



TIP OF THE SPEAR



**Combat
Controller**
awarded
**Air Force
Cross**



U.S. Special Operations Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., October 2011



AFSOC Combat Controller receives Air Force Cross20

During a meeting with joint service members, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta shakes the hand of U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Robert Gutierrez Jr., a combat controller awarded an Air Force Cross Oct. 27. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jacob N. Bailey.

Tip of the Spear

Adm. Bill H. McRaven
Commander, USSOCOM

CSM Chris Faris
Command Sergeant Major

Army Col. Tim Nye
Public Affairs Director

Mike Bottoms
Managing Editor

Tech. Sgt. Larry W. Carpenter, Jr.
Staff Writer/Photographer

Marine Master Sgt. F. B. Zimmerman
Staff NCOIC, Command Information

Tech. Sgt. Heather Kelly
Staff Writer/Photographer

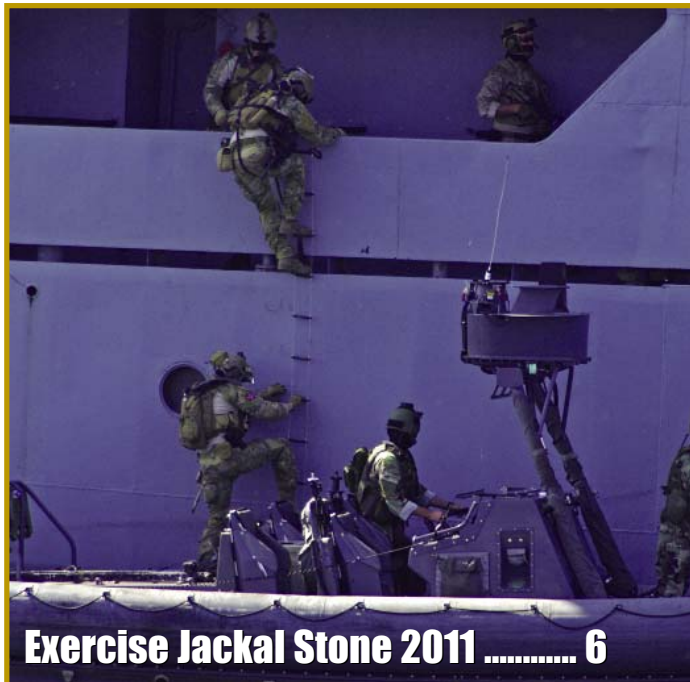


Thomas Jefferson Award Winner

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(Cover) Staff Sgt. Robert Gutierrez Jr., Air Force Special Operations Command combat controller, during a deployment to Afghanistan. Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. Norton Schwartz announced Sept. 20, at the Air Force Association convention in Washington, D.C., that Gutierrez earned the Air Force Cross. He received the medal Oct. 27. Courtesy photo.

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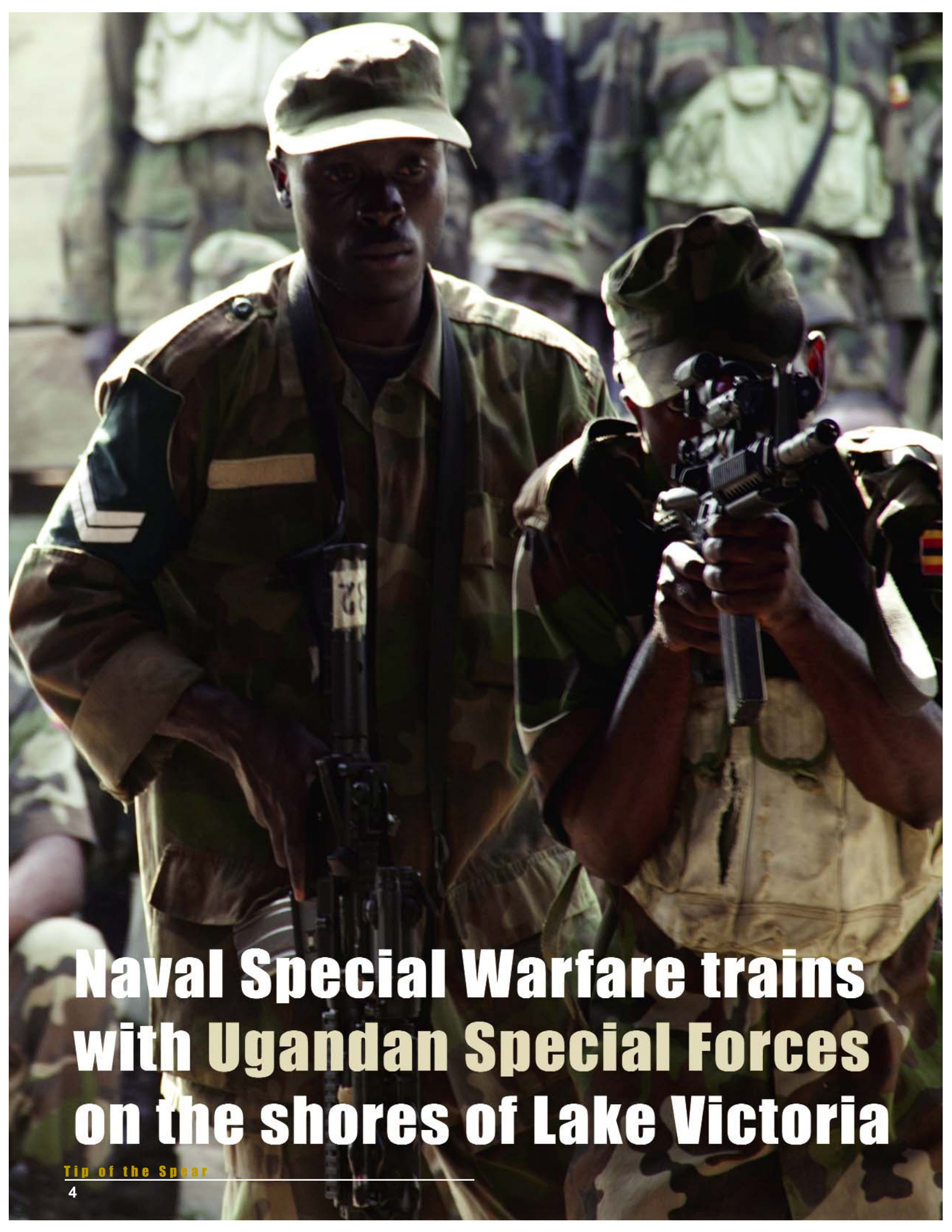
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Naval Special Warfare trains with Ugandan Special Forces on the shores of Lake Victoria

***By Petty Officer 2nd Class Jacob L. Dillon
Naval Special Warfare Group 2 Public Affairs***

Not far from the equator, in the heart of Africa, through the haze of humidity and motorcycle exhaust, down the bumpy red-clay road engulfed by palm trees school children smile and wave at a group of Sailors traveling down a road toward the shore of Lake Victoria to train with Ugandan Special Forces.

A partner force of Naval Special Warfare personnel conducted a Joint Combined Exchange Training with members of a Special Forces Group from the Ugandan People's Defense Forces May 23-July 15 in Entebbe, Uganda.

"Our overall goal was to help Ugandan Special Forces enhance their operability and build and strengthen UPDF's counter-terrorism capacity," said an NSW instructor who participated in the JCET. "Uganda is a very strategic partner force in this region."

The NSW team said its made measurable progress in their partnership with Ugandan forces, providing the nation's fledgling Special Forces with innovative training to improve its capabilities and build upon their foundation of tactical skills.

But these U.S. special operators had to overcome challenges, such as cultural differences and language barriers, while training with their Ugandan counterparts.

"Communication and patience are essential," said an NSW instructor. "Although some Ugandans speak English and are reliable translators, we must always ask questions among ourselves [instructors] and among everybody to clearly illustrate training points and to better understand each other's points of view."

One of the challenges was teaching Ugandan Special Forces newer and updated approaches to tactical techniques and concepts, according to Lt. Peter Olum, a UPDF officer and company commander.

"We specialize in jungle warfare," said Olum. "Much of what we are learning is brand new. Many of us have never had to use night-vision goggles before or have never been in close-quarters combat."

Naval Special Warfare team members also expanded beyond the operational aspects of the JCET to focus on other aspects of training with their partner force.

Petty Officer 1st Class Joe Calderon, a Special



Two members of Alpha Company, 1st Commando Battalion Special Forces Group, of the Ugandan People Defense Forces, practice a hallway and room clearing during a Joint Combined Exchange Training with an East Coast based SEAL Team July 6 in Entebbe, Uganda. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Jacob L. Dillon.

Operations combat medic, did his part to educate his Ugandan counterparts on field medical practices.

"Along with being the corpsman for the training evolutions, I taught my own course as well," said Calderon. "I instructed a two-day course on tactical field response; one-day classroom and one-day practical."

Calderon was also the JCET's resident medic, and he provided classes on preventative medicine and other medical care procedures.

"Preventative medicine is especially important," said Calderon. "This region is prone to malaria and other communicable diseases, and members of this group are from areas of Uganda where other diseases are known to break out."

Naval Special Warfare team members said their Ugandan partners were extremely receptive to the training they received, and both forces look forward to training together again in the future.

"We appreciate everything," said Olum. "We learned so much and are progressively getting better; practice makes perfect. We would definitely welcome any other training opportunities we can get from these guys."

For the NSW trainers, progress was measured by clear objectives established at the beginning of the JCET, and then assessed at the end of the training.

"The Ugandans' continued motivation throughout the JCET really surprised me," said an NSW team leader. "They were very responsive to new training and tactics; they vastly exceeded expectations. They have set the standard for other partner nations."



Jackal Stone 11 kicks off in Romania

Romanian and Norwegian special operations forces conduct fast rope familiarization training with Sailors from U.S. Navy Special Warfare Unit 2 from an MH-47 Chinook helicopter with the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) in Romania, Sept. 14. Jackal Stone is an annual multinational special operations exercise designed to promote cooperation and interoperability between participating forces, build functional capacity and enhance readiness. This year nine nations are participated in various locations in Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine. 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) courtesy photo.



By: Spc. Bethany L. Little
40th Public Affairs Detachment

Special operations forces personnel from nine partner nations came together for the opening ceremony of Jackal Stone 11 held Sept. 17 at the Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base, Romania.

