

U.S. Special Operations Command MacDill AFB, Florida

Tip of the Spear

June 2024



**Connection is the cure:
USSOCOM competes in the
2024 DoD Warrior Games**

United States Special Operations Command



Connection is the cure: USSOCOM competes in the 2024 DoD Warrior Games ... 30

Tip of the Spear

**U.S. Army Gen. Bryan P. Fenton
Commander, USSOCOM**

**Command Sgt. Maj. Shane W. Shorter
Senior Enlisted Leader, USSOCOM**

U.S. Army Col. Alexandra Weiskopf
Special Operations

Communication Office Director

James Gregory

Special Operations

Communication Office Deputy Director

Michael Bottoms

Managing Editor

U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Demetrius Munnerlyn
Staff NCOIC

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marleah Miller
Photojournalist

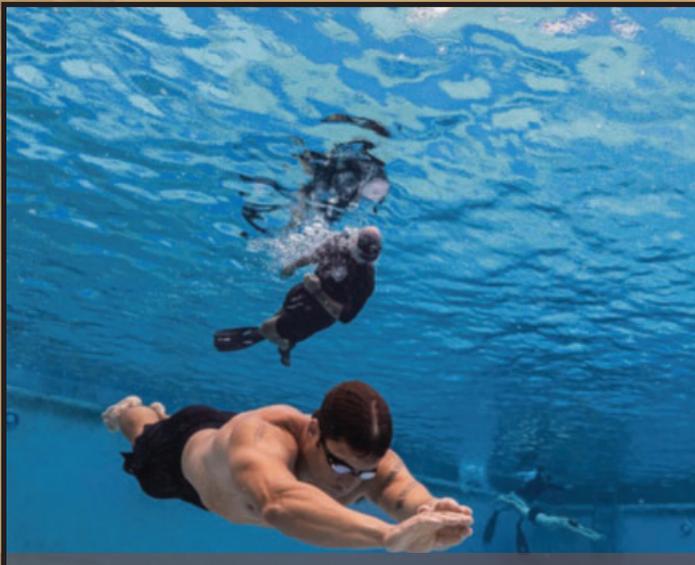
2022 Defense Media Merit Award Winner

This is a U.S. Special Operations Command publication. Contents are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense or USSOCOM. The content is edited, prepared and provided by the USSOCOM Communication Office, 7701 Tampa Point Blvd., MacDill AFB, Fla., 33621, phone (813) 826-8800, DSN 299-8800. An electronic copy can be found at www.socom.mil. The editor of the Tip of the Spear reserves the right to edit all copy presented for publication.

(Cover) U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Brycen Erdody competes in the cycling competition at the ESPN sports facility in Orlando, Florida June 21, 2024. Service members and veterans from the Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy, U.S. Special Operations Command, and representatives from the Australian Defence Force are competing in adaptive sports including archery, cycling, indoor-rowing, powerlifting, shooting, sitting volleyball, swimming, track, field, wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby from June 21 – 30, at the Disney Resort. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marleah Miller. (Above) U.S. Air Force Maj. Mallory Morgan prepares for the 400 meters race June 27, 2024, during the DoD's Warrior Games held in Orlando, Florida. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

The Quiet Professionals

Highlights



10th SFG (A) takes first as best combat divers across special operations forces ... 12



General Conley takes command of Air Force Special Operations Command ... 24



MARSOC hosts change of command ceremony ... 28

Departments

Theater Special Operations Commands

US Special Operations Africa conclude Flintlock 24 alongside international and African partners ... 4

NATO special operations forces secure the Baltic in Exercise Flaming Sword 24 ... 6

US Navy and Air Force special operations personnel conduct routine training in the Republic of Korea ... 8

Fuerzas Comando 24 concludes ... 10

U.S. Army Special Operations Command

10th SFG (A) takes first as best combat divers across special operations forces ... 12

Naval Special Warfare Command

Naval Special Warfare dedicates Normandy NCDU, S&R Monument Park ... 16

Navy Leap Frogs jump into D-Day Events ... 18

CTF-66 deputy commander assumes Bull Frog Mantle for NSW ... 20

NSW operators conduct joint training ... 22

Air Force Special Operations Command

General Conley takes command of Air Force Special Operations Command ... 24

Strategic bombers soar across Arabian Peninsula with MC-130J Commando II support ... 26

Marine Forces Special Operations Command

MARSOC hosts change of command ceremony ... 28

Headquarters

Connection is the cure: USSOCOM competes in the 2024 DoD Warrior Games ... 30

Retired, injured Navy SEAL recovering through adaptive sports in the DoD Warrior Games ... 32

USSOCOM Washington DC front office competes in the Badwater Cape Fear ultra-race series ... 34

Daughters of first USSOCOM Chief of Staff visit Joint Special Operations University ... 36

U.S. Special Operations Command - Africa



US Special Operations Africa conclude Flintlock 24 alongside international and African partners

*Courtesy Story
Special Operations Command Africa*

U.S. Special Operations Command Africa concluded Flintlock 24 with closing ceremonies during distinguished visitor days in both host nations of Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire, May 24, 2024.

Approximately 1,300 participants from nearly 30 international and African partner nations amassed during the two-week duration in support of the largest special operations exercise on the continent of Africa.

“Flintlock 24 serves as a clear illustration of what our partnerships in Africa are all about— African partner led, U.S. and international enabled engagement.” said U.S. Army Col. Todd Sunday, deputy director of operations at SOCAFRICA during closing ceremony remarks in Côte d’Ivoire. “Flintlock could not have been achieved without the unprecedented support from across Africa and the globe, and we offer our immense gratitude to our Ivorian and Ghanaian partners for their role in hosting Flintlock 24.”



Members of the Armed Forces of Mauritania and Spanish Special Operations Command conduct movement exercises at the range during Flintlock 24 in Daboya, Ghana, May 21, 2024. Exercise Flintlock is U.S. Africa Command’s premier and largest annual special operations exercise that strengthens key partner nations throughout Africa, in partnership with other international special operations forces. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Joshua DeGuzman.



Senior leaders salute upon the commencement of Flintlock 24's Closing Ceremonies in Tamale, Ghana, May 24, 2024. Photo by U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer John Pearl.

SOCAFRICA, the Ghana Armed Forces, and the British High Commission headquartered Flintlock's Joint Special Operations Task Force in Accra, Ghana with support from three additional training sites throughout the nation. Côte d'Ivoire will be serving as the sole host nation for next year's 2025 exercise after providing an expeditionary training site for this year's exercise iteration.

"Flintlock remains one of the biggest demonstrations of global commitment to work together for our collective security, and the UK is happy to be a key partner," said Harriet Thompson, British High Commissioner to Ghana. "The collaboration and expertise demonstrated during Flintlock 24 leave no doubt about the resilience of the forces and their commitment to tackle together the challenges of today and tomorrow. We were honored to host part of the exercise at the British High Commission Accra, enabling individuals from a range of nations and organizations to train together."

