

APPLICATION



For application submissions and general inquiries, please use the email below:
720OSS.SOST.Orgbox@us.af.mil

“Quis Illos Bellatores Custodiet”

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction
2.	Career Field Eligibility
3.	SOST Application Procedures
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active Duty Air Force• Reserve Personnel• Inter-service Transfers• Civilians• First Time Non-Selects• Guard Personnel
4.	Phase I
5.	Phase II
Annex A	SOST Phase I Application Instructions & Example
Annex B	SOST Physical Training (PT) Evaluation Standards

Special Operations Surgical Team Assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in the Special Operations Surgical Team (SOST). This document outlines the application procedures for becoming a SOST member. SOST is tasked under the 24th Special Operations Wing (24 SOW), which is tasked under Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC). For more information, visit our website at <https://www.airforcespecialtactics.af.mil/About/Mission/Battlefield-Surgery/>. Applicants should review this document thoroughly because it has undergone significant revision.

2. CAREER FIELD ELIGIBILITY

SOST requires high levels of teamwork, physical fitness, mental agility, professionalism, leadership, interpersonal skills, initiative, psychological stability, motivation, critical thinking skills, and technical competency. Additional eligibility criteria are below:

- Officer candidates: Grades of O-3 to O-4 (+/-1 may be considered on a "case by case" basis)
- Enlisted candidates: Minimum grade of E-5 with 7-level qualification (or able to attain within 6 months of selection). E-4 will be considered on a "case by case" basis
- Hold a qualifying SOST AFSC: 44E3A, 45A3, 45S3, 46Y3M, 46N3E, 46N3J, 4H071, 4N171; or sister service equivalent for officer positions only
- Security clearance: Secret (minimum), Top Secret eligible
- Sister service or civilian candidates: Must meet AF entry requirements prior to application submission
- Medical/Physical: Ability to complete a 9C/Operation Support Flyer Physical and submit DD Form 2992
- Physical Fitness: Candidates must have scored at least a 90% on their last AF Fitness Test
- Eligible to PCS within 12-24 months of selection
- Prior to application submission, officer career consultant or enlisted career field manager must be notified
- Must hold or be able to meet appropriate license and credentials for the states of Florida, Alabama, or Nevada
- Medical Corps applicants from residency programs will be considered and are eligible to submit their applications on the final year of their program
- Medical Providers, when appropriate, must be at a minimum board eligible
- Active Duty Nurses' Talent Marketplace/Myvector should reflect intent to join SOST
- Nurses at a minimum must have two years of recent and consecutive experience in an Adult ICU, ER, or Critical Care Flight role.
- Civilian Nurse applicants must have a current board certification in one of the following: CCRN, CEN, TCRN, (May consider CFRN).

**Individuals may apply to SOST if they have either a primary or secondary AFSC that correlates to an approved AFSC. If your primary AFSC is not listed as an approved AFSC for SOST, but your secondary AFSC is, then the first step is to discuss with your leadership and determine if you are eligible to leave your current career field. If you are eligible, then an individual should have a discussion with appropriate leadership to determine if you would be able to meet AFSC requirements while assigned to SOST.

3. SOST APPLICATION PROCEDURES

There will be two SOST Assessments each year consisting of two phases per assessment. In Phase I, a panel reviews and stratifies applications submitted by the deadline. Qualified applicants are invited to attend Phase II. Receiving an invitation to Phase II means the Phase I assessment board would like to take a closer look at your potential of joining SOST. Phase II consists of a 4-day in-person evaluation conducted at Hurlburt Field, FL. Selection is funded by AFSOC. Upon completion of Phase II, the 24 SOW/CC, or delegated authority, will make their selection of new SOST personnel. Applicants are briefed on their select/non-select status upon completing Phase II. Refer to the schedule on <https://www.airforcespecialtactics.af.mil/About/Mission/Battlefield-Surgery/> pertaining to our two assessment cycles. These schedules may change depending on SOST needs and available resources. Your decision to attend is voluntary and non-binding. Phase II selection means the selection board president has approved your entry into SOST. It is ultimately up to you to accept the challenge.

Active Duty AF: Any member may apply as long as they meet the eligibility requirements stated above.

