



Tip OF THE Spear

United States Special Operations Command
MacDill Air Force Base, Florida

December 2018



SOLDIERS ATTEND SPECIAL FORCES COMBAT DIVER QUALIFICATION COURSE





U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS



Soldiers attend Special Forces Combat Diver Qualification Course ... 17

Tip of the Spear

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(Cover) Soldiers attending the Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Warfare Training Group of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School Special Forces Combat Diver Qualification Course practice skills needed to perform amphibious infiltration, June 7, in Key West, Fla. Green Beret Combat Divers are assigned to U.S. Army Special Forces Operational Detachment - Alphas that specialize in maritime operations. The SFCDQC is a seven-week course taught by the U.S. Army Special Forces Underwater Operations School at Key West and is widely recognized as one of the most difficult advanced skills courses for special operations forces. Photo by Robert Lindee.



Thomas Jefferson Award Winner

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SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – EUROPE



A special operations forces soldier from the Republic of Moldova and a member of the Lithuanian National Defence Volunteer Forces (KASP) provide security during a raid as part of exercise Saber Junction 18 at the Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany, Sept. 27. SOF worked alongside the KASP during Saber Junction 18 to conduct irregular warfare in enemy occupied territory to support the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade as they executed land operations in a multinational joint environment. Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Benjamin Haulenbeek.

Saber Junction 2018 integrates NATO, partner SOF with conventional forces

*By U.S. Army Sgt. Karen Sampson
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe*

Exercise Saber Junction 18 combined NATO and partner special operations forces with conventional forces for training at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Sept. 3 through Oct. 1.

Saber Junction 18 was an exercise designed to assess the readiness of the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade to execute land operations in a joint, combined

environment and promote interoperability with participating Allied and partner nations.

As part of the exercise, special operations forces from Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, Moldova and the U.S. Army 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) partnered alongside Lithuania's National Defence Volunteer Force, or KASP, to conduct irregular warfare in enemy occupied territory to set conditions on the battlefield for conventional forces.

"Integration between SOF and [conventional forces] is

critical,” said U.S. Army Maj. David Ahern, executive officer of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, also known as the ‘Sky Soldiers.’

The Sky Soldiers’ executive officer added that by ensuring reliable communications and creating a common picture of the operation, they collectively became more lethal and agile.

“We are each able to focus on our unique skills while working towards complimentary ends,” said Ahern. “The value of training this way at JMRC is that we achieve this interoperability with U.S. and allied SOF in an incredibly realistic training environment.”

An important task for SOF in supporting conventional forces occurred early in the exercise. Greek special operations forces supported a tactical airborne operation conducted by a long-range reconnaissance platoon from Italy’s Folgore Airborne Brigade.

“Exercise Saber Junction 18 provides realistic problem sets in scenarios allowing our special operations forces to apply their skills in unorthodox ways,” said a Greek special operations forces captain.

Greek SOF were the first to fight against JMRC’s assigned opposing forces battalion, the U.S. Army’s 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment.

“Our platoon held back the opposing forces in order to secure a landing zone,” he said.

The 20th SFG(A) and KASP also secured drop zones and landing zones to facilitate approximately 900 173rd Airborne Brigade paratroopers airborne assault into the training area.

“Collectively we are preparing as a force to support a joint forcible entry by conventional forces,” said a 20th SFG(A) team sergeant. “For Saber Junction 18, we are supporting 173rd Airborne Brigade’s paratroopers as they conduct air assault operations.”

To effectively support conventional forces operations a great deal of planning and coordination must occur. Albanian and Bulgarian special operations forces shared responsibility as the special operations task group, the higher headquarters responsible for coordinating and directing special operations task units, the small individual SOF teams in the exercise.

“Our responsibility as the special operations task group and headquarters support is setting up common ground to integrate with other SOF operators and interoperate with a conventional force on a brigade level,” said an Albanian Army special operations forces sergeant major. “In order to succeed in a real battlefield situation, it



Special Operations Forces from the Republic of Moldova Armed Forces practice room clearing at Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany Sept. 12 during Saber Junction 18. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Karen Sampson.

is here at the Saber Junction 2018 exercise we learn alternative standard operating procedures and other tactical techniques.”

The Saber Junction 18 exercise ensured all SOF units met objectives relevant to their real-world combat tasks. The missions included special reconnaissance, military assistance, personnel recovery and direct action. NATO and partner SOF experienced the full spectrum of warfighting functions to ensure combat readiness.

“There is exceptional value in developing better habits from the repetitive execution of training,” said a Moldovan SOF captain. “This training will help save lives when we are down range during an actual conflict.”

SOF units participating in training exercises at JMRC are supported by a team of SOF observer, coach and trainers.

“The SOF and KASP are individually and collectively better prepared for combat,” said the U.S. Army Special Forces officer in charge of JMRC’s Special Operations Forces Cell. “These units are returning to their country and native units with beneficial lessons learned for home station training.”



SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – EUROPE

10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) conducts mountain warfare training in the Italian Alps

A U.S. Army Special Forces Soldier assigned to 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) rappels while conducting mountain warfare training near Corvara, Italy, Sept. 17. Mountain warfare training is designed to improve movement over challenging terrain in many operational environments. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Gage Hull.



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U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Soldiers with the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) compete hand-to-hand Dec. 6, during the Menton Week Gladiator Challenge. The 1st SFG(A) and the Canadian Special Operations Regiment celebrate their legacy as premier special operations professionals during the first week of December, and to commemorate the deactivation of the First Special Service Force. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Ian Ives.

1st Special Forces Soldiers honor, celebrate 74 years of Menton heritage

*By U.S. Army Spc. Amanda Baker
1st Special Forces Group (Airborne)*

To honor the 74th anniversary of the First Special Service Force's disbandment and to enhance unit cohesion, the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) Soldiers tested their physical and mental endurance with their Canadian Special Forces partners in the presence of friends and family during Menton Week, Dec. 3-7.

The opening kicked off the weeklong celebration where Col. Owen Ray, the 1st SFG(A) commander,

commemorated the First Special Service Force who, among their many missions, destroyed a German artillery brigade in World War II. Because they conducted successful night raids, the FSSF earned the name "The Devil's Brigade."

"These relentless commandos not only led the way to victory in the darkest days of World War II, but laid the framework for modern day U.S. and Canadian special operations forces," said Ray. "They gave rise to generations of professional warriors like the ones that stand here today that carry on the legacy and brotherhood that remains strong."



A major with the Canadian Special Forces Regiment (left) and Col. Owen Ray, commander of the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), carry the ceremonial wreath Dec. 3, during the Menton Week opening ceremony. The 1st SFG(A) and the Canadian Special Operations Regiment celebrate their ongoing legacy as premier special operations professionals during the first week of December, and to commemorate the deactivation of the First Special Service Force. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Ian Ives.

The opening ceremony honored the lives of the fallen 1st SFG(A) and Canadian special operations brothers, and celebrated the accomplishments of the FSSF during World War II. Following the ceremony, the 1st SFG(A) Soldiers participated in team events, such as the Skedco drag, farmer's carry, pullups with weight vest, bench press and a 300-meter shuttle run.

Each day signified an era in the U.S. and Canadian Special Forces history, including World War II, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and the Global War on Terror. On Dec. 4, a day in which the unit honored the 1st SFG(A) presence in the Korean War, the 1st SFG(A) Soldiers endured an 11-mile ruck march at Solo Point, an obstacle course, litter carry, military vehicle push and target shooting at the range. A six-man team from 1st Battalion, stationed in Okinawa, Japan, took home the win for the fastest completion time.

The 1st SFG(A) community welcomed families and friends to Rogers Drop Zone on Dec. 6 to witness their Soldiers demonstrate free fall and static line airborne operations from CH-47 Chinook helicopters. Soldiers stood proudly as they received their foreign jump wings from the

Canadian jump masters.

The exchanging of foreign jump wings is a long-standing tradition bonding Airborne units. Many of the paratroopers from both countries have spent the majority of their careers fighting the war on terrorism alongside their allies.

