



# TIP OF THE SPEAR

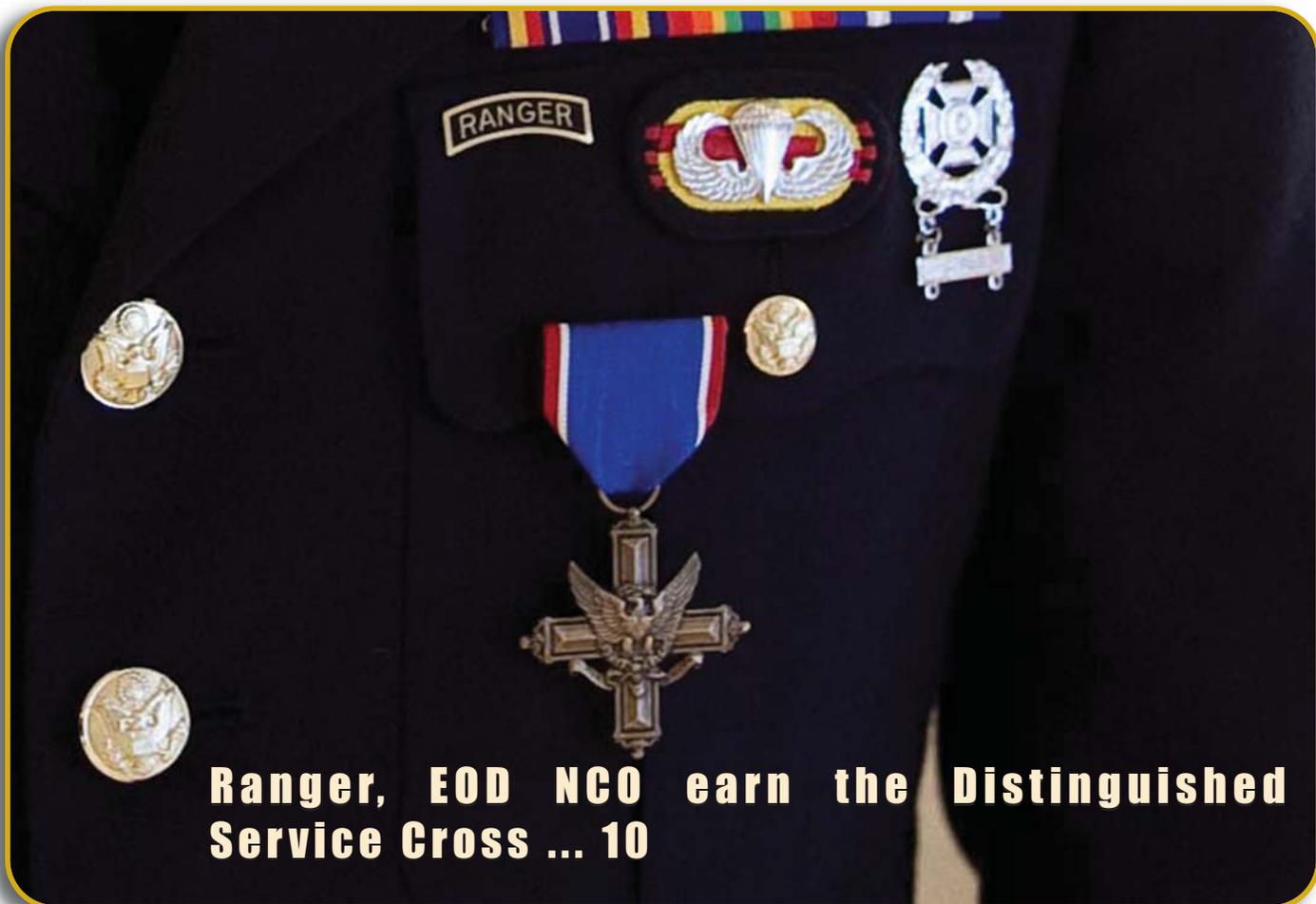
**RANGER, EOD NCO RECEIVE  
DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS**

**TWO MARSOC MARINES  
AWARDED SILVER STAR**

**FLINTLOCK 2015  
HELD IN CHAD**

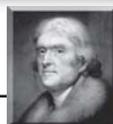


# U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



**Ranger, EOD NCO earn the Distinguished Service Cross ... 10**

## Tip of the Spear



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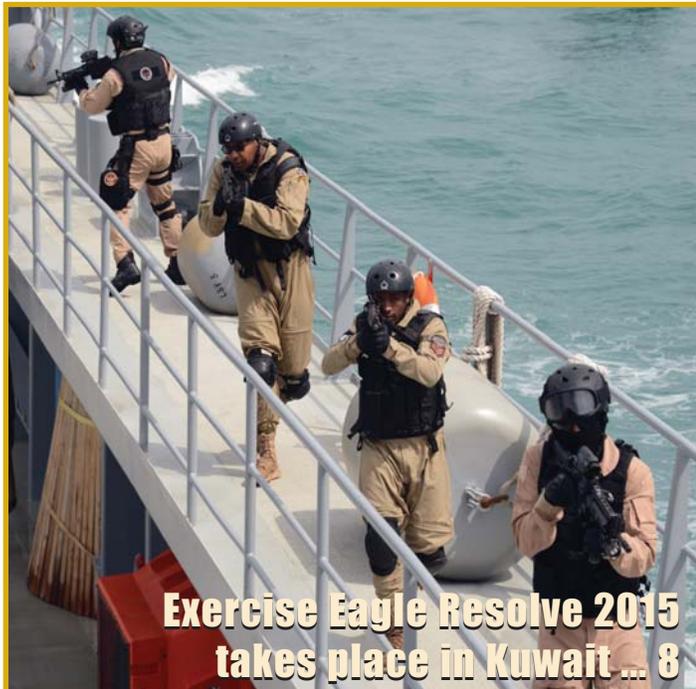
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*A 22nd Special Tactics Squadron Airman climbs a ladder into a CH-47 Chinook helicopter hovering over the ocean June 20, 2014. This photo won first place in the 2015 Defense Information School pictorial category competition. Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Jeffrey Allen.*

# Highlights



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# Flintlock '15 wraps up in N'Djamena, Chad

*By Bardha Azari*  
*Special Operations Command Forward – West Africa*  
*Story on page 6*



*A multinational force of free fall parachutists board a Canadian C-130 for a jump wing exchange in Mao, Chad, Feb. 28. The wing exchange is part of Exercise Flintlock 2015, an annual, African-led, training event focusing on anti-terrorism, military training, and humanitarian efforts. Photo by Army Sgt. Timothy Clegg.*





## SOF AROUND THE WORLD SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – AFRICA



*A U.S. Army Soldier from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort Carson, Colo., observes as a Chadian platoon practices mounted operations during Exercise Flintlock 2015 at Moussoro, Chad, Feb. 19. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Amber Martin.*

The annual Flintlock exercise wrapped up March 10, in N'Djamena, Chad, with a closing ceremony that brought together senior leaders from more than 20 participating countries.

The Chadian exercise director, Brig. Gen. Zakaria Ngobongue, when bidding farewell to the guests and participants from different African and Western partner nations, who trained tirelessly in Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Tunisia, thanked the troops for their professionalism.

“I am pleased to note that the progress made during this exercise was tangible and these results were reached thanks to willing participants,” said Ngobongue.

Ngobongue thanked partner nations for the quality medical and humanitarian assistance that benefited citizens in locations near Mao, Faya, and Moussoro. Similar medical activities were also conducted in Agadez, Niger.

The closing ceremony of the Flintlock exercise was also attended by the Commanding General of United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), Gen. David Rodriguez, who thanked Chad for being a great host to this year’s Flintlock despite the security challenges the country faces.

“It is important to recognize that exercise Flintlock 2015 was successfully conducted by Chad and other African partners while actively engaged in combat operations against Boko Haram. The capacity to execute real world operations while simultaneously training to increase capacity and capability, demonstrates a level of proficiency exhibited only by an extremely professional, capable, and disciplined military,” said Rodriguez during the closing ceremony.

This year’s exercise was the largest Flintlock to date and has continued to build on the success of previous exercises. The three-week Chad-hosted event included the implementation of a collaborative



**U.S. Army Capt. Ross Cook, dentist, and Sgt. Luis Hernandez, dental technician, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), instruct nurses on how to perform a tooth extraction in Faya, Chad, Feb. 19. Ross and Hernandez were in Chad as part of the Flintlock 2015 exercise. Photo by Army Sgt. Timothy Clegg.**

Command and Control and information sharing systems, which will remain in place for African partners to share operational information and intelligence with each other, as well as international partners.

More than 1,000 personnel from more than 20 countries participated in Flintlock 2015, with outstations in Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Tunisia. Ten flight crews from Belgium, the United States, Canada, Spain, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, The Netherlands, Italy, and the United Kingdom moved most of the troops and 500,000 pounds of cargo with 113 flights. In all the outstations, each soldier received 150 hours of training.

They also conducted four community activities, met with key leaders, and treated 1,800 people in several medical assistance clinics. Chadian and U.S. military, as well as U.S. Embassy personnel, also conducted outreach to an orphanage in N'Djamena, supporting victims of war, HIV, and poverty. With the support of non-governmental organization Spirit of America, \$4,500 of educational supplies, hygiene tools, and basic items like blankets, sheets, towels, and mosquito nets were given to 59 orphans.

