

TIP OF THE SPEAR



**Medal of Honor
recipients
Miller, Petry honored**

FRANKLIN D MILLER
SSG USA 5/1/70

GARY B BEIKIRCH
SGT USA 1/4/70

BRIAN L BUKER
SGT USA 5/4/70

HUMBERT R VERSACE
CPT USA 8/7/02

GARY LITRELL
SFC, USA 4-8/4/70

LEROY A PETRY
SFC, USA 12/6/2011

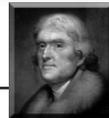


U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



**Medal of Honor recipients
inducted into USSOCOM
Hall of Honor ... 30**

Tip of the Spear



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Award Winner**

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(Cover) Medal of Honor recipient Sgt. 1st Class Leroy A. Petry, currently a U.S. Special Operations Command Care Coalition liaison with 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, looks at his plaque on the Special Operations Memorial during the Medal of Honor Recognition Ceremony at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., March 27. Petry and fellow Medal of Honor recipient Army Staff Sgt. Robert J. Miller, who died as a result of his heroic acts, had their names unveiled at the memorial, and were inducted in the USSOCOM Hall of Honor. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence.

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NSW operators help Hondurans establish elite maritime unit

*By Ensign Brian Bird and Chief Petty Officer Gino Rullo
Naval Special Warfare Unit-Four*

With a rate of 86 people killed for every 100,000 inhabitants, Honduras is considered one of the most dangerous countries in the world according to statistics from the 2011 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report.

Many of these casualties are linked to narcotics trafficking, where Honduras and other Central American nations are used as a narcotic transit point from South America into Mexico and the U.S. - mostly by sea.

During a recent six-month deployment, members of Naval Special Warfare Task Element-Alpha, a deployed maneuver element attached to Naval Special Warfare Unit-FOUR in support of Special Operations Command South, partnered with their Honduran counterparts to train and increase the military capacity of the newly established Honduran Fuerza Especiales Naval or FEN. The FEN is a maritime unit of special operators capable of combating transnational organized crime around its waterways.

Naval Special Warfare Unit 4, stationed in Joint Expeditionary Base, Little Creek, Va., designed and implemented a comprehensive training and maintenance plan to build the FEN into a strong counter-narcotic force. This same training plan has been used before during the creation of the FEN in Guatemala.

Ten operators from SEAL Team 18, attached to NSWU-4, spent six months training and observing the FEN in a multi-disciplinary approach, resulting in 45 highly qualified Honduran special operators by the end of the training.

More than 110 Honduran sailors attended the two, eight-week Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/s) style selection courses, designed by the members of NSWU-4, which challenged the mental and physical capabilities of each individual. The training was modeled after the BUD/s selection course in Coronado, Calif.

The selection course in Honduras included rigorous physical conditioning assessments, team-building evolutions, and basic Special Operations skill sets.

Some of the conditioning assessments included an eight-mile log physical training event, and a six-nautical mile ocean swim across the Bahia de Trujillo completed by both NSW personnel and the Honduran FEN. After completing these physical and mental hardships to become a member of the FEN, the 45 qualified individuals continued through more rigorous and operationally-focused skills training, which completed their transformation into a disciplined and

dedicated team capable of providing the Honduran Fuerza Naval a capable maritime branch of Special Operations.

To compliment the efforts of the Navy SEALs, members from Naval Special Warfare Special Boat Team 22 also spent a month with counterparts from NSWTE-A training the FEN in basic watercraft maintenance skills and procedures, nautical chart familiarization, boat vectoring and intercepting techniques, small boat handling tactics, and long-range navigation exercises.

"The combination of SEALs and Special Boat Operators provided the FEN with arguably the best maritime training available within USSOF," said the NSWTE-A officer in charge.

Outside of the physical and technical training associated with a Special Operator, NSWTE-A focused on creating a team of communication specialists within the FEN to become experts in Harris radio technologies, a skill set lacking in most Central American units due to the lack of expertise.

"In my whole military career, I can only remember three times when radios were used successfully on a mission," said the FEN's commanding officer.

NSWTE-A also focused its efforts on partner nation self-sustainment strategies when seven FEN members were selected as future instructors, shadowing NSW counterparts during all training evolutions. This mentorship provided each Honduran instructor with the competence and confidence to conduct future selection courses.

Organizational departments were also created to include assault, boats, communications, engineering and training with a senior officer and enlisted advisor assigned to each department.

"With the task organization of the FEN currently in place, they are now able to organize operations, training, and maintenance far more effectively, which in turn has created a streamlined and capable maritime unit," stated the NSWTE-A noncommissioned officer in charge.

This training conducted by NSWTE-A established the framework going forward for the Honduran FEN. The FEN is now task organized into assault, boat, communications, maintenance and training departments.

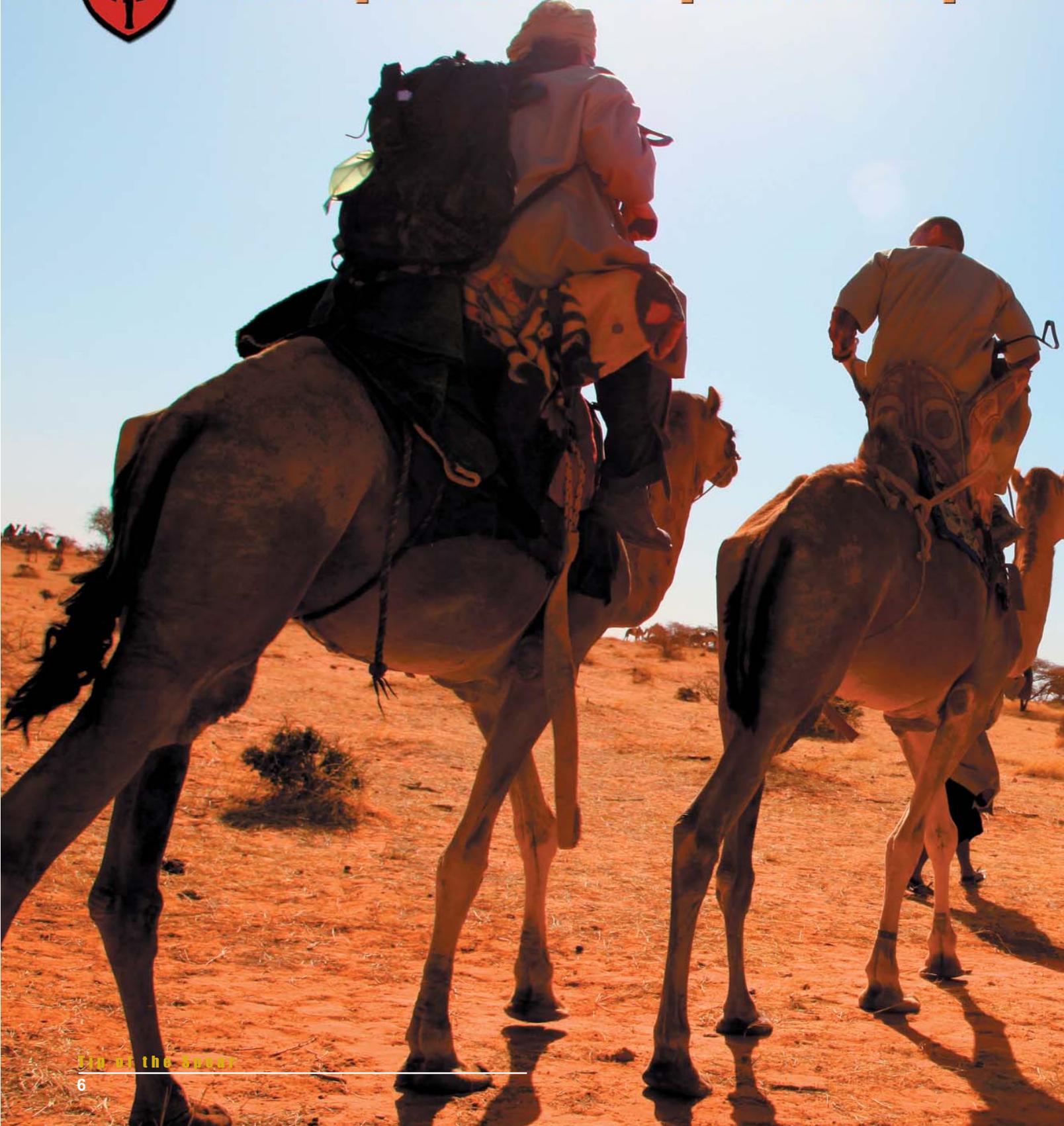
"The unique task organization, presentation of functional skill sets, and development of unit pride and esprit de corps has effectively paved the way for continued Honduran-led training and operations in the future in order to keep their borders secure against transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking," said the NSWTE-A officer in charge.

A diver in a white t-shirt and black cap is shown underwater, carrying a kettlebell. The diver is wearing a black cap and a white t-shirt. The background is a clear, blue-green underwater environment. The diver is holding the kettlebell with both hands, and the kettlebell is a dark color. The diver is in a crouching position, and the kettlebell is held in front of them. The diver's face is partially visible through a mask. The overall scene is a training exercise in a clear, blue-green underwater environment.

A Honduran sailor carries a kettle bell in Caribbean waters as part of a open water competency training during two, eight-week Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL style selection courses conducted by members of the U.S. Naval Special Warfare Task Element-Alpha. This training was conducted in order to assist their Honduran counterparts establish the Honduran Fuerza Especiales Naval division within the Honduran military. The FEN is a maritime unit of Special Operators capable of combating transnational organized crime in their waterways. Photo by Chief Petty Officer Gino Rullo.



In the African desert, an oasis of cooperation and partnership



U.S. Army Soldiers of the 91st Civil Affairs Battalion visit the Mauritania Camel Corps to establish a plan for future visits from U.S. veterinarians and Mauritanian military to ensure the health of the Camel Corps livestock during operation Flintlock 2013, Nema, Mauritania, Feb. 13. Flintlock is an annual, African-led military exercise focused on security, counter-terrorism and military humanitarian support to outlying areas hosted each year by a different government in western Africa. Photo by Spc. Justin De Hoyos.





*By Air Force Master Sgt.
Larry W. Carpenter Jr.*

As reports of conflict in Africa gain notoriety, the value of exercises like Flintlock that improve the interoperability between Western and African nations becomes evident.

Mauritania, bordered by Western Sahara, Algeria, Senegal and Mali, hosted Flintlock 2013, an annual capacity-building exercise between Feb. 20 and March 9, across southeast Mauritania in Kiffa, Nema and Ayoun. More than 1,000 participants from 14 African and Western partner nations contributed in varying levels to the exercise.

Flintlock is a Joint Chiefs of Staff-directed, U.S. Africa Command-sponsored exercise conducted by the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Trans Sahara, focusing on improving the capabilities of regional militaries to operate together, as well as conducting civil military operations aimed at improving the health and welfare of local civilian populations. Flintlock brings together participating multinational Special Operations Forces in a combined environment to develop and refine relevant tactics, techniques and procedures for today's operational environment.

