



TIP OF THE SPEAR



**MARSOC
HOSPITAL CORPSMAN
RECEIVES NAVY CROSS**



**TACP AWARDED SECOND
SILVER STAR**



2014 PHOTO YEAR IN REVIEW

U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLA., December 2014



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Navy Cross presented to MARSOC Special Amphibious Reconnaissance Corpsman ... 30

Tip of the Spear



Thomas Jefferson
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Commander, USSOCOM

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Staff Writer/Photographer

(Cover) A Special Tactics Airman jumps out of an MH-47 Chinook helicopter during helocast alternate insertion and extraction training with Soldiers from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) July 14, at American Lake on Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. The Airmen from the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron conducted 10 daytime helocast iterations and eight nighttime helocast iterations over a two-day span. Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Russ Jackson.

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U.S. Army Special Operations Command



Mississippi Army National Guard Soldiers with the 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) conduct fast rope insertion training as part of Operation Emerald Warrior, a multinational, joint force training exercise April 30, at the Combat Readiness Training Center, near Gulfport, Miss. The training ensures the units are trained and ready for any state emergency or combat mission. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann.



Left) A U.S. Army Ranger assigned to Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, scans the darkness for enemies during annual Task Force Training at Fort Knox, Ky., April 22. Photo by Spc. Philip Diab. (Above) National Guard Soldiers from Illinois and surrounding states lift a log during a readiness assessment with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) April 12. Photo by Army Sgt. James D. Sims.



USSOCOM Images of 2014



Army Rangers from 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, execute fast rope training at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., June 2. Photo by Spc. Coty Kuhn.



(Above) Army Staff Sgt. Daniel Horner kneels and spots for Army Sgt. Tyler Payne during the 2014 United States Army Special Operations Command International Sniper Competition on Fort Bragg, N.C. Horner and Payne won this year's competition. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Shelman Spencer. (Right) Soldiers from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and cadre from the 25th Infantry Division's Jungle Operations Training Center, scale a steep embankment in Oahu, Hawaii July 23. Photo by Spc. Timothy Clegg.





USSOCOM Images of 2014

Naval Special Warfare Command



A special warfare combatant-craft crewman drives a rigid-hull inflatable boat launched from USS Howard (DDG 83) during a visit, board, search and seizure training exercise, Nov. 12, 2013. Naval Special Warfare conducted exercises with Howard and other Navy ships to ensure interoperability between Special Operations Forces and the Navy fleet. Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Paul Coover.



USSOCOM Images of 2014



Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) students participate in Surf Passage at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, Jan 21. Surf Passage is one of many physically demanding evolutions that are a part of the first phase of SEAL training. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Michael Russell.

Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Brad Woodard acts as the jumpmaster during a tandem jump, informing skydivers when they are cleared to leave the plane. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Geneva G. Brier.



A Basic Underwater Demolition candidate and a San Diego student congratulate each other after participating in surf passage at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, May 10. Naval Special Warfare Center hosted 190 students from the San Diego School Safety Patrol and officers from the San Diego Police Department during a day with Navy Sea Air and Land (SEAL)s. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Michael Russell.



Air Force Special Operations Command



USSOCCOM Images of 2014

U.S. Air Force Capt. Alexander Burgess, a pilot with the 522nd Special Operations Squadron, performs an in-air refueling in an MC-130J Commando II aircraft over Florida May 6, during Emerald Warrior 14. Emerald Warrior is a U.S. Special Operations Command-sponsored two-week joint/combined tactical exercise designed to provide realistic military training in an urban setting. Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Marleah Miller.



(Above) Senior Airman Tristan Windle, a pararescueman with the 320th Special Tactics Squadron, provides medical treatment to a simulated victim May 1, on Kadena Air Base, Japan. Windle was awarded the 2013 Air Force Sergeants Association Pitsenbarger Award during a ceremony held Aug. 20. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Kristine Dreyer (Right) Master Sgt. Delorean Sheridan, a combat controller assigned to the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, stands on a roof top to get a good look at the incoming weather while deployed to Afghanistan in 2012. Sheridan was named as one of the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year for 2014. Courtesy photo.





(Above) Members with the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron jump from an MC-130H Combat Talon II over Hurlburt Field, Fla., May 2. Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Marleah Miller. (Right) A U.S. Air Force combat controller prepares to fast-rope out of a Navy HH-60H Seahawk at Hurlburt Field, Fla., May 2. Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Tim Chacon. (Below) A U.S. Air Force CV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft takes off at Hurlburt Field, Fla., May 3. Photo by Airman 1st Class Jasmonet Jackson.

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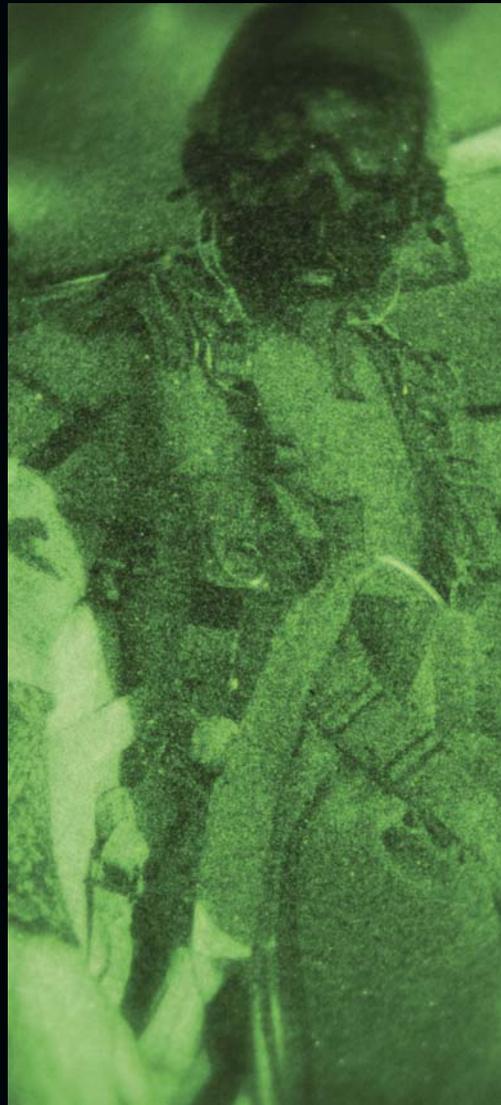
Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command



A Critical Skills Operator, and a Multipurpose Canine Handler, both with U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, render a salute, after hanging the dog tags of one of their fallen comrades on the MARSOC Honor the Fallen memorial, during the Honor the Fallen ceremony April 25, at MARSOC headquarters, on Camp Lejeune, N.C. Photo by Marine Corps Sgt. Scott Achtemeier.



Individual Training Course students with Marine Special Operations School at Stone Bay, on Camp Lejeune, N.C., participate in the field training exercise Raider Spirit, May 8. Photo by Marine Corps Cpl. Donovan Lee.



(Above) A Multi-Purpose Canine handler, with U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, fastropes with his canine aboard Camp Lejeune, N.C., Oct. 1. Photo by Marine Corps Cpl. Steven Fox. (Right) A Critical Skills Operator with 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion, Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command prepares to execute his final jump of a double-bag static line parachute training course, Aug 29, conducted in rural Arizona. Photo by Marine Corps Cpl. Steven Fox. (Below) Members of the 2nd Marine Special Operations Battalion prepare for a Visit, Board, Search and Seizure mission Oct. 25. Photo by Marine Corps Sgt. Donovan Lee.

