



**JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS UNIVERSITY**  
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MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA 33621-5323

15 August 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR Joint Special Operations University (JSOU)

SUBJECT: (U) Academic Year 2025 JSOU Call for Special Operations Papers

**1. (U) PURPOSE.** As the United States refines national strategy, resourcing levels, and focus to address the contemporary threat environment, the role of special operations has never been more vital. In response, USSOCOM is relooking and—in some cases—reimagining its role in integrated deterrence, crisis response, and counterterrorism operations. Recognizing the critical need for advanced discourse and creative idea generation, the Joint Special Operations University Press (JSOU Press) is pleased to announce its call for papers for Academic Year 2025 (AY25).

**2. (U) BACKGROUND.** Informed by the *2024 Special Operations Research Topics (SORT)*, AY25 papers will focus on critical topics to address the USSOCOM lines of effort PEOPLE, WIN, TRANSFORM.

a. **(U) 2024 SORT.** This compilation provides a list of salient topics, grouped by theme, as a starting point for those interested in submitting academic papers that are timely, relevant, and of immediate value to the Special Operations Enterprise (SOE). The questions included in the *SORT* were developed with input from academic and operational organizations representing every enterprise stakeholder and provides a broad array of topics valued by the SOE.

b. **(U) USSOCOM Operational Approach – Destination Postcard.** The commander's approach focuses on three lines of efforts (LOE): PEOPLE, WIN, TRANSFORM. In 2023, USSOCOM conducted a "Strategic Appreciation" to collectively define and articulate SOF's value proposition across three critical mission sets for the Department: Integrated Deterrence, Crisis Response, and Counterterrorism. In 2024, USSOCOM is undergoing a year of "Analytical Rigor," in which SOF education is one of six identified priorities. JSOU intends to use SOE academic papers to explore innovative academic initiatives to contribute to the *USSOCOM Operational Approach* end state of an "Irreversible Momentum" by 2025.

**3. (U) GUIDANCE.** As the needs of the SOF enterprise change, the demand for robust academic discourse rightfully increases. For AY25 academic papers should focus on the LOE's below (see Appendix A).

a. **(U) PEOPLE LOE.** Improve the execution of Headquarters USSOCOM's 10 U.S. Code § 167 service-like responsibilities (Train, Man, Equip, and Educate).

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b. **(U) WIN LOE.** Advance the understanding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russian Ways of War.

c. **(U) TRANSFORM LOE.** Increase the understanding of emergent technologies, how they are impacting the changing character of war, and how SOF could do business.

**4. (U) Writing Categories.** To ensure divergent and convergent perspectives and meet varied submission timelines (see Appendix B), JSOU Press is sponsoring three writing categories.

a. CAT 1: JSOU Enlisted Academy focusing on the Career Education Program (CEP).

b. CAT 2: Professional Military Education (PME) Students and Military Practitioners.

c. CAT 3: Academic Faculty and Civilian Scholars.

**5. (U) Point of Contact.** The JSOU Press Editor in Chief, Ms. Cameron Cobb ([cameron.cobb@jsou.edu](mailto:cameron.cobb@jsou.edu)) 813-826-3222), is the point of contact for the Academic Year 2025 JSOU Call for Special Operations Papers.



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Appendix A: Academic Year 2025 Papers Focus Areas

Appendix B: JSOU President Academic Paper Submission Criteria and Awards

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## Appendix A: Academic Year 2025 Papers Focus Areas

### USSOCOM Operational Approach Focus (PEOPLE Line of Effort)

1. (U) **BACKGROUND.** USSOCOM is examining the balance between its Title 10 U.S. Code § 167 Service-like Responsibilities and 10 U.S. Code § 164 Combatant Command responsibilities and must make the fundamental shift towards a more significant focus on service activities in the coming years.

a. (U) **FOCUS.** Execution of USSOCOM's 10 U.S. Code § 167 Service-like Responsibilities in support of TSOC Campaigning 10 U.S. Code § 164.

b. (U) **QUESTION.** How can SOF improve the execution of its service-like responsibilities (e.g., Program, Planning, Budget, and Execution (PPBE), Cost Assessment Program Evaluation (CAPE), Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities, and Policy (DOTMLPF-P)), utilizing one of the focus areas below:

- Recruiting (SORT, pp. 2-3)
- Sustainability of the Force (SORT, pp. 3-4)
- SOF Education (SORT, pp.7-8)
- SOF Talent Management (SORT, p. 10)
- SOF Cognition (SORT, pp. 10-11)
- Repetitive Assignments (SORT, p. 11)

### (U) USSOCOM Operational Approach Focus (WIN Line of Effort).

2. (U) **BACKGROUND.** China and Russia rely on anti-access/area denial activities, coercive behavior, and malign activities to produce warfighting advantages and neutralize the effectiveness of conventional forms of deterrence.

a. (U) **FOCUS.** Understanding the PRC and Russian Way of War.

b. (U) **QUESTION.** How can the SOF enterprise leverage asymmetric options and new forms of irregular warfare to fill critical gaps in Joint Force capabilities and to “*Prevent, Prepare, Prevail, and Preserve*” against near-peer competitors (e.g., Russia/PRC) utilizing one of the focus areas below:

- Understanding the Will to Resist (SORT, pp. 1-2)
- Cultural Understanding in Deterrence and Compellence (SORT, pp. 4-5)
- Intelligence in Strategic Competition (SORT, pp. 5-6)
- Operationalizing Strategic Influence and Information (pp. 17-19)
- Political Limitations on Operations (SORT, pp. 24-25)
- Irregular and Unconventional Warfare Campaigning (SORT, pp. 21-22)
- Forecasting Unintended Consequences (SORT, p. 22)
- Integrated Deterrence (SORT, pp. 22-23)
- Assessing Civilian Vulnerabilities in Conflict (SORT, p. 25)