One of the biggest developments between Flintlock 2013 and previous Flintlocks is the successful integration of the African-led Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force, a command and control element that integrated operations, logistics, intelligence, information operations and civil affairs into the tactical training scenario. The CJSOTF operations center was staffed by senior officers from the Mauritanian staff college, who would receive exercise information, develop plans and then deliver the plans to the appropriate subordinate unit for execution.

Improving upon tactical skill is important, but equally important is partner development among the nations involved. With events unfolding in nearby Mali, each military force was aware that they could be called upon to support their neighbor in the fight against violent extremists. Participants were able to build bonds by working together, training in the field, or sharing a meal.

"It's an honor... a lot of the partner nations, the head of their delegations are the top Special Forces officers in their entire country," said Col. George H. Bristol, former commander of JSOTF-TS and the commander of the U.S. contingent during Flintlock 2013. "To be able to sit at a table and share a meal with them and talk about what's happening in their countries and be able to talk about how they grew up and the way their nations function, you realize it's an incredible opportunity."



A Mauritanian doctor examines patients during a scheduled medical seminar to provide aid to the village of Weizen, Mauritania, Feb. 24. Flintlock exercises have been conducted across north and western Africa since 2005 to improve the security capacity of regional military forces. Photo by Spc. Justin De Hoyos.

"I think Flintlock is a very good way to make contact and to understand the military and understand the countries in the Sahara and the problems they face," said Alfonso, a Spanish trainer. "That way we can train with them, we can get past these problems, and it's a good way of understanding."

This year's Flintlock was also unique in its proximity to Mali and the involvement of western African nations in the conflict there, many of which were participating in the exercise; although the exercise was not specifically designed to prepare forces for that situation.

"I think probably the biggest thing with Flintlock this year is of course the extraordinary things and extraordinary times that are happening on the African continent, so that makes it a little bit more real," said Bristol. "We're here in Nema, Mauritania, very close to the Malian border, where there are things happening that are shifting and changing some of the dynamics in western and northwest Africa."

Noteworthy is that previous Flintlock participants are actively engaged in operations in Mali. Chadian forces, with the largest contingent of nearly 2,000 total soldiers, encountered heavy resistance from violent extremists near the Algerian border in the Ifoghas Mountains on Feb. 22. According to the deputy chief of staff of the Chadian army, Gen. Zakaria Gobongue, 65 extremists were killed in the exchange and five vehicles destroyed. Also killed were 13 Chadian soldiers. Some senior Chadian officers attribute Flintlock as one of the tools that best prepared them for the conflict.

But Bristol was clear that the Flintlock exercise was in no way tied to what was going on in Mali, it was simply a

coincidence.

“This exercise has been in the works for over a year, between us, the Mauritians and numerous western partner nations and numerous African partner nations,” Bristol said. “So the fact that there’s a lot of events going on in Mali and around us, it was not linked in any way. This exercise would have gone on no matter what was happening.”

Flintlock 2012 was originally scheduled to take place in Mali, but the country’s internal coup d’etat and conflict with violent extremists led to the cancellation of the scheduled exercise. A year later, with western African partner nations contributing to the multinational military efforts to eradicate the influence of groups like al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Mauritania could have justified cancelling the exercise. However, according to Bristol, they persevered and insisted on hosting the exercise despite numerous demands on their security forces.

“The easiest thing in these dynamic times would have been just to cancel it. That would have been an easy thing to do,” Bristol said. “I think this is the right thing; it’s the right thing for the African continent, it was the right thing for the counterterrorism partnership that we have with a lot of these nations, and it’s the right thing for all of our nations to be out here training...we will all walk away from here better, and that’s going to be a good thing for the world.”

The exercise this year also put a strong focus on building the civil military action capacity of the host nation, through the use of medical seminars and holding medical capability (MEDCAP) events throughout the region to allow the Mauritanian officials to provide medical aid to the local population.

Teams from the 91st Civil Affairs Battalion and the Mauritanian military carried out the MEDCAPs in locations throughout Mauritania, chosen because of the need for and lack of permanent government support. The MEDCAPs administered medical care to more than 1,000 people, distributing nearly a half-ton of medical supplies, including eyeglasses.

“Through this exercise we have been able to officially train five civil military action teams and we have also done train-the-trainer type of work as well. That is something we will be able to pass on and have those professionals,” said Col. Mohamed Cheikh Ould Boide, special advisor to the Mauritanian Chief of Staff and the lead Mauritanian planner for Flintlock 2013. “This is something that we will remain very focused on because we understand the importance of having good relationships between the local population and the military; particularly in places like this, where access to real information is very hard and there’s always lots of rumors going around.”

Bristol added that some people want to sum up these

sorts of events as just “winning the hearts and minds,” but stated that it’s much more.

“You’re doing more than that, what you’re putting is a human face to what we have to do as Special Operations Forces,” Bristol said. “To be able to come into a village and say we understand where you are, we want to help you, what are some of your problems and what are some of your challenges. That we can alleviate or assist in some of those is a tremendous dynamic, and it has a lasting effect for the present and for the future.”

The Spanish military contributed trainers who worked with Mauritanian units, teaching them tactics, medical techniques, patrolling and the use of air drops for resupply, while the Dutch trainers worked with the Senegalese units.

“It’s good training ...it’s a good opportunity, and they want to take advantage of this,” said a Spanish trainer. “They take whatever you can teach them, so I think it’s a very good thing for them and it’s a very good thing for us.”

The exercise culminated in a live-fire exercise in Nema, simulating a raid on a high-value target in which multiple African partner nations worked together to ensure a successful mission. The event was a culmination using many of the skills trained during the exercise, from intelligence analysis to planning to tactical execution.

While technical skills are clear benefits of exercises like Flintlock, the forming of bonds among the nations’ military forces sends a message of cohesion, and they will stand united against threats.

“Each nation has a security apparatus to repel that evil,” Bristol said. “I think when you see close to 20 nations bonding together to train to repel that, it makes a strong statement to both the individual countries, to the bond that forms for the future and also to the enemy that justice will follow them wherever they go.”



A Mauritanian soldier takes aim during basic rifle marksmanship training during Flintlock 2013. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Brendan Stephens.



Petty Officer Second Class George Kenny, a hospital corpsman, is showing a two-rescuer drag called "hasty harness" with the use of a heavy nylon strap. The harness offers two rescuers, with increased force and speed, to move a casualty from the point of injury to a safer area to treat. Photo courtesy of (ROK) Naval Special Warfare Flotilla.



Training Korean SEALs

*By Lt. Cmdr. Cheol Kang
Naval Special Warfare Group Eleven*

Constant physical and combat tactics training is the standard for the Republic of Korea Navy SEALs. Their SEAL operators are trained in the same manner as their American counterparts. However, one difference is that not all ROK SEAL teams have a formal unit medic.

Since 2008, Reservists from SEAL Team 17 have been providing vital Tactical Combat Casualty Care training to their ROK Navy SEAL counterparts. These training sessions have taken place during annual U.S. and South Korean military exercises.

Senior Chief Petty Officer Ferdie Santos, a hospital corpsman, coordinated this year's TCCC training, which took place during the joint exercise Key Resolve. For Santos, this is his fourth time teaching the course in a deployed environment.

"TCCC is an invaluable training program that was originally developed for Special Warfare operators by retired U.S. Navy SEAL/Physician Capt. Frank Butler in 1996," said Santos. "TCCC is battlefield proven to save lives and the principles are universally acknowledged to be the standards of care by first responders in combat."

The importance of TCCC training for ROK Naval Special Warfare was demonstrated in 2011 when the South Korean commercial ship, Samho Jewelry, was hijacked by Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden, off the coast of Somalia. The captain of the Samho Jewelry and his crew were successfully rescued by ROK Navy SEALs during a rescue mission. The captain of the Samho Jewelry had been shot multiple times by his Somali captors. He was initially treated and medically stabilized by ROK Navy SEALs who had previously received TCCC training from SEAL Team 17 Reservists.

This year, 50 ROK SEALs were able to



Republic of Korea SEALs perform a final exercise where they simulate treating and extracting an injured team member from a combat area. Photo courtesy of (ROK) Naval Special Warfare Flotilla.

train with their American counterparts during Key Resolve, enhancing interoperability and strengthening the alliance between both forces.

"The TCCC training is a vital piece of training for our SEALs and shows the continued partnership between South Korea and the United States," said Capt. Go San Oh, commander, ROK Naval Special Warfare Flotilla.

Exercise Key Resolve is an annual combined and joint command post exercise that is executed under various scenarios with the purpose of honing the skills necessary to defend the Republic of Korea by improving ROK-U.S. combined forces' operational capabilities, coordinating and executing the deployment of U.S. reinforcements, and maintaining ROK military combat capabilities. The exercise is designed to increase alliance readiness, protect the region, and maintain stability on the Korean Peninsula.

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Surrender is not a Ranger word

By Tracy A. Bailey
75th Ranger Regiment Public
Affairs

In 1999, Kanaan Merriken was your average teenager, just looking for an opportunity to serve his country.

What follows, is an account of an extraordinary journey of drive and determination to become the Ranger, father and husband he is today.

Merriken volunteered for the U.S. Army in October 1999, and attended One Station Unit Training at Fort Benning, Ga., the Basic Airborne Course and the Ranger Indoctrination Program (now Ranger Assessment and Selection Program) and was assigned to Company B, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment.

In the opening days of Operation Enduring Freedom in October 2001, Merriken deployed to Afghanistan in support of initial combat operations.

“I didn’t know what to expect. When we arrived in country we started preparing for Objective Rhino as well as other missions,” said Merriken. “It was a good learning experience and we were ready for war; I will say it was emotional to see FDNY on the back of Ranger equipment and I realized what we were fighting for.”

Merriken met his future bride, Kari Wood, in August 2001 and they were married in Opelika, Ala., on April 28, 2003.

Merriken deployed with the battalion a second time in June 2002 in support of OEF.

Combat operations began in Iraq during March 2003, and during the invasion, Merriken participated in the seizure of Haditha Dam, an operation for which his company received a Valorous Unit Award.

Between these combat deployments and the ones that followed, Merriken attended the U.S. Army Ranger Course and attended the Emergency Medical Technician Basic Course. He served as a Ranger rifleman, grenadier, and squad automatic weapons gunner, and was his platoon’s secondary medic in addition to his other duties.

In June 2003, Merriken and 3rd Battalion deployed to Iraq for his fourth combat tour - his second to Iraq. Little did he know, this deployment would change his life forever.

During a mission in Baghdad on June 26, 2003,



Lt. Col. Brandon Meno reenlists Sgt. 1st Class Kanaan Merriken March 15, while his family watches on. 75th Ranger Regiment photo.

Merriken’s ground assault convoy was attacked by an Improvised Explosive Device. Merriken was one of almost a dozen Rangers who were critically wounded in the attack.

