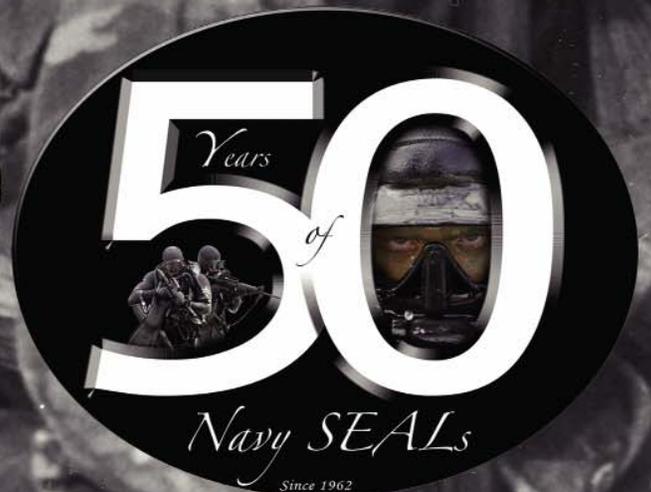




TIP OF THE SPEAR

**Naval Special Warfare
celebrates 50 years
of SEAL teams**



U.S. Special Operations Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., February 2012



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



SEALs mark 50 years of service ... 10

Tip of the Spear



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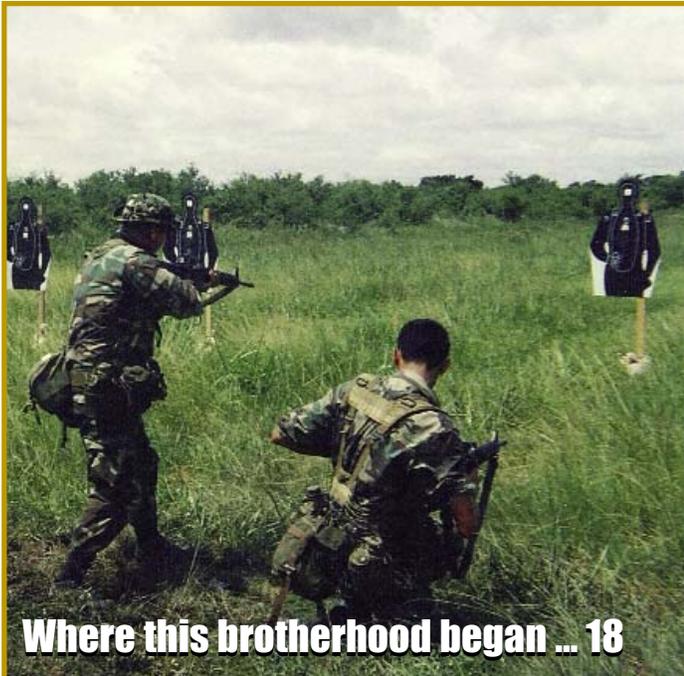
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(Cover) May, 1970, Republic of Vietnam. This famous picture of a SEAL up to his knees in river mud was taken during an actual combat operation in Vietnam by Navy Chief Petty Officer A. Hill. Photo courtesy of the National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum.

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Gallantry, heroism of Soldiers recognized during valor ceremony

*By Master Sgt. Donald Sparks
SOCEUR Public Affairs*

One Soldier was rendered unconscious by a bomb blast, but recovered and repelled an enemy attack. One Soldier strained both his hamstrings carrying a slain French officer down a mountain. One Soldier scaled up and down a mountain three times to save his fellow comrade. One Soldier was shot by enemy fire in the arm three times, yet continued to aggressively engage the enemy. And one Soldier ran through a burning building to evacuate its residents.

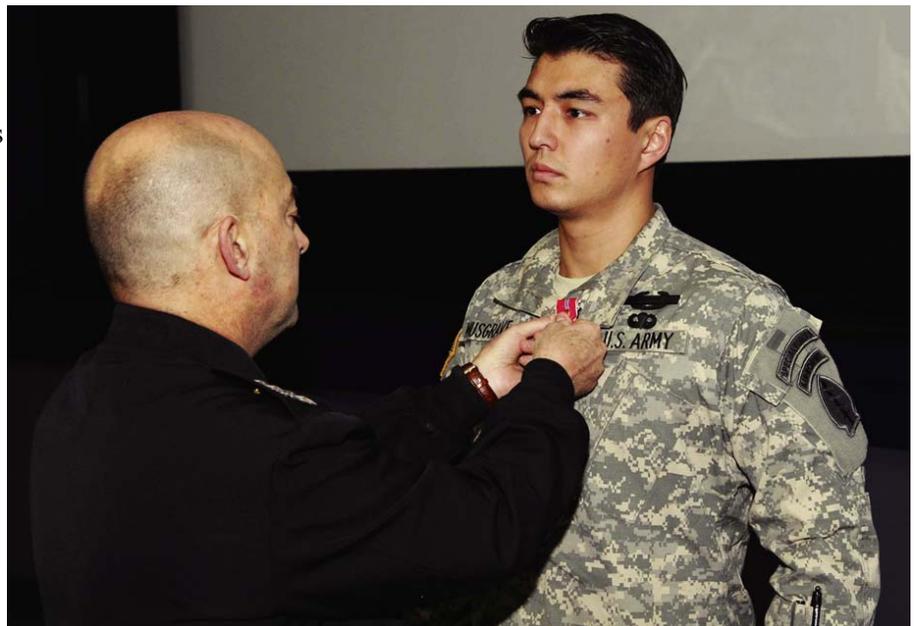
Four words sum up their actions – “leave no one behind.”

All five men, assigned to 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), were honored for their gallantry and heroism in a valor ceremony held at Patch Barracks in Stuttgart, Germany on Tuesday.

Capt. David Fox, Sgt. 1st Class McKenna “Frank” Miller and Staff Sgt. Matthew Gassman received Silver Stars, the United States’ third-highest award for gallantry in combat for their heroic actions on Dec. 17, 2010, in Kapisa Province, Afghanistan, in direct support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Staff Sgt. Jeffery Musgrave was awarded the United States’ fourth highest award for gallantry in combat, the Bronze Star with Valor Device, as well as the Purple Heart, for his actions and wounds received from the enemy on May 17, 2010, while deployed to Wardak Province, Afghanistan.

For risking his life to save 35 German citizens from a Böblingen, Germany apartment fire during the early



Admiral James G. Stavridis pins the Bronze Star with Valor device on Staff Sgt. Jeffery Musgrave during a valor ceremony. Courtesy photo.

morning hours on July 3, 2011, Spc. Willie Smith Jr., was awarded the Soldier’s Medal, the United States’ highest peacetime award for heroism.

Hosting the ceremony, Maj. Gen. Michael S. Repass, commander, U.S. Special Operations Command Europe, said the men being recognized would probably never tell their story due to their humility.

“These are real live friends, neighbors, teammates – people that we know,” Repass said. “They will humbly admit that they had the opportunity to act outside the line of duty, beyond the orders of superiors and perform an act of conspicuous bravery.”

At the conclusion of the ceremony, U.S. European Command Commander Adm. James G. Stavridis praised not only the awardees, but the entire Special Operations Forces community at large.

“Special Forces are the best planners we have,” Stavridis said. “But then when chaos descends, that’s when these extraordinary people stand and deliver. It’s really about bringing order to chaos, about saving your comrades and about, above all, standing for something larger than yourself. That is pretty spectacular.”

No Man Left Behind – December 17, 2010

Fox, three French engineers, an interpreter, an Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) commander and a member of his Special Operations Task Unit (SOTU) were conducting a site assessment for future placement of an ANSF checkpoint when the team started taking enemy contact.

“We just wanted to get out there, take some photos, get some measurements and get out as quickly as possible,” said Miller who was setting up a defensive perimeter while Fox was surveying the site. “We knew we would get into a firefight every time we went out there.”

From his position, Fox noticed that his security elements were taking small arms and rocket-propelled grenade attacks from two separate enemy positions.

“Frank was telling me to hurry up there,” Fox said, describing how enemy fire began to increase in volume on Miller’s position. “I was sensing things were deteriorating.”

He moved the survey element to the top of a ridgeline to engage the enemy and suddenly – darkness enveloped him.

A devastating improvised explosive device detonated near the team leaving Fox unconscious, instantly killing a French captain and critically wounding the ANSF commander. Despite being disoriented when he came to, Fox began to search for survivors and account for members of the element.

“Initially I thought it was a mortar round,” Fox said about regaining consciousness. “I was waiting for that second round to hit, but it never came. I was zapped of all my strength at that point.”

Still dazed from the blast and enemy rounds

impacting within inches of him, Fox began to administer trauma care by placing a tourniquet on the ANSF commander.

From his position on the ground, Miller heard the large explosion atop the ridgeline but could only see a large plume of black smoke billowing up from where Fox and the assessment team were located. At that moment he had broken transmission with Fox and lost radio contact.

“It went from everything’s fine to we’re going to need to evacuate the hell out of here,” Miller said.

Due to the mountainous terrain, it made radio communications more restricted. Not long afterwards only Fox’s words; “urgent...surgical” could be heard being uttered over the radio.

Located at the eastern-most security position, Gassman made several attempts to scale the mountain directly to the blast site. Realizing enemy rounds were impacting on

his position and the ascent route was too steep, he moved 100 meters to the west of his position and around the ridgeline to another access route – but he was still off.