The 1st SFG(A) closed the week with a mixed martial arts fight night, The Gladiator Challenge, where Soldiers in a variety of weight classes, fought hand-to-hand against each other to take home the winning belt. On Dec. 7, Soldiers, Gold Star Families and honored guests joined together at the Menton Ball that marked the official closing of Menton Week 2018.

A major with the Canadian Special Operations Regiment spoke on the FSSF legacy and his appreciation for the unwavering support from the 1st SFG (A) family members. He emphasized the 1st SFG (A) and FSSF commitment to operational success, and the pride shared between Special Forces partners.

“The camaraderie, the bond between our men, regardless of nationality, remains both a source of comfort and pride,” he said. “We honor all those who gave the supreme sacrifice, but we also honor those who, daring to die, survived. It continues to be an honor to serve alongside our American comrades around the world.”



Soldiers with the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), and their families practice firing weapons unique to Special Forces Dec. 6, during the Menton Week family weapons familiarization event. The 1st SFG(A) and the Canadian Special Operations Regiment celebrate their legacy as premier special operations professionals during the first week of December, and to commemorate the deactivation of the First Special Service Force. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Ian Ives.

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U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Sgt. Matthew Hagensick, 34, an infantryman with 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, is the U.S. Army's Soldier of the Year. In preparation for the competition, Hagensick conducted range training at Fort Benning, Ga., Oct. 1. Photo by U.S. Army Pfc. Jonathan Bryson.



Ranger wins Army Soldier of the Year

By Tracy A. Bailey

75th Ranger Regiment Public Affairs

Sgt. Matthew Hagensick, 34, an infantryman with 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, is the U.S. Army's Soldier of the Year.

Hagensick, a native of Madison, Wisconsin, was born in Misawa, Japan and grew-up in Hahn, Germany, while his parents served in cryptologic intelligence with the U.S. Air Force.

Hagensick credits his parents and Sgt. Maj. of the Army, Dan Dailey, for influencing his Army career.

"I always wanted to serve in the Army from a young age, especially the special operations community," Hagensick said. "After attending Edgewood College, in Madison, and receiving quite a number of tattoos, I was unfortunately kept from enlisting for about a decade until Sgt. Maj. of the Army, Dailey, came in and changed the tattoo policy."

Hagensick grew up in a military family and his parents had a tremendous impact on his decision to join the Army.

"I wanted to do something a little bit more than my brothers and sisters and my parents always pushed me to be the best version of myself I possibly could," Hagensick said. "The 75th Ranger Regiment stood out to me as that elite force where you can truly push yourself."

"Growing up in a military family, aspiring to serve my country as well; my family was very supportive along the way, especially my mother after my father passed away."

Hagensick enlisted in the U.S. Army, September 2015, following One Station Unit Training, Basic Airborne Course and the Ranger Assessment and Selection Program 1, all at Fort Benning, Georgia. He was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment as a rifleman.

He is currently serving as an anti-tank team leader with Charlie Company.

Hagensick graduated from the U.S. Army Ranger Course in 2017.

"The U.S. Army Ranger course was an interesting experience. A lot of sleep and food deprivation; it taught you a lot about what you could live with and without," Hagensick said. "It help me discover my short comings as a leader and an individual."

"I also learned how to better motivate individuals when they have ultimately nothing to look forward too for a long period of time," he added.

The road to the Army's Best Warrior Competition started about a year ago when Hagensick won Soldier of the Month for 3rd Ranger Battalion, later that year, he went on to compete and win the Soldier of the Year board.

Hagensick competed in the 75th Ranger Regiment's week-long competition for Soldier of the Year in April 2018 and went on to represent the Regiment at the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Best Warrior Competition.

"By participating in the U.S. Army Best Warrior Competition, I learned several things that I have not focused on during my training as far as the basics are concerned," Hagensick said. "It really humbled me, seeing Soldiers much younger than me, that were out there who are very proficient in basic Soldier tasks that I may not have focused enough on in the last two years."

Hagensick brought back to his team, squad and platoon, the knowledge he gained competing in to better the organization as a whole.

The Rangers who serve within the 75th Ranger Regiment, live and die by the Ranger Creed.

"Living the Ranger Creed means everything to a Ranger in the 75th Ranger Regiment," Hagensick said. "It embodies everything that we stand for, everything that we do and how we conduct ourselves both within the organization and outside of the organization when we are perceived by others."

Hagensick is older than most of his peers and has some words of wisdom for the next generation of Soldiers.

"The best piece of advice I can give to someone younger than me is that nothing comes free," Hagensick said.

"Nobody is entitled to anything. Especially in a selective organization such as the 75th Ranger Regiment."

"Hard work is what will get you to where you want to be and there are no short cuts to hard work. If you put in the work you will accomplish great things," he said.

The 75th Ranger Regiment is the Army's premier special operations raid force. The Army maintains the Regiment at a high level of combat readiness. Typical Ranger missions include airfield seizures, direct action raids and urban combat.

"If you're competitive, you like to push yourself, you want a little bit better than the people to your left and right, you want cooler equipment, you want to get paid a little bit more, you want a higher op-tempo and deploy more often, the 75th Ranger Regiment is where you want to be," Hagensick said.



From Nicaraguan refugee to serving as a US Army Soldier

By U.S. Army Sgt. Michael Parnell
7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)

Those who consider the military always have a reason for joining. Whether to continue a family tradition of service, or to see the world, the decision is life changing.

“I remember growing up and seeing Nicaraguans killed, or jailed for protesting against the government. At that time it wasn’t a safe place to be,” said Army Staff Sgt. Orlando Alvarez, a parachute rigger assigned to the Group Support Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne). “Deciding to leave was the toughest decision I’ve had to make in my life.”

“I also knew what I was leaving behind, in the end would be so I could have something more. The U.S. military provided me the opportunity my country could not. If I had to do it again, I would do it in a heartbeat,” said Alvarez.

“When I left Nicaragua and inquired about joining the military, people said it would be hard and near impossible,” said Alvarez. “But, I didn’t give up.”

In 2013, while speaking very little English, Alvarez moved with his wife, Lucila, to the United States, and joined the Army.

His main reason for joining was to eventually be in a position to give back to the country that took him in as a refugee, while affording him freedoms that he enjoys today.

After five years of service in the U.S. Army, and since being assigned to 7th SFG(A), Alvarez was promoted several times, and attended a variety of military schools, to include the Special Operations Combative Program.

Although he joined later in life, his goal is to serve 20 years in the military, and retire.

“You cannot be afraid to follow your dreams,” said



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Orlando Alvarez, right, a parachute rigger assigned to the Group Support Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), receives an award from Lt. Col. Daniel A. Lancaster, left, Group Support Battalion commander, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. U.S. Army courtesy photo.

Alvarez. “If I had let what people said discourage me from joining the military, and coming to America, I don’t know

where I would be today. I don’t even know if I would be alive. But, I am thankful for what the Army has afforded me, and I will continue to serve my country proudly.”

Alvarez’s journey from Nicaraguan refugee to U.S. Soldier is his American

dream. He plans to continue his life of service while setting an example for his children.

“This country has provided my family with many opportunities,” said Alvarez. “I am grateful for that, and I am willing to fight and protect it. One day, I hope my children will do the same.”

This country has provided my family with many opportunities. I am grateful for that, and I am willing to fight and protect it. One day, I hope my children will do the same.

— Staff Sgt. Orlando Alvarez



Retired Army Col. Roger H.C. Donlon poses next to the bust supporting his Medal of Honor, after a ceremony held by the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in his honor, at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., Dec. 5. Donlon was awarded the Medal of Honor for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while defending a U.S. military installation against a fierce attack by hostile forces during the Vietnam War. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Sean Hall.

Leaving a lasting legacy to 7th Group

*By U.S. Army Sgt. L'Erin Wynn
7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)*

In front of the 7th Group Headquarters building bearing his name, retired U.S. Army Col. Roger H.C. Donlon donated his Medal of Honor to the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), on Eglin Air Force Base, Florida during a ceremony, Dec. 5, 2018.

