



USSOCOM - 30TH ANNIVERSARY

TIP OF THE SPEAR



USSOCOM MARKS ITS 30TH YEAR



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLA., APRIL 2017





U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



U.S. Special Operations Command celebrates its 30th anniversary ... 12

Tip of the Spear

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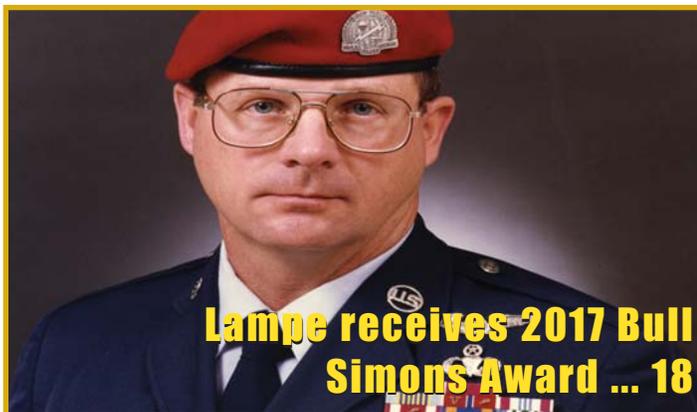


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(Cover) On April 16, U.S. Special Operations Command marked its 30th anniversary. The once fledgling, disparate organization has grown to more than 70,000 people whose contributions to national security are revered by the American people. Photo illustration by U.S. Army Master Sgt. Timothy Lawn. (Above) U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commander USSOCOM, addresses the members of the command after a recent morning run. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Angelita M. Lawrence.

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SOF AROUND THE WORLD - NIGER **SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – AFRICA**



A U.S. Army Special Forces weapons sergeant observes as a Nigerian soldier bounds forward while practicing buddy team movement drills during Exercise Flintlock 2017 in Diffa, Niger, March 11. Flintlock is a special operations forces exercise geared toward building interoperability between African and western partner nations. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Zayid Ballesteros.

Flintlock 2017 builds trust in Niger

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Kulani Lakanaria
U.S. Africa Command

From Feb. 26 to Mar. 16, Nigerian Army soldiers trained with Australian, Belgium, Canadian and U.S. special operations forces as a part of Exercise Flintlock 2017 in Diffa, Niger. The training started with individual soldiering techniques such as marksmanship, first aid, land navigation, counter-explosives training and eventually progressed into advanced platoon-level maneuvers.

These skills will be critical in the multinational fight against violent extremist organizations. When called to fight, the lessons learned at Flintlock 2017 will undoubtedly increase the combat effectiveness and survivability of the Nigerian Army soldiers, also known as the FAN. One thing stands out – the FAN is a willing

force and every soldier takes the training seriously.

3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), or 3SFG (A), has historically been aligned to the African continent. During the global war on terror, 3rd SFG (A) was realigned to Afghanistan. The group's area of operations shifted back to Africa where Green Berets are sharing valuable lessons learned with their partners.

“One of the biggest differences between the Afghan National Army and that FAN is that they have clear lines that they draw between who they want to defend and who they identify themselves as... It's a complete contrast from Afghanistan. They're motivated because they have good leadership that sets good examples and they know that they can succeed in an organization that gives them a better option than what they might have had,” said a U.S. Special Forces medical sergeant with 3rd SFG (A).

FAN soldiers come from across Niger. Niger has

many tribal groups and some soldiers know French and some speak other languages like Hausa. By training as a unit these soldiers bonded and found common ground with each other.

“In my previous experiences training the (Afghan National Army), I’ve noticed that the FAN values your time. They show up willing and ready to train,” said a U.S. Special Forces weapons sergeant.

Officers and noncommissioned officers in the FAN play an active role during the training by pulling soldiers aside to work with them when their platoon is learning a new skill. When a FAN soldier makes a mistake, leaders professionally tell the soldier what they did wrong and show them the right way to do things.

“We gave the FAN fundamentals and concepts of implementing different types of techniques and tactics, the fact that they absorbed a good amount of the training is because they are so motivated and they have a defined

enemy. Ultimately, it’s about trusting the soldiers to your left and right. The first day of training they seemed skeptical about each other. After training together they built a common ground between them and they have great working relationships,” said a U.S. Special Forces medical sergeant.

From the FAN cooks to the gate guards, every soldier knows their purpose and executes their individual tasks with pride. You will never catch a FAN soldier sleeping on guard or a mechanic quitting before a vehicle is fixed.

“The officers and noncommissioned officers take pride in their work. They train their men on their own without us having to get on them. Whereas, in Afghanistan you have to tell the leaders what to do. They do their jobs to the best of their ability because of the looming Boko Haram threat in the area,” said a U.S. Special Forces communications sergeant.



(Left) Nigerian soldiers prepare their magazines for a dismounted patrol during Exercise Flintlock 2017 in Diffa, Niger, March 11. Flintlock brings together forces who share the common goal of peace and stability in North and West Africa. Photos by U.S. Army Spc. Zayid Ballesteros.

(Bottom) U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers observe as Nigerien soldiers fire their weapons with the assistance of illumination rounds during Exercise Flintlock 2017 in Diffa, Niger, March 9. Photos by U.S. Army Spc. Zayid Ballesteros.





SOF AROUND THE WORLD - KUWAIT
SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – CENTRAL



A U.S. special operations forces service member sets a perimeter on the Kuwaiti oil tanker Hadiyah as part of a simulated maritime interdiction operation during Exercise Eagle Resolve, April 3, in Kuwaiti territorial waters. Photo by U.S. Army Master Sgt. Timothy Lawn.

US and Gulf Cooperation Council elite special operations forces simulate raid on hijacked tanker

*By U.S. Army Master Sgt. Timothy Lawn
Special Operations Command - Central*

Elite military special forces from the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the U.S. conducted a simulated rapid response to the hijacking of the Kuwaiti oil tanker, the Hadiyah, April 3, in Kuwaiti territorial waters.

Special forces teams from the GCC, and U.S. Naval Special Warfare and rigid-hull inflatable boat teams simulated an air and sea-borne rapid insertion,

search and seizure of the occupied tanker and its hijackers, and the safe release of the tanker crewmen.

The raid was a cumulative joint exercise that tested the participants' tactical skills and abilities to operate cohesively in an operational mission with GCC partner nations.

Exercise Eagle Resolve is the premier U.S. multilateral exercise within the Arabian Peninsula. Since 1999, Eagle Resolve has become the leading engagement between the U.S. and GCC nations to collectively address the regional challenges associated with asymmetric warfare in a low-risk setting



(Left) Elite military special operations forces from the Gulf Cooperation Council fast rope onto the tanker Hadiyah, April 3.

(Above) Gulf Cooperation Council special operations forces board the Hadiyah, April 3.

(Below) U.S. special operations forces ride a rigid-hulled inflatable boat before boarding the Hadiyah, April 3.

Photos by U.S. Army Master Sgt. Timothy Lawn.





**SPECIAL OPERATIONS JOINT TASK FORCE- AFGHANISTAN/
NATO SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMPONENT COMMAND**

Until Dawn: Surviving the battle of Boz Qandahari

*By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jordan Weir
10th Special Forces Group (Airborne)*

After landing in a flooded field outside Boz Qandahari Village, Kunduz Province, Afghanistan and trudging a mile through mud up to their waists, Army Sgt. 1st Class Morrison thought to himself: All right, yeah, that's how it's going to be tonight.

"We came to the realization that we were going to be wet and muddy real quick," remembered Sgt. 1st Class Valderrama, the senior weapons sergeant, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne).

Their mission that night, Nov. 2, was to target known enemy safe havens and disrupt the refit operations of several high-level Taliban leaders.

What followed was a nightlong battle for survival as 10 Special Forces operators, two American support elements, and a small partner force of Afghan soldiers fought off wave after wave of fortified and determined Taliban insurgents while trying to escape a village that had suddenly become an angry hornet's nest.

The night's brutal fighting resulted in approximately a third of the 59-man force suffering casualties, including two Green Berets killed in action.

A GATE NO ONE EXPECTED

Upon reaching the infiltration area via helicopters, they began slogging through the flooded fields toward their target a mile away. An hour later they reached the village, where they entered by climbing a cliff face with switchback trails carved into the sides.

"The village itself was something like a castle," recalled Morrison, the senior medical sergeant, "just steep, 100-foot high cliffs on all sides of the village with only one entry way."

Using aerial assets at their disposal, the team quickly determined that enemy combatants were already beginning to maneuver around them.

In the village, they cleared the first two compounds of interest without incident, collecting valuable intelligence and destroying contraband as they went. Upon learning that bad weather was on the way, they moved their timeline forward to



Green Berets from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), and their Afghan partner force, transport wounded soldiers through a hot landing zone to a waiting medical evacuation helicopter while a determined enemy force continues to attack during the Battle of Boz Qandahari, Afghanistan on Nov. 3, 2016. The folded American flag, which was on the medevac helicopter that day, was later given to the unit in memory of two Green Berets who were killed in action during that all-night battle. Courtesy photo.

exfiltrate the area safely.

"We determined to bypass our third [compound] and go straight to our fourth," said Sgt. 1st Class Seidl, team sergeant.

However, as they approached the fourth compound through a street lined with 10-foot-high walls on either side, they encountered an unexpected problem.

"The lead blocking position calls up and says, 'Hey we've got a huge metal gate blocking the road,'" Seidl recalled.

Morrison, who was at the gate along with Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Gloyer, an intelligence sergeant, said, "The spider senses were definitely tingling, being up there at that gate."

This area was a known Taliban hideout, and they had just run into a 20-foot tall steel gate that no one had known was there.

"Kind of ominous," Morrison said.

Seidl and Valderrama were planning out how to get

around the gate through an adjacent compound when the ambush began.

“We heard a distinctive thud, and we both turned to look at the gate,” Seidl said. “That’s when the first grenade detonated.”

CAUGHT IN THE BLAST

Morrison and Gloyer, along with several Afghan soldiers, were caught in the blast. Morrison was knocked to the ground, suffering shrapnel wounds to his body, hands and face. He regained situational awareness immediately, engaging and suppressing an enemy fighter inside of a second-story window before dragging an unconscious Afghan soldier out of the kill zone.