The tactical portion of Flintlock 2015 consisted of small-unit combined training and activities involving partner nation counter-terrorism units and military

humanitarian relief operations to help improve the basic medical, dental, and veterinary access for some communities in Chad and Niger.

As an enduring exercise, Flintlock is not focused on any specific security situation, but instead on developing security capacity, building professionalism, and strengthening bonds among exercise participants. Flintlock exercises began in 2005 and are conducted by the Special Operations Command Forward – West Africa (SOCFWD-WA) and sponsored by Africa Command's Special Operations component to develop the capacity of, and collaboration among, African security forces to protect civilian populations across the Sahel region of Africa.

Flintlock exercises strengthen security institutions, promote multilateral sharing of information, and develop interoperability among the partner nations of the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP). Through exercises such as Flintlock, the United States Special Operations Command provides military training opportunities to foster relationships of peace, security, and cooperation among all Trans-Saharan nations.



**Col. Mahamane Laminou Sani of Niger, on left, and Maj. Gen. James Linder, commander of Special Operations Command Africa out of Stuttgart, Germany, catch up just before the closing ceremony, March 10, in N'Djamena, Chad. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jessica Espinosa.**



**SOF AROUND THE WORLD**  
**SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – CENTRAL**



*Arabian Gulf nations and American Special Operations Forces conduct a Visit, Board, Search and Seizure mission in a non-permissible environment during Exercise Eagle Resolve 2015. The exercise affords 29 partner nations the opportunity to address the regional challenges associated with asymmetric/unconventional warfare in a multi-national environment. This is the Government of Kuwait's first time hosting Eagle Resolve, which is the premiere Arabian Peninsula/Gulf Region exercise between the United States, Gulf Cooperation Council nations and other international partners. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jared Marquis.*

# International Special Operations Forces practice maritime operations during exercise Eagle Resolve 2015

*By U.S. Central Command Public Affairs*

Moving with silent efficiency, and weapons at the ready, U.S. and partner nation special operations forces cleared the deck and bridge of the U.S. Army Vessel “MG Charles P. Gross” in the Arabian Gulf, March 22. Boarding the ship from Kuwaiti rigid-hulled inflatable boats, the operators used a tactical formation and moved with purpose as they conducted a visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) mission in a simulated non-permissible environment.

While this precision is a hallmark of SOF training and operations, this VBSS was unique because it wasn’t executed by a hand-picked team honing their cohesiveness through years spent training together. Rather, the teams consisted of special operators from the participating nations who gathered as part of Eagle Resolve 2015, the region’s premiere multilateral exercise designed to promote regional security and cooperation while improving interoperability between each nation’s military.

“The interoperability piece cannot be overstated,” said U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Rick Mattson, U.S. Central Command’s director of exercises and training, and U.S. director of Eagle Resolve. “The ability to work efficiently and effectively together is absolutely critical.”

Given the Gulf’s strategic importance both regionally and globally, it’s understandable that tactics, techniques and procedures like those used during VBSS would be a high priority training event for nations reliant on this vital waterway.

Scenarios like this one are relevant and critical to everyone’s stability in the region, Mattson said. The 29 participating countries recognize the value in supporting the exercise – and specifically events like this.

VBSS is routinely conducted around the world as part of maritime law enforcement and military operations. It can range from a routine inspection of a

ship’s cargo – or a more pinpointed search to counter suspected drug smuggling, human trafficking or other violations of international laws. While international forces conducting VBSS are typically welcomed on-board willingly by a ship’s crews, teams must be prepared for a spectrum of contingencies. Teams also practiced boarding a noncompliant vessel, whose crew was also holding a hostage.

Mattson said he was impressed with the efficiency of the teams once they hit the boat. He said everyone followed their assigned missions and swept through all the rooms quickly.

“What I look for the most is people’s attitude and motivation,” said Mattson. “So far it’s been tremendous, everyone has been highly motivated. They want to get it right.”



***A U.S. Special Operations Forces member conducts a Visit, Board, Search and Seizure mission in a non-permissible environment during Exercise Eagle Resolve 2015. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jared Marquis.***



*Command Sgt. Maj. Victor Ballesteros, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment Command Sergeant Major; Col. Patrick Ellis, Commander, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment commander and Gen. Daniel B. Allyn, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, applaud Sgt. Bryan Anderson, a combat medic with 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment after he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross in a ceremony Feb. 17, at Ft. Benning, Ga. Photo by Patrick A. Albright.*

# Ranger, EOD NCO awarded nation's 2nd highest medal for bravery

*By Tracy A. Bailey  
75th Ranger Regiment Public Affairs*

Two members of a joint special operations task force were awarded the nation's second highest honor for their heroic actions at an awards ceremony, Feb. 17, at Fort Benning, Ga.

Sgt. Bryan Anderson, a Ranger combat medic with 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment and Staff Sgt. Jeffery Dawson, 28th Ordnance Company (Airborne) were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for their actions during an

assault against an armed enemy in Kandahar province, Afghanistan, Oct. 5-6, 2013.

"On Oct. 5th and 6th, Staff Sgt. Jeffery Dawson and Sgt. Bryan Anderson set the example that inspires our current Ranger force and will embolden generations to come" said Gen. Daniel B. Allyn, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, during the awards ceremony.

During the mission, the assault force targeted a Taliban attack network leader operating in Kandahar province. Information indicated the high value target was the leader of an attack cell planning on conducting a high profile attack in

Kandahar City with aims of killing civilians.

On the objective, the enemy triggered multiple suicide explosive devices and improvised explosive devices, killing four members of the assault force and wounding several others.

“October 5th and 6th carry several indelible realities beyond our unspeakable loss. It signals to the enemies of our country, that this nation, this Army, this regiment, knows where the enemy lurks and has men and women of courage ... with the intestinal fortitude to reach out and hold them to account,” said Allyn. “Second, while many scars remain from that October evening, our wounded warriors are indomitable--their example serves to inspire and lead us forward demonstrating to this nation what courage, determination and resolve truly look like.”

He added that Capt. Jennifer Moreno, Sgt. Patrick Hawkins, Sgt. Joseph Peters and Spc. Cody Patterson paid the ultimate price for our nation’s freedom that night.

“To the families of those lost on that fateful day ... we stand in reverent gratitude and commitment for your sacrifice,” said Allyn. “You are forever a part of the Ranger and the Army Family and history ... and we collectively recommit our service to the memory and honor of our fallen heroes.”

As a Ranger combat medic and fully knowing the extreme and imminent danger to himself, Anderson, a native of Gilbert, Ariz., repeatedly moved throughout an improvised explosive device belt with no regard for his own life to render aid to several fallen comrades, directly saving the lives of two

members of the assault force.

“I wasn’t concerned with my life,” said Anderson. “I was concerned that I had buddies who were bleeding out on the compound.”

Dawson, from Reno, Nev., continually placed himself in imminent danger as he repeatedly moved throughout an improvised explosive device belt despite being wounded by two separate detonations to retrieve wounded and fallen teammates.

“When I got back that night people were coming up to me and giving me hugs, and telling me thank you, they heard things about me,” said Dawson. “And I didn’t really understand, I was just there ... I’m doing my job you know. So it’s still pretty weird to be considered a hero in other people’s eyes.”

Concluding his remarks at the ceremony, Allyn said, “On October 5th and 6th in western Kandahar province, you upheld the prestige, honor and esprit de corps of your Ranger Regiment ... you moved further, faster, and fought harder than any other Soldier ... you did not fail your comrades ... and you never left a fallen comrade ... and I am prouder than ever to be a Ranger in your midst today. God bless you and all of our heroes serving near and far. Rangers Lead the Way!”

In all, two Distinguished Service Crosses, one Silver Star, 11 Bronze Star Medals for Valor 18 Army Commendation Medals for Valor and 40 Purple Hearts were awarded to other Soldiers for this mission.



**Command Sgt. Maj. Victor Ballesteros, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment Command Sergeant Major; Col. Patrick Ellis, Commander, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment commander and Gen. Daniel B. Allyn, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, applaud Staff Sgt. Jeffery Dawson, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Specialist with 28th Ordnance Company (Airborne), after he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross in a ceremony Feb. 17, at Ft. Benning, Ga. Photo by Patrick A. Albright.**



# 10th Group Soldiers receive FBI Director's Award

*First time FBI's highest award given to someone from outside the FBI*

*By Mike Bottoms, USSOCOM Public Affairs and Army Lt. Col. Aram Donigian, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne)*

James Comey, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, presented the FBI's Director's Award, the agency's highest recognition, to 26 Soldiers from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) March 9, at the FBI headquarters in Washington DC, for their work ferreting out Improvised Explosive Device networks in Afghanistan from 2006 to 2009.

This is the first time the award has been given to anyone outside of the FBI.

Col. George Thiebes, at the time the Task Force 10 Commander and now serving as the Group Commander for 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), said, "It is an honor to be recognized with the FBI Director's Award. The members of the command receiving this award represent a portion of the entire battalion who developed this relationship with the

FBI and jointly targeted the IED network. This battalion continued to nurture these relationships as it conducted company-sized back-to-back deployments for a total of seven consecutive years."

