



# Tip OF THE Spear

United States Special Operations Command  
MacDill Air Force Base, Florida

February 2018

**FIRST TO GO: GREEN BERETS  
REMINISCE ABOUT EARLIEST  
MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN**





# U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



## Tip of the Spear

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*(Cover) Starting Oct. 19, 2001, 12-man Special Forces detachments from the U.S. Army Special Operations Command's 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) began arriving in Afghanistan in the middle of the night, transported by aviators from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Battalion (Airborne). They were the first ground Soldiers of the war on terrorism following 9-11 and their mission was to destroy the Taliban regime and deny Al-Qaida sanctuary in Afghanistan. Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Special Operations Command.*

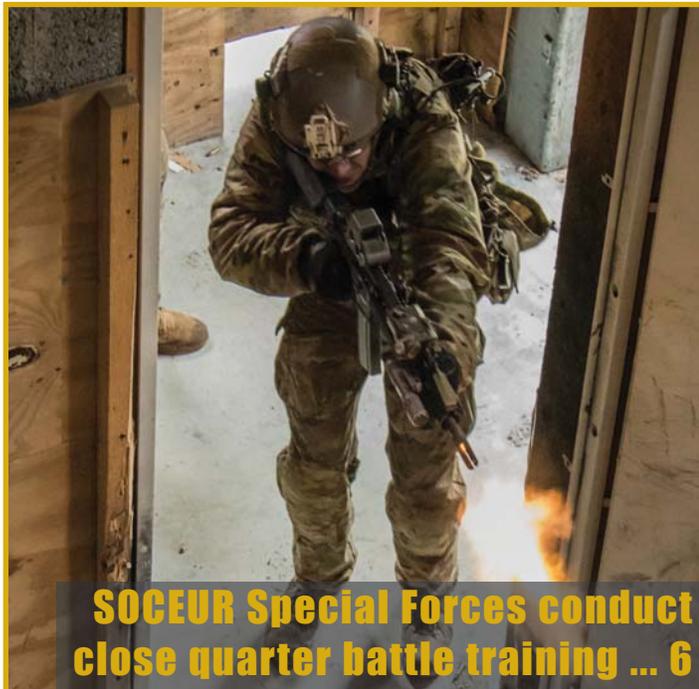
**Tip of the Spear**



Thomas Jefferson  
Award Winner

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## SOF AROUND THE WORLD SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – PACIFIC



Members of the partnered Thai Provincial Police and Royal Thai Border Police joined members of 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) to remember Staff Sgt. Wallace Grubbs, Jan. 5, in Thailand. This was the 50th anniversary of Grubbs' tragic death while training Thai security forces Jan. 6, 1968. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Christopher Harper.

# Special Forces nourishes legacy, remembers Staff Sgt. Wallace Gumbs

*By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Christopher Harper  
1st Special Forces Group (Airborne)*

Staff Sgt. Wallace Gumbs, a Green Beret, was killed Jan. 6, 1968, during a demolitions training accident while training rural Thai Provincial Police units during a U.S. Special Forces led counterinsurgency operations course in Camp Chaw Haw, Korat, Thailand. Gumbs' memorial was erected shortly after his untimely death by the Camp Chaw Haw Commander, Police Maj. Gen. Chookiat Partipasaen in 1968.

Since that time, and every year, the partnered Thai Provincial Police, local members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Special Forces Association, and any active duty 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) members in the country, make their way to the memorial and honor Gumbs' sacrifice and legacy.

On Jan. 5, members from the 1st SFG (A) and partnered forces in Thailand commemorated the 50th anniversary of Gumbs' tragic death.

"This year marked 50 years and we thought it fitting

to highlight his service to the Thai people, his nation and recognize his service as a member of the 46th Special Forces Company, 1st SFG (A) has made to the Kingdom of Thailand," said Col. Larry Redmon, U.S. Army attaché to Thailand and former 1st SFG (A) officer.

Redmon presided over the ceremony and presented a wreath on behalf of the 1st SFG (A) commander.

"The 50th anniversary commemorating the untimely death of Staff Sgt. Gumbs in 1968 was special because it reinforced to Staff Sgt. Gumbs' friends, family, and fellow veterans that the 1st Special Forces Group has not forgotten our brother or his sacrifice, but also was special for the Thai community and police because it also showed that we haven't forgotten a time when we walked hand in hand as brothers against a common enemy during a difficult period of time in Thailand's history," Redmon said.

Deputy Chief of Mission Peter Haymond delivered remarks on behalf the U.S. Embassy and laid a wreath at the memorial. The local Special Forces Association Chapter President retired Lt. Col. Lumpy Lumbaba and

Lt. Col. Michael Lazich, Special Operations Forces Advisor, also attended.

“It was an honor to take part in such a special event and represent our Special Forces brotherhood,” Lazich said. “As I looked at the historical photo of Staff Sgt. Gumbs on display, standing not far from the spot of his memorial in Korat, I also thought about the numerous U.S. Special Forces Operational Detachment Alphas that come to Thailand now, and how connected we all remain to the mission, people, and legacy.”

Representatives from the partnered Thai forces joined in honoring Gumbs’ sacrifice and highlighting the enduring relationship developed over the 50 years since.

Royal Thai Border Police Maj. Gen. Phairot Mangkhala and Police Maj. Gen. Kornake Pethchaiyaweth, deputy commissioner of Border Patrol Police Bureau, attended and paid their respects with a wreath. The Royal Thai Police provided an honor guard

and played taps for the ceremony.

When Gumbs died, he was one of the main instructors at Chaw Haw. He had served in Vietnam and already had served in several other locations throughout Thailand training with police and army units. He was recognized as an expert instructor and was one of the architects of the training course developed for the Royal Thai Police.

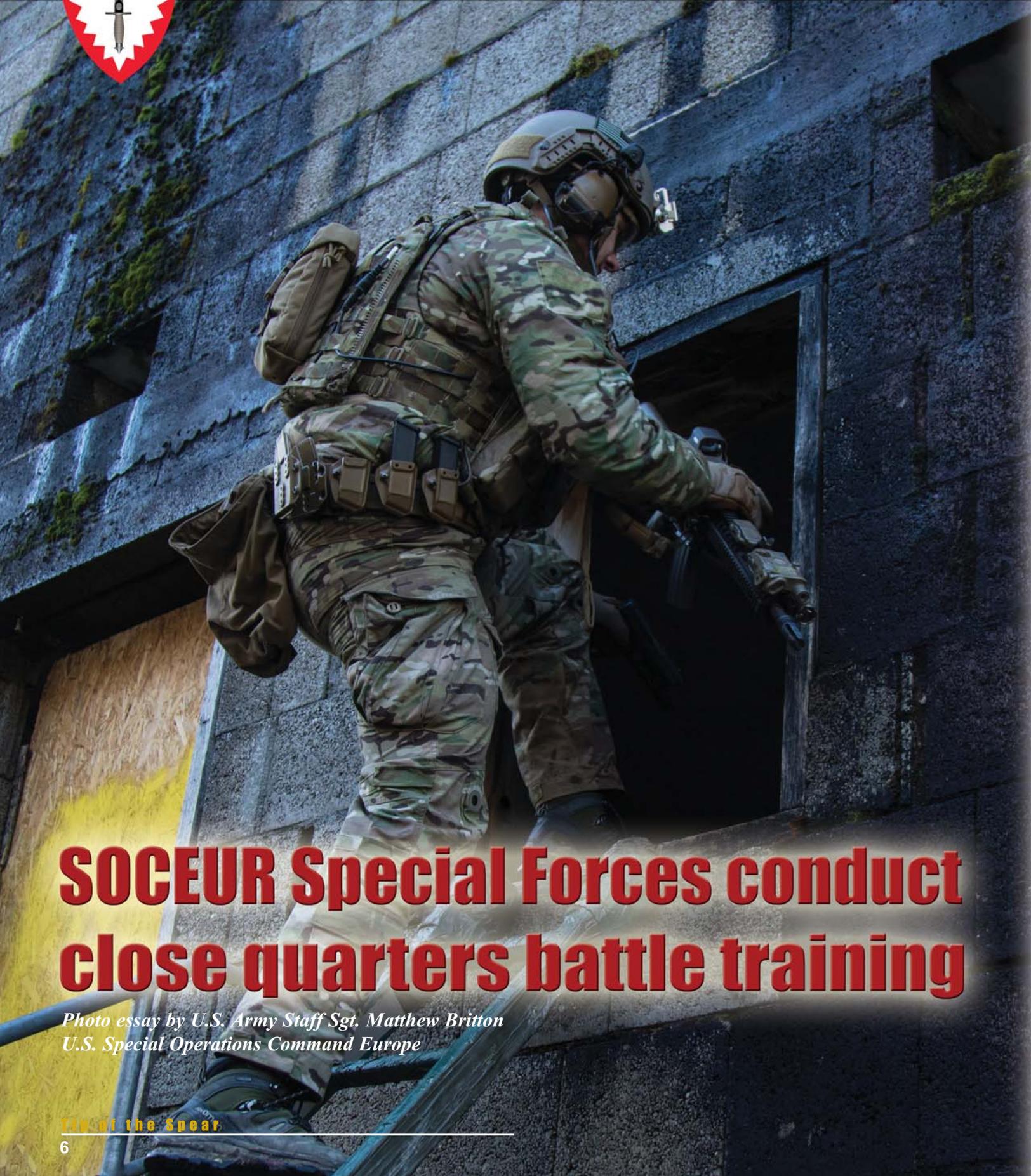
“First in Asia is more than just a motto, it’s fact,” Redmon said. “The 1st SFG (A) draws much of its lineage from its service and history in Asia, and much of it right here in Thailand, from Office of Strategic Services detachments in Burma and Siam, to the 46th Company’s service in Thailand, right up until the present day. The Green Beret and 1st SFG (A) flash are a recognized symbol of America’s greatness and steadfast dedication to safeguarding and protecting our Allies and friends in the region.”