Merriken suffered extensive wounds, including shrapnel in the neck, head, arms, legs and feet. But in true Ranger fashion, selflessly ignoring his own wounds, he continued to perform his duties in assisting the combat medics for more than 15 minutes before he passed out from his wounds. However, Merriken has no recollection of performing these duties.

The platoon medics subsequently determined that Merriken had shrapnel damage to his brain, along with extensive damage to his carotid artery.

“I was notified by phone that Kanaan had been wounded,” said Kari. “I got the call while I was at work. I was walking out for my lunch break and I saw the phone number calling was a 545 exchange.”

“I thought it was Kanaan calling me from overseas, but it was rear detachment calling to tell me about Kanaan,” said Kari.

Due to the extent of his wounds and the traumatic brain injury he suffered, the physicians treating Merriken assessed him as “expectant,” meaning that he was not expected to live. As a result, the U.S. Army medically retired him the next day and evacuated Merriken to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Landstuhl, Germany, where he remained

near death for several days. Because of his resolute will to live, he defied the doctor's expectations.

He continued to defy the physicians' expectations over the following months, healing quickly from his wounds and returning to a functional life over the course of numerous surgeries.

Following his recovery, Merriken returned home to New Mexico with Kari to attend to his ill father. He attended college and worked in a military consulting firm which allowed him to continue to serve his country and the Army.

Throughout this time, Merriken harbored a continued longing to serve his country. This longing led him on a quest not only to serve his country in any way possible, but ultimately to rejoin his fellow Rangers.

In 2005, Merriken and his wife Kari, made the decision to return to the U.S. Army.

"I came back in because I felt physically capable to meet the demands of being a U.S. Army Ranger and I wasn't ready to give up on being a Ranger," said Merriken. "I had just finished the 26-mile Bataan Death March in White Sands, New Mexico, and felt my confidence come back."

No doubt Merriken's indomitable spirit as well as the unwavering support from his wife, led him to overcome the initial skepticism from his physicians and successfully pursue a lengthy and significant rehabilitation.

"Sgt. 1st Class Kanaan Merriken is the epitome of a U.S. Army Airborne Ranger, husband, father, and friend," said Sgt. Maj. Victor A. Ballesteros, Regimental Operations Sergeant Major. "There is nothing that will ever overcome his determination and dedication to what life stands for. He has proven time and time again that defeat is not acceptable under any circumstances."

On Sept. 21, 2005, Merriken reentered the Army, completed the Regiment's four-week Ranger Indoctrination Program, and graduated with the Leadership Award and distinction as the Honor Graduate.

"I wanted Kanaan to get back into the Ranger Regiment," said Kari. "I felt like we weren't finished with 'our' time here. I felt like we belonged in Regiment."

Merriken was assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, serving in the Battalion's Reconnaissance Platoon. During his time with 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, he deployed four times to Iraq and twice to Afghanistan as a reconnaissance specialist, team leader and squad leader; for a total of 10 combat deployments encompassing his entire

Army career.

While Merriken's professional career was on track, in July 2010, his personal life took a difficult turn when his son, Caleb, then 2, was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy.

"There is no cure or treatment for this degenerative disease; Kari and I have to be able to adapt with the progression of Caleb's disease," said Merriken.

The leadership at Regiment provided Merriken an opportunity to continue to serve the 75th Ranger Regiment while still taking care of his family.

In April 2011, Merriken competed in the grueling Best Ranger Competition.

"It was a challenge and something I wanted to test myself on," said Merriken. "We didn't win, but we did finish, and that was important to me."

Merriken left the battalion and moved up to the Regimental headquarters to become the master breacher.

"Becoming the master breacher gave me the opportunity to take care of my family and stay in Regiment," said Merriken.

Merriken, now a sergeant first class, has achieved another dream...the right to be called a Ranger Platoon Sergeant. He recently completed the Regiment's three-week Ranger Assessment and Selection Program 2 and has been assigned to Company C, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment.

He also reenlisted for the third time on March 15 and is now on indefinite status, essentially giving the Army the next 10 years of his life.

"In an organization that is legendary for its heroism and accomplishments, his story is that much more inspiring," said Lt. Col. Brandon Meno, Regimental Fire Support Coordination Officer. "Sgt. 1st Class Merriken is a true warrior in every sense of the word."

"I've reenlisted three times during my career," said Merriken. "The first time was for the bonus, the second time because I wanted to be a squad leader, but this time, I finally figured out what I wanted to do with the rest of my life – be an Army Ranger."

Kari wholeheartedly supports her husband.

"It was the best decision for our family. I want Kanaan to be able to be with his brothers and deploy again," said Kari. "He has really missed that. I know it will make things harder for me and Caleb when we are home alone, but I just want Kanaan to be happy."



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, were presented two Silver Stars, seven Bronze Star Medals with “V” device for Valor, 11 Purple Hearts, four Army Commendation Medals with “V” Device for Valor and a Joint Service Commendation Medal with “V” device, during a ceremony at Saint Martin’s Marcus Pavilion, Lacey, Wash., March 20.

Rangers recognized for valor

*Story and photos by Army Staff Sgt. David Chapman
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

Family, friends and Soldiers gathered at Saint Martin’s Marcus Pavilion, Lacey, Wash., March 20 for a valorous award ceremony to recognize and award Soldiers for their combat achievements in Afghanistan.

Two Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, assigned to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, were presented Silver Stars. Members of the battalion also received seven Bronze Star Medals with “V” device, 11 Purple Hearts, four Army Commendation Medals with “V” device and a Joint Service

Commendation Medal with “V” device during the ceremony.

Specialist Ricardo Cerros Jr., of Los Angeles, a graduate of University of California, Irvine, was an Army Ranger for only eight months before he was killed in action. He was awarded the Silver Star posthumously.

Cerros was a rifleman with the battalion in Afghanistan when he was mortally wounded fighting against enemy insurgents barricaded in a compound in the Logar province. According to the 75th Ranger Regiment biographical sketch, during the battle Cerros exposed himself to enemy fire so that he was able to

pull his wounded platoon sergeant to safety. He then shielded his team members from an enemy grenade, giving his life, as they provided medical assistance to the injured Soldiers.

Sgt. 1st Class Nick Moore, who was Cerros' platoon sergeant at the time, is alive today because of Cerros' heroic actions. After the ceremony Moore shared his experience of serving with Cerros.

"He had a college degree, was a little bit older, a little more mature," said Moore, a 14-year Ranger veteran. "He was always that guy in the right place at the right time, doing the right thing. Everything we look for in all the people we have around us."

Sgt. Peter S. Cimpoes also was awarded a Silver Star for his valorous actions in Afghanistan. He never knew what it meant to be a Ranger until he met with his recruiter and signed up to be one. All he knew was they jumped out of planes and used guns, he said.

Little did he know that becoming a Ranger would put him through a life or death decision to save himself and his team.

On Oct. 11, 2012, Cimpoes was operating as the assault team reconnaissance surveillance target acquisition technician during a mission in Afghanistan. He and his team were on a mission to assault a compound known to be associated with insurgent activity.

As the assault played out, two Rangers were wounded after receiving fire from enemy combatants. Without concern for his personal safety, Cimpoes immediately exposed himself to direct enemy gunfire to take position and engaged three enemy fighters at close distance. By employing grenades and small arms, Cimpoes was able to protect his wounded teammates so they could be evacuated, according to the after action report.

The battalion has been deployed 15 times, through two different conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Over the past 10 years the Rangers have played a valuable part in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

Despite their known toughness and aggressive nature, these Rangers share a sense of humility about the awards they received.

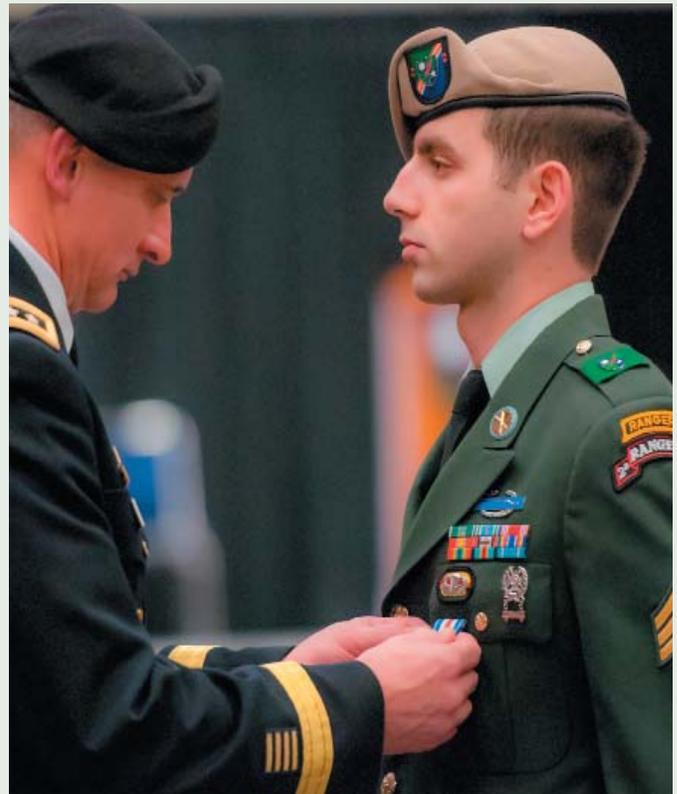
"I would trade all this and everything I've done in the military to bring Sgt. McPhearson (who died from wounds suffered during the mission) back," said

Cimpoes, a Chicago native.

I Corps Commanding General, Lt. Gen. Robert B. Brown took the opportunity to share some of his feelings about what it meant to have the privilege of presenting these awards.

"I tell you, this is one of the most rewarding parts of my job - to pin these medals of valor on the chests of our Soldiers whose acts of individual gallantry and valor have now added to the legends of the United States Army and our nation," said Brown. "All of the awardees here epitomize selfless service to a cause greater than themselves."

As the ceremony concluded the sound of the Ranger Creed reverberated through the pavilion. "...a Ranger is a more elite Soldier, who arrives at the cutting edge of battle by land, sea or air, I accept the fact that as a Ranger my country expects me to move further, faster and fight harder than any other Soldier."



I Corps Commanding General Lt. Gen. Robert Brown, pins the Silver Star to the uniform of Sgt. Peter Cimpoes, formerly of the 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, during a special ceremony at Saint Martin's Marcus Pavilion, Lacey, Wash., March 20.

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Welcome to Nasty Nick

By USASOC Public Affairs

The Soldiers are panting as they circle the first curve. The cold air seems to be no help as the sweat begins to form – and this is only the beginning.

One by one, Soldiers of Company C, 4th Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), make their way through more than a mile of obstacles on a course named Nasty Nick at Camp Mackall, N.C.

Nasty Nick is a rite of passage for any U.S. Army Special Forces Soldier, and on Feb. 25, the obstacle course was used to kick off a weeklong training event for the company.