Gassman then climbed several hundred near-vertical feet on the mountain fully exposed to enemy observation. Impacting rounds sparked the rocky surface near him, yet he continued to try to get to Fox. This time he realized he had climbed south of Fox’s position.

Once again, Gassman ran down the mountain and moved 200 meters north and started his desperate climb again, still taking enemy fire. After scrambling twice up restrictive terrain and wearing nearly 80 pounds of gear, an exhausted Gassman finally found Fox and the wounded ANSF commander.

After Miller arrived to Fox’s location, he noticed Fox was still dazed from the blast but able to move on his own. Miller organized the element to extract the French engineer’s body and the wounded ANSF commander.

“At this time I was totally exhausted, I could barely drag the guy, yet alone put him on my shoulder,” Fox

“We knew we would get into a firefight every time we went out there.”

— Sgt. 1st Class McKenna “Frank” Miller



SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – EUROPE

said. “Frank said, ‘hey I got it,’ bends down, puts the KIA in a fireman’s carry, picks him up and proceeds to move down the mountain.”

Miller had scaled the mountain just prior to arriving on the scene, but he carried the KIA down the mountain to the emergency helicopter landing zone (HLZ) for evacuation.

Soaked in the French engineer’s blood, Miller painstakingly made his way down the mountain, all-the-while taking sustained fire from the enemy. Several times he stumbled and fell due to the weight on his back.

Fox, now carrying Miller’s M4 carbine weapon, provided suppressive fire to shield Miller as they made their way down the near-vertical mountain. As Fox watched Miller struggle, he thought, “This is serious trying to get down.”

As the men approached the dried up wadi at the base of the mountain, Miller fell once more. He was now in agonizing pain due to his hamstrings being severely strained. The team was able to seek cover behind a tree upon crossing the wadi.

Laughing aloud as he recalled the events on the ground, Miller said, “I do remember Captain Fox running across the wadi in the open to go get help and bringing me water.”

Gassman made his way down the mountain under a hail of fire with the ANSF commander to the HLZ, but had to abort because of too much enemy fire at that location. The decision was made to establish another landing zone 1,000 meters away.

After loading everyone in an LMTV, Gassman dismounted and ran in front of the vehicle to suppress enemy fire and led the vehicle to the second HLZ where



From left to right, Silver Star recipients Capt. David Fox, Sgt. 1st Class McKenna 'Frank' Miller and Staff Sgt. Matthew Gassman. Courtesy photo.

the wounded ANSF commander and the fallen French officer were evacuated.

Reflecting on why it was important to bring his mortally wounded French comrade down the mountain, Miller said, “We’re never going to leave somebody behind. It’s not an option.”

In Spite of Pain – May 17, 2010

After completing a home search of a suspected IED facilitator, Musgrave and his SOTU were preparing to head back to camp when they came under enemy fire. Three rounds ripped into his left bicep before he could even react.

“I looked at my arm and didn’t see any blood...my adrenaline just started pumping,” Musgrave said. “I was more excited about the firefight.”

Musgrave informed the team that he was hit, and continued maneuvering to different positions and returned fire on the enemy.

After expending his M-4 basic load and ignoring incoming fire, he left his covered position to man a comrade’s M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon and continued to engage in the fight.

Despite bleeding profusely, Musgrave exposed himself twice more, before finally being treated for his wounds. As he was being treated by the medic, a member of his team yelled for assistance and again Musgrave maneuvered 300 meters into position to engage the enemy allowing two of his teammates to flank the enemy and kill two fighters.

“It was something out of a movie,” Musgrave said. “On top of everything that was happening, it was pouring down raining. Anything and everything possible that could have went wrong – went wrong that day.”

Fighting with only one good arm, Musgrave and his team tried to depart the area, but their vehicle got stuck in the mud – all while getting peppered by enemy fire. He got out of the vehicle and formed a defensive perimeter until the vehicle was recovered.

“You don’t have time to think about what’s going

on,” Musgrave said of his actions. “I may have got shot, but if the guy next to me, who was my medic, gets shot...then we’d really be in a bad situation. During that time of mass chaos, someone had to step up to the plate and do what had to be done.”

Saving Your Fellow Man – July 3, 2011

Walking home in the early-morning hours after attending a social event, Smith and a friend noticed a building engulfed in flames in Böblingen, Germany. After directing his friend to call the German authorities, Smith next did something that he said was instinctive on his part.

“I ran up and down three or four stories to inform the people of what was going on,” Smith said. “I just wanted to ensure I got everyone out of that building.”

Going door-to-door, he attempted to alert the sleeping residents of the fire. By the time the fire department and Polizei

arrived, most of the residents were evacuated, but the crowd mentioned there was still an elderly couple inside.

Smith ran back inside the building along with two members of the Polizei to retrieve the couple from harm.

“The gentleman did not want to leave his wife because she had problems walking, so he stayed in the building with her,” Smith said.

Moving through thick smoke, Smith and the rescue team located the couple, who were disoriented and having trouble getting out of bed. He took control of the handicapped, elderly gentleman and escorted him down the stairs, while the other rescue team members led the elderly woman to safety. Moments later the roof of the building collapsed.

Smith mentioned his motivation for going into the blazing building was that he didn’t want to see anyone get hurt.

“It’s inside of everyone to want to help other people,” Smith said. “When I did it, I didn’t give any second thought about it.”

*“It was something out of a movie,”
Musgrave said. “On top of everything
that was happening, it was pouring
down raining. Anything and everything
possible that could have went wrong –
went wrong that day.”*

— Staff Sgt. Jeffery Musgrave



HALO over Korea

Photos by Air Force Staff Sgt. Rasheen A. Douglas



(Clockwise from top)

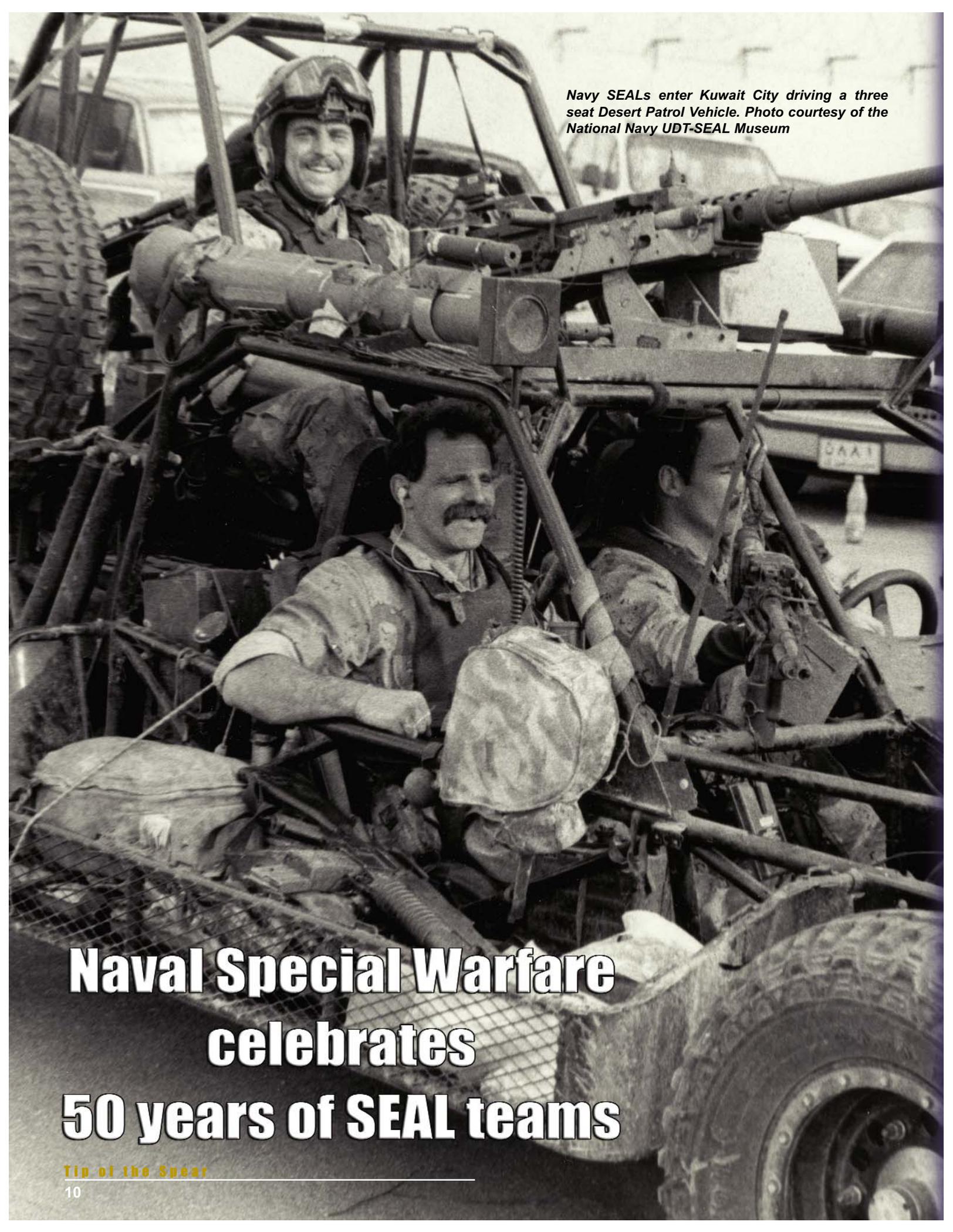
An Air Force survival, evasion, resistance and escape specialist from the 8th Operations Support Squadron (left), makes sure a Soldier from Special Operations Command Korea's 39th Special Forces Detachment (Airborne) has his parachute ready to go before boarding a C-130 at Kunsan Air Base, Republic of Korea.

