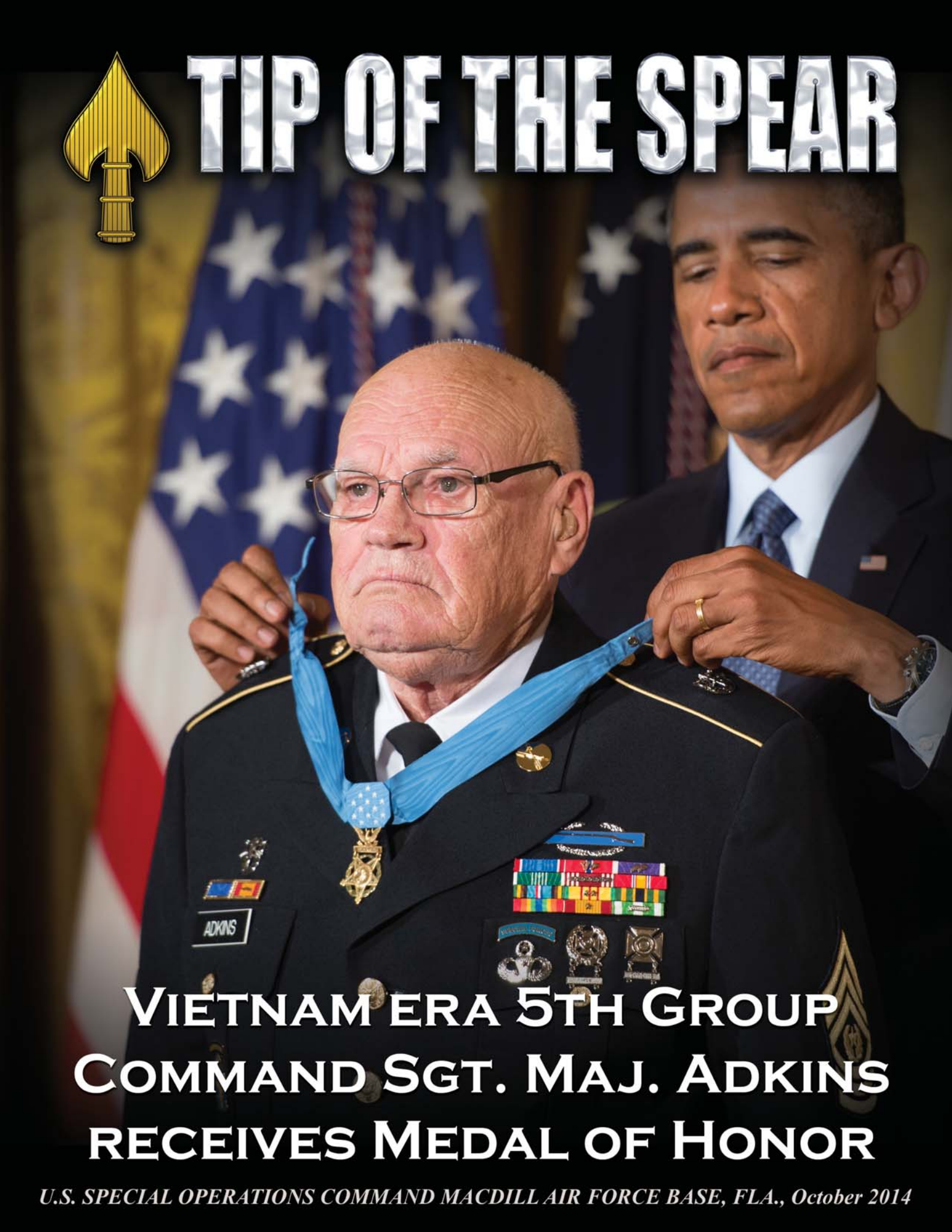
TIP OF THE SPEAR



Vietnam era 5th Group Command Sgt. Maj. Adkins receives Medal of Honor

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

U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Command Sgt. Maj. Bennie Adkins Medal of Honor

Vietnam War

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Tip of the Spear

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(Cover) President Barack Obama bestows the Medal of Honor to retired Command Sgt. Maj. Bennie G. Adkins in the East Room of the White House, Sept. 15. Adkins distinguished himself during 38 hours of close-combat fighting against enemy forces March 9 - 12, 1966. At that time, then-Sgt. 1st Class Adkins was serving as an Intelligence Sergeant with 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces at Camp "A Shau," in the Republic of Vietnam. During the 38-hour battle and 48-hours of escape and evasion, Adkins used mortars, machine guns, recoilless rifles, small arms, and hand grenades, killing an estimated 135 - 175 of the enemy and sustaining 18 different wounds. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Bernardo Fuller.

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Suriname, US military build bonds via training exchange

Suriname special forces soldiers participate in a culmination exercise outside of Paramaribo, Suriname, Aug. 27. The exercise tested the skills that were practiced during the month-long Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) between Suriname security forces and U.S. Special Forces Soldiers assigned to the 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne).

Story and photos by Army Master Sgt. Alex Licea
SOCSOUTH Public Affairs

Located on the northeastern Atlantic coast of South America, Suriname's security forces are charged with defending its borders and more than 240 miles of coastline. Bordered by French Guiana to the east, Guyana to the West and Brazil to the south, Suriname is a nation full of nature reserves and diversity.

However, like most nations in the region, Suriname is at risk of transnational threats such as organized crime and illicit trafficking.

In order to expand their capability to face these challenges, Suriname military officials welcomed a group of American special operations Soldiers during a four-week Joint Combined Exchange Training in the month of August.

Nearly 50 members of the Surinamese security forces from Suriname's Army Special Forces and Surinamese military and law enforcement antiterrorism units work with members assigned to the 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne).

The JCET focused on the development of small unit leaders and noncommissioned officers. U.S. and Surinamese forces exchanged training techniques and knowledge of small arms training, small unit tactics, riverine operations and operational planning. JCETs are part of Special Operations Command South's Theater Security Cooperation program with nations across the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility.

"We've made a lot of progress together in a month. If we ever have to operate together in the future, we know we've made partners and friends we can depend upon," said a senior noncommissioned officer assigned to 20th SFG.

Working in coordination with various agencies including the U.S. State Department and partner nation ministries, JCETs provide a platform that enables partner nations to better protect their borders and increase their capacity to conduct special operations.

JCETs also allow U.S. military personnel to improve their teaching skills and gain regional knowledge, and serve as a great opportunity to learn from their Surinamese counterparts.

"These JCET exercises provide an excellent opportunity for American Soldiers to visit Suriname and learn new skill sets such as jungle survival and riverine operations from their Surinamese counterparts. The JCET also enables cooperation with Suriname's military and police by strengthening the professional skills of Surinamese participants," said the Honorable Jay N. Anania, U.S. ambassador to Suriname.

"This JCET exercise plays an important role in the improvement of military readiness and exchange of experiences. This training event was an excellent opportunity for both U.S. and Suriname Special Forces to train, operate, and learn together."

— Suriname Army Lt. Col. Johnny Antonius

Following the monthlong training, a final event was conducted by the combined forces to showcase the tactical training they had learned from each other. Senior U.S. and Suriname officials attended the event, including the Chargé d'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy to Suriname, Valerie Belon and Col. Adolf Jardim, the deputy chief of defense for Suriname.

The culmination event concluded with a ceremony that recognized the successful participation of the Surinamese personnel.

U.S. and Suriname senior officials understand the significance of these events, and the ongoing partnership between the two allies.

"This JCET exercise plays an important role in the improvement of military readiness and exchange of experiences," said Suriname Army Lt. Col. Johnny Antonius, head of defense strategic planning and education of the Ministry of Defense of Suriname. "This training event was an excellent opportunity for both U.S. and Suriname Special Forces to train, operate, and learn together."

Suriname security forces personnel work with their U.S. counterparts assigned to the 20th Special Forces Group during a water navigation skills exercise, outside of Paramaribo, Suriname, Aug. 27.

Netherlands Maritime Special Operations Forces, Marine Jager Kommando, Czech Republic Special Operations Forces and U.S. Special Operations Forces service members ride 11-meter rigid hull inflatable boats during a training evolution as part of Exercise Jackal Stone 2014 in Den Helder, Netherlands, Sept. 12. Jackal Stone is an annual joint Special Operations exercise designed to enhance capabilities and interoperability among the participating Special Operations Forces to build mutual respect while sharing doctrinal concepts, training concepts and various tactics, techniques and procedures. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class William S. Parker.

Multinational Special Operations Forces train together during exercise Jackal Stone 2014

By Petty Officer 2nd Class William S. Parker
SOCEUR Public Affairs

Netherlands Maritime Special Operations Forces, Norwegian Marine Jager Kommando, Czech Republic Special Operations Forces and U.S. Special Operations Forces assembled on Koninklijke Marine Base in Den Helder, Netherlands, to work and participate as a Joint Task Unit for the special operations exercise Jackal Stone 2014, Sept. 8-21.

Exercise Jackal Stone is primarily a partnership building exercise. Its objective is to provide Special Operations Forces the opportunity to train together and build mutual respect among each other while sharing

Multinational Special Operations Forces conduct direct action assault during Exercise Jackal Stone in the Boeblingen Local Training Area, Germany, Sept. 17. Photo by Visual Information Specialist Jason Johnston.

doctrinal concepts, training concepts and various tactics, techniques and procedures.

"Everyone has something to bring to the table and you can always perfect on how you operate, and some may have a better way to perform a certain operation that we haven't thought of yet, and what better way to do that than to bring three other Special Operations communities from partner nations to work together and to pick each others brains than this," said a U.S. Special Operations commander.

Den Helder was one of five locations chosen to host Jackal Stone. In Den Helder, the Joint Task Unit focused on and performed, a variety of training evolutions to include visit board search and seizure, close quarter combat, sniper tactics, small boat operations, medical evacuation, and hostage rescue.

"Jackal Stone 14 provided the opportunity for personnel of all participating nations to engage in realistic and challenging training to build experience, cooperation and teamwork." said Maj. Gen. Gregory J. Lengyel, commander of Special Operations Command Europe.

Following every training evolution each service presented lessons learned with each service in preparation for future missions and to become a more capable task unit.

"Jackal Stone is an annual joint Special Operations exercise designed to enhance capabilities and interoperability among the participating Special Operations Forces and we are doing just that," said the Norwegian Marine Jager Kommando commander. "The more lessons learned and experience everybody shares, the better we become and new operational capabilities can be learned from each other."

