



# Tip OF THE Spear

United States Special Operations Command  
MacDill Air Force Base, Florida

February 2019

## Women in SOF



# United States Special Operations Command



## Women in Special Operations

## Tip of the Spear

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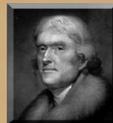
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*(Cover) A U.S. Army cultural support team member with the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force scans the terrain while sitting in a Humvee in Sarobi district, Kabul province, Afghanistan, Dec. 6, 2013. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Sara Wakai.*

# The Quiet Professionals

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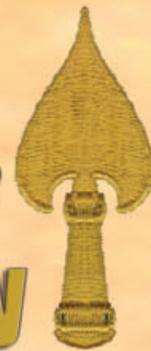
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# Women in SOF: A historical perspective

## Virginia Hall: The limping lady



*“The woman who limps is one of the most dangerous Allied agents in France. We must find and destroy her.” – Orders of the Geheime Staatspolizei (Secret State Police, the Gestapo) in Nazi-occupied France.*

**By Tom Neven**

**USSOCOM History and Research Office**

The “woman who limps” was Virginia Hall, an agent of the Office of Strategic Services. Her sharp featured face with shoulder-length hair and wide-set eyes, details provided by French double agents, appeared on Gestapo wanted posters throughout Vichy France. The Nazis were determined to stop this woman who had established French Resistance networks, located drop zones for money and weapons, and helped downed airmen and escaped prisoners of war travel to safety.

Hall, the daughter of a wealthy family from Baltimore, had wanted to become a foreign service officer in the years just before the outbreak of World War II but was turned down by the State Department despite her being fluent in French, German, and Italian. Women could be clerks but not officers. Besides, she was missing her left leg below the knee, the result of a hunting accident in Turkey years earlier, which to the State Department further disqualified her. (She had nicknamed her wooden prosthesis Cuthbert.)

Unwanted by the U.S. government after the outbreak of World War II, Hall went to work for the British Special Operations Executive. In joining, she became the SOE’s first female operative sent into France. For two years she spied in Lyon, part of the Nazi-allied Vichy government of France, under the guise of a New York Post reporter. After the United States entered the war in late 1941, she was forced to escape to Spain by foot across the Pyrenees Mountains in the middle of winter. At one point during the journey she transmitted a message to SOE headquarters in London saying that Cuthbert was giving her difficulty. The reply from an unknowing SOE officer: “If Cuthbert is giving you difficulty, have him eliminated.”

Hall eventually made it back to London, where the SOE trained her as a wireless radio operator. While there she learned of the newly formed Office of Strategic Services. She quickly joined, and, at her request, the OSS



**Virginia Hall. Central Intelligence Agency courtesy photo.**

sent her back into occupied France, an incredibly dangerous mission given that she was already well-known to the Germans as a supposed newspaper reporter. Though only in her thirties with a tall, athletic build, she disguised herself as an elderly peasant, dyeing her soft brown hair a graying black, shuffling her feet to hide her limp, and wearing full skirts and bulky sweaters to add weight to her frame. Her forged French identity papers said she was Marcelle Montagne, daughter of a commercial agent named Clement Montagne of Vichy. Her code name was Diane.

Infiltrating France in March 1944, she initially acted as an observer and radio operator in the Haute-Loire, a mountainous region of Central France. While undercover, she coordinated parachute drops of arms and supplies for Resistance groups and reported German troop movements



***This painting of Virginia Hall operating a suitcase radio hangs in the CIA building. The formal name of the painting is: Les Marguerites Fleuriront ce Soir (The Daisies Will Bloom Tonight) by Jeffrey W. Bass. Used by permission of the Central Intelligence Agency.***

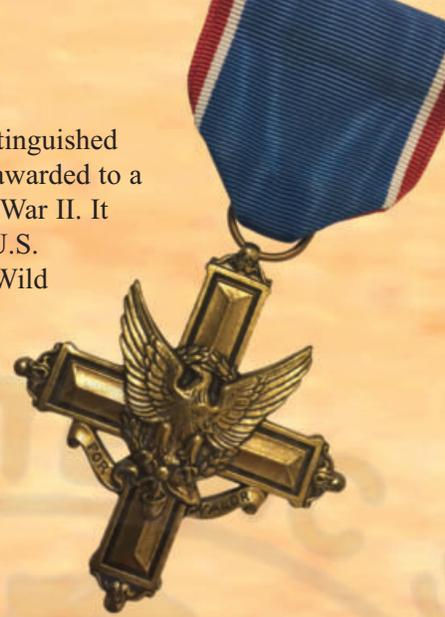
to London as well as organized escape routes for downed Allied airmen and escaped prisoners of war. By staying on the move she was able to avoid the Germans, who were trying to track her from her radio transmissions. Her chief pursuer was no less than Gestapo chief Nikolaus “Klaus” Barbie, who had well earned his nickname: “The Butcher of Lyon.” The Nazis believed Hall was Canadian, and Barbie once reportedly told his underlings, “I’d give anything to lay my hands on that Canadian b—.”

In mid-August 1944, Hall was reinforced by the arrival of a three-man Jedburgh team. Together they armed and trained three battalions of French Resistance fighters for sabotage missions against the retreating Germans. In her final report to headquarters, Hall stated that her team had destroyed four bridges, derailed freight trains, severed a key rail line in multiple places, and downed telephone lines. They were also credited with killing some 150 Germans and capturing 500 more.

For her work with the SOE, Hall was presented the Order of the British Empire by King George VI. After the

war, she was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross—the only one awarded to a civilian woman during World War II. It was pinned on by OSS head U.S. Army Maj. Gen. William J. “Wild Bill” Donovan himself. She went to work for the National Committee for a Free Europe, a CIA front organization associated with Radio Free Europe. She used her covert action expertise in a wide range of agency activities, chiefly in support of resistance groups in Iron Curtain countries until she retired in 1966.

Virginia Hall died on July 8, 1982, at age 76. In honor of her courage and trailblazing exploits, in 2017 the CIA named a training facility after her: “The Virginia Hall Expeditionary Center.”



***Virginia Hall received the Distinguished Service Cross from Maj. Gen. William J. Donovan, the head of the Office of Strategic Services. She was the only civilian woman to receive the DSC in World War II. Central Intelligence Agency courtesy photo.***

# Women in SOF: A historical perspective



## “Undercover girl” Betty McIntosh

By Tom Neven

*USSOCOM History and Research Office*

It appeared to be an ordinary lump of coal. The young American woman furtively handed it to a Chinese man and disappeared back into the crowd. It turned out to be anything but ordinary. Dubbed a “black joe” by its creators at the World War II Office of Strategic Services (OSS), it was in reality carefully disguised TNT. The Chinese man was an OSS operative in Japanese-occupied China, and he used it to destroy an entire enemy troop train, throwing it into the engine and jumping to safety just before the train crossed a bridge.

That young woman was Betty McIntosh, herself an operative of the OSS working behind enemy lines to disrupt the Japanese war effort. In December 1941 she had been a journalist working in Hawaii when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. She covered the event first-hand. Shortly afterwards, she left Hawaii to work for a newspaper bureau in Washington, DC. It was there she was assigned to interview a businessman who was in fact a top official of the OSS and a friend of William J. “Wild Bill” Donovan, the founder and leader of the OSS.

Years later, recalling that encounter, McIntosh said, “It was very difficult to get in to see him, but I finally managed to. After our interview, he said, ‘Wouldn't you like to get into something interesting like ...’ You know, he didn't say ‘spying,’ but he just said, ‘More interesting maybe than the work you're doing?’ ”

She was a real catch for the OSS. Fluent in Japanese, she soon found herself recruited into the Far East division of the OSS's Morale Operations Branch. Their job was to create rumors that the Japanese would believe. It was a form of what today would be called Information Operations. “They taught us how to utilize material tailored for specific targets in the Far East,” she said. “We had to learn to disseminate the material, a mix of truth and fantasy; we were taught how to get rumors started, for example.”

McIntosh's first assignment was in the summer of 1943, in the China-India-Burma Theater. She helped produce false news reports, radio messages, and other



*Betty McIntosh. Central Intelligence Agency courtesy photo.*

propaganda designed to spread disinformation that would undermine Japanese troops, who were already demoralized and retreating. This included efforts to distribute forged Japanese government orders to Japanese troops in Burma.

“The Japanese government told their soldiers that if they surrendered they would lose their birthright and would not be able to go back to Japan,” she explained. “So consequently very few Japanese surrendered. They cost us a great deal because they fought to the very end. So the idea was to try to get them to give up without feeling that they had lost their identity.”