Gloyer, who was mortally wounded in the blast, managed to run back to the group before collapsing into Morrison and Valderrama. Morrison, ignoring his own grievous injuries, began treatment on Gloyer, directing a fellow operator to perform complex medical aid under his supervision after realizing that he had the use of only three fingers on his hand.

With Taliban forces attacking from nearly all sides, the pitch black of the night had suddenly become a hell storm of enemy fire.

“They basically had us, almost 360 degrees,” Valderrama remembered.

One fallen Afghan soldier was still in the kill zone. While trying to rally the Afghans, Seidl watched his own team leader, Capt. Andrew Byers, take action.

“Byers sprinted past me,” Seidl said. “He just ran straight into the smoke and the dust.”

Inspired by his team leader’s selflessness, Seidl took off after him, and together they pulled the fallen Afghan out of the kill zone.

Shortly after, a call came over the radio saying that another Green Beret was down. Warrant Officer Meade, the assistant detachment commander, had been shot five times, sustaining gunshot wounds in his legs, his hip, hand and wrist.

Staff Sgt. Russell, the junior weapons sergeant, was with Meade. Russell recalled a rush of fear when he realized the team had just been hit at their southern and northernmost points, and they were trapped in an alley. But fear didn’t stop Russell from reacting quickly.

“I grabbed [Meade] by his plate carrier,” he said, “dragged him back a few feet and tried to get in front of him, between what was basically a three-way kill zone. ... I thought I was dead.”

Meade, who is recovering from his injuries at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, said Russell exhibited

exceptional heroism in saving his life.

“He ran into machine gun fire to get me,” said Meade, “Then, whenever he couldn’t drag me any further, he laid down on top of me and protected me with his own body.”

When Seidl arrived at their location, he found Russell alone and kneeling over Meade.

“He’s engaging [the enemy] in three different directions,” Seidl said. “And all the while, he managed to get tourniquets on both of [Meade’s] legs, saving his life.”

Russell was later recognized with the Silver Star Medal for his actions that night.

Seidl, Russell and another operator pulled Meade to relative safety before continuing the fight.

A VULNERABLE COMPOUND

The fight was assisted by Air Force Staff Sgt. Hunter, a combat controller who accompanied the unit that night. Hunter, who was recommended for the Air Force Cross Medal for his actions, spent the night calling in precision air strikes on enemy positions and keeping the team informed on enemy movement seen from the air.

With casualties mounting and small arms fire and grenades raining all around them, Byers made the call to set up a defensive posture inside of a compound so they could care for their wounded.

Choosing one nearby, Seidl and Byers stacked up to breach its gate and threw fragmentation grenades inside. Seidl turned to rally the Afghan soldiers into action.

“That’s when I hear the first boot kick the gate,” Seidl recalled.

Byers, determined to get his team out of harm’s way, attempted to kick the gate open himself. It held fast, however, secured by an object. Seidl said he saw Byers reach across the gate to grab the object holding it closed.

“And that’s when I watched the rounds rip through the gate and into [Byers],” Seidl remembered.

Reacting quickly, Seidl emptied his magazine into the gate while Valderrama darted forward to pull Byers out.

After handing off a mortally wounded Byers to another soldier for first aid, Valderrama and Seidl breached a different compound and began clearing it by themselves.

“He went left. I went right,” Seidl said. “Not ideal.”

It happened to be the only compound with shorter walls than the others, allowing more clearing options. But the short walls also gave the Taliban a line-of-sight advantage.

“It was probably the most vulnerable compound to be in,” Seidl said, “but at the time it was the only one we could get into.”



SPECIAL OPERATIONS JOINT TASK FORCE- AFGHANISTAN/ NATO SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMPONENT COMMAND

After about a half-hour of brutal fighting, the team had finally secured the defensive foothold they needed.

With everyone inside the compound, they established as much of a defensive perimeter as they could with their limited personnel. They quickly occupied the few hard-shelled rooms available and established a casualty collection point outside.

WALL OF FIRE

Valderrama set up lanes of fire by placing uninjured Afghan soldiers around the perimeter, then set off running from position to position in an effort to ensure the best defense possible.

“I basically wanted them to build a wall [of fire] between us and anyone out there,” Valderrama explained.

Hunter, at the authorization of Seidl, called in multiple danger-close air strikes onto enemy positions all around them, the closest of which detonated approximately nine feet from their own location.

Morrison, who was significantly injured in the initial grenade blast, continued to refuse medical treatment so he could assist with the other wounded soldiers.

“He’s completely injured,” Seidl remembered. “He looks horrible. He’s got blood covering his face. He’s limping. He can barely hold a rifle, but he’s still fighting.”

Sadly, it was during this time that Gloyer succumbed to his wounds from the initial grenade blast.

With severe injuries to his team leader, Byers, and assistant team leader, Meade, Seidl now found himself in charge of a mass casualty situation.

Along with calling in medevac requests and maintaining radio communications with higher, Seidl called for reinforcements to facilitate their movement out of the village to the landing zone.

With about a third of his force depleted by casualties, Seidl’s team was forced to hold their position until a quick reaction force could arrive to assist in exfiltration.

“For two hours we fought in that compound,” Seidl said. “[We] fought for our lives.”

And they repelled every attack on their perimeter, not suffering a single additional casualty.

HELP ARRIVES

When help arrived, it was in the form of a single 10-man Special Forces unit who had stormed the village alone to reach their comrades.

With the additional forces, they began a movement away from the compound and village. They continued the fight

through 800-meters of volatile enemy territory toward the medevac location.

Bounding out of the village proved difficult due to the force fragmenting and creating gaps in the defense.

Suddenly, aerial assets warned them of enemy movement directly to their flank, and as the enemy opened fire, soldiers darted off the road for cover, including those carrying the stretcher holding Byers.

Morrison was up ahead pulling security.

“I remember turning around,” Morrison said, “and seeing [our medic] laying there, bullets all over the place, just holding pressure on [Byers’] wound.”

With the immediate threat suppressed, they regrouped and traveled to a nearby field. Despite still being under fire, Seidl called for medevac on the spot, due to the slow movement of the formation and the deteriorating health of their casualties.

“We got to a field and we’re like, you know, there’s no better time than the present,” Morrison said. “We need to get our more seriously injured guys [evacuated] right away.”

When the helicopter finally touched down, the Green Berets loaded Byers and Meade on board, along with their medic, who was treating them. Unfortunately, Byers succumbed to his wounds during that flight.

For selflessly running into a kill zone to retrieve a fallen Afghan comrade, for maintaining positive control of a 59-man force during a seemingly hopeless situation, and for sacrificing his life by leading from the front in an effort to rescue his men, Byers was posthumously awarded the Silver Star Medal.

One wounded, litter-bound Afghan soldier still lay in the open field, and upon seeing him, another Green Beret lay on top of him, shielding the soldier’s body from the enemy bullets pinging all around them.

Everyone not involved with moving casualties were concentrating their full efforts on returning fire, trying to suppress the enemy attacks still coming from the village.

As the helicopter flew away, the enemy transitioned their fire directly onto the landing zone, where the remaining force had little protection.

“I hadn’t had fire that close to me in a very long time,” said Seidl. “If I had an [entrenching tool] I would have dug a Ranger grave and gotten as low as I could into that field.”

INTO DAWN

Dawn had broken by this point, taking with it the cover of darkness. The enemy fire was so concentrated that the second medevac helicopter couldn’t land, forcing the Special Forces operators to move their wounded another 300 meters

to a tree line. Improvising to assist in the movement, Seidl and Morrison used a nearby donkey to help carry Gloyer to the new extraction point.

When they made it, Seidl called the evacuation. And, as the sun rose on the morning of Nov. 3, the remaining men left the area.

Despite a night filled with seemingly insurmountable obstacles, these Special Forces operators accomplished a difficult mission. In total, the Special Forces Soldiers killed 27 Taliban insurgents along with three high-value Taliban commanders.

“I feel content that their network was severely hindered and damaged, and probably going to be out of commission for quite a while.” Seidl said.

For taking charge of a depleted force and establishing a defensive posture that repelled every subsequent attack, for making the tough call on multiple air strikes near his own position and leading men under his charge out of a hostile city after inflicting catastrophic damage on multiple enemies, Seidl was awarded the Silver Star Medal.

It was a bittersweet victory, however, with the devastating losses of Byers and Gloyer.

“I know we’ve taken losses in the past,” Seidl said, “but I

don’t know that we’ve ever taken a loss like this in quite some time, where a team is hit this hard.”

The losses of Byers and Gloyer affected every member of the Special Forces unit. Morrison will never forget the men’s professionalism and commitment to the team and mission.

“Both of them were extremely dedicated,” Morrison said. “Both of them believed in what they were doing.”

Morrison explained that, despite the dangers, despite the risks and the hardships, being a Green Beret is ultimately a calling.

“When we sign up for Special Forces, we volunteer several times,” he said. “We volunteer to join the Army, then we volunteer to go to [Special Forces] selection, then we stay around and deal with all the hardships of the [Special Forces] qualification course. So it goes without saying that those guys wanted to be where they were that night.”

“Some of the things that I saw of the men that night was some of the most courageous and amazing things I’d ever seen,” Seidl added, “or could ever hope to see.”

For their actions that night, the Special Forces team were awarded three Silver Star Medals, three Bronze Star Medals (two with Valor), four Army Commendation Medals with Valor, and six Purple Heart Medals.



Special Forces Soldiers of 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) honor two of their fallen brothers during a memorial held at Kunduz Airfield in Afghanistan on Nov. 7, 2016. Maj. Andrew Byers, the commander, and Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Gloyer, an intelligence sergeant, were killed in action during the Battle of Boz Qandahari, Afghanistan, on Nov. 2-3, 2016. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Connor Mendez.



30 Years

US Special Operations Command celebrates its 30th anniversary

By Mike Bottoms
USSOCOM Public Affairs

U.S. Special Operations Command marks its 30th anniversary on April 16. The once fledgling, disparate organization has grown to more than 70,000 people whose contributions to national security are revered by the American people. The following is a brief accounting of the past thirty years.