“This obstacle course is a part of the Special Forces heritage,” said Maj. Kent Solheim, Company C commander. “It’s nice to come back and revisit that.”

The Nasty Nick received its name from the late U.S. Army Special Forces Lt. Col. James “Nick” Rowe.

Rowe, a Vietnam War veteran who was held captive for more than five years, was one of only 34 American prisoners of war to escape captivity. He used his knowledge of surviving as a POW to create the Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape training program that all SF Soldiers must complete.

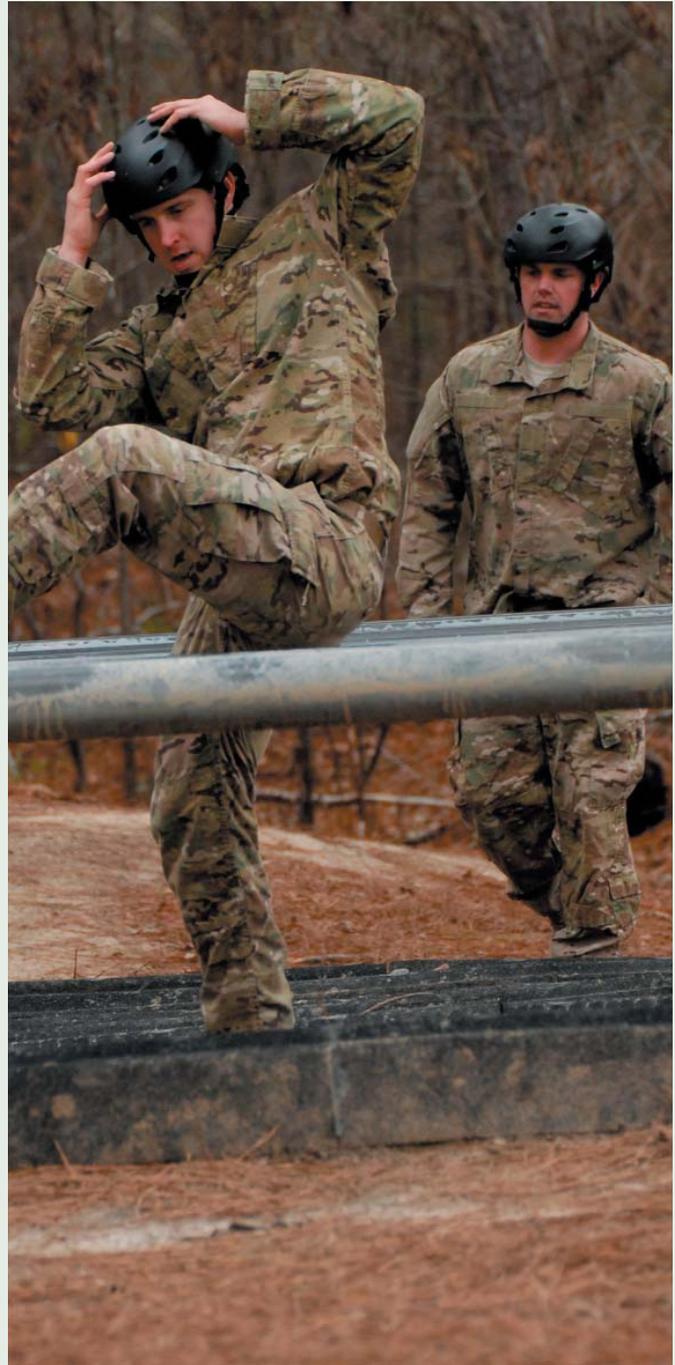
Nasty Nick, was designed to test fear of heights and confined spaces. It also measures strength and endurance.

“It’s a tough course,” explained Solheim. “It’s physically challenging and the [Special Forces teams] need to be in top shape. The Nasty Nick is a good way to test that.”

Solheim said the course helps the soldiers keep their edge, and it is a great tool for training.

“The best thing about this obstacle course is that it’s long enough [and] it’s hard,” he said.

The course is more than a mile of wooded terrain with more than 20 obstacles spread along the path. One obstacle takes the Soldiers underground, where they must crawl in the dark through tunnels that lead them to the exit rope. Many obstacles are high in the air and require climbing rope ladders to complete them. Some of the Soldiers have faced the course many times.



Special Forces Soldiers step over metal bars at one of the many obstacles on the “Nasty Nick” Obstacle Course at Camp Mackall, N.C., Feb. 25. USASOC photo.

The first time a SF Soldier experiences the Nasty Nick obstacle course is when he goes through the three week Special Forces Assessment and Selection process as a candidate.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jeff Miller, Company C operations officer, remembers going through the course 23 years ago.

“My first time seeing Nasty Nick was back in 1990,” said Miller, who was a candidate at that time. “Over time, the obstacles have changed and some have become more difficult. Any time I’ve ever completed this course, it has been a challenge mentally and physically.”

The 30-foot-high rope climbs were the most difficult, he said.

“Believe it or not, I’m afraid of heights,” said Miller. “Even though I jump out of airplanes and rappel, heights have always bothered me. There are obstacles here that are really high and require you to maneuver at those

heights. It increases my mental confidence when I continue to push through my fears and get it done.”

Soldiers can complete the obstacle course individually or as a team. Miller said both build esprit de corps.

“When you complete the course as an individual it poses a mental and physical challenge that the Soldier has to negotiate by himself,” he said. “If you do it as a team you increase cohesion and team work. Either way, there is always the bragging rights of who was faster or who navigated the course more efficiently.”

Special Forces soldiers deploy often and this course can help prepare them for some of the challenges they may face, he added.

“Obviously, you may not come over this exact obstacle in a combat situation,” said Miller. “It helps them make decisions under pressure, and in the end you just have to push through and get it done.”



A Special Forces Soldier low crawls under barbed wire during the “Nasty Nick” obstacle course on Camp Mackall, N.C., Feb. 25. Photo by Spc. Melissa C. Parrish.

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



The view from Forward Operating Base Kutschbach, Kapisa province, Afghanistan. Photo by Army Sgt. Thomas Childs.

Rededication of FOB Kutschbach

*By Maj. Joel Anderson
USASOC News Service*

Forward Operating Base Kutschbach, formerly known as Tagab, was rededicated in rightful memorial to Staff Sgt. Patrick F. Kutschbach almost four months ago in Kapisa province, Afghanistan.

Combat veterans who have served together share a very special bond and those who have fought together on the same patch of ground and lost one of their brothers-in-arms there have an even more special bond.

Such is the case for Special Forces Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), of Stuttgart, Germany, serving as members of Combined

Special Operations Task Force - 10 in eastern Afghanistan.

They were able to mark this past Veterans' Day, 2012, in an especially memorable way...gathering to recognize the ultimate sacrifice of one of their own, Staff Sgt. Pat Kutschbach.

Kutschbach was killed during combat operations on Nov. 10, 2007, just a short distance up the southern end of the Tagab Valley from the FOB.

Although some people may not think that the name of an isolated and rocky scrap of land in a rugged mountain valley in eastern Afghanistan is a big deal, Capt. Ty Flinton, commander of Operational Detachment Alpha 0136, will quickly tell you to him and his Soldiers, as well as many others who were fortunate enough to have

Tip of the Spear

served with Kutschbach and fought on this very spot, it is a very big deal indeed.

Back in November, on the day of the ceremony, Flinton himself opened the ceremony with Kutschbach's impressive biography, recognized his surviving family members and concluded with the regimental motto of the Special Forces, "De Oppresso Liber...To Free the Oppressed..."

Next, Lt. Col. Sean Berg, commander of 1st Bn., 10th SFG (A), opened his remarks where Flinton left off, "To free the oppressed! That is the regimental motto of the Special Forces and that is exactly what Pat was doing, just up the valley from here.

"Pat and his team got here when this was still just Fire Base Pathfinder. They pulled in here with their Humvees facing out and took a knee. They didn't have MRAPs, there weren't any yet."

Eventually, in order to expand operational reach in their team's sector, "Operation Fury II", a 27-vehicle convoy was launched into the valley.

Kutschbach, riding in the trail vehicle was seriously wounded when the vehicle he was riding in was pummeled by a fusillade of insurgent rocket-propelled grenade and machine-gun fire. He was medically evacuated to Bagram Airfield, but died of his wounds.

Berg continued by saying, "there are guys who went to the Special Forces' Qualification Course with Pat...there are still guys, who when we're sitting around the fire at night, still talk about Pat and how, when the chips were

down, they always knew they could count on Pat.

"We have very few, what I would consider sacred duties as leaders, but the most sacred duty we have is that we never leave a fallen comrade. That's why, when we found out that we would be reassuming responsibility for

this base, we knew we had to rededicate this spot to Pat," Berg concluded.

Following Berg's remarks, the formation was called to attention and the "Ballad of the Green Berets" began to play over the base public address system.

The ceremony also included a special fly-over when two U.S. Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon jet fighters and

two A-10 Warthog attack jets screamed overhead in tribute to Kutschbach.

Once the aircraft streaked out of sight and over the

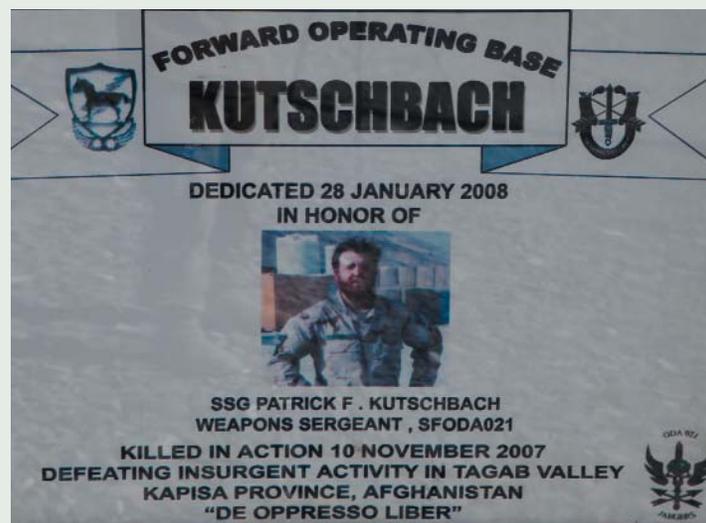
nearby mountain tops, a radio call went out and a three-round volley of 155mm, rocket-assisted projectile (RAP) rounds were also fired in tribute.

"It is very important for those of us who not only knew Staff Sgt. Kutschbach and served with him, but have also spent a lot of time out here in Kapisa, that his sacrifice not be forgotten," Flinton said. "Most of all, we want his family to know, he will not be forgotten...he is definitely not forgotten."

For Soldiers serving in a combat zone, such as the Special Forces Soldiers of TF-10 at FOB Kutschbach, the true meaning of Veterans' Day is never far from their minds because of the ultimate sacrifice for freedom made by one of their own.

"It is very important for those of us who not only knew Staff Sgt. Kutschbach and served with him, but have also spent a lot of time out here in Kapisa, that his sacrifice not be forgotten. Most of all, we want his family to know, he will not be forgotten...he is definitely not forgotten."

