



# TIP OF THE SPEAR

## MH-53s fly final combat mission



- ♠ **USASOC Civil Affairs enrich Iraqi villagers' lives**
- ♠ **Hand-to-hand fight with suicide bomber earns Ranger Silver Star**
- ♠ **MARSOC, 160th SOAR (A) take to the skies**





## MH-53s fly final combat mission

### 34

## Tip of the Spear

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*Front cover: MH-53 Pave Lows from the 20th Expeditionary Special Operations Squadron fly over Iraq on their last combat mission Sept. 27. The MH-53 is being retired after nearly 40 years of service. U.S. Air Force photo.*

# Highlights



## Departments

### Global War on Terrorism

*ISOF sergeants major motivate Iraqi commandos ... 4*

*CJSOTF-AP welcomes RG-33 ... 6*

*U.S., AFP complete joint civil affairs project ... 14*

*PNP officers graduate Police Operations Course ... 15*

### U.S. Army Special Operations Command

*Civil Affairs Soldiers receive Silver Star, Bronze Stars, Purple Hearts ... 18*

*Family accepts Silver Star ... 20*

*20th SFG aids in wake of Hurricane Gustav ... 21*

*SF Soldier dies while saving teammate ... 22*

*5th SFG (A) 2nd Battalion trains at NTC ... 24*

### Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command

*MARSOC Marines turn to DARC side ... 28*

*Marine takes long road to MARSOC ... 29*

### Naval Special Warfare Command

*Special Boat Team special feature ... 30*

*NSWC welcomes new commander ... 32*

*NSW Basic Training Command stands up ... 33*

### Air Force Special Operations Command

*Sister service siblings serve side-by-side ... 36*

*Combat Controller receives two Bronze Stars ... 38*

*Kadena Airmen aid injured mariners ... 39*

### Headquarters

*JMISC changes commander ... 40*

*Congressman Saxton receives USSOCOM Medal ... 41*

*USSOCOM History: Task Force Ranger ... 42*

*Fallen heroes ... 43*



# ISOF sergeants major push Iraqi commandos to excel

*By Staff Sgt. Mike Meares  
CJSOTF-AP Public Affairs*

Iraqi Special Operations Forces are making headlines in newspapers around the globe, each telling the same story: ISOF is fighting to restore stability and security to their war-torn country.

What the headlines don't reveal are the sergeants major of the brigade who lead and support these elite commandos on and off the battlefield.

"I am always with them, in the barracks or on mission," said a command sergeant major with Iraqi Counter Terrorism Force. "I help them solve their issues and support them however I can. If they need anything, we get it."

The ISOF command sergeants major of one Baghdad battalion think their successes as a specialized unit lie in a love for their country. These commandos do not draw religious or tribal lines in the sand; they live and die by the motto, "Iraq is One."

"We all love our country and we support it one hundred percent," said another ISOF command sergeant major. "We will protect it with our lives."

***Iraqi Special Operations Forces soldiers assault a room in a live fire scenario during a four-man team competition against other ISOF teams. The competition pit teams against each other to complete six obstacles from troop movement to basic soldier skills. The teams had to engage targets at several stations along the course while moving and standing still. They were scored based on their accuracy and time on target. Photo by Staff Sgt. Mike Meares.***

Trained by and modeled after U.S. Special Operations Forces, these Iraqi commandos have been capturing Iraq's deadliest criminals and terrorists since the inception of the force in late 2003. In the past four months, ISOF conducted more than 100 missions resulting in more than 200 captured or killed, 50 of whom were high-profile criminals and terrorists.

ISOF soldiers are trained to plan and execute operations on short notice. In some cases, these specially trained counterterrorism units have less than a day to plan and execute multiple missions. The ability to employ precision tactics on these missions requires extensive training, and it's the sergeants major who ensure these soldiers get that training.

Recently, elements of this elite force put their training to a test as they competed amongst themselves. Over a two-week period, the soldiers, broken into four-man teams, were put through a series of obstacles and various scenarios to test their individual and team skills.

"Competition breeds success," said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class J., who works with ISOF.

"(Competition) instills confidence in the operator's peers that he is a performer who can be depended upon in a pinch," he continued.

The clank of eight sets of boots hurriedly slamming on the metal rappelling tower steps marked the beginning of the competition July 10. After the commandos descended in full body armor, they began a half-mile run to the first shooting obstacle.

"The idea is to replicate the myriad of cover an operator is likely to find on the battlefield when he comes under fire," said the Army sergeant. "If the operator is familiar with the relationship his body should be in with whichever immediate cover is available at the particular moment he comes under fire, his lethality and survivability increase exponentially."

From different firing positions, the soldiers moved across a line of shooting barricades and fired around them. At the end of the firing line, they had to negotiate firing from three different positions around a humvee.

Each soldier was scored on the time it took to negotiate the obstacles and the accuracy of his firing. Accuracy was especially important on the second, third and fourth obstacles. They fired rounds from multiple poses: standing, kneeling, sitting and prone.

"Target discrimination and the application of precision fire is one of the most defining characteristics of units like this one," said the veteran sergeant. "It's all about the right tool for the right job. We are a scalpel, not

a sledge hammer. If surgical application of force with minimum collateral damage and a low signature are required for the mission, then we are the right guys for the job."

Another obstacle tested their determination and ability to work as a team. They had to scale a series of walls and could not move to the next wall until all four members of the team were over it. Once successfully over the walls, they climbed to the top of a tower and slid down a rope.

The series of grueling tests didn't stop at the end of the rope. They had to carry a patient on a litter to a predetermined location where they then split up to simultaneously tackle three other tasks: change a tire on the tactical vehicle, take care of a simulated critically wounded patient and reassemble weapons from a box.

The team concept is important during the competition as well as on the battlefield. Performance in the face of danger is vital to the survival of ISOF soldiers, and competition gives them an opportunity to evaluate themselves.

"Through competition, non-performers are identified, which gives them the opportunity and motivation to improve," said the Army sergeant. "When scores are posted in a public area for all to see, nobody wants to be the guy on the bottom."

Their final task in the series of events had them clearing a building designed to test their decision-making skills in determining a combatant enemy from a noncombatant.

"We encounter all kinds of people combating an insurgency that exploits local citizens in order to conceal their nefarious activity," he said. "Therefore we train to identify threats to the assault force in a split second 'snapshot' of what the operator observes. This serves to protect our operators, as well as nonhostile citizens in our sectors of fire."

"To quote Rudyard Kipling, 'The strength of the pack is the wolf, and the strength of the wolf is the pack,'" the combat veteran sergeant said.

The brigade has fought in every major operation of the war since the siege of Fallujah in 2004, and their dedication has led to the capture of hundreds of criminals and terrorists in raids throughout the country. ISOF will continue to seek out terrorists and criminals in their safe havens and erode their strongholds as in Basra, Mosul, Fallujah, Amarah and Diyala.

"We do not want an award for our service," said the ISOF command sergeant major. "We want our country to be stable."

***"To quote Rudyard Kipling,  
'The strength of the pack is the  
wolf, and the strength of the wolf  
is the pack,'"***

***- Iraqi combat veteran***



# CJSOTF-AP Welcomes RG-33



*Members of Special Operations Task Force - West sharpen their skills on the RG-33s remote weapons system. The range time provided the RG-33's gunners an opportunity to ensure the RWS was functioning properly by engaging targets scattered across the range at different distances. Photo illustration by Tech. Sgt. Larry Carpenter Jr.*

*By  
Petty Officer  
1st Class  
Joseph Pfaff  
and Tech. Sgt. Larry Carpenter Jr.  
CJSOTF-AP Public Affairs*

Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force - Arabian Peninsula welcomed the newest addition to its arsenal — the RG-33 Series 4x4 Mine-Protected Vehicle.

The RG-33, also known as the MRAP for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle, is designed to provide a survivability advantage to its passengers.

Many U.S. military units have recently adopted the MRAP, which has a number of configurations based on the customer's needs.

CJSOTF-AP acquired the RG-33s with the U.S. Special Operations Command variant.

The USSOCOM-variant vehicle provides Special Operations Forces with a remote weapons system, a thermal driver's vision enhancer and a more robust communication system.

*Members of Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force's Group Support Battalion convoy new RG-33s to forward operating bases for use by Special Operations personnel June 1. These RG-33s, also known as Mine Resistant Ambush Protective vehicles, are the newest addition to the Special Operations Forces arsenal. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Joseph Pfaff.*

“The weapons system is more protective than that of the regular version of the RG-33,” said a first lieutenant CJSOTF-AP convoy commander. “Having a remote weapons system is great for long movements because it puts the gunner in much less danger.”

The MRAP has a V-shaped hull design and advanced armor for protection from improvised explosive devices, which are constant threats to U.S. and Iraqi troops.

Additional features include swing arm mounts, internal seating for eight, rear door assist, integration for unique USSOCOM equipment and another feature that’s very welcomed by the end users — air conditioning.

Although it is much heavier than the humvee at 40,000 pounds, the RG-33 has a relatively short stopping distance due to the anti-lock braking system. And since it sits up higher, the mine-protected vehicle provides the driver with a good perspective and field of view.

“Every mission is different. Every end state and intent is unique. And for every unique aspect, you need unique equipment, especially in our less-than-ordinary slice of warfare,” said the first lieutenant.

MRAPs were first delivered to CJSOTF-AP earlier this year for distribution throughout the

entire area of responsibility. Once new vehicles arrive, they are checked out and tested to make sure they are running properly before Special Forces personnel receive them down range.

After an MRAP is tested and ready for distribution, it must be driven to the various classified locations throughout Iraq — a job that requires special training on operating and handling. Every person who operates in an MRAP must first take a week-long course that includes familiarization with the communications systems, disabled vehicle procedures, proper use of the rear door assist, rollover drills and, of course, the weapons system.

“I had to go through forty hours of training on the weapons system and vehicle familiarization,” said a staff sergeant vehicle operator.

The vehicle has been well received by the Special Operators. According to a chief warrant officer at Special Operations Task Force-West, a lot of the men say the vehicle has about 80 percent of everything they want in a troop carrier.

“The RG-33 saves lives,” said a SOTF-W chief warrant officer. “A lot of the Operators say it’s the first time they’ve felt safe rolling in a vehicle through Iraq.”

The RG-33 USSOCOM variant is fairly new to the fight in Iraq and is still being delivered and “broken in.” However, once fully integrated into everyday use by the CJSOTF-AP, this newest addition may prove to be a vital tool in bringing security and stability to Iraq.

***“The RG-33 saves lives,” said a SOTF-W chief warrant officer.***







# COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE

## Civil Affairs



*enrich the lives  
of local citizens  
in Iraqi villages*

***Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Mike Meares  
CJSOTF-AP Public Affairs***

U.S. Army Civil Affairs Team 621, located in al Kut, is helping to revitalize several local communities in southern Iraq as they take on projects that will positively impact the lives of the local population.

The team, which is from Bravo Company, 96th Civil Affairs Battalion (A), Fort Bragg, N.C., and operationally attached to the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – Arabian Peninsula in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, strives to meet the basic needs of the Iraqi people: food, water, shelter, electricity, health care and education.

“This is the best job I’ve had in the military,” said the CAT 621 team leader. “Depending on the part of the world we are in, the decisions we make can have national implications.”

The captain was referring to the relationship a CAT builds with the local population and how the team’s actions can have further strategic effects. As the team gains the villagers’ trust and respect, they become more effective in accomplishing their missions and helping the government of Iraq accomplish its

***Children from al Basrokea are going to benefit from the renovated building that was transformed into a health clinic Aug. 21. Civil Affairs Team 621, Bravo Co., 96th Civil Affairs Battalion (A), Fort Bragg, N.C., operationally assigned to Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – Arabian Peninsula in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, worked with local contractors to ensure the clinic was renovated properly.***

goals. In addition, the relationship the team builds with the local tribal leaders can extend beyond the village, as many of these leaders have influence even beyond the national boundaries.

A civil affairs team, explains the 10th Special Forces Group civil affairs officer, serves as a bridge between the U.S. military and the local civilian population by augmenting services and functions normally provided by a civilian government. By helping the civilian leadership and international organizations meet the basic needs of the population, the civil affairs team minimizes the effect of military operations on civilians while simultaneously assisting in helping the civilian community to become self-sufficient.

The team must apply their expertise in the local culture to assist local leaders in developing projects or activities that meet the most immediate and important needs of the population.