She forged a realistic Japanese government directive that permitted them to surrender and demand fair treatment

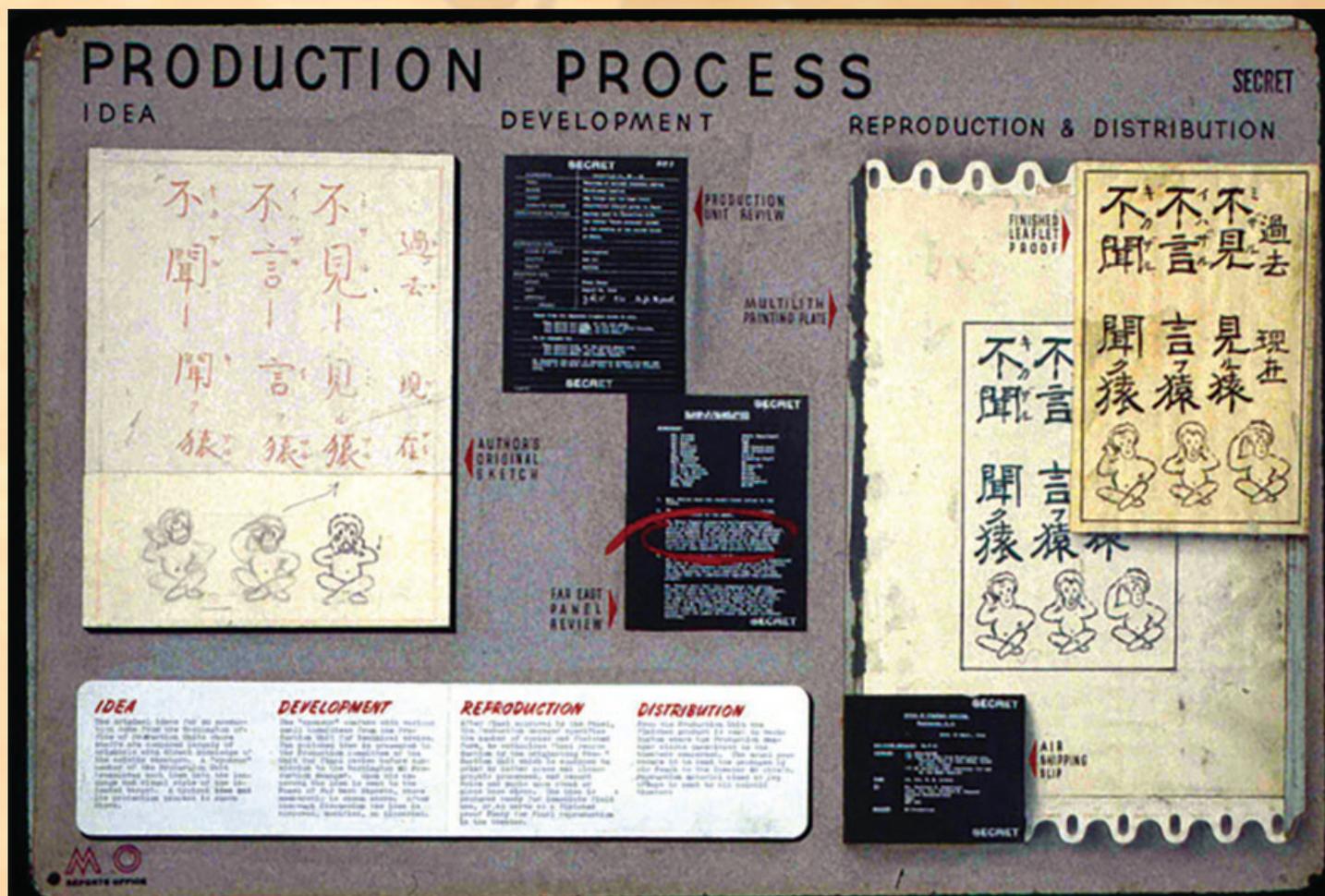
if they were outnumbered or captured. It also rescinded the prevailing order that they should fight to the death. McIntosh had a Japanese prisoner write the order in calligraphy to make it appear more realistic. OSS operatives then handed it to a Burmese agent, who killed a Japanese courier and stuffed the order into the dead man's knapsack. When the Japanese found their dead courier, they went through his knapsack and found the new order. "At the end of the war in northern Burma, there were lots of surrenders," McIntosh said, smiling.

Another time she was tasked with slipping a bogus script to a Chinese fortune-teller whose radio show was popular with Japanese troops. She needed him to "predict" something that would devastate Japanese morale. They ruled out an earthquake, as those were fairly common in Japan. Even adding a supposed tsunami to the prediction was thought not to be enough. They finally came up with this: "Something terrible is going to happen to Japan. We have checked the stars and there is something we can't even mention because it is so dreadful and it is going to eradicate one whole area of Japan."

The next day the United States dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima. McIntosh's superiors were aghast. How had she known about such a well-kept national secret? In fact, she hadn't. It was basically a lucky guess based on a "prophecy" so vague it could have applied to almost anything.

At the end of the war McIntosh went back to journalism, working for a while for a fashion magazine in New York, but after life in the OSS, it was underwhelming. She wrote her memoir, "Undercover Girl," published in 1947, and later joined the newly created Central Intelligence Agency, where she worked until she retired in 1973 after 40 years of service to her country. As she'd blazed a path for women in the OSS, she also showed the way for women in the CIA. She had always gotten along well with her male colleagues, who mostly treated her as an equal. "I guess maybe I developed something that helped me. An attitude, maybe. Especially in OSS, I felt I was just absolutely an equal with anybody in the office," McIntosh said.

Betty McIntosh died in June 2015 at the age of 100.



Much of it written in Chinese, material from an OSS morale operations training and orientation manual. Central Intelligence Agency courtesy photo.

# Women in SOF: A historical perspective



## The indomitable Maria Gulovich

*Maria Gulovich, a young Slovakian schoolteacher, was only 23-years-old when she began harboring Jews from the Nazis. She joined the underground resistance and began working for the Office of Strategic Services as a guide and interpreter.*

*Story and photos courtesy of the Central Intelligence Agency*

Maria Gulovich repeatedly risked her life to assist the Office of Strategic Services, including guiding a small group of American and British intelligence officers for nine weeks through the rugged mountains of Slovakia, in a blizzard, while being hunted by Nazis.

Her bravery and her indomitable spirit caught the attention of OSS Director William “Wild Bill” Donovan and future CIA Director Allen Dulles, who helped Gulovich become a U.S. citizen in 1952. Gulovich was also the first woman to be honored with a review of cadets at the historic U.S. Military Academy at West Point, where she was awarded the Bronze Star for her heroic service on behalf of the United States.

### **The Slovak Schoolteacher**

Gulovich was born on Oct. 19, 1921, in Jakubany, Slovakia. Her father was a Greek Orthodox Catholic priest and her mother was an elementary schoolteacher.

When Slovakia fell under German control in 1939, Gulovich was attending the Greek Catholic Institute for Teachers in Prešov. In 1940, she became a teacher and taught in Jarabina and later in Hriňová.

### **Assisting the Resistance**

In 1944, Gulovich’s uneventful life as a schoolteacher changed forever.

One day, Gulovich’s sister, Marta, and a Jewish family friend named Julius Goldberger paid her a visit at the school in Hriňová. Goldberger operated a nearby lumber mill, and because the Germans considered him and his mill useful, he was not sent to a concentration camp.

Goldberger had been hiding his sister and nephew from the Germans for some time until he came under suspicion. He and Marta pleaded with Gulovich to hide his relatives.

Gulovich reluctantly agreed, realizing that if she were caught, it could mean imprisonment or worse.

It wasn’t long before the Slovakian authorities began to



*Maria Gulovich, right, with Allen Dulles, future CIA Director, smoking a pipe, in Prague, 1945.*

suspect Gulovich of harboring Jews.

A Slovak Army captain showed up at the school to question Gulovich. Fortunately for her, the captain was part of the anti-fascist resistance. The captain offered to hide the Jewish woman and her son if Gulovich would join the resistance as a courier.

Gulovich agreed and was ordered to move to Banská Bystrica where she would work as a dressmaker for an underground sympathizer.

On her first mission, Gulovich was sent to a town 65 miles away to retrieve a suitcase. Gulovich didn’t find out until 1989 that the suitcase contained a radio.

If she had been caught, the consequences would have been severe. She had a few close calls with the Gestapo on the return trip, but quick thinking and a little flirting got her out of trouble.

In addition to her talents as a courier, Gulovich was fluent in five languages — Russian, Slovak, Hungarian, German, and English. Once this was discovered, Gulovich was assigned to translate messages from Slovak into Russian for a Russian military intelligence group.

During her time working for the Russians, Gulovich met some American Office of Strategic Services officers who were assisting the resistance and rescuing some

downed American airmen.

By October 1944, the Germans crushed the uprising and Gulovich and the Russians fled to the mountains to escape. There, Gulovich ran into her American friends again. They, too, had headed to the mountains to evade the Germans.

Gulovich and the Americans became friendly, and it wasn't long before they asked her to join their group as a guide and interpreter for what the OSS called the DAWES mission. She wasn't comfortable working for the Russians, so she eagerly accepted.

