



TIP OF THE SPEAR

BULL SIMONS AWARD 2014
COL. ROBERT L. HOWARD

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

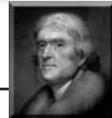


U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS



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Tip of the Spear



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(Cover) Medal of Honor recipient and Special Operations legend, Army Col. Robert L. Howard, is USSOCOM's 2014 Bull Simons Award recipient. The Bull Simons Award is USSOCOM's highest honor and was first awarded in 1990. The award recognizes recipients who embody "the true spirit, values, and skills of a Special Operations warrior." Col. Arthur "Bull" Simons, whom the award is named after, was the epitome of these attributes. Photo illustration by Ana Bruno-Stump.

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U.S. and Dominican Republic Paratroopers board a C-130 Hercules aircraft in order to conduct an airborne operation March 18 as part of a month-long Joint Combined Exercise Training (JCET) operation at the 4th Paracidista FARD, Comando de Fuerzas Especiales, Fuerza Aerea training facility, on San Isidro Air Force Base, Dominican Republic. Nearly 100 paratroopers took part in the operation. Following the jump, there was a wing exchange between the Dominican and American counterparts.

SOCSOUTH and Dominican Republic militaries conduct training exchange

*Story and photos by U.S. Navy Lt. Joseph Nawrocki
SOCSOUTH Public Affairs*

Green Berets assigned to 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne), in support of Special Operations Command South, trained with Dominican Republic Special Operations Forces as part of a month-long Joint Combined Exchange Training program focusing on medical skills, marksmanship, and airborne operations from Feb. 17 to March 20 at San Isidro Air Force Base, Dominican Republic.

JCETs allow U.S. military personnel to improve their

teaching skills and gain regional knowledge, and also serve as a great opportunity to learn from their Dominican counterparts. In addition, they permit U.S. SOF personnel to build relationships and gain military and cultural experiences.

“This JCET gave us a chance to train and interact with our Dominican partners,” said a 20th SFG (A) team leader. “We lived in their barracks, ate in their dining facility, and taught classes in their native language of Spanish, which provided an excellent training opportunity and built an enduring relationship.”

This JCET was centered on three areas; the first was

medical training that focused on splinting, pressure dressing, tourniquets, and casualty transportation. The second was marksmanship training, which focused on more advanced skills like shooting on the move and engaging multiple targets. The month-long exchange concluded with a combined airborne operation between the Dominican Republic and American SOF members, an event that has not taken place since 1994.

To help augment the Green Berets, members from the Puerto Rico Air National Guard and the 95th Civil Affairs Brigade (Airborne) also deployed to the Dominican Republic. The PRANG was responsible for all air transportation movements and the Civil Affairs members assisted in training the Dominicans for the combined airborne operation.

Because of the significance of the event, the newly appointed U.S. Ambassador to the Dominican Republic, James (Wally) Brewster, visited the drop zone and met with both U.S. and Dominican servicemembers.

“The importance of the jump and JCET is to continue to build the technical experience and relationships between both our special forces,” said Brewster.

Accompanying the ambassador was Maj. Gen. Ramon

M. Hernandez, the commanding general of the Dominican Air Force.

“We are privileged to share this experience with the U.S. military. Our purpose is to have both forces work together as a unit in order to always maintain stability in the region,” Hernandez said.

At the end of the month-long training exchange, a combined airborne operation was conducted in which 72 Dominican and 22 American SOF personnel jumped 1,500 feet from an American C-130 airplane onto the San Isidro Air Field, located just outside of Santo Domingo.

During the JCET graduation ceremony, there was a wing exchange between the Dominican and American SOF members. Members that earned their jump wings were pinned by their SOF counterpart, this included both basic and jumpmaster wings. Special Operations Command South’s Deputy Commander, Air Force Col. John Poast, received his Dominican basic jump wings and was pinned by Dominican Maj. Gen. Hernandez.

1st Lt. Luis Gomes-Diaz of the Dominican Republic said, “I would like to give thanks to the United States for all of the classes and the jump. We hope to continue to learn from our U.S. counterparts.”



A jumpmaster assigned to the 95th Civil Affairs Brigade conducts pre-jump training and exiting procedures from the ramp of an American C-130 Hercules aircraft to Dominican Republic Special Operations servicemembers over San Isidro Air Force Base, Dominican Republic, March 18.



President Juan Orlando Hernandez, President of the Republic of Honduras, speaks with a Green Beret from 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, April 7. President Hernandez visited the TIGRES (Toma Integral Gubernamental de Repuesta Especial de Seguridad) training compound to meet trainees and was given a tour by Soldiers from the 7th SFG (A) and Junglas from the Colombian National Police. The TIGRES will be the force of choice for the Honduran government with seeking to capture high value targets such as narcotrafficking and criminal leadership.

Honduran President visits TIGRES, Junglas and 7th Group Green Berets



A Jungla from the Colombian National Police observes TIGRES trainees practice close quarters battle during a tour for Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez, April 7.



A Jungla from the Colombian National Police conducts class with TIGRES trainees April 7.



A Jungla instructor from the Colombian National Police speaks with Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez, April 7.



A Green Beret from 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) instructs TIGRES a trainee during advanced rifle marksmanship training April 7.



A Green Beret from 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) walks with TIGRES trainees during advanced rifle marksmanship training, April 7.



A Green Beret from 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) observes TIGRES trainees during advanced rifle marksmanship training during a tour for President Juan Orlando Hernandez, President of the Republic of Honduras, April 7.



Maj. Jeffrey Hammonds, 75th Ranger Regiment, lays a wreath to honor those who gave their lives at Pointe Du Hoc during the 70th Anniversary of D-Day ceremony, June 07.

Ranger Regiment honors D-Day assaulters at Pointe du Hoc

*Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Michael R. Noggle
75th Ranger Regiment Public Affairs*

Twenty-five Rangers from the 75th Ranger Regiment gathered to honor the 225 Rangers who assaulted Pointe Du Hoc on June 6, 1944.

Elements from 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions

participated in the D-Day landings at Omaha Beach, Normandy. Companies from D, E, and F were given the mission to scale the cliffs of Pointe Du Hoc, which overlooked Omaha Beach, and destroy German gun emplacements. Though viewed by many as an impossible mission, they were to scale the cliffs four miles west of Omaha Beach at Pointe Du Hoc and destroy six 155 mm

artillery pieces, which were aimed at U.S. ships and landing sites.

“The cliffs behind me and the observation afforded from this position commanded the flanking shores of Omaha and Utah Beaches,” said Maj. Jeffrey Hammonds, 75th Ranger Regiment, during his ceremonial speech. “It was considered key terrain for this reason.”

According to the plan, if the operation was a success a signal would be sent back to higher headquarters acknowledging that the point was secured and reinforcements could arrive.

“That was the plan,” said former Pfc. Ray Tollefsen with 2nd Battalion and Pointe du Hoc assaulter. “The rest of us had to have word by radio or signal to come here.”

The operation demanded the utmost in Ranger courage and skill as the assault troops climbed up the sheer rock face while under intense machine gun, mortar, grenade and small arms fire.

Despite losing two of their 11 landing crafts and supplies, the companies overcame German resistance and climbed the 90-foot cliffs only to find that the gun emplacements had been moved. Continuing to search for the gun positions, the Rangers advanced inland to cut off German routes to the landing areas.

After just more than two hours on land, a two-man Ranger patrol had located five of the howitzers a mile from the beach area. Unattended but ready to fire, the Rangers destroyed the sights on all the guns and placed grenades in two others.

Even though the Rangers had accomplished their primary mission within two hours of landing, higher headquarters never received the signal. This led the remainder of 2nd Battalion and 5th Battalion to push forward onto Omaha Beach.

“No word ever came, so the leadership made the decision to head to the beach,” Tollefsen said.

The Rangers at Pointe Du Hoc continued to hold ground when German forces arrived and began counterattacks. Of the 225 Rangers that began the mission, only 90 survived after two-and-a-half days of fighting when reinforcements arrived.

Knowing there might be a chance to go back for his fellow Rangers at Pointe Du Hoc, Tollefsen and 29 other Rangers proceeded to assault the beaches of Omaha. Under extreme enemy fire, their landing craft pilot was killed and the gate had dropped, exposing the Rangers to machine gun fire.

