



Tip OF THE Spear

United States Special Operations Command
MacDill Air Force Base, Florida

April 2019



CLARKE

Clarke becomes 12th Special Operations commander



United States Special Operations Command



**Clarke becomes 12th Special Operations
commander ... 32**

Tip of the Spear

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(Cover) Newly promoted Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke assumed command of U.S. Special Operations Command from Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III Mar. 29, 2019, during a change of command ceremony in Tampa, Fla. Clarke becomes the twelfth commander of USSOCOM. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.

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U.S. Special Operations Command - Africa



More than 30 nations take part in exercise Flintlock 2019 in Burkina Faso, Mauritania

By Nathan Herring
U.S. Africa Command

Exercise Flintlock 2019 officially kicked off during an opening ceremony Feb. 18, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

Approximately 2,000 service members from more than 30 African and western partner nations participated in Flintlock 2019 at multiple locations in Burkina Faso with a key outstation in Mauritania.

Flintlock is an annual African-led, integrated multi-agency, military and law enforcement exercise that builds the capacity of participating African and Western nations to support regional cooperation, security and interoperability.

“Terrorism is a global threat to all of us, and we can only defeat it if we fight against it together,” said Amb. Andrew Young, U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso. “Flintlock is a perfect opportunity to learn how to fight side by side with each other.”

Flintlock 2019 builds on the successes of 2018 by emphasizing operational-level advising and assisting. As part of that effort, a joint multinational headquarters was established at Camp Zagre, Burkina Faso. The JMHQ is designed to exert realistic command and control over tactical units at four different locations in Burkina Faso and Mauritania.

This will allow participants to develop coherent strategies and campaigns in order to ensure tactical units are building on one another’s efforts rather than conducting desynchronized operations, said U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Mark Hicks, commander, Special Operations Command Africa.

“Unity of effort is a foundational principle for successful military engagements, and nowhere is that more evident than here, in Africa, where we’re fighting a ruthless enemy that respects no borders and recognizes no sovereign



A Spanish soldier assists Chadian forces during military operations in urban terrain training during Exercise Flintlock 2019, Feb. 19, in Atar, Mauritania. Flintlock is a multinational exercise consisting of 32 African and Western nations at multiple locations in Burkina Faso and Mauritania designed to strengthen the ability of key partner nations to counter violent extremist organizations, protect their borders and provide security for their people. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Steven Lewis.

governments,” Hicks said. “We all need to work in concert to defeat this foe, and I’m confident Flintlock will enable us to do just that.”

Flintlock 2019 brings together the G5 Sahel, multinational joint task force and troop contributing nations to conduct complimentary scenario-based tactical operations.

“The security situation in the Sahel and Saharan space, marked by an increased tempo of armed terrorist group activities in central Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, is a matter of concern for our states and a reminder of the fragility of our respective spaces caused by the threat of terrorism,” said Burkinabe Minister of Defense and Veterans



A Senegalese special forces soldier teaches a Burkinabe fire fighter how to fire an M240 machine gun as part of interoperability training with U.S. Special Forces Soldiers during Exercise Flintlock 2019, near Po, Burkina Faso, Feb. 21. Flintlock 2019 builds the capacity of participating nations to support regional cooperation, security and interoperability. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Mary S. Katzenberger.

Affairs Chèrif Sy.

International military cooperation through military exercises, like Flintlock, is one of the important links in building an effective counterterrorism strategy for a strong and stable trans-Saharan region, he said.

Bringing together the nations of these multinational organizations, such as the G5 Sahel, are critical to improving security in the region.

“The G5 Sahel is one of the key multilateral institutions

that’s allowing us to fight this growth of terrorism that we are seeing,” said U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Heidi Berg, U.S. Africa Command director of intelligence. “The violent extremist organizations that range across the borders make it even more important to have coordination on a multilateral level between our key partners.”

Flintlock as an exercise, began 51 years ago as an opportunity for America to train European allies during the Cold War. It shifted to Africa in the late 1980s.

“In 2005, Flintlock became what we know it as today: a Sahel-focused, special operations engagement designed to enable our African partners in the fight against our common enemies,” Hicks said.

For the first time in Flintlock’s history, African nations will be training other African forces during the exercise.

“The importance of this development cannot be overstated,” he said. “We are seeing our African partners take ownership of their regional problems and truly evolve into exporters of security.”

Flintlock is more than just a military exercise. It incorporates law enforcement training with Burkinabe police forces and the transition of militants to the civilian justice system for prosecution. Civil affairs teams are working with nongovernmental organizations and community leaders to provide medical training and care to local populations. The U.S. embassy is hosting an event designed to communicate the importance of women and civil societies in de-radicalization programs.

“Our commitment will last far beyond Flintlock as well,” Hicks said. “The lessons we learn during Flintlock will bring us tangibly closer to securing a peaceful future for your nations and your children.”



Green Berets assigned to 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) conduct shooting drills at a Mauritanian range during Flintlock 2019, Feb. 15, in Atar, Mauritania. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Steven Lewis.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Central



US Special Forces build military relationships around the world



Qatar Joint Special Forces soldiers secure detainees before moving them off of the battlefield during an Invincible Sentry 2019 training scenario near Zekreet, Qatar, March 24. The exercise aimed at improving the Qatar JSFs ability to work with their United States special operations forces counterparts. Photo by U.S. Army Specialist Keith Freeland.

*By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Steven M. Colvin
SOCCENT Public Affairs*

The Government of Qatar hosted an annual crisis response exercise conducted by U.S. Central Command on March 21-27, in order to strengthen an enduring relationship and improve interoperability between U.S. and Qatari forces.

Approximately 400 Qatari Joint Special Forces and Internal Security Force, as well as 200 U.S. military personnel participated in exercise Invincible Sentry 2019. The exercise took place at military training areas and other remote locations throughout Qatar.

This year, the bilateral exercise scenarios included the Qatari officials requesting assistance from the U.S. Embassy, Doha, in response to a transnational security threat. U.S. special operations forces, Qatari Joint Special Forces and ISF worked side by side during the exercise and at times combined to strike a simulated terrorist network target.

Bilateral exercises are important because they allow combined forces to hone their communications skills and interoperability efforts in order to accurately and effectively complete a mission. During the mission scenario, the two forces moved tactically through the town to reach the target destination, infiltrate the objective, and take down the

terrorist network.

The goal for Invincible Sentry is to increase awareness of U.S. and partner nation special operations capabilities and amplify joint interoperability.

“Green Berets are America’s premier partnered special operations force,” according to a U.S. Army Special Forces commander who participated in the exercise. “What we bring to the fight -- by doing everything with and through partners -- is a capability that far outweighs our small teams. And perhaps more importantly, by working closely with allies and trusted partners, we’d like to think some conflicts will never come to fruition because of our persistent engagement at key locations around the world.”

The United States and Qatar cooperate on a broad range of Arabian Gulf security issues. CENTCOM maintains its forward headquarters facility and a combined air operations center in Qatar. Qatar’s history of supporting NATO, coalition and U.S. military operations in the region reflects its enduring commitment to regional stability and military-to-military relationship.

The Qatari and U.S. forces tactically and strategically worked together throughout the different scenarios they were faced with during exercise IS-19. Working side by

side, they were able to successfully take control of the simulated terrorist threat situation.

“Invincible Sentry 2019 was a historic exercise with one of our most important security and military partners in the region, the State of Qatar,” said William Grant, the U.S. Charge d’Affaires.

“Both U.S. and Qatari forces have come out of this exercise better coordinated, more in-sync, and stronger in every respect to respond to security threats in the region. We are especially grateful to Qatar for hosting the 2019 Invincible Sentry exercise in coordination with CENTCOM.”

Since 1992, the United States and Qatar have

continued to build on their military-to-military relationship through multiple combined exercises. Invincible Sentry 2019 showcased their enhanced communication and tactical skills and proved that the combined forces can successfully work together as one team.

