



# TIP OF THE SPEAR



**GEN. THOMAS ASSUMES COMMAND OF SOCOM**

*U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLA., APRIL 2016*





# U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



**Gen. Thomas becomes eleventh  
SOCOM commander ... 30**

## Tip of the Spear

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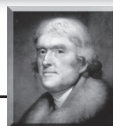
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*(Cover) Newly promoted Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III assumed command of U.S. Special Operations Command from Army Gen. Joseph L. Votel Mar. 30, during a change-of-command ceremony at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. Thomas becomes the eleventh commander of USSOCOM. Votel will become the commander of U.S. Central Command. Photo by Mike Bottoms.*



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## **SOF AROUND THE WORLD - SENEGAL SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – AFRICA**



**Senegalese special operations forces conduct a beach landing exercise during Flintlock 2016 in Saint Louis, Senegal, Feb. 12. Riverine type operations are important in Saint Louis because the region has 700 kilometers of coastline. The riverine operation was a culmination exercise after a weeklong training with Netherlands and U.S. Special Operation Forces. Photo by Spc. David M. Shefchuk.**

# **Flintlock 16 kicks off in Senegal**

**By Staff Sgt. Kulani J. Lakanaria  
Special Operations Command Forward – North  
West Africa, Public Affairs**

The annual Flintlock exercise kicked off Feb. 8 in Thies, Senegal with an opening ceremony that brought together senior leaders and guests representing participating countries. This year more than 30 nations attended Flintlock.

The Flintlock exercise started in 2005 across the Sahel region of Africa. Participating nations are members in the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) and are planned by African

partner nation Special Operations Forces and Special Operations Command-Africa to develop the capacity and collaboration among African security forces to protect civilian populations.

U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Donald C. Bolduc, Special Operations Command-Africa commander, joined leadership from last year's Flintlock exercise, hosted by Chad, and Senegalese leadership in exchanging the Flintlock ceremonial flag, signifying the new host nation accepting the lead role for Flintlock 16. This year's Senegalese-led exercise spans across several locations within the country as well as outposts in Mauritania.

"Flintlock is more than a military exercise, we are





**Senegalese military personnel conduct medical training during Flintlock 2016 in Thies, Senegal, Feb. 10. Photo by Spc. Andrea Serhan.**

training together to increase our interoperability and collaboration to counter today's threats," said Bolduc. "Flintlock contributes to strengthening security ties, promoting shared values and setting conditions for economic growth."

Flintlock 2016 marks the third time the exercise has been hosted by Senegal.

The Senegalese army chief of staff, Brig. Gen. Amadou Kane, welcomed the guests as brothers in arms from different countries.

"This ceremony that unites us today marks the official launch of this multinational exercise," said Brig. Gen. Kane. "Flintlock 2016 will bring together more than 1,700 Soldiers from 33 countries coming from Africa, North America and Europe. Our strategic partner the United States chose us to host this event of great importance."

"We're meeting at a particularly crucial moment in the history of our continent and even more important our sub-regions," said Kane. "Now, even more than the past, the increase of terrorism is a major concern to all of our countries. This moment of apprehension and challenges is also a moment to decide a sole and unique choice for the future, react together to stand in the in the way of violent extremists."

Flintlock improves interoperability and cooperation among regional and international security forces to combat terrorism across borders. Each participating nation has a stake in the successful outcome of Flintlock 2016, which will strengthen each nation's security forces.



**A U.S. Special Forces Soldier conducts tactical training with Senegalese military personnel during Flintlock 2016 in Thies, Senegal, Feb. 10. Flintlock is an African-led military exercise focused on security, counter-terrorism and military humanitarian support to outlying areas. Photo by Spc. Andrea Serhan.**





## SOF AROUND THE WORLD - PHILIPPINES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – PACIFIC



*Members of the 1st Special Operations Squadron pose with a wreath that will be dropped from an MC-130H Combat Talon II special operations aircraft to memorialize Stray 59 on Feb. 26. Stray 59 was a 1st SOS MC-130E Combat Talon I special operations aircraft that went down in 1981 over Subic Bay, Philippines, during a training mission.*

# 1st SOS Stray 59 memorial flight

*Story and photos by Master Sgt. Kristine Dreyer  
353rd Special Operations Group*

Time may pass, but the legacy of the crew and passengers of Stray 59 will never fade. Thirty five years later, the 1st Special Operations Squadron continues to honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

A 1st SOS crew conducted their 35th annual memorial flight Feb. 26 off the coast of the Philippines to pay tribute to the crew of Stray 59.

Stray 59 was the call sign of an MC-130E from the 1st SOS that crashed Feb. 26, 1981 during an exercise killing eight of the nine crew members and 15 passengers. The memorial flight has been flown by the

1st SOS every year since the crash 35 years ago.

“This year marks 35 years since we lost the fine operators aboard Stray 59,” said Lt. Col. Shane Vesely, 1st Special Operations Squadron commander. “The legacy left behind by the crew and passengers of Stray 59 will continue to impact who we are and how we operate as a unit. I am humbled to be a part of the Stray Goose community; a community that always comes through even when the potential costs are very, very high.”

Four Airmen from the 320th Special Tactics Squadron also joined the Talon II crew to honor those who died in the crash, which included two combat controllers.

In February 1981, crews from the 1st SOS were



responsible for the specialized airlift needed to support Special Warfare Exercise '81, an annual joint exercise in the Philippines hosted by the U.S. Navy SEALs. The squadron established a base of operations at Naval Air Station Cubi Point, Philippines, and crews flew day and night missions involving low-level, psychological operations, and infiltration and exfiltration of forces.

During the 16-day exercise, the crew of Stray 59 conducted 12 missions. The Feb. 16 mission was scheduled to be the crew's final mission during the Specwarex '81.

On the morning of Feb. 26, 1981, the crew of Stray 59 departed without issue from Cubi Point, Philippines, at 4:28 a.m. before returning at 5:06 a.m. to quickly load 15 passengers participating in the exercise. Stray 59 then departed two minutes later. All normal checks and calls were conducted within the first six minutes of the flight. The second, and last, transmission from Stray 59 was received at 5:21 a.m. There had been no indication from the crew of any issues.

Shortly after, a local fisherman watched the aircraft explode upon impact with the water. Eight crew members and 15 special operators died. One crew member from the 1st SOS, the electronic warfare officer, was thrown from the wreckage and rescued by a local fisherman. The wreckage from the crash sank 240 feet within minutes. Due to lack of physical evidence from the crash, investigators did not determine the cause of the crash.

"It's an absolute honor to be a part of this mission," said Maj. Casey Cunningham, 1st Special Operations Squadron. "I personally have been a part of all three Talon operational units. What I have come to recognize is that each one has a special history and being a part of that unit, you realize that that history becomes a part of you just as much as you become a part of it."

The 1st SOS members lost Feb. 26, 1981, during the Stray 59 crash were Maj. James Kirk, aircraft commander; Capt. Norman Martel, pilot; Capt. Thomas Patterson, navigator; Capt. Gregory Peppers, navigator; Tech. Sgt. Stephen Blyler, radio operator; Tech. Sgt. Barry Chumbley, loadmaster; Tech. Sgt. Gary Logan, loadmaster; and Staff Sgt. John Felton, flight engineer.

The 15 passengers lost were; from the U.S. Air Force, Senior Airman James Bach, Senior Airman

David Bingaman, Senior Airman Glenn Bloomer, and Airman First Class Kyle Wells.

From the U.S. Army; Sgt. 1st Class Danny Janecki, Staff Sgt. Patrick Estel, Staff Sgt. Davis Hagen and Sgt. Bryan Broadwater.

From the Philippine Navy; Radioman Petty Officer 3rd Class Rodrigo Penol and Seaman Manuel Dumo.

From the Australian Army; Sgt. Ewen Miller, Sgt. Murray Tonkin and Signalman Gregory Fry.

From the New Zealand Army; Warrant Officer 2nd Class Dave Heywood and Sgt. Dennis Terry.



*From left, Tech. Sgt. Brett Bollinger and Tech. Sgt. Michael Gillette, both loadmasters with the 1st Special Operations Squadron prepare to drop a wreath from an MC-130H Combat Talon II off the coast of the Philippines Feb. 26, in memory of those who died in the crash of Stray 59. The flight honors those who were lost 35 years ago when a 1st SOS MC-130E, call sign Stray 59, crashed during an exercise killing eight crew members and 15 passengers.*





**SOF AROUND THE WORLD - PHILIPPINES**  
**SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – THAILAND**

# 353rd SOG wraps up Cobra Gold 16

*Story and photos by Senior Airman Stephen Eigel  
353rd Special Operations Group*

The 35th iteration of the annual combined Task force training event exercise Cobra Gold 2016 took place Feb. 9-19, at various locations throughout the Kingdom of Thailand.

The 353rd Special Operations Group played a large support role working with the U.S. Army and Navy and Royal Thai Air Force counterparts for equipment and personnel drops, as well as working with the Thai special operations daily.