Out of the tragedy of Desert One rose U.S. Special Operations Command



April 25, 1980, was a defining moment for the American people and Special Operations.

At 7 a.m., a somber president announced to our nation and the world the tragic news of Desert

One. President Jimmy Carter revealed a secret hostage rescue mission had failed; eight American servicemen were dead and several others were seriously injured.

“That crushing failure at Desert One and its consequences told everyone, despite the enormous talent we had, we hadn’t put it together right and something had to be done,” said retired Lt. Gen. Sam Wilson, a former CIA field case officer, former Special Forces group commander, and former Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

“That conclusion was reinforced by the superficially successful operation in Grenada. Once again, our service components could not talk with each other, the forces had not lived together, trained together, nor did we share the same doctrine. The operation was like a pick-up basketball game. Desert One and Grenada were the two main events telling us something must be done,” Wilson said.

Problems with the Grenada invasion and failure to fix the special operations joint mobility issues led

Congress to pass the Nunn-Cohen Amendment mandating the president create a unified combatant command for special operations with control over its own resources.

“During the early eighties special operations forces encountered problems with the unified commands during the Brig. Gen. Dozier kidnapping and Operation Urgent Fury. We couldn’t get the unified commands to understand what the special operations community was about,” said retired Maj. Gen. Richard Scholtes, former Joint Special Operations Command commander. “SOF never talked to anyone in the House or Senate in those days so Gen. Vessey (Army Chief of Staff) asked some staffers to talk to us about the problems in Grenada. Discussions began in Congress to reorganize special operations to better define how SOF should be used.”

By September 1986, there were three proposal bills — one from the Department of Defense, the Senate and the House of Representatives — to reorganize special operations. To accurately testify about SOF issues, Scholtes retired prior to appearing before the Senate Sea Power and Force Protection Subcommittee on Aug. 5, 1986.

“Gen. Scholtes has a reputation for integrity and principle. He would tell it like it was. That was important to the (Armed Services Committee) members,” said former Sen. William Cohen, who served as Secretary of Defense from 1997 to 2001. “The Pentagon was waging a frontal and rear assault in opposition to the creation of a special operations command. Without his testimony, USSOCOM might not have happened, or we might have created a command with only two or three stars.”

Scholtes provided the unvarnished military advice to Congress and now it was up to the legislative branch to create United States Special Operations Command.

“Senators William Cohen and Sam Nunn were the driving forces in the legislature in the creation of U.S. Special Operations Command,” said James Locher, the first Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special



30 Years



Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict. “On the House side, it was Rep. Dan Daniel who played the lead role in pushing the legislation through.”

The Department of Defense wanted to make SOCOM a two or three star command, but the legislative branch had other ideas.

“There were fundamental flaws in how we were operating and we needed a four-star in charge of the command to deal with his counterparts,” said Cohen. “SOCOM’s profile needed to be raised to get the money, the appropriations and the authority to start the command in a way that it would be significant.”

U.S. Special Operations Command was formed April 16, 1987, with responsibility to organize, train and equip U.S. special operations forces from the Army, Navy and Air Force.



Gen. James Lindsay

U.S. Gen. James Lindsay became U.S. Special Operations Command’s first commander.

“I have been asked why the headquarters was kept in Tampa, and that is a great question because it caused me some sleepless nights,” said Lindsay, who commanded until June 1990. “There was

great pressure at that time to move the command to the Washington D.C. area, but I resisted because I didn’t want SOCOM to become another staff agency.”

Since Lindsay’s command at SOCOM there have been ten subsequent commanders, eight from the U.S. Army, two from U.S. Navy and one from the U.S. Air Force. Admiral Eric T. Olson became the first U.S. Navy SEAL to be promoted to four-stars and commander of USSOCOM.

USSOCOM has four components consisting of U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command activated April 16, 1987; U.S. Army Special Operations Command activated December 1, 1989; U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command, activated May 22, 1990; and the most recent component, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, activated February 24, 2006. Besides the components, USSOCOM now has seven theater special operations commands who support

the global combatant commands.

The command’s responsibilities have also become more evolved and complex. Originally focusing on training and equipping SOF warriors, USSOCOM now is the lead combatant commander for planning, synchronizing, and, as directed, executing global operations against terrorist networks. Also, U.S. Special Operations Command will take a new, leading role coordinating the Pentagon’s effort to counter weapons of mass destruction.

SOF warriors are deployed to more than 90 countries, speak more than a 100 languages, and spend 365 days each year contributing fight the War on Terrorism.

The following examples are significant special operations that have taken place since USSOCOM’s activation in 1987. From the beginning with Operation Earnest Will to today’s Operation Inherent Resolve the special operations highlighted represent the entire spectrum of SOF unique capabilities in military operations.

Operation Earnest Will

SOF’s first tactical operation involved SEALs, special boat units, and Army special operations aviators working together during

Operation Earnest Will in Sep. 1987. The SOF aviators used “Little Bird” helicopters to disable the Iranian ship Iran Ajr while the ship was laying mines in the Persian Gulf. SEALs and special boat units later captured the ship. SOF provided critical skills necessary to help U.S. Central Command gain control of the northern Arabian Gulf and counter Iran’s small boats and minelayers. The most important lessons to come out of Earnest Will were the need to have highly trained SOF capable of responding rapidly to crises anywhere around the globe and the vital need for interoperability between conventional forces and SOF.

Operation Just Cause - Panama

The Panama invasion known as Operation Just Cause occurred in December 1989. Its key objectives



Iran Ajr



30 Years



Manuel Noriega

were to capture Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega and to set conditions to establish a democratic government. The Joint Special Operations Task Force was commanded by Maj. Gen. Wayne Downing. The task force's mission included the attack on the Panamanian Defense Headquarters and the rescue of American

hostage Kurt Muse. The Muse rescue was the first successful hostage rescue since World War II. The 75th Ranger Regiment seized the Omar Torrijos International Airport, enabling the 82nd Airborne Division to enter Panama. The operation ended with Noriega surrendering to SOF and the country establishing a democratic government. Operation Just Cause demonstrated just how far SOF had come since Desert One; not only with regard to internal enhancements to SOF capabilities and command and control structures, but also with regard to the close integration of SOF and conventional forces. Operation Just Cause clearly validated how SOF were trained, equipped, and organized.

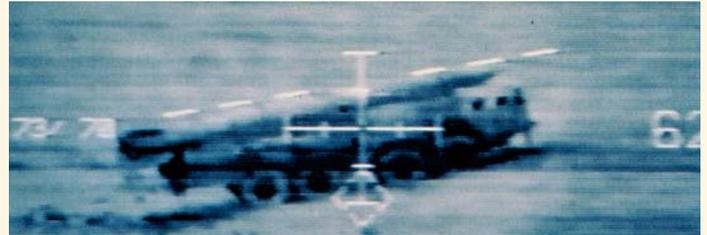
Operation Desert Storm - Scud Hunters Saddam



Hussein was unable to battle in the air during Desert Storm because of coalition forces' air superiority. He decided to use Scud missiles to attack Israel in January 1991. Tactically, the Scud would not have a major impact,

but its strategic effect was felt Jan. 18 when seven Scuds hit several Israeli cities. The Joint Special Operations Task Force was given the mission to stop the Scud attacks on Israel. 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) armed MH-60s and SOF teams went hundreds of miles inside western Iraq to

destroy the Scud infrastructure. SOF Scud hunting operations greatly reduced the attacks, persuading Israel to not enter the war.



Kurt Muse

Operation Provide Comfort - Iraq

In February 1991, Operation Provide Comfort may be the best example of SOF's capability to deal with a large-scale disaster. SOF's diverse talents made it a natural choice to support humanitarian



assistance efforts. Iraqi Kurds had revolted against Saddam Hussein following Desert Storm, but Hussein's forces crushed the rebellion. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds fled to the mountains in northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey. MC-130E Combat Talons led other aircraft to drop emergency supplies for the Kurdish refugees. 10th Special

Forces Group, supported by MH-53J helicopters, helped build suitable refugee camps and worked with refugee leaders to organize and distribute the supplies. Civil Affairs units helped with medical assistance, food distribution and daily camp operations. SEALs and special boat unit personnel provided security for the camps, and psychological operations units produced thousands of leaflets providing instructions on how to get help within the camps. SOF were credited with saving thousands of lives by providing skilled personnel to rebuild the civil infrastructure, establish supply networks and provide medical assistance.

Operation Gothic Serpent - Somalia

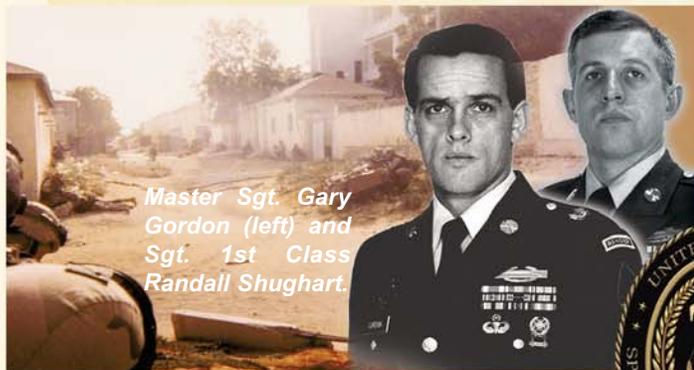
160th SOAR (A) helicopters carrying special operators from Task Force Ranger at Mogadishu Airport



30 Years



were given the mission to capture Somalia's Gen. Mohamed Farah Aideed and his lieutenants in October 1993. During the mission, two MH-60 Blackhawks were shot down forcing a rescue operation. The task force faced an overwhelming Somali mob that overran the crashed helicopter sites, creating a dire situation. Task Force Ranger experienced a total of 17 killed in action and 106 wounded. Task force members had to operate in an extremely difficult environment that required constant innovation, flexibility and sound judgment. The task force had more than held its own against a vastly superior enemy that was battle-hardened from years of civil war and urban fighting. Master Sgt. Gary Gordon and Sgt. 1st Class Randall Shughart were posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions in trying to save a downed helicopter crew.



Master Sgt. Gary Gordon (left) and Sgt. 1st Class Randall Shughart.