*Green Berets representing 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) flanked by members of the Thai Provincial Police and Royal Thai Border Police, placed a wreath at the memorial for Staff Sgt. Wallace Grubs, Jan 5. “This year marked 50 years and we thought it fitting to highlight his service to the Thai people, his nation and recognize his service as a member of the 46th Special Forces Company, 1st SFG (A) has made to the Kingdom of Thailand,” said Col. Larry Redmon, U.S. Army attaché to Thailand and former 1st SFG (A) officer. Representatives from the partnered Thai forces joined in honoring Gumbs’ sacrifice and highlighting the enduring relationship developed over the 50 years since his death Jan. 8, 1968. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Christopher Harper.*



**SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – EUROPE**



# **SOCEUR Special Forces conduct close quarters battle training**

*Photo essay by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Matthew Britton  
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe*



*(Above) A U.S. Special Forces Soldier clears a room during close quarters battle training at Panzer Kaserne, Germany, Nov. 27, 2017. This was part of a month-long training event that finished with a culminating exercise and real-world scenarios.*

*(Opposite page) A U.S. Special Forces Soldier conducts building entry using ladders on Panzer Kaserne, Germany, Nov. 27, 2017.*



*U.S. Special Forces Soldiers prepare to clear rooms during close quarters battle training at Panzer Kaserne, Germany, Nov. 27, 2017.*



*U.S. Special Forces Soldiers provide medical care to a simulated casualty during a training event at Panzer Kaserne, Germany, Nov. 30, 2017.*



*U.S. Special Forces Soldiers conduct a vehicle movement during a training event at Panzer Kaserne, Germany, Nov. 30, 2017.*



# First to go: Green Berets reminisce about earliest mission in Afghanistan

By Elizabeth M. Collins  
U.S. Army Public Affairs

The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania sent shock waves throughout the world. While the tragedy prompted responses of love and comfort, it also inspired a sense of resolve and retribution. In fact, the sun hadn't even set on the smoldering ruins of the World Trade Center when the Central Intelligence Agency, the U.S. military and U.S. Army Special Operations Command began planning a response. They would rain fire on the terrorists who had claimed the lives of thousands of innocent Americans, and on the brutal regime in Afghanistan that had sheltered them.

## TASK FORCE DAGGER

It was soon clear that the initial operation, named Task Force Dagger, would involve bomb drops and small teams of special operators who would link up with local warlords and resistance fighters known collectively as the Northern Alliance. The task force would train and supply the Afghans, coordinating between the U.S. and the various ethnic groups -- many of which were historic enemies with one another.

The Army's 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) eagerly took on the mission, despite little available intelligence on Afghanistan, and despite the fact that few Soldiers could speak Dari or Pashtun. The task force picked up a few phrases pretty quickly, and worked using three-way translations with other languages they already knew, such as Arabic, Farsi, and Russian.

"You had all of the emotions going on from 9/11," remembered Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brad Fowers, then a junior weapons sergeant on Operational Detachment Alpha 574. It would be his first combat deployment, and his team wound up escorting future Afghan President Hamid Karzai into the country. "There was a lot of emotions, excitement, amazement. It was an extreme honor. Looking back on it now, it's humbling. It was a very privileged moment in our history to see how things unfolded and what so many are



*Starting Oct. 19, 2001, 12-man Special Forces detachments from the U.S. Army Special Operations Command's 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) began arriving in Afghanistan in the middle of the night, transported by aviators from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Battalion (Airborne). They were the first ground Soldiers of the war on terrorism following 9/11 and their mission was to destroy the Taliban regime and deny Al-Qaida sanctuary in Afghanistan. Some of the Green Berets found themselves riding horses, becoming the first American Soldiers to ride to war on horseback since World War II. Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Special Operations Command.*

capable of doing."

"We went carrying what we believed to be the hopes of the American people with us," added Lt. Gen. John F. Mulholland, former USASOC commander, in a speech. In September 2001, he served as the 5th Special Forces Group (A) commander. "If there was any fear that we had, it was that we would be worthy of the American people, the people of New York, the people of Washington, the people of Pennsylvania, the people of our great country and all those who lost people that day. So that was with us constantly, the fear that we would not be worthy of the American people."

## KNUCKLE-WHITENING FLIGHT

After almost two weeks of bombings, which kicked off Oct. 7, 2001, the first insertion was set for mid-October. As

with any covert, nighttime flying operation, the dangerous mission was assigned to the Night Stalkers of the 160th Special Operations Regiment (Airborne), “the finest aviators in the world, bar none” according to Mulholland.

But the mission to insert the Green Berets into Afghanistan, flying from Uzbekistan over the Hindu Kush mountains -- which could reach up to 20,000 feet and caused altitude sickness -- was something else. The weather, sandstorms and a black cloud of rain, hail, snow and ice was so bad it delayed the first insertion by two days until Oct. 19 -- an eternity for men who pledge to always arrive at their destination on time, plus or minus 30 seconds. The weather could change from one mile to the next, from elevation to elevation, and continuously caused problems throughout Task Force Dagger.

“Just imagine flying when you can’t see three feet in front of you for a couple of hours, landing or hoping the weather would clear so you could refuel, and then flying through the mountains all the while getting shot at and hoping our (landing zone) was clear,” recalled Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Baker, now of the SOAR’s Special Operations Training Battalion. Fifteen years ago, he was a young, brand-new flight engineer on his first combat mission.

“I was proud and scared. There was a lot of stuff going on. There was bad weather. A lot of people compared those first missions to Lt. Col. (James) Doolittle in World War II because we were doing stuff no one had ever done before. We had a mission to make sure these Soldiers got in. It was my first time ever getting shot at. That’s a pretty vivid memory. It was war. I don’t think I’ve ever been any closer to my fellow brothers-in-arms than I was then. All we had was each other.”

### **ON THE GROUND**

Special operations forces have a famously tight bond. As the Green Berets stepped off the SOAR’s highly modified MH-47 Chinooks into Afghanistan, they stepped back in time, to a time of dirt roads and horses. They stepped into another world, one of arid deserts and towering peaks, of “rugged, isolated, beautiful, different colored stones and geographical formations, different shades of red in the morning as the sun came up,” said Maj. Mark Nutsch, then the commander of ODA 595, one of the first two 12-man teams to arrive in Afghanistan. The world was one of all-but-impassable trails, of “a canyon with very dominating, several-hundred-foot cliffs.” It was a world of freezing nights, where intelligence was slim, women were invisible, and friend and foe looked the same.



***Now-Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brad Fowers poses with Afghan fighters and warlords who opposed the Taliban. Fowers served on one of the first Special Forces detachments from the U.S. Army Special Operations Command’s 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) to arrive in Afghanistan following 9/11. Photo courtesy of Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brad Fowers.***

They arrived in the middle of the night, of course, to the sort of pitch blackness that can only be found miles from electricity and civilization, at the mercy of the men waiting for them. “We weren’t sure how friendly the link up was going to be,” said Nutsch. “We were prepared for a possible hot insertion. ... We were surrounded by -- on the LZ there were armed militia factions. ... We had just set a helicopter down in that. ... It was tense, but ... the link up went smoothly.”

### **HORSEMEN**

The various special forces teams that were in Afghanistan split into smaller three-man and six-man cells to cover more ground. Some of them quickly found themselves on borrowed horses, in saddles meant for Afghans who were much lighter and shorter than American Green Berets. Most of the Soldiers had never ridden before, and they learned by immediately riding for hours, forced to keep up with skilled Afghan horsemen, on steeds that constantly wanted to fight each other.

But that’s what Green Berets do: they adapt and overcome. “The guys did a phenomenal job learning how to ride that rugged terrain,” said Nutsch, who worked on a cattle ranch and participated in rodeos in college. Even so, riding requires muscles most Americans don’t use every day, and after a long day in the saddle, the Soldiers were in excruciating pain, especially as the stirrups were far too short. They had to start jerry-rigging the stirrups with



parachute cord.

“Initially you had a different horse for every move ... and you’d have a different one, different gait or just willingness to follow the commands of the rider,” Nutsch remembered. “A lot of them didn’t have a bit or it was a very crude bit.

The guys had to work through all of that and use less than optimal gear. ... Eventually we got the same pool of horses we were using regularly.”

Nutsch had always been a history buff, and he had carefully studied Civil War cavalry charges and tactics, but he had never expected to ride horses into battle. In fact, it was the first time American Soldiers rode to war on horseback since World War II, and this ancient form of warfare was now considered unconventional.

“We’re blending, basically, 19th-century tactics with 20th-century weapons and 21st-century technology in the form of GPS, satellite communications, American air power,” Nutsch pointed out.

**AUDACITY**

And there were military tactics involved. Even the timing of the attacks was crucial. Nutsch remembers wondering why the Northern Alliance wanted to go after the Taliban midafternoon instead of in the morning, but it accounted for their slower speed on horseback, while still leaving time to consolidate any gains before darkness fell. (They didn’t have night vision goggles.)

Supported by the Green Berets, Northern Alliance fighters directly confronted the Taliban over and over again. Some factions, like Nutsch’s, relied on horses for that first month. Others had pickup trucks or other vehicles, but they usually charged into battle armed with little more than AK-47s, machine guns, grenades and a few handfuls of ammunition. Meanwhile, the Taliban had tanks and armored personnel carriers and anti-aircraft guns they used as cannons, all left behind by the Soviets when they evacuated Afghanistan in the 1980s.