The Director's Award for Excellence is among the FBI's highest honors, recognizing employees and partners for outstanding contributions and exceptional service to the FBI and its mission.

"We feel a natural kinship with our brothers and sisters in the military because we share the values of fidelity, bravery, and integrity," said Director Comey during the ceremony. "Like FBI employees, men and women in uniform move toward the sound of pain and danger, overcoming fear to do good."

According to the award citation, the Kabul Counter-Improvised Device Initiative was created to synchronize the FBI's investigative expertise with 10th SFG (A) operations. A cadre of FBI agents and Special Forces Soldiers dismantled and disrupted three IED cells and thwarted over 40 separate attacks targeting U.S. and coalition forces and the



*James Comey, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, (center) presented the FBI Director's Award, the agency's highest recognition, to 26 Soldiers from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) March 9, in a ceremony at the FBI headquarters in Washington DC, for their work ferreting out Improvised Explosive Device networks in Afghanistan from 2006 to 2009. This is the first time the award has been given to someone outside of the FBI. Photo by Mike Bottoms.*

U.S. mission in Kabul, Afghanistan.

The initiative began after Sgt. 1st Class Merideth Howard and Army Staff Sgt. Robert Paul were killed along with at least eight Afghans in 2006, by a fiery car bombing on their way to the U.S. Embassy.

FBI agents from the Legal Attache' (Legat) office in Kabul responded to the rapidly disintegrating crime scene and found the evidence was being washed away. They realized the need for military Special Operations Forces to help secure and investigate IED crime scenes.

Legat Kabul contacted Army Gen. Dan McNeil, then commander of the International Security Assistance Force, and asked for assistance to launch the C-IED initiative. Gen. McNeil linked 10th Group up with the FBI and McNeil said at the time "G-man, meet your SWAT Team."

Thiebes commented on the nature of relationship formed, "The relationships established and nurtured between the Special Forces Soldiers and the FBI Agents during those deployments still survive today. We continue to run into each other in other conflict areas. The close relationship that exists between our organizations is a testament to how military coordination and integration with the interagency has matured."

Over three years, the team leveraged its analytical and tactical expertise to uncover manufacturing facilities, safe houses, and financiers. FBI interpreters and investigators interviewed failed suicide bombers, established a psychological profile of future bombers, and gleaned actionable intelligence about past and planned attacks. The team identified and neutralized or captured more than 150 IED facilitators targeting the area-including the notorious bomb-makers responsible for the explosion that killed Howard and Paul.

Thiebes said that not only did this opportunity serve as an example of interagency coordination but, moreover, his Soldiers were privileged to work side by side with FBI counterparts during mission planning and combat operations aimed at dismantling IED makers, emplacements, and facilitators.

"This unique relationship capitalized on the FBI's investigative and analytical skills paired with the combat advisory expertise of the Special Forces Soldiers and the local cultural understanding of their partnered Afghan Special Police units," Thiebes said. "This partnership formed a powerful C-IED network that effectively targeted the IED network operating in Kabul and the surrounding provinces."

Several senior military officers spoke at the ceremony about the collective team's unique interagency teamwork and courage.

"There are two types of courage: physical courage and intellectual courage. This team showed both," said Army Lt. Gen. (Ret) Michael Flynn, former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency. "This team said, 'We need to do more,' and did not allow bureaucracy to stifle the innovation we needed on the battlefield."

Army Lt. Gen. John Mulholland Jr., former deputy commander of U.S. Special Operations Command and current new associate director for military affairs for the CIA, echoed this praise, saying, "When we bring the best of our respective agencies together, no one can stand against us."

Now retired Gen. McNeil said at the ceremony that he marveled at the coordination and synergy that emerged among team members. "Give way together," he urged, citing an old rowing command. "There is no greater calling than to serve your nation and fellow citizens. Get everyone on the oars-and pull with everything you have."

One team member of the initiative, Army Chief Warrant Officer Douglas Vose II, lost his life while disrupting IED networks in Afghanistan. His wife, Nicole, and sons, Aiden and Conner, attended the ceremony and received the FBI Star from Director Comey.



**Col. George Thiebes, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) commander, receives the Federal Bureau of Investigation Director's Award, the agency's highest recognition, from James Comey, director of the FBI, March 9, in a ceremony held at the FBI headquarters in Washington DC. Photo by Mike Bottoms.**



# 75th Ranger Regiment makes a child's wish come true

By Tracy A. Bailey  
75th Ranger Regiment Public Affairs

The Rangers of the 75th Ranger Regiment had the honor of hosting a young man whose soul desire is to be a U.S. Army Ranger.

Eleck Stone, 8, from Capitan, New Mexico, knew early on in life that he wanted to be in the Army.

"My great-grandpa was in the Army and he told me stories," said Eleck. "I really want to be a Ranger because they lead the way."

Eleck, who was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis at 6, had his wish come true March 19-20 at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Eleck and his brother Bryce, 6, started their journey to become Rangers with a short tour of the Regimental Headquarters, and met up with their assigned fire team.

They were automatically promoted to Private First Class by the Regimental Command Sgt. Maj. Chuck Albertson.

This would be the first of many promotions over the next two days.

Eleck's fire team came from D Company, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, and out of the four men assigned to escort Eleck, his favorite was Cpl. Patrick Crum now and forever known as "Crum-Dog."

Following a traditional Army breakfast, the young Soldiers moved out to Honor Field to conduct initial manifest call, airborne sustainment training, and observe Rangers preparing for an airborne operation which including pushing a bundle of equipment out of a C-130 Hercules aircraft.

Eleck and Bryce then received a tour of D Company, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, where they learned about life in a Ranger Company.

"We taught Eleck and Bryce a lot of the finer details about being a Ranger, like always sharing your chow with your Ranger buddy, the joy of a tab check, and not just telling them how to live the Ranger Creed but showing them how to live the creed and how it applies to everyday life," said Sgt. 1st Class Miltiades Houpis, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Regimental Special Troops Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment.



**Eleck Stone (right) and his brother Bryce return from a tour of the Texas National Guard C-130 Hercules airplane with the Fire Team assigned to escort Eleck during his visit to the 75th Ranger Regiment. Photo by Pfc. Parker Johnson.**

One of Eleck's favorite things to say in a room full of highly trained U.S. Army Rangers, "Tab check!"

"I would say this and everyone that didn't have a Ranger Tab had to do push-ups," Eleck said.

The Soldiers were then promoted to the rank of Specialist.

The next stop was 3rd Battalion's rigger shed, where the young Soldiers saw Rangers getting ready for the jump and they also got to see the inside of a C-130.

"It's pretty cool in here," Eleck said. "I like sitting in the pilot's seat."

After lunch, which consisted of MREs, the Soldiers rode in all-terrain vehicles out to Fryar Drop Zone where they watched the jump.

After the airborne operations were complete, Eleck and Bryce were promoted to Sergeant and awarded airborne wings for completing all of the requirements to become airborne qualified.

3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment set up a static display on Peden Field which included various weapon systems, a Stryker, and a Ground Mobility Vehicle.

Eleck and Bryce were able to test all of the equipment and ask questions of the Rangers.

The Soldiers then moved back to Honor Field by way of the Stryker to observe Rangers conduct Fast Rope Insertion Extraction System training off the tower.

All of the training Eleck and Bryce had received during the day led up to the afternoon's culminating event – the mission – to capture a high value target.

“We did a squad hit where they got to put on the field gear that we wear. We went into a building which was completely dark,” Crum said. “The boys had their night vision on; we detained some bad guys and they got to watch the multi-purpose canines conduct training which they really liked.”

The young Soldiers were promoted to Staff Sergeant and awarded the Expert Infantryman's Badge.

Day two consisted of marksmanship training on Farnsworth Range and Ranger First Responder training at the Downing Mile.

Under the watchful eyes and training of the fire team, Eleck and Bryce were able to fire the M9 and the M4. Following their weapons training, the Soldiers observed a class of Ranger Assessment and Selection Program candidates conduct weapons training.

They were then promoted to Sergeant First Class.

After their promotions to Sgts. 1st Class, Eleck and Bryce were presented with their leadership boards and a copy of the Ranger Blue Book, the unit's standards policy carried by all members of the Regiment, signed by the fire team.

The afternoon concluded with the combat medics of the Regimental Special Troops Battalion conducting Ranger First Responder Training with the Soldiers.

After learning about the medical equipment Rangers carry with them in training and combat, Eleck and Bryce were part of a team that rescued a simulated casualty in a deep ravine.

The Soldiers were lowered into the ravine by way of a zip line. They triaged and packed the wounded Ranger in a tactical litter and assisted the team in transporting the Ranger to the medical evacuation location.

They were then promoted to Master Sergeant.

Ranger First Responder training concluded all the events that Eleck needed before he went before the assessment and selection board to see if he had what it took to be part of the elite 75th Ranger Regiment.

After a grueling five minute board led by the Regiment's leadership, Master Sergeant promotable Eleck Stone was selected to serve in the 75th Ranger Regiment and was promoted to the rank of Sergeant Major by Albertson.