Fifty-four years ago today, Donlon was dressed with the only MoH to be awarded to a Special Forces Soldier, as well as the first for the Vietnam War.

The Medal of Honor is the United States of America's highest and most prestigious personal

military decoration that may be awarded to recognize U.S. military service members who have distinguished themselves by acts of valor.

At the height of the Vietnam War, Donlon's citation reads that he was awarded for his acts of "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity" during the Vietnam War, distinguishing himself by extraordinary acts of heroism "at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty," on the morning of July 6, 1964, while serving as commanding officer of the U.S. Army Special Forces Detachment A-726 at Camp Nam Dong, Vietnam.

Standing before an audience of over 500 Soldiers, family and friends to the 7th SFG(A) that Donlon helped build, his service and sacrifice was again solidified and celebrated today.

"Sir," began Commander of 7th SFG(A), Col. Patrick T. Colloton. "Your actions will always be a part of our legacy. What we're doing today, is further shaping our culture for generations to come."

A bronze bust, fashioned by artist Douwe Blumberg, and modeled after Donlon's younger self is the keeper of his Medal of Honor, the centerpiece of the event unveiled during the ceremony. That legacy is now permanently on display in the lobby of Donlon Hall.

Even with the unveiling of the bust, Donlon remained humble. He expressed that his medal was not earned alone, giving thanks to those by whom he fought side-by-side, making the ultimate sacrifice. Two of which, Donlon recalled by name: Sgt. John L. Houston and Master Sgt. Gabriel R. Alamo, whose relatives were amongst those in attendance.

"Together we are family," said Donlon. "We live our lives in a way that will always bring honor, love, and respect to the memories of our loved ones. And that's what we're doing here today."

In closing, Donlon went on to recognize his wife of 50 years by referencing the wedding band she gave him inscribed with the quote, "What we are is God's gift to us, and what we become is our gift to God."

After the ceremony, the Red Empire Dining Facility held a luncheon in his honor where service members had the opportunity to meet and speak with Donlon.

"Sir, your inspirational acts of service will continue to encourage generations to come, which you have certainly done here at 7th Group, and through your lifelong volunteer work with the people of Nam Dong," said Colloton.



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



7th Group Soldiers support Hurricane Michael relief efforts

*By U.S. Army Sgt. James F Abraham
7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)*

Soldiers from the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) answered the call to action by directly assisting in disaster relief efforts, after the Oct. 10 landfall of Hurricane Michael.

As damage assessments remain underway, it's fair to say that Panama City was among the cities who received the brunt of the storm's wrath. Across the Florida Panhandle, from Panama City to Mexico Beach and Apalachicola, debris continues to be cleared, and many residential areas still remain inaccessible because of fallen trees and wires. So, that's exactly where 7th SFG(A) Soldiers focused a majority of their efforts.

Through the approach and passing of Hurricane Michael, the Commander of 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Col. Patrick T. Colloton, focused on the safety and accountability of the Soldiers and families of deployed Soldiers within the group. While over 250 families had evacuated the area and began their return home, our local communities and compound were not severely affected. The neighboring communities to our east however, received the brunt of the impact, and the people in those communities required immediate assistance.

"There was an overwhelming desire from the formation to provide support, and I felt it was a call to action," said Colloton. "Soldiers were taking it upon themselves to go and provide assistance on their own time and their own dime over the weekend. As the commander, I wanted to provide people the opportunity to volunteer. So, I took personal leave and encouraged our commanders within the group to grant special pass for Soldiers to go help neighbors in need." The response was overwhelming. Hundreds of 7th Group Soldiers took time out of their day, and utilized personal vehicles and equipment to help Emerald Coast communities in and around Panama City. To me this demonstrated what is in the heart of 7th Group Soldiers, and what it how being a member of the Red Empire family extends to our local communities."



Soldiers from the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) assisted in relief efforts, Oct. 12, in the vicinity of Panama City after Hurricane Michael made landfall Oct 10. About 500 Soldiers a week volunteered to clear debris and other essential tasks in areas affected by the storm. U.S. Army courtesy photo.

Members of the 7th Group saw a need, and filled it. The care and concern always was, and is, what makes 7th Group great.

Over the last few weeks, Group personnel continue to volunteer in damaged areas, averaging approximately 500 Soldiers a week providing debris clearing and other essential tasks in areas affected by the storm. Over 104 personnel with the 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) of the Alabama National Guard worked alongside 7th Group personnel while performing search and rescue.

In addition to the tremendous volunteer effort, 7th SFG(A) offered their land as an intermediate staging base established at the group compound for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to have access to residential



A Soldier from the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) assists in relief efforts, Oct. 12, in the vicinity of Panama City after Hurricane Michael made landfall Oct. 10. U.S. Army courtesy photo.

areas in need.

“The Red Empire is happy to host the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and FEMA in their efforts to assist the people affected by Hurricane Michael,” said Maj. Colin O’Toole. “Our proximity to multi-lane roads and capability of providing a safe and secure staging area provides us with a great opportunity to augment our state and federal emergency response brothers and sisters. We are 100 percent dedicated to helping where and how we can.”

The engineers of 7th SFG(A) worked tirelessly to clear an area of open space to allow FEMA to set up an ISB, where generators, equipment and management personnel were sent out to various affected areas to generate electricity, according to O’Toole, a 7th SFG(A) Engineer.

Maj. Heath Sheehan, the group deputy surgeon, says that he grew up in Fort Walton Beach and has seen the effects of hurricanes so this is a personal matter of going to help those people in affected areas.

“I believe our guys would be out volunteering whether they receive credit, or not. They are not doing it for the credit, it comes from the heart.” Sheehan said. “It brings the community closer together to see that 7th SFG(A) is out here volunteering selflessly.”

A 7th SFG(A) medical noncommissioned officer in charge, who also volunteered to help with hurricane relief,

explained he knows how it feels to have to start over from experience.

“It’s only right to help a community in need, especially a community that supports its service members. We have the tools and abilities to help those affected by this disaster and any aid we provide is going toward the ultimate goal of restoring a normal life for these people,” he said.

Soldiers of 7th SFG(A) have been generously volunteering their time and efforts to clearing debris, cutting and moving trees out of roadways, and handing out food and water.

Nancy Jump, a native of Palm Harbor, Florida, resides with her parents in Panama City. Her family is one of the benefactors who received aid from 7th SFG(A) Soldiers. Her parents’ home was surrounded by fallen trees and debris, and they were unable to get out. Nancy sent out a message on social media requesting assistance to save her family.

Members of 7th SFG(A) received her message, and immediately responded to the call. When the team arrived, Jump’s parents were still trapped inside after Hurricane Michael passed through. They worked together tirelessly removing the debris and ultimately freed her trapped family.

“I was feeling completely helpless being unable to communicate with my parents. Words cannot express how much I appreciate what 7th SFG(A) is doing. They saved my family,” said Jump.

Efforts like this prove the 7th SFG(A) and the Army are ready and always willing to help those in need. Providing humanitarian assistance is how we continue to foster great relationships with the community that we call home.



Soldiers from the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) assist in relief efforts, Oct. 12, in the vicinity of Panama City after Hurricane Michael made landfall Oct. 10. U.S. Army courtesy photo.

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Soldiers attending the Special Forces Combat Diver Qualification Course perform post-dive maintenance on closed-circuit rebreathers, June 6, in Key West, Fla. Rebreathers remove exhaled carbon dioxide and assist in allowing divers to recycle their own air for extended periods of time during underwater operations.