An Air Force SERE specialist from the 8th Operations Support Squadron (right), goes over landing coordinates with a Soldier in a C-130 flying over the Republic of Korea.

Soldiers from SOCKOR jump out of a C-130 at the Gunsan-Saemangeum Airshow in Gunsan City, Republic of Korea.



A Soldier from SOCKOR floats to the ground after jumping 10,000 feet from a C-130 at the Gunsan-Saemangeum Airshow in Gunsan City, Republic of Korea, Oct. 9, 2011.



Navy SEALs enter Kuwait City driving a three seat Desert Patrol Vehicle. Photo courtesy of the National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum

Naval Special Warfare celebrates 50 years of SEAL teams



By Naval Special Warfare Command Public Affairs

The Naval Special Warfare community celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Navy SEAL teams Jan. 1.

In the late 1950s and early 1960, Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy determined a need for developing an unconventional warfare capability to counter a menacing Soviet threat, turmoil in places like Indonesia and Malaysia, and rising insurgency problems in South Vietnam.

In response to the demand for a maritime special operator, Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Arleigh A. Burke, authorized the creation of the first two SEAL teams Jan. 1, 1962. SEAL Team 1 was established in San Diego, Calif. to support the Pacific Fleet. The team was established under the command of Lt. David Del Giudice. SEAL Team 2 was established in Little Creek, Va., to support the Atlantic Fleet. SEAL Team 2 was under the command of Lt. John Callahan. These first two SEAL teams were commissioned with a complement of 10 officers and 50 enlisted men taken from the ranks of the Navy's Underwater Demolition teams who made their mark in World War II and Korea investigating and removing all obstacles, both natural and man-made from beach landing locations.

Shortly after establishment of the teams, the inaugural class of Navy SEALs took to the jungles of Vietnam for reconnaissance, ambushes, captures, raids, POW recovery, and other innovative and offensive efforts to disrupt Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army operations and infrastructure. The teams were

among the most decorated units in the Vietnam War.

While the character and mission U.S. Navy SEALs carried out then and now have not changed significantly, SEALs today have matured their tactical skills and capabilities from the days of KA-BARs, M-16s and PRC-77s. The use of unmanned aerial vehicles is paying huge dividends in intelligence gathering and target tracking. Navy SEALs communicate intra-sound and across the world in real-time, and with video. Navy SEAL armories carry fearsome, hand-held weapons for every environment and situation. From the Mekong Delta to the Hindu Kush, deep at sea or far into the desert, SEALs have conducted some of our nation's most critical missions and are as relevant today, as they were when they were first created.

In spite of radical changes in technology and the times, the Navy SEAL of 2012 has the same dogged determination and exceptional toughness the 1962 "plank owner" possessed. Navy SEAL teams have an impressive battle field record, having earned every significant military award, including five Medals of Honor. Those successes do not come without countless acts of heroism and profound sacrifice. "Never quit" and "always win" are qualities that define the teams and its members vow to never compromise.

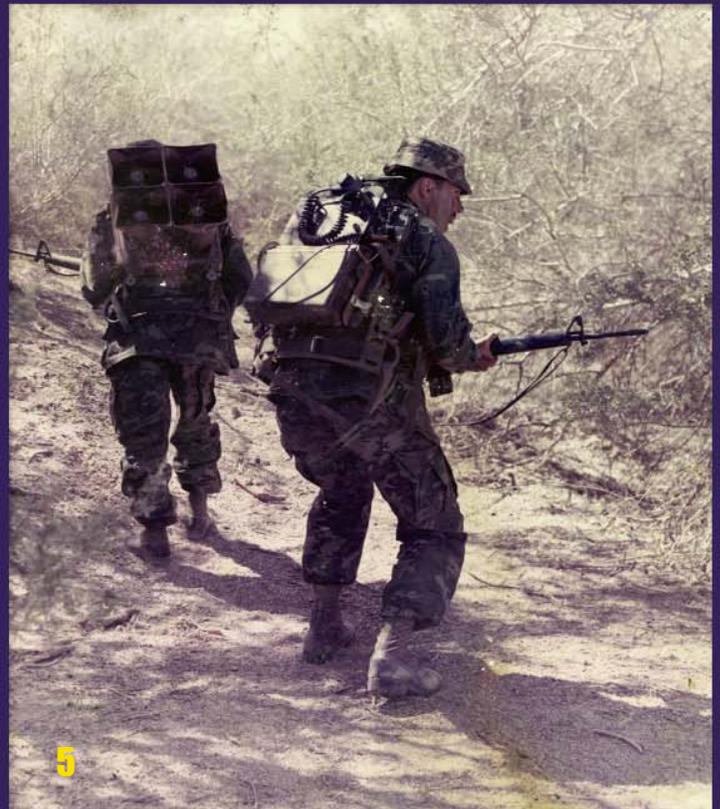
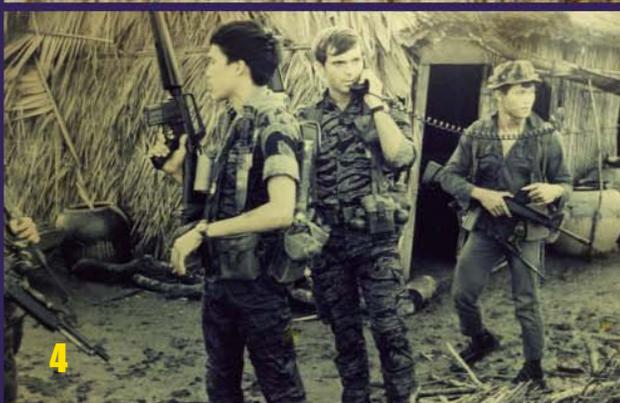
In his remarks to the force Jan. 10, Rear Adm. Sean A. Pybus, commander, Naval Special Warfare Command, emphasized the importance of continuing the Navy SEAL legacy.

"I would ask you to look at the future, make a point to continue our successful legacy and keep our force relevant, continue to develop yourself personally, professionally, get education, get experience and look to the future and make sure that we continue to be successful and relevant for our Navy, for the Special Operations Command and for our nation," Pybus said.



**A Fountain High-Speed Boat (USB)
operated by members of Special Boat Unit
12 near Ras al-Mishab, Saudi Arabia, 1991.
Photo courtesy of National Navy UDT-SEAL
Museum.**

SEALs 50 years of service



Vietnam

Photos courtesy of the National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum.

1) *Disguised as fishermen, Republic of Vietnam Navy SEAL, Kiet Van Nguyen, and U.S. Navy SEAL Tom Norris went behind enemy lines in a sampan and rescued a downed pilot. For their actions Norris received the Medal of Honor and Nguyen the Navy Cross.*

2) *Members of SEAL Team One move down the Bassac River in a SEAL Team Assault Boat during operations along the river south of Saigon in November 1967.*

3) *The Viet Cong would not know of the SEALs approach until they were close by, literally at arm's length. The Viet Cong so feared the camouflaged SEALs that they dubbed them "the men with green faces."*

4) *SEALs became proficient in anti-guerrilla and guerrilla actions. They quickly adapted to enemy practices, using small groups, light weapons, and special equipment to hunt down and capture required intelligence.*

5) *Navy SEALs on patrol.*

Earnest Will

Persian Gulf: 1987 — SOF's first tactical operation involved SEALs, Special Boat Units, and 160th Special Operations Regiment (Airborne) aviators working together during Operation Earnest Will. The Nightstalkers used "Little Bird" helicopters to disable the Iranian ship Iran Ajr while the ship was laying mines in the Persian Gulf. SEALs and Special Boat Units later captured the ship. A SEAL platoon and a demolition unit planted explosives on an oil platform and destroyed it.



Just Cause

Panama: 1989 — Photograph taken in General Manuel Noriega's backyard Beach House, Christmas Day 1989. The SEALs in the picture had recently blown up the Presidente Porras, a Panama Defense Force patrol boat as part of the Task Unit Whiskey during Operation Just Cause.



Desert Storm

Kuwait: 1991 — Navy SEALs on border patrol.



Uphold Democracy

Haiti: 1994 — Members of SEAL Team 8 patrolling the streets of Haiti during Operation Uphold Democracy.



Photos courtesy of the National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum.

SEALs 50 years of service

Operation Enduring Freedom

(Top to bottom)

From left to right, Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew G. Axelson, Senior Chief Petty Officer Daniel R. Healy, Petty Officer 2nd Class James Suh, Petty Officer 2nd Class Marcus Luttrell, Petty Officer 2nd Class Eric S. Patton, and Lt. Michael P. Murphy in Afghanistan. With the exception of Luttrell, all were killed June 28, 2005, by enemy forces in Operation Red Wing. Murphy, Dietz, and Axelson died fighting on the ground. In a rescue effort of Murphy's team, Healy, Suh and Patton along with 13 other SOF Operators were killed in a helicopter crash downed by an enemy RPG. Murphy would receive the Medal of Honor for his actions that day. U.S. Navy photo.

