

Tip OF THE Spear



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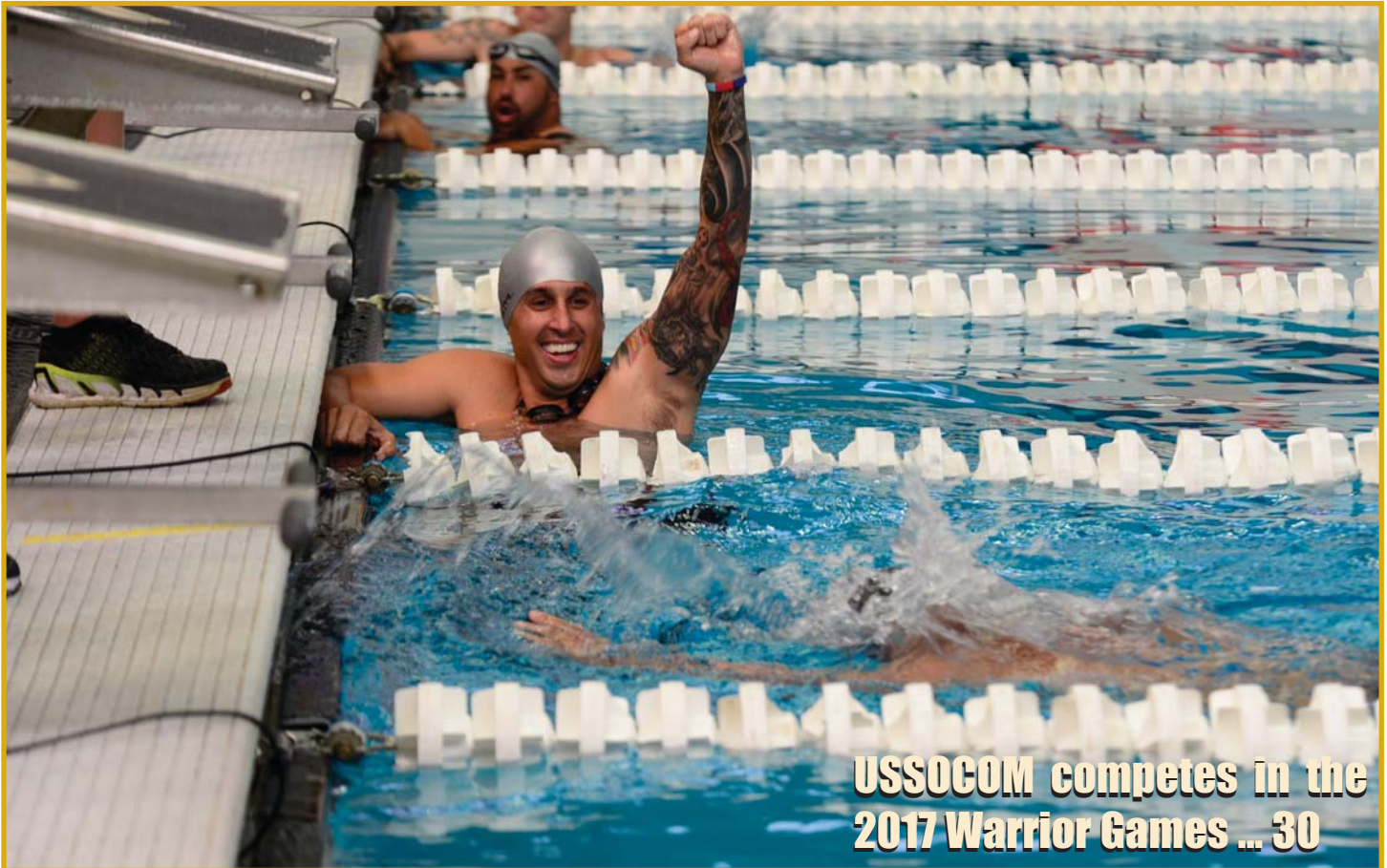


USSOCOM COMPETES IN 2017 WARRIOR GAMES





U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



USSOCOM competes in the 2017 Warrior Games ... 30

Tip of the Spear

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(Cover) U.S. Army Lt. Col. Dave O'Hearn waits for the pass from U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Brant Ireland in the 400-meter relay during the 2017 Warrior Games July 2, in Chicago, Ill. The Warrior Games were established in 2010 as a way to enhance the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded warriors and to expose them to adaptive sports. Photo by Michael Bottoms.



Thomas Jefferson
Award Winner

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U.S. Naval Special Warfare Operators establish a security perimeter during a fast rope training exercise from a CV-22 Osprey at Mykolaiv, Ukraine, July 14, during exercise Sea Breeze 17. Sea Breeze is a U.S. and Ukraine co-hosted multinational maritime exercise held in the Black Sea and is designed to enhance interoperability of participating nations and strengthen maritime security within the region. Photo U.S. Army By Spc. Jeffery Lopez.

US Special Operations Forces train with Ukrainian SOF at Sea Breeze 17

*By Capt. William Leasure
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe*

Across Southern Ukraine, U.S. special operations forces trained with Ukrainian SOF and conventional U.S. and Ukrainian naval forces during Sea Breeze 17, July 10-21.

An annual fixture in the Black Sea region since 1997, Sea Breeze is a U.S. and Ukrainian co-hosted multinational maritime exercise.

This year, U.S. SOF were invited to participate by Ukraine, and, accordingly, Special Operations Command Europe’s Naval Special Warfare operators were eager to

sign up for the mission.

“This is the first time that SOF has operated at Sea Breeze,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Michael Villegas, the exercise’s director. “SOF capabilities are extremely valued by the Ukrainians and extremely valuable to the U.S.”

NSW operators echoed this sentiment while completely integrated into the various air, land and sea missions that required their unique warfighting skill set.

“Exercise Sea Breeze is a perfect fit for SOF to train and exercise our SOF capabilities,” said the lead SOF planner. “With the support of the 352nd Special Operations Wing, we saw a prime opportunity to support

SOF mission essential training with our Ukrainian allies.”

He added that NSW units bring a host of unique capabilities into the exercise scenario like rigid hull inflatable boats; visit, board, search and seizure expertise; and the strongest direct action capabilities available.

However, capability is only one piece of the puzzle when training alongside a partner nation with shared objectives to assure, deter, and defend in an increasingly complex environment.

“In the spirit of Sea Breeze, we come not to impose what we know or how we operate,” said Villegas. “Here we come to exchange ideas, train towards interoperability and learn to operate side by side should a conflict arise that would require that.”

Achieving interoperability with both partner nations and inter service partners is a common objective at exercises like Sea Breeze, but here, the U.S. SOF commander capitalized on it.

“Interoperability is our ability to conduct combined planning, problem solving, and mission execution efficiently to achieve a mutually-defined end state,” he said.

Successfully achieving this end state, he said, hinged on U.S and Ukrainian integration at the tactical level within the SOF platoons, and at the special operations maritime task group level.

“We have combined with our Ukrainian colleagues to integrate their experience and capabilities within our key positions,” he said. “Starting in the command team and further within our operations, communications, logistics, and intelligence departments, we were fully partnered.”

Down at the platoon level, Operators fast roped from hovering U.S. Air Force CV-22 Osprey aircraft assigned to U.S. Special Operations Command Europe, conducted personnel recovery training and boarded vessels at sea.

“Whether it was on the range, in the field, or on the water, these men were a pleasure to work with,” said a U.S. SOF platoon commander. “The Ukrainians’ attitudes made this exercise a great opportunity to exchange training and create a strong relationship.”

As with any exercise of this size and scope, there were challenges to overcome to make the exercise a success while identifying tactical and technical gaps in partner capabilities.

“The first major obstacle we had, but were prepared for, was the language barrier,” the platoon commander said. “Another was that our mission sets differed slightly from our counterparts.”

To remedy this, he related that he found ways to incorporate the skillsets of each unit in ways to accomplish the mission while building relationships to forge a stronger partnership.

As the operators returned from a long day on mission, through the barriers, mutual trust was built through combined hard work, long hours and mutual respect for each unit’s professionalism.

“You always want to work with a partner force who is motivated, wants to train, and wants to get better, and the Ukrainian SOF are all of these,” said the platoon commander.

On the pier in Odessa, overlooking the Black Sea, Villegas expressed the U.S. Navy’s gratitude to Ukraine for inviting U.S. SOF to participate in this year’s exercise.

“SOF participation at Sea Breeze is so important for Ukraine and the U.S. Navy and all the other units participating,” he said. “Our hosts have been incredibly friendly, committed and dedicated; their hard work has ensured Sea Breeze 17 was a success and we are truly very thankful for that.”

Based off the positive reactions of both Ukrainian and U.S. SOF personnel here, both sides hope that participation in Sea Breeze will continue for the foreseeable future.



A U.S. Naval Special Warfare operator observes a Ukrainian SOF operator at a weapons range in Ochakiv, Ukraine during exercise Sea Breeze 17, July 18. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Jeffery Lopez.



Black Swan 17 brings Special Operations Forces into Saber Guardian

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Aaron Duncan
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe

The men patrolled their compound surrounded by the thick, green bush common throughout the area, alert for any signs of trouble. Carrying AK-47 rifles and joking quietly, they stood as dangerous warnings to any would-be intruders.

The quiet of the morning broke however, as special operations forces rapidly swarmed their posts. They came from all directions, wearing the uniforms of their respective nations, working through the compound's

defenses efficiently and effectively.

Unbeknownst to the guards, those forces had arrived the night before. They spent the previous day observing, refining their plan and waiting to strike.

The assault was just one part of the larger exercise Black Swan 2017. Black Swan was a Hungarian-led special operations forces exercise from June 26 – July 22, in locations across Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania. Designed to enable participants to rehearse and demonstrate integration between special operations and conventional forces to prepare for real-world contingencies, it included participants from over eight countries.



Hungarian special operations forces prepare to load a simulated casualty into a medical evacuation helicopter July 17 during exercise Black Swan in Hungary. Black Swan was a Hungarian-led special operations forces exercise from June 26 – July 22, across locations in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania and included participants from over eight countries. Paratroopers from the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade and 10th Combat Aviation Brigade also participated in the exercise alongside the 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) to improve integration between SOF and conventional forces across NATO Allies. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Aaron P. Duncan.