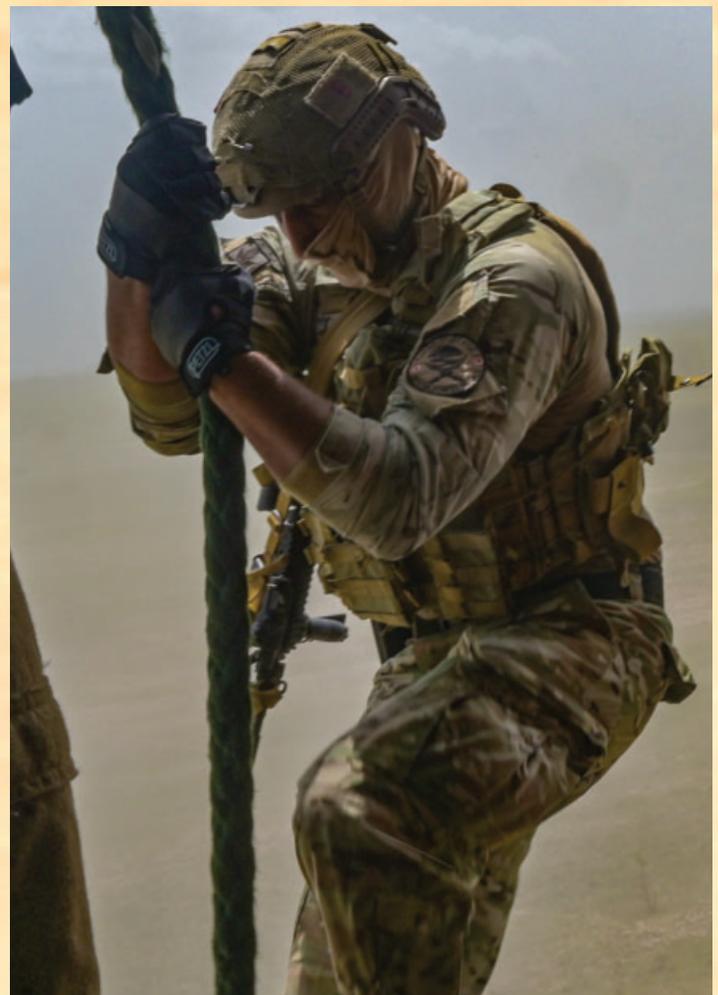
The 2024 exercise's four training sites enabled venues for partners to hone tactical skills including visit, board, search, and seizure maritime activities; close quarter battle drills; and border patrol operations. These engagements bolster interoperability for an enhanced security environment in north and west Africa.

"All these nations gathered here share a common theme and objective for a safer and more prosperous Africa," said U.S. Navy Capt. Scott Fentress, deputy director of operations at SOCAFRICA at Flintlock 24's opening ceremony in Ghana, "Yet violent extremism

and resource insecurity threaten our African partners in their very way of life, culture and security of its people. These effects are felt worldwide. No one nation can solve it on its own but collectively we can achieve measured progress."

Beyond multinational partnerships, Flintlock also leverages a whole-of-government approach with other government and civilian entities to target the root causes of instability. The exercise showcased academics on the rule of law, law of armed conflict, and human rights. Flintlock 24 also featured medical and dental civic action programs in Ghanaian and Ivorian villages illustrating the integral role of community outreach to enhance regional stability.

Occurring annually since 2005, Exercise Flintlock serves as U.S. Africa Command's premier and largest annual special operations forces exercise that works to strengthen combined partner force collaboration in Africa, alongside international and NATO international special operations forces.



A member from the Tunisian Armed Forces conducts a fast-roping maneuver off an Italian HH-101A Caesar helicopter during Flintlock 24 in Daboya, Ghana, May 21, 2024. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Joshua DeGuzman.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



NATO special operations forces secure the Baltic in Exercise Flaming Sword 24

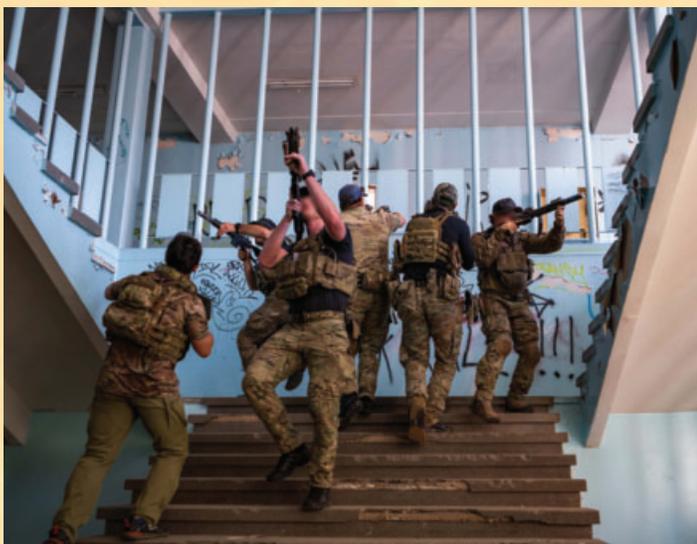
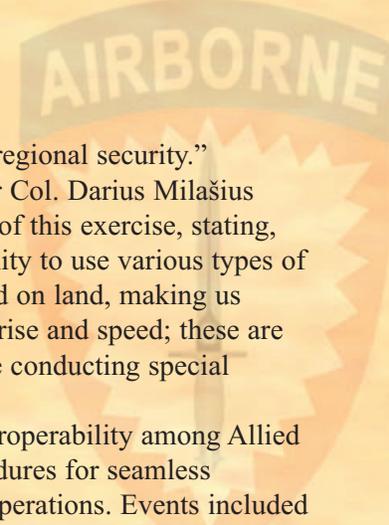


East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) conduct medical evacuation training with Lithuania Special Operators as part of Flaming Sword 24, which brought together NATO Special Operations Forces from six Allied nations, to test their readiness to conduct operations in response to increased aggression against its allies. Flaming Sword 24 allows special operations forces to enhance their warfighting skills, build interoperability, ensure readiness, and demonstrate the capability of ready and postured special operations. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Trey Hutcheson.

*By U.S. Navy Lt.j.g. Martin Carey
Naval Special Warfare Group TWO*

NATO Special Operations Forces (SOF) from six Allied nations recently completed Exercise Flaming Sword 24 in Lithuania, showcasing the Alliance's commitment to warfighting cooperation, collaboration, and interoperability in the Baltic region. The primary purpose of the exercise was to train and test the readiness of NATO SOF units to conduct operations in response to increased aggression against its Allies.

Flaming Sword, a vital training event hosted by Lithuania, involved SOF units from Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, and the United States. This exercise underscores the readiness and capability of NATO Allied SOF to deploy rapidly anytime and anywhere, to promote peace and security through joint efforts. For the first time in recent history, a German submarine in support of the German Special Operation Forces conducted missions in the Baltic Sea and ashore. Danish Frogmen from the Danish Maritime Special Operations Force also conducted operations in Baltic Sea region.



East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) conduct close quarters combat training with Lithuania Special Operators as part of Flaming Sword 24, which brought together NATO Special Operations Forces from six Allied nations, to test their readiness to conduct operations in response to increased aggression against its allies. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Trey Hutcheson.

“Whenever we have the opportunity for U.S. Special Operations Forces to train alongside our NATO Allies, it reinforces our ability to rapidly deploy combat-credible forces in all domains – land, sea, air, and space – with equipment critical to effectively operate in any region,” said Major Gen. Steven Edwards, Commander, Special Operations Command Europe. “Our ability to work seamlessly alongside our Allied partners strengthens our

collective defense and enhances regional security.”

Lithuania’s SOF Commander Col. Darius Milašius also highlighted the significance of this exercise, stating, “As NATO, we have an opportunity to use various types of platforms in the air, at the sea and on land, making us unpredictable to the enemy. Surprise and speed; these are the main principles which we use conducting special operations”.

Exercises like this foster interoperability among Allied forces, refining tactics and procedures for seamless warfighting cooperation during operations. Events included U.S. East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) conducting maritime operations, close quarters combat, weapons training, and helicopter fast-roping iterations with their Allied SOF partners. This face-to-face training fosters a strong and strategic SOF warfighting foundation among NATO Allies.

“The weeks leading up to this exercise allowed my team to integrate with our partner forces from these countries. Having the chance to meet in person, build our operations plans together, and execute scenarios in tandem is invaluable,” said the senior Naval Special Warfare Operator on site. “These relationships are critical to ensure we are postured to quickly support SOCUER’s efforts with flexibility and agility.”

Exercise Flaming Sword 24 reaffirms NATO’s commitment to solidarity, transparency, and regional stability. By enhancing interoperability and readiness among Allied SOF, the exercise serves as a model for future collaborative efforts ensuring a robust defense posture in the Baltic and Arctic regions.