Reserve Personnel: Join in an Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) position. IMA applications begin on the AF portal under AFPC Secure; select reserve vacancies, then IMA Officer/Enlisted vacancies as appropriate. Upon selection they will be IMAs and attend training and deploy in an IMA status.

Interservice Transfers: Officers in other services seeking to apply for SOST should reference <https://www.afpc.af.mil/Career-Management/IST/>. Note: At this time, enlisted transfers are not accepted.

Civilian Personnel: May contact 720OSS.SOST.Orgbox@us.af.mil for application guidance if needed.

First-Time Non-Selects: Candidates who attend Phase II, but are not selected, may be invited back based on recommendation from approval authorities.

Guard Personnel: May contact 720OSS.SOST.Orgbox@us.af.mil for application guidance if needed.

**** Former SOST members reapplying to the teams may contact 720OSS.SOST.Orgbox@us.af.mil for application guidance.**

4. **PHASE I**

Phase I applications are due by the date posted on <https://www.airforcespecialtactics.af.mil/About/Mission/Battlefield-Surgery/>. The appointed Assessment Director does an initial review of the applications for completeness then convenes a review board consisting of current SOST personnel. The selection board has final authority to invite applicants to Phase II. Once invitations are sent, the Assessment Director contacts the individuals with Phase II reporting instructions.

The appointed Assessment Director designates the candidate team leader. At that time, the team is encouraged to begin team building via email and other means. The more cohesive the team is prior to arrival, the better the team interaction will be during Phase II which enhances everyone's selection chances. The team leader is the primary means of contacting the ST Assessment Director for assessment related matters. The appointed Assessment Director is your definitive resource for all policy, continuity, and information on Phase II.

Applications from candidates are stored for Phase II cadre to gain an initial impression of the team members. All non-invited applicants may request feedback on their applications from the ST Assessment Director. If you do not hear from the Assessment Director within 45 days of submitting your application, contact him/her for details at 720OSS.SOST.Orgbox@us.af.mil.

Read through ANNEX A for complete instructions and guidance on constructing your Phase I package.

5. **PHASE II**

Phase II Selection occurs at Hurlburt Field, FL. The purpose of Phase II is to assess each candidate in SOF attributes such as: teamwork, physical fitness, mental agility, professionalism, leadership, interpersonal skills, initiative, psychological stability, motivation, critical thinking, and technical competency for determining if you have the raw skills to operate in the Special Operations environment.

Your ability to be a team member and your individual performance are evaluated. The schedule is designed to stress you. The Assessment Cadre will observe and take notes on everything you do. These observations will be the basis for a hiring recommendation made to the Senior Ranking Officer (SRO). The data will also be used to provide critical feedback to enhance your personal and professional growth.

Candidates must prepare for a physically and mentally trying time. The cadre will push you beyond your comfort zone to assess those critical attributes in adverse situations. You will be expected to perform to the best of your ability in all events.

Candidates will receive reporting instructions. Billeting will be coordinated for all candidates. Candidates will be billeted together for the duration of Phase II. The candidate team leader is responsible for passing travel and contact information for all candidates. The first person to check in will be responsible for facilitating the in-processing of additional candidates. When the candidate team leader arrives, he/she must check in with the Assessment Director for further instructions.

There are five ways to be dismissed during Phase II.

- 1) **Medical disqualification** results from a medical assessment determining your inability to continue safely through Phase II.
- 2) **Self-Initiated Elimination (SIE)** means that you no longer wish to continue in the assessment.
- 3) **Quitting by Action (QBA)**; Failure to Train (FTT) occurs when an instructor tells the candidate to train at an event or perform some action and he/she refuses. Three FTTs given by Cadre will result in elimination from assessment as QBA. When FTT is given, the candidate is pulled from training and provided individualized counseling to discuss the deficiency with the Cadre Lead before returning to the training event.
- 4) **Integrity Violation** is grounds for immediate removal from the assessment, no warning will be issued.
- 5) **Performance Drop** means the Phase II Cadre Lead retains the ability to remove a candidate at any time for not performing to standards.