“As soon as the ramp went down, the machine gun fire came in so the rest of us scrambled out the best we could,” he said. “We were in deep water at the time but buoyant enough to get to somewhere where we could stand.”

Tollefsen never made it past the beaches of Omaha. He

was struck by enemy fire and nearly bled to death. Luckily a fellow Ranger treated his wounds and saved his life.

Tollefsen first returned to these D-Day sites during the 50th anniversary, and returns on occasion to visit the areas where his fellow Rangers had fought.

“I have been impressed with each of the ceremonies and the people who are here, especially the present day Rangers,” he said. “It’s amazing what the Pointe and what D-Day has meant to the world.”

“The entire operation was hard to fathom, but the few exceedingly well-trained and hand-selected Soldiers (were able to execute the mission). Those are our heroes, the United States Army Rangers,” Hammonds said. “Today, we pause to recognize the special accomplishment of these truly special men.”



The 75th Ranger Regiment color guard stands at the Pointe Du Hoc ceremony to remember the Rangers who risked their lives scaling the cliffs.



*The crowd attending the Special Operations exercise.
Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence.*



SEALs dive into Tampa Bay. Photo by Marine Corps Master Sgt. F.B. Zimmerman.



International Special Operations Week

BY USSOCOM Public Affairs

Special Operations Forces (SOF) from the U.S. and partner nations around the world descended on Tampa May 19 – 22 with a goal of building trust and partnerships.

The United States Special Operations Command hosted the fourth International Special Operations Forces conference at the Tampa Convention Center.

Delegates from 84 nations attended the weeklong conference, focusing on the theme of

“Strengthening the Global SOF Network.”

The conference, which last occurred in 2012, allows leaders from throughout the global SOF community to meet, learn from each other and advance a coordinated effort to meet security challenges.

The highlight of the conference was the Special Operations exercise with representatives from 16 nations training in tactics in land, sea and air scenarios. The exercise took place behind the Tampa Convention Center on May 21.





An international operator takes part in the exercise. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence.



Coalition operators aboard a "Little Bird" helicopter. Photo by Greg Clarkson.



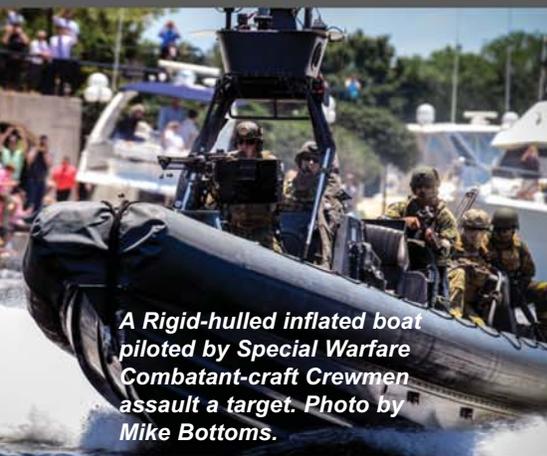
Coalition operators use a Special Purpose Insertion Extraction device. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence.



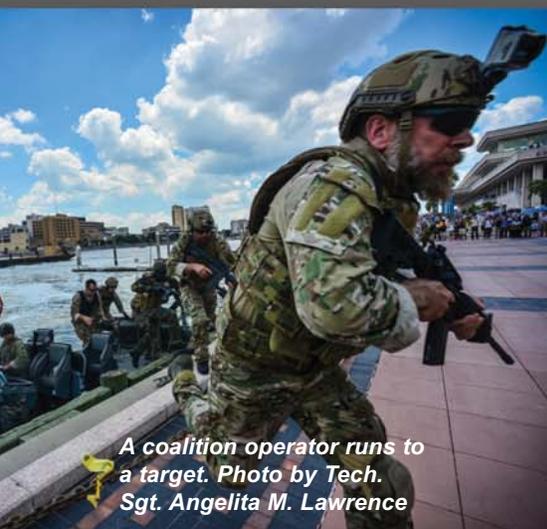
A coalition team takes down a target floating on a barge. Photo by Mike Bottoms.



A coalition team fast-ropes onto a barge in Tampa Bay. Photo by Mike Bottoms.



A Rigid-hulled inflated boat piloted by Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen assault a target. Photo by Mike Bottoms.



A coalition operator runs to a target. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence



An international team of operators are extracted from an objective. Photo by Mike Bottoms.

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Howard carries a prisoner of war in Vietnam. Courtesy photo.



Medal of Honor recipient, Special Operations legend receives SOCOM's 2014 Bull Simons Award



Sgt. 1st Class Robert Howard receiving the Distinguished Service Cross. Courtesy photo.

*By Mike Bottoms
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

Tough, quiet, humble and a Soldier's Soldier are all descriptions friends and colleagues use when talking about Medal of Honor recipient and Special Operations legend, Army Col. Robert L. Howard. Those attributes and Howard's lifetime achievements in Special Operations led to his selection as USSOCOM's 2014 Bull Simons Award recipient.

The Bull Simons Award is USSOCOM's highest honor and was first awarded in 1990 and has since become an annual tradition. The award recognizes recipients who embody "the true spirit, values, and skills of a Special Operations warrior." Col. Arthur "Bull" Simons, whom the award is named after, was the epitome of these attributes.

Howard was born on July 11, 1939, in Opelika, Ala. He entered military service on July 20, 1956, following in the footsteps of his father and four uncles who had served in World War II. He retired on Sept. 30, 1992 and died Dec. 23, 2009.

Howard's legendary combat skills were honed on the battlefields of Vietnam. Howard was assigned to Military Assistance Command, Vietnam—Studies and Observations Group (MACV-SOG). While there, he was recommended for the Medal of Honor on three separate occasions. The first two nominations were downgraded to the Distinguished Service Cross. Howard reluctantly accepted the third nomination for the Medal of Honor, ever mindful he would be pulled from combat duty once he accepted the medal.

MACV-SOG ran Special Operations including reconnaissance and hatchet force missions which involved a Special Operations team of American and South Vietnamese members who operated in small covert operations along the Ho Chi Minh trail. The units specialized in search and destroy missions and in locating missing American servicemen in Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam.

“MACV-SOG was responsible for the top secret, covert, deniable operations conducted cross border outside Vietnam,” said John Plaster who served in MACV-SOG from 1968-1971. “Beginning in 1965 SOG conducted recon and hatchet force missions and other Special Operations missions along the Ho Chi Minh trail corridor in Laos which was the primary route the North Vietnamese used to supply their troops in the south.”

Howard, although originally trained as a supply sergeant, became an integral part of the recon and hatchet force teams.

“At Kontum (Forward Operating Base) Robert Howard was a supply sergeant and he went out of his way to help us to get ready to run our missions,” said retired Army Sgt. Major Billy Greenwood, part of MACV-SOG in 1967 and 1970-71. “I left for a couple of days and came back and asked where’s Howard? Well, the last recon team was short an American so he went with them. I came to find out he had run as many missions as the recon members, but he was the only man in the outfit who knew supply, so he would take care of the supply room and get everything ready and the next team would go into the field and he would strap on with them.”

Howard was an excellent supply sergeant, but where he really excelled was as a recon Soldier.

“A classic example of what he did, he was wounded in the hospital, but he thought he was doing pretty good, so he goes AWOL from the hospital and went down to Pleiku to eat in the chow hall and two men pulled up on a motorbike and the one on the back throws a grenade,” Greenwood said. “Everybody ducks for cover except Howard who drew a weapon



Sgt. 1st Class Robert Howard in Vietnam. Courtesy photo.

and shot the man on the back causing the bike to turn over. The other man starting running down the road and Howard ran about a half-mile down the road and killed him. Then he came on back, got in the chow line, got his chow and didn't even report it.”

The battle where Howard earned the Medal of Honor was related in *Medal of Honor: Portraits of Valor Beyond the Call of Duty*, by Peter Collier. Howard was knocked unconscious by an exploding mine. Regaining conscious, his hands were injured by shrapnel and his rifle was destroyed. He heard his lieutenant groaning in pain a few yards away. He then saw an enemy soldier with a flamethrower burning the bodies of American and South Vietnamese soldiers who had just been killed.

Howard was unable to walk, but he threw a grenade toward the soldier with the flamethrower and managed to grab the lieutenant. As he was crawling with him toward shelter, a bullet struck his ammunition pouch, blowing him several feet down a hill. Clutching a pistol given to him by a fellow



Sgt. 1st Class Robert Howard carrying a weapon in Vietnam. Courtesy photo.