About 1200 U.S. special operators and support personnel took part in this year's Jackal Stone, which is among Special Operations Command Europe's largest exercises. According to SOCEUR, another goal of Jackal Stone 14 is to help prepare participants to operate successfully in a joint, multinational, integrated environment.

"All in all, Jackal Stone 14 was a good experience for me; as an operator you have to keep an open mind to different ways of accomplishing a mission, and here it's a give and take learning experience. I took away some good stuff and also passed along some good stuff, and I think everyone participating gained something. The best take away was becoming a closer tight-knit unit with our partnered nations," said a U.S. Special Operations service member.

Multinational Special Operations Forces demonstrate fast roping from a CV-22 B Osprey tilt-rotor helicopter at the Army Airfield, Baumholder Military Training Area, Germany during exercise Jackal Stone, Sept. 12. Special Operation Forces from 10 nations - Netherlands, Czech Republic, Finland, Great Britain, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Slovenia and the United States - participated in the exercise. Photo by Visual Information Specialist Ruediger.

INVICTUS GAMES
LONDON 2014
FOR OUR WOUNDED WARRIORS

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Israel Del Toro competes in powerlifting during the Invictus Games at the Here East, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London, England, Sept. 14. Powerlifting is one of several sports wounded warriors from 13 nations get to compete in including archery, wheelchair rugby, wheelchair basketball, road cycling, indoor rowing, athletics, swimming and sitting volleyball. The vision for the Invictus Games is to harness the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider understanding and respect for those who serve their country. Photo by Senior Airman Tiffany DeNault.

USSOCOM wounded warriors participate in Invictus Games

By Lt. Cmdr. Ligia Cohen
USSOCOM Public Affairs

The road to the Invictus Games was a grueling one. None of the 12 competitors from United States Special Operations Command chose it willingly. Although the 12 competitors from SOCOM were eligible to compete as a result of a catastrophic injury or a serious illness; once at the start line, these warriors undertook the journey with grit and determination, arriving at a new highpoint as part of the team of U.S. athletes participating in the inaugural Invictus Games in London.

The games, an initiative of the Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry, is an international sporting event for wounded warriors meant to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider understanding and respect for those who serve their countries.

The 12 SOCOM athletes joined 22 Army, 20 Marine Corps, 22 Navy, and 22 Air Force members as part of the U.S. team. Every one of them exemplified the spirit of the Invictus Games and the power of adaptive sports to promote rehabilitation.

After attending the 2013 Warrior Games in Colorado Springs, Colo., Prince Harry was inspired to launch the international adaptive sports event for military members and veterans. Nine months later, the Invictus Games hosted nearly 400 athletes from 13 nations in a world-class event involving cycling, swimming, track and field, archery, wheelchair rugby,

sitting volleyball, wheelchair basketball, indoor rowing, and powerlifting.

"I can only begin to imagine how challenging the journey of recovery is, but the admiration I have for these men and women to move beyond their injury is limitless," said Prince Harry during the opening ceremonies of the Invictus Games, Sept. 10.

Participating in track and field, powerlifting and cycling, Tech. Sgt. Israel Del Toro from Cibolo, Texas, overcame a great deal of adversity. After suffering third degree burns on more than 80 percent of his body from an IED attack in Afghanistan in 2006, he was given less than a 15 percent chance to live. However, after more than 120 surgeries, Del Toro remains on active duty and credits sports for a great deal of his rehabilitation.

"I've always been competitive. When your life changes as dramatically as mine, there's a chance you might give up. I never let that happen to me, and I never will. Everyone knows if you quit before you start, you're done. I will never let the guys who set that bomb get the satisfaction that they ruined my life," said Del Toro.

While most of the athletes have previously participated in different para-Olympic style competitions, including the Warrior Games, the experience at the Invictus Games was unprecedented said U.S. team captain, retired Special Forces Sgt. Maj. Chris Self. The Invictus Games drew crowds and excitement to the site of the 2012 London Olympics.

"The Invictus Games provided an unmatched international opportunity for wounded, ill, and injured service members to showcase the critical role adaptive sports play in their recovery and day-to-day lives," said Self. "I'm grateful to Prince Harry and Great Britain for bringing together brothers and sisters in arms from around the world, who once served side-by-side on the battlefield, to the athletic field, where we could support each other again, even in competition."

This was also a once-in-a lifetime experience for

Former U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Alfredo De Los Santos competes in seated discus during the athletics portion of the Invictus Games at the Lee Valley Athletics Centre, London, Sept. 11. Photo by Senior Airman Tiffany DeNault.

21 SOCOM family members who had the opportunity to accompany their competitors to the Games with the sponsorship of the Fisher House.

"Being there for him meant a lot to me!" said Danielle Radetic, the wife of retired Army Warrant Officer Anthony Radetic, a former Black Hawk pilot and Green Beret who suffered a spinal cord injury as a result of a motor vehicle accident. "Anthony puts so much effort into everything he does, and I love being there to see the end result. I see his daily handcycle training routine, and it was amazing to watch him battle the top competitors and take second place, only inches away from first."

"It was especially uplifting knowing that I was able to achieve a medal for Team USA while still being in an operational unit. Even better, I was able to be on a rowing relay team with a fellow SOCOM team member, Ivan Castro. Without him, that medal would not have been possible."

— Army Staff Sgt. Patrick Smith

The SOCOM team was represented in all the individual and team sports events. Their performance resulted in two gold and two silver medals in cycling; two bronze medals in team rowing; one bronze medal in team recurve archery; two silver medals in seated volleyball and two silver medals in wheelchair basketball.

"It was especially uplifting knowing that I was able to achieve a medal for Team USA while still being in an operational unit," said Army Staff Sgt. Patrick Smith, who is assigned to the 9th Military Information Support Operations Group, Fort Bragg, N.C. "Even better, I was able to be on a rowing relay team with a fellow SOCOM team member, Ivan Castro. Without him, that medal would not have been possible."

The SOCOM team was selected among special operations forces, active duty and veterans, who currently participate in the SOCOM Care Coalition Adaptive Sports Program. The Care Coalition is the SOCOM office responsible for providing support to wounded, ill and injured special operations forces and their families.

"Whether a person is wounded in the battlefield, diagnosed with a serious illness or injured in an accident, our job is to provide the advocacy and support to facilitate their recovery," said Col. Cary Harbaugh, SOCOM Care Coalition director. "Besides adaptive sports, the Care Coalition helps our members navigate the medical system and obtain the support required for each individual situation."

As part of a White House delegation to the Games, Dr. Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, praised the athletes' "energy, positive spirit and resilience. They make Americans so proud."

After four days of competition, the athletes left London with an experience that not only made a positive impact on their lives but also helped widen the public's understanding of their struggles, victories and relentless spirit.

The 400 wounded, injured and sick service members who participated in the games embodied the meaning of the word invictus, the Latin word for 'unconquered.' Their stories symbolized the fighting spirit immortalized in William Ernest Henley's famous 1875 poem of the same title, which proclaims: "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul."

Dr. Jill Biden joins U.S. Army Capt. Ivan Castro (right) and his guide Richard Kirby (left) on the sidelines of a cycling race during the inaugural Invictus Games, an international sporting event for wounded warriors to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider understanding and respect for those who serve their countries. Biden led the White House delegation to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to attend the closing ceremony of the 2014 Invictus Games. The United States is one of 13 nations participating. Castro is part of the US team, which includes 98 military athletes: 22 from the Army, 20 from the Marine Corps, 22 from the Navy, 22 from the Air Force and 12 from USSOCOM. Photo by Lt. Cmdr. Ligia Cohen.

Retired Army Sgt. Edwin Quiros-Ortiz (front and center), from the U.S. Special Operations Command team, awaits the start of the hand cycle race, Sept. 29, during Warrior Games 2014 in Colorado Springs, Colo. Athletes from the USSOCOM Adaptive Sports Program competed against teams from all the branches from Sept. 28 to Oct. 4. The Warrior Games, founded in 2010, are designed to support healing and recovery of wounded, ill and injured service members and veterans through adaptive sports. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Roy Rodriguez.

SOCOM Wounded Warriors overcome injuries at Warrior Games 2014

By Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Jayson Price
USSOCOM Public Affairs

Active and retired veterans from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and U.S. Special Operations Command met at Fort Carson, Colo., Sept. 29, for an all-day event of cycling during Warrior Games 2014 in Colorado Springs.

Retired Army Staff Sgt. Nathan Cruz, a USSOCOM team member, said the race helped mark a milestone in his recovery.

"This race today means a lot to me," said Cruz. "As of yesterday [Sept. 27], it's been six years since the day I was injured. After many surgeries, and years of rehab, I chose a regular [upright] bike for this race."

Cruz sustained injuries from both a jump mission and a vehicle accident which left him with a shattered femur and hip, injured back and traumatic brain injury. He uses both a wheelchair and a cane to get around, although he

struggles with balance and movements on his feet.

"The only problem I have with my balance is if I go up hills," Cruz revealed while reflecting on the length and angle of the steep hill toward the end of the race course. "I cannot stand [like other people] when pedaling, I have to stay in the saddle. If I stand, I will fall."

Cruz rode a hand cycle for about three years after he learned about the sport from the USSOCOM Care Coalition's Adaptive Sports Program. Adaptive sports are intended for people with disabilities and are modified to allow the athletes to participate. From Sept. 28 to Oct. 4, the atheletes competed in archery, cycling, wheelchair basketball, sitting volleyball, shooting, track and field, and swimming.

"I've been part of the Care Coalition's Adaptive Sports Program from the very beginning [of my injury]," said Cruz. "It played a big part in my recovery - not only my physical recovery, but my mental recovery also."

Although he still meets the criteria to continue racing on a hand cycle, Cruz decided to challenge himself and began training on an upright bicycle about eight months ago. He gave his hand cycle to longtime friend and current riding partner, retired Army Sgt. Edwin Quiros-Ortiz, who is also a USSOCOM team member and suffered similar injuries during a parachute training jump.

"I used to be a recreational rider," said Quiros-Ortiz. "I just started riding [hand cycles competitively] thanks to my 'brother' Nathan Cruz. He's the one who got me into biking."

Cruz and Quiros-Ortiz have been through a lot together. Since they first became friends in 2000 during the Army's Advanced Individual Training at Fort Eustis, Va., the two Puerto Rico natives have completed more than six deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan together.