During Sensitive Site Exploitation mission, U.S. Navy SEALs discover a large cache of munitions in one of more than 50 caves explored in the Zhawar Kili area, Jan. 14, 2002. U.S. Navy photo.

A U.S. Navy SEAL observes munitions being destroyed Feb. 12, 2002. The SEALs discovered the munitions while conducting a Sensitive Site Exploitation mission in Eastern Afghanistan. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Tim Turner.





Operation Iraqi Freedom

(Top to bottom)

SEALS conduct a combat operation to detain suspected terrorist leaders of an insurgent force near Baghdad, Iraq, June 12, 2007. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Johansen Laurel.

Petty Officer Second Class (SEAL) Michael A. Monsoor patrolling the streets of Iraq while deployed in 2006. Monsoor would earn the Medal of Honor posthumously as part of a sniper overwatch security position with three other SEALs and eight Iraqi Army soldiers. An insurgent closed in and threw a fragmentation grenade into the overwatch position. The grenade hit Monsoor in the chest before falling to the ground. Positioned next to the single exit, Monsoor was the only one who could have escaped harm. Instead, he dropped onto the grenade to shield the others from the blast. Monsoor died approximately 30 minutes later from wounds sustained from the blast.

SEALs patrol the streets of Shuhaymiyah, Iraq, June 9, 2007, to maintain a security presence throughout the province. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Christopher Perez.

A SEAL with Coalition Forces participates in a search for three missing Soldiers near Baghdad, May 13, 2007. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Michael Watkins.





U.S. Navy SEAL Medal of Honor recipients



Joseph Robert Kerrey

Place / Date of Action:

Near Nha Trang Bay,
Republic of Vietnam,
March 14, 1969



Thomas Rolland Norris

Place / Date of Action:

Quang Tri Province,
Republic of Vietnam,
April 10 to 13, 1972



Michael Edwin Thornton

Place / Date of Action:

Republic of Vietnam,
Oct. 31, 1972



Michael Patrick Murphy

Place / Date of Action:

Near Asadabad, Afghanistan,
June 28, 2005



Michael Anthony Monsoor

Place / Date of Action:

Ar Ramadi, Iraq,
Sept. 29, 2006

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Then-Bolivian Army Corporal Rod Mendoza (left) watches as then-U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Fensom (center), of 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), runs through reaction-to-contact drills during a 1997 Joint Combined Exchange Training exercise in Bolivia with the country's Manchengo ranger battalion. In the past 14 years, Mendoza has left the Bolivian army and joined the U.S. Army's Special Forces regiment, served on several deployments and is now an instructor for the Special Forces Qualification Course. Fensom is now a sergeant major, and the deputy commandant of the David K. Thuma Noncommissioned Officer Academy at Fort Bragg. Photo courtesy of Sgt. Maj. Patrick Fensom.

Where this brotherhood began

One small gesture of friendship by a team of Special Forces Soldiers set one young Bolivian corporal on a path toward wearing his own American green beret

By Dave Chace
SWCS Public Affairs Office

In 1997, eight Special Forces Soldiers traveled to Bolivia to train and advise a battalion of Bolivian army rangers. Beyond running the battalion's light infantry certification training, the Special Forces team used their downtime to refine their own techniques and tactical proficiency; and they allowed a motivated 20-year-old Bolivian Army corporal to participate in their team training sessions.

For then-Sgt. 1st Class. Patrick Fensom and his teammates on Operational Detachment-Alpha 716, part of the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), this training

was routine. A few hours of internal team training events during a six-week Joint Combined Exchange Training deployment was usual, and if one or two host-nation soldiers wanted to come along and see how American forces did business, they were welcome.

For then-Bolivian army Corporal Rodrigo Mendoza, however, this experience came to define the next 14 years of his life. The Army's Special Forces community is small, and friends are often reunited throughout their careers, but Fensom never expected to see Mendoza again; let alone to see him 14 years later as a Special Forces sergeant first class, training future ODA commanders at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

“In Bolivia, military service is mandatory, so I was doing my time [in the '90s] and then I volunteered for ranger training,” Mendoza said. “Real American SF guys came to train us for a peacekeeping mission we were preparing to do with the United Nations. When they showed up, I was like, ‘Whoa, this is awesome!’”

Fensom, now a sergeant major and the deputy commandant of the David K. Thuma Noncommissioned Officer Academy, part of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, was a Special Forces weapons sergeant on the eight-man team assigned to train Mendoza’s unit, Bolivia’s Manchengo battalion.

“With the Manchengo battalion our mission was specifically to get them to a level where they could get certified by the United Nations to conduct peacekeeping operations,” Fensom said. “The training incorporated a lot of light infantry, medical and communications tasks, with equipment organic to their unit.”

“We got along with a lot of the Bolivian soldiers, but [Mendoza] was one of the soldiers who wanted some extra training,” Fensom said as he flipped through an old photo album at his desk, pointing at photos of a young Mendoza on a rifle range. “[Our team] always took some time to conduct team training during deployments, and Mendoza was one of two Bolivian soldiers we invited to train with us.”

Mendoza said he wouldn’t have been able to befriend the American team if it hadn’t been for their ability to connect with him on a cultural level.

“[Our team] could converse pretty well in Spanish, and of course all our lessons were taught in Spanish,” Fensom said. “That really was a key to building that rapport; and if you didn’t speak Spanish really well, you had the Bolivian soldiers there to interact with.”

“They spoke some good Spanish, like [then-Sgt. 1st Class Arthur Lilley],” Mendoza said. “He was a great Spanish speaker, and it was a good way to establish a friendship.”

At the end of the JCET, Mendoza gave Lilley his Bolivian green beret as a gift; Lilley reciprocated, giving Mendoza his own American green beret, complete with the 7th SFG(A) flash and the American Special Forces regimental insignia.

Mendoza finished his service in the Bolivian army in 1998, and spent some time as a firefighter at the Bolivian airport before moving to his wife’s home in Puerto Rico.



A Dutch military officer (left) representing NATO observes Bolivian Army training run by U.S. Army Special Forces Soldiers in Bolivia during a November 1997 Joint Combined Exchange Training deployment. The Dutch officer attended the training to validate Bolivia’s Manchengo battalion to conduct peacekeeping operations on behalf of NATO; the Spanish-speaking U.S. Army Soldiers from 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) spent six weeks training the Bolivian soldiers. Photo courtesy of Sgt. Maj. Patrick Fensom.

“I didn’t know Puerto Ricans were allowed to join the U.S. Army, but as soon as I found out, I decided I didn’t want to be a firefighter, I wanted to join the U.S. Army,” Mendoza said. He enlisted as an indirect-fire infantryman and asked for an assignment with the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, in order to be as close as possible to the heart of the Army’s Special Forces. His experience in an infantry unit was a great introduction to the U.S. Army, he said.

“I liked serving in the Bolivian army, but I always



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

viewed the U.S. as having the best army in the world – as it is, of course, with the quality of its training, equipment and capabilities,” Mendoza said.

“The first thing I did after becoming a U.S. citizen was to go to Special Forces Assessment

and Selection, because that was my dream,” Mendoza said. “I was finally going to become one of those cool guys I saw while I was in the Bolivian army!” Mendoza was selected to attend the Special Forces Qualification Course to become a Special Forces weapons sergeant.

“Of course there were lots of things I didn’t know, and I quickly saw the diversity in the things Special Forces groups can do and the areas they deploy to, especially after 9/11,” Mendoza said. “I saw the capability and how much we can do with just a team of 12 men. It’s amazing, and I’m so grateful to be here.