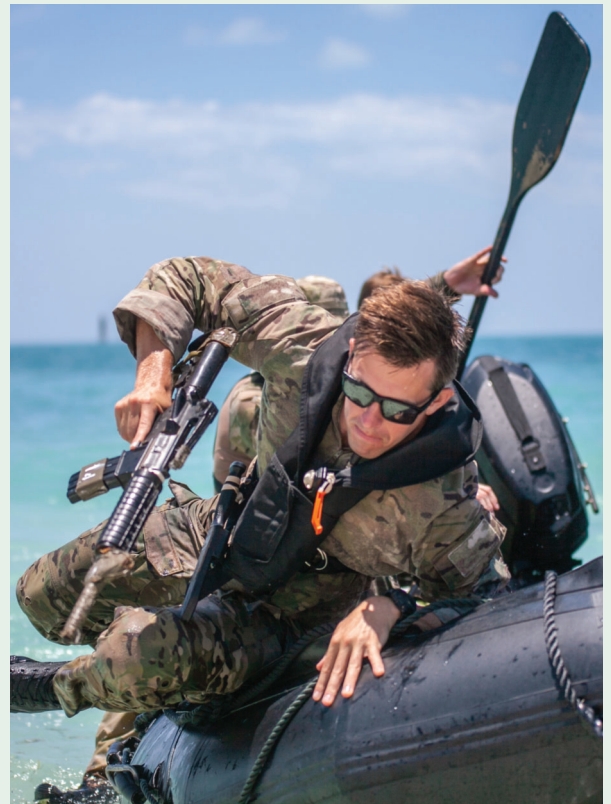
Soldiers attend Special Forces Combat Diver Qualification Course

*Photo essay by Robert Lindee
U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School*

The Special Forces Combat Diver Qualification Course is a seven-week course taught by the U.S. Army Special Forces Underwater Operations School at Key West, Florida, and is widely recognized as one of the most difficult advanced skills courses for special operations forces. These SOF soldiers from the United States and partner nations graduate the course ready and capable of the elevated skills needed to operate in the multi-domain environment of current operations.



Soldiers attending the Special Forces Combat Diver Qualification Course practice skills needed to perform amphibious infiltration, June 7, in Key West, Fla.



A Soldier jumps from a boat during the Special Forces Combat Diver Qualification Course, June 7, in Key West, Fla.



Soldiers attending Special Forces Combat Diver Qualification Course take part in morning physical fitness, June 5, in Key West, Fla. The PT regimen at the school prepares students for the unique physical challenges presented to them during underwater operations.



U.S. Army Cadre with Special Forces Combat Diver Qualification Course monitor a student during rescue dive training, June 6, in Key West, Fla.



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

Second annual Lake Chad Basin Initiative cements NAVSCIATTS as premiere global training command

By Angela Fry
NAVSCIATTS Office of Public Affairs

Two 36-foot patrol vessels make their way along the Mississippi gulf coast in a routine patrol mission to protect maritime domain. Charged with guarding the county's transportation systems and border protection, as they cruise past cargo ships, oil tankers and platforms and a multitude of shipping vessels, the day starts as any other.

Suddenly, the vessel captains receive an alert from an overhead Cessna 205 warning of a suspicious vessel within the area. Utilizing communications and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance tactics, the aviators were able to vector the patrol craft to the location

of the vessel along the 44-mile Mississippi coastline.

The two North River patrol crafts approach the 11-meter vessel which is flying the flag of an unspecified country and request a compliant visit, board, search, and seizure; the process used by international law enforcement agencies and militaries regarding maritime boarding actions and tactics.

While these are events that happen every day throughout international waterways, this evolution was completed in final training exercises in support of the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School's 19-1 semester and second annual Lake Chad Basin Initiative.

"A dream many of us hold at NAVSCIATTS is that this would one day become a joint training command



Two 36-foot patrol vessels approach a suspicious vessel in the waters off the gulf coast of Mississippi during a final training exercise in the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School's Patrol Craft Officer – Coastal course. The course featured students from Tanzania, Malaysia and Iraq. NAVSCIATTS is a Naval Special Warfare Command operating under U.S. Special Operations Command in support of Foreign Security Assistance and Geographic Combatant Commanders' Theater Security Cooperation priorities. To date, more than 12,000 security force professionals from 120 partner nations have trained with the international training command. Photo by Angela Fry.

with not only Navy, but representatives of the other military services standing with us on the instructor’s podium,” expressed Cdr. John Green during the formal 19-1 graduation ceremony held at the John C. Stennis Space Center. “This semester marked the first time in our 56-year history that partner nation aviators lived on our campus and completed U.S. Air Force training here, provided by instructors from what I hope I can call our sister unit, the Airmen of the 6th Special Operations Squadron.”

Green continued by explaining that the aviators from the 6th SOS provided communications, warning and vectoring support in real time as African soldiers and

marines operated patrol boats in VBSS and insertion/extraction exercises along the Pearl River and along the gulf coasts of Louisiana and Mississippi.

“This exceptionally difficult training objective, one that has been a longstanding goal for all of us, has been achieved and is ready to be brought to the waters and skies of the Lake Chad region,” Green stated in regards to NAVSCIATTS’ annual Lake Chad Basin initiatives, which feature both in-resident training on facilities located at the Stennis Space Center in Southern Mississippi and mobile training team engagements within the countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

The inaugural LCBI was held in the fall semester of 2017, focusing on trans-regional threats, building partner capacity and interoperability. This year’s semester was a continuation of the in-resident training, with more than 90-percent of the students coming from countries located within the embattled region of West-Central Africa. With the area’s primary language being French, NAVSCIATTS once again utilized partner nation interpreters and instructors from Belgium, France, Canada and NAVSCIATTS’ first permanent partner nation instructor from Cameroon, Lt. Jean Yves Mendoua.

“This semester, the NAVSCIATTS instructor ranks were strengthened by partner nation instructors from BELSOF, CANSOF, FRASOF and our permanent staff member from Cameroon,” said Green, who has served as

a Navy SEAL for more than 19 years. “You and our NATO allies have made the dream of this command as a truly international training command a reality.”

Along with partner nation instructors and interpreters, observers from the United Kingdom Royal Marines participated as role players in a surveillance and reconnaissance insertion exercise along the Pearl River

with NAVSCIATTS Patrol Craft Officer – Riverine course. The role of opposition forces was played by commandos from the Royal Netherlands Army Korps Commandotroepen, who are training on Stennis facilities in support of Operation Green Salamander. NAVSCIATTS

This semester marked the first time in our 56-year history that partner nation aviators lived on our campus and completed U.S. Air Force training here, provided by instructors from what I hope I can call our sister unit, the Airmen of the 6th Special Operations Squadron.

— CDR John Green

incorporated interoperability into the final training exercise in a simulated casualty evacuation mission that utilized rotary air evacuation support from Oschner Medical Center in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

A large number of dignitaries, both national and international, attended the LCBI graduation, to include Brig. Gen. Eba Eba Bede Benoit, Cameroon; and representatives from U.S. Special Operations Command Africa, U.S. Special Operations Command North, Naval Special Warfare Command, the command element from Belgian Special Forces Group and the Dutch Korps Commandotroepen.

With the growing interest in NAVSCIATTS’ globally shaped initiatives, Amb. Dan Mozena, U.S. Department of States’ senior coordinator on Boko Haram, served as a guest speaker during the graduation events. Mozena, who has worked African affairs for more than 18 years, stressed the value of each security force professional graduating from their respective courses.

“Boko Haram has left more than 2.6 million people with no homes ... tens-of-thousands have been killed by ... thousands more have been kidnapped and over 10 million people in the wonderful Lake Chad region are dependent on humanitarian assistance,” Mozena explained in his passionate speech to the more than 200 in attendance. “In short, these terrorists are monsters; monsters who must be stopped. I believe that you from

Story continues on next page

Tip of the Spear



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

Niger and you from Cameroon and you from Chad ... are the key to defeating these terrorists.”

Mozena explained that although securing the Lake Chad region from the terrorism of Boko Haram is a difficult challenge, training and dedication to the mission will ultimately bring peace to the region. “With the quality training you have received here, and with the mud boats and other equipment that you are receiving there in your homes, you are building the capacity to take the fight to the terrorists. Your efforts will deny the terrorists their safe havens. You will deny them their training camps, which they have on the islands. As you advance against these terrorists, your governments will then have the challenge to fill in behind you, to hold this territory and make it secure.