Candidates should prepare for the following:

- Briefing and writing skills evaluations
- Problem solving events
- Leadership ability evaluations
- Tactical/field medical care scenarios
- Extensive psychological testing and interviews
- Weighted ruck marching
- Distance running
- Vigorous calisthenics sessions
- Weightlifting
- Patient transport via litter

Successful completion of Phase II does not guarantee a position within the Special Operations Surgical Teams.

ANNEX A

SOST Phase I Application Instructions & Example

PHASE I APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Proofread your application for accuracy, format, grammar, and spelling. In Phase I, the selection board relies solely on the information and impressions made through your application. Incomplete or poorly crafted applications are a reflection of the applicant's professionalism. As a rule, successful Phase I applications are concise, easy to understand, and are not filled with extra "fluff." *All supporting documentation should be dated within six months of the selection you are attending.* Your success in the SOF community begins with this application.

The application will include the following in this order:

1. Application checklist
2. Cover page – Use Times New Roman and Font size 10.
3. Personal Narrative – One page in length (See example for format and specifics).
4. One page résumé and/or Curriculum Vitae – emphasize leadership experience (See example for format).
5. One signed recommendation letter formatted according to AFH 33-337 The Tongue and Quill (or sister service equivalent) from your commander or residency director, no more than one-page in length. The letter should comment on your leadership abilities and/or clinical proficiency including relevant examples.
6. Copies of the three most recent performance or training reports.
7. Service members will also include a copy of their SURF or Career Data Brief (CDB) and a copy of your Fitness Tracker Report.
8. Sister service or civilian only: A signed document from a recruiter stating that the applicant meets AF entry requirements (refer to memo on page 12). Sister service applicants must also have approval for release from the first O-6 in the chain of command.
9. Ensure completion of a 9C/Operational Support Flyer physical and submit a signed DD Form 2992 with this package. (<https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/forms/dd/dd2992.pdf>)

When complete, your application should be scanned into a PDF file as ONE DOCUMENT, and sent via signed official email (.gov or .mil) to 720OSS.SOST.Orgbox@us.af.mil. Put your last name and "SOST Application" separated by a hyphen in the subject line of the email and as the PDF file name, such as "Johnson-SOST Application."

Additional Considerations:

- When submitting your application, insert the appropriate CUI statement at the beginning portion of the e-mail traffic. Example: "Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) - Privacy Sensitive - any misuse or unauthorized disclosure can result in both civil and criminal penalties. This transmission should be viewed only by personnel having an official "need-to-know". If you are not the intended recipient, be aware that any disclosure, copying, distribution or use of the content of this information is prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify me immediately by email and delete the original message."
- The format on the next pages is required. Follow the example. However, if the header or section does not apply to your situation, simply use N/A. Page numbers are not needed.
- Be sure that all signature blocks are signed digitally or with wet ink.
- If you have additional questions contact: 720OSS.SOST.orgbox@us.af.mil

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- ☐ Cover page – Use Times New Roman and Font size 10.
- ☐ Personal Narrative – One page in length (See example for format and specifics).
- ☐ One page résumé and/or Curriculum Vitae – emphasize leadership experience (See example for format).
- ☐ One signed recommendation letter formatted according to AFH 33-337 The Tongue and Quill (or sister service equivalent) from your commander or residency director, no more than one-page in length. The letter should comment on your leadership abilities and/or clinical proficiency including relevant examples.
- ☐ Copies of the three most recent performance or training reports. If your time in service is too short to have three reports, include what is available.
- ☐ Service members will also include a copy of their SURF or Career Data Brief (CDB) and a copy of their Fitness Tracker Report.
- ☐ Sister Service or civilian only: A signed document from a recruiter stating that the applicant meets AF entry requirements (refer to memo on page 12). Sister service applicants must also have approval for release from the first O-6 in the chain of command.
- ☐ Ensure completion of a 9C/Operational Support Flyer physical and submit a signed DD Form 2992 with this package.

- If you have a waiver, are taking long term medication, and/or are receiving ongoing treatment for any medical condition, notify the Phase 1 Board for further instructions.

SOST APPLICATION PACKAGE**DATE:****Name (Last, First, MI):**

INSERT YOUR PHOTO HERE.

Rank:**SSN:****Email:****Duty Title:**

Insert a forward facing portrait against a solid colored background. Be in service dress and crop the photo from the bottom of your name tag/bottom of your ribbon rack to the top of your head.