– Capt. Ty Flinton, commander, ODA 0136





NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

The MK-V passes by Fort Drum, a concrete battleship located on the rock called El Fraile in the wide channel south of Corregidor at the entrance of the Manila Bay, Philippines. NSW courtesy photo.



One last ride: MK V fast boat era ends

*By Petty Officer 1st Class John Scorza
NSW Public Affairs*

Sept. 19, 2012 marked the end of an era for Naval Special Warfare surface mobility, as the last two of a fleet of MK V special operations craft made their final voyage via a significantly historical route - the perfect sendoff to the Navy's retired ranks.

In December 1995, two heavily-armed fast boats identified by hull numbers 951 and 952 came onto the NSW scene. Known as the MK V special operations craft, they were the force's first attempt at a high speed littoral vessel for SOF insertion and extraction, coastal patrols and interdiction operations. After being added to the NSW inventory, the capabilities of the craft brought boundless potential to special boat teams.

In the spring of 1996, these heavily-armed fast boats were first deployed to U.S. European Command and were used by NSW Unit 10 located in Rota, Spain. From that time

forward, the MK V was a maritime workhorse, used in combat and multiple NSW missions in the Central Command and Pacific Command areas of operation. In the wake of 9/11, operations for the craft increased as it was used to fill operational voids and remained in use seven years past its original life expectancy, which ended in 2005.

The craft served the NSW community for more than 16 years and its storied life will live on in Special Operations history long after the last two boats were removed from the water and decommissioned. This craft was reliable and technologically advanced in its day, but after more than a decade and a half of use and industry advances, it outlived its shelf life.

"The craft was aging," said Capt. Todd Veazie, former commodore, Naval Special Warfare Group 4. "The technologies that were envisioned for the craft's operational environment when it was developed 16 or so years ago have changed."

The last two operational MK Vs, assigned to Special

Boat Team 12 (SBT-12), were deployed to the Republic of the Philippines to conduct full-spectrum maritime Special Operations in support of the Global War on Terrorism and had recently wrapped up a six-month deployment.

In the early morning of Sept. 16, Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman (SWCC) assigned to SBT-12 made final preparations for the last voyage of the remaining MK Vs in service.

The team's commanding officer, executive officer and command master chief joined the crew for the last journey on the vessel that has carried SEALs and SWCC into battle for more than 16 years.

The final voyage was special, not only because it would be the crafts' last, but because of the historical route that it tracked. The two MK Vs followed the same hair-raising path that Gen. Douglas MacArthur used to exit the Philippines in 1942, minus mines, rough seas, and the Imperial Japanese Navy. Retracing MacArthur's Philippines exit route was the idea of Command Master Chief (SWCC) Miguel Albelo, who wanted to honor the men of the Patrol Torpedo (PT) boats that present day SWCC members trace their roots to.

"What a better way to set up the voyage than to travel the same route that General MacArthur did during World War II," said Albelo. "I cannot think of a better way to pay homage to the MK V and to preserve the history and heritage of the Naval Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen."

The first leg of the three-day journey was a seven-hour boat ride from the southern region of Mindanao to the island of Cebu. From there they traveled to the island of Corregidor and then made a shorter ride to their ultimate destination of Naval Base Subic Bay, located near the city of Olongapo in the region of Zambales.

After a day of travel, the men stopped in Cebu to rest for the night. Early the next morning they set out for Corregidor. On the way, they observed Fort Drum, known as the "Concrete Battleship." During World War II, Fort Drum was used as the primary defense of Manila Bay.

"Until I found out we were going to Corregidor, I had never heard of it," said Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (FMF) Faron Uebelacker, SBT-12's independent duty corpsman. "After looking it up, I read that there was an island there that was made of concrete and supposed to look like a ship, but when we came around and saw it, I had no idea that it was going to be that big or be that intact. I could see why back then, people would be afraid to come through there."

The two boats circled Fort Drum several times to get a

good look at the giant spectacle and then docked in Corregidor to spend the night after 10 hours of transit. There, they spent the night in a hotel that locals believe is haunted and toured the historical sites on the island.

"We toured the entire island learning of battles from the past, seeing the remains of what once were completed structures and learned how the PT boats from World War II played an important part in the War in the Pacific," said Chief Mass Communication Specialist Casey Dillow.

"The tunnels were really big and to live in them, like they did for a year at a time, is unheard of," said Uebelacker. "What was most interesting to me was to see some of the old batteries and guns. They were put there in the late '30s, to early '40s and some of them weigh 12 to 16 tons. I have no idea how they got some of these in some of the places they put them."

"The whole purpose of the trip was to link the new SWCC to their heritage," said Albelo. "It's one thing to study history, but to actually walk the walk and actually walk the tunnels and see McArthur's headquarters and hospital are two different things."

The next morning, members from SBT-12 and members of the Philippine Naval Special Operations Group met up at the Pacific War Museum for a short ceremony. As a parting gesture of respect, the two forces hoisted flags simultaneously, lowered them and exchanged them.

Shortly after the MK Vs were set to get underway, the crew's leadership gathered at the same place MacArthur stood nearly 70 years earlier, and in good humor, recited his famous words, "I shall return."

Two and a half hours later, the MK Vs and their crews arrived at Naval Base Subic Bay. As the voyage came to an end the two craft were hoisted out of the water by crane. After more than 16 years of service, the MK Vs marked with hull numbers 971 and 972 were placed on a cargo ship and sent back to the United States for decommissioning.

"I've been on the rigid-hulled inflatable boats and the MK V," said Uebelacker. "And I know it's not considered a ship because of its size, but when you're on the MK V, it has the feel of a ship and you get attached to it. I don't know how anyone else felt during the trip, but I had a sorrowful feeling about letting it go. I didn't want the boat to go away."

"I think I can speak for everyone who was on this trip, that we sent the MK V out with honor and dignity by paying tribute to warriors of the past and learning about battles from long ago," said Dillow. "We experienced a small piece of history that should not be forgotten."



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

Looking for the same man

*By Petty Officer 1st Class Dominique Canales
NSW Public Affairs*

While most of the base is dark, quiet and sleeping, he begins his day shuffling through a five-mile run with classmates. As they break through the dawn, they crack open another day of relentless training. The steady strain of exercise leaves his legs heavy, sore and tired, yet he's thankful that his current aches and pains are minor and manageable. He is prepared – he trained for the trauma and physical challenges his body is carrying him through. Eight weeks ago, a five-mile run would have caused both mental and physical anguish; there's no way he could maintain a respectable pace for five miles. Eight weeks ago, his mind would have failed his body; sucking it up and carrying on would not have been an option. Yet weeks of sweat at the Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Preparatory course in Great Lakes, Ill., have physically and mentally prepared him for this mind game. He wants to earn the title of Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman (SWCC) and knows that NSW Prep has given him the tools, fitness and confidence to attack training.

Although not as well known as their SEAL brethren, the SWCC community is an essential part of the NSW team. Affectionately known as “dirty boat guys,” SWCC operators train and deploy with SEALs. In an effort to whittle away at SWCC training's high attrition rate, NSW Prep opened its doors to SWCC candidates who now benefit from eight weeks of specialized, personal training and coaching that enlisted SEAL candidates receive before reporting for the next phase of training in Coronado, Calif.

NSW prep was born out of the NSW community's desire to meet the growing demand for SEALs by successfully selecting, training and qualifying men to join the frogman ranks. Considering that the BUD/S washout rate is between 65 and 75 percent and qualification standards will never be lowered, the coaching environment focuses on strength, agility and technique and is proving to be a successful formula to help mentally and physically prepare Sailors for the rigors of BUD/S. Although adding NSW Prep to the training pipeline was specifically developed to help lower the attrition rate for SEAL candidates, after seeing its success, NSW leadership decided SWCC candidates could benefit



A Basic Crewman Training student strains to complete the required number of push ups during a physical fitness assessment at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, Calif., Aug. 19. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Christopher Menzie.

from the same approach.

“We were seeing a lot of our attrition in Basic Crewman Training at the beginning of the program,” said Chief Warrant Officer (SWCC) Gary Luna, officer in charge of SWCC training. “Between our three-week orientation and our five-week basic crewman training, which is our selection phase of the pipeline, our attrition was roughly 50 percent. So we would have 40 guys come in, and maybe 15 to 20 make it through after those eight weeks.”

According to Luna, NSW leadership set the requirement for producing 90 new SWCC operators per fiscal year. Fulfilling this quota is necessary to meet the operational needs of the teams. If production falls off pace while the demand signal is strong, current operations could be negatively affected as NSW operators and their families incur additional pressure and stress due to more deployments and shorter dwell time - something the NSW community is trying to avoid.

“If we don't meet the community manager's numbers, what it does in the long term is it makes guys at the team have to deploy more,” said Luna. “So if there is not an influx of guys coming in, the guys within the teams have to keep deploying to meet operational commitments. So the guy that's been at the team for five years could deploy four or five times, while typically he would deploy two or three times.”

According to Master Chief Special Boat Operator Billy

Jordan, the BTC SWCC senior enlisted advisor, the NSW Prep course helps candidates get the training in the areas where NSW Basic Training Command sees most of its attrition.

“There are three main things that we have seen lead to attrition,” said Jordan. “The candidate wasn’t comfortable in the water, not mentally prepared or they were not physically prepared.”

Jordan also explains that before the development of NSW Prep, candidates would go through boot camp, a two-week financial course and then be shipped to training in Coronado. They didn’t receive any other guidance to prepare them for future rigors of training.

“SWCC is a tough program,” said Jordan. “They are not starting the pipeline mentally or physically prepared, so we need to start preparing them, and that’s also how the idea of incorporating NSW prep came into the training equation.”

The mission of NSW Prep is to physically and mentally prepare SEAL and SWCC candidates, but according to Luna, the instructors also emphasize military bearing while getting the candidates prepared physically.

“The officer in charge at NSW Prep, Special Warfare Operator Master Chief (SEAL) Bryan Beiriger, prides himself in the fact that he is very, very, big on military bearing,” said Luna. “He feels so strongly on the topic because he feels there are so many candidates with the ‘I am better than everybody else’ attitude.”

For training continuity, the instructor staff at NSW Prep, formerly made up of only SEAL instructors, now includes a SWCC instructor. Senior Chief Special Boat Operator Steven Pepin, assistant officer in charge of NSW Prep, also acts as a mentor to SWCC students going through prep while reporting their progress to Basic Training Command (BTC) in Coronado. Pepin reports at least once a week to provide the BTC staff with a preview of what kind of candidate is coming into training.

“They have what is called a ‘dashboard’ that lists all our prospective students,” said Luna. “It will show us run times, swim times, their hobbies and their likes.”

NSW Prep convenes six times a year with 890 SEAL candidates and 240 SWCC candidates. Divided into six classes of 40 students per class, the Prep numbers mirror the six BCT classes held each year.

