



TIP OF THE SPEAR



**PRESIDENT OBAMA SAYS THANK YOU
TO U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND**

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



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



President Obama visits USSOCOM ... 32

Tip of the Spear

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(Cover) President Barack Obama made a historic visit to U.S. Special Operations Command Dec. 6, on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., to say thank you to the men and women of the command for their efforts in combating terrorism during his presidency. (Above) U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commander USSOCOM reads remarks as President Obama, U.S. Army Gen. Joseph Votel, commander U.S. Central Command and retired U.S. Navy Adm. Eric Olson, former USSOCOM commander listen in the headquarters Wargame Center, Dec. 6. Photos by Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.

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15 years later: First Airmen in Afghanistan reflect on initial entry

*By U.S. Air Force Capt. Katrina Cheesman and Senior Airman Ryan Conroy
24th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

On Oct. 14, 2001, the first Airmen stepped foot into Afghanistan with the mission to topple the Taliban.

The rubble of the twin towers was still smoldering and rescue crews continued working through the devastation of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, when special tactics set out to help liberate the Afghan people, alongside U.S. Army Special Forces teams and Afghan Northern Alliance fighters.

“Everyone wants a seat on the airplane to get into the game,” said Bart Decker, a retired combat controller who was one of the first Airmen in Afghanistan.

Less than a month after the terrorist attacks, combat controllers were tasked to survey and run an airfield, Karshi-Khanabad (K2) Air Base in Uzbekistan, which served as the rally point for special operations forces before the invasion of Afghanistan.

“Controlling the airfield at K2 was vitally important to running C-17 (Globemaster IIIs) of personnel and supplies and building up the base,” Decker said.

Special tactics’ secondary mission was to lead combat search and rescue teams paired with the 160th MH-47 aircraft and crew, establishing teams that would be responsible for the northern part of Afghanistan as part of Task Force Dagger, according to retired Chief Master Sgt. Calvin Markham, the first Airman in Afghanistan.

The final mission was to provide air and ground interface for Army Special Forces teams, attach to CIA teams in Afghanistan, and link up with the Northern Alliance. Air Force combat controllers were part of the first three special forces teams on the ground in Afghanistan. The use of precise air power would hopefully gain the trust of the ANA, a crucial relationship in the war against the Taliban, Markham said.

“It was unclear what we would encounter, and how we would get to our objective. When we met the (special forces) team, it wasn’t that in-depth of a briefing,” said U.S. Air Force Maj. Mike Sciortino, another one of the first combat controllers in Afghanistan who is now assigned to the 31st



U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Bart Decker and other Airmen used unconventional methods of transportation during Afghanistan operations. Riding horses along with Northern Alliance forces provided an interface between ground forces and air power. Courtesy photo.

Surgical Operations Squadron at Aviano Air Base, Italy. “It was like, this is our team, we are going to meet up with the warlord Gen. Dostum, and be attached to his guys.”

General Abdul Rashid Dostum, the leader of the ANA, had a fierce reputation amongst his fighters, and his support contributed to the good working relationship between the Americans and the Afghan fighters; he was known to say that he would rather lose 100 of his men than one of the Americans, according to Sciortino, because they brought supplies and airpower.

“The Afghan fighters are men just like us and wanted the same end state – defeat the Taliban,” Markham said. “Leaders of the Northern Alliance gave their lives to keep our team alive in every combat situation we got into. ... Truly honorable fighters and men.”

Besides the challenges of unknown territory, fluid intelligence, and language barriers, a few special operators faced an unexpected test: riding horses.

“It was the wild, wild west,” Sciortino said. “When we first got in, they said we were probably going to ride horses ... I had never ridden a horse before. I was like, ‘Are these guys serious?’”

They were serious. With only four of the Americans having previous riding experience, Sciortino's crash course on horseback riding was an eight-hour trek through the night, all uphill through mountainous narrow passes.

"There were only 34 Americans on horseback out of all the SOF teams that were there," said Decker, whose iconic photo pictured him riding a horse into Afghanistan with the Northern Alliance. "It was not as glamorous as it looked."

The horses had wooden saddles, which were loose and slid left and right as they rode into Northern Afghanistan. Still, this unconventional mode of transportation made sense to the special operators, as it permitted effective, low-profile transportation in the rugged terrain.

"Looking back, it was the best means for travel because some of those places we went would have been non-permissive to even motorcycles," Decker said.

Decker, Sciortino and their special forces team were on horseback for 10 days, with the objective of reaching the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif, and engaging the enemy.

"Everyone was all in, 100 percent," Sciortino said of his teammates. "Everyone was willing to do whatever it took to complete our objective, go get the folks that did this to our country ... and we were going to do it to the end. A lot of us didn't know if we were going to make it back."

To Decker, he said the pairing of teams just made sense.

"Overall, the special forces Soldier is a great Soldier, but we know air ... we know it better than anyone else," Decker said. "Combining us on their team proved to be an incredibly lethal combination for al-Qaida and Taliban forces as we moved throughout Afghanistan to liberate the country in 49 days."

In one particular battle, Markham called in a danger-close B-52 Stratofortress strike that eliminated thousands of Taliban fighters massing on the southern frontline of Bagram Airfield.

"We were about to be overrun, and we had a B-52 in the pattern with 'dumb bombs' loaded," Markham recalled. "The crew took the steps necessary to find the way to 'yes' and calculate a danger-close bomb run that would knock out the entire front line of the Taliban."

This one bombing mission turned the tide of the battle and war, according to Markham, pushing what remained of the Taliban south to Kabul. The ANA then mounted an offensive that pushed the enemy force to Kabul over the next two days.

"This was a huge morale booster not only for us, but the Northern Alliance as well," Markham said. "Through ground-controlled air strikes, we had built credibility with

our Northern Alliance force and brought them confidence with the right strikes, we could defeat the Taliban on the front line."

Once the coalition force established a front line at Bagram, combat controllers were able to direct air drops of food, water and blankets; these supplies were distributed by the ANA to the Afghan people to continue forging stronger alliances.

At the start of the war, the special operators were given an expected timeline of six months to accomplish their mission, according to Markham. In the end, partly due to the joint cohesion of the special operations teams, they accomplished their mission in less than two months.

"The American people should know that we had a goal, and we fulfilled it," Decker said.

These initial-response Airmen rotated home after 90 days in theater.

"Everyone came together to make it happen. No one service or agency could have done this alone," Markham said. "Combat control just brought a tool to the fight to aid in the elimination of Taliban forces on the front line with extreme violence."

Fifteen years later, the brotherhood that was built lives today. Special tactics Airmen today continue to be linked into all services and agencies on the battlefield, operating as a joint force across multiple domains on a global scale.

"If you look at history, and how we can do better in the future, it's got to be the joint world, all four services coming together, and having our leaders not forget what they learned on the battlefield," Markham said.



Now retired Chief Master Sgt. Calvin Markham during the early days of operations in Afghanistan. Courtesy photo.



SOF AROUND THE WORLD

SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – KOREA

U.S. Air Force combat controllers assigned to the 1st Special Operations Squadron, 320th Special Tactics Squadron and members of the Republic of Korea (ROK) 255th Special Operations Squadron, pull security and establish a line of communication at Kunsan Air Base, Republic of Korea, Oct. 22. Members from the 320th STS and 1st SOS worked with the ROK 255th SOS to enhance U.S. and ROK Air Force special operations forces' capabilities. They conducted infiltration methods, jump clearing team operations, airfield establishment, aircraft control and close air support familiarization.

Air Commandos, South Koreans exercise combined interoperability

Story and photos by

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Colville McFee

8th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

The 353rd Special Operations Group conducted joint, combined exchange training at Kunsan Air Base, Republic of Korea from Oct. 13-26.

Airmen from 320th Special Tactics Squadron and 1st Special Operations Squadron worked with the Republic of Korea 255th Special Operations Squadron to enhance U.S. and ROK Air Force special operations forces' ability to conduct infiltration methods, jump clearing team operations, airfield establishment, aircraft control and close air support familiarization.

Also known as Joint Combined Exchange Training or a JCET, these exercises are designed to build partnerships and interoperability among special operations forces.



A member 353rd Special Operations Group rests during the joint combined exchange training at Kunsan Air Base, Republic of Korea from Oct. 13-26.



U.S. Air Force combat controllers assigned to the 1st Special Operations Squadron, 320th Special Tactics Squadron and members of Republic of Korea 255th Special Operations Squadron, pull security and establish a line of communication at Kunsan Air Base, Republic of Korea, Oct. 22.



SOF AROUND THE WORLD SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – KOREA



Soldiers from 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne) receive a safety brief with the 32nd Republic of Korea Special Forces (ROKSF) Battalion prior to starting the last 40 miles of a 250 mile road march. A team of 10 Soldiers participated in a 12-day, 250-mile trek from Mungyeong to Iksan, home of 7th ROKSF Brigade. This is the first year that U.S. Service members have participated in the event with the ROKSF.

One mile no sweat, 250 miles better yet

*Story and photos by U.S. Army Maj. Christina Wright
Special Operations Command Korea*

It is cold, damp and overcast with two hours to go until push off. Soldiers take the time to eat lunch while they wait to have their feet checked by the medic. A kinesiology tape and moleskin configuration is applied to every foot, preparing them for the final 40 miles of a 250-mile road march.

