



TIP OF THE SPEAR



**353RD SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUP
COMPLETES EXERCISE TEAK NET IN NEW ZEALAND**

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



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



**Never leave a fallen comrade:
Green Beret earns Silver Star ... 14**

Tip of the Spear

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(Cover) A 1st Special Operations Squadron loadmaster sits on the back of an MC-130H Combat Talon II and watches a Royal New Zealand Air Force C-130 Hercules June 23. Members from the 353rd Special Operations Group participated in Exercise Teak Net June 12 through June 30 in Whenuapai, New Zealand. During the exercise, members from both the New Zealand Defense Force and U.S. Air Force worked together to conduct personnel and equipment air drops together while exchanging new techniques. Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Kristine Dreyer.

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SOF AROUND THE WORLD - GERMANY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – EUROPE

An Army National Guard Helicopter lands at Illersheim Army Airfield, Germany July 11. The UH-60L Blackhawk is one of four helicopters in a task force made up of Soldiers and aircraft from the Colorado, Utah and Kansas Army National Guard that will be supporting Special Operations Command - Europe's components for the next few months. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Lorraine Whetstone.



Multi-state ARNG helicopters enable Special Ops in Europe

*By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Lorraine Whetstone
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe*

On July 11 a helicopter task force comprised of four UH-60L Black Hawks and Soldiers from the Colorado, Utah and Kansas Army National Guard arrived in Illesheim, Germany to support Special Operations Command - Europe's components during training and exercises throughout Europe for the next few months.

The mission gives National Guard Soldiers an opportunity to enhance their unit deployment readiness that would generally take years to materialize while augmenting the training of U.S. and partner nation special operations forces for a few short months.

"Moving from a good idea around a water cooler to actually executing this idea gives the Soldiers an opportunity to focus on the training objectives of their customers (United States Army Europe, 12th Combat Aviation Brigade and Special Operations Command Europe)," said Lt. Col Anthony D. Somogyi, the task force commander and Colorado ARNG member from Palisade, Colorado.

Since September 2001, the ARNG has deployed in support of combat operations alongside the active component, which provided Soldiers opportunities to build capabilities and relationships with the active components.

"This is a great mission for ARNG Aviation because we find ourselves being asked to work with Special Forces [in global contingency operations] quite a bit and this is another way we can work with them and figure out how to support them," said Somogyi.

As a direct support aviation task unit, the helicopter task force will conduct multi-functional aviation support to SOCEUR by providing air movement, static and military freefall support, and fast-rope insertion and



An Army National Guard Helicopter Taskforce Blackhawk crew chief helps secure his UH-60L at Illesheim Airfield, Germany July 11. The task force is comprised of four UH-60L Black Hawks and Soldiers from the Colorado, Utah and Kansas Army National Guard. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Lorraine Whetstone.

extraction system capability.

Black hawk pilot Chief Warrant Officer 2 Patrick Cavanagh, a Colorado ARNG member and Denver native, said he is looking forward to working with the forces here in Germany and increasing his proficiency as a pilot. Cavanagh has been a pilot in the Guard for 11 years.

This is the first phase of what is hoped to be an enduring mission set, said Somogyi. This helicopter task force is the "proof of concept" and scheduled to rotate back to the U.S. at the beginning of October. If approved, the aircraft will remain in theater to allow follow-on forces from the Army National Guard to gain experience and help build readiness on longer rotations.

"As well as having built the helicopter task force from the ground up, they also plan to build leadership at all levels by developing NATO interoperability and expertise," Somogyi said. "By the end, this first wave of guard Soldiers should prove their value and ability to support SOCEUR for future missions in the European Command Area of Responsibility."

SOF AROUND THE WORLD - NEW ZEALAND
353RD SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUP



Aircrew members from the U.S. Air Force work with Royal New Zealand Air Force in a personnel recovery exercise June 23, near Royal New Zealand Air Force Base Auckland. Members from the 353rd Special Operations Group participated in Exercise Teak Net June 12 through 30 in Whenuapai, New Zealand. Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Kristine Dryer.

353rd Special Operations Group completes Exercise Teak Net 16-1

*By U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Kristine Dryer
353rd SOG Public Affairs*

“This year is the third year in a row where the 353rd Special Operations Group has come to New Zealand,” said Maj. Christopher Izell, Exercise Teak Net mission commander. “Every year we come to not only learn and grow with our New Zealand counterparts, but also build upon the friendships established over the years.”

During the 2-week exercise, MC-130H Combat Talon II aircrews from the 1st Special Operations

Squadron worked with their counterparts from the No. 40 Squadron, Royal New Zealand Air Force while conducting airdrops, formation low level flying and night vision training to improve interoperability between the two countries’ military.

“Every time we come to New Zealand we leave with new techniques and procedures,” said Master Sgt. Ryan Gossen, 1st Special Operations Squadron loadmaster. “It really is interesting to see how New Zealand loadmasters work. We are very similar, but also have a few different approaches to conducting our missions. Every year we continue to share ideas and really benefit from this exchange.”



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Tremel, a 353rd Special Operations Support Squadron Independent Duty Medical Technician, goes over patient monitoring and evaluation techniques with Royal New Zealand Air Force medics during casualty evacuation training on board an MC-130H Combat Talon II June 20. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Kristine Dryer.

In addition to flying, both U.S. and New Zealand medical personnel trained side by side on casualty evacuation procedures while flying on an MC-130H.

“This was very valuable training,” said Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Tremel, 353rd Special Operations Support Squadron. “I enjoyed working together and learning about each country’s capability. The time we spend here will definitely enhance future combined medical operations.”

Learning to survive in different environments is also important, so U.S. and New Zealand Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape specialists came together to plan a personnel recovery exercise. Groups from the U.S. Air Force and the Royal New Zealand Air Force practiced their evasion skills as they navigated their way through the New Zealand forest.

“It is important for us to learn from each other. In this personnel recovery exercise we saw just that. While we had both U.S. and New Zealand evaders on the ground, they started off as two separate teams evading in one group,” said Staff Sgt. Tyler Wise, 353rd Special Operations Support Squadron. “But as the exercise went on they became one team and

started sharing tactical-level information on evading, radio procedures, navigation and local flora and fauna. Overall, the learning outcome was great and we were able to solidify the already existing relationships with our New Zealand SERE counterparts.”

While the mission was completed over the course of the nearly three week exercise, lasting friendships were also created or cemented demonstrating the importance of joint and combined exercises.

“Unfortunately this is my last exercise in New Zealand,” said Gossen. “I am definitely going to miss the interaction we have with our New Zealand counterparts, but I know that the friendships made here will stay with me even after I leave the Pacific AOR.”



A 1st Special Operations Squadron pilot flies an MC-130H Combat Talon II and puts eyes on a Royal New Zealand Air Force C-130 Hercules during a dissimilar formation low level flight June 23, in Exercise Teak Net June held in Whenuapai, New Zealand. During the exercise, members from both the New Zealand Defense Force and U.S. Air Force worked together to conduct personnel and equipment air drops together while exchanging new techniques. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Kristine Dryer.

Rising above: USSOCOM team rocks the 2016 DoD Warrior Games

*By U.S. Army Sgt. Christopher Osburn
DOD Warrior Games Public Affairs*

As the two weeks of the Warrior Games came to a close June 22, the final game for sitting volleyball marked the grand finale.

In an exciting finish, the United States Special Operations Command sitting volleyball team faced off against the U.S. Air Force team. Though USSOCOM was unable to earn the gold medal, they came away with the silver. The game was full of emotion and determination from both sides. The match was both a competitive spectacle and a battle of wills. The U.S. Air Force team eventually was able to claim victory.

The games up until the finale were all hard fought. All athletes walked away with their heads held high.

USSOCOM exceeded not only the crowd's expectations but also their own. Overall, the USSOCOM team earned dozens of team and individual medals, a most impressive feat.

U.S. Army Veteran Sergeant 1st Class Fred Lewis was one of the key members of the volleyball team.

"After the initial victory, we woke up and realized that we actually had some talent, and rode that high till the very end," said Lewis.

The most rewarding aspect of the Warrior Games was the building of closeness and camaraderie. This was furthermore expressed by how well the USSOCOM Care Coalition had benefited the entire team. Something that none of the athletes had expected.

Lewis also encouraged other active and veteran wounded warriors to compete in the games or any other such events in the future.

"We (USSOCOM operators), as a population, tend



Navy veteran Lt. Ramesh Haytasingh of the Special Operations Command team accepts the Heart of the Team Award for the USSOCOM team from television and movie personality Jon Stewart during the 2016 Department of Defense Warrior Games closing ceremonies at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York June 21. Photo by E.J. Hersom.

to hide," said Lewis. "We should be getting involved to show other active-duty guys and veterans with disabilities that there is a lot more we can do than we think we can."

It is not only the athletes that are impacted by events like the Warrior Games, everyone involved is also impacted. This includes family members, volunteers, and anyone who worked at the games. It truly makes someone readjust his or her view on what makes a hero, and what it means to be a warrior.

From enabler to competitor: One story from the 2016 Warrior Games

*By U.S. Army Sgt. William J. Taylor
DOD Warrior Games Public Affairs*

Constant change is a normal fact of life for U.S. service members. Whether from deployments, a cross-country change of assignment or the transition to civilian life, service members face many unexpected twists and turns. For U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Mark Shrewsbury with U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), life has changed dramatically and unexpectedly in the past two years.

Shrewsbury was part of the USSOCOM 2015 Warrior Games support staff last year as a broadcast journalist; sharing the stories of many of the competitors he now calls teammates.

In June 2014, he was diagnosed with metastatic malignant melanoma. In January 2015, a few months before the Warrior Games, he found out that he had a brain tumor.

"The diagnosis hit me and my family pretty hard," said Shrewsbury. "At the time I was having to drive from my home in Panama City to Tampa for treatment, which is a six-hour drive."

Shrewsbury said he was in a bind with the drive until he was put into contact with Master Sgt. Johnny Moses, who was one of the Care Coalition representatives for USSOCOM.

"He was instrumental in getting my assignment to MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa," said Shrewsbury.

After transferring to MacDill AFB, Shrewsbury went through brain surgery at Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Florida and is now currently in remission.

He stated that being part of the Warrior Games support staff last year helped him realize all that the USSOCOM Care Coalition has to offer.

"Last year, I covered the Warrior Games as a public affairs broadcaster for USSOCOM, and it gave me the ability to have close coordination with the Care Coalition," said Shrewsbury. "This year I was honored to be asked to participate."