Branch of Service:**Duty Status:****Applying For:****Phone:**

If an official photo lab is not available, use a digital camera and stand against a white wall with nothing in the background. If deployed, wear the appropriate uniform of the day. Civilians wear appropriate professional attire.

Highest Level of Education:**Residency/Degree Program:****Board Status:****Have you previously attended SOST selection:****If yes, when did you attend:****Are you a U.S. citizen:****City/State of Birth:****Conscientious objector:****Current Security Clearance:****Date of Last Investigation:****Law Violations:**

List any violations (include date, offense, and outcome): **Military members, list violations and/or Article 15/UCMJ/LOR/LOCs since your last security clearance investigation.

Squadron Commander Rank/Name:**Email:****Phone:****Consultant/Career Field Manager Rank/Name:****Email:****Phone:****(Nurse Only) Chief Nurse Rank/Name:****Email:****Phone:**

PT Test Results

Test Date: **Calculated PT Test Score:**

Push-ups:	Sit Ups:	1.5 Mile Run: (mm:ss)
HR Push-ups:	Plank: (mm:ss)	HAMR:
	X-leg Reverse Crunch:	

Candidate can complete 15 yard underwater and can swim 250 meters without stopping:

PTL/OIC/NCOIC Name/Rank:

PTL/OIC/NCOIC Contact (Email):

(Phone):

PTL/OIC/NCOIC Signature:

Health

Are you currently on a medical profile or do you have/require a waiver to carry out your normal AFSC duties?

If yes, please explain:

Do you currently have a condition/injury, acute or chronic, which may preclude you from participating in SOST selection physical activities?

If yes, please explain:

I consent to a review of my medical/psychological records for SOST selection purposes:

How did you hear about SOST?

Candidate Statement of Acknowledgement

"I hereby apply to become a Special Operations Surgical Team member and volunteer to perform the duties inherent to Special Operations. I acknowledge that I can be removed from further assessment for any of the following reasons: 1) quitting through words or actions, 2) becoming a medical or safety risk, 3) committing an integrity violation such as lying, cheating, or stealing, or 4) failing to meet specified fitness standards. To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this application is true."

Candidate Signature:

Date:

MEMORANDUM FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS SURGICAL TEAM ASSESSMENT BOARD

FROM: JOHN SMITH

SUBJECT: Personal Narrative

1. This document is provided to give the assessment board an overall understanding of your character and personality. It should be clear, concise, and free of extra “fluff” statements.

It should include:

1. Your personal background, significant jobs or positions held, and/or an explanation of your clinical currencies and experiences before and during military service
2. An identification and explanation of your perceived strengths and weaknesses
3. A discussion on what attracts you to joining the Special Operations Surgical Team
*If you are a former SOST member, a discussion on why you would like to return to the Special Operations Surgical Team
4. Why the Special Operations Surgical Team is the right career for you

2. The narrative will be formatted with 1-inch margins on the left and right sides. The top margin will be between 1 inch and 1.5 inches depending on the heading, you establish. The bottom will be 1 inch. The last line of your signature block will include the Special Operations Surgical Team motto: “*Quis Illos Bellatores Custodiet.*”

3. The heading format you see above should be followed with your own information entered in the FROM portion. The document may not exceed more than one page in length. Use Times New Roman with a 12 font size. Note: Military personnel include your unit letterhead. See AFH 33-337 The Tongue and Quill or sister service equivalent for examples of an Official Memorandum for Record.

John Smith
JOHN SMITH, Capt, USAF, MC
General Surgeon

PERSONAL RÉSUMÉ

John Smith
Capt, USAF

SSAN: XXX-XX-XXXX
DOB: DD MMM YY
AGE: XX

SERVICE HISTORY

Aug 10 – Present

General Surgeon, 96 MDG, Eglin AFB, FL. Specific description of position and duties assigned....

Jan 10 – May 10

NCOIC, Operating Room, 96 MDG, Eglin AFB, FL. Specific description of position and duties assigned....