Jackal Stone, hosted this year by Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine, is an annual multinational special operations forces exercise coordinated by U.S. Special Operations Command Europe. With 1,400 SOF and support enablers from Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania and Ukraine participating, Jackal Stone is the largest SOF exercise of its kind in Europe.

Welcoming the participants on behalf of the Romania Ministry of Defense to his homeland, Maj. Gen. Illie Botos, the Chief of Romanian Intelligence Directorate, thanked members of the formation for coming to train together and strengthen their relationships.

Romania has participated in the annual event since its inception in 2008, which Botos highlighted during his remarks.

“For Romanian special operations forces, Jackal Stone was and still is the perfect tool to build the required capabilities and achieve interoperability between the participating forces,” Botos said. “Jackal Stone has become critically important for national SOF development that meets North Atlantic Treaty Organization standards of interoperability.”

Botos added that lessons identified and learned from his country’s participation in Jackal Stone has been beneficial in developing SOF capabilities, combat readiness and the ability to prepare, plan, conduct and assess full spectrum SOF specific missions.

After thanking all of the hosts of this year’s event, Army

Maj. Gen. Michael S. Repass, SOCEUR commander, remarked on the significance of the training exercise.

“Today’s ceremony culminates a year of planning and begins a week of exceptional training and cooperation,” said Repass. “Jackal Stone allows us to place special emphasis on our ability and desire to train with each other during those times and demonstrates our resolve to rise to challenges we will certainly face together.”

Repass particularly emphasized how this year’s Jackal Stone features some very important firsts for the exercise.

“It will be the first time we will have four tactical operating locations. This adds another layer of complexity to this exercise’s command and control relationships, but is very realistic in what we have experienced,” said Repass.

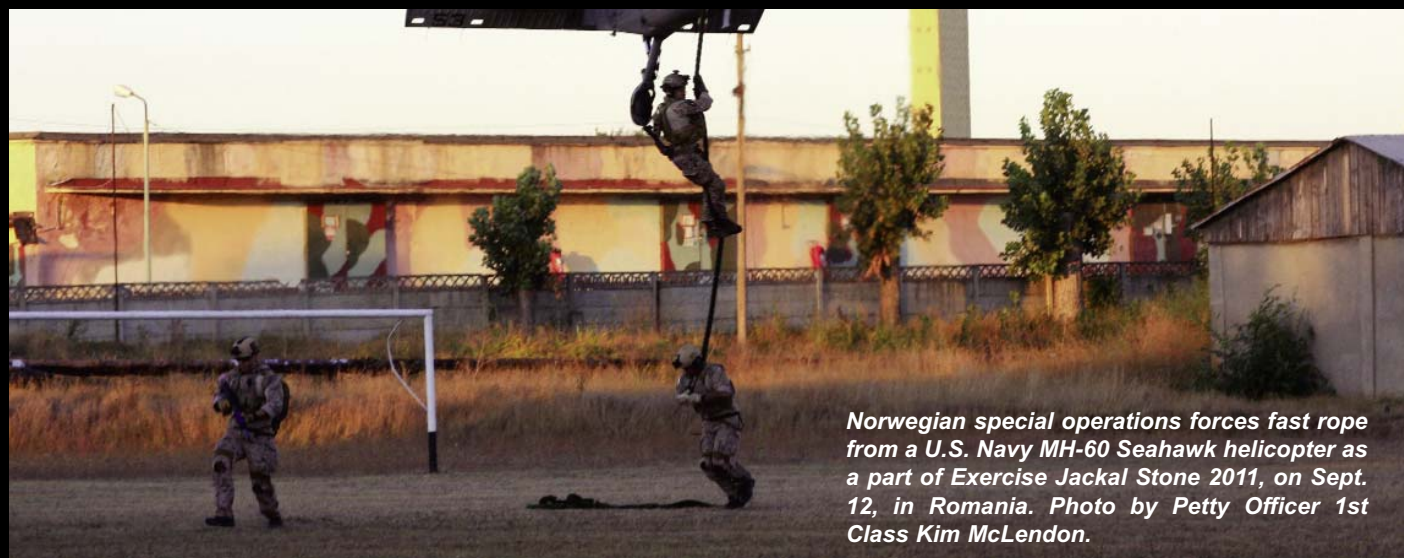
Another change for this year’s exercise, Repass explained, is how the exercise planners moved to a combined joint force special operations component command framework, which will better align their processes with NATO.

Other firsts for Jackal Stone 11 include: incorporating changeable tactical scenarios and using forensic-enabled intelligence to positively identify targets.

“We are certainly building on last year’s success,” said Repass.

After the ceremony, the official party observed a live-tactical demonstration conducted by a maritime Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) consisting of Naval SOF from Norway, Romania, Ukraine and the U.S. at the Constanta Military Harbor.

The demonstration featured the SOTG fast-roping from a Romanian Puma IAR330 helicopter and conducting a Vehicle, Board, Search and Seizure operation from rigid inflatable boats on board a Romanian ship to clear the ship of enemy targets.



Norwegian special operations forces fast rope from a U.S. Navy MH-60 Seahawk helicopter as a part of Exercise Jackal Stone 2011, on Sept. 12, in Romania. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Kim McLendon.



1) U.S. and Ukrainian special operations forces climb into a Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat from the ROS Midia (LSNS 283) as a part of Exercise Jackal Stone 2011, on Sept. 14, in Romania. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Kim McLendon.

2) Naval special operations forces operators from Norway, Romania, Ukraine and the United States conduct a visit, board, search, and seizure demonstration during Jackal Stone 11 multinational special operations forces exercise held at Constanta Military Harbor Sept. 17. Courtesy Photo.

3) U.S. Navy SEALs set guard on ROS Midia (LSNS 283) during a demonstration for distinguished visitors on the opening day of Exercise Jackal Stone 2011, Sept. 17, in Romania. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Kim McLendon.

4) Two MH-47 Chinook helicopters from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) approach ROS Midia (LSNS 283) to drop special operations forces aboard the Romanian naval ship, on Sept. 14, in Romania. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Kim McLendon.



NSW Special Boat Team trains with Chilean Special Operations

A Chilean Marine assigned to the Chilean Comando de Fuerzas Especiales, simply known as COMFUES, climbs up a caving ladder in order to reach the top of a vessel as fellow COMFUES members and U.S. Navy Special Boat Team trainers assigned to the Naval Special Warfare Unit Four look on during a Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure exercise Sept 27, in Vina Del Mar, Chile.

**Story and photos by Army Sgt. 1st Class Alex Licea
SOCSOUTH Public Affairs**

Geographically unique, Chile is more than 2,700 miles north to south yet only 150 miles east to west -- at its widest point. Chile's military is tasked with defending more than 4,000 miles of border with the sea along South America's western coast.

With this in mind, Chilean military officials welcomed a group of American Special Operations sailors during a four-week Joint Combined Exchange Training during the month of September 2011.

This JCET was the first formal exchange between the U.S. Navy Special Boat Team trainers assigned to Naval Special Warfare Unit Four, based in Virginia Beach, Va., and members from the Chilean Comando de Fuerzas Especiales, simply known as the COMFUES.

The primary focus of the month-long JCET for the special boat team was to improve its teaching skills and gain regional knowledge while training with members of the Chilean military, specifically its sea services, in order to enhance its military capabilities to conduct special operations. Within the Chilean military, the COMFUES is considered a top-notch element of the nation's security forces.

However, despite its great reputation, Chilean Marine Capt. Cesar Aguirre Rivera, who serves as the chief of training for the COMFUES, said the command and its personnel always look for ways to improve their skills. This JCET is one of the ways they are doing that.

"This JCET has been a great experience for us, and we hope to continue this great communication with our U.S. partners," he said. "We have benefited from this exchange."

The JCET is part of Special Operations Command South's, Theater Security Cooperation program. The program enables partner nations to better protect their borders and increase their capacity to conduct special operations. SOCSOUTH based in Homestead, Fla., is responsible for all U.S. Special Operations activities in the Caribbean, Central and South America and serves as a component for U.S. Southern Command.

Throughout the JCET, members of the Special Boat Team trained with their Chilean partners on skills and tactics such as visit, board, search, and seizure, a maritime boarding action designed to capture hostile vessels and high value targets that may be onboard. The U.S. Sailors also instructed members of the COMFUES on boat inserts and extraction techniques, live-fire water-board training and boat handling maneuvers on small tactical boats.

For the U.S. Sailors, this JCET is two-fold. The first is to enhance their own skills and professionalize themselves as Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman as well as

gain regional knowledge and improve their language skills. The second is to continue and strengthen an enduring partnership with the Chilean armed forces.

"One of our goals is to enhance their maritime forces by teaching them how to operate and maintain their crafts so they can protect their borders and waterways," said the Special Boat Operator Chief in charge of the JCET. "The great part about this JCET, as compared to others I have done before, is that this is more of an exchange between us as opposed to us teaching them. They are professional and there is great camaraderie between us. We are good friends."

Members of the COMFUES have also enjoyed the benefits of this JCET and view it as a great opportunity to learn from some very experienced U.S. Special Operations Forces.

"Working with our American partners has been great because they have so much knowledge and skill," said Chilean Marine Lt. Patricio Arriagada. "We need experience from people who have it because we are trying to be more proficient as Marines and Sailors."

Established in 2005, the COMFUES is an operational level command comprised of 10 special operations units, six marine commandos regiments and four combat driver elements. The COMFUES's mission is similar to its U.S. Special Operations Forces counterparts as it can perform missions such as direct action, surveillance and other tasks such as humanitarian relief.

Despite its short history as a command, the COMFUES has already participated in several high-profile events including humanitarian relief operations in Haiti following the aftermath of the 7.0 magnitude earthquake in January 2010 and assisting its own nation just weeks later when a 8.8 magnitude earthquake occurred off its coast leaving hundreds dead and millions displaced.

The JCET ended with a closing ceremony where each Chilean participating received a certificate of training from their American counterparts and a barbeque where American and Chilean servicemembers enjoyed each other's company over some good food and great stories of the past month of training.

"Their motivation and dedication is outstanding, and I would fight side by side with these guys any day," said the Special Boat Operator Chief. "These guys will go far."

Capt. Aguirre Rivera uttered those same sentiments and hopes this is just the first of many exchanges between the two nations.

"I hope our partnership will continue in the future, and we can have more exchanges," he said. "We have mixed feelings about the end of this exchange, but we are not saying good-bye. It's more fitting to say until next time."