Operation Uphold Democracy - Haiti

Haiti had endured unrelenting political oppression for hundreds of years. In Operation Support Democracy and its predecessor Operation Uphold Democracy, SOF played a strategic role in securing peace within Haiti. On Oct. 15, 1993, Operation

Support Democracy began with a naval blockade. Patrol craft with SEALs aboard were used to board ships smuggling contraband into Haiti. By June 1994, the SEALs had boarded hundreds of ships.

President Bill Clinton was still dissatisfied with the political oppression in Haiti in July 1994 and authorized an invasion plan. SOF



were assigned to take down key government sites followed by a link-up with conventional forces similar to the invasion of Panama in 1989. After the main takedown, SOF were to secure the countryside. The invasion was called off because former President Jimmy Carter, Sen. Sam Nunn and retired Gen. Colin Powell brokered a peace deal. Operation Uphold Democracy began and 3rd Special Forces Group set up three forward operating bases with Operational Detachment-Alpha teams keeping law and order in the countryside. A psychological operations campaign using leaflets, radio broadcasts and airborne loudspeaker platforms encouraged cooperation with U.S. forces and avoided bloody conflicts with the former regime. With the assistance of nongovernmental organizations, civil affairs units rebuilt infrastructure and restored electricity. The peace and order found in the Haitian countryside during Operation Uphold Democracy were a remarkable tribute to SOF.

Operation Allied Force - Balkans

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization initiated Operation Allied Force March 24, 1999, to put an end to Serbia's violent

repression of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. A 78-day bombing campaign eventually forced Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic to withdraw his forces from Kosovo. The bombing strategy did not prevent Serbia from forcing an estimated 800,000 refugees out of the country, creating an enormous humanitarian crisis in neighboring Albania and Macedonia. SOF played a strategic role throughout the Balkans region with civil affairs units coordinating large-scale humanitarian relief efforts with U.S. governmental agencies and international relief organizations, arranging food, shelter and medical care





30 Years

for the refugee camps. SOF helicopters airlifted supplies into refugee areas prior to conventional forces arriving. Within Kosovo itself, SOF aircraft dropped food and supplies to displaced people. SOF engaged in direct action and special reconnaissance missions to include AC-130 gunships attacking Serbian positions. SOF also rescued the only two U.S. pilots downed during the war. SOF employment during Allied Force enabled commanders to conduct ground operations in a politically sensitive environment, fostering a strategic impact throughout the Balkans region.

Operation Enduring Freedom - Afghanistan



Special operations forces achieved spectacular results during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Task Forces Dagger and K-Bar deployed into Afghanistan to prepare for operations in September

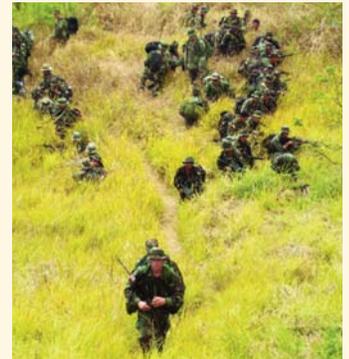
2001. Their mission was to conduct unconventional warfare with coalition forces to free Afghanistan from Taliban oppression and to no longer allow the area to be a safe haven for terrorist organizations. Shortly after arriving, 5th Special Forces Group ODA augmented by Air Force Special Tactics personnel and assisted by Afghani opposition forces infiltrated contested areas. Subsequently, SOF elements coordinated Air Force and Navy attacks against enemy positions while working with coalition forces to arm, train and lead elements under extremely hazardous conditions. The



effort led to the complete rout of Taliban and al Qaeda terrorist elements in Afghanistan within 49 days. The teams did all this with an amazing variety of equipment: everything from donkeys and horses to computers and satellite communications. The success of unconventional warfare operations in Afghanistan generated many lessons for future operations, but their swift and complete success, with minimal U.S. casualties, also demonstrated the effectiveness of SOF unconventional warfare. Operations still continue today on a smaller scale. Last, Osama Bin Laden was ultimately killed by a SOF team May 2, 2011 in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

Operation Enduring Freedom - Philippines

Operation Enduring Freedom extends into the Philippines and is almost exclusively a special operations effort. In today's flat world with satellite communications and the internet, it is important to



understand the battlefield is global. Successful special operations began in February 2002, and are being implemented on the island of Basilan where terrorists from the Abu Sayyaf group had taken stronghold. Abu Sayyaf is linked to larger terrorist organizations that have a global reach.

SOF is helping the Philippine government gain control over the region. The visible method was to train the Filipinos to kill or capture terrorists, but less visible and more enduring were SOF efforts to sever the link between the terrorists and the population. SOF, teamed with their Filipino counterparts, identified Abu Sayyaf strongholds and established bases within their territory, forcing the terrorist group to scatter, thereby separating them from the population. This tactic allowed SOF and the Filipino forces to provide security and to determine the local needs. Digging new wells for clean water, building schools to educate children and establishing hospitals so basic medical care needs could be met are all missions SOF fostered in Basilan. Creating conditions where people want to live peacefully is a powerful weapon against terrorism. Direct action will



30 Years



become increasingly restricted as the Global War on Terrorism matures. Indirect actions of foreign internal defense and civil affairs programs are the key to winning the war on terror.



Operation Iraqi Freedom/New Dawn

SOF were given key roles in Operation Iraqi Freedom such as stopping Saddam Hussein from creating an ecological disaster by dumping massive quantities of oil into the Arabian Gulf and lighting oil fields on fire as he had done during Desert Storm.



SOF were also assigned key missions including preventing the Iraqi V Corps in the north from reinforcing Baghdad; conducting special reconnaissance and direct action missions in western Iraq to locate and destroy Iraqi mobile missiles; supporting Combined Forces Land Component Command movement from the south toward Baghdad; conducting support and stability operations throughout the country; and interdicting borders and lines of communication. Additional SOF operations included conducting airborne parachute assaults to seize key airfields; participating in efforts to kill or capture key personnel within the Iraqi regime; and seizing and protecting suspected sites where weapons of mass destruction were manufactured. SOF were rapidly and effectively deployed during Operation

Iraqi Freedom working closely with conventional forces and governmental agencies. The strategic and operational achievements of SOF had USSOCOM fighting on all fronts, suppressing missile launches against friendly forces and preventing an epic environmental disaster. Today, SOF continue to play a major role in stability operations with the long-term goal of building a free Iraq.



Operation Inherent Resolve

Today, special operators are involved in the campaign in Iraq and Syria to defeat Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant as part of Operation Inherent Resolve. OIR was formed Sept. 10, 2014, when President Obama announced the formation of a broad international coalition to defeat ISIL. SOF is an integral part of the Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve that will carry out this mission.



Remarkable special operations career earns Lampe the 2017 Bull Simons Award

The Bull Simons Award is a lifetime Special Operations Forces achievement award and USSOCOM's highest honor.



By USSOCOM Office of Communication

Chief Master Sgt. Michael Lampe is the 2017 Bull Simons Award recipient. His 27 years in special operations were both remarkable and historic.

Lampe's career began like many during the Vietnam era by receiving a draft notice for the Army. He chose to enlist into the Air Force by chance instead in 1969, an irony he didn't fully understand at the time.

"I was drafted in 1968 into the Army right out of high school at the height of the Vietnam War," Lampe said. "I went to the induction center and the line for the Army was the longest so I tried to figure how to get in the short line to get through this process, so I went up to the Air Force and transitioned from being drafted into the Army and joined

the Air Force."

He began his career as an administration specialist, a job the Washington state native and a son of a logger wasn't naturally suited to because he spent the majority of his childhood in the woods with his father learning the logging profession.

"The administrative career field just didn't excite me which drove me



**Chief Master Sgt.
Michael Lampe**

to research how to get into something physical, something with action,” he said. “I researched special duty assignment options in the Air Force regulations and came across the Air Commando or as it was known the Jungle Jim program. You jump in ahead of a major assault, set up drop zones, have interface with special operations forces, deal with air traffic control, and call in airstrikes. All these things really appealed to me.”

In 1971, he applied and was accepted to be a combat controller and was reassigned to the 1st Special Operations Wing on Hurlburt Field, Florida. He soldiered through the training and it wouldn’t be long before he would take part in dangerous, real-world situations – an occurrence that would happen again and again throughout his time in special operations.

Project 404

“When I cross trained I got assigned to the 1st Special Operations Wing Combat Control Team at Hurlburt Field, where I heard the guys talk about Project 404 – Laos,” said Lampe.

Project 404 was a U.S. Air Force advisory mission operating in Laos out of “Lima Sites” during the Vietnam War. The purpose of the mission was to train the Royal Laotian Air Force, while American forward air controllers were brought in to supply piloting expertise and guidance for running a tactical air force. Along with the forward air controllers the advisory teams normally consisted of five to seven people from different career fields to include pilots, aircraft maintenance, intelligence, medical and a combat controller.

“They had a classified mission in Laos at that time called Project 404, Mike wanted to go on it, but he had no experience,” retired Chief Master Sgt. and former Air Force Special Operations Command’s Command Chief Wayne Norrad said. “He was an E4, a three striper, but unlucky for a couple of guys who got hurt during training, there was no one left to go, so our chief, Chief Howell said ‘Lampe don’t screw this up.’”

Lampe set out on his first special operations mission setting the foundation for his career and would be assigned to Lima Site 20 Alternate in northern Laos, and CIA’s main base in support of Maj. Gen. Vang Pao of the Royal Lao Army and his Meo tribesmen irregulars.

“When I first landed at 20 Alternate, we started taking incoming, 130 millimeter artillery and 122 millimeter rockets. It was a real eye opener,” said Lampe. “Before the first day ended, I would assist in coordinating my first, of many search and rescue missions during my tour of duty there.”

“While he was over there he got a taste of combat, he rescued a pilot from a burning aircraft and got an Airman’s Medal for that,” said Norrad. “Mike was just a great guy, someone who you could rely on.”

In November of 1972, Lampe along with Master Sgt.

