



# Tip OF THE Spear

United States Special Operations Command  
MacDill Air Force Base, Florida

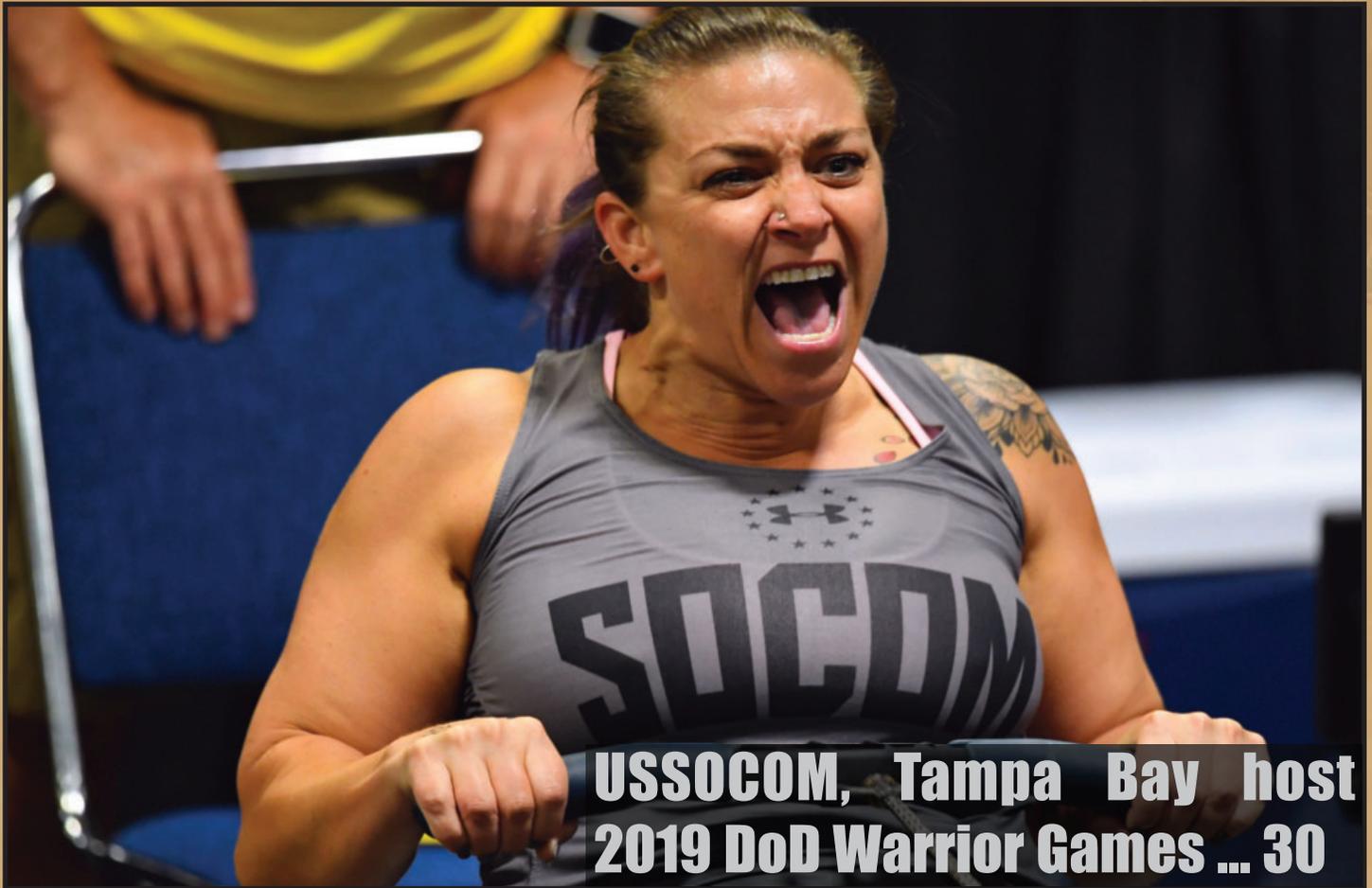
August 2019



## USSOCOM, Tampa host 2019 DoD Warrior Games



# United States Special Operations Command



**USSOCOM, Tampa Bay host  
2019 DoD Warrior Games ... 30**

## Tip of the Spear

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Commander, USSOCOM**

**U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Gregory A. Smith  
Command Chief Master Sergeant**

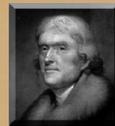
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### Thomas Jefferson Award Winner

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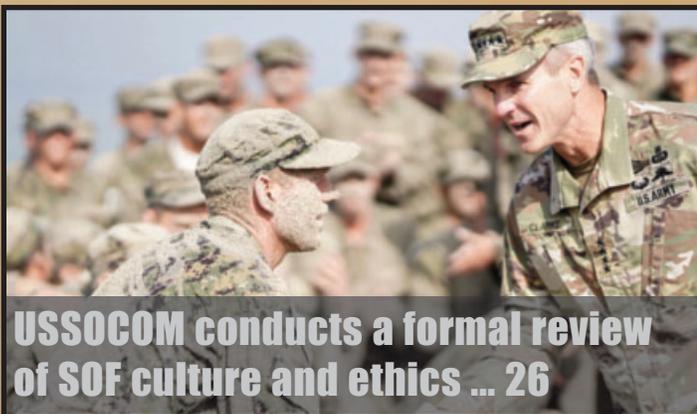
*(Cover) Team SOCOM Army Staff Sgt. Travis Dunn competes in a track race during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 22, 2019. The Warrior Games were established in 2010 to enhance the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded, ill and injured service members and expose them to adaptive sports. The 2019 DoD Warrior Games are comprised of more than 300 service member and veteran athletes representing the U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Special Operations Command, and five partner nations. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.*

# The Quiet Professionals

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# U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



## Operation Rapid Forge 19

*A U.S. Air Force F-15E out of Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany is refueled by an MC-130J Commando II, from RAF Mildenhall, England, during Operation Rapid Forge, July 18, 2019, Amari Airfield, Estonia. The F-15E is a dual-role fighter designed to perform air to air and air to ground missions. The MC-130J Commando II, and aircrew, is able to execute refueling missions in austere, sensitive or hostile territories. Operation Rapid Forge involves forward deployments to bases in NATO territories in order to enhance readiness and improve interoperability between U.S. allies and partners in Europe. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Alexis Washburn-Jasinski.*





# U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



## 1400 NATO SOF in Black Sea region for Trojan Footprint 19

*By U.S. Army Maj. Michael Weisman  
SOCEUR Public Affairs*

Approximately 1,400 special operations and armed forces from 10 nations deployed across host nations Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania June 10-21 for U.S. Special Operations Command Europe's exercise Trojan Footprint 19.

Trojan Footprint is an annual SOCEUR-led exercise that brings together U.S., Allied and partner special operations forces across Europe. SOF and the armed forces of Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, the Republic of North Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. took part in this year's exercise.

While Trojan Footprint 18 focused on the rapid deployment of SOF to the Baltic region, the major training objective for Trojan Footprint 19 was exercising multi-domain mission command across several nations at the operational level and below, synchronizing dozens of operations across the air, land and sea.

"Our Allies and partners in Europe are extremely capable at the individual tactical level, that training is a component but not the overall focus of Trojan Footprint," said U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Kirk Smith, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command Europe. "This exercise is about taking those individual capabilities respective countries possess, and merging them in a combined, joint mission command structure to demonstrate and exercise capacity at the operational level of war."

In order to build the scale needed to support large SOF headquarters, this year's exercise joined with the Romanian annual national SOF exercise Black Swan. Black Swan focused on three different levels from special operations task unit to special operations task groups up to SOF component command. The exercise included a NATO-monitored special operations evaluation of a Hungarian SOTG augmented by a Slovakian SOF team, according to



***A U.S. Army Green Beret assigned to 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne) lands during a military freefall operation June 19, 2019 near Cincu, Romania as part of Trojan Footprint 19. Trojan Footprint is an annual U.S. Special Operations Command Europe-led exercise that incorporates allied and partner special operations forces, and this year's exercise brought together 1400 SOF from ten nations for training over land, sea and air across Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and the Black Sea. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Alex Manne.***

Hungarian SOF Commander Brig. Gen. Tomas Sandor.

"Although most of us know each other from multiple deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq, the size and difficulty of the exercise really challenged the multinational team on all levels and provided a superb training opportunity for us," said Sandor. "It was also the first time for us to execute full spectrum special operations in two different countries with more than five SOTGs. The deployment of a U.S. Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force [for Trojan Footprint] added a tremendous training value and unique opportunity to work side by side and learn from each other."

Black Swan focused on the initial stage of a regional crisis, in which the newly formed regional special operations component command is the immediate response. The R-SOCC is a regional initiative under the leadership of Hungary with partners Austria, Croatia, Slovakia and



**Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewman from Naval Special Warfare conduct maritime operations June 20, 2019 on the Black Sea as part of Trojan Footprint 2019. Photo by U.S. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Jayme Pastoric.**

Slovenia. Established in February 2019, Trojan Footprint and Black Swan provided the R-SOCC its first opportunity to train as a full headquarters.