Comando de Fuerzas Especiales



1) Chilean military members assigned to the Chilean Comando de Fuerzas Especiales, along with U.S. Navy Special Boat Team trainers assigned to the Naval Special Warfare Unit Four prepare to come alongside a Naval vessel during a visit, board, search, and seizure exercise Sept. 27, in Vina Del Mar, Chile.

2) A U.S. Sailor and U.S. Marine look on and provide encouragement as a Chilean servicemember with the COMFUES, climbs a caving ladder as he reaches the top of a naval vessel during a visit, board, search, and seizure exercise Sept. 27, in Vina Del Mar, Chile.

3) Members COMFUES, conduct security operations on a Chilean vessel during a visit, board, search, and seizure exercise Sept. 27 in Viña Del Mar, Chile.



COMFUES



4) A Chilean Marine runs up a flight of stairs as he scans his sector of fire during a visit, board, search, and seizure exercise Sept. 27 in Vina Del Mar, Chile.

5) COMFUES conduct clearing operations Sept. 27 in Viña Del Mar, Chile. The exercise is part of a four-week Joint Combined Exchange Training event between members of the COMFUES and U.S. Navy Special Boat Team trainers assigned to the Naval Special Warfare Unit Four.

6) A Chilean Marine scans his sector of fire as night falls aboard a Chilean naval vessel during a visit, board, search, and seizure exercise Sept. 27 in Vina Del Mar, Chile.





Valor ceremony honors Special Forces Soldiers

*By Staff Sgt. Jeremy D. Crisp
USASOC Public Affairs*

For the second time in seven months, a valor ceremony took place to recognize the heroism of Soldiers from Fort Bragg’s 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) Sept. 19.

Thirty Soldiers from the group were honored Sept. 15 at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, as commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command, Lt. Gen. John F. Mulholland Jr., awarded two Silver Stars, seven Bronze Stars with “V” device, 10 Army Commendation Medals with “V” device and 11 Purple Hearts.

The ceremony showcased vignettes of the respective actions of the two Silver Star recipients, Capt. Matthew L. Golsteyn and Sgt. 1st Class Chad E. Lawson.

Each Soldier braved enemy fire for hours; exposing themselves to danger in order to help their fellow servicemembers and Afghan counterparts.

Golsteyn was awarded for his actions on Feb. 20, 2010, in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

“I had the trust and loyalty of my teammates,” Golsteyn said. “I owe this to them. Recognition like this doesn’t happen if you aren’t leading excellent people.”

Lawson was recognized for his actions on Aug. 4, 2010 in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan.

His former detachment commander, Capt. Aaron Baty, said Lawson was the “epitome of a Special Forces NCO.”



Sgt. 1st Class Chad E. Lawson, 1st Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), shakes the hand of the group’s Deputy Commanding Officer, Col. Matthew Karres, Sept. 15, 2011, after being awarded the Silver Star medal for his actions in combat this past summer. Thirty Soldiers from the group were honored in a valor ceremony where they were awarded respectively: two Silver Stars, seven Bronze Stars with “V” device, 10 Army Commendation Medals with “V” device and 11 Purple Hearts. Photo by Spc. Patricia Caputo.

Also receiving awards from the battle that garnered Lawson his Silver Star were Staff Sgt. Robert Bradford (Bronze Star with “V” and Purple Heart), Sgt. 1st Class

THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

Sean King (Purple Heart) and Staff Sgt. John Bear (Purple Heart).

The USASOC commander acknowledged the selfless and humble nature of the Special Forces Soldier as he addressed the crowd of Family members, friends and fellow servicemembers.

“One thing that every one of these guys would say,

I’m sure if you asked them, is ‘I was just doing my job,’” Mulholland said.

He went on to say that it was his “extraordinary honor and privilege” to recognize the Soldiers.

The following servicemembers received awards during the ceremony:

Silver Star

Capt. Matthew Golsteyn

Sgt. 1st Class Chad Lawson

Bronze Star with “V” device

Master Sgt. Matthew Moore

Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Drew

Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Misero

Sgt. 1st Class Scott Redding

Staff Sgt Robert Bradford

Staff Sgt. Benjamin Wilson

Staff Sgt. Brian Wilson

Army Commendation Medal with “V” device

Capt. Aaron Baty

Sgt. 1st Class Craig Gilbert

Sgt. 1st Class Aaron Jones

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Lopez

Sgt. 1st Class Kuinnlan Malone

Sgt. 1st Class Johnny Rodgers

Sgt. 1st Class Rodney Scalise

Staff Sgt. Mark Barbin

Staff Sgt. Stephen Cotman

Staff Sgt. Joshua Stephen

Purple Heart

Capt. Anthony Applegate

Chief Warrant Officer Thomas Russell

Warrant Officer Candidate Kevin Swenson

Master Sgt. Mike Clark

Master Sgt. Matthew Moore

Sgt. 1st Class Sean King

Sgt. 1st Class Scott Redding

Staff Sgt. James Boehlke

Staff Sgt. John Bear

Staff Sgt. Robert Bradford

Staff Sgt. Patrick Gaskell

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) celebrates 50 years of service



Spec. Jeshua Stahler, a demonstration parachutist with the U.S. Army Golden Knights Parachute Demonstration Team salutes as he exits the aircraft and free-falls onto Gabriel Field, Fort Campbell, Ky., Sept. 24. The parachute demonstration team put on a show for Soldiers, Veterans, and families of the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) marking the end of a week-long reunion celebrating the unit's half century of service to the Nation. Photo by Staff Sgt. Barbara Ospina.

THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

*By Staff Sgt. Barbara Ospina
5th Special Forces Group (A) Public Affairs*

There have been many milestones observed by Green Berets of the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) over its relatively short, but storied history, but many pale in comparison to the milestone celebrated at Fort Campbell, Ky., during the last week in September.

Past and present members of the 5th SFG (A) commemorated the 50th anniversary of the unit's activation, which originally took place Sept. 21, 1961, at Ft. Bragg, N.C. The week-long reunion allowed Soldiers and veterans alike to observe and participate in various events. But more importantly, it was a time to simply enjoy the camaraderie between the generations of Green Berets present.

The reunion events included weapons competitions, sporting events, golf and fishing tournaments, airborne operations, a capabilities demonstration, guest speaker seminars, a formal banquet on the General Jackson Showboat in Nashville, and a day-long picnic culminating with a 20-minute fireworks display.

The week was highlighted by a formal ceremony on Gabriel Field marking the anniversary of the Group's activation in 1961. The ceremony recognized the historic achievements and sacrifices made during five decades of service to the Nation.

During the ceremony, the oldest and the youngest Green Beret jointly unveiled a 9/11 monument. The monument features two World Trade Center structural steel columns that were recovered from Ground Zero in New York City and presented to the unit by the Port Authority of both New York and New Jersey on May 27, 2011.

The steel columns, which are shaped in a Roman numeral V, serve as a constant reminder to the unit of the thousands of lives lost on Sept. 11, 2001. They also represent the special relationship between 5th SFG (A) and New York City first responders, and why, to this day, the Group remains vigilant and at the forefront in today's wars.

Master Sgt. Chris Spence, a Special Forces team member, acknowledged the attacks on the World Trade Center elicit the same emotions in today's Soldiers as the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

Col. Scott E. Brower, commander of the 5th SFG (A), elaborated on the significance of the recently unveiled 9/11 monument and reinforced the importance of what Green



Soldiers of the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) present arms as the oldest and youngest Green Beret of the Group unveil a 9/11 display during a ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of the Group's activation on Sept. 21, 1961. The display features two World Trade Center structural steel columns that were recovered from Ground Zero and presented to the unit by the Port Authority of both New York and New Jersey. Photo by Staff Sgt. Tobias McCoy.

Berets do.

Green Berets were the first to invade Afghanistan in response to the attacks, and once again led the 2003 invasion of Iraq, resulting in a stable environment and the opportunity for a free and democratic society, commented Brower.

"It is an understanding and an ability to relate to those first responders who risked their lives to go to the aid of others that has kept our Soldiers and these three [emergency response] organizations friends to this day," Brower stated. "The brave first responders of 9/11 who were running to the World Trade Center, not away, who were climbing up stairwells, not down them..."

The culminating event for the week, a picnic Saturday on Gabriel Field, allowed Soldiers, veterans, families and friends to gather once more. Attendees enjoyed great food, live music and entertainment, and several static displays including Special Forces mission equipment and a replica of the Vietnam Wall in Washington D.C., provided by the American Veteran's Traveling Tribute. As the day came to an end, the crowd also enjoyed the aerial talents of the U.S. Army's Golden Knights and a 20-minute fireworks display.



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

33rd Superfrog Triathlon honors Post-9/11 fallen NSW forces



*Story and photo by Seaman Megan Anuci
NSWC Public Affairs*

The 33rd annual Superfrog Triathlon was held Sept. 11 at Silver Strand State Beach, Coronado, Calif., where more than 500 athletes participated and honored the Naval Special Warfare forces lost since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

The Superfrog Triathlon was established in 1978 by Philip "Moki" Martin, a decorated retired Navy SEAL officer. Martin's original inspiration for starting the event was to help SEALs train for the Ironman Triathlon, which is twice the distance of the Superfrog triathlon. Superfrog is a traditional swim-bike-run event that covers a course consisting of a two-lap, 1.2 mile open ocean swim; a four-lap 56 mile bike course; and a five-lap 13.1 mile run.

The event honored the fallen service members by lining the finish line area of the race with banners displaying photos and biographies of SEAL and enabler shipmates lost. The banners raised more than \$30,000 for the Navy SEAL Foundation.

"This year is special," said Martin. "In addition to our annual donation, we created these banners for each SEAL and we're offering these as a sponsorship to our racers and fans. This money is going straight to the [Navy SEAL] Foundation, and it's a great way to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11 and our SEALs."

Jozsef Major, a Phoenix native, was the overall race winner finishing with a time of 3:58:48.

"Competing today was a great feeling," said Major. "The training has been hard, but to be able to win the Superfrog, especially on Sept. 11, was rewarding."

The Superfrog Triathlon has grown from a few SEAL competitors to a fleet of local, national and international triathlon stars vying for the race title. Although the event has grown over the years, it has maintained the masochistic tradition of routing half the run portion through the soft and uneven footing of San Diego beach sand. The soft sand ritual is a nod to Basic Underwater and Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) students who train on the beaches of Coronado, running and crawling through the soft sand and surf on a daily basis.