It took a lot of heart, a lot of courage. “We heard a loud roar coming from the west,” said Master Sgt. Keith Gamble, then a weapons sergeant on ODA 585, as he remembered one firefight. “We had no clue what it was until we saw about 500 to 1,000 NA soldiers charging up the ridge line. I called it a ‘Brave Heart’ charge. What the NA didn’t realize was that the route leading up the ridgeline was heavily mined. The NA did not fare too well, as they received numerous injuries and had to retreat. We continued to pound



*Following the liberation of Mazar-e-Sharif and the six northern provinces, Nov. 11, 2001, Afghan commanders began to erect billboards thanking the American military. Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Maj. Mark Nutsch.*

the ridge line with bombs until the NA took it that evening.”

“They weren’t suicidal,” Nutsch, who worked with different ethnic groups, agreed, “but they did have the courage to get up and quickly close that distance on those vehicles so they could eliminate that vehicle or that crew. We witnessed their bravery on several occasions where they charged down our flank (to attack) these armored vehicles or these air defense guns that are being used in a direct fire role, and kill the crew and capture that gun for our own use.”

**BOMB STRIKES**

One of the primary and most important functions of the Special Forces teams during the early days of Afghanistan operations was calling in air strikes, supported by combat controllers from Air Force Special Operations Command. The U.S. military had been bombing the Taliban for a couple of weeks, but in a land of caves and mountains and small villages, it was difficult to distinguish targets.

To help level the field and give the resistance forces a chance, the U.S. had to get rid of those tanks, armored carriers and anti-aircraft guns. Once they got on the ground, Soldiers identified enemy targets, and skilled Airmen called in those targets and quickly began picking off the Taliban and Al Qaeda. They also called for resupplies and humanitarian assistance drops.

“The sole focus of that combat controller was to bring that air-to-ground interface, so to look for areas where we could establish an airhead, where we could land aircraft, where we could bring supplies where we could do airdrops,” explained former combat controller and retired Chief Master Sgt. Calvin Markham, who received a Silver Star for the

operation.

“The other side of it was to bring that close air support expertise with our air traffic control background, having multiple stacks of aircraft ... from fighters to bombers overhead,” he said.

“It annihilated the enemy,” he continued, noting that the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom was the first time B-52s had been used for close air support since the Vietnam War. “I think it really broke their will to fight. You kill 10, 15 enemy combatants on the battlefield at one time, I’m sure it’s a devastating blow to them, but when you’re talking about hundreds of enemy combatants losing their lives from one strike, it makes the other guys think about what they’re doing and that maybe they should retreat.”

The success of the bomb strikes also encouraged other fighters, who were perhaps on the fence, to join the coalition.

“We fought for about a month and a half to two months, constantly air attacks, air attacks, air attacks on all of the Taliban positions, until it got to a point where we moved forward and took their lines and they just kind of went back to the populace,” said Master Sgt. Keith Gamble, then a weapons sergeant on ODA 585.

“Once we started dropping bombs on the enemy, their [civilians] whole attitude changed,” Gamble added. “They were loving us. A lot of (sodas) came out. A lot of really good food came out. We were their heroes.”

#### **AN ERRANT STRIKE**

There were tragedies as well as successes. Fowers’ team had a communications sergeant shot in the neck as they tried to advance across a heavily defended bridge. Then, the next day, Dec. 5, came one of the worst tragedies in those first months. A new GPS system resulted in some confused coordinates and a huge bomb -- a joint direct attack munition -- dropped inside his ODA’s perimeter, killing three Americans and perhaps a dozen Afghan soldiers, and wounding almost everyone, including Fowers.

“I actually thought I had been hit with an RPG,” he remembered. “I thought I had taken a direct round to the chest. I thought we were getting attacked. ... I was thrown probably a good five or six feet and I think I went unconscious for a little bit. When I came to, the Afghans that had been perching near us had been killed. I remember crawling over and grabbing one of their AKs and going over by our little mortar pit. I remember just waiting for the advancing threat I thought was coming up over the hill.”

Fowers and his team were eventually medically evacuated out of Afghanistan. (Operation Enduring Freedom

was in its infancy and evacuation processes and local medical facilities had not yet been established.) He has received multiple Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart throughout his career.

Maj. Mark Nutsch’s deployment lasted about three months and earned him a Bronze Star with valor, while Gamble was in country until the end of January. He was seriously wounded on a subsequent deployment to Iraq, and retired after a long career with multiple awards, including a Bronze Star and Purple Heart. Like Markham, who has lost count of his deployments, all of the men have deployed multiple times. Nutsch has even returned to Afghanistan on charitable humanitarian missions.

#### **NEW YORK**

Today, a 16-foot, bronze statue of a Special Forces Soldier on horseback, named De Oppresso Liber -- the Special Forces motto, “to free the oppressed” -- or the Horse Soldier, stands near Ground Zero in New York, watching over the 9/11 memorial and honoring those first special operations teams.

“Every time I go and look at it, it’s pretty powerful,” said Gamble. “It shows the bond between us and the first responders, the guys here in New York who went into ground zero, who rushed into the buildings to save as many people as they could, and then us, once we got the call, we were in Afghanistan taking care of the people who frigging decided to have this act of terror against us on our ground.

“Every time I see it, I get goose bumps, seeing the stuff we did over there, the good things we did, the response America had to what happened to us.”



*Left to right: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brad Fowers, Master Sgt. Keith Gamble, Maj. Mark Nutsch, Air Force Lt. Col. Allison Black and author Doug Stanton pose in front of De Oppresso Liber, or the Horse Soldier, a 16-foot bronze statue honoring the work of Special Forces Soldiers in Afghanistan at the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom in the last months of 2001. Stanton wrote a best-selling book about some of their experiences, “Horse Soldiers.” Photo by Cheryle Rivas.*

AIRBORNE



## U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



*Green Berets assigned to 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), conducted weapons training Jan 23, as part of a joint training exercise with Indian special operation forces at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. and Camp Rilea, Ore. It is important for both countries to learn the different weapon systems being implemented and the techniques they use. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Marcus Butler.*

# 1st Special Forces Group (A) trains with Indian SOF in joint exercise

*By U.S. Army Spc. Jonathan Rivera Collazo  
1st Special Forces Group (Airborne)*

Green Berets assigned to 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), conducted a joint training exercise with Indian special operations forces, Jan. 14-29 at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington.

Exercise Vajra Prahar is an annual two-week exercise, which highlights bilateral training that improves the ability to react efficiently to any number of contingencies. The training rotates between India and JBLM.

“Our military to military partnership is invaluable. It not only strengthens our international bond but it contributes to the strategic relationship between the two countries,” said Master Sgt. Shane, a team sergeant involved in the training. “India is an essential partner, both for the regional security of South Asia and the maritime security. There is no doubt that what we are doing here directly contributes to that by working with their special operation forces.”

The spirit of this exercise highlighted the two countries working together to safeguard the maritime security and freedom of navigation as well as strengthening their partnership to combat terrorism and piracy.

“The exercise focuses on maritime operations, troop movements, and everything in between so everything that we did was driven and with a purpose in mind,” said Capt. John, a team leader. “From the opening ceremony to the conclusion, this training exercise encompasses the true professionalism of each nation and highlight a sustainable learning environment for both.”

A part of that precise tactical training involved airborne operations.

“We trained for this at home, and it is great to share knowledge with our brothers in arms from the Green Berets,” said Indian Army Lt. Col. Shailender

Singh Ahlawat, Indian special operations company commander. “This training is necessary. This military interaction between the countries will be good for our future.”

Ahlawat said that the training strengthens the partnership, builds relationships and provides better interoperability.

The U.S. is committed to broadening ties with Indo-Asia-Pacific partners. As part of the rebalance, the U.S. is strengthening traditional alliances while enhancing forward presence in Southeast Asia, in Oceania and the Indian Ocean.

“The greatest benefit for our soldiers is any chance that we get to work alongside our allies,” said John. “It was a good exercise, and we got a lot out of it, and everyone came away a better trained soldier.”



*Green Berets assigned to 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), conducted an airborne operation Jan. 17, as part of a joint training exercise with Indian special operation forces at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. and Camp Rilea, Ore. Vajra Prahar is a two-week exercise focused on a bilateral combined training that improves the ability of the forces involved to respond to a wide range of contingencies. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Marcus Butler.*



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



# A centennial of subterfuge: The history Army Psyops

By Jared M. Tracy, Ph.D.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command

On January 23, 2018, the U.S. Army reaches a historic milestone: one hundred years of dedicated psychological operations support to military and national objectives. To be sure, the practice of using psychological devices and tactics to influence foreign populations predated 1918. However, it was not until World War I that the U.S. waged the first orchestrated military propaganda campaign in its history, establishing two agencies specifically for that purpose. The first agency was the Psychologic Subsection under MI-2, Military Intelligence Branch, Executive Division, War Department General Staff. The second was the Propaganda Section under G-2-D, General Headquarters, American Expeditionary Forces in France. Taken together, these two agencies introduced an American military propaganda capability.

