



TIP OF THE SPEAR



GUNNERY SGT. JONATHAN GIFFORD RECEIVES POSTHUMOUS NAVY CROSS

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



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS



Tip of the Spear



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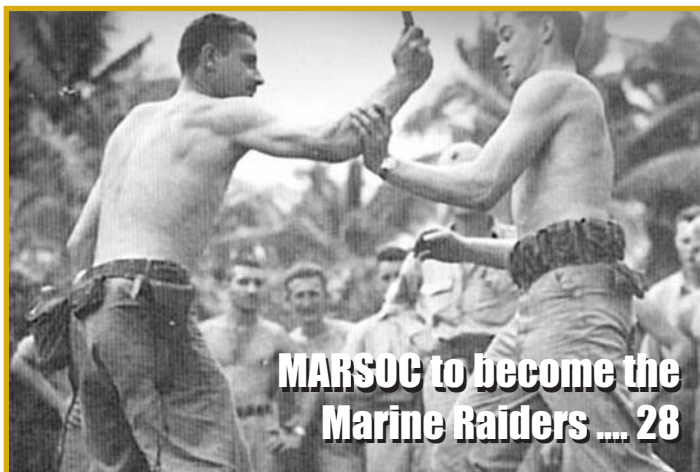
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(Cover) The family of Gunnery Sgt. Jonathan Gifford, a former team chief with 2d Marine Special Operations Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, received the Navy Cross during a ceremony at Stone Bay on Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 17. Gifford was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross for his actions while serving with Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force -Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in July 2012. The Navy Cross is the highest decoration bestowed by the Department of the Navy and the nation's second highest decoration for valor. Photo illustration courtesy of MARSOC Public Affairs.

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SF Soldiers focus training to compete in Fuerzas Comando

By Capt. Thomas Cieslak
7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Public Affairs

Special Forces Soldiers, who placed second in an international special operations competition, credit the intensity and variety of their preparation for their success.

A team of Green Berets from the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) recently placed second among 17 international teams at the Fuerzas Comando competition held July 23 – Aug. 1 in Tolimá, Colombia. This was the highest a team from the United States has ever placed at the multinational competition, one of several exercises sponsored by the U.S. Southern Command and executed by Special Operations Command-South.

The event brought special operations teams from 17 nations together to test their physical and mental stamina with grueling events. The friendly rivalry, though many times intense, promoted military-to-military relationships within the region.

“I’m really proud of this year’s US Team,” said Army Brig. Gen. Sean P. Mulholland, commander of SOCSOUTH. “It’s evident in their performance, attitude and achievement that they were well prepared and took this competition seriously. It was an exciting competition to watch and I’m extremely pleased with what they accomplished.”

The team fielded by the 7th SFG (A) and headquartered at Eglin Air Force Base in Northwest Florida trained when temperatures and humidity in the region mimicked what they would experience in South America.

“We began the selection of the team to be trained by conducting two separate upper body round robin fitness tests and a stress test that involved shooting,” said a 7th Group noncommissioned officer. “With 10 personnel to be trained, we began a vigorous PT and shooting program to prepare for the specific events of the competition. As the competition neared, we selected the best personnel to compete based on their performance.”

Many of the events during Fuerzas Comando pushed competitors to their physical and mental limits. To test accuracy after a physically demanding task, one event required a competitor to pull an evacuation sled loaded with a 140-pound mannequin to a range before engaging targets at

various distances in different positions.

“We made a concerted effort to focus on cardiorespiratory and endurance capabilities. The other countries competing are usually better at traditional cardiorespiratory events whereas the US team has more power and strength,” said the NCO about how his team altered their traditional training to improve their performance during Fuerzas Comando. “Throughout our train up, we tried to focus on potential weaknesses while ensuring we would still do well in events that are our strengths, like shooting.”

The team’s strengths in pistol and rifle shooting led them to dominate in the critical tasks and pistol qualification events, gaining them much needed points to pull ahead of the pack and close in on the Colombian team who was in the lead. The sniper team also scored big during the “Snaps and Movers” event, one of many requiring precision shooting over long distances.

“The most difficult event was the 18K [kilometer] road march. Traditionally, the U.S. team does poorly in this event and has never finished in the top five positions. Colombia had conducted the event the night prior and beat Guatemala, who was a favorite to win the event,” said the NCO. “We knew the time to beat and wanted to take this event away from the Colombians and really show the other competitors what makes us who we are. Every person on the team pushed their bodies to the max. We won the event and beat Colombia by one minute.”

“Everyone in 7th Special Forces Group is proud of the men who represented the United States at Fuerzas Comando. Their training in the Florida heat and humidity was intense and they never stopped thinking how they could better prepare themselves for the challenges of the competition,” said Col. Robert Kirila, deputy commander of the 7th SFG (A). “Their success is a direct result of the hard work and dedication they invested during the months of training leading up to the event.”

The rivalry between the U.S. and Colombian teams was intense throughout the competition, ending with Colombia leading the U.S. by 210 points. After the competition, and as a means to increase partnerships and understanding between the forces, members of the U.S. and Colombian teams conducted a Military Free Fall Jump from 15,000 feet over a drop zone in Colombia.



A member of the Suriname sniper team waits by a woodline for his partner before they attempt to slowly sneak past several judges actively searching for them in the sniper stalk event of Fuerzas Comando 2014 at Fort Tolemaida, Colombia, July 26. Teams from 17 nations across the Western Hemisphere competed from July 23-31, not just to determine a winner, but also to enhance their training and strengthen regional and multinational cooperation, mutual trust, readiness and interoperability of Special Operations Forces in the region. Special Operations Command South serves as the U.S. execution agent for the exercise. Fuerzas Comando was established in 2004 as an U.S. Southern Command-sponsored special operation skills competition and fellowship program. Photo by Army Sgt. Wilma Orozco Fanfan



The top three teams of the Fuerzas Comando competition salute during the closing ceremony July 31 on the parade field in Fort Tolimaida, Colombia. For the sixth time in 10 years, the team from the Republic of Colombia wins the title of Fuerzas Comando. The U.S. team, comprised of members assigned to the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), placed second and El Salvador was third. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Angel Martinez

Fuerzas Comando 2014 competition



A member of the U.S. delegation fires his service rifle during the critical task shooting event July 25 during the Fuerzas Comando competition. The U.S. team is comprised of members assigned to the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne). Photo by Army Sgt. Wilma Orozco Fanfan.



Two members of the Guatemalan team slide down a 30-foot tower during the stress event portion at Fuerzas Comando 2014. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Angel Martinez.



Snipers from Peru run more than 800 meters before firing their rifles during the FBI "T" shoot event July 24. Photo by Army Sgt. Wilma Orozco Fanfan.



The El Salvador special operations sniper team heads into a woodline to finish concealing themselves in the sniper stalk, July 26. Photo by Army Sgt. Wilma Orozco Fanfan.



Members of the Jamaica special operations team row their raft across Lake Pastrana, Colombia, to get to the next station of the Fuerzas Comando aquatics event, July 27. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Angel Martinez.



Special operators from 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) participate in an obstacle course event during the Fuerzas Comando competition at Fort Tolemaida in Melgar, Colombia July 29. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Angel Martinez.



A CV-22 Osprey, similar to the one depicted here, was sent to evacuate American citizens from South Sudan came under fire and had to make an emergency landing in Uganda in December 2013. The CV-22 crewmembers' heroic achievements during this flight earned them the 2013 Mackay Trophy. Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Markus Maier.

CV-22 crews save lives in South Sudan

*By Staff Sgt. Tyler Placie
1st Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

In the early morning hours of Dec. 21, 2013, 8th Special Operations Squadron crews departed in three CV-22 Ospreys to evacuate American citizens from the remote city of Bor, South Sudan.

The mission was proceeding as planned through three countries and 790 nautical miles. The Ospreys arrived at the United Nations compound in Bor on time. After flying

over the compound to gather intelligence on ground activities, the three crews made a turn into their final approach.

"On the initial approach, the formation came under fire from heavy machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire," said Maj. Benjamin Fingarson, 8th SOS pilot, who was the aircraft commander of the third CV-22.

The barrage of gunfire and RPGs from the ground hit the formation 119 times, which caused multiple system

failures on each of the three Ospreys and wounded four Special Operators.

"I couldn't tell immediately if we'd come under fire, but I knew I had to maneuver the aircraft out of the weapons engagement zone," said Fingarson. "I took swift corrective actions to make the aircraft as unpredictable as possible in order to make it difficult for gunfire to hit us."