Once peace returns ... once civilian security is assured...only then can the people return to their homes on the islands of Lake Chad. Only then can they return to fishing and other economic activities. Only then can the people, your fellow citizens, start to rebuild their lives.”

Col-Maj. Moussa Barmou, chief of Nigerien Special Forces hammered home the importance of continued training and partnerships in order to defeat Boko Haram.

“In the wake of the Boko Haram attacks on Niger in early 2015, we have requested the assistance of the United States of America in providing us with the capacities to project ourselves in the islands of Lake Chad where Al Barnawi’s faction of Boko Haram, the Islamic State in West Africa, has established sanctuaries. Ever since, they have excelled in conducting complex attacks against multi-national joint task force outposts and the civilian population in the area and have withdrawn to the islands,” Barmou explained.

“The Lake Chad Basin Initiative is gradually providing us with the capacity of projecting ourselves in the islands, but I have to mention that there is still a lot to be done,” the 25-year military veteran continued. “We need to acquire more boats to be able to project decisive forces. But I also want to stress the fact that we will achieve success only if we operate jointly with the respective countries affected by Boko Haram terrorist activities.”

Barmou closed his remarks stressing what NAVSCIATTS claims as one of its most important objectives: building and maintaining relationships. “It is a wonderful opportunity that you are having to get to know each other before you could actually meet one day



Students from the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School’s Patrol Craft Officer – Coastal course perform a compliant visit, board, search, and seizure operation aboard a suspicious vehicle during the course’s final training exercise prior to graduation. The course featured students from Tanzania, Iraq and Malaysia. Opposition forces were played by commandos from the Royal Netherlands Army Korps Commandotroepen, who are at Stennis Space Center participating in Operation Green Salamander. Photo by Angela Fry.

on the battlefield. You should capitalize on the quality of the training you received, the friendships you made and maintain this bond over time. You are now brothers-in-arms and should be very proud of what you have accomplished so far. I congratulate you for all your efforts and wish you the best in your future endeavors.”

The 19-1 semester featured almost 60 students from Cameroon, Chad, Egypt, Iraq, Malaysia, Niger, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Sierra Leone and Tanzania. The courses of instruction included: International Small Arms Maintenance, International Tactical Communications Course, Outboard Motor Maintenance and Overhaul, Patrol Craft Officer Coastal and Riverine courses, Technical Welding and Applied Repairs, Unit Logistics and Supply, Range Operations and Safety, and Instructor Development.

NAVSCIATTS is a Naval Special Warfare Command operating under U.S. Special Operations Command in support of Foreign Security Assistance and Geographic Combatant Commanders’ Theater Security Cooperation priorities. To date, more than 12,000 security force professionals from 120 partner nations have trained with the international training command.

Fueling the warfighter's performance

*By Petty Officer 3rd Class Juan Cubano Jr.
Naval Special Warfare Group 2 Public Affairs*

Nutrition is fundamental to the success of the Navy SEAL teams. The mental and physical demands required of special warfare operators are rigorous and taxing; therefore, making healthy nutrition choices is key for them to reach peak performance.

This is where Lori Tubbs and her team of culinary specialists come in. Tubbs is a public health educator by job description, but a registered dietitian nutritionist with expertise in sports dietetics and is a certified health coach with the American Council on Exercise. She has spent the better part of 20 years working with Naval Special Warfare developing a human performance program with full time nutrition support.

“When you’re thinking about [SEAL] performance,” Tubbs said, “whether it be on the football field or the battlefield, 70% of their success is about filling the tank properly and sustaining energy and recovery. Their game could be the difference between life and death, and that’s completely different than what the average person deals with. That helps drive me to be so much more committed as their sports dietitian in the military because, ultimately, it’s for our country.”

During Naval Special Warfare Group Two’s Trident Exercise 18-4, Tubbs and her team of 12 Sailors from the Hampton Roads area, Texas and Connecticut volunteered to help set up, prepare and serve Tubbs’ high caliber, quality meal plan to operators and combat support staff at a forward operating base in Westbrook, New Mexico. The Trident exercise series is Naval Special Warfare’s premiere joint training event that encompasses a diverse field of special operations forces, conventional military participants, and partner nation forces and agencies to create realistic, combined-effort scenarios for operational units preparing to deploy overseas.

Her culinary team prepared more than 18,000 meals from scratch in an expeditionary field kitchen fueled by independent generator power and maintained by Special Operations Command deployment cell personnel.

“This is my second Trident where we have brought Navy cooks onboard to help prepare the food for the SEALs,” said Tubbs. “The really unique thing about this trip is the tremendous effort and leadership set forth by the Sailors.”

“It’s a career opportunity for them,” said Senior Chief Culinary Specialist Bailey Webster. “They’re going to take away a lot from the experience here. Learning the new nutritional information and watching these guys succeed out here in a foreign environment with limited resources demonstrates how capable this group is, and it’s been an honor for me to be a part of it.”

Although Tubbs has had a direct, profound impact on the nutrition and quality of food, she credits the Sailors on her team and the SOCOM deployment cell support staff for the success of this year’s Trident exercise.

“My goal is to leave a footprint and a legacy to make sure this continues,” said Tubbs.

One East Coast based SEAL explained how adjusting his nutrition habits changed his life after a blood panel revealed elevated cortisol levels and a hormone imbalance.

“I stared looking at the different aspects of my life that could be causing my hormone imbalance, and I looked thoroughly at my eating habits,” he said. “Since I changed how I eat, my life has drastically improved.”

The direct correlation between the food we eat and our performance is well documented and well known. Looking forward, Tubbs and her team hope to develop and evolve the conversations and decisions involving nutrition to ensure the success of the SEAL teams.



During Naval Special Warfare Group Two’s Trident Exercise 18-4, Lori Tubbs (far left, front row) and a team of 12 Sailors from the Hampton Roads area, Virginia, Texas and Connecticut volunteered to set up, prepare and serve a high caliber, quality meal plan to operators and combat support staff at a forward operating base in Westbrook, New Mexico. Courtesy Navy photo.



Battlefield Airmen candidates, having just completed the Battlefield Airmen Training Group's combat controller course of initial entry, perform field exercises including buddy carries, crab walks and low crawls Aug. 30, at Joint Base San Antonio-Medina Annex, Texas. The Battlefield Airmen Training Group's mission is to select, train and mentor Airmen for global combat operations. Photo by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Dillon Parker.

Special Warfare Training Wing activates to train combat Airmen

*By Airman 1st Class Dillon Parker
502nd Air Base Wing Public Affairs*

To meet the demand for special operations warfighters and improve retention rates for these critical career fields, Air Force officials activated the Special Warfare Training Wing Oct. 10, at Joint Base San Antonio-Medina Annex, Texas.

The mission of the new wing is to select, train, equip, and mentor Airmen to conduct global combat operations in contested, denied, operationally limited, and permissive environments under any environmental conditions.

“This new wing will help us provide additional oversight and advocacy for the complex, high risk and demanding training that’s necessary to produce Airmen to meet the requirements of the joint force,” said Col. James Hughes, SWTW commander.

The new wing headquarters and subordinate organizational structure will consist of approximately 135 personnel. The existing Battlefield Airman Training Group, which was activated in June 2016, has been renamed to the Special Warfare Training Group and will report to the SWTW.

Building upon what the Battlefield Airmen Training Group has started, the previously established five pillars of

marketing and recruiting, manpower and leadership, curriculum, equipment and infrastructure will serve as a starting point for the wing.

“Keeping these pillars in mind will allow us to continue focusing on building the best Airman we can from the time they step into a recruiter’s office up until the end of their careers,” said Hughes.

“Wings move the ball forward at an operational and strategic level,” said Hughes.

“They can provide structure, oversight, strategic vision and unity of command. But to become a leader in the special warfare community, we have to continue pushing the envelope of science and technology. It all comes down to doing everything we can to create Airmen capable of problem solving across a wide-range of national security challenges to meet the joint force’s needs.”