### Escaping the Nazis

Gulovich's work for the OSS DAWES mission included scouting for food and intelligence, and scoping out their surroundings.

She would pose as a peasant girl and go down into the towns to talk to the villagers. Often, Gulovich's job led her right into danger in the form of German soldiers patrolling the roads. Her quick wit and skill with the German language got her out of many a scrape.

One of the greatest dangers in the Slovak mountains was the weather, and the elements struck mercilessly during a blizzard in November 1944. The wind blew so hard that it knocked people off their feet. The weary group didn't dare stop. They passed 83 souls who tried to rest and froze to death.

The group finally reached the hunting lodge on Mount Dumbier, where they were to meet other British and American members of the DAWES team, including Associated Press reporter Joe Morton. It was almost Christmas and the group was waiting for provisions and supplies to be air dropped.

As the days passed, Gulovich, Morton, and some of their companions grew concerned about their safety. They were right to be worried. An elite German unit was sent to track down the DAWES mission.

Gulovich and her group planned to leave on Christmas, but were delayed a day.

On Dec. 26, 1944, Gulovich, two OSS officers, and two British airmen set out to find food and medical supplies further up the mountain. Morton walked with them for a bit, then returned to the camp.

Shortly after the small group left, the Germans surrounded the lodge, burned it to the ground, and captured the Americans, including Morton. They were all taken to the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp, where they were tortured and killed on Jan. 24, 1945.

Gulovich and the small group escaped into the mountains toward the Russian front in Romania as quickly as they could. They slept in barns and mines, suffered from frostbite and lice. It took them nine weeks of hiking through the bitter cold to reach safety.

Once Gulovich reached Bucharest, Romania, in early March, she was transferred to the OSS branch in Italy so she



could continue to be paid for her work.

Years after their escape, Gulovich's companions remembered her with fondness. During an interview, an Army sergeant who escaped with Gulovich called her "our little sweetheart ... for whom I am and will be grateful forever. To her, it is no doubt that I owe my safety and perhaps my life."

### Becoming an American Citizen

After the war, Gulovich met Allen Dulles who was the OSS chief in Switzerland at time, and later became the Director of Central Intelligence. Dulles informed OSS head Gen. William "Wild Bill" Donovan of Gulovich's courageous feats, and Donovan arranged for her to migrate to the United States with a scholarship to Vassar College.

In May 1946, Donovan presented Gulovich with the Bronze Star for her service with the OSS during World War II. She was the first woman to receive a medal on the plain of West Point in front of the Corps of Cadets.

In 1952, Gulovich became a U.S. citizen and settled in Oxnard, California. She established an excellent reputation as a real estate agent in Ventura County, California.

Maria Gulovich died on September 25, 2009 at the age of 87.



*Maria Gulovich at West Point, New York being honored by a review of cadets in 1946.*

# Women in SOF: A historical perspective



## Marion Frieswyk: The first female OSS intelligence cartographer

*Story and photos courtesy of the Central Intelligence Agency*

For 75 years, the CIA Cartography Center has been making vital contributions to our nation's security, providing policymakers with crucial insights that simply cannot be conveyed through words alone.

The center's roots stretch back even before the Office of Strategic Services — all the way to the OSS' predecessor, William Donovan's Office of the Coordinator of Information.

It all started with one geographer, Arthur Robinson, who in 1941 began creatively drafting maps to convey intelligence stories for policymakers.

Demand for Robinson's pioneering work was strong and immediate, leading to the creation of a unit to provide customized mapping services to support U.S. national security interests.

Customized mapping was a new concept at the time. Within a year, however, a large group of geographers gathered together and refined this nascent art and science—figuring out how best to portray



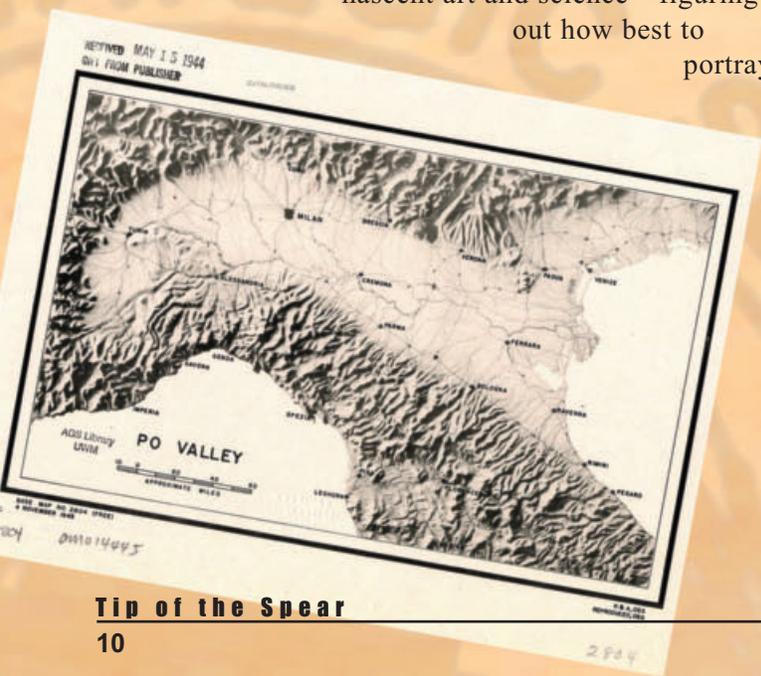
**Marion Frieswyk in 1945. Frieswyk was the first female intelligence cartographer for the Office of Strategic Services.**

information concisely for policymakers and the military.

One of the first cartographers in that group was Marion Frieswyk [pronounced freeze-wick], who embodies the diligence, determination, and innovative spirit that we valued at CIA.

In 1942, Frieswyk was a 21-year-old graduate student at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts when Arthur Robinson recruited her for the OSS. This would prove to be a crucial development in Frieswyk's life—and not only because Robinson also had the good sense to recruit Frieswyk's future husband, Henry Frieswyk.

Looking back over her career, Marion was a true



pioneer. Although other women worked in the Map Division, Frieswyk was the first woman in the Map Division's Cartography Section. It was a place where she thrived.

As an OSS cartographer, she and her colleagues developed a unique system of map production and evolved it rapidly to improve map quality and production efficiency.

During World War II, Frieswyk produced customized maps and 3D topographic models. It was painstaking work, supporting both strategic studies and military operational plans for the U.S. and its allies.

Frieswyk later displayed a true commitment to her craft during some turbulent times. After OSS dissolved in 1945, she remained as part of the core group of cartographers who stayed with the unit. Ultimately, she would work in CIA's Cartography Division until 1958.

Frieswyk recognized early on that geography is

deeply relevant to intelligence work helping enhance the Agency's ability to visualize and tell stories that resonate with those the CIA serves. Her passion and spirit represent timeless qualities that define the Cartography Center to this day.



*Marion Frieswyk (Left) with other OSS cartographers in 1944.*



*President Franklin D. Roosevelt with one of the rare OSS-made globes.*

# Women in SOF: A historical perspective



## “What the heck was I gonna do with a dumb gun?” The derring-do of Stephanie “Captain Czech” Rader

*“[The OSS] gave me a gun, but I never carried a gun. I thought, ‘What the heck was I gonna do with a dumb gun?’” Rader’s most valuable weapon: her wits.*

*Story and photos courtesy of the Central Intelligence Agency*

There are relatively few centenarians buried at Arlington National Cemetery, even fewer who are female, and only a mere fraction of those who served as intelligence officers. But one such woman was laid to rest there on June 1, 2016, buried next to her husband, outstanding in his own right. Her accomplishments would be considered exemplary in any era, even more so in one in which the professional accomplishments of women were often unacknowledged or, at best, slighted. Only now are we learning about the accomplishments of Stephanie Czech Rader, or “Captain Czech,” as she was known to colleagues.

Captain Czech was a woman ahead of her time. Not only did she go to college, but she eventually earned a master’s degree – in chemistry. She caught the attention of the Office of Strategic Services, which sent her on an undercover mission to Warsaw at a time when women were restricted from working in a military or intelligence capacity in Poland. Rader narrowly evaded capture by the Russians and still successfully completed her mission. It wasn’t until decades later that the details of her amazing story were declassified.

### **From Humble Beginnings**

Stephanie Czech was born in Toledo, Ohio on May 16, 1915, the daughter of Polish immigrants. She grew up in a household that didn’t speak English, which made going to school a challenge. She worked hard, however, and caught the attention of her high school teacher, a Cornell alumnus.

Unbeknownst to Rader, this teacher submitted an application to attend Cornell on her behalf. When she

received a full scholarship, she enthusiastically accepted and became the first member of her family to graduate from college, earning a degree in chemistry.

The combination of her gender and graduating during the Depression made finding that elusive first job challenging, but she eventually found a job working as a librarian and researcher at the Texas Oil Company in New York City, New York.

World War II broke out, and Stephanie immediately volunteered to join the Woman’s Army Auxiliary Corps. She was one of the first 80 trainees accepted out of the thousands who applied.