After exiting the danger area, the formation commander called for an assessment of aircraft and personnel. The crews said there were flight control failures and hydraulic and fuel leaks on all three aircraft, and three of the wounded were in critical condition.

As the crews began life saving treatment, they acquired the blood types of the wounded and began drawing matching blood from personnel on board to ensure an immediate transfusion upon arrival in Entebbe, Uganda.

"We quickly created separation between us and the threat, continuing toward Entebbe," Fingarson said. "Because of the severity of the damage to the aircraft and multiple fuel leaks, we determined we would have to coordinate multiple air-to-air refuelings."

"He told me, as he heard the rounds hitting the aircraft, he felt me maneuver the Osprey in ways he didn't know were possible. He told me I saved his life."

— Maj. Benjamin Fingarson —

The formation of Ospreys made it to Entebbe with the wounded still alive.

"One moment that will always stick with me was a Special Operator approaching me a few months after the flight and asking if I was the aircraft commander of the flight he was on," Fingarson said. "I nodded yes.

"He told me, as he heard the rounds hitting the aircraft, he felt me maneuver the Osprey in ways he didn't know were possible. He told me I saved his life," he added.

The CV-22 crewmembers' heroic achievements during this flight earned them the 2013 Mackay Trophy, which is given to the most meritorious flight of the year in the U.S. Air Force.

The MacKay Trophy was first presented by Clarence McKay in 1912 and the trophy is awarded for the "most meritorious flight of the year" by an Air Force person, persons or organization. The U.S. Air Force determines the winner.

The 2013 MacKay Trophy winners are three CV-22 aircrews assigned Air Force Special Operations Command.

Crew Members of Rooster 73

*Maj. Ryan P. Mittelstet
Capt. Brett J. Cassidy
Tech. Sgt. David A. Shea
Staff Sgt. Christopher Nin*

Crew Members of Rooster 74

*Capt. William J. Mendel
Capt. Arjun U. Rau
Staff Sgt. James M. McKay
Staff Sgt. Kenneth E. Zupkow II*

Crew Members of Rooster 75

*Maj. B. Taylor Fingarson
Capt. Daniel J. Denney
Master Sgt. Alberto L. Delgado*



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



U.S. President Barack H. Obama awards the Medal of Honor to Army Sgt. 1st Class Leroy A. Petry, 75th Ranger Regiment, for his valor in Afghanistan at the White House, Washington D.C., July 12, 2011. Photo by Spc. David M. Sharp.

Medal of Honor recipient Petry retires after nearly 15 years

*By Sgt. Leon Cook
20th Public Affairs Detachment*

Any service member who retires honorably from the military is an exceptional person. He or she voluntarily dedicated years of their life to preserve the freedom of the American people. Master Sgt. Leroy Petry, a Medal of Honor recipient, is an especially exceptional person.

Petry retired from the Army July 23, in a ceremony at Evergreen Theater at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., in front of an audience of his fellow Rangers of the 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment.

Petry earned the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest

award for valor, by his actions May 26, 2008. Petry, then a staff sergeant assigned to D Company, 2/75 Ranger Regiment, took part in a daylight raid in Paktya province, Afghanistan. While crossing the courtyard of a house potentially containing a high-value target, Petry and another Ranger, Pfc. Lucas Robinson, received automatic weapons fire from several enemy insurgents.

Both Soldiers were hit by the enemy fire; Petry in both thighs and Robinson in the ribcage. Despite their wounds, the two made it to the cover of a chicken coop in the courtyard and reported the situation.

Another Ranger, Sgt. Daniel Higgins, moved into the courtyard to support the wounded Soldiers and made his way to the chicken coop. As he evaluated the two, an

insurgent threw a grenade, which landed about 10 meters away from the three Rangers. The blast knocked all three to the ground and wounded Higgins and Robinson.

A second grenade landed only a few feet from the three Soldiers. Petry quickly picked up the grenade and threw it away from his fellow Rangers.

"It was almost instinct," said Petry. "I figure if you have time to see it, you have time to kick it, throw it, just get it out of there."

The grenade exploded just as Petry threw it, amputating his right hand at the wrist.

Despite the grievous wound, he remained conscious and put a tourniquet on his wrist and continued reporting the situation.

Within a week, Petry was back in the United States receiving medical care for his legs and hand. With the aid of an advanced prosthetic hand, Petry was able to continue to serve his country as a liaison officer with the U.S. Special Operations Command Care Coalition, providing oversight to wounded warriors and their families.

After President Barack Obama placed the Medal of Honor around Petry's neck July 12, 2011, life changed for the outstanding Soldier. Petry became a spokesman for the Army, appearing on talk shows, speaking at ceremonies, and making appearances across the nation.

As a Medal of Honor recipient, there is a choice an individual must make: to do nothing with it or to share it with as many people as possible, Petry said.

"I am able to keep it, but it represents the men and women in uniform who are serving, who have served, and especially those who gave the ultimate sacrifice," he said.

Traveling around the country brought its own set of challenges for the Ranger.

"The hardest part is the time management," Petry explained.

He said he tries to think of his time as a pie chart, and after taking slices off for traveling to events, doing his job and spending time with his family, the slice for leisure activity is usually very small. He added that making sure his personal time didn't go away completely was the hardest challenge of all.

As Petry traveled around the country and continued to do his duty helping wounded Soldiers, he noticed that his

legs were bothering him more and more often.

"I have more wounds than just my hand," Petry explained. "Most of the muscle in my thighs is gone, and it's hard for me to stand much longer than 15 minutes."

Though Petry had intended to serve his country for 20 years before retiring, his legs forced him to reconsider and he reluctantly accepted medical retirement.

"It's a life I'm going to miss, but I'm also excited to start phase 2 of my life," Petry said.

Now that he's retired, Petry can spend more time with his wife, Ashley, and their four children: Brittany, Austin, Reagan, and Landon.

Petry also set a goal to earn a bachelor's degree in business management from the University of Washington.

"I'm racing my son, Austin, to see who can get their degree first," he laughed.

After college, Petry plans to be an entrepreneur or own a franchise.

Throughout the rest of his life, Petry said he will

always remember the men and women of the military and try to help them.

Petry keeps the fallen Rangers – those he calls the true heroes – close to him at all times.

"I've got all the names of the 2/75 Rangers we've lost on my prosthetic arm," he said. "Those are the true heroes, who sacrificed it all. I didn't sacrifice anything more

than anyone else who is out there."

In the days before Petry's retirement, he reflected on his past 15 years as he prepared for the future.

Petry enlisted in 1999 and spent his entire career assigned to the 75th Ranger Regiment. He deployed eight times: twice to Iraq and six times to Afghanistan, for a total of 28 months deployed.

"I think my service has meant the world to me. It's changed my life," Petry said. "I am leaving the military, but not forever. I will always stay involved, and it has been the greatest honor in my life."

Although the ceremony was dedicated to thanking him for his sacrifice and service, Petry took time at his ceremony to thank those who are still serving and will serve in the future.

"It will give me comfort to know that I can enjoy the rest of my life with my family because you said, 'I volunteer,'" Petry said.

"I think my service has meant the world to me. It's changed my life, I am leaving the military, but not forever. I will always stay involved, and it has been the greatest honor in my life."

— Sgt. 1st Class Leroy Petry —



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Ranger Regiment medic named US Army Special Operations Medic of the Year

*By: Sgt. 1st Class Michael R. Noggle
75th Ranger Regiment Public Affairs NCOIC*

It was Oct. 5, 2013, Rangers from Bravo Co., 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment were a month in to their 18th battalion deployment to Afghanistan since 2001. Their mission was to conduct a helicopter infiltration to capture or kill a high-profile Taliban attack coordinator.

Serving as the platoon medic for more than two years, Cpl. Bryan C. Anderson had conducted numerous operations with the men he called his brothers and had solid leadership from the platoon leader down to the team leaders.

Upon reaching the location of the enemy compound, a suicide vest was detonated. Anderson, around 300 meters away from the objective because of another enemy running away, heard the explosion and the subsequent call on the radio.

“Hey! We need doc!”

Bryan C. Anderson joined the U.S. Army in 2010 on a Ranger contract to serve as a medic. After going to college in Arizona to study emergency response operations, he felt this was the path he was chosen for.

Always wanting to be a firefighter, Anderson said of being a platoon medic, “I know I will never have a better job than the one I have right now, being a platoon medic with the other Rangers I serve with.”

After joining 1st Platoon, he deployed to Afghanistan for the first time in 2012. Having a few eventful missions with his platoon, Anderson knew what was expected of him.