The USSOCOM Care Coalition also helped Shrewsbury prepare for the competition by providing him with a recumbent bike, as well as a compound bow to practice with

at home.

This year, Shrewsbury will compete in sitting volleyball, archery, cycling and swimming during the Warrior Games.

He said that the USSOCOM team has been less of a team and more like a family.

"They take care of you," said Shrewsbury. "You are not just a Soldier, you are a family member. It is a unique perspective, and to be welcomed like they have welcomed me has just been great. It helps me still be a part of the team.

A lot of the time, I have been down and out because of my treatment and getting to know them and getting advice for how they made it through rough times has helped," Shrewsbury said.

Shrewsbury recalled how working last year's Warrior Games was an enlightening experience.

"It is amazing how life changes," said Shrewsbury. "Last year I was interviewing warriors, and this year I am a warrior being interviewed."



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Mark Shrewsbury, U.S. Special Operations Command, cycles past spectators during the recumbent bike event in the 2016 Department of Defense Warrior Games at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, June 18. The DoD Warrior Games is an adaptive sports competition for wounded, ill and injured service members and veterans. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Tynisha Daniel.

Special Forces athlete uses Warrior Games for new challenges

By Shannon Collins
 DOD Warrior Games Public Affairs

Camaraderie and fellowship has been the highlight of the 2016 Department of Defense Warrior Games at the U.S. Military Academy, New York, for medically retired Army Sgt. 1st Class Sualauvi Tuimalealiifano.

About 250 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 and United Kingdom armed forces are competing in shooting, archery, cycling, track and field, swimming, sitting volleyball and wheelchair basketball.

It was his first time racing in the wheelchair race, and he had limited practice in the special chair used for that type of racing.

"I was trying to get all the kinks out and learn the gears, but I'm excited about it," he said. "I'll just keep going from here and push to get it right."

Injury

Tuimalealiifano joined the Army and served for 13 years as a civil affairs specialist. "I joined because I really wanted to serve my country," he said. "I really loved what the country is all about and the history of how we became [what we are]."

He served in Iraq from 2003 to 2004 and in Afghanistan from 2006 to 2007. While at Firebase Cobra, a remote outpost in south-central Afghanistan, Tuimalealiifano dealt with regular mortar attacks and fought in fires. He said he's a jumpmaster and had been jumping out of airplanes for 13 years, so when he fell out of bed and hit a table trying to avoid a mortar attack, he didn't think too much of it at the time.

"We didn't know it at the time but I had fractured vertebrae from an area fire," he said. The fall had exacerbated it. "We just kept going on and about three months later, throughout my time there, it had just been very painful. They didn't know exactly what it was. I just kept going on with the pain, through the pain. They were short manned on the base, and I stayed."

"It was hard for the choppers to get in, and our supply route was damaged," he continued. "There was a flood, and it ruined the bridge, so we had to try and take back a lot of the checkpoints and routes. I stayed with my boys."



U.S. Special Operations Command veteran (right) Sualauvi Tuimalealiifano celebrates after the U.S. rugby team defeated Denmark to win the gold medal during the 2016 Invictus Games in Orlando, Florida, May 11. While competing in the 2016 Department of Defense Warrior Games at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York, Tuimalealiifano said adaptive sports have helped him bounce back from his injuries. Photo by Roger Wollenberg.

He said if he had known just how injured he was, he would have left, but that he stayed for his team, even though the pain became severe. His spinal injury led to paraplegia and he uses a wheelchair for mobility.

Warrior Games

Tuimalealiifano said training and competing in adaptive sports has been beneficial for him. "Adaptive sports have helped me do a lot of things," he added. "They've helped me progress. I got stronger, and that's what I'm doing still. I'm just getting stronger. It's been amazing."

This is his second Department of Defense Warrior Games, and he said he enjoys every minute of it.

"I love it, really, there are no words for it," he said. "I'm really excited to be part of the group and part of the event. The Warrior Games is very fulfilling for anybody, for any injury level, for any person to come out and still have something to look forward to. We come from an active lifestyle in the military. We always had a routine or an objective or mission. There was always something we were doing. Once we get out or we're injured, now we're dealing with our injury and trying to get back, and sometimes you miss the competition level of trying to get into the sports."

"This year's been great because not only have I been

competitive, but the camaraderie, meeting people -- I'm just really blessed to be part of the group and amongst the great men and women and a lot of great volunteers who help out," Tuimalealiifano said.

Tuimalealiifano said his family tries to come out and support him as much as they can, such as last year's DoD Warrior Games and at the Invictus Games last month in Orlando, Florida. His favorite sport is wheelchair rugby, he added, and he said it was an honor not only to represent the SOCOM team, but also to be part of Team USA.

"It was an amazing, awesome feeling I won't forget," he

said. "It was really good to represent the country as a whole. It was awesome being with the different nations with a great bunch of people."

Tuimalealiifano said he hopes to compete again at the Invictus Games and in other veteran competitions, and that he recommends the DoD Warrior Games to anyone considering trying out.

"Come out and check it out," he said. "There's a lot to offer for people with different injury levels, illnesses and injuries. There's a spot for anybody and everybody. Come be amongst the fellowship. It's a blessing."

Wounded warrior to warrior angel

By U.S. Army Sgt. Brandon Rizzo
DOD Warrior Games Public Affairs

"Winning is a byproduct," said Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Marr, a medically retired Special Forces combat engineer. "I always try to contribute and perform to the best of my abilities and by doing that, my hope is that it will inspire and encourage others to know that they can do the same."

Marr's journey toward becoming an inspiration to other wounded warriors began years ago when he suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) after receiving enemy 107mm rocket fire during a combat mission in Wardak Province, Afghanistan.

"I came back to and we were in a fight, so there wasn't really any time to think about it or talk about it," said Marr. "And it was just part of the job, so I didn't think much about it after that."

In addition to the rocket attack, Marr was continuously exposed to blast waves while performing his functions as a combat engineer.

"I was a breacher for our team. So, that means I put surgical explosive charges on denied points of entry," said Marr. "Being that my specialty was explosives, I was around countless explosions -- hundreds, if not thousands. Back then, we never made any correlation between head trauma and blast waves. It just wasn't a thing, nobody knew anything about it."

Eventually, the symptoms of his injury -- memory loss, vision issues, migraines, lost vocabulary, and depression -- led him to seek treatment for his TBI. During his journey, Marr says he crossed paths with a neuroendocrinologist who not only drastically helped improve his condition, but in doing so inspired him to try to help others with the same condition.

In March 2015, he created the Warrior Angels Foundation, an organization dedicated to raising funds for the



U.S. Army Veteran Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Marr of Argyle, Texas, practices throwing discus in preparation for competing in the 2016 DoD Warrior Games at the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, June 12. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Brandon L. Rizzo.

treatment for the condition of TBIs as opposed to simply treating the symptoms. To date, they've helped treat 120 combat veterans with TBIs and post-traumatic stress symptoms.

One year after starting the foundation, Marr received a phone call from U.S. Special Operations Command, asking him to participate in the DoD Warrior Games.

"I saw a great opportunity to train for something, to compete for something, but under the banner of hopefully challenging and inspiring others that are in the same or similar positions," said Marr.

"It feels good to be competing in the games, because two years ago I had a difficult time -- I was having double vision, balance issues ... I was in bad shape, so performing at a high level, doing a rotational spin and throwing anything would have been out of the question. So to go from that physical and mental state to now being able to do at a competitive level, it is fulfilling."

What it takes to field a team

*By Air Force Capt. Leslie Forshaw
DOD Warrior Games Public Affairs*

The saying, “It takes a village,” is more than just a catchphrase at the 2016 Warrior Games, held at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, June 15 - 21. The campus is teeming with family members, coaches, support staff, volunteers and medical personnel, all working hard to manage the athletes’ individual needs as well as the logistics of ensuring the wounded, ill and injured athletes are able to make it to their next event.

Heading up the intricate network of details for U.S. Special Operations Command’s (USSOCOM) Care Coalition and Military Adaptive Sports Program (MASP) is Army Lt. Col. Theresa Lewis, chief of plans, policy and operations, and Army Master Sgt. Pat Gilmore, the manager for MASP.

Team SOCOM is competing against the four U.S. military branches and athletes from the United Kingdom, for gold, silver and bronze medals in eight sports: archery, cycling, track and field, sitting volleyball, shooting, swimming, and wheelchair basketball.

The job of the Care Coalition started long ago with getting the information out about SOCOM’s Warrior Care Program for those wounded, ill or injured service members and their families.

“From time of recovery the athlete goes into rehabilitation. This is where he or she gets involved with the MASP,” said Lewis. “Most are reintegrated back into service, but those who cannot continue to serve are transitioned to the Veterans Administration where they continue to receive some supportive service through the Care Coalition.”

Army Col. Cary Harbaugh, Director of USSOCOM’s Care Coalition Warrior Care Program, is also front and center during the games.

“The adaptive sports program, even though a small



Team USSOCOM coach, U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Lita Bowling directs the team during sitting volleyball practice during the 2016 Department of Defense Warrior Games at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, June 20. The DoD Warrior Games is an adaptive sports competition for wounded, ill and injured service members and Veterans. Athletes representing teams from the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Special Operations Command and the United Kingdom Armed Forces compete in track, field, archery, cycling, shooting, swimming, sitting volleyball, and wheelchair basketball starting June 15. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. William Taylor.

part of the overarching care of the Care Coalition, is really important,” said Harbaugh. “The Care Coalition’s primary goal is for the service member to return to duty. We are using adaptive sports for rehabilitation from the onset.”

Once the athlete is ready and has gone through the week-long annual selection competition held each February, training then starts for the June Warrior Games. The athletes are handed over to Gilmore, Lewis and their team to get them ready to compete.

Athletes attend two training camps before the games and are issued the gear necessary for the sport in which they will compete. During the training camps, expert coaches are on-hand for the athletes.

Competing in the 2016 Warrior Games are 31 athletes from SOCOM’s Warrior Care Program and 25

dedicated Care Coalition adaptive sports staff.

These 25 people, comprised of personnel managers, equipment managers, medical staff, sports coordinators, operations and logistics coordinators other augmented staff such as public affairs, vehicle drivers and protocol specialists come in days prior to the start of the games.

“Some of the guys hauled in a 32-ft trailer packed nose-to-tail from USSOCOM’s headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida,” said Gilmore. “Then we unpack and set it all up about three days prior to the start of the games.”