Include no more than last 10 years

EDUCATION

M.D	USUHS	2012
B.S. Biology	University of Michigan	2008
A.A.S. Surgical Services	Community College of the Air Force	2002

PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION (If applicable)

Squadron Officer School	2010
Airmanship Basic Course	2007

AWARDS/CERTIFICATIONS/LICENSES/MILITARY AND MEDICAL TRAINING/PUBLICATIONS/RESEARCH

USAFA Distinguished Graduate
EMT Basic Certification
USAF NCOA Distinguished Graduate

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Air Force Sergeants Association
American Medical Association

PERSONAL INTERESTS

Surfing, rock climbing, fly-fishing, off-roading

MEMORANDUM FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS SURGICAL TEAM ASSESSMENT BOARD

FROM: JOHN SMITH

SUBJECT: (Candidate Name) Meets Air Force Entry Requirements

1. This document is to confirm (Candidate Name) meets United States Air Force entry requirements.
2. If you have any questions or concerns please contact (Recruiter Name) at XXX-XXX-XXXX or john.smith@us.af.mil.

John Smith
JOHN SMITH, Capt, USAF
Recruiter

ANNEX B

SOST Physical Training (PT) Evaluation Standards

General: All SOST applicants shall complete the physical training test in accordance with these procedures as part of the SOST application. This test is based off of the Air Force fitness test described in DAFMAN 36-2905, *Department of the Air Force Physical Fitness Program*.

Standards: You must achieve a minimum of a 90% on an Air Force PT Test. SOST selection is extremely competitive; you should give your best effort and strive to exceed the 90% minimums. When you submit your application, your PT Test should have been accomplished within six months of the Phase I due date, and as close to Phase I as possible to reflect your current level of fitness.

Administration: The PT test must be given in the order listed. If you are unable to meet any of the minimums, you have failed the test. Your supervisor, such as the unit PT manager, should administer the PT test. Other test administrators are considered on a case-by-case basis, following coordination with the Assessment Director. If you fail to execute the proper form, the test administrator will correct you, and the incorrect repetition will not count. The test administrator will document the results on the cover sheet of your application and sign in the appropriate space.

Procedures: Calisthenic events will be tested one right after the other with approximately a two-minute time lapse between events. One of the calisthenic events will be either sit-ups or cross reverse crunch or forearm plank. The other calisthenic event will be either push-ups or hand release push-ups. Upon completion of the calisthenic events, a 10 minute rest period is given prior to starting the 1.5 mile run or 20-meter HAMR.

- **Sit-ups (one-minute time limit):** Starting Position. The use of a mat is optional. The member will be instructed to lie face up on the floor/mat. In the starting position, the member's feet may extend off the mat, but the buttocks, shoulders, and head must not extend beyond the mat. The member's knees will be bent at a 90 degree angle (throughout the assessment), with the feet or heels in contact with the floor at all times. The member's arms will be crossed over the chest with the hands/fingers on the shoulders or resting on the upper chest. A complete sit-up is accomplished when the upper torso of the member is raised off the floor/mat, the elbows touch the knees or thighs, and the upper torso is lowered back to the floor/mat until the shoulder blades touch the floor/mat. Elbows must touch the knees or thighs at the top of the sit-up, and the shoulder blades must touch the floor/mat at the bottom of the sit-up. Any part of your hands/fingers must remain in contact with your shoulders/upper chest at all times. Incorrect sit-ups (e.g., elbows do not touch the knees or thighs at the top of the sit-up, shoulder blades do not touch the floor/mat at the bottom of the sit-up, hands/fingers lift completely off the shoulders/upper chest, etc.) will not be counted. If an incorrect sit-up is performed, assessor will repeat the number of the last correct sit-up and explain what is being done incorrectly. The member may only rest in the up position. If the member rests in the down position or holds onto their knees/legs while in the up position, the sit-up component of the assessment will be terminated. A two-minute rest follows this event.
- **Cross leg reverse crunch (two-minute time limit):** The use of an exercise mat is optional for this exercise. The member will be instructed to lay on their back on a flat, level surface, legs straight, and feet on the ground. Arms are crossed over the chest with open hands or fingers touching the shoulders or upper chest. Hands can't grab the shirt. While keeping the lower back on the floor, bring both legs toward the chest while reaching your left elbow across your body to touch your right thigh. Then return to the starting position. This is counted as repetition number one. While keeping the lower back on the floor, bring both legs toward the chest while reaching the right elbow across the body to touch the left thigh. Then return to the starting position. This is counted as repetition number two. The repetition will not count if the hands or fingers do not remain in contact with the shoulders or upper chest throughout the assessment, including the rest position. Additionally, the repetition will not count if the lower back lifts off the ground, elbow does not touch the opposite thigh, or legs do not fully extend when returning to the starting position.