“20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) worked with SOF from Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; establishing a Hungarian-led special operations component command conducting an exercise across Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria,” said U.S. Army Col. Derek Lipson, the commander of 20th SFG(A). “More than 600 soldiers participated in this exercise, reinforcing allied relationships, conventional and special operations interoperability, interdependence, and integration.”

Black Swan was one of a series of U.S. and European-led exercises under the umbrella of U.S. European Command’s Saber Guardian. The U.S. Army Europe-led annual exercise is designed to enhance joint operational capability with allied and partner nations across a variety of mission sets, and involved more than 25,000 service members from over 20 ally and partner nations.

U.S. SOF personnel partnered with their Hungarian Allies to assist in the planning of the exercise as well as the execution. U.S. SOF worked alongside their hosts at multiple levels of the exercise command structure.

“The working relationship we’ve established with our partner nations will enable us to further train as a special operations component command - especially as we build on our mutual understanding of NATO SOF doctrine,” said Lipson. “We’ll work together for the next two years to better execute Black Swan 19, as part of Saber Guardian 19.”

The experience of working alongside different nations in the planning of such a large operation was not lost either on Col. Tamas Sandor, commander of the Hungarian Defense Force special operations forces.

“Working with U.S. forces was smooth and easy,” said Sandor. “The U.S. team was professional and really willing to share their experience and mentor our staff. Although language is always a challenge, the similar



Hungarian special operations forces and paratroopers from the U.S. Army’s 173rd Airborne Brigade engage an enemy quick reaction force July 17, during exercise Black Swan in Hungary. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Aaron P. Duncan.

doctrine and experience from Afghanistan and Iraq made cooperation easier. I would like to underline the professionalism and all the great efforts which made real teamwork through the exercise.”

The event allowed special operations staffs to develop their planning expertise. For the U.S., it is imperative to be able to plan alongside allies.

“It was a great exercise and great opportunity for application of special operations from the tactical to the strategic level, and in a part of the world where partnership is crucial,” said Lipson.

Additionally, while SOF perform specialized missions, they work toward and alongside conventional force’s operational objectives. This makes the ability for SOF and conventional forces to coordinate and operate like a well-oiled machine a must.

In addition to Hungarian conventional units, U.S. Army paratroopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade and aviators from 10th Combat Aviation Brigade also participated in the exercise.

“Working with the Hungarian SOF teams and soldiers has been great,” said a U.S. Army Special Forces team leader. “It was a great opportunity to build relationships and see how everyone tackles challenges.”



A band of brothers: Countries compete for 11 days but partner for life

By U.S. Army Spc. Elizabeth Williams
Special Operations Command South

Through friendly competition, Fuerzas Comando creates partnerships that countries take home with them.

“Fuerzas Comando is more than a competition,” Panamanian army Sgt. Josue Juarez, a competitor this year, said. “It’s more like making a friendship with other nations.”

From the opening ceremony to the closing ceremony, actions of competitors and support personnel constantly served as a reminder that bonding countries together was the main goal of the competition.

During the opening ceremony U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, the U.S. Special Operations Command commander, set the tone for what he wanted the competition to mean.

“Fuerzas Comando is yet another link in a global network,” Thomas said. “This network brings together our hemisphere’s special operation forces and key leadership into an interlocking tribe of families, partners and true friends.”

Teams worked together to conquer a rigorous fitness test, a 12-mile ruck march and a Special Forces-style obstacle course. They were pushed to their limits physically many times throughout the 11 days. Many of the events required competitors to push themselves to their physical limits, then, still shaking from fatigue, were challenged to display expert marksmanship skills.



Team Colombia, the returning champions from last year’s Fuerzas Comando competition, return to camp after completing the second marksmanship event at Vista Alegre in Presidente Hayes, Paraguay, July 18. Fuerzas Comando is a foreign military competition designed to enhance multinational and regional cooperation, mutual trust and confidence, and to improve the training, readiness, interoperability, and capability of regional special operations forces. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Elizabeth Williams

Fuerzas Comando is yet another link in a global network. This network brings together our hemisphere’s special operation forces and key leadership into an interlocking tribe of families, partners and true friends.

— Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III

Team Honduras won the competition for the first time in its 13 iterations, upsetting Team Colombia who won the previous year. Team Colombia placed first in the sniper events, and the U.S. team placed first in the assault events.

Each year during the competition, teams have two weeks to observe and learn from each other. The countries constantly evolve their tactics and techniques to better prepare themselves for contingencies. During the 2012 competition, Juarez learned from



Paraguayan competitors hurdle lines during the obstacle course event as part of Fuerzas Comando on July 24, at Vista Alegre, Presidente Hayes, Paraguay. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Chad Menegay.

Team Colombia, who has won the last eight of 13 Fuerzas Comando competitions, that he and his teammates need to go on longer ruck marches more frequently. The marches make the special operators more fit and better able to carry out missions. This year, the Panamanian team placed among the top four teams in the ruck march event.

“You see tactics and movements from other countries that you can adapt to your own team,” Juarez said.

Another example is how the Panamanian team learned from Peruvian special forces how to spot targets in rocky terrains after having met at a Fuerzas Comando competition. From what Juarez’s team learned from both Colombian and Peruvian SOF, they are better prepared not only for next year’s Fuerzas Comando competition, which is planned to be held in Panama, but also their mission back home.

The Dominican and U.S. special operations forces also serves as an example of training cooperation among partner nations. For years, the Americans taught the Dominicans advanced techniques and tactics.

In 2005, Dominican army 1st Lt. Natanael Rodriguez, a competitor this year, went on a rescue mission in Santiago, Dominican Republic. Rodriguez and his team were tasked with rescuing a Dominican businessman and bringing him back to safety, he said. And it was because of the training he received from working with U.S. SOF that the team successfully rescued the businessman unharmed. More recently, Rodriguez learned through observation of the U.S. sniper

team that they also need to improve some of the equipment their forces use.

When a partnership is created, countries learn from each other. Members from Team Colombia have trained with U.S. forces and learned from them the same way the Americans have from Colombian forces.

Colombian air force noncommissioned officer Diego Silva, a competitor this year, learned close combat tactics and pistol and rifle techniques from U.S. forces.

The Soldiers from the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) of Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., at the same time learned how to navigate through thick jungle vegetation along with other jungle maneuvers and various tips and tricks from the Colombians.

The participating countries have a long history of working together. And their partnership continues to strengthen with each Fuerzas Comando competition.

When U.S. Navy Adm. Kurt W. Tidd, the commander of U.S. Southern Command, gave his closing remarks at the final ceremony, he urged the competitors to continue to take the lessons and partnerships gained from the competition back home with them.

Ultimately, it didn’t matter what team held the trophy over their heads at the closing ceremony.

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Angel Martinez, the joint training and exercise division chief for Special Operations Command South, simply summed up the goal of the competition.

“It’s about partnerships,” he said.

Even more, it’s how these countries use their partnerships to create a band of brothers who protect the Western Hemisphere.



U.S. Special Forces Soldiers receive the third-place trophy for the Fuerzas Comando competition July 27, during the closing ceremony in Mariano Roque Alonso, Paraguay. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Joanna Bradshaw.



Where few have gone before: Army surgeon selected for NASA space program



41-year-old NASA astronaut candidate Francisco Rubio waves as he is introduced as one of 12 new astronaut candidates June 7, during an event at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. After completing two years of training, the new astronaut candidates could be assigned to missions performing research on the International Space Station, launching from American soil on spacecraft built by commercial companies, and launching on deep space missions on NASA's new Orion spacecraft and Space Launch System rocket. Photo by Bill Ingalls.

**By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jorden Weir
USASOC Public Affairs**

How many lifetimes does it take to become a Soldier, pilot, doctor, and astronaut? For Maj. Francisco Rubio, the battalion surgeon assigned to 3rd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), it only takes one.

Rubio recently took his place as one of only 12 Americans selected to begin NASA astronaut candidate training in August 2017.

"It's a dream come true," Rubio said.

Rubio's desire to become an astronaut began after he attended a briefing on the NASA program during medical school more than a decade ago. Then, in 2015, he saw his chance. "NASA posted a Facebook release that they were going to be taking applications," he said.

And with that, his journey to becoming an astronaut began.

Rubio says he was a little daunted by the sheer number of applicants he was up against in the process. This selection cycle saw more than 18,000 applications from all over the country, an unprecedented amount. Historically, the typical number of applicants is around 8,000.

"If you're picking 10 out of 8,000 or 18,000, the odds are pretty slim anyways," said Rubio.

During the selection process, Rubio reminded himself to temper his expectations.

"Honestly, you don't expect it," he said, "even at the very end ... mostly because you look at the people around you and you're kind of amazed by them, too. You hope and hope, but you don't really expect it."

As to what ultimately set Rubio apart from more than 18,000 other people, your guess is as good as his.

"That's the million-dollar question," he said.

He explained that, although he felt his personality and teamwork experience played a big part, it really came down to what NASA needed from a new astronaut class at this particular time. He pointed out the incredible diversity among the twelve selectees, and that they all bring different, yet vital, skills and talents to the team.

One thing is certain, however -- Rubio is immensely qualified for the job.

Rubio graduated from West Point in 1998 and entered the Army, where he became a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot and flew more than 1,100 hours over the course of eight years. Of these flight hours, more than 600 were combat or imminent danger flight hours during deployments to Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

Rubio furthered his education and experience by attending and graduating from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland in 2006, and has served in the Army as a surgeon and physician since then.

Rubio is looking forward to the next step on his journey by beginning his astronaut candidate training, which starts in August.

The program is expected to last two years, during which time Rubio will take part in an academically-rigorous training focusing on spacewalks, robotics, international space stations, rocket systems, flying jet aircrafts, and Russian language courses.

“It’s a once in a lifetime opportunity,” he said.

Rubio, who will retain his status in the Army and will become just the third member of the Army Astronaut Corps, acknowledges that the road to space is still a long one for him. After he becomes an astronaut, it will still be another five to eight years before he actually has the chance to go into space. But he’s still energized to go through the process.