Soldier, Howard shot several North Vietnamese soldiers and got the lieutenant down safely to a ravine.

From a 2009 Pentagon Channel documentary entitled *Recon: Courage Under Fire*, Howard described the action that earned him the Medal of Honor.

“First of all I was ambushed and I was unconscious ... my weapon was blown all to hell and then I realized what in the world did I survive to blow that weapon up like that? And then at that point and time I could hear the lieutenant screaming and I knew I had to totally ignore the enemy situation and my wounds ... he’s quite a ways from me and I couldn’t walk so I had to crawl over to him,” said Howard. “And so as I start dragging him away as we get attacked by an enemy frontal attack ... a bullet riddled the center of my body and the ammo pouches blew up with the ammunition and actually picked me up off the ground and blew me away from the lieutenant ... Now this was the split second I didn’t want to go back, but to even hesitate and not to go back makes you feel so

bad and you got to do what’s right and it was right. If I didn’t do it there was nobody else there to do it. Who else is going to do it? You got to make a decision. Everybody else was either dead or wounded or they were in a position trying to help me and I know the condition of the lieutenant and I know no one could get the lieutenant but me and I didn’t want to go back, but I did.”

President Nixon awarded Howard the Medal of Honor March 2, 1971, in a ceremony at the White House. Howard’s daughter, Melissa Howard-Gentsch remembers attending the ceremony and what they did that day.

“When President Richard M. Nixon came down and I looked up at my father’s face, it was solid as stone, but his eyes, I could see in his eyes so many thoughts going on in his brain,” Howard-Gentsch said. “One thing we did that day was go to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and I had asked him, ‘what is this?’ He explained it to me. I could feel all the emotions, these men had families, these men had served their country and I sort of got the feeling of what it was about. As we walked off he patted on my shoulder and said ‘you get it?’ and I said, ‘I do get it.’”

Serving in Special Operations for another 20 years, Howard would be in charge of advance Ranger training, the Special Forces Qualification Course and command Special Operations Command - Korea.

“I was immediately impressed with the reverence the senior Korean officer gave to Colonel Howard,” said Paul Wiseman, who served as a Special Operations Command-Korea intelligence officer. “When I arrived in Korea I was not familiar with the awards that Colonel Howard had received for his Vietnam service. It was later on I knew I was in the presence of a true American hero.

“Colonel Howard, always in my presence, was the utmost professional, yet the most humble of any of the senior officers I had come across or have since met,” Wiseman said. “I was in his office and I noticed his office was devoid of anything on the walls which kind of surprised me. He had one thing in his office, a picture of Audie Murphy. On the corner of that photo frame was a set of Audie Murphy’s dog tags given to him by the Murphy family. He pointed it out one day and said to me. ‘You know I’m just a Soldier. That man up there is a hero.’”

After retiring from the military, Howard was active in the Medal of Honor society as the organization’s vice-president.

“When I was president of the Medal of Honor society, we were contacted by the Armed Forces

Entertainment Network in Washington D.C. asking if we could get a group of Medal of Honor recipients that would like to visit the troops,” said Gary Littrell, Medal of Honor recipient and former president of the Medal of Honor Society. “He wanted to be back in uniform so bad and when he was talking to the troops it was leadership, it was positive motivation, it wasn’t war stories, it wasn’t I did this, I did that. It was as if he was their colonel.”

Those that knew him best still hold him in great esteem.

“Bob Howard commanded such respect due to his abilities, his courage, his spirit and he was always ready to go. You couldn’t hold him back,” said Plaster. “For those of us running on the ground ... Just the knowledge that if you

got into trouble, if you were wounded, left somewhere out in the jungle, that Bob Howard would climb on a helicopter and do whatever it took no matter the risk to himself to come get you was reassuring. That was the



President Richard M. Nixon presents Lt. Robert Howard the Medal of Honor March 2, 1971. Courtesy photo.

kind of guy Bob Howard was. You could count on him 100 percent no matter what.”

“Toughest man I ever met in my life. He was a Soldier’s Soldier,” Littrell said.



Melissa Howard-Gentsch accepts the Bull Simons Award on behalf of her father, the late Col. Robert Howard, from Adm. William H. McRaven, commander USSOCOM, May 21 at the gala dinner during International Special Operations Forces week. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence.

Remembering legendary Bull Simons

By Mike Bottoms
USSOCOM Public Affairs

USSOCOM presented its highest honor, the Bull Simons Award, to retired Col. Robert L. Howard on May 21st. The Bull Simons Award was first awarded in 1990 and has since become an annual tradition.

The award recognizes recipients who embody “the true spirit, values, and skills of a Special Operations warrior.” Col. Arthur “Bull” Simons, whom the award is named after, is the epitome of these attributes.

A career Soldier, Simons led Special Operations in World War II and Vietnam.

Born in New York City in 1918, Simons graduated from the University of Missouri in 1941 with a degree in journalism and served in the Pacific theater in World War II. He rose to company commander in the 6th Ranger Battalion and participated in several amphibious landings in the Philippines. On one noteworthy occasion, he and his men scaled a steep oceanside cliff under cover of darkness and overwhelmed a garrison of Japanese soldiers at the Suluan lighthouse.

Simons left the Army after World War II but returned to duty in 1951. He completed the Special Forces Officers Qualification Course in 1958 and took command of a detachment in the 77th Special Forces Group (Airborne). From 1961 to 1962, as head of the White Star Mobile Training Team, he served as the senior military advisor to the Royal Lao Army. His familiarity with the region would prove useful few years later.

In 1965, Simons returned to Southeast Asia as a member of Military Assistance Command Vietnam’s Studies and Observations Group. Serving under then Col. Donald Blackburn, Simons commanded OP-35, one of three operational directorates within SOG. For approximately two years, he led OP-35 on an interdiction campaign against the North Vietnamese Army along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos and Cambodia. OP-35 interdicted the trail by inserting “hatchet” teams and reconnaissance teams. The hatchet teams, composed of

Nung or Montagnard tribesmen led by a Special Forces noncommissioned officer, conducted hit-and-run raids against NVA units. The recon teams ran long range patrols scouting the trail but also “snatched” prisoners when the opportunity arose.

Simons left Vietnam in 1966, but he returned four years later as the Deputy Commander of Joint Contingency Task Group Ivory Coast — the Son Tay Raiders. The task force, commanded by Air Force Brig. Gen. Leroy Manor, was formed in the spring of 1970 after American intelligence had identified Son Tay Prison, near Hanoi, as a prisoner of war detention camp. After six months of

planning and rehearsals, the task force deployed to Thailand Nov. 18.

Two nights later, the task force flew into North Vietnam. The assault group, led by Capt. Dick Meadows, landed in the prison compound and killed approximately 50 NVA guards, but found the compound to be otherwise abandoned. Meanwhile, Simons had landed with the support group in an adjacent school compound, which was teeming with Russian and Chinese soldiers. Simons and his team killed or repelled hundreds of these soldiers, eliminating the principal threat to the assault group.

The raiders executed the entire operation in 28 minutes, successfully faced an enemy force of approximately 350 men, and left with only two injuries. Although the raid at Son Tay failed to accomplish its principal objective, it sent a clear message to North Vietnam, and the treatment of American prisoners improved somewhat thereafter.

Simons retired from the Army in 1971, but he was to conduct one more special mission. In 1979, Mr. H. Ross Perot asked Simons to rescue two of his employees; the Iranian revolutionary regime was holding them in a Tehran prison and was demanding a \$13 million ransom.

In April of that year, Simons led a civilian rescue party into Iran and safely extracted the American hostages. Just one month later, Simons suffered a massive heart attack and died.

Previous Bull Simons Award recipients are: Mr. H. Ross Perot, Army Gen. Edward “Shy” Meyer, The Honorable John Marsh Jr., Army Col. Aaron Bank, Army Lt. Gen. Samuel Wilson, Air Force Lt. Gen. Leroy Manor, the Honorable Sam Nunn, the Honorable William Cohen, Army Gen. James Lindsay, Air Force Maj. Gen. John Alison, Army Col. Charlie Beckwith, Air Force Brig Gen. Harry “Heinie” Aderholdt, Army Command Sgt. Maj. Ernest Tabata, Army Maj. Gen. Richard Scholtes, Army Maj. Richard “Dick” Meadows, Air Force Col. John Carney, Army Maj. Caesar Civitella, Army Col. Chuck Fry, Army Maj. Gen. Eldon Bargewell, Army Maj. Gen. John Singlaub, Air Force Master Sgt. Scott Fales, and Army Chief Warrant Officer 5 Fred Arooji.