Entering World War I in April 1917, the U.S. War Department had no capacity to conduct what is commonly known as psychological operations, or what is doctrinally referred to today as Military Information Support Operations. On January 23, 1918, U.S. Army Maj. Charles H. Mason, head of MI-2 in the War Department Military Intelligence Branch, direct-commissioned U.S. Army Capt. Heber Blankenhorn straight from civilian life to establish and lead the psychologic subsection for the purpose of organizing “the implementation in combat of the psychologic factor in the strategic situation,” quite a nebulous charter for the new officer. President Woodrow Wilson vehemently opposed the idea of military-run propaganda, so Blankenhorn’s low-key activities were initially limited to research and planning. He spent ensuing weeks walking the halls and knocking on doors throughout the War Department, trying to get support for his idea of waging “leaflet warfare” overseas in support of U.S. Army Gen. John J. Pershing’s American Expeditionary Forces in France.

Having received little support for his concept, Blankenhorn bypassed several layers in his chain of



*On Jan. 23, 1918, Capt. Heber Blankenhorn was direct commissioned from civilian life to establish and lead the Psychologic Subsection for the purpose of organizing “the implementation in combat of the psychologic factor in the strategic situation.” Blankenhorn spent weeks getting support for his idea of waging “leaflet warfare” in support of General John J. Pershing’s American Expeditionary Forces in France. Photo courtesy of the USASOC History Office.*

command and secured a meeting with Secretary of War Newton D. Baker on June 21, 1918. At the meeting, Baker was surprisingly open to military propaganda. “I think we should do this,” he said. “I give my approval to it right now, subject to one condition. The President has had some misapprehensions about this . . . [but] I will take this matter up with him. . . . If I say nothing further, it’s approved.”

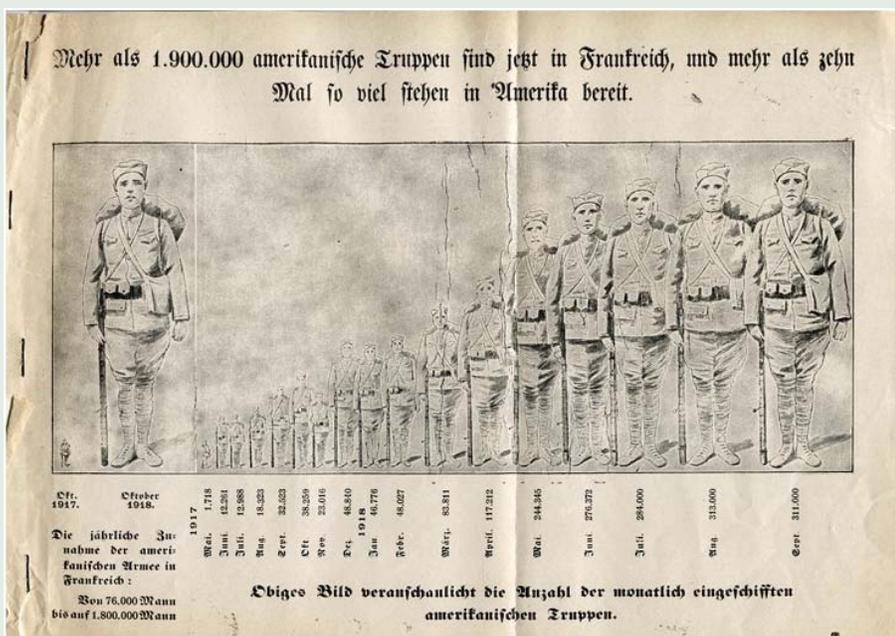
Blankenhorn interpreted Baker's words as a 'green light,' and obtained approval from U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Marlborough Churchill, head of the Military Intelligence Division, to recruit and deploy with a small team. With popular social commentator and New Republic editor Walter Lippmann as his deputy, Blankenhorn and his team deployed in July 1918 and reported to the G-2, GHQ, AEF.

The team, never numbering more than thirty assigned and attached officers and soldiers, 'went operational' in August 1918 as the Propaganda Section, G-2-D, GHQ, AEF. The first concerted American venture into official military propaganda was entirely ad hoc. There was no established doctrine or standard operating procedures to follow; it was all on-the-job-training and trial and error. Between Aug. 28 and Nov. 11, 1918, the section printed some 5.1 million leaflets of eighteen different designs, and arranged to have more than 3 million of them disseminated, primarily by volunteering pilots and hydrogen balloons. Despite many challenges, it accomplished much for such a miniscule part of the two-million-strong AEF. Interrogations of German prisoners of war and statements of key German leaders after the war provided strong indication that U.S. and Allied PSYOP had contributed to the rapid erosion of morale and unit cohesion in the last months of the war. Unfortunately, the U.S. Army would have to re-learn many of these lessons during World War II and the Korean War, until it finally

decided to retain a permanent psychological operations capability after the July 1953 armistice.

Even though U.S. Army PSYOP has existed since 1918, it did not become a formal regiment until Nov. 18, 1998 or a Regular Army Branch until Oct. 16, 2006. Moreover, the function has been known by many different names over the past century, including combat propaganda, psychological warfare, PSYOP, and most recently, MISO. Although the terms, methods, media, situations, and target audiences have changed since January 1918, its fundamental purpose has not: "to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals." With PSYOP units and Soldiers continuing to support military, interagency, and partner nation efforts through the present day, including recent successes against Islamic State Group in Iraq and Syria and the Lord's Resistance Army in Central Africa, the PSYOP Regiment, and the nation it supports, has much to be proud of at this historic milestone.

*Jared M. Tracy serves as the Psychological Operations Branch Historian, U.S. Army Special Operations Command. Tracy, a six-year veteran of the U.S. Army, earned a doctorate in history from Kansas State University and a Masters of Arts degree in history from Virginia Commonwealth University.*



Left, a WWI Leaflet; Right, a hydrogen balloon. Between Aug. 28 and Nov. 11, 1918, more than 5.1 million leaflets of 18 different designs, were printed. More than three million of them were disseminated, primarily by volunteering pilots and hydrogen balloons. Photos courtesy of the USASOC History Office.



# US Soldiers, bobsledders ready to use their Olympic experience to bring home gold

By Joe Lacadan  
U.S. Army Public Affairs

Heading into next month’s 2018 Olympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea, the U.S. bobsled team members don’t plan to take anything for granted. The U.S. men know one slip-up could send any four-man or two-man squad tumbling in the field.

Thankfully, however, three of four Army bobsled athletes that qualified for the games boast prior Olympic experience, which should boost their chances of medal-winning performances during the games.

Joining the U.S. bobsled Olympic team are Sgt. Nick Cunningham, Sgt. Justin Olsen and Maj. Chris Fogt, each of whom competed and medaled in previous Olympic Games, while Sgt. 1st Class Nate Weber will make his Olympic debut.

Cunningham, Olsen and Fogt are members of the Army’s World Class Athlete program and train full time for their sport. Weber, who is not in the WCAP, splits his time between training with the bobsled team at their home base in Lake Placid, and training with his Army unit for combat operations.

Despite their familiarity with the games, these WCAP members know how fast fortune can change. Just ask Fogt.

Considered one of the fastest athletes in the men’s program, Fogt helped put his team in medal contention after placing in the top six during competition at the 2010 Vancouver games. However, a fall on the track sent Fogt’s squad out of medal contention. Fogt rebounded to win bronze in the 2014 Sochi games. The military intelligence officer initially left the bobsled program after the 2014 games, but after learning his pending deployment was cancelled, he rejoined the squad shortly after.

Team USA assistant Mike Kohn, a captain in the National Guard, hopes Fogt can build on his success from the Sochi games. Fogt will be participating in his third Olympic games, and has moved to left-side pusher on the



U.S. bobsled racers, including Maj. Chris Fogt and Sgt. Justin Olsen, compete in the World Cup at Park City, Utah, November 2017. Fogt and Olsen were both named to the U.S. bobsled team that will compete in the 2018 Winter Olympics. Photo courtesy of U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program.

USA’s No. 2 sled team after having served as a brakeman.

“It’s nice having that veteran athlete on the team to help the younger guys find their way,” Kohn said. “He’s a solid guy you can count on to come through when it counts. Chris is a fierce competitor. He’s been with us now for over 10 years and we’re glad to have him for one more Olympics.”

### CUNNINGHAM BOUNCES BACK

Cunningham is back on the team after a surgery to repair torn muscles in his groin and stomach that left him unable to participate on the World Cup squad in 2016.

“That was devastating to me,” Cunningham said. “That was kind of the low point of my entire athletic career, not just bobsled career. And to be able to battle back and earn a world championship berth was the icing on the cake.”

Cunningham worked his way up to the World Cup team by competing on the North American Cup tour, and

his journey culminates with a trip to South Korea. The New York National Guard member will compete on both a four-man and two-man bobsled team in Pyeongchang.

“It’s a testament to him not giving up and continuing to fight through,” Kohn said.

#### **DEDICATION TO A FALLEN SUPERSTAR**

Since the tragic death of bobsled star Steven Holcomb last May, the team has dedicated the 2017-2018 World Cup season to his memory. The squad also decided to dedicate the 2018 games to the longtime U.S. competitor and former WCAP athlete.

Kohn said that as a kind of remembrance of Holcomb, the team on occasion wears Superman symbol patches with Holcomb’s initials on them, along with team shirts and hats.

The most decorated bobsledder in U.S. history, Holcomb had a lasting impact on the men’s program. He competed for the U.S. team from 1998 until his death in May 2017. During that time he won a gold medal in the four-man bobsled, which was the first gold for Team USA in that event in more than 60 years.

In all, Holcomb earned two gold medals, three silvers and one bronze during his 19-year career and served as a mentor to younger members of the squad.

Holcomb competed alongside Kohn, as well as several members still on the current team. And Kohn, who still keeps in touch with Holcomb’s family, said the loss has been tough for everybody who worked with the star athlete.