The U.S. military participates in more than 80 exercises with partner nations in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility each year. Exercises in the region are designed to strengthen military-to-military relationships, promote regional security and improve interoperability with partner nations.

Invincible Sentry 2019 was a historic exercise with one of our most important security and military partners in the region, the State of Qatar.

—William Grant, the U.S. Charge d’Affaires



A Qatar Joint Special Forces soldier and a U.S. Air Force Pararescueman attached to 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) move during an Invincible Sentry 2019 training scenario near Zekreet, Qatar, March 24. U.S. Central Command used IS19 to evaluate the capabilities of its subordinate units to mitigate crises within the region. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Brandon McIntosh.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Central



Let's jump ... virtual reality style

*By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Steven M. Colvin
SOCCENT Public Affairs*

The new Parachute Simulator 7 is one more reason why Special Operations Forces Command Central remains at the "Tip of the Spear."

The Systems Technology, Incorporated team came to MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida, to install the new PARASIM 7 system at the Joint Parachute Rigger facility, Feb. 19, and incorporated military personnel training on the system.

The PARASIM 7 recreates the experience of a real jump from the head-mounted 3D virtual reality display to the suspension harness that detects jumper inputs. The physics-based parachute simulation technology recreates the

conditions of a live jump using real-world scenes, malfunctions, wind profiles, various weather conditions and a full library of terrain types.

"The simulator will allow us to train the MacDill paratroopers in a realistic virtual environment that accurately reflects the areas and terrain they will jump in," said Sgt. 1st Class Shane J. Walthers, SOCCENT parachute rigger noncommissioned officer in charge.

"When used in conjunction with the mandatory refresher training, the simulator is extremely useful in giving jumpers a realistic view of where they will be jumping and what they will see while under canopy."

Simulator training gives jumpers the opportunity to practice and refine their canopy control techniques in a safe virtual environment. Mistakes can be made and corrections



A paratrooper prepares for virtual reality jump training on the new Parachute Simulator 7 at the Joint Riggers Facility, MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Fla., Feb. 21. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Stephen M. Colvin.

can be learned before an actual jump where those same mistakes could have catastrophic consequences.

Systems Technology continues to develop and enhance the PARASIM in response to the needs of the Airborne community. Over 330 systems have been sold worldwide since the first PARASIM system was created 28 years ago, but there is only one PARASIM 7.

“The new PARASIM 7 network system that was just installed for SOCCENT is the first of its kind in the world!” said Cecy Pelz, a Senior Contracts Administrator with Systems Technology, Inc.

“It comes as no surprise that SOCCENT, who is often positioned at the tip of the spear, is the first to adopt the most advanced parachute training system.”

The overall purpose of the PARASIM is to train canopy control, flight pattern optimization, emergency procedure, equipment familiarization and group operations in a classroom setting under controlled, repeatable conditions.

Highly trained SOCCENT instructors, armed with extensive military jump skills, use PARASIM as a tool to translate their wealth of experience and skills. This allows paratroopers to encounter a variety of situations first hand and learn how to respond appropriately.

Upgrading to PARASIM 7 will prepare paratroopers for future Airborne operations by combining the core foundation of its dynamics and training features with the graphics power of Virtual Battlespace 3.

VBS3 is a flagship of the U.S. Army’s Games for Training program, making it key to scenario training, Airborne operations, mission rehearsal and more.

With PARASIM 7, special operations forces can plan and conduct mission rehearsals globally, under any weather conditions – day or night. With multiple canopies and training malfunctions included, it makes equipment transition and emergency procedures training accessible, safe and effective.

“Naval Special Warfare command already had a blanket purchase agreement with PARASIM, and I was able to convince Special Operations Command, Joint Communications Support Element and SOCCENT to invest in the latest and greatest technology available,” said Army Maj. Juan Salas, SOCCENT Headquarters Commandant.

“PARASIM 7 will help paratroopers jump virtually in Drop Zone Zarqa, Jordan as we prepare for future training exercises that will be conducted there.”

PARASIM 7 has improved drop zone graphics giving jumpers a view that looks less video game-like. Paratroopers have the ability to manipulate inputs like wind data, aircraft track of flight and in-air release points.

Paratroopers can now use known historical weather data to simulate what they could realistically expect. The older version included a prepackaged scenario that may or may not

accurately reflect normal conditions on that particular drop zone.

“Upgrading our simulators is important because the MacDill simulators were some of the older ones within the Department of Defense,” said Army Sgt. Cassandre Casseus, a U.S. Special Operations Command paratrooper.

“While the older versions still provided useful training to jumpers, there were limitations that kept the training from being as realistic as possible. The upgrades provide a lot of variables to work with to make the training accurately reflect what jumpers should expect to see.”

PARASIM 7 features a new military free fall virtual platform that tracks jumper movement during the free fall portion of the scenario. This allows instructors to work with jumpers on their body positioning.

This feature harnesses the power of VBS3 making it compatible with special operations forces planning, rehearsal and execution preparation scene databases. It provides jumpers the opportunity to correct movement patterns and body positioning that could cause issues during jumps.

This will play a significant role as the commands prepare to transition to the bottom of container deployment method for the RA-1 parachutes as jumpers will have to learn new body positions necessary to deploy their parachutes.



A paratrooper participates in a virtual reality jump training on the new Parachute Simulator 7 at the Joint Riggers Facility, MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Fla., Feb. 21. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Stephen M. Colvin.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



Ukraine's Special Ops join 16 nations at Combined Resolve XI

*By Army 1st Lt. Benjamin Haulenbeek
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe*

Special operations forces from five nations participated in exercise Combined Resolve XI Dec. 1-11, 2018 at U.S. Army Europe's Joint Multinational Readiness Center here.

Combined Resolve is a U.S. Army Europe-led exercise series that improves readiness and interoperability amongst allies and partners, incorporating U.S. rotational units aligned under Operation Atlantic Resolve. More than 5,500 total soldiers from 16 nations took part in CbR XI.

Multinational special operations forces are integrated into Combined Resolve to improve coordination between conventional forces and provide unique special operations capabilities to the combined joint force. CbR XI included SOF from Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Romania, Ukraine and the U.S. Army's 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne).

"It helps us to visualize the example of command and control of joint forces in a simulated scenario," said a major from the 3rd Ukrainian Special Operations Forces Regiment. "We learn new military standards and hopefully will apply them in our armed forces. Exercises like this provide us a valuable source of knowledge."

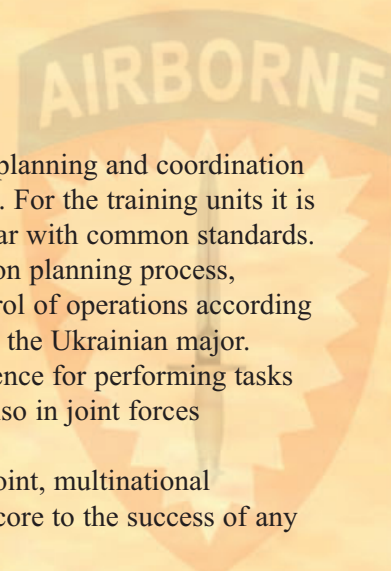
CbR XI marked the first time Ukrainian SOF has participated in a large joint, multinational exercise at JMRC. The training provided Ukrainian SOF with the ability to increase readiness, showcase their capabilities, and share and refine lessons learned from recent combat experience. Ukrainian SOF are an increasingly capable partner, who through events like CbR XI are proving their ability to work alongside U.S., Allied, and NATO SOF counterparts.

"The main achievement for us is the coordination of SOF with NATO conventional forces," said the Ukrainian major. "We were able to observe targets for the brigade



Ukrainian special operations forces and U.S. Army Special Forces Soldiers assigned to 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) clear a building during exercise Combined Resolve XI at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, Dec. 10, 2018. During Combined Resolve XI, an exercise with over 5,500 participants from 16 nations, SOF conducted operations in enemy occupied territory to support and interoperate with conventional forces. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. David Garcia.