“The R-SOCC initiative focuses on our partners’ existing individual tactical capabilities, and provides a platform to jointly develop those into a deployable operational capability at a small joint operation scale, with the support of NATO Special Operations Headquarters and our three sponsor nations of USA, Poland and Germany,” said Sandor. “After reaching full operational capability the R-SOCC can be deployed under NATO or European Union mandate and is planned to serve as the NATO SOF Response Force in 2025.”

Black Swan also included Slovenian ground and air special operations, as well as a Croatian Special Operations Maritime Task Group that executed its operations in Croatia under direction of the multinational R-SOCC in Hungary.

As the fictional crisis continued to develop, U.S. SOF and other allies and partners deployed to Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania as Trojan Footprint began. Prior to this year’s exercise, Trojan Footprint took place biennially, with a focus on the Baltic region.

“Making Trojan Footprint an annual exercise, with rotating focus between the Baltic and Black Sea regions, provides several opportunities for our command and our partners,” said U.S. Army Col. George Thiebes, SOCEUR deputy commander. “Mission command at the operational level is a difficult task, and creating a venue for this every year allows us to increase the complexity, bring in more allies and partners, and link our exercises with other components of U.S. European Command.”

Making the exercise an annual event, and bringing it to the Black Sea region enabled Trojan Footprint to be linked to other regional exercises such as U.S. Army Europe’s Swift Response and Saber Guardian. Although separate and

distinct, actions such as setting up the drop zone for Italian pathfinders to jump into Swift Response in Bulgaria allow for the opportunity for special operations to support large-scale conventional operations.

“Special operations forces do not operate alone in such a complex environment,” said U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Bruce Holmes, SOCEUR’s senior enlisted leader. “Having linkages between these different exercises allows us to work the real-world interdependent relationships between SOF and the conventional combined joint force. These relationships not only make the training more valuable, but also improve our readiness to respond to crisis.”

Ukrainian SOF participated in last year’s Flaming Sword, the Lithuanian national SOF exercise linked to Trojan Footprint 18. This year’s Trojan Footprint offered Ukrainian SOF the ability to integrate into a regional construct with NATO Allies and other partners.

“Training with our NATO partners was a very good experience for us,” said a Ukrainian SOF officer. “It gave us a chance to work together on tactics and logistics. Some of our best experiences were building relationships during the exercise.”

Ukrainian SOF combined with U.S. and Bulgarian SOF to conduct helicopter fast-rope insertions to rapidly deliver combat power to assault an objective near Yambol, Bulgaria.

“This exercise is important because we are strengthening relationships with different partner nations,” said a Bulgarian SOF major. “We have experience with U.S. Special Forces, but this is our first interaction with Ukrainian and [other SOF] in this environment. It’s better to have your first contact with your partners in a training exercise instead of the battlefield, so you can see the mistakes and try to improve, and develop better solutions together.”

For Romanian SOF participants, the exercise strengthened relationships built over several decades, both in combat and training.

“I have personally worked with U.S. SOF since 2009,” said a Romanian SOF joint terminal attack controller officer. “In the past we have done many exercises together including operations in Afghanistan. We continue to strengthen relations with U.S. SOF every time we participate in an exercise like Trojan Footprint.”

Looking ahead, participants agreed on the relevancy of the training conducted in the exercise across echelons.

“Training like this helps us meet today’s challenges in this region,” said a Romanian SOF soldier. “Our mission here is unconventional warfare and this is very relevant these days, and that’s one of the reasons this is beneficial.”

# U.S. Special Operations Command - Pacific



*An Air Commando from the U.S. 353rd Special Operations Group prepares to hot refuel an Australian Army S-70A-9 Black Hawk helicopter from 6th Aviation Regiment at a forward area refueling point during Talisman Sabre, July 13, 2019. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Nicole Rogge.*

# US, Australian SOF take part in exercise Talisman Saber 2019

*Talisman Sabre 2019 is in its eighth iteration of the biennial exercise. With more than 34,000 U.S. and Australian participants, the exercise will enable the partners to conduct operations in a combined, joint and interagency environment that will increase both countries' ability to plan and execute contingency responses, from combat missions to humanitarian assistance efforts.*



**Air Commandos from the U.S. 320th Special Tactics Squadron evacuate a downed pilot with simulated injuries while conducting a personnel recovery training mission during Talisman Sabre, July 20, 2019. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Nicole Rogge.**



**Air Commandos from the U.S. 353rd Special Operations Group and Australian Army soldiers 6th Aviation Regiment prepare to hot refuel an Australian S-70A-9 Black Hawk helicopter at a forward area refueling point during Talisman Sabre, July 13, 2019. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Nicole Rogge.**



**Air Commandos from the U.S. 320th Special Tactics Squadron and Australian Soldiers from the 6th Aviation Regiment search for a downed pilot while conducting a personnel recovery training mission during Talisman Sabre, July 20, 2019. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Nicole Rogge.**

# U.S. Special Operations Command - South



## Familiar team takes Fuerzas Comando 19 title



Comandos Colombia pose with their trophy after a closing ceremony held for Fuerzas Comando 2019 in the Edificio Bicentenario Ejercito de Chile, Santiago, Chile, June 27, 2019. Colombia took top honors for the 10th time in the 15th edition of the tactical competition that tested comandos expertise, resilience and mental strength. Chile finished second with Ecuador placing third. Fuerzas Comando is an annual multinational special operations forces skills competition sponsored by U.S. Southern Command and executed by Special Operations Command South, hosted this year by the Ejercito de Chile and Estado Mayor Conjunto, Chile. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Alex Ramos.

*By U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Alex Ramos  
Special Operations Command South*

Fuerzas Comando 2019 came to an end with a closing ceremony held in the Edificio Bicentenario Ejercito de Chile, Santiago, Chile, June 27, 2019.

Distinguished visitors from the 19 participating countries attended the ceremony to celebrate with their teams.

U.S. Adm. Craig S. Faller, U.S. Southern Command commander, and Chile's Commander in Chief of the Army, Gen. Ricardo Martínez Menanteau,



**U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Antonio M. Fletcher, Special Operations Command South commander, and the Commander for the Special Operations Brigade “Lautaro,” Chilean Brig. Gen. Pedro Pascual Robin, render the salute to begin presentations for team awards during a closing ceremony for Fuerzas Comando held in the Edificio Bicentenario Ejercito de Chile, Santiago, Chile, June 27, 2019. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Alex Ramos.**

presided over the ceremony.

Chile’s Commander of Land Operations, Maj. Gen. Rafael Fuenzalida Carmona, spoke first after the national anthems of the host nation and the U.S. were played and an introduction was given.

“History reminds us that the ongoing defense of our sovereignty means that our needs are the

essential part of the societies we serve and protect generating countless effects that contribute to development and cohesion in a country,” said Fuenzalida. “Increasing our ties, our friendships, interoperability, cooperation among the special operations forces and showcasing the level of training we have in a competition with high physical and mental pressure is part of the objective of a multinational army bringing together elite troops represented by countries here with us today and the authorities.”

Admiral Faller followed Gen. Fuenzalida with a message of togetherness and what it means to build trust.

“...This morning we are all one team. We’re all here together,” said Faller.

The Admiral continued by thanking the host nation for their hospitality and their effort in putting the event

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*Increasing our ties, our friendships, interoperability, cooperation among the special operations forces and showcasing the level of training we have in a competition with high physical and mental pressure is part of the objective of a multinational army bringing together elite troops represented by countries here with us today and the authorities.*

— *Chilean Maj. Gen. Rafael Fuenzalida Carmona*

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together along with thanking Special Operations Command South’s commanding general, U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Antonio Fletcher, and team for all of their hard work in planning and executing a successful event.

“The theme for Fuerzas Comando was ‘We are Fuerzas Comando,’ we are all warriors,” said Faller. “You demonstrated that this week that you are warriors, you work together, and you are ready. As the general spoke, the key to being a warrior, to being a teammate is building trust. We build that trust in order to make a difference for our nations and our future.”

After the speeches were given, Fletcher and the Commander for the Special Operations Brigade “Lautaro,” Brig. Gen. Pedro Pascual Robin, presented the awards to each team.

Perennial winner Colombia took top honors for the 10th time in the 15th edition of the tactical competition that tested commandos expertise, resilience and mental strength. Chile finished second with Ecuador placing

third.

Regional partnerships reflect our enduring promise to one another for a cooperative, prosperous, and secure hemisphere. Fuerzas Comando provides the opportunity for the exchange of experiences and a platform to gain new knowledge about our counterparts, their countries, and their cultures.

Next year’s competition is scheduled to take place in Colombia.



**U.S. Southern Command Commander, Adm. Craig S. Faller, places a first place ribbon around a Colombian service member during a closing ceremony for Fuerzas Comando held in the Edificio Bicentenario Ejercito de Chile, Santiago, Chile, June 27, 2019. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Alex Ramos.**

# U.S. Army Special Operations Command



## Special operations aviator awarded Distinguished Service Cross for heroics in Afghanistan

By U.S. Army Capt. Veronica Aguila  
USASOC Public Affairs

Retired Capt. Christopher C. Palumbo received the Distinguished Service Cross during a ceremony at John F. Kennedy Hall, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, June 27, 2019.

The Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. James C. McConville, presented the award to Palumbo for his heroic actions April 11, 2005, while serving as a UH-60 Blackhawk pilot in Afghanistan.

The then-Chief Warrant Officer 3 Palumbo was part of a quick reaction force supporting conventional and special operations forces when his Blackhawk crew received the call to insert a Special Forces unit responding to an ambush high in the mountains.

After the unit received heavy enemy fire and sustained critically wounded Soldiers, Palumbo's Blackhawk crew reacted to the urgent casualty evacuation request and headed to their location.

Unable to land because of rough terrain, Palumbo placed his Blackhawk between the wounded and enemies allowing his crew to engage the insurgents. Palumbo's former platoon leader, Lt. Col. Robert K. Beale, recalled the events on April 11.

"While flying figure-eight patterns, low-level, in a valley between the insurgents and the wounded Americans, Chris' aircraft started taking heavy enemy



*Retired Capt. Christopher C. Palumbo poses for a photograph with Gen. James C. McConville, vice chief of staff of the Army, after receiving the Distinguished Service Cross during a ceremony at John F. Kennedy Hall, Fort Bragg, N.C., June 27, 2019. Palumbo was awarded the DSC for his heroic actions April 11, 2005, in Afghanistan. The DSC is the second highest military decoration awarded to a member of the U.S. Army. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class J. TaShun Joycé.*

fire. The crew chiefs took aim, shooting straight down at the insurgents attempting to maneuver on the wounded Americans," said Beale.

Palumbo had rotated his helicopter, allowing one gunner to engage insurgents, while the other gunner reloaded, providing continuous suppressive fire.

"The crew members in the back of the Blackhawk neutralized one target after another, all while taking

rounds to the aircraft,” said Beale.

An enemy bullet ricocheted off the crew station injuring a crewmember. Though wounded, the crew continued to shield the service members on the ground from the enemy until the Blackhawk ran low on fuel and ammunition and had sustained significant damage.

“The events of that fateful day permanently impacted me and the Soldiers of our platoon. For the first time in my short military career, I had witnessed extraordinary heroism and courage by otherwise ordinary men,” said Beale recollecting that day.

The support the crew provided allowed medical care to reach the wounded and for additional support aircraft to successfully recover the unit and service members.

All the U.S. military personnel survived the attack by enemy forces. Palumbo and his Blackhawk crew returned

to flying missions the next morning.

McConville recognized the Blackhawk crew, SF unit and those involved in the battle sitting in the audience. He thanked them for their actions that day.

“It was absolutely remarkable heroism during that whole battle,” said McConville. “Thank you all for your heroism.”

Beale said looking back on that day “the actions of all of the men on that early April morning embodied the warrior ethos.”

Chris and his crew showed us that day what warriors are made

of. I am proud to have served with them and am honored to call them my friends,” he continued.

During the ceremony, McConville placed the DSC on Palumbo, in front of his family, friends, former platoon members, leaders and Soldiers from U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

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*The events of that fateful day permanently impacted me and the Soldiers of our platoon. For the first time in my short military career, I had witnessed extraordinary heroism and courage by otherwise ordinary men.*

— Lt. Col. Robert K. Beale

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Then Chief Warrant Officer 3 Christopher C. Palumbo (right) poses for a photograph with members of his Blackhawk crew and platoon from A Company, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, days after a battle April 11, 2005, in Afghanistan. The now-retired Capt. Palumbo received the Distinguished Service Cross from Gen. James C. McConville, vice chief of staff of the Army, for his actions in the April 11 battle, during a ceremony at John F. Kennedy Hall, Fort Bragg, N.C., June 27, 2019. Photo courtesy of Christopher C. Palumbo.

# U.S. Army Special Operations Command



## Army psychological operations holds largest promotion ceremony in history

*By U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Kissta DiGregorio  
USASOC Public Affairs*

More than 200 psychological operations noncommissioned officers proudly stood before their families, friends and leaders during a promotion ceremony larger than any other in Army special operations history, May 31, 2019 on Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. About 100 additional promotees will pin, but were unable to attend the Fort Bragg ceremony because

they are currently deployed or in training.

PSYOP Soldiers complete extensive training and education in human dynamics, influence theory, psychology, sociology, language, culture, and politics. PSYOP NCOs are expected to operate successfully in austere environments, executing national strategic and theater-level policies and decisions with limited supervision. They are expected to interact with U.S. ambassadors, senior country team members, and host nation ministerial-level officials on a daily basis. The



*More than 200 psychological operations noncommissioned officers proudly stood before their families, friends and leaders during a promotion ceremony larger than any other in Army special operations history, May 31, 2019, Ft. Bragg, N.C. Following a review of the PSYOP rank structure, leaders identified a need for the PSYOP NCOs' rank to reflect their extensive training and education, and to correspond with the level of responsibility they assume while deployed. Army and ARSOF leaders at multiple echelons worked for more than a year to achieve the grade plate change that would later create additional positions for the newly promoted staff sergeants and sergeants first class to be promoted into. Selected Soldiers - some who have waited more than 10 years - have met the time in grade and service requirements for promotion, and have completed the appropriate level of professional military education. Photo by Spc. U.S. Army Diego Martinez.*



**Family members, friends and leaders pin new ranks of more than 200 Psychological Operations noncommissioned officers during a promotion ceremony larger than any other in Army Special Operations history, May 31, 2019, Ft. Bragg, N.C. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Gage Hull.**

importance and sensitivity of their missions warranted a grade plate change for the PSYOP regiment's enlisted ranks to ensure the NCOs' ranks corresponded with the level of responsibility they assume while downrange.

Army and ARSOF leaders at multiple echelons worked for more than a year to achieve the grade plate change that would later create additional positions for the newly promoted staff sergeants and sergeants first class. The current organizational structure did not allow for additional NCOs of these ranks, resulting in a stagnation at the junior NCO levels. However, the dedication of these leaders resulted in the change of 336 sergeant positions to staff sergeant, and 114 staff sergeant positions to sergeant first class.

The grade plate change made it possible for these NCOs to finally pin after years of waiting - more than a decade in some cases. However, each promotee had already met every requirement for promotion; they had completed the appropriate level of professional military education and met the time in grade and service requirements, sometimes multiple times over. Instead of reclassifying to a different military occupational specialty or leaving the Army altogether, they were committed to their craft, to their teammates, and to the ARSOF family.

Newly-promoted Staff Sgt. Gabrielle Phillip is one such NCO. Phillip has been a PSYOP Soldier since entering the Army in 2009 and was a sergeant for almost eight years. She said job satisfaction and quality leadership are what kept her in the career field for so long without the guarantee of upward advancement.

"I love PSYOP," she said. "I love the job, I love

what we do. I've had the pleasure of working with leaders who've always pushed me, so even though I might have had the rank of sergeant, I never felt like one. I always felt like I could grow. I always felt like I could do new things, try new things and just accept responsibility. I love PSYOP so that's what kept me around."

While most promotees were pinned by family members or friends, Phillip was among the few selected to be pinned by Maj. Gen. John Deedrick, 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) commanding general. During the ceremony, Deedrick emphasized the fact that these NCOs have patiently waited for this well-deserved day to come while remaining dedicated members of the PSYOP regiment.

"I think it moves the bar on what selfless service, what patriotism, and what fidelity really mean," Deedrick said. "And I want to thank you all personally for your steadfastness, for your commitment to this nation and to this regiment as you have shouldered that burden and gone on and conducted your mission in an incredible way."

He added, "They've put in the work, they've put in the time. They have the experience, they have the education and they are ready to operate at the next level. I couldn't be happier for all of you standing on this field."



**A psychological operations Soldier is congratulated after a ceremony where more than 200 psychological operations noncommissioned officers were promoted during a promotion ceremony larger than any other in Army special operations history, May 31, 2019, Ft. Bragg, N.C. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Thiem Huynh.**

# Naval Special Warfare Command



## BUD/S students pay tribute to D-Day landing

*SEAL candidates at Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training test their grit while paying homage to the service members who took part in the D-Day landings in Normandy, France, 75 years ago. Class 337 is currently taking part in "Hell Week," a strenuous, five-day crucible meant to test a candidate's physical and mental toughness as part of the 63-week training pipeline to become a Navy SEAL. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Abe McNatt.*



*U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, speaks after taking command of AFSOC during a change of command ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla., June 28, 2019. Slife is the 12th AFSOC commander and inherits a command with more than 20,800 Air Commandos worldwide. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Marleah Cabano.*



# Slife takes command of AFSOC

By U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Lynette M. Rolan  
AFSOC Public Affairs

At a ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Florida June 28, 2019, Lt. Gen. Jim Slife took command of Air Force Special Operations Command.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein, presided over the ceremony where Slife took over for Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, who will go on to serve as the commander of Air Education and Training Command.

“When it came time to pick someone for AFSOC’s continuing legacy, Lt. Gen. Slife was the obvious choice,” said Goldfein. “He brings with him the expertise to take this command to new heights. As the United States Special Operations Command vice commander, he ensured our special operations forces had the resources they needed to get the mission done.”

Also present at the ceremony was U.S. Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke, commander of USSOCOM. Clarke spoke about Slife’s leadership abilities.