Cruz was medically retired in 2010 and Quiros-Ortiz in 2011. Cruz helps train his friend in hand cycling, riding up to 200 miles a week as part of each other's recovery plan. Even Quiros-Ortiz' wife and daughter join in, keeping the two veterans motivated.

"Family members are very important when it comes to supporting soldiers. In my case I didn't have that," said Cruz. "I went through a divorce when I was injured and family members from my unit and the Care Coalition took over to make up for my separation with my wife."

"During my entire participation with this program I have created a new family, which is all the members of the CCRP [Care Coalition Recovery Program] and the athletic program for the Care Coalition," said Cruz.

By the day's end, Quiros-Ortiz made his friend Cruz, who helped coach him in hand cycling, proud by bringing home a bronze medal for the USSOCOM team. In all, SOCOM went home with 22 medals: six gold, six silver, and 10 bronze.

Two-hundred wounded, ill and injured service members and veterans competed throughout the six days of competition in the fifth annual Warrior Games. The Warrior Games is intended to promote athletic reconditioning of wounded, ill, and injured service members and veterans by encouraging participation in physical and cognitive activities, inspiring physical fitness and encouraging new opportunities for growth and achievement.

Six years after an accident that left with him shattered bones and a traumatic brain injury, retired Army Staff Sgt. Nathan Cruz, from the U.S. Special Operations Command team, pedals his way up the cycling race course's final hill, Sept. 29, at Fort Carson, Colo., during Warrior Games 2014 in Colorado Springs. Approximately 200 athletes representing the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Roy Rodriguez.

Bennie G. Adkins is promoted to the rank of command sergeant major, with the help of his wife, Mary. Courtesy photo.

5th Group Medal of Honor recipient reflects on heroic Vietnam battle

By Nick Duke

Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Bennie Adkins, an Opelika, Alabama, resident, received the Medal of Honor Sept. 15, 2014, at the White House.

The Medal of Honor is being awarded for Adkins' actions during 38 hours of close-combat fighting against enemy forces near Camp A Shau, Vietnam, March 9-12, 1966.

Adkins said it was not just his actions that were valorous during that time, but also the actions of his fellow Soldiers.

"What I attribute this to is not my actions, but the actions of the other 16 Americans who were with us in the battle at Camp A Shau, and especially the five who paid the ultimate price," Adkins said. "I want it known that I feel like the Medal of Honor belongs to the other 16 Americans who were there, and especially to the five who paid the ultimate price. All of the 17 Americans who were present in this battle were awarded some type of recognition for valor. Valor was something that was just there with us. All of those 17 American Special Forces Soldiers were wounded, most of us multiple times."

Adkins was drafted into the Army in December 1956, and eventually volunteered for Special Forces in 1961.

"I had an assignment in a garrison-type unit, and I found out that was not for me," he said. "I wanted something in the field, and I wanted to be in one of the elite units. At that period in time, it seemed that the Special Forces was the most elite unit. I was not satisfied until I had become a member of that organization."

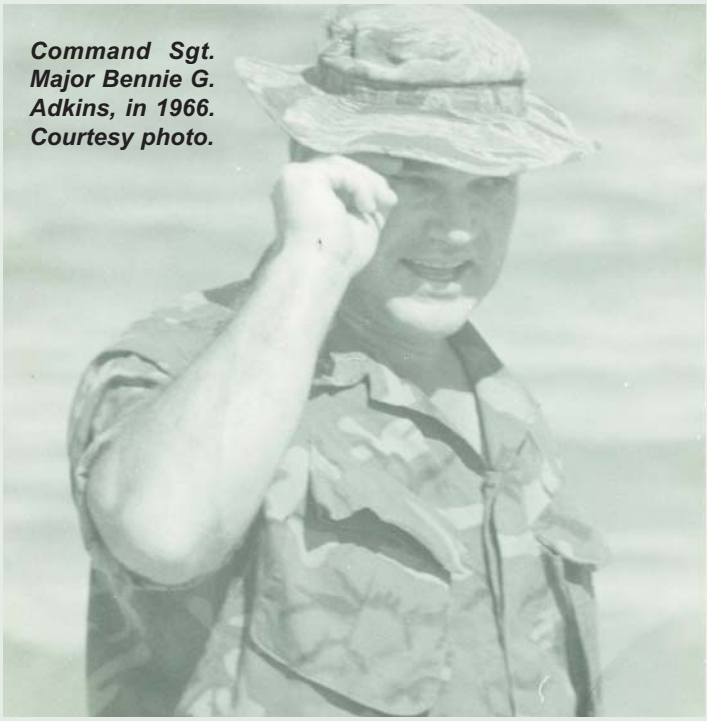
Adkins went on to serve three tours in Vietnam. Adkins served at Camp A Shau from September 1965 to September 1966.

According to the battle narrative, Adkins was serving as an intelligence sergeant with Detachment A-102, 5th Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces, when a large North Vietnamese force attacked Camp A Shau, in the early morning hours of March 9.

Adkins rushed through intense enemy fire and manned a mortar position defending the camp.

He continued to mount a defense while suffering wounds from several direct hits from enemy mortars. Upon learning that several Soldiers were wounded near the camp's center, he temporarily turned the mortar over to another Soldier, ran through exploding mortar rounds and dragged several comrades to safety. As the hostile fire subsided, Adkins repeatedly exposed himself to sniper and mortar fire, while moving casualties to the camp dispensary.

Adkins exposed himself to enemy fire transporting a casualty to an airstrip for evacuation. He and his group then came under heavy small-arms fire from members of the Civilian Irregular Defense Group, known as the CIDG, which had defected to fight with the North Vietnamese. Despite this overwhelming force, Adkins maneuvered outside the camp to evacuate a wounded American and to draw fire away from the aircraft, all the while successfully covering the rescue.



Command Sgt. Major Bennie G. Adkins, in 1966. Courtesy photo.

Despite the defection of some CIDG soldiers, Adkins said many of the CIDG stayed loyal to the Americans and showed bravery that day.

"We were in a situation where there was no ground transportation to get to this isolated Special Forces camp," Adkins said. "We were in a situation where the weather was very bad and we could not get the type of air support we needed. In that period of time, there were about 410 indigenous Civilian Irregular Defense Group soldiers there with us, and of those, only about 122 survived, and most of those were wounded. It was a horrible, horrible battle. There was valor on all sides, not only from the Americans, but from the CIDG soldiers also."

Later, when a resupply air drop landed outside of the camp perimeter, Adkins again moved outside of the camp walls to retrieve the much-needed supplies.

During the early morning hours of March 10, enemy forces launched their main assault. Within two hours, Adkins was the only defender firing a mortar. When all mortar rounds were expended, Adkins began firing upon enemies as they infiltrated the camp perimeter and assaulted his position. Despite receiving additional wounds from enemy rounds exploding on his position, Adkins fought off relentless waves of the attacking enemy.

"It was just not my time that day," Adkins said. "I was blown from the mortar pit on several occasions, and I was fortunate enough to go outside the camp amongst the enemy and get one of our wounded MedEvaced out. I also made a trip into the minefield to recover some supplies that were air dropped to us. The bottom line is that it was just not my day to go."

Adkins then withdrew to regroup with a smaller element of Soldiers at the communications bunker. While there, he single-handedly eliminated numerous insurgents with small-arms fire, almost completely exhausting his supply of ammunition. Braving intense enemy fire, he returned to the mortar pit, gathered vital ammunition and evaded fire while returning to the bunker.

After the order was given to evacuate the camp, Adkins and a small group of Soldiers destroyed all signal equipment and classified documents, dug their way out of the rear of

Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Bennie Adkins takes a tour of the Vietnam War exhibit at the National Infantry Museum Sept. 4. Adkins received the Medal of Honor during a ceremony at the White House Sept. 15 for his actions during combat near Camp A Shau, Vietnam, March 9-12, 1966. Photo by Markeith Horace.

the bunker, and fought their way out of the camp.

Because of his efforts to carry a wounded Soldier to an extraction point and leave no one behind, Adkins and his group were unable to reach the last evacuation helicopter.

Adkins then rallied the remaining survivors and led the group into the jungle, where they evaded the enemy for 48 hours, until they were rescued by helicopter March 12.

During that 48-hour period, Adkins said it looked bleak for him and his fellow Soldiers, until unexpected help arrived.

"It was too late and too high of an altitude for another helicopter, so we had to evade the enemy," Adkins said. "This was the night that it looked like they had run us down. The North Vietnamese soldiers had us surrounded on a little hilltop and everything started getting kind of quiet. We could look around and all at once, all we could see were eyes going around us. It was a tiger that stalked us that night. We were all bloody and in this jungle, the tiger stalked us and the North Vietnamese soldiers were more afraid of the tiger than they were of us. So, they backed off some and we were (able to escape)."

Now his wife of 59 years, Mary Adkins, said she heard stories of the battle the next day.

"I had two little boys who were just starting school," she said. "I got up one morning to get them ready for school and when I got up, I turned the TV on. They were telling about a battle on the national news and about Soldiers going through the jungle with a tiger in the middle of them and the Vietnamese, and I don't know what it was, but something just told me that it was him. I think it was about two days later that I got the telegram saying that he was lost and they hadn't found him. About a day or two later, I got another telegram saying that he was found, but they didn't know what condition he was in. The next one I got said that he was in this hospital and he was doing fine."

During the 38-hour battle, and subsequent 48 hours of escape and evasion, Adkins fought with mortars, machine guns, recoilless rifles, small arms, and hand grenades, killing an estimated 135-175 of the enemy, and suffering 18 different wounds.

Despite the 48 years that have passed, Adkins said the memories of what happened in the jungles of Vietnam are still vivid.

"It is not a faint memory," he said. "I can tell you every man who was there and the five who lost their lives. I can tell you how that happened. It diminishes, but it does not go

away. I really feel that most of the Soldiers today experience some degree of [post-traumatic stress disorder]. We have ways of treating this, and my way of treating this was more work, more family and talking about it."

Adkins, who says he's a "young 80" now, said the reality of receiving the Medal of Honor has not yet set in.

"It's something hard to grasp and realize that during this period of time from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan, there's been somewhere between 28 and 30 million who have served in the military," he said. "To date, we have 79 living recipients of the Medal of Honor … I'll be number 80. I still feel that today."

After his military career, Adkins went on to establish Adkins Accounting Service in Auburn, Alabama, and served as CEO for 22 years. He also taught night classes at Southern Union Junior College and Auburn University, all of which he attributed to lessons learned during his Army career.

