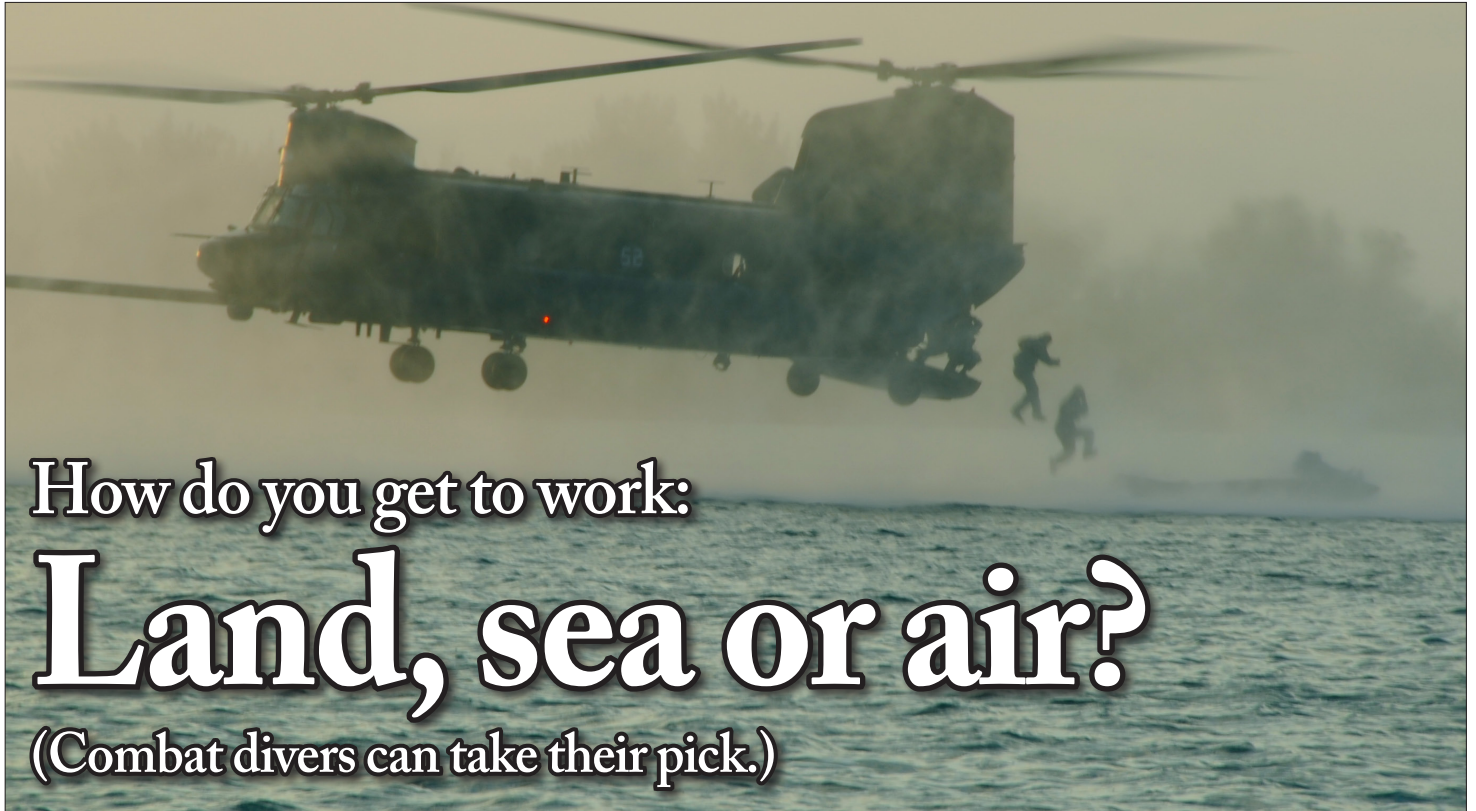




# Inside SWCS

The official newsletter of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy  
Special Warfare Center and School

Feb. 14, 2011  
Issue 6, Volume 2



## How do you get to work: Land, sea or air? (Combat divers can take their pick.)

Students attending the Combat Diver Qualification Course in Key West, Fla. leap into the ocean as part of a helo-casting exercise Feb. 9. Conducted at the Special Forces Underwater Operations School, the CDQC is a six-week course in most any form of military waterborne infiltration. Course curriculum includes open and closed circuit breathing systems and tactical underwater movement using various watercrafts.