AIRBORNE



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Special Forces Vietnam veteran recognized with Distinguished Service Cross

*By Capt. Thomas Cieslak
7th Special Forces Group*

A Special Forces Vietnam veteran was presented with the nation's second highest military award more than four decades after his heroism repelled an enemy attack while saving the lives of his fellow Americans.

Retired Army Master Sergeant Patrick N. Watkins, Jr. was presented with the Distinguished Service Cross during a ceremony held May 22 at the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) compound on Eglin Air Force Base in Northwest Florida.

"The legacy of men like Pat Watkins and so many others is a direct and vital link to our present," wrote Brig. General Michael Turello, commander of Army Special Forces Command (Airborne), in an email regarding Watkins' legacy in the U.S. Army's Special Forces. "I am grateful to those who saw this award through as it further exemplifies a necessary commitment to never forgetting our soldiers and what they have accomplished in defense of our country and our allies."

Watkins was a member of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam-Studies and Observations Group on August 23rd, 1968, and serving as a staff sergeant with Headquarters, Headquarters Company, Command and Control North, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), when the compound he was located at was attacked by a North Vietnamese sapper force.

Watkins, though wounded in the initial assault, quickly organized a small reaction force, repelling the attack and rescuing wounded Americans while leading them through machine gun fire and grenades to a safe location.

Throughout the engagement, Watkins continued to engage and kill sappers from the enemy force while



*Retired Army Master Sgt. Patrick Watkins in November 1968.
Courtesy photo.*

repeatedly being wounded and is credited with fiercely charging and killing an onrushing NVA sniper.

Prior to the ceremony, Watkins and other MACV-SOG veterans were received by members of the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) at the group's compound where they observed a memorial conducted

by the 1st Battalion to honor Soldiers from the unit killed in Vietnam and Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

The MACV-SOG veterans spent the remainder of the day touring the compound and speaking with Green Berets of the 7th SFG (A) about their duties, equipment and recent missions.

The award ceremony, conducted in the group's chapel, was attended by other Vietnam veterans of the MACV-SOG, Watkins's family members and Soldiers from the 7th SFG (A), some having just returned from combat operations in Afghanistan.

"The Special Forces Regiment of today stands on the shoulders of such giants as Watkins and his fellow MACV-SOG veterans. These veterans gathered here today, to include Watkins, represent the history and heritage of the Special Forces as we know it," said Col. Robert Kirila, deputy commander of the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne). "These gentlemen are living national treasures and we can never thank them enough for their actions in Vietnam and the contributions they continue to make."

Turello spoke after Kirila, describing the heritage

today's Army Special Forces draw from the actions and heroics of the MACV-SOG before pinning the medal on Watkins.

Watkins then took the stage to thundering applause from the hundreds gathered in the chapel.

During his remarks, Watkins, whose codename was "Mandolin," recognized the fellow members of MACV-SOG in attendance, some of whom he served with in Vietnam. He spoke about a mission where his team, outnumbered and outgunned, was being pursued behind enemy lines. Watkins recalled when his teammate set a helicopter landing zone on fire with napalm to help facilitate the team's extraction from that intense firefight.

"We didn't come home and beat our chests about the things we did," said Watkins as he reflected on the secrecy of MACV-SOG, its missions and Soldiers. "When people asked about what we did, we said we were in Vietnam."

Sen. Bill Nelson's office was instrumental in the effort to recognize Watkins. The Senator and his staff, who have assisted in other efforts to recognize veterans, also received praise from Watkins for the help and service they gave him.



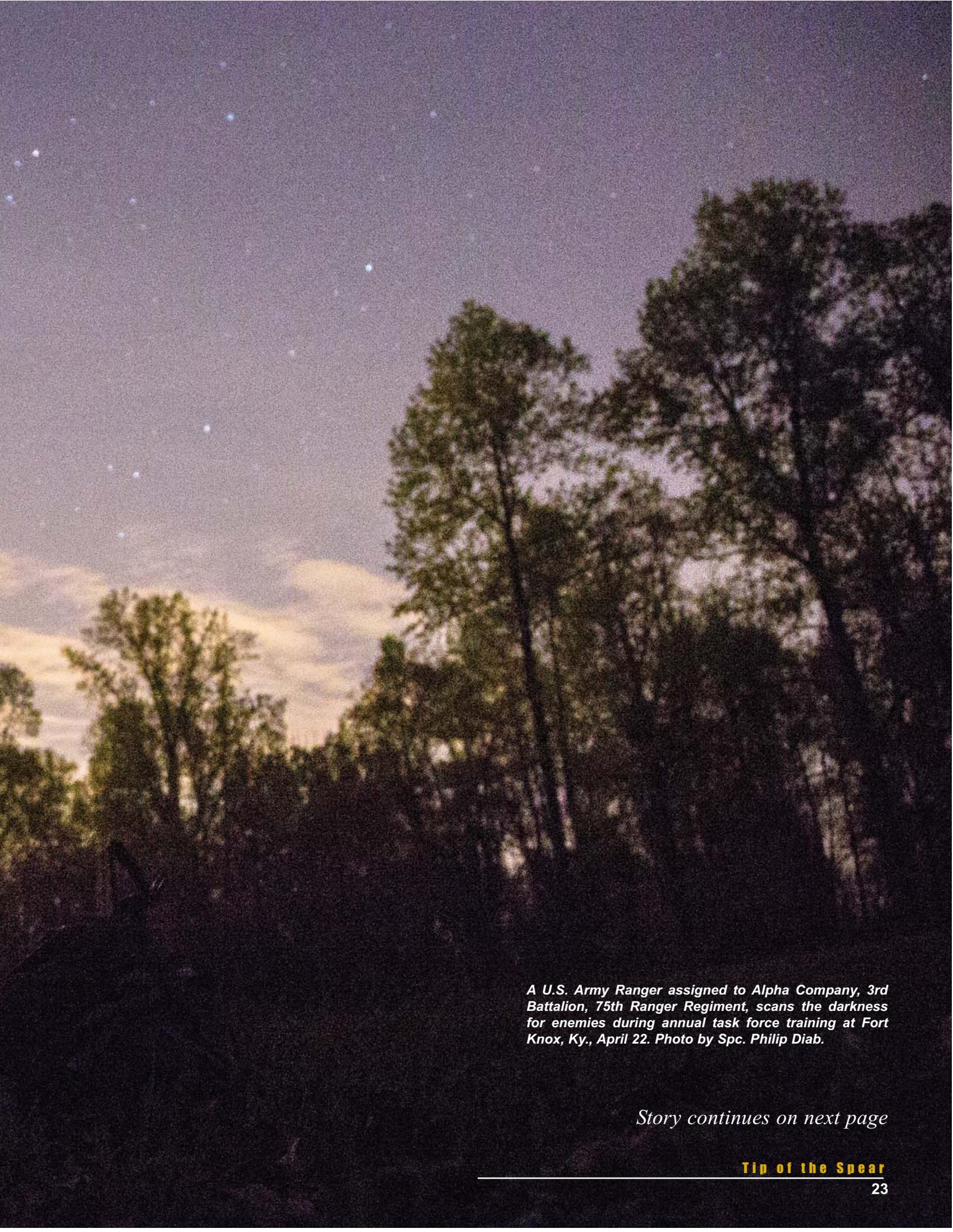
Retired Army Master Sgt. Patrick Watkins, (8th from right in uniform jacket) a Vietnam veteran and recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross stands with members of MACV-SOG after the award ceremony May 22 at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Samuel Lopez.

AIRBORNE



3/75 Rangers train for 19th Deployment





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.

Story continues on next page



U.S. Army Rangers, assigned to Delta Company, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, dismount Strykers during a training exercise on Fort Knox, Ky., April 24. The 3rd Battalion is undergoing annual task force training to evaluate how its Soldiers perform during operational situations. Photo by Pfc. Gabriel Segura.