TOC and disseminate information concerning those targets and call for fire. We also conducted special reconnaissance and direct action missions on high value targets with



multinational special operations task units.”

A key to ensuring the success of SOF and conventional forces integration is the ability to communicate.

“They [Ukrainian SOF] understand the importance of special operations forces and conventional forces integration,” said a captain assigned to 10th SFG (A). “Ukrainian SOF dedicated two of their personnel to act as liaison officers at the brigade level to facilitate communications with units on the ground. The brigade often relied on SOF to identify strategic level targets, coordinate the passage of friendly lines during limited visibility, coordinate resupply missions, and share intelligence about major enemy movements.”

During prolonged operations it is not just conventional forces that are reliant on SOF, the two are interdependent. Conventional forces are able to use their logistical capabilities to sustain SOF, which in turn maintains a critical asset in the fight.

“The key event that highlighted SOF and conventional forces interdependence was when one of the special operations task units was completely out of food and water and in dire need of a resupply,” said the American officer. “The team was able to coordinate a resupply mission by using their LNOs, and they were able to continue mission and call for fire on additional enemy battle positions.”

The ability to conduct sustained and complex operations in a simulated battlefield environment such as

CbR XI requires a great deal of planning and coordination among all the elements involved. For the training units it is an opportunity to become familiar with common standards.

“We took part in the operation planning process, support, and command and control of operations according NATO planning templates,” said the Ukrainian major. “Now we have advanced experience for performing tasks together with NATO units and also in joint forces operations.”

The ability to operate with joint, multinational conventional forces and SOF is core to the success of any NATO and allied fighting force.

“We are thankful to our partners from the Green Berets for their work in training and mentoring of Ukrainian SOF,” said the Ukrainian major. “The knowledge and skills given to us are invaluable. We are expecting to participate in more exercises and trainings with our U.S. and NATO partners in the future.”

The ability to operate in conjunction with each other enables conventional forces and SOF to accomplish more than they could on their own; further integration of SOF into conventional forces operations will only benefit NATO and allies alike.

“This exercise demonstrated to all the participating elements that we need more SOF and conventional forces integration if we want to be successful in future conflicts,” added the American captain.



Ukrainian special operations forces and U.S. Army Special Forces Soldiers assigned to 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) move across an objective during exercise Combined Resolve XI at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, Dec. 10, 2018. Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Benjamin Haulenbeek.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



Air Commandos with the 7th Special Operations Squadron and Romanian special operations forces exit a 352nd Special Operations Wing CV-22 Osprey during a combined training mission, March 12, near Bacau, Romania. Through these pieces of training, SOF members demonstrate and strengthen partner nation relationships and air operations in the European Theatre. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Elizabeth Pena.



Strengthening relationships through combined training

*By U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Elizabeth Pena
352nd Special Operations Wing*

U.S. Air Force's 7th Special Operation Squadron, assigned to 352nd Special Operation Wing, based out of Mildenhall, England, deployed to Bacau, Romania, March 10-15, to conduct mission essential tasks, and simultaneously, familiarize Romanian SOF with the CV-22 Osprey.

"The importance is not only for the commonality of our tactics, techniques, and procedures between U.S. forces and partner forces but combining that within the NATO spectrum to make sure we are all operating in the same format," said a U.S. Air Force special operations captain, the mission commander for the training event and flight lead pilot. "Being able to get these staged drills out of the way now in a safe and effective training environment, allows us to be able to have the confidence to forward deploy in any contingency operation."

The 7th SOS operates the CV-22B Osprey throughout the entire range of military operations in support of conventional and special operations. The 7th SOS executes this mission at night, in adverse weather, performing long-range insertion, extraction and resupply missions in hostile, denied and politically sensitive territories.

U.S. and Romanian SOF conducted day and night fast rope infiltration and exfiltration operations and low-level flying. These capabilities are something Romanian SOF are (trained and) skilled in; however, this was their first time conducting FRIES out of the CV-22.

"Everyone here had used fast rope before, on different platforms, so they understood their techniques," said a U.S. Air Force staff sergeant, and 7th SOS special mission aviator. "One of the main differentiators from our side was just reminding them that the CV-22 creates a lot more downwash and it's a much different experience when it comes to deploying out of our aircraft, compared to a conventional rotary wing aircraft."

Through these pieces of training, SOF members demonstrate and strengthen partner nation relationships and air operations in the European theatre.

"The Romanian SOF was able to extend the CV-22 familiarization training invitation to other units that are not co-located here at Bacau," said the 7th SOS mission commander. "So they were able to cycle through as many of their special operation ground forces as they could, during this timeframe."

Along with developing combined leaders, this deployment gave the U.S. SOF members an opportunity to establish professional development at the tactical level.

"I've been flying for the Air Force for 15 years, and all my training has been stateside, so even for me in the short time I've moved to RAF Mildenhall," said U.S. Air Force captain and instructor pilot for the 7th SOS who helped conduct the training. "I've learned a lot working with Allied partners, whether it's working through language barriers or just the different techniques. It's eye opening."

The 7th SOS mission commander was very thankful for the ability to utilize the diverse NATO terrain and base resources to accomplish their objectives.

"The Romanian government and Air Force base here in Bacau have been extremely supportive with their ability to reach out to us and help," said the mission commander. "They've been able to work on request, with short notice, to include base access, providing us workspace and just being very accommodating when it comes to airspace and tower-controlled patterns that they run here on the airfield."

This collaborative training event allows each force to improve its individual and collective capabilities, and the 352nd SOW and Romanian SOF will continue to train shoulder to shoulder in similar exercises.

"The biggest takeaway for me, is the Romanian partners are more than willing to host us, but they are thirsty to work with us as far as continued training," said the mission commander. "Looking forward to coming back, not just in Bacau but into Romania in general, so that we can work in the dynamic air space that they have, and their terrain, but also working with the ROU SOF members who seem to be very much interested in working with specialized air power like the tiltrotor Osprey."



U.S. Air Force's 7th Special Operations Squadron deployed to Bacau, Romania March 10-15, to conduct mission essential tasks, and simultaneously familiarize Romanian SOF with the CV-22 Osprey. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Kanapaux.

U.S. Special Operations Command - South



Opening ceremony celebrates milestone for Colombia's SOF NCOs



Colombian senior noncommissioned officers selected for training listen to guest speakers during the opening ceremony for the Advance Joint Special Operations Forces Noncommissioned Officers Course, held in Tolemaida, Colombia, March 4. The course is a significant step to implement NCO professional development within U.S. Southern Command's area of responsibility and will provide training through a carefully selected curriculum that hopes to bridge the gap between officer and NCO. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Alexis Ramos.

*By U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Alex Ramos
Special Operations Command South*

The noncommissioned officer has often been described as the backbone of the United States armed forces for being the most visible force charged with

executing an organization's mission and training its personnel. Developing the NCO has long been a strategy in the U.S. military for maintaining readiness by providing the education and training needed to operate in complex environments.

For other countries, however, the NCO's professional

development often has not been a top priority. Colombia's Joint Special Operations Command took a significant step in bringing NCO PD to the forefront with an opening ceremony held March 4, in Tolemaida, Colombia, for a course that hopes to bridge the gap between officer and NCO.

"I want to thank the United States which kindly dedicated itself to help establish this course through their former sergeants major who were part of special operations and are instructing the course," said Brig. Gen. Fernando L. Losada Montoya, Chief of Education for the Colombian Air Force. "For us it is very important that our NCOs are able to receive this type of training. They have experience in combat, and they bring a lot of expertise with them. They will not only offer great input to this course but bring with them that experience to be able to help our armed forces."

The opening ceremony had several guest speakers including the senior enlisted leader for U.S. Southern Command who followed Losada and described initiatives within the unit's area of responsibility.