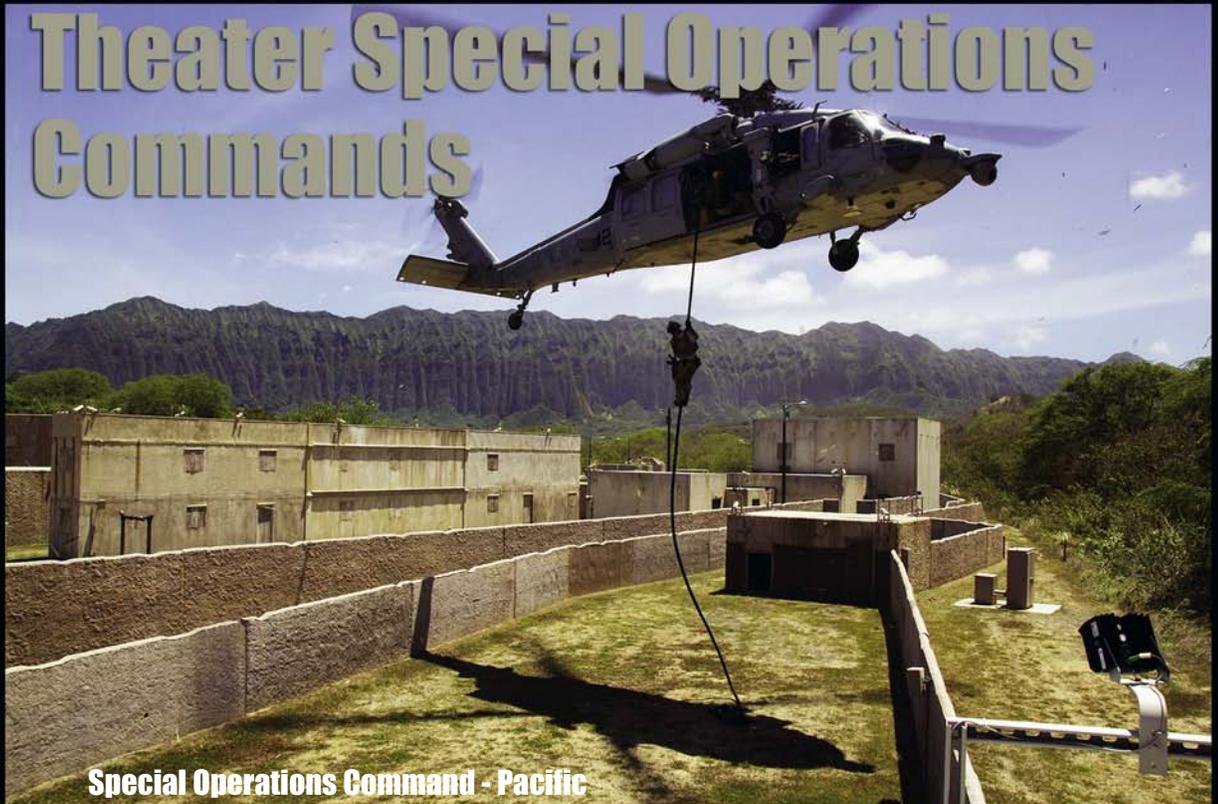


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Theater Special Operations Commands



Special Operations Command - Pacific

Republic of Korea SEALs fast-rope into a military operations on urban terrain facility from an MH-60S Seahawk helicopter during a Special Operations Forces integration exercise as part of Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise 2014, July 10, at Marine Corps Training Area Bellows, Hawaii. Photo by Marine Corps Cpl. Matthew J. Bragg.



Special Operations Command - Central



Special Operations Command - North



Special Operations Command - Africa

(Top left) Multinational Special Operations Forces head towards a transport cruise ship during a level four visit, board, search and seizure as part of Exercise Eager Lion at the Royal Jordanian Naval Base June 5. Courtesy photo. (left) A C-130 Loadmaster surveys the terrain near Tahoua, Niger, before dropping supplies during exercise Flintlock 2014. Photo by Lt. Cmdr. Matt Allen. (Above) The newly created Special Operations Command-North patch is displayed signifying SOCNORTH as a subordinate unified command under U.S. Special Operations Command during the patching ceremony held on Peterson Air Force Base, Colo. SOCNORTH stood up Nov. 5, 2013. Courtesy photo.

(Right) TIGRES commandos wait to conduct bounding overwatch exercises with live ammunition while training with Green Berets from the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and Junglas from the Colombian National Police at Tegucigalpa, Honduras, May 8. Photo by Spc. Steven Young. (Below) A Republic of Korea special operations soldier takes aim during a scenario-based combined cumulative field exercise in the Republic of Korea. Courtesy photo. (Bottom) Multinational special operations forces soldiers conduct direct action assault during Exercise Jackal Stone in the Boeblingen Local Training Area, Germany, Sept. 17. Photo by Visual Information Specialist Jason Johnston.



Special Operations Command - Korea



Special Operations Command - South



Special Operations Command - Europe



USSOCOM Images of 2014



U.S. Special Operations Command Headquarters

(Above) Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, left, passes the U.S. Special Operations Command flag to incoming commander Army Gen. Joseph L. Votel III during a change-of-command ceremony in Tampa, Fla., Aug. 28. Votel assumed command from Navy Adm. William H. McRaven and is the tenth USSOCOM commander. Photo by Tech Sgt. Angelita Lawrence. (Below left) Italian Army Capt. Alberto Spinelli served as the jumpmaster during a static-line and free-fall training exercise from an MV-22 Osprey over Hernando County Airport, Fla., March 26. Because Spinelli served as the jumpmaster, all jumpers that day received Italian jump wings. Photo by Marine Corps Master Sgt. F.B. Zimmerman. (Below right) Coalition operators ride aboard a "Little Bird" helicopter in a Special Operations exercise during International Special Operations Forces Week held May 19 - 22 in downtown Tampa, Fla. Photo by Greg Clarkson.





(Above) Members of USSOCOM prepare to board a Blackhawk helicopter before helocasting into Tampa Bay, July 10. Photo by Tech Sgt. Angelita Lawrence. (Right) Static-line paratroopers from U.S. Special Operations Command, Special Operations Command Central and the Joint Communications Support Element, all from MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., standby as they wait for the MV-22 Osprey to land at the Hernando County Airport, March 26. Photo by Marine Corps Master Sgt. F.B. Zimmerman. (Bottom) U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Joel Hill and Army Maj. Alan Warmbier, both assigned to U.S. Special Operations Command, drag a training mannequin during the Mogadishu Mile Run Oct. 3, on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. The Mogadishu Mile Run is held in memory of the men who lost their lives during the Oct. 3, 1993 Battle of Mogadishu in Somalia. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence.



USSOCOM Images of 2014

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Rangers from 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment conduct airborne operations over South Korea, Oct. 14. Courtesy photo.

75th Ranger Regiment returns to Korea, conducts training exercise

By 75th Ranger Regiment Public Affairs Office

Rangers from the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, returned to the Republic of Korea to conduct a training exercise in coordination with 8th Army, Special Operations Command Korea and U.S. Forces - Korea Command during the months of September and October.

Rangers have not been in Korea since before the Global War on Terror started October 2001. In keeping aligned with U.S. Army Special Operations Command

ARSOF 2022, the Ranger Regiment is seeking to strengthen the Global SOF Network by providing a responsive and tangible benefit to Theater Special Operations Commands and Joint Force Commanders.

During the past two months, elements from 3rd Bn., 75th Ranger Regiment, have put together a comprehensive training path, building from individual marksmanship up to platoon live-fire exercises and force-on-force raids.

“We are focusing on the basics and developed a bottom-up training model to allow a gradual progression

from individual to platoon skillsets,” said Maj. Pete Leszczynski, company commander. “Of our eight weeks on the ground, we have spent six in the field emphasizing marksmanship and small unit tactics.”

The Rangers have also focused on long range marksmanship within the sniper section as well as mobility, physical training, and medical training. That small unit tactics training focused on reacting to contact, entering and clearing a trench, knocking out a bunker and room clearing battle drills. They also incorporated assault breaching, fast rope insertions and close attack aviation call-for-fire.

As the Army reduces its footprint abroad and loses the combat experience built over the last decade, the requirement for the Regiment to increase its ability to project force and to proliferate leaders and tactics, techniques and procedures to the general purpose force will become increasingly important by 2022.

Knowing the changing nature of the environment, Army Special Operations Command recognizes the increased demand from TSOCs and Joint Force Commanders for operational-level capabilities in support of long-duration, regionally-focused campaign plans. To meet both the scope and scale of this demand, TSOCs and Joint Task Force Commanders require Army Special Operations Forces to provide a combination of responsive reach-back support and scalable, tailored command and control options in situations ranging from steady state to

times of crisis.

“Korea was chosen because of the great training facilities and support infrastructure it offers to rotational units,” said Maj. David Uthlaut, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment liaison officer. “The leadership of U.S. Forces – Korea, 8th Army, and Special Operations Command – Korea, has all been extremely receptive to our presence, actively setting the conditions for our success and providing reinforcement as we work through initial integration.”

While joint training with the South Korean military has been limited, the Rangers and the 7th Republic of Korea Special Operations Forces Brigade conducted two foreign jump-wing exchanges. They also observed platoon live-fire training as well as force-on-force training.

“The Korea military, with its habitual relationship with U.S. Forces, has been instrumental in the coordination of events that would have been otherwise impossible to complete without local assistance,” explained Leszczynski. “The synchronization of the many requirements that accompany a training event on any Korean facility would not have been possible without the institutional knowledge, flexibility, language proficiency, and geographical expertise of the Koreans we have worked with.”

“This relationship is still evolving,” Uthlaut said. “We believe we have set the stage for more in-depth interoperability training for future training rotations.”



Rangers from 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment conduct MK-47 training Sept. 18, in South Korea. Courtesy photo.