*By Sgt. Jeffrey S. Moore
10th Press Camp Headquarters*

Approximately 800 special operations Rangers from 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, from Fort Benning, Ga.; 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, from Fort Campbell, Ky., and Air Force Special Operations Command from Hurlburt Field, Fla., conducted annual live-fire training at Fort Knox, Ky., from April 13-28.

The 75th Ranger Regiment (Airborne) is a lethal, agile and versatile special operations force that conducts forcible entry operations and raids across the entire spectrum of combat.

Rangers conduct various training exercises throughout the year to hone their skill set. The unit's exercise is an annual requirement that each battalion must conduct prior to deployment.

"In preparation for our next deployment, the battalion started training from the ground up," said Capt. George Puryear, a platoon leader with 3rd

Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. "We began after we returned from our last deployment starting with individual tasks; these tasks included individual marksmanship and physical fitness."

After returning from each deployment, the Ranger battalion begins working on the basics again. New recruits and leaders arrive to the unit and must learn to work as a cohesive unit. Numerous hours are spent on airborne operations, live-fire ranges and squad, platoon, and company-level rehearsals and exercises.

Normally conducted at Fort Benning, this year's battalion training exercise was conducted at Fort Knox, Ky., which offered numerous ranges and different scenarios for the Rangers.

During the two week training Rangers conducted numerous squad and platoon level rehearsals prior to conducting their live-fire exercises. They also utilized the small-arms ranges, conducted fast rope insertion/extraction special purpose operations (FRIES), shoot house areas, and villages similar to what they may see in Afghanistan. This training provides Rangers with skills necessary to perform

raids in areas of conflict.

“During this exercise we were working on platoon and company level training. We assessed our strengths and weaknesses to better prepare for our next deployment,” said Puryear.

These platoon and company level operations will test each Ranger’s knowledge of not only their individual tasks, but the tasks of the entire unit and supporting elements.

“As the platoon leader, I am looking at the platoon’s ability to synchronize fires and effects. This is our ability to utilize indirect fire such as mortars, and close combat aerial attack helicopters,”

said Puryear.

The aircraft involved includes helicopters such as Little Birds (AH-6), Black Hawks (MH-60), and Chinooks (MH-47); and, AC-130 Hercules, and C-17 Globemaster airplanes and other fixed wing aircraft capable of moving troops and providing close air support.

By the end of the exercise, Special Operations Soldiers are proficient in incorporating all of the skills acquired during the training to perform a simulated raid. The Ranger platoon and air support elements worked together to successfully complete their mission.



Rangers from 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, conduct fast rope insertion/extraction special purpose operations out of a MH-47 Chinook helicopter during the annual pre-deployment training in Fort Knox, Ky., April 17. Photo by Army Sgt. Jeffrey Moore.



A U.S. Army Ranger assigned to 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, climbs a mountainside during a training mission on Fort Knox, Ky., April 24. Photo by Pfc. Gabriel Segura.



A U.S. Army Ranger assigned to Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, provides security while conducting night operations, Fort Knox, Ky., April 23. Photo by Spc. Richard DeWitt.



USASOC Flight Company unveils C-27Js at open house

*By Maj. Emily Potter
U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command*

The United States Army Special Operations Command Flight Company (UFC) held an open house March 18 to unveil its new C-27J aircraft at Fort Bragg, N.C.. The UFC is the only unit in the Army to have C-27Js, which will replace its aging fleet of CASA-212s.

Representatives from across USASOC were present to hear about the capabilities and fielding of the C-27J, as well as the facilities plan to house the aircraft. Chief Warrant Officer 5 Curtis Adams, the UFC commander, said they held the open house for several reasons.

“The audience, the customers, are the stakeholders. They had to give up part of their budget for this capability. It’s important they understand what it brings. Also, as we start to work with this new aircraft, there are differences in the way we will conduct business.”

Brig. Gen. Clayton M. Hutmacher, USASOAC commanding general, reiterated this in his opening remarks. “This is a USASOC aircraft. It is available to support all USASOC units.”

Billy Johnson, USASOAC G3 aviation standards officer, is one of the first USAOAC personnel getting trained to fly the new C-27Js. “It’s very different from the CASA,” he explained. “Very detailed. It’s a flying computer. More capabilities. We have to learn those and work them into what we do every day.”

The first pilot training class consists of two active duty Soldiers, and two Department of the Army Civilians, all standards instructor pilots. According to Chief Warrant Officer 5 James Lindsay, that is because “we are not only the first students getting qualified in this aircraft, but we’re also validating the plan of instruction, making adjustments for future classes, working on our aircrew training manual, and developing unit Standard Operations Procedures.”

“It is equal parts a real privilege to get to fly this, but also a big task to get this program up and running,” explained Lindsay. “It is also equal parts exciting and terrifying. We need the program to succeed, there are a lot



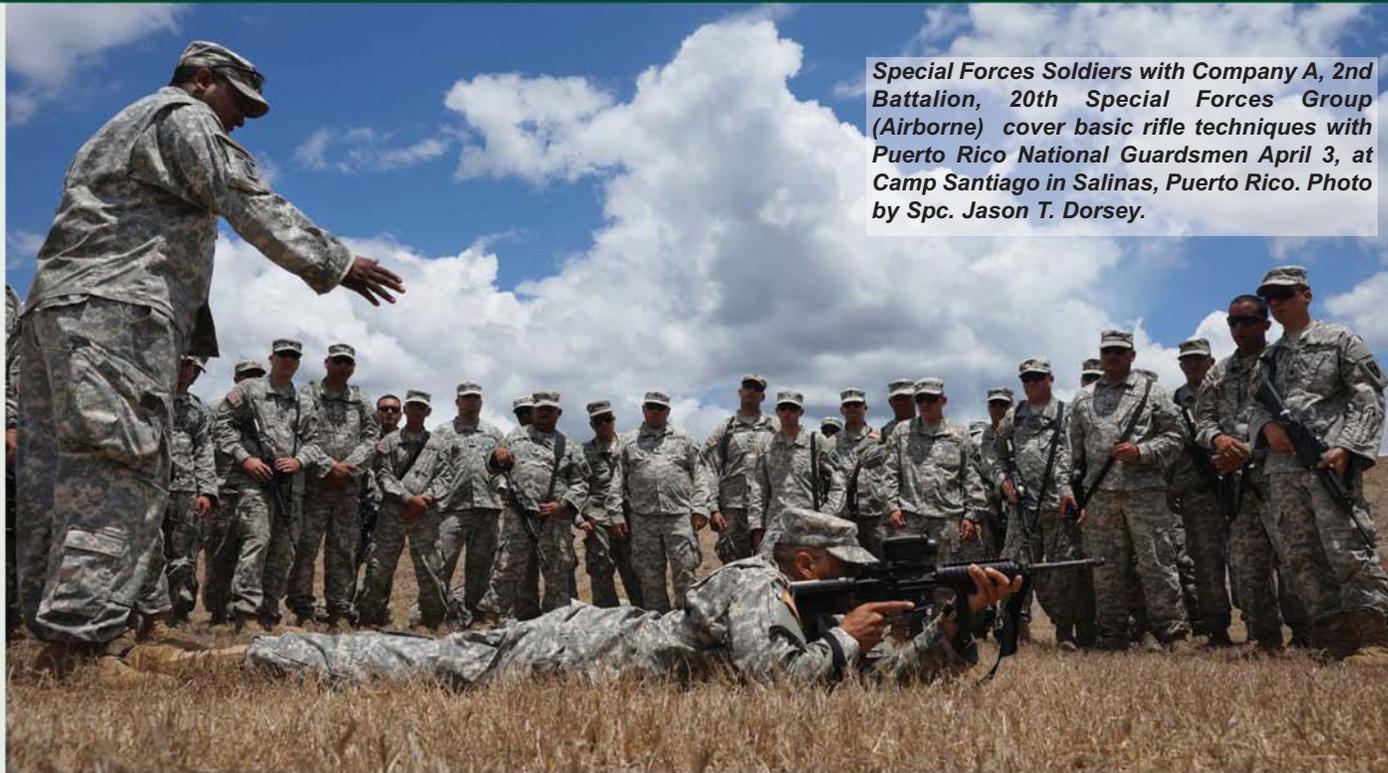
Brigadier Gen. Clayton M. Hutmacher, USASOC commanding general, addresses the audience at the C-27J open house March 18 at Fort Bragg. Photo by Army Staff Sgt Thaddius Dawkins.

of risks are involved.”