Rear Adm. Sean Pybus, commander, Naval Special Warfare Command, signals the start of the Superfrog Triathlon at Silver Strand State Beach, Coronado, Calif. Sept. 11. The 33rd annual Superfrog commemorated post-Sept. 11 fallen Naval Special Warfare operators.

Longest serving Navy SEAL passes on Bull Frog legacy title

By Seaman Megan Anuci
NSWC Public Affairs

The title of “Bull Frog,” a legacy title in the Naval Special Warfare community, was passed to two new NSW representatives at a ceremony in Coronado, Calif., Aug. 22.

The “Bull Frog” title recognizes the active duty Underwater Demolition Team/SEAL operator with the greatest amount of cumulative service following completion of UDT Replacement Accession or Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training, regardless of rank.

Adm. Eric T. Olson, the former commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, retired from active duty after 38 years of service Aug. 22. When doing so, Olson passed the “Bull Frog” title to Adm. William H. McRaven, USSOCOM, and Cmdr. Brian Sebenaler, training and readiness officer, NSW Command.

The UDT/SEAL Association, owner of the trophy and sponsor of the title, says, “...eligible candidates must currently serve on active duty and maintain continuous service within the Naval Special Warfare community.”

“It is a title held by the man with the longest continuous active duty service as a SEAL,” said Olson. “It is an honor that has meant a lot to those who have held the distinction. It’s been my honor to hold it.”

McRaven and Sebenaler, both graduates of BUD/S Class 95, will share the title as the 15th “Bull Frog.” The two men have a combined service of more than 70 years.

Retired Capt. Karl Heinz, the 12th “Bull Frog,”



Adm. Eric T. Olson, former commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, holds up his “Bull Frog” trophy during his retirement ceremony at Naval Special Warfare Command at Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado. The title of “Bull Frog” is given to the longest serving active duty UDT/SEAL operator. Olson passed the title to Adm. William H. McRaven, USSOCOM, and Cmdr. Brian Sebenaler, training and readiness officer at Naval Special Warfare Command. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class John Scorza.

presented individual trophies to McRaven and Sebenaler at the ceremony. Retired Rear Adm. Dick Lyon, the first-ever “Bull Frog,” joined Heinz in presenting the award. The “Bull Frog” trophy is engraved with each recipient’s name and dates of service.

“It is my great pleasure to present the trophies to the incumbent ‘Bull Frogs,’” said Heinz. “The incumbent and former ‘Bull Frogs’ have agreed that the ‘Bull Frog’ trophy should appropriately reside in the newly constructed UDT-SEAL Heritage Center in Norfolk.”

The title came from UDT swimmers being glorified as “Frogmen” in early Navy recruiting campaigns, followed by books and movies. The “Bull Frog” was the superior commander.



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Staff Sgt. Robert Gutierrez Jr. meets President Barack H. Obama Sept. 3, 2010, after he was named one of the Air Force's 12 Outstanding Airmen. Courtesy photo.

Air Force Cross recipient: Three minutes to change the world

*By Capt. Kristen D. Duncan
AFSOC Public Affairs*

As the only qualified Joint Terminal Attack Controller in an operation Oct. 5, 2009, an Air Force Special Operations Command combat controller knew the ground situation would be dire if he died. As an armor-piercing round entered his left shoulder and wrecked havoc throughout his chest, his focus wasn't on his young family in North Carolina, it was on his team.

"I've seen those types of injuries before and time isn't your friend," said the Air Force Cross recipient, Staff Sgt.

Robert Gutierrez Jr. "I thought, I have three minutes before I'm going to die. I've got to do something big. Based on that time frame, I'm going to change the world in three minutes."

The team of 30 U.S. Army Special Forces and Afghan National Army commandos was surrounded in a "Taliban-sympathetic village" in Herat province, Afghanistan. Reports show enemy fighters were positioned on rooftops just 10-feet from the team's position inside a neighboring building. Gutierrez was shot during the 4 hour firefight, which also included sniper and small-arms fire, as well as rocket-propelled grenades.

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As the combat controller, Gutierrez was the only qualified radio operator communicating with Airmen overhead, providing close air support and real-time battlefield surveillance, critical for the team mission and to be able to evacuate their wounded.

“Combat controllers are the air-to-ground interface, bringing the firepower and communications links to the ground force commander,” Gutierrez said. “We bring an extraordinary amount of firepower in a small package, able to shoot, move and communicate at the same time.”

Believing he was about to die, the San Diego native refused to remove his body armor, which held his radio, despite two medics repeatedly ordering him to take it off so his wounds could be treated. Gutierrez only relented momentarily, allowing the medic to insert a needle decompression tube just below his collar bone.

A sucking chest wound, common in gunshot victims, fills the chest cavity with blood, collapsing the lungs. The medic's procedure released the growing pressure on his collapsed lung, allowing Gutierrez to breathe and speak - so he got back on the radio. He continued to advise the ground force commander and request close air support of F-16 and A-10 aircraft overhead.

The A-10 pilot said Gutierrez's voice was calm the entire time, and he only knew of his injuries when the team was moving to the medical evacuation landing zone.

“I realized he was shot after the third (and final) strafe pass,” said Capt. Ethan Sabin, then assigned to the 354th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron. “He said he would be off of the 'mic' for a few to handle his gunshot wounds, until that point he was calm, cool and collected.”

Gutierrez was awarded the Air Force Cross for extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness in the face of the enemy, according to the medal citation. Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. Norton Schwartz announced the award Sept. 20 during the Air Force Association convention in Washington D.C.

“There is no doubt his heroic action under extremely dangerous circumstances and despite being wounded,

saved the lives of his teammates,” said Lt. Gen. Eric Fiel, AFSOC commander. “His courage and character is unsurpassed. While I know he is a humble person that does not seek the spotlight, he is so deserving of the Air Force Cross. His actions are just a snapshot of what AFSOC Airmen are doing everyday in our current theater of operations.”

In all, Gutierrez suffered a gunshot wound to the upper shoulder and triceps muscle, left chest and lateral muscle, resulting in two broken ribs, broken scapula, a softball-sized hole in his back, a collapsed lung and multiple blood infections, which required three chest tubes, three blood transfusions and seven surgeries. To top it off, the ‘danger-close’ 30-mm strafing runs ruptured both of his ear drums.

Despite losing five pints of blood and walking 1 ½

kilometers, Gutierrez stayed on the radio calling for his own medical evacuation and ensuring surveillance coverage for the safe return of the ground force team.

Gutierrez credits the U.S. Army Special Forces medic and U.S. Air Force A-10 pilot with saving their lives. During an interview in early 2010, Gutierrez said, “I don't care if I get an award or not. The team was outstanding. I'm just a product of what I've been taught and a product of AFSOC.”

Since Sept. 11 there have been four Air Force Cross medals awarded, all to AFSOC Airmen. Gutierrez is the second living-recipient to receive the medal. Staff Sgt. Zachary Rhyner was awarded the Air Force Cross while assigned to the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, Pope Field, N.C., as a combat controller for combat operations April 6, 2008, in Nuristan province, Afghanistan. During that operation, Gutierrez was also a fellow teammate and received the Bronze Star Medal with Valor and Purple Heart.

Gutierrez was assigned to the 21 STS during the 2009 operation and is currently assigned to the Air Force Special Operations Training Center, instructing future Special Tactics Airmen, so that they may be “First There...That Others May Live.”

“I realized he was shot after the third (and final) strafe pass. He said he would be off of the 'mic' for a few to handle his gunshot wounds, until that point he was calm, cool and collected.”

— Capt. Ethan Sabin, A-10 pilot



21 STS Combat Controller awarded Silver Star for gallantry

By Matt Durham
AFSOC Public Affairs

When you are an Air Force combat controller in Afghanistan “just doing my job” can make for a very eventful day at the office.

That is how Staff Sgt. C. Caleb Gilbreath described his actions in a running firefight against the Taliban in Konduz Province Oct. 30 to Nov. 6, 2008, earning him a Silver Star for bravery.

Gilbreath was assigned to a U.S. Army Special Forces team when his unit was ambushed by a large Taliban force outside of a local village. As mortar and rocket-propelled grenade rounds impacted within 15 feet of his position, Gilbreath directed pinpoint bomb strikes that devastated the enemy and halted the attack, according to reports.

Later, Gilbreath’s team began a clearing operation in a nearby village when they again came under attack from an estimated 120 Taliban and foreign fighters, officials said. Surrounded by the enemy, the team reached the center of the town as bullets and shrapnel impacted Gilbreath’s vehicle from all directions.

As the tightly packed buildings made the teams withdrawal impossible, Gilbreath began to direct strafing runs against insurgent fighters dug-in just 30 feet from his position, according to the medal citation. For the next hour Gilbreath was in a partially exposed position in a gun truck, taking fire and directed eight more air strikes against the Taliban fighters. The close-air support turned the tide of the battle and allowed his team to defeat the enemy with no friendly casualties.

“I don’t feel particularly special,”

Gilbreath said. “I believe any of the combat controllers I work with would have done the same thing. Everything just slows down and you execute.”

Gilbreath, a former Army Ranger, received the Silver Star and a Bronze Star at a ceremony at Pope Field, N.C., on Sept. 23. Lt. Gen. Eric Fiel, the commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, presided over the ceremony. He pinned the medal in front of a packed house of family members, friends and fellow combat controllers. Also looking on were members of the 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), teammates of Gilbreath during the firefight.

“Caleb looked death in the face and did not cower from the situation,” Fiel said. “He showed tremendous poise, self-control and courage under fire.”

One ceremony speaker noted that, ironically, the section of Afghanistan the 3rd Special Forces Group was assigned to during the battle had been fairly quiet prior to Gilbreath’s arrival.

A member of the 21st Special Tactics Squadron in 2009, Gilbreath is now an instructor at the Combat Control School here. There he teaches combat control candidates what he learned through combat.

“It’s always a team thing...always,” he said.

