



Tip OF THE Spear

United States Special Operations Command
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December 2019



Green Beret receives Medal of Honor for heroics in Afghanistan



United States Special Operations Command



Green Beret receives Medal of Honor for heroics in Afghanistan ... 10

Tip of the Spear

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(Cover) President Donald J. Trump presents the Medal of Honor to U.S. Army Master Sgt. Matthew O. Williams during a ceremony at the White House in Washington, D.C., Oct. 30, 2019. Williams was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions while serving as a weapons sergeant with the Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha 3336, Special Operations Task Force-33, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan on April 6, 2008. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Keisha Brown. (Above) Then Sgt. Matthew Williams (Right) with U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ronald Shurer II, (Left) also a Medal of Honor recipient from the same battle, sit outside a small village in Eastern Afghanistan in May 2008. Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Master Sgt. Matthew Williams.

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U.S. Special Operations Command - Korea



Korean, American SOF service members demonstrate unity through combined free-fall jump



Special Operations Command Korea and Republic of Korea Special Warfare Command service members pose for a photo in a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter prior to a combined military free-fall jump over Gyeryong, South Korea, Oct. 4, 2019. The Special Operations Forces service members were jumping as part of the 17th Annual Ground Forces Festival, one of the world's largest military festivals. Photo by U.S. Air Force Capt. David J. Murphy.

***By U.S. Air Force Capt. David Murphy
Special Operations Command Korea***

Special Operations Command Korea and Republic of Korea Special Warfare Command service members participated in combined military free-fall demonstrations during the 17th Ground Forces Festival in Gyeryong, South Korea, Oct. 4 - 6, 2019.

The jumps were part of a four-day event designed to showcase both Korean and U.S. service members' equipment and capabilities. The event is one of the largest military festivals in the world and attracts up to a million people each year.

With the exception of 2018, SOCKOR has participated in the event every year since its inception in 2002.

"This is a great opportunity for jumps with our Korean counterparts," said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Lyons, SOCKOR Special Operations Forces liaison element member. "The ROKSWC demo team is really proficient and we've jumped with them many times in the past."

This year three members of SOCKOR joined the ROKSWC free-fall team.

"It's a good thing that they invite us to participate," said Sgt. First Class Jimmy Kim, SOCKOR SOFLE member. "The event allows us to showcase our interoperability and to reinforce the strength of the alliance."

The three SOCKOR members joined 17 ROKSWC members who all jumped from a height of 6,000 feet to the festival area below.



Republic of Korea Special Warfare Command service members participate in the combined military free-fall jump from a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter over Gyeryong, South Korea, Oct. 4, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Capt. David J. Murphy.

"It feels awesome and meaningful to jump with our SOCKOR counterparts," said a ROKSWC member. "It helps us work through our combined jump processes in a fun event that helps build our friendship."

Both Korean and American Special Operations Forces members stated that the event in general, and the combined jump specifically, was the true embodiment of the statement "Katchi Kapshida" or "We Go Together."



Republic of Korea Special Warfare Command and Special Operations Command Korea Special Operations Forces service members pose for a group photo prior to their combined military free-fall jump Oct. 4, 2019, in Gyeryong, South Korea. Photo by U.S. Air Force Capt. David J. Murphy.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



Multinational SOF, Sky Soldiers mix unconventional, conventional warfare at Saber Junction 19

*By U.S. Army Spc. Patrik Orcutt
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe*

“For us being Special Forces, we are the first on the battlefield, then we are the last to leave,” said a Bulgarian Special Operations Tactical Group Commander.

The captain was the commander of the SOTG for exercise Saber Junction 19. Approximately 5400 participants from 15 NATO and partner nations including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Italy, Kosovo, Lithuania, the Republic of Northern Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine and the U.S. took part in the exercise at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, in Hohenfels, Germany, Sept. 3-30, 2019.

The exercise partnered about 100 multinational SOF from Bulgaria, the U.S., and members of the Lithuanian National Defense Volunteer Defense, or KASP, with conventional forces to improve integration and enhance their overall combat abilities.

“SOF coalition force integration is a large part of this exercise for us,” said a U.S. Army Special Forces Soldier assigned to 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), acting as an observer coach trainer for the exercise.

To determine the best use of SOF capabilities to support larger combined maneuver, the Bulgarian SOTG commander coordinated directly with his conventional force counterpart U.S. Army Col. Kenneth Burgess, the commander of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. The SOTG also placed SOF liaison officers within the brigade staff to facilitate communication directly between the staff and SOF on the ground.

This gave the SOTG the ability to support critical



Special Forces Soldiers from the U.S. Army's 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) secure a landing zone during combined aviation load training with the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade as part of exercise Saber Junction 19 in Hohenfels, Germany, Sept. 13, 2019. Approximately 100 Special Operations Forces from Bulgaria and the U.S., along with Lithuanian National Defense Volunteer Forces integrated with 5,400 multinational conventional forces lead by the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade to execute land operations in a joint, combined environment. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Patrik Orcutt.

portions of the exercise such as the joint forcible entry, a multinational airborne operation delivering paratroopers from Ramstein Air Base, Germany into the exercise to seize key terrain. Paratroopers from the Italian Army's Folgore Brigade jumped from Kentucky Air National Guard C-130 aircraft to set the drop zone for the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Bulgarian and U.S. SOF provided early reconnaissance of the drop zone and secured the area for the pathfinder's jump, ensuring they had up to date information from the moment they hit the ground.

This multinational coordination was one of the key objectives of the exercise.

“From my point of view, this is the most important exercise for my unit in that it helps prepare us for future NATO missions,” said the Bulgarian commander. “We are currently on standby in my country [as a quick reaction force], so this exercise is beneficial for us.”

Lithuania’s KASP also worked alongside SOF to set conditions for the conventional force. Exercising their real-world mission of unconventional warfare, the KASP integrated with Special Forces Soldiers from the U.S. Army’s 5th SFG(A). This combined time conducted operations ahead of friendly lines in enemy occupied territory to enable the multinational conventional joint force.

The KASP are structured similar to the U.S. National Guard, with about 500 professional soldiers and 5,000 reservists, but have a very different mission.

“Our mission is to conduct territorial defense, so we

must be ready to defend our country against any type of threat, either hybrid or conventional,” said Lithuanian Army Col. Dainius Pašvenskas the KASP commander.

Pašvenskas added that the demand to come to exercises like these within his unit is so high that they have placed internal requirements to be selected. After completing rotations in exercises like Saber Junction 19, they share the techniques they have learned within their units, and teach the unconventional warfare tactics to the rest of the force.

The KASP’s missions at Saber Junction 19 included long-range reconnaissance, direct action and personnel recovery.

“We may have different tasks but we will operate in a similar area as Special Operation Forces,” said Pašvenskas. “Working with Special Forces and learning from their experience is an excellent opportunity for us.”



(Above) Special Forces from the U.S. Army’s 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Soldiers secure a landing zone during combined aviation load training with UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters from the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade as part of exercise Saber Junction 19 in Hohenfels, Germany, Sept. 13, 2019. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Patrik Orcutt.

(Below) Italian Army paratroopers from the Folgore Airborne Brigade coordinate with Special Forces Soldiers from the U.S. Army’s 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Sept. 17, 2019 after the Italian paratroopers parachuted onto a drop zone secured by Special Operations Forces as part of exercise Saber Junction 19 in Hohenfels, Germany. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Patrik Orcutt.



U.S. Army Maj. Nathan Showman of the 173rd Airborne Brigade watches as paratroopers from the brigade land during a joint forcible entry as part of exercise Saber Junction 19 in Hohenfels, Germany. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Whitney Hughes.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Pacific



Establishing camaraderie in Bhutan

*By U.S. Army Major Kevin Boyd
SOCPAC Public Affairs*

A team of disaster response specialists from Special Operations Command Pacific conducted the first ever military exchange between the U.S. and Kingdom of Bhutan in Thimphu, Bhutan Nov. 12-14, 2019.

The Kingdom of Bhutan is one of the most isolated nations in the world and is located between India and the People's Republic of China in the Himalayas. A mountainous nation in the seismically active Himalayan belt, Bhutan is prone to floods, earthquakes, glacial lake outbursts and forest fires.

Guided by the unique national concept of "Gross National Happiness," over the past decade the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan has achieved rapid economic growth and reduced extreme poverty through focused investments in health and education. This unique state has also experienced a peaceful transition to a democratically elected government alongside a constitutional monarchy which has resulted in a dramatic reduction in poverty and a rise in living standards.

The Royal Government of Bhutan recognizes the threats they face from their location on the Eurasian Indian fault line despite not suffering a major disaster in several decades. According to Mr. Jigme Thinley Namgyal, director general of Bhutan's Disaster Management Agency, they are striving to build a disaster resilient nation to safeguard their "Gross National Happiness" prior to the next natural disaster.

This subject matter expert exchange focused on disaster response and preparedness and while the U.S. and Bhutan have had some contact over the past decade, including engagements with United States Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, this is the first formal engagement with the U.S. Department of Defense and the Kingdom of Bhutan.

The SMEE was developed with Bhutan's Department of Disaster Management and had participation from several agencies to include the Royal Bhutan Army, Royal Bhutan Police, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health, and



U.S. Army Maj. Anthony Rafosky and members of the Royal Bhutan Government work through a problem solving exercise during a disaster response and preparedness subject matter expert exchange between U.S. Indo-Pacific Commands Theatre Civil-Military Support Element, the University of Hawaii's Pacific Disaster Center and the Bhutan Disaster Management Agency in Thimphu, Bhutan, Nov. 14-16, 2019. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Derek Mol

other first responders and government agencies to include utilities and engineering.

The U.S. team consisted of USINDOPACOM's Theater Civil-Military Support Element, a disaster data specialist from the University of Hawaii's Pacific Disaster Center, a physician's assistant from the 97th Civil Affairs Battalion (Airborne), and SOCPAC's public affairs team.

This SMEE is the first step in developing a relationship with the Bhutanese Department of Disaster Management and gave the Government of Bhutan insight into the unique capabilities USINDOPACOM can provide during a disaster response.

"This exchange is designed to give USINDOPACOM an understanding of how best we can assist the Kingdom of Bhutan in the event of a disaster," said Maj. Ari Cohen, SOCPAC TCMSE leader. "USINDOPACOM assists only when requested by the affected nation, and when the request is received through diplomatic channels we will coordinate

relief operations in support of U.S. Department of State's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance."

The exchange began with a workshop focused on the U.S.'s disaster assistance provided after the 2015 Gorkha earthquake in Nepal, which provided a framework for Bhutan to understand the U.S. capacity to assist in the Himalayas.

Classes and interactive discussion focused on medical preparedness, international assistance management, how to request U.S. assistance and support since the U.S. does not have a diplomatic presence in Bhutan and how Bhutan has prepared for and responded to past incidents.