“That’s been the hardest thing for us to deal with this year,” Kohn said. “He’s probably the best bobsledder we’ve ever had. (It) is still a challenging thing to get over right now. The whole team is kind of fighting through that. It’s a tough road but you keep moving forward the best that you can.

“It’s been really hard on the athletes because they were so close to him,” Kohn said.

One athlete in particular, Olsen, was a member on Holcomb’s 2010 gold-winning team.

Olsen, also a New York National Guard Soldier, served as a pusher with Cunningham’s team in 2014. The 30-year old will compete as a driver for the first time as Team USA’s coaches shuffled the lineup to find the best team combinations for the Games. But these will be Olsen’s third Olympic Games. Olsen is a construction and masonry Soldier from San Antonio, Texas.

“Sgt. Olsen is arguably our best pusher, he’s a driver but still one of our best pushing athletes,” Kohn said. “Sgt.

Olsen is our hope for the future as far as driving goes. He’s really put in the time and is focused and committed.”

Kohn said Olsen will once again contend for medals in the four-man and two-man events. The Soldier finished in second place during the two-man test event in South Korea last March.

#### **LOOKING FORWARD**

After joining the USA men’s program in 2011, Sgt. First Class Nate Weber, a Green Beret in the Army, will finally get to participate in his first Olympic games. Weber is a native of Pueblo West, Colorado.

“The Olympics is the 50 meter target,” Weber said last summer. “That’s what I’m focused on right now. After that, it’s kind of up in the air as to what I do (after the Olympics). I love being a Green Beret. I love being a Soldier. But at the same time, I love the world of bobsled. I love to compete; I love to be on that international stage.”

For Kohn, he said he is honored to coach the Army’s bobsled athletes as well as serving alongside them. He said despite the Soldiers’ additional duties and training, they have managed to remain committed to training and continually pushing themselves.

The athletes, Kohn said, have had to deal with frequent changes as USA coaches have shuffled lineups in advance of the Olympics next month. In another change, Weber and his sled teammates began working with a new sled this week.

“Most of our athletes are very dedicated,” Kohn said. “That’s what’s great about this group of athletes; they all find a way to train hard and commit themselves ... They make the best of any situation whether they’re deployed or not, they keep training and working hard. And it’s an honor to be their coach.”



*Sgt. First Class Nate Weber. Photo by Molly Choma.*



# Gold Star wife, military spouse, JBLM mom receives 2018 Army Spouse of the Year

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Marcus Butler  
1st Special Forces Group (Airborne)

The role of the military spouse is one of selflessness and courage. It's a job that does not pay or come with any awards. It often means early mornings, late nights, and frequently going weeks and months without a partner nearby. It regularly includes playing both mother and father roles, both good cop and bad, being a counselor, provider, and director or a combination of all three. Coupled with a seamless transition of being firm to the gentle voice of love, being a military spouse is no easy task.

However, this is a role that countless men and women have taken on without complaint or hesitation. One story, in particular, shows the embodiment of these characteristics culminating in a journey that has led to being named the 2018 Army Spouse of the Year as well as the Joint Base Lewis-McChord Military Spouse of the Year.

Krista Simpson Anderson, Gold Star Spouse and wife of an active duty Green Beret with the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), received this honor.

"As Army Spouse of the Year, I am honored to have the opportunity to not only represent Special Forces spouses but all Army spouses," said Krista. "It's very humbling being considered for overall 'Military Spouse of the Year'." "This journey has been humbling. As I read many of the profiles, I felt so honored to be a part of such selfless servants."

Krista serves her community through The Unquiet Professional, an organization she co-founded, of volunteers serving Gold Star families and veterans in times of need.

Military Spouse of the Year award was founded by Military Spouse magazine in 2008 to honor military spouses from all branches of service. It was created to highlight the military spouses who support and maintain the home front while their service members train and deploy for combat operations.

Even in this moment of recognition, Krista hopes that she can redirect the spotlight to shed light on and better the

lives of Special Forces spouses around the world. The award and attention gives her a platform to demonstrate the love and compassion that The Unquiet Professionals and military spouses show on a day to day basis.

Krista's journey as a military spouse has not been easy.

"One day I was a military spouse. The next I was a military widow," Krista said. "Having remarried, I am once again a proud military spouse, and I want other military spouses to see through my journey that we all have the strength to get through anything."

Krista added, "I want to bring awareness to who we are as military spouses and what we do for our nation through our families and within our communities. I want to be a light for those who may be sitting in the darkness. I want to show others that military spouses are fierce and graceful. I want to empower not only the military spouse but all women, to be who they are meant to be. I want to prove that following your husband around the world doesn't mean you're weak and highlight the selfless service we provide daily."

Knowing that marriage is a team effort, U.S. Army Master Sgt. Gus Anderson, Krista's husband, is comfortable in switching his role to supporting Krista's passion to give back.

"I think this opportunity for Krista is amazing," Anderson said. "By far she is one of the most motivated, dedicated, and caring individuals that I have ever met in my life. She has always been supportive of me and my career path, so it's an honor now to be able to step back and support her."

Leaders from 1st SFG (A) are also impressed by and grateful to Krista for her desire and commitment to serving the families within the regiment.

"Krista's recognition as the Army Spouse of the Year is well deserved, and a reflection of her dedication to the families of our Nation's heroes," said Maj. James Self, commander, Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st SFG (A). "I could not be more proud to call Krista a member of our team."

Self also acknowledged the unique characteristics of Special Forces spouses and how Krista embodies those characteristics.

“Special Forces spouses are unique, and consistently demonstrate unparalleled loyalty and resilience,” said Self. “Krista has never sought recognition for herself. Her main interest is consistently using her own experiences and resources to support our families.”

Two of her smallest supporters are also among her biggest fans, Michael, 8 and Gabriel, 6, are proud of their mother and the example she sets.

“I am so happy for my mom, and I want to congratulate her,” Michael said. “She works hard for us at home and other military families.”

For Krista, this story has not been an easy one. In 2013, her life dramatically changed in a blink of an eye when her then husband Staff Sgt. Michael Simpson was killed following an improvised explosive attack in Afghanistan.

“When I was sitting on the tarmac, I remember waiting for them to bring his flag-draped casket off the plane. I looked over to see all of our family and friends crying, and I

decided that I will show them that I would be okay,” said Krista. “I didn’t know how strong I could be until that moment.”

From that strength, Krista relied on her faith and the support of others to gather up the pieces and continue to seek out the peace that she felt her family deserved.

My focus is on love, said Krista.

She has applied herself to providing friendship and support to developing strength among the spouses with whom she meets and instilling faith and resilience in her children.

“My priority is teaching them that no matter what situations you go through in life, lead with your faith, and grace will follow. Michael's legacy plays a major role in our lives every day,” Krista said.

“Gus and I teach our boys to treat and care for others the way our faith teaches us. Strength, resilience and kindness got us through the most difficult of times,” Krista said.

Krista is now in the running for the overall Military Spouse of the Year which is slated to be announced in May 2018.



*2018 Army Spouse of the Year recipient, Krista Anderson poses for a photo with her sons in Olympia, Washington, Feb. 25. Anderson was selected out of the top 18 other military spouses from Army installations around the world. Anderson, a Gold Star Spouse and wife to a current active duty Green Beret from 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), is now in the running for the overall Military Spouse of the Year for all military branches. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Marcus Butler.*



## NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

# Return to the Sea

*Air Force Reserve 301st Rescue Squadron HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters deliver East Coast based Navy SEALs to swim out cremains during a burial at sea for former SEALs who passed away during the previous year. The memorial service was held on the beach where "Scouts and Raiders," precursors to the SEALs, once trained for the beach landings of World War II. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Abe McNatt.*





# Combat Aviation Advisors don newly minted brown beret

By U.S. Air Force Capt. Monique Roux  
919th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs

After decades of distinguished service, the Combat Aviation Advisor community donned the newly minted brown beret as their symbol of distinction during a ceremony held at Duke Field, Florida, Jan. 6.

Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, Commander, Air Force Special Operations Command, presided over the ceremony and shared his perspective on the significance of the event.

“Today, CAAs, you’re being granted the honor and privilege of your own Combat Aviation Advisor beret. It’s an important cultural symbol,” said Webb.

“I can tell you what I expect when I see a brown beret. I expect to see a cultural expert—one that has a complete understanding of a host nation’s customs, culture and way of life. I expect to see a joint warfare expert...an expert in our way of warfare and expert in understanding our partner nation’s way of warfare. I expect [our members] to have the maturity to know how to blend those two together.”

Combat Aviation Advisors have a long and storied history of special operations, working alongside their joint service counterparts to conduct activities by, with and through foreign aviation forces.

The CAAs history of dedicated service was highlighted in the ceremony which served as a visual display of a recent ruling authorizing the wear of the beret on Air Force Special Operations Command installations by the AFSOC commander.

President John F. Kennedy awarded the Green Beret to the U.S. Army Special Forces before it was officially authorized. The Combat Aviation Advisors community had the honor of presenting the first brown beret prototype to the current Commander in Chief, President Donald J. Trump, thus paying homage to the tradition of this distinctive headgear.

“You’re being granted the honor and privilege of your own Combat Aviation Advisor beret.” Webb told the CAAs in the crowd.