While the freshman class of SWCC prep candidates is still going through BCT, the staff at the command is hopeful.

“I think it’s helping them,” said Luna. “With the guys

getting mentally and physically prepared before they show up here, I think, you are going to see success. That’s what I am predicting - success. But it is still too early to tell.”

The NSW Prep staff is hopeful that since their preparatory training has been added to the SWCC pipeline, the three annual Crewman Qualification Training (CQT) classes will each graduate 30 students to meet the requirement of 90 per fiscal year.

In order to complete NSW Prep, students must pass all final physical requirements before continuing on to Coronado for training. Students who do not pass are re-detailed to the fleet.

Another change to the NSW training pipeline is during the three-week orientation period after candidates arrive in Coronado. Today, SEAL and SWCC candidates perform many evolutions together rather than splitting up into their respective communities. Together they perform aquatic skills, inflatable boat system training, surf passage and log physical training.

According to Jordan, combining the two communities at the onset of training gives the students an opportunity to bond with their future NSW brethren.

“I look at it as an opportunity to build a bond of trust between these future SEALs and SWCC,” said Jordan. “These guys will be working together once they go through these pipelines, as well as deploying together; they have to be able to rely on one another. I think it’s a great opportunity.”

Luna agrees with hammering home the brotherhood mindset early in an operator’s career.

“In my past experience as a SWCC, I worked with a lot of SEALs downrange, in Iraq, in the Philippines or in Africa and you build a bond on deployment,” said Luna. “The mindset here is ‘Why not start it early? Why not just start at the beginning of the pipeline?’ So when they do see that guy downrange, they already have some type of a bond.”

By teaming up SEAL and SWCC candidates in the early stages of training, BTC instructors agree that regardless of community, they are looking for the same qualities in a candidate.

“No matter what program, you are looking for the same guy. You are looking for the same guy who is physically capable; mentally, he’s got it,” said Luna. “Whether he is going to be a special warfare operator or special boat operator, you are looking for the same candidate, so why not indoctrinate all of them together?”



352nd SOSS shares medical knowledge with British Army

*Story and photos by Karen Abeyasekera
100th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs*

British Army Joint Tactical Air Controllers with the 19 Regiment Royal Artillery from Tidworth, Wiltshire, and 3 Battalion, “The Rifles,” from Edinburgh, Scotland, learned about U.S. methods for treating combat injuries March 5 - 6, when U.S. Air Force personnel from the 352nd Special Operations Support Squadron Medical Element conducted combat medical refresher training at Stanford Training Area near Thetford, England.

The training enabled the U.S. and U.K. participants to share medical knowledge and information relating to combat injuries and treatment practices in a field environment, said Maj. Michael Hall, 352nd SOSS Medical Element chief of medical plans.

“We learned much from each other and found similarities in knowledge and information, but with some nuances in technique and equipment,” Hall said. “It’s the knowledge of these nuances that makes both parties better prepared to face injuries on the battlefield.”

Working in conjunction with a U.K. exercise conducted at STANTA, Team Mildenhall members shared their expertise and medical knowledge, passing on many techniques to the British soldiers, including different positions for placing a tourniquet, and performing a needle decompression on a collapsed lung.

The 352nd SOSS Medical Element supports special operations forces in a medical capacity. They also provide medical coverage for the crew going out on missions.

“That’s our main ‘bread-and-butter,’ for the (352nd) SOG,” Hall said. “We also perform casualty evacuations, moving casualties from what could be the point of



From right, 1st Lt. Rob Fidler, a 19th Regiment Royal Artillery joint tactical air controller officer-in-command, applies a tourniquet to a simulated injury on Air Force Master Sgt. Scott Piper, a 352nd Special Operations Support Squadron medical element flight chief, as Bombadier Dan Needham, 19th Regiment JTAC, applies a second tourniquet to Piper’s leg March 6, at Stanford Training Area, England.

injury to hospital care, which is usually at a forward operating base or staging base where we have more medical assets.”

These advanced medical assets are used to then stabilize and treat patients, preparing them for evacuation to safer areas.

“Our typical team is a Special Operations Forces medical element; it’s a three-person team consisting of a flight surgeon and two independent duty medical technicians,” Hall explained. “The IDMTs (enlisted medics) are more of a ‘super-medic,’ because they have many certifications that your typical paramedic may not have.”

Hall said because of the medical element, they like to train with U.K. special forces.

“We’re sharing our knowledge with them in the hopes that when we’re downrange together, we each have a knowledge and appreciation of the other’s skills and training,” the San Antonio native said. “One of the biggest things out in the field is that we don’t know if we’re going to be saving the life of a U.K., U.S., or other partner-nation soldier. At the same time, our forces don’t know if they’re going to have a U.S. or U.K. medic, or other partner-nation medic saving their lives - that’s why it’s important that we get out and get to know our partner nations and their medical capabilities and skills.”

Hall emphasized how joint training is a force multiplier, establishing knowledge and trust between forces achieving a common goal.

During this training event, U.S. medics put the JTACs in different field scenarios, including having them under fire and coming across casualties. The medics then split into teams, each working together to provide immediate medical attention to those injured, firstly in the form of a mannequin, followed by the 352nd SOSS members role-playing as patients.

The British Army JTACs said they also appreciated the chance to learn from their American counterparts.

“The way things are going in Afghanistan has really identified the need to work within coalition forces,” said Lt. Rob Fidler, 19 Regiment RA officer-in-command. “As JTACs, we work with different nations and for us this is a nice little ‘cherry on the top’ for our week’s training (at STANTA), and I think this is the way it’s going to go in the future.”

“(Regarding our work method) - we get a casualty, we react, treat and move them off - the way (Americans) do it is very similar to how we do it,” the British officer from Aberdeen, Scotland, said. “We’ve just come back from Afghanistan, but we’re building up our training again as we move to the future; the way it’s going to work is with other nations, so it seemed (wise) to bring these guys in.”

Fidler said during the exercise at STANTA, he and his soldiers had been working with jets and Apache helicopters.

“Working with Apaches is our core trade, but it’s always good to mix it up,” the JTAC said. “This week we’ve also been working with Typhoons and Tornados,

all British aircraft, though from time-to-time we work with U.S. F-15s and F-16s.”

The officer-in-command emphasized how the two nations working alongside each other can only be a win-win situation.

“Our training requirement is ever-ongoing and I see this as building up relationships and working with other nations,” Fidler said. “The Americans are a massive resource, so (it’s good) to tap into that, and also they’re good fun. They want to work with the host nation and we want them to work with us.”

Hall agreed.

“Camaraderie between forces is also a benefit of learning from each other as we did this week,” the major said. “In the end, it’s all about saving lives.”



Air Force Master Sgt. Scott Piper, left, and Air Force Staff Sgt. Tyler Hamilton demonstrate to British Army members how quickly a Talon litter can be unfolded and made ready to carry a patient March 6, at Stanford Training Area, England. Piper is a 352nd Special Operations Support Squadron medical element flight chief and Hamilton is a 352nd SOSS independent duty medical technician.



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

AFSOC stands up Air Warfare Center

*By Raquel Sanchez,
AFSOC Public Affairs*

The Air Force stood up the Air Force Special Operations Air Warfare Center and hosted an assumption of command ceremony at Duke Field, Fla., Feb. 11.

During the ceremony, Brig. Gen. Jon Weeks assumed command of AFSOAWC, which is headquartered at Hurlburt Field, Fla., with operating locations at Duke Field and Robins Air Force Base, Ga.

The ceremony was held at Duke Field to emphasize AFSOAWC's total force partnership between active-duty members and reservists.

"The Air Force Special Operations Command partnered with the 919th Special Operations Wing to help execute aviation for internal defense missions and build partnership capacity," said Col. Jonathan Duncan, AFSOAWC deputy commander.

With the activation of the center, the Air Force Special Operations Training Center was inactivated. As a result the major units that fall under the center include: U.S. Air Force Special Operations School, 371st Special Operations Combat Training Squadron, 19th Special Operations Squadron, 551st SOS from Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., 18th Flight Test Squadron, 6th SOS and the 745th SOS reserve unit, which were formerly assigned to AFSOTC.

"We have accomplished an incredible amount since June 17, when General Fiel and I first discussed the creation of the Special Operations Air Warfare Center, welcoming five new units, gaining at least that many new missions, receiving and exercising new personnel, authorities and responsibilities from AFSOC," said outgoing AFSOTC commander Col. William Andersen.

Weeks said creation of the AFSOAWC will help integrate the capabilities of various units under one command. Manning for the center will come directly from the units



Brig. Gen. Jon Weeks, commander of Air Force Special Operations Air Warfare Center, takes the unit's flag from Lt. Gen. Eric Fiel, AFSOC commander, on Duke Field, Fla., Feb. 11. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Samuel King.

impacted by the consolidation resulting in neither a fiscal loss nor gain of positions.

AFSOAWC is modeled after the Special Air Warfare Center, which activated in 1962 and stood down after the Vietnam War.

"Every unit in this new organization walks in the historic footsteps of the 1960s Special Air Warfare Center, and continues to contribute to these truly timeless mission sets, now executed by a modern force," said Lt. Gen. Eric Fiel, AFSOC commander.

Similar to its predecessor, the AFSOAWC will organize train, educate, and equip forces to conduct Special Operations missions; lead major command irregular warfare activities; execute Special Operations test, evaluation and lessons learned programs; and develop doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures for AFSOC.

"The center is here to train and educate Air Commandos," Duncan said. "We also train sister services from the larger interagency community and other partner nations."

AFSOAWC's major responsibilities will be airframe and aircrew focused to ensure Airmen are well trained and equipped to conduct integrated combat operations. The center will also consist of mission-ready combat aviation advisors, enablers and augmenters who will assess, train, advise and assist foreign partner nations in aviation.

"We've grown from a training-only organization to a training and operations organization," Duncan said.

AFSOAWC combines the efforts of units from AFSOC and the Air Force Reserve Command is part of a long range plan to integrate irregular warfare capabilities and leverage costs by using facilities and manpower already in place.

Air Commando receives BSM #5

By Senior Airman Melanie Holochwost
AFSOC Public Affairs

A Bronze Star with Valor was presented to an explosive ordnance disposal technician March 22 at Hurlburt Field, Fla.

Tech. Sgt. Ronnie Brickey, United States Air Force Special Operations School Force Protection Branch NCO-in-charge, said receiving this particular Bronze Star was humbling for him.

“I feel honored to be this decorated,” the Oregon native said as he became the fifth Airman to receive five Bronze Stars in Air Force history.

Lt. Gen. Eric Fiel, AFSOC commander, presented Brickey this medal for his bravery during a mission in Afghanistan on June 1, 2011.

“Ronnie, your unmatched skills, courage, and selflessness epitomize what being a warrior is all about,” Fiel said during his speech at the medal presentation. “You’re an extraordinary example to us all.”

Brickey said it all started while performing an IED post-blast analysis. He identified three additional IEDs and knew he had to render them safe.