Twelve days earlier, 10 U.S. Service members from 19th Special Forces Group began the foot march alongside their partners from the 7th Republic of Korea, Special Forces Brigade. The trek has been conducted on and off over the past thirty years by Republic of Korea Special

Forces units. Unlike any other training event, it was developed to increase the capabilities and push the limits of the ROKSF.

This was the first time that U.S. Soldiers participated in trek alongside their ROKSF counterparts. For Lt. Col. Jay Kim, commander of 32nd ROKSF Battalion, it allowed a deep bond between the U.S. and ROK to be forged.

“During this combined training, we have been able to push our limits to achieve a strong bond which has made us family. That helps to strengthen the alliance,” said Kim. “The U.S. Soldiers have a positive attitude, no matter what.”

The trek took the 180 participants over mountainous terrain, from Mungyeong to Iksan, home of 7th Republic of Korea, Special Forces Brigade.

“It has been tough, but mainly because of the mountains,” said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Donald Bills, 19th Special Forces Group, from Dallas, Texas. “Here it is all mountains with only a streamer to mark the trail, some of it we have been bear crawling up steep inclines.”

Bills had six months of Korean language training which makes him the only member of the team able to communicate without the need of an interpreter.

“I don’t listen to music when I am walking,” said Bills. “It’s a great opportunity to talk to my Korean counterparts and learn about each other’s culture.”

The 12-day trek took place mostly at night with multiple check points along the route allowing medics to tend to feet and giving participants time for a brief rest. Initially, U.S. Army Staff Sgt. James McMillan, of Dallas, Texas would use this time to check the route ahead but after a week he stopped.

“At the beginning, I wanted to know how many hills and how far we are going,” said McMillan. “Days seven and eight you stop caring about that. You just think to yourself ‘It’s just another mountain to climb over.’”

He says its mental toughness that gets you through. And that is something both the U.S and ROK soldiers have

in common.

“Mental toughness is the key component across the board,” said McMillan. “We may have different weapons and tactics, [but] our mental toughness and brotherhood are the same. Our ROK brothers have the same sense of pride that we do. They are not going to let anybody outdo them.”

For the past six months the team of U.S. Soldiers has been training and working side by side with their ROK counterparts. The trek was planned solely for the ROK and was not mandatory for the American Soldiers. U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Colton Hill was not going to let his Korean brethren face the challenge alone.

“It did not sound like fun, but it was the facing the challenge together that motivated us,” said Hill. “It would have been in poor taste to sit back while our Korean brothers completed this task by themselves.”

Being the example and caring are the core fundamentals of a strong Alliance.

“It is easy to talk the talk. We wanted to walk the walk,” said Hill. “We needed to be with them to show there is solidarity and commitment between United States Special Forces and Republic of Korea Special Forces.”



(Left) Soldiers from 19th Special Forces Group present Lt. Col. Jay Kim, commander of 32nd Republic of Korea Special Forces Battalion with their team flag. The team participated in a 12-day, 250-mile trek from Mungyeong to Iksan, home of 7th ROKSF Brigade. (Above) A medic applies kinesiology tape and moleskin to the foot belonging to a Solider from 19th Special Forces Group, getting ready to complete the final 40 miles of a 250-mile march.



USSOCOM images of 2016



Members of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) conduct a small boat casting exercise with the Indian Army Special Forces at Fort Rilea, Ore., Jan. 26. The training is to prepare Soldiers to properly maneuver through open waters and conduct a beach landing. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Codie Mendenhall.



(Above) U.S. Airmen assigned to the 352d Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron perform a shift change under the wing of an MC-130J Commando II, Jan. 21, on RAF Mildenhall, England. Photo by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Chris Sullivan. (Left) Members of 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), and Indian Army Special Forces conduct a helocasting exercise at Solo Point, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., Jan. 21. The training prepared Soldiers to be inserted into water and make a beach landing. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Codie Mendenhall.



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



(Top left) Former USSOCOM Commander U.S. Army Gen. Joseph L. Votel rigging up for a parachute jump Feb. 19, on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. Votel would relinquish command to U.S. Army Gen. Raymond Thomas III March 30, and become the U.S. Central Command commander. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence. (Bottom left) Petty Officer 1st Class (SEAL) Trevor Thompson, a member of the U.S.

Navy Parachute Team "The Leap Frogs," flies the American flag during a sunrise training demonstration at Homestead Air Reserve Base, Feb 25. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class (SEAL) Trevor Thompson. (Above) Marine Raiders from Company F, 2d Marine Raider Battalion, honed their skills shooting 60 mm mortars during a company collective exercise in Fort Jackson, S.C., Feb. 25. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Donovan Lee.



President Barack Obama presents the Medal of Honor to Senior Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Edward C. Byers Jr. during a ceremony Feb. 29, at the White House. Byers received the Medal of Honor for his actions during a hostage rescue operation in December 2012. Photo by Oscar Sosa.



(Above) MC-130J Commando IIs assigned to the 17th Special Operations Squadron fly in five-ship formation Feb. 17, off the coast of Okinawa, Japan. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Peter Reft. (Right) U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III assumed command of U.S. Special Operations Command from U.S. Army Gen. Joseph L. Votel Mar. 30, during a change-of-command ceremony at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. Thomas is the eleventh commander of USSOCOM. Votel became the commander of U.S. Central Command. Photo by Mike Bottoms.

Tip of the Spear



A U.S. Army UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter with Bravo Company, 2nd of the 147th Assault Helicopter Battalion, a Kentucky Army National Guard unit based out of Frankfort, lands during local area operations in preparation for Fuerzas Comando 2016, May 1, in Ancon, Peru. Fuerzas Comando is a multinational special operations forces competition. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Kimberly S. Hill.



Above left) U.S. Air Force special tactics Airmen assigned to the 24th Special Operations Wing conduct a freefall jump from a U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook assigned to 5th Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., during Exercise Emerald Warrior 16 over Eglin Range, Fla., May 7. Still frame from video by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Gregory Brook.

(Above) A Special Warfare Combat-craft Crewman fires a .50 caliber machine gun from a rigid-hulled inflatable boat May 25, during International Special Operations Forces Week held in Tampa. Photo by Tech Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.



(Left) Chief Master Sgt. William "Ryan" Speck graduated Army Ranger School at Fort Benning, Ga., April 22. Speck is the first Air Force Chief to graduate from the Army's premier leadership course. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.



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 U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Kristine Dreyer.



(Above) 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 July 14, Bastille or National Day in France, at the Tampa Bay Automobile Museum, in Pinellas Park, Fla. Photo by Mike Bottoms.

(Left) U.S. Air Force 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.



Combined special operations forces conduct fast-rope training with U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Regiment forces with Special Operations Command South on July 21, during Chilean exercise Southern Star held in Antofagasta, Chile. Two MH-60 Blackhawks provided combined forces an insertion platform during simulated training scenarios. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Osvaldo Equite.

Combat Control School students assigned to the 352nd Battlefield Airman Training Squadron are ambushed at their drop-off point during a tactics field training exercise at Camp Mackall, N.C., Aug. 3. The field exercise is a culmination of tactics learned in the first year of the combat controller pipeline; which entails weapons handling, team leader procedures, patrol base operations, troop leading and small unit tactics under fire in one mission. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.



USSOCOM held a remembrance event for the Battle of Mogadishu honoring the men who died Oct. 3 and 4, 1993 in Somalia. In the special operations community, the Mogadishu Mile is a symbol of dedication and perseverance. Teams participated in the competition that combined memory exercise, a short run to the small-arms range, a shooting competition and ended with a 5k run in boots and combat uniforms to the Special Operations Forces Memorial. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.



AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Noah Mitchell helps U.S. Army Sgt. Derick Bosley negotiate an obstacle Oct. 27, during the 2016 Army Best Medic Competition at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. The two were named winners of the competition during an Oct. 28 awards ceremony. Bosley and Mitchell, both Army Rangers, represented U.S. Army Special Operations Command in the annual event. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Jose Torres.

With short-notice shakeup, Rangers become Army's 2016 best medics

*By Sean Kimmons
Army News Service*

With only a week's notice, U.S. Army Sgt. Derick Bosley found out that he would be competing in a 72-hour contest to name the Army's top combat medics.

The 33-year-old Ranger paired up with fellow Army Staff Sgt. Noah Mitchell, a fellow Ranger, to compete in the Army's Best Medic Competition, held in the San Antonio area. Both Mitchell's original partner and backup partner had suffered injuries before the

competition began, making them unable to participate.

"I looked at him and said, 'I guess we're going into this and straight winging it,'" Mitchell recalled.

As Rangers continually train at a high standard, Mitchell, 26, said he had no worries about the abilities of his newest teammate.

"I expect and know what he can do because he's an NCO in Ranger Regiment medicine," he said. "There's no dropping the ball because we know that's just not what we do."

The quick change couldn't have worked any better.

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With basically a second alternate as a teammate, the duo grabbed first place after representing the Army Special Operations Command in the annual contest, in which expert combat medics from across the service competed against each other in several physically and mentally demanding tasks.

This year, more than 30 two-person teams vied for the competition's coveted award, dedicated to Command Sgt.

Maj. Jack L. Clark, the Army Medical Command's former senior enlisted leader who focused on the vital role medics play in the Army.

After battling the stifling heat and rough terrain of the Texas countryside, Mitchell and Bosley were able to claim the award.

"There was never a doubt in my mind," Bosley said. "It's either we win this, or we're coming back next year to win. It was one or the other."

That doesn't mean the contest, tailored after the Best Ranger Competition, was a walk in the park, they said.