Charles Day would earn an Airmen’s Medal for their quick and brave actions extinguishing an aircraft fire caused by a rocket malfunction and rescuing a pilot. The faulty rockets fired from a forward air controller’s O-1 Birdog aircraft and impacted two fighter aircraft and the air operations building. Lampe and Day rushed to extinguish the fires, disarmed 250 pound bombs and towed the damaged aircraft away from other aircraft.

“Initially when we saw the smoke and flames and the confusion with the other guys heading to the bunkers, we thought it was an incoming attack,” Lampe said. “When we realized what actually happened, we knew we had do something fast because there was whole bunch people in the air ops building and potential for a chain reaction with the other eight T-28s parked wing tip to wing tip.”

Following his tour in Laos, Lampe would do a two-year tour in Thailand with a follow-on assignment to the Philippines from 1975 – 1979.

“In those seven years I really developed as a combat controller and the time there added a ton of operational experience for me,” said Lampe. “I brought all that experience to Brand X.”



Then Sgt. Michael Lampe (center) in Laos, November 1972, working as part of Project 404. Photo courtesy of retired Chief Master Sgt. Michael Lampe.

Brand X

Lampe’s career would next take him to a seminal moment for U.S. Special Operations Command – Operation Eagle Claw.

Americans hostage were captured in Iran on Nov. 4, 1979 and they would be held for 444 days. A rescue attempt was made on April 24, 1980. Lampe was an important part of the Air Force team known as Brand X that was part of the rescue attempt. His job with his teammates was to control the two airfields created deep inside Iran.

Col. John Carney, known as “Coach,” was charged with laying out the airfield deep inside Iran. In fact, he flew into Iran with a CIA pilot and used a motorcycle to determine the landing site ahead of the mission. He was responsible

for picking Brand X.

“Col. John Carney handpicked 16 combat controllers from around the world to form the nucleus, the cream of the crop, to form Brand X,” Jeffery Buckmelter, USSOCOM deputy director of operations, retired U.S. Air Force colonel and a member of Brand X.

“The reason it was called Brand X was because the guys were from all different units, they didn’t have a unit designation,” said Norrad. “All these different cats and dogs brought together by Col. Carney for the classified mission.”



Col. John “Coach” Carney sits on a motorcycle with members of the Brand X team just prior to Iranian rescue attempt. Tech. Sgt. Michael Lampe is third from the left. Photo courtesy of retired Chief Master Sgt. Michael Lampe.

On April 24, 1980, Brand X and the rest of the rescue team were on the ground in Iran where they encountered many obstacles. Only five of the eight helicopters reached the staging area. During planning it was decided the mission would be aborted if fewer than six helicopters remained. As the rescue team prepared to leave, one of the helicopters crashed into a C-130 aircraft killing eight servicemen.

USSOCOM would eventually be formed because of the problems of that day. Lampe, Carney and a host of others would be part of taking Brand X and evolving it into Air Force Special Tactics.

“In those days we only had 16 combat controllers and five support guys so we got to really know each other,” retired U.S. Air Force Colonel and combat controller Craig Brotchie said. “When we built the special mission unit, Mike was in that unit for 12 straight years. He went from master sergeant to chief master sergeant, holding every enlisted leadership position. He was at the forefront of bringing pararescuemen into the then combat control

squadron. He and a few others really developed all the tactics, techniques and procedures making Air Force special tactics a reality.”

A career involved with nearly every American crisis

Lampe would go on to do combat jumps as a combat controller into Grenada and Panama and he also participated in Desert Storm. His combat jump into Grenada was done at just 500 feet, the lowest since World War II. He followed that up with another 500 foot combat jump into Panama.

“I always said a prayer before jumping,” Lampe said. “On this jump, considering we were jumping from 500 feet and it normally takes at least 200 feet for your parachute to open completely, the reserve was really of no use. So I modified my normal pre-jump prayer, adding ‘I hope the rigger who packed my parachute had best day of his or her life and followed the technical order completely.’ I used the same prayer again, when I made my second 500 foot combat jump into Rio Hato (Panama).”



Master Sgt. Michael Lampe (2nd from right) a day after the invasion of Grenada. To his immediate right are Col. John “Coach” Carney and then 1st Lt. Jeffrey Buckmelter. Photo courtesy of retired Chief Master Sgt. Michael Lampe.

In between the conflicts Lampe was part of the special mission unit who responded to terrorist incidents in the 1980s. In June of 1985 Trans World Airlines Flight 847 was hijacked after leaving Athens, Greece. The hijackers were members of Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad and they were seeking the release of 700 Shiite Muslims from Israeli custody. The passengers including Petty Officer 2nd Class Robert Stethem endured a three-day intercontinental ordeal. Eventually, Stethem would be murdered at the Beirut International Airport, and his body thrown onto the tarmac. The hostages were released after extensive negotiations. Lampe and his team ensured the American hostages were flown home safely.

Lampe was also part of the team assigned to the Achille Lauro incident in October of 1985 where many of the

hostages on the ship were American tourists. President Ronald Reagan deployed special mission units to stand-by and prepare for a possible rescue attempt to free the vessel from its hijackers. Unfortunately, the hijackers murdered Leon Klinghoffer, a retired, wheelchair-bound Jewish American businessman. The hijackers agreed to abandon the liner in exchange for being flown to Tunisia aboard an Egyptian commercial airliner. U.S. Navy F-14 Tomcats forced the airliner to land at Naval Air Station Sigonella. Lampe was on the ground during the tense standoff where the hijackers were finally turned over to the Italians.

“Most guys get a mission or two. It seemed like Mike never missed one,” said Norrad. “He comes to Brand X and gets to go to Eagle Claw. He’s on the Achille Lauro mission. He was on the TWA 847 mission. He jumps into Grenada, Operation Urgent Fury, into Panama, Operation Just Cause and he was involved in Operation Desert Storm so Mike has been there and done that.”



Senior Master Sgt. Mike Lampe (second from right) at Naval Air Station Sigonella, Italy, the morning after the Egyptian airliner (In the background) was forced to land there with hijackers of the Achille Lauro. Photo courtesy of retired Chief Master Sgt. Michael Lampe.

Chosen as Senior Enlisted Advisor

During all his tactical experience Lampe had developed relationships with some of SOF senior leadership to include U.S. Army Generals Wayne Downing and Carl Stiner. In fact, Stiner was Lampe’s commander during several of their missions together.

“There was a change of command going on and Gen. Stiner came over to me and wanted to talk to me,” said Carney. “He wanted to know if Lampe would be his senior enlisted advisor. I said ‘In my opinion you couldn’t get a better guy. He would be great. He’s not spit and polish, but he’s the guy who would tell you like it is. He’s a down to earth kind of guy who the troops admire.’”

Lampe reluctantly interviewed with Gen. Stiner to become USSOCOM’s second senior enlisted advisor.

“I told Gen. Stiner I am a tactical guy and I wanted to

stay at the squadron level,” said Lampe. “I thought there were other sergeant majors who were much more qualified than I and he should go with one of them. I left the interview thinking I was honored to be thought of that way, but surely he would select someone else.”

Stiner selected Lampe anyway and he would go on to serve three different commanders from 1991 -1997.

“Mike worked with Gen. Stiner until his command ended. His next commander would be Gen. Downing and they had served in the Ranger Regiment together and Downing knew his capabilities and strong points,” Buckmelter said. “Gen. Shelton, the fourth SOCOM commander kept him too until Mike decided he wanted to retire. So he is the only senior enlisted advisor to work for three commanders.”

Lampe was not comfortable at the beginning of his tour as the senior enlisted advisor, but he really grew into and liked his new role.

“I had a great team. I had good working relationships with all the Component senior enlisted advisors, they were great mentors and very supportive. Some I had served with in combat. Some I have not,” Lampe said. “Each of the commanders really helped me to be a command chief master sergeant, a command sergeant major.”

“Chief Lampe spent seven years as U.S. Special Operations Command senior enlisted advisor,” Brotchie said. “I’ll tell you there was no stronger advocate for the enlisted Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines than Mike Lampe.”

Lampe would retire from the Air Force in 1997. The fact he retired from the Air Force while almost exclusively working for the Army during his career is not a fact that escapes him.

“In 1968 I was not patient enough stand in the long line for the Army and made my way to the Air Force line. If the Army line was shorter I probably would have had an Army career,” Lampe said. “The funny thing is I ended up working with and for the Army anyway because of the special operations missions.”



Chief Master Sgt. Michael Lampe (left) and then USSOCOM Commander, U.S. Army Gen. Carl Stiner. Photo courtesy of retired Chief Master Sgt. Lampe.

USSOCOM inducts newest members into Commando Hall of Honor

By USSOCOM Office of Communication

U.S. Special Operations Command inducted seven former special operators into the USSOCOM Commando Hall of Honor located at the USSOCOM headquarters, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, April 18. More than 100 people attended the ceremony and watched as each inductee received a medal from U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, USSOCOM commander, and Sgt. Maj. Patrick McCauley, USSOCOM command sergeant major.

The award recognizes individuals who have served with distinction within the special operations forces community. This year's inductees were U.S. Army Lt. Col. Herbert Avedon, U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Bruce Brandewie, U.S. Army Capt. Wade Y. Ishimoto, U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Harry McCommons, U.S. Army Master Sgt. Michael A. Pelaez, U.S. Army Col. Christopher E. St. John, and U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Joseph R. Ulatoski

"There is no better example of valor and professional excellence for today's SOF than the seven honorees with us today," said Thomas. "Their actions, spirit and example serve as an inspiration for the seventy thousand of us who serve in United States Special Operations Command and especially the eight thousand who are forward deployed in over eighty countries right now."

Avedon is a World War II Ranger and special operations officer whose service continued through the Vietnam era. Known by many as a pioneer of psychological operations, he served in the Salerno and Anzio, Italy campaigns of World War II and was recruited by the Office of Strategic Services where he headed the Psychological Warfare section. He also saw duty in North China and the Korean War throughout his decades-long career.

Brandewie served as an aircraft electrical repair specialist responsible for diagnostics and repair of special operations aircraft. As a premiere special operations enabler and maintainer Brandewie helped keep special operations aircraft flying and mission ready during his 34-year career. A master instructor and recipient of multiple awards to include three consecutive "Excellent" Inspector General Ratings and an "Outstanding" Standardization Evaluation Inspection Rating, Brandewie was a go to enabler who supported

numerous deployments including operations Indy, Joint Forge, Allied Forge, Goalkeeper 1/11, Iraqi Freedom, and Enduring Freedom.