She was also one of the first 440 selected for Officer Candidate School at Fort Des Moines in Iowa, where she was quickly promoted to the rank of captain.

### **Going Undercover in Poland**

Rader’s Polish language skills and Ivy League education caught the attention of the OSS. They assigned her to Soviet-dominated Poland in the fall of 1945, one of only two OSS representatives in the country.



**Stephanie Czech Rader, or “Captain Czech,” as she was known to colleagues.**

It was an extremely dangerous time to operate in Poland, where pro-Soviet factions watched the movements of foreigners, including embassy personnel. She had friends who were taken away, never to be seen again.

In her most famous quip, made in later years to an OSS Society interviewer, “[The OSS] gave me a gun, but I never carried a gun. I thought, ‘What the heck was I gonna do with a dumb gun?’” Rader’s most valuable weapon: her wits.

Despite the danger, Rader’s demonstrated skills impressed the U.S. ambassador, who specially approved her assignment to Warsaw.

She traveled to Warsaw, Poland undercover: a mere clerk with the U.S. embassy who spent her spare time traveling throughout the country in hopes of reconnecting with distant family members. Her upbringing in Polish culture, her mastery of the language, and her rudimentary understanding of French allowed her to move about fairly unnoticed.

It was during these spurious searches for family members that Rader was able to collect intelligence. She obtained firsthand information on Russian troop concentrations, the activities of the Polish and Russian security services, and gathered economic and political data.

Soon after Rader’s arrival in Poland, OSS was disbanded, and Rader was absorbed into the War Department’s short-lived Strategic Services Unit (SSU), where she continued her work gathering intelligence.

### **Carrying Secrets**

Beyond her intelligence gathering duties, Rader also acted as a courier; tasked with transporting classified documents between Berlin and Warsaw.

On one particular mission in January 1946, Rader was instructed to carry sensitive documents to Berlin, Germany. Once there, she was asked to take additional documents back to Warsaw: As the only courier, she reluctantly agreed.

The Russian security service was waiting to arrest her when she returned from Germany. In a split second decision, she slipped the documents to a less-suspicious traveler walking next to her and instructed that person to take the package to a safe address in Warsaw.

Immediately after transferring the documents, Rader was picked up and questioned by the border guards. They had nothing to hold her on, so they let her go, but she fell under increasing surveillance.

Soon after, her cover was compromised by a superior in Paris. Although there are few details as to what exactly happened, we do know Rader insisted on staying in Poland to complete her mission despite the additional danger she now faced.

### **Life After OSS**

Rader eventually returned to the United States in



*In this 1940's photo U.S. Army Capt. Stephanie Rader stands with her husband U.S. Army Col. William Rader on their wedding day.*

February 1946.

Upon her return, she was nominated by her superiors for both the Legion of Merit—awarded for ‘exceptionally meritorious’ service—and a Bronze Star: both were denied, with no rationale provided.

Rader was awarded the Army Commendation Medal, however, and was promoted to the rank of major before she retired from the military.

She went on to marry famed WWII military aviator Brig. Gen. William Rader. She continued her involvement with the military as she accompanied her husband during his duty postings.

In 1951, Rader received a Master’s degree in Chemistry from George Washington University. Her husband retired as a brigadier general and died in 2003 after 57 years of marriage. The couple had no children.

Stephanie never talked much about her WWII service, and for decades few knew that she even served in OSS. In 2008, when OSS records were declassified, the OSS Society learned of Rader’s heroic service and began petitioning—with help from Senator Mark Warner (D-VA) and Rader’s lifelong friends—for her to receive the Legion of Merit award she was denied so many years earlier.

Finally in 2012, she was honored as the inaugural recipient of the Virginia Hall award—named for an equally-accomplished female OSS veteran spy—by the OSS Society.

Stephanie Czech Rader died on January 21, 2016, at the age of 100. She was buried at Arlington National Cemetery, next to her beloved husband, with full military honors.

During the funeral service at Arlington, nearly 70 years after her OSS service, the US Army posthumously awarded Rader the Legion of Merit.

# *Women in SOF:* *A historical perspective*

## **Special Forces jumpmaster**



*Army 1st Lt. Mary Shanahan was a certified jumpmaster assigned to 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne). In these photos from September 1981 she is teaching Special Forces Soldiers advanced parachute training and inspecting their gear at Fort Bragg, N.C. Photos by Craig J. Kupras.*



# Women in SOF: Modern day warriors



## Recruiting Special Operations Forces



The special operations forces (SOF) community believes strongly that each and every American should be allowed to rise to their full potential. Our promise to the Nation is that all Americans who have the courage and fortitude to challenge themselves in our assessment and selection arenas will find an environment that is fair and equitable. Anyone who demonstrates the physical, intellectual, professional, and character attributes required for mission accomplishment in the SOF operating environment will find a welcome place in our ranks.

On 3 December 2015, the Secretary of Defense opened all military career positions, career fields, and specialties to women. The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) fully supported that decision. Over the past two and a half years, USSOCOM has welcomed women into our ranks in all capacities and missions. At the time of the Secretary's decision, USSOCOM stated clearly that our commitment to a diverse force is based on our first SOF truth that "humans are more important than hardware," noting that this principle applies equally to all.

Special operations benefit from a diversity that provides access, insight, and perspective unavailable from a homogenous force. We must rely on a wide range of exceptional people to be combat effective and to address the complex security challenges we face.

Building and sustaining this diverse force requires our concerted effort. We must ensure that all potential candidates have correct and complete information about the path to SOF. For these reasons, it is incumbent on leaders at all levels of our SOF formations to encourage service members who have the desire and the qualities to serve with SOF to visit their service SOF recruiter and seriously consider accepting the challenge.

Our recruiting organizations and activities are open to all. We stand ready to provide information to interested service members and to help qualified candidates on their way to a career in special operations.

Raymond A. Thomas III  
General, U.S. Army  
Commander  
United States Special Operations Command

Owen West  
Assistant Secretary of Defense  
Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict

*This memo signed Oct. 24, 2018 by Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commander U.S. Special Operations Command and Owen West, Assistant Secretary of Defense Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, opens all military career positions, career fields and specialties to women. Photo illustration by Michael Bottoms.*



# Women in SOF: Modern day warriors

## AG Officer graduates from the US Army Ranger Course



*75th Ranger Regiment Public Affairs*

Capt. Sidney Jaques, 28, the Regimental S1 [chief of personnel] for the Headquarters and Service Company for the 75th Ranger Regiment, graduated from the U.S. Army Ranger Course October 26, 2018 at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Jaques, a native of Rosemont, N.J., commissioned into the U.S. Army in 2012, after receiving a degree in Communications from The University of Scranton. She was also a four-year athlete on their women's basketball team.

"I come from a military family. My father served two tours in Vietnam as a naval officer and we've had family members serve all the way back to the Revolutionary War," said Jaques. "We're also a pretty athletic family. I carried the lessons from athletics into the Army as a second lieutenant."

Jaques' first assignment was with the 82nd Sustainment Brigade as a postal platoon leader, and she deployed her platoon to Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Jordan as postal support for the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

"My platoon ran the military mail terminal and three APOs within the four countries. Every piece of mail in the majority of the CENTCOM area of responsibility was handled by our platoon whether sending it out or receiving it," Jaques said. "We also re-established postal support back into Iraq when Operation Inherent Resolve began in 2014. I remember coordinating their first six full pallets of mail to Iraq on Christmas Eve."

"Mail is a huge deal to Soldiers. It's an immediate morale boost, connection to home, and a reminder of humanity beyond war," Jaques added. "Through postal support, our platoon had an impact, in some way for every single Soldier in that AO, and that's pretty special."

Jaques' next assignment, and one that put her on the



***Capt. Sidney Jaques, 28, the Regimental S1 (chief of personnel) for the Headquarters and Service Company for the 75th Ranger Regiment, graduated from the U.S. Army Ranger Course Oct. 26, 2018 at Fort Benning, Georgia. Courtesy photo.***

path to serve with the 75th Ranger Regiment, was as the Battalion S1 for the "White Falcons," 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C.

Jaques was the first female Soldier to serve in 2-325th AIR.

"My battalion commanders and command sergeants major set me up for success and were the gateway into the Ranger Regiment. Col. Bradley Boyd and Command Sgt. Maj. Reese Teakell trained me as a Battalion S1 and

absolutely influenced my path to Ranger School,” Jaques said.

“After serving for more than a year in 2-325th AIR together, I came to know Capt. Jaques as a leader of extraordinary courage, tenacity, and a selfless dedication to service,” Teakell said. “She is the type of leader that drives through problems like a juggernaut, knows when to go through walls, over them, or when she can just go around them to get the job done.”

Teakell is currently the Command Sergeant Major of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division.

“I am super proud of Capt. Jaques,” Teakell added.