"The military teaches a competency and a desire to do the best you can at whatever you do, and I carried that on in my teaching and the businesses I operated," he said. "Whether (Soldiers are) a one-time Soldier or a career Soldier, they should absolutely do the best they can and accomplish the most that they desire to accomplish."

President Barack Obama applauds retired Command Sgt. Maj. Bennie G. Adkins for his heroism just after Adkins was awarded the Medal of Honor in the East Room of the White House, Sept. 15. Adkins distinguished himself during 38 hours of close-combat fighting against enemy forces on March 9 to 12, 1966. At that time, then-Sgt. 1st Class Adkins was serving as an Intelligence Sergeant with 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces at Camp A Shau in the Republic of Vietnam. During the 38-hour battle and 48-hours of escape and evasion, Adkins fought with mortars, machine guns, recoilless rifles, small arms, and hand grenades, killing an estimated 135 - 175 of the enemy and sustaining 18 different wounds. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Bernardo Fuller.

Hero retires at Hunter Army Airfield to complete his new life mission

By Nancy Gould
Hunter Army Airfield

Sgt. 1st Class Cory Remsburg is a proven warrior — as a weapons squad leader on the battlefield with fellow Rangers from the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment — and off the battlefield as an advocate for those with Traumatic Brain Injuries, like the one he received in 2009 when an Improvised Explosive Device injured him during a firefight.

He was recognized for his heroism by commanders, fellow Rangers, friends and family members at his retirement ceremony at Truscott Air Terminal on Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., Aug. 20. He was previously awarded the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart and the Army Commendation Medal for Valor for his brave actions.

He has also been in the National spotlight for his sacrifice and service, including recognition from President Obama as he sat next to Michelle Obama at a State of the Union Address.

Brigadier Gen. Richard Clarke, Commandant of Cadets at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and the former 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment commander, also praised the warrior he came to

Admiral William H. McRaven, former USSOCOM commander, pins a medal on Sgt. 1st Class Corey Remsburg during his retirement ceremony Aug. 20 at Truscott Airfield Terminal, Hunter Army Airfield, Ga. Photo by Tracy Bailey.

know almost 10 years ago.

"He was a great Ranger," Clarke said. "He was funny, warmhearted and a natural leader. He didn't fear those who had rank. He was the one who approached my wife at a battalion function and asked her to dance. He was loved by everyone and needless to say, my wife's favorite Ranger."

Remsburg sustained the TBI on his 10th combat rotation with his squad from the 1st Battalion, Oct. 1, 2009, during combat in Afghanistan. The mission was successful but it claimed the life of fellow Ranger, Sgt. Robert Sanchez and nearly killed Remsburg.

Nine of the enemy combatants were killed and a large weapon cache was destroyed, but the explosion gravely injured Remsburg and threw him into a canal. He was rescued and airlifted to Kandahar Air Base, then to Bagram Airfield for surgery. After that, he was transported to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany for two weeks of treatment where he remained in a coma. He was eventually treated at the James Haley Veterans Administration Hospital in Tampa, Fla., and remained there for three and a half months before he started to regain consciousness.

After 15 months of hospitalization, Remsburg became an outpatient and rented an apartment in Tampa with a caregiver. He continued his daily occupational, physical, vision and speech therapies at the Tampa VA Center and now lives near his father in Arizona.

At the retirement ceremony, his father, Craig Remsburg, stood with Cory as he spoke about leaving the only job he's had since high school.

"I don't want to retire," said the Ranger, " but it's time."

"He wants to encourage the injured to work hard to recover and never give up. Cory gets a lot of requests to speak to other traumatic brain injury casualties and other groups. His message to them is, 'you can recover; you're not defined by your injury.'"

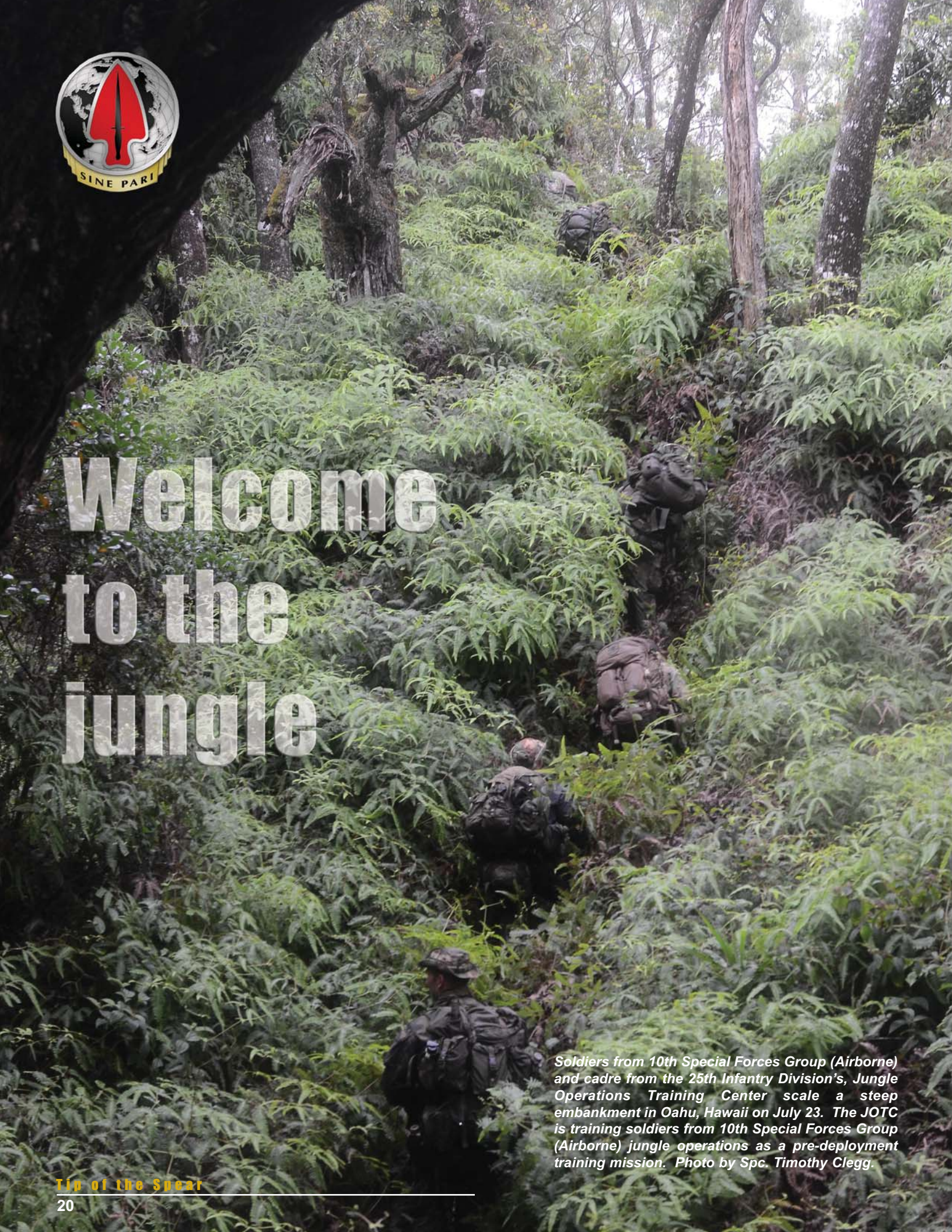
— Craig Remsburg

The senior Remsburg said Cory is ready to move forward to the next chapter of life. He wants to 'pay it forward,' complete his mission, and make the path easier for other TBI casualties.

"He wants to encourage the injured to work hard to recover and never give up," said his father, adding that Cory's recovery requires hours of grueling therapy during the week and bike riding on weekends.

"Cory gets a lot of requests to speak to other traumatic brain injury casualties and other groups," he said. "His message to them is, 'you can recover; you're not defined by your injury.'"

Sgt. 1st Class Cory Remsburg waves to the crowd assembled at Truscott Airfield Terminal, Aug. 20, during his retirement ceremony. Courtesy photo.



Welcome to the jungle

Soldiers from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and cadre from the 25th Infantry Division's, Jungle Operations Training Center scale a steep embankment in Oahu, Hawaii on July 23. The JOTC is training soldiers from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) jungle operations as a pre-deployment training mission. Photo by Spc. Timothy Clegg.

By Army Staff Sgt. Matthew G. Ryan
25th Infantry Division Public Affairs

With an ever-changing and evolving global threat against U.S. national strategic interests, the U.S. Army and Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) continue to develop a more dynamic and versatile force through continued focus on ARSOF 2022 imperatives: investing in human capital and conventional and Special Forces interdependence.

As the U.S. military continues over a decade of combat and advisory operations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, U.S. Special Forces conduct parallel operations around the world to include jungle environments. Recently, Special Forces Operational Detachment - Alpha (ODA) from Colorado Springs, Colorado, visited the newly established 25th Infantry Division (ID) Lightning Academy Jungle Operations Training Center (JOTC) to focus on individual and collective training using the unforgiving jungle terrain located on the island of Oahu, Hawaii.

The JOTC was resurrected in February 2013, as a supplement to the closure of the jungle survival school in Panama, and to redress the PACOM Asia-Pacific rebalance after 25th ID was removed from Afghanistan rotations.