Then they make sure the equipment, like basketball wheelchairs, are accounted for and checked to make sure it’s functioning before the events start, he said.

Another ‘hat’ the Care Coalition adaptive sports staff wears is that of a travel agent.

“About three months out from the games, we start coordinating all the hotel and travel reservations,” said Gilmore. “Due to the vast array of wounds, illnesses or injuries the athletes have, their unique needs can determine the type of hotel accommodations needed.”

Athletes still on active duty receive government funded orders from the military to participate. Expenses are provided by various benevolent groups. For the 2016 Warrior Games, the Wounded Warrior Project and Special Operations Forces Bionic Warrior Program Inc., are the benefactors for the athletes.

The ‘little’ details are just as important as the big ones; tables, chairs, Wi-Fi, computers, printers, office supplies, water, food, shirts for staff members are all set up and ready to go - down to purchasing sunscreen - is all a part of what it takes to set up.

“It’s all a part of taking care of our wounded warriors,” said Gilmore.

The medical component is critical to the care of the athletes. Most athletes need daily medication, have special needs or just require basic physical therapy. There are physical therapists on hand, medical doctors who can prescribe medication, nurses, medics and a clinic to nurse the bumps and bruises.

“Seeing the outcome and effect this program has on the service members’ recovery is what makes me want to do this - and to continue doing this,” said Lewis, who also serves as the medical lead for the Care Coalition adaptive sports staff.

Once the games officially start, it’s game-on. Cell phones, walkie-talkies and radios chirp nonstop, keeping the team in constant communication as shuttle

buses start transporting athletes, family members, and staff to and from the various sporting events. Massage therapists are on hand for athletes’ last-minute needs and medics are on scene at every event.

Each staff member is responsible for a different sport and the athletes and families who attend.

“They have to make sure all the athletes have what they need, when they need it, to include getting them to all the training sessions,” said Gilmore. “Not to mention the staff is responsible for the resources at the event, like water and food.”

At each event, family members, additional staff and leadership attend. It’s loud, cheerful, competitive, fun, inspirational and invigorating.

“It’s hard to describe unless you experience it,” said Gilmore. “To see these wounded members able to achieve what they thought was impossible is hard to put into words. That’s the whole thing with adaptive sports, it’s a vehicle to wellness. The sense of being on a team together, the social aspect of that, and the informal peer mentorship is invaluable.”

As the 2016 games draw to an end, the hard work of the Care Coalition continues on as they begin preparing for the 2017 Warrior Games in Chicago, Illinois.

“We literally have a wellness event next month. As soon as one game ends, we start planning the next,” said Lewis.

A wellness event brings participants together in order to integrate with fellow wounded warriors through peer to peer mentorship and relationship building using sports such as sailing, skiing, snowboarding, golf and water sports as a reconditioning vehicle, said Gilmore.

“It’s a lot of work, but it’s awesome to see the growth of these participants and help in getting them to a better place,” Gilmore said. “We are a family here. We get to know the family, their kids, and the details of each and every injury or illness.”

From June through the next selection course in February, the staff and athletes will attend wellness and training events throughout the year.

The Care Coalition is one of five congressionally recognized Wounded Warrior Programs with a mission to provide wounded, ill and injured special operations forces service members and their families support to ensure they are receiving optimal care with the intent to return to Active Duty.



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Never leave a fallen comrade: Green Beret earns Silver Star

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

Crouched in the kill zone with a rifle in one hand and a grenade launcher in the other, Sgt. 1st Class Richard “Rich” Harris prepared to fight to the death to protect his fallen comrade.

On Sept. 13, 2011, Harris, a weapons sergeant with a Special Operational Detachment-Alpha (ODA) assigned to 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), embodied the spirit of the Army’s warrior ethos after his ODA team was ambushed by an overwhelming enemy force while conducting a mission in the Wardak Province, Afghanistan.

Harris’ team sergeant, Master Sgt. Danial “Slim” Adams, was killed in action during the initial moments of the ambush, and Harris spent the rest of the battle aggressively attacking the ambushing insurgents while guarding the body of his team sergeant at significant risk to his own life.

Nearly five years later, Harris’ heroic actions from that day were formally recognized when he was presented the Silver Star medal, the nation’s third highest award for valor, June 3.

“It does bring a little bit of closure,” said Harris, who was able to reconnect with some of the men he fought with on that day, some of whom he had not seen in years.

“This ceremony has ended up being a reunion, and a celebration of [Adams], his life and his sacrifice,” said Harris.

On that day nearly five years ago, Harris’ ODA, partnered with Hungarian Special Operations and Afghan National Police, carried out an operation to apprehend known insurgents in the Maydan Shahr District, an area traditionally used by insurgents to move, undetected by opposing coalition forces.

The ODA’s team sergeant, Master Sgt. Danial Adams led a small maneuver element, which convoyed through the mountainous area on the outskirts of the village through the use of all-terrain vehicles (ATV) in order to provide necessary over watch and to facilitate radio communications



Sgt. 1st Class Richard Harris, a Special Forces Soldier with 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), in 2012 at a Forward Operating Base Airborne in the Wardack province of Afghanistan. Harris was awarded the Silver Star Medal at a ceremony held June 3, at Fort Carson, Colorado for gallantry and heroic actions on Sept. 13, 2011, when he prevented a determined enemy force in Afghanistan from taking the body of his fallen team sergeant, Master Sgt. Danial Adams. Courtesy Photo.

from the high ground to the west.

A separate main body element patrolled through the village from the north-east. Harris was originally part of the main element, but joined up with Adams’ ATV team part-way through the mission.

After approximately three hours of searching, they were unable to locate their target, so they began to withdraw from the village. It was at that time they lost their aerial reconnaissance assets, which were pulled away to assist coalition forces in other parts of the country.

Once the main body was clear of the village, Adams and the rest of his over-watch element began moving south on their ATVs to the designated link-up point. Adams led the

way, followed by Harris and three other team members.

Just as they passed a small cluster of buildings at the edge of the village, they ran into a well-planned and emplaced ambush comprised of more than 25 insurgents armed with AK47 light machine guns, PKM heavy machine guns, and RPG-7 rocket propelled grenades. The insurgents were in staggered positions along the ambush line across approximately 180 meters.

Harris recalled the area around them suddenly coming to life with the sounds and flashes of close gunfire. “My mindset was, ‘Holy crap. We’re in deep trouble,’” he remembered.

As the air around them filled with deadly enemy fire, and rounds whizzed by and pinged off their vehicles, Adams and Harris both got low and gunned their ATVs, attempting to accelerate through the kill zone. Unfortunately, it was here that Adams took a burst of PKM fire, suffering wounds to his wrist, thigh and neck, and throwing him from his ATV within meters of the enemy line.

“At the time, I didn’t know what happened,” Harris said. “I just saw him kind of dive off or fall off his ATV.”

Harris aborted his path and veered up a small hill to take cover between two buildings. The three operators following closely behind Adams and Harris managed to stop their ATVs behind the cover of small buildings where they began fighting back.

Harris, under an intense and unyielding barrage of enemy fire, immediately engaged the enemy with his M4 rifle and grenade launcher, all the while calling out to his team sergeant below. His attacks soon brought the insurgents’ attention to him, and he found himself the target of concentrated enemy fire. Undaunted, he continued to return fire.

“That’s when an RPG came and just ... streamed right up at me,” said Harris.

The enemy rocket exploded against a wall approximately seven feet behind him, throwing him to the ground and knocking him unconscious.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Bell, who was a sergeant first class at the time, was one of the three operators fighting about 40 meters away. He was preparing to throw a grenade when he happened to look up at Harris’ position and witnessed the explosion.

Bell described his first thoughts as, “I’m pretty sure Rich is dead.”

Harris wasn’t, however, and after regaining consciousness and situational awareness moments later, he got back in the fight. The explosion had knocked his radio

system ear buds out, leaving him unable to communicate with his fellow green berets. Not knowing when or even if he would get reinforcements, Harris said he had only two priorities: Return fire and find Slim. Harris resumed his attack on the enemy line.

Meanwhile, unaware that a battle was raging less than two miles away, Staff Sgt. Millan, a fire team leader that day, was waiting back at the link-up point with the rest of the main element. Millan said they were getting concerned the ATV element hadn’t linked up yet.

“Anything outside of a minute or two minutes would have been uncharacteristic of Slim to be late,” said Millan, “and we were approaching about five minutes now.”

Suddenly, Millan spotted green smoke coming from the distance. He drove up a nearby hill, where he finally gained radio communication with Bell and verified they were under attack. Without hesitation, Millan and his men organized three trucks, loaded them with fighters, and made their way as fast as possible through the narrow and undulated mountainous trails to reach their endangered team.

Back on the ambush line, Harris finally spotted Adams laying face-down approximately 25 meters away. He had been partially dragged by enemy insurgents who had advanced while Harris was unconscious. Harris tried making



Sgt. 1st Class Richard Harris (2nd from right), stands in front of a memorial with other members of his Special Forces Operational Detachment – Alpha to pay respect and honor his fallen team sergeant, Master Sgt. Danial “Slim” Adams, who was killed in an ambush on Sept. 13, 2011. Courtesy photo.



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

contact by calling his team sergeant's name, but Adams did not move. Fearing Adams may fall back into the hands of the enemy, Harris had a decision to make.

"Okay, I know where Slim's at,"

Harris explained. "I can't find the

rest of my team. I need to go and get Slim."

Harris said, "I remember my legs and knees were just shaking and knocking uncontrollably and I couldn't stop it...I was basically preparing myself to die."

Harris fell back on his training as a Soldier. "Everything that I've ever learned and trained and had beat into my head was that you never leave a fallen comrade," Harris said, "and that's exactly what Slim was."

It was decided.

Harris darted out of cover and sprinted directly into the storm of enemy fire, firing a weapon from each hand as he went. Amazingly, he made it through unscathed. Once he reached Adams, he continued his attack on the enemy, throwing hand grenades before using his rifle to fire left, right, and in front of him, no longer knowing where the ambush line began and where it ended.

Between bursts of attack, Harris checked on Adams, and knew immediately that he needed to find cover so he could provide first aid.

Knowing he would be cut down by enemy fire if he tried to carry Adams back the way he came, Harris did the only other thing he had a choice on. Acting quickly, he threw two grenades and then began dragging both Adams and himself closer to the enemy, seeking the meager cover provided by a small rock-wall that ran along the very ditch that the enemy occupied.