Jaques successfully completed the 75th Ranger Regiment’s Ranger Assessment and Selection Program 2 in December 2017 and was hired as the Regimental S1. She became the second female to serve in the 75th Ranger Regiment.

“I volunteered for the Ranger Regiment because I wanted to follow and serve with the best leaders in the Army,” Jaques said. “Several White Falcons leaders who influenced me during my time with 2-325 progressed to the Regiment. I wanted to continue working with the best leaders and serve the best Soldiers.”

Once on board at the Regiment, Jaques went into full swing in preparing for the U.S. Army Ranger Course.

She credits her success to the students she was in school with, to the non-commissioned officers who trained her for the course, and to her husband’s constant support.

“The support I’ve received, especially during and after Ranger School, has been overwhelming,” Jaques said. “I knew, while in the low points at school, that my leadership, family, the RS1 shop, and adjutant general officer community wanted me to succeed. And I wanted to see everyone around me succeed as well. It sounds a little cheesy, but I knew they expected me to go further, faster, and fight harder.”

The fear of failing Ranger School also motivated me,” she added. “I couldn’t imagine returning to work without my tab. I wanted to make sure we validate women can, and will, work here in the Regiment, and I really did not want to lose my job!”

I have to credit all of the students I had the pleasure of suffering with. We all got the full Ranger experience together, and some of those friendships will never fade,”

Jaques said.

“I got to spend invaluable time with Rangers from our line platoons and it motivates me to be a better RS1 knowing that I work for them.”

Jaques did a lot of self-reflection while attending Ranger School.

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*Don't think because you are different or you don't fit a certain mold that you won't fit in. Do not let this stop you from volunteering, The leadership at the Regiment wants and values diverse leaders with different experiences. If you are successful at your job and want to be among the best, the Regiment is where you want to strive to serve.*

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— Capt. Sidney Jaques

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“I kind of therapeutically used Ranger School to let go of hardships and challenges from my life that I kept carrying in my heart. They all prepared me for school, and I used them to help me keep going,” Jaques said.

Jaques highly encourages anyone who wants to excel in their

Army career to volunteer for the 75th Ranger Regiment.

“Don’t think because you are different or you don’t fit a certain mold that you won’t fit in. Do not let this stop you from volunteering,” Jaques said. “The leadership at the Regiment wants and values diverse leaders with different experiences. If you are successful at your job and want to be among the best, the Regiment is where you want to strive to serve.”



**Capt. Sidney Jaques receives her Ranger Tab after graduating from the U.S. Army Ranger Course Oct. 26, 2018 at Fort Benning, Ga. Courtesy photo.**

# Women in SOF: Modern day warriors

## Madigan remembers fallen Soldier 5 years later



By Joseph Jones  
Madigan Army Medical Center

October 6, 2018 marks the fifth year since Madigan Army Medical Center on Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington lost its only Soldier in combat in the war on terrorism. It was an attack that reportedly wounded 30 Army Rangers and killed a total of four Soldiers. Capt. Jennifer Moreno, a nurse at Madigan, died during the attack embodying a cornerstone of the Army values and a vital component of the Soldier's Creed: "I will never leave a fallen comrade."

On the evening of Oct. 5, 2013, Moreno and the other Soldiers of the regiment were performing a raid on an enemy bomb-making compound in the Zhari District of Afghanistan. It was there that a suicide bomber detonated an improvised explosive device. Following the explosion, other enemy insurgents activated more improvised explosives in what has widely been called a "deadly day" in the war on terror.

"Even at the end, Jenny was driven by her need to help, and the training she had as a nurse to help those in her unit at the end," said Jessica Rea, a registered nurse at Madigan who bonded with Moreno early in her career. "We miss her and her beautiful smile."

Moreno, who commissioned into the Army as a nurse and volunteered to deploy with a joint special operations task force as a Cultural Support Team member, went to the aid of another Soldier wounded in the attack. In an attempt to attend to her comrade, she stepped on a concealed landmine and was killed.

Ultimately, Moreno sacrificed her own life attempting to save others. It was Moreno's first deployment.

She was posthumously promoted to captain and awarded the Combat Action Badge, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Purple Heart, Afghanistan Campaign Medal and NATO Medal.



**Army Capt. Jenny Moreno geared up and ready to go. Moreno was a nurse who was deployed from Madigan Army Medical Center when she lost her life trying to attend to a fellow Soldier in Afghanistan in 2013. Courtesy U.S. Army photo.**

According to those who knew her, Moreno served her nation and died as a warrior, but is endearingly remembered by many at Madigan as "Jenny." Many of the colleagues and friends still at Madigan who worked with her in the "7 North" inpatient area of Madigan's hospital tower not only have fond memories of her but have taken steps to honor her legacy and share memories of the person that they knew with new generations of Madigan staff and visitors.

In addition to a large memorial stone bearing her likeness at Madigan's iconic pond of fountains, Madigan's 7 North section honors her with a carved wooden plaque and a wall-mounted display case adorned with images of

Moreno with her colleagues. It is apparent from the litany of pictures that Moreno was more than just a “co-worker” to her team at Madigan, but that there was a meaningful bond and camaraderie.

“You always wanted to have Jenny on your team because she was good under pressure and a willing and helpful teammate,” said Rea. “She was driven and loved being an Army officer and a nurse seeking out opportunities to grow in her knowledge and skills. To this day, we have patients, patients’

Family members, visitors and staff that come by the unit and read the memorial board. It is a daily reminder of why we are here to train the active-duty service members

to be ready to care for those in a war-time mission.”

Madigan nurse Elizabeth Edgecombe echoed Rea's sentiments regarding Moreno.

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*My special memory of Jenny was her beautiful smile. She would have that smile no matter what was going on. She would always kid me. She was courteous and kind to all people she encountered in life. She was a positive influence on many people. She was also very enthusiastic about growing in her career. The day she left this earth, a great void was left but at same time her legacy carries on. What a blessing and honor it was to know Capt. Jennifer Moreno.*

— Elizabeth Edgecombe

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“My special memory of Jenny was her beautiful smile. She would have that smile no matter what was going on. She would always kid me. She was courteous and kind to all people she encountered in life. She was a positive influence on many people. She was also very enthusiastic about growing in her career. The day she left this earth, a great void

was left but at the same time her legacy carries on. What a blessing and honor it was to know Capt. Jennifer Moreno,” said Edgecombe.



The memorial display for Capt. Jenny Moreno, a nurse who was deployed from Madigan Army Medical Center, Joint Base Lewis McChord, when she lost her life trying to attend to a fellow Soldier in Afghanistan in 2013. Courtesy U.S. Army photo.

# Women in SOF: Modern day warriors Cultural Support Teams



*A U.S. Army Cultural Support Team member from Special Operations Task Force - East interacts with Afghan children in a village in the Kunar District. Cultural Support Teams are comprised of female Soldiers who are trained to support U.S. Army Special Operations Forces such as Special Forces. Their primary role is to engage with the local female and adolescent population present at ARSOF objectives, in scenarios where such engagement would be culturally unacceptable for the male ARSOF Soldiers to perform. CST operators receive training in soldier survivability, operational orientation, general and regional culture, engagement, face-to-face communication, civil reconnaissance and tactical information collection. CST members also receive training in fast-rope insertion. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Patricia Caputo.*



*Women in SOF:*  
*Modern day warriors*  
**Jumping HALO**





*Navy Lt. Michaela Bilotta performs a high-altitude low-opening parachute jump. Bilotta is an explosive ordnance disposal officer and graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 2013 with a Bachelor of Science in English. From December 2017 to March 2018, Bilotta deployed to Syria, supporting Special Operations Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve as an EOD Supervisor assigned to 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne). Her team conducted more than 1,000 kilometers of U.S. presence patrols throughout Northern Syria, ensuring freedom of movement for USSOF and Syrian Democratic Forces combating the Islamic State. Bilotta spearheaded the safe clearance, exploitation, and disposal of 4,000 lbs of ISIS improvised explosive devices, homemade explosives, and explosive remnants of war. She was awarded the Bronze Star and Navy Commendation Medal for her work in Syria. Bilotta currently serves as a platoon commander at EOD Mobile Unit 12 at Little Creek, Va. Naval Special Warfare Command courtesy photo.*

# Women in SOF: Modern day warriors



## First female Air Commando senior leader selected for International Women's Day TED Salon Talk

By AFSOC Public Affairs

Colonel Brenda Cartier, the first female Air Commando to serve as a senior leader, was selected to represent the Air Force on the TED Salon stage in their production titled "Imagine If." Public release of her talk was on International Women's Day, March 8th, in over 100 languages to more than 150 countries.

"At 30 days into preparation for the TED Salon event, I was at version 20 of my talk and finished at version 36. It was a grueling and rewarding experience through which I grew and explored the impact of my last 27 years in special operations from the fresh perspective of TED's award-winning, all-civilian team of exceptional professionals. While

living our lives, we can choose to grasp the opportunity to contribute to the path being built for those coming up ahead of us. The honor of speaking on that stage was one of the bricks on that path, one of several I am happy to offer to our future understanding."