East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) conduct maritime training with Lithuania Special Operators and Portuguese Naval Special Operators from Special Actions Detachment (DAE) as part of Flaming Sword 24, which brought together NATO Special Operations Forces from six Allied nations, to test their readiness to conduct operations in response to increased aggression against its allies. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Trey Hutcheson.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Korea



US Navy and Air Force special operations personnel conduct routine training in the Republic of Korea

*By U.S. Air Force Maj. Christopher Mesnard
Special Operations Command Korea*

U.S. Air Force personnel and an AC-130J Ghost rider gunship assigned to the 1st Special Operations Wing arrived in the Republic of Korea on June 12, 2024, in support of an ongoing joint, combined exchange training iteration with U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command personnel.

The special operations forces JCET program is managed at the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict level and ensures routine combat readiness of U.S. personnel in the special operations community.

U.S. Department of Defense personnel in the SOF community routinely participate in JCETs as a means for continuing a high level of proficiency in skills known as the SOF Core Activities.

“As a professional military force, we train to maintain our readiness,” said Brig. Gen. Derek N. Lipson, Special Operations Command Korea commander. “We fully expect people will mischaracterize the intent of this training as provocative to justify the belligerent actions they already intended. This long-planned JCET ensures our personnel remain ready in our core, skills-based activities to fulfill our SOF-peculiar mission, if called upon.”

Historically, the AC-130J remains one of the most requested aircraft by ground forces.

The aircraft is suited to support unique mission requirements and can more readily travel the vast distances to reach the Indo-Pacific than previous versions. Recently, aircraft and personnel participated in exercise Balikatan 24 in the Philippines this past April and a previous JCET in the Republic of Korea in March of 2023.

Additionally, U.S. Naval Special Warfare special operators, enabling personnel, and equipment regularly rotate into the area to participate in training events and exercises.

The joint elements working together on the Korean peninsula demonstrate a broad scope under which U.S. SOF personnel conduct routine training to maintain a heightened state of readiness.

“We’re hyper focused on supporting our ironclad commitment to the U.S.-ROK Alliance to defend our homelands,” said Lipson. “Every training event we plan and participate in focuses on the enduring goal of preventing conflict while also preparing to prevail if someone should ever decide to mistake our level of readiness and resolve toward a free, open, and stable Indo-Pacific region.”

The AC-130J is a traditional C-130J cargo aircraft modified with an array of sensors and weapons, providing an unparalleled tactical effect of deadly accuracy.

The aircraft’s modifications include a Precision Strike Package, with a precision guided munitions delivery capability as well as 30mm and 105mm weapons. Its primary missions are close air support, air interdiction, and armed reconnaissance.

The AC-130J “Ghost rider” is the 5th generation of the AC-130 series, and the 8th aircraft to wear the title “Gunship.” The concept originated during the Vietnam War from a need to protect remote outposts and hamlets from attack by enemies who would hide from traditional American airpower in the darkness and jungles.

U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command special operators and their enabling personnel specialize in direct action, special reconnaissance, and supporting functions. Often included in these missions is the need and ability to coordinate joint fires from various weapons systems, like the AC-130J.

U. S. Air Force Special Warfare personnel observe the range during a live fire training event June 18, 2024, at Pilsung Range, Republic of Korea. U.S. Department of Defense personnel in the SOF community regularly participate in JCETs as a means for continuing a high level of proficiency in skills known as the SOF Core Activities. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. William Rio Rosado.



U.S. Special Operations Command - South



Fuerzas Comando 24 concludes

*By U.S. Army Sgt. Olivia Lauer
Special Operations Command South*

Special Operations competitors from 17 countries were welcomed by local Panamanian law enforcement and military during the opening ceremony of Fuerzas Comando 2024 (FC24) in mid-May. Fuerzas Comando is an exercise consisting of a high-level leadership seminar targeted at international counterterrorism work and a Special Operations skills competition in urban, rural, and aquatic areas where tactics and techniques are tested in counterterrorism action procedures. The 2024 participating countries are: Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Fuerzas Comando's goal is to identify the most skilled and proficient special forces operatives while strengthening partnerships between nations through a competition held in the heat of Panama, May 13-24. Each participating nation sends an assault team, a sniper team, one evaluator to participate in a special operations skills competition, and three distinguished visitors to participate in the Distinguished Visitors Program/Senior Leaders Seminar.

Nations participating in FC24 are able to build partnerships with their competitors. This partnership allows them to exchange experiences and gain new knowledge about their counterparts, countries, and cultures. This new knowledge allows nations to refine the tactics used by their Special Operations Forces. Countries become more capable of confronting common threats by increasing their special operations capabilities after competing each year in Fuerzas Comando.

During the opening ceremony, overseen by distinguished Panamanian officials and U.S. military leaders, each national team was introduced as they marched in for their entrance. Maj. Gen. Peter Huntley, Commander of the Special Operations South, and Juan Manuel Pino, Panama's Minister of Public Security,



The Fuerzas Comando trophy is carried by the 2023 champions, led by Captain Samir Sepúlveda Aguirre of the Republic of Colombia, during the opening ceremony for Fuerzas Comando 24 (FC24) in Cerro Tigre, Panama, May 13, 2024. Countries participating in FC24 have developed solid working relationships based on mutual respect and are conducive to the open exchange of ideas. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Olivia Lauer.

both shared opening remarks during the ceremony. Throughout the ceremony, many current and previous FC competitors were honored with roles of importance, like the lighting of the torch carried by Second Lieutenant 20235 Josué A. Juárez, the presentation of the FC trophy by the 2023 champions, and the guarding of the trophy until the closing ceremony by Captain Roswell Ruiz of El Servicio Nacional de Fronteras, Second Lieutenant Abel Rodriguez of the National Police and Staff Sergeant Edwin Buitrago of El Servicio Nacional Aeronaval. The ceremony ended with the playing of the U.S. and Panamanian National Anthems and words of well wishes and good luck.

Over the course of 10 days, the assault teams competed in events like a confidence course, close quarter combat, and rucksack march. While the sniper teams competed in events like marksmanship, mobility, and concealment.

Fuerzas Comando became an annual event in 2004, with this year being the third time hosted in Panama. The most notable performer within FC is Colombia, having won the competition on 11 different occasions.

SENAFRONT, the National Border Service of Panama, attend the Fuerzas Comando 24 (FC24) opening ceremony in Cerro Tigre, Panama, May 13, 2024. FC24 is a unique opportunity for participating nations of the Americas to improve their special operations capabilities. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Olivia Lauer.



U.S. Army Special Operations Command

10th SFG (A) takes first as best combat divers across SOF



By Steve Morningstar

United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School

“To build the best skilled maritime operators for such dangerous missions, the training these Soldiers undergo is inherently dangerous,” said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jim Dougherty, Special Forces Underwater Operations (SFUWO) chief warrant officer. “Until now, no memorial existed to honor the memory of the brave Soldiers who took their last breath.”

Dougherty’s opening remarks echoed across the Special Forces Underwater Operations compound during a memorial unveiling ceremony honoring the legacy of eight fallen combat divers since 1964 before kicking off the 2024 USASOC Best Combat Diver Competition at Naval Air Station Key West, Florida, June 10-12.

This year marks the 60th anniversary since the inception of Special Forces Underwater Operations. Under the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School footprint, this is the second year the Special Forces Underwater Operations School hosts the competition at Fleming Key, Key West’s northern point.

“The purpose of the United States Army Special Operations Command Best Combat Diver Competition is to foster camaraderie amongst the joint special operators who combat dive,” said Maj. Alexander Pombar, commander of the Special Forces Underwater Operations School. “The competition tests a number of key attributes of a combat diver.”

The competitors were challenged on academic



A competitor in the 2024 U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Best Combat Diver Competition undergoes a Dive Supervisor Pre-Inspection prior to validating his equipment at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School's Special Forces Underwater Operations School, at NAS Key West, Florida June 10, 2024. Twelve teams competed in the event to test the skills and abilities of combat divers, build esprit de corps between organizations and advance the capabilities of military divers. Photo by K. Kassens.

rigor, physical toughness, mental agility, and adaptability while executing high-risk waterborne operations. The competition included rigorous tactical underwater events, boat movements, and airborne insertion related to real-world combat dive operations.