Now, within mere feet of the enemy position, Harris once again took the fight to them, by employing his remaining grenades and his rifle.

In between his attacks, Harris attempted to render medical aid to Adams. It was during this time that he realized that Adams had been killed in action and that due to the nature of his wounds, no amount of first aid would bring him back.

"I was pretty devastated," said Harris. "I took two seconds to say a quick prayer for him and his family, and then it was back to the firefight that I was still the center of attention of."

Determined not to let the enemy lay another hand on the body of his leader, Harris reloaded his rifle and grenade



Sgt. 1st Class Richard Harris (right), shakes hands with Lt. Gen. Ken Tovo, commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command after being awarded with the Silver Star Medal June 3, at Fort Carson, Colorado. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Smith.

launcher, took up one in each hand, and prepared to die defending his team sergeant.

"I was getting a pretty heavy dose of returning fire from those guys," he said, "and I needed to...secure the area and figure out what my next move was, because now I'm even further away from cover and I'm even closer to the enemy."

During his one-man stand-off, the rest of the ATV element managed to maneuver into closer fighting positions, and their Joint Tactical Air Controller (JTAC), Air Force Tech Sgt. Tommy Baughs, started calling in F-16 strafing gun runs within meters of Harris' position.

Despite the F-16's strafing attacks, the enemy continued to place deadly fire on Harris and his team's positions, and was still attempting to maneuver on them.

Realizing that he needed to get in communication with the rest of his men, Harris located his radio system ear buds and finally made contact with Bell.

"I could tell that he was in a bad way," said Bell. "This guy [was] living in a different world than what we were living in. A totally different world."

Bell informed Harris that they were unable to utilize close air support (CAS) to drop bombs on the enemy due to Harris occupying the same location. Harris, understanding that the lives of his team would be seriously jeopardized if they couldn't drop ordinance on the enemy, decided to find cover until the bombs could be dropped. Under covering fire from his team, Harris sprinted back up the hill where he

finally met up with Bell and the rest of the ATV element.

“It was a momentous reunification,” said Bell. “(Harris) was as exhausted as I’ve ever seen a human being be.”

By this time, Millan and his reinforcements had also reached the ambush site.

“We drove up, and we’re trying to calm down Rich,” said Millan, “because he was out of water, he was beet-red in the face, and his main concern was he needed to go get Slim.”

At one point, the team decided they needed to retrieve their 60mm mortar system from a nearby ATV, and despite his exhaustion, Harris stepped up. He and Bell sprinted 40 meters across open ground, paralleling the enemy line and exposing themselves yet again to small arms and machine gun fire, to retrieve and place the mortar into action. They fired eight 60mm rounds before taking cover as the F-16 dropped a 500 lb. bomb on the enemy’s position.

Bell and Harris then rode the ATV back across the hostile terrain to hand off the mortar to their team. That’s when Harris decided to go back for his fallen comrade. Once again ignoring the immense risk to his own life, he drove the ATV one final time directly into the kill zone, toward both the waiting enemy and his fallen team sergeant. Millan, who realized that Harris was the only one who knew the location of Adams’ body, ran after him on foot.

“All the sudden I hear on the radio, ‘Hey, there’s another 500 lb. bomb coming in,’” said Harris, “And I’m like, ‘Okay, great!’”

Without hesitation, he covered Adams’ body with his own to protect him from the impending detonation less than 40 meters away. Millan, who had reached Harris by then, jumped on top of him, and together they waited for the earth-shattering explosion. As soon as it was over, the two men jumped up and began to load Adams onto the ATV. Their interpreter came running in at that time, and with his help, they loaded Adams’ body onto the ATV and drove out of the kill zone.

Harris’ continuous actions during the battle were the primary reasons Adams’ body did not fall into enemy hands.

Throughout all of this, Harris and his team members want people to remember Master Sgt. Danial “Slim” Adams, who was killed in action while defending his nation’s security.

“Dan...was an amazing man, was well-loved by every one,” said Bell. “He was a true leader and a wonderful husband and father.”

Adams is survived by his wife and three children.

“He cared about us,” said Millan. “He cared about his troops. And that’s the legacy he left behind, that...we’re going to carry forward.”

Harris, who had only graduated the special forces qualification course a few months earlier, recalled a moment right before they shipped out. As he was saying goodbye to his wife, Harris tried to reassure her by saying, “You don’t have to worry about me. You don’t have to worry about us. Because we got Slim.”

According to Harris, Adams’ sacrifice may have been directly responsible for his survival that day.

“In my mind, that day,” explained Harris, “as soon as the firefight happened, we had some choices to make immediately. And the one that Slim made was the one that I was gonna make, because I trusted him that much.”

“If anything, [Adams] drew fire so that I had the time to move up that hill and get to cover, and live,” Harris said. “[Adams] made the decision of ‘I am going first, I’m leading out. He didn’t have to lead out...He didn’t tell anyone to lead, he didn’t ask anyone to lead. He led from the front, like he always did.’”

According to those who knew him, that was how Adams lived his life. It was how he lived his Army career: Always leading from the front.



Sgt. 1st Class Richard Harris (center), takes a moment for a photo with Lt. Gen. Ken Tovo (right), commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command, and Col. Isaac Peltier (left), commander of 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), after being presented the Silver Star Medal June 3, at Fort Carson, Colorado. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Daniel Carter.



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Ranger Hall of Fame welcomes 2016 inductees

*By Lindsay Marchello
Fort Benning Bayonet and Saber*

Fifteen retired Rangers were inducted into the 2016 Ranger Hall of Fame class, and one retired Soldier was recognized as an honorary inductee, during a ceremony held July 14 in Marshall Auditorium, Fort Benning, Georgia.

The Rangers inducted into the Hall of Fame were retired Brig. Gen. William Bond, Command Sgt. Maj. David Dalton, Command Sgt. Maj. James Gibson, Col. Glenn Hale, Sgt. Maj. Ronald Hart, Gen. P.K. Ken Keen, Sgt. Gary Linderer, Capt. Stephen Maguire, Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey Mellinger, Master Sgt. Jesus Moncada, Staff Sgt. Robert Passanisi, Staff Sgt. Raymond Schuder, Command Sgt. Maj. Tommy Shook, Command Sgt. Maj. Willie Snow and Lt. Col. James Tucker.

Retired Col. Robert Poydasheff, a former mayor of Columbus, was inducted as an honorary member of the Hall of Fame.

Each inductee was given a bronze Ranger Hall of Fame medallion.

"We are proud to have a whole bunch of Rangers here," said retired Ranger Col. Robert "Tex" Turner, the guest speaker for the ceremony. "I am very proud and very honored just to get to talk to them."

Turner shared some personal anecdotes about a few of the Rangers he knew, including Maguire and Tucker.

"I wish I could say a lot more about each and every one of you, but I don't know you all that well. I'll get to know you though, I promise," said Turner.

Each inductee was invited to speak after receiving their medals.

One of the inductees, Hale, explained his first experience with the Ranger creed.

"When I looked at the Ranger creed for the first time I was shocked. Everything it said, I believed in," said Hale. "There are three particular phrases in there that caught my attention right away and that is: I'll never fail my comrades, I'll never leave a fallen comrade and I will



Retired Ranger Capt. Stephen Maguire is guided back to his seat by Col. Douglas Vincent, the commander of the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade, after being inducted into the Ranger Hall of Fame July 14, in Marshall Auditorium, Fort Benning, Georgia. Photo by Markeith Horace.

complete the mission."

Hale explained that those three phrases are the most important out of the entire Ranger creed.

"It is why Rangers are respected around the world and why Rangers are feared around the world," said Hale. "It is a great honor to serve in a regiment and a great honor to be included with these men in the pantheon of American warriors."

To be inducted into the Ranger Hall of Fame, Rangers must be deceased or have been separated or retired from active military service for at least three years. Inductees must have served in a Ranger unit in combat or be a successful graduate of the U.S. Army Ranger Course.

Honorary inductees must have made a considerable contribution to Ranger units, the Ranger foundation or the Ranger community, but do not meet the normal criteria for induction.



Command Sgt. Maj. Rob Abernethy, who serves as the senior enlisted leader for U.S. Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, visited the Recruiting and Retention School at Fort Knox, Kentucky, July 25, to demonstrate the value a broadening assignment in recruiting can add to an NCO's career. Courtesy U.S. Army photo.

Abernethy shares recruiter experience

By Kelli Bland
USAREC Public Affairs

The top non-commissioned officer in Army Special Operations used his own experiences as a former recruiter to inspire new students in the Army Recruiter Course July 25.

Command Sgt. Maj. Rob Abernethy, who serves as the senior enlisted leader for U.S. Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, visited the Recruiting and Retention School to demonstrate the value a broadening assignment in recruiting can add to an NCO's career.

"I learned things about myself and about being a leader while serving as a recruiter that led me to the position I am in now," said Abernethy, who recruited in Mississippi from 1996 until 1998. "Before becoming a recruiter, I was a completely introverted person who didn't feel comfortable in a crowd."

When one NCO expressed concern over a perceived stigma of recruiting duty and how three years away from the infantry could impact his career, Abernethy used his personal experience as an example, noting he was "voluntold" to become a recruiter and had to take a break from Special

Operations to do so.

The now USASOC command sergeant major told the future recruiter any negative perceptions about recruiting duty must be fixed at the ground level.

"Stay connected to your peers and tell them about your experiences. The stigma is built on ignorance," he said, adding senior leaders also need to help change perceptions and demonstrate the real value and potential for growth U.S. Army Recruiting Command offers its Soldiers.

"If you are not excited about the duty ahead of you, you should be," Abernethy told the students. "Recruiting is a new challenge, and it will make you a better leader in the long run. Your listening abilities will improve. Your speaking abilities will improve. You will be self-motivated and self-confident."

While reminding the future recruiters of the important role they soon will play in the future readiness of the Army, Abernethy also highlighted the career development opportunity awaiting each of them.

"Recruiting is a broadening assignment," he said. "The aim of broadening assignments is to create flexible, agile and adaptive leaders. Recruiting will do that for you."



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

Naval Special Warfare Command changes commanders

*By U. S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Richard Miller
NSW Public Affairs*

Rear Adm. Tim Szymanski relieved Rear Adm. Brian L. Losey as commander, Naval Special Warfare Command during a change of command ceremony at Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado, California Aug. 3.

Gen. Raymond Thomas, commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, (USSOCOM) was the guest speaker for the ceremony. In his remarks, Thomas praised Losey's leadership within Naval Special Warfare.