One may imagine that gender stereotypes are constraining for women in the military, but Cartier claims to be a better leader for it. While preparing for her talk, she explored how being a woman fits within the boundaries of the inherent associations of men, military combat and masculinity. She also explained how her

training to think like an Air Commando guided her through years of development into a senior leader serving the male-dominated professions of special operations.

"In combat, it does not matter whether you are a man or a woman as long as you can deliver violence against an adversary;



Col. Brenda Cartier

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*In combat, it does not matter whether you are a man or a woman as long as you can deliver violence against an adversary; this is something that my fellow female Air Commandos and myself have proven we are capable of and willing to do hundreds of times over.*

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— Col. Brenda Cartier

this is something that my fellow female Air Commandos and myself have proven we are capable of and willing to do hundreds of times over," says Cartier. "Where gender does matter, and being a woman in traditionally male professions does make a difference, is in mentorship, leadership and promotion practices."

"There's no better person to speak to breaking barriers, building bridges, and how being a woman fits within the boundaries of the inherent association amongst men, military combat and masculinity, than Brenda Cartier," said Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, commander of Air

Force Special Operations Command.

Cartier joined the Air Force when it was impossible for a female to serve as director of operations. Following the 1993 Congressional ban repeal on female service in combat aircraft, she was one of the first women in the U.S. Air Force to fly combat missions. Once given the opportunity, she excelled in combat and went on to command the 4th Special Operations Squadron, the 1st Expeditionary Special Operations Group and the 58th Special Operations Wing. She is a command navigator with more than 4,000 hours in seven different aircraft and has flown combat missions in Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. She is currently responsible for implementing and directing operational command policy for AFSOC's worldwide special operations units including over 19,000 personnel, 237 aircraft, and \$16 billion in assets.

"As Army, Marine and Navy special operations forces integrate women into all-male units, I encourage the other services to consider the senior female leaders in AFSOC that can help them pave the way, to serve as mentors and take on leadership roles," Cartier pointed out, "Many of us had to imagine what it would be like to get where we wanted to go, because there was no one like us to model our dreams after. I had to be excited

about the challenges and possibilities." She went on to say she had to use her imagination daily, not only as a woman in traditionally masculine territory, but also to get her mission done.

"Being a woman matters, just not always in the way that one may first imagine," shared Cartier on the TED stage as she recounted a story from her time as the 1st ESOG commander in Afghanistan. Shortly after returning from a mission with many dead and injured, a combat controller and one of the only survivors of the mission walked off the back of the aircraft and came to her emotionally unraveled with the confession of, "I don't know what to do."

In TED's words, 'When our imagination is engaged, we dare to break barriers, build bridges and create a world we all want to live in.' Today's security environment demands that well-rounded and imaginative leader. In closing, Cartier explained, "Each leadership opportunity requires of us to be able to pull from a suite of emotional and professional experiences to appropriately equip and provide for our people. This arsenal is filled with neither masculine nor feminine characteristics alone. We can and must have both; particularly so in today's business of combat."



**Col. Brenda Cartier, AFSOC director of operations and assessments, was selected to represent the U.S. Air Force on the TED Salon stage for their International Womens Day "Imagine If" special that premiered March 8. Her focus was women in combat. She also coins the term "Precision Guided Masculinity" in leadership. Courtesy photo.**

# Women in SOF: Modern day warriors



*Lt. Col. Allison Black became the first woman in her special ops navigator field. Now younger generations of Airmen can take the same path while embarking on their own journey in the Air Force. Photo by Master Sgt. Jeffrey Allen.*



## The path

*How one female special ops navigator cleared the path dozens now fly*

*By U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. David Salanitri  
Airman Magazine*

Under the cover of night, then-1st Lt. Allison Black left her tent in Uzbekistan to walk to a preflight brief. Hours later, she'd be making history.

On this November night in 2001, the United States was hoping to bring to justice those responsible for the attacks two months earlier in New York City and Pennsylvania, and at the Pentagon.

Flying over the skies of Afghanistan, Black, who is now a lieutenant colonel and assigned to U.S. Special Operations Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida was the navigator on the AC-130H Spectre. As the navigator, she was charged with several duties, one of which was to be the single voice communicating from the aircraft to troops on the ground.

As the gunship fired everything it had upon the Taliban, expending 400 40 mm rounds and 100 105 mm

rounds, the Northern Alliance leader, Gen. Abdurrashid Dostum (often referred in the media and around camp fires as "Dostum the Taliban killer") heard Black's voice communicating to the joint terminal attack controller on the ground to better understand where rounds need to be fired.

"He heard my voice and asked the special ops guys 'Is that a woman?' and they said 'Yeah, it is,'" Black recalled. "He couldn't believe it. So he's laughing and says, 'America is so determined, they've brought their women to kill Taliban.' He calls the guys we're shooting and says 'You guys need to surrender now. American women are killing you ... you need to surrender now.'"

The morning after that first mission, those remaining Taliban members surrendered.

"My first combat mission began the collapse of Taliban in the north," said Black, who became the first female to be awarded the Air Force Combat Action Medal.

This operation would have looked different in 1992.

**Tip of the Spear**

### Challenge accepted

When Black joined the Air Force in 1992, females weren't allowed to fly combat missions. That didn't change until 1993, as the Air Force opened all but less than 1 percent of career fields to women, with the remainder scheduled to open up by early 2016.

At just over 5 feet tall, the Long Island, New York, native seeks and embraces challenges and doesn't play for second place — a mindset that led her to the Air Force.

"The Air Force seemed to be the hardest service to get into. That got my attention," Black said. Arriving at basic military training as an enlisted Airman, she was guaranteed a job in the medical career field. But her plans changed when a survival, evasion, resistance and escape specialist briefed Black's flight on his career field and challenged the group of trainees to join SERE.

"I didn't know how to chop down a tree, didn't know how to kill a rabbit, didn't know how to set a snare, but I was willing," Black said. "It sounded challenging."

After more than four years as a SERE instructor, including time as an arctic survival instructor, Black wanted another challenge.

Upon finishing her degree, Black earned a commission as a second lieutenant and headed off to become a navigator — a career field available on several airframes, including bombers and fighters.

There was just one airframe Black wanted: the gunship — specifically, the AC-130H gunship — so she could be on the main flight deck with the pilot, right in the thick of things.

But becoming an Airman, a SERE specialist, an officer and a navigator wasn't enough — she wanted to join the elite Air Force Special Operations Command.

"It was exciting. It's special operations command. You're in a small force, asked to do tough missions — missions that operate in the gray," Black said.

Black didn't realize it at the time, but when she arrived at the 16th Special Operations Squadron, then stationed at Hurlburt Field, she became the first female navigator in that unit and on the AC-130H.

"The thought of being the first was the furthest thing on my mind," she said. "At that time, I was so focused on being really good at my job and not letting any naysayers get in my way."

Not only was the milestone the furthest thing from her

mind, but it was also something she didn't want to be on anyone else's mind either.

"I wasn't trying to change anyone's opinion on whether I should or shouldn't be in a job," Black said. "I wanted to be an asset. I wanted to be sought after. I wanted to be really good at what I did. I didn't want to come in second; I wanted to be first."

### Each person defines success differently

Black doesn't define success by the medals on her chest or the oak sleeves on her shoulders.

"By not trying to make a statement, I think I found success. I didn't have an agenda. I didn't join the Air Force, I didn't join SERE, and I didn't join AFSOC to prove that women can do a job," Black said. "I joined all those things because of the challenge and the career field and the sexy mission. And I just happen to be a woman doing it. And, fortunately, because of my successes, it brought more visibility to 'Hey, it doesn't matter if it's a guy or a girl.'"

### Paying it forward

"It wasn't until years later ... when I'd have young female or male Airmen tell me that my story was inspiring, that hearing what I was able to do in AFSOC gave them the confidence to raise their hands and go forward. It was humbling," Black said.

Black remembers vividly a point in her

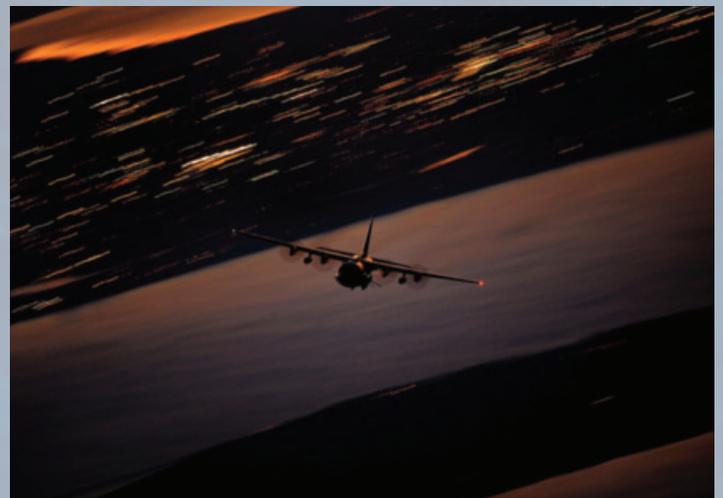
career where it was clear that she needed to pay it forward. *(Story continues on next page)*

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*I wasn't trying to change anyone's opinion on whether I should or shouldn't be in a job. I wanted to be an asset. I wanted to be sought after. I wanted to be really good at what I did. I didn't want to come in second; I wanted to be first.*

— Lt. Col. Allison Black

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AC-130U Gunship. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Jeremy T. Lock.