"The U.S. Southern Command commander's number one line of effort is about building the team, our team," said Sgt. Maj. Bryan K. Zickefoose, senior enlisted leader for USSOUTHCOM. "In U.S. Southern Command and (Special Operations Command South) we are committed to helping the NCOs in the CCOE, and it starts with these courses. This is not a tactical course, this is a strategic course. Communication at a different level."

Zickefoose continued describing the role of the NCO and what the course would provide to the senior NCOs selected for the first iteration of the Advance Joint Special Operations Forces Course.

Master Gunnery Sgt. Otto E. Hecht, senior enlisted leader for the Marine Raider Training Center, followed Zickefoose and similarly described the responsibilities of the senior NCO and what the course means to CCOE's future NCOs.

"The senior staff NCO is someone who is disciplined, that has been trained, and has upheld the standard for a very long time," said Hecht. "The senior staff NCO is the backbone of any military organization. The senior staff NCO is the one who carries out the commander's intent and figures out how to make it work when things are challenging and when there is doubt ... Ultimately, you are leaders and this course will give you the training and education to help you become a better leader."

The 19 selected senior NCOs for the Advance JSOF Course listened to all the words of wisdom from the guest speakers and were made to understand the importance of NCO PD. Not wasting any time, the course immediately began at the conclusion of the ceremony.

Both the basic and advance courses can seat a minimum of 18 students and a maximum of 25 students.

The basic course will last two weeks while the advance course will have a duration of three weeks.

For those who helped plan the course and those in attendance, the significance of the

milestone was not lost.

"It's the first of its kind," said Army Master Sgt. Justin R. Daniels, SOCSOUTH strategy NCO in charge and planner for the Advance/Basic Joint SOF NCO Course. "This course will provide the educational curriculum designed to help reach objectives in the AOR."

The overall goal of the course is to train the trainer so that the students will one day become the teachers, explained Daniels.



Master Gunnery Sgt. Otto E. Hecht (right), senior enlisted leader for the Marine Raider Training Center, speaks to Brig. Gen. Fernando L. Losada Montoya (center), Chief of Education for the Colombian Air Force, at the conclusion of an opening ceremony for the Advance Joint Special Operations Forces NCO Course, held in Tolemaida, Colombia, March 4. The course will last three weeks and is a significant step to implement NCO professional development within U.S. Southern Command's area of responsibility. The carefully selected curriculum hopes to bridge the gap between officer and NCO. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Alexis Ramos.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command

Rangers receive valor awards



By Steve Hart

Hunter Army Airfield Public Affairs

Fourteen Rangers from the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment received awards for valor and three were presented Purple Heart medals in a ceremony on Hunter Army Airfield Savannah, Georgia March 8.

“We are here to recognize extraordinary Rangers who have gone above and beyond what was expected of them,” said Army Maj. Gen. Mark Schwartz, deputy commanding general, Joint Special Operations Command, who presented the awards.

Schwartz said the 1st Ranger Battalion has deployed 22 times in support of the War on Terror. He quantified the impact the battalion had during their most recent deployment by saying they conducted 198 combat operations that resulted in the killing or capturing of 1,900 terrorists. He attributed JSOC’s operational tempo as being responsible for “the ongoing dialogue with the Taliban.

Master Sgt. Phillip Paquette was awarded a Silver Star, the nation’s third highest honor for battlefield valor, during the ceremony. As the ground force commander of a joint task force in Afghanistan, his unit engaged the enemy April 25, 2018. According to his award citation, Paquette selflessly and with little regard for his own personal safety, exposed himself to enemy fire several times in order to retrieve a casualty, suppress the enemy by direct fire and delivered several danger close aerial munitions.” Paquette’s actions enabled the assault force to eliminate the enemy and safely maneuver the unit to the helicopter landing zone for exfiltration.

Paquette, who has 17 years of Army service, all with the 75th Ranger Regiment.

“Though the award is an individual award, it’s all about the men serving with me,” Paquette said with humility.



Maj. Gen. Mark Schwartz, deputy commanding general, Joint Special Operations Command presented the Silver Star to Master Sgt. Phillip Paquette, a former 1st Sgt. with 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, for his heroic actions April 25, 2018. As the ground force commander during combat operations, Paquette, selflessly and with little regard for his own personal safety, exposed himself to enemy fire several times in order to retrieve a casualty, suppress the enemy by direct fire, and deliver several danger close aerial munitions. He enabled the assault force to eliminate the enemy and safely maneuver to the helicopter landing zones. Photo Tracy A. Bailey.

“We won’t leave anyone behind. We do what we do for the person to the left and to the right wearing tan berets and scrolls on our left and right sleeves. Serving as a Ranger is a lifelong relationship.”

Paquette is currently attending the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas.

Eight Bronze Star Medals for valor were also presented during the ceremony, including two to Staff Sgt. Nicolas Volk-Perez and one to the eight-year-old Shannon Celiz, daughter of Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Celiz, who gave his life during the deployment.

Five Rangers received Joint Service Commendation Medals for valor and three were presented Purple Heart medals.

“It is truly an honor to serve with men like you,” Schwartz said to the award recipients.

Master Sgt. Benavidez Highway

*By Michael E. Krivdo
USASOC History Office*

Former Special Forces Army Master Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez, a Vietnam Medal of Honor recipient, was honored by the State of Texas, Saturday, March 23, 2019.

Sponsored by Benavidez's adopted home town of El Campo, Texas, a section of State Highway 71 was dedicated to his memory. This highway section is close to a statue of him in his old hometown of Cuero, Texas.

Fifty years ago, Benavidez, a Special Forces light weapons noncommissioned officer, stepped forward to help fellow Special Forces Soldiers under attack in Loc Ninh, South Vietnam. Despite wounds to his face, neck, and hands, Benavidez directed helicopters to the crippled team and under fire assisted in the evacuation of wounded and dead. Severely wounded in the stomach and back, Benavidez called in air strikes for a second

helicopter after his aircraft crashed. While treating and evacuating his fellow Soldiers, he kept the enemy infantry at bay, but was wounded several more times. After a final check for possibly forgotten Soldiers and classified material, Benavidez boarded a helicopter and flew to safety with those he had rescued. For his valorous actions he was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Benavidez died in San Antonio, Texas, November 29, 1998.



U.S. Army Master Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez. Photo courtesy of USASOC History Office.

U.S. Army Master Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez. Photo courtesy of USASOC History Office.



U.S. Army Special Operations Command

2019 USASOC International Sniper Competition



U.S. Army Soldiers in the United States Army Special Operations Command International Sniper Competition shoot at targets during a night live-fire range on Fort Bragg, N.C., March 20. Twenty-one teams competed in the USASOC International Sniper Competition where instructors from the United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School designed a series of events that challenged the two-person teams' ability to work together. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Michelle Blesam.



Naval Special Warfare Command

This story is about a rock



A gift, in the form of a large boulder, from the students of Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) class 250 sits in the middle of a parking lot at Naval Special Warfare Center, home to the BUD/S training facility. Class 250 included Medal of Honor recipient Petty Officer Second Class (SEAL) Michael A. Monsoor who was killed in action September 29, 2006. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Devin Monroe.

Courtesy Story

Naval Special Warfare Command

“The secret to BUD/S is under this rock” is engraved on a 2,000-pound boulder that rests in a curious location.

Just before graduating 2004, students from Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) class 250 worked as one, in the shadows to move the colossal stone from some unknown location to the middle of a

parking lot at Naval Special Warfare Center, home to the BUD/S training facility.

“The origin of the boulder is a mystery to many,” said Lt. Tom Deshazo, a BUD/S class 250 graduate and the Naval Special Warfare Center orientation officer in charge (OIC). “Some in BUD/S class 250 are not even sure of where it came from and how it got to its current location at the back gate of Basic Training Command. I know it was brought there some time in the middle of the night to the surprise of the instructor staff.”