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Special Forces Group Force Preservation Directorate focus on physical, psychological strength

*Story and photos by Army Capt. Thomas Cieslak
7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)*

A comprehensive program at the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) pairs Special Forces soldiers with professional trainers, psychologists and physical therapists to improve their performance on the battlefield and strengthen their resiliency.

The Force Preservation Directorate at the 7th SFG (A) is a program unique among others in the United States Special Operations Command because it takes a holistic approach to improving the warfighter's performance in combat, and in their recovery from injuries sustained while training or on the battlefield.

"The FPD at 7th Group ensures we maintain our extraordinary level of preparedness. Our soldiers are deploying constantly and repeatedly to our AOR [Area of Responsibility] in Central and South America as well as Afghanistan," said Col. Robert Kirila, the group's Deputy Commander. "Traditionally our ODA's [Operational Detachment Alphas] train constantly to maintain their physical and technical competencies. The inclusion of psychological resiliency training complements other operator training efforts. As such, the FPD has become a critical component of our readiness strategy to prepare our operator's minds and bodies for the complex missions they conduct."

"A Special Forces soldier is trained to put himself in harm's way for the American way of life. That is to say, he has accepted the call to go into some of the most volatile places on the planet and give of himself mentally, physically and spiritually. He has decided to put his total being on the line for our country's defense," said Mike Sanders, the Human Performance Coordinator for the 7th SFG (A). "In order to survive such environments, the SF [Special Forces] soldier must start with training ... they must go into combat and the most important tool they have is



A member of the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) consults with Mr. Mike Sanders, center, on his exercise performance Sept. 17 in the Group's Combat Readiness Training Facility. Sanders is responsible for the Group's Human Performance Program, an initiative combining the expertise of strength and conditioning coaches and physical therapists to maximize soldiers' physical fitness.

themselves," he continued.

Sanders leads the Tactical Human Optimization Rapid Rehabilitation and Reconditioning program. Known commonly as THOR3, the program is an integral component of 7th Group's FPD.

The directorate harmonizes efforts of THOR3 athletic trainers, medical professionals, psychologists and nurse case managers into a holistic approach toward improving the warfighter's physical and mental performance. Its main

focus lies specifically on the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded warriors within the group, returning them to the battlefield fully able to perform their duties or helping them transition from Special Forces, and equipping them with the tools needed to succeed outside the Army.

“The FPD is unique to 7th Group and is an undertaking by leadership to bring together all the different facets of soldier health and recovery under one roof,” said Sanders. “Complete integration is accomplished by frequent communication, meetings and close work proximity of each individual section. This integration enables a more robust program for wounded warrior care.”

That “one” roof Sanders speaks about is the group’s Combat Readiness Training Facility. The facility spans nearly 44,000 square feet and contains rooms for strength and cardiovascular training. A physical therapy clinic is contained inside as well as Sanders’ THOR3 training area. Behind the CRTF lies athletic turf used by the Special Forces soldiers for mobility drills.

“No other THOR3 program is set up where all members of the THOR3 staff are housed in the same area. Our program was also the first to employ an athletic trainer to act as a bridge between the latter half of rehabilitation and engagement in THOR3 strength and conditioning program,” said Capt. Shay Rogers, the group’s physical therapist. “These aspects allow our servicemembers to move fluidly within the program to suit their needs – whether injured on the battlefield, in training, or progressing toward a physical conditioning goal.”

Rogers leads a team that includes other physical therapists and medical professionals. It is common to see her and her team interacting with soldiers as they exercise, providing them guidance while evaluating their progress and recovery.

“Referrals require little effort, all patients have direct access. This means they may access the PT [Physical Therapy] clinic without a referral. We are otherwise a phone call away,” said Rogers about the accessibility of her team to soldiers of the group. “Our servicemembers need only walk in and may be seen the day of injury.”

“Physical performance and resilience and well-being are integral to mental health and personal achievement,” said Rogers about the role her program plays in assisting soldiers to achieve their goals. “By providing the means to overcome injury, to meet physical training goals, the physical therapy and training staff provide the means to operate again.”

Another key component of the FPD is the

Psychological Performance Program, led by Maj. Isaac Lopez, the 7th SFG (A) Psychologist. The program provides soldiers with skills needed to manage difficult situations before the stress impacts their health, family and career. Lopez leads a team of mental health care providers who seek to help soldiers find balance in their physical, mental and spiritual well-being while improving their family and peer relationships.

“When individuals think of a wounded warrior, they often imagine an individual with a physical injury. However, research has shown that the majority of individuals that have a physical injury also suffer emotional injuries,” said Lopez.

“The P3 program works with physical therapy and THOR3 in identifying and concurrently treating emotional injuries in individuals. The P3 has experienced providers that can assess an individual’s current level of emotional and behavioral functioning and develop an individualized, research-based treatment plan to assist that individual in fulfilling their goals.”

“The FPD is responsible for many 7th Group soldiers returning to the battlefield. They can take an SF soldier wounded in training or combat and condition them, mentally and physically back to their full capability,” said Col. Christopher Riga, the group’s commander. “The program makes the group a more lethal force and ready to execute our missions in South America and Afghanistan.”



Dana Terrell, Doctor of Physical Therapy, speaks with a soldier from the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in the group’s Physical Therapy Clinic, located in the unit’s Combat Readiness Training Facility. Terrell is a member of the group’s physical therapy team, medical professionals essential to rehabilitating wounded and injured members of the unit and improving the physical performance of others.

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Pilots from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) stand with the unit's last MH-60K Blackhawk, tail number 388, prior to handing the aircraft over to the National Navy Sea, Air and Land (SEAL) Museum, Nov. 19. The aircraft will be put on display to help museum visitors further understand the unique relationship between Army Special Operations Aviators and the Navy SEALs.

The end of an era: Last MH-60K Blackhawk takes its final flight

*Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Thaddius S. Dawkins II
USASOAC (A) Public Affairs*

As the crowd gathered around the National Navy Sea, Air and Land (SEAL) Museum Nov. 19, 2014, it became clear this wasn't a standard military retirement. There was no podium, no colors and no sound system. A small crowd gathered with their eyes fixed on the horizon.

Then, a familiar sound became increasingly audible to the special operators in attendance. That sound was the rotors of two MH-60 Blackhawks, a MH-60K and a

MH-60M, as they appeared over the shoreline, flying as a team one final time.

The MH-60K, tail number 388, made its long anticipated final flight from Fort Campbell, Ky., to the National SEAL Museum, where it will be demilitarized and put on display.

"The relationship between the Army, the Navy and what we do has been in the shadow for a long time," said Rick Kaiser, a retired Navy Seal Master Chief Petty Officer and Executive Director of the museum. "A lot of people will ask the same question 'Why do you have this Blackhawk in here?' People always assume

it's Navy aircraft that fly the SEALs around. We will then be able to tell them the story about the relationship between the SEALs and the Army Special Operations Aviators."

The process, which began almost a year prior, required careful coordination between several command elements, branches and offices across the Army; the unit who owned the aircraft – 1st Battalion, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne), 160th SOAR Operations Section, The U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command (Airborne) Aviation Readiness Branch, the USASAO Technology Applications and Program Office, the SEAL Museum, and the Army Tank and Automotive Command donations branch. All offices

worked together to ensure all the necessary requirements were met in order to legally transfer the aircraft to the museum.

Sgt. 1st Class Joseph W. Evans, USASOAC Aviation Readiness Branch senior maintenance noncommissioned

officer in charge, has been working the project since he arrived at the unit in March.

"This is the first time I have had the opportunity to work an aircraft donation for the team," said Evans.

For aircraft 388's final flight, it only seemed fitting that Chief Warrant Officer 5 Ben D. Savage, 160th SOAR's command chief warrant officer, was in the cockpit. Savage has been training on the airframe since it arrived in the unit 20 years ago.

"We started getting the MH-60K in 1994," Savage said. "I was part of the train-the-trainer in Block Zero. Block Zero was to train all the instructor pilots in each of the following blocks. In April of '94, I got qualified on the aircraft and started teaching block one in the fall."

Savage, who had close to 4000 flight hours on the MH-60K airframe, said tail number 388 had a storied history during its lifetime.

"This aircraft has been on multiple joint readiness

exercises leading up to 2001," he explained. "It has also been in a 'Class A' accident where it rolled over and was unable to fly for an extended period of time. In 2002, it made its first trip to Afghanistan and has flown multiple missions in Iraq, Afghanistan and Africa since that time. During one of 388's missions, the aircraft's co-pilot had his microphone boom shot off his helmet and its pilot-in-command was shot in the face. They still managed to fly the aircraft out of the area after it had taken fire, so the aircraft has a significant history of battle damage as well."