"It was way harder than we expected," Bosley said,

adding that some parts of the competition really tested their skills. "There was a lot of stiff competition, with some creative medics out there."

The only certainty in war is that we will take casualties. And that's where you come in -- the combat medic.

— *Command Sgt. Maj. Gerald Ecker*

Sgt. Jarrod Sheets and Sgt. Matthew Evans from the 10th Mountain Division took second place in the competition, while Capt. Jeremiah Beck and Sgt. Seyoung Lee from the 2nd Infantry Division secured third.

Once those teams were honored, Command Sgt. Maj.

Gerald Ecker, the Army Medical Command's senior enlisted leader, addressed all of the medics during Friday's awards ceremony.

"The only certainty in war is that we will take casualties. And that's where you come in -- the combat medic," he said. "You are the front line."

In the future, he said that expert medics will be needed even more as multi-domain concepts emerge and change the battlefield.

"We're going to be fighting in the unknown," he said. "Thank God we have expert and dedicated medics such as you. That's why this is a very proud day for Army medicine."



U.S. Army Sgt. Derick Bosley negotiates an obstacle, Oct. 27, during the 2016 Army Best Medic Competition at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Bosley and teammate Staff Sgt. Noah Mitchell were named winners of the competition during an Oct. 28, awards ceremony. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Jose Torres.



75th Ranger Regiment celebrates 75 proud, historic years in 2017

By 75th Ranger Regiment Public Affairs

Modern Rangers trace their lineage to World War II when Maj. William O. Darby stood up 1st Ranger Battalion June 8, 1942 at Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland. The 3rd and 4th Ranger Battalions were activated and trained by Col. Darby in Africa near the end of the Tunisian Campaign. 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions participated in the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Omaha Beach Normandy. The 6th Ranger Battalion was the first American force to return to the Philippines with the mission of destroying coastal defense guns, radio stations, and other means of defense communications in Leyte Harbor.

The 75th Infantry Regiment (5307th Composite Unit) was the first United States ground combat force to meet the enemy on the continent of Asia during World War II. It was during the campaigns in the China-Burma-India Theater that it became known as “Merrill’s Marauders,” after its commander, Maj. Gen. Frank D. Merrill.

The outbreak of hostilities in Korea, June 1950 again signaled the need for Rangers. The first cycle completed their training Nov. 13, 1950. The 1st, 2nd, and 4th Ranger Companies prepared for overseas shipment. The 3rd Ranger Company prepared to assist in training the second cycle, which consisted of the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th Ranger Companies. The Rangers went into battle by land, sea or air.

With the growing United States involvement in the



Photo illustration courtesy of the 75th Ranger Regiment.

Vietnam War, Rangers were again called to serve their country. The 75th Infantry was reorganized once more on Jan. 1, 1969, as a parent regiment under the Combat Arms Regimental System. Fifteen separate Ranger Companies were formed from this reorganization. Thirteen served proudly in Vietnam until inactivation on Aug. 15, 1974.

The outbreak of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War prompted the Department of the Army to be concerned about the need for a light mobile force that could be moved quickly to any trouble spot in the world. On Jan. 25, 1974, Headquarters, United States Army Forces Command, published General Orders 127, directing the activation of the 1st Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry, with an effective date of Jan. 31, 1974. On July 1, 1974, 1st Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry, parachuted into Fort Stewart, Georgia.

2nd Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry soon followed with activation on Oct. 1, 1974. These elite units eventually established headquarters at Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia and Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, respectively.

3rd Battalion, 75th Infantry (Ranger), and Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 75th Infantry (Ranger) received their colors on Oct. 3, 1984 at Fort Benning, Georgia.

On Feb. 3, 1986, World War II battalions and the Korean War lineage and honors were consolidated and assigned by tradition to the 75th Infantry Regiment. This marked the first time that an organization of this size had been officially recognized as the parent headquarters of the Ranger Battalions.

After our nation was viciously attacked on Sept. 11, 2001, Rangers were called upon to lead the way in the Global War on Terror. Due to the changing nature of warfare and the need for an agile and sustainable Ranger force, the Regimental Special Troops Battalion (Provisional) was activated in July 2006 and made a permanent part of the 75th Ranger Regiment Oct. 16, 2007.

The 75th Ranger Regiment continues to take the fight to the enemy, in denied areas, every day, living the Ranger Creed.

Rangers Lead the Way!

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brad Fowers poses with Afghan fighters and warlords who opposed the Taliban. Fowers served on one of the first Special Forces detachments from the U.S. Army Special Operations Command's 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) to arrive in Afghanistan following 9/11. Their mission was to destroy the Taliban regime and deny Al-Qaida sanctuary in Afghanistan. Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brad Fowers.

Green Beret reflects on necessity of strong relationships with local allies

*By Elizabeth M. Collins
Defense Media Activity*

Green Berets are historically some of the Army's toughest Soldiers. They've been to hell and back since the days before the beret, since World War II when small teams of Soldiers conducted unconventional

warfare behind enemy lines, often under the umbrella of the Office of Strategic Services. Special operators fought guerrilla warfare in Europe and the Pacific and later in Korea and Vietnam. (President John F. Kennedy authorized the green beret in 1961.)

During Operation Desert Storm, Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf described Special Forces as "the eyes and

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ears” of the conventional forces and the “glue that held the coalition together.” Green Berets in Afghanistan were instrumental in the fall of the Taliban. They’ve also provided humanitarian assistance, trained indigenous forces and performed special reconnaissance missions around the world.

Among the most essential components of such missions is relationship-building, the working with local allies to overthrow corrupt regimes like the Taliban. It involves embedding in local militia units, sharing their accommodations, eating at their communal meals. It involves drinking tea, taking horse rides along steep mountain trails. It’s sharing their hardships, bathing in icy rivers, and sleeping in a cave or under a truck in the mountains in freezing November weather.

“I find the best way to start out is, even if you don’t know a language fluently, showing an effort that you want to learn the language,” said U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brad Fowers, a Special Forces Soldier who served on one of the first Special Forces teams to go into Afghanistan in 2001. “Picking up on cultural nuances, you know, the placing of a hand on the chest, head gestures, picking up on all of these things and kind of giving that back when you communicate with a partner force just shows a lot of respect.”

Building trust, whether it’s by showing local fighters they can rely on America, that there will be bombs, ammunition and humanitarian supplies to support them, he said, “is everything. I think that was really highlighted in Afghanistan. ... You have a handful of Americans there. At any time, that town can fold on you. You only have so much ammunition. You’re just as reliant on them as they are on you.”

Fowers noted that, for the missions they undertook, they packed only what they could carry. Yes, there were supply drops, but most of their weapons were locally procured, such as Soviet machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades. In fact, the Afghans taught the Americans a few things about surviving in the harsh Hindu Kush mountains and jerry-rigging their gear.

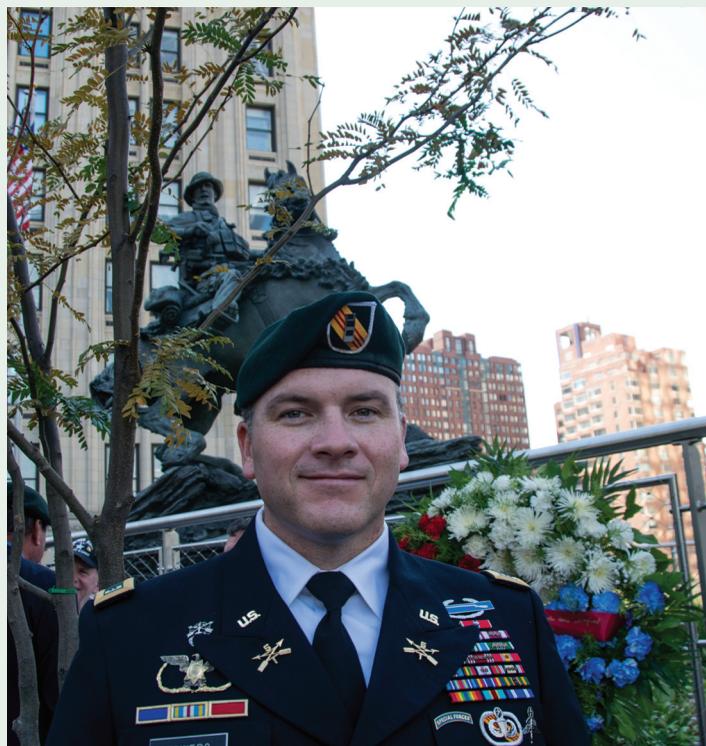
“Their field craft was amazing,” he explained. “They could make a vehicle last for months, [even] with the environment they put it through and the harsh treatment of it. I learned a lot from them on vehicle maintenance. They would take out the air filters and blow it out with the exhaust pipe or things like that. ... They definitely know how to survive in their environment.

“We needed them as much as they needed us. It was a pretty neat experience to go through. I was very surprised at how much support came from the small villages. ... They definitely put their best foot forward and helped us in any way they could.”

Never, he said, underestimate the power of will. It can overcome the severest privation, the harshest oppression. “You show me a population with a will and I’ll show you a population that can overcome anything.

“That’s the biggest part of it: The people have to want what they’re after. It doesn’t matter how much money or equipment or training you throw at a partner nation. If they don’t have the will, it’s not going to be successful. They have to have the will for it.