Traditionally, BUD/S classes leave behind “gifts”



Petty Officer Second Class (SEAL) Michael A. Monsoor was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for diving onto a grenade to save his teammates in Ar Ramadi, Iraq on Sept. 29, 2006. Monsoor also received the Silver Star for his actions in May during the same deployment in 2006 when he exposed himself to heavy enemy fire to rescue and treat an injured teammate. In this photo Monsoor is attending cold weather training in Kodiak, Alaska in 2004. Courtesy photo.

for the instructors, command and future BUD/S classes. This massive stone is the gift from the class that included Medal of Honor recipient Petty Officer 2nd Class (SEAL) Michael A. Monsoor who was killed in action September 29, 2006.

According to Deshazo, a group of the shortest members of class 250, or “Smurf Crew,” bumped into the stone while out in San Diego bay. One of the brave “Smurfs, from Santa Barbara, California, who had been tempted by mermaids before,” held onto the rock for dear life while the other members attempted to follow the mermaid who made promises of warm beds and hot coffee. The mermaid’s spell was broken when a BUD/S instructor kayaked by while combing his mustache. The crew brought the now-sacred boulder back to venerate it as an object of devotion, it is believed.

Another, more plausible rumor from an undisclosed source, states that unidentified members of class 250 found the boulder in the desert and loaded it into a truck late one night. They brought it back to San Diego and placed it in the command parking lot as a gift.

“The great thing about the story behind the rock is

that it inspires the Sailors who see it when they are at Basic Training Command,” said Deshazo. “I have heard more than one story over the years, some have elements of truth, some are totally off base, but all are meant to motivate Sailors.”

There are as many stories about the boulder’s origin as there are answers to what the secret is hidden below the rock. It would take a bulldozer, or a large group of very motivated BUD/S students working together to find out what is actually under the boulder.

Regardless of how or why, the placement of the boulder was the first of many great feats to come from graduates of class 250, which include the acts of selfless courage of Monsoor and Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Jason Ray Workman, also killed in the line of duty.

In one of the most tragic days of Naval Special Warfare Command’s history, Workman along with 29 other service members died August 6, 2011 in Wardak province, Afghanistan, when their CH-47 Chinook helicopter was shot down.

Some say there is no secret to becoming a Navy SEAL and that there’s nothing under the rock, while others say the secret is teamwork. However, everyone seems to agree that the boulder and its myths inspire and encourage everyone who comes across it.



Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Jason Ray Workman was killed in the line of duty in one of the most tragic days of Naval Special Warfare Command’s history. Workman along with 29 other service members died August 6, 2011 in Wardak province, Afghanistan, when their CH-47 Chinook helicopter was shot down. Courtesy photo.

Naval Special Warfare Command



NAVSCIATTS teaches Combat Lifesaver skills course to partner nation special operations forces

Story and photos by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Michael Williams

Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School

More than 25 Partner Nation special operations forces personnel from Italy, Lebanon, and Romania, Trinidad and Tobago participated in a two-week Combat Lifesaver Course at Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School, located at Stennis Space Center, Mississippi, from March 8-21. The course is designed to provide personnel with specialized training that enables them to perform advanced lifesaving techniques to treat battlefield trauma.

This semester of the course featured security force professionals from Belize, Barbados, Bulgaria, Egypt, Gabon, Grenada, Hungary, Iraq, Italy, Jamaica, Lebanon, Madagascar, Poland, Romania, Sao Tome & Principe, St.

Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, and Ukraine. This semester marked the first time that this Naval Special Warfare Command trained security force professionals from Italy.

NAVSCIATTS is a security cooperation schoolhouse operating under United States Special Operations Command in support of foreign security assistance and geographic combatant commanders' theater security cooperation priorities. The international training command has the ability to meet emergent requirements from operational commanders through in-resident and mobile regionally focused training initiatives. NAVSCIATTS has trained with more than 12,000 partner nation special operations forces, SOF-like security force professionals and SOF enablers from 121 different countries.

CLC include: human rights, casualty assessment, hemorrhage control, maintaining casualty airway, casualty evacuation and management of injuries such as penetrating chest wounds, shock, heat injuries, burns and fractures.



Air Force Special Operations Command



Special Tactics Airmen culminate 830-mile ruck march to honor fallen

*By U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Joseph Pick
24th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

Aches, blisters, exhaustion, pain...830 miles, five states, 11 days...are a minute price to pay to honor the fallen. The push to continue on for these Air Commandos come from their communities' legacy of never forgetting a fallen comrade, from the pride instilled within themselves, and from reaching down and grabbing one of 20 batons that contained an inscribed name of a fallen teammate.

Air Force Special Operations Command Special Tactics Airmen, along with a mission support force of 19 Air Commandos assigned to the 24th Special Operations Wing, began the fifth iteration of the Special Tactics Memorial March in the pre-lit dawn, Feb. 22 at Medina Annex at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, to pay tribute to U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Dylan J. Elchin.

"This ruck march, this fifth ruck march that we have done, is in honor of Dylan Elchin," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command. "It gives us an excellent opportunity, however, to remember the 19 Special Tactics warriors who have also fallen. And of course, as you have heard several times, it also gives us an opportunity in this particular case to honor those that fell alongside Dylan."

Elchin, along with U.S. Army Capt. Andrew Ross and U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Eric Emond, were killed in action when their vehicle hit an improvised explosive device in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, Nov. 27, 2018, while deployed in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel. U.S. Army Sgt. Jason McClary died later as a result of injuries sustained from the IED.

"The ruck is a good way to pass on people's memories and to continue to talk about them," said Staff Sgt. Matt Smith, a Special Tactics combat controller with the 24th SOW. "When you lose guys like Dylan, it is important to take the time to remember them and tell their stories. By doing things like this, where we can just stop for 11 days and

ruck in their honor, it shows our Gold Star families how important our brothers and they are to us."

Local patrons and citizens from the five states the group rucked through came out to cheer, support and join for a few miles.

In 2009, the ruck march originated as the "Tim Davis Memorial March" and has since been renamed to honor all fallen Special Tactics Airmen to the "Special Tactics Memorial March" and is held whenever one of their own is killed in action.

The team completed their trip with Air Force senior leadership, Air Force Special Operations Command leadership and 24th SOW leadership rucking alongside the Airmen for the last mile until completion at the Special Tactics Training Squadron for a memorial ceremony March 4, Hurlburt Field, Florida.

"The quiet professionals that we remember today served others, they pushed limits of human condition and endured without a hint of entitlement," said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein. "For me, that's the essence of Special Tactics, you do what others cannot or will not do. Part of a broader special operations family--where the example of those remembered today inspires everyone to give a little bit more."

In attendance were the Gold Star families of Special Tactics operators that have been killed in action, including relatives of Elchin, U.S. Air Force Capt. Matthew Roland, U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. John Chapman, U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Forrest Sibley and U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Mark Forester.

"To our Gold Star families, we are committed to ensuring that your father, your husband, your son, your brother, will never die twice," Goldfein said. "First, on the worst day of your life, when they make that ultimate sacrifice and again, if their service were ever to stop saying their name. We will always remember."

The term "Gold Star family" is a modern reference to the service flag. During World War II, families with loved ones



Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein marches alongside Special Tactics Airmen with the 24th Special Operations Wing during the Special Tactics Memorial March at Hurlburt Field, Fla., March 4. This was the 5th Special Tactics Memorial March since 2009 and since it originated as the “Tim Davis Memorial March.” The march was renamed to honor all fallen Special Tactics Airmen in 2011 to the “Special Tactics Memorial March.” Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Joseph Pick.

servicing in the armed forces would display a blue star, which was replaced by a gold star if that loved one passed away, allowing members of the community to know the price that family had paid.

The route of the ruck echoed the years-long path Special Tactics Airmen take to be trained and certified, beginning immediately after basic military training graduation at the Medina Annex in Texas and ending with graduation from the special tactics training squadron in Hurlburt Field, Florida.

“For the special tactics operators, we never forget the

significance of this march. From Medina Annex where the training starts to Hurlburt Field where the training ends, where the lines of history and heroism intersect,” Goldfein said. “The batons that the marchers carried embodied that legacy and in a moment will literally be passed from generation to generation of Special Tactics warriors, the long blue line.”