The aircraft also participated in the 2012 mission that helped rescue American, Jessica Buchanan and her Danish co-worker, Poul Hagen Thisted. Both Buchanan

and Hagen Thisted were captured by Somali pirates and held hostage for three months starting in October of 2011.

During the operation, SEAL team members parachuted into the objective and engaged the pirates, killing all

nine of them. After the firefight, multiple aircraft evacuated the SEALs and the two hostages, including aircraft 388.

"I'm going to put this on my list of things visit once this display gets set up," Savage said. "We are leaving our checklists, which have our names in them, in the aircraft. So it's an honor to know it's going to be in the SEAL Museum. It's quite fitting because of the number of SEALs we've carried around in this airframe."

As for Evans, he said everyone's hard work to get the aircraft donated to the museum pales in comparison to what the pilots and crewmembers on the MH-60K have all given to the Special Operations community.

"To me, the reward is knowing the 160th's last MH-60K will be preserved and on display for many years to come," Evans said. "This ensures the memory of those that have gone before us, and what they accomplished on so many missions with the use of the MH-60K and more specifically, aircraft 388."

"The relationship between the Army, the Navy and what we do has been in the shadow for a long time. A lot of people will ask the same question – 'Why do you have this Blackhawk in here?' People always assume it's Navy aircraft that fly the SEALs around. We will then be able to tell them the story about the relationship between the SEALs and the Army Special Operations Aviators."

— Retired Master Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Rick Kaiser



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

SWCC marks its 50th year

*By Petty Officer 2nd Class Timothy Blake
NSW Public Affairs*

Forged from the salt, blood and sweat of unconventional warfare, and dominating the world's rivers and oceans for 50 years, the special warfare combatant-craft crewman's history is a story of continuous development and overcoming obstacles.

World War II, a war that tested a generation of American servicemembers, also tested the predecessors of SWCC. Using craft known as PT boats, small boat operators played a part in military operations in both the Pacific and Europe by providing support for reconnaissance, blockades and sabotage, and raiding missions. Those operators established a legacy that would ensure that the skills of American Sailors manning small, fast attack boats were honed through Korea and into Vietnam.

On Feb. 1, 1964, Boat Support Unit 1 was established, kicking off 50 years of Naval Special Warfare SEALs and

SWCC working together. Though SWCC operators were not known as such until much later, Vietnam is often considered the genesis of the modern NSW boat teams. Yet as the conflict was ending for American forces, there was also talk of decommissioning the boat units.

"There were obstacles that made the early decades in the community hard, and foremost was after the Vietnam War was over," said retired Master Chief Gunner's Mate Jim Gray, who served in the early boat units. "Congress and the Navy wanted all the boat [units] to be disestablished. It was the SEALs that saved the boat community, by saying, 'We have to have boats to do our mission.'"

With the capabilities of the Force preserved, another problem emerged: small boat operators were effective parts of special operations missions, but would rotate back to other commands in the Navy after tours with NSW.

One man in particular played a pivotal role in keeping experienced operators in the boat community while also creating a tough training regimen for future crewmen.



Special warfare combatant-craft crewmen assigned to Special Boat Team 20 navigate the MARK V Special Operations Craft near Key West, Fla., April 27, 2009. The MARK V retired from service in 2013. Photo by Chief Petty Officer Kathryn Whittenberger.

Retired Master Chief Boatswain's Mate Kelly Webb got started with the boat teams in 1984, part of the Harbor Patrol Unit at Rodman Naval Station Panama. At first, he was providing escort services for submarines coming in and out of the port, but then moved on to counter-insurgency and drug operations.

"We were led by some unique brown-water Vietnam veterans who honed our skills in patrol tactics and setting up waterborne guard posts, ambushes, board and search and jungle survival," Webb wrote in "Journal of Frogmen."

"We started deploying with the third of the Seventh Special Forces Group all over Central and South America. We were far removed from any flag pole, and we were our own band of waterborne cowboys."

In 1987, the U.S. military realigned Naval Special Warfare, giving its components a more professional and unified leadership structure.

"Among those initiatives, Special Operations Command and Naval Special Warfare Command were created," said Webb. "Special Boat Unit 26 was also established out of Panama harbor patrol unit, and what that meant for us, and all the boat units, was a shift from a focus on coastal, riverine patrol and harbor security operations to specialized missions in unconventional warfare."

The crafts, after Vietnam and during Webb's period of service, were also being modified and upgraded. Webb had a major role in acquiring and validating new equipment.

On the coastal operations side, the boat units shifted from the Seaspecter Patrol Boat Mark III and Mark IV, which were designed for on-station and long-range transit operations, to the special operations craft Mark V, a high speed insertion and interception craft.

"Then we get to my baby, the indomitable and iconic Patrol Boat Riverine, which was aptly named for its mission, and set the standard for many years," said Webb. "It was replaced with the Special Operations Craft-Riverine, a high speed, low-profile and air deliverable gun boat that was, like the rest of our new craft, designed from the keel up for comparative stealth, direct action and hot extraction when called upon."

NSW also created a closed-loop career path for boat operators, meaning crewmen could stay within the Force for the duration of their time in the Navy. However, obstacles in structure and manning still plagued the boat community following the closed-looping of the community.

"Then there were times I left good guys at base camp," Webb said, "because even though they could keep the



A Basic Crewman Training (BCT) student demonstrates underwater knot tying skills during water proficiency training at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, Calif., Aug. 5, 2008. BCT is the first phase of the Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman training pipeline. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Christopher Menzie.

engines running or the weapons up, they weren't physically fit enough to operate in a small boat in extreme sea states or jungle environments. At the time, we had no control over who got orders to a boat unit and, simply put, with the change in mission focus, we needed a pipeline for screening and pre-training."

Webb was chosen to be part of the development of a SWCC school. He was part of a group of senior boat operators who went to Curriculum Development and Instructor Training School, as well as High Risk Instructor

Story continues on next page



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND



Special warfare combatant-craft crewmen from Special Boat Team 22 operate a Special Operations Craft-Riverine near John C. Stennis Space Center, Miss., Aug. 16, 2009. Photo by Chief Petty Officer Kathryn Whittenberger.

Training. Ultimately, he was part of the team that wrote the 9533 course of instruction, which trains the modern SWCC operator.

“Voila!” Webb said. “Just like that, we had our six-week, basic boat guy class. We focused the curriculum around what we wanted to fall out of a graduate’s pocket if we turned them upside down. Radio operation, navigation, weapon skills, first aid, engineering, and of course, boat handling and mission planning were our priorities.”

Webb and his fellow instructors wanted the students to have the knowledge of basic small unit boat operations. They made a course that would test the individual operator on his ability to meet the demands placed upon him.

“It means nothing if you can bench press a diesel engine, unless you know what the white smoke coming out of it means,” said Webb. “We only wanted better than what we had. None of us could have envisioned that our effort would culminate into the community we have today.”

Webb doesn’t take all the credit for close-looping the community, but he is known as one of the fathers, and even

grandfathers, of SWCC.

“It’s a test-tube baby with many men’s DNA in its history,” said Webb. “Some of those donors are still on active duty today, and some served and sacrificed long before I was born.”

Looking at the past history of the SWCC community, there is a consensus that the community will improve the technology, crafts and training like it has in the past five decades to stay ahead of adversaries.

Threats to American assets and interests will always remain, but SWCC operators keep their tools sharp and ready. One of the men taking the helm is Chief Warrant Officer Michael Andre, assigned to Naval Special Warfare Command.

“One of the best ways to maintain superiority on the battlefield is to stay ahead of the competition when it comes to technology,” said Andre. “Fortunately for our community, we have been very successful in conducting NSW operations with very sophisticated equipment. The NSW community has very intelligent people, both active

duty and DOD employees, who are constantly developing and researching new gear and equipment. This equipment has been an essential element toward fighting the Global War on Terror.”

Webb emphasized that with a tough screening process for manpower and increasing demands for operators, NSW strategically works to solve this issue through a rack-and-stack priority system. This maintains and sustains SWCC operational requirements and deployments all over the world.

“Over the past few years, SWCCs have been working with all sorts of other forces,” said Andre. “This has always been the case, but more so during the Iraq War than in previous years. I see this becoming a trend in the future, as it is part of the SWCC mission set. We don’t just support SEALs, contrary to popular belief; we support all of SOF within the U.S. military. Although we don’t advertise the nature of our operations, theater commanders throughout the globe have taken notice of our efforts downrange.”

In another evolution, SWCC has been transitioning from foreign internal defense to conducting more security force assistance operations. Andre added that SWCCs’ ability to conduct intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance has grown exponentially compared to the past and believes it will continue to grow in the same direction.

“Our new NSW future craft will be harder to detect by the enemy, faster and more technologically advanced than ever before,” said Andre. SWCC also plays a critical role in international SOF operations and diplomacy.