“In ‘01, the Afghans definitely had the will. They were ready to go against the Taliban with pick axes and whatever they could find in the tool shed. Of course, giving them some equipment and training goes a long way, but it’s all for naught if they don’t have the will to fight.”



U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brad Fowers poses in front of De Oppresso Liber, or the Horse Soldier, a 16-foot bronze statue honoring the work of Special Forces Soldiers in Afghanistan at the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom in the last months of 2001. Recently rededicated, the statue stands near ground zero in New York. Fowers served as a junior weapons sergeant on Operational Detachment A 572 in 2001. Photo by Cheryle Rivas.



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

NOSWC provides essential element of mission success

*By Petty Officer 2nd Class Richard Miller
CNSWC Public Affairs*

From the jagged mountains of Afghanistan, to the blistering deserts of Iraq, to the thick, humid jungles of Southeast Asia; Naval Special Warfare operates in any climate. As weather conditions change, missions adapt with them. A small community of weather professionals dedicates their time to ensuring operators are ready for anything nature can throw at them: the Naval Oceanography Special Warfare Center.

“We provide the SEAL teams with the information to use the environmental conditions to our advantage or to the enemy’s disadvantage by dictating what time we go, what gear we use, what weapons we use, and what route we take,” said Petty Officer 1st Class Bryan Stone, a

forecaster assigned to Special Reconnaissance Team ONE.

NOSWC, a subset of the joint Meteorology and Oceanography community, provides up-to-date weather forecasts from their headquarters in Coronado, California, as well as from personnel deployed with teams around the world.

“We’re within Naval Special Warfare Command itself, we’re within all the groups, and we have detachments with the Special Reconnaissance Teams and SEAL Delivery Vehicles,” said U.S. Navy Lt. Michelle Watts, NOSWC’s operations and training officer.

NOSWC plays a crucial role in the planning of NSW operations.

“The adversaries use weather to their advantage,” said Watts. “METOC is becoming more important in the execution of these missions.”



A forecaster attached to the Naval Oceanography Special Warfare Center (NOSWC) deploys an Unmanned Underwater Vehicle into the San Diego Bay, Calif., April 16. Photo courtesy of NOSWC.

Naval Special Warfare operators deploy in locations where enemies are more familiar with the terrain and weather conditions, making it even more important for NOSWC to provide accurate information and an advantage over adversaries.

“We have to think about what the upper level winds are doing, what the currents are doing, what the seas are doing, and what kind of terrain the beach is,” said Stone. “Are they going to get on the beach and sink right away? Is it muddy terrain? Are there coral reefs a mile out? We have to think about the angles of approach. You don’t have to think about these things on a carrier. NOSWC is far more detailed and you have to really think about how every little aspect will be impacted.”

Constantly-changing weather conditions mean NSW personnel have to modify their plans on the fly.

“Cloud coverage, thunderstorms, and dust storms have large impacts,” said Watts. “We’ll forecast them to the best of our ability and then we can shift the schedule as needed.”

NOSWC personnel work long, irregular hours to provide up-to-date and thorough forecasts.

“There’s a lot of work when you’re deployed,” said Petty Officer 1st Class Melissa Ortiz. “It’s a heavy workload. There’s a lot to be done and a lot to focus on.”

Hours of preparation go into METOC briefs and deployed personnel have to get information out with a concise, easy-to-understand delivery.

“It takes hours to put these briefs together, but we talk for maybe 30 seconds,” said Stone. “If you’re putting together a complete top-to-bottom brief, it can take up to four hours at a minimum. You have to put it into a simple format.”

METOC personnel go through a lengthy training process to qualify to work with Naval Special Warfare.

“It takes several months for us to get qualified,” said Stone. “You don’t know where you’re going to go, so you have to be good at weather regimes for the entire globe. You can be deployed to Europe, Africa, the Middle East, or the Pacific. You have to be ready for entirely different weather patterns, different seasons, and different

hemispheres.”

Stone found an interest in working with NSW early in his Navy career.

“I wanted to see what this side of the Navy was like,” said Stone. “It’s so glorified in the movies, media, gossip, and I wanted to see what it was really like. It sounded really cool and I was curious, so I screened while I was in C school.”

Stone met NSW METOC personnel during school, who helped open the door for him to participate in the program.

“When I was in C school, the NSW METOC personnel came to recruit,” said Stone. “They didn’t go into too many details about what exactly we’d be doing and the high tempo we’d experience while with these NSW commands, but everyone had nothing but positive things to say about this community which resonated with me.”

NSW’s unique culture creates a challenging, yet fulfilling work environment.

“Everything is rapid pace,” said Stone. “You’d better

be able to learn on the fly and ask the right questions. This was my first station as a petty officer 1st class so it was doubly tough to learn operationally and administratively. I really love the ‘big boy rules’ that exist here. Everyone is treated as adults and trusted to make the correct choices with little supervision. It’s very different from the fleet and I thrive in this type of

environment. I’m heading back to the fleet on shore duty and will miss it here.”

The METOC community plans to develop new capabilities to continue providing the most accurate forecasts.

“Right now the focus is on Unmanned Underwater Vehicles,” said Watts. “We want to receive the same level of training for underwater capabilities that they’ve built with Scan Eagle Unmanned Aerial Vehicles.”

As technology evolves, so will NOSWC’s responsibilities. Adversaries continue to find new ways to use their environment to their advantage. Rain or shine, NOSWC works tirelessly to ensure NSW keeps an advantage in all conditions.

You don't know where you're going to go, so you have to be good at weather regimes for the entire globe. You can be deployed to Europe, Africa, the Middle East, or the Pacific. You have to be ready for entirely different weather patterns, different seasons, and different hemispheres.

— Petty Officer 1st Class Bryan Stone



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein (left) and Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, the Air Force Special Operations Command commander, unveil the Special Tactics Memorial during a dedication ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla., Oct. 20. The seven-foot bronze statue of a Special Tactics Airman in operational gear is a memorial to past, present and future Special Tactics operators. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Jeffrey Parkinson.

Nation's first Special Tactics memorial unveiled on Hurlburt Field

*By U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy
24th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

A seven-foot tall bronze statue of a Special Tactics Airman in operational gear stands atop a black granite base – a memorial to past, present and future Special Tactics operators.

The nation's first Special Tactics Memorial was unveiled at a dedication ceremony with more than 800 people present, presided over by Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. David Goldfein, at the Hurlburt Field Air Park, Florida, Oct. 20.

“This memorial serves to close a loop in our airpark,” said Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command. “As Special Tactics is the connective tissue between the ground and the air, this memorial links our past to our present and our future.”

The memorial, according to Col. Michael Martin, commander of the 24th Special Operations Wing, is a physical touchstone of the Special Tactics community's place in history.

“This monument serves as recognition of the battle-hardened operators who defend our nation's freedoms against tyranny and oppression,” said Martin. “The

members who serve within the Special Tactics community are dedicated professionals who work tirelessly to preserve our way of life. This monument represents the valor of those who never wish to highlight themselves – the quiet professionals of Air Force’s ground special operations force.”

Special Tactics, the Air Force’s ground special operations force, has been engaged in every major conflict since 9/11, continuously deployed for more than 5,000 days to more than 73 locations. As a result of their actions in combat, the Special Tactics community has earned the highest number of valorous medals in the Air Force since the Vietnam War.

In the last 40 years, only ten Airmen have received the Air Force Cross, the service’s highest medal it can bestow for valor in combat. Eight of those recipients were Special Tactics Airmen.

Their names are now forever etched into granite of the monument.

“They don’t consider themselves as heroes; they see themselves as Airmen,” Goldfein said. “In this community, uncommon valor is a common virtue.”

In addition to eight Air Force Crosses awarded since the Battle of Mogadishu, Airmen in the community have received 35 Silver Star Medals, 105 Purple Hearts and more than 600 Bronze Star Medals, and hundreds of BSMs with valor.

“In today’s battlefield environment, joint operations is the only way to go,” said U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Joseph Osterman, deputy commander of U.S. Special Operations Command. “Being an infantry guy, I can tell you there’s nothing better than having a Special Tactics Airman around and having a gunship overhead. That changes everything on the ground: a sense of confidence that isn’t really matched by anything else.”

Flanking the statue will be two pedestals with the names of fallen Special Tactics Airmen – 19 Airmen killed in action and eight in training – a recognition of those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

“The costs of war are real, and Special Tactics Airmen understand these costs as well as anyone,” Goldfein said. “The price of admission to this community is higher than most are willing to pay – checks signed with blood and cashed in loved ones’ tears.”

Families of several fallen Special Tactics Airmen were present for the unveiling of the memorial.

“In our line of work, the next day is never a certainty,”

said Martin. “Our Special Tactics community understands that risk and rises to the challenge. Any loss of an Airman is tragic, but we are committed to continuing the legacy of those who gave their lives, and the sacrifice made by our Gold Star families.”

The memorial was conceptualized by Steven Haggett, a 30-year retired chief master sergeant, who served 14 years in Air Force Special Operations Command as a first sergeant and maintenance crew chief. Haggett volunteered to lead the project, from concept to design to final creation.

The memorial was a team effort between many units here, including AFSOC leaders, 1st Special Operations Wing, 1st Special Operations Civil Engineer Squadron, and 823rd Red Horse.

“In more than 30 years of military service, I have not come across a community like Special Tactics: they never asked for anything other than allowing them to do their job. Without complaint – with no regrets,” Haggett said, whose son is a pararescuer. “It was clear to me that a memorial was the least we could do for these Airmen who give everything for their country, and ask for nothing in return. To us, it is the right thing to do.”