“He is the perfect man at the perfect time for this critical position,” said Clarke. “He set an example for all of us to follow. Your dedication to our nation and its great warriors has left a profound impact on all of us. You are going to continue to keep AFSOC on its global scale and foster the culture if there is a way – we find it.”

Slife’s Air Force career spans 30 years. Many of those

years were in AFSOC.

He served as an MH-53J instructor pilot, 20th Special Operations Squadron director of operations, 27th Special Operations Group commander, and the 1st Special Operations Wing commander.

Before Slife assumed command, Webb offered comments about his own time in AFSOC.

“I am extremely proud of all of the competence and character I have seen over these past three years,” said Webb. “Our Airmen in AFSOC exemplify the Air Force core values. I just want to say thank you to everyone here for all you have done.”

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

Slife inherits a command with approximately 20,800 Air Commandos worldwide. He is now the 12th AFSOC commander.

“These Airmen here today – we’ll talk about them as legends,” said Slife. “We have Airmen wearing Air Force Crosses and Silver Stars. These are outstanding Airmen. I will serve them with the humble dedication they deserve.”



U.S. Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke, left, commander of United States Special Operations Command, U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, center, outgoing commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, and U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, right, incoming commander of AFSOC, listen to Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein, speak during AFSOC’s change of command ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla., June 28, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Marleah Cabano.

# Air Force Special Operations Command



## First female Air Commando promoted to brigadier general

By U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Lynette Rolan  
AFSOC Public Affairs

Brig. Gen. Brenda Cartier, Air Force Special Operations Command's first female selected for promotion to the rank of a general officer, was promoted June 14 at a ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Florida.

Cartier now serves as AFSOC's director of operations.

Brig. Gen. David Tabor, Joint Special Operations Command assistant to the deputy commander and assistant commanding general, presided over Cartier's promotion ceremony.

"When I looked through her record, it was not surprising to me that there were a couple of common threads," said Tabor. "It would be really tempting to use today as a historic day for AFSOC and talk about all of the many firsts Brenda has been a part of. What really came to me were three constants throughout her career. It comes down to aptitude; she's really the best at everything she did. The trust that people put in her to lead. And third, really, how articulate she is. And to put it another way, it's how intelligent she is. This runs throughout her entire career."

Tabor and Cartier served together in leadership positions at the Air Force Special Operations Warfare

Center. Tabor served as the commander and Cartier served as his vice commander. Tabor said Cartier was his number one commander while she was there.

Cartier thanked her family, friends and leadership for supporting her throughout her career progression.

"What I love most about this day is that it highlights the true form of our AFSOC family," said Cartier. "Being an Air Commando isn't just a moniker – it's a way of life – a proud heritage and an everlasting family. Today, I'm so grateful to be joined by my senior AFSOC leaders. Thank you all for being here."

Tabor offered further comments about Cartier's keen ability to lead and influence those around her.

"Probably the ultimate trust we put in officers is to put them in charge of people," said Tabor. "And for most of us, that comes as a squadron commander. For Brenda, it came as the commander of the 4th Special Operations Squadron; the largest flying squadron in AFSOC. This is a tremendous

responsibility. When Brenda's in command, she's responsible not only for the operational deployment of AC-130s, but she's also responsible for the schoolhouse and training up all these people. It was a huge job and I would dare say probably one of the highlights of Brenda's career."

AFSOC's senior leaders, both officers and enlisted

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*It would be really tempting to use today as a historic day for AFSOC and talk about all of the many firsts Brenda has been a part of. What really came to me were three constants throughout her career. It comes down to aptitude; she's really the best at everything she did. The trust that people put in her to lead. And third, really, how articulate she is. And to put it another way, it's how intelligent she is. This runs throughout her entire career.*

— Brig. Gen. David Tabor

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personnel, attended the promotion ceremony.

“To my fellow Air Commandos, today is about our team,” said Cartier. “Nobody stands up here at a ceremony like this without an extraordinary team of Air Commandos alongside her. Through training, through combat, through the lives and deaths of our AFSOC family; just as all of our aircraft are crew aircraft, so are our lives as Air Commandos, through thick and thin. As I reflected on what today means, the thought of pay it forward consistently came to mind. Being a general officer is about having authority, resources and solemn responsibility to take care of our Airmen; to ensure that you, our future, are the best in the world and ready to take on whatever challenges the world throws our way.”

Tabor said Cartier’s leadership capabilities prepared her for this promotion.

“Her mentorship for the Airmen and her care for people was evident in absolutely everything she did,” said Tabor. “I think that probably a lot of people have

experienced that themselves. She has an outsized influence, not only on the Airmen here in AFSOC, but on the entire Air Force in her leadership. She continues to shatter ceilings and if I could, on behalf of all the women in AFSOC and all Air Commandos, thank you for being the best and most trustworthy and most articulate Air Commando that we have. You’ve really earned this promotion.”

Cartier referenced advice she received of paying it forward from recent talks with Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, commander of AFSOC and one of AFSOC’s newest officers as her motivation for her new responsibilities.

“In the course of a couple of weeks, I heard the advice of pay it forward from the most senior and junior officers in AFSOC,” said Cartier. “Today, I gladly take on the breadth of responsibility to pay it forward; to give every fiber of my being to the next generation of Air Commandos, to my family and to my friends, thank you.”



*Brig. Gen. David Tabor, Joint Special Operations Command assistant to the deputy commander and assistant commanding general, presents the brigadier general flag to Brig. Gen. Brenda Cartier, Air Force Special Operations Command’s director of operations, June 14, 2019, at Hurlburt Field, Fla. Cartier is AFSOC’s first female general officer. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Lynette Rolan.*

# Air Force Special Operations Command



## Special Warfare Airman receives Silver Star for heroism in Afghanistan

*By Danielle Knight*

*Special Warfare Training Wing Public Affairs*

In the early morning hours of Jan. 11, 2018, a five-man team set out to conduct a seemingly uneventful and successful key leader engagement in Afghanistan. Over a year later, an Air Force Special Warfare Airman stood in front of a crowd at the Lackland Gateway Club at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, July 18 to be presented with a Silver Star for his actions that secured the safety of his joint and allied partners.

Technical Sgt. Michael Perolio, an assessment and selection instructor assigned to the 350th Special Warfare Training Squadron at JBSA-Lackland was awarded the nation's third highest medal for his heroic actions in combat during Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

The presentation of the Silver Star was hosted by Col. James Hughes, Special Warfare Training Wing commander, and the presiding official of the ceremony was Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, commander of Air Education and Training Command. U.S. Army Capt. William Clark, the ground force commander of Perolio's unit in Afghanistan was a guest speaker at the event.

"The Silver Star is a big deal," Webb said. "Mike is going to join the ranks of some notable Airmen such as Chuck Yeager, Bud Day, Jimmy Doolittle, and special warfare operators such as Calvin Markham, Cam Kelsch, [Ishmael] Villegas and Brian Claughsey to name a few."

The citations for both the Silver Star and the Bronze Star Medals were read in front of family, friends and fellow special warfare colleagues. Perolio's family looked on, tearful and proud as they heard the details about his heroism for the first time.

On that early January morning in Afghanistan, Perolio's actions under dangerous circumstances distinguished himself as a Special Tactics Combat Controller. As his team left the key leader engagement,



*Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, commander of Air Education and Training Command, presents the Silver Star to Technical Sgt. Michael Perolio from the Special Warfare Training Wing, during a ceremony at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland's Gateway Club, Texas, July 18, 2019. Perolio was presented the Silver Star in connection to military operations against an armed enemy in Afghanistan Jan. 11, 2018, during Operation Freedom's Sentinel. Perolio was part of a five-man element of American special operators and partner force representatives conducting a key leader engagement with local militia forces. In addition to the Silver Star, Perolio was also presented a Bronze Star for his service across the Afghanistan deployment. Photo by Sarayuth Pinthong.*

they were engaged by heavy machine-gun fire from enemy fighters, injuring three members, including Clark. Perolio immediately took charge by treating his wounded comrades. Once he realized that Clark was gravely injured with wounds to the chest and leg, he moved directly into the line of enemy fire to identify the safest route back to friendly lines.

Perolio then directed a precision airstrike, killing 12 enemy combatants and completely destroying the heavy machine gun minutes after first contact with no further injury to his team or collateral damage.

According to the citation, Perolio's calm thinking under fire and innate ability to manage a crucial situation allowed two members to receive lifesaving medical care within 15 minutes of injury.

"[Perolio] is an expert at his job," Clark said. "He's everything that you would want from someone standing next to you in a gunfight. Mike and some very talented surgeons are the only two reasons that I'm here today. He got me out of the worst situation that I've ever been in and I honestly can't thank him enough."

In response to receiving the medal, Perolio said he

felt humbled.

"It's pretty crazy to have my name etched on that wall of Air Force Silver Star recipients," he said. "I am honored to be part of that."

Perolio's current duty is training new recruits that come through the assessment and selection course for the Special Warfare Training Wing. Perolio stressed the influence of what he, as an instructor, can provide to current students.

"I take a high ownership of training these [students] to get ready for what's to come," he said.

"At the end of the

day, there's a lot out there that they will be exposed to, and not every experience is the same ... it's a big responsibility that we have in Air Force Special Warfare."