"This ceremony commemorates the completion of 33 years of historic service for [Losey], most recently, three years of remarkable service here as commander, Naval Special Warfare Command," Thomas said. "The global impact of this 9,000 member force under his command is hard to overstate."

Losey will retire after more than three decades of service. Losey, a career SEAL officer, has previously served at Naval Special Warfare Development Group and as a director on the National Security Council in the Executive Office of the President, among other assignments.

"I want to start by first and foremost thanking the CNO and Gen. Thomas, U.S. Special Operations Command for their presence here today," Losey said at the ceremony, "there is no higher honor within the military than to have these two leaders of our nation's military to be here for Naval Special Warfare."

Losey's remarks touched heavily on the people that make up the NSW community and he specifically thanked his family for their support, the SEAL's that came before him and his NSW staff members for all their assistance over the years. Losey also made it a point to reach out to the new class of hopeful SEAL's by thanking Basic Underwater Demolition/Seal class 321 for showing their support and wished them well in their future careers.

Losey's time as commander was marked by an emphasis on the SEAL ethos, a return to the



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John M. Richardson presents Rear Adm. Brian L. Losey with the Navy Distinguished Service Medal during the Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC) change of command ceremony at Naval Base Coronado, California Aug. 3. NSWC mans, trains, equips, educates, deploys, and sustains forces to conduct primarily direct action and special reconnaissance core activities, and to build partner capacity in or out of the maritime environment, in order to support USSOCOM, the U.S. Navy, Geographic Combatant Commanders, and ultimately, national objectives across a full range of political and operational environments. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Richard Miller.

community's maritime roots and a focus on caring for the NSW force and families.

Thomas said he was impressed by Losey's efforts to take care of those under his command.

"Most recently [Losey] applied his exceptional vision and energy to this organization with a special renewed focus on undersea warfare and support to the Navy in the form of full spectrum special operations," Thomas said.

Losey was relieved by Szymanski, another career SEAL officer. Szymanski most recently served as assistant commanding general, Joint Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, N.C. A 1985 graduate of the United States Naval Academy, Szymanski also served as commander, Naval Special Warfare Group 2 and commander, SEAL Team 2.

Szymanski said he was honored to take command from Losey.

"I thank Adm. Richardson and Gen. Thomas for attending the change of command today and recognizing

the exceptional leadership and performance of Adm. Losey leading and advancing the Naval Special Warfare community the last three years and the trust and confidence to put me at the helm of this community," Szymanski said at the ceremony.

NSW is comprised of approximately 8,900 personnel, including more than 2,400 active-duty SEALs, 700 Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen, 700 reserve personnel, 4,100 support personnel and more than 1,100 civilians.

The commander of NSW in San Diego leads the Navy's special operations force and the maritime component of USSOCOM, headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Fla.

NSW groups command, train, equip and deploy components of NSW squadrons to meet the exercise, contingency and wartime requirements of the regional combatant commanders, theater special operations commands and numbered fleets located around the world.



Rear Adm. Brian L. Losey addresses the audience during the Naval Special Warfare Command change of command ceremony at Naval Base Coronado, California Aug. 3. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Richard Miller.



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND



Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School Strategic Level Small Craft Combating Terrorism Course (SLC) participants assemble in front of United States Special Operations Command April 29, during a visit as part of the SLC course. The 15 SLC participants represented 13 separate partner nations. Photo by Leah Tolbert.

NAVSCIATTS continues to grow the global network powered by trust

By Leah Tolbert
NAVSCIATTS Public Affairs

Fifteen officers from 13 partner nations completed Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School's (NAVSCIATTS) 14th iteration of its Strategic Level Small Craft Combating Terrorism Course (SLC) May 5, 2016.

Maj. Gen. Topply Lubaya, Zambia Deputy Army Commander and Chief of Staff, was the guest speaker at the SLC graduation. The graduating officers represented their countries of Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Morocco, Nigeria, Poland, Rwanda, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Uganda.

The SLC course allows international officers a forum to discuss shared challenges, while helping facilitate the formation of networks and trans-regional synchronization between partners who operate in the same geographic area and face similar problems. This network, which reaches across oceans and continents allows for an efficient sharing of information between U.S. forces and facilitates efforts with other agencies and international partners.

"NAVSCIATTS has broadened my perspectives about fighting terrorism. No question is off limits. The curriculum is crosscutting and delves into the political, ideological, cultural, economic, and military strategies one needs to consider in the war against terror," said SLC participant Mr. Spencer Leeco, Policy Analyst to

the Minister of Defense, Liberia.

Supplementing the in-class lectures and exercises, the course included a week of travel to Washington D.C., and Tampa, Florida, to visit and meet with key leaders of various military and interagency staffs. It also gave the senior officers the opportunity to witness the U.S. government at work and visit national monuments and museums.

In Washington D.C., the officers visited Arlington National Cemetery and witnessed a changing of the guard ceremony at The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. They also toured the U.S. Capitol and viewed the U.S. House of Representatives while in session.

In addition, the officers met with U.S. Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict, Theresa Whelan. She discussed the U.S. Department of State's policy and how that translated to the U.S. Department of Defense. She emphasized the importance of working by, with and through partner nations to meet common security goals. She said the U.S. operates within its own national interest and works with partner nations where those interests align. U.S. country team members on Whelan's staff spent an afternoon discussing U.S. policy and interagency coordination and also fielded many country and regional questions from the officers.

Nigeria Cdr. Aminu Chikaji Isah appreciated Whelan's comments and said that she was able to emphasize the type of security assistance the U.S. can provide to partner nations. "The U.S. isn't necessarily putting boots on the ground, but is empowering other nations to solve their problems through collaboration which encourages a country's independence," added Isah.

The officers were also able to visit U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) in Tampa, Florida to learn about and discuss the interagency coordination not only within U.S. security forces and agencies, but also with partner nations' security forces and agencies around the world. Representatives from USSOCOM stressed the importance of the "global network powered by trust and providing strategic options" for partner nations to enable effective communication, collaboration and idea sharing.

While at USSOCOM, the officers also met with foreign exchange and foreign liaison officers from Norway, Lithuania and Jordan who are examples of effective partner nation relationship building by assisting, enabling and facilitating the exchange of

information between the U.S. and their respective nations.

Capt. Radoslaw Tokarski, Polish Formosa Commander, found it beneficial to visit USSOCOM and see the joint interagency cooperation in person. "The network between countries is very important for strategic plans. It is very difficult to exist in today's world without effective communication between partner nations," he said.

The SLC course was designed to expand senior officers' and civilian equivalent leaders' joint interagency education on the strategic theory of standing up, leading and operating a dynamic unit, to include operational campaign designs focused on counterterrorism, maritime domain control, counter-narcotics and human trafficking.

The course of instruction also includes maritime security doctrine; operational command and control; training and readiness; organizational leadership; material craft and equipment suitability; logistics; maintenance sustainability; professional military education; and maritime facilities and infrastructure.

"In addition to the relevant and dynamic course curriculum, one of the most important things the partner nation officers gain while at NAVSCIATTS is friendship - friendships that span social, economic, religious and geographic boundaries. We are drawn together by the common goals of protecting our families, protecting our nations, and protecting our world," said NAVSCIATTS Commanding Officer, Cmdr. Clay Pendergrass.

Lt. Marko Mladenovic of Serbia greatly values the relationships he has built during the SLC course. "I have gained much knowledge while attending this course and I have had the opportunity to see the world through my classmates' perspectives. My time at NAVSCIATTS will benefit myself and my country in the future."

NAVSCIATTS is U.S. Special Operations Commands' International Center specializing in mobile and in-resident training across the tactical, operational and strategic spectrums strengthening partner nation capabilities and capacity.

NAVSCIATTS currently offers 20 courses with an average of nearly 1,000 personnel graduating from in-resident and mobile training events annually. Since 1963, nearly 11,000 students from 108 partner nations have graduated from NAVSCIATTS. Courses are offered in English and Spanish or in other languages through the use of translators.



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Gen. David L. Goldfein, chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force, presents the Air Force Special Operations Command flag to Lt. Gen. Brad Webb during the change of command ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Florida, July 19. Webb is the 11th commander of AFSOC, and he returns to the Florida panhandle for his fifth tour of duty. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Melanie Holochwost.

Webb takes command of AFSOC

*By U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Melanie Holochwost
AFSOC Public Affairs*

Lt. Gen. Brad Webb took command of Air Force Special Operations Command July 19, Hurlburt Field, Florida in the Freedom Hangar.

Gen. David L. Goldfein, chief of staff of the Air Force, presided over the ceremony where Webb replaced Lt. Gen. Brad Heithold, who will go on to serve as the principal deputy director of cost assessment and program evaluation in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Goldfein said he has a special place in his heart for Air Commandos.

"If it weren't for the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron and

the 55th and 21st Special Operations Squadrons pulling me out of Serbia, I wouldn't be standing here today," he said. "Our nation has no idea how good AFSOC is on the battlefield...but I do. And, I want to say thank you."

Navy Vice Adm. Sean Pybus, deputy commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, (USSOCOM) also participated in the ceremony.

Pybus said Air Commandos are indispensable to USSOCOM's efforts to win and influence around the world.

"Today's special operations are about shooting, moving and communicating faster than our adversaries," he said. "[We] have come to depend on AFSOC to provide a great degree of that shooting, moving and communicating with the world's best joint special operations force."



Lt. Gen. Brad Webb addresses the assembled Air Commandos and guests July 19, as the newly installed commander of Air Force Special Operations Command. Webb returns to Hurlburt Field as the 11th AFSOC commander. Photo by Senior Airman Krystal Garrett.

Goldfein welcomed Webb, who previously served as the commander of NATO Special Operations Headquarters in Mons, Belgium.

“When it came time to pick the next AFSOC commander, we scanned the entire general officer corps to find another officer – named Brad,” said Goldfein. “In all seriousness, General Brad Webb was the obvious choice.”

Heithold agreed. During his final remarks as the AFSOC commander, he spoke highly of Webb.

“This is a Distinguished Flying Cross recipient. This is a

man who understands battle. This is a man who has been there. This is a man, an Airman, who has led multi-ship formations deep into Iraq,” Heithold said. “General Brad Webb is a person who has earned his spurs. He’s commanded at all levels, and he’s exactly the right person to take command.”

Then, Heithold thanked his Air Commandos.

“I am humbled to have served with you,” he said.