After the ceremony, nearly the entire crowd joined the Airmen present for a set of memorial pushups, a Special Tactics tradition that honors fallen comrades.

“I commend you for guarding this, your heritage, as fiercely as you defend our nation,” Goldfein said. “I’ve never been prouder to be an Airman than I am standing here before you on this sacred ground.”



More than 800 Airmen and families attend the Special Tactics Memorial dedication ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla., Oct. 20. Special tactics, the Air Force’s ground special operations force, has been engaged in every major conflict since 9/11, continuously deployed for more than 5,000 days to more than 73 locations. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.



Combat controller continues Special Tactics legacy of valor

By U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy
24th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs

Their mission was to return power to the people of Kabul. But what started as a peaceful venture ended in a 14-hour firefight, with one Airman using airpower to turn the tide of the battle.

Staff Sgt. Keaton Thiem, a combat controller with the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron, ventured out into enemy fire multiple times, controlled 22 aircraft delivering 3,000 pounds of munitions, rescued four joint-partner teammates from sniper fire ... and now, he's receiving the Silver Star Medal.

During a ceremony Nov. 16 here, the vice commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, Maj. Gen. Eugene Haase, presented the nation's third highest medal for gallantry against an armed enemy of the U.S. in combat to Thiem. Thiem's actions occurred when he was deployed with a U.S. Army Special Forces team in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

As a combat controller, Thiem is part of a highly trained special operations force who integrate air power into the special operations battlespace.

"Our Special Tactics heritage is long and distinguished," said Haase. "Gallantry is the epitome of our Special Tactics Airmen every day, along with courage, dedication and selflessness."

On Feb. 22 this year, Thiem and his SOF element, consisting of U.S. Army Special Forces and Afghan partnered forces, made their way to a town in Bagram province, which was in chaos and on the verge of collapse to well-equipped fighters. Their mission – to return electricity to the locals – would bolster the local governance in the face of an overwhelming threat of oppression and violence.

"We pushed in through the mountains ... it was cold and wet, and we walked for four or five hours until we hit our initial point of resistance," said Thiem. "The Taliban had intentionally flooded the fields, forcing us to take one specific route...so they knew we were coming and where we were coming from."

At the first compound, the element's progress was slowed down by accurate and heavy small arms fire and



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Keaton Thiem controls aircraft during a drug/weapons cache clearing mission in Helmand province, Afghanistan. The Silver Star Medal was presented to Thiem, a combat controller with the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron, for using air power to ensure the safety of his 100-plus man SOF element during a 14-hour firefight with no regard for his own personal safety, while deployed with U.S. Army Special Forces in Afghanistan. Courtesy photo.

rocket-propelled grenades. The U.S.-Afghan force intercepted communications indicating the enemy was in a fortified position and using night-vision devices to target them.

Thiem's role began in earnest when two friendly elements were pinned down by withering machine-gun fire, impacting within inches of their position. This was the first of many times Thiem disregarded his own safety to step into enemy fire and relay coordinates to an F-16 Fighting Falcon, which dropped two 500-pound bombs within 35 and 80 meters of friendly positions in order to save his beleaguered teammates.

"Without exposing yourself [to enemy fire], there's really no way to see who is where or what is going on," said Thiem. "It's mass chaos and confusion on the battlefield, and the last thing you want is fratricide."

After eliminating those threats, friendly forces could continue on the offensive until they couldn't advance any further. When preparing to leave, insurgents initiated another complex ambush from fortified positions – this time concentrating heavy fire toward the main friendly formation. Shrapnel and bullets tore through the force, resulting in eight

critically wounded teammates.

“It’s hard to say the fear goes away, because it’s definitely nerve-wracking,” said Thiem. “Having the weight of the situation on your shoulders, disregard for yourself takes over and you do what you have to do to make sure the rest of the team gets out of there.”

In the midst of the chaotic ambush, Thiem led a recovery team into a hail of heavy enemy fire several times to rescue pinned-down Afghan commandos who were separated from the main force. Along with a small group, he made his way through a hail of gunfire in open terrain for 100 meters to locate and account for a separated friendly element before calling in additional airstrikes.

Thiem then controlled six F-16 shows of force, providing critical time and space for friendly forces to maneuver out of the immediate kill zone and scramble to relative safety. After accounting for all friendly forces, Thiem directed another danger-close air strike within 80 meters, which allowed his teammates to regroup.

As the SOF unit worked to gain accountability, four Afghan commando partners were identified as missing. While still receiving sniper fire, Thiem orchestrated air strikes while using ISR aircraft to locate the missing commandos.

Once he located the wounded commandos, Thiem coordinated an U.S. Army AH-64 Apache escort and led a small recovery team 150 meters toward a prepared machine-gun position to recover the wounded commandos. While on the move, Thiem expertly targeted insurgents and controlled two additional 30mm gun runs to cover the team’s movement.

The team was still under fire when Thiem helped carry the wounded teammates on litters 200 meters to the main force, all the while continuing to control circling ISR aircraft and Apache gunships.

“There’s definitely a huge trust in the aircraft overhead, not just the Apaches but all the strike aircraft,” said Thiem. “It’s just a sense that they know exactly what they’re doing up there, and they know exactly what we’re doing ... and they’re going to save us. The Apaches were taking rounds when we were carrying the litter ... those guys are just as heroic as we were on the ground.”

One commando was still unaccounted for so the recovery team ran back out into enemy fire, but were pinned down. Without hesitation, Thiem controlled two more 30mm gun runs and eight rockets to destroy the fortified sniper position, allowing his team to reach the fourth missing Afghan commando and return to the rally point.

Once the fighting started to die down, Thiem focused his

efforts on coordinating medical evacuation lifts for injured forces while continuing to deconflict close air support fires on several other insurgent positions. In the end, Thiem’s actions played a role in suppressing a well-prepared force, supporting local Afghan governance, and returning electricity to the Afghan people

“Our Special Tactics Airmen performed when it mattered the most, on the battlefield,” said Lt. Col. Daniel Magruder, commander of the 22nd STS. “Drawing on their training, they acted without regard for their own safety in order to protect their joint and coalition brothers in arms.”

Three of Thiem’s U.S. Army Special Forces teammates were awarded Silver Star Medals for their valorous actions during the same battle.

“What means the most is when my teammates on the Army side reach out and congratulate me because they were there with me,” said Thiem. “I don’t even have words to explain what I feel when some of them tell me that I saved their lives...it’s humbling.”

In addition to the Silver Star Medal presentation, Haase also presented a Bronze Star with Valor and four AF Combat Action Medals to 22 STS Airmen.

One Airman, while deployed with a U.S. Army SOF team May 7, 2016, eliminated an insider attack in Afghanistan. An enemy in an Afghan police uniform infiltrated the base and began firing on partner-force soldiers. The combat controller covered one of the wounded soldiers with his own body while providing aid, and spotting the attacker, drew his weapon and killed the gunman. He then began to render aid to both wounded and coordinated a medical evacuation – saving the lives of two SOF teammates and five Romanian soldiers.

Additionally, four other Airmen assigned to the 22nd STS were awarded Combat Action Medals, which are presented to Air Force personnel who have been in combat, having been under direct and hostile fire or physically engaging hostile forces with direct and lethal fire in connection with military operations.

This will be the 36th Silver Star Medal awarded to a Special Tactics Airman and only the second Silver Star Medal awarded to a U.S. Airman in support of Operation Freedom’s Sentinel.

“As we recognize the heroic actions of these six men, we remember 135 Special Tactics personnel are in harm’s way as I speak in 35 countries around the world,” Haase said of the Air Force’s ground special operations force. “These six men represent them – and all of us well – as humble, competent and courageous Air Commandos.”



137th Special Ops Wing graduates first special operations MC-12W combat systems officer



U.S. Air Force Second Lt. Brent Webb, graduated from combat systems officer school, Oct. 14, at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla. Webb is the first MC-12W CSO from Will Rogers Air National Guard Base to graduate since the wings transition to a special operations wing. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Andrew LaMoreaux.

**By U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Kasey Phipps
137th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs**

An Airman of the 137th Special Operations Wing became the unit's first organically-grown MC-12W combat systems officer.

Second Lt. Brent Webb graduated, Oct. 14, from the combat systems officer school at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida, making him the first since the wing joined Air Force Special Operations Command.

"I don't really know what to think about being the first," Webb said. "I'm just glad I got the job, finished the school and, now, I'm back to train with the other guys."

Though the 137th SOW has MC-12 pilots and officers who transferred from Beale Air Force Base, California, along with the aircraft, Webb will be the first

from the air refueling wing-turned-special operations wing to serve as a MC-12 CSO.

"The mission itself is just different, coming from refueling under the Air Mobility Command and going to the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance mission of AFSOC," Webb said. "I have a background in aviation, so that helps out."

A native of Weatherford, Oklahoma, Webb began his aviation career in 2001 as a C-130 Hercules loadmaster for the Oklahoma Air National Guard, then transitioned to become a boom operator on the KC-135 Stratotanker.

Webb's wife and son are back in Oklahoma after going to Florida with him for CSO training, but she has some apprehension for his upcoming missions.

"I will be in more remote locations for deployments than what we're used to with the KC-135s and for longer periods of time," Webb said. "My wife is a little nervous about that, but we'll be okay."