The wearer of the charcoal brown beret is accountable to be professional, mature, trustworthy, a trade expert, and most importantly, a team player committed to mission



**Combat Aviation Advisors assigned to Duke Field, Fla. are now authorized the wear of the brown beret on Air Force Special Operations Command installations by the AFSOC commander, Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, Jan. 6. CAAs are a team of Air Commandos that advise foreign militaries in combat aviation throughout the globe. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Joseph Pick.**

accomplishment. The color signifies fertile soil and reminds the wearer daily to look for potential where others see barrenness. It signifies grit, hard work and commitment to transform potential into capability by, with and through our foreign partners”

Also present at the ceremony was the man considered as the Godfather of the CAA community, retired Lt. Col. Jerome Klingaman, who addressed the crowd and his fellow CAAs.

“The team is the alpha and omega,” said Klingaman. “It is the beginning and the end of everything you stand for as Combat Aviation Advisors. It’s what this beret is all about for the Combat Aviation Advisor and it puts you on the same ground as Army [Special Forces] and Seals with the mission.”

Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Myers, 6th Special Operations Squadron, spoke for the CAA community saying, “To all prior CAAs, thank you for laying such a strong foundation for us to build upon. To you we guarantee we will not waste any opportunity to build, and build smartly. We will be hard on ourselves and we will approach this mission and capability with an attitude of stewardship. We will serve our joint force, partner force and one another in such a way as to honor the legacy that you leave us to carry.”

# Combat Controller awarded Silver Star for actions in Mosul offensive

By U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy  
24th Special Operations Wing

The car bomb barreled relentlessly toward the joint special operations team ... it seemingly came from nowhere.

A Special Tactics operator, exposed in an open turret hatch, began to fire the Humvee-mounted M2 machinegun into the large pickup truck, as it hurtled closer and closer.

200 meters, 150 meters, 125 meters... finally, the operator triggered a massive detonation at 100 meters away.

The team was safe ... for now.

Staff Sgt. Christopher Lewis, a combat controller with the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron, was awarded the Silver Star Medal during a ceremony hosted by Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, Jan. 19, at Hurlburt Field, Florida, for his actions during the Mosul offensive in 2016.

Lewis was embedded as a joint terminal attack controller with a Naval Special Warfare platoon during the opening days of the Mosul offensive on Oct. 20, 2016, in Iraq. The joint team was tasked with advising and assisting Kurdish peshmerga forces expunging "Daesh" fighters from strongholds and liberating the city.

"Chris is our go-to guy, he is one of our most experienced JTACs in the theater, and for that reason, we put him in our toughest spots," said a Special Tactics officer who was Lewis' team leader in garrison and expeditionary special tactics squadron commander. "Prior to the battle of Mosul, we actually hand-picked him as the most seasoned operator ... I wanted Staff Sgt. Lewis to create the best force multipliers for the impending battle that we could."

The day began at 2:30 a.m. with a 15 kilometer drive south to link up with the peshmerga fighters. The convoy consisted of close to 50 vehicles, including tanks and up-armored bulldozers, which are designed to trigger roadside bombs and clear the path.

As the sun began to rise, around 7 a.m., the joint force began to receive indirect fire from the closest village to the forward line of troops. The automated .50 caliber turret system on Lewis' vehicle became disabled.

In the midst of withering grenade, mortar and small arms fire, Lewis systemically engaged the enemy in multiple

locations from the open turret. He held this vulnerable position for hours despite direct enemy fire impacting within inches of him.

During this time, Lewis simultaneously directed airstrikes from F-15 Eagles and B-52 Stratofortresses within 400 meters of the team's positions before engaging the pickup truck-born improvised explosive device, providing the cover and opportunity for the team to move out of harm's way.

The convoy didn't go far before being ambushed again by enemy fire from a concealed tunnel entrance only 100 meters away and detonating several IEDs, mortally wounding one U.S. Service Member.

Lewis leapt out of his vehicle without hesitation to assist his wounded teammate, and coordinated the casualty evacuation while providing medical care just feet away from an unexploded IED. He established a hasty helicopter landing zone and moved his severely wounded teammate to the extraction point while simultaneously working with other aircraft to assess and eliminate a second, vehicle-born threat before it reached his team.

Lewis' calm, collected demeanor was apparent when he received the news of his nomination for the Silver Star.

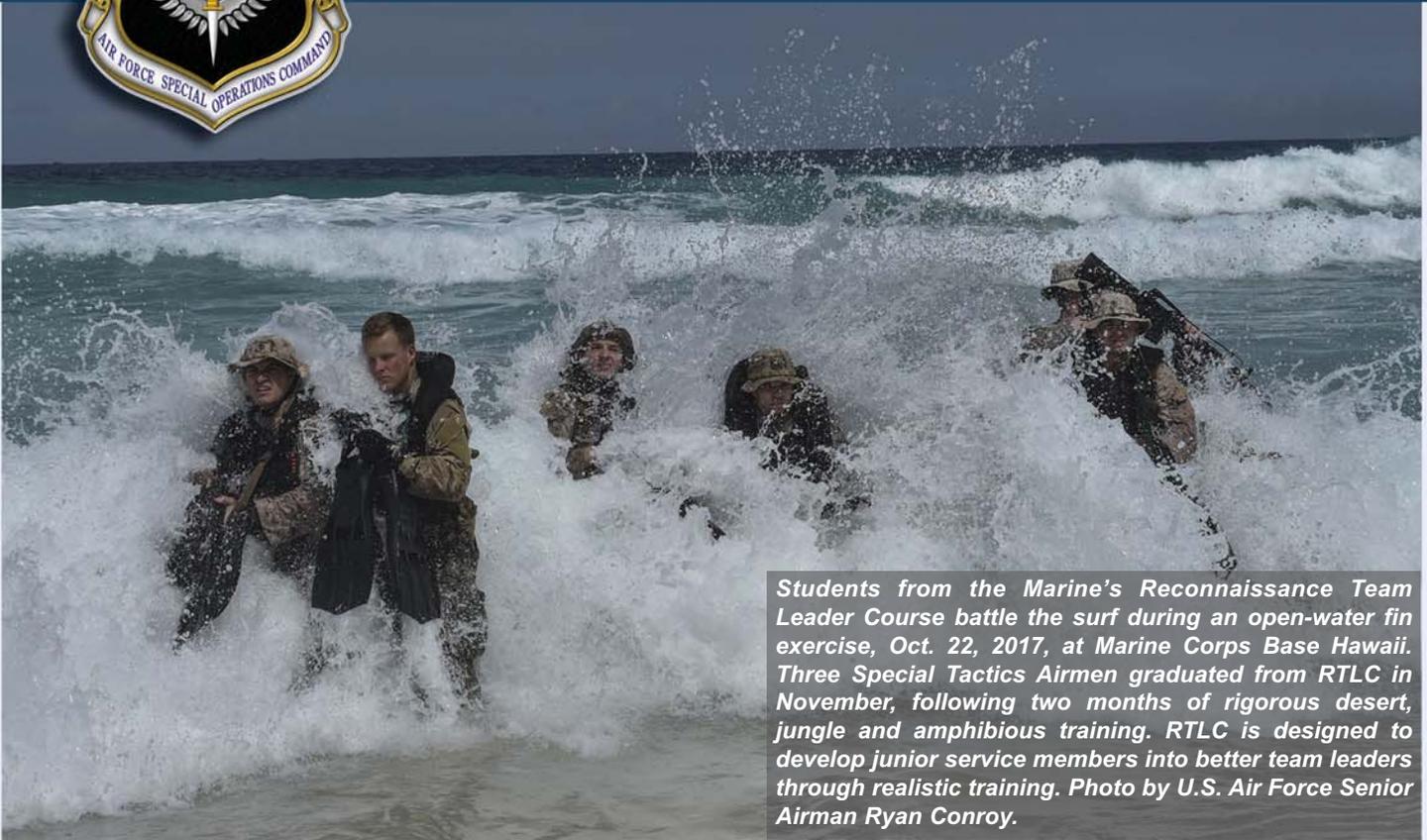
"It was emotional at first, you really think about, or at least I thought about, 'do you deserve this?'" said Lewis. "Obviously, if it wasn't for the proficiency of the aircrews overhead and the Navy SEAL team, I wouldn't be able to do what I do. Being a combat controller, you'd like to think that any one of us could step in and fill that role and do what I did that day, and that's just the level of professionalism and proficiency that we like to hold all of ourselves to."



**Staff Sgt. Christopher Lewis, a combat controller with the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron, received the Silver Star medal during a ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla. Jan. 19. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Victor J. Caputo.**



## AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



*Students from the Marine's Reconnaissance Team Leader Course battle the surf during an open-water fin exercise, Oct. 22, 2017, at Marine Corps Base Hawaii. Three Special Tactics Airmen graduated from RTALC in November, following two months of rigorous desert, jungle and amphibious training. RTALC is designed to develop junior service members into better team leaders through realistic training. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.*

# Recon Marines, Special Tactics groom joint ground leaders

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

The police officers rush into the compound, weapons drawn, shouting orders at the men inside the building to surrender.

Shots ring out, spent rounds discharge and the police retreat, leaving one officer behind with a gunshot wound. The insurgents drag him through the courtyard for all to see and execute him.

Buried in the thick brush on a hill, a small contingent of Force Reconnaissance Marines and Special Tactics Airmen are watching, waiting and reporting what they see back to the operations center. Their intelligence will provide incoming Marines with vital information to conduct raids later in the day.

This was not a real mission in a foreign land, but rather a Marine reconnaissance proving ground at Bellows Air Force

Base, Hawaii.

Three Special Tactics Airmen graduated from the Marine's Reconnaissance Team Leader Course in November, following two months of rigorous desert, jungle and amphibious reconnaissance training.

RTALC is an advanced level reconnaissance course designed to develop junior service members into better team leaders through realistic training.