“Thank you to each and every one of you in the formation and in the audience today. Thank you for your dedicated and selfless service to our country. It was truly a privilege to serve as your commander.”

AFSOC’s mission is to present combat-ready forces to conduct and support global special operations missions. The command consists of highly trained, rapidly deployable Airmen, conducting global special operations missions ranging from precision application of firepower, to infiltration, exfiltration, resupply and refueling of special operations forces’ operational elements.

Webb inherits a command with more than 19,000 Air Commandos worldwide. He is the 11th commander of the organization.

“Our challenges today run the continuum of the spectrum of conflict,” Webb said. “AFSOC will tirelessly seek to strike the balance of these myriad of challenges.

“And, we will always have our most important asset...our people, our Airman and families, in mind,” Webb continued. “As Orde Wingate said, ‘I will [go] with you boys any place, any time, any where.’”



Col. Anthony Thomas, Air Force Special Operations Command director of cyber and command, control, communications and computer systems; Col. William Holt, AFSOC director of operations; and Maj. Lisa Stokey, executive officer to the AFSOC vice commander, lead the formation of Air Commandos at the change of command ceremony, July 19, held in Freedom Hangar, Hurlburt Field, Florida. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Melanie Holochwost.



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Joint airborne operation a success for 353rd Special Ops Group

*By U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Jaclyn Pienkowski
353rd Special Operations Group*

“One, two, three...five, six, seven...I see seven chutes,” said an Air Force combat controller with the 353rd Special Operations Group, (SOG) radioing back to the aircrew in the MC-130J Commando II that all jumpers were accounted for.

The jumpers followed the lowest man to the ground and in about seven minutes, one after another, they landed in soft grass on the hilly Kalakaua Range of the Pohakuloa Training Area, Hawaii.

The 353rd SOG pulled off a multi-aircraft, joint airborne operation 15 days into Rim of the Pacific, or RIMPAC 2016 in civilian airspace.

In three hours, the last of seven passes left 63 service



A combat controller with the 320th Special Tactics Squadron watches as Army Special Forces and Marine Raiders board a CH-47 Chinook after a multi-aircraft, joint airborne operation with special operations assets and conventional forces from all four branches of the U.S. Armed Forces as part of Rim of the Pacific 2016 to strengthen their relationships and interoperability with their partners, Pohakuloa Training Area, Hawaii, July 14. Twenty-six nations, more than 40 ships and submarines, more than 200 aircraft and 25,000 personnel participated in RIMPAC from June 30 to Aug. 4, in and around the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California. The world's largest international maritime exercise, RIMPAC provides a unique training opportunity that helps participants foster and sustain the cooperative relationships that are critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's oceans. Photo by 2nd Lt. Jaclyn Pienkowski.

members representing all four branches' special operations assets in the U.S. Armed Forces on the ground and mission complete. A year of planning and hundreds of man hours of coordination culminated in Air Force Special Operations Command leading the joint operation that included members of Naval Special Warfare, Air Force Air Combat Command, Army Special Forces, Marine Special Operations Command and the III Marine Expeditionary Force.

"Crisis and time constraints often go hand in hand with one another," said U.S. Air Force Capt. John Rulien, mission commander for the 353rd SOG participation in RIMPAC. "And when crisis calls, there is little time to form those critical relationships among partner units that we need to enable successful mission execution--whatever and wherever it may be."

By investing in their joint relationships, Special Operations Forces (SOF) bolstered their ability to provide responsive aid in a time of need to the Pacific theater. Their collaborative relationship maximizes their agility and minimizes the time needed to respond to a contingency. The adaptable force formed within the SOF community makes success in an unpredictable environment achievable.

"Habitual training and forming relationships across Special Operations Command Pacific and III Marine Expeditionary Force maneuver units will only increase our ability to answer the call when it comes," Rulien said.

As a combat controller directed air traffic in and out of the restricted air space, joint SOF showcased the ability to work together in a complex environment. The airborne operations provided special operations teams an opportunity to practice expeditionary access into a denied or hostile area.

The operation encompassed four services, seven commands, more than 150 service members, three air assets, and a 775 acre drop zone. Historically, bringing a diverse SOF team together like this is not accomplished often, but the benefits to strengthening the interoperability between special operations and conventional forces will be vital to the Pacific Command's operational success.

"What airborne operations provide aside from non-standard infiltration proficiency is the opportunity to work



Special Tactics Airmen with the 320th Special Tactics Squadron (STS) standby to board an MC-130J Commando II to perform a military freefall operation with special operations assets and conventional forces from all four branches of the U.S. Armed Forces in a multi-aircraft, joint airborne operation as part of Rim of the Pacific 2016 to strengthen their relationships and interoperability with their partners, Pohakuloa Training Area, Hawaii, July 14. The 320th STS is participating in Rim of the Pacific 2016 with III Marine Expeditionary Force in order to practice their unique skills and strengthen their partnership to respond to crises quickly. Photo by U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Jaclyn Pienkowski.

with one another when the risk is heightened," Rulien said. "Training together during risky operations solidify our trust in one another. That trust is imperative when the order comes for us to quickly integrate and execute real world problem sets."

As a result of taking the time to train together, SOF becomes better than they were yesterday, learning from lessons experienced in a controlled training environment.

Twenty-six nations, more than 40 ships and submarines, more than 200 aircraft, and 25,000 plus personnel are participating in RIMPAC in and around the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California. As the world's largest international maritime exercise, RIMPAC provides a unique training opportunity that helps participants foster and sustain the cooperative relationships critical to ensuring the safety and security of sea lanes across the world's oceans. RIMPAC 2016 is the 25th iteration of the exercise that dates back to 1971.



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Special operations medical Airmen save lives at sea

*By Senior Airman Ryan Conroy
24th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

Members of a special operations surgical team assigned to the 720th Special Tactics Group (STG) here worked to save the lives of two critically-burned fishermen rescued 500 miles off the coast of Bermuda, June 22.

The fishermen had been stranded when their vessel caught fire, and the Special Tactics medical team and pararescuemen provided urgent care, while special operations aircrew evacuated the patients to a hospital in Virginia.

“The satisfaction that comes from saving a life is unparalleled and that’s exactly what we do,” said U.S. Air Force Col. Thomas Dorl, commander of the 347th Rescue Group (RQG), home of the aircrew and pararescuemen. “We specialize in personnel recovery and our Airmen are professionals who perform their duties to the best of their ability so that others may live.”

On June 21, the U.S. Coast Guard requested assistance from the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center, to rescue 19 fishermen whose fishing vessel caught fire in the Atlantic Ocean.

A Panamanian cargo vessel, the “K. Corral,” discovered the stranded fishermen clinging to the remains of their fishing boat and picked them up out of the sea. Two men were in critical condition and needed immediate medical care due to severe burns on a majority of their body.

A HC-130J Combat King II departed Moody Air Force Base, Georgia, carrying a team of pararescuemen (PJ) team, a combat rescue officer and the 720th STG surgeon and critical care nurse.

Pararescuemen are among the most highly trained tactical rescue and emergency trauma specialists in the U.S. military, including qualification as an emergency medical technician



U.S. Maj. Alex Keller (left center), a surgeon with the 720th Special Tactics Group, supervises the medical treatment of a burn patient on an HC-130 Combat King II, June 23. Keller, alongside pararescuemen and aircrew from the 372nd Rescue Group, assisted in the rescue and evacuation of fishermen stranded off the shore of Bermuda when their vessel caught fire. Courtesy photo.

- paramedic. With this medical and rescue expertise, along with their deployment capabilities, PJs are able to perform life-saving rescue missions in the world's most remote areas.

Two teams of pararescuemen parachuted into the Atlantic Ocean to meet with the patients aboard "K Corral." The plan was for the ship to head to Bermuda and evacuate the patients from Bermuda via C-130 aircraft.

"The Air Force is the DoD's personnel recovery expert in high-end rescue capabilities and we continually train to remain proficient in those core tasks whether during peacetime or combat," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Pedro Ortiz, deputy commander of the 347th Rescue Group. "These things we do that others may live."

U.S. Air Force Maj. Alex Keller, a surgeon with the 720th STG, was contacted by the pararescue medical director due to his expertise with burn patients. Keller and U.S. Air Force Lt. Col.

Daniel Donahue, a special operations surgical team leader and critical care nurse, joined the 347th RQG team in Georgia and flew to Bermuda.

The short-notice timeline gave Keller and Donahue less than two and a half hours to get all of their medical gear and flight gear prepped and packaged, including medications and equipment from the 1st Special Operations Support Squadron pharmacy team.

In Bermuda, Keller and Donahue evacuated the patient from the "K. Corral" and transported them to the waiting HC-130 for evacuation. Keller served as the medical consultant for the medical management of the burn patient. Donahue guided the nursing care of the casualty while allowing the pararescuemen to perform most hands-on tasks.

Their expertise in their fields assisted in a challenging environment, adding to the efforts of the pararescue team on board the aircraft.

"Care on a critically-injured casualty in a fully staffed, well-stocked intensive care unit is very

challenging," said Donahue. "On a ship, boat, ambulance and plane is a whole new level of complexity. Maj Keller and I facilitated the highest level of clinical care possible with the massive operational constraints placed on the mission."

The injured fishermen are Taiwanese nationals and while they are not members of the service, Special Tactics members are called upon to rescue any life in need, said Ortiz.

"He survived because of quality training, hard work and the amazing courage of the PJ team that parachuted into the ocean to save a stranger 900 miles from home, the aircrews that got them there, along with the captain and crew of the K. Corral that spent several hours searching for and plucking all 17 survivors from the water. They are absolutely the heroes of this story. Lt. Col. Donahue and I are humbled to have played a small part."

— U.S. Air Force Maj. Alex Keller

"All the heavy lifting and direct patient care was actually provided by the PJ team and Lt. Col. Donahue," said Keller. "Between them and the prior care rendered by the amazing PJ team that parachuted to the ship, the patient was in pretty good shape for what I expected based on the severity of his burns."

Keller, Donahue and the team of pararescuemen turned the patient over to the trauma team at the hospital, and the patient is currently in stable condition, according to Keller.

"He survived because of quality training, hard work and the amazing courage of the PJ team that parachuted into the ocean to save a stranger 900 miles from home, the aircrews that got them there, along with the captain and crew of the K. Corral that spent several hours searching for and plucking all 17 survivors from the water," said Keller. "They are absolutely the heroes of this story. Lt. Col. Donahue and I are humbled to have played a small part."