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*He's everything that you would want from someone standing next to you in a gunfight. Mike and some very talented surgeons are the only two reasons that I'm here today. He got me out of the worst situation that I've ever been in and I honestly can't thank him enough.*

— U.S. Army Capt. William Clark

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Technical Sgt. Michael Perolio, stands at attention during the playing of the National Anthem during an event in his honor, where he was presented both the Silver and Bronze Stars, at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, July 18, 2019. Perolio was presented the Silver Star in connection to military operations against an armed enemy in Afghanistan Jan. 11, 2018, during Operation Freedom's Sentinel. Photo by Sarayuth Pinthong.

# Marine Forces Special Operations Command



## Spiritus Invictus: Marines team up in Marine Raider Competition



*Marine Raiders carry a combat rubber raiding craft in preparation for the boating portion of the annual Marine Forces Special Operations Command 2019 Marine Raider Competition on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 12, 2019. The competition fostered camaraderie and tested participants' operational capabilities consistent with special operations missions through a rigorous evolution of events and to honor Marine Raider heritage. The competition consisted of six teams of six participants hailing from 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Marine Raider Battalions, Marine Raider Training Center and 2nd Marine Reconnaissance Battalion. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Michael Neunehoff.*

*By U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Janessa Pon and Cpl. Bryann K. Whitley  
MARSOC Public Affairs*

Marine Forces Special Operations Command hosted the 2019 Marine Raider Competition on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 12, 2019.

MARSOC hosts this event annually to build camaraderie and test operational capabilities consistent with special operations missions and to honor Marine Raider heritage.

The name, "Raider," was adopted in 2015 in

recognition of their forbearers and represents a strong history in special operations with members of all branches of the Department of Defense. Raiders have conducted more than 300 operational deployments to date, spanning across more than 17 countries.

"Marine Raiders continue to make impressive contributions to Special Operations Command's efforts around the world," commented Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Robert B. Neller, during his visit to MARSOC in February for its 13th Anniversary. "I am sure their World War II Raider predecessors would be as proud of them as we are today."

The competition consisted of six teams of six participants hailing from 1st, 2nd and 3rd Marine Raider Battalions, Marine Raider Training Center and 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion. The teams participated in a rigorous evolution of events that tested their operational abilities consistent with special operations missions.

“The endurance coupled with the strength needed for some of the events was one of the most taxing parts of the competition,” said the Assessment and Selection land navigation instructor on the Marine Raider Training Center team. “Trying to pace ourselves and make sure we were maintaining hydration throughout the events while pushing through all the aches and pains was the most mentally straining aspect.”

Teams left the starting point in 15-minute intervals and were timed to make comparisons for final scores. Throughout the various challenges, teams combatted fatigue and the mental pressure of competition while avoiding possible penalties for missed targets or performing incorrect simulated combat casualty care.

“When it came to preparing, our biggest challenge was finding adequate time to train,” said the A&S land navigation instructor on MRTC’s team. “We got hit with some penalties because of that, but we did our best to communicate with each other and help each other through the events.”

During the competition, each team member carried more than 45 pounds of equipment for the duration of the 15-mile ruck course that consisted of events such as rappelling; live fire shoots; casualty carries; breaching; land navigation with resupply; and boating.



***A Marine Raider participates in the rappel portion of the annual Marine Forces Special Operations Command 2019 Marine Raider Competition on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 12, 2019. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Heather J. Atherton.***



***A Marine Raider fires an M203 grenade launcher on an M4 carbine during the unknown distance live fire portion of the annual Marine Forces Special Operations Command 2019 Marine Raider Competition on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 12, 2019. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Heather J. Atherton.***

“Going in we were expecting to be the fastest team,” said Sgt. Adam Terrazas with the 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion team. “I think we came out of the gate too strong, which affected us negatively because we started to break off a little and get dehydrated, but ultimately, we were able to put our minds together at each event and help one another get through the challenges.”

After all teams crossed the finish line, participants received awards for their performances in the competition.

“It means a lot to us for our recon brothers to join us,” said the MRTC commander during his closing remarks. “This is something we will continue to do to build camaraderie and the competitive spirit.”

# Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

## USSOCOM conducts a formal review of SOF culture and ethics

*By USSOCOM Office of Communication*

In a SOF all message to U.S. Special Operations Command Aug. 9, 2019, Gen. Richard D. Clarke announced an enterprise wide culture and ethics comprehensive review. Clarke emphasized that special operations warriors have a special trust with the American people that must never be compromised. The general stated, ethics that guide the command in its decisions are values-based no matter the environment.

“The American people trust that you — that we — protect them,” Clarke said. “We will not only win, but win with honor, with your values intact. Never allow a disordered loyalty to an individual or team to obscure the values, commitment and trust you share with SOCOM and with the nation.”

This comprehensive review of special operations forces culture and ethics is designed to make SOF better and will gather insights and observations from across SOF, it is not an investigation. Two teams, an advisory team and a review team, will draw upon the unique perspectives of leaders from inside and outside the organization. The review will focus on recruitment, assessment and selection, leader development, values-based education and training, force structure, force employment and force accountability.

“The themes of trust and of teamwork are the fabric of our training,” Clarke said. “Trust is our currency with the American people. It’s a powerful but fragile credibility that each of us must guard fiercely.”

The culture and ethics review and its evaluation of SOF is scheduled to be complete by the end of November with the results publicly released.



*U.S. Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke, Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, speaks to U.S. Navy SEAL candidates participating in Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) training in San Diego, Calif. August 2, 2019, as he secures “Hell Week.” Hell Week is five-day crucible meant to test a candidate’s physical and mental toughness as part of the 63-week training required to become a Navy SEAL. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Abe McNatt.*



## Special Operations Forces Culture and Ethics

### Comprehensive Review

To All Members of U.S. Special Operations Command,

The American people must trust those who protect them, including the special operations professionals in this Command. This trust is paramount and must never be compromised. Our culture—the very fabric of our beliefs and values—is deeply rooted in a history of honor, duty, and sacrifice. Our ethics—the principles that govern our behavior—are the foundation for values-based decision-making at home and when deployed in the most complex environments.

Recent incidents have called our culture and ethics into question and threaten the trust placed in us. As a result, I am initiating a comprehensive review of Special Operations Forces (SOF) culture and ethics. The review will gather insights and observations from across our force and will draw upon the unique perspectives of leaders from internal and external entities. In addition to an overall assessment of SOF culture and ethics, the review will focus on our recruitment, how we assess and select SOF professionals, how we grow leaders, how we educate and train our force to operate ethically with the same excellence with which we operate tactically, and how we address ethical failures when they occur.

The review will begin immediately and conclude in the fall of 2019. Specific details and schedules for unit visits across the USSOCOM enterprise will follow. I expect you to expend every effort to facilitate access and support the review team's efforts. Be open and candid in your feedback to the team. We will also publish the results and discuss them broadly. ***This is about making us better.***

Most importantly, recognize this review as an opportunity to strengthen our values and reinforce trust. We are the nation's special operations force and we remain intensely focused on accomplishing our mission while upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct—each and every day, as individuals and teams, at home and while in harm's way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Clarke", written over a white background.

Richard D. Clarke  
General, U.S. Army  
Commander

# Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

## USSOCOM, Tampa Bay host 2019 DoD Warrior Games



*“I believe not only has Warrior Games saved our warriors lives, but it has saved families and strengthened our families. To all of our families, thank you very much. Our athletes, you have inspired us, we watched you in hundreds of competitions, we watched you get knocked down, we watched you get back up, we watched you laugh, we watched you cry, these were some incredible games. It has been an absolute honor for SOCOM to sponsor these games.”*

— U.S. Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke, commander U.S. Special Operations Command

### *By USSOCOM Office of Communication*

The 2019 DoD Warrior Games were hosted by U.S. Special Operations Command and held from June 21-30 in Tampa Bay, Florida. The athletes who participated in the competition are comprised of wounded, ill and injured service members and veterans representing the U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Special Operations Command. Athletes from the United Kingdom Armed Forces, Australian Defence Force, Canadian Armed Forces, Armed Forces of the Netherlands, and the Danish Armed Forces also competed in this year’s DoD Warrior Games.

Each athlete in the Warrior Games has had to overcome some form of adversity, conquer specific challenges, and recover from what they may have been told was unrecoverable. The Warrior Games signifies to many of the participants defying all odds, no matter how insurmountable they may have seemed to be in the past.