“This is ideally a locally generated concept





## – ARABIAN PENINSULA



executed by local workers and partially funded by the civil affairs team to give the population a sense of ownership,” the civil affairs officer explained. “This is not always possible, depending on the existing conditions, but it is always the goal. The objective is to help the population become self-sufficient, not to make them more dependent on U.S. funding.”

The team assesses what projects will have the most positive impact for the community and initiates the process to begin. Once the proposal is approved, the team hires a contractor who hires workers from within that village to do the job. Throughout the life of the project, the team does periodic quality control assessments to make sure everything is going according to plan.

“We conduct civil affairs activities through building projects, humanitarian assistance drops and assessments to improve the civilian infrastructure,” said the CAT 621 team sergeant.

The team is a four-man, cohesive unit. The CAT 621 team captain said he believes the mission of the civil affairs team creates an environment where the team depends on each other and is knowledgeable of each other’s positions. They learn from one another’s experience and expertise while interacting with the Iraqi people.

“We all have a specific part on the team, but we are all trained to do each other’s job as well,” he said. “Any one of us can do an assessment on an area or pull security while out

***A U.S. Army Civil Affairs Team 621 team member takes stock of the local clinic’s pharmacy. Iraqi and U.S. Forces conducted a humanitarian and medical assistance visit to the town Aug. 20.***

***A U.S. Army Civil Affairs Team 621 team member performs security checks near the town’s medical clinic. Iraqi and U.S. Forces conducted a humanitarian and medical assistance visit to the town Aug. 20. The medical team, assisted by Iraqi health care professionals, examined more than 200 patients during the MEDAV.***

on mission.”

The team leader oversees mission planning, key leader engagements and mission coordination. The team sergeant facilitates the execution of mission plans and is usually the most experienced member on the team.

“The team sergeant is pretty much the heart and soul of the team,” the team leader said.

The civil affairs NCO is the coordinator for the group and takes care of the mission logistics and organizes the humanitarian aid drops. The NCO also does tribal engagement analysis and keeps records on the local contractor’s information.

“You get exposed to the culture more than typical units here,” said the CAT 621 team medic. “It’s a very diverse mission in that we do something different every day.” This is because the close and constant interaction with the local civilians is critical to the success of the civil affairs efforts.

The team medic takes care of all the medical needs of the team and takes the lead on medical assistance visits in the surrounding communities.

One of the most interesting experiences the team medic said he will remember about Iraq is visiting a Sheikh’s house — the leader of a local tribe — and sitting on the floor eating a chicken dinner.

“Sometimes it’s not always comfortable and sometimes they serve food you don’t like,” he said. “You just have to be





# COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE

sensitive to the customs and courtesies, and press on.”

The CAT is involved in many aspects of the community through medical assistance visits, veterinarian assistance visits, humanitarian aid drops and infrastructure assessments. Through this interaction, they are able to get an idea of what the Iraqi people in the villages need to help them live better. They also advise commanders on the impact of military operations on the civilian population, according to the civil affairs officer, and help provide commanders with vital feedback on the needs and sentiments of the local population.

“All the projects we do must have the support of the local or provincial government to continue,” the captain said. “The Iraqi ministries commit to these projects and expand on them long after our part is done.”

These civil affairs activities also provide Iraq’s government an opportunity to reach out to the community and demonstrate their commitment to provide for the Iraqi people’s security and basic needs through short-term and long-term projects. By making these commitments, the government can hope to regain the support of the villagers who felt abandoned by it, thus becoming less likely to embrace or acquiesce to the influence of terrorists, criminals and outlaws.

The civil affairs team works together with the Iraqi Security Forces partners to create a legitimate and capable force to protect the Iraqi people. CAT 621 activities are focused on the overall mission of helping Iraq become a stable and safe country by making the quality of life better for its people.

“We all have a piece of the pie in the joint mission,” the team sergeant said. “It’s cliché, but it’s a war for the hearts and minds.”

A civil affairs team understands civilians are at the core of a country and cannot be overlooked. Working with the host country’s government and making sure people are taken care of is vital to mission success. When all pieces of the puzzle are in place, a partnership is born. The community sees how its government is working with Coalition forces to help make life better — one project at a time.

## *Medical Assistance Visits*

Recently, CAT 621 conducted a medical assistance visit in al Muwaffaqiyah, approximately 186 kilometers southeast of Baghdad. The team medics met with Iraqi doctors upon their arrival and set up treatment rooms and a pharmacy to assist the local doctors in providing routine medical care for



***Al Muwaffaqiyah citizens line up to get humanitarian-aid items from Iraqi Security Forces Aug. 20 after a medical assistance visit by Iraqi health care professionals and U.S. Forces. Each bag contained beans, cooking oil, rice, canned tomato paste, dried milk, salt and bars of soap.***

their people.

Women held their children as they formed a line that stretched down one side of the hallway while the men, some accompanied by children, stretched down the other side waiting to get treated by Iraqi and U.S. Forces.

“The people can’t always get to medical care,” said the CAT 621 team leader. “We try to schedule visits like this as often as we can.”

The 7th Special Forces Group medics and Iraqi Security Forces also participated. Working together, the medics and the Iraqi doctors treated more than 200 patients during the visit.

“There’s a shortage of Iraqi doctors nationwide,” the team leader said. “You can’t grow doctors overnight so, to fill the gap, our medics help Iraqi doctors provide medical care for those who wouldn’t normally get it.”

Many times, Iraqi doctors are overwhelmed with the number of patients. These visits provide assistance to the doctors and enable more local Iraqis to receive medical care. At the same time, the Iraqi people have first-hand knowledge of U.S. Forces’ genuine concern for their welfare.

“Since the Americans showed up in the province, we have realized the difference,” said the chief physician of the al Muwaffaqiyah health clinic. “Unlike a lot of people who say they are going to help but never deliver, the Americans help when they say they are going to help.”

“These medical visits show we are here helping and we care about the Iraqi people’s health and well-being,” said the



## – ARABIAN PENINSULA

*Iraq's Wasit Province Ministry of Health Director, General Mahir Ghanim Murad, cuts the red ribbon that stretched across the gate of the new health clinic in al Basrokea Aug. 21. Medical care was difficult for the residents before the clinic opened because the town is more than 30 kilometers from the nearest medical facility.*

CAT 621 team medic. "A lot of people show up to get care. It's a great opportunity to interact with the people."

The visit also serves as a partnership between the Iraqis and U.S. Forces, showing the people they are working in harmony.

At the end of the MEDAV, Iraqi Security Forces set up a distribution center in front of the clinic and handed out bags of humanitarian aid. Each bag contained beans, cooking oil, rice, canned tomato paste, dried milk, salt and bars of soap.

### *Building a community health care clinic*

The smell of fresh paint permeated the air outside a building as Iraqi officials and community leaders gathered in al Basrokea, a village 10 kilometers south of al Kut, for a historical town event — the opening of a community health care clinic.

"When we first visited the community, the people thought the Iraqi government didn't care about their needs," said the CAT 621 team leader. "Now the Ministry of Health has stepped in and provided support for the clinic by getting it up and running."

The fresh coat of white paint on the building shined brightly in the southern Iraqi sun as Mahir Ghanim Murad, Wasit Province Ministry of Health director general, cut the red ribbon stretched across the front gate to the clinic. The building, formerly occupied by the Ba'ath Party, was completely made over with new floors, windows, plumbing, electrical system and lighting. The al Basrokea Health Clinic also has a waiting room and new generator.

"We are very thankful for you [Iraqi people and U.S. Forces] making this happen," said the director general. He told the people in attendance that the Ministry of Health understands how important this clinic is to the villagers to get medical care when they need it. He also promised the villagers and the reporters attending that the Wasit Province Ministry of Health will supply the



clinic with all the necessary furniture, equipment, medicine and doctors to keep the clinic going.

"We renovated the medical facility and created an agreement with the Wasit Ministry of Health to provide the things they need," said the CAT 621 team sergeant. "We helped them get started. Now they have to maintain it from here."

The town sits more than 30 kilometers from the nearest medical facility. As an isolated and impoverished farming village with little to no transportation, getting to a medical facility is difficult.

"This new facility provides care immediately for this town," the team sergeant said. "This also improves the relationship with the Iraqi government and the people. They have seen the government as being apathetic to their needs. It positively impacts the perception of the government and the security forces protecting them in the region."

The economic impact is another positive aspect the clinic is already having on the community. Several small businesses have opened across the street from the clinic to support the town and visitors to the clinic.

"This clinic has the potential to change the lives of the people here, but will certainly change their quality of life," said the CAT 621 team medic. "People who suffer from chronic diseases and illnesses, especially the older population and children, will get the care the burden of travel has kept them from."



# COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE

The building was once a headquarters for the Ba'ath Party when Saddam Hussein was in power. After the fall of Hussein's regime, the building was converted into a medical facility but closed because of its dilapidated condition. Criminal elements then used the abandoned building as a meeting place until Iraqi and Coalition forces began operations to rid the criminals from the area. Now that the Iraqi Security Forces are making the village more secure, the town elders decided they would like to see the building transformed back into a health care facility.

The ministry of Health is already living up to its promises to maintain the clinic. They have hired a security guard and a mechanic to take care of the generator. Meanwhile, the government of Iraq and Iraqi Security Forces are remaining committed to provide security and stability to the area.

## *Windmill project brings water to villagers*

Another CAT 621 project resulted in the supply of fresh, clean water available to the village of al Agar.

A tri-blade windmill rises above the desert housing like a beacon of light that draws the residents of the village to it. A sign on a fence surrounding the new turbine-windmill, well-water pump reads, "With God's help and Coalition forces, we were able to install the windmill."

"This project took a lot of research," said the CAT 621 team leader. "We decided the best solution to get fresh, clean water to the people was a windmill. Based on the geographical features of the region, the town sits in a natural wind tunnel."

The windmill draws water from a 54-meter-deep well, pumping 5,000 liters of clean water into a tank. The system replaced a concrete cistern laced with polluted water and sediment that was once the town's source of drinking water.

The windmill is a modern design to an old concept that dates back more than 2,000 years. It relies on the wind to charge the batteries and pump water out of the ground. The windmill project comes just in time, as getting water for the village of more than 200 people was becoming costly.

"The water they were getting was expensive and not clean at all," said the CAT 621 team medic. "The polluted water they were drinking was causing illnesses like dysentery."

Purchasing bottled water and water delivery was getting too expensive for them to handle. The water delivered to the village was siphoned from a nearby river and pumped into their cistern, a condition the village Sheikh was eager to remedy.

"They needed a clean, renewable water source that didn't



***A windmill stands tall in the desert village of al Agar, Iraq, supplying the residents with a continuous supply of fresh water Aug. 22. Civil Affairs Team 621 facilitated the construction of the windmill to provide the rural community with a means of getting fresh water.***

have a lot of maintenance costs," the team leader said. "We visit a lot of towns that have fresh water wells but can't afford the fuel for the generators used to pump out the water."

After determining what the village needed most to improve their quality of life, the civil affairs team started the process of finding the best possible solution to their problem. After nearly a month of work by a contractor, with citizens of the town also working on the project, the well was pulling fresh, clean water from the ground.

"We are very thankful for the windmill and the fresh water it produces," said one of the town elders during the ribbon-cutting ceremonies. "The water the windmill provides is much better than the water provided to us in the past."

"Water is a precious resource, especially in the desert," said the CAT 621 team sergeant. "These villagers went days



## — ARABIAN PENINSULA

and sometimes weeks without water, and hardly ever had fresh water that wasn't bottled."

The water pumped out of the ground passes water purity testing and is filtered before it reaches the mouths of the villagers. The town can now use the money and resources they are saving on water to continually improve other areas in their way of life.

### *School renovation*

The colorful paint scheme on the walls of the renovated schoolhouse promises to blossom creativity and promote learning throughout the school year.

In the village of al Kalamat, where the children's future is on the list of the things most important to the community, the renovation of the school project was born.

A CAT 621 team leader walked into the building before the renovation to assess what needed to be done and couldn't believe it was actually a place where children were supposed to learn.

"This is not a place I would want my children to go to school," said the team leader. "These children are the future of Iraq. We need to invest in their future."

The walls were bare cinder blocks to about four feet and mud bricks above that. It had a thatched roof supported by a wooden beam. Dead palm fronds kept the sun out, except through holes in the palm branches. The floors were dirt during the dry season and mud during the rainy season. The electrical system was exposed and the restrooms were holes dug in the ground in the back of the building.