One person present at the open house who was instrumental in bringing the C-27Js to the UFC was Tom Brew, the USASOAC G8 project manager for non-standard aviation. “This is a decade in the making from when we originally identified the need,” he said. “From initially getting our requirements recognized by the Army, through the years of the aircraft going to the Air Force, and then the long fight to revalidate our requirements to get the aircraft and meet our mission.”

Before attendees were given the opportunity to tour the new aircraft and ask questions of the crew, Adams shared some lessons learned from the first airborne operations, conducted only weeks earlier. “One of the most important observations from the initial static line jumps is that a strong exit is required. With undisturbed high-velocity airflow (no deflector), a strong exit is necessary.”

Already, the C-27Js are an asset to the USASOC community. “Right off the bat, we can more than double our jumper load,” said Adams. “And they will pay dividends in the long run, as the costs to maintain the aging CASAs are more than what it takes to operate the C-27Js.”



Special Forces Soldiers with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) cover basic rifle techniques with Puerto Rico National Guardsmen April 3, at Camp Santiago in Salinas, Puerto Rico. Photo by Spc. Jason T. Dorsey.

Illinois SF train with Puerto Rico NG

*by Sgt. 1st Class Cassidy Snyder
Illinois National Guard Public Affairs*

Approximately 40 Illinois National Guard Special Forces Soldiers with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne), in Chicago conducted foreign internal defense training with the Puerto Rico National Guard, April 2-6, at Camp Santiago in Salinas, Puerto Rico.

More than 300 Puerto Rico National Guardsmen were familiarized with marksmanship training, mechanical and ballistic breaching procedures, military operations on urban terrain and close-quarter battle techniques.

“We were able to teach basic fundamentals to establish a baseline of proficiency to build upon in future training,” said a weapons sergeant with Company A, 2-20th. “They were very receptive and we were able to challenge their abilities.”

SF Soldiers shared techniques for more accurate and proficient shooting with the M16A2 rifle, M4 carbine, M249 squad automatic weapon and M240B machine gun.

“The tactical weapons training was the best part,” said Spc. Christopher Figueroa, with Headquarters and

Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 296th Infantry Regiment in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. “The opportunity to fire crew serve weapons was very beneficial and refreshing.”

Each unit said they gained language proficiency, because both English and Spanish were spoken throughout the training.

“This was the first time I had to use English for training,” said Spc. Eric Aponte, an infantryman with Company A, 1st Battalion, 296th Infantry Regiment in Utuado, Puerto Rico. “They have been great at explaining the training step by step and I learned a lot.”

In the past three years Company A, 2-20th, has deployed four operational detachments to Central America for long-term training missions, but this is the first time in more than 10 years the unit conducted training in Puerto Rico.

“There were long days with little sleep, but everyone enjoyed the training,” said 1st Lt. Alexis Avellanet, the executive officer for Company C, 1st Battalion, 296th Infantry Regiment in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. “We will take this back to our units and raise the standard of training.”

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



A Place of Peace

Remembrance Trail pays tribute to fallen Night Stalkers

By Michele Vowell
The Fort Campbell Courier

As Black Hawk helicopters flew overhead, Jazlyn Redd glided her index finger lightly over her father's name engraved on a plaque and posted on a young elm tree.

The 22-year-old spent a few precious moments in silence looking at the letters that spelled, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Steven B. Redd.

The 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) Soldier was 37 when he died Aug. 8, 2011, after his AH-6M Little Bird helicopter crashed at a live-fire range at Fort Benning, Ga., during a training mission.

"A lot of people remember my dad as being intense – an intense dude, very aggressive into his work," Jazlyn said. "But, I have those memories of him laughing and us having fun together all the time."

Those memories came flooding back as Jazlyn walked the new Remembrance Trail, located in a wooded area just outside the 160th SOAR (A) compound at Fort Campbell.

"Yes, it hurts. The pain will always be there," she said. "[The Remembrance Trail is] a way for me to come here and reflect and also to celebrate his life. To have that moment in private is a healing."

Sergeant 1st Class Tom Wegner, 160th SOAR (A), designed the mile-long Remembrance Trail, which features posted plaques with names of 94 fallen Night Stalkers.

Having known several of the fallen, the idea for the Remembrance Trail developed during his daily runs along the wooded area of post.

"I thought it would be great to put a trail out here where I could go and reflect ...," Wegner said. "I thought it would be even better to put the names of the fallen Night Stalkers out there so that no one forgets – so that we remember the names."

Armed only with a machete, Wegner spent nearly 17 months of his free time chopping down weeds and brush to carve out the natural pathway through trees, over hills and beside a creek.

"In December 2012, I started at the far end of the trail



Gold Star daughter Jazlyn Redd, 22, remembers her father, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Steven B. Redd, 160th Special Aviation Regiment (Airborne), at his memorial tree on the new Remembrance Trail just outside the 160th compound at Fort Campbell, Ky.. Redd, a Night Stalker, died in a training accident at Fort Benning, Ga. Aug. 8, 2011. Photo by Michelle Vowell.

and just started cutting with a machete ...," he said, smiling. "I didn't realize there were thicker portions of the woods, but ... I kept going and I got help along the way."

To put the finishing touches on the trail, Wegner reached out to his fellow Soldiers, like Staff Sgt. Richard Anderson, F Company, 1st Battalion, 160th SOAR (A).

"He gave me the opportunity to apply myself to it," the staff sergeant said. "He came up with a couple of ideas ... I kind of built onto those things and actually put hammer to nail. With help from a couple of friends, I had two bridges built and we put in some stairs ... leveled off some parts of the trail to make it easier for people to run on. We put in some entry and exit points with signs. We actually named each entry and exit point."

Anderson knew seven of the fallen Night Stalkers and was humbled that Wegner gave him the opportunity to help out with the trail landscaping.

"I was just motivated by the idea," he said. "I knew the same exact people he knew [who died]. They were really dear friends of mine. Really close friends. It broke my heart to see their families go through that loss ... There's

things out here that help the healing process. It brings a smile to my heart.”

The Remembrance Trail was formally dedicated May 20 with Wegner, Anderson and Gold Star Family members, relatives of the fallen Soldiers, were in attendance.

“We’ve got a long tradition in the 160th of remembering our fallen,” said Col. John Evans Jr., 160th SOAR (A) commander. “... Sgt. 1st Class Tom Wegner took on this labor of love really to give a place for contemplation and solitude for our Soldiers and guests and Families of our fallen to come and think about the people we’ve lost.”

Jazlyn and other Gold Star Family members placed rocks at the base of their loved one’s tree. On some of the rocks were painted the letters NSDQ – an acronym for “Night Stalkers Don’t Quit,” the regiment motto. Others had Black Hawk helicopters drawn on the stones and personal handwritten messages.

“As they place the rock on the ground, it’s kind of taking the load off of them – that weight that they carry with them after losing a loved one,” Jazlyn said. “It’s very healing for them.”

For Gold Star son Kyle Anderson, the Remembrance Trail offered him a place of peace.

“It’s a great place to come and just think and be alone with the spirit of all of the fallen fathers, sons, husbands and brothers here who have died to keep us free and keep us safe,” he said.

Kyle is the son of fallen Night Stalker Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael F. Anderson, who died Feb. 21, 1991, while serving as the flight lead of an MH-60L Black Hawk helicopter during Operation Desert Storm in Southwest Asia. The Soldier received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his extraordinary heroism on that day.

“I was nine months old. I’m 24 now and a proud Night Stalker son,” Kyle said. “... It never gets easier. It never gets OK. It never gets better. But things like this [Remembrance Trail] make it bearable ...”

Other Family members have placed the dog tags of their fallen loved ones onto one of the trail bridges. A variety of other memorials have also been added to the trail, Wegner said. There are some guidelines to follow before adding a memorial to the trail. Anyone interested in the trail should contact the 160th SOAR (A) Public Affairs Office at (270) 412-8108.

“I think everybody in this unit has thought at some point that they might not come back, but they still went willingly,” Wegner said. “I have a lot of respect [for these

fallen Soldiers]. I think it’s very important that we don’t forget them. I thought that it would mean a lot to the Family members.”

Although he believes his work is complete, Wegner hopes that the Remembrance Trail doesn’t stop at the 160th.