- **Forearm Plank:** The member will be instructed to lay face down on the floor with elbows bent, forearms flat on the floor/mat, with the body in a straight line through the head, shoulders, back, buttocks and legs. Elbows must be aligned directly below the shoulders at a 90-degree angle between the forearm and upper arm. Hands will either be in fists with the pinky side of the hand touching the floor or lying flat with palms touching the floor. Forearms may be parallel or angled inward, but the hands cannot be clasped together. Feet should be placed hip-width apart. Hips must be lifted off the ground with only the forearms, hands and toes on the floor. Knees are straight, pelvis in a neutral position and back flat. The back, buttocks and legs must be straight from head to heels and must remain so throughout the assessment. Toes, forearms and fists or palms must remain in contact with the floor/mat at all times and folding of hands is not permitted. No other part of the body may contact the vertical support surface. Forearm plank ends when maximum time for the forearm plank has elapsed or until the last participant stops prior to the maximum time allowed, any part of the body other than hands (fists/palms) forearms, or feet touch the floor, member lowers head to hands, member lifts hands, forearms or feet off the floor, member does not maintain 90 degrees at the elbow (i.e., shifting weight forward or back on forearms/toes decreasing or increasing the 90-degree bend).
- **Push-ups (one-minute time limit):** From the starting position (elbows extended), the member will lower the body to the ground until the upper arm is at least parallel to the floor (elbow bent at least 90 degrees or less) before pushing back up to the starting position (the chest may touch but not rest on or bounce off the floor). The member completes one full push-up after returning to the starting position with elbows fully extended. It is important to monitor the member's form and make sure the body does not bow at the waist as the member tires. The body must remain rigid during the assessment (the back must remain straight unless resting). Incorrect push-ups (e.g., member does not lower body until upper arm is at least parallel to the floor, member does not fully extend elbows when returning to starting position, body bows at the waist, etc.) will not be counted. If an incorrect push-up is performed, assessor will repeat the number of the last correct push-up and explain what is being done incorrectly. Member may rest in the up position only. If member rests in the down position with their body on the ground, the push-up component of the test will be terminated.
- **Hand release push-ups (two-minute time limit):** The member will begin in the prone position and must ensure hands are flat on the ground with the index fingers inside the outer edges of the shoulders. This is the starting position. The member will push their whole body up from the ground as a single unit to the up position by fully extending the elbows. For the duration of the exercise, a generally straight body alignment from the top of the head to the ankles will be maintained. Member will bend their elbows to lower the body back to the ground. The chest, hips and thighs should touch down at the same time. The head or face do not have to contact the ground. Without moving the head, body, or legs, extend both hands out from the body until arms are fully extended forming a 90-degree angle between the arms and trunk at the shoulders. Hands must be off the ground. After reaching this position, elbows bend to move the hands back under the shoulder. Ensure hands are flat on the ground with index fingers inside the outer edges of the shoulders and push the whole body back to the starting position. This completes one repetition.
- **1.5 Mile Run:** Performed with running shoes and running shorts. This run must be continuous (non-stop). The test is conducted on a 400 meter running track, six laps plus 46 feet. If a track is not available, the 1.5 mile timed run will be 2640 yards or 2414 meters. Designed to measure aerobic endurance used when performing mission tasks, specifically employment or evasion situations.
- **20-meter high aerobic multi-shuttle run (HAMR):** You will run between two lines 20 meters apart, at a progressively faster pace, to the tempo of a recorded beep. You must touch the line with one foot before the beep sounds. If you get to the line early, do not begin running back before the beep sounds. Failure to reach the line before the beep, or leaving the line too early, will result in a warning. Three consecutive warnings will result in termination of the assessment. After each level the time between beeps will become shorter, requiring you to run faster. You are encouraged to keep going until you are no longer able to keep the pace.