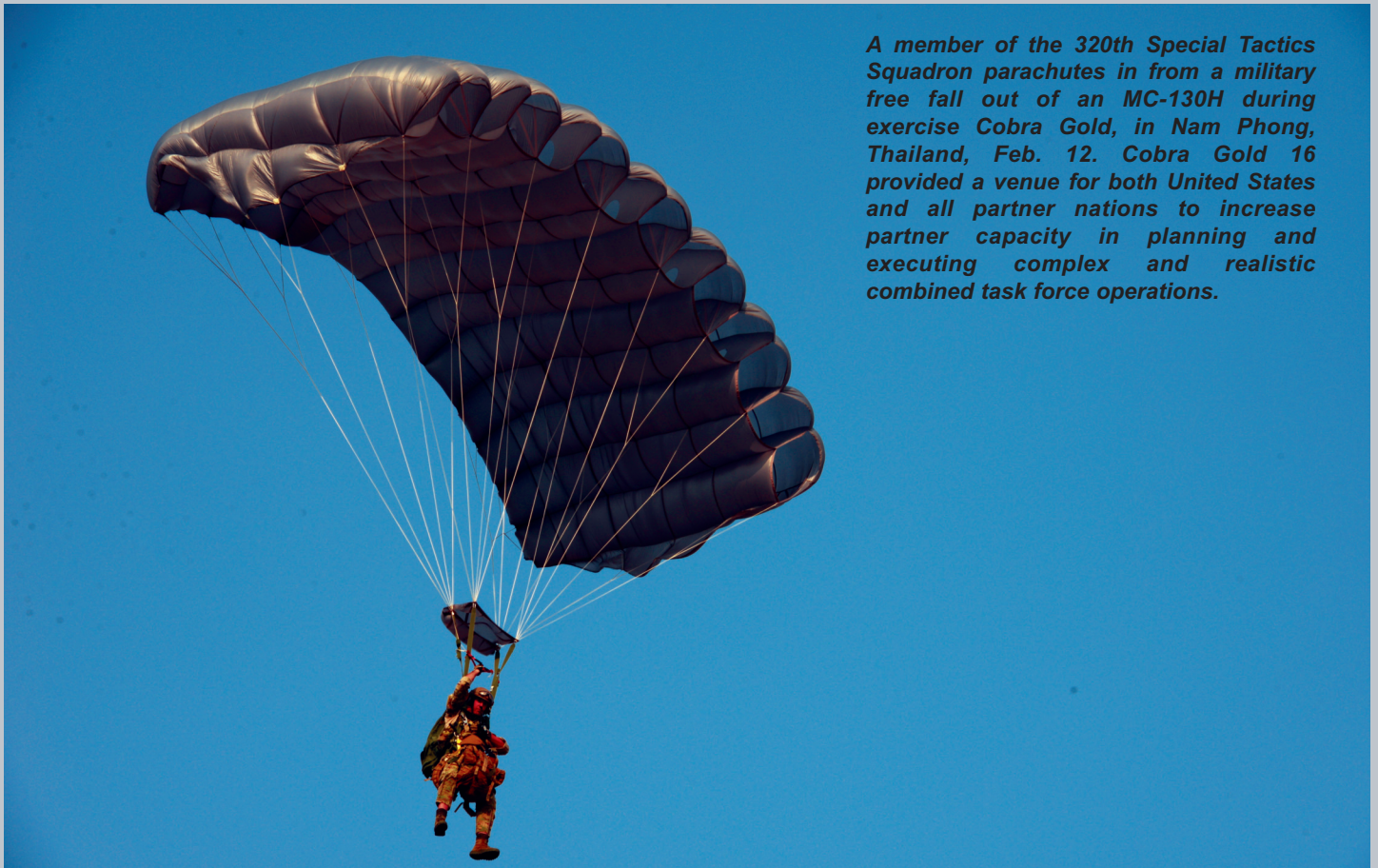
“We played a critical role with the Thai special operations regiment,” said Maj. Matthew Prochazka, 353rd SOG mission commander for exercise Cobra

Gold. “Our 320th Special Tactics Squadron worked hand-in-hand with them every day conducting military free fall and a range of other tasks.”

While continuing to focus on strengthening engagement in the region, this year, Cobra Gold also emphasized coordination on civic action, such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, with the aim of expanding regional cooperation and collaboration in these vital areas.

“Making an impact on the community was a huge priority for us coming into Thailand,” said Prochazka. “Going to the two schools in Nam Phong and Udon Thani was great, and I feel like we made a huge impact on those kids, and that it will benefit the community.”

In total, the 353rd donated nearly \$2,000 of



*A member of the 320th Special Tactics Squadron parachutes in from a military free fall out of an MC-130H during exercise Cobra Gold, in Nam Phong, Thailand, Feb. 12. Cobra Gold 16 provided a venue for both United States and all partner nations to increase partner capacity in planning and executing complex and realistic combined task force operations.*





**Members of the 353rd Special Operations Maintenance Squadron perform an engine change for an MC-130H at exercise Cobra Gold, in Udon Thani, Thailand, Feb. 14. The 353rd SOMXS's mission is to organize, train and equip Airmen to perform aircraft maintenance and back shop support for the MC-130H flown by the 1st Special Operations Squadron as well as other special operations aircraft.**

members' own personal funds to the schools through desks to study with and sports equipment, including \$1,600 for skill craft equipment to help with unfunded courses that teach them how to fix their own bikes and cut hair.

While humanitarian events were important, there was no lack of focus for improving capabilities between nations for joint operations.

"Our number one goal here was to continue to foster relationships with our Thai counterparts, and we did that," said Col. William Freeman, 353rd SOG commander. "We were able to come down here and achieve what we set out to do. It was really great to see everyone working together as one team."

Cobra Gold 16 improved the capabilities of participating nations to plan and conduct combined, joint operations; built relationships among participating nations from across the region; and improved interoperability over a wide range of activities, including enhancing maritime security, preventing and mitigating emerging disease threats, and responding to

large-scale natural disasters.

"We were able to complete all four of the major engagements with the Royal Thai Air Force that we set out to do, and that's a great accomplishment," said Chief Master Sgt. Gilbert Edwards, 353rd SOG command chief. "I am very proud of our guys, and everything we were able to accomplish."

The exercise focused on interoperability of forces and operational readiness. The experiences gained from Cobra Gold complements the mutual training interests of all nations involved and the combined ability to respond to crises across a range of military operations such as responding to humanitarian crises like earthquakes and typhoons.

"We love coming here to Thailand and working with all of our partner nations to help strengthen our interoperability for real-world operations," said Prochazka. "We look forward to future exercises here and can't wait to come back."



**U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Brandon LaFayette, 353rd Special Operations Support Squadron weather technician, works alongside members of the Royal Thai Air Force 231st Squadron weather team during exercise Cobra Gold, in Udon Thani, Thailand, Feb. 17. They met together to discuss the different techniques they use to determine the weather in this area of responsibility as well and build rapport for future exercises.**







# Special Forces support Soldiers participate in sling-load operations

*Story and photos by Mr. Richard L Rzepka  
U.S. Army Garrison Okinawa*

The more than 11,000 pound airframe hovered just feet above the Soldiers' heads while sand and other debris obscured their vision as they focused on rigging the quad bike onto the belly of the aircraft with a sling -- an operation that requires a high-degree of attention to detail, meticulous preparation and an unerring commitment to safety.

Dozens of support Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group, participated in sling-load operations, March 30, Okinawa Japan, to stay tactically and technically sharp on the procedure, which is a staple in providing Soldiers in combat the beans and bullets required to win on the ground.

"Sling-load skills are perishable like many other individual Soldier tasks," said Headquarters Support Company Commander Capt. Kai, whose last name is being withheld for operational security reasons. "This training helped introduce new Soldiers to the mechanics of sling-load operations and gave senior NCOs an opportunity to refresh skills and share knowledge and experience," he said.

The battalion's support companies take pride in being able to provide depth and breadth in the logistics realm and consistently look for new ways to add value to the organization's lethal prowess, said Kai.

Although it is not known for certain when the U.S. Army first lobbed provisions from an aircraft to Soldiers on the ground, by the summer of 1942 "supply by air" had become commonplace in the Pacific Theater, according to Dr. Steven E. Anders, Quartermaster Corps Historian and author of "Aerial Delivery and Field Services -- A Brief History."

After the advent of the aerial delivery training department at the Quartermaster School at Fort Lee, Virginia, in 1951 and the solidification of aerial resupply doctrine during the Korean War, the extensive use of helicopters in Vietnam proved equally effective at resupply via sling load, according to Anders.



**Support Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group, participated in sling-load operations, March 30, to stay tactically and technically sharp on the procedure, which is a staple in providing Soldiers in combat the beans and bullets required to win on the ground.**

For the First in Asia battalion, resupplying small teams of operators on the ground requires innovation and versatility.

"Our Soldiers and NCOs are among the most versatile in the Pacific," said Kai. "This training reflects the flexibility and adaptability we try to instill in our Soldiers. As support elements to forward deployed Special Operations Forces, [Forward Support Company] and [Headquarters Support Company] encourage creative solutions to problems and an outside-the-box mentality towards logistics."

From deepening SOF-conventional force interoperability to developing new concepts for support and providing options for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, 1st Battalion Soldiers remain committed to staying at the height of readiness.





# 17th SOS launches Pacific region's first MC-130J Commando II five-ship formation flight



***Story and photo by Senior Airman Peter Reft  
18th Wing Public Affairs***

Instead of the usual howl of jet engines, Team Kadena heard the growl of 120 turboprop blades chopping the air as 17th Special Operations Squadron MC-130J Commando II aircraft dominated the airfield Feb. 17.