The exchange culminated with a tabletop exercise that enabled all participants to work together through an earthquake scenario that rendered several hospitals and the only international airport unable to operate. Jared Batzel from the Pacific Disaster Center oversaw the tactical exercise and said, "The Bhutanese have clearly thought through their response, and being a small close-knit community know who to contact within their government to provide needed

response. This is a needed critical first step is establishing disaster resilience."

The United Nations World Food Programme participated in the exchange and in recent years has been supporting the Government of Bhutan in preparing for and responding to natural disasters to include capacity building, logistics, emergency telecommunications and food security. By working with and the WFP, who maintain a persistent presence in Bhutan, the USINDOPACOM TCMSE hopes to establish an enduring program that enhances Bhutan's Department of Disaster Management and ongoing efforts to improve their disaster preparedness.

This exchange is the first of what both nations hope to become an enduring effort in establishing a friendship and collectively building disaster resilience, response and preparedness.

"While this is the first time we are working together, let it not be the last. We welcome this collaboration into making Bhutan a disaster resilient country," said Mr. Namgyal. "We need to work together, learn from each other, and help each other to improve our response to disasters."



Service members from U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's Theater Civil-Military Support Element conducted a disaster response and preparedness subject matter expert exchange in Bhutan. This exchange was the first time the U.S. military has worked with the Royal Government of Bhutan in Bhutan. The exchange was held in Thimphu, Bhutan, Nov. 14-16, 2019. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Derek Mol.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command

Green Beret receives Medal of Honor for heroics in Afghanistan



By Devon L. Suits
Army News Service

President Donald J. Trump presented the Medal of Honor to Master Sgt. Matthew Williams Oct. 30, 2019 for his actions in Shok Valley that saved the lives of his fellow Soldiers and commandos.

Williams is the second member of his detachment to receive the Medal of Honor for the same operation. Former-Staff Sgt. Ronald Shurer II, the team's medic, was recognized for his lifesaving actions Oct. 1, 2018.

"The battle of Shok Valley is a testament to the overwhelming strength, lethal skill, and unstoppable might of the United States Army Special Forces and all of our military," Trump said.

Then-Sgt. Williams served as a weapons sergeant with Operational Detachment Alpha 3336, Special Operations Task Force 11, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan, during the operation on April 6, 2008.

On that day, Williams joined other U.S. Soldiers and Afghan commandos as a member of the rear-assault element. Credible intelligence had led the team to the valley in Nuristan Province, Afghanistan, where they dropped in by helicopter and quickly moved toward their objective.

"When the first Americans reached the edge of the valley, at the base of a 100-foot mountain, a handful of Special Forces scouted ahead," Trump said. "The lead group was 60 feet up the slope when roughly 200 insurgents savagely attacked. It was a big surprise -- a very unwelcome



Map depicting Operation Commando Wrath in Shok Valley, Nuristan province, Afghanistan, April 6, 2008. Graphic courtesy of Army News Service.

surprise."

Calls from the first element started coming in -- they had sustained several casualties and were pinned down at a higher elevation. Shurer and Master Sgt. Scott Ford joined Williams as he organized his Afghan commando force and led a counterassault against the enemy, Trump said.

Eventually, the weapons sergeant and his team made their way to the base of the mountain with three wounded Soldiers. He and the Afghan commandos continued to provide a counterattack, as the enemy tried to overrun their casualty collection point.

As medical evacuation helicopters arrived, Williams risked his own life to help move the casualties. Through



3RD SPECIAL FORCES GROUP
(AIRBORNE)



Master Sgt. Matthew O. Williams and his wife after the Hall of Heroes Induction Ceremony at the Pentagon, Arlington, Va., Oct. 31, 2019. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Keisha Brown.

it all, he continued to direct commando fires, which enabled the safe evacuation of the wounded and dead.

"[Williams's] incredible heroism helped ensure that not a single American Soldier died in the battle of Shok Valley," Trump said.

"His ground commander later

wrote, 'I've never seen a troop so poised, focused, and capable during a fight in matters without question and reservation. [He is] one of the bravest soldiers and people I've ever met,' Trump added.

During the White House ceremony, Matt was accompanied by his wife Kate, his father Michael, mother Janet, brother Cody and sister Amy.

"Each of you has strengthened our nation through your steadfast love and support, and we want to thank you," Trump said.

"They have a young son, Nolan, who will turn three next week," the president said. "In the years to come, Nolan will learn that his father stands among the ranks of our nation's greatest heroes."

Many of Williams' teammates were able to attend the White House ceremony, to include: Shurer, Luis Morales, Karl Wurzbach, Seth Howard, David Sanders, John Walding, Dillon Behr, and Ryan Wallen. Two Afghan translators that helped support the ODA's

mission were also at the event.

"For more than a decade, Matt has stared down our enemies, fought back the forces of terror, and exemplified the virtue and gallantry of the American warrior," Trump said. "He has completed five tours in Afghanistan, a deployment in Africa, and he continues to serve our country on active duty today."

Battle Brothers

The Medal of Honor is more than just one person, Williams said during a media event. The medal represents a story of teamwork, trust and brotherhood, and how the team never chose to quit during the operation.

Williams joined ODA 3336 shortly after graduating from the Special Forces Qualification Course -- just weeks before the detachment's scheduled deployment, said retired Master Sgt. Scott Ford, who also attended the White House ceremony.

"He missed a huge part of our train up," said Ford, the detachment's former team sergeant. "Training for him started in combat. Being one of the youngest

members within the detachment, I gave him as much responsibility as I would for my most senior members, early on. I recognized his potential and maturity as a leader."

Williams was "always trying to find work," Lt. Col. Kyle

Walton recalled. Then-Capt. Walton served as the commander during the Shok Valley operation. He was also at the White House ceremony to show his support.

"When Matt completed one task, he showed right back up -- all of it under fire, and all of it under extreme physical stress with enemy activity around us," Walton said.

"We had approximately 70 close air strikes, to include one right on top of our position," Walton said. "And through the clouds and the dust, Matt would reappear looking for more work. His actions demonstrated that 'refusal to quit.' Traits we look for in our Green Berets."

Through the near-seven-hour operation, Williams always found a way to move safely around the battlespace, Shurer said. His actions helped save the lives of four critically wounded Soldiers.

Ford was one of the Soldiers injured during the operation. He was initially knocked to the ground after a

His ground commander later wrote, 'I've never seen a troop so poised, focused, and capable during a fight in matters without question and reservation. [He is] one of the bravest soldiers and people I've ever met.'

— President Donald J. Trump



Master Sgt. Matthew O. Williams and Staff Sgt. Ronald J. Shurer II pose together after the Medal of Honor ceremony at the White House in Washington, D.C., Oct. 30, 2019. Both received the Medal of Honor for actions with the Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha 3336, Special Operations Task Force-33, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan on April 6, 2008. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Keisha Brown.

sniper round made contact with his chest plate. Another sniper bullet penetrated through his left arm moments later.

“Everyone else was either hit ... or wounded by enemy fire,” Walton said, explaining the severity of the situation.

With a tourniquet applied to his injured limb, Ford said he was determined to move down the mountain without assistance, but Williams was there to provide support.

“Matt was the one that came to me and said, ‘Hey, you’re going to need help getting down the mountain.’ I didn’t even realize how much my balance would be off,” Ford said. “I just didn’t want to take another gun out of the fight at that moment.”

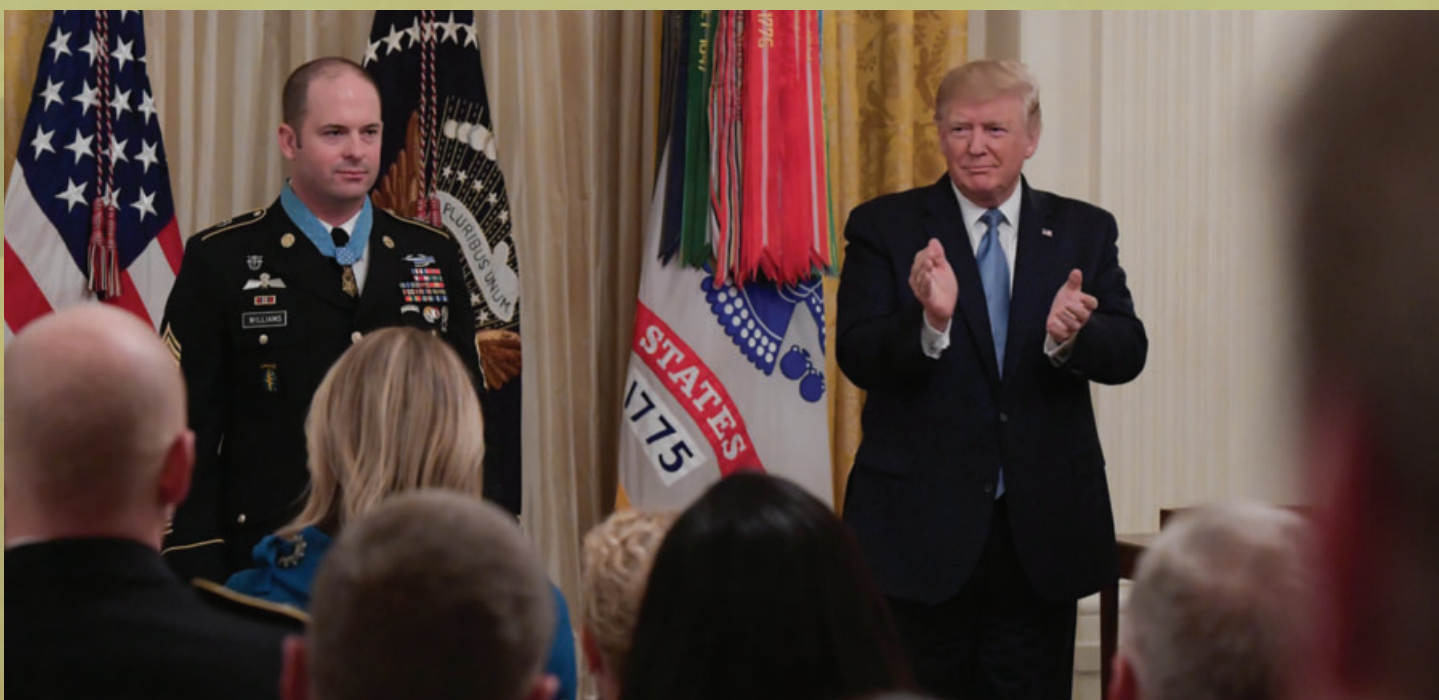
Through a barrage of fire, Williams grabbed Ford and assisted him down the mountain and handed him off to then-Staff Sgt. Seth Howard for support.

“We trained hard to be ready for that day,” Ford said. “We had to react to the situation as it developed. There was no option to give up. It took everybody stepping up at another level.”

The joint force was responsible for taking out more than 200 insurgents during the battle. However, at the end of the day, “the enemy gets a say, and they chose to fight hard that day,” Walton said.

“I think a lesson learned... is that our Soldiers will never quit, and they will never leave someone behind,” Walton said.