Additionally, the wing will focus on improving human performance by staying at the forefront of science and technology with the addition of the Human Performance Support Group, unique unit that will integrate specialists from a variety of sports and medical fields into special warfare training to optimize physical and mental performance, reduce injury and speed rehabilitation to create more capable and resilient ground operators.

“By pushing the limits of science and technology, we’re going to find the most efficient and effective methods for improving human performance,” said Hughes. “We’re going to take what we already have learned and enhance how we produce the most physically and psychologically fit Airmen possible for the joint force.”

Special Warfare Airmen, previously known as Battlefield Airmen, are the critical ground link between air assets and ground forces. They are trained to operate as a ground component to solve ground problems with air power, often embedding with conventional and special operations forces. Their requirements have grown substantially since 2001 due to the effectiveness of and increasing demand for the precision application of air power in the joint combat environment.

Seven Air Force specialty codes currently fall into the Special Warfare category: pararescue, combat rescue

officer, combat control, special tactics officer, special operations weather team, tactical air control party personnel and non-rated air liaison officer. These airmen share ground combat skill sets and a sharp focus on joint, cross-domain operations.

The first step toward more efficient and effective training is to combine the courses of initial entry for all special warfare candidates into one cohesive course.

These courses of initial entry are the bedrock of lethality and readiness. By combining them, we’re making the pipeline much more efficient, while also building a team mentality that focuses on our similarities, rather than our differences.

— Chief Master Sgt. James Clark

“The various Special Warfare Air Force specialty codes are a lot more similar than they are different,” said Chief Master Sgt. James Clark, SWTW command chief. “These courses of initial entry are the bedrock of lethality and readiness. By combining them, we’re making the pipeline much more efficient, while also building a team mentality that focuses on our similarities, rather than our differences.”

This change is also the first step toward answering the most important question facing the SWTW: How do we create and develop the most adaptive and agile leaders possible?” said Clark. “It starts by continuing to be critical of ourselves, while searching for any way to become more efficient in everything that we do.”



Maj. Gen. Timothy J. Leahy, (left) Second Air Force, commander, Keesler Air Force Base, Miss. gives command of the Special Warfare Training Wing, Joint Base San Antonio-Medina Annex, Texas to Col. James “Parks” Hughes (right) during the activation ceremony Oct. 10. The SWTW unifies resources, training, and advocacy to build Special Warfare Airmen for the future battlefield by focusing on the human weapon system. Photo by Andrew C. Patterson.



23 STS hands off Hurricane Michael airfield operations to 821st CRG at Tyndall Air Force Base

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

When Hurricane Michael began devastating much of the Florida panhandle with upwards of 150 mph gusts and rain on Oct. 10, it left many with uncertainty of what their community would look like when they returned home.

For a portion of that area, a ghosted and devastated Tyndall Air Force Base, it didn't take long for support to start flowing in aid. One day after Hurricane Michael hit the area, a Special Tactics troop with the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron was flown in on two CV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft assigned to the 8th Special Operations

Squadron to assess, and if possible, open the airfield.

"We found that the devastation that we had seen on the news and open sources was accurate," said Maj. Steven Cooper, commander of the 23rd STS. "There was significant damage on the base and debris on several of the taxi areas on the airfield."

Special Tactics' global access mission enables the U.S. military and its partner forces access across the globe, whether that is surveying landing zones for aircraft, or commanding mission support sites to project forces across the world. With this, Special Tactics Airmen have the ability to assess, open, and control major airfields to clandestine dirt strips in any environment, including those that have been impacted

U.S. Air Force Special Tactics Airmen with the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron access Tyndall Air Force Base's airfield, Fla., Oct. 11. Special Tactics are prepared to assess, open, and control major airfields to provide support during humanitarian operations. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Joseph Pick.





U.S. Air Force Special Tactics Airmen with the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron load cargo onto a CV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft assigned to the 8th Special Operations Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Fla., Oct. 11. Special Tactics Airmen and supplies were transported to Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., to provide relief efforts following the devastation of Hurricane Michael, one of the most intense hurricanes to ever hit the United States. Photo by Senior Airman Joseph Pick.

by a natural disaster.

With obstacles in sight and not enough runway for aircraft to land, the Airmen had to modify the airfield to ensure that aircraft landing criteria was met and there was a safe approach path for aircraft.

“We had to displace both the approach and departure end thresholds because of cables that were there,” Cooper said. “We were able to open up more than 7,000 feet of usable runway and multiple taxi ways to bring in resupply aircraft and set conditions for offloading of those supplies.”

Within two hours of their arrival and successfully opening a runway, the Special Tactics Airmen controlled the first aircraft to land on Tyndall AFB, ultimately paving the way for follow on humanitarian relief efforts.

Over the next 72 hours, the Special Tactics troop controlled more than 30 aircraft carrying personnel and supplies to provide relief and aid future operations.

One of those initial aircraft was a C-17 Globemaster III carrying a small initial assessment team from the 821st Contingency Response Group, Travis Air Force Base, California.

“The ST troop had already cleared and prepared the runway for aircraft arrival, established communications for inbound aircraft and created an initial parking plan,” said Capt. Richardson, chief of group weapons and tactics with the 821st CRG. “Their initial actions when

they arrived saved us valuable time once we were on site.”

After the assessment team surveyed the damage, a C-17 from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, transported a larger contingency response element of nearly 50 Airmen. On board, much needed equipment and supplies arrived for the re-initiation of airflow and for the initial clean-up and operations of the base.

With the 821st CRG’s arrival on Tyndall, the Special Tactics troop that initially set up air traffic operations was able to turnover and depart back to Hurlburt Field. Although the CRG is still working with temporary equipment and facilities, the CRG Air Traffic Controllers are able to control air operations and manage the airfield at Tyndall AFB. Conventional Air Force and CRG ATCs must be trained in accordance with Air Force regulations to be able to control air traffic in an austere environment, as Tyndall exists after Hurricane Michael.

“This was a text book (ST-CRG) turnover, exactly how it should be,” Cooper said. “Ideally we should go in for a short period of time, then hand over to the next force, which allows us to reset for the next potential tasking or contingency.”

Editor’s Note: Information from a 621st Contingency Response Wing Public Affairs article was used in this story.



A Special Tactics Airman with the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron controls an aircraft at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., Oct. 14. Special Tactics Airmen and supplies were transported to Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., to provide relief efforts following the devastation of Hurricane Michael. Photo by U.S. Tech Sgt. Sandra Welch.



Grit, determination: AFSOC Airmen slide with Team USA bobsled

By U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Ryan Conroy
1st Special Operations Wing Public Affairs

Hours, days, weeks, months and even years of training have prepared two Airmen for one moment – four explosive seconds at the top of a winding icy track in a city that once hosted the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Early days of sprinting, heavy lifting, box jumps and squats have faded into late nights of sanding runners, making countless adjustments and pushing through frustrations to shave off hundredths of a second pushing a 500-pound sled 60 meters.

The goal? A chance to make a team in four years. A chance for a medal. A chance to represent their nation and the Air Force. A chance.

Two Airmen within Air Force Special Operations Command were selected to compete with the USA Bobsled team this year. Capt. Dakota Lynch, a U-28A pilot with the 34th Special Operations Squadron, and Capt. Chris Walsh, a Special Tactics officer with the 24th Special Operations Wing, are push athletes who are ultimately competing for a spot on the U.S. Olympic team in 2022.

“If you want it bad enough, you’re going to do whatever it takes to be successful ... that’s the grit of this sport,” said Walsh. “It takes four years of commitment to make yourself better with every opportunity and even then you’re never really quite there ... you have to keep grinding.”

As push athletes, both Airmen train vigorously on sprinting and strength to accelerate a bobsled up to 24 miles per hour in close to four seconds while the pilot focuses on navigating hairpin turns in a choreographed chaos down the ice.