Twelve two-man teams from across U.S. Army Special Forces, U.S. Marine Forces Special Operations, and U.S. Air Force Special Operations competed in a ten event, multiple day, and night competition to demonstrate skill and capability through performance.

Day one events encompassed a combat dive physical fitness test, safety round robin, and equipment validations.

Day two officially kicked off the competition with a memorial unveiling ceremony straight into a helo-cast kayak race at the SGM Jerry D. Patton Water Drop Zone in Fleming Key. Competitors then performed a subsurface swim, cache race, and neuro-crossover subsurface activities in the pool.

Day three started with a target contour dive in Mole Harbor, where dive teams had to test their navigation skills to tag multiple targets. They went on to conduct an Over-the-Beach dive then shuttle race on Patio Beach and return to the ocean for exfiltration. The final event was a helo-cast, followed by a one kilometer surface swim, and a five kilometer run.

Following the conclusion of the competition, the winners were announced during an award ceremony.

This year's winner of the USASOC Best Combat Diver Competition is the combat diver team from the 10th Special Forces Group.

The 1st Marine Raider Battalion took second place followed by the USASOC team in third.

CW2 Dante from 3rd Special Forces Group scored highest in the physical training event.

The Special Forces Underwater Operations School is the premier institution in generating the expert special operator in underwater and maritime operations. Combat dive operations reflects one of many advanced capabilities of the special operator in unconventional warfare, integrated deterrence, and irregular warfare.

The names of the fallen combat divers are the following:

- 2nd Lt. William Koscher, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 15 Aug. 1969
- Spc. 4 John A. James, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), 15 Aug. 1969
- Sgt 1st Class Kevin L. Devorak, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), 18 Oct. 1990
- Staff Sgt. Bruce L. Miller, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), 14 Sept. 1991
- Sgt. Charles L. Glenn, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 15 May 2007
- Staff Sgt. Mark M. Maierson, 7th Special Forces

Group (Airborne), 13 March 2009

• Staff Sgt. David J. Whitcher, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 2 Nov. 2016

• Staff Sgt. Micha E. Walker, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 27 July 2021



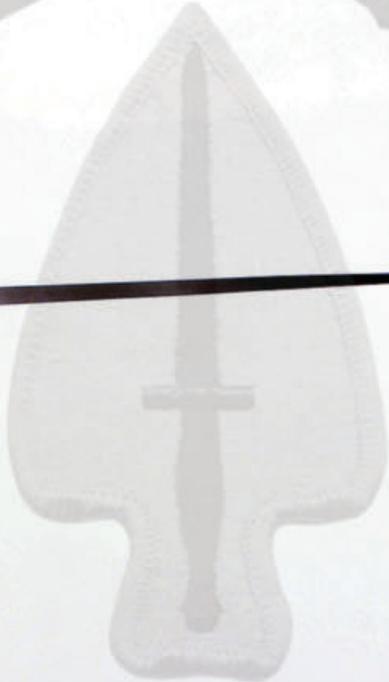
A competitor in the 2024 U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Best Combat Diver Team Competition swims underwater in a pool at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School's Special Forces Underwater Operations School at NAS Key West, Florida June 11, 2024. Photo courtesy U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

A competitor in the 2024 U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Best Combat Diver Team Competition jumps off the tailgate of a CH-47 at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School's Patton Water Drop Zone, at NAS Key West, Florida June 11, 2024. Twelve teams competed in the event to test the skills and abilities of combat divers, build esprit de corps between organizations and advance the capabilities of military divers. Photo by K. Kassens.





AIRBORNE



Naval Special Warfare Command



Naval Special Warfare dedicates Normandy NCDU, S&R Monument Park

By U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Kyle Fiori-Puyu
Naval Special Warfare Command

Rear Adm. Keith Davids, commander, Naval Special Warfare Command, delivered remarks during a ceremony to dedicate the Naval Combat Demolition Units (NCDU) and Scouts & Raiders (S&R) Monument Park at Omaha Beach, May 30.

Thanks to nearly two years of relentless work and collaboration between the National UDT-Navy SEAL Museum and Denis Madouasse, the mayor of Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer, France, the monument park was opened to the public on the 80th anniversary of the D-Day invasion. It serves as a tribute to the selfless sacrifice of NCDU and S&R service members during the D-Day invasion.

During his remarks, Davids discussed the courage and grit displayed by the men whose surveillance and beach-clearing efforts contributed to the D-Day invasion, underscoring the enduring importance of global alliances in achieving common objectives.

“As we dedicate this park, we salute the brave NCDU service members and S&Rs, forefathers of Naval Special Warfare, for their service and sacrifice, said Davids. “This monument will carry forward their legacy, ensuring their stories inspire future generations to cherish and defend the liberties we hold dear.”

Overlooking the shores of Omaha Beach, the monument tells the story of the NCDU and S&Rs teams through maps, historical panels, and artifacts.



From left to right, Navy SEAL Medal of Honor recipients Thomas R. Norris, Edward C. Byers Jr., and Michael E. Thornton, stand during the U.S. National Anthem at the Naval Combat Demolition Units. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Kyle Fiori-Puyu.

The monument’s center features a Living Beach with a hedgehog barrier. This barrier was a common obstacle cleared by the NCDUs during the D-Day invasion. The

beach is surrounded by sand from global locations where NSW service members have trained, fought, and died. The sand was spread around the hedgehog by NSW service members and the friends and family of NCDU service members and S&Rs.

Before the monument’s dedication, Davids and NSW Force Master Chief Walter Dittmar paid their respects at the NCDU and S&R gravesites in the Normandy American Cemetery and

Monument. This cemetery, where over 9,000 American service members are interred, honors those who fell during the Normandy invasion from June 6 to August 30, 1944.

As we dedicate this park, we salute the brave NCDU service members and S&Rs, forefathers of Naval Special Warfare, for their service and sacrifice. This monument will carry forward their legacy, ensuring their stories inspire future generations to cherish and defend the liberties we hold dear.

— Rear Adm. Keith Davids, commander,
Naval Special Warfare Command



Rear Adm. Keith Davids, commander, Naval Special Warfare Command, and Force Master Chief Walter Dittmar pay their respects to fallen Naval Combat Demolition Units (NCDU) service members and amphibious raiders at the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial. The cemetery is the resting place for over 9,000 American service members, most who lost their lives in the invasion of Normandy, June 6 to August 30, 1944. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Kyle Fiori-Puyu.

Navy Leap Frogs to jump into D-Day Events

The U.S. Navy Parachute Team, the "Leap Frogs," fly over Amfreville, Normandy, France, June 7, 2024, during the 80th commemoration of the D-Day. U.S. military personnel and equipment commemorate the 80th anniversary of Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944, widely known as D-Day. Highlighting the Department of Defense continued commitment to honor the historic significance of D-Day and the sacrifices made, this event connects the strength of the alliance and dedicated resolve required during WWII to NATO, which strengthens the unity today. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Aron Montano.





Naval Special Warfare Command

CTF-66 deputy commander assumes Bull Frog Mantle for NSW



By U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Felicito Rustique Jr.

Naval Special Warfare Command

Capt. Eric Skalski, deputy commander of Commander Task Force (CTF) 66, officially assumed the title of the Naval Special Warfare Community's 19th Bull Frog on May 1, 2024. Skalski succeeded retired Cmdr. Joseph Burns, who had served as NSW's 18th Bull Frog since Jan. 19, 2023, until his recent retirement.

The Bull Frog, the longest continuously serving active-duty SEAL at the time of receiving the title from their predecessor, embodies key traits highly valued in the Naval Special Warfare and SEAL community: adaptability, strength, and leadership. The title also highlights the naval tradition of nurturing leadership within the community.