The aircraft took to the skies during the Pacific region's first five-ship formation flight involving the new specialized mobility aircraft.

The formation was part of a 353rd Special Operations Group exercise testing the 17th SOS and 353rd Special Operations Maintenance Squadron to launch a short-notice, large-scale tasking.

"We routinely fly two ships, but we mobilized five ships to test our ability to generate aircraft in full force


to make sure our maintenance can support that, and to make sure we can do the planning in case we are ever asked to fly a large formation," said Maj. Brad Talley, 17th SOS assistant director of operations.

As part of that assessment, team members evaluated their formation flying and short runway landings, combat systems operators tested their cargo air drop timing, and loadmasters practiced their cargo delivery system rigging capabilities.

"We mobilized all available personnel in the squadron to execute this mission, while all five planes were able to accomplish all cargo drops, land in a small landing zone, maintain formation, and return safely," Talley said.

Though the team successfully accomplished the exercise objectives, it wasn't a simple process. Despite complex procedures, the Air Commandos overcame the





*MC-130J Commando IIs assigned to the 17th Special Operations Squadron fly in formation Feb. 17, off the coast of Okinawa, Japan.*

challenges to ensure mission completion.

“The most difficult portion was the planning and safe execution of the mission, since most of our squadron isn’t used to that level of de-confliction complexity,” said Senior Airman Zach Harmon, 17th SOS MC-130J Commando II loadmaster.

According to Talley, the best part of the mission was seeing the whole team fly together and build camaraderie.

“My favorite part was flying in close formation, exploring various formation geometries, and seeing how well each crew flew,” Talley said.

The 17th SOS was activated as a permanent unit at Kadena Air Base Aug. 1, 1989, and is instrumental in carrying out wartime and contingency operations in support of U.S. and allied Special Operations Forces.

The 17th SOS began the transition from the MC-

130P Combat Shadows to the MC-130J Commando II in December 2014, and the latest aircraft arriving on Kadena in October 2015. Technological advances allow the Commando II to set new standards for safety and accuracy in executing clandestine missions.

The new aircraft specializes in night-time, low-level infiltration/exfiltration and resupply of special operations forces as well as air refueling missions for special operations vertical lift aircraft.

The 353rd SOG, made up of more than 800 Airmen, is the only Air Force Special Operations Command unit in the Pacific theater. The group conducts wartime and contingency operations planning and execution as well as humanitarian and relief operations, all the while maintaining global mobility readiness for Special Operations Forces around the world.





**U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND**

# **Beret flash changeover ceremony ties together past, present 5th SFG (A) Soldiers**

*By 5th SFG (A) Public Affairs*

The Soldiers assigned to 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) stood in formation wearing patrol caps, awaiting the order to don berets with the new flash. On the command, each Soldier removed their beret from their pocket, adorned with the black, white, yellow and red flash, and placed it on their head.

The 5th SFG(A) conducted a beret flash changeover ceremony at Fort Campbell, Ky., March 23. During the ceremony, the Group reinstated the Vietnam-era beret flash, adding a diagonal yellow stripe and three red stripes to the existing black background with white border. The colors symbolize the 1st and 7th SFG(A) Soldiers who served under 5th SFG(A) during the conflict.

For the veterans in attendance, the ceremony brought back memories of a similar ceremony in 1961, in which President John F. Kennedy authorized Special Forces Soldiers to wear the green beret

“They read the special order that authorized the wearing of the green beret,” said Sgt. Major William Schrader, a 5th SFG(A) veteran, who participated in the 1961 ceremony. “We took our baseball caps off, threw [them] up in the air and put the beret on.”

Gen. Mark Milley, Chief of Staff of the Army, was the guest speaker for the ceremony. Milley is a former SFOD-A detachment commander in the 5th SFG(A).

“This is incredible. This is only the second time in the 55-year history of 5th Special Forces Group that all these green berets have actually been in a formation together wearing soft caps and they actually know the position of parade rest,” he joked.

On a more serious note, he added, “Fifth Group from day one until today has always been populated by heroes. The proudest moments of my life was wearing the green beret in the 5th Special Forces Group.”



**5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Soldiers raise a banner depicting the new flash with the Distinctive Unit Insignia of the US Army's Special Forces regiment during 5th SFG(A)'s flash changeover ceremony at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, March 23. During the ceremony, 5th SFG(A) reinstated the Vietnam-era beret flash, adding a diagonal yellow stripe with three red stripes to the existing black and white background. The stripes pay homage to the Group's history in the Vietnam War and its crucible under fire. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Kissta DiGregorio**





***Vietnam-era 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Soldiers participate in 5th SFG(A)'s flash changeover ceremony at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, March 23. Courtesy Photo.***

The yellow and red stripes pay homage to the Group's history in the Vietnam War and its crucible under fire.

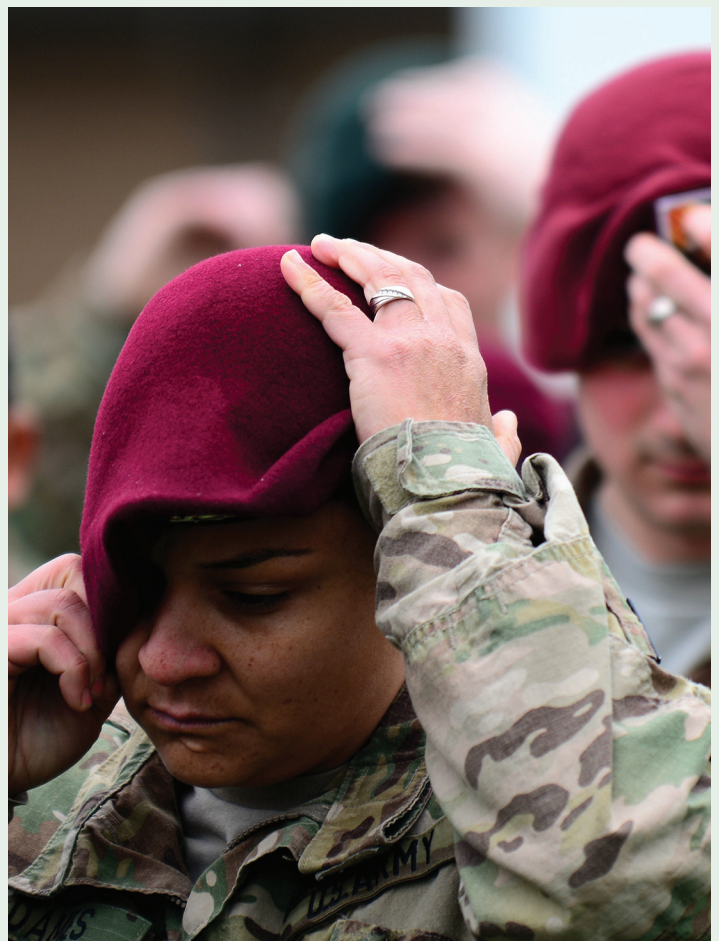
The Legion, as 5th SFG(A) is known, was officially activated on September 21, 1961. Within a year, its Soldiers were serving temporary tours of duty in Vietnam, and the entire Group was deployed there by 1965, training and leading indigenous forces, and conducting unconventional warfare and strategic reconnaissance. These Soldiers are some of the most decorated in U.S. military history, earning 14 campaign streamers during the Vietnam conflict. Eighteen 5th Group Soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor during Vietnam, nine posthumously. Additionally, three Australian SAS Regiment members were awarded the Victorian Cross for actions while attached to 5th SFG(A) in Vietnam.

To complete the ceremony, 5th SFG(A) veterans were invited onto the field to join the formation and present the new flash to current members of the Group. The veterans included many former members of the highly-classified special operations unit Military Assistance Command, Vietnam - Studies and Observations Group, wearing their own green berets that

they wore more than 50 years ago. They passed through the ranks handing out new flashes and shaking the hands of the Group's current members, green berets and maroon berets alike. This act served to tie the Group's honored past together with the present.

In a letter to current and former members of the Group, Col. Kevin Leahy, commander of 5th SFG(A), said the change "acknowledges 5th Group's history in the Vietnam War, the 785 Special Forces Soldiers lost in that conflict and the contributions of our Vietnam veterans to make The Legion the organization it is today."

This tribute did not go unnoticed by the veterans. Michael Risner, a Vietnam-era 5th SFG(A) veteran, said adding the stripes back onto the flash proves that the Unit appreciates what his generation accomplished in Vietnam.



***Soldiers assigned to 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) don their berets bearing the new unit flash during the 5th SFG(A) flash changeover ceremony at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, March 23. Photo by Staff Sgt. Kissta DiGregorio.***





## U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

# Ski-In: A Camp Hale, World War II remembrance event

*By Staff Sgt. Daniel Carter  
10th Special Forces Group (Airborne)*

Paying tribute to the legacies of WWII veterans, former members of the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division and the Norwegian-manned 99th Infantry Battalion (Separate), families, friends, and descendants along with soldiers of the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) from Fort Carson, Colorado, skied down Cooper Hill in Leadville, Colorado, Feb. 19.

Marking the 71st anniversary of the famed 10th Mountain Division's battle for Mt. Belvedere in Italy, the 'Ski-In' event was held for service members to remember, connect, and pay respect to those who came and fell before them. The colorful event featured skiers carrying unit colors and the American and Norwegian flags as they skied down the slopes in formation.