“SWCCs continue to deploy and train partner nations downrange,” said Webb. “We conduct [joint combined exchange training] all over the globe, and teach other countries how to shoot, move and communicate. We do this by conducting [security force assistance], which is one of our primary missions. This mission has never gone away and is really the bread and butter of our community.”

According to a study done by the Council on Foreign Relations, SFA provides SOF capabilities for more surgical strikes, which could significantly lessen the need for large-scale military action in the future.

“We have detachments in Africa, South America, Asia, and Europe training other countries how to drive boats and take care of their equipment,” said Webb. “If we can teach them to protect their coastlines and rivers from terrorists and extremists, we can help deter terrorists from entering their country and bordering countries as well.”

This fiftieth anniversary celebrates the brotherhood of

the SWCC past and present. Gray, the president of the Combatant-Craft Crewman Association, wants all past and present boat operators to remember sacrifices paid in full. Webb agrees.

“When asked, most people will tell you the history of today’s Special Boat Teams traced back to World War II PT boats and Vietnam-era coastal and river patrol boats,” Webb said. “No doubt, they are a large part of our recent history and our ties to NSW. But I have always been taught, and prefer to believe, our lineage goes all the way back to the birth of our nation.”



Special warfare combatant-craft crewmen from Special Boat Team 12 prepare to patrol the beach during a casualty assistance and evacuation scenario at Naval Special Warfare Center, Coronado, Calif., Dec. 10, 2008. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Michelle Kapica.



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Master Sgt. Thomas Case, Tactical Air Control Party Airman, 18th Air Support Operations Group, coordinates aerial command and control while deployed as part of a joint task force during Operation Enduring Freedom. U.S. Air Force photo.

TACP receives second Silver Star

*By 1st Lt. Katrina Cheesman
24th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

Master Sgt. Thomas Case, a tactical air control party Airman in the 18th Air Support Operations Group here, received his second Silver Star medal Nov. 13, 2014, for heroic actions during a 2009 deployment to Afghanistan at Pope Army Airfield, N.C.

The Silver Star medal is the U.S. military's third highest military decoration for valor. It is presented for gallantry in action against an enemy of the United States. There have been 67 Silver Stars presented to Airmen for actions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Maj. Gen. H.D. Polumbo Jr., Ninth Air Force

commander, presided over the ceremony, making Case the only TACP in the Air Force to receive two Silver Stars.

“Master Sgt. Case answered his Nation’s call and defended his country with his life. He is the embodiment of our legacy of valor and will always be part of our proud heritage,” Polumbo said of Case’s second Silver Star. “If you look at the Airman’s Creed, there are a couple lines in there that are particularly important to me when you consider Sergeant Case’s actions: ‘Not leaving an Airman behind;’ shielding other troops to keep them alive during a firefight...that’s our Airman’s Creed. He epitomizes our warrior ethos and is the ‘Wingman, Leader and

Warrior’ our Airmen want to follow.”

For Case, it’s not a matter of another medal. In his eyes, he has done nothing more than what is asked of him.

“It’s recognition for doing your job,” Case said. “You wake up, you get the mission and you go do it.”

He joined an elite group as the third Airman and the seventh U.S. military member to receive two Silver Stars since Sept. 11, 2001.

During his 2009 deployment, Case was embedded with a U.S. Army Ranger unit. Inserted by helicopter onto the high mountains in Afghanistan the night of June 17, Case and his team of Rangers were to capture or kill enemy combatants and to destroy their mountain camps.

After climbing up nearly 1,000 feet of mountainous terrain, carrying heavy equipment, body armor and weaponry, Case realized they were off route, and using the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft, he redirected the team.

When they took enemy fire from higher ground, Case remained exposed to enemy fire to ensure he knew the enemy’s position for an air strike.

Despite the wires on his radio being seriously damaged, making it nearly impossible to communicate with the aircraft, Case troubleshooted the issue while machine gun rounds hit the ground and trees one meter from him. Once ensuring the enemy’s position was communicated correctly, he called in close air support from an AC-130 gunship.

Throughout the night’s mission, Case stood up multiple times while under fire to ensure the safety of his team members, whether to provide them cover or to make sure the rounds from the aircraft hit enemy positions.

During the battle, while communicating with multiple aircraft overhead and returning fire with his M-4 rifle, he spotted two enemy fighters bounding down the mountain toward his ground force commander. The TACP stepped forward to protect the commander from gunfire and eliminated the threat.

“Even at that time, I was a little bit older than most of the guys,” said Case, a senior NCO with 18 years of service. “So, I’m a little paternal. It was automatic for me to step in front of the commander.”

When the enemy repositioned themselves to

higher terrain and began throwing grenades down the mountain slope, even after six more dangerously close air strikes on the enemies, Case realized he needed to have eyes on the enemy position. While under direct fire, he climbed 50 meters up a 60-degree incline with near-zero visibility from the dust to join the lead fire team. He fixed his radio and directed four AC-130 air strikes, and then threw a grenade to eliminate incoming insurgents just seven meters away.

At the time of his gallant actions, he was assigned to the 17th ASOS, now the 17th Special Tactics Squadron, at Fort Benning, Ga.

Special Tactics TACP Airmen deploy with special operations forces to integrate air combat power and surface fires into the ground scheme of maneuver, enabling dynamic, synergistic, and lethal firepower on the battlefield. Special Tactics TACP support all three Ranger battalions, the 75th Ranger Regiment’s Reconnaissance Company, U.S. Army Special Forces Operational Detachment A teams, U.S. Navy SEAL Team platoons, and other special mission units.

TACPs perform all air-to-ground integration, surface-to-surface fire integration (artillery), rotary-wing and fixed-wing air combat support, naval gunfire, electronic warfare such as jamming and intelligence.



Maj. Gen. Harry Polumbo, Ninth Air Force commander, presented Master Sgt. Thomas Case, Tactical Air Control Party Airman, 18th Air Support Operations Group, with his second Silver Star medal, Nov. 13, at Pope Army Airfield, N.C. Case received the medal for gallantry in action during a 2009 deployment to Afghanistan. Photo by Airman 1st Class Ryan Callaghan.



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Members from 17th Special Operations Squadron fly an MC-130P Combat Shadow around the coast of Okinawa, Japan, Oct. 16, during a four-ship formation. All Pacific-based MC-130P Combat Shadow aircraft will be retired over the next year and replaced with the MC-130J Commando II. The flight marked the last time the Combat Shadows will conduct a four-ship formation at Kadena. Photo by Airman 1st Class Keith James.

17th Special Operations Squadron pays tribute to MC-130P retirement

*By Tech. Sgt. Kristine Dreyer
353rd Special Operations Group Public Affairs*

From providing helicopter air-to-air refueling to conducting long-range support of Special Operations Forces, the MC-130P Combat Shadow has provided a critical service to the U.S. military for nearly 50 years.

The 17th Special Operations Squadron highlighted the beginning of the MC-130P Combat Shadow

retirement with one final formation flight on Oct. 16, 2014 at Kadena Air Base, Japan.

“Today’s final 4-ship formation flight was the 17th Special Operations Squadron’s tribute to the heritage and legacy of this fine aircraft,” said Lt. Col. Nathan Colunga, 17th SOS commander. “This event marks the historic beginning of the end for the MC-130P Combat Shadow in the Pacific. It has served our command well, but ultimately it is time to retire the fleet and bring out

the MC-130J Commando II as its replacement.”

Built with 1960s technology, the MC-130P began its special operations career in the mid-1980s and went on to conduct critical air refueling missions in the late 1980s during Operation Just Cause in Panama and the early 1990s during Operation Desert Storm.

Since the early 1990s, the Air Force Special Operations Command looked to replace the aging aircraft with cutting edge technology, but the Combat Shadow managed to prove its worth within the special operations community time and again.

“Almost every aircraft in the Air Force inventory has been employed for a greater length of time and scope than initially expected,” said Mr. Stephen Ove, 353rd Special Operations Group historian. “The people make that possible. Right up to the date of its retirement, the Combat Shadow continues to remain a specialized air mobility platform called upon during the nation’s time of need. The ingenious designers, exceptionally trained operators and determined maintainers kept the Combat Shadow relevant in an ever-changing world.”

The Pacific-based Combat Shadows alone have supported more than a dozen named operations. From combat missions in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom to humanitarian assistance disaster relief operations across Asia, the Combat Shadow left its mark

in special operations history.

With an old airframe comes a long history that inspires and motivates those who contribute to its mission today. From the aircrew who execute the mission to the maintainers who enable it, each will have bittersweet thoughts of the Combat Shadow’s retirement.