**By Maj. David Butler**  
SWCS Public Affairs Officer

It has been said that the combat diver was created a long, long time ago. As the story goes, the prehistoric human, commonly referred to as the caveman, blindly walked off a small cliff into a body of deep water. Some struggled for air and drowned to their death. Some climbed the cliff to safety. A few enjoyed their new circumstance; even thrived. The combat diver was born.

“Most guys walk, but combat divers fly horizontally through the water,” said Master Sgt. J.T. Reed, the operations officer at the Special Forces Underwater Operations School in Key West, Fla.

The common key to success as a student and instructor at the Special Forces Underwater Operations School is the ability to think and overcome adversity in some of the most difficult conditions.

The cadre train combat divers, supervisors and medical technicians. They train a wide variety of students ranging from cadets to senior non-commissioned officers from every facet of Army special operations.

Students graduating from the course will provide their operational units with a wealth of waterborne skills, like the ability to move and navigate underwa-

ter using open and closed circuit breathing systems, enter the water via helo-cast or static-line parachute, and move tactically using various watercrafts.

The type of person who succeeds as a combat diver does not have to be a champion swimmer. A successful diver has to possess the mental facilities to take comfort in ambiguity.

It’s not necessarily about physical strength, intelligence or fortuity, although these attributes are important. A successful diver has a unique ability to maintain his mental faculties when submerged in an environment not fit for humans.

“The whole thing about this school is that you have to overcome your fears,” said Sgt. 1st Class William Plaag, Jr., the senior instructor at SFUWO. “The water is the great equalizer.”

“There are a lot of things that could go wrong in the ocean. A diver has to be relaxed enough to think and manage issues for himself and his team,” said Sgt. 1st Class Sean Hurd, a combat diver instructor.

The training begins with very basic tasks in a con-

trolled environment. As the Soldiers progress, each task becomes more difficult and the environment more demanding.

When the Soldiers are ready, they enter the open waters; at first shallow, then as deep as 130 ft. Once their underwater skills are mastered, they combine surface and underwater operations to become operationally capable of most any form of military waterborne infiltration.

Five times a year, about 60

“common air-breathers” report to Naval Air Station Key West, Fla. to attend the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School’s Combat Diver Qualification Course.

After six weeks, the capable graduates—perhaps descendants of those cavemen who decided to swim—return to an Army special-operations unit, ready to take on most any task involving waterborne operations.

“At the end of the course, these guys epitomize the three lightning bolts we wear on our [Special Forces] patch; they are capable of infiltrating by land, sea or air,” Reed said.

**“There are a lot of things that could go wrong in the ocean. A diver has to be relaxed enough to think and manage issues for himself and his team.”**

**Sgt. 1st Class Sean Hurd**  
Combat Diver Qualification Course instructor

# Fort Bragg garrison commander to talk post BRAC changes

By Dave Chace  
SWCS Public Affairs Office

SWCS personnel are spread across the United States training the next generation of special-operations Soldiers, and while many of our cadre members won't be in the 910 to see Fort Bragg swell

**Fort Bragg BRAC Update**  
Col. Stephen J. Sicinski, Fort Bragg garrison commander  
10 a.m., Tuesday, Feb. 15  
John F. Kennedy Auditorium

over the coming year, the bulk of SWCS staff, leaders, students and support specialists will see it in every

traffic jam and construction project throughout Fort Bragg and Fayetteville, N.C.

The 2005 round of Base Realignment and Closure recommendations may not be new news, but the Spring 2011 relocation of the U.S. Army Forces Command and U.S. Army Reserve Command to Fort Bragg is getting closer with each passing day.

If no Fort Bragg units were deployed, over 60,000 people would be working on Fort Bragg today. And while the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) relocation to Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. will slightly ease the growth, FORSCOM and USARC will bring over 8,000 more workers through Fort Bragg checkpoints each morning.