“The whole time I’ve been in Regiment, I’ve taken my job very seriously,” he explained. “Sometimes you are the only medical provider on the ground and when something bad does happen, all of a sudden you become the leader and everybody looks to you for what to do next. I wanted to be that calm voice in the middle of all the chaos on what the next step needed to be.”

During his second deployment, not more than a month



Cpl. Bryan Anderson, Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, was named the 2014 U.S. Army Special Operations Command Medic of the Year, during a ceremony at Fort Benning, Ga., June 25. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michael R. Noggle.

on the ground, Anderson had to be that “calm voice” when the mission turned chaotic.

Anderson arrived to the first casualty; And he began his assessment by checking the treatments that had already been applied by the first responder care. The casualty had an effective tourniquet in place, his airway was intact, and he reported no difficulty breathing. He moved to the chest, finding a penetrating chest wound to the casualties left side. Applying an occlusive dressing, Anderson checked for effectiveness and then continued his assessment.

No more than a few minutes into his assessment, a pressure plate improvised explosive device detonated a few meters from Anderson's position creating another casualty. Upon completion of the first casualty's assessment, Anderson grabbed a fellow Ranger to stay with him and moved through an active IED field to treat the second.

As he approached the second casualty's location, he noticed the multiple blast injuries up the entire left side of the body. He assessed a left leg amputation, left arm amputation

at the elbow, abdominal evisceration, and various other injuries. After treating the wounds, Anderson instructed another Ranger to assist in the treatment. Even though the casualty was unresponsive, Anderson made every attempt to help. His last measure was to make a vertical incision in the throat and insert a definitive airway. It was then that the

casualty took his last two breaths before showing no more signs of life.

Just then, a third PPIED detonated 10 meters away from Anderson's location, resulting in a third casualty. He moved to the location and immediately noticed bilateral leg amputations. Having run out of tourniquets, Anderson applied manual pressure to the femoral arteries. Then the Air Force Para-Rescue Jumper arrived to assist with the application of the tourniquets. Shortly thereafter, the patient lost consciousness and went into respiratory distress. The PJ began the vertical incision, while Anderson assisted by preparing his equipment for the cricothyroidotomy. Then another PPIED was detonated five meters from their location, throwing Anderson and the PJ from the casualty. After regaining consciousness, Anderson consulted with the PJ to ensure he could finish the procedure and moved to the fourth casualty.

Anderson arrived at the fourth casualty who had also sustained bilateral leg amputations. He again applied manual pressure to the femoral arteries with both knees while waiting for additional tourniquets. He reached for one off of the

casualty's equipment and yelled to a fellow Ranger for another. After the tourniquets were applied, Anderson began assessing the remaining injuries to the casualty and began prepping him for the evacuation aircraft. An aid and litter team arrived at his location and with his instruction they loaded the casualty onto the litter. Anderson then accounted for the two urgent casualties, relocated the PJ to the first casualty, and moved to the landing zone.

When the aircraft had loaded the casualties, Anderson

conducted a casualty handover with the flight surgeon onboard. He continued treating the fourth casualty en route to the combat support hospital.

Anderson praised the Rangers and others on ground for their quick responses to help treat others. "We couldn't have done any of this without the platoon being so good at RFR (Ranger First Responder). They were

all doing an amazing job at treating what they knew how to treat, before a medic made it over there."

In summary, Anderson ran throughout the objective area to four different patients without the area being cleared by EOD technicians to treat his fellow Rangers.

"To be honest, not once until I was moving to Josh that I was thinking I should be careful moving around here," he said. "I think they do a fantastic job training us, but they never train us to hold back. So when you see your buddy hurt, and there is no enemy to fight, your immediate reaction is to run to your buddy."

According to his nomination for the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Medic of the Year, "His utter disregard for his own safety in order to treat patients was astounding, and his efforts to deftly perform intricate and complicated medical procedures with minimal equipment was incredible. Specialist Anderson directly contributed to saving two Ranger's lives, including that of a double amputee, whom Specialist Anderson kept alive for almost two hours until the casualty evacuation helicopter could land, refusing to leave a fallen comrade despite his own life being in extreme danger."

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— From Medic of the Year citation



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Legion dedicates building to Medal of Honor recipient Dix

*Story and photo by Sgt. Justin A. Moeller
5th SFG (A) Public Affairs*

Retired U.S. Army Maj. Drew D. Dix was awarded the Medal of Honor from President Lyndon B. Johnson on Jan. 19, 1969, for repeatedly leading a 20-man force of local fighters in to Chau Phu, Vietnam; driving out the Viet Cong and resulting in 14 confirmed Viet Cong killed in action and a potential 25 more. Also he is credited with the rescue of 14 United States and other civilians and capturing 20 enemy combatants, including a high ranking Viet Cong official, during the early days of the Tet Offensive.

As a MOH recipient, he is the first enlisted Special Forces Soldier (serving as a Staff Sergeant in the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne)) to receive that award.

In recognition of his exemplary time spent serving with the “Legion,” the 5th SFG (A) dedicated the Special Operations Complex of their 4th Battalion, on Fort Campbell, Ky., in his name during a ceremony July 11.

“The dedication, sacrifice and professionalism of men like Drew Dix, created the foundation of this regiment that is only further cemented by this building dedication, the warrior it honors and the inspiration it provides to the professionals currently serving in its storied ranks,” said Lt. Col. Joseph Lock, commander of the 4th Bn., 5th SFG (A).

“This building dedication today will provide an enduring, tangible reminder of the warriors who have built this regiment, and serve as an example of what we should strive to be.”

Aside from receiving the Medal of Honor, his actions led to a direct commission to 1st Lt., where he became a commander of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, in the 101st Airborne Division.

“The 101st Airborne Division has a spot right here [in my heart], cause I commanded some of the finest draftees in the 101st: A Company, 2nd Bn., 502nd Infantry Regiment,” said Dix. “We’ve got a fine military, a military with history, and a military that believes in doing the right thing. For whatever reason, the men and women (of the Army) raise their hand to do this kind of work, and that’s what we need.”



(Left to right) Col. John W. Brennan, commander of the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), retired Maj. Drew Dix, Medal of Honor recipient and former member of the 5th SFG(A), Lt. Col. Joseph Lock, commander of 4th Battalion, 5th SFG(A) and Maj. Gen. Gary J. Volesky, commander of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), stand in front of the plaque dedicating the 4th Battalion Special Operations Complex to Dix, after a ceremony held July 11.

Having a storied career that is a legacy to most Soldiers, Dix’s gratitude was still evident as he and Lock unveiled the plaque dedicating the building in his name.

“This is a tremendous honor for me,” said Dix. “I’m proud to be a part of this group.”

The connection back to the early days of Legion, gave Dix a moment to reflect on his own time as a Special Forces Soldier.

“My association with the 5th Special Forces (Group) came at an early age back in 1967,” said Dix. “A lot of conventional troops, back in my day didn’t like us because we were called ‘special.’ We’re not special because we want to be treated special, we are special because we know special things and we do special things for each other.”

Dix showed he was special by earning the trust of the locals to not only accomplish his mission, but to better their lives.

“Dix was successful, not only because of exceptional bravery, heroism, and audacity in the face of overwhelming odds, but because he was able to win the hearts and minds of an indigenous force,” said Lock. “He treated them like brothers, or inspired by his heroism they willingly risked their lives to defeat a far numerically superior enemy force.”

7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) celebrates community, heritage

*Story and Photo by Capt. Thomas Cieslak
7th SFG (A) Public Affairs*

Soldiers of the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) celebrated their partnership with communities in the Northwest Florida Region and the storied heritage of the unit at various events held the last week of June 2014.

Red Empire Week, held June 24 through June 27, honored Col. (Retired) Roger Donlon, the first recipient of the Medal of Honor in Vietnam and former member of the 7th SFG (A), the original members of Team A 726 and their families.

In the early morning hours of July 6th, 1964, a force of nearly 900 Viet Cong soldiers attacked the base at Nam Dong, where then Capt. Donlon and Team A 726 were stationed along with Australian Warrant Officer Kevin Conway, Dr. Gerald Hickey of the Rand Corporation and about 300 South Vietnamese Soldiers. Donlon and the members of Team A 726 fought the attackers in a pitched battle detailed in Donlon's book "Beyond Nam Dong."

Members of the Northwest Florida community were welcomed onto the Group's Compound June 24 for the Red Empire Week opening ceremony and the Group's Community Day.

"Every week, I meet soldiers who have just arrived to the unit. For some, this is their first unit out of basic training. Each time, I hear stories from them about the kindness and support shown to them in a chaotic period in their life," said Col. Robert Kirila, the Group's Deputy Commander about the local community's support for the Group's new soldiers.