Dorl credited all members in the joint effort with the success of the rescue.

"This mission was a combined team effort across all four squadrons in the group and we could not have accomplished it without everyone who responded during this mission. The Air Force and Coast Guard coordinated efforts led to a successful rescue of all crewman."

Despite the emergency response team's efforts, one burn patient later died from their injuries. The other burn patient has since been flown to Sentara Norfolk General Hospital in Norfolk, Virginia, for further medical care.



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Airmen prepare to board a C-23 Sherpa during the Military Freefall Jumpmaster Course at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, June 28. The course will graduate 12 Airmen at the end of its fifth 3-week-long rotation; reaching a total number of 58 certified jumpmasters. Photo by Airman Nathan H. Barbour.

Mastering the jump

***By U.S. Air Force Airman Nathan H. Barbour
355th Fighter Wing Public Affairs***

In order to run a combat freefall jump and deploy Airmen safely from an aircraft at high altitudes, there has to be someone specially trained to direct the operation. They must be highly proficient in every component of the jump process, from ensuring equipment is donned properly, to coordinating with the aircrew during the release so jumpers land on the designated drop zone.

In the past, the only place to receive the formal training required to lead a jump was the Military Freefall School (MFFS) at the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Grounds in Arizona.

U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. David Biddinger, Guardian Angel Freefall Jumpmaster instructor, had experience working at the school in Yuma before being stationed at Davis-Monthan, Arizona, about four years ago.

“We realized that the Air Force had a need for the jumpmaster course,” Biddinger said. “Working with contacts in U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and at the MFFS, we were able to convince the Army and Air Force of that need.”

During an approximately 3 1/2 year process, Biddinger worked side by side with the 68th Rescue Flight/Guardian Angel Formal Training Unit to establish a new USSOCOM approved course at Davis -Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona.

“Getting officially recognized by the Army and USSOCOM as a validated course is special, it is a difficult standard to attain,” Biddinger said. “This is the only Military Freefall Jumpmaster Course in the Air Force and it’s one of two in the Department of Defense.”

The course will graduate 12 Airmen at the end of its fifth 3-week-long rotation; reaching a total number of 58 certified jumpmasters across the Battlefield Airmen career fields.

“Before this course we only had the option of attending the school in Yuma,” Biddinger said. “We only saw about 28 slots per year spread between all the different groups that jump in the Air Force.”

The course is intended to train mid-level NCOs and officers. Students vary from tactical air control party specialists, combat controllers, pararescuemen, and survival, evasion, resistance and escape specialists from

all different commands. In addition, as a joint accredited organization, the Guardian Angel Formal Training Unit also affords this training and qualification to other services such as the Navy, Army and Marines.

“I go back to my unit as a freefall jumpmaster,” said

Staff Sgt. Jonathan, 321st Special Tactics Squadron combat controller. “Anytime my unit has a jump, I’ll either be the primary person in charge of all the coordination or the assistant.”

During each free fall, the success of the mission and the lives of others are in the hands

of the jumpmasters.

“We’re training special operations Airmen to be able to deploy personnel out of the aircraft safely and ensure that those guys reach the ground to do their mission.” Biddinger said. “Whether the mission involves rescuing someone, calling in airstrikes, or recovering downed equipment or aircraft.”

“We’re training special operations Airmen to be able to deploy personnel out of the aircraft safely and ensure that those guys reach the ground to do their mission. Whether the mission involves rescuing someone, calling in airstrikes, or recovering downed equipment or aircraft.”

– U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. David Biddinger



U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. David Biddinger, 563rd Rescue Group Jumpmaster Course instructor, performs a jumpmaster personnel inspection during the Military Freefall Jumpmaster Course at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, June 28. Jumpmasters must be highly proficient in every component of the jump process, from ensuring equipment is donned properly, to coordinating with the aircrew during the release so jumpers land on the designated drop zone. Photo by U.S. Air Force Airman Nathan H. Barbour.



MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



(Right to left) Major Gen. Joseph L. Osterman passes the Marine Corps colors to Maj. Gen. Carl E. Mundy III during a change of command ceremony on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, July 26. The passing of the flag symbolizes Osterman relinquishing his responsibilities as the commanding general of U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command to Mundy. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Ryan C. Mains.

Raiders welcome new commander, say farewell to Maj. Gen. Osterman

*By U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Steven Fox
MARSOC Public Affairs*

Over the past two years, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command (MARSOC) has matured from merely being known as U.S. Special Operations Command's youngest and smallest component, to a full-fledged integral player in SOCOM's global operations.

In ceremonies throughout the last week, the Raiders of MARSOC have commemorated a decade's worth of accomplishments – as well as losses – in the command's

short but distinguished existence.

A final celebratory event marked a milestone in the command's history and the start of a new chapter – the changing of command between two storied officers.

The ceremony was held July 26 at MARSOC headquarters, at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, with 300 people in attendance to witness Maj. Gen. Joseph L. Osterman relinquish command to Maj. Gen. Carl E. Mundy III. Osterman led the Marine Corps' special operations component for two years, initiating and overseeing some of its greatest contributions to special operations to date.

Osterman was recently confirmed for promotion to lieutenant general and assignment as deputy commander at U.S. Special Operations Command in Tampa, Florida.

General John M. Paxton Jr., the 33rd assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, presided over the ceremony and spoke briefly about Osterman's exceptional performance as the commander of MARSOC.

"You pushed that envelope, General Osterman, and you pushed it by organizing, training and equipping at the individual level, building competent small units and teams, and have proven operational capability on behalf of Marine forces, Naval forces and special operations forces," said Paxton. "So on behalf of the institution: a job well done. We're proud of your leadership; we're grateful for your accomplishments."

Major highlights of Osterman's command included the regionalization of the three Marine Raider battalions and their corresponding support battalions, expansion and operational integration of the component's intelligence capabilities beginning at the Marine special operations team level, and other support innovations to forward-deployed elements. He expanded the command's information operations capabilities and oversaw the development of the special operations forces liaison element concept, which integrates planning and coordination between special operations and Marine expeditionary units. Lastly, he oversaw the first deployment of a Raider-led combined joint special operations task force in any of the geographic combatant commands.

"For a change of command-type situation, the focus tends to go on the commander as we pass the colors but today really is about MARSOC," said Osterman. "The ten years that MARSOC has been in existence - that we just celebrated - amazing people have come through the ranks, who have done incredible things."

Osterman went on to cite MARSOC's footprint in Afghanistan and the shift in the component's focus to regionalized battalion areas of responsibility.

"For those who don't know, there are MARSOC members, right now, that are spread all the way from Africa, through the Middle East, all the way out to the Pacific," said Osterman. "One of the big things I had to do was adjust my thoughts from maneuvering battalions and regiments when I got here, to understanding that small teams can have strategic effects out in the battlespace."

After addressing those in attendance at the ceremony, Osterman gave the floor to Mundy.

"I'm privileged to be able to be a part of this wonderful



Major Gen. Carl E. Mundy III, left, shakes hands with Maj. Gen. Joseph L. Osterman, during a change of command ceremony on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, July 26. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Ryan C. Mains.

organization. I cannot say it better than what General Paxton and General Osterman said," explained Mundy. "Let me just say - turning to face you all, because you are all the most important people here - everyday I'm in this billet, it will be a privilege to serve alongside you, and an honor to command you."

In a letter addressed to the incoming and outgoing commanders, Marine Commandant Gen. Robert B. Neller expressed his view of MARSOC's immediate future.

"[Maj. Gen. Mundy], know that you have my total trust and confidence. I know you will bring the same outstanding leadership to this assignment that you demonstrated as commanding general of 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade in Bahrain, and in your previous command assignments," said Neller.

Neller stated that Marine Raiders will continue to set the standards for excellence and are instrumental in shaping the national security environment and providing decision space for our national leaders.



MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

MSOS honors fallen hero, renames school house Gifford Hall

*By Cpl. Ryan Mains
MARSOC Public Affairs*

U.S. Marine Raiders gathered at a dedication ceremony where the Marine Special Operations School (MSOS) academic facility was named in honor of Gunnery Sgt. Jonathan W. Gifford, at Stone Bay, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, July 20. Gifford was killed in action July 29, 2012 while deployed to Afghanistan with 2d Marine Raider Battalion and was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross.

Gifford, a founding instructor at the school, posthumously received the nation's second-highest award for valor and the highest within the Department of the Navy - the Navy Cross – for his actions in Afghanistan in 2012. In recognition of his lasting impact on U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command (MARSOC), the command honored Gifford by naming the school's academic facility Gifford Hall.

"This is the first dedication for a critical skills operator in MARSOC's ten-year history," said Col. Brett A. Bourne, the school's commanding officer. "Jonathan



Gunnery Sgt. Jonathan W. Gifford's children unveil the new name adorning the Marine Special Operations School building, posthumously dedicated to their father during a ceremony on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, July 20. Photo by U.S. Marine CorpCpl. Ryan Mains.

Gifford is the first of the modern day Raiders to be memorialized. He spent a lot of time in the community. I did not know Jon personally, but I do know about his reputation that always preceded him.”

Months after MARSOC’s activation in 2006, Gifford received orders to the special operations school, developing its Advanced Sniper Course and serving as its chief instructor.

Former MARSOC teammates paid tribute to Gifford, commenting that not only was he a natural leader, but he was also passionate about teaching each of the Marines under him. One former teammate praised Gifford’s obsessive focus on improvement in every facet of his life and expressed hope that Gifford’s memory will be carried on by future generations of aspiring Critical Skills Operators and Special Operations Officers who train at Gifford Hall.

“I find it completely appropriate that the school house is named after Jon,” said John Teague, a former team member and a close friend of Gifford. “That’s what this building should be about, getting prepared and understanding that when you graduate a school or an institution like this, you don’t just stand still and you don’t just assume everything. You do what Jon Gifford did and you continue to improve and you want to learn something new every day.”

Gifford is not just known for his contributions to the MSOS, but for his influence on MARSOC as a whole. During his fourth deployment, Gifford and his team were advising and assisting a contingent of Afghan commandos on an operation near the village Bala Bokan, Badghis province, Afghanistan. After entering the village, the 14-man Marine special operations team and their partner nation force began taking heavy fire from an enemy ambush, wounding several commandos.