“Maybe we can reshape and redefine what a memorial is,” he said. “This memorial could stretch across the United States. It could be a mile here; a mile there. It could be 120 miles long ... It could be on post; it could be off post.”

Wegner and Anderson each said they hope that Soldiers, Gold Star Family members and other visitors stop by the Remembrance Trail and take time to relax and reflect.

“I hope they enjoy walking through it as much as I enjoyed building it,” Anderson said. “It’s something that’s going to change every year, so I hope they keep coming back.”

Kyle, who has moved away from the Fort Campbell area, said he plans to return to the Remembrance Trail.

“It’s a beautiful trail. It’s a beautiful idea,” he said. “For me, as a Gold Star son, it’s a beautiful reminder of we’re cared for, we’re loved and their sacrifice is not in vain. That’s something to keep me proud.”



Dog tags of the fallen 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment “Night Stalkers” are displayed on a bridge along the new Remembrance Trail near the 160th compound on Fort Campbell, Ky. Photo by Michele Vowell.



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND



A Basic Underwater Demolition candidate and a San Diego student high-five after surf passage at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, Calif. 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. Surf passage is one of the many physically demanding evolutions that are a part of the first phase of SEAL training.

San Diego students train with SEALs

*Story and photos by Petty Officer 1st Class
Michael Russell, NSW Public Affairs*

Naval Special Warfare Center hosted 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, May 10.

SDPD Juvenile Services, Southeastern Division, teamed up with the Naval Special Warfare Center to provide the once in a lifetime opportunity for more

than 190 School Safety Patrol students from the San Diego Unified School District.

“This means a whole lot to us and demonstrates our strong partnership with Naval Special Warfare,” said Tony D. McElroy, Police Capt. for the City of San Diego, Southeastern Division. “Many of these kids have never even visited the beach, so to have them come out and spend the day with Navy SEALs is a big deal.”

Upon arrival, the students watched members of the U.S. Navy Parachute Team, the Leap Frogs, parachute onto the beach.

Next was a motivational speech by Luis R. Lastra, Master Chief SEAL (Ret.) who gave the students a basic understanding of Naval Special Warfare. “This is a great experience for the children,” said Lastra. “It gives them an understanding of the challenges that we

face as SEALs and helps them understand they can personally get through things themselves by embracing adversity.”

After adding face paint to look more like Navy SEALs, the students headed out to the obstacle course where students climbed ropes, balanced logs and maneuvered under barbwire on the Basic Underwater Demolitions SEAL (BUD/s) compound. The students also got a chance to go out with SEALs in rafts to perform surf passage.

The day ended with lunch followed by an awards ceremony.

SSP was formed in 1935 by SDPD to assist elementary school children to cross uncontrolled intersections on their way to and from school, and to reduce the number of pedestrian and bicycle collisions involving elementary-age students.



Basic Underwater Demolition candidates and San Diego students participate in surf passage at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, Calif.



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Senior Airman Andrew Goffeney, 1st Special Operations Security Forces Squadron combat arms journeyman, launches a RQ-11B Raven at Choctaw Field, Fla., March 4. Goffeney practiced launching the small unmanned aerial system, which requires a specific technique for takeoff.

1 SOSFS patrols the skies

*Story and photos by Senior Airman Michelle Patten
1st Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

“Off we go into the wild blue yonder...” begins the U.S. Air Force Song, but Airmen at the 1st Special Operations Security Forces Squadron aren’t leaving all the flying up to traditional pilots.

Approximately one year ago, the 1st SOSFS began a small unmanned aerial system program to operate the RQ-11B Raven. The Raven platform looks like a toy airplane and weighs less than five pounds. Despite appearances, it’s equipped with surveillance capability and is designed to be launched by hand to enable covert missions.

The Airmen initially train in a two-week course at the Joint Formal Training Unit at Choctaw Field, Fla., which is

operated by the 371st Special Operations Combat Training Squadron. SUAS instructors within the unit attend an additional one-week course to learn more technical aspects of the platform.

“The course goes over characteristics of the aircraft, capabilities and different ways you can use it, like from inside a vehicle,” said Staff Sgt. David LeBlanc, 1st SOSFS deployed air ground response element team leader.

After training, security forces members must keep their skills sharp through regular simulator and live-flight training. It may appear operators are logging time on their favorite gaming system, but the video game-like controller remotely navigates the SUAS for both simulator and live flights.

While the simulator allows fliers to practice navigation, there are elements Airmen perfect during live flights.

“When you’re doing it live, you ensure you’re throwing and landing the bird the correct way and are aware of other aircraft in the air space,” LeBlanc said.

The SUAS program fits with existing security forces missions.

“I’ve deployed four times, and I could see this helping in that environment,” LeBlanc said. “Usually you have manpower going out and doing physical perimeter checks, but this is an asset we can use to mitigate having people right on the fence line.”

The remote surveillance capabilities of the RQ-11B Raven also have potential to be used to survey damage from natural disasters like hurricanes. For security forces teams who travel outside the wire, SUAS can give eyes on the route ahead.

“We’ve had individuals lost out on the range and we can easily put this up and search for people instead of using a larger platform,” said Tech. Sgt. Matthew Coutts, 1st SOSFS SUAS program manager. “You could do route reconnaissance, conduct a visual assessment of a target, or have over watch of a team moving through a populated area.”

Use of SUAS has the potential to mitigate safety risks for security forces Airmen.

“You’d rather lose a piece of equipment than send a team in harm’s way,” Coutts said.

For the growing number of security forces Airmen qualified to pilot SUAS, it’s a career-broadening opportunity that allows them to step outside their regular roles.

“We get to do something outside of the normal element of security forces,” LeBlanc said. “Usually security forces



Staff Sgt. Jonathan Carter, 1st Special Operations Security Forces Squadron desk sergeant, watches a RQ-11B Raven fly at Choctaw Field, Fla., March 4. The small unmanned aerial system can take photographs and live video.

arms up with weapons, checks IDs or patrols the streets, but with this you get to do something a lot of people don’t get to do. This just shows security forces are a jack of all trades.



A team from the 1st Special Operations Security Forces Squadron conducts small unmanned aerial system training at Choctaw Field, Fla., March 4, 2014.



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Chief Master Sgt. Scott Doremus, 1st Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron superintendent, stands by C-130E 62-1857 on loan to the Carolinas Aviation Museum in Charlotte, N.C., Oct. 19, 2013. The C-130 has been in service in the Air Force for more than 50 years. Among its many distinguished combat missions, it flew during Operation Eagle Claw, which was an attempt to rescue U.S. citizens held hostage in the U.S. embassy in Iran in 1980. Courtesy photo.

Saving a C-130: Aircraft 1857

*Commentary by Chief Master Sgt. Scott M. Doremus
1st Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron*

She wasn't just any C-130.

Throughout my 20 years with Aircraft 1857, I was always aware of her vast history. Not only did she fly more than seven years during the Vietnam War, but she also actively participated in Operation Eagle Claw as

“Republic 5.”

This past year was her final operational year. She was due to retire in June to the boneyard at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., where she would eventually be scrapped.

As the last operational aircraft that took part in Operation Eagle Claw, and the only Airborne Command and Control Center aircraft remaining, I decided I

would do everything in my power to save her.

This was a tough proposition as money is tight for these types of projects, and several recent attempts to save other C-130s for preservation have failed.

With the backing of Air Force Special Operations Command, I began contacting every museum and base that I thought was capable of accepting the aircraft for display. After months of rejections, I was put in-touch with the staff of the Carolinas Aviation Museum, home of the "Miracle on the Hudson" aircraft.

They read my two-page document outlining the history of the aircraft and were interested in acquiring the plane for their collection at Charlotte-Douglas airport. They felt Aircraft 1857 would be a great addition to their collection, and her history fit perfectly with the Special Operations Forces community in North Carolina.

With a solid museum wanting the plane, I contacted the officials at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, for permission to transfer the aircraft.

Initially, they said no.

They said USAF aircraft are typically retired and demilitarized in the boneyard or on a base, not in civilian hands. USAF aircraft aren't flown in and directly handed over to museums. Additionally, a C-130 was never transferred this way before.

At this point, I contacted Col. Roger Williams, wing commander of the 145th North Carolina Air National Guard, conveniently located at Charlotte-Douglas airport, which is adjacent to the museum.

I requested ramp space for the aircraft, permission for myself and a small team to perform the demilitarization of the aircraft on the flightline, and access to maintenance facilities.