The memorial baton has the following fallen Special Tactics Airman’s names inscribed and carried throughout the march.

- | | |
|---|---|
| U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. William McDaniel, Special Tactics Pararescueman, Feb. 22, 2002 | U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. William Jefferson, Special Tactics Combat Controller, Mar. 22, 2008 |
| U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Juan Ridout, Special Tactics Pararescueman, Feb. 22, 2002 | U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Timothy Davis, Special Tactics Combat Controller, Feb. 20, 2009 |
| U.S. Air Force Master. Sgt. John Chapman, Special Tactics Combat Controller, Mar. 4, 2002 | U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Daniel Sanchez, Special Tactics Combat Controller, Sep. 16, 2010 |
| U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Jason Cunningham, Special Tactics Pararescueman, Mar. 4, 2002 | U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Mark Forester, Special Tactics Combat Controller, Sep. 29, 2010 |
| U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Scott Sather, Special Tactics Combat Controller, April 8, 2003 | U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. John Brown, Special Tactics Pararescueman, Aug. 6, 2011 |
| U.S. Air Force Capt. Derek Argel, Special Tactics Officer, May 30, 2005 | U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Daniel Zerbe, Special Tactics Pararescueman, Aug. 6, 2011 |
| U.S. Air Force Capt. Jeremy Fresques, Special Tactics Officer, May 30, 2005 | U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Andrew Harvell, Special Tactics Combat Controller, Aug. 6, 2011 |
| U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Casey Crate, Special Tactics Combat Controller, May 30, 2005 | U.S. Air Force Capt. Matthew Roland, Special Tactics Officer, Aug. 26, 2015 |
| U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Adam Servais, Special Tactics Combat Controller, Aug. 19, 2006 | U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Forrest Sibley, Special Tactics Combat Controller, Aug. 26, 2015 |
| U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Scott Duffman, Special Tactics Pararescueman, Feb. 18, 2007 | U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Dylan Elchin, Special Tactics Combat Controller, Nov. 27, 2018 |

Air Force Special Operations Command



F-35A maintainers, special ops team for forward refueling



Two Special Tactics members observe as Airmen from the 27th Special Operations Logistics Readiness Squadron, Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., refuel an F-35A Lightning II from the 388th Fighter Wing, Hill Air Force Base, Utah, Feb 27. This is the first time the F-35 has been refueled from an MC-130J Commando II during a forward air refueling point exercise. Photo by Micah Garbarino.

By 388th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

America's most advanced aircraft integrated with a variant of one of its oldest and truest airframes this week to provide more combat flexibility to the Air Force.

For the first time, Airmen from the 388th Fighter Wing at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, and Airmen from the 26th Special Tactics Squadron and the 27th Special Operation Logistics Readiness Squadron, trained and carried out a

forward air refueling point operation from the MC-130J to the F-35A.

During this forward refueling scenario, an MC-130J lands at a remote airfield secured and managed by Air Force combat controllers. The C-130 crew, made up of loadmasters and fuels troops, or "Farpies," quickly set up equipment and fuel lines, then transfer fuel from the MC-130J to other aircraft landing behind them – in this case, an F-35A.

The training is a building block in adaptive basing



A refueling hose split in two directions out of the back of a MC-130J Commando II during the start of forward area refueling point training for F-35A Lightning II aircraft at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., Feb. 2. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Luke Kitterman.

development. Adaptive basing is a key component to providing air power in highly contested modern warfare. To succeed, Airmen from different platforms and different specialties must train to work together effectively, planners said.

“We’re really experienced at FARP operations with fourth-generation aircraft like the F-16 and the A-10 but this is the first time we’ve done it with the F-35,” said Maj. Meghan O’Rourke, an MC-130J combat systems officer with the 9th Special Operations Squadron and one of the organizers of the exercise.

The 9th SOS at Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico

has refueled F-22s and is traditionally a place where new operations are given a trial run, O’Rourke said.

Expanding FARP operations with the F-35A will provide commanders more options in a near peer fight where other support may be limited.

“Setting up a FARP gives us flexibility in planning because we now have the capability to land in a remote location, refuel, potentially rearm and go take the fight to the enemy, and the F-35 can bring a lot to the fight.” said Lt. Col. Matthew Olson, director of operations for the 421st Fighter Squadron and one of the F-35 pilots who flew to Cannon.

The training brought together pilots, maintainers, special operators and planners.

The maintenance footprint for the training was adaptive too. A small group of blended operational lightning technicians from the 388th Maintenance Group traveled to Cannon to provide training and support to the special operations airmen.

“It’s been very valuable to interface with the refueling troops and special-ops guys,” said Master Sgt. Dantorrie Herring, 388th Maintenance Group. “A lot of lessons learned and we demonstrated that we can do this with a small group of BOLT Airmen.”

Instead of bringing a group of 12 F-35A maintainers, Herring brought three Blended Operational Lightning Technicians, F-35 crew who are trained in multiple aspects of maintenance. In scenarios like FARP operations, the BOLT program can reduce manpower by more than 65 percent.

“If you think about doing this ‘real-world,’ we want the smallest footprint we can have,” Herring said. “With adaptive basing and BOLT you don’t have to send the whole unit.”



An MC-130J Commando II from the 9th Special Operations Squadron refuel two F-35A Lightning IIs from the 388th Fighter Wing at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., during a forward air refueling point training exercise Feb. 27. Photo by Micah Garbarino.

Air Force Special Operations Command



352nd SOW CV-22 performs flyover

A U.S. Air Force CV-22 Osprey assigned to the 352nd Special Operations Wing, RAF Mildenhall, U.K., performs a flyover during the Mi Amigo 75th anniversary flypast event at Endcliffe Park, Sheffield, U.K., Feb. 22. The aircraft flew over the park where thousands of U.K. residents honored the memory of the ten fallen U.S. Airmen who died when their war-crippled B-17 Flying Fortress crash landed to avoid killing residents and nearby children. Photo by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Jennifer Zima.



Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command



U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command celebrated its 13th anniversary on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., Feb. 21. The anniversary event included a battle colors rededication ceremony to recognize some of the collective achievements by the service component. The commander, Maj. Gen. Daniel D. Yoo also awarded Marines and Sailors for their exemplary performance. Since the unit's inception, Raiders, a name adopted in 2015 in recognition of their forbearers, have earned more than 300 valor awards and have found themselves in 17 countries to conduct more than 300 operational deployments, ranging from 14-man Marine special operations teams, to combined joint special operations task forces overseeing American and coalition special operations forces. The Raiders are a scalable force, much like their conventional Marine brethren. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Bryann K. Whitley

MARSOC celebrates 13th anniversary

*By Gunnery Sgt. Lynn Kinney and Sgt. Janessa Pon
Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command*

Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command celebrated its 13th anniversary on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Feb. 21, 2019.

The anniversary event included a battle colors rededication ceremony to recognize some of the collective achievements by the service component. The commander,

Maj. Gen. Daniel D. Yoo also recognized Marines and Sailors for their exemplary performance.

Since the unit's inception, Raiders, a name adopted in 2015 in recognition of their forbearers, have earned more than 300 valor awards.

The composition of the unit has changed and expanded in the years since it was founded in October of 2005 at the direction of the Secretary of Defense, but according to Yoo, the unit's moto, "Spiritus Invictus," or unconquerable spirit,

reverberates through the command.

“We saw that spirit in the Marines that are forward deployed,” said Yoo, about his recent visits to the Central and Africa Command’s area of operations. “We are in sustained combat. Today is about taking a pause to celebrate our past accomplishments and remember and honor those who have gone before.”

Raiders have found themselves in 17 countries to conduct more than 300 operational deployments, ranging from 14-man Marine Special Operations Teams, to combined joint special operations task forces overseeing American and coalition special operations forces. The Raiders are a scalable force, much like their conventional Marine brethren.