Though Webb has not begun flying missions with Airmen in his unit here, he has been through more than a year of training, including officer training school, initial qualification training and mission qualification training.

In initial qualification training, students are taught and tested on general intelligence knowledge and tasks, while mission qualification training educates students on their roles within their unit's specific mission.

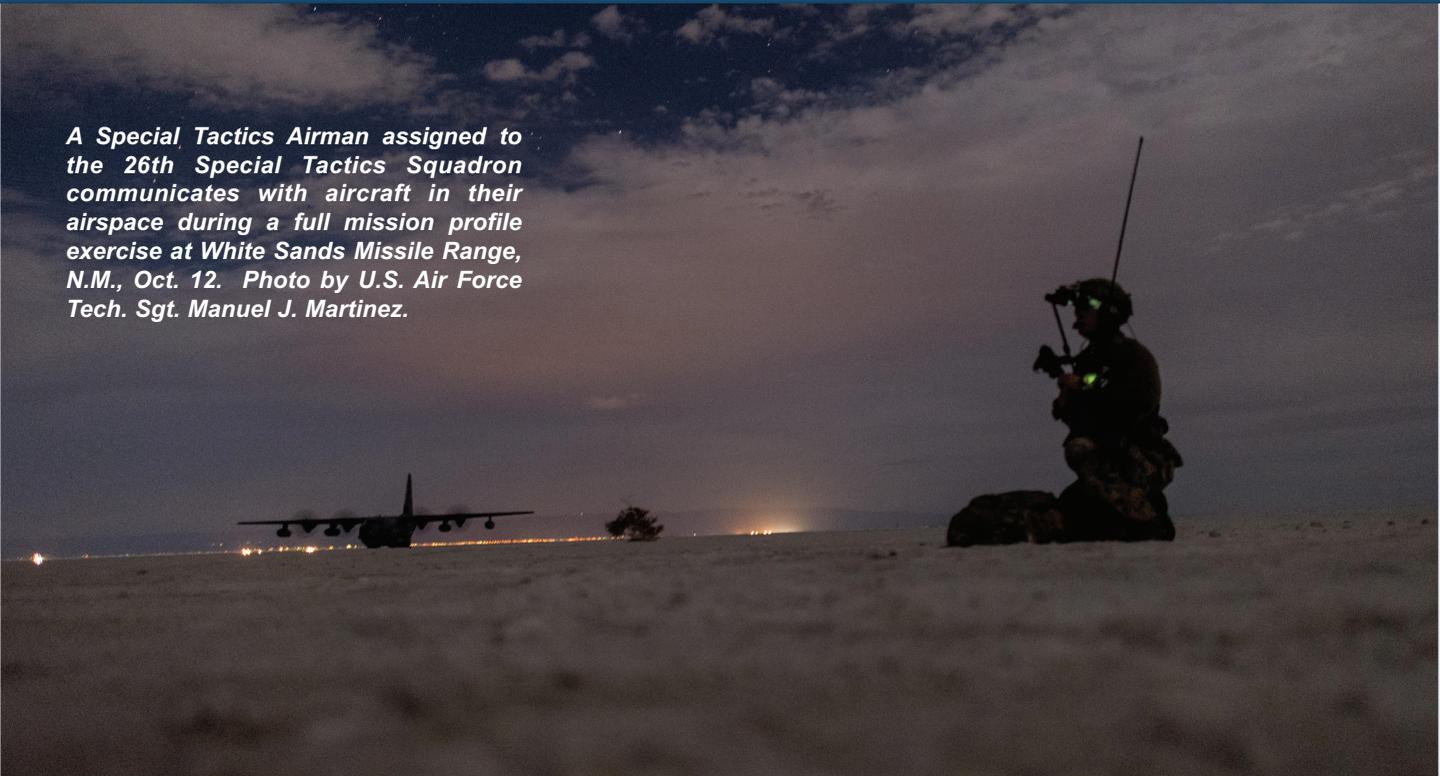
"A lot of the school was navigation, which helps to transition from being a boom operator to being up front and listening to all of the radio calls," Webb said. "There were also a lot of academics, and we were on the flight line for about four months of it."

Now back in Oklahoma, Webb will progress toward being fully qualified in his position as a CSO.

"I'll be running the sensors and working the radios on the MC-12 to communicate with ground forces by radio," Webb said.

Though Webb doesn't know what to expect going forward, he is excited for the new opportunity.

"I think I'll really enjoy it," he said.



A Special Tactics Airman assigned to the 26th Special Tactics Squadron communicates with aircraft in their airspace during a full mission profile exercise at White Sands Missile Range, N.M., Oct. 12. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Manuel J. Martinez.

Air Commandos get real-world experience at White Sands

*By U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Manuel J. Martinez
27th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

The 26th Special Tactics Squadron trained alongside 27th Special Operations Wing units while conducting a full mission profile at the White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, earlier this month.

The training tested the Air Commandos' abilities to react to adverse conditions and complete a mission as a team in an unknown location.

"The purpose of a FMP is to incorporate all our assets we have at Cannon Air Force Base with our joint partners on the ground and the 26th STS Airmen," said U.S. Air Force Capt. Jon Vaage, 27th Special Operations Group strike branch chief of group weapons and tactics. "We combine our skill sets and execute missions as we do downrange."

Unlike most exercises, the mission planning was integrated during the exercise instead of being done beforehand to better simulate real-world situations. The Air Commandos had to rely on multiple agencies to

accomplish their objectives.

One of their missions was to secure, establish and control an airfield – located in contested or austere territory – so aircraft could land and refuel safely in a forward area refueling point. Special Tactics Airmen led much of the planning for ground maneuver and air integration portions of the mission.

"The night of execution phase, Special Tactics Airmen were transported on an MC-130J and performed a high-altitude-high-opening airdrop," said a combat controller from the 26th STS. "They started controlling the airspace while under the canopy of their parachutes."

Once they jumped onto the drop zone, the Special Tactics Airmen secured, surveyed and marked the FARP. A U-28A then landed to be refueled by an MC-130J at the Forward Area Refueling Point. The Special Tactics Airmen became the air traffic control tower for the runway, running the airfield much like they would in a deployed environment.



Military policemen from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit's law enforcement detachment prepare to forcibly enter a building as their instructor from Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command watches on, Nov. 2. The two groups of Marines were training to develop the urban patrolling and combat skills of the law enforcement detachment as part of their realistic urban training exercise. The group served as a notional partner nation force on which the Marine Raiders refined their coaching and mentoring skills. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Nicholas Mannweiler.

24th MEU law enforcement, MARSOC develop urban skills together

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

The morning started with an honest assessment – the squad of Marines were faced right out of the gate with executing a full mission under the watchful eyes of their new instructors. Every inefficiency, every uncertain expression added to the overall picture of their readiness – the team had a good base with room to improve.

The Marines of the 24th Marine Expeditionary

Unit's law enforcement detachment spent the next several hours holding classes, going through drills and conducting rehearsals in urban patrolling and close quarters battle, partnered up with an element of critical skills operators from Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command.

“The first thing we did was run them through a full mission profile, doing urban movement and clearing an objective building. Once inside, watching their CQB techniques gave us our baseline for them for where we

would tailor our training the rest of the day,” said the MARSOC element leader.

Throughout the day, the two groups of Marines built on the previous lessons as the Marine Raiders coached their notional partner nation force through the finer points of moving in an urban environment, assessing threats and methodically clearing buildings. Though there were noticeable differences, the commonalities between Marines working together were unmistakable.

“I’ve trained with infantry battalions on the last MEU. I’ve trained with SEAL Team Four and the Maritime Raid Force as well. Everyone has their own tactics and terms – but those are more tools to put in our toolbox,” said Sgt. Derek Busby, law enforcement detachment non-commissioned officer in charge.

The Raiders highlighted bounding security when crossing linear danger features, thorough clearing of rooms while providing security for search teams and several different methods for complicated interior movements such as clearing up a staircase. These particular skills would enhance the detachment’s efficiency and would improve their survivability in a hostile urban environment.

“Everyone has their own [standard operating procedures] and terminology. All we had to do was see how it was presented and then we were able to relate it to our SOPs and it made it a whole lot easier for the Marines that attended today,” said Busby.

The MARSOC operators agreed, citing terminology barriers and different basic skills training standards as stark differences when training actual foreign forces. For the special operations Marines, the opportunity to coach and mentor other professionals was a welcome repetition before advising and assisting an allied force in unfamiliar terrain later.

“This got our junior guys on the team a chance to train a partner nation. It allowed them to get up in front of the podium and start giving instruction to an audience – an audience that is a peer of theirs that they could see so it’s a little more difficult for them,” said the element leader.

The group wrapped up day one of their training by conducting two final patrols through the urban training facility; once with prompts from the Raiders and finally with them serving as an aggressor force hidden within the objective buildings. A group after action debrief captured lessons learned and identified areas for improvement ahead of their nighttime heliborne raid the

next evening.

“When it came to training with MARSOC, we were all excited and we got some really good training today. We learned advanced techniques and CQB tactics which we plan on bringing into our training and passing back to our parent unit when we are done, said Busby. “I hope my team realized that looking at them and looking at us, it’s one family teaching another. The skills we were taught today we can bring back to our own toolbox and pass down to the younger generation.”

Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command is the Marine Corps’ service component of U.S. Special Operations Command and provides highly trained full-spectrum special operations forces in support of overseas missions around the world.



A Marine from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit’s law enforcement detachment holds rear security during a building clearing exercise, Nov. 2. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Nicholas Mannweiler.