“It’s going to be a really cool experience,” he said. “The most inspiring thing about it is that it’s almost universally supported in our country ... you know you’re kind of inspiring other people.”

In all, Rubio says he’s proud and humbled to represent the nation doing something this spectacular. When looking back at all he’s accomplished over the last 19 years in the Army, he attributes his success to good fortune, good timing, and seeking out opportunities for continued growth.

“I’ve been incredibly blessed,” he said. “They [were] amazing opportunities ... If it weren’t for the Army, I wouldn’t have had any of those opportunities. We’re in an organization that lets you succeed.”

Asked to provide advice to Soldiers who are also looking to make the most of their Army experience, he says that the first and most important step is to apply for training or programs that interest them.

“There’s a lot of people that have dreams and hopes,” he said, “and they’ll talk about them, but

sometimes they just don’t go through with finishing the application process. You never know unless you apply.”

The second piece of advice is to prepare to make mistakes -- and learn from them.

“As much as it sounds like I’ve had some great success,” he explained, “I’ve also had some failures and I’ve fallen on my face. And sometimes that’s the hardest part, and the part where you learn the most.”

Embracing success and failure equally as a part of the learning process has allowed Rubio to persevere and earn the accomplishments of several lifetimes.

Now Rubio, already a Soldier, already a pilot, and already a doctor, is on track to take his place as one of only 350 Americans ever to earn the title of astronaut.



2017 NASA astronaut candidate Frank Rubio has his portrait taken at Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base in Texas. Photo by Robert Markowitz.



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Special Operations Advanced Mountaineering School students lead a force of 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Soldiers across a peak in Colorado's Ten Mile Range, June 20. The Senior Mountaineering Course students led the Soldiers up the 13,000-foot peak for a reconnaissance mission at the top as part of the course's culminating exercise. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Christopher Stevenson.

Green Berets add 'Senior Mountaineers' to their renowned designations

*By U.S. Army Pfc. Christopher Stevenson
10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Public Affairs*

At the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne)'s Special Operations Advanced Mountaineering School, known as SOAMS, Green Berets are trained to survive in mountainous regions, and the skills they learn enable them to carry out difficult and dangerous mountain warfare operations across the globe.

During the mountaineering school's featured summer course, the Senior Mountaineering Course, students learn these critical skills over a seven-week period. At the end of the course, participants demonstrate their mountain warfare

skills and must pass a final test during a culminating exercise before they can claim the title of Senior Mountaineers.

A recent SMC iteration's final test featured students verifying their newly acquired skills by taking on leadership roles to train mountaineering skills and tactics to a group of untrained Soldiers.

An SMC Instructor for SOAMS said the culminating exercise was especially important because it was the first time the course's students would be leading Soldiers instead of being led by the course cadre.

"After this, students can take partnered forces and move them up, over, and through mountainous terrain to conduct

military operations,” he said.

Missions like this are at the core of Special Operation Forces’ role in national defense. Through an indigenous approach, Operational Detachment-Alpha teams enable partner forces by living, training, and fighting alongside their counterparts.

The students’ objective for the culminating exercise was to establish an observation point on the top of a local peak, perform a direct action strike against a high-value target, then safely move to the exfiltration point on the other side of the mountain -- all while working with an untrained force.

One SOAMS instructor said that this type of mission is common for Special Operations Forces.

“All throughout the world, SF teams deploy and typically work with a partner force,” he said. “That partner force may or may not know as much as you do when operating in mountainous environments. So as an ODA, you have to maximize their ability by training them, and possibly leading them through mountainous terrain.”

Training, advising and assisting partner forces so that they have the necessary skills and tools to be self-sufficient is at the heart of what Special Operations Forces do on a regular basis.

“The whole point of Special Forces,” one student said, “is to work ourselves out of a job. There’s no point in us just continuing to bring these guys along as much as we feel comfortable.”

A key component of what made the culminating exercise unique was the presence of untrained troops. They simulated what the students could be asked to do as Senior Mountaineers in Iraq, Afghanistan, and beyond -- leading a force with little to no mountaineering experience through difficult mountainous terrain during a military operation.

“The fact that we’re working with an untrained troop, there’s a lot more that comes into play,” one student said.

The students developed a day-long training program to familiarize the untrained Soldiers with the types of tasks they might have to complete during the mission, including proper knot tying, safely navigating a fixed line rope for moving up and down difficult terrain, and rappelling down the side of a cliff.

The culminating exercise itself began with a 5 a.m. infiltration at the base of Colorado’s Ten Mile Range, west of Fort Carson. From there, the element moved up the side of the mountain across rocky and unstable terrain until they reached a peak at nearly 13,600 feet.

After observing their target, the Soldiers called in a



A 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Soldier rappels down a climbing tower during a mountaineering skills class led by students of the Special Operations Advanced Mountaineer School’s Senior Mountaineering Class June 19, at Fort Carson, Colorado. The seven-week course taught students how to lead and train Soldiers through mountainous terrain. For their final exercise, the students had to lead a large group of untrained Soldiers through a mountain mission in Colorado’s Ten Mile Range. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Will Reinier.

notional airstrike to destroy it, and then headed back down the opposite side.

During their movement to the exfiltration point, the element received word that a helicopter had crashed in their vicinity and they would need to recover the pilot -- another critical capability that Special Operations Forces provide.

By the time they finished for the evening, the students and their untrained force had climbed and traversed the difficult terrain for nearly 20 hours.

“Having these untrained troops in the final exercise has been paramount,” one student said.

The successful completion of the exercise meant that all of the SMC students would graduate and become Senior Mountaineers before heading back to their ODAs. Now, these Soldiers qualified to safely and quickly lead their teams through any mountain mission.

“Now, we expect them to teach and lead,” one instructor said. “They leave the school with not just the mountaineering skills, but also the skills to lead untrained troops on missions that run the full range of unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency, foreign internal defense, and they’re going to be able to explain to the commander the abilities and limitations of that element in a mountain environment.”



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



1st SFG (A) face arduous training during 'Dragon Week'

*By U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Balda
1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) Public Affairs*

Most Army units prepare for overseas contingencies by performing an emergency deployment readiness exercise. Supervisors ensure a Soldiers' paperwork is in order and they go through the motions of a mock deployment. The Soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), pride themselves in unconventional training methods and the unit's Dragon Week was no different.

"Dragon Week is a 3rd Battalion tradition that we have been unable to execute over the past few years because of our operational tempo," said the battalion's

commander, Lt. Col. Jason Clarke. "We wanted to get back to our roots and instill the sense of tradition that 1st SFG (A) has been great at for the past 60 years. Dragon Week stresses our Soldiers both physically and mentally as they navigate their way through multiple tactical and technical challenges."

Due to the nature of their training and mission sets, Army special operations forces are becoming leaders at redefining the readiness model, according to 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne). Not only are special operations forces much smaller with a very high demand for services, but they experience an extremely high mission deployment rate. Those challenges make it difficult to maintain a sustained ready force, especially when teams operate in different phases of readiness.



A safety swimmer keeps an eye on a team from 3rd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) during a competition held during "Dragon Week" on Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., June 28. Dragon Week consisted of airborne operations, maritime operations, patrol lanes, a stress shoot, and medical evaluations to test readiness at the battalion level. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Victor Richmond.



A Soldier from 3rd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) participates in a stress shoot during “Dragon Week” at Range 103, Joint Base Lewis - McChord, Wash. June 29. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Wes Conroy.

By testing readiness at the higher level, 1st SFG (A) is proving readiness can occur outside of the team. To exercise this, 3rd Battalion personnel awoke to an early morning phone call with instructions to bring pertinent paperwork and equipment posthaste for an unknown mission. After the battalion’s human resources section checked readiness packets, Soldiers found themselves preparing for an airborne operation with a follow-on mission.

After landing safely, the teams representing every company in the battalion, were given the first of 10 points to navigate to by staying off roads and using only a compass and a map. At each point they had to overcome physical and mental tasks prior to receiving their next point. The tasks ranged from assembling and disassembling heavy weapons to constructing a rope bridge and crossing an obstacle, to assembling a 300-piece Mickey Mouse puzzle for time.

There was very specific reasons for designing the training in such a way.

“We wanted to make it challenging but not to the point where it detracted from the esprit de corps and team building,” said Capt. Mike Dutile, the battalion logistics officer and the officer in charge of planning the event. “If it was too bad, we would have lost the focus.”

There were also real world implications in the training set up.

“Everything our teams were asked to do during Dragon Week was 100 percent applicable towards our

operations, whether a training event in Asia or a combat operation in Afghanistan or Syria,” Clarke said.

Staff Sgt. Katie Whelan, a preventive medicine non-commissioned officer assigned to the battalion, supported the medical lane. Teams were required to self-administer tourniquets, inject IVs, and carry a teammate on a litter for time.

“A lot of the teams had Soldiers who weren’t trained as medics, but could complete the tasks,” she said. “It was pretty impressive to see.”

At night, the teams established patrol bases and waited until morning before continuing with small unit tactics and patrolling. The teams also participated in maritime operations at involving paddling a boat 1,000 meters to recover a Soldier and then returning to shore. They moved from there to a weapons range to finish with a stress shoot.

Clarke stressed the fact that at every echelon the staff played a part in the overall success of Dragon Week from running the command post, coordinating communications between all units, manning the opposition force, conducting intelligence collection, and acting as roll players to add degrees of realism to the exercise. The training was even joint, as an Airman specializing in Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape helped train Soldiers to escape from various restraints.

“The amount of support to conduct Dragon Week is almost as high as the operators going through the exercise,” Clarke said. “Our support Soldiers are just as important as our operators to ensure mission success.”



A Soldier in 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) conducts airborne operations at Merrill Drop Zone, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. June 27. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Wes Conroy.



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND



NASA announced its 2017 Astronaut Candidate Class on June 7. The 12 candidates, pictured here at NASA's Ellington Field in Houston, are Zena Cardman, U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Jasmin Moghbeli, U.S. Navy Lt. Jonny Kim, U.S. Army Maj. Francisco "Frank" Rubio, U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Matthew Dominick, Warren "Woody" Hoburg, Robb Kulin, U.S. Navy Lt. Kayla Barron, Bob Hines, U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Raja Chari, Loral O'Hara and Jessica Watkins. NASA courtesy photo.