Although this alone can be a normal day’s work in the EOD business, things went downhill fast for this Air Commando.

Brickey said he was able to eliminate the first two threats pretty quickly; however, after he started working on the third IED, his unit came under direct fire from multiple positions.

Brickey protected his team of 20 U.S. Soldiers, four Canadian soldiers, and two Afghan National Security Forces members throughout the 40-minute firefight by posting himself next to the IED to prevent accidental detonation. During this time, he repeatedly exposed himself to direct fire, returned fire on the enemy, and directed his team past the IED.

“I often felt like a kid on Christmas morning when I would walk down a dirt path in Afghanistan and identify a buried IED. Knowing that a life is saved every time I remove an IED from the battlefield is one of the greatest feelings in the world.”

— Tech. Sgt. Ronnie Brickey



Tech. Sgt. Ronnie Brickey, Air Force Special Operations School Force Protection Branch NCO-in-charge, poses for a photo with his family and Lt. Gen. Eric Fiel, Air Force Special Operations Command commander, after receiving a Bronze Star with Valor March 22, at Hurlburt Field, Fla. This is the fifth Bronze Star Brickey has received during his 13-year Air Force career in Explosive Ordnance Disposal. Photo by Senior Airman Melanie Holochwost.

Finally, Brickey attached a render safe tool to the IED and instructed his team to disable it remotely. He also used his body to shield two soldiers from the potential blast.

Because of Brickey’s efforts, his team was able to maneuver on the enemy without unintentionally detonating an IED. The joint force went on to lay lethal fire, which forced insurgents to retreat.

To date, Brickey has been on 500 combat missions and rendered 200 IEDs safe.

“I love being an EOD technician,” he said. “I often felt like a kid on Christmas morning when I would walk down a dirt path in Afghanistan and identify a buried IED. “Knowing that a life is saved every time I

remove an IED from the battlefield is one of the greatest feelings in the world.”



MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Major General Mark A. Clark, commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, congratulates the winning team leader of the MARSOC warrior challenge at an awards ceremony at MARSOC headquarters aboard Camp Lejeune, N.C., Feb. 22. MARSOC Marines and Sailors celebrated the command's seventh birthday by competing against each other in the warrior challenge's three separate events, which included a stamina course, a fitness and marksmanship challenge and a soccer tournament.



MARSOC marks seventh year

*Story and photo by Marine Corps
Cpl. Kyle McNally
MARSOC Public Affairs*

U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command celebrated its seventh birthday on Feb. 22, marking the Corps's growing commitment to special operations in the Global War on Terror.

"[MARSOC] is no longer new," said Maj. Gen. Mark A. Clark, the MARSOC commander, addressing his unit. "We are a young organization. We are still growing, but we are no longer new."

MARSOC Marines and Sailors marked the occasion with a morning "warrior challenge" in which the unit's subordinate commands competed against each other in events including a stamina course, a fitness and marksmanship challenge, and a soccer tournament.

"It was a good way to meet people throughout the command," said a lance corporal with MARSOC's Logistics Battalion. "It's important with the workload that we have to be able to come out here and relax, reflect and get to know each other."

Teams from MARSOC's Marine Special Operations School (MSOS), Support Group (MSOSG) and Regiment (MSOR) strapped on 45-pound backpacks and ran a four-mile obstacle course, stopping at different stations to treat mock casualties, assemble weapons and swim 500 meters. During the fitness and marksmanship challenge, Marines and Sailors ran suicide drills, dragged anchor chains and ran up and down flights of stairs until they reached an indoor pistol range, where their marksmanship abilities were tested under stress and fatigue.

The winning team from MSOS was recognized at an awards ceremony that afternoon, where they received a trophy and a Spartan helmet from Clark and Sgt. Maj. Thomas F. Hall, the MARSOC sergeant major. The command also presented the following awards to its top performers: Marine of the Year, SOF Operator of the Year, SOF Support Marine of the Year, Recruiter of the Year, Instructor

of the Year, Civilian of the Year, The Luke Milam Excellence Award and The Commander's Award of Excellence.

"Because of the passion and perseverance of our Marines and Sailors, [MARSOC] is considered to be one of the most capable and professional special operations forces today," Clark said at the awards ceremony.

Clark noted that in the past year alone, MARSOC Marines and Sailors have received 135 valor medals, 112 combat action ribbons, and 25 purple hearts.

"It is because of our dedicated Marines, Sailors and government team members, carrying the weight of the command on their backs, that [MARSOC] is where it is today," he said.

MARSOC joined U.S. Special Operations Command in 2006, and has since integrated seamlessly, said Clark.

"We are accepted and respected in the Special Operations community," he said. "Our operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere over the past 12 months have demonstrated our maturation as a command and have proved our value."

MARSOC is currently commanding and supporting a Special Operations Task Force of Marines, Green Berets and SEALs in Afghanistan. Its battlespace is larger than that of any other SOTF, covering an area of more than 100,000 miles.

Although a newcomer to SOCOM, the Marine Corps has a long history of Special Operations that stretches back to World War II and the Marine Raiders – one of the first Special Operations Forces in U.S. history. Even before the Raiders, Marines were conducting irregular warfare in the Caribbean, Asia and North Africa throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

MARSOC attributes this lineage with its success in the Special Operations community; a lineage Clark echoed in his MARSOC birthday address.

"The vision of [Marine SOF] has changed as the environment has changed," he said. "But the direction has not."

A ceremony to honor Medal of Honor recipients Sgt. 1st Class Leroy A. Petry and Army Staff Sgt. Robert J. Miller was held March 27 at USSOCOM headquarters, MacDill Air Force Base Fla.



Medal of Honor recipients inducted into USSOCOM Hall of Honor

*Story By Marine Corps Master Sgt. F.B. Zimmerman
Photos by Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

A crowd of several hundred onlookers watched as the names of two Special Operators who earned the Nation's highest military award were unveiled on the black granite walls of the Special Operations Memorial on MacDill Air Force Base March 27.

The ceremony was to honor Medal of Honor recipients Sgt. 1st Class Leroy A. Petry and Army Staff Sgt. Robert J. Miller and induct them into U.S. Special Operations Command's Hall of Honor, as well as reveal their names at the memorial. Miller, who died as a result of the wounds he received on the mission when he performed his heroic actions, was represented by his parents, Phil and Maureen Miller, along with two of his siblings. Petry and his wife, Ashley, were also on hand to pull off the black veils covering the names at the conclusion of the ceremony.

Admiral Bill McRaven, commander of USSOCOM, presided over the ceremony and talked about how Americans take great pride in the military and are "in awe" of those who earn the Medal of Honor.

"This is about honoring the people and stories that breathe life into the granite walls that surround us," McRaven said. "The black stone preserves and promotes our heritage ... A heritage and legacy that

these two Medal of Honor recipients exemplified during their service to this Nation."

Petry, who is currently serving as a USSOCOM Care Coalition liaison with 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, received his Medal of Honor for his actions while serving with D Company, 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, in Paktya province, Afghanistan, on May 26, 2008. During an engagement with the enemy, he was wounded in both legs before picking up an enemy grenade that landed nearby, which detonated just after leaving his hand as he attempted to throw it clear of his fellow Rangers. Despite the blast severing his right hand, Petry stayed in the fight and called in support for his unit after applying a tourniquet to his wrist.

Miller received his Medal of Honor for his actions while serving with Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha 3312, Special Operations Task Force-33, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan, in Konar province, Afghanistan, on January 25, 2008. While conducting a battle damage assessment after an engagement with the enemy, Miller and his team were caught exposed by a large insurgent force. Miller, the point man, called for his men to fall back and take cover, and then charged the enemy to provide protective fire. Despite being shot in the upper torso, Miller continued to engage the enemy to draw fire from more than 100 insurgents. Through his actions, Miller killed at least 10 insurgents and



wounded dozens more, allowing his team to safely reach cover, before he was mortally wounded.

Technical Sgt. Robert Gutierrez, currently with the Oregon Air National Guard's 125th Special Tactics Squadron, was the guest speaker for the event. He served with Miller's team as a Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC), and was there the night Miller earned his Medal of Honor when he sacrificed his life.

Gutierrez recalled his first encounter with Miller after being assigned to the team. He said he put his gear in his room, grabbed his rifle and headed out side where Miller and a fellow team member were. Gutierrez said his first encounter with Miller was a good ribbing with a question of, "What are you doing with that rifle, Air Force?"

Gutierrez explained how they became instant friends and would often enter into service rivalry discussions – Gutierrez saying his ammunition was bigger (bombs) and never missed, and Miller always replying with, "But I'm a Green Beret!"

Throughout their time together, Gutierrez said he and Miller shared experiences – Gutierrez taught Miller how to call in close air support using Air Force jargon, and Miller taught Gutierrez the intricacies of

working with the local population. The friendship resulted in the two working closely together every day, even the night when Miller was killed as he helped Gutierrez identify and call in targets to pilots above.

After the strikes were called in and Miller took the point to assess the damage, Gutierrez said he felt a little anxiety, like being separated from his brother. After Miller was wounded, Gutierrez and a fellow team member went to pull him back to safety, but Miller was still pointing out targets.

"The thing that mattered the most was, A – we were trying to get to him and help him, and B – a dying man still points out, on his back, and says, 'They're right there,'" recalled Gutierrez, who earned an Air Force Cross on a subsequent deployment. "Me, as a JTAC, being able to see it and do my job because of him, there's nothing I could do or say to ever repay what he did."

A total of 45 names grace the Medal of Honor/Victoria Cross wall at the Special Operations Memorial. The memorial lists the names and pays tribute to all Special Operations personnel who have died in service to the Nation.



Phil and Maureen Miller, parents of Medal of Honor recipient Army Staff Sgt. Robert J. Miller, unveil his plaque on the Special Operations Memorial at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., March 27. Their son received the medal for his actions while serving with Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha 3312, Special Operations Task Force-33, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan, in Konar province, Afghanistan on Jan. 25, 2008.

Operations Memorial



Medal of Honor recipient Sgt. 1st Class Leroy A. Petry and his wife Ashley unveil his name during the Medal of Honor Recognition Ceremony at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., March 27. Petry currently is a U.S. Special Operations Command Care Coalition liaison with 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment.



Air Force Cross recipient Tech. Sgt. Robert Gutierrez, reminisced about the memories of his friend and comrade in arms, Medal of Honor recipient Army Staff Sgt. Robert J. Miller during the Medal of Honor Recognition Ceremony at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., March 27.



A photo of Medal of Honor recipient Army Staff Sgt. Robert J. Miller displayed at the Medal of Honor Recognition Ceremony at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., March 27.



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS



(From left to right) Canadian Brig. Gen. Denis Thompson, commander of Canadian Special Operations Command and Joint Special Operations University President Dr. Brian A. Maher listen as Lt. Gen. John F. Mulholland, SOCOM deputy commander, addresses the Role of the Global SOF Network in a Resource Constrained Environment symposium.