Eleck and Bryce were awarded the tan beret and the scroll and recited the Ranger Creed surrounded by their fire team. The young Soldiers left a lasting impression on their Ranger brothers.

“This was a really humbling experience for all of us,” said Crum. “We've been hanging out with them like they were one of the boys because that's what Rangers are all about.”

The favorite part of the week for Eleck? “Firing the M9 and M4 and tab checks!”

Eleck made memories that will last a lifetime, but he is not sharing what he learned here.

“I'm not going to tell my friends anything; it's a secret what we do here at the Ranger Regiment,” said Eleck. “I like my beret and I'm going to take care of it. I am going to put it up high so my brother doesn't ruin it.”

The whole experience was more than just following a schedule for the Rangers.

“It was about us putting our minds to making Eleck's wish come true. Rangers don't fail their Ranger buddies,” said Houpis. “Without a shadow of a doubt, Eleck believes with his heart and mind, that he is an Army Ranger.”

Rangers Lead the Way!



*Eleck Stone and a Ranger medic insert at nasopharyngeal airway in a simulated casualty during Ranger First Responder Training. Photo by Pfc. Parker Johnson.*



## NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND



*Mimi Ney, assistant coach with Ultimate Human Performance, assists a West Coast based Navy SEAL (Sea, Air, Land) during a stretch session sponsored by the Navy SEAL Foundation. UHP trains SEALs three times a week on proper stretching techniques.*

# Keeping NSW stretched and ready

*Story and photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Timothy M. Black, CNSWC Public Affairs*

Naval Special Warfare Sailors are warfighters first, and must always be ready to respond to conflicts worldwide. The constant workload of training and exercising can take a toll on the human body, so in order for NSW personnel to remain physically prepared for their next missions, many operators and support personnel participate in a program called Ultimate Human Performance.

The chief executive officer and head coach of UHP, Joseph Hippensteel, has trained more than 1,000 special warfare and special boat operators in his program since it started four years ago. UHP trains athletes how to stretch properly and how to obtain certain standards in flexibility.

“What we do is teach advanced training methods,” said Hippensteel. “[The] first thing we do is educate the operators that there are four pillars of fitness. We have strength, conditioning, cardio, and flexibility, and virtually everyone we’ve worked with so far has been deficient in flexibility.”

This knowledge has far-reaching effects on operational readiness. “To have operational longevity and to be ready, operators can’t have aches and pains,” said Hippensteel. “The pain, if severe enough, will limit the operator’s capabilities. These ranges of motion [promoted in UHP] take them back to what all kids can do, and UHP likes to think of the program as getting operators back to the condition of teenagers, when nothing used to hurt.”

Because being elite Navy commandos requires a tough

training regimen, Hippensteel and his team focus on helping operators reach their potential. “You can train hard, but without these ranges of motion, you have deficiency, therefore dysfunction, therefore pain,” said Hippensteel.

Hippensteel has a bachelor’s in physical education with an emphasis on physiology/ kinesiology and biology. However, he said his education for this program was not learned through books, but through his personal struggle to accomplish his Olympic aspirations.

“The main part of my education for what I do now was created through my training program, running for many years and being a small guy without the talent to make it to the Olympic team,” said Hippensteel.

Hippensteel, only 5’8” and 168 pounds, trained for 30 years for the decathlon. His commitment to training for the Olympics had him training eight to ten hours a day, five days a week. Although he never achieved his goal of making it to the Olympics, he developed intense and creative training programs to enhance the performance of the human body.

“The main thing is, I kept training,” he said. “I have literally put in 30,000 hours of [research and development] trying to figure out how to improve a Volkswagen to go to the Indianapolis 500.”

Hippensteel’s determination to improve others’ physical well-being is demonstrated during each session, as he moves from one operator and enabler to another to make sure they do each exercise to the UHP standard and improve at a healthy rate. While in BUD/S, candidates are challenged to push themselves to the next level and, as the saying goes, “power through it.”

In the UHP program, operators cannot have a “power through it” mentality, as that mindset can inflict more injury. Operators are limited to stretching only to a moderate pain level in order to effectively work their way up to the standard of flexibility and range of motion prescribed by UHP.

One Navy SEAL assigned to a West Coast-based SEAL Team started the program more than 2 years ago when, after a 400 meter run, his back seized up and he could barely walk.

“I walked straight up to a stretch lab,” he said.

“Throughout language school and several months after, I spent a lot of time in here and my back opened up. I was able to run with no problems.”

Knowing how your body works and how it should be functioning is another plus of this program.

“This keeps you physically ready by mitigating injuries, but it also keeps you tuned to your body, and you can feel something coming on quicker just because you focus on it more,” the SEAL said. “You start performing like an athlete, asking yourself, ‘How do you perform at the optimal level?’”

The SEAL said he appreciates the services that Hippensteel and the UHP team provide for him and his teammates.

“I think the instructors are great, very knowledgeable and have a lot of experience,” he said. “Working with a professional athlete makes all the difference in the world.”

UHP is funded as a resource to supplement physical therapy by the Navy SEAL Foundation, a benevolent organization dedicated to supporting NSW operators, support personnel and families.

“I think that it is great that the Foundation funds

this, because it allows this program to operate freely to the most benefit for the operators,” said the SEAL. Once trained in this program, operators and support personnel can take it wherever they go.

“I have taken what I learned here and applied it while I was out on deployment in Afghanistan and Kuwait,” said the SEAL. “[My Teammates] see me stretching all the time; they usually wonder why, and then I can get on my soapbox and tell them.”

Awareness about UHP is spread through word of mouth, and UHP has grown at a steady success rate ever since it started four years ago. UHP hopes to expand services to East Coast-based SEAL teams and detachments around the world.

“Our goal would be to penetrate even deeper into NSW and ultimately be able to hit as close to 100 percent of the operators as possible and their support personnel,” said Hippensteel. “We are honored to be able to support NSW,” he said. “The operators have proven their level of commitment, and I am grateful we are able to do this for them.”

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*What we do is teach advanced training methods. The first thing we do is educate the operators that there are four pillars of fitness. We have strength, conditioning, cardio and flexibility, and virtually everyone we’ve worked with so far has been deficient in flexibility.*

— Joseph Hippensteel, coach of Ultimate Human Performance

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*U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Brad A. Heithold, Air Force Special Operations Command commander, speaks during the 352nd Special Operations Wing activation ceremony March 23, on RAF Mildenhall, England. The 352nd SOW is comprised of more than 1,200 active-duty and civilian Airmen performing missions on MC-130J Commando II and CV-22B Osprey aircraft for AFSOC. Photo by Senior Airman Christine Griffiths.*

# 352nd Special Operations Wing, two groups activate at RAF Mildenhall

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

The 352nd Special Operations Group was redesignated as the 352nd Special Operations Wing during a ceremony held in Hangar 814 March 23, at RAF Mildenhall, England. Immediately following this, the 752nd Special Operations Group and the 352nd Special Operations Maintenance Group were activated.

Consisting of six squadrons and two groups, the 352nd SOW includes more than 1,200 Air Commandos

and provides support to the European theater as well as other combatant commands when necessary.

“We not only support Special Operations Command – Europe, but we will also support Special Operations Command – Africa, to combat the challenges we see and the struggles we have against violent extremism. And that is not going away anytime soon,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Brad Heithold, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command.

The request for the redesignation was made to reflect the increased responsibilities and capabilities of the

units, people and assets – a tradition carried on by today’s Air Commandos.

“To the men and women of the 352nd Special Operations Wing – congratulations,” said U.S. Air Force Col. William Holt, 352nd SOW and Joint Special Operations Air Component – Europe commander. “Seventy-one years ago, the 2nd Air Commando Group was formed with a singular task: be one-fourth the size of comparable units, yet bring twice the capability. That is your lineage and that is how we will move into the future.”

The 752nd SOG, commanded by U.S. Air Force Col. Nathan C. Green, is responsible for planning and executing specialized and contingency operations using advanced aircraft, tactics and air refueling techniques to infiltrate, exfiltrate and resupply special operations forces.

“The (752nd SOG is) a busy place and it is only getting busier. We currently have planes, crews, maintenance, support personnel and battlefield personnel all over Europe, Africa and the Central Command theaters,” Green said. “We have people forward right now, this very minute, in harm’s way and several others on alert for whatever needs to be done, whatever call comes next. We are ready; you are ready.”

The 352nd SOMXG, commanded by U.S. Air Force Col. Eric V. Faison, provides all organizational maintenance on MC-130J Commando II and CV-22B Osprey aircraft assigned to the group’s two special operations flying squadrons. The 352nd SOMXG also provides management for the group’s engine and equipment inventories.

“I’m excited, yet humbled, to be given the opportunity to lead this remarkable team of maintenance professionals; men and women who maintain two of this nation’s newest and highly-demanded weapon systems in the defense of our nation,” Faison said. “Never forget that, when all is said and done, the power of the Air Force is in our people, not our platforms. It is the total force team here at RAF Mildenhall that fulfills the purpose and the promise of our Air Force.”

The 352nd SOW’s mission will continue with its current purpose: to provide combat ready forces, first and foremost.