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS



(From left to right) U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commander USSOCOM, President Barack Obama, U.S. Army Gen. Joseph Votel, commander U.S. Central Command and retired U.S. Navy Adm. Eric Olson, former USSOCOM commander watch a video documenting special operations from 2009 - 2016 in the USSOCOM Wargame Center, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., Dec. 6. President Obama visited the headquarters to say thank you to the men and women of USSOCOM for their contributions in the war against terrorism. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.

President Obama says thank you in historic visit to USSOCOM

By USSOCOM Office of Communication

President Barack Obama visited U.S. Special Operations Command to thank the members of the command, on MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, Dec. 6.

President Obama visited the USSOCOM headquarters where he met privately with special operations senior leaders thanking them for their contributions during his administration.

“We have been so reliant on the outstanding work that has been done by SOCOM and CENTCOM,”

Obama said. “I have been constantly in awe of your performance and the way you have carried out your mission.”

Obama also met with servicemen and women, as well as, civil servants from USSOCOM and Central Command at another separate gathering on the base where he gave a short speech before personally thanking and shaking the hands of the hundreds gathered there to see him.

“I am here for a very simple reason,” said Obama accompanied on stage by USSOCOM and CENTCOM

commanders Army generals Raymond Thomas and Joseph Votel. “To say thank you on behalf of the American people.”

Obama wrapped up his MacDill visit by delivering a speech that addressed his strategy for combating terrorism over the past eight years where he reemphasized the importance of the contributions and sacrifices of the men and women in uniform and their families who helped carry out his counterterrorism policy throughout his presidency.

Obama’s stage entrance was heralded by the cheers of troops and their family gathered there as well as the traditional playing of “hail-to-the-chief”. The commander-in-chief told the audience the moment was a sentimental one, commenting that his visit to MacDill would likely be his last official tour to visit the troops outside of Washington and thus the last time he would hear the presidential anthem while on the road. This January’s inauguration will mark the end of Obama’s second term and also the first time a U.S. president has served two consecutive terms in office with America on a time-war footing. Adding to the sentimentality, Obama noted the sacrifices of the hundreds of thousands of men and women and their families throughout his presidency.

“I have visited troops around the globe, I have met our wounded warriors, and I have grieved with gold star families.” Obama said addressing a crowd of nearly 2500 gathered in a large open hangar on the base. “I know better than most that it is because of your service and your sacrifice, that we have been able during these eight years to protect our homeland... to you and your families and to the extended families of American servicemembers, let me say that our nation owes you an unbelievable debt of gratitude.”

The president concluded his speech with a final charge to the men and women in uniform to carry forward the legacy of America. Obama drew a tie between the men and women currently serving and members of the “the Greatest Generation” who stormed the beaches of Normandy and Iwo Jima describing their commitment to a common creed and offering this as a strategy to protect the long-term interests of the country.

“We are a nation that at our best has been defined by hope and not fear, a country that went through the crucible of civil war to offer a new birth of freedom, that stormed the beaches of Normandy, climbed the hills of Iwo Jima” Obama said. “Remember that history. Remember what that flag stands for, for we depend on

you the heirs to that legacy, our men and women in uniform and the citizens who support you, to carry forward what is best in us, that commitment to a common creed.”

The president’s last visit to MacDill was in September 2014.

USSOCOM is comprised of more than 69,000 men and women serving as operators, enablers and support personnel.

Within the force are Army Special Forces, SEALs (Sea, Air, Land Teams), Air Commandos, Rangers, Night Stalker helicopter crews, Marine Raiders, civil affairs personnel, psychological operations personnel, acquisition experts, logisticians, administrators, analysts, planners, communicators, and other specialists. USSOCOM also relies on Guard and Reserve units, as well as government civilians and contractors to support missions across the globe.

Currently, U.S. special operations forces are deployed to more than 97 countries worldwide, fulfilling geographic command requirements and supporting 10 named operations. USSOCOM supports a variety of missions ranging from working with indigenous forces and local governments to improve local security, to high-risk counterterrorism operations.



President Barack Obama gives remarks during his visit to USSOCOM on MacDill Air Base as U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, USSOCOM commander looks on. Photo by Mike Bottoms.



Retired SEAL Senior Chief Leonard “Lenny” Waugh, NSW HALO and space program pioneer

By Richard Green

USSOCOM History and Research Office

Leonard “Lenny” Waugh was 18 when he saw “The Frogmen,” the 1951 film about U.S. Navy Underwater Demolition Teams during World War II. It was then he decided he wanted to be a frogman. UDT training, then called Underwater Demolition Team Replacement training, did not accept volunteers direct from boot camp so he enlisted in the Navy in December 1951. After service, schools, and time in the fleet, he was accepted in 1954 for UDTR training at the Naval Amphibious School in Little Creek, Virginia. After completing the training, Waugh graduated with Class 13 and was assigned to UDT-22, which years later was merged with UDT-21. In a career that spanned two decades, Waugh participated in routine taskings, wartime deployments, and development and testing of capabilities, many in use by U.S. Navy SEALs today.

As a frogman, Waugh was involved in several unique projects. He participated in the testing of a frogman’s ability to successfully operate in the water without taking time to acclimate when going from a tropical environment directly to an arctic one. Another project involved the resupply of the Distant Early Warning Line, or DEW Line, the line of long-range radar stations in the far northern Arctic region intended to warn of approaching enemy aircraft or missiles. Frogmen, working in the frigid waters, used demolition to clear boulders from the beach so supplies could be brought ashore. Additionally, in a test of the Navy Dive Tables, Waugh and other volunteers got decompression sickness, or “the bends,” and required treatment in a recompression chamber.

According to Waugh, his most unusual project was his participation as a test subject for NASA. In the early 1950s, as NASA began exploring the feasibility of space travel, it was not yet clear the qualities needed in astronauts. Should the characteristics be of a pilot, a physical giant, an engineer, or something else? Physical fitness and the ability to withstand physiological and psychological stress were recognized as key factors. Waugh believes UDT frogmen’s



Retired Senior Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Leonard “Lenny” Waugh is pictured second from left during the Project Mercury program in 1958. Waugh, during Project Mercury, went through physical testing that would serve as a basis for selecting the Gemini astronauts. Courtesy photo.

excellent physical condition and familiarity with working in confined spaces, such as those involved in locking out of escape trunks on submarines, were considered in the selection process. Waugh and three other frogmen were chosen for testing on physical, psychological, and other parameters at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. Later, two more groups of four frogmen each were tested by NASA. It is believed that the tests conducted on the frogmen were later used in selecting astronauts for Project Mercury.

In November 1958, Waugh attended parachute training at Fort Benning, Georgia, an event that had a profound effect on his career. He discovered he enjoyed static-line jumping. The following month he was one of the UDT men sent to the 82nd Airborne Jumpmaster School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where he learned of the military freefall sport parachute clubs and decided he wanted to skydive. (Note, Army sport free fall parachuting, or skydiving, had begun the year before, 1957, when the Army contracted with two sport

skydivers to train Army skydivers.)

Back in Virginia, Waugh read a couple articles on how to skydive, bought the equipment for \$150 and made his first jump out of fellow frogman Jim McGee's airplane. Unsure of the altitude from which to jump, Waugh and McGee reasoned that if Fort Benning's static-line jumps were from 1,250 feet, then Waugh should skydive from 1,500 feet. Waugh completed the jump, becoming the first east-coast, and possibly the west-coast, frogman to skydive. Following Waugh's successful jump, other frogmen took up the sport.

At that time it cost Waugh about three dollars to jump from a civilian airplane in Virginia so he joined an XVIII Airborne Corps skydiving club at Fort Bragg, where military aircraft were used and he could jump for free. At Fort Bragg, Waugh ran into George "Ron" Brown, a member of the U.S. Army Parachute Team, then called the Strategic Army Corps (STRAC) Team. Waugh had met Brown earlier during scuba training at UDT. Brown introduced Waugh to Henry "Jim" Arender, considered a pioneer in Army freefall and who later in 1960 became the first U.S. citizen to win a gold medal at a world skydiving championship. Learning from Arender, Waugh advanced rapidly as a freefall parachutist. In three years he earned his United States Parachute Association D-license, number 128. Waugh also participated in demonstration jumps with the STRAC Team. Once on the ground, the Army jumpers would put on their berets while Waugh would don his Navy white hat. At that point in the demonstration the audience would be told that the Army taught the Navy to skydive.

In 1960, Waugh was selected as part of a team to evaluate the feasibility of UDTs conducting water jumps and how to safely do so. The team developed testing parameters and then examined the parachutes and equipment for wear and tear after water jumps. They also looked at the length of time needed for drying and repacking parachutes. Testing was conducted on parachuting in scuba gear and also on jumping with deflated rubber boats. The team determined that water jumps were a viable insertion means for UDTs and developed the initial standard operating procedures that were built upon as UDTs conducted more jumps. From those humble beginnings, those static-line UDT water jumps have evolved into the sophisticated personnel and boat water-drop insertion capabilities of SEAL and Special Boat Unit teams today.

In January 1962, the Navy formed the first two SEAL teams. Waugh was brought back early from a UDT-21 Mediterranean deployment to be one of the plank owners of SEAL Team Two. He believes his extensive jump experience

and his Brown Belt in Judo were the skills that got him selected. After three months preparation, Waugh deployed to Vietnam in April 1962 on a combined SEAL Teams One and Two Mobile Training Team. He returned in October 1962 just in time to deploy on a submarine for the Cuban Missile Crisis.