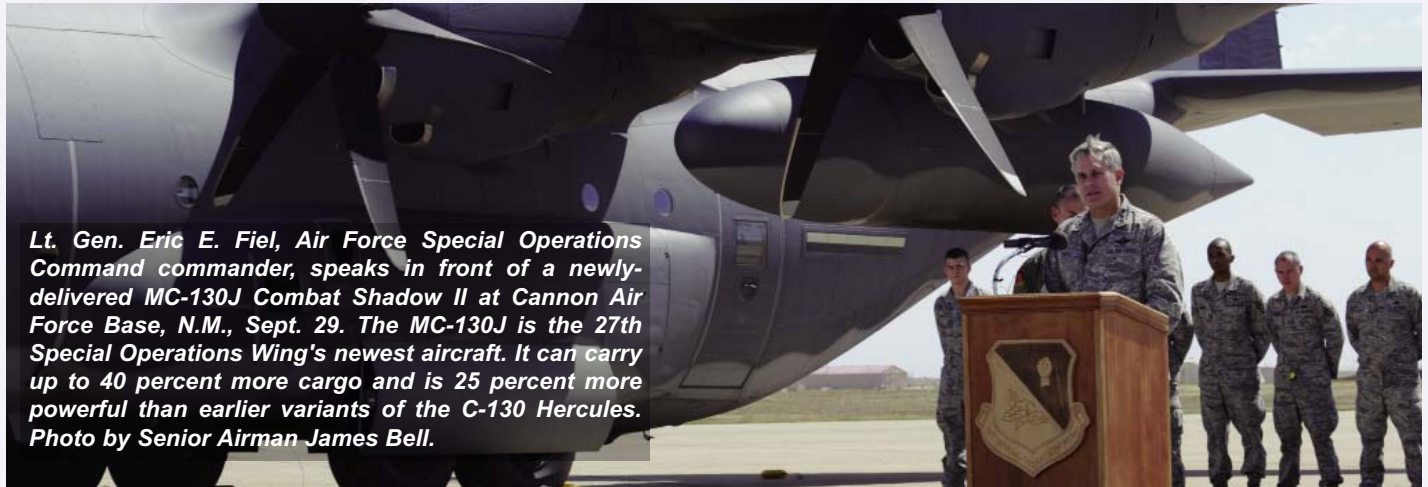
Lt. Col. Jerry Kung, the Commander of the 342nd Training Squadron, who oversees the school, said he hopes the candidates will learn from Gilbreath.

“There is no room for the individual,” Kung said. “You do your job and the whole team succeeds. Anything else -- that does not work for us.”



“I believe any of the combat controllers I work with would have done the same thing. Everything just slows down and you execute.”

– Staff Sgt. C. Caleb Gilbreath



Lt. Gen. Eric E. Fiel, Air Force Special Operations Command commander, speaks in front of a newly-delivered MC-130J Combat Shadow II at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., Sept. 29. The MC-130J is the 27th Special Operations Wing's newest aircraft. It can carry up to 40 percent more cargo and is 25 percent more powerful than earlier variants of the C-130 Hercules. Photo by Senior Airman James Bell.

AFSOC's first MC-130J Combat Shadow II arrives at Cannon

by Airman 1st Class Alexxis Pons Abascal
27th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs

The 27th Special Operations Wing held an aircraft acceptance ceremony Sept. 29 on the Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., flightline for the arrival of Air Force Special Operations Command's first MC-130J Combat Shadow II.

Lt. Gen. Eric E. Fiel, AFSOC commander, and Brig. Gen. Stephen Clark, AFSOC director of plans, programs, requirements and assignments, were part of the official party, flying the aircraft to Cannon for delivery to the 522nd Special Operations Squadron.

The MC-130J is the next generation special operations warfighter and a newer, better special operations C-130, said Lt. Col. Paul Pendleton, 522nd SOS commander.

The MC-130J Combat Shadow II is the newest variant of the C-130J Super Hercules four-engine turboprop aircraft. The C-130 has been continuously produced longer than any military aircraft in history and has been a crucial component of U.S. special operations for decades.

The "J-model" boasts more power and efficiency, longer range, shorter takeoff distance, a smaller required crew and a modern computerized flight deck.

"We can carry about 40 percent more, it's about 25 percent more powerful and 15 to 20 percent faster," said Pendleton. "It's entirely computerized; this allows us to better

complete our mission."

The aircraft was delivered to Cannon from the Lockheed Martin plant in Marietta, Ga.

A few of the Combat Shadow II's capabilities are to provide nighttime low-level infiltration and exfiltration, aerial refueling of helicopters and tilt-rotor aircraft, aerial delivery and resupply of Special Operations Forces and ground refueling.

This is a historic event for Cannon, said Fiel. "It marks a milestone in improving the combat capabilities of AFSOC and more importantly the 27th Special Operations Wing.

"Members of the 522nd SOS will rewrite history as they fly the MC-130 farther, faster and higher," he said. "As innovative Air Commandos you will push this plane to its limits and find creative ways to employ our people more effectively."

Col. Buck Elton, 27th SOW commander, spoke briefly on the significance of receiving the new aircraft and what it means for AFSOC's mission.

"This newest version of a combat proven aircraft has big shoes to fill, but there is no doubt that the MC-130J will take specialized mobility to a new level," said Elton. "This incredible new aircraft will quickly become the backbone of our nation's C-130 fleet. This is an exciting time for our base, our command and our Air Force."

Family, friends say goodbye to founding air commando



U.S. Air Force Honor Guard members carry retired Maj. Gen. John Alison to his final resting place as Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz look on Oct. 3, at Arlington National Cemetery, Va. Donley and Schwartz were present at the full-honors funeral to pay their respects to Alison, a World War II and Korean War hero, and his family. Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Christopher Ruano.



By Staff Sgt. Richard A. Williams Jr.
Air Force Public Affairs Agency

Airmen gathered in Arlington, Va., Oct. 3, to render a final salute to retired Maj. Gen. John Alison as he was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery.

“We have lost a great American, a dear friend, and a committed and loving family man,” Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz said during a eulogy at the Old Post Chapel at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall. “And our nation has lost one of her most spectacular aviators.”

Schwartz said Alison’s humility was a constant theme throughout his life.

“‘Call me Johnny,’ he used to say,” Schwartz said. “This was so emblematic of his trademark humility that, except for the many testimonials from those who knew him, like this one today, we might even forget that this was a man of audacious undertakings and extraordinary achievements.”

Following the chapel service, Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley presented the American flag to Alison’s wife Penni at the graveside service.

Alison was born in Florida in 1912. He grew up in Gainesville, Fla., and graduated from the University of Florida in 1935 with an engineering degree. He enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps as a flying cadet in 1936 and was commissioned at Kelly Air Field, Texas, upon completion of his training in 1937.

A combat ace during World War II with seven confirmed enemy kills and numerous unconfirmed kills, Alison served as an assistant military attaché to the British Royal Air Force where he helped transition pilots to the P-40 Warhawk prior to the United States’ entry into the war.

He traveled to Moscow in October 1941 to serve as an assistant military attaché supporting the U.S.-Soviet P-40 lend-lease program and to train Russian pilots on P-40, A-20 Havoc and B-25 Mitchell aircraft. In June 1942, the China-Burma-India theater became Alison’s home as he joined the Flying Tigers’ 75th Fighter Squadron. His exploits included a take-off from his

airfield while it was under attack, after which he quickly eliminated one enemy aircraft.

In 1943, Alison was selected by Gen. Henry “Hap” Arnold, head of the Army Air Forces, as deputy commander of the 1st Air Commando Group in the theater.

The American air commandos, along with British “Chindit” commandos, successfully performed Operation Thursday, the dramatic aerial invasion of Burma in 1944. Alison led a glider assault in that operation as the senior air officer present for the landings.

“His daring invasion deep into enemy-held Burma in 1944 was the quintessential example of where such leaders lead: from the front,” Schwartz said.

Despite never having flown a loaded glider before, he piloted a lead glider, packed with mules and Special Operations Forces, to a very harrowing landing in the dense jungle, Schwartz added.

Alison left the service as a colonel in 1946. Later, he joined the Air Force Reserve and commanded the 452nd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, rising to the rank of major general.

His awards include the Distinguished Service Cross, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, the Purple Heart and the British Distinguished Service Order.

His dedication to the Air Force and Special Operations Forces earned him several accolades. In 1994, he was inducted to the Air Commando Hall of Fame, and he was selected to speak for the Air Command and Staff College’s “Gathering of Eagles” in 1985, 2004 and 2009.

Also in 2005, he was enshrined in the National Aviation Hall of Fame and most recently was the first inductee into the U.S. Special Operations Command’s Commando Hall of Honor in October 2010.

“John exemplified how effective leaders properly lead -- with intensity to be sure, but also

with empathy and compassion,” Schwartz said. “Our nation and Air Force, which he so deeply loved and so faithfully served, will continue to benefit from his example and to move ever forward in his loving memory.”



“John exemplified how effective leaders properly lead -- with intensity to be sure, but also with empathy and compassion.”

— Gen. Norton Schwartz



Penni Alison, along with sons John and David, places flowers in honor her husband and retired Maj. Gen. John Alison, during his funeral Oct. 3, at Arlington National Cemetery, Va. Alison is known for his distinguished Air Force career, during which he flew with the Flying Tigers over the skies of the China-Burma-India theater and helped create the Air Force's Special Operations Forces. Photo by Air Force Tech. Sgt. Raymond Mills.



Col. (Chaplain) Charles R. Cornelisse provides comfort to wife Penni Alison and sons John and David Alison during the Oct. 3 funeral of retired Maj. Gen. John Alison. Alison is often referred to as the father of Air Force Special Operations Forces. Photo by Air Force Tech. Sgt. Raymond Mills.



Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley presents the American flag to Penni Alison during the funeral for retired Maj. Gen. John Alison Oct. 3, at Arlington National Cemetery, Va. Alison was survived by his wife, Penni, and two sons, John and David. Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Christopher Ruano.



MARSOC Sailor awarded Silver Star Medal for gallantry

*Story and photo by Cpl. Kyle McNally
MARSOC Public Affairs*

A Navy corpsman previously assigned to 2d Marine Special Operations Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, was awarded the Silver Star – the nation’s third-highest military decoration for valor in combat – for his extraordinary heroism while conducting combat operations in Bala Morghab, Afghanistan, on Nov. 6, 2009.

During a deliberate attack on a series of enemy positions, Petty Officer First Class Amilcar Rodriguez and his Afghan partner force took a rooftop position to provide over watch for their Marine Special Operations Team. Almost immediately after taking the position, two Afghan Commandos and a Marine in Rodriguez’s team were wounded by sniper fire. Though warned by his teammates about the sniper, Rodriguez exposed himself from cover and took up an M249 squad automatic weapon, which he unloaded into the enemy position, killing two insurgents. He then rushed to his wounded teammate’s position and proceeded to drag him to safety, until three shots from a sniper sent him falling beside the injured Marine.