“It’s a metal and carbon fiber bullet rifling down an ice track at speeds of 85-95 miles per hour,” said Lynch on the experience. “It’s like a fast-moving jet with a monkey at the controls while getting in a fight with Mike Tyson ... it can be incredibly violent.”

Preceding the countless hours in the gym and on the track, the ride begins with a dream to succeed at the highest athletic level. For Walsh, it was an article in a magazine and for Lynch, it was a challenge from friends



(From left) Capt. Chris Walsh, a Special Tactics officer with the 24th Special Operations Wing, and Capt. Dakota Lynch, a U-28A pilot with the 34th Special Operations Squadron, are push athletes who are competing for a spot on the U.S. Olympic bobsled team in 2022. As push athletes, both Airmen train vigorously on sprinting and strength to accelerate a bobsled up to 24 miles per hour in close to four seconds while the pilot focuses on navigating hairpin turns in a choreographed chaos down the ice. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Ryan Conroy.

while deployed to Africa. For both, it would begin a journey of bruises, scrapes and exasperation that would lead them to Park City, Utah, for the International Bobsled and Skeleton Federation North American Cup.

The first steps of their journey was a gauntlet of tryouts and selection beginning with an open combine. From there, standout athletes were invited to rookie camp and then push championships in Lake Placid, New York. Both Lynch and Walsh excelled once again and were invited to national team trials to continue to the next phase -- competition.

“It relates pretty closely to the job because there days where you know it’s going to be tough,” said Walsh. “Every workout, every time I’m in the garage with the team, every step I take is either taking me closer or further away from my goal. If I’m lazy and I decide to slack one day ... that workout may mean the difference between me making the Olympic team or not.”

Both Airmen attribute their time in AFSOC to their success on their bobsled journey. Walsh is a member of Air Force Special Tactics, which is a special operations ground

force comprised of highly trained Airmen who solve air to ground problems across the spectrum of conflict and crisis.

“The qualities that Special Tactics fosters in individuals translates very well to bobsledding,” said Walsh. “ST operators are mature, responsible and disciplined and need to be squared away as an individual. If they’re not, the team as a whole is weak ... so having that grit and determination to see the mission through is a big piece of what makes me successful here.”

For Lynch, the team mentality of a four-man bobsled loosely correlates to responsibilities of piloting an aircraft. The U-28A aircraft Lynch flies provides an on call capability for improved tactical airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance in support of special operations forces.

“In AFSOC I am responsible for the aircraft, the men and the women on that aircraft and ensuring the mission is executed properly, safely and precisely,” said Lynch. “Things aren’t going to get handed to you – conditions are

going to suck, you’re going to get your crap punched in, but you’re going to have to have the strength and resiliency to drive through it and press forward.”

As active-duty Airmen, both Lynch and Walsh have had to negotiate service commitments with leadership support. Both have been granted permissive temporary duty by their respective commanders to vie for a chance at being accepted into the Air Force World Class Athlete Program.

WCAP provides active duty, National Guard and reserve service members the opportunity to train and compete at national and international sports competitions with the ultimate goal of selection to the U.S. Olympic team while maintaining a professional military career.

“I wouldn’t be here without my squadron and group commanders taking a chance on me and giving me a shot,” said Walsh. “It makes me want to do really well to represent my country, the Air Force and AFSOC in a good light.”



Capt. Chris Walsh, a Special Tactics officer with the 24th Special Operations Wing, performs sprints at The Fieldhouse on Nov. 16, in Park City, Utah. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Joseph Pick.



Capt. Dakota Lynch, a U-28 pilot with the 34th Special Operations Squadron performs power cleans at The Fieldhouse on Nov. 16, in Park City, Utah. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Joseph Pick.



A U.S. National four-man bobsled team rounds turn 12 for the second run of the International Bobsled and Skeleton Federation North American Cup at the Utah Olympic Park on Nov. 17, in Park City, Utah. Two active-duty Airmen from Air Force Special Operations Command, Capt. Dakota Lynch, a U-28A pilot with the 34th Special Operations Squadron and Capt. Chris Walsh, a Special Tactics officer with the 24th Special Operations Wing, were selected to compete with the national bobsled team as push athletes. Photo U.S. Air Force by Staff Sgt. Ryan Conroy.



MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Marines and Sailors with Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command carry a simulated casualty to a decontamination point during an Advanced Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Medical Course at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Dec. 13. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Taylor Cooper.

MARSOC Marines, Sailors enhance critical CBRN decontamination skills



Marines and Sailors with Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command carry a simulated casualty to a decontamination zone for medical treatment during an Advanced Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Medical Course at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Dec. 13. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Taylor Cooper.

*By U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Taylor Cooper
II Marine Expeditionary Force*

Marines and Sailors participated in the Advanced Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Medical Course at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Dec. 13, to enhance critical individual and collective CBRN skills in the face of complicated problem sets. The scenarios they encountered included setting up decontamination points and medically treating simulated victims in a notional contaminated environment. This training evolution is the first time the Defense Threat Reduction Agency supported the 2-week course for any Marine Corps unit.

The course is divided into two blocks. The first block is intended for medical personnel, and is called the Advanced Hazardous Material Life Support Provider Course and grants graduates certification in differentiating between elevated levels of toxins and the clinical implications.

The second block, which predominantly consists of a practical application portion, requires both medical and non-

medical personnel to work together in a field setting, while wearing personal protective equipment, with the goal of exercising clinical and planning strategies that facilitate self-recovery from a CBRN event. The problem sets presented are designed to help improve the outcomes of multisystem trauma patients who require decontamination as well as treatment for sign and symptoms of CBRN agent toxicity.



Marines and Sailors with Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command begin giving a simulated casualty medical treatment during an Advanced Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Medical Course at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Dec. 13. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Taylor Cooper.



Marines and Sailors with Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command administer emergency medical treatment to a simulated casualty during an Advanced Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Medical Course at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Dec. 13. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Taylor Cooper.



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS

Sgt. 1st Class Brant Ireland (left) of Team U.S. chases after the ball during the Team U.S. and Team Australia wheelchair rugby match during the 2018 Invictus Games in Sydney Australia Oct 24. The Invictus Games was founded in 2014 and is designed to use the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider understanding of and respect for those who serve their country and their loved ones. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Ryan Scranton.



USSOCOM athletes join Prince Harry and others for Invictus Games

By U.S. Special Operations Command Office of Communication

Athletes from U.S. Special Operations Command helped represent Team U.S. in the 2018 Invictus Games held in Sydney, Australia Oct. 18-28.

The USSOCOM athletes joined nearly 50 other U.S. competitors representing the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps who competed against 18 other nations from across the globe. The Invictus Games brought together active duty and veteran wounded, ill and injured servicemen and women for an annual international sports competition similar to the Olympics.

“Invictus has become about the example of service and dedication our competitors have provided to the world,” said Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, during the Games opening ceremony. “Our Invictus family has turned these games into a symbol of strength, honor and optimism for a new generation.”

Nearly 500 athletes competed this year in 13 adaptive sports over the eight-days of events being staged in Sydney Olympic Park and in and around Sydney Harbour. The events included archery, indoor rowing, wheelchair tennis, powerlifting, road cycling, sailing, sitting volleyball, swimming, wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby.

Team U.S. fared well at this year’s Invictus Games accumulating numerous medals in cycling, swimming and rowing among others despite bringing a mix of athletes with varying degrees of experience. Wheelchair Tennis doubles partners Navy veteran Chance Fields and Air Force Master Sgt. Brian Williams are a great example. Fields has deep experience in the doubles format event while Williams said he is so new to the game he is still learning the mechanics of moving around the court. Despite the mismatch in experience the duo pulled off a bronze place finish after a tie-breaker comeback over New Zealand. Like many of the Team U.S.

competitors they have been able to rely on each other for support.

“It’s been hard learning how to play and how to move around,” Williams said. “Chance has been a great help, he tells me what I need to do and I just support him by trying to keep the ball in play.”