“These awards ... demonstrate the kind of quality of guys that we have, and the values of the American Soldier,” he added. “ODA 3336 is still out there right now, and they are doing missions on behalf of the nation. Missions everyone would be proud of if they knew what they were doing right now.”



President of the United States, Donald J. Trump hosts the Medal of Honor Ceremony in honor of Master Sgt. Matthew O. Williams, at the White House, Washington, D.C., Oct. 30, 2019. U.S. Army Photos by Sgt. Keisha Brown.

Operation Commando Wrath

April 6, 2008 | Shok Valley, Afghanistan

Then-Sgt. Matthew Williams served as a weapons sergeant with Operational Detachment Alpha 3336, Special Operations Task Force 11, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan. On April 6, 2008, the ODA was on a mission to capture or kill high-value targets of the Hezeb Islami al Gulbadin in Shok Valley, Nuristan province, Afghanistan.

Williams was part of an assault element consisting of several American Soldiers and a larger Afghan commando force, who were inserted by helicopter into a location in Nuristan province. As they were

moving up a mountain toward their objective, they were engaged by intense enemy machine guns, snipers and rocket propelled grenades.

The lead portion of the assault element, which included the ground commander, sustained several casualties and was pinned down on the mountainside. While this was going on, Williams and the rest of the trailing portion of the assault element were forced to take cover as they began to receive intense enemy fire. Insurgent fighters had the entire assault element pinned down.

Keeping the insurgents at bay

As the Afghan commandos and American Soldiers desperately engaged the enemy, Williams heard that the lead element had sustained several casualties and was in danger of being overrun. He immediately gathered the commandos around him while braving intense enemy fire and led a counterattack across a 100-meter long valley of ice-covered boulders and a fast-moving, ice-cold, waist-deep river.

After leading his commandos up the mountainside to the besieged element, Williams arrayed his Afghan commandos to provide suppressive fire to keep the insurgents from overrunning the position.

As Williams worked to defend his position, his team sergeant, Master Sgt. Scott Ford, was hit by a sniper round. Once again, Williams braved intense enemy fire to provide Ford first aid and moved him down the sheer mountainside to the casualty collection point.

Then, knowing the commandos and his fellow

Soldiers were still in danger, Williams fought and climbed his way back up the mountainside, under enemy fire, to help defend the lead assault element, which still had several serious casualties to evacuate.

Exposing himself to

danger

Upon reaching the lead element, he provided suppressing fire, killing several insurgents, before once again exposing himself to enemy fire in order to move to the element's satellite radio and reestablish their communications capability. Williams then continued to expose himself to enemy fire as he assisted moving the wounded down the mountainside to the casualty collection point.

After Williams reached the casualty collection point with three wounded Soldiers, enemy fighters began maneuvering to overrun their position, putting the lives of the wounded and those caring for them at risk.

Realizing the danger to the wounded, Williams again

led the Afghan commandos in a counterattack and fought for several hours against the insurgents, keeping them at bay until helicopters arrived to evacuate the wounded.

Again and again, as the wounded were being evacuated, Williams exposed himself to

enemy fire while carrying and loading casualties onto the helicopters. He then continued to suppress numerous insurgent positions by directing commando fires, which allowed the patrol to evacuate the wounded and the dead without further casualties.

It was kind of quiet, then all of a sudden everything exploded all at once – machine gun fire, some RPGs started going off. [The insurgents] had some pretty good shooters and a lot of people up there waiting for us.

— Master Sgt. Matthew Williams

That day was one of the worst predicaments of my life at that point, the experience from that has helped me through my whole entire career. Remain level headed and focus on what needs to happen as opposed to what is happening.

— Master Sgt. Matthew Williams

U.S. Army Special Operations Command

30 Years - 10 Army Special Operations Medal of Honor recipients



*By U.S. Army Sgt. Larry Barnhill
USASOC Public Affairs*

In the past 30 years of U. S. Army Special Operations Command history, 10 American heroes from within its ranks were awarded the Medal of Honor, our nation's highest award for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of their own lives above and beyond the call of duty.

The president, in the name of Congress, has awarded more than 3,400 Medals of Honor to our nation's bravest Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen since the decoration's creation in 1861.

Of the 10 USASOC Medal of Honor recipients, four were for actions taken while fighting in the war in Afghanistan, four from the Vietnam War and two from operations in Somalia.

The most recent recipient, Master Sgt. Matthew O. Williams, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), was awarded the MOH by President Donald J. Trump during a ceremony at the White House on October 30, 2019.

Williams was honored for actions taken during Operation Commando Wrath, a fierce battle in Shok Valley, Nuristan province, Afghanistan in April 2008.

Retired Staff Sgt. Ronald J. Shurer II, who was awarded the MOH, October 1, 2018, fought in the aforementioned battle alongside Williams.

According to their MOH citations, Williams and Shurer risked their lives to save several Soldiers and Afghan commandos during this operation. They and Afghan commandos across a river and up a cliff and established firing positions, while Shurer moved through enemy fire to treat and evacuate wounded Soldiers to a casualty collection point he set up at the base of the mountain. During the nearly seven hour firefight, they moved injured Soldiers to the casualty collection point while under rifle, machine gun and rocket propelled grenade fire.

The spring of 2008 is when another battle in Afghanistan would end with an Army Ranger fighting gallantly, losing his hand and later earning a MOH.

Retired Master Sgt. Leroy A. Petry was awarded the MOH for valor while assigned to 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment by then President Barack Obama at a White House ceremony July 12,

2011.

Then Staff Sgt. Petry, according to his award citation, led a wounded fellow Ranger to cover, while wounded himself, and throwing a live grenade back at the enemy force which saved the lives of three other Rangers in the Paktya province, Afghanistan, May 26, 2008. Petry also lost his hand that day because of the grenade exploding as he threw it back to the enemy.

Prior to the Afghanistan war battles in which Petry,



Shurer and Williams earned their respective Medals of Honor, a USASOC operator gave the ultimate sacrifice in a January 2008 firefight, saving the lives of 22 other Soldiers.

Staff Sgt. Robert J. Miller was posthumously awarded the MOH October 6, 2010 for actions taken during a battle in Konar province, Afghanistan, Jan. 25, 2008.

According to Miller's MOH citation, while serving as a Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha weapons sergeant, charged into overwhelming enemy fire from more than 100 insurgents to provide protective fire for his team. Despite being mortally wounded, Miller continued to expose himself to draw fire away from his teammates, saving the lives of seven fellow operators and 15 Afghan National Army soldiers.

The Battle of Mogadishu, according to an October 2018 Army Times article, is viewed as a tactical success because a force of about 100 Americans held off more than 1,000 Somali insurgents in intense combat.

Two USASOC snipers gave their lives in that battle, protecting the pilot and crew of a Blackhawk helicopter that crashed in the city.

Master Sgt. Gary Gordon and Sgt. 1st Class Randall Shughart were posthumously awarded the MOH in September of 1994 for their actions taken on Oct. 3, 1993 battle in Mogadishu, Somalia.

According to their MOH citations, Gordon and Shughart, USASOC snipers-team members, fought their way through a dense maze of shanties and shacks, under intense enemy fire, to reach the critically injured crew members; pulled the pilot and the other crew members from the crashed aircraft, before establishing a perimeter which placed him and his fellow sniper in the most vulnerable position.

More than 58,000 Americans were killed during the Vietnam War which lasted nearly two decades, four of which were USASOC Soldiers who later received the MOH.

Gary M. Rose was awarded the MOH October 23, 2017 by President Donald J. Trump for actions taken during a September, 1970 battle that lasted several days during the Vietnam War.

According to then Sgt. Rose's MOH citation, serving as a 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) medic, he exposed

himself multiple times treating, moving and loading friendly casualties onto evacuation helicopters as well as repelling enemy fire for helicopter extractions and saving the life of the Marine door-gunner who was shot on the helicopter during the evacuation.

Retired Master Sgt. Jose Rodela was awarded the MOH by then President Barack Obama at a White House ceremony March 18, 2014 for actions taken during combat operations in Phuoc Long province, Republic of Vietnam Sept. 1, 1969.

According to then Sgt. 1st Class Rodela's MOH citation, while serving as a company commander in 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), exposed himself to intense enemy fire while providing suppressing fire, assisting wounded comrades and destroying an enemy rocket.

Retired Sgt. 1st Class Melvin Morris was awarded the MOH by then President Barack Obama at a White House ceremony March 18, 2014 for actions taken during combat in the vicinity of Chi Lang, Republic of Vietnam Sept. 17, 1969.

According to then Strike Force Commander Staff Sgt. Morris' citation, he charged into enemy fire, destroyed four enemy bunkers, and was wounded three times while

recovering the body of a fallen comrade.

Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Bennie G. Adkins was awarded the MOH by then President Barack Obama during a White House ceremony Sept. 15, 2014 for actions taken in a battle at Camp A Shau, Republic of Vietnam March 9 - 12, 1966.

According to then Sgt. 1st Class Adkins' MOH citation, after being wounded by intense enemy fire, he repeatedly exposed himself to sniper, machine gun and mortar fire to move wounded Soldiers to safety as well as, with a small group of men, fought off North Vietnamese

Army and Viet Cong forces until they were rescued two days later.

USASOC warriors have gone and continue to go above and beyond the call of duty to defend the United States in combat theaters worldwide. The 10 warriors who have received the MOH within the last 30 years are among the ranks of American heroes who willingly put themselves in harm's way to protect their comrades and the American way of life.



U.S. Army Special Operations Command

U.S. Army Special Operations Command marks 30th anniversary



By USASOC History Office

On Dec. 1, 2019, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command marks its 30th anniversary. Headquartered at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, USASOC was established, according to its first commanding general, then Lt. Gen. Gary E. Luck, because the Army recognized “the importance of Special Operations Forces in counterinsurgency around the world,” as the Cold War drew to a close. Luck, Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Carl E. Vuono, and Brig. Gen. William F. ‘Bill’ Garrison, USASOC’s first deputy commanding general, envisioned the command as “the force of choice” in future conflicts. Stood up as a major Army command, it was also the Army service component command of U.S. Special Operations Command.

Army Special Operations Forces traces its legacy to World War I, with dedicated psychological operations and civil affairs agencies. The use of ARSOF expanded greatly during World War II, with units deliberately organized and trained for a wide array of special operations missions, such as long range reconnaissance, irregular warfare, prisoner rescue, and commando raids.

During the Korean War, psychological warfare, civil affairs, Rangers, guerrilla advisors, and other ARSOF capabilities were employed. In addition, Ranger training was codified and the first Special Forces units were established. ARSOF expansion during the Vietnam War included the activation of three PSYOP groups, multiple SF groups, and the first special operations aviation units.

The post-Vietnam drawdown threatened ARSOF’s existence. However, it experienced a revival in response to the failed 1980 hostage rescue mission in Iran (Operation Eagle Claw) and various insurgencies in Central America. In 1982, the 1st Special Operations

Command was established provisionally as higher headquarters for SF, Ranger, PSYOP, CA, and SOA units. In 1988, Gen. Vuono, approved the creation of an ARSOF major command. USASOC was established in provisional status on Dec. 1, 1988.