Gifford rushed to the Afghans’ aid, treated their wounds and moved them back to safety, maneuvering through a fiercely contested patch of land. Afterward, Gifford led a counterattack, killed an enemy fighter firing from a window of a nearby building, scaled the wall of the building and dropped a grenade down the chimney, killing the remaining insurgents. Gifford continued to coordinate attacks against the Taliban fighters until he was mortally wounded. His actions directly enabled his teammates and Afghan partners to defeat the Taliban insurgents and secure the village.

“Everyone described Jon, that knew him and worked with him, as a gifted operator and a natural. He looked

effortless in what he was doing,” said Teague. “Whether he was doing a [physical fitness test] or if he was behind a sniper rifle, he looked like he had been doing it his whole life. I don’t agree with that assessment - he was not a natural nor was he effortless. Jon Gifford was always prepared. He was continually trying to improve himself.”

Given Gifford’s reputation amongst MARSOC personnel, the significant time and experience he invested in MSOS, and the recounting of his heroism echoing through the MSOS corridors, the facility’s new name is an entirely appropriate one.

“His fellow instructors remember him for his tireless dedication to student success and his belief that each instructor needed to be able to demonstrate any aspect of training on demand,” said Bourne. “He forced his instructors to remain current and relevant in all aspects of their jobs. These are the traits we look to instill in all of our instructors. It is fitting that our academic facility is named in dedication of Gunnery Sgt. Jonathan Gifford.”



Col. Brett A. Bourne, Marine Special Operations School commanding officer, speaks on behalf of Gunnery Sgt. Jonathan W. Gifford during a ceremony on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, July 20. In honor of the fallen U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command Raider, the command passed on Gifford’s name and legacy to the school’s academic building. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Ryan Mains.



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS

Special Ops patriarch receives prestigious French Legion of Honor

By Mike Bottoms
USSOCOM Public Affairs

Special operations legend Caesar Civitella was awarded the French Legion of Honor which is the highest decoration offered by the French government and was started by France's first consul, Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802. Despite being normally awarded only to French nationals, the honor can be bestowed upon foreign nationals who have served France or helped the country's values and principles.

The ceremony presided over by Maj. Gen. Bernard Commins, French senior national representative to U.S. Central Command and was held July 14, Bastille Day (National Day) in France, at the Tampa Bay Automobile Museum. Along with Civitella, ten other World War II veterans received the medal.

Civitella was born Aug. 21, 1923, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and was the son of Italian immigrants. He joined the Army in February 1943 and, because of his fluency in Italian, he was screened and selected for the historic Office of Strategic Services (OSS) headed by Maj. Gen. William "Wild Bill" Donovan.

Civitella would eventually become part of a 15-man OSS operational group (OG). The small OG teams had multifaceted missions and worked with local resistance organizations, where they conducted hit and run missions against enemy-controlled roads, railways, and strong points, or prevented their destruction by retreating enemy forces. Donovan believed Soldiers with native language skills and cultural backgrounds could be

inserted as a team into enemy-occupied territory and successfully operate as small guerilla bands. They were trained in infantry tactics, guerilla warfare, foreign weapons, demolition, and parachuting.

"We trained in small teams, and we trained hard together and that training was the foundation of our success in France," Civitella said. "Success behind the lines necessitated trust, respect and leadership within the



Special operations legend and World War II veteran Caesar Civitella (center) looks on as the French Legion of Honor citation is read by Maj. Gen. Bernard Commins, French senior national representative to U.S. Central Command, during a ceremony held on July 14, Bastille or National Day in France, at the Tampa Bay Automobile Museum. The Legion of Honor is the highest decoration offered by the French government and was started by France's first consul, Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802. Along with Civitella, ten other World War II veterans received the medal. Photo by Mike Bottoms.



An original member of the Office of Strategic Services, Caesar Civitella receives the French Legion of Honor from Maj. Gen. Bernard Commins, French senior national representative to U.S. Central Command, during a ceremony held on July 14, Bastille or National Day in France, at the Tampa Bay Automobile Museum, in Tampa, Florida. Photo by Mike Bottoms.

OG and all the training Donovan insisted upon really built that trust.”

According to his bio from the U.S. Army Special Operations Command website in early 1944, after eight months of intense training, Team Lafayette of which he was a part, were inserted into North Africa to support Operation Dragoon — the allied invasion of southern France. This was his first operational jump behind enemy lines. Team Lafayette, along with two other operational groups, captured nearly 4,000 Axis soldiers after employing psychological warfare against the finance section of a Nazi division in France.

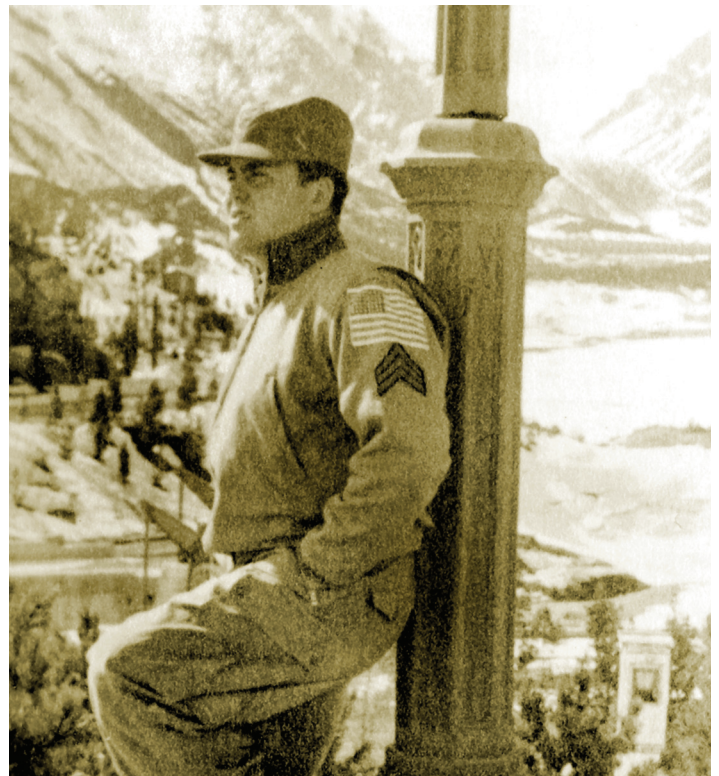
Following their mission in southern France, Team Lafayette went on to operations in Italy. There he participated in 21 air operations dropping leaflets while working as a “Bundle Kicker.” Following his service in

the OSS and World War II, he became one of the first Green Berets, and then served with the CIA until the early 1980s.

Civitella was helped by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, Civil Affairs Branch historian, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, to fill out the necessary paperwork and prove Civitella’s military service in France during World War II.

“I provided Caesar with copies of the after action report of OSS Operational Group Lafayette and some supporting documentation. Then it was up to Caesar to submit the application,” said Sacquety. “The French did come back for more information regarding his operation. At that time, I submitted a letter to them saying that he was a member of Lafayette, which parachuted into southern France on August 29, 1944, in support of Operation Dragoon. Caesar was there, he did it, and earned the right for the award.”

Revered in the special operations community, Civitella was presented the U.S. Special Operations Command Bull Simons Award for his outstanding and dedicated service to Special Operations May 19, 2008.



Sgt. Caesar Civitella is seen here in World War II. Civitella was part of a Office of Strategic Services operational group. Civitella received the French Legion of Honor July 14, for his help in liberating France. Courtesy photo.



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS

SOCOM intelligence officer receives coveted Galileo Award

By Mike Bottoms
USSOCOM Public Affairs

Sometimes bureaucracies stifle innovation from the bottom. The Galileo Awards competition was created within the intelligence community to help bring innovative ideas directly to its senior leaders. In fact, the Director of National Intelligence, James R. Clapper, reviews the winning entries.

Winning this year's competition along with two others is a U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) intelligence officer Bryon Mushrush. A member of USSOCOM for about a year, he is also a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College School of Advanced Military Studies.

"The foundational concepts and research for the paper were developed during my year at the Army School for Advanced Military Studies," Mushrush said. "There I was exposed to and able to do deeper research into system theory and complexity science principles."

The Galileo Award competition is an annual program designed to promote excellence in the intelligence community by encouraging innovative ideas to help shape the future of U.S. intelligence. Two panels of intelligence experts judge the submissions anonymously and select up to three winners. The theme for the 2015 competition was "Managing Risk: Harnessing Strategic Direction in Tactical Times."

Mushrush's submission is entitled "Improved Warning through Complex Adaptive Analytic Teams." In total there were 46 papers submitted. Of the 46 papers, ten advanced to the second round where the judges identified three winning papers, six finalist papers and one paper of interest. Mushrush's essay was one of the three winning papers.

The work and research put into of the winning essay has opened some significant doors for him professionally and he hopes to put his concept of non-traditional analyst teams into practice across the intelligence community.

"It's still early, but the paper and award have started to allow me to make a lot of connections and experiences throughout the intelligence community, DoD, and within SOCOM that I wouldn't have otherwise," said Mushrush. "In the last month I've been able to meet and discuss the paper with Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and



Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper (left) presents the Galileo Award for innovation to USSOCOM intelligence officer Bryon Mushrush. Courtesy photo.

members of his staff, members of the Defense Warning Network, brief staff members of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, a representative from Defense Advanced Research Project Agency, a DIA analytic team trying to test analytic best practices, and SOCOM's J2, Army Brig. Gen. Gary Johnston."

Mushrush continued, "I hope moving forward to be able to use winning the award to work with others to build on the ideas of more flexible analytic teams that cross traditional functional boundaries and incorporate new technologies to make them more adaptive and responsive to the needs of our customers (policy makers and military commanders)."

Mushrush and his wife Haley were invited to Director of National Intelligence Headquarters in Washington D.C. where he received the award from Director Clapper June 28.

"Being selected as having a winning paper is a very humbling experience. There are a lot of people thinking and working on innovating and improving how intelligence is conducted within the community. I'm extremely thankful for my family, especially my wife Haley, the support to let me focus on research despite the disruption going to school caused," Mushrush said. "Honestly, I'm still in a bit of shock over winning. When I wrote the paper I thought I had an interesting concept and was just hoping for some people to read it and generate discussion. All that said, the award means that people did listen and now I get to be part of the work to put the ideas into practice."



U.S. Army
Staff Sgt. Matthew V. Thompson
1st Special Forces Group (Airborne)

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

Air Force special tactics students swim the length of the pool with their hands and feet bound during a class before scuba training at Hurlburt Field, Florida, June 29. The class familiarizes trainees with the basics of water operations. The trainees perform tasks such as tying knots underwater, staying afloat without their arms and hands, and using snorkeling gear. Photo by Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.