Ishimoto's affiliation with the Special Forces Regiment began in 1968, where he conducted classified human intelligence cross-border operations in Vietnam. He continued service with the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) while leading civic action and humanitarian relief missions to the Miyako Islands in Okinawa. Ishimoto created innovative techniques to collect and analyze information on terrorism including designing the first database on terrorist groups. Ishimoto served in numerous other special operations assignments including involvement in the rescue attempt of American hostages in Tehran, Iran and as an instructor in a variety of courses at the Special Missions Unit Operator Training Course. Ishimoto continued to serve after retirement staying actively involved in homeland security and counterterrorism.

McCommons started his civilian service career with Joint Special Operations Command as a plans specialist in 1987 after 30 years of service as a loadmaster in the Air Force. Throughout his career in special operations McCommons was involved in setting the stage for special operations around the globe. He deployed prior to Operation Just Cause, establishing a forward staging base in anticipation of future operations in Panama and was deployed in advance of Operation United Nations Operations II in Somalia making way for Task Force Ranger in Mogadishu, Somalia. McCommons was also the lead air planner for the immediate movement of forces for Operation Enduring Freedom. McCommons also engineered the critical airlift support moving SOF into U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility for combat operations supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Pelaez's support to SOF spans more than 43 years. He was a pioneer in developing tactics, techniques and procedures used during special operations mission communications. He modified and developed innovative communications capabilities for combat operations, operations other than war, and classified assignments around the world. Pelaez served in the Military Assistance Command Vietnam Studies and Observations Group including Command and Control South, the 1st, 5th, 7th and 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne), the Joint Special Operations Command, Joint Special

Communications Unit, Joint Communications Support Element and USSOCOM.

St. John has a long and distinguished career in special operations playing instrumental roles in conflicts and operations across the globe including advising the armed forces of El Salvador and coordinating counter-drug activities in South America. St. John led psychological task forces for operations Vigilant Warrior in Kuwait, and United Shield in Somalia and helped train and deploy forces for operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Joint Task Force Southeast Asia in Saudi Arabia. St. John also served as the commander of 4th Psychological Operations Group (Airborne).

Ulatoski's career began shortly after World War II. As a junior officer he served on occupation duty in Korea in the 96th Military Government Group, the precursor to today's 96th Civil Affairs Battalion. While in Korea he saw extensive combat and was wounded in action near Kimo-ri. He commanded Task Force

Kirkland, organizing, training and directing anti-communist guerrillas operating on several islands off North Korea's east coast. As a brigadier general he commanded the Joint Casualty Resolution Center, investigating and conducting active recoveries of U.S. personnel missing in Southeast Asia. He retired in 1974 and is active in recording the history of post-World War II Army special operations forces.

The seven newest inductees will join an elite group of 55 other special operations warriors who have been inducted into the Commando Hall of Honor since its inception in 2010. Past inductees come from all four branches of service and have served in every conflict since World War II.

"It's very humbling and I am very honored to receive this award," said Ulatoski. "Receiving this award has made me think back to all of those people I have served with, those are the people who are really responsible for me receiving this award."



U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, U.S. Special Operations Command commander, and Sgt. Maj. Patrick McCauley, USSOCOM command sergeant major reveal the seven newest names added to the Commando Hall of Honor during a ceremony at USSOCOM headquarters, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., April 18. The Commando Hall of Honor was created in 2010 and recognizes individuals who have served with distinction within the special operations forces community. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.

USSOCOM 30th anniversary



week in pictures



A member of USSOCOM's Paracommandos jumps into USSOCOM's 30th Anniversary opening ceremony April 17, at the headquarters on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., with the 30th Anniversary celebratory flag. USSOCOM marked its 30th year April 16th. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.



(Left) U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commander USSOCOM addresses the attendees at the opening ceremony 30th Anniversary Celebration Week, April 17 at the headquarters on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.



(Right) Members of USSOCOM aboard the World War II ship USS Victory located in Tampa, Fla., enjoy an informal social marking the command's 30th anniversary, April 17. Photo by Mike Bottoms.

USSOCOM - 30TH ANNIVERSARY



(Above) Awards stand at the ready to be handed out at USSOCOM's 30th Anniversary Gala held at the convention center in downtown Tampa, Fla., Apr. 19. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.



(Right) A U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. with the USSOCOM Color Guard renders a salute to the POW/MIA honorary table at USSOCOM's 30th Anniversary Gala held at the convention center in downtown Tampa, Fla., Apr. 19. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.

(Bottom right) Senator and former Secretary of Defense William Cohen gives the keynote speech during USSOCOM's 30th Anniversary Gala held at the convention center in downtown Tampa, Fla., Apr. 19. Photo by Mike Bottoms.



(Below) Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, U.S. Marine Corps Gen. Joseph Dunford gives a speech during USSOCOM's 30th Anniversary Gala held at the convention center in Tampa, Fla., Apr. 19. Photo by Mike Bottoms.



AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Soldiers assigned to the Battalion Support Company, 3rd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) move across Marshall Drop Zone during cross-country ski training at Fort Harrison, Mont., Feb. 9. Soldiers honed their skills in a variety of cold weather activities from this ski movement training to snowmobile training to live fire sniper and automatic weapon ranges. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Craig Cantrell.

10th Group conducts cold weather training in Montana's mountains

*By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Craig Cantrell
10th Special Forces Group (Airborne)*

Soldiers assigned to 3rd Battalion, 10th Special Force Group (Airborne) traveled to Montana's National Guard Training Facility, Fort William Henry Harrison, to conduct cold weather training beginning February 7.

Offering a complex and austere training area, Fort Harrison provides Soldiers opportunities to refine cold weather tactics and train with equipment in order to improve operational proficiency and to gain knowledge in how their teams and equipment perform in a harsh environment.

With Fort Harrison's unique terrain and cold-weather conditions, 3rd Battalion validated Special Forces Operational Detachment - Alpha teams and its support-company functions in operating in extremely cold, austere environments.

"This training definitely helps us with our mission because we are going to be setting up retransmission sites in austere, cold weather environments, and we are going to need to know how to get out to those locations and sustain ourselves while we are out there," said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jacob Breslin, Signal Detachment Noncommissioned Officer in Charge, 3rd Battalion, 10th SFG (A).

The Soldiers honed their skills in a variety of cold weather activities from snowmobile training to live fire sniper and automatic weapon ranges.

"Planning for this exercise meant finding an environment where we could conduct cold weather training to replicate Eastern Europe, our current operating environment, and this location allowed us to do tactical training and incorporate cold weather training tasks," said U.S. Army Maj. Douglas Reynolds, commander, Company C, 3rd Battalion, 10th SFG (A).

Fort Harrison holds a significant title of birthplace of special operations due to the forming of the 1st Special Service Force during WWII when both Canadian and U.S. troops began to train for the war in Europe.

"1st Special Service Force was a critical part of Special Forces history. Our lineage where we came from



A Special Forces operator assigned to 3rd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) fires an M249 Squad Automatic Weapon at targets downrange during automatic weapons training at Fort Harrison, Mont., Feb. 9. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Craig Cantrell.

and being able to train in the same locations as the Soldiers who came before us is incredibly important to us," said Reynolds. "From this training we want to take away that we can do unconventional warfare in a wintertime environment."



Soldiers climb a hill during snowmobile training at the Cherry Creek Training Area at Fort Harrison, Mont., Feb. 8. Soldiers honed their skills in a variety of cold weather activities from this snowmobile training to live fire sniper and automatic weapon ranges. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Craig Cantrell.



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND



Naval Special Warfare Group 4's Special Boat Team 22 take U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commanding general of U.S. Special Operations Command, through a simulated hot extraction, March 9 at the John C. Stennis Space Center, Mississippi. Courtesy photo.

USSOCOM commander visits Stennis Space Center NSW commands

By Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School

U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commanding general of U.S. Special Operations Command, participated in a simulated hot extraction March 9, by Naval Special Warfare Group 4's Special Boat Team 22, located at the John C. Stennis Space

Center in Mississippi.

Thomas' visit to the three Stennis NSW commands marks his first tour of the area as commander of USSOCOM. The Stennis NSW commands include SBT 22, the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School and Training Detachment Stennis. The three NSW commands are situated on the NSW Western Maneuver Area Training Range, which is composed of some of the finest riverine and littoral



training areas in the world.

SBT 22's mission is to organize, mentor, train and equip NSW personnel to conduct the full spectrum of special operations in riverine and coastal environments to support fleet and joint commanders worldwide.

The U.S. special operations community depends on Special Warfare Combatant Crewmen for maritime insertion and extraction on time, on target, worldwide. SWCC are an indispensable part of the NSW team, as they operate and maintain high-speed craft specially designed to execute SEAL missions. NSW maritime platforms are equipped with state-of-the-art navigation, communications, engineering and weapons systems. They operate day and night in extreme weather and sea states to achieve the ultimate element of surprise against enemy forces.



U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commanding general of U.S. Special Operations Command, and Rear Adm. Timothy Szymanski, commander of Naval Special Warfare Command, prepare to participate in a simulated hot extraction March 9, by Naval Special Warfare Group 4's Special Boat Team 22, located at the John C. Stennis Space Center in Mississippi. Courtesy photo.



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Justin O'Brien, 7th Special Operations Squadron special mission aviator, stands in front of a CV-22 Osprey Mar. 7, on RAF Mildenhall, England. The CV-22 is a tiltrotor aircraft that combines the vertical takeoff, hover and vertical landing qualities of a helicopter with the long-range, fuel efficiency and speed characteristics of a turboprop aircraft. Photo by U.S. Air Force Capt Chris Sullivan.

CV-22 special mission aviators versatility vital to mission success

*By U.S. Air Force Capt. Chris Sullivan
352d Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

The versatility of the CV-22 Osprey sets a well-known standard for Special Operations Forces. Lesser known is the flexibility which extends beyond the aircraft's unique capabilities to the Airmen who employ it.