Activated a year later, on Dec. 1, 1989, at Fort Bragg, USASOC provided a higher headquarters for the 14,000 active duty and 10,000 reserve Soldiers, U.S. Army Reserve Special Operations Command, 160th Special Operations Aviation Group, and the 75th Ranger Regiment. Over time, USASOC organizational expansion included the 95th Civil Affairs Brigade, 528th Sustainment Brigade, 8th Psychological Operations Group, and the U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command. For the past thirty years, it has trained, equipped, organized, and deployed ARSOF Soldiers across the globe.

The current Commanding General, USASOC, Lt. Gen. Francis M. Beaudette, shared his thoughts on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of USASOC. “ARSOF Soldiers are custodians of the legacy of those who’ve gone before them. They will never let America down, and as always, they will keep winning through calculated recklessness, disciplined daring, and aggressive action.”

Today, USASOC is home to 33,000 Soldiers, assigned to its headquarters or to its subordinate commands: 1st Special Forces Command, U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command, 75th Ranger Regiment, and the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

Lt. Gen. Beaudette concludes, “We’re all extremely proud of today’s special operator. Unified by selfless service, sacrifice, and dedication to mission, our men and women are trusted, empowered, and vigilant in the fight against violent extremism and at the leading edge of great power competition.”

On Dec. 1, 2019, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command marks its 30th anniversary. Photo by Walter Sokalowski.



Return to Panama: Rangers mark the 30th anniversary of Operation Just Cause



By U.S. Army Maj. Tony Mayne
USSOCOM Office of Communication

More than 75 Ranger veterans of Operation Just Cause traveled to Panama from Dec. 17-23, 2019 to commemorate the 30-year anniversary of U.S. military operations to remove and arrest the Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega and allow the democratically elected president Guillermo Endara to assume his office.

“It is important to honor our five fallen comrades from the Ranger Regiment and actions of members of the special operations community as a whole,” said retired Sgt. Maj. Joe Clark, a fire team leader with 2d Platoon, A Company, 1st Ranger Battalion during the operation.

The 75th Ranger Regiment spearheaded the U.S. military’s assault onto two airfields in Panama providing conventional forces a secure point of entry to assemble and execute their assigned mission.

“We look back with pride that we were a part of U.S. Special Operations and Ranger history. It is important to remember our history and pass on those lessons learned to prepare current and future special operations warriors so they are ready when their day comes,” Clark added.

Strategic Situation

After a month of mounting political pressure, the Panamanian general assembly declared that a state of war existed with the United States on Dec. 15, 1989. The very next day, Marine Capt. Richard E. Hadded, Navy Lt. Michael J. Wilson, Army Capt. Barry L. Rainwater, and Marine 1st Lt. Robert Paz were fired upon outside of the Panamanian Defense Headquarters in Panama City fatally wounding Paz. The PDF claimed the Americans were armed. Eyewitnesses denied the PDF claim.

On Dec. 17, President George H.W. Bush ordered the execution of the Panama invasion plan – Operation Plan 90-2; the military set H-hour as 1 a.m., Dec. 20.

Originally named, Operation Blue Spoon, Army Gen. Colin Powell encouraged the name change to Just Cause rationalizing, “even our severest critics would have to

utter ‘Just Cause’ while denouncing us.”

Rangers prepare for Just Cause

1st Ranger Battalion conducted two full-scale rehearsals, an air coordination exercise and a mission rehearsal on an airfield with similar characteristics to what the Rangers would see in Panama.

“Our company executed as planned, but not everything went well with adjacent unit coordination,” remembers then-A Company 1st. Sgt., retired Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Hall. “None of us had any idea this was a rehearsal for Panama.”

Hall recalled that the unit’s battalion commander, retired Lt. Gen. Robert Wagner, had his Rangers rehearse actions on the objective in a way that they were unaccustomed. With prior knowledge of the likelihood of the pending operations, then-Lt. Col. Wagner left the Rangers in mystery as to why he preferred a change in their standard operating procedures.

“At the time we didn’t understand some of the things he told us to do, but it became apparent on 20 December,”

Hall recounted. “Like the old Army saying, you may not always understand some of the things you are asked to do, but you usually find out later, there is a method to the madness.”

Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Doug Greenway was a platoon sergeant with 2d Ranger Battalion. Greenway recalls returning to Fort Lewis, Washington via Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia after a three-week training exercise, which, unknown to the Rangers, was a rehearsal for the invasion.

“Within 24 hours of returning, we received orders to redeploy via Benning to Panama,” Greenway said. “Luckily all of our stuff was still somewhat configured. The 2d Battalion Rangers departed for Fort Benning, Georgia, within eight hours for coordination and synchronization.”

The Pacific Northwest Rangers were accustomed to cold winters, but were surprised to find temperatures in 30s and raining in southwest Georgia.



Upon arrival, the Rangers marshaled and began dividing live ammunition among the force.

"That really brings it home when you are loading 5.56 ball, LAWs, and a mortar round into your rucks," Greenway remembered.

The order called for the 75th Ranger Regiment to conduct an airborne assault on the Omar Torrijos International Airport and Tocumen Military Airfield complex with the 1st Ranger Battalion and C Company, 3d Ranger Battalion. Second Ranger Battalion and the remainder of 3d Ranger Battalion would simultaneously conduct a second airborne assault to seize Rio Hato airfield.

With H-hour was set at 1 a.m. on Dec. 20, the ready brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, more than 2,000 paratroopers strong, was to jump forty-five minutes after the Rangers' seizure of Torrijos/Tocumen Airport.

"We were ready for the challenge due to realistic training and excellent Ranger leaders at all levels," Clark said.

Torrijos-Tocumen airfield seizure

The greatest concern for Rangers on an airfield seizure mission is what they could not control. For Hall, this fear was brought to life when he was awoken during the seven-hour flight to Torrijos-Tocumen Airport by Brig. Gen. Tom

Maffey, then B Company's company commander.

"He wakes me up to tell me they found the ZPU-4 antiaircraft gun," Hall recollected. "I said, 'Great, where?'"

Then-Cpt. Maffey replied, "End of the airstrip."

At that point, Hall returned to sleep with confidence the Air Force Special Operations Command's AC-130 gunship would eliminate the target prior to Hall's exit as the last jumper.

Hall was awoken a second time to learn that H-hour would be moved up, and, to Hall's dismay, a report the AC-130 would not be able to destroy the ZPU.

"So I wake up the entire bird and tell them the situation and impress upon them the importance of clearing the bird as quickly as possible so that the old 1st Sgt. can live to collect his retirement," Hall said.

Preparatory suppressive fires began and three minutes later, according to plan, 732 Rangers of the 1st Ranger Battalion task force exited seven C-141 Starlifters and four C-130 Hercules transports. Jumps were supposed to be 500 feet above ground level, but given the large crown of the airfield, many reported they must have exited from 350 feet.

Hall recounted his C-141 aircraft dropped 34 Rangers in 15 seconds. The audible sound of initial gunfire from the Panamanian Defense Force and growing return rate of fire from assembling Rangers provided all the motivation necessary to clear the runway and execute their small unit missions faster than had occurred in any rehearsal.

Giving credit where credit is due, Hall understood the importance of the support received from the Air Force in the face of anti-aircraft fire.

"The Air Force did a fantastic job!" Hall stated.

"They knew the situation with the ZPU, and they did their job."

The seizure of Tocumen portion of the airfield was nearly a flawless operation. With the southern security established, A Company quickly overwhelmed a handful of Panamanian Air Force personnel who elected to fight. By 2 a.m., twenty-five minutes later than planned, the 1st Ranger Battalion's objectives on the Tocumen military airfield were cleared and secured.

"The only difference from this jump and any other was that our Panamanian Defense Forces barracks objective adjacent to the airfield was on fire, thanks to the AC-130," Clark said.

Clark remembers when an American paratrooper landed in a tree right next to his Rangers outside the PDF barracks.

"He was fighting to get out of the tree and get his pistol when I told him, 'We are Rangers. Relax and I will help you,'" Clark said. "He had no idea we were even on the ground and thought we were PDF. Lucky for him we were the good guys."



The Torrijos side proved more challenging. As the Rangers began to sweep through the terminal's ground floor the first of the 376 passengers from a Brazilian airline that arrived just prior to the airborne assault began to emerge from their hiding places in the terminal.

The Rangers could hear the civilians screaming as they prepared to enter the terminal from their assembly area immediately across the tarmac. The PDF identified an English-speaking women and ordered them to warn the Rangers, "Don't come in here, they're going to kill us!!"

Sgt. David Reeves of C Company, 3d Ranger Battalion recounts his experience clearing the Torrijos civilian terminal. A fire team leader in a five-person squad, operating in two-man teams, Reeves' team's mission was to clear both floors of the terminal's northern boarding gate area. After clearing the first floor, the team breached a glass door leading to a stairwell providing access to the main level.

During room clearance, Reeves spotted a PDF soldier in his peripheral vision with his rifle pointed directly at him.

"The world went into slow motion," Reeves recalls. "My first thought was 'I don't have time' and my second thought was 'This is going to be messy'." Reeves was carrying 40 millimeter explosive ammunition for his M203 grenade launcher and knew the results if it was hit by the enemy fighter.

The PDF soldier fired a long burst and Reeves felt the blast covering his face and he went down as if, "I had been hit hard with a baseball bat across the chest."

"I had no doubt I was dead," Reeves said. "I heard voices but I could not understand them, I thought I should be able to understand voices in heaven and that is when I realized I was still alive and the voices were enemy soldiers talking to each other."

Reeves knew any movement would alert the PDF that he was still alive. With his blood pooling on the floor around him, Reeves began to reach for a grenade and was struggling to grip a pin when the room exploded in gunfire.

A Ranger buddy, Pfc. Travis Kelley low crawled toward him and continued his movement despite having his Kevlar helmet shot off his head. Kelley drug Reeves into a larger room where the Rangers prepared to assault the small PDF team.

A second attempt to take the room by Kelley and

Spc. Michael Eubank failed. On the third attempt, Kelley cooked off a grenade and pushed on the door again. This time the door was blocked.

With the holler of "frag out," Pfc. Michael Farber dove on top of Reeves to shield him as Kelley tossed the grenade into an unoccupied area of the terminal area allowing the seating area to absorb the shrapnel.

On the fourth attempt, Kelley and Eubank shot a PDF soldier who was knocked through the floor opening created by the numerous grenades. The enemy soldier landed outside the terminal in front of a Ranger machine gun where his was eliminated as he attempted to draw his pistol from his waist band.

Back inside the room, the remaining PDF soldier leapt from his hiding position engaging Eubanks in hand to hand combat. Luckily, Kelley maneuvered in position to engage and kill the soldier with his rifle without injuring Eubank. The room was finally clear.