"Our main objectives in this course is taking young leaders and guiding them into being better ground force commanders," said Gunnery Sgt. Jeremy Froio, NCO in charge of RTALC. "Regardless of what service you're in, the reconnaissance mission is so detail oriented and in depth that no matter what your actual mission is, you're going to benefit from this training."

Force Reconnaissance Marines are the Marine Corps' special-operations-capable forces that provide essential intelligence to the command element of the Marine Air-

Ground Task Force. Forging a relationship between conventional and special operations forces create unique opportunities and partnerships in the future.

Special Tactics is U.S. Special Operations Command's tactical air and ground integration force and the Air Force's ground special operations force enabling global access, precision strike, personnel recovery and battlefield surgery operations.

To provide realism to the curriculum, students in the course transition to three different geographic locations. Special Tactics regularly trains in extreme conditions to acclimate to any scenario when called upon.

"Much like in a Marine Expeditionary Unit, you find yourself in some other part of the world ... one day you're in the high desert, the next the desert plain, the next in the jungle, etcetera," said Froio. "We try to replicate that aspect of not always knowing your environment."

Beginning at Camp Pendleton, Calif., students learn public speaking to enhance their briefing skills, and conduct their first patrol as a team. According to the instructors, briefing is the first step of becoming a capable ground force commander.

Froio explained the need for ground force commanders to clearly communicate their intent and objectives during mission planning, because without that capability, the team won't make it to the battlefield.

"We wholly utilize the crawl, walk, and run method during training by having them brief daily, to giving impromptu briefs and finally briefing a real commander after drawing up their mission plan," said Froio.

From there, the course moves to Yuma, Arizona, for desert patrols and reconnaissance. During this portion, instructors incorporated Special-Tactics-unique scenarios for the students such as an airfield reconnaissance and fires planning.

"Since Airmen from Air Force Special Operations Command began to take this course, we have changed our curriculum to accommodate what they bring to the table," said Gunnery Sgt. Edward Brugeman, senior noncommissioned officer in charge of RTL. "Each one of the mission sets gives the students – Marines and Airmen alike – the planning, briefing and execution aspect of a multitude of mission sets they will most likely encounter in the real world."

From Yuma, the joint contingent travelled to Marine Corps Base Hawaii-Kaneohe Bay to exercise jungle and amphibious reconnaissance mission sets. Here, they finished the tactical portion of their training with a 3-day, 2-night

marathon final exercise.

"We're giving these Airmen the ground-level experience they may not get from other schools in their pipeline," said Staff Sgt. Brandon Mackey, course chief of RTL. "They bring so much to our class and our students learn a ton from them, in return we give them the ground-based tactical decisions and skills they need to lead a team."

Throughout each portion of the course, each student rotated through multiple graded billets to gain perspective and experience in each position: team leader, assistant team leader, point man, radio transmission operator and assistant RTO, said Brugeman.

"Every student is placed in every role, because in order to become an effective leader, you don't only need to know what you need to do, but what every person on your team needs to do," said Brugeman.

During the training, the joint efforts between the Airmen and the Marines lead to them casting aside their differences and embracing their similarities. While the Airmen were sent to RTL to learn, the joint efforts between the sister services lead to sharing tactics, techniques and procedures to improve processes.

"Once you begin to look through your differences, you start to realize that the personalities are the same," said a Special Tactics officer enrolled in the course. "There's the drive – everyone has the same work ethic and drive to complete the mission."

At the end of the final exercise, one of the Special Tactics Airmen was named overall distinguished graduate for the course, placing first in academic and physical assessments.

"I had little to no experience working with Airmen, but after this course I have nothing but good things to say," said Marine Sgt. Eric Dipietrantonio, a student with RTL. "Completely professional, phenomenal at their jobs and they bring a different aspect in terms of tactics that Marines don't usually see."



*A Special Tactics operator enrolled in the Marine's Reconnaissance Team Leader Course, performs reconnaissance on a village during a final exercise, Oct. 31, 2017, at Bellows Air Force Base, Hawaii. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.*



# Prepping for a CV-22 night mission

*An Airman assigned to the 14th Weapons Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Fla., stands outside a CV-22 Osprey before a night mission during the U.S. Air Force Weapons School Advanced Integration Course at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Dec. 10, 2017. The CV-22 is a tiltrotor aircraft that possesses vertical takeoff, hover and vertical landing qualities. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Kevin Tanenbaum.*





# SPIE landing on the X

*Marines with U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command conduct Special Patrol Insertion/Extraction techniques with the aid of a Marine Corps CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter in Camp Lejeune, N.C., Jan. 30. Marines from 3rd Marine Raider Battalion completed SPIE training as part of MARSOC helicopter insert extraction techniques and para operations pre-deployment training requirements. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Bryann K. Whitley.*







# Honoring African Americans in times of war: Three special operators who earned the Medal of Honor

By *U.S. Army Sgt. Jose Reyes*  
*USSOCOM Office of Communication*

Every year since 1976, February has been designated as Black History Month and certain themes are endorsed by the president. The theme for Black History Month 2018 is “African Americans in Times of War.” In times like this it’s important to take a step back and reflect on several of the exceptional African American service members who have served in special operations and earned the Medal of Honor.

### **Sgt. 1st Class Eugene Ashley**

Army Sgt. 1st Class Eugene Ashley was born in Wilmington, North Carolina, Oct. 12, 1931. He enlisted out of New York in 1950. He distinguished himself while serving with Detachment A 101, Charlie Company as a senior Special Forces advisor of a hastily organized force whose mission was to rescue trapped fellow advisors. During an attack by the North Vietnamese Army forces, Ashley supported the camp with high explosives and illuminated mortar rounds while also directing air strikes and artillery support. He led a total of five assaults against the enemy continually exposing himself to grenades and automatic gunfire. During his fifth and final assault, he was seriously injured by enemy machine gun fire, but he persevered. Ashley coordinated air strikes nearly on top of his own assault element, forcing the encroaching enemy to withdraw. After the final assault Ashley lost consciousness and was carried



to the summit of the hill he was instrumental in seizing. Unfortunately, he suffered a fatal wound from an enemy artillery round. He was buried in Rockfish Memorial Park, Fayetteville, North Carolina. Ashley, posthumously received the Medal of Honor. His Medal was presented to his family at the White House by Vice President Spiro T. Agnew on Dec. 2, 1969.

### **Sgt. 1st Class William Maud Bryant**

Army Sgt. 1st Class William Maud Bryant was born in Cochran, Georgia, Feb. 16, 1933. He enlisted out of Detroit, Michigan, in 1953. He distinguished himself while serving with Alpha Company Civilian Irregular Defense Group Company 321, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Mobile Strike Force Command in Vietnam. The battalion came under heavy enemy fire and became surrounded by the elements of three enemy regiments. Bryant fought valiantly throughout the 34-hour attack, he moved throughout the company position under intense enemy fire and established a perimeter, directed fire during critical phases of the battle, distributed ammo, assisted the wounded and provided the leadership and an inspirational example of courage to his men. As the siege continued Bryant organized and led a patrol with the purpose of breaking through the enemy encirclement. While advancing, his patrol was pinned down by automatic weapons fire from a heavily fortified bunker where he was severely wounded. Despite his injuries, Bryant rallied his men, called for helicopter gunship support and directed heavy suppressive fire upon the enemy position, overrunning it



and single-handedly destroying its three defenders. While regrouping his small force for the final assault against the enemy, Bryant was mortally wounded by an enemy rocket. He was buried in Raleigh National Cemetery, Raleigh, North Carolina. He later posthumously received the Medal of Honor.

### **Sgt. 1st Class Melvin Morris**

Retired Army Sgt. 1st Class Melvin Morris was born in Okmulgee, Oklahoma Jan. 7, 1942. He enlisted in the Army National Guard in 1959 and later requested to join the active Army. As a Staff Sergeant, Morris distinguished himself through his actions on Sept. 17, 1969, while commanding a strike



force drawn from Delta Company, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces in Vietnam. Morris learned by radio that a fellow team commander had been killed near an enemy bunker. He quickly assembled and led a three-man element across enemy lines to retrieve the team commander's body. The element was met with heavy enemy fire. With both his men injured, Morris single handedly destroyed four enemy bunkers and reached the team commander's body. While retrieving his comrade, he was shot three times as he ran back toward friendly lines, but he did not stop until he reached safety with the casualty in tow. He received the Medal of Honor at the White House, March 18, 2014.

These men distinguished themselves through their valorous actions and unwavering commitment to their men, their unit and their country. These are just few examples of African American service members who have distinguished themselves by answering the call to serve in special operations. It's paramount to look back as a nation recognizing the role that African Americans have played in the safeguarding of this country.





# Air Commandos rise from clandestine World War II mission

By U.S. Army Master Sgt. Timothy Lawn  
U.S. Special Operations Command

Against seemingly all odds and employing unconventional standards, a select group of aviators flying a group of composite aircraft, including the first use of the helicopter in combat, successfully launched and supported one of the first aerial invasions, making aviation history. That mission's legacy still lives in today's Air Commandos.

General Henry "Hap" Arnold, U.S. Army Air Forces Commander, hand-picked Lt. Col Philip Cochran and Lt. Col. John Alison as co-leaders of the unit that gave birth to the Air Commandos. Arnold provided initial (but loosely defined) directions. His orders were to assemble a composite task force that could provide aerial support for the allied mission and be self-sufficient for a minimum 90-day window.

Cochran and Alison, in what was known as Project 9, hand selected a bold crew of volunteers and chose a varied assortment of aircraft that allowed the Air Commandos to conduct a wide range of missions; these consisted of fighters, gliders, transports, liaison, bombers and the first U.S. military helicopters.