Former Navy SEAL joins NASA's newest astronaut recruits

By Naval Special Warfare Public Affairs

After receiving a record-breaking number of applications to join an exciting future of space exploration, NASA has selected its largest astronaut class since 2000. Rising to the top of more than 18,300 applicants, NASA chose 12 women and men as the agency's new astronaut candidates. One of the 12 was doctor and former Navy SEAL Lt. Jonathan Yong Kim.

Kim took an unusual path to Harvard Medical School. A graduate of Santa Monica High School, he enlisted in the Navy and made his way onto a SEAL team. After proving himself as a combat medic (among other roles) in more than 100 missions — and earning a Silver Star and Bronze Star — he joined the ranks of naval officers and earned a degree in math from the

University of San Diego. Now 33, Kim is training as an emergency physician at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Vice President Mike Pence joined NASA leaders Wednesday as they introduced the members of the 2017 astronaut class during an event at the agency's Johnson Space Center in Houston. While at Johnson, the vice president toured the International Space Station mission control center, and the historic mission control center, which was used during early NASA spaceflights, including the first moon landing mission, Apollo 11. He also was presented with a model of the International Space Station and a framed U.S. flag that was flown to and from the orbiting laboratory this winter.

"These are 12 men and women whose personal excellence and whose personal courage will carry our nation to even greater heights of discovery and who I know will inspire our children and our grandchildren



Dr. (Lt.) Jonathan Yong Kim. Photo by Robert Markowitz.

every bit as much as your forebears have done so in this storied American program,” said Vice President Pence. “And to this newest class of astronauts, it’s my honor to bring the sincere congratulations of the 45th President of the United States of America, President Donald Trump. Your President is proud of you, and so am I.”

The astronaut candidates will return to Johnson in August to begin two years of training. Then they could be assigned to any of a variety of missions, including: performing research on the International Space Station, launching from American soil on spacecraft built by commercial companies, and departing for deep space missions on NASA’s new Orion spacecraft and Space Launch System rocket.

“We look forward to the energy and talent of these astronauts fueling our exciting future of discovery,” Acting NASA Administrator Robert Lightfoot said. “Between expanding the crew on board the space station to conduct more research than ever before, and making preparations to send humans farther into space than we’ve ever been, we are going to keep them busy. These

candidates are an important addition to the NASA family and the nation’s human spaceflight team.”

With the addition of these 12 members of the 2017 astronaut candidate class, NASA now has selected 350 astronauts since the original Mercury 7 in 1959.

“These women and men deserve our enthusiastic congratulations,” said astronaut and Johnson Space Center Director Ellen Ochoa. “Children all across the United States right now dream of being in their shoes someday. We here at NASA are excited to welcome them to the team and look forward to working with them to inspire the next generation of explorers.”

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Name: Jonathan Yong Kim

Home of record: California

Date enlisted: Oct. 22, 2002

Date commissioned: May 29, 2012

Designator: Reserve Medical Corps Officer

Rank/Date of Rank: Lieutenant / May 26, 2016

SERVICE ASSIGNMENTS

Bureau of Navy Medicine and Surgery, Bethesda, Md.

Navy Recruiting District New England, Boston, Mass.

Aug. 01, 2012 – May 30, 2016

Student, Seaman-to-Admiral-21, University of San Diego, Calif.

April 20, 2009 – July 31, 2012

West-Coast-Based Special Warfare Unit

April 21, 2005 – Feb. 19, 2009

Student, John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center, Fort Bragg, N.C.

Sept. 16, 2004 – April 13, 2005

Student, Navy Advanced Special Warfare Training, Coronado,

Calif. March 31, 2004 – Aug. 27, 2004

Student, Navy Basic Special Warfare Training, Coronado, Calif.

June 27, 2003 – Feb. 20, 2004

Student, Naval Medical Training, San Antonio, Texas

Dec. 20, 2002 – June 26, 2003

Student, Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Ill.

Oct., 22, 2002 – Dec. 20, 2002

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Silver Star

Bronze Star w/Combat “V”

Navy/Marine Corps Commendation Medal w/Combat “V”

Combat Action Ribbon

Good Conduct Medal (3)

National Defense Service Medal

Iraq Campaign Medal

Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal

Global War on Terrorism Service Medal

Sea Service Deployment Ribbon (2)

Rifle Marksmanship Ribbon w/Silver “E” expert device

Pistol Marksmanship Ribbon w/Silver “E” expert device

Enlisted Special Warfare Specialist (SEAL)

Enlisted Basic Parachutist



NAVSCIATTS graduates largest class in school history

By Angela Fry

Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School

The Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School, located at the John C. Stennis Space Center in Mississippi, recently graduated its largest class in the international training center's more than 50-year history.

This iteration, which accounted for 125 students, featured students from Belize, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago.

The selected international military and law enforcement personnel studied at NAVSCIATTS' facilities in order to develop operational proficiency and technical knowledge and skills in specialized courses ranging from the school's inaugural iteration of Expeditionary Logistics and Supply, Intel Fusion Operations and Integration, International Small Arms Maintenance course, Outboard Motor Maintenance and Overhaul, Patrol Craft Officer Coastal and Riverine courses, Technical Welding and Applied Repairs course, to the facility's flagship Strategic Leaders International Course.

Students, NAVSCIATTS' staff and international and local dignitaries gathered at the Diamondhead Country Club on July 20, to honor the students for their achievements and for newly forged relationships.

"Tonight's ceremony is a bittersweet event for me, as this is my final graduation serving as the commander at NAVSCIATTS," expressed Cmdr. Clay Pendergrass, as he introduced the incoming head of the facility, Cmdr. John T. Green.

"Few positions in my career have impacted me as much as the time I have spent at this command and I am



International students perform communications checks in a classroom exercise in the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School's International Tactical Communications Course at the school's facilities on the John C. Stennis Space Center in Mississippi. NAVSCIATTS is a Security Cooperation school house operating under U.S. Special Operations Command in support of foreign security assistance and geographic combatant commanders' theater security cooperation priorities. The international training center trains and educates partner nation special operations forces, SOF-like forces and SOF enablers across the tactical, operational and strategic spectrums through in-residence and mobile training team engagements. This semester's class was the largest in NAVSCIATTS' more than 50-year history, graduating 125 students from 12 courses of instruction, to include the school's flagship Strategic Leaders International Course. Photo by Angela Fry.

extremely proud to be at the helm tonight as we honor our largest graduating semester in the school's history," continued Pendergrass, a 28-year veteran of the U.S. Navy who has spent the majority of his career as a SEAL. "NAVSCIATTS' most important objective is to build everlasting and ever changing relationships with

our partner nations. Those very relationships are the cornerstone in combating globally shared issues. “

“I am proud to say that no other international training center within the entire U.S. Department of Defense can make the claim that it shapes the entire career of their partner nation students, except NAVSCIATTS,” he stressed. “We do not simply train a student on a skill set and send that student home. We train our students. Then we reach across oceans and borders and politics and religion to help shape that student as he or she progresses through their careers.”

With NAVSCIATTS’ primary mission as an international training center for U.S. Special Operations Command, an invitation to address the graduates was extended to Guatemalan Brig. Gen. Pedro Antonio Reyna Caro, commander of the 1st Infantry Brigade. With more than 30 years of military experience, Reyna stressed the importance of continued training and strengthening of relationships within the Latin American regions.

“We have the support of the United States government, our brothers-in-arms from the marines and especially the crew of NAVSCIATTS,” he explained, as both Central and South America routinely provide large numbers of students to the Security Cooperation schoolhouse. “It has been here in this school where our junior officers and enlisted marines and sailors, those who make the difference, train and acquire valuable knowledge and experience.”

Reyna closed his remarks to the 17-4 class reiterating the importance of combined global efforts and partnerships. “Graduates, today you conclude this instruction that enables you to lead the actions against criminal groups that threaten and terrorize the residents of each of your countries. The threat is great. But your strength is greater, because we are stronger together.”

Other international and local dignitaries in attendance were Capt. Angel Eugenio Fonseca Donaire, chief of the Nicaraguan Naval Forces; Dr. Ken Griffey, Stennis Space Center; and Cmdr. Jose Antonio Martinez Perez, commander of Nicaraguan naval battalion and Nancy Depreo, Diamondhead, Mississippi City Council.

NAVSCIATTS currently offers 20 courses of instruction with an average of nearly 1,000 international personnel graduating from in-resident and mobile training events annually. Since 1963, more than 11,500 students from 110 partner nations have graduated from NAVSCIATTS, which specializes in mobile and in-

resident training across the tactical, operational and strategic spectrums. The Security Cooperation schoolhouse operates under USSOCOM in support of the foreign security assistance and geographic combatant commands’ theater security cooperation priorities.



An international student performs a practical exercise in the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School’s UAS Operations and Planning course at the school’s facilities on the John C. Stennis Space Center in Mississippi. UAS is a four-week course that teaches the necessary skills and competencies required to operate the Puma AE Small Unmanned Aerial Systems in tactical environments. Photo by Leah Tolbert.



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

Commander of Colombian Navy honored with NAVSCIATTS 2016 Distinguished Alumni Award

*By Leah Tolbert
Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical
Training School*

The Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School, located at the John C. Stennis Space Center in Mississippi, recently honored Vice Adm. Ernesto Durán González, commander of the Colombian National Navy, with its 2016 Distinguished Alumni Award.

Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, presented the fourth annual award at a July 17, ceremony at USSOCOM headquarters on MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida, with NAVSCIATTS and USSOCOM staff along with other international delegates in attendance.

NAVSCIATTS established the Distinguished Alumni program in 2013 in conjunction with the international training center's 50th anniversary. The program recognizes specific accomplishments of NAVSCIATTS graduates who achieve strategic military or law enforcement agency positions within their countries that influence the network of international relationships that have proven beneficial in countering global issues such as extremism, piracy, drug trafficking and other criminal activities.

"Vice Admiral Duran is a perfect example of the importance of these relationships," explained Thomas, former commander of Joint Special Operations Command. "He has served with distinction for more than 33 years in various key positions within the Colombian Navy. He embodies the NAVSCIATTS motto of 'Stronger Together,' and I look forward to an ongoing and ever-strengthening relationship between Colombia, the United States and USSOCOM."