The CAT 621 team developed the project by determining what needed to be done and hired a local contractor. The contractor then hiring people within the village, which helped provide jobs and stimulate the economy for the village. The renovation took 50 workers more

***A young Iraqi girl collects clean, cool water from a windmill-powered water pump to splash her face and provide a little relief from the 130-degree temperatures in the Iraqi desert village of al Agar Aug. 22. The pump provides a continuous supply of clean water from a 54-meter-deep well. The Civil Affairs Team 621 facilitated the construction of the windmill to provide the rural community with a means of getting fresh water.***



than 45 days to complete.

"School needs to be a place where the children want to go instead of being a place where they dread being," said the CAT 621 team sergeant.

Now the walls of cinder blocks and mud bricks are covered with plaster. The electrical system is safely protected. The floors have decorative ceramic tile on a concrete foundation. The roof was raised by three feet and made of brick. Lastly, the seven-room schoolhouse has new fluorescent lighting and three private toilets with a septic tank.

"This is the first time anyone has done something this nice for our people," said a village elder during the ribbon-cutting ceremony. "We appreciate everything the Coalition forces and the Ministry of Education has done to make this happen for our children."

The Wasit Province Ministry of Education supported the renovation project and supplied new desks for the children. They also provided fans for every room until they get air conditioners installed.

"Education is a long-term investment," said the team leader. "Planting the seed of hope through education will show the people they can make a better life for themselves, beginning with their children."

The children were excited to see the building renovated and anxious for the new school year to begin.

"We like the changes that have been made to the school," said a young Iraqi boy, a student at the school. "There is no comparison for the changes that have been made."

A young girl is also looking forward to the new school year so she can study her two favorite subjects—math and reading.

"I'm happy we have a nice school to go to," she said. "I like all the subjects we study when I'm in school. I really like reading."

Beginning with the new school year, the children will all get up early and go to a brand new school for the first time in their lives. The vibrant, multi-color paint scheme — pink, purple, green, blue and yellow — will welcome them and encourage them to invest in their future through education.

# U.S., AFP engineers complete joint civil affairs project

*By Petty Officer 1st Class Katherine Sanchez  
JSOTF-P Public Affairs*

U.S. Navy Seabees, Philippines Seabees and Joint Special Operations Task Force - Philippines personnel worked in partnership with the local community and AFP Marines to refurbish an elementary school complex in Barangay Cabcanan in the municipality of Sumisip on Basilan.

Rehabilitation of a five-building school complex that serves more than 200 students in grades first through sixth began June 14 and was completed Aug. 31. Included in the construction was the re-pouring of support columns, new roofs, windows, door framings, new restrooms, paint, added chalkboards, new ceilings and new restrooms.

According to Chief Petty Officer Michael Duranko, the buildings were constructed in the late 1960s to early 1970s and were badly in need of repair. The buildings had termite damage, rusted steel and metal, and bullet holes in the walls. He also said 50 to 60 students were restricted to one small classroom.

"It allows the children to move from one small schoolhouse where they were cramped in a single classroom into a new, clean and comfortable environment to learn in," said Duranko.

According to one of the U.S. Navy Seabees who participated, the effort brought AFP and U.S. Seabees together to form a strong partnership among the service members and the local community.

"Some of the building materials and techniques they use in the Philippines differ from what we're used to using in the United States, but once we [U.S. Navy Seabees] adapted, we all came together and meshed as one team and worked really well together," said U.S. Petty Officer 2nd Class Cody Woitena.

"The entire community was so grateful for the work we were doing with the Philippine Seabees, by the time we left, it felt like we were part of their family," Woitena added.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Sonny Rossman was born in



**Col. Bill Coultrup, JSOTF-P commander, discusses the project with Ens. Legopi, Philippine Navy Seabees officer-in-charge. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Katherine Sanchez.**

the Philippines and lived here until he was 16 years old. For Rossman, the opportunity to come back "home" after two tours in Iraq is a highlight in his Naval career.

"I couldn't have imagined I would be coming back home to the Philippines," Rossman said. "The chance to work with Filipino Seabees on a project that meant so much to them and did so much to help improve their ability to get a better education and improve their neighborhood was one of the best things I've accomplished since becoming a Seabee," he added.

Ribbons leading to the entrance of the new classrooms were cut during a ceremony, Sept. 6, signifying the official opening of the new school complex to the community. More than 300 local residents and students attended as well as community leaders and U.S. and AFP military personnel.

Col. Bill Coultrup, commander of JSOTF-P, attended the ceremony and commented on the benefits the new buildings will have on the students.

"We're extremely proud of this project. The AFP and U.S. military members working together as a team made a previously unusable school fully functional. This new facility will have an immediate and positive impact on the local community's quality of education," Coultrup said.



# First PNP Officers Graduate from Basic Police Operations Course

*By Petty Officer 1st Class Katherine Sanchez  
JSOTF-P Public Affairs*

A ceremony held July 11 at Camp Bautista marked the graduation of the first Philippine National Police students to complete the Basic Police Operations Course held there.

Nearly 50 officers from PNP stations throughout the Sulu Province completed the three-week course, which included lessons in ethics, human rights, patrol and custody procedures, and law enforcement.

Camp Bautista's commander, Philippine Marine Maj. Gen. Juancho Sabban, Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines commander, U.S. Army Col. Bill Coultrup, representatives from the U.S. Department of Justice and Jolo's chief of police were among the attendees on hand to offer their congratulations to the graduating class.

"Military and FBI personnel of JSOTF-P are proud to support the PNP's commendable effort to provide this top-notch training to their officers. This course will go a long way in helping the PNP to protect their fellow citizens," Coultrup said.

Two PNP officers, who were trained through other U.S.-sponsored law enforcement development programs in the Philippines, and an American technical advisor with an extensive police training background taught the course.

JSOTF-P military personnel and FBI agents provided logistical and administrative support as well as crime scene investigation tools and supplies and facilities to process and store evidence.

"JSOTF-P provided logistical support in the form of personnel, transportation and facilities that enables us to operate in Sulu Province," said Richard Miller, with the Department of Justice's International Criminal Training Assistance Program. "Of course, they also play an important role in their engagement with local government officials, which is critical to get the buy-in we need to be successful. Additionally, they've been present in the province for some time now, working side-by-side with the cops, and when they endorse our program to the locals, it gives us some automatic credibility."

The United States has committed about \$75,000 in police equipment and supplies to aid in this training initiative and provided logistical and administrative support and facilities to process and store crime scene evidence.

"The FBI and JSOTF-P arranged for the delivery of some shipping containers that have been converted to evidence storage and processing facilities," Miller said. "ICITAP provided crime scene investigation tools and supplies to support, and we will be conducting some extensive investigator training soon. This entire package is intended to build a degree of investigative competence that currently does not exist."

The Basic Police Operations Course will continue through December, allowing up to 300 PNP personnel to participate in the training.

A special three-week course for investigators is scheduled for November, where students will broaden their knowledge in criminal and crime scene investigation and interviewing and questioning techniques.



**Col. Bill Coultrup, JSOTF-P commander, congratulates a Philippine National Police Officer after graduating a three-week course, that teaches lessons in ethics, human rights, patrol and custody procedures and law enforcement. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Katherine Sanchez.**

# Ranger awarded Silver Star for hand-to-hand fight with suicide bomber

*Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Andrew Kosterman  
1st Special Forces Group (A) Public Affairs*

What began as a mission to find and eliminate terrorists earlier this year in Iraq ended up being a life-defining moment for one member of 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment.

Spc. Joe Gibson placed his comrades' lives ahead of his own while evacuating wounded American Soldiers and engaging in hand-to-hand combat with a suicide bomber during a secret night mission in April. His actions saved the lives of fellow Rangers.

The attention gained from the awarding of the nation's third highest medal for valor makes Gibson feel slightly "uncomfortable," he said, and he is quick to point out the achievements of his brothers in arms.

"I am honored to be here with those other guys who got honored," said Gibson, following an awards ceremony for members of the unit.

Adm. Eric T. Olson, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, lauded the men of the 75th Ranger Regiment before presenting medals to Gibson and other Rangers for their actions in combat.

"You are a special breed. We ask a lot of you, and for that the nation and I thank you," said Olson. "Rangers are proven over and over again in battle. Rangers are glorified in Hollywood movies, but you aren't actors. You are real men who make real sacrifices."

Olson added that Gibson's actions during the mission for which he was awarded "exemplify and uphold the warrior culture of the Rangers."

## ***The Crucible Begins***

As the helicopter full of Rangers touched down that April night, Gibson and fellow Soldiers found themselves dodging enemy small-arms fire less than 50 meters away.

Gibson's platoon sergeant said the enemy small-arms and machine-gun fire began "less than a minute" after the group disembarked the helicopter.

"The contact was heavy where Specialist Gibson was," said the platoon sergeant. "We took two casualties there."



***Spc. Joe Gibson received the Silver Star for saving the life of a Ranger and fighting a suicide bomber hand-to-hand and preventing the detonation of the bomber's device.***



He described the setting as "a very dark night, out in the middle of nowhere with no ambient light, chest-high grass, and deep irrigation ditches."

Among the two casualties the Rangers sustained was a life-threatening gunshot wound victim.

"The guy who got hit is a real good friend of mine, and he called out to me," said Gibson. "Me and another guy moved to him. I had the medical equipment, so I started getting that prepped while other people started taking care of him. We got him ready for evacuation, patched him up and started moving him out."

Transporting the casualty across an uneven field with irrigation ditches and through enemy fire was a challenge for the Rangers.

"Moving him out was horrible. It was the most 'smoked' I've ever been. It was physically demanding," said Gibson.



The Rangers' dedication to each other motivated Gibson to get his friend to safety.

"It was my buddy; I didn't want to quit," said Gibson. "For a while, it was just me on one end of the litter."

Gibson's actions are credited with saving the Soldier's life.

The Soldier returned home safely to his wife and newborn child.

### ***Making Sure***

After assisting in the medical evacuation, Gibson and the Rangers continued on with their mission.

They began to clear a field with tall grass and canals near the helicopter landing zone. The Rangers knew enemies were still in the area, even though most had fled when the Soldiers touched down.

While clearing the field, Gibson stepped on a terrorist hiding in a ditch under some grass.

"I really didn't think it was a person that I stepped on because I thought it was just another part of the ground, maybe some trash or something," said Gibson.

Initially, Gibson continued for a few more steps past the terrorist. Following his gut instinct, Gibson turned around to investigate what he had stepped on.

The terrorist moved to kill Gibson and the Rangers.

"He didn't say anything other than giving his war cry," explained Gibson. "He had an advantage on me. I didn't have a chance to get my weapon ready, and I knew he was going to shoot me, so I dived on him."

Gibson grabbed the muzzle of the terrorist's rifle as the terrorist began to fire. Gibson wrestled the terrorist to the ground and gained positional control. He struggled and later stripped the terrorist of his weapon.

The terrorist then gripped Gibson's rifle. Without the ability to use a firearm, Gibson engaged the enemy with his hands.

"Then he ripped off my helmet and all my night vision optics, so I couldn't see all that well," recalled Gibson.

The terrorist then began to reach for something hiding in his clothing.

"I stopped him 'cause I thought maybe he was grabbing a knife to attack me with," said Gibson.

The terrorist was reaching for the detonator to his suicide vest. The terrorist screamed, "Bomb!" in English.

"I thought at that moment that I was probably going to die," explained Gibson.

As Gibson worked to stop the terrorist from detonating his vest, the terrorist had maneuvered into a



***Spc. Joe Gibson from Yale, Okla., received a Silver Star for his actions in combat from Adm. Eric T. Olson, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command.***

position that was cutting off Gibson's circulation.

Gibson, in an effort to save himself, began to hit the terrorist as hard as he could. His blows rendered the terrorist unconscious.

"I got my weapon into his stomach and fired," said Gibson.

"And he came back to consciousness after that; I knew I got him. I stood up and neutralized him."

### ***Doing His Job***

The Yale, Okla., native said he was just doing what he was supposed to do, and he doesn't think he deserves any special recognition. He said he is honored to serve as a Ranger and to have saved his fellow Soldier's life. He added that he "can't wait" to return to Iraq.

Following the incident, Gibson re-enlisted to fight with the Ranger platoon he accompanied that night.



# Civil Affairs Soldiers receive Silver Star, Bronze Stars, Purple Hearts

*By Staff Sgt. Marie Schult*

*3rd Special Forces Group (A) Public Affairs*

Three members of Civil Affairs Team 745 were recognized Sept. 25 for their performance during an Afghanistan mission last November.