Two of the Osprey's four crew positions are manned by enlisted special mission aviators, a job which requires them to maintain currencies and stay proficient on, not only two distinct roles, but two physically separate locations on the aircraft.

"The crew is made up of two pilots and two SMAs,"

said Staff Sgt. Justin O'Brien, 7th Special Operations Squadron special mission aviator and NCO in charge of current operations. "One of us sits in the cockpit between the pilots, and the other on the tail. It's two completely different jobs, 180 degrees from one another."

While the SMA position in the front of the aircraft focuses on standard flight engineer duties, such as controlling aircraft systems, mission management, aircraft safety and flight planning, the role of the SMA on the tail falls more in line with both loadmaster and aerial gunner duties.

"When you go to the back, you're in the tail scanner crew position," said O'Brien. "On the tail we're responsible for keeping everyone in the back safe,

operating the ramp mounted weapon system -- a .50-cal GAU-21, weight and balance, clearing the landing zone and alternate insertions and extractions which are mainly fast rope and hoist.”

With such a diverse set of responsibilities, CV-22 crews have to not only know their aircraft, but also be confident that each member is prepared to accomplish the job they’ve been assigned and prepared to speak up when needed.

“We are the voice of reason and the systems’ expert on what’s going on underneath the panels,” said O’Brien. “When something goes wrong, we have to be assertive, identify the problem, look for any secondary indications and act.”

These enlisted Airmen play a vital role in the flying squadron that crews and commanders rely upon, both in the unit and downrange during operations.

“The role of the SMA in a CV-22 is one of the toughest jobs in the Air Force. Not only do we expect our SMAs to perform a myriad of complex tasks, we rely on them to do so autonomously, trusting them to make mission-critical decisions on our behalf,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. James Peterson, 7th SOS commander.

“While some folks have contended that we should split SMA duties into two distinct career fields, I cannot overstate the importance of having a crewmember on the ramp with an understanding of what’s going on in the cockpit,” continued Peterson. “More often than not, when a situation becomes dynamic, the tail-scanner who is removed from the chaotic situation in the cockpit provides critical input to the aircraft commander. There is simply no way we could employ the CV-22 as effectively without the unique contribution of our two SMAs assigned to each crew.”

The ability to fluidly integrate with the rest of the crew does not come without a price, and that price is training. The CV-22 SMAs spend their first year in technical training. This includes approximately three months of initial SMA training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, four months of initial training and screening on the UH-1N Huey at Ft. Rucker, Alabama, and six to eight months of Osprey-specific training at Kirkland Air Force Base, New Mexico. As with all Air Force specialties, this

training continues after an Airman is stationed at their first base and throughout their career.

Until recently, CV-22 SMAs pulled exclusively from Air Force members who retrained from other career fields. This comes with a bit of a learning curve, but one that O’Brien was happy to embrace.

“I was security forces for four years. I enjoyed what I did, but I was ready for a change,” said O’Brien. “(Being an SMA) brings an operations tempo that is fast and busy, but the benefits come with the direct interaction I have with the mission and the people we support.”

Even with the challenges, the unique position they hold and the capabilities of the CV-22 Osprey are a point of pride for these Airmen.

“The CV-22 allows us to go places that other aircraft, even other Ospreys, can’t,” said O’Brien. “All around the continent, we contribute to allied country’s missions and prove we can work seamlessly in a variety of scenarios.”



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Justin O'Brien, 7th Special Operations Squadron special mission aviator, performs preflight checks on a CV-22 Osprey's ramp-mounted weapon system, a .50-caliber GAU-21 heavy machine gun Mar. 7, on RAF Mildenhall, England. When assigned to the tail position of the aircraft, SMAs are responsible for operating the RMW, weight and balance, clearing the landing zone and alternate insertions and extraction methods, among other duties. Photo by U.S. Air Force Capt Chris Sullivan.



Brig. Gen. Mohammed Benlouali, operations commander for Morocco's Southern Zone, speaks to the lead exercise instructor from a U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command team at the opening ceremony for Exercise Flintlock 2017 Feb. 27. This year marks the tenth iteration of the special operations forces exercise, which focuses on building partner capacity and enhancing interoperability between 24 African and Western partners training in seven partner nations. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Scott A. Achtemeier.

The oldest friendship: US, Morocco exercise together in Flintlock 2017

*By U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Nicholas Mannweiler
MARSOC Public Affairs*

Military representatives from the Kingdom of Morocco and the United States held an opening ceremony for Exercise Flintlock 2017, Feb. 27 aboard the Tifnit training

base in Morocco's Southern Zone area of operations.

More than 2,000 military personnel from 24 African and Western nations are participating in the 10th annual iteration of the exercise, which began Feb. 27 and concludes March 16 across seven African host nations.

The exercise, sponsored by U.S. Africa Command,

strengthens security institutions, promotes multilateral sharing of information and develops interoperability between counterterrorism partners from across Africa's Sahara region. African partner special operations forces and Special Operations Command Africa jointly plan and execute the exercise, highlighting the sense of shared purpose across the continent as partners strengthen themselves and their regional network against violent extremists. For Morocco and the U.S., the roots run deep in this partnership.

Morocco formally recognized the United States by signing a treaty of peace and friendship in 1786 between U.S. Minister Thomas Barclay and the Sultan of Morocco, Sidi Muhammad, in the legendary city of Marrakech, according to the U.S. Department of State website. The relationship matured with the naming of James Simpson as the first American consul in 1797 in Tangier. Sultan Mawlay Suleiman gifted the consulate a building and grounds to use, marking the first property owned by the U.S. government on foreign shores. In all of American history, no other country has maintained its treaty relationship with America for as long as Morocco. Flintlock 2017 is the most recent in a long line of actions and expressions of solidarity between the two nations.

"Morocco plays a key leadership role in Africa and we are honored by the continued partnership and friendship between our two countries. We look forward to working with you over the next few weeks," said MARSOC's exercise instructor.

Brig. Gen. Mohammed Benlouali, operations commander for Morocco's Southern Zone, delivered remarks on behalf of the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces.

"These types of activities, as well as other joint combined Moroccan-American exercises, are a golden opportunity to further enhance the ties of military cooperation between our two countries," said Benlouali.

"We will stand ready and willing to take maximum benefit from this period of training to further promote our knowledge and know-how in the field of special forces. For these reasons, I urge all FAR SOF company members to take advantage of this experience," he said.

Over the course of the next few weeks, Marines from Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command will train alongside their Moroccan peers, refining tactics, techniques and procedures across multiple full mission profiles. The two forces will specifically train on small unit special operations forces tactics, weapons training and fire support, lifesaving first aid and trauma care, command

and control and force protection. The shared training experiences will develop the two partners' ability to plan, coordinate and operate as an integrated team and will strengthen the bond between the two countries. The Moroccan Royal Armed Forces have been a resolute contributor to United Nations peacekeeping missions around the world and provide a center of stability and security across the Sahel region.

The threat posed by violent extremist organizations around the world demands proficiency, coordination and enhanced interoperability in order to counter it. While regional security is the main focus of Exercise Flintlock 2017, the lessons learned and investments in relationships will allow us to share the burdens of managing conflicts and improve our ability to provide security solutions that meet threats at their origin.



Members of Morocco's special operations forces methodically clear buildings as part of a direct action raid, Mar. 3, during Exercise Flintlock 2017. The operators partnered with Marines from U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command throughout the exercise in order to build interoperability and support their common goal of countering violent extremism across the region. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Nick Mannweiler.



SOF AT&L receives top acquisition honors from DoD

By USSOCOM Office of Communication

U.S. Special Operations Command's Special Operations Forces Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Center continues to be recognized as one of the best AT&L organizations in the Department of Defense. Recently, five people and one team from SOF AT&L were recognized for workplace achievement and workforce development by DOD.

The 2016 Defense Acquisition Workplace Individual Achievement and Workforce Development Awards were presented to the members of SOF AT&L because of strategies and practices they developed to bring the best equipment, in the shortest amount of time, to the warfighter.

The awards were presented in a ceremony at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia and was attended by some of the Pentagon's top leadership to include Frank Kendall the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics and Deputy Defense Secretary Bob Work.

The SOF AT&L Center was recognized for its efforts in workforce development and the Rapid Response Light Tactical Vehicle Team was recognized for top performance. One military member and four civilians were also awarded with individual acquisition honors.

"It's an honor to accept this award on behalf of the entire team of SOF technologists, logisticians and acquirers," said James F. Geurts, USSOCOM's acquisition executive. "They work tirelessly each and every day to provide our SOF warriors with the very best, most effective technology to do their job."

The Defense Acquisition Workplace Individual Achievement awards are presented annually recognizing individuals and organizations within the Department of Defense who distinguish themselves in the field of acquisitions for professionalism, excellence and best practices. Awardees are selected based on their achievements and contributions to their organizational missions.

The SOF AT&L Center was recognized for its workforce development, being honored for its commitment to the career-long development of the SOF AT&L staff

though talent management and leader development and their efforts to improve the qualifications and professionalism of its workforce. The Award also acknowledged SOF AT&L's exceptional success in finding innovative ways to mentor and develop staff members and attract high-caliber individuals for civil service careers.

"We have made heavy investments in developing our people and seeking out the very best to join our team here at SOF AT&L." Geurts said. "It's important to make these investments because we understand that it is the operators we support that will reap the returns on those investments."

SOF AT&L was also among some of the biggest individual and team award winners this year as it worked to provide the research, development, acquisition, procurement and logistics needed to support the thousands of operators and enablers across USSOCOM. Individual standouts from SOF AT&L include Andrew Yee, Special Programs Branch chief, J-8 Requirements Division, who was acknowledged for his achievements in the requirements management category, U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Bernie Beigh, the former Manned Intelligence, Reconnaissance, and Surveillance and Non-Standard Aviation Systems Division chief, acknowledged for achievement in the acquisition in an expeditionary environment category, Christopher Harrington, Office of Small Business Programs director, recognized for achievement in the small business category, Robert Hurd, Jr., assistant program manager for Command Control, Communications and Computers, honored for achievement in program management and Ashley Farrier, a SOF AT&L contracting officer, was acknowledged for her work in services acquisition.