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## Appendix A: Academic Year 2025 Papers Focus Areas

### USSOCOM Operational Approach Focus (PEOPLE Line of Effort)

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a. (U) **FOCUS.** Execution of USSOCOM's 10 U.S. Code § 167 Service-like Responsibilities in support of TSOC Campaigning 10 U.S. Code § 164.

b. (U) **QUESTION.** How can SOF improve the execution of its service-like responsibilities (e.g., Program, Planning, Budget, and Execution (PPBE), Cost Assessment Program Evaluation (CAPE), Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities, and Policy (DOTMLPF-P)), utilizing one of the focus areas below:

- Recruiting (SORT, pp. 2-3)
- Sustainability of the Force (SORT, pp. 3-4)
- SOF Education (SORT, pp.7-8)
- SOF Talent Management (SORT, p. 10)
- SOF Cognition (SORT, pp. 10-11)
- Repetitive Assignments (SORT, p. 11)

### (U) USSOCOM Operational Approach Focus (WIN Line of Effort).

2. (U) **BACKGROUND.** China and Russia rely on anti-access/area denial activities, coercive behavior, and malign activities to produce warfighting advantages and neutralize the effectiveness of conventional forms of deterrence.

a. (U) **FOCUS.** Understanding the PRC and Russian Way of War.

b. (U) **QUESTION.** How can the SOF enterprise leverage asymmetric options and new forms of irregular warfare to fill critical gaps in Joint Force capabilities and to "*Prevent, Prepare, Prevail, and Preserve*" against near-peer competitors (e.g., Russia/PRC) utilizing one of the focus areas below:

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- Resiliency Approaches Through Women, Peace, and Security SORT, (p. 27)
- Low-Probability, High-Consequence Events (SORT, p. 31)

**(U) USSOCOM Operational Approach Focus (TRANSFORM Line of Effort).**

**3. (U) BACKGROUND.** As trailblazers for the Nation and stewards of precious resources, SOF must optimize, modernize, innovate, invent, and transform for current and future mission success.

a. **(U) FOCUS.** Technological Change, Changing Character of War and Special Operations Forces.

b. **(U) QUESTION.** How can SOF leverage emergent technology and/or advanced concepts that enable SOF operations, such as the SOF-Space-Cyber-Strategic Command Nexus, to “*Prevent, Prepare, Prevail, and Preserve*” in conflict against a near-peer competitor (e.g., Russia/PRC) utilizing one of the focus areas below:

- Artificial Intel/Machine Learning in Misinformation and Disinformation (SORT, p. 5)
- Human/Technology Interface (SORT p. 6)
- Technological Undermatch (SORT pp. 6-7)
- Predictive Analytics (SORT pp.19-20)

**NOTE:** *The page numbers provided are the pages in the SORT 2024 book. PDF page numbers may vary.*

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**Appendix B: JSOU President Academic Paper Submission Criteria and Awards.**

JSOU encourages students, faculty, and SOF practitioners to submit their unique perspectives that address topics identified in Appendix A in accordance with the submission guidance below.

**1. (U) Submission Criteria.**

a. **Subject.** Must relate to a topic in Appendix A.

b. **Length.** 1,500-3,000 words (JSOU Quick Look; Occasional Paper).

Additional submission information is located at [Publish with JSOU](#).

**2. (U) Categories.**

a. **CAT 1:** JSOU Enlisted Academy focusing on the Career Education Program (CEP).

b. **CAT 2:** Professional Military Education (PME) Students and Military Practitioners.

c. **CAT 3:** Academic Faculty and Civilian scholars.

**3. (U) Timelines.**

a. **CAT 1.** CEP Quarterly Submissions, as directed with the Enlisted Academy Commandant.

b. **CAT 2.** In accordance with respective PME intuitions academic paper timeline. However, to be considered for the JSOU Academic Year Writing Award, PME papers must be submitted to JSOU PRESS no later than 28 February 2025.

c. **CAT 3.** JSOU Faculty and Civilian Scholars 1 October 2024 – 28 February 2025.

**4. (U) Evaluation.**

a. All submissions will be blind peer-reviewed.

b. Suitability for review:

1. Adheres to length, JSOU style, and topic tied to CG's guidance.

2. Must meet established timeline for category submission.

3. Must be unclassified.

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3. Once reviewers submit their selections, final reviewers (TBD) have **one week** to select a winner.

4. If necessary, the JSOU Provost (CAT 2 & 3) or Command Sergeant Major (CAT 1) serves as a tiebreaker and sends the selected winner to the JSOU President.

5. JSOU President makes the final decision.

**5. (U) Incentives and Awards.**

a. All winners receive a signed certificate, challenge coin, and personal letter from the JSOU-President.

b. CAT 1: The Enlisted Academy winner will be recognized as a distinguished graduate at graduation.

1. One student from each class will earn the JSOU President Writing Award.

2. Winning papers qualify for entry into the JSOU Academic Year Writing Award.

c. CAT 2: The PME winner will be recommended for a Joint Service Achievement Medal (JSAM) or receive a congratulatory letter/award from USSOCOM.

d. CAT 3: TBD to ensure author applicability (e.g., government civilian, contractor, non-DoD civilian, partner nation, etc.).

e. The JSOU Press will publish winning submission and notable papers.

f. If possible, JSOU will coordinate with USSOCOM to recognize winners (CAT 1, 2, 3) at SOF Week.

**NOTE:** *For submissions outside of the USSOCOM Headquarters, JSOU will provide authors with a point of contact to assist in understanding the SORT, SOCOM Operational Approach, and CG USSOCOM priorities.*