“In the past year, you’ve increased your aircraft by 40 percent and personnel by 200,” Holt said. “We will continue to build our new CV-22 and MC-130J capabilities and training. We will work closely to develop

and strengthen new and enduring relationships with our partners across Europe. And we will maintain a sharp and constant focus on safety and mission accomplishment. Europe’s Air Commandos will prove the motto of ‘Mission First, People Always.’”

The 352nd SOW is comprised of the 67th Special Operations Squadron flying the MC-130J Commando II; the 7th Special Operations Squadron flying the CV-22B Osprey; the 321st Special Tactics Squadron composed of combat controllers, pararescumen and combat weathermen; and the 352nd Special Operations Support Squadron which provides in-garrison and deployed command and control support as well as the two maintenance squadrons, the 352nd Special Operations Maintenance Squadron and the 352nd Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.



**U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Brad A. Heithold, left, Air Force Special Operations Command commander, passes the 352nd Special Operations Wing guidon to U.S. Air Force Col. William Holt, 352nd SOW commander, during the 352nd SOW activation ceremony, March 23, on RAF Mildenhall, England. The 352nd SOW is responsible for planning and executing specialized and contingency operations using advanced aircraft, tactics and air refueling techniques to infiltrate, exfiltrate and resupply special operations forces. Photo by Senior Airman Christine Griffiths.**



# Special Tactics Training Squadron ride on

*Airmen from the Special Tactics Training Squadron learn how to drive a variety of all-terrain vehicles during advanced tactical vehicle training at Eglin Range, Fla., Feb. 1-4, 2014. The STTS trains special operations forces for rapid global employment to enable airpower success in austere and hostile environments. Photos by Senior Airman Christopher Callaway.*







# Silver Star Medal awarded to 2d Marine Special Operations Battalion critical skills operator

*Story and photos by Marine Corps Sgt. Lia Gamero  
MARSOC Public Affairs*



“I think sometimes the worst situations bring out the best in people, and that day a lot of people showed their worth,” Staff Sgt. Andrew Seif said, recalling the day he selflessly faced enemy fire to save a mortally wounded friend in July 2012.

Seif, a critical skills operator with 2d Marine Special Operations Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, was awarded the Silver Star Medal during a ceremony at Stone Bay aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune,

N.C., March 6, for his actions against the enemy in Badghis Province, Afghanistan.

As a small child in Holland, Mich., Seif played soldier in his back yard, fighting cousins and friends armed with stick rifles. As he got older, Seif knew college was not the route he wanted to take and he joined the Marine Corps just weeks after he graduated high school to be a combat engineer.

Seif deployed once in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom with 7th Engineer Support Battalion, out of Camp Pendleton, Calif., before his desire for something different led him down a new path. In 2010, he successfully completed MARSOC’s Individual Training Course and joined 2d MSOB.

On July 24, 2012, during his first deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Seif and his



**Staff Sgt. Andrew C. Seif, a critical skills operator with 2d Marine Special Operations Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, was awarded the Silver Star Medal during a ceremony at Stone Bay aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., March 6, for his actions against the enemy in Badghis Province, Afghanistan.**

teammate, Sgt. Justin Hansen, were closing in on one of western Afghanistan’s improvised explosive device experts. The bomb maker was responsible for many International Security Assistance Force and NATO forces casualties including U.S. and Italian forces.

“People had been (tracking) him for a while; we had an opportunity and we took it,” Seif said, describing the mission that put him and Hansen outside a small compound

and engaged in a firefight with several enemy personnel. “A lot of things go into planning an operation and we are always weighing whether not the risk is worth it. We’ve got men on our (Honor) Wall (memorial) that he’s potentially taken the lives of, so this one was absolutely worth it.”

While Seif and Hansen maneuvered to prevent their target’s escape, the team came under fire and Hansen was injured. Seif rushed to his teammate and treated his wounds while securing the area and returning small-arms fire.

“Even though Justin was hit, he was very much still in the game,” Seif said. “He motioned to where the (shooter) was, so I assaulted through.”

Seif refused to wait for reinforcements, tactfully maneuvered across exposed ground and entered the compound to complete the mission. After clearing the entire compound alone, Seif hurried back outside and moved Hansen to a safer position. He treated Hansen’s wounds while returning fire against a persistent enemy force.

Hansen succumbed to his wounds, but Seif said if not for his teammate the mission would have failed.

“He was larger than life,” Seif said. “If you didn’t

know him, you heard about him. He was a straight shooter, called it like it was, was willing to push a fight and he understood the circumstances.”

During the ceremony, Maj. Gen. Joseph L. Osterman, commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, presented the medal to Seif and praised his character.

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*I think sometimes the worst situations bring out the best in people, and that day a lot of people showed their worth.*

— Staff Sgt. Andrew Seif

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“The fact that (Seif) continued to fight through the objective to get Sgt. Hansen taken care of, putting himself in the line of fire, speaks volumes to who he is and demonstrates that

he would never leave a Marine behind,” Osterman said.

Seif remained humble after receiving the award, crediting the achievement to everyone involved in the mission that day.

“There are definitely some individuals out there who deserve (the medal) just as well,” Seif said. “But it’s an honor to accept it on the behalf of the unit and on behalf of the rest of the men.”

*Editors note: Staff Sgt. Andrew Seif was killed in a training accident, March 10.*



**Maj. Gen. Joseph L. Osterman, Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command commander, presents a Silver Star to Staff Sgt. Andrew Seif March 6 on Camp Lejeune, NC, as Seif’s wife Dawn looks on.**



# MARSOC corpsman awarded Silver Star Medal for combat bravery

Story by Sgt. Donovan Lee  
MARSOC Public Affairs

Petty Officer 1st Class Kevin D. Baskin, a special amphibious reconnaissance corpsman with 3rd Marine Special Operations Battalion, Marine Special Operations Regiment, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, was awarded the Silver Star Medal during a ceremony at Stone Bay aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., March 20, for his actions in Afghanistan.

Baskin was deployed with 2d MSOB in 2013 when his team came under fire in Kushe Village. In total disregard for his own safety, Baskin ran through accurate enemy fire and provided aid to a wounded teammate. He stabilized and loaded the casualty into the evacuation vehicle before being shot in the back by an enemy combatant.

Baskin's citation reads, "Although wounded, he continued treating casualties while refusing medical treatment for his own injuries. Under intense fire, while simultaneously directing the evacuation of the wounded Marines, partner forces and himself, he laid down suppressive fire until every team member had evacuated the kill zone. His actions ultimately saved the lives of four of his teammates."

Baskin was born in Sellersville, Pa., but grew up in nearby Hatfield, Pa., where he graduated from North Penn Senior High School in 2005. He reported one year later to Recruit Training Command Great Lakes, Ill.

Following recruit training, Baskin attended medical training at Field Medical Training Battalion West at Camp Pendleton, Calif., and knew very quickly he wanted to serve with Marines. Soon after his training at FMTB, Baskin was selected for and completed the Special Amphibious Reconnaissance Corpsman training program.

Baskin was assigned to 2d MSOB and very quickly deployed with them on his first deployment to Afghanistan. But his tour was cut short after five months into the deployment when fragmentation from a rocket-propelled grenade pierced his body. He was medically evacuated to U.S. Naval Hospital Bethesda, Md., where he worked for eight months while recuperating.

Eager to get back in the fight, Baskin left Maryland,



*Petty Officer 1st Class Kevin D. Baskin, special amphibious reconnaissance corpsman, 3d Marine Special Operations Battalion, Silver Star Medal recipient at Stone Bay aboard Camp Lejeune, N.C. March 20. Baskin was awarded for his actions in Afghanistan April 25, 2013. Photo by Marine Corps Sgt. Scott A. Achtemeier.*

attended the six-month Amphibious Reconnaissance Independent Duty Corpsman course, and then requested a temporary assignment back to 2d MSOB for another deployment to Afghanistan in 2013.

On April 25th, 2013, Baskin's team set out on the mission to Kushe Village. He said he prepared himself for the mission like he always did.

"In order to be mentally prepared for missions you have to be physically ready first," said Baskin. "I would prep my

gear until I was comfortable knowing I had all of my mission essential equipment. Also, (I'd double check) all of the details about the mission ... what I would be doing, what the primary and alternate routes are, what (the structures in the area) looked like. (I would have) all of the contingencies hashed out.”

Baskin said that upon reaching one of their check points, his team started taking sporadic fire and identified two separate groups moving into fighting positions. As time went on, the rate of fire increased and they were pinned down behind a cemetery wall.

“Another teammate ran to our position with the 60 mm mortar and started sending rounds down range,” said Baskin. “When he ran out of rounds for the 60, he left the cemetery to another wall about 50 meters in front of us. When he looked up to try and suppress the enemy, he was shot.”

Baskin rushed to his teammate’s side and provided desperately needed aid. Even after he was shot in the back, Baskin continued treating other casualties, and is credited

with saving the lives of four of his teammates.

Major Gen. Joseph L. Osterman, commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, presented the medal to Baskin and spoke on his character.

“If you look across battlefields throughout history, there is always that one ringing slogan that you see and hear throughout and that is, ‘Corpsman up!’” Osterman said. “HM1 (Baskin) went forward without thought of himself, to the point of protecting his fellow Marines with his own body. From a personal perspective, I appreciate who he is as a man, from how he takes care of his family to the quiet professional that he epitomizes.”