"This is the 41st time we've had this 'Ski-In,' and it means a lot because we get old comrades back from all across the country," said Hugh W. Evans, a WWII veteran from the 10th Mountain Division. "They are dropping off the vine pretty fast, but the ones that are here are special, just like the ones that have gone."

The event's location in Leadville, which was then known as Camp Hale, is where the 10th Mountain Division and the 99th Infantry Battalion (Separate) trained in preparation for their deployment to the European Theater. The 99th was a special battalion made up of Norwegian merchant marines, Norwegians, and Norwegian Americans. The 99th was formed under the Office of Strategic Services, a predecessor of today's Central Intelligence Agency, and a contributing influence to today's Special Operation Forces.

"They trained right here on this mountain, what they call Cooper Hill. A barracks sat right here as well," said retired Marine Col. Tom Duhs, whose father was also a WWII veteran. "Battalions would be brought here one at a



**World War II veterans from the 10th Mountain Division and the Norwegian-manned 99th Infantry Battalion (Separate), along with current-day Special Forces Soldiers from the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), and members of several veterans' organizations, and friends and family members ski down Cooper Hill, Leadville, Colo., Feb. 19, on the 71st Anniversary of the Battle for Mount Belvedere, Italy. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Amber Martin.**

time. They would be trained by a cadre of instructors, about 200 to 250 instructors, who taught them how to ski and everything thing else."

Once the training at Camp Hale was complete, the 10th Mountain Division and 99th Infantry Battalion (Separate) deployed to Europe. The units were sent to Italy and England, respectively, and the 10th was the last division to enter the continent of Europe during WWII.

"They were put into the line right away in January of 1945, and by February 18th they got into their first big battle," Duhs said. "In order to get the road that goes north, toward the Po River, they had to take this key terrain feature which was Mt. Belvedere, which was held by the Germans."

Duhs explained it took nearly the entire Division to capture the objective.

"All nine battalions were involved in the fight," said Duhs. "Hugh Evans was a sergeant at the time, and they



fought a very tenacious enemy, and they won the battle. And that was 71 years ago today.”

As for the 99th, while their training was done in conjunction with the 10th Mountain Division, their mission was much different.

In 1940, German forces occupied Norway and their merchant marines that were caught outside the country were not able to return home. They made port in the U.S. and Canada and immediately sought out a way for return to their homeland.

“A lot of [Norwegians] landed in Canada and the U.S. and went to various authorities to ask what they could do to help fight the war back home,” said Bruce Bjorgam, whose father was a 1st lieutenant in the 99th. “The U.S. Army caught onto this and thought they might need an invasion force for Norway some day. So, they put two and two together, made these guys U.S. citizens, and threw them in the Army.”

The U.S. Army put out announcements in newsletters that they were now looking for men to serve who spoke Norwegian, were of Norwegian descent, and/or had relatives in Norway. Soon thereafter, a battalion of approximately 1,000 men was formed.

Bjorgam’s father saw these announcements after he was drafted and signed up.

“They trained here in Camp Hale, 1,000 of them and 12,000 10th Mountain soldiers, and they did all the stuff, skiing, working with mules, trying out some of the early equipment, staying out on over night trips in 20 below weather... all that stuff,” said Bjorgam.

While the 10th Mountain deployed to Italy, the 99th was sent to England in preparation for deployment into Norway. Eventually the King of Norway, along with Allied Commanders knew that a group of 1,000 men sent to Norway, by that time occupied by no less than 400,000 German troops, was a losing idea.

“They knew that the Germans would just take retaliation on all the locals,” explained Bjorgam. “So they were repurposed to fight in the European Theatre and they entered Normandy on D-Day +16.”

The 99th Infantry Battalion ended up fighting in France, Belgium, and Germany. The battalion liberated the town of Malmedy, Belgium and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. Towards the end of the war, the 99th was placed in the 474th Infantry Regiment. The unit was sent to Norway to help in the disarmament of German forces, after which, they returned to the United States.

Although battle paths of soldiers from the 99th and 10th differed, Bjorgam explained it’s their camaraderie, their shared experiences, and their love for each other that continues to bring the veterans and families together every year.

These veterans are whom Duhs talks about when he explains some of their actions and why they are true heroes.

“There are veterans here like Jimmy Nasser [10th Mountain Division], a real gunfighter – all these guys are real gunfighters. They were all there killing Germans,” said Duhs. “Neil Yorker [10th], he killed a German with a pistol from about 10 feet away. Hugh took machine gun nests.”

“The Germans were no slouch outfit,” added Duhs. “They were the best there was, and these guys took them on.”

The veterans from the 10th and 99th paved the way for later generations to continue training in extremely cold, mountainous environments with ever increasing proficiency. These two units hold claim to being among the first U.S. Army units to be placed on skis.

The legacy of these veterans and their rigorous training in the mountains of Colorado remains to this day as soldiers of the 10th SFG (A) carry out training on skis throughout the winter season, focusing on both winter survival skills and advanced skiing techniques. The establishment of this capability can be attributed to the efforts of the 99th Infantry Battalion and 10th Mountain Division all of those years ago.

“Since [Europe] was our area of responsibility we knew that there was a need for the capability to conduct operations in an extreme winter environment,” said Master Sgt. Chad Johnson, a senior ski instructor for the 10th SFG (A). “That is when we started taking the former members of the 99th, who were in the OSS as well, and formed the core of 10th SFG (A) in 1952.”

The lessons learned from the 99th Infantry Battalion and 10th Mountain Division are what helped shape the way the 10th SFG (A) currently operates. This connection, the unit’s home in Colorado, ties to the OSS, and honoring U.S. Forces who fought in WWII is why soldiers from the 10th SFG (A) attended the 41st Ski-In event.

Soldiers with the 10th SFG (A) attended to not only spend time with WWII veterans, but also to pay homage to those who had come before them.

When asked what the young soldiers attending the event should leave knowing, with a smile on his face, Hugh Evans said, “Do your duty and serve the country. It’s wonderful, and we thank you.”





## NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

# The Navy's bridge: Cultural Engagement Unit helps connect U.S. and partner forces

*Story and photo by  
Petty Officer 2nd Class Paul Coover  
NSW Public Affairs*

In a cramped, second-deck passageway inside a nondescript building aboard Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, Sailors drenched in sweat are shuffling into various office spaces, dropping heavy gear with thuds before gingerly moving toward the exits. It's late afternoon, and after a six-mile ruck run down the Silver Strand in Coronado, California, the Sailors are still only partially finished with a multi-day selection process to join a small but critical Naval command. The Navy's Cultural Engagement Unit, for which the Sailors are

applying, has slots for 51 language and regional experts, or LREs, who can assist in operating in complex overseas environments. Only an elite few applicants will make the cut.

The goal of the CEU is to increase the Navy's operational effectiveness by more fully understanding world cultures that might be unfamiliar to Sailors born and raised in the United States. Accomplishing that ambitious goal, of course, requires LREs who can bridge gaps between cultures while working independently. That's part of the reason the screening process is so selective. To be a native speaker of a foreign language is not enough to qualify for a CEU position, nor is being physically fit enough to keep pace



*A language and regional expert of the U.S. Navy's Cultural Engagement Unit, works with service members from the Republic of Korea navy during a combined training with U.S. forces at Chinhae, South Korea, March 14.*



with the Navy's highest operational tempos, though LREs must possess both of those traits. LREs must also possess a holistic knowledge of a region in which the Navy operates, including the nuances that make life in that area unique — deployed LREs might need to work as translators one minute and help navigate a busy local market the next.

The three-day trial to join the CEU contains several physical fitness tests — including the six-mile ruck run — a swim qualification, and a board-conducted interview process. The trial also places a high value on maturity and education, which are assessed in-person during the screening. Such a detailed evaluation is both time- and labor-intensive for the command, but it's not one that command leadership is willing to compromise. The Navy has to have LREs who can hit the ground running.

"If you don't have trust, you don't have anything," said Lt. Cmdr. Anthony Waters, the officer in charge of the CEU, "and we have to earn that trust [with a partner nation] within a six-month deployment."

That's a large part of the reason education is so highly valued at the command. Many LREs already had bachelor's or even master's degrees before joining the Navy, since pursuing higher education was often part of what brought them to the U.S. from their home countries. Once at the command, the emphasis on learning and growth continues. Time is allotted to study for Navy advancement exams, CEU leadership supports Sailors who continue to pursue advanced degrees, and the command provides numerous resources for professional military development.

Because the CEU's main priority is to be operationally successful, the emphasis on education directly relates to the CEU mission, and pays dividends on Navy deployments. Mature, educated LREs often interact with senior-level leaders from partner nations, and the resulting relationships formed through these interactions directly benefit the U.S. and its partners.

The CEU fills its ranks a variety of ways. Potential LREs are sometimes recruited as civilians through the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest program; MAVNI applicants are legal residents of the United States who provide the U.S. military with language and cultural skills and gain U.S. citizenship as a result of their service. The CEU also recruits current Sailors who might have similar strengths to those of a MAVNI candidate, but who joined the Navy through a traditional

enlistment option. Regardless of the enlistment path a Sailor takes, CEU leadership is simply looking for men and women who fit the command's unique needs.

