

United States Special Operations Command South Training Program's Effectiveness: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

United States Special Operations Command South (SOCSOUTH) plans and coordinates Special Operations to find and fix threats and enable the Interagency, Intelligence Community, and Partner Nations to counter threats to US interests, maintain regional stability and compete in a complex environment. Physical readiness, performance optimization, and injury prevention are critical to the individual operator. SOCSOUTH has allocated significant financial resources associated with operational training and human performance programs in order to improve and maintain operators' tactical and physical readiness. Whether these efforts are pointed to the right direction are under evaluation. **PURPOSE:** To evaluate the effectiveness of a 3 months' customized training program on SOCSOUTH operators. **METHODS:** Retrospective data of ten operators (Age 41.1 ± 6.6) who participated in a customized training program for 3 months were analyzed to evaluate program's effectiveness. Program was designed to improve operational training and human performance, while reducing the risk of musculoskeletal injuries based on microcycle periodization. Pre/Post testing was performed on selected tests, reflective of important mission qualities, to assess upper body muscular endurance (# chin-ups), lower body muscular endurance (150-yard shuttle test), and agility (30-yard sprint). A repeated-measures design for pre/post examined variables performed using SPSS[®]. **RESULTS:** There was a significant effect of post-training compared to pre-training on operators' number of chin-ups performed ($F_{1,9}=10.42, p=.01, \eta^2=.54$), 150-yard shuttle time ($F_{1,9}=38.29, p<.001, \eta^2=.81$), and 30-yard time ($F_{1,9}=16.29, p=.003, \eta^2=.64$) respectively. **CONCLUSION:** The current SOCSOUTH's efforts on improving operational performance by applying a customized training program was successful. Operators' selected mission quality capacities for upper- and lower-body performance and agility were improved. SOCSOUTH needs to continue supporting operators' training based on these data analytics.