Baskin humbly accepted the award on behalf of the men he was serving with at the time, and for those who continue to serve.

“I am proud to be receiving an award like this,” said Baskin. “I felt like I was just doing my job ... what anyone else on the team would have done if put into the situation. It’s a very surreal feeling.”



*Major Gen. Joseph L. Osterman, commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, awards Petty Officer 1st Class Kevin D. Baskin, special amphibious reconnaissance corpsman, 3d Marine Special Operations Battalion, the Silver Star Medal during a ceremony at Stone Bay aboard Camp Lejeune, N.C., March 20. Photo by Marine Corps Sgt. Scott A. Achtemeier.*



Marines with 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, run to a firing point at a range, Feb. 10. Critical skills operators with 3rd Marine Special Operations Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, trained with 2nd CEB Marines during RAVEN 15-03, a 10-day realistic military training exercise to enhance the battalion's readiness for worldwide support to global security. Marines with 2nd CEB played the role of a partner nation force during the exercise.

# Gulf Coast region plays host to MARSOC realistic military training

*Story and photo by Gunnery Sgt. Joshua Higgins  
MARSOC Public Affairs*

Service members and staff with U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command conducted a realistic military training exercise in the Gulf Coast region Feb. 6-16 to prepare Marines with 3rd Marine Special Operations Battalion for future deployments.

Marines with MARSOC partnered with several Marine Corps and other U.S. military units during Unit Readiness Exercise RAVEN 15-03 to evaluate and enhance the battalion's preparedness for worldwide

support to global security.

MARSOC's G-7 (Training and Education) conducts six such exercises yearly, and the MARSOC G-7 Director said it is during this training that MARSOC units get their first opportunity to work with the types of supporting units and subject matter experts they will likely work with during a deployment.

"At MARSOC, we take pride in deploying fully enabled (Marine Special Operations Forces)," said the MARSOC G-7 Director. "During RAVEN, we assess the (units') ability to accomplish the full spectrum of missions MARSOC Marines conduct."

MARSOC is a component of the joint U.S. Special Operations Command, and is tasked to support the Geographic Combatant Commands, through their respective Theater Special Operations Commands, with task organized, scalable and responsive Marine Special Operations Forces.

The G-7 Director said when a unit is tasked with a deployment, they analyze the mission to identify what enablers they will need during a deployment, and he and his staff bring those enablers to the exercise to evaluate the unit's ability to plan and execute missions.

MARSOC units often deploy with intelligence, communications and logistics enablers to achieve a variety of special operations missions, including foreign internal defense, special reconnaissance and direct action.

MARSOC's G-7 assigns mentors at the Marine Special Operations Team level to better evaluate the units during the exercise. The mentors provide operational experience and leadership to the teams in order to help prepare them for the deployed environment.

In early 2014, MARSOC regionally aligned 1st, 2nd and 3rd Marine Special Operations Battalions to support Special Operations Command (SOC) Pacific, SOC Central and SOC Africa, respectively. The G-7 assigns mentors with recent deployed experience to the units' anticipated area of operations to add value to the exercise, said a mentor for the exercise.

"(3rd Marine Special Operations Battalion's) missions are highly dependent on relationship building and having someone who has operated in a given (team's) anticipated environment allows not only mentorship for the scenario, but also two weeks for the (team's) leadership to pick mentors' brains on lessons learned, best practices and personalities of foreign forces the (team) will interact with on a daily basis," said the mentor.

Equally important for the units is the ability to train realistically in populated environments. During the exercise, Marines in the battalion practiced helicopter-borne and vessel-borne insertion, breaching techniques, fast-roping, and close-quarters battle techniques among other critical skillsets. The G-7 Director said the training would not be possible without the support of local government officials and the community.

Portions of the exercise took place in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana.

"Support of the local officials and communities is absolutely essential to this exercise and we would not be able to do it without them," said the G-7 Director. "We're very appreciative of their hospitality."

Being able to train in and around cities and in populated areas provides a valuable element to the exercise and prepares the units for operations in similar atmospheres while deployed.

"The teams continue to be required to balance physically challenging events with simulated role play in politically sensitive scenarios," said the mentor. "This replicates real-world environments that teams will be deployed in, which will require them to be mentally focused and apt communicators to influence that environment toward mission accomplishment in ambiguous situations."

"(3rd MSOB) is better prepared for that because of the hard work of its teams, the G-7 Exercise Control Group and the team mentors," he added.

MARSOC's ability to conduct the exercise was also dependent upon several Marine Corps and other military service units. Service members with Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 773 in Belle Chasse, La.; Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 772 in Lakehurst, N.J.; 122nd Air Support Operations Squadron in Pineville, La.; 524th Special Operations Squadron at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M.; 1st Special Operations Group in Hurlburt Field, Fla.; 7th Special Forces Group at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.; and Louisiana Army National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility 1 in Hammond, La., participated in the exercise.

Marines with 2nd Platoon, Truck Company, Headquarters Battalion, and with 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion, both part of 2nd Marine Division based at Camp Lejeune, N.C., participated as the notional partner nation force during the exercise. The MSOTs were tasked with training, advising, and assisting the force, a core competency vital to MARSOC operators.

The combined efforts of all military units involved and the support of local officials resulted in a successful exercise.

Overall, Marines with the battalion gained insight on the missions required of them and improved their core special operations competencies, said the mentor.

"Focus on the basics always remains relevant," he said. "This includes tough, realistic training for all parties involved."



# Marine Special Operations Team trains at Key West during advanced amphibious training

*Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Steven Fox  
MARSOC Public Affairs*

On a warm February day, at a harbor in Key West, Fla., two men fixed their footing on the edge of a dock and surveyed the water below and along the boardwalk in search of the soon-to-arrive Marine scout swimmers.

“Do you hear anything yet?” asked a former Navy SEAL, there to assess the approaching Marine Special Operation Team members conduct a visit, board, search and seizure exercise.

“Nope,” said another observer. “I can’t hear them.”

A few moments following their exchange, three critical skills operators and two special operations capabilities specialists finned up to the modestly-sized yacht they knew to be their target objective, emerged from the water and cleared the vessel.

The operators cleared the 30-foot vessel in a matter of minutes, turning it inside out in search of contraband and personnel.

The MSOT, with 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion, spent the month of February in several Florida locations conducting training exercises, all of which involved maritime operations.

Smaller vessels such as a yacht are not typically incorporated into U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command’s VBSS training, but this particular team sought to familiarize itself with the challenges of interdicting a small boat during their week-long training package held Feb. 15 – 22. The team focused on maritime operations that included closed-circuit diving, scout swimming and VBSS, among various other skill sets.

The team’s assistant operations chief said practicing VBSS iterations on smaller, privately-owned vessels is important for his team because its assigned area of operation may present such a mission.



***A 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion critical skills operator surfaces from the water and advances up a beach, completing a combat dive exercise in Key West, Fla., Feb. 18. The operator’s team spent a week in Key West practicing various maritime operations skill sets, further solidifying the development of their techniques, tactics and procedures and their standard operating procedures.***

However large or small the vessel, the practices and tactics employed during a VBSS mission are similar.

“The fundamentals are going to remain the same, whether you’re clearing a 25-foot yacht or a several hundred-foot cruise liner, so I absolutely think this capability is going to be maintained,” said an operator on the team. “Being able to take down either large vessels or small vessels, and doing that interchangeably between teams – that’s where we need to be.”

However, an MSOT may not get tasked with taking down a vessel of any kind, but will instead be tasked with a mission on land. The location and circumstances

of that mission will then dictate the insertion and extraction method used.

If an objective lies just beyond a waterway, the only feasible mode of insertion and extraction may be of an amphibious nature. Or if the mission necessitates operational activities remain clandestine, an amphibious insertion and extraction may also be the best option.

“The scout swimming is a realistic insert method for our team,” explained the team’s assistant operations chief. “If we had some attached personnel on our team who are not divers, we can get those guys to the mission using scout swimming techniques.”

Scout swimming is an individual’s application of standard surface-swimming techniques combined with the application of mission essential equipment and attire, and does not involve the use of a supplemental breathing apparatus.

“Scout swimming is nothing super advanced, but it relies on brilliance in the basics and doing the small things right,” said an operator with the team.

“Hydrographic surveys, beach reports, as well as assessing tides and currents - knowing all these things, and knowing how to incorporate all of that into mission planning before you even get into the water is really important.”

Scout swimming, though practical and effective when applied to appropriate missions, is not necessarily a suitable skill-set for every operation requiring an amphibious insertion. There are certain circumstances that demand the use of closed-circuit diving and scuba diving.

Dive operations are not commonplace; in fact, they are rarely executed outside of training and simulated missions. But they serve their purpose as a tool critical skills operators and special amphibious reconnaissance corpsmen can utilize to travel underwater, rendering visual detection unlikely and better preserving the integrity of a clandestine operation.

The Army’s Special Forces Underwater Operations School in Key West allowed the MSOT to use its training facilities which ensured the team had support readily available, maximizing their ease of training and minimizing their logistical complications.

“We went to Key West with the intent of refining our Tactics, Techniques and Procedures and our Standard Operating Procedures internal to the team,” said the operator.