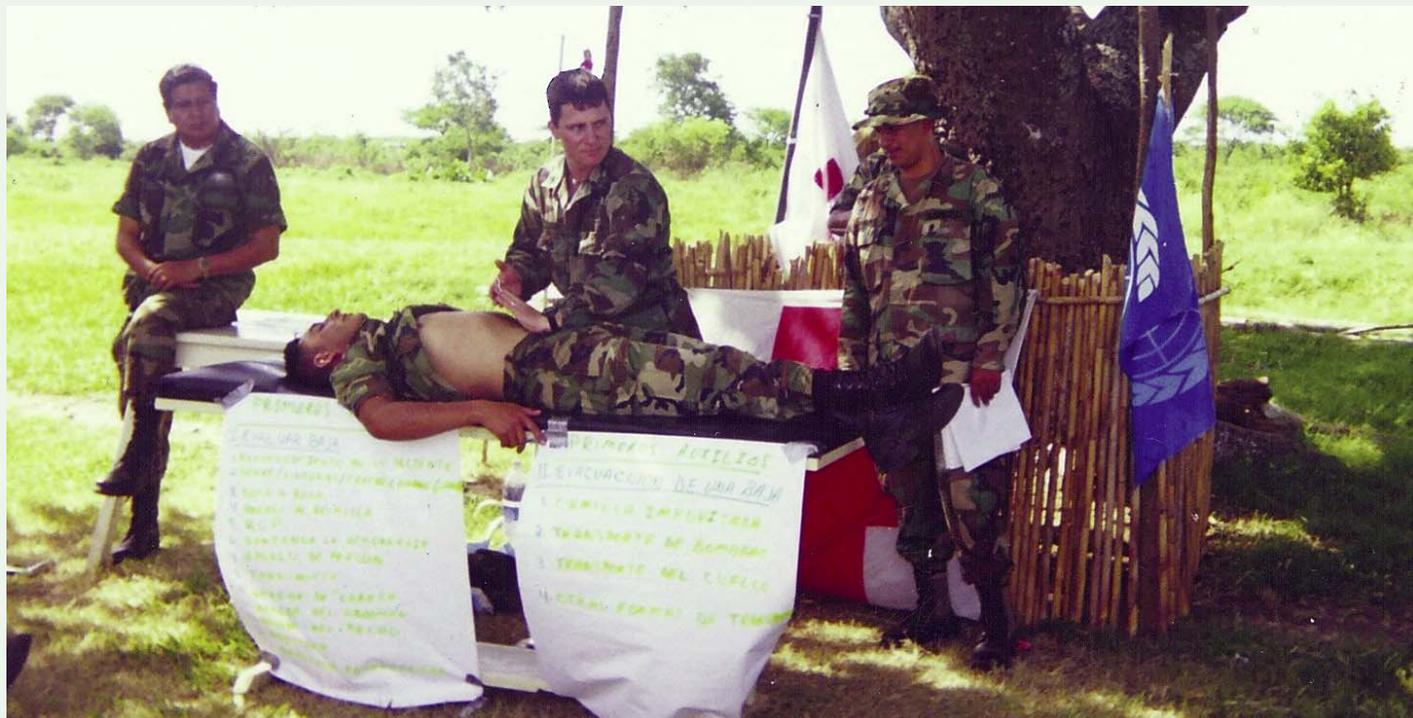
“In a later JCET I learned how important it is for you as a team in a foreign country to represent your country; you actually build relationships with local

soldiers,” Mendoza said. “And that’s what [ODA 716] pretty much did to me, they were my inspiration to join the U.S. Army later on. I didn’t even speak English, but I dreamed of joining the Special Forces, and life took me there.”

Mendoza ran into Lilley, then a first sergeant in the 96th Civil Affairs Battalion, after beginning the SFQC.

“He couldn’t believe it – in fact, he thought I was still in the Bolivian army, because we were still wearing BDUs,” Mendoza said. “He was so excited, and said that he was going back to 7th SFG(A) to be a team sergeant, and to stay in touch – maybe I could go to his battalion.”

Mendoza invited Lilley to attend his graduation ceremony from the SFQC, but Lilley couldn’t make it – he was preparing to deploy to Afghanistan. Mendoza was due to report to 7th SFG(A) following his graduation, and as a sign of friendship, he donned the green beret he’d received from Lilley in Bolivia in 1997 at his regimental first formation ceremony – the ceremony where new Special Forces Soldiers are first allowed to wear their beret.



Soldiers from the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) conduct medical training for Bolivian army soldiers during a November 1997 Joint Combined Exchange Training deployment. Special Forces Soldiers are specifically trained and educated to work with foreign militaries. On this mission, the 7th SFG(A) team was training and validating a Bolivian ranger battalion to conduct NATO peacekeeping operations. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. Maj. Patrick Fensom)

Sadly, Mendoza never had the opportunity to serve alongside his friend. Master Sgt. Arthur L. Lilley was killed in action on June 15, 2007, of wounds sustained from enemy small-arms fire in Afghanistan.

“We’ve lost so many good men, and to see that Art’s memory is continuing in Mendoza and some other guys, that’s huge. That’s really honoring the memory of a quality NCO,” said Fensom, who wears a bracelet with Lilley’s name as a personal reminder of his service.

Mendoza went on to serve five years in 7th SFG(A), becoming a Special Forces intelligence sergeant during that time. He served three combat deployments in Afghanistan, but his first Special Forces deployment had been as part of a JCET to Guatemala in Central America. His experience training with Lilley and Fensom’s team in 1997 made him want to be a similar mentor and inspiration to other young soldiers.

“[Guatemala] was a great experience for me because of my experiences in the Bolivian army,” Mendoza said. “We trained this Ranger-equivalent unit, and I was picturing myself back them, so to me it was easy to interact with those soldiers because I knew their lingo. I think we did a lot of good.”

Mendoza reported to SWCS in November 2011 to become an instructor for potential Special Forces officers attending the SFQC. He hadn’t expected to run into Fensom again; Mendoza hadn’t heard about him for years, and figured he’d gotten out of the military – until he saw Fensom addressing a group of Senior Leader Course students. Both Mendoza’s classroom SFQC training and Fensom’s NCO Academy are located in Fort Bragg’s Kennedy Hall.

“I recognized [Fensom’s] face – of course, he’d had hair back in Bolivia,” Mendoza said. “I ran into him and told him that he’d been on ODA 716 and served in Bolivia, and he was like, yeah, how do you know that?” Fensom said that he remembered exactly who Mendoza was as soon as he found out he’d been a part of the Bolivian army.

“He’s an instructor, mentoring future Special Forces Soldiers,” Fensom said.

“This job is interesting, because I can talk to future team leaders, and tell them how important it is to get a good relationship with host-nation soldiers and leaders,” Mendoza said. “And I can speak from the perspective of a member of the host-nation’s military.”

“This is a tremendous story, but it’s not about me or our team, it’s about what we do in Special Forces,”

Fensom said. “Not only did we communicate our lessons in his language, but we were a tight team back then, and I think that was captured in our non-verbal communications.”

Fensom said it was a proud feeling to see Mendoza serving at this level, as an NCO in the U.S. Special Forces community.

“It makes you realize that this is probably happening at so many levels, daily, with what special-operations Soldiers are doing,” Fensom said. “You see a guy achieve his dream, and he’s doing the same thing that we were doing back then, and that’s just too cool.”



Sgt. Major Patrick Fensom left, and Sgt. 1st Class Rod Mendoza stand outside the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, Fort Bragg, N.C. Photo by Staff Sgt. Russell Lee Klika.

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



'Silent Professionals' in Action:

4/3rd Special Forces Group's JISE receives national intelligence recognition

By Capt. Joshua Bloom

4/3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne)

"You may want to pack your bags... you're leaving next weekend." Local nationals in a remote area of Afghanistan had taken a stand against the Taliban and Coalition commanders were looking for a way to

reinforce success. With only 10 days notice, 4th Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), was selected to fill this vital gap.

Little did they know that the work they did would garner them much attention – so much so that then Gen. David Petraeus nominated them for one of the intelligence community's highest honors: the National Intelligence Meritorious Unit Citation.



Ms. Stephanie O'Sullivan, principle deputy to the Director of National Intelligence, presents the National Intelligence Meritorious Unit Citation to the Joint Intelligence Support Element, 4th Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), Sept. 20, 2011. Photo courtesy of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

The NIMUC is the highest national intelligence unit award given through the National Intelligence Awards program and is bestowed on behalf of the Director of National Intelligence.

The Joint Intelligence Support Element's worth was proven in December 2010 when Gen. David Petraeus, Commander International Security Assistance Force, and Mr. Mark Sedwill, NATO Ambassador to Afghanistan, described the Special Operations Task Force's unprecedented success as a "game changer" for the strategic picture in Afghanistan. Over the next several months, the JISE provided intelligence and products to key decision makers from across the coalition. On several occasions, products that the JISE produced were briefed to the commander of U.S. Central Command, Congress, and the President. The JISE also briefed Ambassadors from the U.S., Australia, and the Netherlands.

Understanding that the success of the JISE was also due to interagency members of the organization, leadership at every level wanted to ensure recognition for the entire organization and recommended the JISE to receive the National Intelligence Meritorious Unit Citation. Awarded by the Director of National Intelligence, the NIMUC recognizes exceptionally meritorious service on behalf of the entire intelligence community.

The JISE was the first organization within U.S. Army Special Forces Command (Airborne) to earn the NIMUC. According to Master Sgt. Brandon Kilgo, the JISE's senior enlisted advisor, "at first I thought that's good, the guys will have something to show for their time and hard work. But later when I realized who all signed off and approved the award, I realized it was much more than that. It was the intelligence community recognizing the accomplishments, sacrifice, and hard work of the JISE, and I realized how special it was. I'm still speechless over receiving the award."

On Sept. 20, 2011, the Director of National Intelligence held a ceremony in McLean, Va., to honor the awardees. Although the DNI was called away, his Principal Deputy Ms. Stephanie O'Sullivan presented the award. Because of the prestige of the award, several distinguished members from across the Special Operations community were in attendance, including Brig. Gen. Steven Duff, deputy commanding general for USASFC(A) and Col. Thomas Miller, senior intelligence officer for



Eighteen members of the Joint Intelligence Support Element were on hand at McKellar's Lodge, Fort Bragg, N.C. as the 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) commander presented them with the National Intelligence Meritorious Unit Citation ribbons. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Crisp.

USASOC. Following the ceremony, Lt. Gen. Ronald Burgess, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, congratulated the JISE on a job well done.

Unfortunately, due to ongoing mission and training requirements, few of the JISE members were able to attend the ceremony in Virginia. In light of this fact, the 3rd Special Forces Group held a dinner and awards ceremony at McKellar's Lodge to present individual awards to members of the JISE.