The squad then turned its attention to Reeves. After taking him to the assigned casualty collection point, Reeves recalled with pride, "the squad continued with the mission."

By dawn, all of the Ranger objectives on Torrijos-Tocumen and were clear and secured.

Rio Hato airfield seizure

The attack on Rio Hato commenced simultaneously with the assault on Torrijos-Tocumen with brief preliminary fires followed by the airborne assault of 837 Rangers exiting at 500 feet. Enemy antiaircraft fires were heavy and, for the moment, unsuppressed as close air support had to cease-fire and withdraw while the Rangers were in the air. Eleven of the thirteen aircraft supporting the jump were hit as they overflew the objective.

"Crossing over the beaches into Rio Hato, we sounded off with the 'Ranger Creed' and we were out the doors just after midnight - filling the skies with paratrooper silk at 500 feet," Command Sgt. Maj. Greenway remembered.

The Rio Hato airfield was divided into two different operational regions, north and south. Two companies of the 3d Ranger Battalion were to secure the northern sector of the objective with 2d Ranger Battalion securing the south.

Greenway remembers seeing damage inflicted on the PDF barracks by a 500-pound bomb out of a troop window of his C-141. With barracks still burning, the jumpmaster of Greenway's stick held the



Rangers past the planned release point to ensure the Rangers were clear of the ground hazard.

"Exiting was rough, but I was glad to get out and get on with making this happen," Greenway said.

On the ground, the Rangers found themselves in a 360-degree firefight against an alert and dispersed PDF. Lacking organization, the PDF kept a sustained rate of fire at the Rangers as they discarded their chutes.

Greenway remembers linking up with Rangers and moving to his assigned support-by-fire position for the assault on the Rio Hato terminal. As his small team passed a civilian hotel, he observed a Ranger team taking control of 40 civilians now involuntarily involved in the conflict. The team declined support from Greenway's element.

"That fired me up!" Greenway recalls.

Arriving at their designated support-by-fire position, Greenway found his squad leader Staff Sgt. John Bolduc directing machine-gun fire, enabling the clearance of the Rio Hato terminal. Sounds of Ranger platoons were audible, with M68 hand grenade explosions visible to the Greenway's team through the windows.

Once again, the Rangers freedom of movement was ensured by the AFSOC AC 1-30 gunships.

"The AC-130 was like a warm blanket," Greenway

reflected.

Seven minutes ahead of schedule, one hour and fifty-three minutes into the operation, the airfield was reported secure.

The Rangers then moved to defend the airfield from counterattack and assisted with casualty collection. Maneuvering in and round airfield buildings, Greenway remembers seeing cigarettes in the ash trays and showers running.

"Most Panamanian Defense Forces had no stomach for the forces against them and left quickly," Greenway grinned. "I am sure the 500-pounder rattled their resolve."

Dawn of the Dec. 20th found one major objective yet to be achieved. The PDF headquarters at La Comandancia in Panama City had yet to be taken. The task fell to C Company of the 3rd Ranger Battalion. Following preparatory fires and supporting building clearing assaults that commenced at 3 p.m., the Rangers swept through La Comandancia and secured it by 5 p.m.

On Christmas Day, Noriega fled to the Apostolic Nunciature of the Holy See seeking political asylum from the Vatican. In response, on Dec. 27, the 4th Psychological Operations Group began an intensive three-day barrage of rock music to unnerve Noriega and to disrupt communication interference between the U.S. military representatives and Holy See decision makers.

On Dec. 30, the Vatican clarified that it did not believe Noriega had asylum, "but a person in refuge." As a result, Monsignor Jose Sebastian Laboa told Noriega that he had no choice but to surrender to the American soldiers at the front gate.

The Rangers would continue executing missions to seize key terrain until Dec. 28.

Reflecting on Just Cause

For the special operators attending the reunion, the time spent reminiscing about their participation in Just Cause provided time for reflection.

"The bottom line is we had great weapon systems and assets to defeat the enemy, but it was those Rangers and their lethal and violent actions that quickly took that ground," Greenway recounted. "I couldn't be prouder to have served with such great warriors and brothers."

"As I look back on OJC, we gained many lessons learned that we passed on to Rangers for many years to come -- just as Rangers did from Urgent Fury [Grenada invasion] to me and current Rangers are doing from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria," Clark said. "Train as you fight is truly the Ranger standard."



Outside airline terminal



U.S. Army Special Operations Command

Young Lions: Army Special Operations leaders selected to attend Chicago seminar



*By U.S. Army Maj. Jeff Reed
1st Special Forces Command (Airborne)*

The view from the 46th floor of the Aon Center in Chicago tells a group of young Army Special Operations leaders that they are a long way from Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Lake Michigan and surrounding sky scrapers replace the sweeping pine forests of the North Carolina Sandhills. Camouflage uniforms are nowhere to be seen. An experienced management consultant begins a dialogue on the concept of organizational learning. The group of young leaders, surrounding a large conference room table, listen intently as the words “whoever learns the fastest, wins” flash on the screen.

This was the scene in September at the Young Lions event, a three-day seminar on innovation, competition, organizational culture, and executive communication. The event brought together 19 rising leaders from across 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) to hear from 15 guest speakers representing industry front-runners in the marketing, real estate and education sectors. Through briefings and dialogue with corporate executives, these special operations leaders gained valuable insight into strategies used in the civilian sector to drive innovation, encourage critical thinking, and communicate effectively.

“We are here to give you the opportunity to listen to industry leaders on different ways to approach problems,” Maj. Gen. John Deedrick, 1st SFC (A) commanding general, said to the group. “A different way of thought to help you take large amounts of data to provide clarity and to get you away from Fort Bragg for some new opportunities.”

Investing in people

This recent iteration of the Young Lions program reinstated a former U.S. Army Special Operations



A consulting expert discusses the importance of organizational culture with commissioned and warrant officers from across 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) during the Young Lions leader development event at the Aon Center in Chicago, Sept. 17-19, 2019. Through briefings and dialogue with corporate executives, these Special Operations leaders gained valuable insight into strategies used in the civilian sector to drive innovation, encourage critical thinking, and communicate effectively. This opportunity to invest in young leaders will also help the command retain existing talent and attract the best and brightest to the special operations community. Courtesy photo.

Command program began in 2012 to provide exceptional mentorship opportunities to rising stars. Hand selected by their commanders for their demonstrated potential to grow within their organizations, these commissioned and warrant officers represented the civil affairs, psychological operations, Special Forces, ordnance, and medical services communities. With an average of 12 years of service and 19 months of deployed combat experience, these leaders

are at a critical point in their Army careers. Soon, they will be transitioning from the tactical level to the operational level within their organizations, from leading small teams to managing teams of teams. The increased scope and responsibility require these leaders to develop new skills and approaches. Events like Young Lions provide a unique opportunity for 1st SFC (A) to recognize talented officers and provide them with opportunities to gain new perspectives.

Nurturing a culture of innovation

Corporate leaders are constantly looking for innovative ways to drive down operational costs while maximizing revenue. For businesses to survive in an increasingly complex world, they must establish cultures of innovation, to include setting bold organizational goals, embracing failures as learning opportunities, and empowering employees to pursue creative solutions. 1st SFC (A) is on a similar mission to nurture innovation within its ranks as the command continues to pursue novel solutions to maintain operational readiness while balancing mission sets that support countering violent extremist organizations and returning to great power competition. As we balance generating quick wins with maintaining a focus on long-term solutions, lessons gleaned from the private sector through events such as Young Lions may spark insights that help 1st SFC (A) leaders address these types of challenges.

Evaluating organizational culture

Another focus area during the Young Lions event was analyzing organizational culture to predict future success or failure. While culture, or those attitudes and values underlying the environment of an organization, is often considered nebulous and hard to measure, the presenters at Young Lions gave the SOF leaders concrete ways to evaluate the culture within their units. The private sector

presenters pointed to these models of analyzing culture as predictive tools that help them determine future financial success. For 1st SFC (A), such models could be used to examine organizational culture as a determinate of operational success.

Communicating with clarity and precision

Because participants were emerging leaders who are likely to fill more senior roles in their units, the Young Lions event included training on executive communications. The human brain processes data faster than a speaker can present information, necessitating clear and succinct communication to key leaders who are charged with making organizational decisions. Participants were taught how to wade through a large amount of data to filter key points, organize their thoughts, and present a clear picture to senior leaders. Such skills are critical in an environment that is characterized by ever-increasing amounts of data and attention distractors. Participants left this event better prepared to provide their commanders with clear and precise information that enables them to understand, visualize, describe, and direct their units.

The way ahead

1st SFC (A) is planning to expand the Young Lions leader development seminar to two iterations per year and open it up to enlisted members of the command. As these events continue and expand, they will help drive change at the lowest level to grow agile and adaptive leaders ready to take on the challenges of the future. This opportunity to invest in young leaders will also help the command retain existing talent and attract the best and brightest to the special operations community. Though this program began before the recently enacted Army People Strategy personnel management system, programs such as Young Lions are absolutely aligned with Army senior leaders' vision for innovation in the talent management realm.



Commissioned and warrant officers from across 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) attended the Young Lions leader development event held at the Aon Center in Chicago, Sept. 17-19, 2019. Courtesy photo.

Naval Special Warfare Command Memorial of a legend



Retired Vice Adm. Joseph Maguire, acting director of national intelligence, speaks at the memorial service for retired Master Chief Boatswain's Mate (SEAL) Rudy Boesch at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Virginia Beach, Va., on Dec. 3, 2019. Boesch served 45 years in Naval Special Warfare completing tours in both World War II and Vietnam, as well as serving as Command Master Chief of SEAL Team TWO and United States Special Operation Command. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Russell Rhodes Jr.

*By U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew Murch
Naval Special Warfare Group TWO*

Family, friends, shipmates, and fellow Frogmen gathered to honor the life and service of retired Master Chief Boatswain's Mate (SEAL) Rudolph "Rudy" Boesch at the Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek Fort Story base theater, in Virginia Beach, Virginia Dec. 3, 2019.

"Rudy was not just our senior enlisted leader for 26 years, he was SEAL Team Two," said retired Vice Adm.

Joseph Maguire, acting director of national intelligence and previous SEAL Team Two commanding officer.

"Rudy set the standard of conduct for military bearing, for physical excellence and for dedication to mission, to team, to family and to the country that he loved. Rudy didn't just set the standard for all of us. Rudy was the standard."

Boesch joined the U.S. Merchant Marines in 1944 at the age of 17, and one year later enlisted in the U.S. Navy where he spent the next 45 years on active duty. He immediately volunteered for Underwater Demolition

Team training where his stellar performance led to his selection as one of the first U.S. Navy SEALs. Boesch retired in 1990 after serving two tours in Vietnam with SEAL Team Two and serving as senior enlisted leader at United States Special Operations Command.

Throughout the ceremony close friends and family recalled special moments and funny anecdotes that celebrated and honored Rudy's life and legacy.