Durán first attended the Patrol Craft Commanders' Course in 1989, when NAVSCIATTS was located at the U.S. Naval Station in Rodman, Panama. In June 2016, he was the guest speaker for the Strategic Leaders



U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commander U.S. Special Operations Command, and Vice Adm. Ernesto Duran, commander Colombian National Navy, pose for a photo after Duran received the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School's 2016 Distinguished Alumni Award Ceremony at USSOCOM headquarters, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., July 17. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Jose Reyes.

International Course gradation and spoke about his successful use of NAVSCIATTS' network of global partners.

Durán described how he has applied what he learned at NAVSCIATTS many times during the course of his career.

"At the schoolhouse, we benefited from many fundamental lessons that were based on years of experience and lessons learned, some of which were written in the blood of our shipmates who had been injured or lost," he explained. "By studying and learning together, we all had the chance to apply this knowledge to

our lives in both war and at sea.

“One of the greatest benefits of these endeavors is great friendships that are forged forever,” the commander reiterated regarding the importance of relationships. “These friendships later facilitate the hard work we all face every day. The United States and Colombia have a tradition of fighting together against the same enemies. We have common problems and we are joined by a friendship, a history, and many experiences where together, we do things superbly. As we continue to work together, the whole will far surpass the sum of its parts,” he concluded in remarks to those in attendance.

In addition to recognizing the accomplishments of NAVSCIATTS graduates, the Distinguished Alumni Award serves as a conduit in the maintenance of strategic relationships within the network of global partners. “Vice Admiral Durán has effectively used his position throughout his impressive career to strengthen and expand the network of global partners in order to better counter the mutually destabilizing threats we face today,” said Cmdr. Clay Pendergrass, commanding officer of NAVSCIATTS. “We are truly honored to be able to

recognize a career of outstanding achievements that he has demonstrated.”

“There is almost no problem in the world today that can be solved alone,” added Pendergrass, a 28-year U.S. Navy veteran. “It is in the spirit of hard work, achievement and commitment to sharing that we all look forward to a new generation of leadership to follow in Vice Admiral Durán’s footsteps, as NAVSCIATTS continues to train future leaders from more than 110 partner nations.”

Durán has degrees in oceanography and environmental engineering from the Industrial University of Santander, Colombia, and holds a specialization in geographic information systems from the National Autonomous University of Mexico and a master’s degree in National Security and Defense from the Colombian War College. The newly-named distinguished alumni has served as an operational commander on national sovereignty development missions, scientific research, counter drug trafficking and smuggling, among other global crime-fighting missions at sea during his illustrious career.



Vice Adm. Ernesto Duran, commander Colombian National Navy, gives remarks after receiving the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School’s 2016 Distinguished Alumni Award Ceremony at USSOCOM headquarters, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., July 17. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Jose Reyes.



Pacific Air Commandos launch on 'Day of the Jakal'



*By U.S. Air Force Capt. Jessica Tait
353rd Special Operations Group Public Affairs*

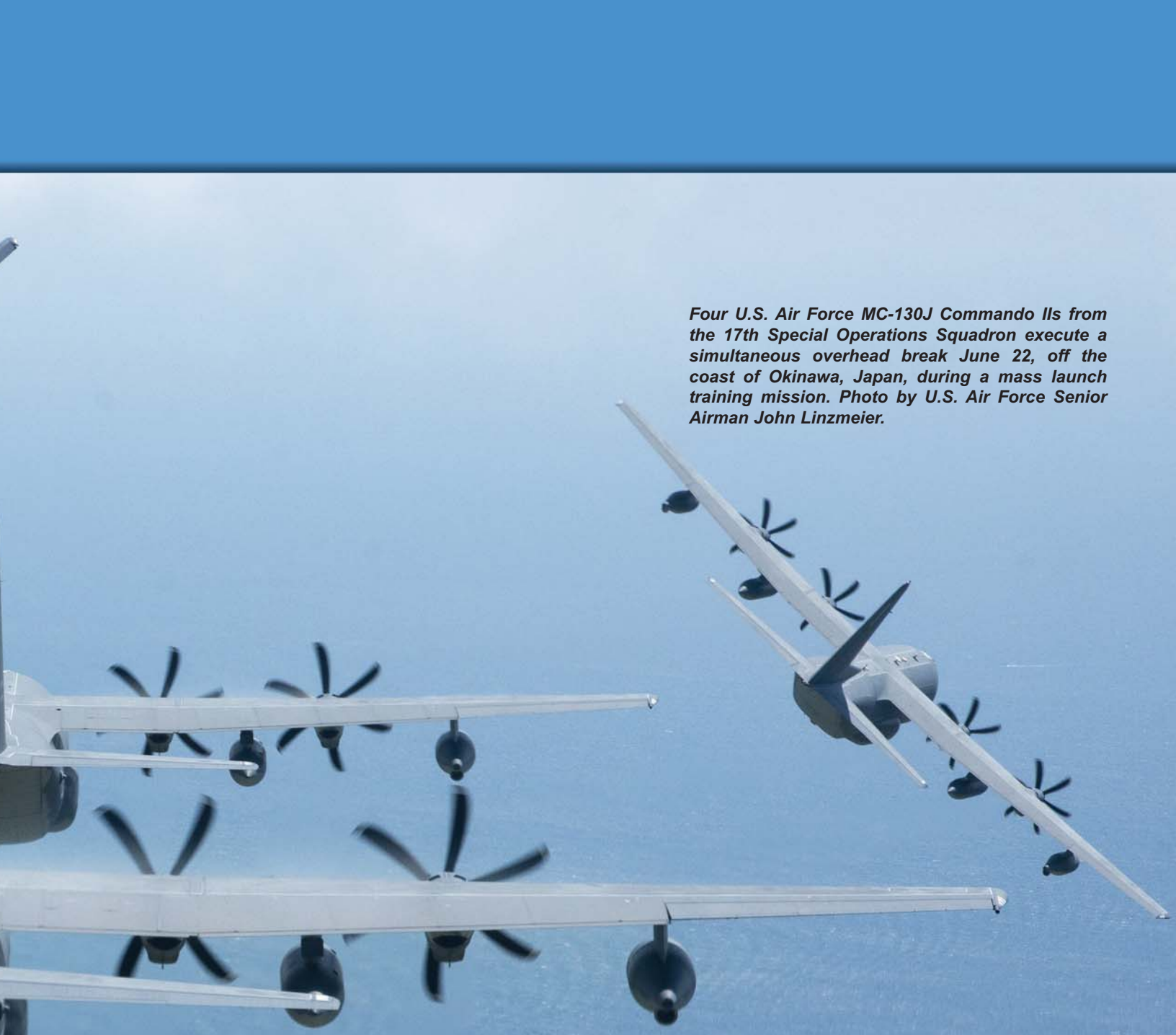
The 17th Special Operations Squadron observed its annual 'Day of the Jakal' with a mass launch of five U.S. Air Force Special Operations MC-130J Commando IIs, June 22, at Kadena Air Base and Ie Shima Range, Okinawa, Japan.

"It's a great way to showcase the abilities of both the 353rd Special Operations Group and 17th Special Operations Squadron," said Lt. Col. Patrick Dube, 17th

SOS operations officer. "To get out and put mass on objective. It shows how we can meet the emerging mission sets for both SOCKOR and SOCPAC out here in the Pacific theater."

Five MC-130Js flew in formation from Kadena Air Base to Ie Shima Range to practice mass on objective training to include airdrops, aircraft landings, and rapid infiltration and exfiltration of equipment.

"Lots of training and planning goes into 'Day of the Jakal,'" said Dube. "First off you have five pieces of iron that weigh about 140 thousand pounds flying in formation 500 feet apart. Additionally, aircrews need to



Four U.S. Air Force MC-130J Commando IIs from the 17th Special Operations Squadron execute a simultaneous overhead break June 22, off the coast of Okinawa, Japan, during a mass launch training mission. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman John Linzmeier.

drop bundles right on the mark where they need to resupply troops. It's a good training evolution for these guys."

In addition to the 17th SOS, the 353rd Special Operations Maintenance Squadron and 353rd Special Operation Support Squadron had a role in supporting the event.

"This day is all about building cohesion and comradery within the 17th SOS and rest of the group that are a part of the team," said Tech Sgt. Kade Bollinger, 17th SOS instructor loadmaster. "We executed multiple events that we do downrange. It was great to have a competitive training event amongst, not just the aircrew, but encompassing maintenance and enablers as well. The JAKALs are one big family and we wanted to get

everybody involved."

The 17th SOS proudly exemplifies their motto, 'no mission too demanding' in both training and real-world contingencies.

"There is no mission too great for the JAKALs," said Dube. "I have the utmost faith in the guys that I fly with and work with every day. They are the best trained and I'd put them up against anybody in the world."

The 17th SOS traces its heritage back to World War II when the unit was activated as the 17th Observation Squadron (Light) on March 2, 1942. The squadron flew the HC-130P/N, later re-designated MC-130P/N, to provide covert aerial refueling for special operations helicopters. Its other missions included infiltrating, exfiltrating and resupplying special operations forces.



Special Mission Aviator receives Distinguished Flying Cross

*By U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Tenley Long
352d Special Operations Wing*

A 7th Special Operations Special Mission Aviator was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross June 2.

U.S. Air Force Technical Sergeant James M. McKay was decorated for his actions during an urgent evacuation of American citizens in Africa on December 21, 2013. While attempting the evacuation, the flight of three CV-22 Ospreys was targeted and hit multiple times by surface-to-air fire from ground forces.

Due to his courageous actions that followed, McKay became the 80th Airman in Air Force Special Operations Command to receive this honor, a medal created in 1918 to reward those who display heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in an aerial flight.

“It’s awesome to see one of our special mission aviators receive this honor,” said Lt. Col. Sean Brammerhogan, 7th SOS director of operations. “Too often, the service they give to our country goes unrecognized.”

During the engagement, McKay identified threats and directed maneuvers that ensured successful clearance of the weapons engagement zone. Without hesitation, he conducted a thorough assessment of the aircraft’s systems, discovering severe impairment including ruptured fuel tanks, flight control deterioration, an inoperable emergency liberation system and loss of the largest hydraulics system on the aircraft.