Builder 2nd Class Seong Yeol Song is one such Sailor. Song was born in Inchon, South Korea, and came to the United States initially to attend an American university. He quickly developed a love for the country, and learned he could become a citizen by enlisting in the Navy. He didn't hesitate. And he's never looked back.

"If I could stay here 20 years, I would," he said of the CEU. "I love this command."

Song's first assignments included brief trips back to his home country to assist in bilateral training exercises. But it wasn't until he completed a full deployment that he really understood the value of his job. He found fellow Sailors to be highly appreciative of his suggestions and input, and eager to have Song around whenever they interacted with partner forces.

"I was really motivated to support them," Song said. He was able to work equally well as a translator and cultural guide, both during working hours and outside of them. "I was a bridge," he said.

American-born Sailors who have deployed with LREs often speak to the value of working with peers who understand foreign culture.

"It's about as perfect as you can get," said one Sailor who recently deployed with an LRE. Having a uniformed service member who can work as a translator ensures everyone involved in conversations understands the U.S. mission and how to best accomplish it.

Back in Coronado, most of the applicants and current CEU staff have left for the day. The passageway between CEU spaces is mostly empty, but Lt. Cmdr. Waters is still working in his office. He's held numerous jobs in the Navy in both the enlisted and officer ranks, but believes there is something special about the CEU. He says he is often struck by the stories of the men and women who fill the command, who grew up around the world but who all shared a dream to become U.S. citizens and serve their new country.

Motioning beyond his door, Waters talks about what it means to be part of the command. The passageway may look plain enough, but the men and women who walk it each day make it unique.

"It's like walking the halls with the American dream," he says. "It humbles you, and it makes you want to be a better American."





## AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



*A U-28A aircraft taxis in after completing a mission March 31 at Hurlburt Field, Florida. As part of the mission, Staff Sgt. Kyle Cook, a tactical system operator with the 28th Intelligence Squadron, completed his aircraft mission qualification training. Photo by Airman 1st Class Kai White.*

# 28th Intelligence Squadron achieves full operational capability

*By Capt. Kristin E. Mack  
Headquarters AFRC Public Affairs*

After only 18 months – six months ahead of schedule – the 28th Intelligence Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Florida, achieved full operational capability.

The milestone was achieved after Staff Sgt. Kyle Cook performed a check ride as an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operator in a special operations aircraft March 31. This was the final training requirement the squadron needed to complete to have the

trained personnel to achieve FOC status.

“It was very gratifying for me individually to know that we finally attained the goal that was set out before us as a squadron, especially since it was years in the making,” Cook said. “I was fortunate enough to be the one in the training cycle that put the squadron over the threshold.”

The check ride was Cook’s final evaluation to deem him qualified for his job as a tactical systems operator.

“This was a big deal,” he said. “I feel blessed to be able to fly by myself and not have my instructor with me.”



The 28th IS is a geographically separated unit that is part of the 655th Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Group at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. To achieve FOC, the squadron had to reach a high level of mission capability. In addition, the vast majority of the unit's members had to be ready to deploy, and the squadron had to be fully manned.

"The hard work of the Airmen of this squadron led to reaching our FOC goal well before our established deadline," said Lt. Col. Joseph Marcinek, 28th IS commander. "I'm proud of the job they've done so far and will continue to do in this critical mission."

To meet these requirements so quickly, Marcinek and his staff focused on recruitment, training, readiness, and integration with the squadron's active-duty associate unit, the 25th IS. In addition, the 28th relied heavily on support from other Air Force Reserve Command intelligence squadrons as well as another Reserve unit at Duke Field – the 919th Special Operations Wing.

"I want to thank our customer, the 25th IS, and the 361st Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Group (at Hurlburt) for being amazing and supportive mission partners," Marcinek said. "Also, our leadership in the 655 ISRG and Air Force Reserve Command Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Directorate at Robins AFB, Georgia, as well as our other stakeholders and mission partners in the 919th SOW, 1st SOW and Air Force Special Operations Command, for providing superior service and collaboration to get our job done."

The squadron is the first Reserve tactical systems operator squadron. Its mission is to organize and train total force integrated personnel to deliver specialized analysis directly to Air Force special operations forces, provide equipment maintenance and configuration, analysis and dissemination, airborne ISR, and operational support.

"The Air Force Reserve is aligning itself to meet the demands of the warriors around the world," said Col. Douglas Drakeley, the command's ISR director at Robins AFB and former 655th ISRG commander. "We have the ability to support the nation in a cost-effective way by co-locating with active duty and employing Reservists as the mission arises, in order to meet the strategy for combatant commanders around the world."

The 655 ISRG is growing rapidly right now in order to provide some relief to the stress its active-duty counterparts are experiencing due to back-to-back deployments.

"There is an insatiable demand for more ISR personnel by combatant commands," Drakeley said.

The group stood up in October 2012 with 38 people and has grown to include 11 classic associate intelligence squadrons in six states that conduct eight different missions with more than 1,000 people. By next year, the 655th is expected to add three more squadrons that will put them at more than 1,300 people.

"The great thing about these jobs, from a Reserve standpoint, is that most of them are here in U.S. operations centers, so our Reservists can do their civilian job during the week and then come to work on the weekend to work missions from here," Drakeley said. "In nine out of our 11 squadrons, it's possible for us to do global activities from the U.S. It's a great role for Reservists."

A sister squadron to the 28th IS, the 49th IS at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, is still working to achieve FOC but hasn't met its training requirements yet, Drakeley said. He said the squadron is facing a challenge getting people with specialized skillsets qualified on a different airframe, the Rivet-Joint 135. Personnel with experience on this airframe can contact an Air Force Reserve recruiter.

For more information about any intelligence job opportunities in the Reserve, please contact your local recruiter.



**Staff Sgt. Kyle Cook, a tactical system operator with the 28th Intelligence Squadron, gets doused after completing his aircraft mission qualification training March 31 at Hurlburt Field, Florida. The completion of that training pushed the squadron to its goal of achieving full operational capability ahead of schedule. Photo by Airman 1st Class Kai White.**





# Air Commandos infiltrate via free fall

*By 27th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

Members of the 26th Special Tactics Squadron conducted routine jump training March 25 just over the flightline, Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, training to infiltrate hostile or remote areas where it is not possible for aircraft to land.

While jumpers loaded onto an MC-130J Commando II, a ground crew worked quickly to establish a landing zone. And with safety consistently being a top priority of the wing, emergency response teams took their position nearby.

The 26th STS is part of the 24th Special Operations Wing, one of three Air Force active-duty special operations wings assigned to Air Force Special Operations Command.

Special Tactics Airmen train to rapidly deploy to enable airpower success, global access, precision strike, and personnel recovery operations. They are ground special operations who are experts at air/ground

integration, specializing in airfield reconnaissance, assessment, and control; personnel recovery; joint terminal attack control and environmental reconnaissance.

Additionally, Special Tactics Airmen often embed with Navy SEALs, Army Green Berets and Rangers to provide everything from combat air support to medical aid and personnel recovery, depending on their specialty.

Special Tactics is made up of special tactics officers, combat controllers, combat rescue officers, pararescuemen, special operations weather teams, air liaison officers, tactical air control party operators, and a number of combat support Airmen, which make up 58 Air Force specialties.

These unique skills provide a full-spectrum, air-focused special operations capability to combatant commanders in order to ensure airpower success. With their unique skill sets, special tactics operators are often the first special operations elements deployed into combat or crisis situations.



*Members with the 26th Special Tactics Squadron begin their descent over the flightline March 25, at Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico. Air Commandos with the 26th STS performed routine practice jumps as part of maintaining operational readiness. Photo by Staff Sgt. Alexx Pons.*







# 'Viking' Raider's legacy remembered at celebration of life

*By Sgt. Lia Gamero  
MARSOC Public Affairs*

During a celebration of life ceremony, family, friends and fellow Raiders gathered to honor the life and legacy of retired Master Sgt. Eden M. Pearl, at the Base Theater on Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Feb. 19. Master Sgt. Pearl succumbed to his wounds on Dec. 20, 2015, more than six years after his vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device while deployed to Herat Province, Afghanistan in 2009.

"He was one of those guys the Marines tell stories about in the Marine Corps, so I couldn't wait to meet (him)," said Phillip Noblin, who met Pearl in 2002, when Pearl was his team leader at 2nd Force Reconnaissance Company, II Marine Expeditionary Force. "Just off the stories, I had built up this picture of this battle-ax swinging Viking obeast of a man."

By 2002, Pearl had already built himself a reputation as a force to be reckoned within the reconnaissance community. He had deployed with the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, completed Amphibious Reconnaissance School, Scout Sniper School, and the Rigid-hull Inflatable Boat Coxswain's Course.

"He was a very consummate professional, and commanded respect everywhere he went," said Noblin, who described Pearl as a leader who always took the time to teach and train younger Marines. "(On his team) you always wanted to make sure you did the right thing because Eden was your team leader and you didn't want to let him down."

Pearl completed four more deployments with II MEF, in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom I and Iraqi Freedom II. It was shortly before his fifth deployment that Pearl was introduced to his wife, Alicia, a U.S. Navy corpsman stationed in Virginia. After a long-distance relationship, the two received orders to deploy with the same unit, but two months from deployment, Alicia found out she was expecting.

"He had a plan, to be together for some time, engaged for some time," said Alicia, "but we both knew we were right for each other and we wanted to be together, so he was just so excited when he found out."