During the ceremony held at the John F. Kennedy Auditorium at Fort Bragg, N.C., Maj. Gen. John Mulholland, incoming commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command, presented Sgt. 1st Class Drew Kimmey with a Silver Star for gallantry in action, performed with marked distinction. Kimmey is reportedly the first active duty Civil Affairs specialist to receive the award.

Capt. Stephen Ward and Staff Sgt. Carlo Alcazar were awarded the Bronze Star with Valor for distinguishing themselves by meritorious achievement while in combat. Both Soldiers were awarded the Purple Heart for injuries sustained during the battle.

The three Soldiers were recognized for their efforts in rescuing a Special Forces team leader, who was also the ground forces commander that day.

"These guys deserve these awards, full on," said the SF team leader whom they helped rescue.

CA Team 745 was stationed at Firebase Cobra in Oruzgan, Afghanistan, with Special Operations Detachments from the 3rd Special Forces Group, members of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police.

The teams and their Afghan counterparts left the firebase Nov. 2, 2007, to visit the village of Sarsina to conduct a medical capabilities mission as well as a humanitarian aid drop.

"We really wanted to give them radios since they are so isolated," said Alcazar, the team engineer at the time.

Once they arrived at the village, they discovered it had been evacuated, and the Taliban was entrenched into several fighting positions in an attempt to ambush Coalition forces in the area.

Alcazar said only three families came in for medical treatment. The families told the Soldiers the Taliban made the other people leave the village, but they had nowhere to go so they stayed.

"What was alarming was the buildings had locks and barricaded doors, which was a clear indication the village wasn't abandoned but had been turned into a defensible



**Sgt. 1st Class Drew Kimmey, team sergeant, Civil Affairs Team 745, 97th Civil Affairs Battalion, receives a Silver Star from Maj. Gen. John Mulholland, incoming commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command. Photo by Staff Sgt. Marie Schult.**

position," said Ward.

When asked if this seemed strange to him, Alcazar said it did.

"It was time to get into a firefight; you can feel it," said Alcazar, who had been in a firefight in this village before. "I didn't know exactly where they were, but it was just a matter of time."

Three hundred Taliban fighters engaged the teams. According to Army documents, after an hour of fighting, two vehicles were pulled to the rear of the fight after being disabled. This left the ground forces commander at the front of the U.S. lines and in jeopardy of being overrun.

At this point, Ward, the team leader for CA Team 745, radioed to the ground forces commander, who was pinned down in a vulnerable building, that they were on their way.

"We went because we were the closest truck to do anything about it, and the others were busy providing cover," said Ward. However, the team's vehicle crashed into an enemy fighting position and became immobile, knocking Ward and Alcazar momentarily unconscious.

After they both regained consciousness and situational





awareness, Alcazar took to reloading ammunition belts, enabling Kimmey, the gunner, to continue engaging enemy forces. Ward exited the vehicle and directed his team to dismount and move to cover. Kimmey remained in the turret, providing cover for the team and allowing them to reach the ground forces commander. He stayed, even though he knew the enemy was setting up mortar positions in order to rocket the truck he was firing from.

“The difference was Kimmey was able to keep them from overrunning us with the .50 cal., and in the process he was drawing a majority of the enemy fire,” said Ward, who noted the enemy was approximately 50 to 100 meters away at this point.

“Yeah, he was my hero,” said Alcazar about Kimmey.

Team 745 moved to the ground commander’s position and helped in the recovery of the commander and the casualties. All of this was done, according to statements taken after the firefight, while under continual, accurate, effective enemy fire.

Since Team 745’s vehicle was immobile, it was stripped of all sensitive equipment and its gun was dismantled to prevent the enemy from using the weapon. Once Team 745 sterilized their truck, they had no choice but to run beside the Special Forces vehicle, using it as cover, until they reached safety because there was no room for them on the truck.

“I thought, ‘This sucks.’ I could see bullets ricocheting off the ground,” said Alcazar, who was unknowingly injured.

He knew his leg hurt, but he didn’t remember injuring it and only later found out it was deeply cut. All three men ran alongside the truck until they reached a checkpoint and



**Capt. Stephen Ward, team leader, Civil Affairs Team 745, 97th Civil Affairs Battalion, receives a Bronze Star with Valor device, from Maj. Gen. John Mulholland, incoming commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command. Photo by Staff Sgt. Marie Schult.**

mounted up into another vehicle for the ride back to Firebase Cobra.

“The words can’t do justice, nor can the medal on your chest convey what they went up against,” said Mulholland.

He also compared them to those who fought in battles of the past, remarking on the historical line of valor that leads to these three men and their actions.

“The land may be different, the uniform may be different, but the common thread is that when the chips were down, we had men and women who had the courage to seize the day,” said Mulholland.

“I earned it, but did I really deserve to receive this kind of award? Did I really do great things?” Alcazar asked while receiving the award. He attributed much of the success of the battle that day to the other combatants on the field.

“The three of us were honored at this particular ceremony, but there were two Operational Detachment Alpha Soldiers from 3rd Special Forces Group that were doing things above and beyond that day,” said Ward.

After everything CA Team 745 went through that day in the gunfight, none of them sustained an injury worse than a deep laceration, and they all have something to celebrate.

Less than six months later, the Special Forces teams gave that village back to the people.

“Not only were we able to give the village back to the people, but we set up an Afghan Police checkpoint; Afghans protecting Afghans,” said the team leader, who added that they were able to see hundreds of families move back into the village and Afghan forces able to operate in the area.



**Staff Sgt. Carlo Alcazar, Civil Affairs Team 745, 97th Civil Affairs Battalion (Airborne), receives a Bronze Star with Valor device from Maj. Gen. John Mulholland, incoming commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command. Photo by Staff Sgt. Marie Schult.**

# Family accepts Soldier's Silver Star



**By Pfc. Benjamin Watson**  
**49th Public Affairs Detachment**  
**(Airborne)**

The widow of a Special Forces Soldier with the 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), accepted her fallen husband's Silver Star Medal during a ceremony Sept. 9 near the unit's headquarters at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Gisela and Dalia Munoz, surviving wife and daughter of Sgt. 1st Class Pedro Munoz, participated

in the ceremony honoring his sacrifice after he was fatally wounded at Shindand, Afghanistan, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Jan. 2, 2005.

Munoz was previously awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Valor device; however, the award was recently upgraded to the Silver Star. The ceremony recognizing the upgrade was held in a commemorative rock garden designed by his daughter.

Munoz was clearing a compound in pursuit of a mid-level Taliban commander when a Taliban fighter opened fire from inside a room containing women and children, said Col. Mark Gorton, deputy commander of 7th SFG (A). Although he was wounded, Munoz returned fire and killed the Taliban fighter, enabling those in his detachment to proceed in clearing the building.

"Sergeant First Class Munoz continued to support his detachment," Gorton said, "firing selectively, engaging only armed combatants without harming any non-combatants. His dedication and his courage are evident through his actions: protecting innocent life, staying in the fight without thought for himself while supporting his teammates, allowing them to successfully accomplish their mission."

Munoz entered the Army in February 1986 as an automated logistical specialist. He graduated from the Special Forces Qualification Course in 1990 and was assigned to the 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne). Soon after assignment, he deployed in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He later deployed to Haiti for seven months in 1994 in support of Operation Uphold Democracy.

In 1999, he was assigned to the U.S. Army

parachute team, the Golden Knights. After completing more than 300 static-line and 4,000 free-fall parachute jumps, Munoz returned to the Special Forces community in 2002, serving with the 7th SFG (A).

"You look at a picture of Munoz," said Lt. Gen. Robert Wagner, commander of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, "and you see a 47-year-old senior Soldier who has served our nation with extraordinary honor, distinction, pride and accomplishment. I suspect some of the things he's most proud of are his wife and his daughter, two incredible people who have served our nation."

Over the course of his career as a Soldier, Munoz received the Silver Star Medal, the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the Joint Meritorious Unit Award, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Armed Forces Service Medal, the Humanitarian Service Medal, the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon, the Kuwait Liberation Medal, the Combat Infantryman Badge with 2nd Award Star, the Special Forces Tab, the Master Parachutist Badge and the Master Military Free Fall Badge.



**Gisela Munoz, widow of Sgt. 1st Class Pedro Munoz, accepts a posthumous Silver Star Sept. 9 outside of 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) headquarters at Fort Bragg. From left stands commander of U.S. Army Special Forces Command (Airborne), Brig. Gen. Michael Repass, Munoz's daughter, Dalia, Gisela and Lt. Gen. Robert Wagner, commander of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command. Photo by Pfc. Benjamin Watson.**



# 20th Special Forces Group rescues residents in hurricane's wake



**Members of the 20th Special Forces Group of the Mississippi Army National Guard launched rubber boats fitted with outboard motors to rescue residents of the flooded Jordan River Shores subdivision in Kiln, Miss., Sept. 1. Photo by 2nd Lt. Steven Stubbs.**

***By U.S. National Guard Bureau Public Affairs***

Shortly after Hurricane Gustav made landfall, several members of the 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group of the Mississippi Army National Guard launched a search and rescue operation at the Jordan River Shores subdivision in Kiln, Miss.

Six teams from the unit, based in Jackson, Miss., used rubber boats fitted with outboard motors to search for anyone who remained in the subdivision, which flooded as a result of a tidal surge from Hurricane Gustav Sept. 1.

"They prepared to patrol the neighborhood to pick up those who had chosen not to evacuate and had become trapped in their homes," said 2nd Lt. Steven Stubbs, a public affairs officer from the 186th Air Refueling Wing of the Mississippi Air National Guard in Meridian, Miss. "And suddenly it became more than just a rescue; it became an extreme emergency."

Scott Bilbo, chief of the Kiln Volunteer Fire Department, had gotten word that a man whose house was surrounded by rising water needed emergency medical help.

"I don't know what shape he's in. I was told he was sick," Bilbo told the troops.

Within minutes, the Special Forces Soldiers had the victim on the way for emergency medical attention.

"We called our dispatcher through our fire marshal to get us a boat. We got here. They happened to be here doing rescues, and it worked out perfectly," said Bilbo. "Our boat would have to come from two miles away."

Stubbs said Sgt. Maj. Mike Patterson handled the mission very well. "You could just tell by his actions his main concern was getting those folks out safely and quickly. This was a perfect example of the Mississippi National Guard's Citizen-Soldiers helping fellow citizens in time of need."

The unit worked in conjunction with local fire, rescue and police departments to recover the stranded residents, Stubbs said. Special Forces troops rescued six residents from Jordon Estates.

In addition to search and rescue missions, other Soldiers conducted security patrols along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.



# Special Forces Soldier dies while saving teammate

*By USASFC Public Affairs*



**Sgt. James M. Treber**

An Army Special Forces Soldier died heroically when he gave his life to save a comrade from drowning in Afghanistan after a vehicle accident, according to the only survivor, Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Serna.

Master Sgt. Shawn Simmons, Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Rada Morales and Sgt. James Treber, all from

Company A, 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), drowned June 29 when, under the cover of darkness, their heavily armored vehicle, an RG-31, dropped off a narrow, unimproved dirt road and rolled upside down into a water-filled canal.

Following recovery efforts performed by the rest of the combat convoy, Serna was found alive but suffering from hypothermia and hypoxia.

The Combined Joint Task Force - 101, the American division-sized task force in eastern Afghanistan, conducted an investigation into the events that led to the rollover of the RG-31 MRAP. The results of that investigation have been formally briefed to the primary next of kin of the deceased Soldiers.

Serna's sworn statement

concerning the accident reveals that, in the immediate aftermath of the rollover, he was trapped in the passenger compartment by ammunition cans and unable to free



**Sgt. James M. Treber**



himself as water began filling the vehicle.

"I was covered in ammo cans, so I couldn't release my seatbelt, at which time the water began to fill up inside the cab, and I became totally submerged in my seat," Serna said in his statement. "I felt a hand come down and unfasten my seatbelt and release my body armor. Sergeant Treber picked me up and moved me to a small pocket of air."

That air pocket originally was Treber's, who had been sitting one seat ahead of Serna during the operation. However, once Treber freed Serna from where he was trapped, he left that air pocket to Serna after determining there was not enough air in that particular pocket for both men to breathe as they struggled in the darkness against frigid, rising water.

"He knew there was not enough room for both of us to breathe, so he went under water to find another pocket of air," Serna stated. "Once he re-emerged, we attempted to open the door and hatches with no success."

Serna said he blacked out shortly thereafter and, before his comrades were able to save them, Treber, Simmons and Rada Morales all died.