Like anything in the military, diving has the potential

to be dangerous, and the skills employed are perishable. The assistant operations chief explained that the team possesses advanced dive capabilities, and they seek to regularly practice and improve upon what they already know, as well as further their skill-set.

“Key West allowed us to get into some clearer water that provided better visibility so we could see each other in the daytime and iron out our SOPs, so when we roll into the night iteration, it goes a lot smoother,” said the team’s assistant operations chief.

The team strives to offer MARSOC and Special Operations Command Pacific something valuable by gathering capabilities that are rare among MSOTs, while being able to also execute them extremely well.

“We’re working on being able to execute missions where we’re traveling five kilometers on a dive propulsion device, negotiating multiple direction changes, caching DPDs and MK 25s (underwater breathing apparatus) underwater, coming up, going onto land and executing the mission,” said the team’s assistant operations chief.

Since leaving Afghanistan, MARSOC has pushed to strengthen its amphibious capabilities, not just at 1st MSOB, but across all three battalions, and Key West offers the battalions opportunities to advance their maritime skill sets to a higher tier of capability.

“I think it’s key this training is implemented in the future because there’s a lot to learn in a dive team, and there will always be more to learn,” said the operator.



**Critical skills operators with 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion conduct combat dive operation training, Feb. 21, in Key West, Fla.**



## U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS



*Eugene Gutierrez, a U.S. Army World War II veteran and Charles Mann, center, a Canadian military World War II veteran, receive a Congressional Gold Medal honoring their unit's contributions to the liberation of Europe and the end of WWII during a ceremony in Washington, D.C., Feb. 3. Photo by John Martinez.*

# World War II's 1st Special Service Force honored with Congressional Gold Medal

*By J.D. Leipold*  
**ARNEWS**

Forty-two veterans of the original 1,800 commandos that made up the World War II U.S.-Canadian 1st Special Service Force were honored in the Capitol, Washington DC, Feb. 3, as recipients of the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian award for distinguished achievement the U.S. Congress can bestow.

Speaker of the House John Boehner hosted the

presentation of the medal which was first awarded to George Washington in March 1776 to express the people's appreciation for his distinguished achievements. Other recipients include Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela and the Tuskegee Airmen.

The 1st Special Service Force was activated in 1942 as an elite unit of 900 American and 900 Canadian commandos. Following extensive stealth training near Helena, Montana, in rugged conditions atop the peaks of the Rocky Mountains, former lumberjacks, trappers,

mountaineers and miners honed their skills in skiing, rock climbing and demolition so they could start their fight by destroying military and industrial installations.

In an amphibious assault landing in January 1944 at Anzio, Italy, the forerunners of today's Army Special Forces clawed their way through the siege of Monte Cassino and eventually captured Rome, before moving into southern France to encircle German troops.

"For every man they lost, they killed 25. For every man they captured, they took 235. The force was so fearless, that the enemy dubbed them 'the Devil's,' and so effective ... that our special forces refer to them as pioneers," said Boehner before an audience of dignitaries, Service members and civilians from both the United States and Canada.

Following the presentation of the Congressional Gold Medal to unit veterans Canadian Charles W. Mann and American Eugene Gutierrez Jr., on behalf of the 1st Special Service Force, each took a turn thanking the Congress, federal governments, their lost brothers-in-arms and their families.

"I must say I am most honored and humbled -- and I thank you all for allowing me to speak on behalf of the force members present and force men who are no longer with us ... may they rest in peace," said Mann to standing applause.

"It's great to be here and it's great to be American," said 94-year-old Gutierrez. "I want to thank everyone who undertook this very important and noble assignment to honor and recognize this most versatile and effective World War II fighting unit from the USA and Canada."

Capping off the ceremony was Gen. Joseph Votel, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command. The general highlighted the history of the unit, which was disbanded in December 1944. He referred to the men as

"pioneers and patriots."

"Gentlemen, the living members of the 1st Special Service Force, you should be proud of not only what you

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*Gentlemen, the living members of the 1st Special Service Force, you should be proud of not only what you accomplished on the battlefield, but also for the foundation and groundwork that you laid in order to shape our modern day special operations forces and for the close and professional relationship that ties our two countries together today. Rest assured that your legacy lives on in today's American and Canadian special operators -- both our countries and their citizens owe you a boundless debt of gratitude ... thank you.*

*Gen. Joseph Votel, USSOCOM Commander*

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accomplished on the battlefield, but also for the foundation and groundwork that you laid in order to shape our modern day special operations forces and for the close and professional relationship that ties our two countries together today," Votel said. "Rest assured that your legacy lives on in today's American and

Canadian special operators -- both our countries and their citizens owe you a boundless debt of gratitude ... thank you."



**Eugene Gutierrez, a U.S. Army World War II veteran, speaks during a ceremony honoring his contributions to the liberation of Europe and the end of the war in Washington, D.C., Feb. 3. Mann received a Congressional Gold Medal during the ceremony. Photo by John Martinez.**

# USSOCOM Care Coalition hosts 6th annual Military Adaptive Sports Program All Sports Camp

*Story and photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence  
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

Buses filled with athletes arrived at the MacDill Air Force Base gymnasium and active and retired service members poured out, ready to take on the challenges of participating and competing in multiple events throughout the week. Some of the athletes will be selected to represent the U. S. Special Operations Command at the Department of Defense competition this summer.

USSOCOM Care Coalition held the 6th Annual Military Adaptive Sports Program All Sports Camp Feb. 23-27, 2015 and hosted 45 wounded, ill and injured service members for

a week-long event.

“This sporting event is about the camaraderie and bringing our wounded warriors together through sports as part of their recovery and rehabilitation process,” said Master Sgt. Patrick Gilmore, USSOCOM Care Coalition event coordinator.

Participants are veterans and active duty Special Operations Forces that were given the opportunity to participate in archery, track and field, swimming, shooting, discus, shot put and other sporting events. For some athletes, this is their first-time participating in MASP and for others; it’s becoming an annual event.

“I know what to expect,” said Army Staff Sgt. (Ret.)



Roy Rodriguez, a Special Operations Forces athlete. This is his second year participating in the games. “Last year, I showed up at training and I was scoring points and making baskets with my left hand, but when you get to the real games, everybody not only scores with their left and right hands, but they can bounce it off the floor, they can throw it off a shoulder, they can hit it from their head and all of sudden it was like, ‘I have to step my game up so that I can compete against them.’”

During the week-long sporting event, athletes got a chance to compete against the University of South Florida women’s volleyball team and USSOCOM command staff in a match of seated volleyball. This year, Sgt. Maj. Bryan B. Battaglia, senior enlisted advisor to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was able to visit and participate on the

command staff team. He said that the wounded warriors interaction with the USF team members helps the community understand what it takes to protect America.

Battaglia also expressed his support for programs that help the quality of wounded, ill and injured service members and even gives them an excuse to get together.

“A take away that hit me pretty hard is that these service members, who are

wounded, ill or injured, though out of the Special Operations Command or their service branch and no longer serving in uniform, but they still continue to serve,” said Battaglia.

This training camp is designed to introduce participants to new sports, improve their existing skills and also hone skills in preparation for upcoming Defense of Department competitions.

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*A take away that hit me pretty hard is that these service members, who are wounded, ill or injured, though out of the Special Operations Command or their service branch and no longer serving in uniform, but they still continue to serve.*

— Sgt. Maj. Bryan B. Battaglia, senior enlisted advisor to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

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*U.S. Army Staff Sgt. (Ret.) Roosevelt J. Anderson, formerly assigned to the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), Ft. Campbell, Ky., cycles down the track during the 2015 USSOCOM All Sports Camp USSOCOM Trials, Feb. 23, at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. Anderson injured his T4 and T5 vertebrae in a motorcycle accident in 2012.*



## U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS



A giant U.S. flag is unfurled on the side of the Bayway Bridge during the bridge renaming ceremony in St. Pete Beach, Fla., on March 28. The Bayway Bridge is now called the Medal of Honor CSM Gary Littrell Causeway Bridge for Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Gary Littrell, because of his selfless dedication to his comrades during the Vietnam War.

# St. Pete Beach dedicates bridge to local Medal of Honor recipient

*Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence  
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

More than 100 people from St. Pete Beach and surrounding areas came out to support a local man and witness the dedication and renaming ceremony of the Bayway Bridge to the Medal of Honor CSM Gary Littrell Causeway Bridge, March 28.

St. Pete Beach Mayor Maria Lowe honored U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Gary Littrell of St. Pete Beach by having the Bayway Bridge re-dedicated in his honor. In October 2014, the four lane high-level fixed bridge was completed and replaced a two lane bascule

bridge built in 1962.

“It’s a rare occasion that you get to dedicate a bridge, much less dedicate it as the Medal of Honor Bridge. If there is one thing that CSM Gary Littrell has taught me, it is to have courage and never lose faith,” said Lowe.

Littrell received the Medal of Honor when he was a sergeant first class serving as an advisor to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam’s Ranger units during the Vietnam War.

According to Littrell’s Medal of Honor Citation, “On April 4, 1970, after 473 South Vietnamese Rangers ran into a concentration of approximately five thousand enemy troops, they established a defensive perimeter on a

hill against a ferocious mortar attack.”