"Being the Bull Frog means having a wealth of experiences, but not all of them," explained Capt. Eric Skalski. "In my nearly 39 years with Naval Special Warfare and the Navy, I've witnessed significant changes. As an NSW leader, my role remains consistent: setting a positive example, sharing my experiences (including mistakes), and learning from diverse perspectives. I'll continue adapting alongside my teammates until I pass the torch to the next Bull Frog."

When a Bull Frog retires, Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC) conducts a formal ceremony to officially transfer the title. During this event, the outgoing Bull Frog presents a specially engraved trophy to the newly recognized Bull Frog. The trophy features a small wooden frog on top and the names of previous Bull Frogs inscribed on the side. However, Skalski is currently stationed in Europe, helping to lead the U.S. 6th Fleet's newest Task Force and the ceremonial fare

was replaced by an enthusiastic email notification.

World events in Ukraine and the Red Sea have given warfighters valuable insights into the risks and dynamics of asymmetric warfare. The collaborative efforts of CTF-66, our Allies, and partners are key to perfecting maritime domain awareness

globally, assisting our partners in the defense of predatory practices such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, and defending our own infrastructure, ships, and personnel against a growing unmanned systems threat.

As a member of CTF-66, Skalski is thankful to be surrounded by smart, innovative professionals from many warfare communities to include space, cyber, SOF and intelligence. He's also pleased that his current team works closely with and shares similar attributes with NSW.

"I may be biased, but I am very proud of NSW's partnership with and contributions to CTF-66," said Skalski. "Our ability to learn, adapt and innovate is critical to staying relevant and survivable. NSW and SOF in general are leaders in this arena as demonstrated over the decades. The actors remain largely the same, but the tools of the trade continue to evolve."

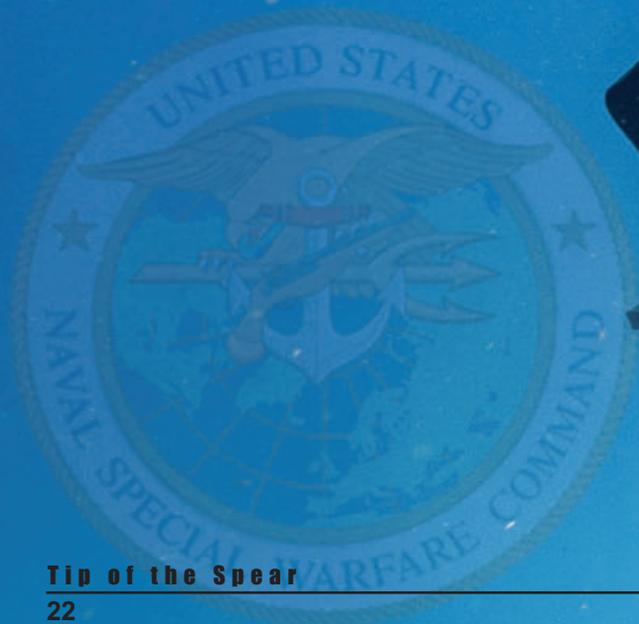


Capt. Eric Skalski



NSW operators conduct joint training

West Coast-based Naval Special Warfare operators participate in combat dive training in the Gulf of Mexico. Naval Special Warfare is the nation's elite maritime special operations force, uniquely positioned to extend the Fleet's reach and gain and maintain access for the Joint Force in competition and conflict. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Alex Perlman.





Air Force Special Operations Command



General Conley takes command of Air Force Special Operations Command

By Lucelia Ball

Air Force Special Operations Command Public Affairs

Lt. Gen. Michael Conley assumed command of Air Force Special Operations Command from Lt. Gen. Tony Bauernfeind in a change of command ceremony at the Freedom Hangar, Hurlburt Field, Florida July 2, 2024.

Presiding over the ceremony, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Allvin praised Bauernfeind's past accomplishments and Conley's future potential as the commander of AFSOC. Allvin said the image that came to mind when he thought of the transition to a new commander was the passing of a baton in a race.

"Races are won or lost by fractions of a second," he said. "The stakes are high for our Air Force, our special operations community and our nation and we can't afford to take a pause. Mike Conley is up to speed. He's ready. He brings a breadth of experience working with the Air Force, major command and joint staff. He also has a depth of experience in the AFSOC mission."

During the ceremony, four formations of Air Commandos stood at attention to represent the Airmen of AFSOC. The military formation, comprised of 85 Airmen, represented the five active-duty, one Reserve wing, and two National Guard wings; and more than 20,000 active duty, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and civilian Airmen who serve across AFSOC.

U.S. Army Gen. Bryan Fenton, commander of United States Special Operations Command, also provided remarks during the ceremony, as AFSOC is the Air Force component of USSOCOM. Fenton welcomed Conley as AFSOC's new commander and praised the command for its spirit of innovation.

"Mike, welcome aboard," he said. "You are taking charge of an exceptional team. You know this already because you've been a key part. You're inheriting an incredible organization that is not only pathfinding and trailblazing for SOCOM but equally for our Air Force and on top of that, the



Lt. Gen. Michael Conley assumes command of Air Force Special Operations Command from U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David W. Allvin at Hurlburt Field, Florida, July 2, 2024. Conley is the successor to U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Tony Bauernfeind, who has been selected as the next superintendent of the United States Air Force Academy. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ty Pilgrim.

Department of Defense. And they are doing it at lightning speed. You're exactly what AFSOC needs to continue that transformation."

Lt. Gen. Michael Conley assumed command of Air Force Special Operations Command after previously serving as the director of operations for Headquarters AFSOC. He was responsible for implementing and directing operational command policy for AFSOC's worldwide special operations units including 20,800 personnel, approximately 300 aircraft and \$17 billion in assets. He also served as the vice commander for AFSOC's 27th Special Operations Wing and the commander of the 1st Special Operations Wing.

"I am honored and humbled for this opportunity," he said. "I am committed to making this command the best it can be in ensuring we are ready to go whenever you need us to.

Bauernfeind was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal as well as the USSOCOM ceremonial colors for his accomplishments as commander and then received the final salute from the Air Commandos. He will depart AFSOC to become the next Superintendent of the United States Air Force Academy.

U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Michael Conley offers his first salute as he assumes command of Air Force Special Operations Command during a change of command ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Florida, July 2, 2024. Conley was previously the director of operations for Headquarters AFSOC. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ty Pilgrim.



Air Force Special Operations Command



Strategic bombers soar across Arabian Peninsula with MC-130J Commando II support

By Ninth Air Force (Air Forces Central) Public Affairs

U.S. Air Force B-52 Stratofortress long-range strategic bombers integrated with U.S. and Coalition Forces throughout the Middle East, June 12 and 14, including passes through the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf, as part of Bomber Task Force, a rotational bomber presence in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

The strategic bombers from Minot Air Force Base's 69th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron, currently deployed to the United Kingdom's RAF Fairford, conducted a cross-combatant command mission, which integrated allies and partners across U.S. European Command, U.S. Africa Command, and U.S. Central Command.

This iteration incorporated fighter escorts from several coalition nations and integration with MC-130J Commando II aircraft operated by Special Operations Command-Central joint warfighters, which recently conducted familiarization

training for the rapid employment of palletized effects from cargo aircraft.

The rotational bomber presence offers familiarity on how to integrate long-range strike capabilities to support deterrence initiatives. As part of a live weapons employment training in June 2023, the U.S. Air Force launched a Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile at a training range within the U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility to further demonstrate advanced strike capabilities.

The bomber missions also provide senior coalition leaders with strategic options to employ advanced conventional weapons, including airstrikes on February 2 from two B-1B Lancer supersonic bombers against Iranian-Aligned Militia Group facilities in Iraq and Syria.

Bomber Task Force missions highlight the U.S.'s ability to rapidly field combat airpower while enhancing training opportunities and interoperability for regional allies and partners operating alongside U.S. forces.