Fields had more than just his doubles partner to count on for support during the Games. His wife Shelly and brother Taos came from Amarillo, Texas to cheer him on. Austin’s family joined 1000 other family members and friends who came to Sydney to attend the games this year in support of the competitors.

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex are also among the Games supporters. Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle attended the Games and made appearances during the opening days of competition and meeting both the competitors and their friends and families.

Prince Harry has close ties with the competition. He helped create the Invictus Games after being inspired by a visit to the

2013 Warrior Games in Colorado where he witnessed the positive impact sport was having on the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded, injured and ill service members.

“These games were created for our men and women in uniform designed around their talents and their needs,” Prince Harry said. “And built not just for them but also for the friends and the families that have supported their recoveries and had their lives changed forever.”

The first Invictus Games took place in March 2014 in the United Kingdom. Previous games have also been held in Orlando, Fla., and Toronto, Canada. Invictus means “unconquered” or “undefeated” in Latin and the name was intended to capture the spirit of the injured service members who participate in the Games.

The Games use the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider understanding and respect for those who serve their country.

These games were created for our men and women in uniform designed around their talents and their needs. And built not just for them but also for the friends and the families that have supported their recoveries and had their lives changed forever.

— Prince Harry

INVICTUS GAMES MOVING FORWARD

- U.S. ARMY MASTER SGT. GEORGE VERA





Photo illustration by U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Ryan Scranton.



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS



Military Adaptive Sports Program athletes and Patriot Award recipients gather at the annual Care Coalition Conference Nov. 11 at the Innisbrook Salamander Golf & Spa Resort in Palm Harbor, Fla. The event brought together military and civilian organizations to network and collaborate on best practices for recovery care, military adaptive sports program, and transition of SOF wounded, injured and ill servicemembers. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.

Care Coalition holds annual conference with eye on the 2019 Warrior Games to be held in Tampa

By USSOCOM Office of Communication

USSOCOM Warrior Care Program (Care Coalition) hosted its annual conference Nov. 13-15, 2018 at the Innisbrook Salamander Golf & Spa Resort in Palm Harbor, Florida. The event brought together military and civilian organizations to network and collaborate on best practices for recovery care, the military adaptive sports program, and transition of SOF wounded, injured and ill servicemembers.

With Care Coalition leadership converged on Tampa, the Care Coalition made the most of its time by conducting their semi-annual All Sports Camp for MASP

athletes and recovery care coordinator training for their geographically assigned personnel.

After a social to greet conference participants on Nov. 13, USSOCOM Commander Army Gen. Raymond Thomas and Command Sgt. Maj. Patrick McCauley kick started the first full day of the conference Nov. 14 with a bicycle ride with SOF MASP athletes.

Following the ride, Thomas provided opening remarks to more than 400 conference participants and presented the third annual Patriot awards to a combination of nine individuals and benevolent organizations for their enduring support for SOF WII and their families. Among the awardees was comedian



Care Coalition Athlete Travis Dunn trains on archery during the U.S. Special Operations Command Warrior Care Program (Care Coalition) All Sports Camp in Palm Harbor, Fla., Nov. 15. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.

Jon Stewart, a longtime DoD Warrior Games supporter and confirmed master of ceremonies for the 2019 games to be hosted by USSOCOM next summer in Tampa.

Army Lt. Col. James Alexander, Warrior Games operations officer, followed Gen. Thomas with an overview of planning for the international adaptive sports competition. The 2019 Games marks the first time in the Games eight year history that USSOCOM will serve as the Games host, and the first time that golf makes its appearance as an adaptive sport. Each of the department's services, USSOCOM, and six partner nations are scheduled to participate in 14 adaptive sports in the Tampa Bay area, June 21-30.

The afternoon concluded with recovery care panels focused on current and emerging topics with government, military and industry professionals, but the day was far from over.

The Care Coalition maneuvered its MASP athletes from the conference center to take on USSOCOM leaders and the University of Tampa women's volleyball team in a round-robin style seated volleyball tournament at Short Fitness Center on MacDill Air Force Base. Over the course of two hours, age nor rank could spare the participants from harsh realities of competition with limited mobility. All participants and spectators witnessed the enduring efforts of the MASP

athletes to overcome obstacles on their road to recovery.

The final day of the conference featured discussion of the future of MASP through grassroots initiatives such as Regional Adaptive Sports Events. RASE intends to provide recovering service members the opportunity to connect with local sports and wellness activities to bring adaptive sports into communities partnered with private and public organizations.

More than 30 SOF WII athletes continued their training into the weekend. The mix of active duty and veterans were provided the opportunity to try out 11 adaptive sports. Many of the athletes will participate in the train up camp in March and the final train-up camp in May before the June Games.

Originally established to fill the gaps in the non-clinical care for SOF WII in 2003, the Care Coalition has built upon its foundation of ensuring top notch recovery services for SOF WII to maximize their opportunity to reintegrate back into the force.

Over the last five years, the Care Coalition has assisted in the return of 73 percent of the WII population to their previous duty status.



Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Stuart DiPaolo trains on shot put during the U.S. Special Operations Command Warrior Care Program (Care Coalition) All Sports Camp in Tarpon Springs, Fla., Nov. 15. The program provides special operations forces wounded, ill, and injured service members and their families with advocacy after life-altering trauma or illness. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS



Jonathan Linton, (left) the artist who painted Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker's portrait and USSOCOM Commander Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III unveil Schoomaker's official portrait during a ceremony honoring the general at the University of Tampa in Tampa, Fla., Nov. 19, 2018. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

A four star conversation honoring Army Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker

*By Michael Bottoms
USSOCOM Office of Communication*

Retired Army Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker, former U.S. Special Operations Command commander and Army chief of staff, had his official portrait unveiled at the ROTC and athletics building named in his honor at the University of Tampa in Tampa, Fla., Nov. 19. Former USSOCOM Commanders retired Army Gen. Bryan “Doug” Brown and retired Adm. Eric T. Olson and retired Army Gen. Ann Dunwoody, the Army’s first female four-star, and the current USSOCOM Commander Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III attended the event.

“General Schoomaker has been a mentor to me and we are here to celebrate a remarkable forty-year career,” Gen. Thomas.

Schoomaker served as the 35th Chief of Staff of the

United States Army from 2003 to 2007. Schoomaker’s appointment as chief of staff was unique because he was recalled and came out from retirement to assume the position. Schoomaker retired from the Army for the second time in 2007 after completing the full four-year term as chief of staff.

Schoomaker participated in numerous operations including Eagle Claw in Iran, Urgent Fury in Grenada, Just Cause in Panama, Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm in Southwest Asia, and Uphold Democracy in Haiti. His special operations career culminated when he commanded U.S. Special Operations Command from 1997 to 2000 and retired for the first time.

Speaking to the cadets at the University of Tampa during the unveiling ceremony about his career he said, “The most important thing you will ever do is defend the Constitution of the United States.”



(From left to right) Retired Navy Adm. Eric T. Olson, former USSOCOM commander; retired Army Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker, former USSOCOM commander and Army chief of staff; Tom Arthur, University of Tampa benefactor; retired Army Gen. Ann Dunwoody, the Army’s first female four-star general; and retired Army Gen. Bryan “Doug” Brown, also a former USSOCOM commander, pose with Schoomaker’s painting at the University of Tampa in Tampa, Fla., Nov. 19. Photo by Michael Bottoms.



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U.S. Army
Sgt Leandro A.S. Jasso
75th Ranger Regiment



U.S. Army
Spc. Nicholas C. Jividen
7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)



U.S. Army
Capt. Andrew P. Ross
3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne)



U.S. Army
Maj. Brent R. Taylor
U.S. Army Special Operations Command

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

A Soldier with the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), free falls from a CH-47 Chinook helicopter Dec. 6, during the Menton Week airborne operations over Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.. The 1st SFG(A) and the Canadian Special Operations Regiment celebrate their legacy as premier special operation professionals during the first week of December, and to commemorate the deactivation of the First Special Service Force. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Joseph Parrish.