“It’s not the most complex plane in the fleet, but we can complete some of the most complex tasks with it,” said Capt. Matthew Davis, a pilot at the 17th SOS. “It’s not very fancy or very modern, so it takes more out of you to fly, but it gives you more too. You grow with this plane and learn a lot from it. The Combat Shadow has proven its worth even at the end of its long career. That says a lot.”

“It is a great privilege to retire my airplane that I have been working on for the last few years,” said Staff Sgt. Sean Taylor, 353rd Special Operations Maintenance Squadron crew chief. “It will be sad and great to see her fly out of Kadena one last time to finally take a much needed break she has been working toward for the last 50 years.”

The last group of Combat Shadows in the Pacific will begin to leave for the “boneyard” at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., in October and the final MC-130P from the Pacific is scheduled to retire in April. The final MC-130P Combat Shadow in the Air Force is slated to retire in May 2015.



Four MC-130P Combat Shadows taxi through the water arch after completing a final 4-ship formation flight, Oct. 16. Over the next year, the MC-130P Combat Shadow aircraft in the Pacific will be replaced with the MC-130J Commando II. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Kristine Dreyer.



Navy Cross presented to MARSOC Special Amphibious Reconnaissance Corpsman

*By Lance Corporal Steven Fox
MARSOC Public Affairs*

Heroism; bravery; valor: these are qualities which are defined and made familiar to Marines and Sailors alike upon entering the service. They are further illustrated in the numerous chronicles of battles past, and the heroes of those battles. The servicemembers who embodied, and truly exemplified those noble qualities in the direst of circumstances – their stories have been immortalized in the citations of medals earned, and made famous by service members who stand in admiration.

The Navy Cross serves as a testament to its recipient's extraordinary heroism and valor displayed in combat. It is the second highest award a Marine or Sailor can receive, recognizing gallantry in combat, only to be surpassed by the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Less than 6,500 servicemembers aiding U.S. naval services have come to earn the Navy Cross in its 95-year existence. The individuals belonging to that small circle of recipients had braved gun fire, mine fields, overwhelming enemy advances – really, any number of situations presented in combat



Navy Chief Petty Officer Justin A. Wilson, Special Amphibious Reconnaissance Corpsman, 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion, received the Navy Cross aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif., Nov. 25. The Navy Cross is the second highest valor award, second to the Congressional Medal of Honor, and must be approved by the Secretary of the Navy. Photo by Marine Corps Sgt. Scott A. Achtemeier.

resulting in a bleak chance of survival – and performed unimaginable, heroic feats, almost always with a complete disregard for self-preservation.

Chief Petty Officer Justin A. Wilson, a native of Beloit, Kansas, joined that small circle Nov. 25, 2014, receiving the Navy Cross aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., for the heroic actions he displayed while supporting Operation Enduring Freedom, Sept. 28, 2011.

On that day, Wilson, a Special Amphibious Reconnaissance Corpsman with 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command (MARSOC), was on a patrol with Marine Special Operations Team (MSOT) 8113. Wilson voluntarily set out with Staff Sgt. Nicholas Sprovtsoff, the MSOT's explosive ordnance disposal technician, and Staff Sgt. Christopher Diaz, a Military Working-Dog handler attached to MSOT 8113, to clear an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) near an Afghan Local Police checkpoint in Helmand province.

Upon approaching the IED for disposal, a sizable explosive detonated.

Wilson's award citation described what happened next, and reads, "despite being disoriented by the dust and overpressure from the blast, and knowing the enemy's tactic of emplacing multiple IEDs in proximity, Petty Officer Wilson immediately left the safety of his position and searched the checkpoint until he located the severely wounded EOD Tech."

Upon locating Sprovtsoff, two additional team members ran through the likely bomb-ridden area to assist in rendering aid, and removing the EOD Tech from the kill zone.

During the attempt to move Sprovtsoff to safety, Wilson's anticipation of multiple emplaced IEDs was realized and the second explosive detonated.

"I knew what lay ahead. I think they [Diaz and

Sprovtsoff] knew what lay ahead and I think everybody knew what was going to happen that day," Wilson said to the audience, after receiving the award. The second blast severely wounded Wilson and mortally wounded his teammate. Wilson, even after sustaining serious injuries, paid no mind to his own welfare, and proceeded to move his teammate to safety, where he coursed through life saving procedures until the Marine succumbed to his wounds.

Still not certain of the condition of the other two team members, or if any other IEDs remained, he immediately returned to the checkpoint in search of his fellow teammates.

"This is a man who literally ran through multiple IEDs with complete disregard for his own safety, he didn't hesitate for one second to run to the sound of the guns," said Maj. Gen. Joseph L. Osterman, commander of MARSOC.

When Wilson reached his fallen comrades, he soon realized there was nothing more he could do to save the lives of his teammates, and only then did he allow for the treatment of his own wounds.

Two of the Marines who died that 28th day of Sept., 2011, Diaz and Sprovtsoff, felled by the explosions of this same IED incident, posthumously received Bronze Star Medals with combat distinguishing devices, received by their families in the same ceremony. Both Diaz and Sprovtsoff received the awards in

recognition of their willing and courageous advancement into danger.

"[Hero] is a word we tend to use pretty frequently these days, or we have for the last 10 years. There have been a lot of folks who have done heroic things," Osterman said. "But I think as you listen to the citations today, these are genuine and true heroes."

Wilson is the first Sailor assigned to MARSOC to be awarded the Navy Cross, joining his Marine brothers as the seventh service member within MARSOC to receive the medal.





A U.S. Marine Critical Skills Operator with 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion, Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, executes a double-bag static line (DBSL) jump, during a DBSL parachute training course, Aug 26, conducted in rural Arizona. The DBSL course was an introduction to the High Altitude, High Opening insertion method used by Special Operations Forces.

MARSOC Marines take to the air, acquire HAHO insert capability

*Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Steven Fox
MARSOC Public Affairs*

“One minute,” shouted the jumpmaster – his voice competing with the incessant hum of the aircraft.

Marine Critical Skills Operators with Bravo Company, 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion, Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, aboard the plane, held out their right index fingers, acknowledging the one-minute countdown to their final jump of the Double-Bag Static Line (DBSL) parachute training course.

The light at the ramp shone green and, one-by-one, CSOs leapt from the rear of the aircraft into the night sky, gliding toward the black Arizona desert below.

On the ground, 1st MSOB paraloft parachute riggers scanned the sky with thermal and nightvision goggles, looking for jumpers.

“I have one-two-three-four-five-six good ‘chutes,” announced the rigger who first spotted the jumpers.

Those with nightvision capabilities kept a close, attentive eye on the jumpers as they began to execute the landing of their final and most difficult jump of the course.

Along with a mobile training team of Marine instructors from Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., the 1st MSOB paraloft personnel coordinated and conducted the 11-day point of instruction.

The course, which took place Aug. 19-29, in rural Ariz., started with several days of classes, parachute packing, and emergency procedure tutorials and drills. Before the Marines could execute any jumps, it was necessary for them to gain a complete conceptual understanding of the way a DBSL HAHO jump is conducted, and what to do if something went wrong.

“The intent of this course is to be able to take a basic parachutist and give them the information needed, and the ability to jump a ram-air canopy via static line,” said the 1st MSOB Paraloft chief. “It bridges their capability from the low level parachuting they already know, to the High Altitude, High Opening (HAHO) jumps.”

HAHO jumps allow a team of jumpers to establish a flight pattern, and the ability to travel together over long distances to an offset location.

The Bravo Company’s Executive Officer (XO) explained, “It offers them an opportunity, as they’re in the air, to do long distance navigation. With HAHO, they’re able to stay consolidated for a longer period of time, which increases their likelihood of landing together.”

Halfway through the course, the CSOs conducted “slick” jumps – with no combat gear –to familiarize themselves with jumping and navigating to the drop zone.

“After a certain amount of slick jumps and gaining a certain level of confidence, we start adding the complexities of the combat equipment,” explained the paraloft chief. “That consists of their ruck sack, which is placed inside of a container called a parachutist drop bag, their weapon, secured to their side, and supplemental oxygen.”

Though the Marines never jumped from an altitude high enough to require supplemental oxygen, it was essential the CSOs understood the difficulties of jumping with the cumbersome equipment for future jumps, which will require a supply of oxygen.

Ultimately, this is the CSOs’ first step to developing an understanding in HAHO jumping. Applying everything they have learned to more advanced HAHO training, further refining their insertion capabilities is what follows.

“They’ll do follow-on training that enables them to operate within their teams so they can actually start looking at the tactical side of it, not just the actual capability of jumping, but how to use this as an actual insert method on the mission itself,” explained the XO.