As his teammates came to their aid and began dragging them to safety, Rodriguez calmly instructed them on the triage and assessment of the other casualty. Once taken to the casualty collection point, Rodriguez continued to assist another medic in the treatment of the wounded.

Maj. Gen. Paul E. Lefebvre, the commander of MARSOC, presented Rodriguez with his award at a ceremony at the MARSOC Headquarters building.



Navy Petty Officer First Class Amilcar Rodriguez, a corpsman previously assigned to 2d Marine Special Operations Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, shakes hands with a Marine after an awards ceremony at MARSOC Headquarters, Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 24, in which he was awarded the Silver Star for his extraordinary heroism while conducting combat operations in Bala Morghab, Afghanistan Nov. 6, 2009. The Silver Star is the nation’s third-highest military decoration for valor in combat.

“We obviously realize the magnitude of this presentation,” Lefebvre told the crowd. “Our heritage is based on our actions. And the actions that we’re recognizing today add significance to the history of the Navy, and to the history of the Corps.”

MARSOC reflects on 9/11, 10-year war

Story and photo by Cpl. Kyle McNally
MARSOC Public Affairs

As Americans across the country paused to remember and reflect on lives lost on 9/11, a small group of Marines from U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command carried out their own unique commemoration. Joining several Army Rangers and an assortment of firefighters and policemen from across N.C., Georgia and Florida, three MARSOC Marines biked more than 400 miles in honor of their fallen SOCOM brothers during the annual Operation One Voice Honor Ride.

The five-day trek stretched from U.S. Army Special Operations Command Headquarters at Fort Bragg, N.C. to Lake Lanier Island, Georgia.

“It’s a great way to pay tribute,” said Maj. Tom Burgett, one of the participating MARSOC Marines. “It also directly benefits the families of special operators affected by the Global War on Terrorism – it’s a way to generate fundraising and visibility for Operation One Voice within the community.”

The Honor Ride is sponsored by Operation One Voice, a non-profit organization that raises money to aid the families of wounded or fallen special operators, while simultaneously paying tribute to SOF heroes. This year, the ride was dedicated to Army Ranger and Medal of Honor recipient Sgt. 1st Class Leroy Petry.

“It’s incredible to see the support and impact that the community can have,” said Burgett. “The cheers we encountered were very heartfelt. It sends a clear message that Americans appreciate our sacrifice.”

The ride culminated in Duluth, Ga., where 70 civilians, four special operations forces amputees, and Marine Maj. Gen. Mark A. Clark, the Chief of Staff of SOCOM, joined the cyclists in the last 25-mile stretch of the ride to Lake Lanier Island.

The next day was the 10th anniversary of 9/11. At the Duluth city hall, the cyclists took part in a ceremony that saw the unveiling of a memorial statue honoring native public servants and military servicemembers past and present, before a crowd of roughly 2,000 people.

“I think it reinvigorated the cyclists,” said Burgett. “We saw that after 10 years, America has not forgotten.”

MARSOC formally paid its respects to the victims of 9/11 and fallen servicemembers in several ceremonies

throughout the month. Lt. Col. Darren Duke, the commander of 3d MSOB, addressed his Marines at a ceremony Sept. 7.

“Remember the lost and the fallen,” said Duke. “Many were the innocent victims who died and many more were those who paid the ultimate price in our military and intelligence response to these attacks.”

Aboard Camp Pendleton, Marines with 1st MSOB commemorated their fallen brothers by unveiling a new memorial Sept. 16.

Maj. Gen. Lefebvre, MARSOC commander, also paid tribute to the victims of 9/11 at a brief ceremony at MARSOC Headquarters Sept. 12.

“As in all we do, [the future of this war] will be challenging,” said Lefebvre. “It will require leaders that understand purpose and will not be deterred in the execution of their duties. It will take continued sacrifice on our part. But it is my sense that both our civilians and our military component hear the proverbial trumpet.”

The ceremony at MARSOC Headquarters concluded with the raising of morning colors, a daily occurrence aboard all military installations, but given new importance as the colors climbed over a formation of Marines and rippled across the names of MARSOC’s fallen on the black marble surface of the MARSOC Memorial.



Marines and Sailors with 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, observe a new memorial honoring 1st MSOB’s fallen warriors at a memorial dedication ceremony at Camp Pendleton, Calif. Sept. 16. September was a month of remembrance and reflection, marked by several ceremonies taking place throughout MARSOC to honor its fallen servicemembers and the victims of 9/11.



Outgoing senior enlisted adviser: Some things never change

By Senior Airman Joe McFadden
1st Special Operations Wing Public Affairs

Recalling the first time he operated a 30-pound radio and generator in the field, Army Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Smith realized the most vital component of the device actually weighed the least.

Before microchips and digital bytes enhanced communication into its current form, the outcome of a mission actually hinged on a military radio operator's precise placement of tiny diode crystals.

"If they had 10 frequencies projected to be used during that time, I had 10 different crystals representing each frequency," Smith said. "After learning the frequency, I'd find that crystal, pull it out of the box and stick it inside my radio."

Fast forward more than three decades later, service members use more sophisticated radios covering even more frequencies, but also weigh considerably less.

"When you look at what they've got today, you're just like 'you've got to be kidding me?'" he said. "I think what makes our force as awesome today is the technology that we've been able to put into their hands. I think sometimes, how would the war have been different had the soldiers of Vietnam had the tools that we have today? It would have been a whole different world back then. Technology, beyond the shadow of a doubt, has changed our culture more than anything else."

The former senior enlisted adviser to the U.S. Special Operations Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., Smith has witnessed many technological changes since entering active-duty service March 1, 1977. How Special Operations Forces fight the wars of today, as well as the challenges of maintaining such a force for the future, were just some of the topics he discussed during his visit to Hurlburt Field, Sept. 15.

"The biggest challenge our force faces today is dealing with the operations tempo and the demands we've placed on them," Smith said. "It is a demanding world out there with the wars going on and the other global challenges we're

dealing with. The pressure on the force has been tremendous."

Smith pointed out how certain stresses of the process, in combination with the number and durations of deployments, can also affect a servicemember's family life.

"In many cases, the spouses are our unsung heroes," he said. "Their husbands or wives are doing exactly what their nation needs them to do, and we thank them for all of the support they give their spouses."

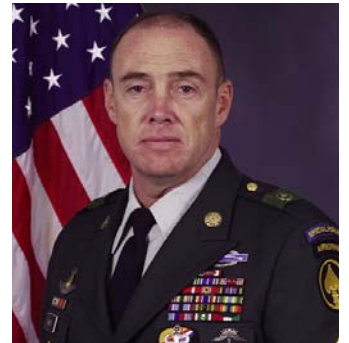
Since 9/11, USSOCOM's manpower has nearly doubled to almost 60,000 personnel, its yearly budget has nearly tripled to more than \$10 billion, and its overseas deployments have quadrupled.

"I think SOF (Special Operations Forces) has always been quite relevant and the last 10 years have really shown its ability to provide a pretty big bang for a small buck," he said. "We get an awful lot done with a very small amount of resources. But as far as the future goes, I think the demand upon SOF will continue to grow."

As the command's top enlisted leader from Jan. 23, 2006 to Sept. 27, 2011, Smith has given direct feedback regarding the force to three USSOCOM commanders. His insight has been sought on several key issues facing the SOF community, including those deployments as well as cultural training, education and quality of life for more than the last five years.

Earlier this year, Navy Adm. Eric Olson, then-commander of USSOCOM, suggested a potential way to reduce those stresses on SOF would include getting them "more time at home," an idea of which Smith expressed agreement.

"A deployment's got to be a deployment-- we can't get away from the actual mission components of what we do overseas," he said. "Where we can try to help out is some of



Former Command Sgt. Major
Thomas H. Smith

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the self-induced time away, such as some schools that may not really be necessary. Some of the things that we're looking at are how to better train in certain locations or minimize the amount of time you have to be away from home in order to train. We're trying to reduce those sorts of things, to better manage time away from home."

While on the subject of time, Navy Adm. William McRaven, USSOCOM commander, said during his confirmation hearings that such deployment tempos had an impact on SOF personnel attending cultural and language training.

"For SOF forces, it's absolutely imperative that we continue to maintain and better ourselves in our cultural and language abilities," Smith said. "For many SOF qualification courses, cultural and language training is embedded into it. We are a force that works and operates by, through and with, our partner nations out there. It is extremely important to understand and respect other cultures and to at least attempt to speak the language."

Just as he and his fellow senior NCOs have had to operate in a world much different from the one they first trained in, Smith first saw the need for a separate SOF senior enlisted academy to focus on irregular warfare nearly five years ago.

Today, the Joint Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy at MacDill Air Force Base educates SOF and selected conventional force senior enlisted personnel in mission-oriented leadership and critical thinking skills to prepare them to effectively advise, lead and mentor in the future operations environment (joint, combined, interagency) at the operational and strategic levels, according to the Joint Special Operations University website.

"I would say of my entire career and what was my biggest contribution, I would hope that it was to better educate our fellow senior enlisted warrior diplomats and having implemented that plan," Smith said.

While expressions like "tip of the spear" and "quiet professionals" may designate Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Marines as being one of USSOCOM's ranks, Smith said such terminologies have never meant as much to him as the actual qualities they display.

"To be SOF means to be competent, wise and understanding of the environment you're operating in," he said. "It means understanding who the enemy is and who the friendlies are. It means understanding the difference and balance between kinetic operations and non-kinetic operations. It means understanding what tools to apply to a

situation to achieve the desired outcome. That's what distinguishes SOF from all the other forces."

As he prepares for his retirement from the Army, Smith also shared how he developed his leadership vision and managerial philosophy throughout the years.

"I think deep down in every operator's heart and memory is the time that he spent on a team," he said. "Those were probably some of the best of times, but I had to start moving through the ranks and leave that world behind. Then you start looking forward to other challenges and how you can best serve in the role."

But even as he retires, Smith remarked how some core values of the SOF and conventional military forces have always remained constant, despite the speed-of-light advances in technology.

"A lot of people talk about how we have the greatest force that we've ever had," Smith said. "I don't necessarily agree with that. Our force today is just as good as the men who have served before them. One thing that has absolutely not changed is the willingness of each generation in our country to stand up and meet the demands of securing our freedom and protecting our interests."