A U.S. Air Force MC-130J Commando II operated by U.S. Special Operations Command-Central flies ahead of a U.S. Air Force B-52H Stratofortress from Minot Air Force Base's 69th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron, June 12, 2024, during a Bomber Task Force mission over U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility. U.S. Air Forces Central led the combined effort to integrate with U.S. joint and coalition forces to highlight the critical long-range strategic bomber capability. U.S. Air Force photo.



Marine Forces, Special Operations Command MARSOC hosts change of command ceremony

U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Peter D. Huntley, left, commander, Marine Forces Special Operations Command, receives the MARSOC colors from Maj. Gen. Matthew G. Trollinger, right, during a change of command ceremony at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, June 11, 2024. During the ceremony, presided over by the 39th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Eric M. Smith, MARSOC bid farewell to Trollinger and welcomed back Huntley for his fourth tour at the command. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Henry Rodriguez.





Headquarters - U.S Special Operations Command Connection is the cure: USSOCOM competes in the 2024 DoD Warrior Games

*By Michael Bottoms
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

The Department of Defense Warrior Games took place June 21-30, in Orlando, Florida featuring more than 200 wounded, ill, and injured active-duty and veteran service members competing in adaptive sports.

This year marks the 14th anniversary where athletes from the U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and U.S. Special Operations Command as well as the Australian Defence Force come to compete in the adaptive sports competition.

The games feature 11 adaptive sports including cycling, archery, air precision shooting, swimming, powerlifting, indoor rowing, swimming, track and field, sitting volleyball and the wheelchair events of rugby and basketball.

U.S. Army Master Sgt. Ivan Morera, injured in 2013 in Afghanistan due to a vehicle rollover, sustained a crushed left hand requiring a field amputation to free him from the vehicle. This is his third year competing in the games.

“We will show what we’re capable of doing, where we focus on what we can do and not focus on what we can’t do,” said Morera of the DoD Warrior Games 2024 Team SOCOM.



Team USSOCOM competes in the cycling competition at the ESPN sports facility in Orlando, Florida June 21, 2024. Service members and veterans from the Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy, U.S. Special Operations Command, and representatives from the Australian Defence Force are competing in adaptive sports including archery, cycling, indoor-rowing, powerlifting, shooting, sitting volleyball, swimming, track, field, wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby from June 21 – 30, at the Disney Resort. Photo by Michael Bottoms.



U.S. Army Master Sgt. Ivan Morera competes in indoor rowing June 25, 2024, during the DoD's Warrior Games held in Orlando, Florida. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

The Department of Defense Warrior Games, an annual event first held in 2010, celebrates the resiliency and dedication of wounded, ill, and injured active-duty and veteran U.S. military service members.

"Here when we come together, we become a family, we become brothers and sisters, and we just grow very, very close to each other," Morera added.

The ten-day event is a great chance to bring the competitors and their families together and build camaraderie and is a place where they can reflect on their service to the country.



Team SOCOM competes in the wheelchair rugby June 24, 2024, during the DoD's Warrior Games held in Orlando, Florida. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

"For many of our SOF wounded, ill, and injured, military adaptive sports provide a crucial element in the overall process of recovery and rehabilitation. Participating in adaptive sports produces positive outcomes in overall health and quality of life, but sometimes even more essentially, it provides the social connective tissue back to the SOF family when our brothers and sisters are faced with challenges that change the course of their life," said H. Kelly Ammerman, Director, USSOCOM Warrior Care Program (Care Coalition).

The DoD Warrior Games provide a venue to showcase the efforts of our SOF adaptive athletes as they pursue a new mission of representing SOCOM, strive to achieve new objectives and personal bests, and overcome



U.S. Army Master Sgt. Jerry Millan competes in the 400 meters race June 27, 2024, during the DoD's Warrior Games held in Orlando, Florida. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

obstacles so they can celebrate their victories, big and small, with their teammates and their family members who, in many cases, have traveled this difficult journey with them. As a SOF adaptive athlete noted during one of our camps, 'Connection is the cure,' he was spot on," Ammerman said.

The DoD Warrior Games serves to enhance the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded warriors by providing them exposure to adaptive sports. Participation in the Warrior Games represents the culmination of a service member's involvement in an adaptive sports program and demonstrates the incredible potential of wounded warriors through competitive sports.

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

Retired, injured Navy SEAL recovering through adaptive sports in the DoD Warrior Games



Retired Lt. Cdr. (SEAL) Scott Terry and his mother Evelyn pose during the swim meet June 29, 2024, during DoD's Warrior Games held in Orlando, Florida. Service members and veterans from the Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy, U.S. Special Operations Command, and representatives from the Australian Defence Force are competing in adaptive sports including archery, cycling, indoor rowing, powerlifting, shooting, sitting volleyball, swimming, track, field, wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby from June 21 – 30, at the Disney Resort. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

By Michael Bottoms
USSOCOM Public Affairs

On a winter's night in December of 2019, Lt. Cdr. (SEAL) Scott Terry was on a tactical boat monitoring fellow SEALs swimming during a cold-water training mission in Kodiak, Alaska when the disaster struck. A Coast Guard cutter rammed into Terry's boat destroying it and severely injuring him.

"I was driving the Navy boat and the Coast Guard hit me," said Terry. "I was staring at the screen observing the swimmers and then it happened. I am told I was completely covered in debris to include a 150-pound chair."

The Naval Academy graduate would be in a coma for two and half months and had extensive injuries with long-term traumatic brain injury. He began his road to recovery, and he had to relearn



Retired Lt. Cdr. (SEAL) Scott Terry competes in the archery competition June 26, 2024, during DoD's Warrior Games held in Orlando, Florida. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

how to walk and talk. His mother and caregiver Evelyn helped him to regain his confidence and his ability to move again.

“He was at Palo Alto for over two years and then transferred him to a hospital called Casa Colina where they taught him how to walk again,” said his mother Evelyn.

The Richmond, Virginia native has always been into physical fitness and wanted to be a Navy SEAL since childhood.

“He told us very early on he wanted to be a SEAL and always has been in into physical fitness,” said his mother.

The U.S. Special Operations Command's Warrior Care Program (Care Coalition) encouraged Terry to participate in adaptive sports and to compete in the Warrior Games to satisfy his desire for physical challenges. He would go on and compete in archery, indoor rowing and swimming.

“I love the Warrior Games. I get to be with fellow warriors and experience the camaraderie and it is like being on a team again,” Terry said.

“It is great therapy for him, he is with people who understand what he is going through because they have gone through it too,” his mother said.

The Department of Defense Warrior Games this year took place June 21-30, in Orlando, Florida

featuring more than 200 wounded, ill, and injured active-duty and veteran service members competing in adaptive sports.

The DoD Warrior Games serves to enhance the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded warriors by providing them exposure to adaptive sports. Participation in the Warrior Games represents the culmination of a service member's involvement in an adaptive sports program and demonstrates the incredible potential of wounded warriors through competitive sports.

This year marks the 14th anniversary where athletes from the U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and U.S. Special Operations Command as well as the Australian Defence Force come to compete in the adaptive sports competition.

Terry was medically retired in 2022, but the Care Coalition continues to help him navigate his care. The command's Warrior Care Program was established in 2005 to provide special operations forces (SOF) wounded, ill, or injured servicemembers and their families advocacy after

life changing events to navigate through recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration as quickly as possible, strengthening SOF readiness. The program will try to bring the service member back to operational status or move

into a different field or transition into veteran status.

I love the Warrior Games. I get to be with fellow warriors and experience the camaraderie and it is like being on a team again.

— Retired Lt. Cdr. (SEAL) Scott Terry



Retired Lt. Cdr. (SEAL) Scott Terry competes in the swim meet June 29, 2024, during DoD's Warrior Games held in Orlando, Florida. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command USSOCOM Washington DC front office competes in the Badwater Cape Fear ultra-race series

By Michael Bottoms
USSOCOM Public Affairs

Recently, U.S. Special Operations Command's Vice Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Francis Donovan and members of his Washington DC office staff, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Amanda Wilson and U.S. Navy Cdr. Ryan Hall participated in the 51-mile long Badwater Cape Fear in North Carolina which is the first of three Badwater races culminating in the Badwater 135 that takes place in Death Valley California.