Yikes.

Col. Stephen J. Sicinski, Fort Bragg's garrison commander, will deliver a brief to SWCS employees on Tuesday, Feb. 15 to tell you how this will affect you in the coming weeks, months and years. The brief will be held after the Civilian of the Quarter award ceremony at 10 a.m. in the John F. Kennedy Auditorium in Kennedy Hall.

These are some of the topics that will be covered in the brief:

- Construction and relocation timeline
- Projected access control point delays
- Legal, retirement and ID card services
- Changes to road infrastructure
- Security
- Transportation efficiencies
- PX and commissary changes
- Fort Bragg schools and day care centers
- Recreational facilities for Soldiers, civilians and dependents

Come prepared with any questions you believe would be relevant to the entire command; there will be a question-and-answer period following brief.

The objectives of the 2005 BRAC Commission were to better integrate active and Reserve units, rearrange forces to be able to act around the globe, make the military more flexible and agile, and to improve cooperation between military service branches while training and fighting.

## SWCS Cadre Profile



Sgt. 1st Class William Plaag, Jr., left, is a Special Forces medical sergeant, dive supervisor, dive medical technician, and the senior instructor for the Special Forces Underwater Operations School, meaning he's got a hand in each block of instruction the school offers.

## Sgt. 1st Class William Plaag, Jr.

Senior Instructor, Special Forces Underwater Operations School



Sunny Key West, Fla. is an alright assignment, but Sgt. 1st Class William Plaag, Jr. is really looking forward to his return to the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and the chance to work alongside some of the divers he's helped train as the senior instructor for the Special Forces Underwater Operations School. A seasoned Special Forces medical sergeant, Plaag knows that the realistic training conducted at the school, when conducted safely, will help special-operations Soldiers stay alive in missions around the world.

### On the ups and downs of being an instructor:

"I get a sense of satisfaction. Sometimes it's frustrating because the students may be having a bad day or they may be not be into the subject ... Then there are times when I can see their eyes just light up and they realize what we're trying to teach them, and can execute the task to standard. Then I get personal satisfaction because I've shown someone else how to do something."

### On training his future peers and teammates:

"At first, I didn't want to come to SWCS, but over time you start realizing that the product we're putting out is important. All of our instructors came from different [Special Forces] Groups' dive teams and now we're all here, trying to promote a better product to send back to the groups. When we go back to these groups to take over a team, we are going to see a lot of guys we put through the course, so you definitely want to put out quality guys that are trained properly."

### On the best week of CDQC:

"Advanced close circuit, tactical team infiltration week. We take [the students] from operating in two-mans teams and put up to 12 guys together to work as a group. I play the role of the team sergeant, they're the team, and we go out and do team training. These are the things that I'd like to do when I go back to a team. That's a fun week."

### On being one with the ocean:

"I grew up in New Jersey and North Florida and spent all my summers in the ocean. When I was 15 years old I was life-guarding, I was surfing, and I grew up swimming competitively. All those things contribute to my interest in combat diving."

### On Key West; is it all that it's cracked up to be?

"Key West is OK. It's nice because you are surrounded by water, and the water activities are unlimited, but it's also very touristy. You need time to get off the rock. I live away from the madness."

## Upcoming Events

| Sunday | Monday                          | Tuesday   | Wednesday | Thursday  | Friday                        | Saturday |
|--------|---------------------------------|---|-----------|---|-------------------------------|----------|
| 13     | 14                              | BRAC Briefing and Civilian of the Quarter Recognition Ceremony<br>10 a.m.<br>JFK Auditorium | 16        | CA and MISO AIT Graduation<br>10 a.m.<br>JFK Auditorium                     | Training Holiday              | 19       |
| 20     | Presidents Day                  | 22  | 23        | Special Forces Senior Leader Course Graduation<br>11 a.m.<br>JFK Auditorium | 25                            | 26       |
| 27     | SWCS Key Leader Off-site begins | 1   | 2         | 3   | SWCS Key Leader Off-site ends | 5        |