Teams competed in archery, cycling, golf, indoor rowing, powerlifting, shooting, sitting volleyball, swimming, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby, wheelchair tennis, track and field through Jun. 30. The Paralympic-style sports competitions were held throughout the Tampa Bay area, including Amalie Arena, the Tampa Convention Center, Clearwater’s Long Aquatic Center and the University of South Florida. The Warrior Games concluded June 30 with



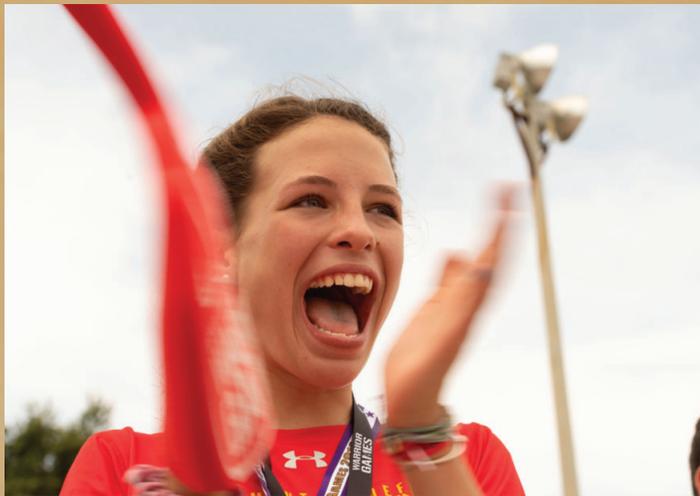
***U.S. Army Master Sgt. Jarrid Collins carries the torch to light the flame during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games opening ceremony hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 22, 2019. The DoD Warrior Games were established in 2010 as a way to enhance the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded, ill and injured service members and expose them to adaptive sports. The 2019 DoD Warrior Games are comprised of more than 300 service member and veteran athletes representing the U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Special Operations Command, and five partner nations. Photo by Michael Bottoms.***

the closing ceremony back at Amalie Arena.

The 2020 DoD Warrior Games will be hosted by the U.S. Marine Corps and held in San Antonio, Texas Sep. 21-28.



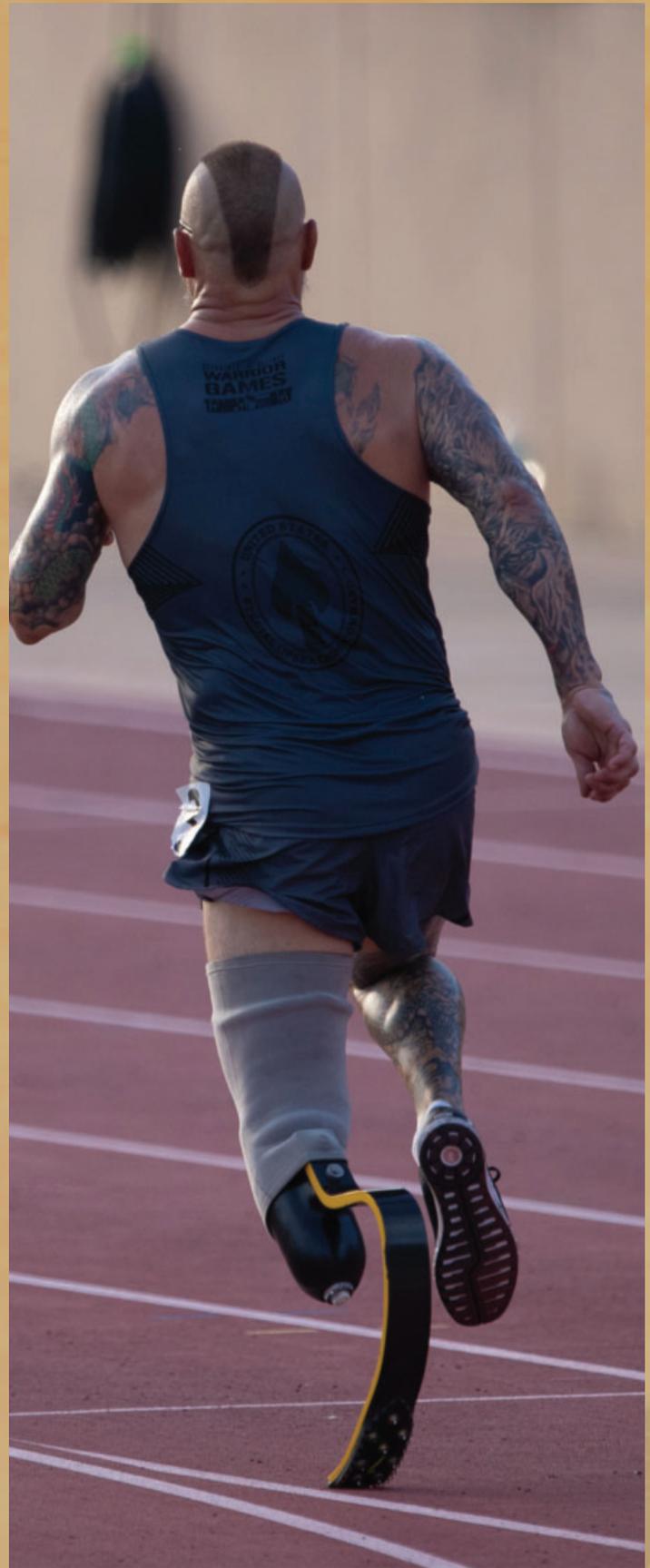
*U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Lauren Montoya runs track during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 22, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.*



*Team Marine Corps fan Rileigh Leary cheers for athletes during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 22, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.*



*U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Brandt Ireland runs track during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 22, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.*



*U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Stephen Tobaz runs track during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 22, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.*

# Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command



An athlete's gear before competition in track during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 22, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Russell Ruth competes in discus during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 23, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.



U.S. Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke, commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, and Team SOCOM Field Coach Amanda Federici, watch Marine Staff Sgt. Stuart DiPaolo compete in the shot put during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 23, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.



(Left) U.S. Army Master Sgt. Joe Roberts competes in the bench press weightlifting competition during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 24, 2019. Photo by Michael Bottoms.



**Team SOCOM U.S. Army Master Sgt. Henry Taylor competes in indoor rowing during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 25, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.**



**Team SOCOM U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Mario Webb competes in archery during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 25, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.**

**(Left) Team SOCOM U.S. Army Master Sgt. Alfred Martinez warms up with his son, Jayden, 6, prior to a wheelchair basketball competition during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 25, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.**

# Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command



*Team SOCOM U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Brant Ireland pedals a handcycle in the early morning hours June 23, 2019 during the cycling time trials for the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Ryan Scranton.*



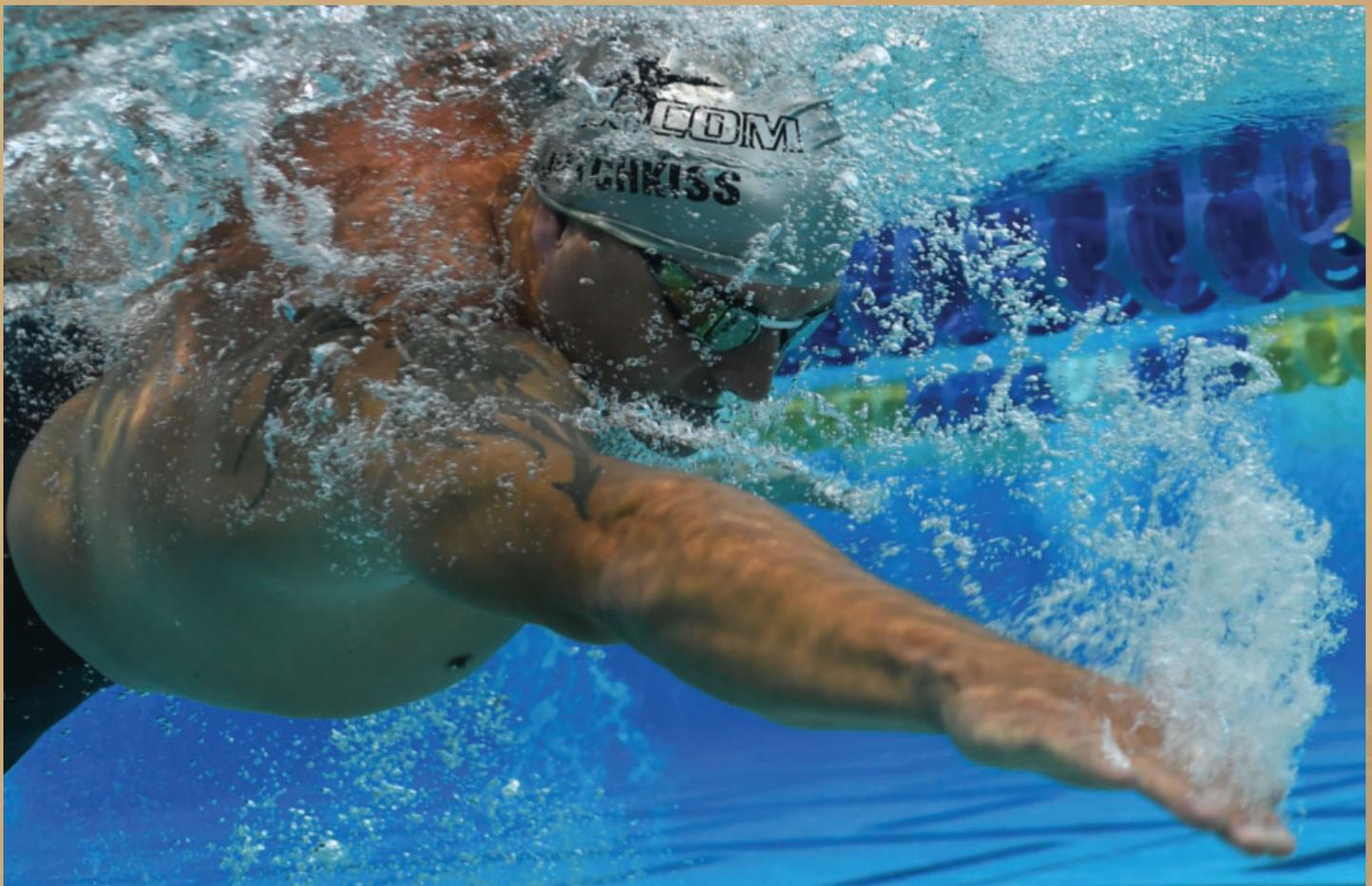
*The father and wife of U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jimmy Covas watch him practice with the pistol during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games in Tampa, Fla., June 28, 2019. Covas would go on to win second place. Photo by Michael Bottoms.*