The organization has paid a high price for the victories it has achieved. The youngest and smallest of the DOD’s special operations forces, they have lost 43 souls in combat and in training, to include two multipurpose canines.

“Honoring our fallen and upholding their legacies are central virtues within MARSOC,” said Yoo, who pointed out the importance of the ceremony’s location, the memorial

located in front of the headquarters, etched with the names of the fallen Raiders.

Both Yoo and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Robert B. Neller, who visited the headquarters, took time to meet with the family of Master Sgt. Thomas A.

Saunders, who was killed in a training accident in March of 2015.

Neller, who arrived at Camp Lejeune today with the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Sgt. Maj. Ronald L. Green, also met with the awardees and

their families, as well as commanding officers within the command.

“Marine Raiders continue to make impressive contributions to SOCOM’s efforts around the world,” said Neller. “I am sure their WWII Raider predecessors would be as proud of them, as we are today. On this 13th anniversary, we cannot forget to pause and honor those MARSOC Marines who have given their last final measure too.”

According to Yoo, these Raiders have built a reputation for adaptability, determination and the spirit of innovation that all Marines are known for, making sure to point out, “Marines are who we are, special operations is what we do.”

Marine Raiders continue to make impressive contributions to SOCOM’s efforts around the world. I am sure their WWII Raider predecessors would be as proud of them, as we are today. On this 13th anniversary, we cannot forget to pause and honor those MARSOC Marines who have given their last final measure too.

Gen. Robert D. Neller, Commandant of the Marine Corps

Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Robert B. Neller, and the commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, Maj. Gen. Daniel D. Yoo, view the Memorial Wall etched with the names of the fallen Raiders after MARSOC’s 13th Anniversary Ceremony at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N. C., Feb. 21. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Olivia Ortiz.



Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command



Newly promoted Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke assumed command of U.S. Special Operations Command from Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III March 29, 2019, during a change of command ceremony in Tampa, Fla. Clarke becomes the twelfth commander of USSOCOM. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.

Clarke becomes 12th Special Operations commander

*By Michael Bottoms
USSOCOM Office of Communication*

Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke took command of U.S. Special Operations Command from Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III during a March 29 change of command ceremony in Tampa, Florida.

Acting Secretary of Defense Patrick M. Shanahan presided over the time-honored change of command

ceremony, also attended by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Marine Corps Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr.

“We are here today to pass the baton from Gen. Thomas to Gen. Clarke. As we say farewell to a leader who has contributed so much to this community and we welcome a new commander who will ensure our special operators will continue to plan, conduct and support critical missions in a dangerous world at a demanding pace,” said Shanahan. “To SOCOM, which will celebrate



Acting Secretary of Defense Patrick M. Shanahan gives his remarks lauding U.S. Special Operations Command during a change of command ceremony where Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke assumed command from Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III March 29, 2019, in Tampa, Fla. Clarke becomes the twelfth commander of USSOCOM. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.

its 32nd anniversary next month, your skill and vigilance keep us safe. I've learned a new lexicon since coming to the Pentagon. Words with significant connotations. One that always sticks with me is devotion. For our special operations forces, too often devotion means sacrifice. Our department and country are grateful for what you do and your families endure on our behalf."

Clarke becomes the twelfth commander of USSOCOM and will be responsible for ensuring the readiness of Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps special operations forces and synchronizing special operations planning.

Clarke, 56, was the director for strategic plans and policy, joint staff at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C. where he provided strategic direction, policy guidance, and planning focus to develop and execute the National Military Strategy. Clarke has led Soldiers at all levels in Airborne, Ranger, mechanized and light infantry units in five different divisions, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, and the 75th Ranger Regiment in the United States, Europe, Iraq and Afghanistan. He spent six years in the 75th Ranger Regiment as a company commander from 1994 to 1996, battalion commander from 2004 to 2006 and regimental commander from 2007 to 2009.

He pledged to work with the joint chiefs of staff, interagency partners and through the combatant commanders to fight current and future threats. He also iterated a promise to the USSOCOM force.

"For all those SOCOM warriors deployed or preparing to do so I commit to you my utmost, each and every day, to ensure that you are adequately resourced, have proper command guidance and the appropriate authorities. I am humbled and honored to assume the ranks of this command, but most of all to be amongst the finest warriors our nation has ever known," said Clarke.

Thomas, 60, has commanded USSOCOM since March 2016, and retires after more than 39 years of military service.

"Throughout your career, you have been at the forefront of our nation's battles. Since the day you pinned on the black and gold Ranger tab you've been leading the way. This includes your numerous combat deployments in support of historic missions from Operation Urgent Fury [Grenada invasion] in 1983 to Operation Enduring Freedom in 2013," Shanahan said. "You deployed to Afghanistan leading Soldiers every year from 2001 to 2013 except for 2008 where you deployed to Iraq instead and after you were wounded in combat you returned to the fray in 2009. In 39 years of distinguished service, you've embodied the West Point motto duty, honor, country."

Thomas ended his remarkable career by commenting how much he enjoyed commanding USSOCOM.

"I'm compelled to acknowledge that the opportunity with the SOCOM team has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life," said Thomas. "I was quickly amazed by the span and scope of our organizational activities and extraordinary leaders that comprised this eclectic headquarters."



Acting Secretary of Defense Patrick M. Shanahan, Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III and Richard D. Clarke prepare for the U.S. Special Operations Command change of command ceremony where Clarke assumed command from Thomas March 29, 2019 in Tampa, Fla. Clarke becomes the twelfth commander of USSOCOM. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

USSOCOM announces 2019 DoD Warrior Games team

By U.S. Navy Lt. Phillip Chitty
USSOCOM Office of Communication

Col. Cary Harbaugh, director of the U.S. Special Operations Command Warrior Care Program (Care Coalition), is proud to announce the athletes who will represent “Team SOCOM” at the 2019 Department of Defense Warrior Games.

USSOCOM is also the host of this year’s DoD Warrior Games, which will be held in Tampa, Florida and venues in the Tampa Bay area, June 21-30.

The active duty and veteran athletes selected to represent Team SOCOM are:

Active Duty:

Staff Sgt. Jimmy Covas, U.S. Army

Senior Master Sgt. Israel Del Toro, U.S. Air Force (Team Co-Captain)

Staff Sgt. Stuart DiPaolo, U.S. Marine Corps

Master Sgt. Christopher Donaldson, U.S. Army

Chief Petty Officer Nolan Ellis, U.S. Navy

Chief Petty Officer Phillip Fong, U.S. Navy

Tech. Sgt. Zachary Hildebrand, U.S. Air Force

Capt. Brian Hotchkiss, U.S. Army

Sgt. 1st Class Brant Ireland, U.S. Army

Lt. Col. Rhonda Keister, U.S. Army

Master Sgt. Alfred Martinez, U.S. Army

Staff Sgt. Lauren Montoya, U.S. Army

Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Norman, U.S. Army

Lt. Col. David O’Hearn, U.S. Army

Cmdr. Clay Pendergrass, U.S. Navy (Team Co-Captain)

Sgt. 1st Class Gabriel Rodela, U.S. Army

Capt. Alec Ross, U.S. Army

Chief Petty Officer Terry Scaife, U.S. Navy

Petty Officer 1st Class David Terpstra, U.S. Navy

Master Sgt. George Vera, U.S. Army

Staff Sgt. Mario Webb, U.S. Air Force



Army Master Sgt. Chris Donaldson, a Care Coalition athlete, fires an arrow during the U.S. Special Operations Command Warrior Care Program (Care Coalition) Warrior Games stand-up camp in Tampa, Fla., March 14. The camp was designed to develop the USSOCOM team roster for the 2019 Warrior Games. The games introduce wounded, ill and injured service members and veterans to Paralympic-style sports and showcase their resiliency. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.