"Sergeant Treber's selfless actions are in keeping with those traditions internalized within the ranks of our regiment," said Brig. Gen. Michael Repass, commanding general of U.S. Army Special Forces Command located at Fort Bragg, N.C. "Valor and sacrifice were not mere words to Sergeant Treber. Rather, he lost his life living the Warrior Ethos. The great sacrifice and courage that Soldiers like Sergeant Treber exhibit each day inspire us to protect the values and ideals of this great country."

At the 7th SFG (A) unit memorial ceremony July 17, Treber was remembered as a hero who gave his all, even though it may have contributed to his death.

The commander of 7th SFG (A) and Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – Afghanistan, Col. Sean Mulholland, was unable to attend the unit memorial ceremony at Fort Bragg but provided his comments to be read during the ceremony.

"Shawn (Simmons), Jeffrey (Rada Morales) and James (Treber) believed in what our country stands for and lived their lives to the utmost," said

Mulholland. "Their courage, dedication, commitment, heroism and lives will always remain present in our minds and hearts..."

Treber's Operational Detachment Alpha commander in Afghanistan, Capt. Casey Galligan, was also not able to make it to the unit memorial. His personal statement was read during the ceremony as well. It said he felt blessed to have had Treber on his team.

During his short time in the detachment, "we watched Sergeant Treber become a man," Galligan said. "A man who gave his life to save another; there is no greater action or sacrifice."

One of Treber's teammates, Staff Sgt. Jonathan Davis, made the trip back from Afghanistan to speak at the memorial.

"The most important thing I will always remember (James) Treber for, and I will think about every day, are his final actions on that fateful night," said Davis, an ODA teammate who was in the convoy the night the accident occurred. "(James) Treber

saved my teammate's life. For that, I will forever be grateful."

After a service with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery, half of Treber's cremated remains were interned in a memorial wall, in keeping with his wishes. Treber's wife keeps the other half in an urn at their home.

Serna has recovered from his injuries and is back serving with his unit in Afghanistan.

***"I felt a hand come down and unfasten my seatbelt and release my body armor. Sergeant Treber picked me up and moved me to a small pocket of air."***

***"He knew there was not enough room for both of us to breathe so he went under water to find another pocket of air."***

**- Sgt. 1st Class Joseph A. Serna**



**Sgt. 1st Class  
Jeffrey M. Rada Morales**



**Master Sgt.  
Shawn E. Simmons**

# th SFG(A), 2nd BATTALION trains

*By Maj. April Olsen  
5th SFG (A) Public Affairs*

Known for being the best trained Soldiers in the Army, Special Forces units routinely send individuals and teams to locations around the world to practice their field craft.

To capitalize on an opportunity to train with a conventional Army brigade combat team and partner nation forces, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) recently sent an entire battalion to participate in a National Training Center rotation as part of pre-mission training for their next Iraq deployment.

“Second Battalion’s training objectives are being executed on two levels,” said battalion commander Lt. Col.

John Prairie. “At the headquarters, we are developing our staff’s systems and processes that will be utilized during our upcoming deployment, while simultaneously incorporating training events for our specialty teams that haven’t been emphasized due to high operational tempo in OIF.”

The month-long exercise involves one Special Forces Advanced Operational Base conducting SOF specific missions inside “the box,” synchronizing operations with 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, said the battalion NTC planner.

One Operational Detachment-Alpha team is training with Soldiers from the United Arab Emirates special forces.

Other elements and ODAs from 2nd Battalion are geographically dispersed throughout multiple training locations in California, Nevada and Utah to replicate the operating environment the battalion will encounter in Iraq.

“The intent for all specialty missions is to feed back into full spectrum operations in the box,” the planner said. “All missions outside the box are tied back into the box scenario.”

ODAs using advanced infiltration techniques by air, sea and land conduct their training as an internal validation.

“We use the training here to evaluate their skills,” said battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Dwayne Cox. “So they know and we know the unit is ready to deploy and perform its missions.”

The battalion headquarters, operating out of a facility in southern California, is using their command and control role to refine battle tracking procedures as well as systems for

communications and logistical support, said the battalion operations officer, Maj. Seth Krummrich.

## PRACTICE MAKES

“Everything we’re using here — the systems we’re developing and using — were pulled from products and formats being used in Iraq,” said the planner, who also serves as a battalion battle captain. “We are refining the battle rhythm we expect to use in Iraq.”



*Special Forces Soldiers prepare to breach a door during U.S. and UAE training at the National Training Center. United Arab Emirates special forces joined 2nd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group during an NTC rotation in August. U.S. Army photo.*



*Members of an Operational Detachment Alpha from 2nd Battalion, 5th SFG (A) carry a downed “pilot” during a training scenario at the National Training Center in August. U.S. Army photo.*



# 25<sup>th</sup> ID, UAE partners at NTC

The AOB commander in “the box” said the rotation is an opportunity to enhance how his headquarters supports the ODAs, but also to practice external communications with conventional Army forces and forces from partner nations.

“Overseas, we [Special Forces] help build a common operating picture,” said Maj. Scott Schroeder. “We work together to put pieces of the puzzle together. When you go overseas, you can’t operate in a vacuum.”

The ODAs under his AOB are working alongside battalions from 3rd BCT, 25th ID, Schroeder said.

“All of our guys

*During training at the NTC, Soldiers of 2nd Bn., 5th SFG (A), train on the emplacement of the Claymore mine. U.S. Army Photo.*



# PERFECT

understand the importance of working with battlespace owners and BCTs,” he said. “We have an appreciation for what each other brings to the fight.”

“All training, from STX lanes to full spectrum ops, was integrated with the brigade for planning,” the planner said.

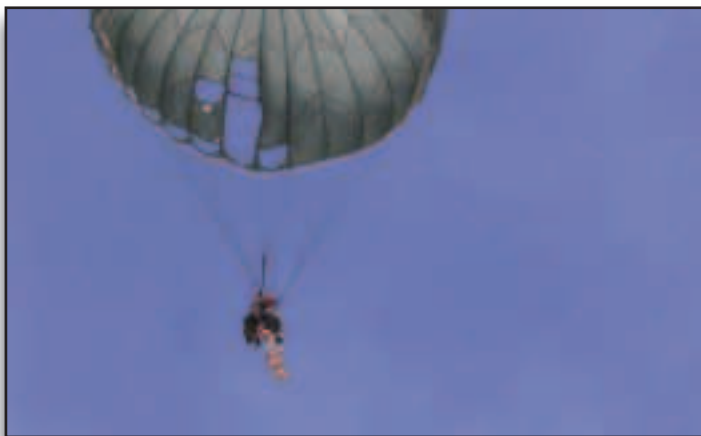
The addition of training with UAE soldiers allows some 2nd Battalion Soldiers to foster relationships and build the partner nation force capability while enhancing ODA training.

“Every time we work with other countries, we stay

fluid,” said one ODA team sergeant, citing the flexibility it provides his team to learn from the experiences of other Special Operations Soldiers.

The battle captain said working with conventional Army forces such as BCTs provides a similar opportunity to share lessons learned from previous combat deployments. He said tracking geographically separated elements conducting training missions in desert, mountain and water environments as part of the same rotation involving U.S. and UAE forces is preparing the battalion for continued combat operations in a complex operational environment.

“We work very decentralized,” he said. “Teams are given a lot of responsibility, and we expect them to be responsible and do what needs to be done.”



*A 2nd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Soldier parachutes onto a drop zone at the National Training Center in August. The training was part of a rotation involving U.S. and United Arab Emirate Special Forces. U.S. Army photo.*



*A Soldier from 2nd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), trains with soldiers of the United Arab Emirates special forces during a rotation at the National Training Center in August. U.S. Army photo.*



# MARSOC, 160th SOAR (A)

## *take to the skies*



*Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Stephen Benson*  
**MARSOC Public Affairs**

At the back edge of a helicopter, a column of Marines stare out into the vast space above their drop zone as the wind whips across their faces. They wait for the jumpmaster to wave his arm and shout, “Go! Go! Go!” so they can exit the plane at heights of up to 13,000 feet with their fellow Marines.

Marines from 2d Marine Special Operations Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, and Soldiers from the U.S. Army Special Operations Command’s 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) recently teamed up to conduct paraloft operations at Drop Zone Pheasant at Camp Lejeune, N.C. The intent of the operations are to sharpen their insertion skills and prepare for combat situations where airborne insertions are necessary.

The Marines arrived at the drop zone early in the morning to stage their equipment. Shortly after, members of the 160th SOAR (A) flew in to the drop zone in an MH-47D Chinook, a dual engine helicopter developed specifically for Special Operations Forces.

The Soldiers discussed the details of the exercise and gave a safety brief to the Marines before they began.

“These Soldiers from the 160th SOAR are extremely professional, and it’s always a privilege when our Marines get to work with them,” said Staff Sgt. Jason Elson, safety chief and jumpmaster, 2d MSOB, MARSOC. “[160th SOAR] are experts in airborne operations.”

Marines conducted static-line and freefall jumps throughout the day. Static-line jumps are executed at a lower height than freefall jumps, and the parachute deploys upon exit of the aircraft. Freefall jumps are executed at nearly five times the height of static-line jumps, and the Marines deploy their parachutes after a short drop.

According to Elson, the Marines of 2d MSOB, many who came from Force Reconnaissance billets, have multiple capabilities that allow them to conduct a variety of combat operations when deployed. The 2d MSOB paraloft works to build and maintain the airborne capabilities of the unit. 2d MSOB is fortunate to have more







**A Soldier with the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) discusses safety procedures with Marines from U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command before boarding an MH-47D Chinook helicopter at Drop Zone Pheasant, Camp Lejeune, N.C.**

qualified jumpmasters than almost any other unit in the Marine Corps, added Elson.

After the Marines touched down from their jump, they quickly moved to the staging area to equip themselves with new parachutes. Due to the flexibility and the speed of the Soldiers and their aircraft, Marines were able to execute multiple jumps throughout the day.

Just as the Marines from 2d MSOB need to maintain their paraloft skills, the Soldiers of the 160th SOAR (A) need to maintain their skills in flying the MH-47D Chinook with the intent of dropping parachutists. The operation was a benefit to both units, and, according to Elson, they plan to work together in the future on more operations.

#### **Photo Column**

**1. A Marine with U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command drops from the ramp of the MH-47D Chinook helicopter from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (A) over Drop Zone Pheasant, Camp Lejeune, N.C.**

**2. Deployment bags dangle in the wind as MARSOC Marines drift away from the MH-47D Chinook helicopter piloted by the 160th SOAR (A).**

**3. A MARSOC Marine glides through the wind on his descent as another Marine drops in behind him.**

**4. A MARSOC Marine reins in his parachute after descending from an MH-47D Chinook helicopter from the 160th SOAR (A).**



# MARSOC Marines turn to DARC side

*By Sgt. Steven King  
MARSOC Public Affairs*

When a person hears someone talking about loud music and flashing lights, the first thing that usually comes to mind is a dance club. But that wasn't the case for Marines with Marine Special Operations Advisor Group, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, when they trained at the Direct Action Resource Center in Little Rock, Ark.

The Marines attended DARC in order to sharpen their skills through the advanced urban warfare, advanced tactical carbine and advanced tactical pistol courses offered by DARC.

"This training has helped me to walk away with a better understanding of close-quarters battle and urban tactics," said Staff Sgt. Shaun Cason, MARSOC. "It's brought us up to a higher standard and higher level in the urban warfare arena."

For the MSOAG students, the training was just as mentally challenging as it was physical.