**Master Sergeant Eden M. Pearl was deployed with Fox Company, 2nd Marine Raider Battalion, to Herat Province, Afghanistan, in 2009.**

The couple married days before his deployment and their daughter was born just two weeks before his return in 2005.

"(She) was his joy," said Don Hoemann, long-time friend of Pearl. "He had this carrier that he bragged about continuously and did so much in-depth research on, and he'd carry her absolutely everywhere. He'd be up to his knees in muck, and she'd be on his back, hiking with him."

In April 2005, Pearl then received orders to 2nd Special Operations Training Group, Special Missions Branch, as a Dynamic Assault/Entry Instructor.

"(When I arrived) Eden was kind of in charge over there, which was funny because on paper there was probably a (gunnery sergeant) over him," said Noblin, founder of Brothers in Arms Foundation. "But he had that about him, you could be in a room with majors and captains, but if Eden was talking they were listening. He was the guy who had



been there and knew all the skills, and at the time, that was with only 10 years in.”

Pearl was with the Special Missions Branch in 2006 when the unit was reassigned and re-designated at Marine Special Operations School, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command. At MSOS, Pearl was assigned as Lead Instructor and was integral in the development of the Individual Training Course.

An explosive ordinance disposal technician with 3rd Marine Raider Support Battalion, who met Pearl in 2006 described Pearl as a very intense individual.

“His reputation as a recon Marine was already legendary with all of us, so in a way it was hard not to be in some kind of ‘awe’ when you first met the guy,” said the EOD tech. In 2008, he was assigned to Marine Special Operations Team 8211, Fox Company, 2nd Marine Raider Battalion, with Pearl as his team chief.

“Eden was (the team’s) anchor, our go-to guy with anything,” said the EOD tech. “We all would have followed him anywhere because we knew without a doubt that he would do the same for any of us.”

In 2009, MSOT 8211 deployed to Herat Province, Afghanistan. While on a routine convoy, Pearl’s team was ambushed and an IED was detonated directly under his vehicle. Two service members were ejected from the vehicle and survived, three others, including Pearl, were caught inside. Pearl was the only service member from inside the vehicle to survive.

“I don’t pray often, but that night I prayed it wasn’t one of our vehicles, and more specifically not his,” said the EOD tech. “As you can imagine, the entire team was caught pretty off guard to that kind of a blow; having that anchor, brother, leader and friend taken from you.”

Pearl suffered 2nd and 3rd degree burns to 97 percent of his body. He was medically evacuated from country and only days later to Brook Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, where he underwent multiple surgeries and skin grafts. After a couple of months, Pearl had a severe stroke that put him into a temporary vegetative state, but after 16 months he was transferred to a facility in Florida, that catered to his cognitive care needs.

In 2013, the Brothers in Arms Foundation, together with the Gary Sinise Foundation, helped build a home in San Antonio that was accessible to care for Pearl in a home setting.

“I don’t think most people would have survived those initial injuries to begin with and the fact that he made it out of (Brook Army Medical Center) after 16 months is

amazing, and the fact that he was even able to come home and spend more time with us here, is kind of miraculous,” said Alicia. “He truly was an incredible man, father and husband.”

Pearl’s wounds and recovery not only led to the development of multiple medicines but also several procedures that will help future burn victims. His survival was the leading factor for the Brothers in Arms foundation, which continues to support wounded and fallen special operations Marines. Alicia and Hoemann attribute his survival to his ceaseless warrior spirit.

“(Eden) was the epitome of a fighter, he was not going to give up,” said Hoemann. “Even with family and work it wasn’t an option to give up and not give 110 percent. He fought every day ... for what he thought was best for his Marines and his family.”

Pearl was retired in September 2014, where he continued to live in San Antonio with his family, until his passing on Dec. 20, 2015. He is survived by his wife Alicia, daughter Avery, and a community of Raiders with an example to live up to.

“I only wish that more guys coming up through MARSOC could have been influenced by him,” said the EOD tech. “(Eden) was a full package deal that could do it all. I will never forget the moments that I had with him, to know him, and have the honor to work beside him.”



**Master Sergeant Eden M. Pearl in Herat Province, Afghanistan, 2009.**





## MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



*Marine Raiders assigned to Marine Special Operations Company B, 1st Marine Raider Battalion and U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command headquarters salute the remains of Sgt. John Holladay, a fallen World War II Marine Raider. During World War II Holladay was assigned to Company B, 1st Marine Raider Battalion, 1st Marine Raider Regiment, who fought in U.S. Marine Corps battles against Japanese positions along the Pacific front, when he was killed in 1943.*

# WWII Marine Raider returns home from the Pacific after 73 years

*Story and photos by Marine Corps Sgt. Donovan Lee  
MARSOC Public Affairs*

Marine Raiders throughout history are renowned for their ability to accomplish seemingly impossible missions. The fact that Raiders take care of their own, in life and in death, is a major contributor to their audacity and mission accomplishment.

After 73 years, Sgt. John C. Holladay, a Marine Raider killed in action during World War II, was brought

home and laid to rest with military honors in his hometown of Florence, South Carolina, April 4.

The ceremony took place at the Florence National Cemetery where Holladay was placed in his permanent resting place. The funeral cascade was led by a large group of patriotic motorcycle riders from the Patriot Guard. At the cemetery, his family was met by service members saluting and dozens more patrons waving American flags in support.

During World War II, Holladay was assigned to Company B, 1st Marine Raider Battalion, 1st Marine



Raider Regiment, where he fought battles against Japanese positions along the Pacific front where he was killed.

Holladay was a family man who enjoyed spending much of his time outdoors hunting and fishing, according to his nephew, Jack Holladay. He told a story of how his Uncle John, paddled a canoe from South Carolina down to the coast and when he got there, he learned of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and he immediately enlisted into the Marine Corps at the age of 29.

During the war, Holladay was spoken of as an excellent Marine who only wanted the opportunity to serve, said his nephew Jack. He excelled in marksmanship, swimming and survival - all qualities that made him an exceptional Raider.

One of Jack's favorite stories to tell comes from the book "Edson's Raiders."

"Some like Private First Class John C. Holladay of Baker Company, were world class shooters. He could shoot the eyes out of an ant with 'Ol' Lucifer' his well-oiled Springfield." As recorded by Private First Class John H. Gann a radio operator, Holladay took aim at a sniper in a distant palm tree and carefully squeezed the trigger. Nothing. "Better shoot him again," suggested First Sergeant Brice Maddox. Holladay demurred: "Top, Ol' Lucifer don't lie; he'll fall in a minute." Gann and Maddox then shook their heads in amazement as the sniper's body slid out of the tree."

Jack was one of two people that offered their DNA to be tested so they could determine the identity of Holladay's remains.

"To have the chance to bring him home and give him an internment on American soil to honor them (WWII Raiders) and him is just an overwhelming feeling," said Jack. "I get tears of joy if I think about it for too long."

During this process the Holladay family has received nothing but support from the local community and the Marine Corps. People have donated everything from tents for the overflow of people coming to pay their respects to a vault for the casket.

"I don't think we would have any problem getting



***Gunnery Sgt. Clemente Batista, Staff Non-Commissioned Officer in charge of the funeral detail for Sgt. John C. Holladay, hands an American flag to Jack Holladay, the nephew of Sgt. Holladay, a World War II Marine Raider who was killed in action in 1943. After 73 years, Holladay's remains were recently recovered and returned to his hometown of Florence, South Carolina, April 4.***

the money to bring him home for a funeral, but the Marine Corps has refused to allow anyone other than the Marine Corps to take care of their Marines," said Jack.

Marines met and escorted the casket back to the United States and then to the funeral site. The Marines of Company F, 4th Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, based out of Eastover, South Carolina, provided the funeral detail, ensuring Sgt. Holladay received his full military burial honors with the dignity and respect he so much deserved. There were also current Marine Raiders who attended the funeral.

"Sgt. Holladay's return provides closure for both his family and the Raider community, demonstrating that although he was missing for 73 years, he was never forgotten," said a Marine Raider currently assigned to Marine Special Operations Company B, 1st Marine Raider Battalion. "The sacrifices Sgt. Holladay and his family have made in coping with his loss for the past 73 years is extremely important for U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command to recognize. We shall never forget their sacrifice."





*Marine Raiders from Company F, 2d Marine Raider Battalion, honed their skills shooting 60 mm mortars during a Company Collective Exercise on Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Feb. 25.*





# 2d MRB Raiders' skills tested at CCE

*Story and photos by Sgt. Donovan Lee  
MARSOC Public Affairs*

Marines Raiders from Company F, 2d Marine Raider Battalion, put their skills to the test during a Company Collective Exercise on Fort Jackson, South Carolina. The Marine Special Operations Company and individual teams were tested on their execution of basic skills and learned new tactics, techniques and procedures.

"The CCE is a good opportunity for the Company Headquarters to exercise command and control and refine their producers to ensure that we work as a cohesive staff," said the company first sergeant.

The MSOTs had the opportunity to train a simulated partner nation force during the CCE. They also completed multiple ranges and raids honing both their individual skills and team TTPs.

"Having a partner-nation force allows us to simulate training a real world foreign internal defense force," said the company first sergeant. "We train basic infantry patrolling, trauma casualty combat care, helo-borne assaults and ground assaults. (This experience) makes the teams better equipped to be a military force supporting a host country."

