



# Barriers to Minority Participation in Special Operations Forces

*Margaret C. Harrell*

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This report assesses minority representation and recruiting in special operations forces (SOF). It examines the extent of underrepresentation of minorities in SOF and the reasons for it and provides recommendations to help improve such underrepresentation. The authors used personnel data from the U.S. Special Operations Command and the various component commands to portray the racial/ethnic composition of SOF and compared it to the racial/ethnic composition of different comparison groups. The study found that minorities are, indeed, underrepresented in SOF--especially blacks. Barriers to joining SOF consisted of structural barriers such as the ASVAB score cutoffs and the swimming requirement, perceptual barriers such as lack of knowledge and community support and lack of identification with SOF, as well as a possible lack of interest in SOF. The authors offer several recommendations to overcome these barriers.

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