In 1963, Waugh helped establish the first SEAL Team Two high-altitude low-opening (HALO) parachute training class, taught by the HALO Committee at Fort Bragg. Aircraft provided by the U.S. Navy included the Douglas A3D Skywarrior strategic bomber and P2V anti-submarine warfare aircraft. The HALO Committee, Waugh, and another experienced SEAL skydiver conducted the initial jumps from the A3D to evaluate its use by the less experienced students, due to the A3D's high speed and the 40,000 feet jump altitude.

In 1967 Waugh deployed to Vietnam as a Provincial Reconnaissance Unit advisor, earning two Bronze Stars for his service.

Waugh continued his jump career and participated in SEAL demonstration jumps between his many deployments. He won a trophy for style and accuracy in skydiving competition, but for the most part his heavy deployment schedule precluded his competing.

In 1972 Waugh conducted his final jump, number 1,129, before retiring from SEAL Team Two. As a UDT frogman and one of the original SEALs, Waugh left a legacy of innovation in Special Warfare capabilities that continues to this day.



Retired Senior Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Leonard "Lenny" Waugh visited USSOCOM Dec 1. Waugh conducted 1,129 active-duty parachute jumps as a UDT Frogman and plank owner of SEAL Team 2. Photo by Mike Bottoms.



From pressure to preservation: How POTFF continues to evolve

*By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Aaron R. Knowles
SOCCENT Public Affairs*

In 2010, the United States had been at war for almost a decade.

Servicemembers across the board were being rapidly deployed multiple times in short time periods.

For those in the special operations community, the pace of deployments, as well as adding the stress from the lack of stability made life very stressful for the special operations forces operator and their family.

Enter U.S. Navy Adm. Eric Olson, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command.

After years at war, it seemed like the task was taking its toll on SOF, and due to issues rising across the services and landing on his deck, Olsen needed an answer.

The answer was the creation of the Pressure on the Force and Families Task Force.

Olsen had the task force conduct over 400 focus groups. The results validated what the admiral was already hearing: increased family stress, increased disciplinary issues, increased alcohol-related incidents, and marriages were failing. His assessment: the force was ‘frayed’.

The results of the focus groups and testing arrived at the end of Olsen’s tenure, and the baton was passed on to his predecessor, Adm. William McRaven.

In 2011, McRaven took command of USSOCOM, and rebranded POTFF to Preservation of the Force and Family. He realized that it was more than just pressure on the force and families, and McRaven set out to preserve the community using a holistic approach.

“Anyone who knows SOF knows that our mission, our deployments specifically, tend to be non-standard,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Estolita Bowling, the Senior Enlisted Advisor of POTFF USSOCOM. “With typical general forces, they know how long they are going, where they are going, and when they will be back. It’s not really the case with SOF.”

One of McRaven’s answers to a worn-out force was creating a policy that would require Servicemembers to have a minimum “head on pillow” time. SOF operators



U.S. Army Colonel Joel Aoki, the Command Inspector General for Special Operations Command Central, practices breathing techniques that he learned during the Welcome Home Troops Power Breath Meditation Workshop, on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., Sept. 28. The workshop is designed to help students control stress and improve the quality of life through specialized breathing techniques. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Aaron Knowles.

were required to be home at least 55% of their time, and it would take a general officer to overrule that requirement.

The Preservation of the Force and Families program was designed to create a ‘ready’ special forces operator and family. The goal was and continues to be to take the load off of the force and family in order to support an operator

to achieve mental and physical peak performance; aka a world class athlete.

“We have these things called SOF truths, and the number one truth is that humans are more important than hardware,” said Bowling.

POTFF is broken down into four lines of effort which equate to a focused, ready, and resilient SOF operator. These four LOE’s are human performance, psychological performance, social/family performance, and spiritual performance.

“Our teammates; we expect them to receive care, to get help, because no matter who you are, no matter where you come from, what rank, what service you come from, everyone is going to have challenges,” said Bowling. “So we expect and encourage everyone to seek care.

“The vision is that if you are healthy in all four of these domains, you’re going to be able to focus on your mission; you’re going to be able to go out and do the things that you need to do.” said Bowling. “You won’t be distracted with what’s going on at home or things you need to get off your chest.”

To support these key areas, USSOCOM uses an embedded model which places specialized staff who are subject matter experts of each domain into the different SOF organizations in order for them to have a direct line of access to those in need. specialized staff is generally collocated with SOF teams in order to provide rapid rehabilitation to the team members, as well as providing trusted bonds and relationships and minimizing stigma.

“Our embedded model is something that is very key to the success of POTFF,” said Bowling. “We have resources, primarily in the form of staff, either at the unit, organic to the unit, nearby, or on the campus or compound of that installation. This is a huge thing. It increases access to care and lowers the stigma that you can’t operate while receiving help.”

Another major benefit of having the POTFF Program in place is that data is collected into one consistent and standardized system. That data is then provided to Congress to show them that the POTFF Program is a benefit to the enterprise, increases readiness, and is

necessary in keeping the force ready.

“Our operators tend to be about 8 years older than our counterparts in the general forces, so we have to protect that and account for their age,” said Bowling. “We have to preserve their physical and mental fitness because they are unique. It takes years to get them trained and millions of dollars, so we leverage all programs to ensure that we are meeting their needs.”

POTFF as a program is always constantly changing and growing its capabilities.

U.S. Army Colonel Mark Bagget, the command psychologist for U.S. Special Operations Command and a representative of the Preservation of Force and Family Program, recently attended a power breathing workshop that is a potential addition to the POTFF program.

“The concept of POTFF is to get [ahead] of people having problems, whether those be physical problems, medical problems, spiritual problems or psychological problems,” said Bagget. “So, instead of waiting until the problem occurs, we try to help them come in early before it becomes a problem.”

“Breathing and meditation are some of the earliest forms of relaxation and there are a huge variety of health benefits from lower blood pressure, to better concentration and attention, and having a program like this that is already in place may be something that we would be interested in. It means that we don’t have to

build it ourselves. Right now, we are in the early stages of evaluating if this workshop is something that we want to do.”

The thing that POTFF is not, is a replacement to those services already provided by the individual branches. Programs in place such as family advocacy, ombudsman support, and other similar programs. POTFF is there to address the gaps and fill in the seams.

“At the end of the day, after you take all of this into consideration, POTFF truly is about readiness,” said Bowling. “If you are healthy in all four of those domains, you can remain focused on your mission. That’s being ready.”

For more information on the Preservation of the Force and Family, visit <http://www.socom.mil/POTFF/default.aspx>.

We have to preserve their physical and mental fitness because they are unique. It takes years to get them trained and millions of dollars, so we leverage all programs to ensure that we are meeting their needs.

— Sgt. Maj. Estolita Bowling, Senior Enlisted Advisor of POTFF



2016 Special Operations communicators are recognized

By USSOCOM Public Affairs

The 5th Annual Special Operations Forces Communicator of the Year awards ceremony took place at the Davis Conference Center on MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, Nov. 1.

Members of the entire SOF enterprise, with attendees from the component commands and the Theater Special Operations Commands, along with USSOCOM headquarters staff were present.

The SCOTY awards were established by the USSOCOM chief of information office directorate in 2012, to recognize enlisted, warrant officer,

commissioned officer, and civilian communicators who have demonstrated outstanding leadership, gallantry, integrity, moral courage, and whose significant contributions have improved SOF communications mission capabilities.

This year 21 packages were reviewed and the four winners came from Joint Special Operations Command, Special Operations Command – Pacific and two from Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command.

The 2016 SCOTY award winners are Walter Moffit, U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Joseph McCaffery, U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Phillip Jones, and U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Brandon Wombough.



The 5th Annual Special Operations Forces Communicator of the Year awards ceremony took place at the Davis Conference Center on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., Nov. 1. (From left to right) John Wilcox, director, Communications Systems/J6 and Chief Information Officer for USSOCOM), Walter Moffit, SCOTY Award recipient, U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Luke Bergman who received the SCOTY award for U.S. Marine Corps Capt Joseph McCaffery, U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Phillip Jones, SCOTY Award recipient, U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Brandon Wombough, SCOTY Award recipient, U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen Joseph Osterman, deputy commander USSOCOM and Sgt. Maj. Daniel Lopez, J6 sergeant major. Photo by Mike Bottoms.

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



U.S. Army
Maj. Andrew D. Byers
10th Special Forces Group (Airborne)



U.S. Army
Sgt. 1st Class Ryan A. Gloyer
10th Special Forces Group (Airborne)



U.S. Army
Sgt. 1st Class Matthew C. Lewellen
5th Special Forces Group (Airborne)



U.S. Army
Staff Sgt. Kevin J. McEnroe
5th Special Forces Group (Airborne)



U.S. Army
Staff Sgt. James F. Moriarty
5th Special Forces Group (Airborne)



U.S. Army
Staff Sgt. David J. Whitcher
7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Ivan Morera conducts strength conditioning under the supervision of a Tactical Human Optimization, Rapid Rehabilitation and Reconditioning Program coach in the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)'s Combat Readiness Training Facility, Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., Feb. 10. In August 2013, the Green Beret's left shoulder and knee sustained severe damage and his left hand was crushed when the vehicle he was driving rolled over while avoiding a suicide bomber in Afghanistan. Morera has since returned to full service with the group. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Bryan Henson.