# Women in SOF: Modern day warriors



After a speech to members from base, a female senior airman approached her and referenced the part of the presentation when Black said it has been possible to mother children while also being an Airman. The senior airman was about to get out of the Air Force because she didn't have anyone telling her the same thing.

"She's a senior master sergeant now, and we still keep in contact," Black said.

Seeing these tangible results from telling her story, Black began to reach out even more.

"It's second and third order effect that just at the virtue of me doing my job, it highlighted that women can succeed. It highlighted the opportunity for women: 'Hey you're going to be accepted. They're going to respect what you bring to the fight,'" Black said.

When she arrived at AFSOC, she didn't have a cadre of female navigators to offer her mentorship. What she did have were those she refers to as her everything: her husband, Ryan, who was also a SERE instructor, and a supply of male mentors who were all willing to help a teammate grow, regardless of which bathroom stall they use.

"All of the gentlemen I've worked for have equipped me with the skills to be a good leader. They gave me that opportunity to shine and to step up," she said. "You're judged on game day. You can practice every day of the week, but it's what you do on Sunday that counts. And I don't believe in 'Everyone gets a trophy.'"

## **A new generation**

When Black joined the Air Force in 1992, her options looked a lot different than they do for female Airmen today. However, because of her success and the success of many others like her, there are more options in the Air Force for females than in any other service.

This success gave people like 1st Lt. Margaret Courtney many options and paths to walk — or even fly.

Just over two years ago, Courtney had the world on a string, with options in droves. The Baylor University graduate, who majored in neuroscience, managed to pass the Law School Admission Test while working at a mental health institution helping to rehabilitate individuals with drug dependencies. Her potential career paths were in no way limited.

But she wanted more. She wanted a bigger challenge



**1st Lt. Margaret Courtney graduated Baylor University with a degree in neuroscience and later passed the Law School Admission Test, but chose to join the Air Force and become an AC-130 Gunship navigator. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Jeffrey Allen.**

even than graduating with a neuroscience degree and going to law school.

After talking to recruiters from three different branches of the military, and after pinging several friends and family members, Courtney noticed a trend.

"It's funny — everyone who wasn't in the Air Force recommended the Air Force," Courtney said.

After commissioning as an officer and going through training to become a navigator, Courtney faced a decision — what airframe did she want to work on for the remainder of her Air Force career?

"I remember going through (navigator) training, and there are several airframes that require (combat systems officers). You're going through those aircraft and imagining your life three to 10 years down the road," Courtney said. "How different would my life look if I joined this community or that community?"

The number of opportunities the Air Force has given Courtney caught her off guard.

"It's not too bad to be in your young 20's and have

basically limitless possibilities laid out in front of you. I'm like 'Goodness gracious, let me look into it all,'" Courtney said. "I feel like I'm hitting this whole job and career at the sweet spot. I've had plenty of people ahead of me pave the way."

Knowing what's ahead for Courtney, Black is excited, and almost proud of the options female Airmen now have.

"It's exciting — hearing about Lieutenant Courtney," Black said. "I can't help but to reflect on when I was a lieutenant and how excited I was to come to the mission, then, after 9/11, to go and fight. I'm excited for her, because I know she's going to find the reward."

Black doesn't just see the past and the present, but the future keeps her motivation high, knowing the possibilities now out there for females in the Air Force.

"The success is that we don't hear about it because they're blended in," Black said of current female aircrew members. "They're just people doing great things — male and female. That's success."

When Black arrived at Hurlburt in 2000, she was wide-eyed and ready to take on the world. She saw a fork in the road and committed to a direction, not knowing the path. Now that she's traveled that path, she feels she has a responsibility to people like Courtney and other female Airmen.

"She doesn't know what she doesn't know," said Black of Courtney, who's even more wide-eyed than the prior-enlisted Black was at this stage in her AFSOC career.

"That's where people like me come in," said Lt. Col. Megan Ripple is the director of (operations) at the 4th

Special Operations Squadron. We arrived here at Hurlburt together. We are taking the initiative to reach out to these women to prepare them for deployment, to teach them all the things we didn't know."

Considering Courtney's only job up until this point has been to learn and receive training, she's growing more and more excited to fly this new path.

"I'm still trying to figure out how everything works," said Courtney, who was recently assigned to the 4th SOS. I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. I can't wait to actually partake in it, and do what I've been training for. They want you to learn, they want you to train; they want to set you up for success. No one really cares where you've come from, what your rank is. They care about how much work you put into your job every day. If you're competent and put forth the work, you get rewarded."

Though there are some years between Black and Courtney, they noted a common mentality present when they joined the AFSOC community.

"I haven't noticed if anyone cares about me being a girl or not," Courtney said. "They care about how good you are at what you do, and if you care or not, and if you take pride in your work."

Letting your work speak for itself is a welcome reality for Courtney.

"It's definitely a relief that you're judged based on the quality of your work, and nothing else," Courtney said, pointing out that the impact of the mission is way too important to care about the irrelevant. "AFSOC is pretty open about it. The game we play is life or death."

**AC-130U Gunship. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Julianne Showalter.**



# Women in SOF: Modern day warriors



## SOST emergency medicine physician named to SOMA board

By U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Victor Caputo  
24th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs

A Special Operations Surgical Team member was recently elected to the board of the Special Operations Medical Association.

Maj. Regan Lyon, 720th Operations Support Squadron SOST emergency medicine physician, was named board member at-large on the board of directors, where she will be involved in the multiple projects and SOMA committees.

“Having this opportunity to sit on the board and influence operational medicine, which is truly what I feel is what I was meant to do, is an absolute honor,” said Lyon.

Special Operations Surgical Teams are highly trained medical professionals with the skills and equipment to fully function in austere and complex environments, providing advanced combat casualty care within minutes of a sustained injury, saving lives and providing psychological stability for the warfighter.

### A long time coming

Lyon decided in high school that she would become a doctor. She never once thought about going into a civilian practice, however, considering she split her childhood between her father, who retired from the Air Force shortly before she was born, and her mother, who served on active duty during Lyon’s childhood and teenage years before retiring.

She began her educational journey at Texas A&M University in 2002 and decided to specialize in emergency medicine during medical school. Lyon went to the Air Force’s flight medicine course during medical school given her interest in operational medicine. After residency, with flight medicine and emergency medicine training and her interest in operational medicine, she became the flight doctor for the 21st Special Tactics Squadron at Pope Field, North Carolina. While at Pope,

she volunteered to fill a spot as the flight surgeon and medical director for pararescuemen in the 83rd Expeditionary Rescue Squadron; it was on this deployment that she had her first direct experience with a SOST.

“I was with (the SOST) for almost 14 days, out in the middle of nowhere, and we brought our own electricity, had no running water and I thought it was the most awesome thing ever,” said Lyon. “It was everything I had ever dreamed of and more.”

Upon her return from the deployment, Lyon was determined to join a SOST and dropped every career plan she had been working on. She discussed her plan with her peers, superiors, and mentors, and reached out to anyone who could help make her dream reality, and finally landed it as her follow-on assignment out of Osan Air Base, South Korea.

After reporting to the SOST, Lyon hit the ground running and deployed with her team overseas within a year of arriving at Hurlburt Field and completing her additional training.

“I know that I’m doing all the training for a reason, and (after) going on the deployment and experiencing the things I did, I know the training is beneficial; it’s not just training to train,” she said. “It was (during this deployment) that my team started to realize we were truly (revolutionizing) in military medicine with the things we were doing with very limited resources.”



Maj. Regan Lyon. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Victor Caputo.

The wealth of experience and knowledge Lyon brings to her team played a huge part in their success while overseas, increasing both the team's and patients' confidence in their skills.

"On our last deployment, we only had one day that we saw no patients," said Maj. Marc Northern, 720th OSS SOST surgeon. "Maj. Lyon worked tirelessly every day, with constant dedication to her patients. Her confident ability to calmly lead patient triage in the most chaotic environments, including 31 mass casualty events and 53 emergent walking blood drives, and to assist with numerous surgical procedures was a force multiplier critical to the entire team's success in saving lives. I had complete confidence in her patient evaluation, her resuscitative skills, and her technical ability to perform rapid invasive procedures."

Even beyond her technical expertise and level-headedness in the face of life-or-death situations, it's Lyon's heart that truly sets her apart.