As a composite group, they were tasked to conduct and support an airlift of glider and airborne allied and British irregular forces called "Chindits," under the command of British General Orde C. Wingate.

The concept was considered controversial due to Burma's rugged mountains and deep jungles. The mission was to carry troops via cargo and glider aircraft deep behind enemy lines to hastily constructed landing zones in dense jungle. The reason they chose the glider airborne operation was to spare the Chindit force a dangerous and exhaustive jungle march and to beat the oncoming monsoon season.

In February 1944, Lt. Col Cochran and a handful of pilots manned their P-51A Mustang fighters and embarked on a daring secret mission. Launched from a remote airstrip in India about 100 miles from the Burma border, it was the culmination of the planning phase for an unorthodox raid on Japanese ground targets behind enemy



*In February 1944, Lt. Col. Cochran and a handful of pilots manned their P-51A Mustang fighters embarking on a daring secret mission and making aviation history. That mission's legacy still lives in today's Air Commandos. Illustration by U.S. Army Master Sgt. Timothy Lawn.*

lines. The raid was the opening phase of an operation designed to destroy Japanese targets and deflect attention from the Allies' true intention.

The Air Commandos also were given their motto "Anytime, Anywhere, Anyplace" by the British forces during a mission rehearsal following a glider accident that claimed several lives.

The ground assault, organized under the command of Wingate, was scheduled to commence in early March and was created to rid Burma of Japanese forces.

Wingate tasked the Air Commandos to conduct a night

combat landing to hastily establish airfields and defend them. This portion of the overall mission was known as Operation Thursday. These airfields allowed crews to land and exfiltrate troops, resupply troops by air, evacuate the wounded and provide air superiority for the assault on Japanese-controlled Burma.

Hailing their motto, the Air Commandos conducted Operation Thursday with success. A spot was selected and constructed more than 165 miles behind enemy lines. Within a five-day window, more than 9,000 troops and tons of supplies were airlifted and delivered.

From an air power perspective, Air Commandos led and maintained the first American special operations invasion conducted almost exclusively via air movement.

They conducted, developed and honed the use of air superiority by successfully defending the landing force from enemy air.

Throughout the mission they refined the employment of aircraft to provide close air support in the form of air artillery support via the use of rockets launched from the fighters and continued to improve their tactics, techniques, and procedures.

The Air Commandos used aircraft to evacuate casualties from improvised airstrips and in combat conditions.

The first aerial combat rescue mission using a helicopter made aviation history for the Air Commandos.

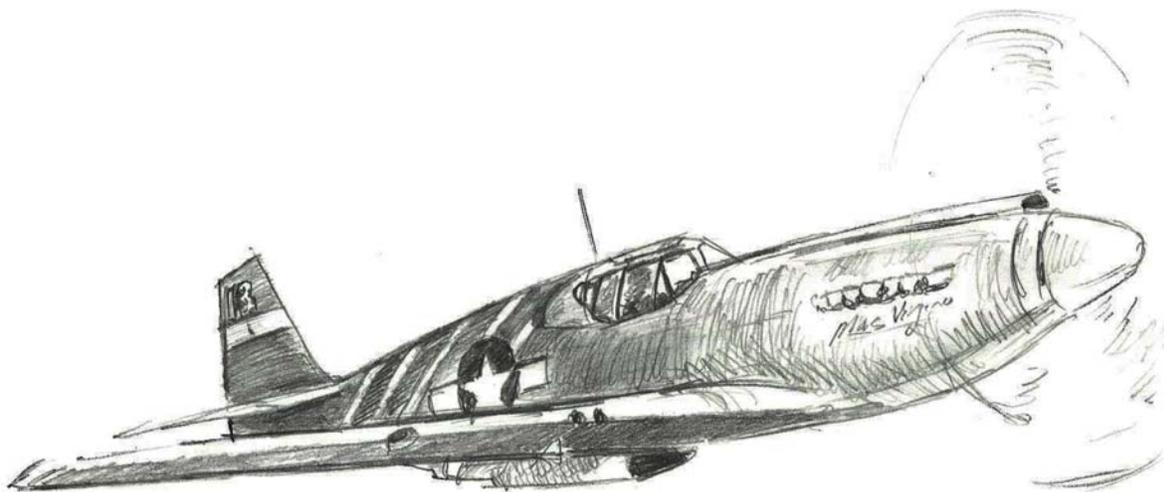
The composite Air Commandos irregular tactics, varied equipment and successful mission employment deep behind enemy lines helped lay the foundation and justification for future Air Force special operations forces and missions.

Some of the lessons learned from the first group of Air Commandos are employed even today. The Air Commandos pioneered or honed the use of air platforms as gunships, close air support, airborne forward controllers, air medical evacuation, air reconnaissance, air resupply and aerial civil affairs missions, and psychological operations.

The Air Commandos legacy is still alive today, their heritage is embodied and lived through the men and women of the U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command, stationed at Hurlburt Field, Florida.

Today's Air Commandos fill a need when a more indirect method to accomplish a task or mission is called upon. Mainly operating at night, they can conduct a wide range of unconventional tasks such as combat search and rescue, close air support, air drop, and more.

AFSOC continues on with its proud heritage and the legacy of the first Air Commandos, standing ready, "Any Time, Any Place."



*A P-51A Mustang fighter. Illustration by U.S. Army Master Sgt. Timothy Lawn.*



# 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 sent her back into occupied France, an



**Virginia Hall. Photo courtesy of the Central Intelligence Agency.**

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 to London as well as organized escape





***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.***

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, aged 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. Photo courtesy of the Central Intelligence Agency.***



## U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS



A member of U.S. Special Operations Command J4 Deployment Cell carries a sledge hammer while building a mock bare base during a training exercise on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., Nov. 7, 2017. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.

# Deployment Cell builds bare bases

By U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo  
USSOCOM Office of Communication

U.S. Special Operations Command J4 Deployment Cell stands ready to build bare bases from empty fields anywhere, anytime.

D-Cell builds temporary camps for special operations forces including specialized facilities like kitchens, showers, laundries and even small aircraft hangers. They also provide services such as power and security.

“We build camps for SOF, it’s that simple,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Joe McHugh, D-Cell commander.

The unit comprises 54 Airmen from 15 career fields, including services, civil engineers, security forces, logistics, vehicle maintenance and more. However, their capabilities are a little more specialized.

“We’re a little different than other bare base units;

we’re a little faster. Our equipment compresses a bit smaller, and we’re designed to move quicker,” McHugh said.

“Airman looking to sign up should be go-getters and they should be self-starters and they should be self-reliant,” said Tech. Sgt. Serkan Acar, D-Cell electrical systems supervisor. “Our people know what needs to be done and we take care of it.”

The challenges they face require diligence to overcome because of the world’s rapidly evolving security requirements. It’s hard work.

“They land, they immediately start building and don’t stop until the camp is done,” McHugh said. “Our goal is to make sure that the SOF operator is ready to do his job.”

Typically working without days off when deployed, Acar calls building bare bases “a challenge, but it’s a good challenge.”



***A member of U.S. Special Operations Command J4 Deployment Cell stakes a tent during a training exercise on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., Nov. 7, 2017. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.***

In addition to supporting current worldwide operations, D-Cell also maintains proficiency through supporting SOF exercises, as well as to exercises of their own.

“We pull the material out in our yards, construct, test, and put as much stress onto the equipment as needed to make sure it’s ready to go, and then repack it as neatly as possible and have it ready,” McHugh said.

“We stay ready by doing lots of inventory and making sure every piece of equipment we have, every tool we have is ready to go, and we are trained on how to use them,”

Acar said.

To ensure they are able to perform in a diverse range of operational environments, D-Cell personnel also receive additional physical and tactical training such as combatives and combat marksmanship. A small selection of Airmen go to Army air assault, airborne and pathfinder schools.

“We can support and we train to support in every case,” McHugh said. “We don’t request other people to monitor us, babysit us or do anything else.”

The continuous training enables D-Cell to perform whenever called upon, often times with little notice, as soon as they hit the ground.

“Everyone knows exactly what to do from the start,” Acar said. “The base starts coming together.”

Over the last year, D-Cell reduced its standard kit size by a third through repackaging and new equipment purchases. The reduction also allowed for smaller teams to deploy, enhancing overall efficiency.

“We’ve doubled in the last two years the number of exercises we support and we are able to support some of the downrange units more often than we did in the past,” McHugh said.

Like USSOCOM units, it’s the pedigree of the personnel comprising D-Cell that makes them special.

“They’re the best at what they do. I don’t think there’s a bare base unit in the Department of Defense that can match what D-Cell does,” he said.

But D-Cell refuses to grow complacent with its current capabilities.

“The goal is to always get faster, always get quieter, always get better,” McHugh said.



***U.S. Special Operations Command J4 Deployment Cell built a tent city during a training exercise on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., Nov. 7, 2017. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.***





**U.S. Army**  
**Spc. Devin James Kuhn**  
**75th Ranger Regiment**



**U.S. Army**  
**Sgt. Maj. Samuel M. McAllister**  
**1st Capabilities Integration Group**

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



U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Zachary Malik, a student with the Marine's Reconnaissance Team Leader Course, is battered by surf during amphibious infiltration training, Oct. 2, 2017, at Marine Corps Base Hawaii. Three Special Tactics Airmen graduated from RTLC in November, following two months of rigorous desert, jungle and amphibious training. RTLC is designed to develop junior service members into better team leaders through realistic training. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.