Wilson, a veteran of the ultra-race series has completed all three races to include the Death Valley race.

"The race in Death Valley takes place in July," said Wilson. "I can attest that Badwater 135 was the hardest event I ever participated in, and 130 degrees - hot!"

"The race the VCOM, Ryan and I participated in this year was Badwater Cape Fear in North Carolina. This race traditionally has two distances - a 50k and a 51.2 miler - all run individually, and on the soft sand of Bald Head Island," Wilson said. "The three of us signed up and completed the 51-miler. Conditions went from cool, to hot, then windy with some aggressive sideways rain. We received the full ultra experience! "

Ryan relayed the grueling race was a positive life experience.

"In short, it was amazing. I ran almost all of it without music, just living in the moment and taking in the scenery and the experience. I would characterize it as racing, rather than competing. As I am new to this, I am finding out the culture within the ultra-marathon community is so encouraging of one another," said Hall. "You feel like everyone was competing against

themselves but encouraging each other. It was special to be a part of it."

To train up for the race, the three also ran in the Marine Corps 50k this past October in Washington DC.

"The Marine Corps 50K was a fun and fast event," Wilson said. "Otherwise, the train up was all about time on feet - a lot of slow

Our camaraderie has grown, but not just with the VCOM but with the whole team at the Washington Office. While you would think an evolution like this is an individual sport, the incredible support network across the Washington Office team really made it a team effort.

— U.S. Navy Cdr. Ryan Hall

running!"

"My first ultra distance race was the Marine Corps Marathon 50k, but there are thousands of people that run that race, so it's an entirely different experience than the much more intimate 200 or so in this one," Hall said.

Participating in the ultra-race series is a way for the Washington office to further coalesce as a team.

"The race I'll tell you, since running these two ultras with the boss, the camaraderie within the small Washington Office has absolutely grown!" Wilson said. "Ultra is much more mental than physical, and I believe that commonality between all of us in the

office (mental fortitude) has really synergized our commitment to each other and the success of the platform.”

“Our camaraderie has grown, but not just with the VCOM but with the whole team at the Washington Office. While you would think an evolution like this is an individual sport, the

incredible support network across the Washington Office team really made it a team effort,” Hall said. “The encouragement, support and accountability partnership preparing for and during the race was critical. It really shows how the SOF truths transcend the entire culture around our organization, and not just in our military duties.”



(From left to right) U.S. Marine Corp Lt. Gen. Francis Donovan, U.S. Special Operations Command vice commander, and members of his Washington office staff, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Amanda Wilson and U.S. Navy Cdr. Ryan Hall display their medallions after completing the 51-mile long Badwater Cape Fear race in Bald Head Island, North Carolina, March 23, 2024. Courtesy photo.

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

Daughters of first USSOCOM Chief of Staff visit Joint Special Operations University

*By U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marleah Miller
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

The daughters of U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Joe Lutz, the first chief of staff for U.S. Special Operations Command, received a tour of MacDill AFB, March 25, 2024, with their final stop at the Joint Special Operations University's Lutz Conference Room.

The tour, hosted by members of JSOU, was the first time all three daughters, and their husbands, had the opportunity to view the room dedicated in their father's memory.

"After Maj. Gen. Lutz retired from the Army, he directly supported joint education initiatives at JSOU and traveled frequently from his home in Tampa Bay, [Florida], to Hurlburt Field, [Florida], to serve as a senior mentor," said Dr. Amie Lonas, provost with JSOU. "When Maj. Gen. Lutz passed, the JSOU President established the Lutz Conference Room in his honor and in recognition of his contributions to the early days of JSOU."

When U.S. SOCOM was established in 1987, U.S. Army Gen. James J. Lindsay, the first commander of U.S. SOCOM, selected Lutz to serve as chief of staff.

"Maj. Gen. Lutz was a dedicated Special Forces warrior for over 35 years and is considered the father of modern Special Operations Forces," said Lonas. "The success that U.S. SOCOM and the Special Operations community enjoy today would not have been as great without his inspirational leadership and foresight. His family played a key supporting role, enabling him to focus on developing the SOF Enterprise while serving as the SOCOM Chief of Staff."

The below interview was conducted with Lutz's daughters: Krista Lutz Castillo, Karla Lutz Bowling and Joan Lutz Reimann.

Interviewer: Why did you want to visit U.S. SOCOM and JSOU?

KRISTA: As "Army Brats" who moved constantly, returning to places from the past and reconnecting with old



Krista Lutz Castillo, Karla Lutz Bowling and Joan Lutz Reimann, daughters of U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Joseph Lutz, visit his placard at the Special Operations Forces Memorial at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, March 25, 2024. U.S. Army Gen. James J. Lindsay, the first commander of U.S. SOCOM, selected Lutz to serve as chief of staff when U.S. SOCOM was established in 1987. The Lutz daughters received a tour of MacDill with their final stop at the Joint Special Operations University's Lutz conference room. The tour, hosted by members of JSOU, was the first time all three daughters, and their husbands, had the opportunity to view the room dedicated in their father's memory. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marleah Miller.

friends is a cherished opportunity. Because of our father, we have fond memories and deep ties to the Special Operations community. We wanted to go by our old home, tour MacDill, and visit JSOU to see the conference room dedicated to our father. It was a special day!

JOAN: SOCOM was our dad's last assignment in the Army. He came to SOCOM in its infancy and was excited about the possibilities of working on the ground floor of a

concept that he deeply believed in—that the Special Operations Forces of all branches of services needed to work cohesively for the good of the mission. He retired from SOCOM and the Army after 35 years of service. He then worked as a business consultant and often taught at the precursor to JSOU at Hurlburt Field. He was a communicator and was passionate about SOCOM’s mission. He enjoyed engaging with others in discussion and sharing his experiences. It was extraordinary to see how far SOCOM and JSOU have come from their roots over 30 years ago.

Interviewer: When did you live on MacDill AFB, and what years did you visit SOCOM?

KARLA: When my parents moved to Tampa in the late 1980s, I was married and had two children. We loved to visit since it was such a great place to vacation and bring the kids! Once Dad retired, they moved to Lutz, Florida (rather appropriate!), and we still visited MacDill often for events, airshows, ceremonies, etc. Seeing so many progressive transformations in housing, recreational opportunities, and military facilities was terrific.

KRISTA: I was starting a career in Texas when my parents moved to MacDill, but I returned to Tampa frequently for work and stayed with Mom and Dad at their home. It served as my home away from home from the late 1980s to the ‘90s when Dad retired.

JOAN: I lived overseas while my dad was stationed at SOCOM and would often return for extended stays and holidays. We have fond memories of the whole family together at what was then called Staff Loop. Our neighbors at the time were General Lindsey, the first USSOCOM Commander, General Schwarzkopf, and General Cox. My parents loved living in that beautiful house. My Mom, who loved the beach, couldn’t believe she had a direct view of the Bay across the street! When I heard that MacDill had established a new area for General Officers’ quarters, I hoped the houses on Staff Loop had not been torn down. I was delighted to learn that these homes now comprise the Staff Officers’ Quarters Historic District and that the street name has been changed to honor John Chapman, a fallen airman. My Dad would be especially pleased that our home is currently the home of Command Sergeant Major Shorter!

Interviewer: What was it like being the daughter of U.S. SOCOM’s first Chief of Staff?

KARLA: I felt immense pride when Dad was selected as the first Chief of Staff of the newly formed U.S. SOCOM. As his final assignment before retiring, it seemed a fitting culmination to the years he spent advocating for a unified Special Operations Command. He was passionate about the role Special Ops should play globally and believed that it would change the trajectory of international involvement. Witnessing how Special Ops has grown from



U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Jamie Sands, chief of staff for U.S. Special Operations Command, visits with U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Joseph Lutz’s daughters the Joint Special Operations University, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, March 25, 2024. U.S. Army Gen. James J. Lindsay, the first commander of U.S. SOCOM, selected Lutz to serve as chief of staff when U.S. SOCOM was established in 1987. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marleah Miller.

those early formative days is astounding.