"That support network continues to be a blessing to soldiers of the group beyond their arrival, as they integrate into our formation and serve as a member of the Red Empire."

Kirila and other members of the 7th SFG(A)'s leadership team then honored nine spouses with Volunteer of the Year Awards for their outstanding contributions to the Group. Two of the spouses were also honored with the Colonel Maggie Raye Volunteer Award for their distinguished service to the Special Forces.

Spouses of the Group gathered June 25 with Mrs. Norma Donlon, whose first husband was killed in Vietnam. She spoke about her experiences, first as a military widow and then as a military spouse again with her second marriage to then Capt.

Donlon. She also spoke about what it is like to be married to a war veteran and a recipient of the Medal of Honor.

"Norma Donlon's experience provided great insight about being a military spouse during the Vietnam War," said Mrs. Jonalyn Carver, the Group's Family Readiness Assistant and organizer of the event. "She gave everyone there a greater appreciation for the programs we have in place today that support both the soldier and their family."

The Group honored Col. (Retired) Donlon and other members of Team A 726 at the Red Empire Week Ball June 27th at the Emerald Coast Convention Center located in Fort Walton Beach.

"We all had good intentions, going into the village, making friends, healing the sick. We were not merciless killers, our weapons were not to be used, only if necessary," said Donlon about the mission he and team A 726 were sent to Vietnam to accomplish. "That all changed...on 6 July, 1964."

Donlon spoke about each member of A 726 who fought at Nam Dong, including Australian Warrant Officer Kevin Conway and Dr. Gerald Hickey of the Rand Corporation. He described each team member in detail and introduced those in attendance to the audience.

"It's been said that when a man nears his end, his family becomes the most important part of his life," Donlon continued. "That is definitely reflected in our group gathering here tonight with our children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews. Thank you all for coming to share this remarkable evening."



Master Sgt. Todd Yule, a USASOC Para Commando, lands at the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Compound with the American Flag June 24.



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

The Sky's Not The Limit

*Story and photos by
Petty Officer 2nd Class Geneva G. Brier
NSW Public Affairs*

Petty Officer 1st Class (SEAL) Timothy John Amdahl is in a C-130 Hercules, flying 12,500 above Fort Worth, Texas. The back cargo door is open, exposing clouds and the ground below and, waiting outside, a potential once-in-a-lifetime adrenaline rush. Except that for Amdahl, it's just another day at work.

This is Amdahl's dream job. The newest member of the United States Navy Parachute Team, the Leap Frogs, Amdahl has hundreds of jumps under his belt, but still resembles a kid on Christmas morning the moments before each jump. He has already jumped once today. Still, his grin now reaches ear to ear. When the jump master gets the okay from the safety officer on the ground that it's time for the jumpers to leave the plane, Amdahl's smile only grows larger.

"The best part of skydiving for me isn't as I am falling out of the plane; it is the second before you jump out," said Amdahl. "The moment before jumping, nothing else matters. You have an acute sense of awareness, and all you are thinking about is what you are about to do. It's unreal!"

The noise in the plane is significant, the air is thin and the jumpers are waiting for the green light. The jump master walks to the end of the open cargo door, kneels down and sticks his head out into the air, checking to see if the plane is over the drop zone. He signals for the pilots to make one more loop around the area before allowing the jumpers out of the plane. The jumpers are now standing up, anxious. Finally, the jumpmaster gives Amdahl the thumbs up – the signal that he can jump when ready.

Amdahl approaches the back door...



T.J. Amdahl knew he was going to join the military since he was a young boy. He always loved history and adventure, and as he matured, he realized he wanted to



Petty Officer 1st Class (SEAL) T.J. Amdahl fist bumps a young fan after jumping into an air show in Fort Worth, Texas.

join the armed forces to serve his country. Growing up, he imagined being a jet pilot, but he quickly realized he needed a more hands-on job.

"I wanted to be more intimate with the troops on the ground," said Amdahl.

Amdahl had friends within different branches of the armed forces and after speaking with a few, he realized that being a Navy SEAL was the route for him.

"After learning that the job-set, mindset and pipeline within the Navy SEAL teams are unlike any other, and knowing the Navy would allow me to join as special forces, I knew it was for me," he said.

He enlisted at 17 and left for boot camp when he turned 18. After completing basic training, he went to BUD/s and was able to start and graduate SEAL training with class 275.

Shortly after, he had the rare opportunity as a rookie in the Teams to attend sniper training. Upon completion of

his secondary training and two deployments with SEAL Team 7, Amdahl was ready for new orders. It was brought to his attention that there was a spot available on the Leap Frogs. Amdahl knew very little about the team other than that they jumped out of planes, but that is all he needed to know for the job to pique his interest. He was eager to put in a package to the team, and start the application process.

"The team needs to see how you are in the sky; if you are safe and accurate and also how you are with interviews and on camera," said Amdahl. "Since it is a very public job they want to make sure you represent the team and the Navy in a positive way."

Amdahl does excel in the air, and you can immediately see he is ideal for a job interacting with people. He's genuinely interested in conversations with strangers. These can be about anything from their previous military service to their family vacation to San Diego, and he is a natural when high-fiving kids and striking a silly pose with fans.

"What really makes the Leap Frogs stand out is the way we interact with the people on the ground after we do a jump, and that's where T.J. shines," said Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Brad Woodard, who is also part of the Leap Frogs." His jumping is top notch, but to see the way he lights up the kids when he talks to them afterward – it makes me want to enlist."

"T.J. has taken to his training with an enthusiasm I haven't seen in years," said Petty Officer 1st Class (AW/PRJ) Victor Maldonado, Navy Parachute Team leading petty officer. "He's always chomping at the bit to get to the next level, and he's done so well with everything we've thrown at him so far."



Amdahl's accent and background story are quick indicators that he's not from a big city.

He grew up in a very small town with a graduating high school class of 42 students. He was taught to raise Black Angus cattle, pigs and chickens while working with his four siblings on their family farm. He would wake up early to practice with his high school's marching band before classes started and stayed late after school as a member of the football team. He beams when talking about marrying his high school sweetheart and of the arrival of his first child. Before each meal he invites everyone around to join in for prayer.

That enthusiasm and willingness to learn are as visible now as they were when Amdahl was a teenager in rural South Dakota.

"There is so much team work here and room for

growth," said Amdahl. "Once you master something there is another skill or formation to try, and once you master that you move on to the next thing. Goals are very tangible here on the team."



Although the parachute team provides unique experiences and opportunities, Amdahl prefers to have his boots on the ground.

"I am a Navy SEAL sniper primarily and a Leap Frog second," he said.

When speaking about the Teams, Amdahl's voice lowers, assuming a more serious tone.

"You cannot replace the platoons," he says. "I miss the brotherhood and the relationships. Going through the worst time of your life is not fun, but it does drive you close to all the guys you are working with."

Therein lies the bridge between the Leap Frogs and the Teams.

Every Navy SEAL is safe in the air. Not every SEAL wants to land his parachute in between the tiny gap between first and third base on a baseball field, in a cramped stadium, in front of 10,000 people.



Petty Officer 1st Class (SEAL) T.J. Amdahl offers a young fan a remote radio to talk to skydivers before they exit the Hercules C-130.

Story continues on next page

Tip of the Spear



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND



Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Brad Woodard acts as the jumpmaster during a tandem jump, informing skydivers when they are cleared to leave the plane.

Amdahl wants to take that level of perfection – the ability to jump into any venue and any space – back into operational platoons.

His ultimate goal is to become a subject matter expert in air operations and be able to train and maintain that when moving to his next assignment. Although Amdahl loves what he is doing, he joined the Navy to be operational and that is where his passion lies.

“I want to become an expert and a trainer, and earn the different qualifications necessary so that I can bring my knowledge to a platoon that wants to focus on the air operation aspect,” he said.



Back on the airplane, Amdahl jumps.

His free fall lasts only seconds before his parachute opens, then he spends about five minutes in the air until he touches firm ground. As he lands and the crowd is cheering, the smile never leaves his face. He quickly picks

up his parachute and runs towards the crowd, high-fiving and taking photos with every star-struck kid he passes. When he reaches the rest of the team, they all bump fists, proud of their jump, and wave to the crowd.

“I feel honored and humbled when I land and people are cheering for me and thanking me,” said Amdahl. “There are so many people that have sacrificed so much more than me, those people who have given their lives and the family members left behind. Those are the people that truly deserve the thanks and applause.”

“I am just so thankful that I can do this for a living and represent the Navy in a way that I love and appreciate.”