Hurd said he was honored to be awarded, but commented that the award was not about individual achievement, rather a recognition of the cumulative efforts of the many people throughout SOF AT&L.

"It was an honor that makes you reflect on the many people behind this achievement," Hurd said. "Although an honor, the real reward comes in fielding effective kit to the SOF operators around the world," he continued.

The Acquisition Rapid Response Light Tactical Vehicle Team was also one of 2016's standouts, receiving the David

Packard Excellence in Acquisition Award. The award is given to teams that exhibit exemplary innovation and acquisition best practices. The ARRLTV Team was recognized for its success with acquiring, testing, and rapidly fielding a light tactical all-terrain vehicle capable of supporting the various needs of special operations forces across the globe.

The vehicle helps reduce the physical burden on operators inserted into denied areas to negotiate long distances over rough terrain. Much of the AARLTV Team's success was due to the team members dynamic talents and the SOF AT&L senior leadership's willingness to break with conventional approaches and take calculated risks to get things done according to U.S. Army Col. John Reim who heads the SOF Family of Vehicles Program and helped see the project through from inception to completion.

"From the Commander of USSOCOM, through the acquisition executive, program executive officer and program manager, the team felt empowered to make decisions," said Reim. "The ARRLTV consisted of a talented and dynamic group of people that accomplished some amazing work in supporting the SOF warfighter. Without such a great team of professionals, often thinking outside the box when faced with a new challenge, this award would never have happened."

Geurts said he is honored to have his team of innovators, logisticians, acquirers, and supporting operators recognized for their hard work and he is looking forward to the coming year's challenges. He said SOF AT&L will stay focused on working closely with government, academia, and industry to innovate and refine its processes to support USSOCOM's special operations forces.



Frank Kendall, undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology and logistics, left, presents James Geurts, acquisition executive for U.S. Special Operations Command and his team with a Bronze Award during a ceremony at the Pentagon, Dec. 8, 2016. Deputy Defense Secretary Bob Work, center right, and Air Force Gen. Paul J. Selva, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, participated in the event. Photo by EJ Hersom.



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS



Attendees of the 15th Sovereign Challenge conference entitled “Challenges to Westphalian Sovereignty: Irregular Warfare Past, Present and Future,” sit for a group photo in Raleigh, N.C., March 7. Sovereign Challenge began in 2004 when USSOCOM invited a group of defense attachés from Washington, D.C., to Tampa, Florida to discuss major issues of concern to their respective nations. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jerimiah Richardson.

USSOCOM hosts its 15th Sovereign Challenge conference

*By Mike Bottoms
USSOCOM Office of Communication*

United States Special Operations Command hosted a three-day Sovereign Challenge 15 conference entitled “Challenges to Westphalian Sovereignty: Irregular Warfare Past, Present and Future,” in Raleigh, North Carolina, March 7-9.

More than 100 participants from 52 countries and the European Union, including 26 flag officers and three ambassadors, North Carolina’s Secretary of Military and Veterans Affairs and Assistant Secretary for Military Affairs, North Carolina’s former Chief Justice, and a CEO of a major Washington Think Tank actively participated in the conference.

“We have ... an extraordinary critical mass

representation from around our globe,” U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commander USSOCOM said. “I am here to think, think about our world, make some new acquaintances and listen to your perspectives.”

Westphalian sovereignty is the doctrine named after the Peace of Westphalia, signed in 1648, which ended the Thirty Years’ War, in which the major continental European states – the Holy Roman Empire, Spain, France, Sweden and the Dutch Republic – agreed to respect one another’s territorial integrity. The doctrine’s philosophy is each sovereign state has the right to engage in individual, regional and collective efforts to address national security issues.

Keynote speakers, the Honorable Michèle A. Flournoy, chief executive officer, Center for a New American Security and Gen. Thomas addressed the

conference in a fireside chat format to analyze strategies for global stability.

“We have all benefited enormously from the stability and economic growth that has come from the rules-based international system that was architected after World War II. All of the institutions that we know and love, the U.N., Bretton Woods System, the World Bank, the NATO, and on and on,” Flournoy said. “These are all under enormous pressure as these new structural changes happen and as some powers rise and others are resurgent, and they don’t necessarily accept the rules of the road as something that applies to them or that they have bought.”

I think the network of U.S. alliances and partnerships around the world is really unique and it’s a huge source of strategic advantage for us collectively. When you can approach the pressures and the disorder and the threats with some shared interests and some shared values, you have a much better chance of actually managing them, addressing them effectively,” concluded Flournoy.

“The intent [of Sovereign Challenge] really was that we would leverage this sort of Rolodex, those of us who have shared interests and that might be inclined to really crush through prohibitions to sharing information and enabling each other, not to just empower us to do more unilaterally but to empower us collectively to do more things,” said Gen. Thomas. “This design is playing that out in huge ways that even we didn’t envision.”

The conference was broken into five panels over the three days. The first two panels were co-sponsored by the German Marshall Fund and discussed “Unconventional and Unknown – Russia’s Challenge to the West” and “Deterring an Aggressive Russia in Europe’s East.” The third panel focused on “Security Challenges in Southeast Asia.” The fourth and fifth panels were co-sponsored by the Center for a New American Security and discussed “Mosul and Raqqa Are Not the End Game: the Iranian and Salafi/Jihadi

Threats in the Core Middle East” and “Libya’s Civil War and the Salafi/Jihadi Threat in North Africa and the Sahel.”

“I thought the themes were very interesting and enriching. The conference gave me interesting perspectives on jihadism and the refugee crisis,” said Thorsten Eisingerich, director for press and information

for the Austrian Embassy. “This conference allows us the opportunity to get out of Washington, D.C. and gives us fresh, honest points of view.”

Sovereign Challenge began in 2004 when USSOCOM invited a group of defense attachés from Washington, D.C., to Tampa, Florida to discuss major issues of concern to their respective nations. Since then, conference participation has focused on accredited military, defense

attachés and security-related diplomats from D.C.-based foreign embassies.

The intent [of Sovereign Challenge] really was that we would leverage this sort of Rolodex, those of us who have shared interests and that might be inclined to really crush through prohibitions to sharing information and enabling each other, not to just empower us to do more unilaterally but to empower us collectively to do more things.

— Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III,
USSOCOM commander



U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commander USSOCOM, (with hands extended) addresses the attendees to the 15th Sovereign Challenge conference entitled “Challenges to Westphalian Sovereignty: Irregular Warfare Past, Present and Future,” in the Capitol building, Raleigh, N.C., March 7. Photo by U.S. Air Force Capt. Brian J. Wagner.



First Homeland Security Agent graduates from Joint Special Operations Senior Enlisted Academy

By Mike Bottoms

USSOCOM Office of Communication

Aviation Enforcement Agent Kristina Fonzi became the first U.S. Department of Homeland Security Federal Agent and interagency member to graduate from the Joint Special Operations Senior Enlisted Academy. The opportunity to attend JSOFSEA happened just by chance.

"I knew nothing about JSOFSEA prior to seeing the announcement come across e-mail at my workplace. Being prior military, as well as someone who works in a joint environment, this course piqued my interest," Fonzi said. "I submitted my resume along with a letter of recommendation from one of my supervisors and a letter of endorsement from my director. I don't know the exact reasons why they selected me but I have a pretty solid resume with a background in training, operations, and schedules as a leading petty officer in each department."

The Jacksonville, Florida native spent ten years on active duty in the Navy as an electronic systems warfare operator flying on board the P-3 Orion. She served as an active instructor and a leading petty officer traveling around the fleet teaching weapons and tactics. Before leaving the Navy she earned a bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University in workforce education and development.

Today, Fonzi has been attached to the National Air Security Operations Center-Jacksonville since 2010. She worked as a detection enforcement officer providing surveillance, and gathering intelligence for interagency, intergovernmental, multinational components fighting against illicit drug and contraband smuggling from South and Central America to include the Caribbean. Upon graduation from JSOFSEA she is scheduled to be a liaison at the Joint Interagency Task Force – South.

"My favorite part of the course was the joint interagency, intergovernmental and multinational curriculum," said Fonzi. "I learned so much about my own organization as well as Department of Defense and the State Department and how they interact. I am really going to take

that part of the course back with me and apply what I have learned."

JSOFSEA is nominative-only and is 35-weeks long broken up in two phases. Phase one is completed online and is 26-weeks long while phase two is 9 weeks and taken in-residence. Course topics are divided into six components and focuses on joint, special operations forces senior-noncommissioned leadership principles, as well as how DOD and the other government departments function in defending the United States. The academy wants more interagency students to attend.

"Agent Fonzi is the first interagency member to graduate from our course and she is a real milestone for us," said William Howell, director of distance learning, Joint Special Operations Senior Enlisted Academy. "Now our goal is to build upon her achievement and get four interagency students per course."

Fonzi thinks the academy classes would be very useful to prospective students from the interagency, especially for those who are seeking career development.

"My organization, ultimately DHS and its components, were created for the purpose of bringing the different departments together in order to never let another 9/11 happen again," Fonzi said. "Now I know that all of us ultimately have the same goals, to keep our nation, its people and interests safe. We all have our part and just as I have a tremendous amount of respect for what SOF does, I hope to think that they also see what I'm doing and we can find ways to work together to be more successful."



Aviation Enforcement Agent Kristina Fonzi. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.



U.S. Army
Staff Sgt. Mark de Alencar
7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)



U.S. Air Force
Capt. Andrew Becker
318th Special Operations Squadron



U.S. Air Force
Capt. Kenneth Dalga
318th Special Operations Squadron



U.S. Air Force
1st Lt. Frederick Dellecker
318th Special Operations Squadron



U.S. Army
Warrant Officer Shawn Thomas
3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne)

Editor's note: Honored are special operations forces who lost their lives since February's Tip of the Spear.



U.S. Air Force Special Tactics Airmen assigned to the 24th Special Operations Wing conduct close air support training during Emerald Warrior 17 at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., March 2. Emerald Warrior is a U.S. Special Operations Command exercise during which joint special operations forces train to respond to various threats across the spectrum of conflict. U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Barry Loo.