"This award was really the culmination of several unique events: the creation and activation of a brand new SF Battalion (including the Military Intelligence Detachment), the creation and activation of a brand new SOTF in Afghanistan, and the consolidation of an outstanding group of individuals," said Staff Sgt. Frank Muto, SOTF's senior analyst. Going from non-existent to fully operational in such short order is a testament to the hard work of the individuals in the organization. It was humbling to see such hard work from young Soldiers and NCOs who were performing at their maximum level. They had a steep learning curve to overcome and they did not disappoint. For intelligence professionals across the spectrum, it is common for our failures to be public and our successes to be private. It was a welcome reversal to see one such success recognized. Though I am biased now from working and living with the civilians, soldiers, NCOs, and officers I've come to count among my friends; every accolade is well-deserved."

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Medal of Honor recipient Sgt. 1st Class Leroy Petry told Soldiers in 3rd Battalion, 13th Field Artillery, how he lost his right hand from throwing a live grenade away from himself and two other Army Rangers during combat in Afghanistan's Paktia Province, during a visit to Fort Sill, Okla., Jan. 12, 2012. He stressed how important training is in staying alive in combat.

Medal of Honor recipient talks training, choices to Soldiers

*Story and photo by Marie Berbera
Fort Sill Public Affairs*

Sgt. 1st Class Leroy Petry's fate was stitched together by Army training, a pre-determined plan, and a

pineapple grenade.

He came to Fort Sill, Okla., Jan. 12, to share his story with Soldiers as the second living, active-duty service member to receive the Medal of Honor for actions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

On May 26, 2008, Petry was serving in the 2nd Platoon, D Company, 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, as they performed an unusual daytime mission to get a high value target in Afghanistan's Paktia Province.

He was shot through both of his legs and was taking cover with two other Soldiers when an enemy grenade landed nearby.

Petry had thought about what he would do if faced with this situation before, and it was this thought process that turned into action.

"You hear stories of guys jumping on grenades and whatnot. Well, being trained with grenades you know that it has up to a five-second fuse. And I had always thought, why do people jump on them? Now granted, if you're in an enclosed space in

a building, in a room, in a vehicle -- you kind of cover it up to protect your buddies. Well, being in an outside environment, I said if you have time to see it, you have time to kick it, throw it, whatever. And that's what was in my mind at the time," said Petry.

As the fuse was expiring, Petry picked up the pineapple grenade to throw it away.

"As I opened my hand it just exploded, completely took the hand off. I looked at it for a second and in my mind I thought, 'Why isn't this thing spraying in the wind like you see in the Hollywood movies?' And the next thing that kicked in was the reality of, well the hand is gone. What to do next? Put on a tourniquet."

He told Sill's Soldiers that his training took over as he kept performing his duties as a senior noncommissioned officer on the team.

"I think the adrenaline, but also the responsibility that I felt kept me mentally in the fight. I mean if I didn't have any of my limbs except for one, I could still get on the radio. I could still fire commands. I could still

fight, as long as I'm coherent. And so that's the way I looked at it," he explained.

Petry also stressed the importance of discipline as he said there is no time to be lax downrange. While his battle buddies were worried for his safety, he told them to stay focused and keep pulling security.

"Take the job seriously because when you get overseas there's no second chances," said Petry.

He said taking the time to teach Soldiers will keep leaders from feeling any guilt over losing someone from lack of training.

After safely coming home to his wife and four children, Petry was still ready for more. He chose to re-enlist because he said the opportunity to still serve in the military was too great. It was something he had wanted to do since he was seven years old.

"I kind of hit a wall when I lost my arm of, 'well I can't do the same job,' so then I had to find a new direction," Petry said. "Then I found a job that I love doing -- helping wounded Soldiers -- and then with the medal it just brought more upon talking and meeting with other Soldiers, so it's a positive thing."

His heroism has been celebrated all over but when asked how he felt about his actions, Petry said he simply had no regrets and that his son summed it up the best.

"They asked, 'How do you feel about your dad receiving the Medal of Honor and being at the White House?' He said 'I'm pretty proud of my dad, but I'm happy that he saved two of his friends and they're still here.'"

Petry is currently assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 75th Ranger Regiment, at Fort Benning, Ga., with duties as a liaison officer for the United States Special Operations Command Care Coalition-Northwest Region.

"I think the adrenaline, but also the responsibility that I felt kept me mentally in the fight. I mean if I didn't have any of my limbs except for one, I could still get on the radio. I could still fire commands. I could still fight, as long as I'm coherent. And so that's the way I looked at it."

— Sgt. 1st Class Leroy Petry



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Candidates push and pull a make shift vehicle during the Team Week phase of the Army Special Forces Assessment and Selection course, Jan. 22, in the woods of North Carolina near Camp Mackall. Team Week is designed to evaluate the candidates' behaviors to determine their potential to be a member of the Special Forces Regiment.

Soldiers endure physical strain of SF Assessment and Selection Team Week

*Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Marcus Butler
USASOC Public Affairs*

Soldiers from throughout the Army come to Fort Bragg, N.C. with the dream and goal of joining the U.S. military's "tip of the spear" – the U.S. Army Special Forces regiment.

To see this dream manifest, the Soldiers must attend the three-week Special Forces Assessment and Selection program at Camp Mackall. SFAS is a physically, mentally and emotionally rigorous test of Soldiers' courage, character and commitment.

Within this process is the phase called Team Week, in which the candidates' behaviors are assessed to

determine their potential to be members of the Special Forces Regiment.

"Team Week is both dynamic and complex, assessing an individual's ability to navigate uncertainty autonomously and as a member of a team," said Maj. Brian Decker, the Army Special Operations Forces Assessment and Selection company commander.

During this week-long trial-by-fire, the Soldiers have to work in 16-man teams to successfully negotiate and complete various challenges within the deep woods of North Carolina, often with minimal or ambiguous instruction, which allows evaluators to assess a candidate's ability to interpret intent and think for themselves. All the candidates have are their buddies to the left and right to help them make it through.

These challenges may take place at any time throughout a day, including the middle of the evening, and generally involve an entire team transporting equipment and contraptions across long distances of rough terrain. Team Week events are changed for each SFAS iteration, and the specific qualities being assessed are a closely guarded secret held by the SFAS cadre, in order to prevent Soldiers from gaming the selection process.

Approximately 50 percent of candidates who begin SFAS are not selected to attend the Special Forces Qualification Course, and Team Week is one of the candidates' biggest hurdles. During this period, cadre members observe and assess the ways in which each individual interacts with their peers in stressful situations.

The SFAS cadre is made up of experienced Army special operations Soldiers who have spent years operating as members of highly skilled small teams, and within a couple years, they will complete their assignment at SWCS and return to an operational unit. The cadre members are choosing their future subordinates, peers and leaders.

"[Team Week] has been one of the most physically challenging events of my life," said a candidate attending the January 2012 iteration of SFAS, which is run several times each year. "My body and mind have never been pushed like this before."

While the candidates execute their tasks despite physical and mental exhaustion, the SFAS cadre keep a vigilant eye on each candidate to make sure that they are conducting their tasks efficiently and maintaining the program's strict safety standards.

"Safety is paramount throughout the selection and assessment process," Decker said. "The course has institutionalized over 20 years of the best practices to manage all aspects of risk, from environmental hazards to the nutritional and hydration needs of the candidates."

Despite the pain, the candidates all continue to push themselves and each other throughout the process no matter what challenges that they face.

"I know that the pain is going to be there, we all know it," said another candidate, after having rolled his ankle during a road march. "But that is not going to stop us. The cadre will come and check on us to make sure it