Extensive system knowledge allowed McKay to uncover the need for immediate emergency air refueling and enabled the crew to isolate the worst hit fuel tanks, slowing leaks in the aircraft and preventing a forced landing on the front line of South Sudan’s civil war.

Following the refueling, he calmly stepped through the remainder of the emergency checklist and prepared the aircraft for landing in Uganda. His actions and knowledge relieved unnecessary burden on the pilots and allowed the rest of the crew to focus on coordinating support for four critically wounded personnel on the



Col. Matthew D. Smith, left, 352d Special Operations Wing commander, presents Tech. Sgt. James M. McKay, right, 7th Special Operations Squadron special missions aviator, with the Distinguished Flying Cross medal June 2, on RAF Mildenhall, England. McKay is the 80th Airman in Air Force Special Operations Command to receive this honor, a medal created in 1918 to reward those who display heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in an aerial flight. Photo by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Tenley Long.

formation’s lead aircraft.

Despite all odds, according to the award’s citation, his actions led to a safe recovery of four crew members, nine passengers and his aircraft. The professional proficiency, aerial skill and commitment to duty displayed by McKay reflect great credit not only upon himself, but to the U.S. Air Force.

“We have to always be prepared for the unexpected, not only physically, but mentally as well. If things get out of control, what’s going to distinguish your actions from others is clearing your mind and allowing yourself to think it out,” McKay explained. “I’m humbled and honored to be a part of the AFSOC community, and I’m proud to have a big win for our community.”

Oklahoma Air National Guard train in five-day close air support event

By U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Trisha Shields
137th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs

More than 50 Airmen from Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve wings participated in a five-day close air support training event at two Arkansas training areas, July 10-14.

Tactical Air Control Party specialists from the 146th Air Support Operations Squadron coordinated the event known as Sooner Strike. The event allowed Airmen to conduct close air support training and share techniques while also working across several airframes common to TACPs.

“The purpose of this exercise is to work hand-in-hand with other units while practicing close air support and integrating with them to hone both the skills of the pilots and the TACPs doing the ground duties,” said Tech. Sgt. Christopher Vaughn, 146th ASOS TACP and exercise planner.

MC-12Ws from the 137th Special Operations Wing, Will Rogers Air National Guard Base, Oklahoma City; F-16 Fighting Falcons from the 138th Fighter Wing in Tulsa, Oklahoma; A-10 Thunderbolt IIs from the 442nd Fighter Wing, Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri; and KC-135 Stratotankers from the 507th Air Refueling Wing, Tinker AFB, Oklahoma City, participated in the five-day event.

“It is not uncommon for all of those aircraft to be working in the same operating area at any given time,” said Vaughn. “We call this controlling the ‘stack.’ We deconflict the multiple aircraft and hold them at different altitudes in the airspace. That is also a responsibility we can pass to the pilots, so we practice doing that too.”

In the air, pilots train on sensor operator duties including pulling grids, following targets and working with TACPs while having other aircraft overhead. On the ground, TACPs used the event to accomplish mission qualification training, live controls and continuation training.

“This training went really well,” said Master Sgt. Larry Mansell, 146th ASOS TACP. “Typically we go all over the country and do this, but we haven’t worked with

the 125th Fighter Squadron (under the 138th Fighter Wing) yet. I’ve seen improvement from our guys. This training is a must-have.”

KC-135s from the 507th were also on hand to refuel the F-16s during the event.

“This is a good training for pilots and TACPs to all work together,” said Vaughn. “This training scenario simulates what they are going to see when they deploy. They will deploy into a counterinsurgency type of environment. We focus our training on what we will see soon.”

This was the first training event of its kind between the 146th ASOS and the wings, but Mansell and Vaughn hope to make a regular occurrence.

“We want to reestablish this relationship to where we work together regularly,” said Vaughn. “In the future, we would like to train with them every month. We play their ground party because they need us to practice close air support and we need them to practice our capabilities.”



Capt. Christopher Cadieux, a 146th Air Support Operations Squadron air liaison officer from Will Rogers Air National Guard Base, Oklahoma City, calls in coordinates during a training event at Razorback Range, Fort Chaffee Maneuver Training Center in Fort Smith, Ark., July 11. The close air support training event, called Sooner Strike, was coordinated by the 146 ASOS and enabled Airmen in the air and on the ground to share techniques and accomplish both mission qualification training and continuation training with several aircraft common to TACP missions. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Andrew M. LaMoreaux.



A legacy inherited: Marine Raider Training Center reactivates

By Maj. Nicholas Mannweiler
MARSOC Public Affairs

Accompanied to the tune of “Auld Lang Syne,” the organizational colors of the Marine Special Operations School were cased during a ceremony at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina June 21.

In their place, the colors of the Marine Raider Training Center were unveiled, flying proudly again after a 73-year retirement.

Marine Corps Bulletin 5400, dated March 27 of this year, authorized the commander of Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command to make the change in order to capture and revive the esprit de corps and pride associated with the term “Marine Raider.” This action represents the final step in MARSOC inheriting the legacy of the original Marine Raiders of World War II, a process begun in August 2015 with MARSOC Marines assuming the Raider name.

The first generation of Raiders were created in 1942 at a time when the United States and her allies needed to staunch a seemingly endless stream of Axis victories around the world. The Marines established four battalions of hand-selected, specially-trained commandos who could conduct advanced reconnaissance of Japanese defenses and wreak havoc in the enemy system through direct action raids. In order to keep these uniquely-focused units supplied with a pool of qualified replacements, the Marine Raider Training Center was established on Feb. 5, 1943, on property that is now



Maj. Gen. Carl E. Mundy III, commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, addresses the audience during a ceremony June 21, at Camp Lejeune, N.C. The Marine Special Operations School was redesignated as the Marine Raider Training Center, reincarnating the name used for the training facility that produced Marine Raiders in World War II and which was disbanded in 1944. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Scott Achtemeier.

part of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.

The eight-week training pipeline focused on developing individual skills before moving on to more challenging small unit tactics. The curriculum covered weapons employment, hand-to-hand combat, small boat operations, reconnaissance and patrolling and guerilla warfare. An aggressive hiking program was an

infamous staple of the Raider training program, featuring water restrictions to simulate battlefield conditions, a seven mile per hour target movement pace and intense hand-to-hand combat training and obstacle courses following a 42-mile hike conducted in a time limit of 15 hours. Key Raider leaders and MRTC instructors openly highlighted that the primary requirements for Marine Raiders were mental determination and physical stamina. These traits are found in the reincarnated Marine Raider Training Center today.

“[Historical accounts] also mention in several places the tremendous mental determination that was required to be a Raider,” said Maj. Gen. Carl E. Mundy III, MARSOC’s commander. “I mention that because there is no one that has gone through any portion of the Marine Raider Training Center that would call that unfamiliar. That sounds very familiar to what our own [Individual Training Course] does even to this day. There’s a common thread to where the Marine Raider Training Center has been in the past.”

The Marine Raider Training Center continues to be responsible for the creation, training and development of the Raiders’ core competencies. The instructor cadre play a critical role in MARSOC’s mission to man and train capable special operations forces. This starts in the quality control they provide in assessment and selection of potential Raiders. They train and educate them in basic and advanced special operations skills and continue to refine Raiders’ capabilities with follow-on training throughout their careers.

“The lifeblood of any organization is the people in it – it’s the first SOF Truth,” said Mundy. “It’s the human capital that we then provide to those Raider formations that go down range to conduct complex and challenging missions abroad.”

The Marine Raider Training Center’s reputation for competency, professionalism and proficiency has resulted in enhanced interoperability and training opportunities for sister service SOF and the conventional Marine Corps.

Mundy voiced his confidence that like the center of

learning and readiness that came before it, the Marine Raider Training Center will continue to serve as a training and proving ground for concepts that will allow Marine Raiders to excel in any climate and place.

“Any professional organization needs a place where you can imbue Marines undergoing the training with the characteristics, the attributes, the culture, the ethos that really lie

behind what it means to be a Marine Raider. That’s what the Marine Raider Training Center does for us.”

The lifeblood of any organization is the people in it – it’s the first SOF Truth. It’s the human capital that we then provide to those Raider formations that go down range to conduct complex and challenging missions abroad.

— Maj. Gen. Carl E. Mundy III



Col. Brett Bourne, commanding officer, Marine Raider Training Center, with Master Gunnery Sgt. Jerome Root, MRTC senior enlisted advisor, uncased the new MRTC colors during a redesignation ceremony at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 21. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Scott Achtemeier.



An IV-solution bag attached by a metal plate is carried by a Joint Tactical Aerial Resupply Vehicle for transport from a simulated forward operating base to a Marine special operations company in the field at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., July 7. The JTARV, which is in the developmental phase, is a lightweight autonomous vehicle that provides an aerial resupply capability for immediate support to operational units. It was being tested as a resupply platform for machine-gun sustainment training with a cargo unmanned logistics system during a tactical readiness exercise. Photo by U.S. Sgt. Salvador R. Moreno.

Cargo-ULS takes flight with 1st MRSB

*By Sgt. Salvador R. Moreno
MARSOC Public Affairs*

Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command's 1st Marine Raider Support Battalion conducted cargo unmanned logistics system testing in conjunction with machine-gun sustainment training and the unit's tactical readiness exercise aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., July 6-11.

The training was designed to demonstrate the C-ULS' capability to provide medical resupply by a forward unit. The support battalion tested Joint Tactical

Aerial Resupply Vehicle, which is in the developmental phase, it is a lightweight autonomous vehicle which provides an aerial resupply capability for immediate support to operational units.

MARSOC selected 1st Marine Raider Support Battalion as its lead for C-ULS experimentations and is collaborating with Deputy Commandant Installations & Logistics, MARSOC's 1st Marine Raider Battalion, and the U.S. Army's Research and Development Command for the field tests.

The JTARV 10 and 50 platforms were field tested with multiple training events during the week with a

culminating experiment supporting 1st MRSB's TRX II and a Marine special operations company at Case Springs, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton.