After four long days and nights, surrounded and fending off assaults, Littrell displayed superhuman endurance, selflessness and courage, his citation explains. Littrell repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire as he crawled and ran from position to position around the defensive perimeter carrying and distributing ammunition, strengthening faltering defenses, caring for the wounded, shouting encouragement to the Vietnamese in their own language, and calling in airstrikes, sometimes within 55 yards of their position.

“Littrell acted with extraordinary courage and selflessness during a four day siege on his battalion,” the citation read.

As a member of the St. Pete Beach community, Littrell doesn’t consider himself a hero at all.

“When I look at this bridge I don’t see it named after me or in my honor, it’s to say thank you to every man and woman among us and to those who have ever served in the military,” Littrell went on to say.”

“It is for the ones who died for freedom because freedom is not free; it has been paid for by every battle since our country was born,” he said.

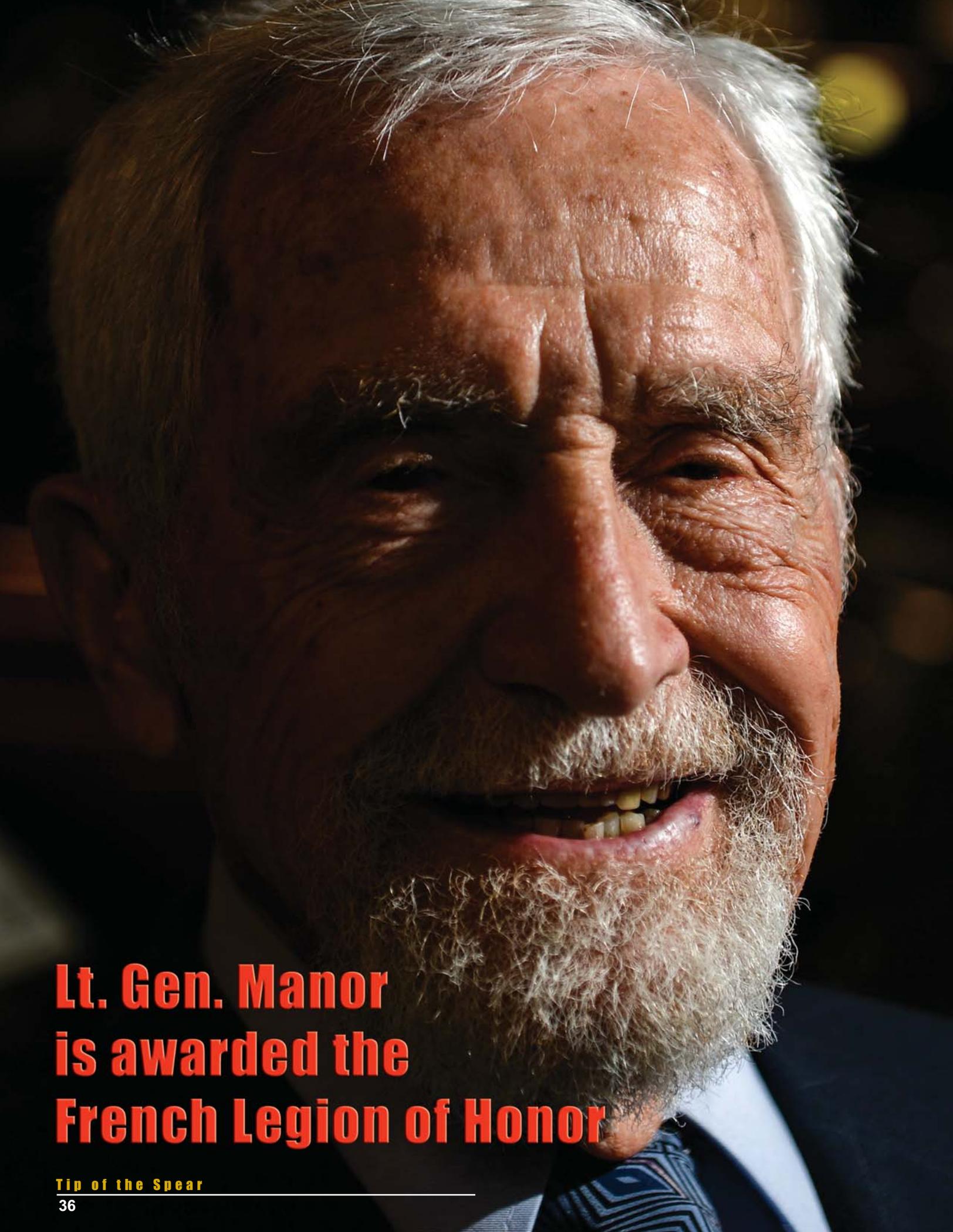


***U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Gary Littrell sits during the bridge renaming ceremony in his honor, March 28th. Littrell received the Medal of Honor for his heroic actions during the Vietnam War.***

Littrell served his country and the United States Army for more than 24 years.



***The Mayor of St. Pete Beach Maria Lowe, presents a plaque to U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Gary Littrell during the Bayway Bridge renaming ceremony.***



**Lt. Gen. Manor  
is awarded the  
French Legion of Honor**



***The French Legion of Honor recognizes service members for their determination and participation in the air offensive over Europe, including the liberation of Normandy.***

***Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence  
USSOCOM Public Affairs***

The Legion of Honor (Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur), is the highest decoration given by France and was established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802. This award distinguishes military and civil merits, and today recognizes the courageous American soldiers, and allies, who helped France fight against the barbarity of the Nazis and liberate it from its occupied status.

U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Leroy J. Manor was presented a medal of knight of the Legion of Honor March 3 in St. Petersburg, Fla., for his determination and participation in the air offensive over Europe, including the Liberation of Normandy.

“The patrolling was to prevent German aircraft from interfering with what we were doing on the ground. It just so happened that the German aircraft didn’t show up that morning, but I had a ring side seat to the greatest military operation in the world,” said Manor, as he recalled his part in the D-Day invasion of German occupied France. “On one of my missions over France, I was hit when a German anti-aircraft artillery hit my aircraft, you might say my aircraft was destroyed, but it flew me back to England, where I received the Purple Heart because I was wounded on that mission.”

Leroy Joseph Manor was born Feb. 21, 1921, and is a retired U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. who began his career as a P-47 fighter pilot in World War II, went on to serve in numerous command

positions and fought in the Vietnam War. His awards include the European African Middle Eastern Campaign medal with 6 Stars, the WWII Victory Medal, and the Purple Heart. He is also a USSOCOM Bull Simons Award recipient for a lifetime of achievements in Special Operations and a member of the Commando Hall of Honor.

Manor is perhaps best known as the Joint Task Force commander responsible for the daring Son Tay prison compound raid in North Vietnam on Nov. 21, 1970. Though the raid wasn’t successful since prisoners had been moved, it impacted future treatment and morale of prisoners of war.

“Although we didn’t bring back any POWs because they had been moved, it sent a message to the 500 POWs who were held in the various camps that their country had not forgotten them, and that was very important for their morale.”

Manor also served on the investigate panel of the failed Iranian hostage prisoner rescue attempt, Eagle Claw, in 1980, whose findings and recommendations led to the forming of U.S. Special Operations Command.

“During World War II I didn’t know that much about special operations but as time went on there was a need for special operations,” Manor said. “Today special operations has developed into a point that it is one of our primary military options.”

In April 2014, Manor was inducted into the U.S. Special Operations Command Commando Hall of Honor for his contribution to the SOF community.



***U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Leroy J. Manor is presented the French Legion of Honor Medal by Cdr. Pierre Roty, the French liaison officer to USSOCOM, at the Tampa Bay Automobile Museum March 3.***



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



**Marine Corps Staff Sgt.  
Marcus S. Bawol  
2d Marine Special  
Operations Battalion**



**Army Staff Sgt.  
Lance Bergeron  
Louisiana Army National  
Guard**



**Marine Corps Staff Sgt.  
Trevor P. Blaylock  
2d Marine Special  
Operations Battalion**



**Army Staff Sgt.  
Thomas Florich  
Louisiana Army National  
Guard**



**Marine Corps Staff Sgt.  
Liam A. Flynn  
2d Marine Special  
Operations Battalion**



**Chief Warrant Officer  
George W. Griffin Jr.,  
Louisiana Army National  
Guard**



**Marine Corps Staff Sgt.  
Kerry M. Kemp  
2d Marine Special  
Operations Battalion**



**Navy Petty Officer 3rd  
Class (SEAL)  
Jason D. Kortz  
Seal Team 1**



**Marine Corps Master Sgt.  
Thomas A. Saunders  
2d Marine Special  
Operations Battalion**



**Marine Corps Staff Sgt.  
Andrew Seif  
2d Marine Special  
Operations Battalion**



**Marine Corps Capt.  
Stanford H. Shaw III  
2d Marine Special  
Operations Battalion**



**Chief Warrant Officer  
George D. Strother  
Louisiana Army National  
Guard**

# 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) drops in

*A U.S. Soldier assigned to 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) free falls as his parachute opens after jumping out of a C-130 Hercules aircraft over a drop zone in Germany, March 17. Photo by Visual Information Specialist Jason Johnston.*