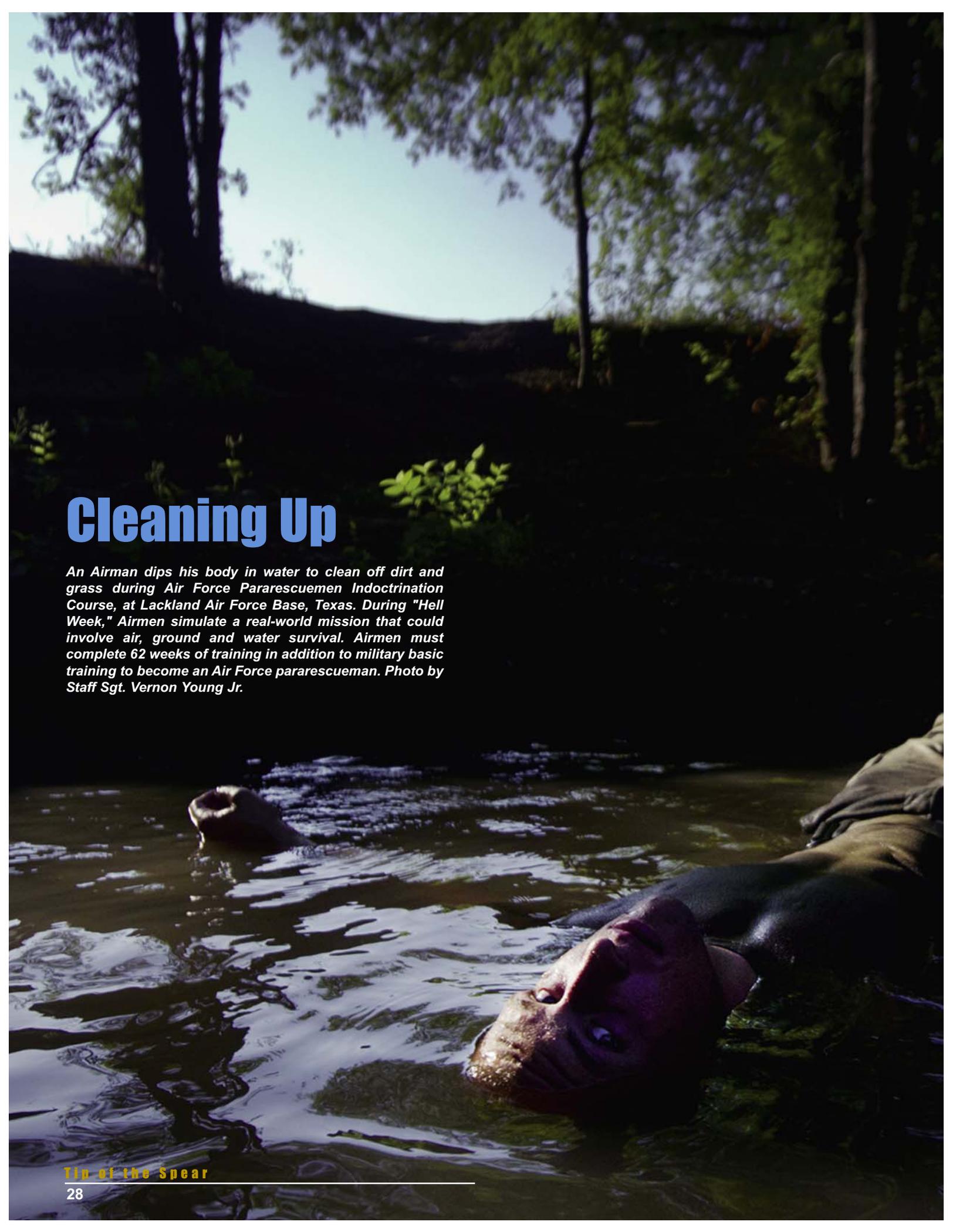
Candidates work together to break down a make-shift vehicle during the Team Week phase of the Army Special Forces Assessment and Selection course, Jan. 22, in the woods of North Carolina near Camp Mackall.

is nothing serious, and then we move on with the mission."

Teams of experienced Special Forces medics are present for each event throughout SFAS.

At the end of Team Week the candidates will find out whether or not they have earned the right to return to Fort Bragg to attend the Special Forces Qualification Course – the path toward earning a Special Forces tab and a green beret.

"I just hope that I did everything I could to give me the best chance to be selected," said one of the candidates during a brief stop. "No matter what, I am never going to quit. Even if I am not selected this time, I will be back."

A photograph showing a person floating in a river. The person's head and one arm are visible above the water. The background consists of a dense forest of green trees under a clear sky. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding environment.

Cleaning Up

An Airman dips his body in water to clean off dirt and grass during Air Force Pararescuemen Indoctrination Course, at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. During "Hell Week," Airmen simulate a real-world mission that could involve air, ground and water survival. Airmen must complete 62 weeks of training in addition to military basic training to become an Air Force pararescueman. Photo by Staff Sgt. Vernon Young Jr.





Combat Controller awarded Silver Star, Special Tactics Airmen receive more than 30 combat medals

By Capt. Kristen D. Duncan
AFSOC Public Affairs

The commander of Air Force Special Operations Command presented the Silver Star medal to a combat controller and more than 30 other medals to Special Tactics Airmen during a ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla., Jan. 18.

Lt. Gen. Eric Fiel presented Tech. Sgt. Clint Campbell the Silver Star for his actions during combat near Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, August 4, 2010. According to the citation, Campbell “directed 22 air

strikes, including multiple danger close employments, resulting in 13 enemy (fighters) killed.

“Without regard for his own safety, he ran 300 meters through a gauntlet of enemy fire...(and then again) exposed himself to enemy fire to mark insurgent positions with a 40-millimeter smoke grenade and directed an F-16 strafing run to neutralize the threat and enable evacuation of the wounded. (His) bravery in the face of withering enemy fire turned the tide of the battle, defeated the ambush, saved three teammates’ lives, and prevented certain additional casualties.”

The Silver Star is the third highest medal, given for gallantry and marked heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States.

“This is more of an accomplishment for the team,” Campbell said. “You just help your friends that are hurt. They’re your brothers and you’d do anything for them.”

Fiel brought Campbell’s parents on stage to take part in the presentation. Dwight and Sandy Campbell said their son acted true to form.

“I was just so proud of him,” Sandy said. “It’s just the kind of person he is.”

In addition, more than 30 medals were presented for combat actions during the recent 23rd Special Tactics Squadron deployment. Special Tactics Airmen received six Bronze Star Medals with Valor, three Purple Heart Medals and 22 Air Force Combat Action Medals. One Airman, Staff Sgt. Joshua Craig, received two of the Bronze Stars for separate engagements.

“All of the Airmen in Special Tactics have incredible dedication and tenacity to serve our nation,” said Lt. Col.

Chris Larkin, 23 STS commander. “Tech. Sergeant Campbell is like most of our Airmen...it’s what we’re trained to do.”

Larkin commanded his unit, the 23rd Expeditionary Special Tactics Squadron, throughout the six-month deployment to Afghanistan. His unit returned home in mid-December.

“Without regard for his own safety, he ran 300 meters through a gauntlet of enemy fire...(and then again) exposed himself to enemy fire to mark insurgent positions with a 40 millimeter smoke grenade and directed an F-16 strafing run to neutralize the threat and enable evacuation of the wounded.”

— Tech. Sgt. Clint Campbell’s Silver Star citation

Special Tactics Airmen are among the most highly deployed in the Air Force and the most highly decorated. Combat controllers, pararescuemen, tactical air control party and special operations weather team members make up the Special Tactics field. They work with Special Operations Forces conducting the nation’s most dangerous missions behind enemy lines.



Special Tactics Airmen presented more than a dozen combat medals

“Whenever I speak with a recipient of one of these awards, I always get the response ‘sir, I was just doing my job, just doing what I was trained to do.’ But the reality is that all of you men do so much more than just ‘what you were trained to do.’”

— Lt. Gen. Eric Fiel, AFSOC commander

By Rachel Arroyo
AFSOC Public Affairs

Fourteen Special Tactics Airmen from the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., were presented two Purple Hearts and 15 Bronze Stars, five of which were with Valor.

Lt. Gen. Eric Fiel, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, hosted the ceremony, presenting the medals to 10 combat controllers and four tactical air control party members.

The Bronze Star is awarded in recognition of bravery, heroism and meritorious service during engagement with an armed enemy of the U.S. It is the fourth highest combat honor within the military. The Bronze Star recognizes meritorious service while the Bronze Star with Valor recognizes heroism.

The Purple Heart is awarded to those injured or killed in combat.

Fiel commended the Airmen for tirelessly and

humbly sacrificing for their country.

“Whenever I speak with a recipient of one of these awards, I always get the response ‘sir, I was just doing my job, just doing what I was trained to do,’” Fiel said. “But the reality is that all of you men do so much more than just ‘what you were trained to do.’”

Training is a building block, but these Airmen are not merely being recognized for putting their training into play, he said.

Fiel continued by saying, “They are being recognized for being leaders in their squadron and examples for the next generation of Special Tactics Airmen. They are being recognized for their belief in the mission and for the preparation put into planning their missions and executing them in theater. They are being recognized because they have strong families standing behind them.”

The Airmen recognized have deployed at least 42 times. According to their award citations their combined service has resulted in the removal of more than 600 enemy combatants from 2009 to 2011.





Melanie Sather, spouse of Staff Sgt. Scott D. Sather, and a family member pay their respect at the unveiling of Sather's memorial, Jan. 20, 2012, Medina Annex, Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas. The 12,000 pound memorial was transported from Iraq to Lackland, AFB, Texas. Photo by Senior Airman Marleah Miller.



Sather Memorial finds rest at Lackland

By AFSOC Public Affairs

A memorial honoring Staff Sgt. Scott D. Sather, a combat controller, was unveiled, Jan. 20, 2012, at the Medina Annex, Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas. Sather was the U.S. Air Force's first combat casualty during Operation Iraqi Freedom. As a combat controller, he was assigned to the 24th Special Tactics

Squadron, Pope Air Force Base, N.C.

Pararescuemen, combat controllers and Pararescue Indoctrination Course trainees attended the memorial unveiling ceremony honoring Sather. His memorial was created and displayed by civil engineers in Iraq to honor his leadership and bravery. The memorial was transported from Sather Air Base, Baghdad, Iraq, to Lackland Air Force Base, Texas in March 2011.



Pararescuemen, combat controllers and Pararescue Indoctrination Course trainees attend the memorial unveiling ceremony honoring Staff Sgt. Scott D. Sather. Sather's memorial was created and displayed by civil engineers in Iraq to honor his leadership and bravery. His memorial was then transported to Lackland AFB, Texas in March 2011. Photo by Air Force Senior Airman Marleah Miller.