The battalion's goal was to find out how a C-ULS could be used to provide immediate autonomous resupply to a Marine special

operations team. The experiments ranged from how to conduct inspections of the system, to rigging of planned cargo, and ensuring that the projected weights and balance matched the specified weight and balance needed to successfully maintain flight and distance. The culminating event incorporated the week's research with the C-ULS by having it deliver medical supplies during night and day conditions to a compound approximately two kilometers away. The C-ULS was tested on its range of flight, altitude, load-bearing abilities, speed of travel and other various categories.

"The more we experiment with emerging C-ULS technologies, the better informed our understanding of what the technology might eventually do for us will be," said Lt. Col. Richard M. Martin, the battalion commanding officer.

The feedback from the operational perspective of the MSOC will be used to further advance the development of the C-ULS to meet the needs of MARSOC.

"We believe autonomous resupply capability will be something that will give Marine special operations forces a distinct advantage on the battlefield," said Martin. "Both current and anticipated operating environments in which MARSOF are deployed include a number of logistics sustainment challenges, from host nation infrastructure shortfalls to enemy forces or other threats denying critical terrain."

The broad range of operations that the C-ULS has the potential to be used in could possibly save lives and expedite mission-essential needs.

According to Martin, one of the prevailing attractions to an unmanned system is putting troops and people out of harm's way. By transporting cargo via airlift rather than a convoy limits the warfighter's risk of roadside improvised explosive devices, hostile fire

and the lengthy time of resupply. To help mitigate risks, MARSOC is looking into the scalability, flexibility and responsiveness of the technology, and are continuing to examine C-ULS capabilities for their utility in overcoming sustainment challenges inherent in the austere deployed environments in which MARSOF find

themselves.

"Those are the sorts of things that are being examined when we put emerging C-ULS technology to the test during our experiments," said Martin. "UAS platforms, particularly logistics variants, present the potential to overcome those challenges more predictably and ensure that we're able to get our forces the support they need."

We believe autonomous resupply capability will be something that will give Marine Special Operations Forces a distinct advantage on the battlefield.

— Lt. Col. Richard M. Martin



A UAV pilot with 1st Marine Raider Support Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, preps the Joint Tactical Aerial Resupply Vehicle for transport from a simulated forward operating base to a Marine Special Operations Company in the field at Camp Pendleton, Calif., July 7. Photo by Sgt. Salvador R. Moreno.



Sgt. 1st Class Dawn Page celebrates her victory in the 100 meter race during the 2017 Warrior Games July 2, in Chicago, Ill. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

Sharing a ray of sunshine several thousand miles apart

By Michael Bottoms

USSOCOM Office of Communication

Energetic and possessing a brilliant, electric smile, Sgt. 1st Class Dawn Page and a civil affair Soldier has had a remarkable Warrior Games. Page gold medaled the 100, 200 and 400-meter races.

Her journey to the games has not been easy though.

Deployed to Jordan in June of 2015, Page went for a group three-mile recreational hike. They came upon a cliff with a waterfall and she slipped and fell into a cave behind the waterfall, breaking her left arm and dislocating her shoulder.

And no one saw her fall.

“On the day I fell, I was with a Marine and he went to the right so I decided to go the other way,” Page said. “I stepped on what I thought was a rock, but in

retrospect was a reflection from the pool and I fell. There is no way they would have found me, even though they were looking for me, because I was right below their feet, with a current of water and a waterfall in between.”

Badly hurt and disoriented, she wasn’t sure she could make it out. She struggled for two hours praying for God’s help.

“I didn’t think I could get out of there, that hole,” she said. “When I was down there, afraid, I prayed to God. It was so dark in there, and I prayed to God for a sign. Suddenly, I got this brief ray of sunlight that shone through the cave in the direction where I came from. I decided to go that way, and I was either going to get out or die trying.”

Page struggled for two hours and finally managed to crawl to safety. She was found and taken to the hospital. While there, Page finally picked up her cellphone and

found a text message from her future wife, U.S. Army Sgt. Dana Childress-Page. The text, and the time stamp, shocked her.

“I saw this text from Dana and it was sunshines, emoji sunshines, and it came through at the exact moment while I was hurt and struggling to get out of that cave,” Dawn said. “Well I knew right then when I would get home Dana and I were going to get married.”

“I had a sinking feeling something was wrong with her. That’s what motivated me to send the sunshines,” Dana said. “She said I saved her life that day.”

Dawn returned to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and had surgery to repair her shoulder. Her physical wounds would heal, but she began to suffer from post-traumatic stress.

Inspired by the rescue efforts and images of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, Dawn decided to join the Army.

“Once I saw people being rescued from their houses in helicopters, I said that’s what I wanted to do,” Dawn said.

Dawn enlisted in April 2006, deployed to Iraq in 2007 for 15 months.

“I saw a lot of wounded, a lot of blood, hurt Iraqi kids,” Page said “I had a tough time dealing with it. Even though we were in a medical unit, we didn’t get much help dealing with what we saw afterwards.

“My next deployment was to Afghanistan. I helped the Afghani women, and I was the only woman dealing with all them. It was a really tough task.”

Dawn’s wife watched her struggle with PTS. “She puts things away mentally, very compartmentalized,” Dana said. “I see when she has PTS memories. She just gets quiet.”

Post-surgery, Dawn signed up for U.S. Special Operations Command’s Care Coalition Wounded Warriors program for her PTS and physical issues. Dana has too. She has injured both hips and her left shoulder in training and she plans to compete in next year’s Warrior Games.

“Dana and I are completely different which works well for our marriage,” said Dawn. “I tend to hide my emotions and Dana knows when I do and she brings me out of it.”

Through the Care Coalition’s adaptive sports program Dawn has found people she can relate to and a kindred spirit.

“I didn’t want people to know I was suffering. I tried

to hide it. I saw a flyer about the Care Coalition’s adaptive sports program,” she said. “I thought I would give it a try and what a blessing it has been. I’ve met people who have had harder journeys than I and it really has allowed me to open up.

“The Care Coalition is all about getting people healthy again, and if possible, returning to active duty,” she said.

This is Dawn’s first Warrior Games and she competed in track, sitting volleyball, wheelchair basketball, shooting and cycling. Next year, Dana plans to compete and Dawn plans on being her biggest cheerleader.

“Dana has had two hip surgeries and will have a shoulder surgery,” Dawn said. “She will be competing next year and I will take a back seat and just cheer her on.”

Sharing that ray of light still inspires the couple. “It still gives me chills,” Dawn said.



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Dawn Page receives the gold medal in the 400-meter race during the 2017 Warrior Games July 2, in Chicago, Ill. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

Archers match arrow for arrow, forcing shootout at Warrior Games

By Shannon Collins
DoD News

Archers matched arrow for arrow, forcing a shootout in two medal rounds during the 2017 Department of Defense Warrior Games in Chicago, Ill., July 3.

About 265 wounded, ill and injured service members and veterans representing teams from the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force, U.S. Special Operations Command, United Kingdom and the Australian Defense Force competed through July 8, in shooting, archery, cycling, track and field, swimming, sitting volleyball and wheelchair basketball.

The tightest competition was between two USSOCOM competitors, Sgt. 1st Class Rick Devericks and medically retired Sgt. 1st Class Josh Lindstrom in the compound bow gold and silver medal round. By the third round, Lindstrom had a perfect score of 90; Deverick had an 89. During the last round, Deverick shot three bull's-eyes and Lindstrom shot his first nonbull's-eye of the medal round, forcing them into a shootoff with a 119 tie. Lindstrom went on to win the gold by a millimeter difference.

"They were incredible," USSOCOM coach Kim Rigney said. "They worked so hard for the last six months to a year with their own equipment, putting time in, money in, and hours behind a bow. It's just incredible to see it come to fruition and pan out. They were point for point; they were tied for the gold medal even after the regulation rounds and had to shoot closest to the center. It was a millimeter difference for gold and silver. It was record breaking for SOCOM, gold and silver medals in archery, what a great day. I couldn't ask for more."

Lindstrom's wife, Christine, and children, said they were very proud of him.

"He's been working so hard. He's been working for almost a year, shooting almost daily, practicing in the sun and the rain, just putting everything he had in this. I'm just so proud that he competed and won the gold medal," Christine said. "His competition was pretty stiff. I'm so proud of him. I'm glad we brought our kids and



Retired U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Josh Lindstrom checks his target during the 2017 Warrior Games in Chicago, Ill., July 3. Lindstrom would win the gold medal in the compound bow. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

his parents. I'm glad the whole family can be here for this really incredible experience. I'm just beside myself. I'm so proud of him."

Lindstrom said he's humbled and grateful to be a part of an event like the Warrior Games because he feels like he's part of the military again and training gives him something he can teach his children.

"I'm humbled and grateful to get that same feeling just before you step off the ramp into the dark or get off the helicopter onto the objective. You don't realize how much you miss the extreme performance when you leave the military," the former Green Beret said. He said it's jarring to go from a life of full combat night jumps followed by a 25-mile ruck march, to days full of medical appointments.

"I'm grateful for that opportunity to feel that competition again, to feel that drive to do something great," he said. Lindstrom missed the games last year because of an injury and had to learn to shoot left-handed. His goal is to start competing against able bodied competitors in archery competitions, though he will be competing in the Invictus Games in September.

Sailor honors fallen comrades with gold medal wins at Warrior Games

By Shannon Collins
DoD News

After joining the Navy 20 years ago and attending basic training at nearby Naval Station Great Lakes, Lt. Cmdr. Ramesh Haytasingh is excited to end his military career in Chicago, Ill., as he competes in the 2017 Department of Defense Warrior Games June 30 - July 8.

Haytasingh earned gold medals in the seated shot put, discus, air rifle tomorrow and in swimming.

During last year's games at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, Haytasingh's U.S. Special Operations team voted to give him the "Heart of the Team" award because he can't pass an athlete, family member or coach without smiling, giving them a hug and providing support.

"He's always thinking of everybody else and cheering them on and encouraging them," Kathy Bottrell said. "I'm at a loss to describe him. He's a great human being."

Bottrell said Haytasingh is like an adopted son. He flew to Germany to be with her son after he was injured in an improvised explosive device blast in Afghanistan and stayed with him until he recovered at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

"I love Ramesh like my own son," Michael Bottrell said. "He's one of my biggest heroes. He's like a hug parade. He's always been inspiring."

