or coalition) security objectives and guidance, and develops and uses national resources to accomplish these objectives

- Envisions the end state and applies appropriate analysis to move the operational campaign toward strategic goals
- Weighs the implications of strategic risks against the ultimate goal
- Comprehends the theater of operation and synchronizes the full spectrum of national power (diplomatic, informational, military, economic, social, and infrastructure)
- Comprehends and allocates national resources appropriate for strategic goals

Strategic Awareness: Understands the major and vital interests of the United States and the strategic and operational implications of SOF actions

- Understands the substance and interrelationship of national and theater strategic guidance (e.g., National Security Strategy, National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, Theater Security Cooperation Plans)
- Understands the role joint SOF has in either supporting a conventional Joint Force Commander or conducting independent operational and strategic level activities

- Understands the broad implications and challenges of integrating conventional, special operations, coalition, interagency, and surrogate forces

Opportunity Development: Discerns emerging requirements in asymmetric environments and translates the need to meet these into operational plans
- Articulates operational and support requirements derived from unanticipated environments
- Identifies and develops new capabilities requirements and integration needs based on experience, observation, and analysis of the operational environment
- Creates new opportunities and discerns future capabilities

Core Values

Integrity: Fosters honesty and high standards of ethics through modeling own behavior and encouraging others
- Instills mutual trust, respect, and confidence in others
- Behaves in a fair and ethical manner
- Demonstrates a sense of organizational responsibility and commitment to serving the country
- Maintains personal discipline and operational focus in the face of unexpected distractions

Courage: Accepts personal responsibility to address operational requirements in ambiguous environments and make decisions appropriate to extant circumstances
- Makes hard decisions in the absence of detailed instructions
- Accepts responsibility for decisions and their consequences
- Informs higher headquarters when guidance is incorrect or inappropriate for the circumstances

Creativity: Develops new insights and applies innovative, unexpected operational or organizational solutions to accomplish mission objectives
- Thinks outside established constraints and expectations
- Applies capabilities outside of conventional operations, doctrine, and force application
- Develops intellectual capital through the creation of ideas, processes, alternatives and solutions

Competence: Exhibits a sufficient level of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics required to perform duties conscientiously and achieve personal, team, and mission success.
> *Because this factor in effect subsumes all other competencies in the model, it does not require illustrative behaviors.*