Adm. Bill H. McRaven, commander U.S. Special Operations Command, passes the sword to Command Sgt. Major Chris Faris during a change of responsibility ceremony Sept. 27, at the command's headquarters on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. The transfer of the sword from Adm. McRaven to Command Sgt. Major Faris signifies the trust and confidence that USSOCOM has in the non-commissioned officer corps. Faris becomes the USSOCOM's seventh Command Sgt. Major and replaced Command Sgt. Major Thomas H. Smith. Faris is the personal adviser to the commander on all issues regarding the welfare, readiness, morale, and proper utilization of the enlisted force. Photo by Mike Bottoms.

A photograph of two USMC Para-Commandos in formation during a jump. They are wearing dark jumpsuits and helmets. The parachutes are large and dark, with yellow accents and the word "USSOCOM" visible on the top left of each canopy. The formation is a bi-plane, with one jumper positioned higher and further back than the other. The background is a clear, light sky.

USSOCOM Para-Commandos honor founders, twenty year anniversary

Two members of SOCOM Para-Commandos perform canopy relative work during the 20th anniversary of the team's first jump. This formation is also known as a bi-plane. Courtesy photo.

By Tech. Sgt. Heather Kelly
USSOCOM Public Affairs

Members past and present of USSOCOM's elite parachute team, the Para-Commandos, gathered in August to mark the 20th anniversary of the team's formation and honor two of its founders.

The first and former team officer-in-charge, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Ron Ward, and team non-commissioned officer-in-charge, U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Santos Matos, were honored by informally naming the training site and drop zone after the men: The Ron Ward Para-Commando Training Facility and Matos Drop Zone.

The event was held at the team's training drop zone in Zephyrhills, Fla. U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Mark Clark, USSOCOM chief of staff, and Mr. Al Vernon, retired U.S. Army Colonel and former team leader, addressed the attendees.

"Throughout the team's existence, we've had 12 different NCOICs, five different uniforms, three different parachute manufacturers and three different alignments within the SOCOM staff," said Vernon. "The team has evolved from what were essentially a bunch of skilled military parachutists to a competitive parachute demonstration team. It's one thing to be a good jumper; it's another thing to be a good team. This is a good team composed of good jumpers."

In 1991, Gen. Carl Steiner, then commander of USSOCOM, approved the creation of a command parachute team. Two months later, the team made its first jump. The jumpers that day were Matos and team members Staff Sgt. Bill Lee and Sgt. Jeff Ritter.

From that humble beginning, the team has grown to 24 demonstrators and demonstrator candidates and a robust ground crew. The team performs 35 to 50 demonstrations across the country each year, with a combined audience totaling more than one million U.S. citizens.

"We are all here for at least two reasons: to celebrate 20 years of USSOCOM parachute team operations and to formally recognize two legends who founded the SOCOM parachute team," Clark said. "Without the efforts and vision of these two brave men, we would not be standing here today to celebrate two decades of successful parachute operations."

Matos and Ward were the driving force behind the Para-Commando team, establishing its reputation from the ground up and forging the relationship with the Zephyrhills skydiving community, which was critical in being able to train at the facility.

"What you see today is not limited to those two great Americans, who then passed the torch to the many

others who hold our deepest respect and admiration for the contributions that they have made to this team and the Special Operations community. And you see many of them in the audience today," Clark said, acknowledging current Para-Commando Team Leader Keith Walter and Vernon.

"These two great commandos have provided countless energy and vision for this event and organization," Clark said. "Everyone here is special to this evening. We have the parachutes, the airplanes, the altitude and the adrenaline. But when you get down to it, it's about the people, it's about the relationships, and it's about the memories."

Conveying his respect and appreciation for team members, Clark said the men and women who represent the Para-Commandos are some of the best that SOCOM has to offer.

"Some are active duty, some are retired, a whole mix of different services and agencies, different backgrounds, ages, ranks, gender and experiences, all coming together for a common mission and common cause and passion," Clark said. "These are reflected in what Special Operations does and is all about. All devoted to doing something more, something more than themselves."

That devotion is not limited to the individuals who jump, said Clark, recognizing the team's support staff.

"All these people do it as volunteers, never asking for anything in return, no accolades or special recognition," Clark said. "But all have an inner satisfaction and pride knowing that they represented their command as true quiet professionals. As the face of SOCOM and the SOF community, being a Para-Commando takes hard work, commitment and the attitude that good enough is never good enough."

Vernon agreed.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for people who are assigned to this headquarters whether they are military or civilian, regardless of grade or gender to participate in something that is truly, truly exciting," Vernon said. "It's personally satisfying to be a part of this command and community. It's been a privilege to participate in it and watch it evolve though the years."

The sentiment was echoed by Clark and countless other members, family and friends.

"Twenty years from now, who knows what this team will look like or what this facility will be, but I'm sure many people in this room will still be there," said Clark. "I can guarantee that this team and drop zone facility will still embody the symbols of true professionals with a passion for life, mission and each other in parachuting."

SORDAC members win top DOD awards

By Special Operations Research, Development, and Acquisition Center

On any average day the USSOCOM acquisition team, the Special Operations Forces Acquirers, execute more than 200 acquisition programs and 400 projects, conduct more than 100 combat evaluations, execute more than 60 procurement actions, obligate more than \$11 million, deliver more than 30 communications equipment and weapon systems, and field more than 37,000 rounds of munitions—a formidable effort by any means that has not gone unnoticed.

“For the first time the Special Operations Research, Development, and Acquisition Center was selected as the 2011 Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics recipient in three of three prestigious award categories—David Packard Excellence in Acquisition, Workforce Achievement, and Workforce Development,” said Mr. James Geurts, Deputy Director for Acquisition, U.S. Special Operations Command. “These annual awards are the top DOD acquisition awards, where USSOCOM goes head to head with other DOD agencies and the Services competing for recognition in acquisition excellence. To be recognized in one category is outstanding, for recognition in all three categories is an honor and true testament to the exceptional dedication and work of the entire SOF acquisition enterprise.”

The Packard Award honors four teams across the DOD; USSOCOM’s Program Executive Office SOF Warrior’s Personal Signature Management Joint Acquisition Team was chosen as one of the teams for demonstrating exemplary innovation and best acquisition practices. During a time when SOF operators were undergoing a globally expanding deployment posture, operational commanders submitted urgent requirements for more effective personal protective camouflage to reduce their detection by threat forces. The PSM Team rapidly responded to this combat need and, with careful and integrated planning, coordinated the development of three innovative camouflage patterns.

The Workforce Achievement Award recognizes excellent performance in the acquisition of products and services for the DOD, honoring those who represent the best in their acquisition disciplines. Lt. Col. Renee Holmes of PEO SOF Warrior and Mr. Terry Ricket of PEO C4 were both recognized for this honor. Holmes was honored for her contributions to acquisition in an expeditionary environment as Program Manager for USSOCOM’s Family of Special Operations Vehicles.



The Special Operations Research, Development, and Acquisition Center received three of the 2011 Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Awards: David Packard Excellence in Acquisition, Workforce Achievement, and Workforce Development. SOF Warrior’s Personal Signature Management Joint Acquisition Team was chosen for the Acquisition Award and its team members included Duke Dunnigan, Kelly Hughes, Lt. Col. Pete Greany, Tom Brophy, Drew Mitchell, Tom Mills, Pete Capuzzi, Clifton Scott, Steve Russell, Rob Derespino, Steve Chamberlin, James Bellemare, and Maj. Steve Cook. The Workforce Achievement Award went to both Lt. Col. Renee Holmes and Mr. Terry Ricket. The Workforce Development Award went to SORDAC’s Human Capital Team of the Directorate of Resources & Analysis and its members Ted Koufas, Eric Gustafson, Kim Kunding, Rachel Ford and Rebecca Gonzalez. Photo by Brian Carson.

“My team was instrumental in providing wheeled mobility and equipment to the Warfighter to meet specific mission requirements when Services solutions did not,” said Holmes.

Ricket was honored for his work in leading a team to modernize the Fly Away Broadcast System, generating a transformational capability for the Military Information Support Operations community.

“Our team revolutionized the Fly Away Broadcast System program by reducing the system’s footprint by more than 70 percent,” said Ricket. “We gave MISO forces a highly mobile tactical asset for the critical day-to-day execution of their contingency mission.”

The Workforce Development Award acknowledges organizations that have made exemplary contributions to the career-long development of their workforces. SORDAC’s Human Capital Team of the Directorate of Resources and Analysis took this honor, winning the Silver award for their dedication in managing the workforce development program and human capital plan, launching new initiatives, and coordinating with other stakeholders in the Command and DOD. This award is particularly meaningful to SORDAC as it was earned during a year while steadily reducing staff size and cost of doing business while simultaneously increasing the support to the Warfighter.

Terrorism seminar promotes security among sovereign nations

By SSgt. Ryan O'Hare

USSOCOM Strategic Communications

The Royal Netherlands Embassy, partnering with the U.S. Special Operations Command Sovereign Challenge Program, hosted a seminar in Washington, D.C., Sept 19, to discuss the phenomenon of the "lone wolf" terrorist and their effects on society.

Titled "Lone Wolf: Undefendable Threat?" the seminar allowed terrorism experts to share views, experiences and expertise on the dangers of a single terrorist.

During opening remarks, Lt. Gen. Bradley Heithold, Vice Commander, USSOCOM, highlighted the importance of having a collective dialogue concerning this long-term issue.

"This lone wolf phenomenon didn't just start," said Heithold. "This goes back a long way when you think about all the isolated cases of extremists acting on their own beliefs or somebody else's."

Peter Mollema, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Netherlands Embassy in D.C., highlighted the challenges in identifying these people.

"Lone wolves come in many different shapes and sizes," said Mollema. "That makes the threat so real and the attacks so difficult to prevent."

In addition to defending against attacks from larger radical organizations, sovereign nations must also prepare for smaller scale acts from single terrorists.

"The recent tragic event in Norway has highlighted the importance of coming to a better understanding of the lone wolf phenomenon," said Stan Schrage, Sovereign Challenge Coordinator. "I think all of our nations, including the United States, have improved our capabilities to defend against traditional attacks. While the lone wolf phenomenon may not be new, it is increasingly dangerous given the current and presumably foreseeable threat environment."

Colonel Martin Wijnen, from the Netherlands Office of the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism, believes that lone wolves' ideologies evolve over a long period of time, not overnight.