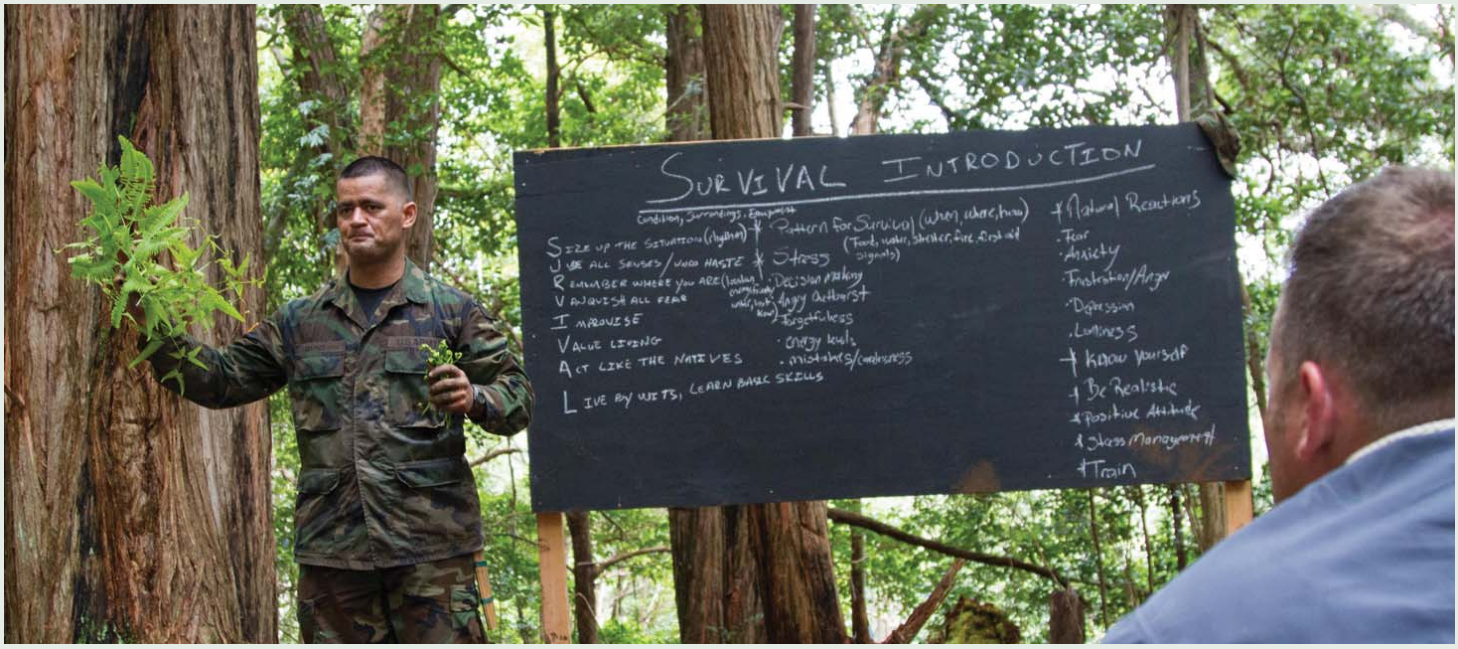
"News of the newly established JOTC reached me through rumors from friends within the 25th ID," said the ODA commander. "After conducting mission analysis for our upcoming operation, we realized the importance of mirroring the operational environment for our training. Further course of action development revealed that training in Hawaii was more optimal than training at Fort Bragg or in Florida."

The JOTC instructors are comprised of recent graduates and students of the Malaysian Tracker School, Australian Jungle School, Brunei Jungle Warfare Course, and the Okinawa Jungle Warfare Course.

"These schools teach a combination of skill sets to include visual tracking, foraging, and constructing rope bridges and pulley systems within a jungle environment," said Sgt. 1st Class Dominick Johnson, senior instructor at the JOTC.

"We hope to be able to improve their survivability and adaptability by providing them a refined program of instruction (POI) and expert instruction in bush-craft while in a jungle environment, something which this team has limited training on. We don't call ourselves experts, but we try to perfect our craft. Every time, we learn more efficient ways to train Soldiers," said Johnson. "The instructors are always seeking to master the jungle and the skills required to survive in order to make the training more realistic and valuable."

The ODA underwent a condensed two-week POI at the Lightning Academy in the East Range training



An instructor with the Jungle Operations Training Course, Lightning Academy, 25th Infantry Division, teaches Soldiers from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) how to conduct the 24-hour safety test for consuming unknown plants during a condensed two-week course of basic survival skills in the jungle environment of the East Training Range Complex, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, July 14. The 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Soldiers are participating in pre-deployment training hosted by 25th Infantry Divisions Jungle Operations Training Center. Army Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew G. Ryan.

complex of Schofield Barracks. The first week consisted of basic survival skills to include: tropical medicine, combat casualty care, food procurement and preservation, water procurement and purification, improvised shelter building, fire starting, and antenna theory. The detachment also conducted waterborne and riverine operations, incorporated rope bridges using simple and complex pulley systems, and enhanced their tracking skills along with ground sign awareness.

During the first week of training, ODA members sat on the ground or on logs during periods of instruction swatting at the relentless infestation of countless insects while wiping the sweat from their faces caused by the high humidity of the double-canopy jungle. All training was conducted in the jungle, completely immersing the detachment in the environment. The training areas were devoid of classrooms, climate control, conventional seating, or everyday comforts typically used during training events. The team had to adapt to the environment from day one.

"If I could describe the training and instructors, it would be as specialized subject matter experts. We were very pleased with their professionalism and how much collective knowledge they had on jungle operations and jungle survival. Instruction was direct, to the point, and was backed with examples of learned experiences of the instructors. The training was invaluable for the ODA and surpassed my expectations," stated the ODA commander.

The second week of training consisted of a four-day movement beginning with an air insertion into the East Range Training Complex. The ODA traversed more than 5 kilometers of jungle terrain, moving 100 meters an hour among overgrown vegetation at certain points along their route.

"There were times that we walked on ridgelines only two feet wide. We had to clip into safety static lines while moving along the ridges because of the shear 100 foot drop offs on either side," said the ODA commander.

During the remainder of the week, the detachment met all of their training objectives, applying the

Soldiers from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) assault an enemy location during a culmination exercise while training with 25th Infantry Divisions Jungle Operations Training Center in Oahu, Hawaii, July 25. Photo by Spc. Timothy Clegg.

A Soldier from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) uses a rope bridge to cross a water obstacle during training in Oahu, Hawaii, July 16. Photo by Spc. Timothy Clegg.

instruction of the JOTC cadre to improve their jungle survivability, mobility, and tracking skills. "The jungle out here was very gruesome and nasty. It tested all of our skills and capabilities," said the ODA Commander.

Throughout the two weeks of training, the ODA adapted their tactics, techniques, and procedures to tackle the difficult terrain. Detachment members consistently adjusted their equipment to accommodate for long movements and the wet environment. The ODA primarily wore BDUs, Vietnam era load carrying equipment (LCEs), ALICE ruck sacks, and a variety of non-military issue jungle boots.

"We had to significantly reduce our weight, change our kit, and streamline our packs to move through the dense vegetation," said the ODA Operations Sergeant.

Overall, the interaction between the 25th ID JOTC and U.S. Special Forces serves as an example of conventional and Special Forces interdependence, spear-heading the way for the future SOF community to train at the JOTC. This combined exchange allowed U.S. Special Forces the opportunity to assist the JOTC in achieving a program of record that is officially recognized by the Army Training and Doctrine Command.

The recent training event between the two units is a benchmark in furthering U.S. national strategic interests' worldwide, bolstering Army resources while enhancing the Human Capital, and strengthening the relationship of US Special Forces and their Conventional brethren.

"This has been a great experience and shared knowledge with lessons learned from both sides between the ODA and the instructors here at the Jungle Operations Training Course," stated Johnson.

As the Army continues to shift its focus from operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the SOF community must adapt and meet the complex threats and challenges faced by its adversaries. Army SOF is now getting back to the basics and addressing the capability gaps over the last twelve years of conducting combat operations predominately in the desert environment. With ARSOF globally realigning its framework, U.S. Special Forces are redesigning their efforts to meet and close with the enemy in any environment they may face.

"This is what it is all about, coming out and training in the harshest environments you can find, testing your TTPs, and updating your standard operating procedures to ensure we are fully prepared for anything we might encounter," stated the ODA commander.

Soldiers from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) track instructors from 25th Infantry Divisions Jungle Operations Training Center up a river in Oahu, Hawaii, July 21. Photo by Spc. Timothy Clegg.

Petty Officer 1st Class Jesse Murray drives a rigid-hull inflatable boat during the Naval Special Warfare Logistics and Support Unit 1 coxswain course. The course is designed to train Sailors in basic small-craft operation and safety to support a wide range of NSW missions.

Rigid Hulls, Flexible Minds

Story and photos by Petty Officer 2nd Class Paul Coover
NSWC Public Affairs Office

Seaman Apprentice Keegan Kilgore hadn't driven a boat in years, and even then it was just a small fishing dinghy. But by the way he was driving a Navy rigid-hull inflatable boat on a windy afternoon on San Diego Bay, he could pass as a near-expert coxswain. Kilgore sat behind the helm on the boat's starboard side, his right hand resting lightly on two throttles, his left on the wheel. The adjustments he made were subtle: Kilgore was aiming straight at the open ocean, and deviated from this heading only to avoid major wakes or other crafts. Then it was back to full speed and a direct southwesterly course.

Recreational sail boaters waved as Kilgore flew past; the downtown skyline fell off into the distance; aircraft launched off nearby Naval Base Coronado buzzed overhead. Kilgore leaned into light turns, scanning the horizon for potential dangers in the way of swimmers or other hard-to-see obstacles. The RHIB gently swayed side-to-side, hull slicing easily through blue saltwater. Soon Kilgore would be through the calm of the bay and into sea swells.

As the tip of Point Loma passed to his north, Kilgore tightened his grip on the wheel just slightly. The swells were new to him, and he throttled back to handle them. It's a move he learned through observation and classroom study, but he'd never practiced it himself. In fact, after growing up in Alaska and going through

military training in Great Lakes, Illinois, and Port Hueneme, California, before being stationed at Naval Special Warfare Logistics and Support Unit 1 in Coronado, this was Kilgore's first time on the water in San Diego.

It was also one of Kilgore's first real-world tests as a coxswain. It takes minimal skill to maneuver in glassy bay waters, but just off the coast of Point Loma, breaking waves, unpredictable winds, kelp beds and shoal areas have the potential to expose even experienced drivers to serious dangers. Kilgore's transition from bay to ocean, however, was a smooth one. He accelerated down swells, eased off at their crests to avoid jumping his boat and quickly gained "the feel of the water," as he called it. He'd been trained well.

Kilgore was part of the LOGSU-1 coxswain course, one of six students in June who would spend six days going over the fundamentals of small-craft boat handling. The course was developed in response to a growing need for qualified coxswains to support NSW operations by driving RHIBs during training, and is offered about once a month. Combat swimmer evolutions, visit, board, search and seizure simulations, parachute jumps into water -- all require a safety boat on station.

"This needed to happen," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Keith Pritchett, the LOGSU-1 officer in charge of the course. "There are just not enough SEALs to sit in that seat [at the helm]. When they're out there doing an op, they don't have another SEAL to drive a safety boat. So we had to look at the competent and professional support staff that wants to get out there and help out. It really frees up the operators from having to fulfill that duty, and it gets other rates out there to see what the SEALs are doing."