Once the crowd leaves, the team debriefs and talks about the strengths and weaknesses of the jump and how they can improve for next time. They then pack up their gear and get in the van. It’s on to the next job and the next jump.

NAVSCIATTS: Front and Center

*Story and photos by Petty Officer 3rd Class Paul Coover
NSW Public Affairs*

A small crowd of men strode onto a boat dock aboard Stennis Space Station, Miss., some wearing pressed naval uniforms, others loose-fitting army camouflage, still others in sleek tactical gear and helmets. It was about as diverse a gathering as is possible with a group of just more than 20 service members. They were from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Some even called Mississippi home.

But all of the men had one thing in common: they had each come to the U.S. Naval Small Craft Instruction and Tactical Training School to take part in a leadership course aimed at expanding military education to civilians and officers on the strategic theory of standing up, leading and operating a combating-terrorism small craft unit. The four-week course, which included operational campaign design, focused on counter-terrorism, maritime domain control and counter-narcotics and was nearing its end. A high-speed ride on one of the world's premier riverine crafts would be one of the culminating evolutions.

Most of the men on the dock were foreign students, many high-ranking officers in their own countries who had been assigned to travel to Stennis for the U.S.-led course. A few were U.S. Navy Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen tasked with demonstrating select special operations capabilities.

The men climbed aboard four Special Operations riverine craft and the boats slowly pulled away from the shore. The students smiled and snapped a few photos as the SWCCs maneuvered the crafts into the center of the Pearl River. The relative calm was short-lived. With steady pressure on the throttles and an open river ahead, the boats began to accelerate.



On the night of Feb. 12, 2013, President Barack Obama stepped into the House Chamber of the U.S. Capitol to deliver his State of the Union Address. In front of Congress and the country, the commander-in-chief opened his address and noted the bravery of American troops almost immediately. About 40 minutes into his speech, the president returned to the topic,



Students prepare for a demonstration of the Special Operations Craft-Riverine. Part of the NAVSCIATTS curriculum includes familiarization with select U.S. Special Operations capability.

acknowledging the increasingly complex world in which the U.S. military operates.

“The threat [extremist] groups pose is evolving,” Obama said. “But to meet this threat, we don’t need to send tens of thousands of our sons and daughters abroad, or occupy other nations. Instead, we’ll need to help countries...provide for their own security, and help allies who take the fight to terrorists.”

That, in essence, is the central mission of NAVSCIATTS, which conducts foreign internal defense in support of combatant commanders in accordance with commander, U.S. Special Operations Command priorities. Using both mobile training teams and in-residence training to prepare partner nation forces to conduct small craft operations in riverine or littoral environments, NAVSCIATTS graduates up to 500 students each year, and has worked with partners from more than 100 nations since its beginnings in 1961.

NAVSCIATTS instructors teach courses in 13 different subject areas, with the potential for growth as Congress, combatant commanders and SOCOM deem necessary. The courses range from the highly technical

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Tip of the Spear



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

(in the Diesel Systems Overhaul and Maintenance course, students learn to completely deconstruct and reassemble a diesel engine) to the theoretical. The Strategic Level Small Craft Combating Terrorism Course (SLC for short) falls into the latter category, and covers topics from human rights to maritime command and control procedures to operational planning and execution.

Capt. Peter Watulo, from the Uganda People's Defense Forces, was one of the SLC students. A serious man whose dress uniform remained meticulously pressed even in the Mississippi heat, Watulo works in his country's department of counter-terrorism, so sending him to NAVSCIATTS was an obvious choice for his superiors.

Watulo worked early in his career in combat intelligence, participating in reconnaissance missions in dense forests and battling threats of terrorism from and in various parts of Africa. He said the SLC classes, where students from all over the world gathered to discuss shared challenges, broadened his situational awareness that is so critical to his work.

"This course has given me a wider view of different terrorist groups and how they formed and think," he said.

Another benefit of those lessons and discussions is the network formed between partners who operate in the same geographic area and face similar problems.

"If there is any problem, we can cut through the bureaucracy," Watulo said. "We can just pick up the phone."

Watulo's comments underscore a central component of the NAVSCIATTS mission. Cmdr. John Cowan, commanding officer, NAVSCIATTS, said a common misconception about the school is that information flows in only one direction, from U.S. instructors to students. In fact, the network Watulo and other students describe is in line with SOCOM Commander Adm. William McRaven's goal of creating and maintaining a Global SOF Network. That network allows for an efficient sharing of information between U.S. forces and facilitates efforts with other agencies and international partners.

"I believe that these efforts -- that is, building allied capacity and capability -- represent the best approach to dealing with some of the world's most complex security problems," McRaven said.

McRaven also praised NAVSCIATTS specifically.

"NAVSCIATTS is about much more than technical training," he said. "I think everyone that has been there



Retired Army Lt. Gen. David Fridovich speaks to students during a strategic-level leadership class of NAVSCIATTS in April. Fridovich is the former deputy commander of U.S. Special Operations Command.

will tell you that NAVSCIATTS build character, professionalism and relationships. In today's world, character, professionalism and relationships are what really matter. We have to be together, and we will be stronger together."



While NAVSCIATTS' history began in South America 53 years ago, it moved to its current location in 2000. The advantages of this quickly became clear. Now, not only do students gain knowledge in course subjects, they are also exposed to American culture at large. Even seemingly insignificant activities -- getting off base on a weekend to see a baseball game, for example, or talking with local residents about day-to-day American life -- can go a long way toward fostering a greater understanding between the U.S. and its partners, NAVSCIATTS leaders say.

Another benefit is that the infrastructure in Mississippi allows instructors to demonstrate what U.S. capabilities look like when discussing possible options for partner militaries and law enforcement agencies.

"It's difficult to go to another country and get them to imagine what a capability looks like," said Cowan. "Here, we can show them."

Of course, not all training can be done in Mississippi, and NAVSCIATTS still employs mobile training teams, small groups of subject-matter experts who can travel to various locations around the world to help bolster a country's security capabilities. The

flexibility in having both in-house and mobile training means NAVSCIATTS can educate a wide array of partners on a similarly diverse number of topics.

The goal is not to teach a one-size-fits-all solution to international problems.

“Courses will span the spectrum of SOF competencies with the intent of building the right capabilities,” Cowan said. In other words, only by understanding the range of options available can each nation choose for itself which security solutions will work in different situations. Cowan said he makes it clear to students up front that what works for the U.S. might not work for every country, and said it’s important NAVSCIATTS be as transparent as possible, while being consistent with operational security concerns, when building relationships.

“A partnership is that important,” he said.



Back on the brown water of the Pearl, the boats quickly get up to speed, engines roaring, throwing wakes behind them that fan out across the entire width of the river. The SWCCs are stoic, communicating through hand signals, maneuvering as one unit according to conditions on the water. The students continue to smile, even as they had to put their cameras away to hold onto the sides of the craft to avoid being tossed overboard.

When the line of Special Operations Craft-Riverines finally slows for good to pull back pierside, a SWCC sitting near the front of one was asked how much faster the boats could have gone if pressed.

“Quite a bit,” he said.

Still, the students said they were thrilled with the experience. They shed their helmets and life vests and walk up to a van waiting to take them back to their barracks, exchanging stories about the ride and talking about how it compared with what they could do back home.

A day later, they would graduate in a formal ceremony that doubled as a revalidation of what the students had learned during their time in Mississippi.

Retired Army Lt. Gen. David Fridovich, a former deputy commander of SOCOM, was the guest speaker. He had already given several talks to the students in his capacity as a visiting instructor, so his face was familiar. In an interview before graduation, Fridovich expressed his respect for the work done at NAVSCIATTS.

“It’s little-known, but punching above its weight,” he said. “It’s a dynamic place, and I believe in what they

do.”

Fridovich remembered how, as a young Soldier, he had been assigned to mentor a foreign officer through a grueling Special Forces training course. Initially reluctant to take on the extra responsibility, he had not only succeeded in getting the lieutenant through the training, he had grown as an officer himself.

“It had a profound effect on me,” Fridovich said.

Fridovich said that experience helped shape him, and he carried it throughout his career. As an instructor at NAVSCIATTS, he said mentorship and leadership have been formalized and are paying dividends for the United States and its allies around the world.

“You build these relationships,” Fridovich said, “and they endure the years.”

In the graduation hall, the students mingled and shook hands. They listened as Cowan, then Fridovich, took turns congratulating them for their hard work. Finally, they stood, one-by-one, to cross the little stage that had been assembled. As they smiled for photos with the commanding officer and retired general, they were pinned with a medal that identified them as NAVSCIATTS graduates. Worn on a military uniform, it is a symbol of a place that unites people across the globe.