"Her selection to SOMA board is very well deserved," said Northern. "Her endless compassion and dedication to her patients in the most strenuous of circumstances demonstrate the highest qualities of her character, and she has the selfless leadership skill and motivation to continue to pursue the progress of special operations medicine. The SOMA board will find her knowledge and experience in combat casualty care to be both extremely relevant and valuable."

### SOMA

According to their website, SOMA is the only medical association in the world that brings together a unique blend of pre-hospital, tactical, wilderness, austere, disaster and deployed medicine. Their goal is to advance the art and science of special operations medical care through education and professional development of special operations medical providers, while providing a forum for military and civilian medical providers, academia and industry from around the world to meet and exchange ideas.

Lyon has been a SOMA member since her time with the 21st STS, but recently decided to jump in the fray by becoming a board member. She put together a nomination package, submitted it and pushed the elections out of her mind until she received her voting ballot and saw the competition.

"I thought, 'I am literally making a joke out of myself by putting my name in the hat,' but okay, we'll see in a few weeks," she said. "I'm just ecstatic that I'm getting the experience right now. My plan is to stay involved with special operations medicine as long as possible, or as long as I'm relevant."

Her member-at-large position gives Lyon a platform

that reaches outside of the Air Force medical world, allowing her to learn about practices and theories with her counterparts in the other U.S. military branches in addition to civilian medical professionals while passing on her unique, cutting-edge experiences.

"Regan's contributions to trauma medicine have been recognized on the world stage," said Northern. "At a recent trauma and vascular surgery conference in Europe, her publications and contributions were lauded multiple times. Military and civilian providers from numerous European, Asian, and African countries are building on her unique operational experiences. The placement of (the Resuscitative Endovascular Balloon Occlusion of the Aorta) as an Emergency Physician for hemorrhage control is a model for how civilian trauma teams could function in the civilian environment."

Northern claims the international community recognizes the merit of Lyon's achievements and how she is an example of teamwork making the difference in life-or-death situations.

"She has brought cutting edge medicine to the most remote places in the world, and has saved the lives of hundreds of her patients," he said.

Lyon views her role with SOMA as a natural extension of her life's work, providing her the opportunity to give back to her community.

"I'm doing what I feel I was born to do and what really makes me tick," she said.



**Maj. Regan Lyon, a Special Operations Surgical Team emergency medical physician with the 720th Operations Support Squadron, greets Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson at Hurlburt Field, Fla., May 3, 2018. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Victor Caputo.**

# Women in SOF: Modern day warriors **Piloting the Predator**



*A MQ-1 Predator pilot stands next to her aircraft. The MQ-1 Predator is an armed, multi-mission, medium-altitude, long-endurance remotely piloted aircraft employed primarily as an intelligence-collection asset and secondarily against dynamic execution targets. The MQ-1's capabilities make it uniquely qualified to conduct irregular warfare operations in support of combatant commander objectives. AFSOC courtesy photo.*



# Women in SOF: Modern Day Warriors



## First Homeland Security Agent graduates from Joint Special Operations Senior Enlisted Academy

*By Michael Bottoms  
USSOCOM Office of Communication*

Aviation Enforcement Agent Kristina Fonzi became the first U.S. Department of Homeland Security Federal Agent and interagency member to graduate from the Joint Special Operations Senior Enlisted Academy March 17, 2017 on MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. The opportunity to attend JSOFSEA happened just by chance.

“I knew nothing about JSOFSEA prior to seeing the announcement come across e-mail at my workplace. Being prior military, as well as someone who works in a joint environment, this course piqued my interest,” Fonzi said. “I submitted my resume along with a letter of recommendation from one of my supervisors and a letter of endorsement from my director. I don’t know the exact reasons why they selected me but I have a pretty solid resume with a background in training, operations, and schedules as a leading petty officer in each department.”

The Jacksonville native spent ten years on active duty in the Navy as an electronic systems warfare operator flying on board the P-3 Orion. She served as an active instructor and a leading petty officer traveling around the fleet teaching weapons and tactics. Before leaving the Navy she earned a bachelor’s degree from Southern Illinois University in workforce education and development.

Today, Fonzi has been attached to the National Air Security Operations Center-Jacksonville since 2010. She worked as a detection enforcement officer providing surveillance, and gathering intelligence for interagency, intergovernmental, multinational components fighting against illicit drug and contraband smuggling from South and Central America to include the Caribbean. Upon graduation from JSOFSEA she is scheduled to be a



**Aviation Enforcement Agent Kristina Fonzi became the first Department of Homeland Security federal agent to graduate from the Joint Special Operations Senior Enlisted Academy, March 17, 2017 on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. JSOFSEA is nominative-only and is 35-weeks long broken up in two phases. Phase one is completed online and is 26-weeks long while phase two is 9 weeks and taken in-residence. Course topics are divided into six components and focuses on joint, special operations forces senior-noncommissioned leadership principles, as well as how Department of Defense and the other government departments function in defending the United States. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.**

liaison at the Joint Interagency Task Force – South.

“My favorite part of the course was the joint interagency, intergovernmental and multinational curriculum,” said Fonzi. “I learned so much about my own organization as well as Department of Defense and the State Department and how they interact. I am really going to take that part of the course back with me and apply what I have learned.”

JSOFSEA is nominative-only and is 35-weeks long

broken up in two phases. Phase one is completed online and is 26-weeks long while phase two is 9 weeks and taken in-residence. Course topics are divided into six components and focuses on joint, special operations forces

senior-noncommissioned leadership principles, as well as how DoD and the other government departments function in defending the United States. The academy wants more interagency students to attend.

“Agent Fonzi is the first interagency member to graduate from our course and she is a real milestone for us,” said William Howell, director of distance learning, Joint Special Operations Senior Enlisted Academy. “Now our goal is to build upon her achievement and get four

interagency students per course.”

Fonzi thinks the academy classes would be very useful to prospective students from the interagency, especially for those who are seeking career development.

“My organization, ultimately DHS and its components, were created for the purpose of bringing the different departments together in order to never let another 9/11 happen again,” Fonzi said. “Now I know that all of us ultimately have the same goals, to keep our nation, its people and interests safe. We all have our part and just as I have a tremendous amount of

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— Aviation Enforcement Agent Kristina Fonzi

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respect for what SOF does, I hope to think that they also see what I'm doing and we can find ways to work together to be more successful.”



Aviation Enforcement Agent Kristina Fonzi receives her diploma from the Joint Special Operations Senior Enlisted Academy March 17, 2017 on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. Fonzi became the first Department of Homeland Security federal agent to graduate from JSOFSEA. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.



GILBERT ALANZ (B)	RALPH L. THOMPSON	WESLEY B. AN. DAVID	ALAN C. BRY
SMO PVT USA 880125	SMO CPT USA 810120	SMO PVT USA 840922	SMO CPT USA 8
JANCESS	WILLIAM C. HAYES	ROBERT A. BRADMAN	



**U.S. Air Force**  
**1st Lt. Tamara L. Archuleta**  
**41st Rescue Squadron**  
**March 23, 2003 - Afghanistan**



**U.S. Army**  
**Spc. Nichole M. Frye**  
**415th Civil Affairs Battalion**  
**Feb. 16, 2004 - Iraq**



**U.S. Army**  
**Spc. Julia R. Hickey**  
**401st Civil Affairs Battalion**  
**July 4, 2004 - Iraq**



**U.S. Army**  
**Sgt. 1st Class Merideth L. Howard**  
**405th Civil Affairs Battalion**  
**Sept. 8, 2006 - Afghanistan**



**U.S. Navy**  
**Chief Petty Officer Shannon M. Kent**  
**Cryptologic Warfare Activity 66**  
**Jan. 16, 2019 - Syria**



**U.S. Army**  
**Capt. Jennifer M. Moreno**  
**In support of the 75th Ranger Regiment**  
**Oct. 6, 2013 - Afghanistan**



**U.S. Army**  
**Sgt. Regina C. Reali**  
**448th Civil Affairs Battalion**  
**Dec. 23, 2005 - Iraq**



**U.S. Air Force**  
**Staff Sgt. Anissa A. Shero**  
**15th Special Operations Squadron**  
**June 12, 2002 - Afghanistan**



**U.S. Army**  
**Sgt. Jalisha V. Tucker**  
**3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne)**  
**Oct. 24, 2016 - North Carolina**



**U.S. Army**  
**1st Lt. Ashley White**  
**Headquarters USASOC**  
**Oct. 22, 2011 - Afghanistan**

*Editor's note: Honored are the women who served with special operations forces and who lost their lives since the attack on Sept. 11, 2001.*



Senior Airman Maggie Jakaitis, an aerospace propulsion journeyman with the 1st Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, safety wires a fuel nozzle on an AC-130U Spooky gunship at Hurlburt Field, Fla., July 6, 2017. Aerospace propulsion technicians test, maintain and repair AC-130U engines, preparing them to execute the mission any time, any place. Photo by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Rachel Yates.