Williams enthusiastically said yes.

With this plan, plus the history of the aircraft I had written, I submitted my proposal to the Collections Committee at the NMUSAF. They unanimously agreed the aircraft should be preserved and the Carolinas Aviation Museum would be awarded permanent loan of

the aircraft as a museum display.

On Aug. 1, EC-130E 62-1857 made her final flight and landed at Charlotte-Douglas airport with an AFSOC aircrew at her controls. She had a total of 38,306.8 flying hours, almost 10,000 of which were flown in Vietnam. She was involved in every contingency up to 9/11, and ground time at Desert One during Operation Eagle Claw.

I spent about a week demilling the plane with a small team of mechanics. We removed fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, fire agent and batteries, as well as disabled the avionics and instruments to render the aircraft permanently non-flyable, which is a requirement for any permanently grounded aircraft in a museum.

Several weeks later, I made a second trip up to Charlotte to replace all four engines on the aircraft with older units for display purposes. In two days, my crew

and I removed and replaced all four engines and made final preparations for the aircraft to be put on display.

On Oct. 19, the Carolinas Aviation Museum hosted a gala induction ceremony and dinner for aircraft 1857.

Guests included former ABCCC crew

members and members of Operation Eagle Claw who had flown on the aircraft during the mission to rescue our hostages being held in Iran.

Retired Lt. Col. Russ Tharp, 1857's pilot and aircraft commander during Operation Eagle Claw, was the special guest speaker. He gave an edge-of-your-seat account of flying 1857 into and out of Iran during that risky mission in 1980.

I never would have imagined that a journey I started as a young C-130 crew chief with this plane 20 years ago would have ended so perfectly. The aircraft is now on display in a prominent museum; a permanent memorial representing the Air Force, AFSOC, Air Combat Command, and the veterans who flew and maintained her. She continues her mission as she sits proudly among other historical aircraft.

I'm sure she'll outlast us all...

On Aug. 1, EC-130E 62-1857 made her final flight and landed at Charlotte-Douglas airport with an AFSOC aircrew at her controls. She had a total of 38,306.8 flying hours, almost 10,000 of which were flown in Vietnam. She was involved in every contingency up to 9/11, and ground time at Desert One during Operation Eagle Claw.



Master Sgt. Donovan Petty, a critical skill operator with 2nd Marine Special Operations Battalion, addressed the audience after receiving the Silver Star Medal following his award ceremony at U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command headquarters, Camp Lejeune, N.C. Petty's team was engaged by insurgent personnel in Afghanistan when his actions led to the successful capture of a key insurgent leader.

MARSOC Marine awarded Silver Star for actions in Afghanistan

*Story and photo by LCpl. Ryan Young
MARSOC Public Affairs*

Master Sgt. Donovan Petty, a critical skills operator with 2nd Marine Special Operations Battalion, was awarded the Silver Star Medal by Maj. Gen. Mark A. Clark, commander U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, during a ceremony May 12 at the MARSOC headquarters at Stone Bay, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Petty served as a team chief with Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan in 2012 when his unit was tasked with capturing a local insurgent leader. During the detention operation, Petty and his unit came under attack inside an open courtyard.

Armed insurgents fired at Petty as he maneuvered through the courtyard in an attempt to suppress the

enemy fighting position. During the exchange, insurgents lobbed hand grenades at Petty's position, forcing him to withdraw from the courtyard.

As the team chief, Petty knew he needed to gain a position of advantage over the enemy fighters and moved to the rooftop of a nearby building. Petty again exposed himself to enemy fire to employ a hand grenade against the enemy. Petty's initiative and swift action resulted in the capture of the insurgent leader.

During the ceremony, Petty humbly accepted his award but said his Marines were the ones who really deserved the recognition.

"The Marine Corps isn't about awards," said Petty. "The Marine Corps is about the Marine who stands next you, both to the left and to the right. Each one of my Marines who were there that day are deserving of this award."

MARSOC pauses to ‘Honor the Fallen’

*By Capt. Barry Morris
MARSOC Public Affairs*

Marines and sailors throughout history are renowned for their ability to accomplish seemingly impossible tasks. The fact that Marines and sailors take care of their own, in life and in death, is a major contributor to their audacity and mission accomplishment.

With this in mind, Maj. Gen. Mark A. Clark, commanding general of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, in conjunction with the MARSOC Foundation, hosted Honor the Fallen, a one-of-a-kind event, April 25, on Camp Lejeune, N.C., to honor all Marines, sailors and civilian Marines lost at home and abroad since MARSOC’s inception.

“The unconquerable spirit, spiritusinvictus, words that mean something to many, words that mean everything to a few. Today is about remembering and honoring those who embraced and lived those words with the utmost passion here at MARSOC,” Clark said during the ceremony.

“Honor the Fallen is about honoring and reflecting upon the memory and life of all of our fallen MARSOC Marines and sailors to include all civilians who have served with MARSOC in any capacity, and the remarkable contributions they made in serving our great nation, protecting our freedom and liberties,” said Kristin Smith, the Family Readiness Officer for MARSOC headquarters. “We are remembering and honoring all of our fallen with the respect they so much deserve.”

During the ceremony, a final roll call of the names of 45 Marines, sailors and civilians was called out, with no reply.

A set of identification tags commemorating each Marine, sailor and civilian Marines was carried out by Marines and sailors as the names of the fallen were read and the bell rang. Marines and sailors paused, took a knee and gently hung the fallen’s dog tags on the Honor the Fallen memorial, and rendered a salute before departing.

The design of the Honor the Fallen memorial resembles a specially designed pin and was created specifically for the occasion. “This exclusive memorial was designed out of love, loyalty, and is a tribute the legacy of our fallen,” explained Clark.

The pin itself was hand crafted and designed with a great deal of reflection and compassion, and each family of the fallen received the one-of-a-kind pin. “It is important to

understand the remarkable Marines, sailors, civilians Marines and families represented in the pin,” noted Clark.

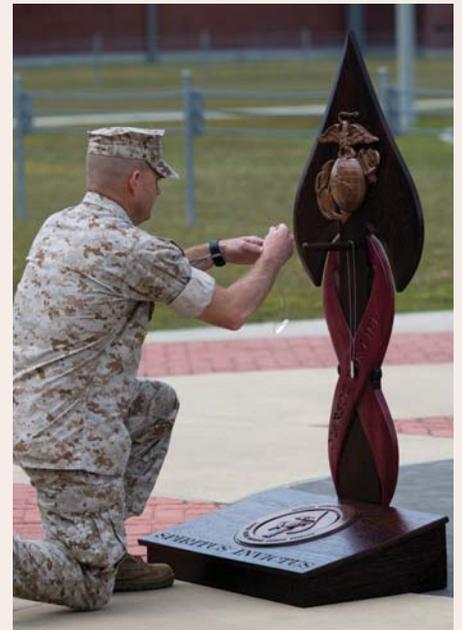
The backdrop of the pin is a spear, representing the best of the best, the first and finest in combat, the rich and storied heritage of U.S. Special Operations Command. “Like SOCOM, our brothers and sisters of MARSOC are special and unique,” said Clark.

The Eagle, Globe and Anchor, the cherished symbol of the U.S.

Marine Corps, is central to the design of the pin, “just as our Marine identity is central to our lives,” noted Clark. “Marines earn the Eagle, Globe and Anchor, which makes them Marines for life; and by extension, you have earned your place, through your sacrifice and support, as our Marine families for life,” explained Clark to the families of the fallen.

Wrapping the spear is an infinity symbol made of purple ribbon. “This is a symbol of the enduring impact your loved one had on MARSOC. It reminds us of the lifelong, infinite bond that unites us as the MARSOC family through the unconquerable spirit,” said Clark. “The purple in the ribbon calls to mind the expensive and rare nature of the color itself in history, that of which we treasure and value, of remembrance of the most significant people [our loved ones], and renowned life.”

The MARSOC memorial and all identification tags will be kept on display inside the MARSOC headquarters as a way of always honoring those lost.



Master Chief Petty Officer Jody Fletcher, command master chief for MARSOC, hangs dog tags of one his fallen comrades on the MARSOC Honor the Fallen memorial, April 25, at the MARSOC headquarters, Camp Lejeune, N.C. Photo by Scott Achtemeier.





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

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. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann.