More specifically, the CSOs will start jumping from higher altitudes, traveling longer distances, carrying mission-critical equipment, all under cover of darkness and ensuring the training more closely resembles real mission conditions, the XO went on to say. And once every Marine hits the drop zone, numerous considerations must be accounted for, as that is when the mission truly starts. The jump is not the mission; that’s just a way to get to a desired location.

As the CSOs continue to refine their HAHO insertion skills, they increase their value as operational assets to commanders while forward deployed. The potential missions for deployed MARSOF require expertise in a variety of insertion techniques.

“It is a capability we need to have so we can be the force of choice that the commander goes to,” said the XO. “Whenever any contingency operation comes up, or any emergent mission arises, we want to be prepared for the worst-case scenario.”

Sustaining a force-of-choice status, and an excellent reputation requires constant self-examination, explained the XO.

“We are continually doing a mission analysis and looking at what capabilities we have, and what our capability shortfalls are, and we will continue to address those so we are as mission capable as we can be,” he said. “That starts with considering everything from your capabilities, and your actual readiness and preparedness, to your level of professionalism that you portray in everything you do.”



Critical Skills Operators with 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion, Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, wait aboard a CASA 212 aircraft in the process of gaining altitude to conduct a double-bag static line jump, Aug 26.



USSOCOM transition team invests in SOF warriors

*Story and photo by Gunnery Sgt. Reina Barnett
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

November marked Warrior Care Month, a time to recognize wounded, ill, and injured warriors – and those who care for them – for their service, sacrifices and achievements. This year’s theme was “A Show of Strength,” recognizing the fortitude that these servicemembers exhibit during their journey toward recovery.

In the pursuit of physical, emotional and spiritual health, wounded warriors may also face the reality of an unplanned career transition from military to civilian life following their injuries. Forming its genesis in January 2012, the three-member transition program, a part of the United States Special Operations Command’s Care Coalition Team, works closely with companies across the country to ease that transition, planned or unplanned, for former SOF men and women.

Army Lt. Col. Kimberly Moros, the chief of transition and community outreach for the Care Coalition, said it is important to help find wounded SOF team members rewarding careers and provide any assistance in their most critical time of need.

“Any wounded, ill, or injured SOF servicemember is eligible for transition initiatives,” said Moros. “After the servicemember enters their medical evaluation board, they can step over to transition assistance, while still on active duty.”

The transition team has four main pillars in the program: fellowship opportunities, re-training and education, employment assistance, and outreach to public and private organizations across the United States.

The fellowship program allows servicemembers to gain valuable experiences in the private sector, which increases their chances of viable employment if they do transition out of the military unexpectedly. Transitioning from the military to business world is a cultural shift, said Moros.

“Our job is to create a personal profile for our [men and women] based on their goals and objectives for their transition,” she said. “We are here to guide them in that process.”

With more than 162 business opportunities across the



Working at the Mobile Forensics Workstation at his office in Tampa, Fla, retired Army Staff Sgt. Nathan Cruz works to extract texts, emails, images, and all data from confiscated cell phones in an effort to collect evidence necessary to charge and put child predators behind bars.

U.S., thanks in part to the team’s networking efforts and partnerships made, former SOF members have completed 132 fellowships. They’ve been offered 619 employment opportunities, and 177 men and women have gained employment following service in the SOF community and to our nation.

“I’ve witnessed some beautiful things in this job,” said Moros. “There is one guy who knew he couldn’t continue on active duty, but wanted to go home to Chicago since he could no longer continue with his [SOF] team.”

As a result of the fellowship program, he got to go back home, had two companies vying for his skills, and picked the company he wanted to work for. The most important thing is that he witnessed a seamless transition and his family was taken care of. The families go through so much stress already ... this helped ensure there was limited stress on everyone.”

Retired Army Staff Sgt. Nathan Cruz, a computer forensic analyst for the Department of Homeland Security Investigations, went through the Care Coalition’s transition program and said it didn’t take long for him to decide that he had to do something after being medically retired from the Army.

“I have three kids ... I want to help my kids out, send them to college, and I’m not one to just sit around,” he said.

My advocate called me and told me about the Human Exploitation Rescue Operative Child Rescue Corps (HERO) program. I thought, ‘sure, why not?’”

Cruz, who served as an MH-47 Chinook crew chief with the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne), in Fort Campbell, Ky., sustained multiple injuries stateside after an accident, soon after returning from deployment.

Nineteen surgeries later, Cruz said, the relationships formed as a result of his involvement with the Care Coalition have been nothing short of amazing.

“The advocates are wonderful. They would show up to my house, take me to my appointments, and do a lot for me,” he said.

Speaking of two of his advocates, he says they’re more like family, and refers to one as his ‘big brother’ and another as his ‘stepdad.’

Some veterans decide on pursuing higher education. Here, too, the transition team has tapped into their many resources and collaborated with one of the nation’s top schools. The COMMIT Foundation and Stanford Graduate School of Business have teamed up to present ‘Stanford Ignite Post 9-11 Veterans,’ a certificate program teaching innovators to formulate, develop, and commercialize their ideas. The program exposes veterans to both the fundamentals of business, and the practical aspects of identifying and evaluating business ideas and moving them forward.

“Eight of our Care Coalition guys participated in this program,” said Moros. “They were surprised by what graduate school was like, and the educators at the school were surprised by what these former Special Operators brought to the table.

I really see a shift in education ... that the traditional education model is going to be permeable,” said Moros, speaking of the wealth of knowledge, talent, and experience SOF members bring to the civilian workforce. Schools are now saying, ‘you have what we seek to find: adaptability, leadership, decision-making skills, perseverance’ ... all those things that cannot be taught in college. That’s what these SOF members bring.”

Many, like Cruz, continue higher education or training programs, but that too, has its own set of challenges.

Having suffered some memory loss from his accident, and having difficulty retaining information was an obstacle Cruz decided to tackle if he was going to pursue his new career.

“I told my advocate, ‘I don’t think I’m going to make it,’ but I decided to give it a shot. It took a big effort on my part; I spent 12-13 hours a day studying in order to pass the

required certifications in order to be in this program,” he said.

The one year fellowship program taught Cruz how to execute search warrants, conduct undercover work, and retrieve evidence.

Professional realignment does not come without its unique challenges, however. The complex obstacles faced when making the military-to-civilian transition can force one to balance considerations such as: goals, obligations, and responsibilities; taking into account family, finances, geography, aspirations, and education.

Moros attributes a lot of the success stories to the great partnerships formed between USSOCOM and companies that are strong supporters of our wounded, saying the companies are networking among themselves to support our nation’s servicemen and women.

“Companies are having conversations among themselves, introducing ideas about employing our wounded, ill and injured, and these little links set us up to help our SOF members,” she said. “Companies are saying, ‘Why should we as taxpayers, pay for all of this education and training of our Special Forces, and not implement it into the business sector?’ Companies now understand that,” said Moros.

Retired Army Col. James McDonough, the senior director at The Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University, understands all too well the importance of easing into the civilian workforce after serving in the military. In a 2012 interview with The New York Times, McDonough said, “The process of separating from military service is often termed as a transition, implying something akin to moving steadily along a continuum. In reality, the experience is abrupt – one day you’re in; the next you’re out – and often involves completely starting over. For too long, we’ve made separating from military service an individual task, one that is supposed to occur over a few days. It needs to be a collective task.”

Cruz echoed the importance of the entire team.

“Even though I’m hired, they [the Care Coalition], calls and checks on me to see how I’m doing, or if I need anything.”

USSOCOM’s Transition Team has definitely adopted the ‘collective’ mindset, and with former SOF members employed by pharmaceutical, insurance, financial management companies, and leading computer companies, there are no doubt the partnerships and opportunities are proving successful.

“Many of our servicemembers who participate in our fellowship program, become employed, or return to school, and that’s a success story,” concluded Moros.



SORDAC nets DoD's highest award for excellence in acquisition

*By Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

The Special Operations Research, Development and Acquisition Center (SORDAC) at U.S. Special Operations Command was recognized Dec. 9, in a Pentagon ceremony with the highest level award within the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology & Logistics.

“The sustained excellence by SORDAC is second to none within the Department,” said James Geurts, USSOCOM acquisition executive. “This award truly embraces the commander’s priorities, ‘The right people, skills, and capabilities ... now and in the future.’”

“Additionally, the award exemplifies the SORDAC ‘Truths,’ that humans are more important than hardware,” added Geurts.

Despite dynamic mission demands and budget uncertainties, SORDAC continues to achieve its vision of being the recognized expert and trusted provider to the finest SOF the world has ever known. As such, 2014 marks SORDAC’s fourth consecutive year for recognition and validation from the highest levels within OSD-AT&L.