NAVSCIATTS students look at photos from a class trip to Washington, D.C., before their graduation ceremony at Diamond Head Country Club in Diamond Head, Miss. The class visited the U.S. Capitol building and other historic landmarks during the trip, which is designed to expose students to various aspects of American culture.



An Airman from the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron's Red Team jumps out of an MH-47 Chinook helicopter July 14, during helocast alternate insertion and extraction training with Soldiers from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) at American Lake on Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. The Airmen from the STS conducted 10 daytime helocast iterations and eight nighttime helocast iterations over a two-day span.

Special Operations Airmen and Soldiers conduct joint training

***Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Russ Jackson
62nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs***

Airmen and Soldiers from Joint Base Lewis-McChord participated in a water training exercise at American Lake, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., July 14 - 15.

Airmen from the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron's Red Team practiced helocasting alternate insertion and extraction training with Soldiers from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne).

Helocasting is an airborne technique used by special operations forces units for amphibious insertion into a military area of operation. The unit is flown in by an aircraft, in this case an MH-47 Chinook helicopter, to an insertion point above the water where the STS members jump out.

The 160th SOAR (A) was tasked with AIE training and called the STS in hopes their Airmen would have the training requirement to take part in the exercise. Red Team had not practiced AIEs in some time and agreed to join in the two-day training.

During that span, the group conducted 10 daytime helocast iterations and eight nighttime helocast iterations. Their operations included ladder training, hoist training, and soft duck insertions, which involved personnel pushing an inflated zodiac boat out of the back of the helicopter into the water and jumping in.

"As combat controllers, we can attach to Navy [special operations forces], Operational Detachment Alpha, or Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, so we have to be smart on every type of infil and exfil," said Staff Sgt. Dallas Stoll, 22nd STS combat controller. "This is why we practice fast roping, helocast master, and repelling which are all counted as AIEs."

As one of the most currently trained helocast masters available, Stoll was chosen to be the STS team leader for the

exercise to ensure the members of Red Team could get the proper upgrade training.

To become a helocast master, an Airman must be an E-4 or above, signed off by the unit commander and have two daytime iterations and two nighttime iterations, one with non-combat equipment and one with combat equipment each.

"As a helocast master, it's my responsibility to ensure my Airmen don't jump from the aircraft unless we're 10 feet above the water and moving no faster than 10 knots of airspeed," Stoll said. "Once we're in that profile, I ensure my guys unhook, get out and get accounted for in the water as safely as possible."

Soldiers from the 160th SOAR (A) needed to accomplish the upgrade training for helocasting Special Operations Forces members out of their aircraft. They used this opportunity to train for extracting members from the water via a rope ladder and hoist methods as well.

The 22nd STS is a unit of the 24th Special Operations Wing based at Hurlburt Field, Fla. The primary mission of the 24th SOW is to provide special tactics forces for rapid global employment to enable airpower success.

The 24th SOW is U.S. Special Operations Command's tactical air and ground integration force and the Air Force's Special Operations ground force to enable global access, precision strike and personnel recovery operations.

In addition to AIEs, STS members train in high altitude low opening and static line parachute jumps, demolition, controlling landing zones and helicopter landing zones.

Airmen from the STS can attach to numerous outside units across the Department of Defense and must be proficient in just about everything.

This exercise proved, once again, that Soldiers and Airmen from Joint Base Lewis-McChord can train together, fight together and run a base together.



Airmen from the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron's Red Team give Soldiers in an MH-47 Chinook helicopter the thumbs up July 14, to let them know they were fully accounted for in the water of American Lake on Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. The Airmen practiced soft duck operations which involve them pushing an inflated zodiac boat out of the back of the helicopter as they jump in after it.



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Around the world in 27 days

*Story and photo by Airman 1st Class Shelby Kay-Fantozzi
27th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

The first continuous mission around the world for the MC-130J Commando II, Air Force Special Operations Command's newest platform, ended successfully July 9 with the aircraft's safe return to Cannon Air Force Base, N.M.

The MC-130J's historic mission, which spanned five continents and approximately 28,000 statute miles, was to escort single-engine AFSOC aircraft to a destination in the Pacific Area of Responsibility.

"This journey included several long flights, so the purpose of our aircraft was to ensure personnel recovery in case anything went wrong," said Lt. Col. Nathaniel Jones,

522nd Special Operations Squadron acting operations officer.

A diverse group of Airmen had to work together to safeguard the aircraft and keep the mission running smoothly.

"We had a team of 26 all together," said Capt. Mary Spafford, 522 SOS combat systems officer. "We had our aircrew, maintainers for the 522nd, pararescuemen from the 308th Rescue Squadron at Patrick Air Force Base [Florida], and the crews from the aircraft we were escorting. All of those packages—maintenance, ops, and rescue—came together to get the mission done."

The true triumph of the mission, according to Jones, is the teamwork it took for units from the 27th Special



Aircrew from the 522nd Special Operations Squadron unload supplies, souvenirs, and luggage down the ramp of an MC-130J Commando II that just completed a mission around the globe July 9, at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M. The mission spanned five continents and took nearly four weeks to complete.

Operations Wing and the 1st Special Operations Wing to support each other.

“The planning efforts of the crew were a major highlight of the mission,” said Jones. “They had to marry up two sets of plans, and staying aligned was key. Crews were focusing down to the hour to work within clearances to fly over certain places.”

Clear communication was essential in the air and on the ground, as landing in countries all around the world called for renewed attentiveness and flexibility at each destination.

“It definitely required everyone to be vigilant and understand their respective roles,” said Capt. Cooper Livingston, 522 SOS pilot, and the copilot for this mission. “With so many different groups and agencies working together, we had to stay on the same page.”

Learning how to interact with other countries was both a challenge and a learning experience for the crew.

“We encountered so many different cultures and perspectives,” said Livingston. “It was a really interesting dynamic. Depending on where you were, you had to tailor your mannerisms and way of speaking. It definitely required close attention.”

Stops for rest and refueling allowed the team to explore locales that many never get a chance to see.

“A lot of people join the Air Force to see the world,” said Senior Airman Tyler Julyan, 522 SOS MC-130J loadmaster. “We actually got to do it.”

The crew collectively cited Tanzania, Sri Lanka and Japan as some of their favorite stops overseas.

“Riding an elephant in Sri Lanka was the highlight of my experience,” said Livingston. “As an Alabama grad, being able to see our mascot up close was just really cool.”

The crew also climbed Mt. Fuji, toting hiking sticks that were stamped from bottom to top with elevations to mark the climbers’ progress up the mountain.

In spite of the adventures the crew found overseas, the high point of the trip remained the high points of the mission itself—the first day, and the day all three aircraft were successfully dropped off at their final destination.

“We got to see and do some amazing things, but the



U.S. Air Force MC-130J Commando II maintainers gather to welcome the aircraft and its crew home from a nearly four-week mission around the world July 9, at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M. The mission was the first of its kind for Air Force Special Operations’ newest aircraft.

point was the escort,” said Maj. Matthew Weinschenker, 522 SOS pilot and mission commander.

By all accounts, the MC-130J’s escort mission was a success.

“It’s almost unheard of for an aircraft to go around the world with no major breaks or delays,” said Spafford. “Every time the mission called for it, the crews just got up and pushed. We had a lot of different squadrons with a lot of different objectives, but we all pulled together to achieve the main objective of the mission.”

The crew made the best of their rare opportunity not only to work with various squadrons around the country but also to demonstrate the capabilities of the U.S. Air Force around the world.

“For 27 days we were out there doing the mission,” said Weinschenker. “We all made it back safe and people all over the world saw what we’re capable of.”

After nearly four weeks of constant motion, the crew was relieved to return to Cannon.

“It was a long trip, but it was definitely worth it,” said Spafford. “It’s great to be back on U.S. soil.”



MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Major Gen. Mark A. Clark, commanding general, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, presents the Navy Cross citation to the wife of Gunnery Sgt. Jonathan Gifford, a former team chief with 2d Marine Special Operations Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, during a ceremony at Stone Bay aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 17. Gifford was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross for his actions while serving with Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in July 2012. The Navy Cross is the highest decoration bestowed by the Department of the Navy and second highest decoration for valor.

MARSOC Marine awarded nation's second highest decoration for valor

By Cpl. Donovan Lee
MARSOC Public Affairs

Gunnery Sergeant Jonathan Gifford was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross, the highest decoration bestowed by the Department of the Navy and second highest decoration for valor, during a ceremony at Stone Bay aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, June 17.