Maj. Adam Ziegler, U.S. Army

Transitioning Active Duty:

Vairon Caicedo-Ocampo, U.S. Army

Jarrid Collins, U.S. Army

Lee Harvey, U.S. Army

Tiffany Hudgins, U.S. Marine Corps

Jason Phillips, U.S. Army

Henry Taylor, U.S. Army

Veterans:

- Jacob Anthony, U.S. Army*
- Lance Borman, U.S. Army*
- Steve Carmen, U.S. Army*
- Travis Dunn, U.S. Army*
- James Howard, U.S. Army*
- Cory Remsburg, U.S. Army*
- Rommel Siervo, U.S. Navy*
- Isaiah Staley, U.S. Navy*
- John Stanz, U.S. Marine Corps*
- Chase Tanton, U.S. Army*
- Stephen Toboz, U.S. Navy*
- Leticia Vega, U.S. Marine Corps*

The DoD Warrior Games were established in 2010 as a way to enhance the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded warriors and to expose them to adaptive sports. The Paralympic-style competition between teams of wounded, ill and injured service members and veterans from the U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and SOCOM has grown to new heights as it prepares to light the torch for the 10th time.

Military Paralympic adaptive sports programs help wounded service members and veterans build strength and endurance and draw inspiration from their teammates. Participation in the Warrior Games represents the culmination of a service member's involvement in an adaptive sports program and demonstrates the incredible



Retired Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Rommel Siervo, a Care Coalition athlete, throws a discus during the U.S. Special Operations Command Warrior Care Program (Care Coalition) Warrior Games stand-up camp in Tampa, Fla., March 13. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.

potential of wounded warriors through competitive sports.

The mission of USSOCOM's warrior care program is to provide wounded, ill, and injured special operations forces, veterans, and their families with advocacy after a life-altering trauma or illness to enhance their quality of life and strengthen SOF readiness.

Learn more about the Warrior Games at DODWarriorGames.com.



Navy Cmdr. Clay Pendergrass, a Care Coalition athlete, conducts swim training during the U.S. Special Operations Command Warrior Care Program (Care Coalition) Warrior Games stand-up camp in Tampa, Fla., March 13. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

Medal of Honor recipients inducted into the Commando Hall of Honor

*By Michael Bottoms
USSOCOM Office of Communication*

Twenty special operators who have been awarded the Medal of Honor were inducted into U.S. Special Operations Command's Commando Hall of Honor Jan. 29, 2019 in Tampa, Florida. The multi-generational Medal of Honor recipients spanned from World War I with the induction of Army Maj. Gen. William "Wild

Bill" Donovan to today's war on terrorism with the induction of Army Staff Sgt. Ronald Shurer II.

The group of national heroes were given a tour of USSOCOM's Medal of Honor Hall, given a global mission briefing by Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, then USSOCOM commander, followed by a formal mess night where they were officially inducted into the hall.

"It is just a great honor to be in the company of such extraordinary people like you," Thomas said. "Our



Retired Army Command Sgt. Maj. Bennie Adkins, a Vietnam War Medal of Honor recipient, autographs a book featuring his image during a U.S. Special Operations Command Commando Hall of Honor induction ceremony in Tampa, Fla., Jan. 29. Adkins, along with other special operations forces Medal of Honor recipients and their families, also received a tour of the Commando Hall of Honor and Medal of Honor Hall at USSOCOM headquarters, a brief by the USSOCOM commander in the Wargame Center, and a formal dinner event. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.



Medal of Honor recipient retired Army Sgt. 1st Class Melvin Morris enters USSOCOM headquarters Jan. 29 on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. Morris, along with 19 other special operations forces Medal of Honor recipients were inducted into the USSOCOM Commando Hall of Honor. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

command really cherishes your contributions to special operations.”

The guest speaker during the Commando Hall of Honor induction ceremony was Navy Adm. Eric Olson, the eighth USSOCOM commander and Silver Star Medal recipient for his actions in 1993 at the Battle of Mogadishu.

“Only those who have earned the Medal of Honor know how deep one has to reach to find the strength to perform such acts of extreme valor,” Olson said. “Those who wear the medal live under a very public spotlight, know what it takes to be the highest role model for the rest of their lives. None of them sought to be in the public eye. They always look good. Stand tall. Speak well. They go the extra mile and if you look at them tonight you see what I mean.”

The medal represents the very best of a warrior culture. The extraordinary acts and courage are performed for the right reasons,” continued Olson. “It’s worth noting that Medals of Honor awarded in our lifetime were for saving lives and not taking them at levels of heroism that they and we honor most.”

The grandson of Maj. Gen. William Donovan, David Donovan and his wife Teresa, attended the induction representing his grandfather who commanded the Office of Strategic Services during World War II. The OSS is the precursor for the Central Intelligence Agency and ultimately USSOCOM.

“What an incredible experience Teresa and I had assisting with the induction of my grandfather and other Medal of Honor winners into the Hall of Fame,” Donovan said. “We are still trying to absorb being at the nerve center of the world’s only hyper-power along with the Medal of Honor recipients from the past and present.”

The following special operations Medal of Honor recipients were inducted into USSOCOM’s Commando Hall of Honor.

- Command Sgt. Maj. Bennie Adkins, U.S. Army*
- Sgt. 1st Class Eugene Ashley, U.S. Army*
- Sgt. Gary Beikirch, U.S. Army*
- Master Sgt. Roy Benavidez, U.S. Army*
- Master Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Edward Byers, U.S. Navy*
- Master Sgt. John Chapman, U.S. Air Force*
- Maj. Gen. William Donovan, U.S. Army*
- Maj. Gen. Merritt Edson, U.S. Marine Corps*
- Master Sgt. Gary Gordon, U.S. Army*
- Col. Robert Howard, U.S. Army*
- Col. William Jones, U.S. Air Force*
- Sgt. John Levitow, U.S. Air Force*
- Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Littrell, U.S. Army*
- Staff Sgt. Robert Miller, U.S. Army*
- Sgt. 1st Class Melvin Morris, U.S. Army*
- Capt. Gary Rose, U.S. Army*
- Sgt. 1st Class Randall Shughart, U.S. Army*
- Staff Sgt. Ronald Shurer II, U.S. Army*
- Petty Officer 1st Class James Williams, U.S. Navy*
- Sgt. Gordon Yntema, U.S. Army*



David Donovan, grandson of Medal of Honor recipient William “Wild Bill” Donovan and his wife Teresa, pose next to a photo of his grandfather at USSOCOM headquarters Jan. 29 on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. Donovan’s grandfather, along with 19 other special operations forces Medal of Honor recipients were inducted into the USSOCOM Commando Hall of Honor. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Jacob Johnson.



GILBERT ALANZ (B) RALPH L. THOMPSON WESLEY B. AN. DAVID ALAN C. BRY
S/MSGT PVT USA 880125 MSGT CPT USA 810120 S/MSGT PVT USA 840922 S/MSGT CPT USA 8
JANIS B. WILLIAM C. HAYES ROBERT A. BRADMAN



**U.S. Army
Sgt. 1st Class
Joshua Z. Beale
3rd Special Forces Group
(Airborne)**



**U.S. Army
Sgt. 1st Class
Ethan C. Carpenter
75th Ranger Regiment**



**U.S. Army
Warrant Officer 2
Jonathan R. Farmer
5th Special Forces Group
(Airborne)**



**U.S. Army
Sgt. 1st Class
Will D. Lindsay
10th Special Forces Group
(Airborne)**



**U.S. Army
Sgt.
Cameron A. Meddock
75th Ranger Regiment**

Editor's note: Honored are those special operations forces who lost their lives in combat or training since the February issue of Tip of the Spear.

A Senegalese Special Forces soldier prepares to fire an M240 machine gun as part of interoperability training with U.S. Special Forces Soldiers during Exercise Flintlock 2019, near Po, Burkina Faso, Feb. 21. Flintlock is a multi-national exercise consisting of 32 African and Western nations at multiple locations in Burkina Faso and Mauritania designed to strengthen the ability of key partner nations to counter violent extremist organizations, protect their borders and provide security for their people. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Mary S. Katzenberger.