With a team of less than 400 members, SORDAC professionals have not only fielded numerous military



The Honorable Frank Kendall, under secretary of defense for acquisition, technology & logistics presents James Geurts, acquisition executive, U.S. Special Operations Command, the 2014 Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Award. To Geurts’ left is Jim Smith, deputy AE, USSOCOM and Lt. Gen. Thomas Trask, vice commander, USSOCOM. Courtesy photo.

items and systems, but have executed more than 500 programs and projects, overseen nearly \$9 billion in funds, and awarded \$3.1 billion in contracts in the last fiscal year alone.

“To win this award one time is a feather in your cap;” said Geurts, “to win it four years in a row is unheard of and speaks directly to SORDAC’s commitment to its workforce and ensuring we have the best acquisition workforce in the world to support our warfighters.”

SORDAC member receives unique recognition from United Kingdom

British Maj. Gen. John Patterson (left), head of the Joint Forces Command Capability Branch, presents the Four-Star British Joint Meritorious Commendation Award to Hugh Stallworth (right), a key member of the International Operations Division in U.S. Special Operations Command’s Research, Development and Acquisition Center, Nov. 6, in London. The award, by General Sir Richard Barrons, commander of the United Kingdom’s Joint Forces Command, was presented in recognition of Stallworth’s dedicated service as the National Program Coordinator for UK-U.S. Special Forces Equipment Capability, Memorandum of Understanding.

Stallworth was further recognized for three years of tireless efforts to complete negotiations of a multi-lateral Special Operations Forces Capability Development MoU between Australia, Canada, UK, and U.S. Special Operations Commands. Due to Stallworth’s efforts, the UK and U.S. have realized cost avoidance, exceeding \$400 million since the MoU was signed in 2004, while ensuring significant technological advantage against common adversaries. This is the first time a non-UK civilian has been awarded this commendation by the UK JFC.



Enterprise Management graduates have bigger goals in mind

By *Kent Dolasky*
JSOU University

In the fall of 2011, the leadership of U.S. Special Operations Command threw out a challenge ... to create the best educated force in the world.

In a remarkably short time, the Joint Special Operations University Enlisted Academy has matched leadership's challenge and has the data to prove it. The JSOU-EA met the challenge by ramping up its programs from one course to four courses in a career education program. The final course to be launched under the initiative, The Enterprise Management Course, focuses on E-7 SOF operators and enablers.

Reviewing survey data from the first three iterations of the course, the instructors uncovered a surprising fact. Ninety-two percent of graduates reported they had either completed their degrees or were now enrolled in a bachelor's completion program. This is a noteworthy leap from 34 percent with bachelor's degrees prior to starting the course.

This leap in college completion and enrollment is made possible by three lines of operation: The instructors, articulation agreements and academic advising.

The instructors teach at the mid-baccalaureate level and mentor the students each step of the way. The four instructors are all prior SOF operators and hold degrees at the master's or doctoral level. They fulfill former Command Sergeant Major Chris Faris' vision of providing lessons that are "early to need," meaning the course lessons precede real world application. For example, students learn about campaign phasing and strategy before they are assigned to a Theater Special Operations Command. The level of instruction gives students confidence they can complete a bachelors program.

Agreements stipulate 12 to 15 transferable college credits through three partnering institutions: Norwich University, University of Charleston - West Virginia and Excelsior College. With these credits, and those recommended through Joint Service Transcripts or the Community College of the Air Force, students are discovering they are just 30-36 college credits (10-12 courses) from graduating with a meaningful degree, even if

they've had no previous college education.

Figuring out college credit and degree programs are where JSOU's Academic Advisor, Katie Carson comes in. Carson ensures all students are aware of their options, she contacts students who have not completed a degree and provides them with choices.

"Most students have no idea how close they are to earning their degrees. After we complete the evaluation process, most are able to transfer around 75 credit hours before we even begin discussing credit for the Enterprise Management Course," Carson said. "The admission process can be intimidating for someone who has never attended a university. However, once we have done our jobs, the student has a very bright light at the end of the tunnel moving toward his or her degree."

The Enterprise Management course's major lessons include: Critical thinking, leadership, strategy, irregular warfare, negotiations, campaign phasing, Department of State history and culture, change management and Preservation of the Force and Families. The course runs five times a year and can accept up to 100 students per iteration. The course is designed for E-7s, and E-6s who have completed the Joint Fundamentals Course, as well as E-8s and E-9s. Those interested in attending can register through the JSOU public site at <https://jsoupublic.socom.mil/Pages/Courses.aspx>.

Feedback for the course has been very positive, and according to one graduate, "This course was very well executed; the lessons were pertinent to SOF leaders, I enjoyed the interaction with other students and it provided a wide field of view on topics relevant to U.S. SOF, regardless of service component."

While only time will tell if JSOU's Enlisted Academy will maintain the 92 percent higher education enrollment rate, they stand ready to assist in making sure USSOCOM has the best educated force in the world.



Katie Carson, JSOU's Academic Advisor



Volckmann's WWII campaign a mastery of unconventional war

*By Dr. James Herson
USSOCOM Research and History Office*

It can be argued that Capt. Russell W. Volckmann, an American Army officer stationed in the Philippines just prior to the beginning of WWII, may be one of the most experienced practitioners of unconventional and guerilla war to ever to wear a U.S. uniform. Participating in the defense of the Philippine Islands first as an advisor and then commander of an ill-supplied and poorly trained Filipino regiment, Volckmann learned a great deal about the Philippines and its people. After fighting a credible delaying action with his regiment against surging Japanese invasion forces, Volckmann fought his way to Bataan to join the final defense. Upon arrival, Volckmann was reassigned as the G-2 of the 11th Filipino Infantry Division. When the decision to surrender was made, Volckmann received permission to escape. Accompanied by Capt. Donald D. Blackburn, Volckmann went into northern Luzon to establish a resistance movement.

Despite three years of suffering chronic malaria and other tropical ills following his dangerous escape from Bataan, enduring little U.S. support until the last six months of the war, and facing a cunning and ruthless enemy, Volckmann nonetheless prevailed.

Bereft of weapons, communications, medicine and other conventional forces wherewithal, Volckmann used what he did have; patriotic Filipinos willing to place themselves in harm's way, jury-rigged communications, scavenged supplies, and throughout his three-year ordeal continuously reinforced the belief among the population that the U.S. would return to liberate the Philippines from the Japanese. Volckmann waged an unrelenting and ultimately successful guerrilla war against the Japanese in Luzon.

In a post war account he shared, "Resistance movements and guerrilla warfare are as old as war itself. Splendid examples from biblical times down through the centuries, are recorded in history. In every example there are common denominators—the passion of an aroused people, a cause, courage, suffering, sacrifices, determination, and inspired leadership. There are few fields involving human conflict that hold more interest and deserve closer

analysis than does the field of resistance and guerrilla warfare. By applying old and tried principles together with new techniques, resistance and guerrilla warfare have become potent tactical and strategic weapons of importance comparable to the new weapons of the atomic age."

Evading numerous Japanese patrols with a price on his head and periodically suffering from bouts of debilitating tropical illnesses, Volckmann eventually was able to contact stranded or escaped U.S. troops and sympathetic Filipinos and began to build a resistance network. With fellow escapee Blackman by his side for most of this time in the Philippines, Volckmann began to develop an island-wide intelligence net in order to discern Japanese strengths and weaknesses while slowly building small units capable of raids, ambushes and collaborator executions along with intelligence gathering. Paramount to their efforts was consolidating command of the various resistance factions in Luzon into one organization, the United States Army Philippines Northern Luzon (USAFFIP(NL)).

Volckmann focused his efforts on putting the enemy on the defense, making the Japanese expend resources trying to eliminate his forces while killing them whenever possible.

Through the power of his personality and determination, a deep understanding of Filipino human terrain, and knowledge of conventional and guerrilla operations, Volckmann developed a highly effective indigenous force that harried, battled and eventually beat a numerically superior Japanese force with the help of late arriving U.S. conventional forces in 1945. Volckmann's USAFFIP(NL) while growing to 22,000, killed more than 50,000 Japanese troops, caused 150,000 enemy to withdraw, and was considered by the 6th U.S. Army Commander as a highly effective regular division with exceptional capabilities. Russ Volckmann was one of our founders of modern-day SOF.



Col. Russell W. Volckmann



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Editor's note: Honored are Special Operations Forces who lost their lives since October's Tip of the Spear.



A Multi-Purpose Canine handler with U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command carries his canine up a grated ladderwell during training aboard Stone Bay, Camp Lejeune, N.C., Sept. 16. As MARSOC continues to demonstrate their capabilities and versatilities, MPC handlers with the command are preparing themselves and their canines for new areas of operation. Photo illustration by Marine Corps Sgt. Scott A. Achtemeier.