General John M. Paxton, Jr., the assistant

commandant of the Marine Corps, and Maj. Gen. Mark A. Clark, commanding general, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, spoke during the ceremony and then presented the award to Gifford's wife and children.

"Acts of extraordinary heroism, those of conspicuous gallantry, are acts that cannot be planned, ordered or demanded. They are acts given fully and willingly by a person without regard to themselves; they are acts done for the man to their left, and the man to their right and for

the mission” said Clark. “Today we are here to honor such a man.”

Gifford, of Palm Bay, Fla., was mortally wounded while assigned as a team chief with Special Operations Task Force West, Combined Joint Special Task Force Afghanistan, in support of operation Enduring Freedom.

Gifford was advising Afghan commandos during an operation in Badghis province, Afghanistan, July 29, 2012, when he observed three commandos become wounded.

Gifford’s award cites, “Without hesitation he mounted an All-Terrain Vehicle and crossed 800 meters of exposed ground, preformed first aid and, with the help of another Marine, moved the casualties several hundred meters to a protected landing zone for medical evacuation.”

Realizing other commandos were under heavy gun fire and being wounded, Gifford gathered ammunition, and with another Marine, ran back across the same terrain

“Without hesitation he mounted an All-Terrain Vehicle and crossed 800 meters of exposed ground, preformed first aid and, with the help of another Marine, moved the casualties several hundred meters to a protected landing zone for medical evacuation.”

— Navy Cross award citation —

under fire and led the commandos in an assault.

Gifford, in his final act of bravery, eliminated an insurgent firing from a window, climbed atop the building from which insurgents were firing and dropped a grenade down the chimney. He continued to engage the enemy until he fell mortally wounded.

Gifford continued to uphold the core values of the Marine Corps until the very end, and his actions saved countless lives.” Gifford’s actions during this fight were extraordinary and they turned the tide of this ambush, ultimately saving the lives of his fellow Marines, soldiers and Afghan commandos,” Paxton said during the ceremony.

“We are forever indebted to the service and leadership (Gifford) gave and continues to give through all those he has touched, and those who continue to serve, with the traits and characteristics garnered from (Gifford’s) tutelage,” concluded Paxton.



Gunnery Sgt. Jonathan Gifford



MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

THE PAST

ALIGNED

THE FUTURE



The past aligned with the future: MARSOC becomes Marine Raiders

*By Gunnery Sgt. Josh Higgins
MARSOC Public Affairs*

During World War II, four Marine Raider battalions and two Raider regiments were formed and saw action

in the Pacific Theater between 1942 and 1944. Formed to conduct amphibious raids and guerrilla operations behind enemy lines, the Raider battalions were among the United States first modern special operations units.

The Raiders went on to participate in campaigns

across the Pacific Ocean and earned more than 700 decorations, including seven Medals of Honor, before disbandment approximately two years later.

Though the units' existence was short-lived, they left a lasting impression. The Marine Raider battalions were a significant part of the inspiration for what would become modern day special operations.

But when U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command was established in 2003, the unit did not officially carry-on the moniker.

Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. James F. Amos made official the title in a proclamation he released Wednesday, which calls for "the official continuation of our Corps' special operations heritage from the Raiders of World War II to our modern day Marines."

"United States Marines take great pride in our special operations and irregular warfare heritage...From this point forward, the Marines of MARSOC will be officially aligned with the Marine Raiders of World War II and are charged with maintaining the high standards and traditions that accompany such distinction," as stated in the proclamation read during the unit's change-of-command ceremony held at Stone Bay aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.

While MARSOC is adopting the name Marine Raiders, the command's official title will remain MARSOC. However, Major Subordinate Elements of the unit will reflag with the Raider name. For example, subordinate commands will reflag as Marine Raider Regiment, Marine Raider Support Group, Marine Raider battalions, etc.

The Marine Raiders and MARSOC share the common experiences of being a specialized unit; formed during a time of conflict; and uniquely manned, trained, and equipped to conduct Special Operations.

Use of the Marine Raider title has so far been informal although MARSOC units have linked to the

Raiders since establishment. Special Operations Marines have used the Raider insignia in their unit emblems and it has become both a linkage to Marine Corps identity and a source of unit pride.

Major Gen. Mark A. Clark, the MARSOC commander, welcomed the news as he turned over command of MARSOC to Maj. Gen. Joseph L. Osterman. "The decision to align MARSOC with the

Marine Raiders of WWII will enhance the Esprit de Corps and anchor MARSOC's identity and heritage with the Marine Corps," said Clark.

"We are proud and honored to adopt the name Marine Raider, carrying on the rich heritage passed along to MARSOC by the Raiders of World War II," said Clark. "As

with every Marine Corps unit, MARSOC desires a moniker that creates its own unique identity that is based on Marine Corps heritage and enables Marines to trace the legacy of those Marines who served before them."

Although MARSOC draws upon the Raider's heritage for identity and esprit de corps, the unit is a forward looking organization, focused on innovative and critical thinking, standing always ready and prepared for modern day and future conflicts, explained Clark.

The reason for the recent designation is two-fold. First, Clark said, the Marine Raiders were performing Special Operations missions during World War II and therefore provides a logical, historical link to MARSOC.

The second reason is one backed by Raiders themselves. At recent Marine Raider reunions, its remaining original members have highlighted their strong desire for their legacy to not be forgotten and to be carried on by another Marine Corps unit.

"The Marine Raiders have chosen MARSOC to be the holder of their legacy," said Clark. "We feel we owe it to those Marine Raiders still living and their families to make every attempt to do so."

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— Maj. Gen. Mark Clark —



MARSOC approved to create Special Operations Officer Military Occupational Speciality

By Gunnery Sgt. Joshua Higgins
MARSOC Public Affairs

Marine officers graduating U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command's Individual Training Course will be assigned a new Primary Military Occupational Specialty, clearing the way for retention and promotion in a professional career path.

Commandant of the Marine Corps General James F. Amos approved development of the new PMOS 0370 and Maj. Gen. Mark A. Clark, the former MARSOC commander, made the announcement to members of the unit July 25 during an officer's call at the Paradise Point Officer's Club here.

Previously, only enlisted Marines designated as Critical Skills Operators were awarded a PMOS of 0372, while Special Operations Officers were awarded an Additional Military Occupational Specialty of 0370.

The decision now allows Marine Special Operations Officers (SOOs) to hold 0370 as a PMOS, and be managed with a development strategy that facilitates talent management of Special Operations Forces skills, standardized training, retention, promotions, command, professional military education and career progression, according to Maj. Gen. Clark, the MARSOC commander.

"Approval of the PMOS allows the Marine Corps the ability to develop Marine Special Operations

Officers, over a course of a career, as both fully proficient Special Operations professionals and well-rounded Marine Corps Air-Ground Task Force officers," said Clark.

Implementation of the billet will end the five-year rotation limit for SOOs assigned to MARSOC. Once designated with the PMOS, SOOs will predominantly fill billets within MARSOC, but will also serve in billets throughout the Marine Corps and across the Special Operations enterprise.

"By developing a defined career path, the Marine Corps will be better able to retain and sustain the operational experience and capability necessary to meet operational requirements and reinvest special operations talent and experience where it is needed most."

— Maj. Gen. Mark A. Clark

"By developing a defined career path, the Marine Corps will be better able to retain and sustain the operational experience and capability necessary to meet operational requirements and reinvest special operations talent and experience where it is needed most," said Clark.

The decision is a welcome one for most SOOs who might otherwise have pursued lucrative civilian-equivalent jobs or faced returning to a MOS with less career-building potential for SOOs.

"To be honest, I was considering transitioning out of the Marine Corps," said one SOO assigned to MARSOC. "The decision to establish 0370 as a Primary MOS provides my family and I the stability we needed to plan out our family's growth and future knowing there is now a clear and long-term career path for me as a (SOO) within the Marine Corps. Ultimately, this decision allows me to keep doing what I love, and that is leading Marines as a SOO."



A Special Operations Officer with U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command awaits the signal from the jump master, before exiting the aircraft to conduct a High Altitude Low Opening training exercise. Marine officers graduating MARSOC's Individual Training Course will be assigned a new Primary Military Occupational Specialty, clearing the way for retention and promotion in a professional career path. Photo by Marine Corps Sgt. Scott Achtemeier.



Helocasting

An airborne technique used by small unit, Special Operations Forces to insert into a military area of operations. Members of USSOCOM headquarters practiced this Special Operations technique July 10.



Receiving instruction. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.



Picking up safety gear. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.



Walking to the Blackhawk. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.



Pre-flight. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.