*(Left) U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Brant Ireland, Team SOCOM, competes against Team Army for the game's starting tipoff in wheelchair rugby during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 26, 2019. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Jacob P. Johnson.*



*Team SOCOM competes in sitting volleyball against Team Netherlands during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 27, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.*

*(Left) U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Brant Ireland leads Team SOCOM down the ramp after being named the “Heart of the Team” during the closing ceremony for the 2019 DoD Warrior Games, June 30, 2019 in Tampa, Fla. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.*



*Team SOCOM U.S. Army Capt. Brian Hotchkiss competes in swimming during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 29, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.*

# Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

## Fighting on to the Ranger objective

By U.S. Army Maj. Tony Mayne  
USSOCOM Office of Communication

Four and a half years after an enemy bullet entered retired Staff Sgt. Travis Dunn's armpit and severed his spinal cord, the Ranger veteran found himself back in the arena competing for the first time as a member of Team SOCOM during the 2019 Department of Defense Warrior Games in Tampa, Florida.

Dunn's story of rehabilitation and recovery does not only belong to himself, but to his "team of teams" surrounding him led by his wife Kelley and their 15-month-old daughter Sadie.

Like so many special operators before him, the native of Albuquerque, New Mexico's military story began after learning of the Al Qaeda-led terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. A sixth grader at the time of the attacks, Dunn remembers clearly the vision for his future.

"I knew from that moment forward, I would join the Army," Dunn said. "If I was going to go into the Army, I was going to ensure I could fight right away, and that meant enlisting and joining the infantry."

At Army basic training in Fort Benning, Georgia, Dunn earned an Airborne School slot after achieving the top physical fitness score in his platoon. Later, Dunn raised his hand when the drill sergeants asked which of his platoon mates had a contract to attend the Ranger Indoctrination Program, the forerunner of the 75th Ranger Regiment's Ranger Assessment and Selection Program 1. Only the truth is Dunn did not have a signed RIP contract at the time.

"I learned early on, if you volunteer for something hard in the Army, you'll get it," Dunn reported with a grin. He was proven correct. Dunn's drill sergeants were happy to provide him the opportunity to earn his way into the Ranger regiment.

Dunn tackled the 17-day RIP course head-on graduating in January 2009 to earn an assignment to 1st Ranger Battalion in Savannah, Georgia. In August of that year, Dunn would experience a baptism under fire in Kandahar, Afghanistan where he would receive his first Purple Heart medal.



**Team SOCOM Army Staff Sgt. Travis Dunn's family visits him prior to a track race during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 22, 2019. The Warrior Games were established in 2010 as a way to enhance the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded, ill and injured service members and expose them to adaptive sports. The 2019 DoD Warrior Games are comprised of more than 300 service member and veteran athletes representing the U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Special Operations Command, and five partner nations. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.**

To continue to advance in the ranks of the Ranger regiment, Dunn set his sights on completing Ranger school.

"I had difficulty with land navigation in two different Ranger school classes," Dunn said.

When he returned to Savannah without the coveted black and gold Ranger tab the second time, he thought his time in the Ranger regiment was nearing the end. The regiment requires its small unit maneuver leaders to pass the Ranger course or face reassignment to the conventional Army.

"At this point in my career, I had been on three deployments and involved in multiple fire fights," Dunn said. "The only thing I wanted for myself at that point was to lead Rangers in combat, to be the one they counted on to get the mission done and bring them back from an op."

Instead of departing the unit, Dunn told his Ranger leadership he desired to go back to Ranger school. To prove his commitment, he reenlisted to go back to Fort Benning and its Ranger school.

In 2011, Dunn and Spc. Kevin Nash, his best friend in his platoon, met up with Nash's sister Kelley, new to Savannah from her native California. Kelley enrolled as a student at Armstrong State University. They would continue to socialize in group settings until Dunn departed to Ranger school.

In Feb 2012, Dunn passed Ranger school on his third attempt. He returned to 1st Ranger Battalion prepared to lead a Ranger fire team in combat for the fourth time. But, Dunn also had something else on his mind.

In downtime during the deployment, Dunn asked Nash for permission to date Kelley. His question received a rapid, "No". After a cooling period, Nash had a change of heart and told Dunn, "She is a grown woman, she can make her own decisions."

Kelley and Dunn would start dating in late 2012, and they would marry almost one year later.

On Dec. 2, 2014, on his seventh deployment in six years of service, Dunn entered a doorway to provide supporting fire to a Ranger element engaging enemy combatants from an objective compound in Nangarhar province. During the engagement, Dunn was shot.

For five days, Dunn was in and out of consciousness as he was transported from Bagram Airfield to Landstuhl, Germany to Walter Reed Military Hospital. When he regained consciousness, Kelley was there.

"The moment I came to and realized the extent of my injuries, I knew that I had to recover for Kelley," Dunn reported. "She quit college one semester short of graduation to take care of me and did so without a complaint. I owe her everything."

During an extensive recovery process, the Dunn's decided that they were not going to allow the Ranger's paralysis to define them or their family. Dunn continued with rehabilitation in Savannah with the human performance specialists at 1st Ranger Battalion for two years.

"It meant the world to me that the battalion kept me around," Dunn said.

The Dunns' next challenge was a heavy burden on Kelley. For two years the Dunn's tried fertility procedures to become parents. In June 2017, they found out Kelley was pregnant.

Dunn states, "It was the happiest day of my life."

Now 15-months old, beautiful Sadie Lee Dunn was in attendance with Kelley watching her father compete in his first Warrior Games. The Ranger tackled archery, track, wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby at the annual

Paralympic-style event.

"We have great coaches," Dunn said before the Games began on June. 21. "I'm just hoping not to get my doors blown off."

To no surprise to anyone that knows Dunn, he put up a fight down the stretch of the 200-meter wheelchair sprint to place second in his heat and followed it up with a second-place heat finish in the 100-meter wheelchair event.

As for basketball, Dunn stated what most know about the athletic ability of the most special operators.

"SOF doesn't play basketball, we run through walls. Wait until wheelchair rugby," Dunn said emphatically.

Dunn and his SOCOM teammates prepared for the wheelchair rugby competition, a sport more in line with the soft-spoken Ranger's tenacity and competitive character.

"Like everyone else competing, I'd rather not be here – but I am," he stated matter-of-factly. "More importantly, my family is here along with all those people that supported Kelley and I along the way. They are here in person or in spirit."



**Team SOCOM Army Veteran Staff Sgt. Travis Dunn poses for a portrait prior to a wheelchair basketball competition during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 25, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.**

# Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

## Innovation in the arena

By Christina Caudill  
SOFWERX

SOFWERX, a non-profit organization under a partnership intermediary agreement with the U.S. Special Operations Command, has earned a reputation as a platform for innovation, successfully churning out technical solutions to some of the most vexing problems facing the U.S. military's special operations forces. Through collaboration and ideation between government and non-traditionals, cutting-edge techniques and technologies are being delivered to the warfighter through this organization.

On March 14, 2019, the traditional process of assisting SOF temporarily shifted when 33-year-old Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Stuart DiPaolo came through the doors of SOFWERX. DiPaolo was severely injured in an all-terrain vehicle accident while training with the Marine Raider support battalion in Camp Pendleton, California, in 2015. The incident left him with one eye, wheelchair-dependent and limited use of his left arm.

After years of recovery, he set his sights on competing in the 2019 DoD Warrior Games - a Paralympic-style sports competition aimed at helping wounded service members recover through adaptive sports. More specifically, DiPaolo was eager to compete in archery.

DiPaolo and his Warrior Games coach, Josh Lindstrom, spent countless hours trying to work out the mechanics of how to draw the bow, hold it on the target and then release an arrow with only one arm. The pair even contacted a prosthetist who told them it would take months to engineer a solution. As DiPaolo and Lindstrom brainstormed possibilities, a fellow teammate suggested asking SOFWERX for help. It wasn't long after that, DiPaolo and Lindstrom found themselves in the SOFWERX fabrication lab, working directly with experts and partners from USSOCOM's Special Operations Forces Acquisition Technology & Logistics Acquisition Agility Directorate.

"Helping Staff Sgt. DiPaolo was a unique opportunity and fulfilling mission for our team," said Michael Guinn, a USSOCOM representative. "We were excited to get to work and find a solution for this determined athlete."