Staff Sgt. Dale Young, 342nd Training Squadron combat controller, bows his head in reflection during a memorial unveiling for Staff Sgt. Scott D. Sather, Jan. 20, 2012. Sather was the United States Air Force's first combat casualty during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Photo by Air Force Airman 1st Class Colville McFee.



Pararescuemen, combat controllers and Pararescue Indoctrination Course trainees perform "memorial push-ups" during the memorial unveiling ceremony honoring Staff Sgt. Scott D. Sather. Photo by Air Force Senior Airman Marleah Miller.



MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



A Marine attending the Individual Training Course patrols during the course's culminating exercise, Raider Spirit. Photo by Cpl. Thomas Provost.



MARSOC graduates newest Special Operators, grows forces

*By Cpl. Kyle McNally
MARSOC Public Affairs*

As U.S. and NATO forces, including up to 10,000 Marines, start an accelerated troop withdrawal from Afghanistan as early as next fall,

U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command knows that the withdrawal does not include them for now – in fact, MARSOC continues to grow and will see a continued presence in Afghanistan.



MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Marines attending the Individual Training Course plan their patrol during the course's culminating exercise, Raider Spirit. Photo by Cpl. Thomas W. Provost.

With an increasing demand for special operators, MARSOC is fulfilling its charge to bring more Marines to the unconventional fight – most recently by graduating 42 Critical Skills Operators from its Individual Training Course at a ceremony at MARSOC headquarters, Dec. 2. ITC Class 2-11 was the largest graduating class of CSOs to date, according to John Daily, deputy director of the Special Operations Training Branch. The smaller attrition rate of this class can be attributed to the majority of the students having completed the Assessment and Selection Preparation and Orientation Course (ASPOC) – a 21-day course that better prepares candidates for the 19-day Assessment and Selection process, he added. ASPOC

provides a baseline of fitness training and instruction in skills that will be required of the candidates during A&S.

“The benefits of ASPOC continue to be felt as the course is refined,” said Daily. “ITC Class 3-11, which is currently in session, is performing exceptionally well.”

Once selected through Assessment and Selection, CSO candidates attend the seven-month ITC, which is designed to prepare Marines for duty in the Special Operations Forces environment. At the end of the evolution, Marines emerge as qualified special operators,

indoctrinated thoroughly in MARSOC’s core tasks of direct action, special reconnaissance, foreign internal defense and irregular warfare, and capable of

“We are operationally engaged in every theater but despite operational pressures, our build plan adheres to the SOF truths that ‘quality is more important than quantity’ and that ‘Special Operations Forces cannot be mass produced.’”

— Maj. Gen. Paul E. Lefebvre

accomplishing such missions in austere environments, typically with little support. Because SOF often operates autonomously, Marines in ITC are constantly analyzed on their sound judgment and their ability to make critical and timely decisions.

The course is divided into four phases. Students learn communications and combat medicine in Phase I, which culminates in survival, evasion, resistance and escape training. Phase II covers amphibious operations, tactics, weapons and special reconnaissance, and Phase III brings the students to the urban battlefield, where they train in marksmanship, close quarters battle and urban combat. The final eight-week phase consists of irregular warfare training and the course's culminating exercise, testing the Marines on everything they learned in the previous seven months.

"One of the advantages of drawing from the Marine Corps is that a lot of the guys who come to us already have a lot of experience," said an ITC instructor. "They also come from a wide background of (Military Occupational Specialties), so they can really diversify the teams."

Efforts to right-size MARSOC continue, and along with the 44 percent increase as approved by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, which consists of mostly combat support and combat service support capabilities, MARSOC must hit a target number of close to 850 CSOs to outfit 48 fully operational Marine Special Operations Teams.

"I think we have recently settled on a sound methodology that will ensure we find the right Marines in terms of quantity and quality," said Maj. Gen. Paul E. Lefebvre, commander of MARSOC. "We are operationally engaged in every theater but despite operational pressures, our build plan adheres to the SOF truths that 'quality is more important than quantity' and that 'Special Operations Forces cannot be mass produced.'"

"We will fully embrace MARSOC and capitalize on its unique capabilities, while we strengthen the relationships between our operating forces and Special Operations Forces," said Gen. James F. Amos, 35th commandant of the Marine Corps, in his 2010 Commandant's Planning Guidance. "More importantly, I fully understand that MARSOC serves as a tremendous force multiplier for any joint/combined force commander and is a valuable part of what our Corps provides to the



Marines patrol during the Individual Training Course to become a Critical Skills Operator. Marines graduate ITC as qualified special operators trained in the core tasks of direct action, special reconnaissance, foreign internal defense and irregular warfare. Photo by Cpl. Thomas Provost.

nation," he said.

"I believe Special Operations Forces have never been more valuable to our nation and to our allies," said Navy Admiral William H. McRaven, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, during recent testimony before the House Armed Services Committee. "You have my promise that we will continue to fight as long and as hard as you need us to...."

"The world today is as unpredictable as ever," said McRaven when he assumed command of SOCOM, Aug. 18., 2011. "As such, the American people will expect us to be prepared for every contingency, to answer every call to arms, to venture where other forces cannot and to win every fight no matter how long or how tough. They will expect it, because we are the nation's Special Operations Force...and we will not let them down."



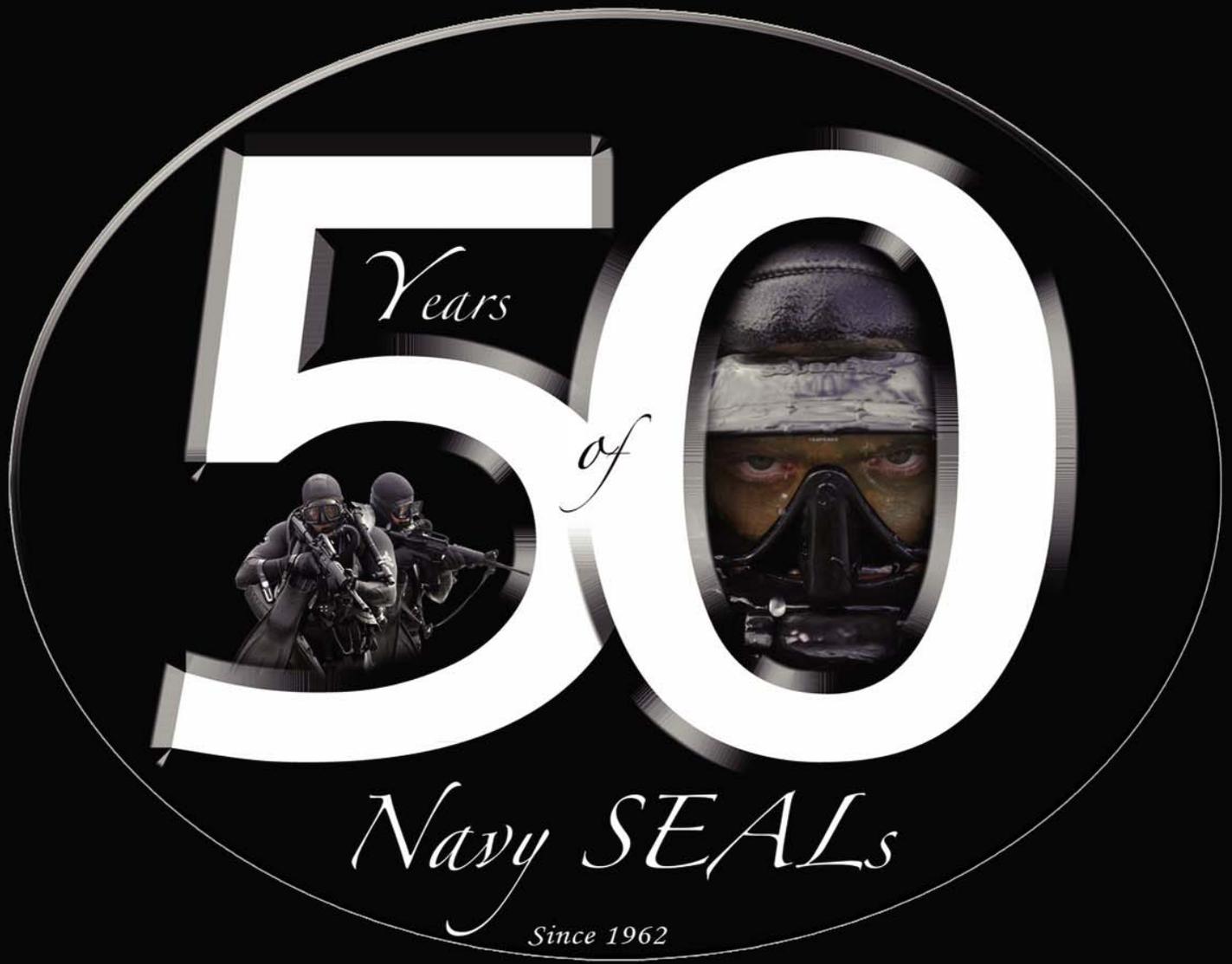


***Navy Petty Officer 1st Class
Chad R. Regelin
Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit Three***



***Army Sgt. 1st Class
Benjamin B. Wise
1st Special Forces Group (Airborne)***

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



The official U.S. Navy logo commemorating the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the U.S. Navy SEALs. U.S. Navy photo illustration.