KRISTA: To me, he felt larger than life. At the same time, he was accessible and grounded... very much a ‘regular guy.’ He led our family much like he led his troops: by example. Dad never asked anything of us that he wouldn’t do himself. He was a man of principles: unwavering loyalty, high integrity, and strong moral character. His word was golden. People often said he was a “soldiers’ soldier” — he seemed like one of the guys. Our father had an uncanny ability to make people feel at ease and to make everyone feel important. He was a great conversationalist, whip-smart, funny, and even sentimental. It was well-known that the Lutz kids could tug on General Joe’s heartstrings, and the big, tough soldier would readily shed a tear or two!

JOAN: It made me happy to know my dad was where he wanted to be for his last assignment. He was with the Special Operations community, and he had the ability to make an impact. It was wonderful for Dad to be assigned to MacDill, just a little bit different than our days at Bragg.

Interviewer: What’s your fondest memory of your dad?

KARLA: As my sister said, there are so many! And yes, his rendition of Claire de Lune was quite spectacular! One of my favorite memories of dad was at his retirement ceremony. He was making the final and most significant speech of his military career. It was sprinkled with his trademark self-deprecating humor as he emotionally reminisced about his years of service in front of friends,



Krista Lutz Castillo, daughter of U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Joseph Lutz, looks through her father's memorabilia in the Lutz Conference Room at the Joint Special Operations University, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, March 25, 2024. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marleah Miller.

family and dignitaries. Then, from out of the audience, my two-year-old son ran up to his grandpa and latched onto his leg. In his arms, he held “General Bear,” a handmade, stuffed bear in full-on fatigues and sporting a Green Beret. Dad let my son stand beside him as he finished his speech, shedding a few tears as he said his farewells. It was a bittersweet moment of reflection for me – the juxtaposition of my father and son. The young and the old. The past and the future. A life well-lived and one just beginning.

KRISTA: I’d be hard-pressed to name a favorite, but some recurring moments stand out. Dad enjoyed singing and playing many tunes on the Ukulele and one, yes, one, song on the piano. He’d pretend to take song requests for the piano, then begin playing the one song he could play. Hilarious! And might I add, impressive: it was Claire de Lune. He’d milk it for all it was worth.

JOAN: My fondest memories of my dad are sitting outside of whatever quarters we were in at the time and playing cribbage. Dad taught me the game as a child, and we could play for hours. He was an intense card player, and I would love to play just one more game with him.

Interviewer: What did this visit mean to you?

KARLA: What a wonderful day! I cannot adequately express how special we were made to feel. JSOU is a top-notch facility, and it is remarkable to see how it has grown from its initial conception at Hurlburt Field to the state-of-the-art institution it is today. Dr. Lonas, Col. Miller, and Admiral Sands were exceptionally welcoming and gracious. Everyone we met and interacted with at JSOU is such an ultimate professional. So impressive!

KRISTA: Getting to tour MacDill, visit JSOU and Dad’s room was one of the highlights of our Tampa trip –

memories came flooding back the moment we entered the gates. It was an emotional day, certainly humbling and affirming to witness how beautifully our father’s legacy has been honored, and his memory kept alive in the Special Operations community.

JOAN: It was a powerful visit to tour MacDill, the Special Operations Memorial, and JSOU. Seeing Dad’s plaque at the memorial and viewing the room at JSOU made me feel immense pride for the role our dad played within the Special Operations community. We are thankful and humbled that JSOU continues to honor his legacy.

Interviewer: How did it feel to walk into JSOU’s conference room and see all your dad’s memorabilia?

KARLA: Walking into the room was breathtaking – I was flooded with emotions. It was humbling to see Dad honored in such a meaningful way. If people take the time to look through the photos and newspaper articles, they will be surprised at the historical significance of much of the memorabilia.

KRISTA: Overwhelming! We grew up surrounded by and deeply immersed in the military way of life. Even long after Dad retired, he remained heavily involved in various military projects and organizations. What struck me was that we had assumed this connection would always be there. And quite suddenly, when Dad passed away, that link was gone. Our unique bond to military culture, which provided structure, security, and comfort, evaporated overnight. That was tough. Walking into the room brought back a flood of powerful emotions and memories!

JOAN: I choked up when entering the room - memories flooded back, and I felt immense pride that Dad was respected and honored for his contributions to JSOU from its humble beginnings at Hurlburt Field where he taught. He would be proud to be remembered today at the current state-of-the-art facilities. The professional presentation of the memorabilia and the fact that important meetings occur in this room where others can see our father’s mementos is gratifying. We thank former JSOU President Dr. Maher for envisioning this room and Dr. Lonas and Col. Miller for hosting us, allowing us to relive a piece of our family’s history.

Interviewer: Why is it important that the conference room was named after your dad?

KARLA: Recognizing those who laid the foundations for ideas that change history is meaningful. It is never just one person, but certain individuals tend to carry the torch a little higher and keep that flame burning bright. Dad followed in the footsteps of great men. Often, they may not seek notoriety on their own, but their contributions should be remembered. It is humbling to have a room dedicated to my father amidst the Special Operations trailblazers whose portraits line the halls of JSOU. I hope visitors feel inspired

by these pioneers, including my father, who have paved the way for current and future generations.

KRISTA: We have always been immensely proud of our father—both parents, actually! As mentioned above, it’s humbling and affirming to witness how our father’s legacy has been honored and to see his memory kept alive in the Special Operations community. It’s also heartwarming to see our mother included in so many pictures. It makes us proud!

JOAN: It is heartening to see that dad’s role was recognized. He firmly believed in the education and training of our own military and foreign counterparts, and we appreciate that his legacy continues through the naming of the conference room.

Interviewer: For those who visit that room, what is something you hope they learn and/or take away from being in there and seeing everything from your dad?

KARLA: I hope visitors to the Lutz Conference Room will experience a more intimate glimpse of Dad as an individual, a husband and a father. I’d like them to see my father’s humanity and humility – not only to remember what he accomplished in his career but the ideals he believed in and emulated as a Soldier and leader.

KRISTA: We hope his character and personality shine through so visitors might see that Joe Lutz was far more than a major general. He was a father, a son, a husband, a brother and a friend who was loved and who loved all fiercely.

JOAN: It is important to remember the heritage of the Special Operations Forces. When speaking with Col. (R) Miller and Admiral Sands, the current SOCOM Chief of Staff, they mentioned that SOCOM is looking to the past to address the changing role of SOCOM. It’s important to



Joan Lutz Reimann, daughter of U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Joseph Lutz, looks through her father’s memorabilia in the Lutz Conference Room at the Joint Special Operations University, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, March 25, 2024. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marleah Miller.

remember the roots and mission of the Special Operations Forces, and I believe the pages of history in the room speak to that role as it was initially meant to be. I also hope that Dad’s role as a communicator will be evident. There are many photos of Dad communicating out in the field with the troops, his favorite place to be, and up to the highest levels of the military and civilian world. True leaders need to communicate effectively, empathize, and find solutions through collaboration with multiple parties. That was Dad’s greatest gift to the Special Operations community – believing in the people and the mission and being able to articulate that to others.



Krista Lutz Castillo, Karla Lutz Bowling and Joan Lutz Reimann, daughters of U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Joseph Lutz, visit the Lutz Conference Room at the Joint Special Operations University, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, March 25, 2024. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marleah Miller.

Team USSOCOM competed in the wheelchair basketball competition at the ESPN sports facility in Orlando, Florida June 26, 2024. Service members and veterans from the Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy, U.S. Special Operations Command, and representatives from the Australian Defence Force competed in adaptive sports including archery, cycling, indoor-rowing, powerlifting, shooting, sitting volleyball, swimming, track, field, wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby from June 21 – 30, at the Disney Resort. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Demetrius Munnerylyn.