Kilgore is a good example of the kind of force-enabler who can become a valued asset to a SEAL Team: comfortable with powerful equipment underneath him but mature enough to understand his own limitations; motivated enough to seek training outside his rating but humble enough to take direction.

Kilgore enlisted in the Navy as a way of making something of himself after a few unproductive years of working odd jobs after high school, and his work ethic showed.

"I wanted something different for my life," he said. As a Seabee, and now at the helm of a RHIB, he's getting it. He quickly became the class' best coxswain even though he was the junior member of the group. After his initial foray into ocean navigation during the daytime training, he was tested again at night.

"Out in the water," Kilgore said afterward, "not being able to see where you're going, having to trust your instincts and knowledge – it's empowering."

Pritchett, a SEAL, said that's exactly the kind of appreciation for missions that pays dividends for Sailors.

"Appreciation feeds right into motivation," he said. "When you see guys jumping out of a plane and into the water--canopies and lines all over the place--and you're there, that coxswain has a very important role to make sure he's on station to pick

"Appreciation feeds right into motivation. When you see guys jumping out of a plane and into the water--canopies and lines all over the place--and you're there, that coxswain has a very important role to make sure he's on station to pick up those swimmers. It's motivating. At the end of the day, you contributed. You had a significant role in the success of that evolution."

— Chief Warrant Officer 3 Keith Pritchett

Students in the Naval Special Warfare Logistics and Support Unit 1 coxswain course plot points on a chart of San Diego Bay during a lesson on navigation. The course is designed to train Sailors in basic small-craft operation and safety to support a wide range of NSW missions.

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Though RHIBs and other small, fast boats are often associated with the Navy's SWCC operators, the SWCC mission is entirely separate from that of the LOGSU-1-trained coxswain. SWCCs undergo more extensive training and a much more demanding selection process, and their missions are often dangerous and high-speed. Coxswains play a support role, while SWCCS are capable of carrying out entire operations themselves. A SWCC works full-time as part of a special operations crew, while a coxswain might work in his or her rating for much of deployment and drive a boat only when needed. But both types of boat drivers are ultimately important.

"The standout coxswains really can assess a situation in various sea states and circumstances, stay safe and still get the boat where it needs to be to provide the best support possible," Pritchett said. "I think it's a good skill set for anybody in the Navy to have."

During the LOGSU-1 course, prospective coxswains learn the fundamentals of navigation, rules for driving in congested waterways, emergency procedures and communication protocol. But the majority of the class is spent on the water, practicing safe and effective boat handling.

Chief Petty Officer John Hamilton, assigned to SEAL Team 17, was part of Kilgore's class and says the amount of time the class spent on the water was key to creating competent coxswains.

"It didn't waste your time at all," he said of the curriculum. "We worked from 7 to 5 every day."

One afternoon, Hamilton was sitting behind the helm doing circles in the small bay near the pier where the LOGSU-1 RHIBs were moored. It was 3 p.m., and the class instructors were on the pier watching students perform relatively simple parking maneuvers. By mid-week, most could pull the boats alongside the pier and stop close enough to a cleat to secure the boat without the assistance of passengers manning mooring lines. The instructors were tired from long days under the sun, and watching attempt after attempt end with near-perfect results could have convinced them that they would be justified in cutting the day short. They didn't. The three instructors, all qualified coxswains themselves,

Petty Officer 2nd Class Kristy Donoghue gives a lesson on navigation during the Naval Special Warfare Logistics and Support Unit 1 coxswain course.

understood that while the students seemed capable now, an hour or two of extra practice would make them even better.

"A couple more," Chief Petty Officer Justin Beaulieu called out from shore.

Hamilton and his two passengers complied, working on parking on both the port and starboard sides. Some attempts were better than others, but all were passable. All would have allowed a SEAL Team to quickly disembark during a training operation.

"I think any skill we can gain that can support the Teams is totally valuable," Hamilton said. "It's another tool in our belt to say, 'Hey, we can drive the boats.'"

Beaulieu, the lead instructor for the class, has been working with small craft in one manner or another for more than a decade. He has done it as part of the crew of an aircraft carrier -- he was aboard USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) after 9/11 -- and he's doing it with NSW now. After the class, he will get back behind the helm himself, helping operators and enablers conduct training during long days off the California coast. He explains his role as a teacher in simple terms.

"We're going to show you how to do the dangerous stuff," he says, "and pull it off safely and effectively."

Beaulieu isn't encouraging dangerous maneuvers from his students, of course, as much as simply stating a fact. Being on the water in small craft operations is inherently hazardous, as even the safest crew must deal

with unpredictable sea states and, worse, other boat drivers whose inexperience or lapses in attention could cause injuries or death. For these reasons, Beaulieu and his team begin each day with a risk-management brief, constantly monitor safety on the water and discuss contingencies should anything go wrong. The strategy is overwhelmingly successful: by the end of the training, the only injuries to speak of are minor sunburns courtesy of the San Diego summer.

On the final day, each student climbed into a RHIB, solo, to be evaluated on his or her skills. Beaulieu floated underneath the Coronado Bridge, directing students via radio as to which maneuvers he wanted them to demonstrate. His feedback was firm but instructive. All students passed the final.

"We're going to show you how to do the dangerous stuff and pull it off safely and effectively."

— Chief Petty Officer Justin Beaulieu

As the class finished, students cleaned up, shook hands and began to make their way home. Most got into cars and drove off with a wave. Kilgore lives on base, and chose to walk back to his barracks rather than take one of the rides he was offered. The sun was high overhead and Kilgore took his time walking the warm sidewalk home. It had been a long week, full of mentally taxing exercises and scenarios. Instructors and students alike were ready for a Sunday off before returning to work. Kilgore was, too. At the same time, he said he is eager to put his new skills to use. Even though he will spend much of his Naval career working on construction projects ashore, after the week on the water, his mindset is that of a Sailor: he is at once happy to be back on land, yet eager to return to the sea.

Seaman Apprentice Keegan Kilgore drives a rigid-hull inflatable boat during the Naval Special Warfare Logistics and Support Unit 1 coxswain course. The course is designed to train Sailors in basic small-craft operation and safety to support a wide range of NSW missions.

320th STS Pararescueman receives AFSA Pitsenbarger Award

Story and photo by Tech. Sgt. Kristine Dreyer, 353rd Special Operations Group Public Affairs

Senior Airman Tristan Windle, a pararescueman with the 320th Special Tactics Squadron, provides medical treatment to a victim during the OSMP training held May 1, on Kadena Air Base, Japan.

A special tactics Airman was awarded the 2013 Air Force Sergeants Association Pitsenbarger Award during a ceremony held Aug. 20, in Jacksonville, Fla.

Senior Airman Tristan Windle, a pararescueman with the 320th STS was recognized for his heroic actions while deployed in 2013 to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"The special tactics community is proud that Tristan's pararescue skills were able to make a profound impact on such a tragic day," said Lt. Col. Edmund Loughran, 320th Special Tactics Squadron commander. "We are grateful to AFSA for choosing to recognize him in this manner."

The Pitsenbarger Award recognizes an Air Force enlisted member who has performed a heroic act, on or off duty, which resulted in the saving of a life or the prevention of a serious injury while placing the nominee at risk of danger.

While deployed to Afghanistan as a rescue specialist embedded with the U.S. Army Rangers, Windle and his team were caught in a planned insurgent ambush where suicide vest and pressure-plate improvised explosive device attacks resulted in 34 wounded and killed in action. Despite suffering injury from a blast within six feet of him, Windle provided treatment for 23 personnel and saved the lives of two of his teammates.

While deployed to Afghanistan as a rescue specialist embedded with the U.S. Army Rangers, Windle and his team were caught in a planned insurgent ambush where suicide vest and pressure-plate improvised explosive device attacks resulted in 34 wounded and killed in action. Despite suffering injury from a blast within six feet of him, Windle provided treatment for 23 personnel and saved the lives of two of his teammates.

"Honestly, I am just humbled and honored to be recognized with this award. That deployment gave me the opportunity to put the training and mentorship I have received over the last five and a half years to use," Windle said. "While I was prepared when my time came to go to Afghanistan, I was slightly nervous to deploy without a team of PJs to depend on. I knew I needed to know my stuff. By focusing on knowing my job and the mission, I was able to apply what I have been taught and simply do my job."

The AFSA Pitsenbarger Award is named after Airman 1st Class William H. Pitsenbarger, an Air Force pararescueman who gave his life while aiding with the evacuation and treatment of fellow soldiers who were surrounded and pinned down by the North Vietnamese in the jungle of Vietnam. Pitsenbarger posthumously received the Air Force Cross on June 30, 1966 for his heroic actions. The award was upgraded to the Medal of Honor on Dec. 8, 2000.

A plaque memorializing the sacrifice of Tech. Sgt. William Jefferson, 21st Special Tactics Squadron combat controller, is placed before a flag pole Sept. 26, at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M. Jefferson's memorial previously resided in Afghanistan where Jefferson died defending our country. Photo by Senior Airman Ericka Engblom.

In honor of WJ

By Chief Master Sgt. Paul Henderson
27th Special Operations Wing Command Chief

A new ornament can now be seen by all who enter through the main gate here, perched high atop the flagpole proudly displaying our nation's flag.

The topper is in the shape of a spear-head and, much like Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., and Air Force Special Operations Command, has a rich and honorable heritage.

The spear tip was hand made by two deployed AFSOC metals technicians to honor a fallen comrade, Tech. Sgt. William H. Jefferson, nicknamed WJ, a combat controller assigned to the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, Pope Air Force Base, N.C.

On March 22, 2008, WJ was conducting special operations in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom when his vehicle was hit by an Improvised Explosive Device. He died from wounds sustained during the blast, and is survived by his wife, two daughters, other family members and numerous teammates and friends. He honorably served in the Air Force for 12 years and had planned to continue serving until retirement; he was 30 days from returning home from his third combat tour overseas.

Fast forward to late 2009, the Combined Joint Special Operations Air Component operating out of Iraq and Afghanistan were in the initial planning stages of building a new compound in Afghanistan that would serve as home for the deployed joint special operations teammates. The leadership team agreed that this particular compound was going to be named Camp Jefferson after Jefferson.

Upon learning of the plans for Camp Jefferson and WJ's personal story, two deployed special operations metals technicians, Staff Sgt. William Miller and Staff Sgt. Derek Spencer, 1st Expeditionary Special Operations Maintenance Squadron, designed and worked together to fabricate a fitting memorial in honor of WJ.