Marines from Marine Corps Air Station New River, North Carolina, made up the supporting elements and partner-nation force.

"There is a big difference between what we do in garrison and what we have been doing out here," said Sgt. Conner Fiero, a Marine assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, MCAS New River. "From the air wing side we only get to see one dimension of the assault, out here we have gotten to see how the aircraft operationally employed, troop movements, how the troops communicate with the aircraft and the actual assault which turns it into a 3-D picture."

The CCE is designed to validate all the training the Raiders have done up to this point said the company operations chief with Company F.

"All the training they have done, all the time they've been away, all the hardships they've faced, all the struggles have paid off, its paid off through leadership and mentorship from the supporting elements to the team commanders and team chiefs," said the company operations chief. "Their (Marine Raider's) mindsets have been brought up from conducting unilateral operations to being able to fully integrate not only enablers but a partner nation force who may have a language barrier or not have the same level of training."



*Marines Raiders from Company F, 2d Marine Raider Battalion, led a simulated partner nation force on a night raid during a Company Collective Exercise in Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Feb. 28.*





## U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS



*Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, gives remarks after assuming command of USSOCOM Mar. 30, at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. The former commander, Army Gen. Joseph L. Votel, will become the commander of U.S. Central Command. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence.*

# Thomas becomes 11th U.S. Special Operations Command commander

*By USSOCOM Public Affairs*

Army Gen. Joseph L. Votel turned the helm of U.S. Special Operations Command over to Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III during a Mar. 30 change of command ceremony at USSOCOM headquarters.

Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter presided over the time-honored change-of-command ceremony, attended by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Marine Corps Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr.

“For both Joe Votel and newly promoted Gen. Tony Thomas, their families have been a vital foundation,

providing them the flexibility to answer their country’s call repeatedly and to lead missions of incredible difficulty,” said Carter.

“While we are saying goodbye to a great commander, the special operations bench is deep and we’ve got the good fortune to have another exceptional leader taking command,” said Dunford. “Tony Thomas is a proven combat leader with a wealth of experience and tactical expertise. He’s also a strategic leader who has the intellect and vision to take the command to the next level. I think the men and women of the Special Operations Command couldn’t be in better hands.”

**Tip of the Spear**



USSOCOM synchronizes the planning of special operations and provides Special Operations Forces to support persistent, networked and distributed Global Combatant Commands' operations in order to protect and advance our Nation's interests.

Votel, 58, has commanded USSOCOM since August 2014, and will become the commander of U.S. Central Command.

"Michele and I have been so blessed throughout our almost 36 years of service," said Votel. "We've had the distinct fortune of serving at many locations and working with some of the best and brightest our nation has to offer. We have cherished every assignment and are looking forward to the challenges and opportunities that Central Command will bring."

Thomas became the eleventh commander of

USSOCOM and will be responsible for ensuring the readiness of Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps Special Operations Forces and synchronizing Special Operations planning.

Thomas was in command of Joint Special Operations Command till July of 2014. A 1980 West Point graduate, Thomas has also served with the 75th Ranger Regiment and was a troop commander, squadron operations officer, unit executive officer and squadron commander.

"I am humbled to have been considered and selected to lead this outstanding organization," said Thomas. "Both Barb and I are excited with what the future brings, and we will continue the standard of excellence set forth by the Votels. I recognize the confidence and trust that you and the President have shown in us."



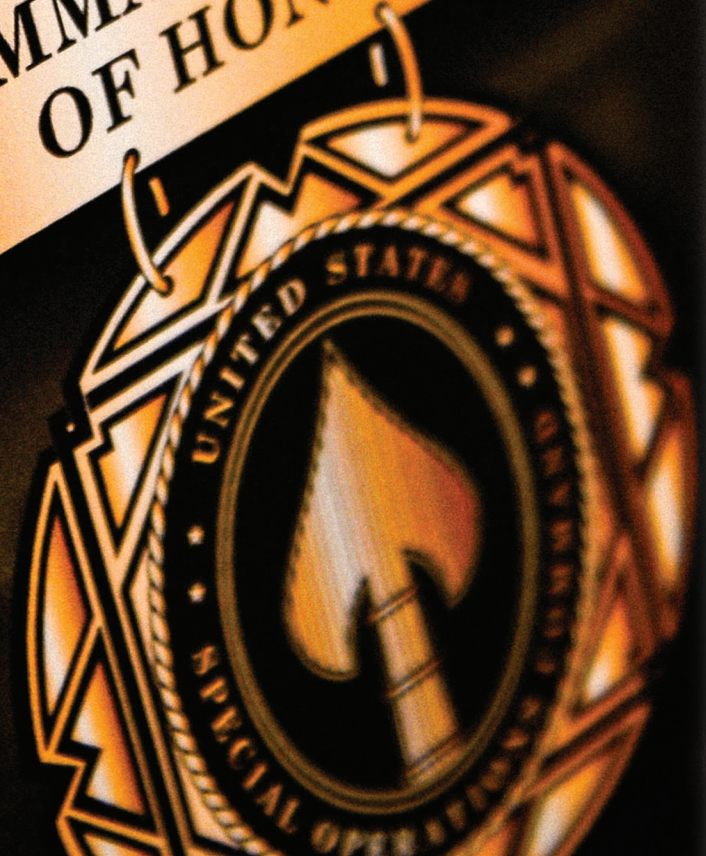
*(Left) A member of the USSOCOM Paracommandos parachutes into the change of command ceremony Mar. 30, at the headquarters on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. (Top) Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter gives his remarks lauding Special Operations Command. (Bottom) Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Marine Corps Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr. and Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commander of USSOCOM, converse during the change of command ceremony. Photos by Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence.*







COMMANO HALL  
OF HONOR





# USSOCOM inducts five new members into the Commando Hall of Honor

*Photos and story by Tech Sgt. Angelita Lawrence  
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

The U.S. Special Operations Command inducted five former special operators into the USSOCOM Commando Hall of Honor located at the USSOCOM headquarters, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, April 20. More than 100 people attended the ceremony to honor the inductees and watched as each of the inductees received a medal from Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, USSOCOM commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. William F. Thetford, USSOCOM command senior enlisted adviser.

This year's inductees were Army Maj. Caesar Civitella, Marine Corps Col. Robert Coates, Marine Corps Master Sgt. John Mosser, Air Force Col. Billy "Rusty" Napier, and Army Maj. Thomas Powell.

Civitella was an original member of the Office of Strategic Services during World War II and did combat jumps into Italy and France. His career continued as a Special Forces officer retiring at the rank of major. He then joined the Central Intelligence Agency supporting paramilitary operations for nearly 20 years.

Coates' career spanned 33 years and he commanded a reconnaissance platoon, served as commanding officer, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command Detachment One and served two tours of duty with the CIA.

Mosser distinguished himself during a myriad of special operations assignments in his 20-year career culminating as the future operations chief, 2d Marine Raider Battalion. He served as a special operations team sergeant and team chief during two combat deployments in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Napier spent 42 years in special operations as an Air Force officer and in the corporate world working aircraft equipment acquisitions for Special Operations Forces. A master navigator with more than 6,000 flying hours, Napier was awarded with three Distinguished Flying Crosses and Mackay flying trophy for leading an AC-130 sortie into the Panama invasion.

Powell served in special operations from 1965 to 2015 culminating his career as a senior intelligence analyst for Joint Special Operations Command. He earned the Distinguished Service Cross for his valorous actions during the attempted rescue of prisoners of war held in the Son Tay, Vietnam prison.



*(From left to right) Air Force Col. Billy "Rusty" Napier, Marine Corps Master Sgt. John Mosser, and Marine Corps Col. Robert Coates, stand next to the Commando Hall of Honor display after they were inducted into the USSOCOM Commando Hall of Honor during a ceremony held at USSOCOM headquarters, on MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, April 20. Not pictured, but inducted, is Army Maj. Thomas Powell who attended the ceremony via video teleconference.*

The newest members will join other recognized warriors in the Commando Hall of Honor, which includes such legendary names as; Aaron Bank, Charles Beckwith, Ted Lunder, Sidney Shacknow, and William Darby. Their contributions and legacies to the special operations community and this country have been unquestionably influential and are truly inspirational.

"A perk I enjoy is the ability to single out individuals for their performance and today is a great opportunity to do so, in terms of inducting five truly historic members of Special Operations Command into our Commando Hall of Honor," said Gen. Thomas.

Each new inductee, received a Commando Hall of Honor Medal and a crystal commemorative induction plaque, but the day was about something greater than tangible items.

"It's a huge honor to be selected for this award, this is a very special organization of amazing people and just to be considered worthy to be amongst those type of heroes is a huge and humbling honor," said Mosser.





## U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS

# A profile in perseverance

*An Air Commando's partnership with the Care Coalition*

**By Mike Bottoms**  
**USSOCOM Public Affairs**

Polite, soft-spoken, and still a young man, Tech. Sgt. Sean Cory faced a crossroad in his life.

Seventeen years in Special Operations as a Special Operations Weather Team Airman had taken a significant toll on his body. Surviving several IED explosions in combat and a hard parachute landing severely injuring his spine, he did what many Special Operators do when in pain, eat Motrin like candy.