Preparing to board. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.



Helocast inbound. Photo by Spc. Andrew Sveen.



Egress. Photo by Spc. Andrew Sveen.



Safety crew pulls in swimmer. Photo by Spc. Andrew Sveen.



Return to base. Photo by Spc. Andrew Sveen.



A U.S. Special Forces Soldier with the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force - Afghanistan, crosses a small creek during a clearance operation in Gaza Valley, Arghandab district, Zabul province, Afghanistan, Dec. 11, 2013. Photo by Pfc. David Devich.



USSOCOM personnel tempo program brings predictability to time away from family

By Tech. Sgt. Heather Kelly
USSOCOM Public Affairs

U.S. Special Operations Command carried out a holistic review of personal tempo (PERSTEMPO) and operations tempo programs and policies, examining the tools required to effectively manage and preserve the force as a result of a 2011 Pressure on the Force and Families study that identified a demanding operational tempo and significant time away from home as a major source of stress on the force and families.

“The study clearly identified predictability is a key component of building resilience and reducing stress on the force,” said Army Maj. Gen. Christopher Haas, USSOCOM director, force management and development.

Today, USSOCOM achieved a new milestone in the effort to increase predictability for Special Operations Forces and their time spent away from home by completing the SOF-wide implementation of PERSTEMPO tracking and reporting capabilities. The DefenseReady PERSTEMPO reporting capabilities provide a common operating picture of readiness across the force, allowing SOF leaders to track, forecast and predict force employment down to the individual level.

“DefenseReady allows SOF leaders to make informed force management decisions and directly supports readiness and retention while balancing operational demands,” said

Haas.

USSOCOM also instituted a new PERSTEMPO policy that applies to all members assigned to the force and is outlined in USSOCOM Policy Memo 14-07, which details threshold reporting and waiver requirements. Specifically, the policy establishes a threshold of minimum of 250 days at home station, or a maximum of 480 days away, in a 24-month period. It also designates that all events that take a SOF member away from his or her family will be used to calculate the cumulative

PERSTEMPO for each individual. For calculation purposes, a previous and forward-looking 12-month sliding scale is used.

“For example, if a member had 300 PERSTEMPO event days in the previous 12 months, the service member could be away from home station no more than 180 days

“For example, if a member had 300 PERSTEMPO event days in the previous 12 months, the service member could be away from home station no more than 180 days over the next 12 months without breaking the USSOCOM PERSTEMPO threshold.”

— Maj. Gen. Christopher Haas —

over the next 12 months without breaking the USSOCOM PERSTEMPO threshold,” said Haas.

Also, as part of the directive, commanders are responsible for ensuring accurate PERSTEMPO data tracking and calculating projections. Service members identified as potentially breaking PERSTEMPO requirements will require a waiver which can only be approved by the USSOCOM Commander.

“Managing PERSTEMPO is all about ensuring the long term health of the force and maintaining readiness,” said Haas.



Jim Barnes, a lifetime of service

By Richard Green

USSOCOM History & Research Office



*Jim Barnes during World War II.
Courtesy photo.*

Jim Barnes was born in 1921 and grew up in Beaver, Penn. Working in a steel mill when the United States entered World War II gave him a deferment from military service; however, not wanting to be deferred, he joined the Navy in August 1942. Six months later he volunteered for the amphibious forces. Shortly thereafter, he volunteered again, this time for a dangerous unit

called the Scouts and Raiders. In February 1943 Barnes arrived at the U.S. Naval Amphibious Training Base in Fort Pierce, Fla., home of the newly established Scout and Raider School. There, Barnes endured the intense physical and psychological training required of Scouts and Raiders.

The Scouts and Raiders were commissioned as "Scouts and Raiders for Special Operations" in August 1942. Initially a joint Army-Navy unit, Scouts and Raiders were trained in night reconnaissance for amphibious operations and to guide amphibious forces to the beach. Later in the war, the Scouts and Raiders evolved into an all-Navy force and their missions increased to include the training of guerilla forces in China to counter the Japanese threat. Today, the Navy SEALs trace their origins back to these Navy Scouts and Raiders and other World War II naval special operations units.

Barnes completed training in November 1943 and traveled with other Navy Scouts and Raiders to Virginia where they boarded the USS Rocky Mount (AGC-3) en

route to the war in the Pacific. Following rehearsal landings in the Hawaiian Islands, two officers and twelve enlisted Scouts and Raiders, including Barnes, were transferred to the USS Monrovia (APA-31) for the invasion of Kwajalein Island, the largest island in the Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands.

While Scouts and Raiders were trained to operate at night, for Kwajalein Island they were directed to reconnoiter the approaches to the beach during the day. On D-Day-1, the day before the invasion, the Scouts and Raiders were taken by landing craft to a reef that was a natural obstacle preventing boats from reaching the beach on Kwajalein Island. The men used two rubber boats to paddle further toward shore where they got out in chest-deep water to search for obstacles and check the depth of the water.

To get past the reef, the invasion force used amphibious tractor vehicles called LVTs to move the Army 7th Infantry Division from the ships to shore. To ensure the LVTs could get over the reef, Barnes rode in one to show them the way. While the Scouts and Raiders did their work, the fleet continued the shore bombardment to soften up the Japanese defenses. The 16-inch projectiles from the battleship USS Mississippi (BB41) could be seen and heard passing overhead. The following morning, D-Day, the Scouts and Raiders boarded a 110-foot-long surface vessel known as a submarine chaser to guide the LVTs toward the beach. After the successful invasion of Kwajalein Island, Barnes and the other Scouts and Raiders were transferred back to the USS Rocky Mount, from where they operated for the remainder of the war.

Following the Japanese surrender on Sept. 2, 1945, Barnes was eligible for discharge and left the Navy as a Third-Class Coxswain, ultimately returning to Beaver, Penn., however, his ties to the Naval Special Warfare community would last a lifetime. Barnes' post-war career started out back in the steel mill. He later became a carpenter apprentice, moved to St. Petersburg, Fla., and rose in the carpenter ranks to become Superintendent. Retiring in 1981 at the age of 60, Barnes again started thinking of his wartime service while attending a reunion of the USS Monrovia. Learning of the recently established Underwater Demolition Team (UDT)/SEAL museum in Fort Pierce, Fla., Barnes became active on its Board of

Directors and was one of its longer serving members. In charge of membership, Barnes was instrumental in raising awareness of the Museum amongst his former Scouts and Raiders, Naval Combat Demolition Unit veterans, UDT veterans, and Navy SEALs. Barnes, with his wife Hazel's help, wrote thousands of letters for more than twenty years to sign up new members, paying for the postage himself the first few years. He also started a Scouts and Raiders newsletter and sent out notices for the Scouts and Raiders reunion dinner, held annually in November during the UDT/SEAL Museum Muster. Barnes also contributed to fundraising to offset costs of the museum.

Through his and a retired SEAL's efforts, the museum started a memorial brick program which resulted in the sale of more than 3,200 engraved memorial bricks. Barnes was the third recipient of the Captain Norman H. Olson Distinguished Achievement Award, given for his service to the Museum and the Naval Special Warfare community.

Since the 1980s, Barnes has accumulated an extensive library of material on Scouts and Raiders and other naval Special Operations Forces. His collection has proven a

valuable resource for authors, such as the late John "Barry" Dwyer who acknowledged Barnes' help in his book "Scouts and Raiders: The Navy's First Special

Warfare Commandos." Additionally, historians from Naval Special Warfare Command and the U.S. Special Operations Command History and Research Office have used Barnes' knowledge and collection as a reference for their work. In recent years, retired Navy Chief Yeoman Laura Mercereau Bryant has assisted Barnes in organizing this expanding collection.

Following his wartime service in the Navy, and at a time in life when most people have long since fully retired, Barnes, 93, continues to contribute to the legacy and memory of the Scouts and Raiders, Naval Combat Demolition Units, UDTs, and today's SEALs. Affectionately known as Jim "Old as Dirt" Barnes, he continues to write the Scouts and Raider newsletter, attends the UDT/SEAL Museum Muster, and furthers the collection of Naval Special Warfare reference material. In 2014 Barnes was honored along with other Florida veterans by the presentation of the Governors Veteran's Service Award by Governor Rick Scott of Florida.



Governor of Florida, Rick Scott, presents the Governors Veteran's Service Award to Jim Barnes June 30 in Tampa, Fla. Photo by Sara Brockmann.





***Chief Petty Officer (SEAL)
Bradley S. Cavern
SEAL Team 3***



***Army Staff Sgt.
Girard D. Gass Jr.
3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne)***

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



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