"Master Chief pinned [my] Trident on my chest and I thought 'this is awesome,'" said

retired Master Chief Special Warfare Operator Steven Gonzalez, the officiant of the memorial.

"I cherished that Trident my entire career, only wearing it on special occasions but today, that same Trident continues Rudy's legacy. I pinned that very same Trident upon the chest of my nephew who is stationed at SEAL Team Two and is currently deployed overseas."

Rudy's passion for the SEAL teams was contagious.

"There are few people in our community, the Navy or maybe even the world where one word defines who or what they are," said Gonzalez. "For Rudy, that word is service."

Rudy's daughters spoke lovingly of their father and his time in the Navy. "He lived and breathed the military," said Rudy's daughter, Barbara Schlatter. "He didn't want to retire, the Navy forced him to retire at age 62, but it never stopped him from being active."

After retirement, Boesch spent most of his time giving back to the community. He served on the board of directors at a nonprofit organization that assists Navy SEALs and their families; he volunteered with a local police force; and he was an avid member of the Red Cross, always making time to help the brotherhood he never truly left.

In 2000, Boesch became famous across the U.S. after competing on

the first season of "Survivor" where he finished in third place. Several years later he became the oldest contestant on the show when he was brought back for "Survivor: All Stars." Despite this newfound fame, Boesch's commitment to Naval Special Warfare never wavered.

Rudy was truly a member of the greatest generation. He was an example to all of our generations that followed especially the SEALs and Sailors he mentored in his 45 years of service to our nation.

— Retired Vice Adm. Joseph Maguire,

"Rudy was truly a member of the greatest generation," said Maguire. "He was an example to all of our generations that followed especially the SEALs and Sailors he mentored in his 45-years of service to our nation."

NSWC's mission is to provide maritime Special Operations Forces to conduct full-spectrum operations, unilaterally or with partners, to support national objectives. NSW's greatest competitive advantage is its people, and it provides the nation's premiere maritime special operators and combat support personnel in support of U.S. Special Operations Command's global mission.



The daughters of retired Master Chief Boatswain's Mate (SEAL) Rudy Boesch are presented with U.S. flags at a memorial service for Boesch at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Virginia Beach, Va., Dec. 3, 2019. Boesch served 45 years in Naval Special Warfare completing tours in both World War II and Vietnam, as well as serving as command master chief of SEAL Team TWO and United States Special Operation Command. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Russell Rhodes Jr.

Naval Special Warfare Command

A full-page background image showing two divers underwater in a pool. One diver is in the foreground, wearing a full scuba rig with a tank and mask, and is holding the leg of another diver. The second diver is further back, wearing a black wetsuit and fins, and is reaching out with one hand. The water is clear blue, and the pool floor is visible at the bottom.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Alex Perlman assigned to Naval Special Warfare Command photographs U.S. Navy SEAL candidates participating in Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training Nov. 5, 2019 at Navy Diving and Salvage Training Center, Panama City, Fla. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Sean Furey.

Increasing underwater visual information capability in great power competition

*By U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Ace Rheaume
Naval Special Warfare Command*

Petty Officer 3rd Class Alexander Perlman recently earned the scuba diver qualification and the Navy Scuba Diver pin during a graduation ceremony at the Navy Diving and Salvage Training Center, Panama City, Florida.

Perlman, assigned to Naval Special Warfare Command, completed the scuba class as part of his endeavor to become an underwater photographer for the Navy.

“Underwater photographers provide a very unique force multiplier to our underwater operations,” said Master Chief Navy Diver Mike Shields, NSW Group TWO master diver.

“They have the capability to dive and photograph underwater operations that would otherwise go undocumented. This visual feedback is valuable and gives us the opportunity to see the challenges and successes members of the special operations community meet while operating in an austere environment. We can take that information and make changes to improve everything from gear to tactical techniques and procedures.”

Perlman attended the Navy’s 33-day scuba diver course that provides non-diving personnel with the necessary training to safely and effectively perform as a dive-team member and scuba diver, including instruction in cardiopulmonary resuscitation, basic diving physics and charting, basic diving medicine, scuba operations and underwater searching operations.

With the disestablishment of Navy combat camera commands in 2018, there is a targeted effort within the Navy to reconstitute and task organize high-end operational documentation capability across warfare domains to provide better support to operational commanders at all levels.

“The training and qualification that Perlman received and earned goes well beyond the NSW community,” said Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Navy’s Chief of Information Master Chief Mass Communication Specialist Mike Lewis. “Our ability to capture, edit, and rapidly transmit imagery in training and operational settings is absolutely critical to the Navy’s ability to engage effectively in the information environment in an era of great power competition. This is just one example of where we are investing in our cadre of mass communication specialists to support commanders’ requirements fleet-wide.”

With additional training at NSW, Perlman will learn how to operate and manage underwater camera gear and equipment to include lighting systems, cameras and specialized housings. These skills will enable Perlman to capture underwater photos and video of various NSW mission sets for training and archive purposes.

Commands, mass communication specialists and other Sailors interested in developing underwater visual information capabilities or attaining the Scuba diver Navy enlisted classification, should refer to MILPERSMAN 1220-410. They can also email Chief Mass Communication Specialist Gary Keen from Navy Public Affairs Support Element East at gary.m.keen@navy.mil.

Air Force Special Operations Command



Special Tactics Chief awarded Silver Star for countering Afghan ambush

*By U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Rachel Williams
24th Special Operations Wing*

What began as a typical reconnaissance patrol during a brisk November in Afghanistan quickly took a devastating turn for the worst.

U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Chris Grove, a Special Tactics combat controller assigned as the 720th Special Tactics Group superintendent, delivered thousands of pounds of munition, securing the safety of his joint and partner forces, and now he's receiving the Silver Star Medal.

A crowd of over 100 family members, friends and teammates gathered at the Special Tactics Memorial, Hurlburt Field, Florida as U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, presented the nation's third highest medal for actions against an armed enemy of the United States to Grove during a ceremony, Nov. 15.

"Luck is when preparation meets opportunity," said Slife. "On the 2nd of November, 2007, [Grove was] the right Airman at the right place, at the right time, who rose to the occasion brilliantly. Thanks for being our example of the embodiment of the American Airman and a testament to the proud Special Tactics wing."

Grove was originally awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Valor for his actions in October 2008, but due to a recent review of awards within the 24th Special Operations Wing, his package was resubmitted for an upgrade.

"I'm grateful that [leadership] valued the actions that day and sought out this upgrade," said Grove. "Within our formation, we are fortunate that we have those leaders, both military and civilian, that take care of our people and what they do."

Then-Tech. Sgt. Grove, assigned to the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron, here, was deployed with a U.S. Special Forces team to Afghanistan in support of



U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Chris Grove, a Special Tactics combat controller assigned as the 720th Special Tactics Group superintendent, faces the crowd after receiving a Silver Star Medal during a ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla., Nov. 15, 2019. Grove was awarded the nation's third highest medal for actions against an armed enemy of the United States in combat for his actions while deployed to Afghanistan in November 2007. Grove was originally awarded the Bronze Star with Valor, but his award package was reviewed and resubmitted for an upgrade. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Rachel Williams.

Operation Enduring Freedom.

As an Special Tactics Combat Controller, Grove is part of a highly trained special operations community that lethally integrates air power into the special operations' ground scheme of maneuver.

On Nov. 2, 2007, conditions were at their worst.

Grove was assigned as the joint terminal attack controller with a U.S. Special Forces team while on patrol in an area that was hammered by the largest Taliban offenses in the country when his team

encountered a disastrous, close range enemy ambush.

Bearing an uphill vantage point, the enemy had an overwhelming force of heavy machine gun, rocket propelled grenade, mortar and rifle fire, flanking the team's left and front position.

Grove and his team immediately began returning fire and sought cover in a nearby compound.

With no regard for his own personal safety, Grove exposed himself to a hail of gunfire to establish an observation post and check with aircraft overhead.

While under continuous, accurate fire from the enemy, Grove valiantly controlled airstrikes from F-15 Strike Eagles, coordinating multiple 25mm strafes and six 500-pound bombs, decimating advancing enemy forces.

As the battle raged, the ground force commander became trapped inside a building of the compound. Insurgents were advancing on his position and the chances of being overrun were rising by the minute.

Grove assessed the situation and did what any Special Tactics Airman would do: he called for air power.

With the precision employment of a complex danger-close airstrike, Grove created a window of opportunity for his team to maneuver against the enemy forces who had advanced to within 20-meters of their isolated position and allowed his ground force commander to escape.

Grove's intrepidity and competency on the battlefield allowed his team to break contact and recover a fallen teammate, saving the lives of many U.S. and coalition forces and ensuring no one was left behind.

"The best of our organization, whom Chief Grove epitomizes, maintain a steady sense of humility balanced with quiet confidence," said Col. Matt Allen, commander of the 24th SOW. "[Grove] embodies the best of Special Tactics, the best of [Air Force Special Operations Command], and the best of the Air Force."

Special Tactics Airmen are U.S. Special Operations Command's tactical air to

ground integration force, and AFSOC's special operations ground force, leading global access,

precision strike, personnel recovery and battlefield surgery operations.

Since 9/11, ST Airmen have received one Medal of Honor, 11 Air Force Crosses and 48 Silver Star Medals.

"It's not about

me, but more about our Airmen that are hauling the mail daily," Grove said. "There are hundreds of valorous acts, both in the last 18 years and to this day; I appreciate what our Air Force, [Air Force Special Operations Command], and Special Tactics Airmen are doing daily while prosecuting the nation's business."

There are hundreds of valorous acts, both in the last 18 years and to this day; I appreciate what our Air Force, [Air Force Special Operations Command], and Special Tactics Airmen are doing daily while prosecuting the nation's business.

— Chief Master Sgt. Chris Grove



Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, pins the Silver Star Medal onto Chief Master Sgt. Chris Grove, a Special Tactics combat controller assigned as the 720th Special Tactics Group superintendent, during a ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla., Nov. 15, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Rachel Williams.

Air Force Special Operations Command



U-28A Draco crew receives Air Force 2018 Mackay Trophy

By Bridget Donovan

Air Force Special Operations Command Public Affairs

Members of the U-28A crew, “Draco 42,” received the 2018 Mackay Trophy during a ceremony at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, Virginia, Nov. 13, 2019.

Air Commandos from the 319th Expeditionary Special Operations Squadron including Maj. Caitlin Reilly, Capt. Patrick Perez, Capt. Samantha Lang and Senior Airman Kyle Hanson, received the Mackay Trophy for their distinguished actions during a flight in support of Operation Freedom’s Sentinel on Aug. 14, 2018.

“The distinctive accomplishments of Draco 42 reflect

the caliber of Airmen we have in Air Force Special Operations Command,” said Brig. Gen. Brenda Cartier, AFSOC director of operations. “They put everything on the line to get their mission done. I can’t express the gratitude and pride I have for them. Congratulations to Draco 42.”

Administered by the U.S. Air Force and the National Aeronautic Association, the Mackay Trophy is awarded to an individual, aircrew or unit for the most meritorious flight of the year across the Air Force.