"A very important prerogative is that no one is born as a terrorist," said Wijnen. "It sounds kind of logical, but everyone who is eventually a terrorist or a lone wolf goes through a process of radicalization."

Dialogue also focused on terrorist attacks in Norway, including the recent attack by Anders Breivik. This event, which killed 93 people, was the worst terrorist attack in

Norway's history. Given Norway's small population compared to the U.S., the assault killed more people per capita than the World Trade Center attack on 9/11. Breivik confessed his actions were planned and executed without the support of any terrorist organization, demonstrating the extreme damage a lone wolf can cause.

The Principal Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, John Cohen, provided insight into what motivates single terrorists.

"They hardly issue any threats prior to their acts," said Cohen. "They have no links to terrorist organizations, and will commit deadly violence because of their ideology, their political reasons, or their hatred toward the government system."

Dr. Marc Sageman, an independent researcher on terrorism, delved into the psychological aspects of these individuals. Sageman believes the Internet and social media provide lone wolves with a convenient platform to research and network with like minded people globally.

"Most lone wolves are people who are physically loners, never met the other guy, but often are a part of this community," said Sageman. "And even if they don't discuss the various plots online, they're still very much part of this virtual political protest social movement."

Vice President of Strategic Forecasting, Scott Stewart, shifted the discussion from why these individuals act out, to how they plan attacks and their reasoning for acting alone.

"You've got a lot of operational security," said Stewart. "You don't have to worry about your communications being intercepted. You don't have to worry about a rat inside your group. All your planning is self-contained, so it's really difficult for intelligence agents, or even social service, or even the police, to pick up on who you are and what you're intending to do."

Government agencies worldwide continue to work together, sharing information in an attempt to stop future threats.

"The lone wolf phenomenon is not going to go away. It will continue to create challenges to all of our nations. We will continue to need to focus on this kind of productive exchange of information to deal with this increasingly dangerous threat," said Schrage. "The more nations exchange ideas and points of view with other countries in a dialogue that reflects both their mutual interests and singular threats to sovereignty, the better able we all are to combat these threats, both collectively and individually."



USSOCOM graduates senior leaders warfighter's course

By the JSOU Senior Education Department

Eighteen general and flag officers and civilian senior executives completed the Combined/Joint Force Special Operations Component Commander Course (C/JFSOCCC) at the Davis Conference Center, MacDill Air Force Base from June 6-10, 2011. Participants included representatives from each USSOCOM component and each military service as well as senior executives from other federal agencies. Dr. Brian Maher, President of the Joint Special Operations University, reflected on the curriculum and noted that graduates “are academically equipped to more effectively lead and operate in a combined/joint environment with SOF, service, interagency and coalition partners.”

There is a demand for senior leaders of all services and agencies to be educated for theater level combat leadership roles and U.S. Special Operations Forces are no different. Because SOF is increasingly employed globally to work the complete spectrum of SOF activities and missions, independently and with conventional forces, USSOCOM directed the Joint Special Operations University to design an executive course to meet the requirements specified in the Chairman of the Joints Chief of Staff Officer Professional Military Education Policy.

Navy Capt. Ed Gallrein of JSOU's Senior Education Division described the course and its purpose. “The intent is to join SOF executives with senior service and interagency leaders in a seminar environment and provide a course of instruction that both addresses C/JFSOCC doctrine and leverages the dynamic of group interaction to optimize learning. The June 2011 C/JFSOCCC is the second iteration of the course and with this successful foundation, we expect to welcome international participation next year in addition to the dedicated U.S. course.”

The former commander of USSOCOM, Adm. Eric T. Olson and deputy commander, Lt. Gen. David P. Fridovich, separately addressed the class to offer strategic vision and command perspectives on SOF employment. Olson also participated in an interactive luncheon to continue



Retired Army Brig. Gen. Hector E. Pagan, former commander of U.S. Special Operations Command South, addresses the Combined/Joint Force Special Operations Component Commander Course at the Davis Conference Center, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. The purpose of the course is to join SOF executives with senior service and interagency leaders in a seminar and provide a course of instruction that both addresses C/JFSOCC doctrine and leverages the dynamic of group interaction to optimize learning. Courtesy photo.

conversation on “Presenting the Force in the Next Decade.” He discussed the evolution of SOF constructs that mirror the services and still satisfy SOF unique requirements as the SOF community adjusts to meet the demands of the future operating environment.

Individual feedback validated the course objectives and content. Throughout the course, subject matter experts provided current and insightful discussions in person and via VTC in order to obtain timely perspectives from the field. Other discussion addressed C/JFSOCC doctrine and application-based case studies as well as an examination of equivalent joint force roles and structures. In a culminating event, participants exercised their critical thinking and collaboration skills to work through operational and strategic questions in a two-part scenario.

The next C/JFSOCC is scheduled for June 11-15, 2012. C/JFSOCC 12A will include additional inter-agency representation as well as participants from several key Partner Nations' Special Operations Forces.

THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

“Do it”

America’s SOF Response to September 11

By Christian E. Fearer
USSOCOM History & Research Office

Sept. 11, 2001. The day that dawned over the East Coast was nearly perfect for flying. In Boston, Newark and Washington, D.C., passengers and crews boarded four flights, each destined for California. In New York City and around Washington, D.C., commuters navigated typical Tuesday rush-hour traffic as they made their way to work in Lower Manhattan and the Pentagon.

At 8:46 a.m. everything changed. A commercial airliner flew fast and low over the New York skyline, slamming into a tower of the World Trade Center.

Shortly after, at 9 a.m., a second aircraft crashed into the other tower, causing a tremendous explosion. Clearly this was no accident, but a purposeful, calculated act of terrorism. Within a half-hour, a third plane slammed into the Pentagon at full throttle, tearing a hole into the building’s west wall. A fourth plane, bound for a target in the capital, crashed into a southwestern Pennsylvania field. The day that began as any other ended as none other; hijackers had turned civil aircraft into missiles, and nearly 3,000 people had died.

President George W. Bush addressed the nation that evening, explaining that a search was already underway for those responsible and vowed to make no distinction between the terrorist organizations and those that



U.S. Special Operations Forces ride horseback working with members of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan, Nov. 12, 2001.



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS

sponsored them. The search led to al Qaeda, a terrorist organization led by the radical, exiled Saudi named Usama bin Laden, headquartered in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

U.S. Central Command was directed to develop a plan that would eliminate Afghanistan as a sponsor of—and safe haven for—international terrorists. Planners' primary objective was to specifically destroy the al Qaeda network and capture or kill its leadership. But Afghanistan presented significant challenges: diverse, rugged geography would prove a formidable challenge, especially in winter, which comes early in most of Afghanistan, particularly in the mountains. Planners recognized that though bombing and cruise-missile attacks could be launched soon, which they did on Oct. 7, 2001, it was unlikely they alone would be decisive, requiring a more substantial effort that would necessitate time to mobilize and deploy.

In the interim, military planners determined that an unconventional option could fill the gap and deliver initial, decisive blows against the enemy; however, CENTCOM lacked an Unconventional Warfare plan for Afghanistan. Initially, Special Operations Command–Central was tasked with developing plans to support Combat Search and Rescue; but recognizing and anticipating a greater potential role for SOF, SOCCENT planners began preparing a UW plan.

The idea of using SOF was recognized by senior leaders in the Pentagon as well. Less than two weeks after the attack, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz passed a memorandum to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld suggesting the use of Special Forces in Afghanistan. Instead of using Special Forces to unilaterally attack enemy targets, the deputy secretary suggested they partner with existing anti-Taliban and anti-al Qaeda forces. The memo outlined the military advantages of such a strategy—an outline that almost perfectly mirrored SOCCENT's plan. Days later, SOCCENT briefed its UW plan to Gen. Tommy Franks, the CENTCOM commander. At the conclusion of the briefing, Franks stated simply, "Okay. Do it." With that, SOF would be the initial main effort of America's response, soon to be named Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.

The plan, developed by SOCCENT, approved by

Franks and suggested by Wolfowitz to Rumsfeld utilized Special Forces Operational Detachments Alpha, augmented by Air Force tactical air controllers, to land deep in hostile territory, establish contact with members of the Northern Alliance resistance and then coordinate their activities in a series of offensive operations against the enemy. The ODAs, working with indigenous Islamic, anti-Taliban partners, would identify enemy forces, positions and assets and then call for massive U.S. airpower to bear against their enemies.

The UW campaign commenced during the cool, dark hours Oct. 19, 2001, when the first two teams of Task Force DAGGER infiltrated Afghanistan and rendezvoused with their Afghan counterparts. In the weeks to come, images of SOF Operators on horseback, riding across barren Afghan landscape with their allies in pursuit of the enemy, were broadcast around the world, the images invoking a peculiar combination of historic 19th century cavalry and 20th century technology.

Two weeks after insertion, Mazar-e Sharif fell, followed by Kabul on Nov. 14; Konduz on Nov. 23, and Kandahar on Dec. 7. By the end of the month, the Taliban government was deposed, and significant damage had been inflicted on al Qaeda. Where the Soviets had failed after nearly a decade of brutal war waged by a 100,000-man military presence, small teams of elite SOF, partnered with Afghan resistance fighters, had seemingly succeeded. The Taliban government was overthrown, and al Qaeda lost its Afghan safe haven. The next challenge for the Coalition: securing the peace.



Former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz



Army Master Sgt.
Danial R. Adams
10th Special Forces Group
(Airborne)



Army Spc.
Ricardo Cerros Jr.
75th Ranger Regiment



Marine Sgt.
Christopher Diaz
Headquarters Battalion
Marine Corps
Air Ground Combat Center



Army Sgt.
Tyler Nicholas Holtz
75th Ranger Regiment



Army Staff Sgt.
Michael W. Hosey
1st Special Forces Group
(Airborne)



Navy Petty Officer 1st Class
(SEAL)
Caleb A. Nelson
SEAL Team 10



Marine Staff Sgt.
Nicholas A. Sprovtsoff
1st Marine Special
Operations Battalion

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



Exercise Jackal Stone

An MH-47 from the 160th Special Operations Regiment (Airborne) hovers as Norwegian special operations forces clear the deck of ROS Midia (LSNS 283) as a part of Exercise Jackal Stone 2011, Sept. 14, in Romania. Jackal Stone is an annual multinational Special Operations exercise designed to promote cooperation and interoperability between participating forces, build functional capacity and enhance readiness. This year nine nations participated in various locations in Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Kim McLendon.