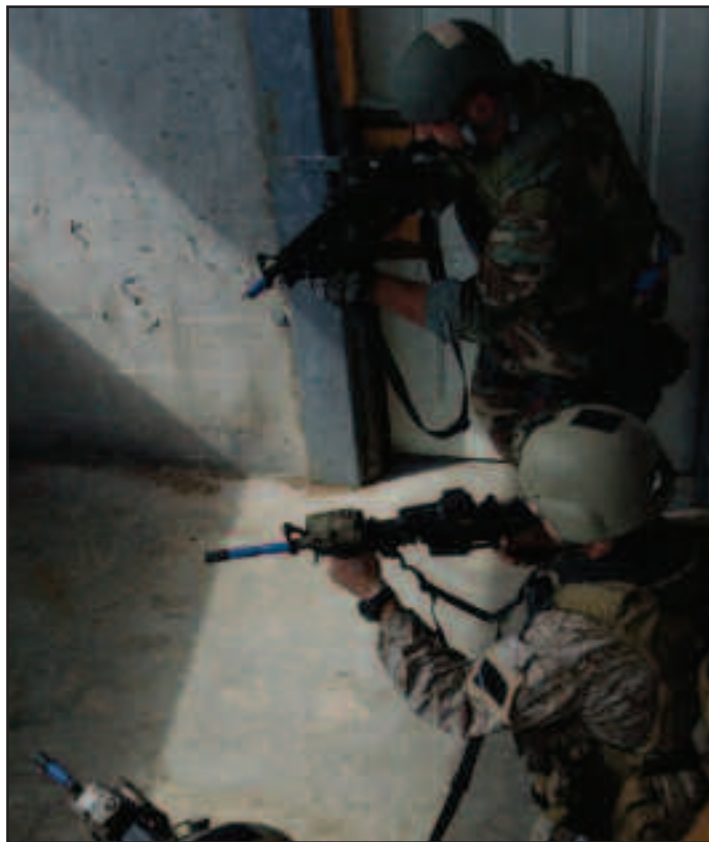
"I can honestly say I have a stronger grasp on the thought process one should have when clearing a building," said Staff Sgt. Roy Archer, MARSOC. "This training gave me another style to approach CQB with."

With a combination of loud music and the wearing of gas masks to make verbal communication difficult and hand signals essential, the Marines continually navigated down the corridors of the DARC shoot-house, making sure to clear every room along the way while dealing with the simulated chaos and fog of war.

"We endeavor to make the training as realistic as possible for the trainees," said Caitlyn Firrantello, DARC public relations advisor. "We incorporate loud music, simunitions, role players, burning cars and rocket propelled grenade simulators in our training evolutions in order to capture an essence of reality."

DARC, which was founded 12 years ago by Richard Mason, a former Army Green Beret, has been training U.S. government and corporate entities in numerous tactical, operational and strategic disciplines ranging from tactical parachute courses to urban survival, evasion, resistance and escape, and tactical medical courses. Their training style integrates the use of simunitions training and a realistic use of an antagonistic force with no military training.

"I wanted to build a place where guys can train as hard and realistic as possible," said Mason. "There are many restrictions on base as far as training is concerned,



**Marines with Marine Special Operations Advisor Group, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, clear a corner during the Advanced Urban Warfare portion of their training at the Direct Action Resource Center, Little Rock, Ark. MARSOC photo.**

so we try to give a little more freedom at DARC to allow the guys to train more realistically."

Mason and his staff take measures to collect the most recent information from the battlefield in order to structure DARC training evolutions.

"A large majority of our staff still deploys overseas in support of the Global War on Terrorism," said Firrantello. "By having our instructors forward, we receive a constant flow of updated information with which to outline our training."

Every one of the DARC instructors is a subject matter expert with real-world experience.

"Our courses are top rate because all of our instructors have combat experience and the ability to convey that info to our students," said Firrantello.

The knowledge and real-world experiences of the instructors, the realistic training evolutions and the blending of teaching methodologies and facilities of DARC gave the Marines of MARSOC a training experience that is sure to pay off in their future missions.



# Marine takes long road to MARSOC

*By Sgt. Steven King*  
*MARSOC Public Affairs*

For those of us who are born and raised in the United States, it's easy to take the privileges and opportunities we enjoy in our country for granted, but for Sgt. Ekhart Kohkemper, S-3 training NCO with Marine Special Operations Support Group, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, coming to America in 1994 and experiencing the opportunities this country holds was a life-changing experience for which he is thankful.

Kohkemper was born in 1980 in San Jose, Costa Rica. Even in Kohkemper's early years, moving from country to country was business as usual.

"My father was a financial specialist with Inter-America Development Bank, and his job required him to move around a lot," said Kohkemper. "I lived in Costa Rica until 1984. We then moved to Venezuela and stayed there until 1989 before moving to Mexico, where we made our home until 1992. We left Mexico in '92 and moved to Uruguay, where we stayed until 1994." In 1994, the Kohkemper family moved from Uruguay to the United States to seek greater opportunities.

"My parents wanted a better life for us," said Kohkemper. "They wanted us to grow up in a place that offered more opportunity, so they decided to move us to the U.S. My father already had family here, so that made the decision to move here easier."

After graduating from high school and attending a year of college at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., Kohkemper decided to join the Marines.

"I wanted to do something different with my life, not to mention travel some more, so it seemed like the Marine Corps was the perfect career choice for me," said Kohkemper.

Through hard work and commitment in the Marine Corps, Kohkemper developed himself, not only into a phenomenal leader, but also a teacher, according to his superiors.

"Kohkemper is currently the only (Marine Combat Instructor of Water Survival) we have in the support group," said Master Gunnery Sgt. Robert Couillard, MSOSG operations chief. "He's helped five different units get qualified in combat water survival, subsequently training more than

200 Marines. He is a decisive individual that is not afraid to lead from the front."

Kohkemper's desire to help others fuels his passion for the billet he holds in the Marine Corps.

"The reason why I love my job in the Marines is because it allows me the opportunity to help other Marines excel in their careers," said Kohkemper. "Being the S-3 training NCO is fulfilling and gratifying for me to help everyone stay on top of their training requirements, thus moving them closer to promotion and personal career goals."

Kohkemper achieved his personal goal of becoming a U.S. citizen March 4, 2008.

"Gaining U.S. citizenship has been like a weight lifted off of my shoulders," said Kohkemper. "My citizenship will open more doors for me within MARSOC and the Marine Corps as a whole.

According to Kohkemper, being a U.S. citizen is a great privilege and being a U.S. Marine is one of the highest honors he has attained in his life so far.

"I appreciate the opportunities and lifestyle this country offers," explains Kohkemper. "Not only am I glad I'm a citizen now, I'm also thankful for the chance to serve this nation as a Marine."



**Sgt. Ekhart Kohkemper, a training noncommissioned officer with Marine Special Operations Support Group, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, oversees MARSOC shooters taking part in their annual pistol qualification at Pistol Range D-30, Camp Lejeune, N.C. Serving as a range coach is one of Kohkemper's duties as a training NCO. MARSOC photo.**





# SPECIAL BOAT TEAMS



*(Top) Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen from Special Boat Team 22 conduct live-fire immediate action drills Aug. 11 on the riverine training range at Fort Knox, Ky. SBT-22 operates the Special Operations Craft-Riverine and is the only Special Operations unit dedicated to operating in the riverine environment. Photo by Chief Petty Officer Kathryn Whittenberger.*



*(Above) A Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman from Special Boat Team 22 mans an M240N .762mm machine gun while conducting live-fire immediate action drills Aug. 11 on the riverine training range at Fort Knox, Ky. (Left) A Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman from Special Boat Team 22 reloads an M2HB .50 caliber machine gun. Photos by Chief Petty Officer Kathryn Whittenberger.*

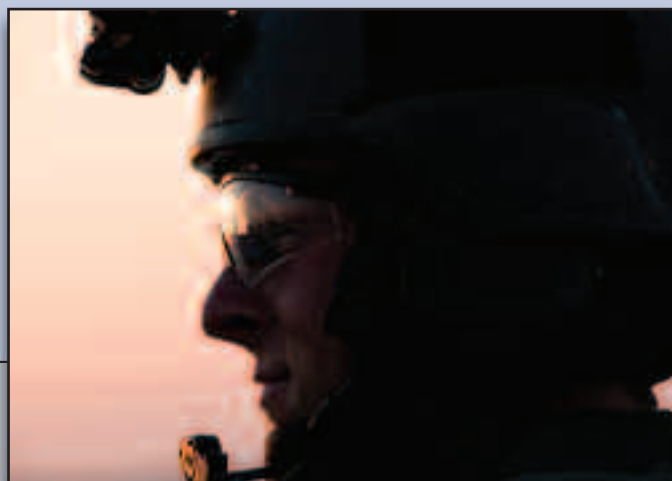






*(Top) Naval Special Warfare 11-meter Rigid-hull Inflatable Boats conduct live-fire training in Pamlico Sound, N.C. The Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen who operate the 11-meter RIBs fired .50-caliber machine guns and MK-19 grenade launchers as part of a training exercise in preparation for an upcoming deployment in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Photos by Petty Officer 3rd Class Robyn Gerstenslager.*

*(Right) A Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman from Special Boat Team 20 takes a break between live-fire training drills on Pamlico Sound, N.C. (Bottom) Naval Special Warfare 11-meter Rigid-hull Inflatable Boats transit Pamlico Sound, N.C., to a live-fire training range near Piney Island. SWCC from SBT-20 spent the day training on MK-19 grenade launchers and .50-caliber machine guns in preparation for an upcoming deployment in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Photos by Petty Officer 3rd Class Robyn Gerstenslager.*



# NSWC welcomes new commander

*By Senior Chief Petty Officer Scott Williams  
NSWC Public Affairs*

A combat-hardened officer recently leading Special Operations units in Iraq took charge of the Navy's entire force of 8,300 Navy SEALs, Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen and supporting staff during a change of command ceremony at the Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, Calif.

Rear Adm. Edward Winters III relieved Rear Adm. Garry Bonelli as commander of Naval Special Warfare Command, the headquarters of the USSOCOM's naval Special Operations Forces.

Bonelli, who previously served as deputy commander of NSW, took command in June when then-commander Rear Adm. Joseph Kernan was selected to take charge of the newly established U.S. 4th Fleet. Bonelli now returns to his former position as deputy commander.

Adm. Eric T. Olson, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, was the guest speaker at the ceremony. As a former commander of NSW, he understands the tremendous impact the force is having in the current global conflict.

"With Navy SEALs at the core, Naval Special Warfare has been magnificent," said Olson. "The successes against Al Qaida in Iraq are due in no small part to the talent, professionalism, the dedication, the tenacity and the operational flexibility of this great force. Rear Admiral Bonelli has been accountable for the force's readiness."

Before he relinquished command, Bonelli remarked on his short tour at the helm of NSW with reverence for the everyday warriors he led and respect for his successor.

"During this time of war, it's been a true privilege and honor, frankly a humbling experience, to serve this great team of agile, formidable SEALs, Special Warfare Combat-craft Crewmen, military mission specialists and civilian experts," Bonelli said. "Welcome aboard Ed. You're absolutely the right leader at the right time to keep this force at the forefront of the Global War on Terrorism."



**Rear Adm. Edward Winters, incoming commander of Naval Special Warfare Command, salutes while being piped aboard during a change of command ceremony in Coronado, Calif., Sept. 5. Winters relieved Rear Adm. Garry Bonelli as commander of the maritime Special Operations Forces. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Michelle Kapica.**

Winters commanded the Iraqi National Counterterrorism Force Transition Team prior to his selection as commander of NSW. His career includes multiple tours of duty with SEAL Teams and deployments to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq and Afghanistan. He was selected for flag rank Aug. 1, 2007.

During his 28 years of service, Winters received two Defense Distinguished Service Medals, the Legion of Merit, three Bronze Star Medals, five Defense Meritorious Service Medals, the Navy Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal and various unit and personal citations.

During his first address to the guests and his staff, Winters expressed appreciation for his new command. "I think it's the best job you can have on the planet here at Naval Special Warfare, the greatest command this country has ever had."





# Naval Special Warfare Basic Training Command stands up

*By NSWC Public Affairs*

Naval Special Warfare Basic Training Command was established in a ceremony at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, Calif., Aug. 29, 2008.

The new command, which reports to the Naval Special Warfare Center, is charged with the basic training of all Naval Special Warfare Forces.

“The main focus of BTC is to increase the number of Basic Underwater Demolition/Sea Air Land and Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen graduates without degrading the graduation standards or making training easier,” said Cmdr. Brian Sebenaler (SEAL), commanding officer of BTC.

BTC will be responsible for both Navy SEAL and SWCC basic training programs, which include the BUD/S course and SEAL Qualification Training for SEAL candidates and Basic Crewmen Training and Crewmen Qualification Training for SWCC candidates.

Sebenaler also said that training smarter and recruiting the right candidates with the right mental and physical aptitude has shown promise at increasing the

number of graduates.

Training pipelines will remain uninterrupted with the establishment of BTC, and all changes should be fairly transparent to students, said Cmdr. John Thorleifson (SEAL), the executive officer of NSWC.

Formerly, Naval Special Warfare basic training fell directly under the command of NSWC, while the advanced training schools fell under the Advanced Training Command.

With the establishment of BTC, NSWC will now be able to focus more on the long-term goals of Naval Special Warfare, while ATC continues to train SEAL and SWCC Operators.

“In the long run, this will increase the number of qualified graduates to SEAL Teams, SEAL Delivery Teams and Special Boat Teams, which will increase their capability on the battlefield,” said Sebenaler.