Haytasingh is a training officer with USSOCOM at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. He served as a special operations explosive ordnance disposal technician during five deployments -- to Afghanistan from 2005 to 2012 and in Iraq from 2003 to 2011. He would help disarm roadside bombs for special operations forces.

At one point, he was attached to the Navy's SEAL Team 6. "It was the most humbling experience, supporting the members of the SEAL Team 6 community," he said. "They were some of the most professional sailors I've ever had the opportunity to work with."

A 2013 surfing accident injured his neck and spinal cord and caused a traumatic brain injury. He lost his voice for two years.

"I went through significant lost and dark times, but

while I was recovering, the community and brothers in my community reached out," Haytasingh said. "And as I slowly attended, I started speaking for the first time after two and a half years. Life started changing for me with adaptive sports. Adaptive sports and being around brothers and sisters -- it's such a life-altering and amazing blessing. I can't express that enough."

For Haytasingh, participating in the DoD Warrior Games isn't about earning the medals, but rather is about honoring his fallen brothers. "I wanted to compete in everything, but I had to choose my three favorite sports: air rifle, swimming and seated shot put and discus," he said. "This is my last hoorah to my brothers I've lost over the last 20 years. I have over 33 that I've lost. I don't say 'friends.' I don't say 'acquaintances.' I say 'brothers.'"

Haytasingh said that if he hadn't been limited to three sports, he would have competed until every drop of sweat, blood and tears was out of his body. "I'm still going to give it 110 percent," he added, "because that's all the members here from the military branches know how to do. I'm excited to be here. It's my last year in the military. ... Great Lakes is no more than 45 minutes away, so it's very special to me."



Lt. Cmdr. Ramesh Haytasingh cheers on his competitor after finishing in first place in the 50-meter swim during the 2017 Warrior Games July 8, in Chicago, Ill. Photo by Michael Bottoms.



2017 Warrior Games in photos

Photo essay by Michael Bottoms

Technical Sgt. Curtis Krenzke finishes second in the 200-meter race July 2, at the 2017 Warrior Games in Chicago, Ill. The Warrior Games were established in 2010 as a way to enhance the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded warriors and to expose them to adaptive sports.



(Left) Retired Sgt. 1st Class Josh Lindstrom takes part in the shot put competition July 5, during the 2017 Warrior Games in Chicago Ill.

(Above) Team USSOCOM and the U.S. Marine Corps play their opening basketball game June 30, during the 2017 Warrior Games in Chicago, Ill.



(Above) Lt. Cmdr. Ramesh Haytasingh competes during the prone air rifle competition July 7, during the 2017 Warrior Games in Chicago, Ill. Haytasingh would win the bronze medal in the prone competition and the gold medal in the standing air rifle competition.



(Top right) Gunnery Sgt. Leticia Vega takes part in the discus competition July 5, during the 2017 Warrior Games in Chicago Ill.

(Right) Team SOCOM pose for a picture with U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Joseph Osterman, (far right) deputy commander USSOCOM, July 1, at the opening ceremony for the 2017 Warrior Games on Soldier Field in Chicago, Ill.



(Bottom) Sgt. 1st Class Brant Ireland starts his recumbent cycling race July 6, during their 2017 Warrior Games in Chicago, Ill. Ireland would win the gold medal.





The Fulton Skyhook: Seems like fiction but was actual fact

By Richard Green

USSOCOM History & Research Office

Maybe you remember the scene in John Wayne's 1968 movie, "The Green Berets." Special Forces Soldiers infiltrate an enemy headquarters, abduct a North Vietnamese general, and spirit him away into the night. Rather than transport the uncooperative prisoner all the way back to friendly lines, they bundle him into a large padded suit attached by a line to a large balloon. The balloon is raised several hundred feet into the air and, out of nowhere, a C-130 transport appears with a large v-shaped projection attached to its nose. The plane swoops down and snags the line with the nose device, pulling the prisoner into the air, where he trails behind the plane as the aircrew winches him onto the back cargo ramp.

It seems like a fictional invention for a fictional movie, but the Fulton Skyhook Aerial Retrieval System was very real. Invented by Robert Fulton, the Skyhook enabled a fixed-wing aircraft to pick up one or two people or a package from the ground exactly as seen in the John Wayne film. The following military aircraft were equipped with the Fulton system with the years used to pick up personnel shown in parenthesis: the Navy P2V (1958-1962), a contract B-17G (1962), the Army CV-2 Caribou (1962-1966), the Navy S2 Tracker (1963-66), the Air Force C-123 Provider (1964), and several versions of the C-130 Hercules, including the Special Operations C-130E(I) (1966-1982) that was later re-designated the MC-130E in 1976. The Fulton system on the C-130 was known as the surface-to-air-recovery system. While the conduct of live pickups for training ended in 1982, some MC-130s retained their STAR capability for another 15 years until the equipment was removed in 1997.

The Fulton Skyhook was first tested with a live person in August 1958, when U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Levy Wesley Woods was picked up by a Navy P2V aircraft at Quantico, Virginia. While no complete list exists of the



A U.S. Navy S2 tracker testing the Fulton Skyhook Aerial Retrieval System. Courtesy photo.

men picked up, the incomplete records indicate there may have been roughly 180 live pickups. They include all four branches of the U.S. military, a special forces colonel from Thailand, and two unnamed Vietnamese. There are two confirmed casualties from the Fulton Skyhook, both due to equipment failure. The first was an Underwater Demolition Team-22 frogman in 1964 and the second a 10th Special Forces Group soldier in 1982.

Despite the Fulton Skyhook/STAR system being available on military aircraft for 39 years, from 1958-1997, there are only two confirmed operational pickups of personnel, both of which occurred during Operation Cold Feet in 1962, the parachute insertion of two military scientists onto an ice floe in the Arctic to examine an abandoned Soviet research station. A contract B-17G equipped with the Fulton Skyhook was later used to retrieve the two men off the ice.

There were attempts to employ the Fulton Skyhook/STAR system during the Vietnam War. Special Operations C-130E(I) aircraft were deployed to Southeast Asia in the fall of 1966 and one of their assigned missions

was to use their STAR system to recover downed aircrew and agents from inside North Vietnam. The threat to the aircraft over North Vietnam required the special operations crews to make adjustments to their procedures. First, their STAR training up to that point had been during daylight, and missions in North Vietnam would have to be conducted under cover of darkness. There were, however, only a few Fulton lift-lines with strobes for night pickups available in Vietnam, so the crews could not immediately practice night pickups. One crew chose not to wait and the two pilots, U.S. Air Force pilots Maj. Sam Rose and Capt. Doug Forsythe, flew practice runs at night but broke off their approach at the last minute to avoid contacting the strobe lit lift-line. This enabled both pilots to make multiple runs without damaging the lift-line. Following this training both pilots were confident they could conduct a night STAR recovery.

The second problem was the enemy threat in North Vietnam would not allow a C-130E(I) to fly over an area, drop the Fulton kit, and then fly back over the same location 20 minutes later to conduct a STAR pickup. An alternate means of delivering the Fulton kit was needed so the C-130E(I) would have to fly over the area only once, during the pickup. The C-130E(I) loadmasters, led by Tech. Sgt. Carl Legrand and the Fulton Company technical representative in Vietnam, Byron Fair, tackled this problem and developed a method of packing the Fulton kit into a high-speed container to be dropped by an Air Force F-4 Phantom.

The first opportunity to employ the STAR system to recover a downed pilot in North Vietnam occurred in May 1967, before the additional night ropes had arrived and the C-130E(I) crews could conduct training night pickups. An A-6 Intruder had been shot down and the pilot ejected over an area beyond the range of search and rescue helicopters. Rose and Forsythe, confident they could do the night STAR pickup, volunteered for the mission. The F-4 pilot who had flown a practice drop of the high-speed container was also available. The mission was approved and the F-4 dropped the Fulton kit to the downed pilot. Rose and Forsythe started their C-130E(I) flight into North Vietnam to pick up the pilot but were told to abort the mission because the pilot was being pursued by enemy forces.

There were other attempts to operationally employ the STAR system during the Vietnam conflict but none were successful. The requirement to air drop the Fulton kit to the downed pilot and then for the man to retrieve the kit and set it up for recovery, including a large balloon

floating high overhead, was too difficult to accomplish in close proximity to enemy forces.

While the Fulton Skyhook/STAR may have had limited application during hot combat situations, it was still a viable means of extraction under the right circumstances. Thus in the European theater it became a part of the Flintlock Exercise, and from 1979-1982 live pickups of personnel were conducted. These live pickups for training ended in April 1982, when a failed pickup led to the death of a soldier.

In the late 1980s there was an effort to increase the lift capacity of the STAR system on the MC-130 so that it could lift 1,500 pounds, the equivalent of six 250-pound men. While testing with sandbags and dummy loads was successful, the modification to the system was not brought on line. In 1997, the STAR equipment was removed from the remaining MC-130Es, and the military use of the Fulton Skyhook / STAR system ended.



A successful use Fulton Skyhook Aerial Retrieval System in Thailand, Oct. 31, 1970. Courtesy photo.





U.S. Marine Corps
Staff Sgt. Robert H. Cox
2d Marine Raider Battalion



U.S. Marine Corps
Sgt. Chad E. Jenson
2d Marine Raider Battalion



U.S. Marine Corps
Staff Sgt. William J. Kundrat
2d Marine Raider Battalion



U.S. Marine Corps
Sgt. Talon R. Leach
2d Marine Raider Battalion



U.S. Navy
Petty Officer 1st Class Ryan M. Lohrey
2d Marine Raider Battalion



U.S. Marine Corps
Sgt. Joseph J. Murray
2d Marine Raider Battalion



U.S. Marine Corps
Sgt. Dietrich A. Schmieman
2d Marine Raider Battalion

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



Retired Sgt. 1st Class Howie Sanborn competes and wins the gold medal in the 1500-meter wheelchair race at the 2017 Warrior Games in Chicago, Ill., July 2. The Warrior Games were established in 2010 as a way to enhance the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded warriors and to expose them to adaptive sports. Photo by Michael Bottoms.