“It’s never one person on a U-28 sortie that makes or breaks the sortie (flight),” said Reilly, the aircraft commander. “We have four people trying to do the job of



A U-28A Draco aircraft flies over a deployed location. The U-28A Draco provides a manned fixed wing, on-call/surge capability for improved tactical airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance in support of Special Operations Forces. Courtesy photo.

about 30. It's all four people on that crew who have to work as a team, be good at their job and work together."

The award citation reads, "Despite multiple rounds of indirect fire impacting near the aircraft at their forward refueling location, Draco 42 continued to coordinate rapidly evolving target and concept of operation changes with geographically separated air and ground assets. Once airborne, Draco 42 managed the highly complex operation of simultaneous helicopter infiltrations to time-sensitive targets in urban areas that yielded valuable intelligence on

a top-level al Qaida leader and four enemy killed in action. The professional ability and outstanding aerial accomplishments of the crew of Draco 42 reflect great credit upon themselves and the United States Air Force."

Throughout history, the Mackay Trophy has been awarded for a multitude of extraordinary missions, such as

the first nonstop around the world flight, breaking altitude and flight duration records, and flawless execution of combat missions. It was first awarded in 1912 to then 2nd Lt. Henry "Hap" Arnold, who would later be known as the Father of the Air Force.

"It is incredibly humbling to represent the U-28 community in the presence of such legends," said Reilly. "Every U-28 crew is doing missions just

Despite multiple rounds of indirect fire impacting near the aircraft at their forward refueling location, Draco 42 continued to coordinate rapidly evolving target and concept of operation changes with geographically separated air and ground assets. Once airborne, Draco 42 managed the highly complex operation of simultaneous helicopter infiltrations to time-sensitive targets in urban areas that yielded valuable intelligence on a top-level al Qaida leader and four enemy killed in action. The professional ability and outstanding aerial accomplishments of the crew of DRACO 42 reflect great credit upon themselves and the United States Air Force.

— Award citation

like this around the world every single day, so we are all very humbled to be associated with those individuals."

The Clarence Mackay Trophy is displayed at the National Air and Space Museum.



Members of the U-28A Draco 42 crew stand with Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein, Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, and Chief Master Sgt. Cory Olson, AFSOC command chief, at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, Va., Nov. 13, 2019. The crew received the Mackay Trophy for their distinguished actions during a flight in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel on Aug. 14, 2018. Administered by the U.S. Air Force and the National Aeronautic Association, the Mackay Trophy is awarded to an individual, aircrew or unit for the most meritorious flight of the year across the Air Force. Courtesy photo.

Marine Forces, Special Operations Command



MARSOC takes certification exercise to the higher level

*By Gunnery Sgt. Lynn Kinney
Marine Forces, Special Operations Command*

Marine Forces Special Operations Command recently concluded a series of exercises in the Gulf Coast region aimed at streamlining integration of forces at various command levels. The three 10-day exercises were a collaborative effort between MARSOC, governmental agencies and other stakeholders to evaluate Marine Special Operations units deploying in support of theater special operations commands and combined joint special operations task forces across the globe.

Raven Unit Readiness Exercise serves as the certification exercise for a soon to be deploying Marine Special Operations company. It has evolved into a multilevel venue to integrate the various command structures and capabilities deployed by MARSOC. Each level of command, down to the team, is challenged in planning and executing, and command and controlling activities in urban environments. Through Raven, the MARSOC commander ensures operational readiness and capability of Marine Special Operations forces to conduct special operations missions across a range of military operations and domains. It tests Marine Raiders' individual and collective abilities to synchronize operations, activities, and actions in the information environment with those in the physical environment to affect decision making and mission planning.

Since its inception in 2012, the unit readiness exercise has become increasingly complex. What was originally done at Fort Irwin, California, has expanded to several locations throughout Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi. Teams were spread across a 100-mile area, with the exercise operations center at the National Guard Base in Gulfport, Mississippi. The decentralized approach is intended to mimic the challenges in communication, planning and logistics when evaluating considerations for mission execution.

"Raven's scenario design incorporates current and future



Marine Raiders and Marines from 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion from 1st Marine Division conducted on-off drills during Marine Forces Special Operations Command's unit readiness exercise, Raven, which is conducted across a 100-mile area, with the exercise operations center at the National Guard Base in Gulfport, Miss. The exercise serves as the certification exercise for a soon to be deploying Marine Special Operations company. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Elias Pimentel.

dynamics the joint force may encounter to present exercise participants challenges across the range of military operations," according to a former company commander, now the special operations officer in charge of the entirety of training execution. "Within this, participants must account for the implications of tactical actions across operational and strategic levels. The great thing about Raven is that it lets a unit execute full spectrum operations in a realistic military training environment without any requirements to support the exercise."

It is also an opportunity to enhance collaboration and strengthen our operational relationships between members of the SOF community, conventional Marine Corps units and other partners with whom Marine Raiders work closely, ensuring MARSOC provides the nation with an agile, adaptive force to meet the complex demands of the future

operating environment.

“Raven incorporates lessons learned from academia, the joint force, and redeploying MARSOC units to maintain a realistic and current exercise. The [Exercises, Training and Education Branch] consistently seeks incorporation of experimental and new technology, equipment, and tactics, techniques and procedures into the exercise providing exposure to the force, and testing and evaluation feedback under simulated real-world conditions,” said the officer in charge. “This enables the exercise the ability to immediately implement the commander’s initiatives while quickly adapting to emerging indicators of the future operating environment.”

The exercise also capitalizes on the opportunity to further streamline the integration of other SOF and conventional forces.

“SOF are inherently reliant on support from joint forces across conventional and SOF formations. Conventional forces gain the exposure and experience of working along side SOF units and the joint force improves interoperability with both SOF and conventional forces. As Marines, [Raiders] are intimately familiar with the task organized Marine Air-Ground Task Force concept. Our understanding of the MAGTF, and both USMC and SOCOM concept allow us to improve institutional and operational cooperation through interdependence, interoperability and integration with conventional forces,” said the former company commander.

For this particular exercise, MARSOF integrated with conventional Marine Corps assets from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 366 from 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, and 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion from 2nd Marine Division and 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion from 1st Marine Division. There was also integration of Air Force Special Operations Command assets from the 73rd and 319th Special Operations Squadrons, and the 178th Attack Squadron; and an Army Special Operations Task Force. These units were able to come together and execute missions beginning at the target development phase all the way through mission execution.

“This is the kind of stuff you envision when you join the Marine Corps,” said one of the platoon commanders from 3rd AABN. “You can see the added excitement and engagement from my Marines who are getting the added exposure to infantry skills that may have some carry over for when we have to operate with infantry Marines in the future,” he added. His team of 15 Marines conducted weapons familiarization, close quarters battle drills and planned and executed a raid with the MSOT they were attached to.

For the MAGTF Marines, the training conducted at Raven provides exposure to small unit tactics they might not otherwise receive, particularly units like 3rd AABN, whose day to day responsibilities are focused on amphibious assault

vehicle readiness, basic formations and water ops, and terrain driving.

At the MARSOC company level, Raven is the last in a series of training evolutions within the 180-day training cycle an MSOC will execute in preparation for deployment. At this point, units are refining and streamlining processes. Considerations for mobility, sustainment, and logistics all require additional planning and coordination, according to a critical skills operator and team chief evaluated during this Raven series.

Having first participated in Raven as a sergeant, the gunnery sergeant has seen the exercise grow in scale and complexity, providing units the ability to execute the full range of special operations core tasks, special insertion skills, and missions against an opposing force.

“The command has invested quite a bit of time and money into making the training challenging and realistic,” he said. “While there are still role players, the scenario is much more developed, requiring in-depth analysis in developing possible targets.”

According to this team chief, another aspect that has improved is the extent of the integration of mentor-evaluators and Exercise Control Group into the training.

“It is an opportunity for the team to cross-pollinate [tactics, techniques and procedures] from units across MARSOC. We all have the same baseline, but it comes to identifying gaps and refining efficiencies, down to things as simple as naming conventions,” he said. “Having been a mentor-evaluator and seeing teams go through the stress of the exercise, it is eye-opening to have that outsider’s perspective. It can be time-consuming, but it spreads the learning across the entirety of the exercise.”

MARSOC conducts the Raven series several times a year, alternating locations from the Gulf Coast Region and the Kentucky-Tennessee border two to three times per year, with the next one being conducted in April, 2020.



Marines with 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion from 1st Marine Division participated in Marine Forces Special Operations Command’s unit readiness exercise, Raven. The exercise serves as the certification exercise for a soon to be deploying Marine Special Operations company. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Elias Pimentel.

Marine Forces, Special Operations Command



Passing the torch: Call sign “Raider 96”

*By U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Bryann K. Whitley
Marine Forces, Special Operations Command*

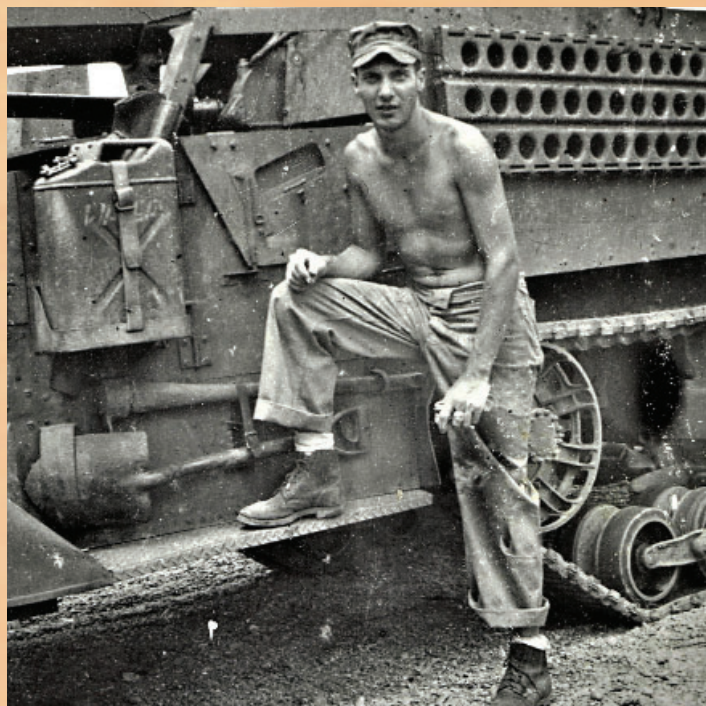
Detroit native, born in 1923, Cpl. Leonard B. Turner enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1942 following the example of two of his brothers who had already signed up for World War II military duty ahead of him; Bob via the Coast Guard and Bill through the Marine Corps.

“I enlisted when I became age eligible with the signed permission of my parents, to join the fight to preserve our American way of life,” recalled Turner. “I chose the Marines because of their history, legacy, reputation and training. I felt that my best chance for victory and survival would be with the Marines. Of note, I would be remiss to not mention the uniform!”