The BTC mission is to ensure the Naval Special Warfare community continues to produce sufficient resources to keep up with the manpower growth required to win the War on Terrorism.



*Cmdr. Brian Sebenaler, commanding officer, reads the order to establish the Basic Training Command during a ceremony at the Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, Calif. BTC, which falls under the command of the Naval Special Warfare Center, is charged with the basic training of all Naval Special Warfare Forces. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Kevin Beauchamp.*

# MH-53's



## FINAL MISSION



*By Staff Sgt. Andrea Thacker  
Air Forces Central News Team*

Aircrews flew the remaining six MH-53 Pave Low helicopters on their last combat mission in support of Special Operations Forces Sept. 27 in Southwest Asia.

The last mission, a SOF logistical resupply and passenger movement throughout central and southern Iraq, marks their last combat mission before the airframe retires after nearly 40 years in the Air Force inventory.

"We really feel like we are standing on the shoulders of giants," said Lt. Col. Gene Becker, the 20th Expeditionary Special Operations Squadron commander and an MH-53 pilot of 13 years. "(We owe it to) the folks who, over the past 40 years, have built the capability of this aircraft and the mission. We were just the lucky ones to be here at the end."

"We felt a great responsibility to close the MH-53's remaining months in the Air Force in a professional, disciplined and safe manner," he said. "At the end of the last mission, we felt like we achieved that goal. A goal, we believe, was the best way to honor those (who contributed to) the last 40 years of this magnificent helicopter."

MH-53s, with their unique Special Operations mission and

capabilities, have played a vital role in several operations during a career spanning four decades. The HH-53 was the lead command and control helicopter during a raid of Son Tay prison camp in 1970, a mission linked to improving conditions for prisoners of war in North Vietnam.

Again, in 1990, MH-53s led the way for Army AH-64 Apaches during an airstrike, which opened the air war in Operation Desert Storm. And since March 2003, the MH-53 has played a crucial part in Special Operations missions supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The 20th ESOS MH-53 helicopters and their crews have provided vertical lift, direct action and logistical resupply to the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force in Iraq.

"It is a bittersweet ending," said Tech Sgt. Corey Fossbender, a 20th ESOS MH-53 aerial gunner and a crewmember on the lead helicopter during the final mission. "These birds have been around for so long. Our maintenance (teams) have basically been magicians keeping them in the air."

Fossbender, who has spent 13 of his 16-year career in the MH-53 community, said he will miss the camaraderie the helicopter crews shared the most.

"It wasn't just a job, it was a brotherhood," he said. "A legacy is going away. With all the history they have been apart of, it's sad to see them go."

The six-man MH-53 crew consists of two pilots, two flight engineers and two aerial gunners.

"Most of the MH-53 crewmembers will head to AFSOC's new weapons systems like the CV-22 (Osprey), AC-130 (Gunship) ... and (MQ-1) Predators," Becker said. "Some will head over to Air Combat Command and fly the HH-60G (Pave Hawk), and a few will retire."

Senior Master Sgt. Mark Pryor, the 20th ESOS superintendent, will retire after more than 28 years;

half of which he served as a flight engineer on the MH-53.

"I don't think it has had an opportunity to sink in," Pryor said. "When I grabbed those throttles and pulled them off for the last time and realized this is the last time I will fly on the Pave Low and work with this group of guys, it was bittersweet. The MH-53s are retiring, and then I retire. It's a perfect ending to a wonderful career."

Some of the MH-53s will become relics of the past when they become displays in Air Force museums. Others will go to the Aircraft Maintenance and Regeneration Center at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz.

"As the Pave Low goes on to retire from combat today, she goes out as she came in — the very best," Becker said.

# Sister service siblings serve side-by-side

*By Master Sgt. Buffy Galbraith  
AFSOC Public Affairs*



**Siblings Army Sgt. William "Trey" Bullock III (left) and Senior Airman Mary Bullock (right) say their grandfather, a World War II veteran, was their greatest influence growing up. Sgt. Bullock followed in his footsteps by becoming an Army Ranger. Inspired by both her grandfather and her younger brother, Airman Bullock joined the Air Force. Today, the brother and sister duo sometimes find themselves working together despite being in different services. Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Terry Blevins.**

They grew up with stories about his heroism and bravery as a 19-year-old Soldier. They knew of his sacrifice to leave his new bride and his dedication to serve his nation. They were told he suffered a great loss and was never the same after he watched his best friend die on D-Day. They admired his patriotism and wanted to be just like him.

For one Airman and one Ranger, their grandfather was their greatest influence.

When Senior Airman Mary Bullock, 11th Intelligence Squadron imagery analyst, decided to join the military, she knew she had big shoes to fill, not only her grandfather's, but her younger brother's, who joined the Army two years prior. From a close-knit family of six, the Bullock children were raised to look out for one another and to respect family history.

Army Sgt. William Bullock III, also known as Trey, was the first to follow in his grandfather's footsteps, and the most likely, according to his older sister, Airman Bullock.

"We were always told about our grandfather and what he did for our country," said the 23-year-old Airman. "Our parents taught us well, and Trey always wanted to be like our grandfather. He was also a spitting image of our grandfather, and though he was a typical teenager, he was determined to be like him. After he finished boot camp and then Ranger school, he was different."

The Airman was inspired by the way her only brother stood taller, seemed stronger and acted more mature.

As a Ranger attached to the 75th Ranger Regiment, Bullock had to meet tough physical, mental and moral criteria. Each Ranger is a four-time volunteer: for the Army, Airborne school, the Ranger Regiment and Ranger school, according to the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Web site.

"He was proud and he wasn't afraid," she said. "There was an inner strength that just exuded from him, and it was infectious. We were so proud of him and what he accomplished. I was inspired and wanted to join up right away."

Bullock ultimately decided the Air Force was a perfect fit for her and soon found out she would be a part of Air Force Special Operations Command. The first Airman assigned to the newly formed 11th IS from technical school, she learned quickly she would be providing analysis for units that rely on unmanned aerial vehicles like the MQ-1 Predator, a reconnaissance unmanned aerial vehicle.

As an analyst, she conducts full-motion video and all-source analysis for U.S. Special Operations Command and



its components, monitors targets for activity and personnel of interest and creates intelligence products tailored for specific Special Operations Forces missions.

Though relatively new to the Air Force, looking out for her brother was a job Bullock has been doing for 22 years. Realizing her duties as an imagery analyst would allow her to continue to look out for her younger brother added a personal element to her commitment to serve.

Recently, the Bullocks realized they were working closer than ever. Airman Bullock had provided life-saving intelligence to her brother and his patrol while his unit was deployed, though she didn't know it at the time. Sgt. Bullock suffered injuries and was later awarded the Purple Heart, but the intelligence his sister and her unit provided resulted in the prevention of further injuries and loss of life. Bullock credits his sister's life-long watchful eye with the success of the mission and the reason he's alive.

"She's never stopped watching over me," said Sergeant Bullock. "When I was first born, I was very sick and had to be in an incubator in the neonatal intensive care unit. When our mom walked into the ward, she just stood there in disbelief of what she saw."

What the Bullock matriarch saw was a photo of her own daughter hanging above her baby boy's incubator. She didn't put it there, but there it was, nonetheless. The staff at the hospital near the Bullock's hometown of Mathews, Va., said the image was chosen for no particular reason, other than the fact that it was a picture of a beautiful baby with pleasant features that might calm the sick patients in their ward.

"Our mom had no clue my picture was up there, but I had won a beautiful baby of the year contest and they had pictures of babies all over the walls," said Airman Bullock.

"But it was there for a reason," added Sgt. Bullock. "My big sister was watching over me when I was first born, and the Air Force has ensured that she can keep doing that. We know when the Predator is overhead, we are being watched over."

The beautiful baby of the year contest was the beginning of what could arguably be called a trend for Bullock and her Air Force career. She is AFSOC's Airman of the Year and has recently been named one of the Air Force's 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year. Personal achievement, superior leadership, job performance and community involvement are aspects used to recognize the 12 outstanding enlisted personnel.

"I know the competition for the 12 Outstanding Airmen

was so intense, and the fact that my sister surpassed others who have done such great things has proven what our family already knows," said Bullock. "Mary is special, and her talents are only beginning to be realized. The Air Force is the way she can reach her full potential, and she has only just begun."

Bullock lauds the professionalism and skills of not just his sister, but of all the Quiet Professionals who work in AFSOC.

"It's comforting to know it is AFSOC supporting our mission," he said. "They continue to give us the capabilities to do our jobs safely and effectively."

The Bullock siblings say that because they work so closely together, their family's stress has been reduced because they are able to combat any negative light the media may shed on the military.

"I thank God for putting us as close together as He could, considering we chose different services," said Airman Bullock. "We are together, though physically thousands of miles apart at times, and that enables us to continue to encourage each other and put the minds of our family at ease."

Sergeant Bullock agreed, saying he also takes comfort in the job his sister performs that keeps him and his unit out of harm's way.

"I trust in God, and I trust Mary with my life because she's never stopped watching over me," he said.

The Bullocks say they think today's military is a different environment than when their grandfather served during World War II, but the one thing that hasn't changed is the trust servicemembers put in one another and the esprit de corps that accompanies the commitment to serve. They often give each other friendly banter about their respective service choices, but they say it's only in fun, and the bottom line is the great sense of respect they have for the other's abilities.

"I realize that our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines are safe because of the capabilities of our great military and the incredible organization and planning that goes into each and every mission," Airman Bullock said.

As servicemembers, the brother and sister agree there is no comparison to what their grandfather experienced during the 1940s and their experiences in today's military.

"We have an even greater respect for what our grandfather sacrificed, and it makes his legacy that much more important," said Sergeant Bullock. "The impact of his actions is why America is what it is today, and we truly understand his past service allows us to serve today."



# COMBAT CONTROLLER

## awarded two BRONZE STARS

*By Master Sgt. Buffy Galbraith  
AFSOC Public Affairs*

A 23rd Special Tactics Squadron combat controller was awarded two Bronze Stars, one with Valor, and a Purple Heart during a ceremony at the 23rd STS, Hurlburt Field, Fla., auditorium July 21.

Staff Sgt. Dean Conner stood at attention before a standing-room-only crowd as Col. Bradley Thompson, 720th Special Tactics Group commander, presented each of the three awards.

“Sergeant Conner epitomizes the Warrior Ethos — he is always professional and always humble,” said Thompson. “One aspect I appreciate most about special tactics is that our Airmen constantly put the team before themselves — always. Dean was doing exactly that when he was wounded twice in nearly a week’s time.”

According to the citation for the Bronze Star with Valor, Conner was involved in an ambush where he was knocked unconscious when a rocket-propelled grenade impacted the side of his vehicle. After regaining consciousness, he immediately returned fire, prevented the enemy from surrounding his team, and directed air strikes onto known enemy locations.

Little more than a week after this incident, his skills were put to the test again when his patrol was struck by a hostile force. He returned fire and called in support from above as the enemy continued to attack. During a hail of incoming enemy gunfire, Conner suffered a gunshot wound. Despite his injury, he maintained composure and situational awareness and continued identifying targets and calling in air strikes while he received life-saving medical attention.

“What you do not read in the citation is that right up until the time he was airlifted out for his wounds he was thinking about his team’s welfare above his own,” said Thompson. “His last words to the support aircraft overhead were to please be sure his team got out of there safely.”

A pilot providing close air support in communication with Conner said he was impressed with the clear and calm voice of professionalism that the noncommissioned officer displayed.



**Col. Bradley Thompson, 720th Special Tactics Group commander, presents Staff Sgt. Dean Conner, 23rd Special Tactics Squadron, with the certificate to accompany the Purple Heart during a ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla. The combat controller was also awarded two Bronze Star Medals, one with Valor, for his heroic actions during a hostile fire situation. During a hail of incoming enemy gunfire, Conner suffered a gunshot wound. He continued to return fire while calling in support from above, despite his injury. Photo by Senior Airman Emily Moore.**

“The person standing next to you becomes more important than you,” said Senior Master Sgt. Antonio Travis, 23rd STS chief enlisted manager. “You find that you will do anything for that person, and Sergeant Conner exemplified that by his actions that day.”

Conner doesn’t feel he did anything anyone else in his situation wouldn’t have done.

“This is what we, as special tactics combat controllers, do,” said Conner. “I was only doing what the Air Force trained me to do. To be decorated does feel good, but this is for my career field — my team.”

Conner’s modest and team-focused attitude is what superiors say make him stand out.