"When we would leave the FOB in Afghanistan, I used to always look back at the base and think was this going to be the day I was finally going to be blown up? Surviving explosions makes you think that way. But you still always go out," said Cory. "My worst injury was not in combat, but when I was doing a 'dummy' tandem jump and I was the dummy. We landed really hard and I fractured my tailbone and damaged my spine. That happened in 2009 and I dealt with it by eating Motrin for six years."

### **I just couldn't do it anymore**

Chronic pain was taking its toll and one day he decided he just couldn't perform at a high level anymore.

"I had been hiding my pain for six years. I didn't want to leave Special Operations," Cory said. "One day I woke up and that was it – I just couldn't do it anymore. Seeing the doctor and telling him I couldn't do it anymore was the hardest thing I ever did."

After a series of medical tests, he was told he would face a medical examination board and be forced to retire.

Married with children and now with an uncertain future, Cory faced a significant amount stress. An Army Ranger buddy was going through a similar situation and he told Cory about USSOCOM's Care Coalition and how the organization was helping him transition.

He connected with Army Col. Kimberly Moros, deputy director of the Care Coalition, and Nikki Coombs who became his advocate, and they began to guide him through the transition process and helped him find housing and employment.

"The mission of the USSOCOM Care Coalition is to



**Retired Tech. Sgt. Sean Cory, a Special Operations Weather Team Airman, is seen here leaving a forward operating base in Afghanistan. Cory was medically retired due to work-related injuries. The USSOCOM Care Coalition assisted his transition to civilian life by helping him find housing and employment. Courtesy photo by Tech. Sgt. Sean Cory.**

provide Special Operations Forces wounded, ill, and injured service members and their families advocacy after life altering trauma or illness, enhancing the service member's quality of life and strengthening SOF readiness," Moros said. "The Care Coalition leverages the military health care system, the Tricare network, DoD Benefits, federal programs, and community-based initiatives through four lines of operation: recovery, rehabilitation, reintegration, and transition."

"As advocates, we are there to help think outside the box. We spend time talking about things they may need. Everyone's situation is unique; we want to make sure they have enough medication or know where to go for medical care while away from home station, things of that nature," Coombs said. "Sean stayed in contact with me throughout the whole process, mainly because he was still undergoing an MEB. I continued to assist him through all stages of transitioning out of the military."

Cory decided he wanted to live in Dallas, Texas. The Care Coalition and the organization Homes Fit For Heroes, a program providing free apartments to wounded special



operations warriors and their families, helped set up housing for him and his family.

Like many, Cory's military experience had a structured order of basic training, technical school then off to his first-duty station. His civilian transition was a decidedly different experience.

Helped by the Care Coalition, Cory was able to gain a fellowship with a company called First Data. He wanted to convert his experience as a curriculum developer of the Special Operations Weather Team career field and be a training planner for First Data.

"The Care Coalition's last line of operation is transition. The transition team establishes fellowship and employment services for service members by developing and maintaining relationships with corporate leaders, benevolent organizations, educational institutions, career service professionals, and government agency representatives," said Moros. "The Care Coalition fellowship program allows service members to intern with private industry or a public agency for up to six months while still on active duty. These fellowships allow service members to develop their technical skills and business knowledge, learn about different career paths available to them, create and build a network, and even secure employment upon the completion of the fellowships. The transition team has placed more than 200 service members in fellowships and has assisted more than 1,200 with employment since 2013."

"I was the human resources liaison, pre-screening potential applicants where I conducted annual compliance training and new employee orientation," Cory said. "First Data was impressed with my abilities, but unfortunately, they wanted to put me in a position I didn't want so I decided to end my fellowship with them."

Starting over, Cory contacted Moros again and she connected him with La Quinta Inns & Suites Vice President, Marketing and Military Programs, Derek Blake. Blake became a mentor to Cory and introduced him to La Quinta's human resources and other human resources departments in Dallas.

"During my career, many people have helped me along the way. Much of my success is due to the thoughtful advice given to me by the men and women that have mentored me," said Blake. "I really enjoyed getting to know Sean. He was in the middle of a transition. I challenged Sean to start networking and getting involved in his new community - Dallas, Texas. We attended an event together where he met other business leaders as well as other veterans. I enjoyed

watching him network and starting to build new relationships."

One place of business Blake introduced Cory to was the Center for Brain Health.

"Derek not only introduced me to the Center for Brain Health for a possible employment opportunity, but also as a means to treat my Post Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury," Cory said.

### **The power of networking finally paid off**

Cory's hunt for civilian employment took another twist. Blake introduced Cory to a multitude of companies and people including a company called the Trident Response Group or TRG, whose CEO is a former Navy SEAL officer named Clint Bruce. Bruce is also a Naval Academy graduate and professional football player, having played for both the Baltimore Ravens and New Orleans Saints.

Cory was immediately enamored with TRG and Bruce because of their common special operations backgrounds. Bruce's dynamic personality and TRG's culture was exactly what Cory was looking for. Cory was offered and took a training position within the company.

"To solve transition issues for injured military people shouldn't be done with just philanthropy, but by giving them meaningful work," said Bruce. "When I see people like Sean, I know they have given so much, they need to get back to work to get on with their lives."

Today, Cory is starting a veteran's transition course, setting veterans up for success in the civilian corporate world. He is also teaching HR departments to focus on a service member's skills and attributes and not just their vocation.

Companies like TRG, La Quinta and First Data have provided fellowships to the Care Coalition so injured service members like Cory can get back to work. Their military careers may be over, but their training and experience still provide great value to civilian corporations. The Care Coalition capitalizes on a person's strengths and leverages those strengths through the fellowship program. Yet, it is up to the individual to use the Care Coalition as a springboard and network themselves. Cory's story reflects that ethos.

"The Care Coalition helped me tremendously and was an important catalyst through my civilian transition," Cory said. "If you know you are going to be medically retired, don't wait around feeling sorry for yourself. Contact the Care Coalition early because they can help guide you through what can be a daunting experience."

To contact the USSOCOM Care Coalition call 1-877-672-3039 or go to [www.socom.mil](http://www.socom.mil).



# USSOCOM conducts 2016 Warrior Games trials

*Photo essay by Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence  
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

More than 40 Special Operations athletes kicked off their week-long USSOCOM Team Warrior Games selection trials at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, Feb. 28 - March 4. Athletes who were selected will compete in seven adaptive sporting events during the games at West Point, New York, from June 15-21.

The Warrior Games began in 2010. The games are a Defense Department program supporting the physical and emotional well-being of participants and contributing to a successful recovery, whether they are transitioning back to active duty or to civilian life.

Teams of wounded, ill and injured, representing the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force and U.S. Special Operations Command, compete for gold in archery, track and field, cycling, sitting volleyball, shooting, wheelchair basketball and swimming.











**U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS**

# **SOCOM History and Research Office wins two Telly Awards**

*By Laura LeBeau  
USSOCOM History and  
Research Office*

USSOCOM's History and Research Office recently won a Silver and a Bronze Award in the 37th Annual Telly Awards competition. The trophies were presented for the 2015 Bull Simons Award video honoring retired Command Sgt. Maj. Rick Lamb.

A Silver Telly (the highest honor) was awarded in the category "Film/Video–Non-Broadcast Productions–Employee Communications." The Bronze Telly was given in the category "Film/Video–Non-Broadcast Productions–History/Biography."

A panel of more than 500 industry professionals, each a past winner of a Silver Telly and a member of The Silver Telly Council, judged the competition, evaluating entries to recognize distinction in creative work. Entries do not compete against each other; rather, they are judged against a high standard of merit. Fewer than 10 percent receive the Silver Telly, and approximately 25 percent receive the Bronze.

Founded in 1979, The Telly Awards honor film and video productions; Web commercials, videos and films; and outstanding local, regional and cable TV commercials and programs. Silver Telly winners from the 36th Annual Awards include Bloomberg TV, CNN, Discovery Channel, Disney, ESPN, and Showtime Networks.



***Laura LeBeau and Tom Neven from USSOCOM's History and Research Office display Telly Awards for their work in producing the 2015 Bull Simons Award video honoring Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Lamb. Members from the Multimedia Support Detachment, part of the 3rd Military Information Support Battalion at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to include the director, Mark Williams; videographer, Army Sgt. Thomas Moore; narrator, Sgt. 1st Class Bradley Latham; motion graphics artist, Sean Callan; sound engineer, Andy McPherson; senior graphics illustrator, Ana Bruno-Stump; graphics illustrator, Army Sgt. Georgina Gray; graphics illustrator, Rachel Crabill; and researcher, Renee Vomero helped produce the nationally recognized video. Photo by Mike Bottoms.***

Along with Tom Neven and Laura LeBeau of the USSOCOM History & Research Office, Mark Williams, the video director, and members of the Multimedia Support Detachment, part of the 3rd Military Information Support Battalion at Fort Bragg, contributed to the video production.

The Bull Simons Award is presented annually by the USSOCOM Commander to recognize those who embody the true spirit, values and skills of a Special Operations warrior as epitomized by Col. Arthur "Bull" Simons.





*Editor's note: No Special Operations Forces lost their lives since February's Tip of the Spear.*

**Tip of the Spear**

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Petty Officer 1st Class Trevor Thompson, member of the U.S. Navy Parachute Team "The Leap Frogs," flies the American Flag during a sunrise training demonstration at Homestead Air Reserve Base, Florida, Feb. 25. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Trevor Thompson.