JSOU partners with Canadian peers to discuss global SOF future

*Story and photo by Marine Corps Master Sgt. F.B. Zimmerman
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

More than 150 Special Operations personnel from nine countries gathered at MacDill Air Force Base Fla., during the last week of February for a symposium to discuss the way forward for their respective forces in years to come.

The Role of the Global SOF Network in a Resource Constrained Environment was the title of the symposium co-hosted by U.S. Special Operations Command's Joint Special Operations University and the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command Professional Development Centre. The two-day conference was held at the Davis Conference Center, and included not only U.S. and Canadian personnel,

but SOF representatives from Australia, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and the United Kingdom. This was the third symposium in the series and the second JSOU and CANSOFCOM co-sponsored.

A total of 10 presentations were given over the two days, ranging from keynote addresses from the leadership of both U.S. and Canadian SOF, to panel discussions with SOF leadership and operators. The goal of the symposium was to discuss the way forward while strengthening relationships within the global SOF network.

Speakers came from CANSOFCOM, SOCOM, Canadian Joint Forces Command, Canadian Forces College, North Atlantic Treaty Organization SOF Headquarters, U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, Polish Special Operations Command, U.S. Northern Command and

private security companies. They discussed issues relevant to SOF including the challenges of interoperability, education and application of cultural intelligence, a historical perspective of global SOF networks, thickening the global SOF network, setting priorities, experiences of the operators, the roles of private security companies, and the future of a global SOF network in a resource constrained environment.

During his opening remarks, JSOU president Dr. Brian A. Maher said symposiums such as this are “part of the knowledge proliferation ... part of looking at problems that are current or have future impact and being able to tackle them in an academic setting.”

He said he believes an academic setting should be free of policy constraints and leadership prerogatives, giving students and researchers the freedom to explore beyond boundaries.

“It allows us to go beyond and maybe shape or reshape, or come at a problem from a different angle, and I hope that’s what we can accomplish here,” Maher said.

Maher added that in addition to increasing personal and SOF community knowledge, the symposium will help create new ways the partnerships can work together in a resource constrained environment.

During a presentation on policy perspectives, Mr. James Q. Roberts, the principal director of Special Operations and Combating Terrorism, Office of the Secretary of Defense, said it is highly unlikely the U.S. or partners would see a direct force-on-force confrontation soon. He said our enemies will use indirect methods of attack since they cannot match the size and power, and maintaining a SOF partnership is vital.

“Why a global SOF network?” Roberts asked. “Well you have shared values, you have shared skills, you can share the burden, you can share the costs, but most importantly, if we had such a global SOF network, we would have expertise in many locations where neither the U.S. nor the Canadians have much expertise, but somebody in the network would have the regional, the cultural, the language, the historical, the tribal and the ethnical understandings that would allow you to address the problem appropriately. That’s one of the great values of building this network.”

Roberts said attention will shift from a direct approach to indirect, where SOF personnel will help partners build their own capacity so they can not only help themselves, but eventually help the rest of the SOF global network.

Key to moving forward and reaching SOCOM’s 2020 vision is trust, according to Army Lt. Gen. John F.

Mulholland, SOCOM deputy commander.

“You cannot surge trust,” Mulholland said. “You can surge forces, you can surge capacity, but you cannot surge trust. Trust is built in the human domain.”

Mulholland went on to say that while partners working together can sometimes be difficult due to government agendas, those issues can be overcome by building relationships and forging that trust.

“We’ve never had such a degree of cohesion and common purpose and melding of who we are and how we do it as I think we’ve achieved here the last 10 to 12 years,” he said.

Speaking on a panel with Mulholland during the commanders’ discussion was Canadian Brig. Gen. Denis Thompson, commander of CANSOFCOM. In their discussion about setting priorities, Thompson spoke of his experience serving as commander of Task Force Kandahar in Afghanistan in 2008-2009, citing the difficulties of receiving differing directions from his nation and the coalition.

“Commonly, this puts you between two masters,” Thompson said of balancing the differences between the expectations of the coalition and those of his government. Though serving “two masters” proved to be a challenge, Thompson said it was important to understand the direction from his nation, but the priority was the coalition’s mission.

Wrapping up the symposium was Canadian Lt. Gen. Stuart Beare, commander of the Canadian Joint Operations Command. He said while winning the battle was well defined during the Cold War era, it’s not as cut and dry today. In addition to winning the physical battle, you must also win the battles of credibility and information due to the technology today.

Beare joked during his closing remarks about being a target of an information operation campaign when he received a brief about the SOCOM 2020 vision.

“I got an appreciation for the need to be there before the ‘bang,’ as a matter of fact to prevent the ‘bang,’” Beare said. “In this world of incredible uncertainty and instability, being predisposed to understand the problem before it manifests itself, to be engaging before it gets below the line, is priceless. So there is an incredible opportunity for SOF in this world of incredible instability, pre-bang – partnerships, relationships, understanding, capacity building, you name it.”

The CANSOFCOM PDC and JSOU are slated to co-sponsor another symposium in December 2013 in Kingston, Ontario, to continue their collaboration for a way ahead for global SOF and to sustain the continuity of the SOF effort.



JSOU explores combating terrorism with social media

*Story and photo by Chuck Ricks
Joint Special Operations University Senior Fellow*

Twenty-one military and police officers from 17 countries attended the Joint Special Operations University Advanced Special Operations Combating Terrorism Course at MacDill Air Force Base Fla., March 18-22. As a Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program alumni event, the presence of international officers from previous JSOU in-resident and overseas programs, as well as alumni from Regional Center CTFP programs, provided leadership and continuity to the class as it unfolded.

“The Advanced Special Operations Combating Terrorism course focuses on developing strategies for countering future terrorist threats,” said Russell Townsend, ASOCbT course director. “During the current academic year, the course is focused on combating terrorism through social media.”

Townsend said the course is tailored for international mid- to senior-level military officers and ministry of defense/security officials with responsibilities directly linked to combating terrorism and advances international partnership networks.

Speakers from the international business community, academia, U.S. State Department, U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Special Operations Command engaged the students in extensive discussions. Among the presenters was James Locher, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict. His presentation on leading change across government resonated with the international audience who appreciated perspectives on familiar problems and the potential for common solutions.

“The topics give me a clear idea of what to do in the future in my country to try to understand what kind of threats terrorists could cause to security in my country,” said a deputy chief of police from Morocco.

Also contributing was David Snepp, the spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, who spoke about the ongoing social media campaign against insurgent forces in that country. He also provided a real-time glimpse of

those efforts as they unfolded on Facebook, Twitter and the embassy’s website. Lovisa Williams, senior policy advisor and social media strategist, and Tim Receveur completed a professional team of social media communicators from the U.S. State Department.

They represented a substantial U.S. interagency community persistently engaged in public diplomacy and combating terrorism programs including social media skills.

Three central themes framed the study of social media: critical thinking, change management and innovation. Individuals from the University of Texas, Microsoft and other private sector companies contributed their perspectives to these discussions. USSOCOM presenters specifically addressed issues of innovation and described various social media initiatives relative to Special Operations Forces.

Students worked within four separate groups to assess the current social media security environment, outline a strategy with social media objectives and operational initiatives, and propose a network to address social media challenges populated by appropriate interagency organizations and international partners.

Several officers expressed concern about the ideological and mobilizing effects created by social media. Others expressed some skepticism about the relevance of social media to what they saw as their direct action responsibilities as SOF practitioners.

“It is amazing to observe how the overall [counterterrorism] efforts now are concentrating more and more on social media,” said an officer from the Armenian Army.

The next iteration for the ASOCbT alumni course is scheduled for July 2013.



Students discuss ways to combat terrorism through social media applications.

Iraq: Task Force Viking

SOF and Kurdish Peshmerga take on Ansar al-Islam and Saddam's forces

By Tom Neven

USSOCOM History and Research Office

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-North, dubbed Task Force Viking, faced a difficult task in staging and inserting its forces. Turkey had denied access to both its air and land space for coalition forces, and although TF Viking had advance elements in Iraq prior to hostilities, these detachments were not sufficient in number to thwart a large Iraqi assault, much less secure key objectives originally tasked to 4th Infantry Division as part of the initial invasion plan.

Beginning on March 22nd, MC-130s flew through heavy Iraqi anti-aircraft fire and landed Special Operations team members. One of the MC-130s took so much fire it was forced to land in Turkey. The incident led Turkey to relent and lift of its airspace restrictions. In the meantime, the 352nd Special Operations Group managed to insert 51 Special Forces ODAs into northern Iraq within the next several days. On March 28th, several of these ODAs and 6,500 Kurdish Peshmerga guerrillas attacked Ansar al-Islam, an al Qaeda affiliate, in a fortified enclave near Iran that housed 700 heavily armed terrorists. Within 30 hours, the combined force crushed the terrorist pocket. Through a subsequent series of coordinated attacks along the Green Line, which demarcated the Kurdish Autonomous Zone (KAZ), SOF and Peshmerga troops steadily advanced against Iraqi military forces, occupying abandoned positions. The effective integration of air and ground forces destroyed the enemy's will to fight and opened the avenues of approach to the two largest northern cities, Kirkuk and Mosul.

As operations progressed, it became apparent that TF Viking would need additional combat power to seize objectives in the north. To facilitate operations, the Combined Force Commander, Army Gen. Tommy Franks, assigned TF Viking tactical control of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. This marked the first time that a SOF



Attacking Ansar al-Islam, Iraq. Courtesy photo.

operational headquarters had been the supported command, complete with a conventional brigade, since the Vietnam War. The 173rd parachuted into the KAZ on March 26th and prepared to support coalition operations. These airborne soldiers conducted an area defense operation around Irbil to deny enemy movement along the major lines of communications between Mosul and Kirkuk. The brigade's actions subsequently freed ODAs to prosecute objectives with the Peshmerga. On April 10, Special Operations Forces and their Peshmerga allies attacked Kirkuk from three sides, and the city fell by nightfall. More SOF and elements of the 173rd Airborne Brigade soon reinforced the coalition peacekeeping efforts. Together, the combined force secured nearby oil fields, maintained checkpoints, and conducted joint patrols that calmed the city residents.





**Sgt. 1st Class
James F. Grissom
1st Special Forces Group (Airborne)**



**Petty Officer 1st Class (SEAL)
Matthew J. Leathers
SEAL Delivery Team 1**



**Army Capt.
Andrew Michael Pedersen-Keel
3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne)**



**Chief Petty Officer
Christian M. Pike
Naval Special Warfare Support Activity 1**



**Chief Petty Officer (SEAL)
Brett D. Shadle
Naval Special Warfare Development Group**

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

Tampa, Fla. artist, Dominique Martinez, created the "Hero and the Warrior" statue modeled after Special Operations Forces and was displayed at USSOCOM headquarters on March 29. The statue stands nearly 8 feet tall and weighs approximately 400 lbs. The sculpture contains two figures, "Maj. Stone" carrying "Pfc. Steel." Photo illustration by Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.