“Dean is a great teammate and a phenomenal operator,” said Capt. Steven Cooper, 720th STG executive officer and former team leader. “His medals are well-deserved, and it is great that he and special tactics as a whole are getting recognition for their great contributions and sacrifices.”

Conner is quick to acknowledge that contributions and sacrifices are made by many.

“We are nothing alone. It takes the hard work and dedication of many people to be successful, and we are proud of what we do,” he said.



# Kadena Airmen aid injured mariners

*By Maj. John Hutcheson  
18th Wing Public Affairs*

A team of Pacific Air Force and Air Force Special Operations Command Airmen from Kadena Air Base, Japan, deployed recently to provide medical assistance to two injured mariners aboard a Panamanian freighter 750 nautical miles north of Saipan.

Pararescuemen from the 31st Rescue Squadron and members of the 320th Special Tactics Squadron left around 2:30 p.m. aboard an MC-130 flown by the 1st Special Operations Squadron. The 320th STS and 1st SOS are both part of the 353rd Special Operations Group based at Kadena. The 31st RQS is part of the 18th Wing.

After a four-and-a-half-hour flight, a total of six Airmen performed a freefall jump into the Pacific Ocean from 3,500 feet. Using two Riggable Alternate Method Zodiac packages consisting of inflatable Zodiac boats and engines, the team made contact with the freighter and boarded it around 10 p.m. local. The freighter's crew was mostly Ukrainian, but the captain was able to communicate in English with the rescue team.

The pararescuemen and special tactics Airmen

immediately began providing medical aid to the two injured crewmembers, one of whom was in critical condition with head injuries. The Airmen stayed in constant contact with flight doctors at Kadena as they worked to stabilize the critical patient. During the course of the operation, a KC-135 from the 909th Air Refueling Squadron refueled the MC-130, which subsequently dropped resupply bundles for the Airmen onboard the freighter.

The Airmen remained on board the ship and provided medical assistance to the injured crewmembers until they could be evacuated to a hospital on Guam. According to the U.S. Coast Guard coordinating the rescue operation, two U.S. Navy search and rescue helicopter crews from Guam's Navy Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron Two Five flew to a rendezvous point near Saipan and transferred the injured crewmembers to Naval Hospital Guam for urgent care.

"This is one of the many scenarios Air Force rescue professionals train for, and I'm glad we were able to respond and provide the medical assistance desperately required by those injured crewmembers," said Maj. Jason Pifer, commander of the 31st Rescue Squadron. "I am proud of everyone, across both Air Force commands and the other services, who came together to make this event happen."



*A Pararescueman from the 31st Rescue Squadron treats a crewmember of a Panamanian freighter aboard a helicopter 750 miles north of Saipan. A total of six Airmen performed a freefall jump into the Pacific Ocean from 3,500 feet. Using two Riggable Alternate Method Zodiac packages consisting of inflatable Zodiac boats and engines, the team made contact with the freighter and boarded it. Navy search and rescue helicopter crews from Guam's Navy Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron Two Five flew to a rendezvous point near Saipan and transferred the injured crewmembers to Naval Hospital Guam for urgent care. Courtesy photo.*

# JMISC welcomes new commander

*By Master Sgt. Rudy Carter*  
**JMISC Public Affairs**

The Joint Military Information Support Command, a subordinate joint command of U.S. Special Operations Command, bade a fond farewell to Army Col. Jack Summe and welcomed his successor, Army Col. Dorothea Burke, in a ceremony at the MacDill Air Force Base Davis Conference Center, Sept. 3.

Adm. Eric T. Olson, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, presided over the ceremony and praised Summe for the work he and the JMISC have accomplished during his tenure.

“As we say goodbye to Colonel Summe, we welcome back Colonel Dorothea Burke. You have a great challenge ahead of you, and we look forward to supporting you,” said Olson.

Prior to assuming command of the JMISC, Burke served as the deputy of Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate, Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan.

“This is a great day! I am truly humbled to be standing here today. I am honored to be able to take a position where

I can serve with such a professional group of military and civilians who will continue to move the bar forward.”

Speaking to Summe, Burke said, “You have left some big shoes to fill, and you can walk away proud, knowing that you have contributed much to the JMISC and the psychological operations community at large. I wish the best for you and your family.”

Summe told Burke she was the right person at the right time.

“I wish you all the luck in the world and God speed. I know you will do a phenomenal job. This team will follow you, and all you have to do is point them in the right direction,” said Summe.

Following the change of command ceremony, Summe was retired from active duty after a distinguished 30-year career in which he served in command and staff positions within various military police and psychological operations organizations.

The JMISC is a command composed of senior military and civilian personnel working to provide professional analysis, planning, program development and prototype product development to support combatant commanders and national goals and objectives in support of the Global War on Terrorism.



*Col. Dorothea Burke, JMISC commander, receives the JMISC colors from Adm. Eric T. Olson, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command. Photo by Staff Sgt. Frank Camarotti.*



# Rep. Saxton honored in USSOCOM Medal ceremony

*By Master Sgt. Laura LeBeau  
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

Rep. Hugh “Jim” Saxton recently received the U.S. Special Operations Command Medal in a ceremony paying tribute to his service and advocacy of Special Operations and the Armed Forces communities throughout his 26-year career as a member of the House of Representatives.

“Congressman Saxton’s work has had a powerful impact. He has stepped beyond his district to put SOCOM in his vision and has served USSOCOM extremely well in his tenure,” said Adm. Eric T. Olson, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.

Military and civilian members filled headquarters Donovan Room as Olson presented Saxton with the USSOCOM Medal, the command’s single most prestigious award.

“I’m not sure I deserve it,” Saxton said. “It’s been a labor of love working with you and your leadership over the past decade or so. Special Operations is one of the highlights of my career.”

Saxton is credited with leading a 15-year campaign to bring terrorism issues to the attention of Congress in a pre-9/11 environment.

“He understood early on that whatever comes next would be fundamentally different throughout the military,” Olson said.

Saxton’s foresight and the Sept. 11 attacks served as the springboard to convince House leaders to create the Terrorism and Unconventional Threats Subcommittee, a part of the House Armed Services Committee. From 2002 through 2006, Saxton chaired the subcommittee, which oversees a budget of more than \$30 billion annually to fund Special Operations Forces, ensuring SOF are adequately trained and equipped.

Additionally, Saxton has maintained a thorough familiarity with SOF organization and culture, and he has recognized the unique challenges faced— and capabilities provided— by SOF in an enduring global campaign. His continued, unwavering support has ensured the SOF community is properly organized, focused and operationally employed.

In his final comments in the ceremony, Saxton expressed his gratitude to the USSOCOM members. “Everyone serves because they’ve had a calling. Thank you for what you do. The country’s level of security is related to your activities and the successes you’ve had.”

The USSOCOM Medal was established in 1994 to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to the defense of the United States through Special Operations. Through the years only 51 people have been recognized with the medal including former leaders of USSOCOM, civilian supporters of SOF, and operators who laid the groundwork for today’s SOF.



***Congressman Hugh “Jim” Saxton received the U.S. Special Operations Command Medal in a ceremony at USSOCOM Headquarters, MacDill AFB, Fla., Sept. 3, honoring his 26 years of service and advocacy of Special Operations and the Armed Forces. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Lawn.***

# TF Ranger: First Battle of Mogadishu

*By Jonathan Freudenthal*  
*USSOCOM History Office*

In January 1991, a coalition of tribal clans known as the United Somali Congress forced out long-time dictator Siad Barre. Cooperation between the clans was short-lived. Fighting soon broke out among the Somali National Movement, the party of Mohammed Farah Aided, rival factions loyal to Ali Mahdi and various groups. Violent warfare followed, destroying the fragile economy of Somalia. In one year, an estimated 300,000 – 500,000 Somalis died, either from fighting or starvation. Chaos reigned until March 3, 1992, when the warring parties agreed to a cease-fire to allow humanitarian assistance monitored by the United Nations.

On Aug. 15, 1992, U.N. Operations in Somalia began Operation Provide Relief. In Somalia, food was used to ensure the loyalty of followers, gain conscripts and exchange for arms with neighboring countries. Relief flights were looted as soon as they landed, food convoys were hijacked and aid workers assaulted. Frustrated, the U.N. called upon its members to provide security for the relief mission. As one of his last acts as commander in chief, Dec. 4, 1992, President Bush responded to the U.N. request, ordering 25,000 troops to lead the United Task Force in Operation Restore Hope. Led by U.S. Marines, the U.N. temporarily subdued the clans and restored order.

The U.N. recognized humanitarian intervention would be insufficient to halt Somalia's civil war or bring long-term help. Taking on the task of "nation building," the U.N. expanded its mission. The objectives of UNOSOM II included disarming warring factions, restoring law and order, rebuilding infrastructure and establishing a representative government.

By May 1993, the United States had reduced American forces to 1,200 combat Soldiers and 3,000 support troops. As the number of U.N. forces decreased, the level of violence increased. On June 5, 1993, 24 Pakistani soldiers were massacred. The U.N. launched a major effort to capture or kill Aided and destroy his militia. Aided retaliated with further attacks on U.N. and U.S. forces. In response, a Special Operations Forces task force, Task Force Ranger, deployed to Somalia Aug. 8, 1993, with orders to eliminate Aided. At the same time, the Clinton administration began a secret initiative to negotiate with Aided, utilizing former President Carter as a special envoy.

TF Ranger, commanded by Maj. Gen. William Garrison, operated independently of the U.N. contingent. TF Ranger reported directly to U.S. Central Command but coordinated



**Special Operations Forces fight at the battle of Mogadishu in October 1993. Courtesy photo.**

all missions with Maj. Gen. Thomas Montgomery, commander of U.S. forces, Somalia.

Beginning in August, TF Ranger conducted several operations and captured Aided's lieutenants. In late September, reliable intelligence indicated Aided planned a meeting with his senior lieutenants. On Oct. 3, 1993, Garrison ordered TF Ranger to conduct a "snatch and grab" near the Olympic Hotel. If successful, this operation would decapitate the top leadership of Aided's party and eliminate him as a threat.

SOF units began the mission with an air assault on the target, capturing 24 Somalis. As they waited for extraction by a convoy of trucks and Humvees, SOF Black Hawks and other helicopters provided air support. The attack was conducted near the Bakara Market, the heart of Aided's domain, precipitating a furious response. The ground convoy met strong resistance, taking heavy casualties. Rocket-propelled grenades were fired at the ground force and helicopters. Over the next 17 hours, TF Ranger fought a battle with an enraged mob numbering in the thousands. TF Ranger suffered 18 dead and 84 wounded and inflicted hundreds of Somali casualties. The rescue force, comprised of two rifle companies from 10th Mountain Division, two Malaysian mechanized companies with Armored Personnel Carriers, an ad hoc platoon from TF Ranger and one Pakistani tank platoon, supported by SOF aircraft, extracted the stranded troops. The "Mogadishu Mile" began at 5:42 a.m. as the SOF rear guard trailed out of the city.

During the battle that lasted into the night, SOF dedication and professionalism prevailed over numbers. Combat skills and individuals' initiative dominated the battlefield. Rigorous training prevented catastrophe. Against overwhelming odds, 24 of Aided's top men were taken, and TF Ranger inflicted far more casualties than it sustained. After a build-up and a show of force, American units were withdrawn, and the last American units pulled out in 1995.



**SPECIAL OPERATORS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES  
SERVING IN OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM,  
IRAQI FREEDOM AND  
IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM  
WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN**



**Army Capt.  
Richard CMI Jr.  
7th SFG (A)**



**Army Spc.  
Kevin Dickson  
10th SFG (A)**



**Chief Petty Officer (SEAL)  
Jason Freiwald  
NAVSPECWARCOM**



**Petty Officer 1st Class (SEAL)  
Joshua Harris  
NAVSPECWARCOM**



**Marine Capt.  
Garrett Lawton  
2d MSOB**



**Senior Chief Petty Officer (SEAL)  
John Marcum  
NAVSPECWARCOM**



**Army Sgt. 1st Class  
Jamie Nicholas  
7th SFG (A)**



**Army Sgt.  
William Rudd  
75th Ranger Regiment**



**Army Sgt. 1st Class  
Gary Vasquez  
7th SFG (A)**

**Editor's note: Honored are SOF who have lost their  
lives since August's Tip of the Spear.**



***Iraqi Special Weapons and Tactics soldiers, alongside U.S. Special Operations Forces, conduct an operation in a village in the Bani Sayd region.***

***Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Miguel Angel Contreras.***