Within four short hours, DiPaolo was outfitted with an



**Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Stuart DiPaolo (seated) leads Team SOC down the ramp during the closing ceremony for the DoD 2019 Warrior Games, June 30, 2019 in Tampa, Fla. The DoD Warrior Games were established in 2010 to enhance the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded, ill and injured service members and expose them to adaptive sports. The DoD 2019 DoD Warrior Games are comprised of more than 300 service member and veteran athletes representing the U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Special Operations Command, and five partner nations. Photo by Michael Bottoms.**

apparatus he could mount on his shoulder. Using a combination of custom molded plastics, machined metal, some straps and a special release mechanism triggered by DiPaolo's cheek. With this solution, he could independently draw his bow and arrow and discharge it when he found his target.

"They molded a piece of Kydex [thermoplastic] to my shoulder. They lined everything up with the release and the bow, so it sat right on my jaw," said DiPaolo. "I thought it was incredible! It allows me to be able to shoot the bow by myself and I don't need anybody."

After seeing how they could help DiPaolo, SOFWERX wanted to make its team of innovators available to the more than 300 wounded U.S. and International athletes participating in the upcoming games.

"With the resources we have at SOFWERX, the team knew we had the ability to support the Warrior Games in a special way," said Brent Koehlhoeffer, the SOFWERX fabrication lab manager who helped support the 2019

Warrior Games. “We wanted to assist the participants directly using our skills in agility and innovation.”

SOFWERX set up a makeshift fabrication shop in a hangar on MacDill Air Force Base during the Warrior Games practices, seeking out athletes needing help. The SOFWERX team knew they could help, but there was no way to anticipate how many opportunities were waiting in the wings. During the practice week leading up to the Games, SOFWERX engineers and volunteers worked on more than thirty modifications for the competitors. Their first request coming in before they had a chance to power on their machines.

“We really didn’t know if anyone was going to utilize us or not. We set up a bare bones shop [in a hangar] with no real expectation of what was going to happen,” said Robert Ash, a Skybridge Tactical representative “In less than an hour, there were over twenty coaches and participants asking what we did and how we could help.”

The first athlete to request assistance was U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Travis Dunn, a former Army Ranger, who was shot in the upper torso during a six-hour firefight in Afghanistan in 2014. The bullet severed his spinal cord and left him paralyzed from the waist down. Dunn was struggling with balance, causing him to fall out of his wheelchair during archery practice. The SOFWERX design team created an adjustable strap that fit tightly around Travis’ torso and looped through the back of his chair giving Dunn the needed support to remain upright.

Soon after, a recent below-the-knee amputee, Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Anika Hutsler, sought out the SOFWERX team for help with an issue she was having with her prosthetic leg. She was struggling with the suction device designed to help keep her prosthetic in place. The SOFWERX team provided a liner that gave a more effective seal until she could have a permanent replacement made. During the Games, SOFWERX completed numerous other projects like Hutsler’s, including customized quivers, prosthetics, clothing articles and modified pistol grips.

At the end of the day, the SOFWERX team would bring the remaining projects back to their facility in Tampa where they used their collection of industrial and commercial equipment, ranging from plasma cutters to 3D printers, to craft the specialized parts and pieces needed.

Once the games began, the fabrication shop was moved from the hangar to the sporting events to provide onsite assistance. Athletes continued to approach the SOFWERX team with requests, like building special tables to help stabilize shooters and special gloves to protect the hands of wheelchair rugby players. The team worked with athletes and coaches throughout the games, fielding their requests and finding clever solutions and modifications to problems. The scope of their impact came into sharper focus as the

SOFWERX team worked with more athletes.

Veteran and Warrior Games Team Navy coach, John Dusseau, was diagnosed with Ewing’s sarcoma in 2011. The 37-year-old former Navy aircraft mechanic underwent chemotherapy and surgery to remove a large tumor including part of his hip. The surgery affected his balance and caused continual pain in his legs and spine. The SOFWERX team paired up with a local prosthetics organization in an effort to help relieve some of Dusseau’s pain. Two variations of molds were fabricated to act as a prosthetic for Dusseau. The first was completed by creating a 3D mold and duplicating that mold with ballistic gel. The second version was made with silicon and sewn into a pair of pants. With the mold accurately placed, Dusseau was able to correct his posture and balance, alleviating much of the pain he had felt for years.

“After communicating my needs to the team, the project began steamrolling. Before I knew it, I had a prototype!” said Dusseau. “Thanks to the knowledge, staff and technology provided by SOFWERX, my quality of life has improved tenfold.”

SOFWERX plans to build off their recent successes at the games. Using established connections, SOFWERX is joining each team with their service-connected innovation organization to prepare for the 2020 Warrior Games in San Antonio, Texas. The team is encouraging everyone to get involved in some capacity to make a difference in the athletes’ lives.

“Ultimately, the goal is to help these heroes perform on a grander scale despite the difficulties they face along the way.” Tambrein Bates, the SOFWERX Director said.

Interested in helping Warrior Games athletes? Visit [www.sofwerx.org/warriorgames](http://www.sofwerx.org/warriorgames) for more information.



**Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Annika Hutsler makes her way to the starting line of the seated race competition at the University of South Florida track and field stadium in Tampa, Florida, June 22, 2019, during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Marianne Santos.**

# Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

## Ross Perot: Friend of SOF

By Tom Neven

USSOCOM History & Research Office

H. Ross Perot, a self-made Texas billionaire who was a great friend of the U.S. military in general and special operations forces in particular, died on 9 July 2019. He was 89 years old. The U.S. Naval Academy graduate (1953) was the first recipient of USSOCOM's prestigious Bull Simons Award, in 1990, and received the USSOCOM Medal in 1995.

He made his money creating a computer services company, Electronic Data Systems, at a time when American businesses were just starting to computerize. He sold the company to General Motors in 1984 for \$2.5 billion.

He often used his wealth to benefit members of the U.S. military. He first made his mark with the SOF community in 1979, when two EDS employees were taken hostage in Iran by the Shah's secret police, the dreaded Savak, in the days just before the fall of Iran and the return of Ayatollah Khomeini. Rather than pay the ransom, Perot drafted Special Forces legend Col. Arthur "Bull" Simons to plan a rescue mission. Simons

selected and trained a group of EDS employees, all Vietnam veterans, to sneak into Iran to spring the two EDS men from prison. As part of the mission, Perot himself snuck into Iran under the guise of a TV news crew to reassure the jailed

men that he had not forgotten them and to fill them in on the plan. Because this was during the chaotic early months of the Iranian revolution, Simons planned to use a street protest as cover for a mob to storm the prison. The mob was led by an Iranian employee of EDS, recruited by Simons for the mission. In the resulting disorder, Simons' team found the two Americans and snuck them out, driving them more than 500 miles to the Turkish border.

But Perot's aid to the military began years before that episode. In 1969 he organized a drive to bring letters and medicine to American prisoners of war in North Vietnam. The North Vietnamese refused him access, but his actions

and the surrounding publicity forced the North Vietnamese to improve their treatment of the POWs.

He later became good friends with Generals Wayne Downing and Hugh Shelton, USSOCOM's third and fourth commanders, respectively, and would frequently provide aid to the families of Special Forces Soldiers. He was also instrumental in getting the U.S. government to give refugee status to nearly 200 Vietnamese Montagnard tribesmen who had fought alongside U.S. Special Forces in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

Perot helped fund research that established Gulf War Syndrome in order to help the U.S. and British Soldiers who were affected by it, and he provided seed money to establish the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, a think tank that bridges the gap between the public and private sector, academia, and the government. In 2009 he received an



H. Ross Perot. Courtesy Perot Family Archive.

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*Words cannot adequately express our deep respect and gratitude for your support. You are a patriot in the truest sense of the word.*

— Former USSOCOM commander Army Gen. Bryan "Doug" Brown

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award from the Veteran's Administration for his support of veterans. He's just one of 14 honorary members of the Army's 75th Ranger Regiment and was made an honorary Green Beret in 2009. In 2017, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller made Perot an honorary Marine, citing his contributions to the service, particularly his endowing the prestigious Leftwich Trophy, awarded annually to an outstanding infantry officer.

In 2004, Army Gen. Bryan "Doug" Brown, USSOCOM's seventh commander, wrote to Perot: "Over the years, you have been a kind friend to our men and women in uniform, providing assistance when other means were unavailable—all freely given without thought of personal gain or recognition. Words cannot adequately express our deep respect and gratitude for your support. You are a patriot in the truest sense of the word."



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Scott A. Koppenhafer  
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Master Sgt.  
Micheal B. Riley  
10th Special Forces Group  
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**U.S. Army  
Sgt. 1st Class  
Elliott J. Robbins  
10th Special Forces Group  
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**U.S. Army  
Sgt. Maj.  
James G. "Ryan" Sartor  
10th Special Forces Group  
(Airborne)**



**U.S. Army  
Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Sheperty  
19th Special Forces Group  
(Airborne)**

*Editor's note: Honored are those special operations forces who lost their lives in combat or training recently.*

*Correction of the record: Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Sheperty was misidentified as Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jonathan Farmer in June's issue.*

*Team SOCOM Army Staff Sgt. Russell Ruth runs track during the 2019 DoD Warrior Games hosted in Tampa, Fla., June 22, 2019. The Warrior Games were established in 2010 as a way to enhance the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded, ill and injured service members and expose them to adaptive sports. The 2019 DoD Warrior Games are comprised of more than 300 service member and veteran athletes representing the U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Special Operations Command, and five partner nations. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.*