Turner served under Lt. Col. Evan F. Carlson on New Caledonia; was sent to Guadalcanal, Efate, and Espiritu Santo; and was a part of the first waves during the battles of Bougainville, Guam and Okinawa. After the war was over, Turner returned to his hometown of Detroit and served in a supervisory capacity at General Motors headquarters, retiring after 42 years.

Appearing in authentic 1945-1948 Marine Corps dress blues with his original regalia, Turner marched into the ballroom behind the traditional birthday cake as the slow version of the Marines Hymn played, during the Marine Forces Special Operations Command’s 244th Marine Corps Birthday Ball in Wilmington, North Carolina, Nov. 2, 2019. Turner, a 96-year-old World War II veteran and Marine Raider, affectionately nicknamed “Raider 96,” served with 2nd Marine Raider Battalion and was the oldest Marine in attendance at the ceremony. He stood proud and tall as he was announced as the oldest Marine present and generations of Marines responded, without hesitation, with a standing ovation as Turner passed a piece of birthday cake to the youngest Marine present, 19-year-old Pfc. Ivan K. Lopez.

“The experience was humbling and exhilarating,” remarked Turner. “It filled me with a sense of great honor and pride to be a part of this timed-honored tradition, allowing me to pass the torch to the youngest Marine, who in fact is actually from 2nd [Marine] Raider Battalion, as



Detroit native, born in 1923, Cpl. Leonard B. Turner enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1942 following the example of two of his brothers who had already signed up for World War II military duty ahead of him. Turner, a 96-year-old War World II veteran and Marine Raider, affectionately nicknamed “Raider 96,” served with 2nd Marine Raider Battalion and was the oldest Marine in attendance at Marine Forces Special Operations Command’s 244th Marine Corps Birthday Ball in Wilmington, N.C., Nov. 2, 2019. Turner served under Lt. Col. Evan F. Carlson on New Caledonia; was sent to Guadalcanal, Efate, and Espiritu Santo; and was a part of the first waves during the battles of Bougainville, Guam and Okinawa. After the surrender of Japan, Turner served as a Military Policeman on the Island of Ryukyu, Japan until returning to the United States. After completing his military service, Turner returned to his hometown of Detroit and served in a supervisory capacity at General Motors headquarters, retiring after 42 years. Courtesy photo.

was I, over 75 years ago. It ranked high on my life’s most memorable events, along with the announcement of Japan’s surrender in World War II, my wedding day, the births of my daughter and my son, and my retirement day from General Motors.”

Every year, each Marine Corps unit comes together and hosts a Marine Corps birthday cake cutting to celebrate one more year since the birth of their Corps. This celebration is an event that brings together Marines, old and young - enlisted and officer, active and retired, and allows them to celebrate their commitment and dedication to the Marine Corps and strengthen their camaraderie and organizational esprit de corps. Throughout the ball, different Marine Corps traditions are upheld, paying homage to the organizations' heritage.

"You can't force heritage, it just happens," said Master Gunnery Sgt. Otto E. Hecht, the senior enlisted leader at MARSOC's Marine Raider Training Center. "Heritage is the result of the people, artifacts, symbols and traditions that have been provided by those that served before us. Our heritage defines who we are and shapes where we are going as Marines. [The ball is] a time of reflection on our past accomplishments combined with our newest generation of Marines and their contributions that make our future both exciting and meaningful."

This connection between the past and present can be seen throughout many traditions during the Marine Corps ball and is

the foundation of this event each year. One such tradition is the passing of birthday cake from the oldest Marine to the youngest Marine, which represents the passing of experience and knowledge from older generations to the newest generation of Marines. The birthday cake is traditionally cut with the Mameluke sword, to honor Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon's assault of Derna, Tripoli in 1805, as a reminder that Marines are a band of warriors, committed to carrying the sword, so that the nation may live in peace.

"The ceremonial formalities along with the reading of our 13th Commandant's message reminds us all of our Marine Corps heritage; however, the ball is not just about that," commented Master Gunnery Sgt. Anthony Guisao, MARSOC's SOF senior enlisted advisor. "Along with reminding us of our past, the ball allows us to view who we are in the present. The reading of the present Commandant of the Marine Corps' message also provides insight as to where he envisions the Marine Corps going towards the future."

Turner explained that his favorite experience at the ball was shaking the hands of the younger Marines. The opportunity to meet the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General David H. Berger, and his wife, Donna, who were in

attendance as the guests of honor at the MARSOC Ball was, as Turner described it, "the icing on the cake!" He was moved by the reverence and respect shown to him by the Marines and the interest in his experience in the Marine Corps. Due to the time in our country's history that Turner was enlisted, most of his cherished memories involved the time he spent making memories with friends, with his most cherished being when the announcement rang out that the Japanese had surrendered.

"I would say that I went into the Marines a mere teen and left an old man," said Turner. "The Marine Raiders had defined me. They set me up for life's battles and challenges with skills of leadership, organization, morality, steadfastness, patience and discipline- not to mention I'm still pretty good with that machete around my yard!"

The term Raider can't be used alone. It must be preceded by "Marine" because that is what Marine Raiders are first and foremost- Marines, mentioned Hecht. The

Marines are who we are and special operations is what we do' is not just a catch phrase, it's a constant reminder for all Marine Raiders to never forget their identities as U.S. Marines.

— Master Gunnery Sgt. Anthony Guisao

warfighting principles current Marine Raiders use in special operations comes from their foundation in Marine ethos and core values - there is not one without the other.

"Too often people, in general, tend to identify

themselves as what they do instead of who they are - Marine Raiders are no different," remarked Guisao. "As the younger generation of Marines assimilate into the MARSOC culture, it is the senior Marine Raiders' responsibility to continue inculcating Marine Corps values into them. 'Marines are who we are and special operations is what we do' is not just a catch phrase, it's a constant reminder for all Marine Raiders to never forget their identities as U.S. Marines. This is also a reminder to the Marine Corps writ large that Marine Raiders have not forgotten where they came from and continue to be proud of who they are, U.S. Marines."

When asked to share a story from his time during the war, Turner reflected on his time when assigned to 6th Marine Division. During this time, a fellow 6th Division Marine told him that they were the lucky ones. Many of their military brothers had given up their todays so that Turner and those who survived would have their tomorrows.

"This is my legacy, my story," revealed Turner. "So, young men and women, as far as stories go, you will have to make up your own story. You have been given the chance to create a story of courage, strength, honesty, morality, leadership, and compassion that you will carry with you to your end of days."

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command USSOCOM Warrior Care Program All-Sports Camp and annual conference kicked off in Orlando

By Michael Bottoms
USSOCOM Office of Communication

U.S. Special Operations Command's Warrior Care Program (Care Coalition) hosted its All-Sports Camp for military adaptive sports participants in Orlando, Florida, Oct. 21-24. More than 30 athletes are scheduled to participate in cycling, shooting, archery, rowing and golf. Concurrently, the Warrior Care Program held its annual conference Oct. 21-23.

The conference kicked off with Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke, commander USSOCOM, giving opening remarks and presenting four Patriot Awards. The Patriot

Award recognizes exceptional and enduring contributions to the welfare of USSOCOM's wounded, ill and injured service members, veterans and their families. This year's recipients are the Chris Carter Charity for Life founders Drs. Stanley Carter and Beth Zimmer-Carter, Kenneth Fisher of Fisher House and Bill Stevens from Operation One Voice.

"This community remains as dedicated as ever to our most enduring SOF truth: Humans are more important than hardware," said Clarke. "It's a long battle but with the continued support from people like you and an enduring emphasis from this command, it's a battle that we will win."



Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke, commander U.S. Special Operations Command, gives opening remarks at the Warrior Care Program (Care Coalition) annual conference in Orlando, Fla., Oct. 22, 2019. The three-day conference covered topics including prosthetic innovation, suicide prevention, and special operations forces well-being. The Warrior Care Program focuses USSOCOM's wounded, ill and injured service members and their families. The program provides advocacy and care coordination services to more than 15,000 participants. Photo by Michael Bottoms.



Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke, (left) commander U.S. Special Operations Command stands with the USSOCOM Warrior Care Program's (Care Coalition's) 2019 Patriot Award recipients in Orlando, Fla., Oct. 22, 2019. The Patriot Award recognizes exceptional and enduring contributions to the welfare of USSOCOM's wounded warriors and their families. From left, Chris Carter Charity for Life founders Drs. Stanley Carter and Beth Zimmer-Carter, Kenneth Fisher of Fisher House, Members of the Duluth, Ga., Police Department accepting for Lt. Bill Stevens from Operation One Voice and H. Kelly Ammerman, acting director of USSOCOM's Warrior Care Program. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

Care Coalition leaders and staff will discuss topics including prosthetic innovation, suicide prevention, and Special Operations Forces well-being during the three-day conference. The Warrior Care Program focuses on wounded, ill and injured USSOCOM service members and their families. The program provides advocacy and care coordination services to more than 15,000 people.

Many of the innovations and program improvements discussed during the conference will directly benefit the athletes who will participate in the fall adaptive sports camp. The more than two dozen athletes in attendance will also benefit from the sports program's reconditioning activities which help with mental, emotional, spiritual, physical and social healing as service members and veterans develop camaraderie and mentor one another.

The camp will help familiarize participants with the sporting events included in the upcoming 2020 Warrior

Games scheduled for Sept. 21-28, 2020 in San Antonio, Texas. Tryouts for Team SOCOM 2020 will be held at USSOCOM's spring camp Feb. 28 – March 6 at

MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. Spring camp participants will be able to experience all Warrior Games sports, and results achieved in each sport will be used in the team selection process. Selected athletes and mentors will meet next summer to train for Warrior Games 2020.

Participants in USSOCOM's military adaptive sports program do not have to compete in

Warrior Games sports. There are also recreational opportunities available. Upcoming events include the Warrior Sailing Program Basic Training Camp in St. Petersburg, Florida, Dec. 3-5. The sailing camp trains participants in sailing and sailboat racing. Training is facilitated by world-class coaches using techniques and equipment adapted to meet the varying needs of the participants.

This community remains as dedicated as ever to our most enduring SOF truth: Humans are more important than hardware. It's a long battle but with the continued support from people like you and an enduring emphasis from this command, it's a battle that we will win.

– Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke





**U.S. Air Force
Staff Sgt.
Cole N. Condiff
23rd Special Tactics Squadron**

Editor's note: Honored are those special operations forces who lost their lives in combat or training since the Oct. 2019 issue of Tip of the Spear.

Bulgarian Special Operations Forces exit a U.S. Army UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter from the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade during combined aviation load training Sept. 13, 2019 as part of exercise Saber Junction 19 in Hohenfels, Germany. Approximately 100 Special Operations Forces from Bulgaria and the U.S., along with Lithuanian National Defense Volunteer Forces integrated with 5,400 multinational conventional forces lead by the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade to execute land operations in a joint, combined environment. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Patrik Orcutt.