Three 105mm brass rounds were cut down and flattened. An outline of a spearhead was drawn on each plate and cut out. The pieces were riveted together and bent to form a precise three-dimensional spearhead and were attached to a 40mm shell in order to mount it to the top of a flagpole. The 22-foot flagpole, acquired from Navy Seabees and the U.S. Army, provided the pulleys and clips for the rope.

This particular flag pole, with its spear-head top, proudly flew our nation's flag in the face of the enemy for more than four years. On January 15, 2014, Camp Jefferson was inactivated and turned over to coalition forces. Chief Master Sgt. William Markham, CJSOAC-Afghanistan command chief and a personal friend of WJ, arranged for the flagpole and ornament to be carried home to U.S. soil by an MC-130J aircrew from Cannon's own 522nd Special Operations Squadron. The ornament and flagpole were symbolically turned over to the 26th Special Tactics Squadron at Cannon and is now mounted and displayed near the front gate where it greets everyone entering Cannon as a symbol of WJ's legacy and sacrifice, and serves as a reminder that freedom is not free.

The finial memorializing Tech. Sgt. William Jefferson waits to be set in its place of honor atop a flag pole Sept. 26, at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M. Photo by Senior Airman Ericka Engblom.

U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. John Peak, center, 67th Special Operations Squadron commander, receives the Freedom of Hunstanton from Counsillor Carol Bower, mayor of Hunstanton, Oct. 4, in Hunstanton, England. This is the highest award the town council is able to deliver to commemorate the lives saved by 67th Air Rescue Squadron Airmen during a flood in 1953. Photo by Airman 1st Class Kyla Gifford.

67th SOS granted Supreme Honor by english town Hunstanton

By Tech. Sgt. Stacia Zachary
352nd Special Operations Group Public Affairs

Editor's note: The 67th Special Operations Squadron has close ties to the 67th Air Rescue Squadron, and its heritage can be traced back to the 67th ARS while it was assigned to a now defunct contingent at RAF Sculthorpe.

The 67th Special Operations Squadron received the Freedom of Hunstanton Oct. 4, for the critical role U.S. Airmen played during the 1953 floods that devastated the area and claimed the lives of more than 60 people.

Led by the Norwich Pipe Band, a contingent of more than 60 Airmen marched up to the Spinney, the town center, where the Hunstanton Scroll was presented to Lt. Col. John Peak, 67th SOS commander.

"Today's ceremony is a highlight of my career," Peak said. "To be out in front of the squadron of such exceptional Airmen to receive the Freedom of Hunstanton is such an enormous honor. People shook my hand thanking me for what the 67th Air Rescue Squadron did during the floods of 1953 - it was such a humbling moment for me."

The event for which the Freedom of Hunstanton was granted to the 67th SOS occurred Jan. 31, 1953, when a violent storm, combined with a tidal surge, caused the sea water to broach the seaside town's defences and stranded

several families on the southern beach areas of Hunstanton making them vulnerable to the flooding.

The 67th ARS stationed at RAF Sculthorpe mobilized quickly saving several more lives. Of the Airmen who responded, Airman 2nd Class Reis Leming saved 27 people despite being unable to swim. Approximately 6 ft. 4 in., Leming treaded out into the icy waters, towing a life raft. As a result of his heroic and unselfish actions, Leming was the first non-Briton to be awarded the George Medal for bravery in peacetime.

"Our relationship with Hunstanton was forged on the tragic night of Jan. 31, 1953, when one of our own, Reis Leming risked his life to rescue 27 people, including children," Peak said. "Our special bond has endured for over 60 years and it is a privilege to be associated with the town."

The ceremony, similar to the American tradition of receiving the keys to the city, marks only the second time a U.S. Air Force squadron has received the freedom of a British town. The Freedom of Hunstanton was the community's way of expressing their gratitude for the actions taken more than 60 years ago.

"The depth of our gratitude cannot be expressed in words alone," said Counsillor Carol Bower, mayor of Hunstanton. "We were revisited with a storm of similar magnitude Dec. 5, 2013. The difference was, we had forewarning and so many people aided in ensuring the safety of all residents. So, it's quite important that we recognize those who risked their lives to help us so long ago. The Freedom of Hunstanton is the highest honor we can bestow and we give it with great enthusiasm."

The Freedom of Hunstanton scroll was also presented to the late Reis Leming's wife, Kathy, and son, Michael, to honor his actions that fateful night.

"The love and support the community shows my father is amazing," said Michael Leming. "The true heroes in this world don't look at themselves as such. My dad was one of them ... he liked to say he was in the wrong place at the right time. He very much would have loved to be here today, especially with the town and fellow Airmen."

Just as the contingent marched to the sea wall, the town of Hunstanton was greeted with a flyby of an MC-130J Commando II, the aircraft the 67th SOS operates out of RAF Mildenhall.

"Today was exhilarating," Bower said. "The service members were so smart looking and it moved me to tears to see the aircraft as it flew over. There was a collective gasp from the crowd when it came by - I am so very proud to be mayor at this time."

The motto of the 67th SOS details how Airmen are always prepared and poised to act regardless of the circumstance.

"Our motto is 'any time, any place,'" Peak said. "Reis Leming's actions embody the very finest characteristics of our Airmen both past and present. It shows that no matter the call, when it comes, we will be there."

Airmen from the 67th Special Operations Squadron march after receiving the Freedom of Hunstanton, the highest award the town council is able to give, Oct. 4, in Hunstanton, England. The award was in commemoration of the lives saved by 67th Air Rescue Squadron Airmen during a flood in 1953. The town recognized the late Reis Leming in particular, who was an Airman 2nd Class at the time of the flood, for single-handedly saving 27 people. Photo by Airman 1st Class Preston Webb.

2/8 Marines join forces with MARSOC to enhance partner nation force training capabilities

Story and photos by Marine Corps Capt. Barry Morris MARSOC Public Affairs

As the nature of conflict and challenges to the U.S. and its interests remain constant, so does the demands of the U.S. Marine Corps' ability to operate and conduct operations as a closely integrated Marine Air Ground Task Force with interagency and multinational partners across the full range of military operations.

With this in mind, elements of Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, joined forces with U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command Aug. 17 – 27, to strengthen the process-driven capability integration process between Special Operations Forces and the MAGTF. This increases the Marine Corps' and MARSOC's ability to partner with foreign counterparts to advise, train and assist allied security forces.

Throughout the 10-day training evolution, Marines with 2/8 played the role of a notional partner nation force, while MARSOC critical skills operators and special operations officers advised, trained and assisted 2/8, increasing both MARSOC's and 2/8's ability to advise, train and assist partner nation forces throughout the globe.

"The training scenarios we [MARSOC] developed were designed specifically to enhance not only our own abilities to train, advise and assist a partner nation force in conducting operations on their own, but to enhance the overall capabilities of 2/8," said a MARSOC CSO conducting the training.

"It was great to train with MARSOC, explained 2nd Lt. Zachary A. Basich, 1st platoon commander with Echo Company. "I learned a great deal about advising a partner nation force at the small unit level while at the same time learning some of MARSOC's best practices, which in turn helped my Marines and me to refine our own basic infantry tactics."

The training also included advanced intelligence fusion, preparation of the environment based off of the collected intelligence, and how to properly handle and report valuable information.

A Marine with Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, provides security during a partner nation force training exercise at Hurlburt Field, Fla., Aug 17 – 27.

"Conducting training like this with MARSOC provided us with a greater understanding of the importance of intelligence gathering and collecting critical information discovered at an objective site, and the value of reporting and properly handling new information gathered," said Sgt. Edwin R. Soto, a squad leader with 2nd Platoon.

In addition to intelligence collections, MARSOC also shared with the Marines of Echo Company specialized techniques used to conduct short strikes and small-scale offensive actions to seize, capture and recover critical information or high value targets and persons of interest.

"Training with MARSOC provided me with the opportunity to work with a wide array of specialized equipment, as well as train at unique and unfamiliar facilities that my unit normally wouldn't have access to," said LCpl. Daniel J. Maine, a squad leader with 1st platoon. "The best part about training with MARSOC was the small unit tactics the MARSOC operators emphasized. Essentially, the past two weeks brought us

back to our roots of conducting dynamic missions at the fire team maneuver level."

When asked if training with MARSOC was value added and would they do it again, the responses from the Marines of Echo Company were overwhelmingly positive.

"Looking at our future mission sets, we will be more focused on small unit detachments spread loaded throughout any particular area of responsibility," said Basich, a Wheeling, W.Va., native and 2013 U.S. Naval Academy graduate. "This training facilitated our requirement to learn how to train another partner nation force, while at the same time honing our own tactics, techniques and procedures. I would definitely jump on the chance to have my entire platoon, if not the entire battalion, involved in training like this with MARSOC again in the future."

Soto said having a hybrid platoon made up of Marines from each platoon within Echo Company allowed them to spread load the knowledge gained during the training throughout the entire company, and has prepared the unit for future deployments.

"I was also impressed with the level of professionalism MARSOC's critical skills operators and special operation officers displayed throughout the entire evolution," said Soto. "They served as true role models to our young Marines participating in this training exercise."

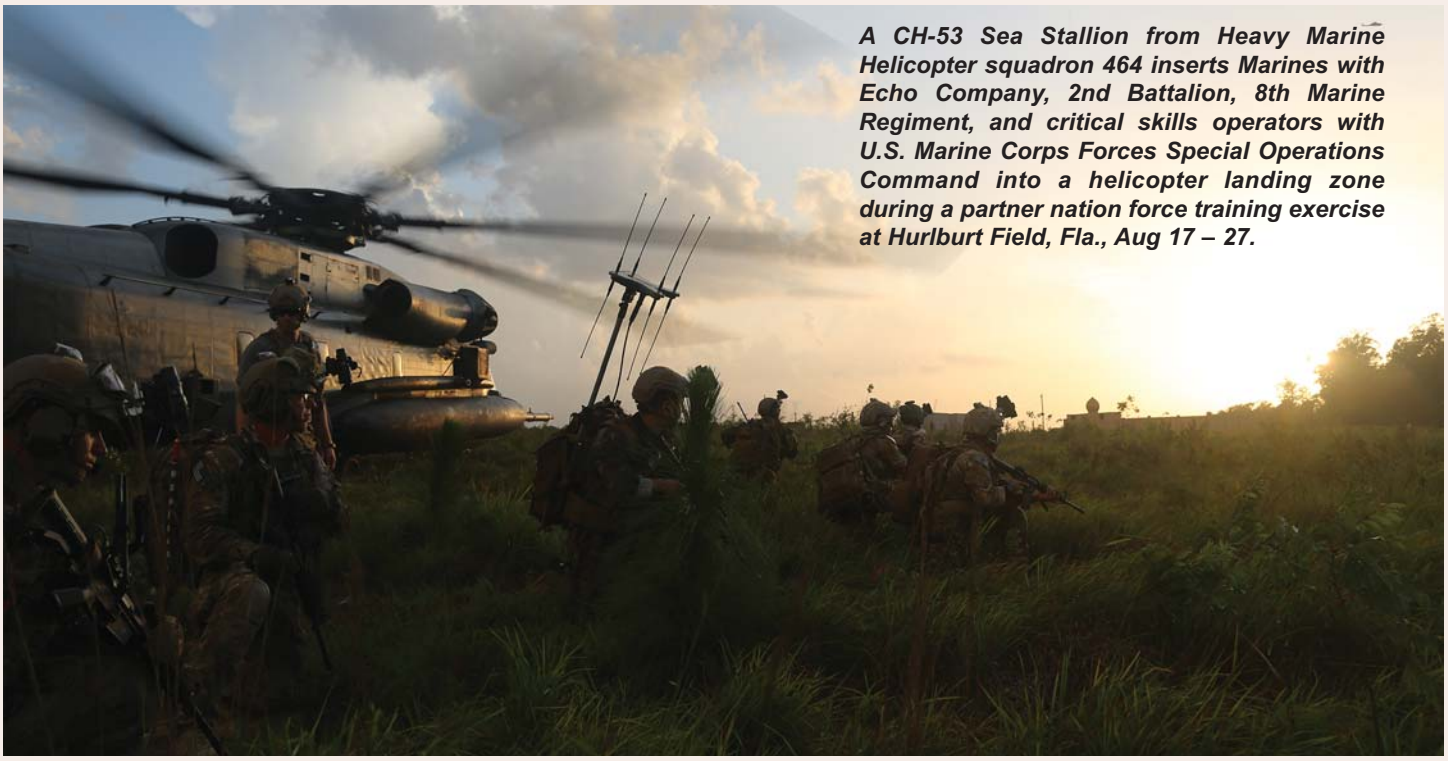
"The level of professionalism and the way the MARSOC Marines carried themselves was something we all looked up to," said Maine. "When I become eligible, I plan to submit my application to be screened and selected for MARSOC Assessment and Selection. This past week of training definitely opened my eyes a little more about what it is that MARSOC does, and I want in," exclaimed Maine, from Norwich, Conn.

The Marines with MARSOC were also pleased with the training outcome.

"The Marines of 2/8 performed superbly and my fellow CSOs and SOOs were extremely pleased with the level of enthusiasm they displayed and their willingness and eagerness to learn new TTPs based upon the special operations scenarios we developed for this exercise," said a MARSOC CSO.

While building partner nation capacity is essential to advancing U.S. interests abroad, so is the ability for both conventional Marine Corps forces and MARSOC to train and work together to enhance the MAGTF and SOF capabilities integration process to meet the U.S.' National Security Strategy objectives.

"At the end of the day, the training exercise was a win-win for all those involved, concluded a MARSOC CSO."



A CH-53 Sea Stallion from Heavy Marine Helicopter squadron 464 inserts Marines with Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, and critical skills operators with U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command into a helicopter landing zone during a partner nation force training exercise at Hurlburt Field, Fla., Aug 17 – 27.

USSOCOM runs in remembrance

By Gunnery Sgt. Reina Barnett
USSOCOM Public Affairs

Active-duty members, veterans, and civilians came out in full force Oct. 3, marking the 21st anniversary of the dangerous and deadly battle on the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia, where 18 Americans were killed and at least 68 others wounded.

Twenty-eight two-man teams participated in the Mogadishu Mile, an event comprised of shooting a course of fire at the firing range followed by a 5k run that ended at the Special Operations Memorial at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.

The teams shot their course of fire in a simulated urban environment, replicating the original firefight. After moving and shooting through smoky conditions, the teams had to drag a 185-pound training mannequin, a simulated downed pilot, to safety.

The relay race refers to the route run by Special Operations Forces from the helicopter crash site to a rally point held by the 10th Mountain Division during the early October battle more than two decades ago. In the Special Operations community, the Mogadishu Mile is a symbol of perseverance and dedication to the mission.

After all teams completed the course, U.S. Special Operations Command senior enlisted, Command Sergeant Major Chris Faris, who was a sergeant first-class in 1993, and fought in the battle, spoke to participants and others who came out to honor and remember those who paid the ultimate sacrifice during Operation Gothic Serpent.

"There is a bond that will always be shared among warriors," said Faris. "They will never be forgotten."

Faris and the rest of his unit joined Task Force Ranger, a joint effort as part of a special operations task force deployed to Somalia in response to attacks by supporters of warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid on American and international troops. The original mission was to capture two of Aidid's key lieutenants near the Bakara Market; but all that changed when local Somali fighters and militiamen loyal to Aidid took actions of their own, raising an assault and shooting down one UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter. The mission to seize the militants immediately changed into a rescue operation.

"The biggest reason we stayed there was that we were not going to leave a fallen comrade behind," Faris said.

Before the battle was over, militants shot down two Black Hawks with rocket-propelled grenades and engaged in a fierce attack with exposed U.S. forces.

"When you're engaged in a firefight, it's a matter of survival, and who you fight for is that man to your left and your right, and every one of them did that," Faris said, as he recalled the young men who lost their lives that day.

"This operation is still remembered as evidenced by everyone that's out here participating," said Faris. "Thank you for being here … for remembering the events of 3 October. It's very humbling."

U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Joel Hill and Army Maj. Alan Warmbier, both assigned to U.S. Special Operations Command, drag a training mannequin during the Mogadishu Mile Run Oct. 3 on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. The Mogadishu Mile Run is held in memory of the men who lost their lives during the Oct. 3, 1993 Battle of Mogadishu in Somalia. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence.

Active-duty members, veterans, and civilians from USSOCOM came out Oct. 3, marking the 21st anniversary of the deadly battle on the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia, where 18 Americans were killed and at least 68 others wounded. Twenty-eight two-man teams participated in the Mogadishu Mile, an event comprised of shooting a course of fire at the firing range followed by a 5k run that ended at the Special Operations Memorial. Photos by Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence.

MOGADISHU MILE
5K ROAD RACE
IRVING, TX

The First Japanese Surrender

Before that better known surrender ceremony on the deck of a U.S. battleship, the Japanese first surrendered to UDT-21.

By Tom Neven and Richard Green
USSOCOM History & Research Office

The famous photo of Gen. Douglas MacArthur accepting the Japanese surrender on the deck of the U.S.S. Missouri on Sept. 2, 1945, does not capture the actual first capitulation to U.S. forces. That happened five days earlier when a Japanese officer handed over his sword to members of the Navy's Underwater Demolition Team-21. And how that team came to be on a Japanese beach during the last days of August 1945 had its genesis several years earlier on the coral reefs of a tiny Pacific atoll.

The invasion of Tarawa in November 1943 had become a near disaster when Marine landing craft became hung up on shallow coral reefs. The Marines were forced to wade several hundred yards through heavy enemy fire, and they suffered more than 3,000 casualties, including 990 dead. Planners had relied on photographic reconnaissance and ignored warnings about tricky tides and shallow reefs.

The U.S. Navy had earlier anticipated that the Pacific atolls might require coral blasting and had initiated a training program in Hawaii only weeks before the Tarawa invasion. That battle's dire results added incentive to this program. By the end of November, approximately 30 officers and 150 enlisted men from the Navy, Army, and Marine Corps had been trained in coral blasting and were divided into two groups to form UDTs 1 and 2, which were first employed for the invasions of Kwajalein and Roi-Namur in the Marshall Islands in January 1944. Their tactics, techniques, and procedures were refined under fire as these frogmen preceded landings across the Pacific. The UDTs later grew to 30 teams and evolved into all-Navy units.

They were scheduled to begin cold-water training Aug. 15, 1945, to prepare for a November assault of Japan's home islands. By Aug. 10, however, after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan sued for peace. The mission for the UDTs changed from one of invasion to one of occupation, and a flotilla of UDTs from California was dispatched on destroyer escorts on Aug. 16, bound for Japan, China, and Korea. UDTs 18 and 21 were

flown by C-54 transport planes to Guam and from there traveled onboard destroyer escorts to Tokyo, where the Third Fleet was gathering.

On Aug. 29, under the command of Lt. Cmdr. Edward P. Clayton, UDT-21 launched from the destroyer escort U.S.S. Begor (APD-127) to perform a beach reconnaissance at the harbor approach. They landed their craft at Futtsu-saki, at the entrance to Tokyo Bay, making UDT-21 the first Navy unit to land in Japan. As the team conducted the survey, a Japanese Army coastal artillery major approached Clayton and ceremoniously surrendered his samurai sword. This was the first sword surrendered to an American force in the Japanese home islands. The surprised Clayton reluctantly accepted it as a token of surrender—and a priceless souvenir. Clayton was later ordered to give up the sword so that nothing could mar the historic first surrender ceremony to Gen. MacArthur aboard the U.S.S. Missouri.

UDT-21 went on to survey beaches and wharves for the Marine occupation troops. They planted a banner on the beach that read, "Underwater Demolition Team-21 Welcomes the U.S. Marines to Japan." UDT-18 scouted the Yokosuka naval base, and additional teams arrived to help perform reconnaissance, clear obstacles, destroy war materiel, and other duties.

These activities marked the climax of the UDTs involvement in the Pacific Campaign. By 1946, only four UDTs remained after the post-war drawdown, though they would go on to play a prominent role in the Korean and Vietnam Wars and became the precursors to today's Navy SEALs.

Marine Corps Sgt.
Charles C. Strong
2d Marine Special Operations Battalion

Sgt. 1st Class
Andrew T. Weathers
7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)

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

Army Maj. Alan Warmbier takes aim while his teammate Navy Lt. Cmdr. Joel Hill (far left) clears his weapon during the Mogadishu Mile Run Oct. 3 on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. The Mogadishu Mile Run is held in memory of the men who lost their lives during the 1993 battle of Mogadishu in Somalia. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence.