



Tip OF THE Spear

United States Special Operations Command
MacDill Air Force Base, Florida

June 2019



The boys of Pointe du Hoc



United States Special Operations Command



The boys of Pointe du Hoc ... 16

Tip of the Spear

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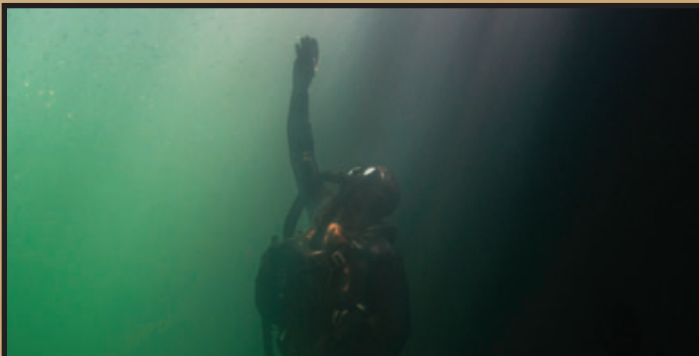
Soldiers with 75th Ranger Regiment scale the cliffs like Rangers did during Operation Overlord 75 years ago at Omaha Beach, Pointe du Hoc, Normandy, France, June 5, 2019. More than 1,300 U.S. service members partnered with 950 troops from across Europe and Canada, converged in northwestern France to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Operation Overlord, the WWII Allied invasion of Normandy, commonly known as D-Day. U.S. Army photo by Markus Rauchenberger.

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An MC-130J, stationed with the 352nd Special Operations Wing, RAF Mildenhall, England, conducts desert landings near Agadir, Morocco April 25, 2019. The 352nd SOW supported bilateral training with African partners to strengthen relationships and combined capability. Photo by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Kevyn Stinett.



U.S. Special Operations Command - Africa



U.S. forces train with Moroccan forces via contingency scenarios

*By U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Kevyn Stinett
352nd Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

Members of the Royal Armed Forces of Morocco and the U.S. Air Force joined together for over 10 days of thorough, bilateral cooperation and training during exercise Epic Guardian 19, during the last weeks of April, 2019, based out of Inzegane Airbase, Agadir, Morocco.

MC-130J and CV-22B aircraft and crews, stationed with the 352nd Special Operations Wing, RAF Mildenhall, England, conducted desert landing operations, low-visibility approaches, mass personnel drops, and other bilateral training scenarios with members from the Moroccan special operations forces. This exercise demonstrates the long-term commitment to training with Morocco's law enforcement and military forces as they continue to secure their country.

"We appreciate working with the U.S. military for joint, bilateral training down here in the African region. The Moroccan Royal Armed Forces value the relationships we have built with the U.S. forces here and for future exercises," said a public information officer for Moroccan FAR.

Bilateral training gives each nation unique opportunities to train and strengthen processes through coordination with each partner force.

"Military cooperation is a critical part of the U.S.-U.K. and U.S.-Morocco partnerships, and through exercises like these, we can build upon our strong relationships with our partner nations' forces," said a U.S. Air Force major, mission commander, assigned to the 352nd SOW.

Precise training with regional allies not only builds partner capability, it solidifies and grows partner nation relationships.

"At a tactical level, we learn from the processes our partner-nation forces in Morocco use and are able to

strengthen our coordination, day-in and day-out, when we work together through these missions," said the mission commander. "Internally, we also build relationships across our units when we deploy together to successfully complete the mission."

The 352nd SOW deploys regularly within the European theater, but was able to demonstrate their readiness and capability of deploying across combatant commands into the AFRICOM area of responsibility as well.

"Training here, in AFRICOM's area of responsibility, enables us to practice and tighten up our TTPs," said a U.S. Air Force senior airman flight engineer, assigned to the 352nd SOW. "It's really valuable training for us here, specifically for something like training on low visibility approaches and desert ops, and for us to show how ready we are."



Members of the special operations forces of Morocco kneel ready for exfiltration training with a CV-22B, stationed with the 352nd Special Operations Wing, RAF Mildenhall, England, during Epic Guardian 19 near Agadir, Morocco April 30, 2019. The 352nd SOW supported bilateral training with African partners to strengthen relationships and combined capability. Photo by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Kevyn Stinett.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



NATO SOF snipers hit the mark


The International Special Training Centre's Urban Sniper course held in Hohenfels, Germany is designed to provide the skill and knowledge required to deliver precision rifle fire to selected targets while using camouflage and concealment techniques.

*Photo essay by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Whitney Hughes
SOCEUR Public Affairs*



(From top left clockwise) A Norwegian Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrolman engages a target Apr. 1, 2019. Multinational special operations soldiers observe as another acquires a target Apr. 3, 2019. A U.S. Army Soldier assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade clears an obstacle Apr. 3, 2019. A German Special Operations Soldier jumps over a wall Apr. 3, 2019.





A Greek special operations sniper traverses an obstacle as a U.S. Army Sniper Instructor, assigned to the International Special Training Centre, provides security during the ISTC's Urban Sniper course Apr. 3, 2019.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



ISTC offers elite NATO SOF realistic combat medical course

*By U.S. Army Spc. Patrik Orcutt
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe*

The International Special Training Centre in Stettin, Germany doesn't do mass casualty exercises with a splash of fake blood here and a bit of pyrotechnics there. Instead they use actual amputees and professional makeup artists, and immerse students in the chaos of combat. This includes silicone used to create dislodged eyeballs and actual missing appendages that look like fresh wounds at the NATO Special Operations Combat Medic Course, replicating the sights and sounds of the battlefield.

During the course students undergo a mentally challenging 21 weeks of classes and practical exercise, followed by a physically demanding 36-hour field training exercise to test the skills they have learned. Skills learned through hands-on stations, trauma lanes, and mass casualty scenarios at a final field training exercise, conducted March 19-20, 2019.

The course is designed to create a well-versed special operations medic while allowing the students to perform on a tactical level in realistic settings. The most recent course included students from 21 nations including Italy, Switzerland, Croatia, Germany, Greece, The Netherlands, Norway and America.

"Its purpose is to make a special operations medic who is capable of being proficient in (Tactical Casualty Combat Care), then being able to hold onto a patient for 72 hours in a prolonged field care setting," said a U.S. Special Forces Master Sgt. assigned to the ISTC. "They also learn clinical medical skills such as sick call and history taking, and basic veterinary medical skills. "Tactical Casualty Combat Care is the standard of care which teaches life-saving techniques in the pre hospital battlefield setting.

The intent of TCCC is to stop massive hemorrhage, maintain the airway, treat thoracic injuries and prevent hypothermia."

During the field training exercise portion of the course,



A Greek special operations forces soldier prepares a simulated casualty to be raised to safety during the International Special Operations Training Centre's NATO Special Operations Medic Course in Stettin, Germany on March 19, 2019. The NSOCM course is designed to transform International SOF first responders into Special Operations Combat Medics through 24 weeks of training while working on hands-on skill stations, trauma lanes and prolonged field care clinical skills. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Patrik Orcutt.

the students arrive at a mass casualty site where they treat and stabilize the patients, then transport them to a field clinic where they provide treatment over the next 24 hours.

This scenario is the culminating event for the class and tests the students on their overall knowledge of the course while sharpening their rescue techniques and prolonged field care skills.

The realism of the event did not go unnoticed.

“The training was very real, with the trauma patients having real amputations, it’s very awesome and very impressive how they dress up the patients and conducted the training. It was very real,” said an NSCOM student with the Italian Special Forces.

With nine member nations including Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Belgium, Germany, Turkey, Romania, Italy and the United States acting as a lead nation, the International Special Training Center is a multinational training facility based on a memorandum of understanding. Its goal is to provide advanced and specialized training for special operation forces at a tactical level.

While many of these operators are learning how to become proficient combat medics, they are also building relationships with each other and special operations forces throughout NATO.

“It can give you a web of knowledge and a network of people that you can talk to for shared experience while increasing your knowledge after the course, so it’s very awesome,” said an Italian Special Forces NSCOM student.

Sharing years of experience and knowledge between the NATO partners is helpful for everyone involved.

“These guys are our partners, our allies — we want them



Italian, Norwegian and Dutch special operation forces hoist a simulated casualty during the International Special Operations Training Centre’s NATO Special Operations Medic Course in Stetten, Germany on March 19, 2019. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Patrik Orcutt.

to have the best standard of care possible. Being able to work with them and bounce ideas off them is always a good thing,” said the noncommissioned officer in charge of the course.

With the field training exercise completed, these students will now move on to the final two weeks of the course where they will travel to Ireland to conduct hospital and ambulance base clinical rotations in conjunction with the University College of Cork. Upon completing the course, the students will return to their respective units as combat medics where they will put their skills to use and train others how to implement what they have learned.



Norwegian, American and Swiss special operations forces work through the night on simulated casualties in a field clinic during the International Special Operations Training Centre’s NATO Special Operations Medic Course in Stetten, Germany on March 19, 2019. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Patrik Orcutt.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Pacific



Soldiers from the Armed Forces of the Philippines and U.S. Special Forces from 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), conduct security during an airfield seizure scenario on Lubang Island, Philippines, April 10, 2019 as part of Exercise Balikatan 2019. Balikatan highlights the long-standing relation between the Philippines and the U.S. and is aimed at strengthening relations, improving multinational and joint interoperability, and increasing partner nation capabilities. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Marcus Butler.

Combined SOF take part in BK 19

By U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer William Tonacchio, SOCPAC and U.S. Army Maj. Cynthia Holuta, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne)

Military special operation forces from the U.S. Navy, Air Force and Army in collaboration with Armed Forces of the Philippines SOF and the Australian Defence Force expanded their partnership capabilities during the 35th iteration of Balikatan 2019, held in Manila, Philippines April 1 - 12, 2019.

BK19 SOF events consisted of multiple evolutions of joint interoperability and combined training events that tested and enhanced the services' skills and abilities in areas such as counterterrorism, hostage rescue, airfield seizure, amphibious operations, live-fire, urban operations and aviation operations. U.S. participating units consisted

of 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), 353rd Special Operations Group, 1st Special Operations Squadron and Naval Special Warfare Unit 1.

"The importance of this training cannot be overstated," said Staff Sgt. Sabastien, a U.S. Special Forces Soldier with 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne). "It also shows the innovation, communication, and sense of community of the Armed Philippine Forces and allows everyone involved to develop crucial relationships and learn new skills."

The two-week long exercise began with various weapon ranges and live fire training, followed by rehearsals of this year's culminating event – a multiphase airfield seizure and hostage rescue scenario on Lubang Island, located on the Philippines' western edge. Each phase of training was designed to challenge and force the



Armed Forces Philippine Soldiers hold up Philippine Airborne Wings during a wing exchange ceremony with Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) out of Okinawa, Japan, April 7, 2019 as part of a Joint Combined Exchange Training during Exercise Balikatan 2019. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Marcus Butler.

participants to focus on their interoperability and readiness.

“If they [Filipinos] were to have any small islands taken over by a foreign military, this is definitely a dress rehearsal that can be used in the future,” said Maj. Christopher Bolz, a U.S. Army Special Forces Company

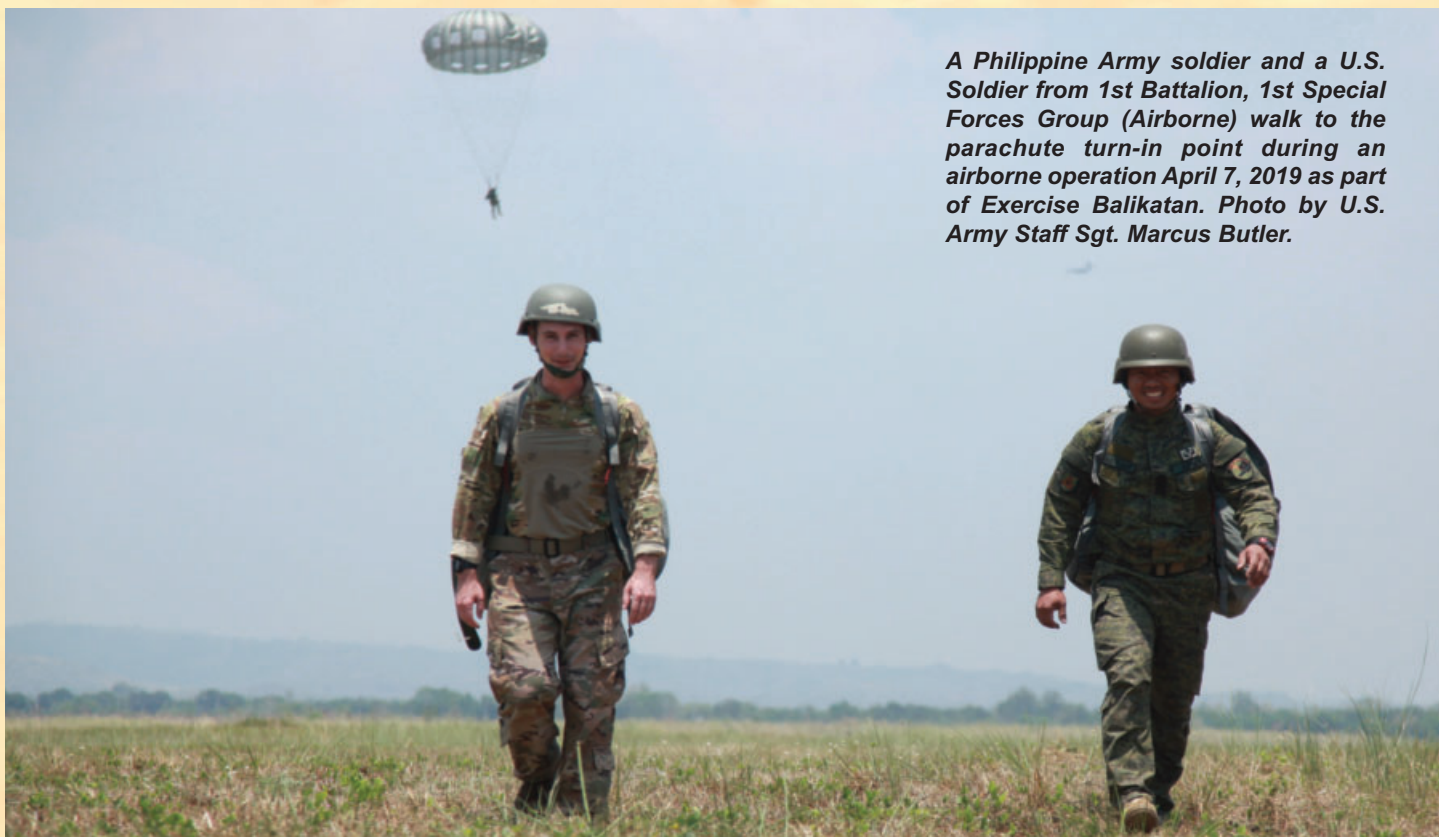
Commander. “I think the scenario is very realistic, especially for an island nation such as the Philippines.”

Additionally, BK19 hosted numerous humanitarian and civic assistance, community relations and subject matter expert exchange events. There were extensive rehab projects at multiple elementary schools, one-day medical clinics, joint social visits to schools and orphanages and a three-day conference for mental health providers.

“This training allows us to come together and operate as one team,” said U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Eric M. Smith, commanding general, III Marine Expeditionary Force. “Balikatan continues to prepare our armed forces to work together to confront any and all challenges that may jeopardize the mutual defense we have worked so hard to provide for one another.”

Balikatan is a Filipino term that means “shoulder-to-shoulder”, which characterizes the spirit of the exercise and represents the partnership between the U.S. and the Philippines, as well as their commitment to the Mutual Defense Treaty.

“Since 1951, we’ve had that mutual defense treaty, and every year when we were allowed to come here, to interact, to interoperate with our brothers and sisters in the Philippine Armed Forces, it makes us both better,” said Smith, during the closing ceremony. “We look forward very much to coming back, every time and every opportunity that we are allowed to by our hosts, the Philippine government.”



A Philippine Army soldier and a U.S. Soldier from 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) walk to the parachute turn-in point during an airborne operation April 7, 2019 as part of Exercise Balikatan. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Marcus Butler.

United States Agency for International Development

USAID, SOF partner to accomplish the 3D's (Defense, Diplomacy, Development)



*By U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Timothy Lawn
USSOCOM Office of Communication*

Naim Square in Raqqa was a center of commerce where children's voices were heard playing in the water fountain during the day and rhythmic music could be heard from the vibrant nightlife when the sun set. Naim means "paradise" in Arabic.

That was before ISIS took control in 2013.

ISIS used Naim Square as the nerve center of its self-proclaimed capital. Western news organizations referred to it as the "inner ring of hell."

The heads of those executed by ISIS were mounted on metal spikes surrounding the once-beautiful fountain. That was until the Syrian Democratic Forces, assisted by U.S. special operations forces, retook Raqqa in 2017.

The SDF quickly handed over control of the city to a local civilian authority, the Raqqa Civil Council, as they chased the last remnants of ISIS southeast toward Deir ez-Zor.

But how do you save lives, alleviate suffering, restore basic services and strengthen local government in order to prevent an ISIS resurgence? That's where the U.S. Agency for International Development steps in.

"USAID is in the deeds business," said Robert Jenkins, who has more than 20 years of international development experience. "We build trust ... trust is gained by not what we say, but what we do."

On the humanitarian front, USAID leads and coordinates the United States' humanitarian response to an average of 65 disasters in more than 50 countries every year. Of these, USAID requests the Department of Defense's unique capabilities in situations when a civilian response capacity is overwhelmed, civilian authorities request assistance, and the military provides a unique capability, added Jenkins, USAID's Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance.

USAID is a key partner for DOD, particularly to U.S. special operations forces, around the world. USAID partners beyond humanitarian assistance, which meets immediate lifesaving needs, to include stabilization and longer term



Children greet members of the Coalition and Syrian Democratic Forces at school in Southwest Asia, Jan. 15, 2019. The schools in this region were closed for the past seven years and have recently opened. The Global Coalition and its partners visit schools to distribute items such as desks and blackboards. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Joseph Truckley.

counterinsurgency and development.

USAID defines stabilization as the capacity to prevent conflict, address fragility, and respond to crises in a more strategic, integrated way, and act as a stabilizing force in times of transition.

The USAID and SOF partnership was conceived to function at all levels – tactical, operational and strategic – and to ensure development and defense efforts were mutually reinforcing and not duplicative.

USAID and the military have been partners since the 1960s. In early 2012, they partnered once again.

To operationalize the partnership, USAID embedded strategic advisors within Combined Joint Interagency Task Force-Syria before it became Special Operations Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (SOJTF-OIR) in 2016.

The stated mission of SOJTF-OIR is to conduct Special Operations in both Iraq and Syria in support of the CJTF-OIR commander, to militarily defeat the Islamic State Group and set conditions for greater regional stability.

In order to help accomplish greater regional stability, the

military calls on USAID.

“USAID’s focus is enabling our partners in the local community, building institutions and capabilities of governments and countries to take command of their own future,” says Mike Harvey, the USAID Assistant Administrator for the Middle East. “SOF seeks to do the same thing, but in the security realm. The two efforts need to go forward together.”

To better enable this to happen, U.S. Special Operations Command’s relationships with USAID continue to grow and expand – there are development advisors, humanitarian advisors and soon stabilization advisors within the USSOCOM enterprise.

“We’re also working to formalize the Joint Special Operations University partnership,” said Harvey, who previously served as a faculty member of the National War College. “We can leverage our partnership with SOF as USAID staff embeds, syncs and becomes familiar with the SOF community.”

As the 3Ds Defense, Diplomacy and Development continue to be constrained by resources, both people and money, an emphasis is needed for cooperation and collaboration.

“We are small in numbers of people, with relatively few resources trying to find imperfect solutions to what we are trying to do,” said Jenkins describing the joint USAID/SOF mission. “A wonderful definition of a symbiotic relationship is that we both leverage each other because the mission is the same, but we just come at it from different directions.”

The primary provision of humanitarian assistance is it provides for a more stable environment to help facilitate effective safety and stability, added Jenkins. Humanitarian assistance helps keep people alive and with basic needs met, thereby, offering a more stable environment for troops on the ground.

The operating environment could be completely different for coalition forces if humanitarian and stabilization assistance was sparse or nonexistent. Often USAID and SOF operate exclusively in these environments where they can train and equip their respective partners to do the heavy lifting – such as the environment in Syria.

“It’s a struggle,” said Stephen Allen, the regional team leader for USAID’s Disaster Assistance Response Team in Syria, who oversees USAID’s humanitarian assistance programs that reach four million people a month in Syria.

Similar to how SOF relies on the Syrian Democratic Forces to shape the battlefield, USAID relies on implementing partners to shape the humanitarian assistance front.

“It doesn’t matter who controls what territory. If it means people need assistance, we try to get it there,” Allen said. “It’s important that the agencies that are delivering it are doing it in a neutral way, and not taking political sides.”

One of the first units on the ground for USAID is the

DART from the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. The DART is a team made up of elite disaster experts who deploy worldwide to assess and identify humanitarian needs, set response priorities, and coordinate with local governments and non-government organizations working in country.

In effect, a DART member can embed with SOF, work in tandem with them, local authorities and other humanitarian organizations on the ground to identify urgent critical humanitarian assistance.

USAID may also send experts in rebuilding essential services, governance and longer-term development as part of stabilization efforts.

The need to embed experienced, skilled, and innovative stabilization and humanitarian specialists into USSOCOM’s theater of operations has never been greater.

“The goal is to ensure they have the right people in the right place,” said Harvey.

Today, two years later, the roundabout in Naim Square is once again a bustling city centerpiece. Children play in the newly refurbished water fountain and life is beginning to return to normal. In Raqqa Governorate alone, USAID stabilization programs supported projects to remove thousands of pounds of rubble, rebuild Tabqa Hospital serving over 500,000 people, brought potable drinking water to more than 350,000 residents and helped return the electricity to Naim Square.

“Just a few weeks ago, we helped turn the lights back on in Raqqa for over 200,000 people,” added Harvey referencing a USAID-supported program completed in cooperation with the Raqqa Civilian Council’s Energy Committee.

The SDF, assisted by SOF, paved the way for the Raqqa Civilian Council, assisted by USAID, to promote a sense of normalcy in Syria and help protect against the resurgence of ISIS.

Together, USAID and SOF are working to shape the environment and potentially mitigate crises before they become the next Syria. Thus, working together to protect and preserve national security goals and enhance American values across the globe.



Coalition forces help distribute jackhammers to Syrian Democratic Forces in Southwest Asia, Jan. 2, 2019. Military success has bought space, time and opportunity for international, civilian-led stabilization activities by unified action partners. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ray Boyington.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command



Leading by example: Army Rangers strengthen ties with infantry trainees, Ranger hopefuls

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

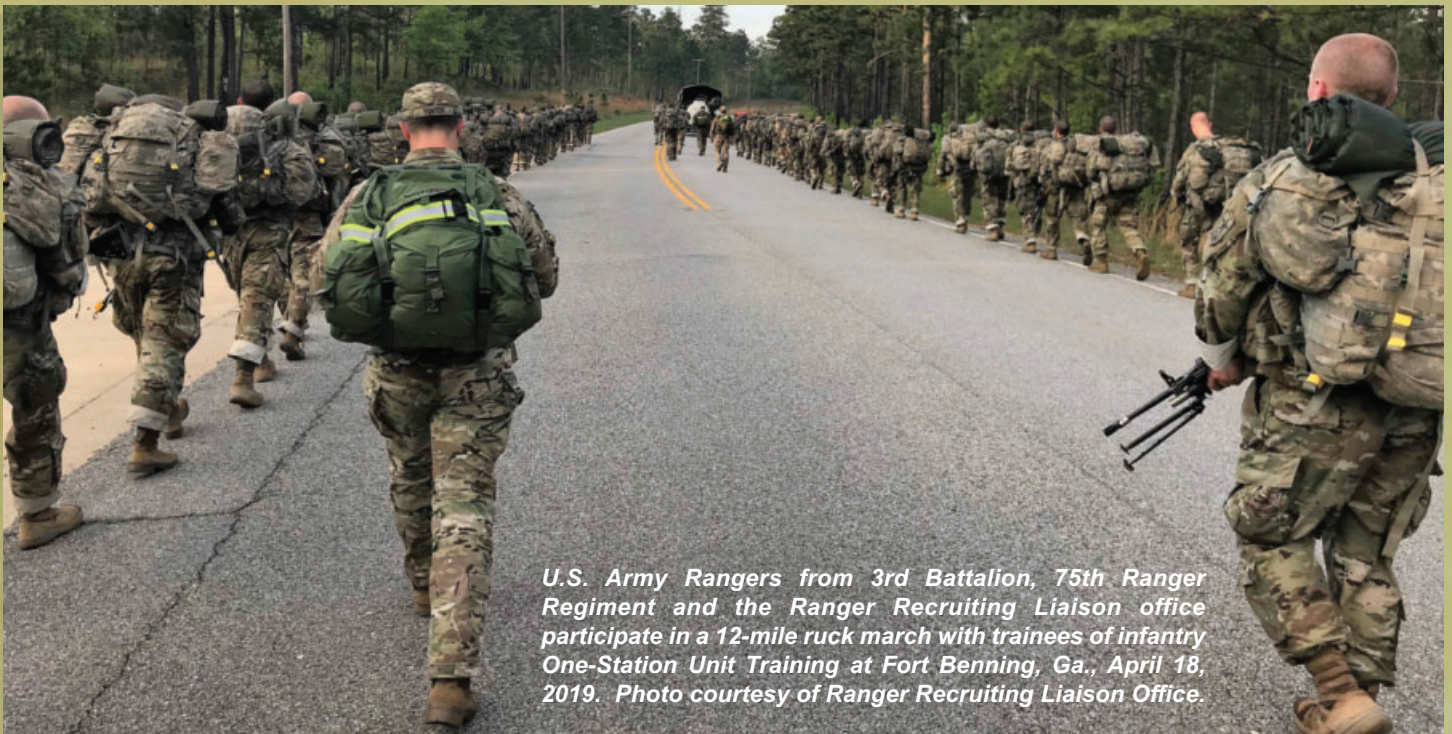
U.S. Army Rangers with the 75th Ranger Regiment are joining infantry One-Station Unit Training at Fort Benning, Georgia. The Rangers will participate in various fitness events, ruck marches and field exercises alongside the infantry Soldiers in training.

In partnership with OSUT leadership, the initiative is an opportunity for trainees to learn firsthand about life as an Army special operations gorges Soldier, and discuss their

timeline and path towards joining the elite Ranger Regiment.

Select infantry enlistees receive an Option-40 contract, which puts them on track to attend Ranger Assessment and Selection Program following their infantry training. Enlistees, without an Option-40 contract, can also volunteer for RASP at advanced individual training or during OSUT. Successful completion and selection through RASP is the only way for a Soldier to become a member of the 75th Ranger Regiment.

Further, the initiative attempts to clarify differences between volunteering for RASP as opposed to volunteering



U.S. Army Rangers from 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment and the Ranger Recruiting Liaison office participate in a 12-mile ruck march with trainees of infantry One-Station Unit Training at Fort Benning, Ga., April 18, 2019. Photo courtesy of Ranger Recruiting Liaison Office.



A U.S. Army Ranger from 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment speaks with Soldiers in training following a 12-mile ruck march at infantry One-Station Unit Training, Fort Benning, Ga., April 18, 2019. Photo courtesy of Ranger Recruiting Liaison Office.

for Ranger School.

“We believe a lot of Soldiers are hesitant to volunteer for RASP because they are misinformed about what RASP is and what the Ranger regiment does,” said Sgt. 1st Class Lukas Colclough, noncommissioned officer in charge, 75th Ranger Regiment Recruiting Detachment. “We are constantly being confused for Ranger School and we take every chance we can get to push the word out that we are not Ranger School.”

The 75th Ranger Regiment is an ARSOF unit that conducts special operations missions focused in three areas: special operations raids, forcible entry operations and special reconnaissance. Upon RASP selection, a tan beret and the Ranger regiment scroll, uniquely identify their members. This is different from Ranger School, which is an Army leadership school, where students develop small unit leadership skills and graduates earn a Ranger tab denoting their successful completion.

“This initiative will allow those initial entry Soldiers to

ask their questions to actual Rangers about what life is like in the regiment and how it differs from life in a conventional infantry unit,” continued Colclough. “It will also expose them to the quality of individuals that serve in the 75th Ranger Regiment,” he said.

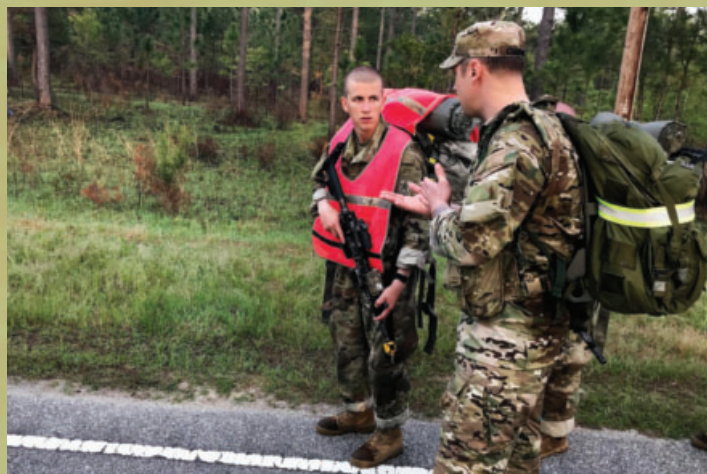
By introducing trainees early to Rangers who have completed the selection process, the goal is to motivate Soldiers to continue on their path toward RASP and volunteer for positions within the special operations community. If not already qualified, Regiment members will have an opportunity to attend Airborne and Ranger School as part of their follow-on training and leadership development.

According to the Ranger Recruiting Liaison Office, there are high rates of Soldiers voluntarily withdrawing from their Option-40 contracts, even before attempting RASP. For this reason, the Rangers have made themselves available to show the Army’s newest Soldiers what it means to be part of the Ranger and ARSOF family. Option-40 contracts are available to Army enlistees in a variety of military occupational specialties.

“We believe this initiative will make these Option-40 candidates understand they are in the beginning stages of something very special while they are going through OSUT, so they are less likely to withdraw from their Option-40 contract,” said Colclough.

On April 18, the Rangers kicked off their first OSUT event by participating in a 12-mile ruck march with basic trainees. The Rangers moved up and down the formation speaking with individuals about the Ranger regiment and answering questions.

Following the ruck march, an additional 22 infantry trainees signed volunteer statements to attend RASP after they graduate OSUT, vying to become one of the Army’s most elite Soldiers.



A U.S. Army Ranger from 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment speaks with a Soldier in training during a 12-mile ruck march at infantry One-Station Unit Training, Fort Benning, Ga., April 18, 2019. Photo courtesy of Ranger Recruiting Liaison Office.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command



A modern-day Ranger and a Ranger in a World War II uniform reflect on the heroic actions of the Rangers of Pointe du Hoc June 6, 1944. Rangers from 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment scaled the cliffs of Pointe du Hoc in commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of Operation Overlord June 5, 2019. Photo by Army U.S. Sgt. Jaerett Engeseth.

The boys of Pointe du Hoc

*By U.S. Army Maj. Anthony Mayne
USSOCOM Office of Communication*

Seventy-five years after the 2d Ranger Battalion scaled the cliffs of Pointe du Hoc in Normandy as part of Operation Overlord, the Allied Forces' D-Day invasion of France, the current generation of Rangers replicated their forbearers daring feat. On June 5, 2019 more than 100 Rangers from the 75th Ranger Regiment completed the climb in period dress to an audience of thousands as part of the diamond anniversary of the pivotal operation of World War II.

Dubbed "the boys of Pointe du Hoc" by President

Ronald Reagan during his 1984 address at the 40th Anniversary of D-Day, 225 men from the original 2nd Ranger Battalion had the arduous task of crossing the English Channel and seizing the dominate terrain providing the German forces effective fields of fire on both Omaha and Utah Beaches.

Pointe du Hoc was such a key objective, that the 5th Ranger Battalion was reinforced by the remainder of 2d Ranger Battalion mission to the seizure of the Pointe via an overland route beginning in the seascape of at the foot of Omaha Beach.

Weighed down by wet clothing, equipment and climbing slippery ropes, 225 members of the original

2nd Battalion would scale the 100-foot cliffs in thirty minutes. The Rangers were surprised to find that the casemates containing three 155 mm guns were empty. After swiftly seizing their objective, the Rangers set out to find the displaced guns. Ninety minutes later, a team of four Ranger noncommissioned officers discovered and destroyed the artillery pieces using thermite grenades.

For the next two days, the Rangers defended the terrain repelling several German counterattacks until the remainder of the 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalion's reinforcements arrived on Jun. 8, 1944.

The defense of Pointe du Hoc was a costly endeavor for the Rangers. Of the 225 Rangers who served in the 2nd Ranger Battalion on D-Day, 77 were killed, 152 were wounded, and 38 were listed as missing. In the 5th Ranger Battalion, casualties numbered 23 killed, 89

wounded, and two missing.

The significance of the mission and its legacy was not lost on the modern day Rangers participating in the reenactment.

"For us in the 2nd Ranger Battalion, this was our baptism by fire," said Maj. Ross Daly. "This is where our battalion's legacy was born. They gave everything that day and now it is on us."

Reflecting on opportunity to stand on the hallowed ground that turned the tide of the war for the Allies, Daly expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the once in a lifetime event.

"It's an extremely humbling experience. You're on the same terrain here, but without the confusion, the fright, the noise, the angst of what was upon their shoulders," Daly said. "Putting on what they wore that day, it just gives a slice of what it might have felt like."



Rangers assigned to the U.S. Army's 75th Ranger Regiment rehearse their ascent of the battle worn cliff-face of Pointe du Hoc on the northwestern coast of Normandy, France, June 4, 2019. During the American assault of Omaha and Utah beaches on June 4, 1944, U.S. Army Rangers scaled the 100-foot cliffs of Pointe du Hoc and seized the German artillery pieces that could have fired on the American landing troops at Omaha and Utah beaches. At a high cost of life, they successfully defended against determined German counterattacks. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Henry Villarama.

Special operations forces spies and saboteurs



Men and Women Special Operators take the war to the Enemy at D-Day and beyond

*Art and story by U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Timothy Lawn
USSOCOM Office of Communication*

June 6, 1944 - The mission sounds simple; pierce Nazi defenses, seize strategic targets, destroy obstacles and fortifications, delay and sabotage enemy movements, and link up with allied citizens to wage guerrilla warfare in support of the Allied invasion of Normandy, and liberate Europe from the clutches of the Third Reich. The men and women who completed those missions did so at great risk, many were captured or never returned, but their accomplishments are etched in the annals of American military history, setting the foundations and blazing the trails for the evolution of today's special operations forces.

From D-Day's earliest hours on June 6, 1944, through final victory of the Second World War, like-minded, highly trained, skilled and independent young men and women volunteered to become trained and perform as special operators and take the war directly to the enemy.

The young men and women special operations professionals became better known individually and collectively as members of the Navy Combat Demolition Units, Army Rangers, The Office of Strategic Services and their Jedburgh and Operational Group teams.

Individuals and teams successfully carried out missions that are now well known and too many to cover. Listed here are several examples of how special operations contributed to victory in Europe.

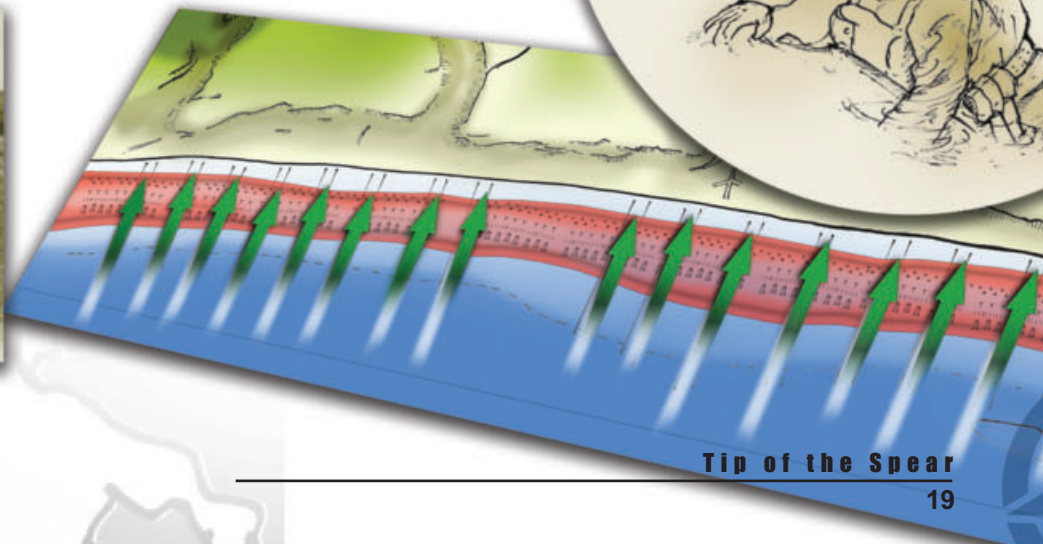
From the first day of D-Day, NCDU's waded through fiercely enemy contested surf at Omaha Beach in Normandy, France and destroyed obstacles blocking landing craft and creating gaps so that the following

invasion force could establish a beachhead. The Army Rangers climbed the seemingly impenetrable 100-foot cliffs of Point du Hoc to assault fortifications and fixed gun emplacements and storm further inland destroying critical targets. Air Force Carpetbaggers dropped supplies, individuals and small teams of OSS and Jedburgh operators; ones such as OSS agent Col. Pierre "Peter" Julien Ortiz, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, and five other Marines dropped from blackened planes in the middle of the night to operate as partisans and wage guerrilla war. And lastly, heroic individuals, such as Virginia Hall operated deep within enemy lines to spy, organize resistance, rescue escaped prisoners of war and facilitate safe houses.

From Navy demolitions to Rangers, OSS through Jedburghs, these special operators listed and those not contributed to the war's victory. From D-Day's earliest hours through the end of WWII, young men and women volunteered, selected, trained, planned and if necessary, sacrificed their well-being or self to accomplish missions, often operating at great risk, alone and with or without support. Their accomplishments helped bring victory in Europe, end the war, set the foundations for and blazed the trail for today's special operations professionals and special operations units.



Naval Combat Demolition Units



Naval Special Warfare Command



SEAL military dive operations



Photo essay by U.S. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Jayme Pastoric

SEALS assigned to Naval Special Warfare Group 2 conduct military dive operations off of the East Coast of the United States. U.S. SEALs are the maritime component of U.S. special operations forces and are trained to conduct missions from sea, air, and land. Naval Special Warfare Command has more than 1,000 special operators and support personnel deployed to more than 35 countries, addressing security threats, assuring partners and strengthening alliances while supporting joint and combined campaigns.





Air Force Special Operations Command



Special Tactics TACP awarded Silver Star for Afghan ambush

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

The joint special operations team was pinned down in a creek bed as dirt, rock and water exploded into the air.

A cacophony of gunfire and bursting grenades disoriented the team and any terrain that could be used as protection quickly withered away.

The situation was bad and getting worse, with one of the team members taking a bullet to the chest.

At this moment, the training and instincts of an Air Force Special Tactics operator began guiding precision strike air power as close as 35 meters away to turn the tide of battle against the overwhelming enemy ambush.

In the span of six hours, with no regard for his own safety, the Airman stepped into heavy enemy fire, directed dozens of 40 mm and 105 mm rounds, two 500-pound bombs and saved the life of a wounded teammate ... even after being shot himself in the chest plate.

A crowd of over 250 family, friends and U.S. service members gathered as U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Vincent Becklund, deputy commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, presented the Silver Star Medal to U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Cam Kelsch, an ST Tactical Air Control Party operator assigned to the 17th Special Tactics Squadron, during a ceremony at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum, Pooler, Georgia, April 9, 2019.

Kelsch was deployed with the U.S. Army Special Operations Command's 75th Ranger Regiment in Afghanistan in support of Operation FREEDOM'S SENTINEL and RESOLUTE SUPPORT in early April 2018.

As an ST TACP, Kelsch is part of a highly trained special operations community that lethally integrates air power into the battlespace by controlling precision strike munitions and delivering destructive ordnance on enemy targets in support of offensive combat operations.

"There's one thing that Cam had that day that we can't



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Cam Kelsch, a Special Tactics Tactical Air Control Party operator with the 17th Special Tactics Squadron, is presented a Silver Star Medal by U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Vincent Becklund, deputy commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, during a ceremony at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum, Pooler, Ga., April 9, 2019. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Rachel Yates.

teach, instruct, or measure," said Becklund. "The reason we're here today is because Cam distinguished himself on the battlefield that night through his courage, his selflessness, and his devotion to his teammates."

On April 25, 2018, Kelsch alongside Army Rangers and Afghan special forces were directed to find a high-value target in enemy held territory. With clear skies and the moon's illumination sitting high at 90 percent, Kelsch's team made first contact with enemy forces outside of the target compound.

According to Kelsch, the contact resulted in a small firefight that quickly neutralized the enemy.

As the team successfully secured the target compound and interdicted the targeted individual, the force continued to encounter small enemy forces. Intelligence gathered during the operation within the compound led Kelsch and his team

to believe there was a second high value target nearby.

Due to the brightness of the night, Kelsch utilized the oversight of an AC-130-U Spooky gunship to develop a low-profile route for the assault force to maneuver to the next target compound: a creek bed with a path around a foot wide.

"When we were down in the creek bed, it was pitch black because we were covered in trees and there were high walls on either side of us," said Kelsch.

Then ... chaos.

"It was like a bomb went off," Kelsch said. "It was so bright and looked like fireballs going off all around me."

Kelsch and his team were ambushed by enemy forces using assault rifles, fragmentation grenades and belt-fed machine guns.

An American teammate was hit in the chest and collapsed in front of Kelsch as he and his ground force commander sought cover behind nearby rocks. Kelsch initially thought that he was killed in action.

"The fire was so overwhelming, I couldn't stick my head out," Kelsch said. "Bullets were ricocheting; dirt was being kicked up."

Another teammate called out the position of the attackers ... a mere 40 meters away.

"I realized that I had to get eyes on target, so I had to leave the protection of cover," Kelsch said.

With no regard for his own safety, Kelsch exposed himself to fire to conduct danger close air strikes from the AC-130 with 40 mm rounds to suppress the threat, several only 35 meters away from his position.

"If it weren't for the true competency of that AC-130 crew, I wouldn't be here today," Kelsch said. "The aircrew really brought their A-game that night and made sure we got out of there."

With a moment without fire in all directions, Kelsch and his ground force commander seized the opportunity to recover their wounded teammate. While dragging him to safety, Kelsch took a direct hit to the magazine on his chest rack -- the plate in his armor caught the bullet.

Upon recovering his wounded teammate and receiving more enemy fire, Kelsch opted to upgrade to the 105 mm rounds from the gunship, still danger close to his fighting position. The effective munitions proved enough to allow Kelsch and his team to fall back roughly 100 meters, but not before suffering an Afghan casualty.

At that time, the team elected to call for extraction.

To ensure aircraft could land so close to the ambush site, Kelsch directed a coordinated attack from two F-16 Fighting Falcons using precision guided 500-pound bombs, neutralizing all remaining threats.

In the end, Kelsch's actions played a role in completing a successful mission, suppressing multiple prepared forces, and saving the lives of the joint SOF team.

"I did not think that a fight that big would ensue when we were going after that target," said Kelsch. "It was just another day, another mission."

Kelsch credits the medal awarded to him for his efforts during the engagement to his entire joint team.

"I just feel that I'm receiving it on behalf of my team simply because we're all in that situation," Kelsch said. "We all had different roles to execute that night and we all brought the fight to the enemy to make sure that we all got out of that creek bed alive and the objective that we went out there to accomplish was met."

Kelsch also commends his Afghan special operation forces that were with him during the operation.

"The Afghan partner forces are true patriots for their country," Kelsch said. "They want their country to be rid of terrorists. They want peace. They're professional, they're lethal, they're highly trained. It was an honor to work with them."

Kelsch's ground force commander for the mission, U.S. Army Master Sgt. Phillip Paquette, 75th Ranger Regiment, also received a Silver Star Medal for his valiant actions during the same engagement.

"Sergeant Kelsch is the epitome of a professional," Paquette said. "One of [his] greatest attributes is his dedication to the mission and fellow Rangers. Sergeant Kelsch's actions directly contributed to the recovery of wounded team members and the safe extraction of the objective area."

In addition to the Silver Star Medal, Becklund also presented Kelsch a Bronze Star Medal with Valor for actions while on the same deployment.

"For well over 6,000 days and 65 combat deployments, the joint effort of the 17th STS and the 75th Ranger Regiment has paired the Department of Defense's most lethal JTAC's with the world's premier direct action raid force," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Joseph Booker, commander of the 17th STS. "This pairing has continuously dealt devastation to our country's enemies across the globe, year after year."

Special Tactics Airmen are the Special Operations Command's air/ground integration force who conduct personnel recovery, global access, precision strike missions and battlefield surgical operations.

Since 9/11, ST Airmen have received one Medal of Honor, nine Air Force Crosses and 45 Silver Star Medals. Kelsch is the first Air Force TACP operator to be awarded the Silver Star for actions in combat during the last seven years.

"Cam had the guts to carry out this and other extremely dangerous missions because of the operators to his left and right," said Booker. "Whether it be a fellow Airman, Ranger, or any other part of his team; Cam is always willing to put his life on the line for them. He is the epitome of the 'next great generation of warfighters.'"

Air Force Special Operations Command



Air Commando pursues dream of flying on AFSOC airframes



U.S. Air Force Capt. Holly Mapel is a combat systems officer and operational flight test director with the 18th Flight Test Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Fla. Mapel is an MC-130J Commando II aircrew member and regularly flies on other aircraft in order to test equipment and weapon systems used to accomplish Air Force Special Operations Command and U.S. Special Operations Command missions. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Andrea Posey.

***By U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Andrea Posey
1st Special Operations Wing Public Affairs***

As a child, she sat in front of the TV watching the “Top Gun” movie over and over again and listening to Tom Cruise proclaim, “I feel the need – the need for speed!” Watching the aircraft soar across the screen made it clear to her that she wanted to fly when she grew up.

The actor’s words weren’t the only reason U.S. Air Force Capt. Holly Mapel was inspired to join the military. She already had a sense of familiarity with the armed forces due to her family’s deep connection to it.

“I knew I wanted to join the Air Force for as long as I can remember,” said Mapel, a combat systems officer

and operational flight test director with the 18th Flight Test Squadron at Hurlburt, Florida. “Being an Air Force brat, I have been surrounded by the military my entire life – it is all I’ve ever really known. I wanted to follow in the footsteps of my dad, and multiple other family members, [to] serve in the military and fly.”

Mapel joined six months after graduating high school in 2001 and began her career as an enlisted aircrew flight equipment technician at Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico.

“I spent seven years maintaining flight equipment that was used by Air Force Special Operations Command aircrew,” she said. “It was there where my desire to do something more with my career started.”

This aspiration led Mapel to enroll in school to earn her degree and commission.

Although attending school and working a full time job can be difficult to do at the same time, Mapel felt she had enough support and time to accomplish these goals.

“I had some very supportive supervisors, both enlisted and officers, that encouraged going to school,” she said. “Being in Air Education and Training Command allowed me to have a pretty stable and consistent schedule that facilitated going to school.”

After receiving her degree and changing duty stations, Mapel arrived at Hurlburt, where she applied for Officer Training School.

“OTS wasn’t anything that I had expected or planned for,” she said. “There were many nights the first couple of weeks that I was second guessing my decision to commission, but you lean on those that are going through it with you and think about why you wanted to do it in the first place and persevere.”

After commissioning, Mapel became a combat systems officer with a specialization as an electronic warfare officer on the MC-130H Combat Talon II. A CSO is responsible for planning and executing low-level

navigation and terrain clearance so personnel and equipment can be delivered to hostile areas. Additionally, CSOs operate and manage the aircraft's defensive systems and airborne communication systems.

"I spent two years at the 15th Special Operations Squadron where I learned a lot but also [decided] I still wanted more," Mapel said.

This need to expand her knowledge led Mapel to request a change of air frames, and it was the MC-130J Commando II that she had in her sights.

"I chose [the MC-130J] platform mainly because it was an easy transition of what I was already doing on the Talon IIs, but also because

I love the mission of special operations forces mobility," she said.

The Commando II is flown in covert refueling missions for helicopters and tiltrotor aircraft, and conducts infiltration, exfiltration, and resupply of special operations forces by airdrop or landing. Its secondary mission includes the airdrop of leaflets for informational counterterrorism methods.

After completing her mission qualification training, Mapel was assigned to the 9th Special Operations Squadron at Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico.

"I can honestly say that my time spent at the 9th Special Operations Squadron has been the best part of my career thus far," she said. "As one of AFSOC's specialized air mobility platforms, the MC-130J executes missions directed by higher authorities to ensure the theater commander's strategic vision and objectives are accomplished."

In 2018, Mapel certified as an operational flight test director and came to the 18th Flight Test Squadron to further contribute to the mission.

Mapel now leads a team of officers, enlisted Airmen and civilians through the planning, execution and reporting phases of a test. The team tests new or updated equipment on AFSOC aircraft and weapons systems, advising senior level decision makers on a system's performance and deficiencies.

"Test directors ensure whatever gadget or software being tested is what the warfighter wants and needs," she said. "It could be something that helps them execute their job more efficiently or save their lives. By testing and fielding new technology, we are keeping AFSOC relevant

on an ever-changing battlefield."

Mapel enjoys her current duties because it still allows her to fulfill her childhood dream.

"I love to fly and with both jobs, that's what I get to do," she said. "Whether I am performing crew duties as a CSO on an MC-130J or executing a test on another AFSOC platform, I get to do what I love."

The commander of the 18th FLTS, U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Rafael Bosch, believes Mapel embodies the three tenets of the Air Commando mission – Ready Today, Relevant Tomorrow, Resilient Always.

"Capt. Mapel is at the leading edge of the AFSOC

and SOF mission," Bosch said. "Her MC-130H background is absolutely invaluable as we move forward [with] the MC-130J [because] it is at the forefront of what AFSOC will be and is currently. She has been key to ensuring the squadron, as a whole, receives the correct training so we can all take care of each other when the time comes."

Bosch added that Mapel

is also one of only a handful of CSOs [in the Air Force] that has training on the new MC Terrain Following radar system – a \$480 million acquisition program.

"This new radar will make the MC-130J a viable replacement for the MC-130H," Bosch said. "Her role in the testing of this system will directly impact the future of AFSOC for generations to come."

Mapel is able to see the direct impact she has on the bigger Air Force picture and that makes the job more enjoyable for her.

"AFSOC is vital to our nation's security," she said. "[We] provide specialized airpower and ground forces that are utilized by sister service's special operations forces to conduct missions in contested environments. We work together as a team to accomplish our nation's objectives."

Mapel has a sense of pride being part of the AFSOC team because she is entrusted with carrying out some of the nation's most important global endeavors.

"Every day I'm reminded of what it took to become a part of this family, which while small in comparison to other commands, is an incredible pool of specialized talent," she said. "It is truly a commitment rather than an assignment and I'm proud to be committed to this team that is committed to me and my own family."

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— Capt. Holly Mapel

Air Force Special Operations Command



Capt. Joseph Siler: 'Go in, get help, get back to the fight'

By AFSOC Public Affairs

The news story shows a drone operation — the screen lights up with a flash, followed by the crumbling of a building. To the viewer at home, it is a smooth, seamless operation far away. But to Capt. Joseph Siler, he would tell you that it took a team of highly-trained and dedicated intelligence professionals to carry out the critical mission witnessed on television. However, with each successful mission comes an everlasting impact. In Siler's case, that impact came in the form of an invisible wound.

"The challenge with my role was that the mission was never-ending," he said. "It was a 24/7 – 365 job, and we always had to be on alert."

Siler commissioned in 2010. He attended the Intelligence Officer Initial Skills course where he met his now wife, Katherine. He spent the first three years of his career supporting dynamic intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions. In 2014, he deployed to Afghanistan, where he continued collecting, analyzing, and disseminating intelligence.

Upon his return from deployment in October 2014, Siler and Katherine married. After spending several years working over 12-hour shifts (or 'abnormally long shifts') in a fast-paced, highly stressful position, Siler and his wife decided it was time to take a step away from operations. This decision prompted his transition to a more consistent 8 a.m.-5 p.m. work environment at the Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

It was not until his life slowed down that Siler started feeling as though his world was caving in. In August 2015, he began experiencing a loss of balance, nausea, and frequent panic attacks.

"I thought, I've already made it through the hard stuff," as he questioned the onset of emotions he was

facing. "Why am I having so many issues now?"

He rapidly lost 20 pounds and struggled to keep food down. His only relief from the nausea and panic attacks came when he was finally able to get a few hours of sleep.

After that first panic attack, the couple knew he needed to see someone and went to an urgent care facility off-base where doctors prescribed him medication to alleviate the attacks. After 72 hours of taking the medication and still unable to get relief, he decided that he needed to go to the mental health clinic on base. There, the team arranged for Siler to be admitted to a psychiatric ward in the town outside the base for the night.

"I told them I felt like I was losing my bearings and unable to function, that the anxiety was getting really bad," Siler said. "I didn't know what my options were but felt like I was running out of them."

While Siler was in the hospital, Katherine recalled from her own past Air Force training that resources were available but found it hard to know how and where to start. The one person she knew to call was the base chaplain, who immediately came to sit with her at the hospital while she waited to be reunited with her husband.

"Having the chaplain was a huge source of support and kept me grounded while I was unable to see him," she said.

Once released from the hospital, Siler spent two weeks at a behavioral health facility. It was there he was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, received counseling services and met with a psychiatrist every day. During those two weeks, they walked him through his medications, helped him work through his experiences, and taught him how to embrace his post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I learned that PTSD is not normally diagnosed in

the first six months of being back from deployment,” he said. “It usually develops once the body slows down. For the first time, I got clarity of what was going on and why certain things were happening.”

He was nervous about returning to work following his recovery but found that his leadership and fellow Airmen were understanding and supportive as he transitioned back into work life.

For Siler, the biggest takeaway was understanding the tools he had at his disposal to help him overcome his PTSD.

“Medicine is just one quick fix tool, but medicine alone does not help you change the behavior that contributes to stress,” said Siler.

In addition to medicine, he identified a network of people who could support him, such as his wife and extended family. He rediscovered his love of exercise and found practicing music to be an effective outlet for stress reduction.

“Using all of the tools that were available to control and limit my anxiety, I was able to come off all medication about a year and a half later, after exhibiting healthy behaviors,” he explained.

Siler believes the Air Force’s perspective on mental health needs reframing so that people know it’s okay to

seek help.

“A lot of people think that if you go to mental health, that is the end of your career,” Siler explained. “I am living proof that that is not the case. Going to get help allowed me to gain an understanding of what I experienced, get the help I needed, and come back stronger. Now when I experience the same kind of stress, I am better equipped to handle it.”

He advises his fellow Airmen who are experiencing symptoms of an invisible wound to “go in, get help, get on the road to recovery, and get back to the fight.”

Now, as a leader in the 492nd Special Operations Support Squadron, Siler has become an advocate for what he believes are healthy techniques for dealing with stress, noting that he is back in the fight as a stronger officer and more resilient Airman than he was before.

Editor’s Note: Are you or someone you know suffering from an invisible wound? Visit the Invisible Wounds Initiative website or the Air Force Wounded Warrior Program for more information. Ultimately, Airmen taking care of Airmen is what this is all about. Finding strength in yourselves and others, to go the extra distance, seek help, and come back stronger. The Air Force is committed to ensuring you have the resources to do so.



U.S. Air Force Capt. Joseph Siler, 492nd Special Operations Support Squadron chief of intelligence training, and his wife Katherine, hold their daughter. Siler advises fellow Airmen who are experiencing symptoms of an invisible wound to get the help needed to get back to the fight. Courtesy photo.

Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command



Marine Raider graduates French Commando training, earning highest distinction 'Moniteur' avec 'aptitude'

*By U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Bryann K. Whitley
MARSOC Public Affairs*

He was the first U.S. Marine Raider to attend the course and the first American to graduate with the Commando "Moniteur" avec "Aptitude," the highest distinction given upon graduation.

A gunnery sergeant and critical skills operator with U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, recently graduated the French Commando "Moniteur" Training Course in Mont-Louis, France.

The 26-day course, conducted entirely in French, is intended for officers and noncommissioned officers. Its curriculum targets combat infantry training, special operations and survival skills.

"I did two weeks of review before departing for the course," explained the gunnery sergeant. "In the course information packet there was a list of topics and knowledge that we would be covering in the course that we needed to be capable of effectively communicating. Knowing the content we would be covering made my language review easier and a lot more targeted."

Training and skills development are a way of life for Raiders. Highlights of their training include tactical skills such as close-quarters combat techniques, explosive ordnance disposal training, survival in

austere environments, hand-to-hand combatives and skills required for Raiders' amphibious operations. While these are important, Raiders are expected to train and operate with foreign partner nation forces. To do this effectively, language skills are critically important to mission success.

"Being a CSO, you have to go through so many other schools and tests that, in that aspect at least, I was prepared for this course," said the Marine Raider. "It was adding in the language that changed that and made things difficult."

The course developed commando techniques in its students through challenges such as obstacle courses, rappelling, guerilla warfare tactics, amphibious insertion procedures, rescue techniques and grueling physical fitness events. The Marine attributed his success in the French Commando course to his prior training and operational experience with MARSOC and his commitment to sustaining his personal readiness.

"Students must be highly motivated and willing to make extreme efforts in regard to a language barrier," the Marine Raider said. "If I hadn't had a background in a majority of the techniques they were going over, I wouldn't have been successful at all."

The gunnery sergeant built upon his language foundations established as a young child through personal commitment to sustainment. In particular, he



Marine Raider World War II-era logo

used French language news sites and podcasts to keep his fluency fresh, but one of the most advantageous training assets available to him were fellow francophone Raiders.

“We knew the gunnery sergeant would be a great candidate for this and that he’d represent the command and the Marine Corps well,” said the Marine Raider Regiment’s language program manager. “He far exceeded our expectations by being the first American to receive the course’s highest distinction upon graduating.”

While much of the tactical training and physical challenges were similar to those encountered in the Raider training pipeline, the challenges of a language immersion environment created a substantial challenge as a non-native speaker.

“I didn’t have a choice but to use the language and there was an initial struggle,” the Raider said. “The formality and the speed that the instructors spoke in was difficult to understand at times, and they wouldn’t slow down just for you.”

The Raider identified the language sustainment opportunity as one of the biggest benefits of participating in the course. As opposed to a classroom setting, the tactical environment and real-world training and operational applications provided hands-on learning opportunities that would not be available in casual conversation or in a classroom lecture.

The goal of the Marine Raider Regiment’s language program is to sustain the language and

culture skills taught to CSOs at the Marine Raider Training Center, then enhance them to a much higher level in preparation for upcoming mission requirements.

“Language training doesn’t always have to be in a classroom,” the language program manager said. “Living, eating, training and interacting with one another 24/7 for an extended amount of time provides a level and depth of knowledge you just can’t get in an academic setting.”

This training was not designed to be a language sustainment event, but I looked at this course as a perfect way to inject sustainment into an awesome course. Graduating this course is one heck of an accomplishment, but to graduate this grueling course that is not taught in your native tongue, and to do so as a distinguished graduate, like [this] gunnery sergeant

did, is absolutely amazing.”

Given the central role played by foreign language skills in determining special operations mission success, MARSOC’s language program has taken great strides in “operationalizing” language sustainment training -- part of that initiative is to seek out innovative immersion opportunities, such as this course.

“Attending a course like this is great both personally and operationally,” said the Marine Raider. “The personal

benefits are high because it allows you to keep your language skills up. Operationally it’s a great course because it helps with building rapport and communication capabilities.”

Attending a course like this is great both personally and operationally. The personal benefits are high because it allows you to keep your language skills up. Operationally it’s a great course because it helps with building rapport and communication capabilities.



The critical skills operator badge is a 2-inch by 2.75-inch pin featuring a bald eagle with outstretched wings representing the Marine Corps; a dagger in the eagle’s talons to symbolize Marine Raider battalions and the Marine Special Operations School; the Southern Cross, to represent Raiders’ victories on Guadalcanal; and the Latin phrase “Spiritus Invictus:” which translates as “unconquerable spirit.”

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

USSOCOM inducts four historic figures into Commando Hall of Honor

By Michael Bottoms
USSOCOM Office of Communication

Virginia Hall, Army Col. Charles Munske, Army Lt. Col. Leif Bangsboll and Command Master Chief (SEAL) Richard Rogers, were inducted into U.S. Special Operations Command's Commando Hall of Honor for their remarkable contributions to special operations in a ceremony held at the headquarters on MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, April 18, 2019. Although their actions were from another era, they embody the first special operations forces truth "Humans are more important than hardware." The four inductees are an eclectic group of special operations pioneers who shared a dedication and a commitment to defending our country.

Hall, an amputee and first female operative sent into France during World War II spying in Lyon, the Nazi-allied Vichy government of France. Munske, a career Civil Affairs officer credited for rebuilding Japanese infrastructure after the devastation of World War II and was in the forefront rebuilding both Pyongyang and Seoul during the Korean conflict. Bangsboll, a Danish turned American Office of Strategic Services operator who parachuted behind enemy lines into Denmark helping defeat the Germans during World II earning the Distinguished Service Cross and who would also go on to serve with valor in Korea. Rogers, a SEAL would serve from platoon point man to senior enlisted leader of USSOCOM from 2000 to 2003.

The limping lady

Hall, the daughter of a wealthy family from Baltimore, wanted to become a Foreign Service Officer before the outbreak of World War II, but was turned down by the State Department despite 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



Virginia Hall

disqualified her.

Undeterred, Hall went overseas and joined the British Special Operations Executive. There, 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, she was forced to escape to Spain by foot across the Pyrenees Mountains in the middle of winter.

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 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, dying 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 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, infamously known as "The Butcher of Lyon." The one thing they knew about her was that she limped, and therefore she became known to the Gestapo as "The Limping Lady."

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. The French government gave her the Croix de Guerre avec Palme. After the war, she was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross—the only one awarded to a woman during World War II. It was pinned on by OSS head Army Maj. Gen. William J. "Wild Bill" Donovan himself.

She went to work for the National Committee for a Free Europe, a Central Intelligence Agency 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 2017, the CIA named a training facility after her: "The Virginia Hall Expeditionary Center."

The Mayor of Pyongyang

Munske's lengthy Civil Affairs military career began on Dec. 14, 1914 when he enlisted in the 13th Coast Defense Command, New York National Guard. His first

exposure to Civil Affairs/Military Government activities was as a sergeant and interpreter for the postwar Engineer Operations Division of War Damages in Allied Countries section of the American Commission to negotiate peace in Paris.

Munske received a commission on

June 7, 1920 as a second lieutenant in the New York National Guard serving until 1940, when he joined the active Army. After being stuck in the U.S. as a Coast Artillery officer in 1944 Munske made a career change to get overseas. He volunteered to attend the School of Military Government at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. He next attended Harvard's Civil Affairs Training School before going to the Civil Affairs Staging Area at The Presidio, California.

In November 1945, he was sent to Japan to serve as the assistant chief of staff G-5 (Military Government) of the 98th Infantry Division, headquartered in Osaka. Much of his time was spent administering civil matters, including jump-starting Japanese local industry. To do this effectively, he learned the language and culture, and attended many meetings and social events in order to make inroads with the local civilian population. His assistance to more than six million inhabitants of the Osaka Fu, Mie, Wakayama and Nara prefectures, would earn him a Legion of Merit and the Army Commendation Ribbon

In October 1950 and Munske was assigned to the Pyongyang Civil Assistance Team of the United Nations Public Health and Welfare Detachment. He accompanied the victorious UN forces north to Pyongyang, which fell to UN forces on Oct. 19, 1950. He became known as the "Mayor of Pyongyang" when he and his fourteen-man military/civilian team achieved dramatic success when they found resources to reestablish infrastructure, resumed trash collection, established a fire brigade, made sure city workers were paid, immunized 3,500 people against typhus and another 4,000 against smallpox, reestablished the police force and law and order, organized a rudimentary health care system and

Story continues on next page



Army Col. Charles Munske

set up insecticidal dusting stations to prevent and control the spread of lice and flea-borne infectious diseases. They also repaired two power plants, fixed the streetcar and telephone system and began reconstructing the key railroad bridge across the Taedong River. However, all of this hard work was for naught.

By late October 1950, the UN forces had pushed the North Korean Army across the Yalu River, the northern border with China. It was then that massive infiltrations of volunteer Communist Chinese forces attacked behind UN lines. This human onslaught quickly overwhelmed the strung out UN forces forcing them to retreat across enemy occupied territory. By the beginning of December, Communist forces were at the gates of Pyongyang. Munske had no choice but to order the destruction of what his team had recently rebuilt and join the retreat.

His next assignment was as executive officer of the Kyongsang-Namdo (Pusan) Provincial Civil Assistance Team where he helped administer the sizeable refugee population in and around Pusan. After UN forces again pushed the Communists north, Munske headed the Kyonggi Do Province (Seoul) Civil Assistance Team. He was instrumental in rebuilding the major metropolitan areas of Seoul, Inchon, and Suwon, all of which had suffered greatly having been twice occupied by the Communists.

The last phase of Munske's CA career was as inspector general of the New York Military District, with concurrent duties as legal assistance officer and senior advisor for Military Government units. He inspected reserve Military Government units and Reserve Officers Training Corps programs.

Munske retired Feb. 28, 1958 with 20 years of active service while serving nearly 43 years in the military. The 95th Civil Affairs Brigade has named their headquarters building after him.

He passed away on Nov. 14, 1985 at the age of 88, and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

OSS operator to Green Beret plank holder

Born in Denmark in 1918, Leif Bangsboll was the son of Danish Navy Rear Adm. Frederick Christian Bangsboll who commanded the Danish submarine fleet. In 1935, he volunteered for the Royal Danish Naval Air Force and trained as an observer prior to joining the merchant marine. In September 1940, he joined the Norwegian Air Force (in exile) in Canada, where he trained as a flight sergeant. Knowing that he would not see action he volunteered for the U.S. Army, joining as a private first class on March 22, 1943.

Fluent in Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish, and able to speak French, German and Greenlandic, the Office of

Strategic Services recruited him in September 1943. At first, the OSS employed him as an instructor at RTU-11, otherwise known as the Farm, a school for teaching the methods of secret intelligence work. He was then sent to the Danish operations section of the OSS Special Operations branch.

Because he was unable to get a U.S. Army

commission at the time by agreement with the OSS the British Army gave him a commission as a first lieutenant. He eventually got his U.S. commission on Nov. 6, 1944.

On the night of Oct. 5, 1944 Bangsboll parachuted into occupied Denmark near Allborg, and was "the only American officer serving as an agent" in that country. Until the end of the war, he lived as a civilian- subject to execution as a spy if caught- and helped arm, train, and lead the Danish resistance while reporting on conditions in the country. He also engaged in several sabotage missions, including blowing rail and communications lines seriously delaying German troop movements. While in Copenhagen in May 1945, Bangsboll led a resistance force that captured German artillery pieces and machineguns leading to the surrender of the entire garrison. For his extremely dangerous assignment in a country with a robust enemy counterintelligence network. Bangsboll received the Distinguished Service Cross and a number of Danish awards. After the war in Europe ended. He then briefly served in Germany with the OSS successor, the Strategic Services Unit.

After returning to the U.S., Bangsboll attended intelligence officer's training at Camp Holabird, Maryland, and served in airborne units at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Before deploying to prewar South Korea. There, he served as a public safety officer in the 59th Military Government Headquarters and Headquarters Company. He then became an intelligence and reconnaissance platoon leader in the 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment.

When this unit was sent to Korea as the Regimental



Army Lt. Col. Leif Bangsboll

Combat Team Bangsboll again went to war. For an action on Nov. 16, 1950 he received the Silver Star for leading a small force behind enemy lines near Pyongwon-ni, North Korea. His platoon overwhelmed a North Korean garrison and discovered the location and contents of a food storage warehouse. Later ordered to destroy the warehouse, Bangsboll once again led his numerically inferior force in killing the enemy defenders, demolishing the warehouse with its estimated 100 to 150 tons of dried food all with no friendly casualties.

When he returned from Korea Bangsboll briefly served with the Central Intelligence Agency before coming to the Psychological Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, with further assignment to the newly-established 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne). Bangsboll taught guerrilla warfare and clandestine operations and helped develop the initial program of instruction. As an instructor, he excelled. He also attended the Psychological Warfare course at Georgetown University thus being qualified in both of the Army's special operations fields.

Bangsboll retired from the U.S. Army April 30, 1963 and passed away Nov. 20, 2001.

Lifetime of service to naval special warfare

Retired Command Master Chief Petty Officer Richard Rogers, (SEAL), spent 31 years of active duty in elite special operations forces taking countless assignments from platoon point man ultimately becoming the senior enlisted leader for USSOCOM from August 2000 to August 2003.

Rogers also has an extensive resume of military experience within the Naval Special Warfare community. He joined the Navy in July 1972 and completed Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training in May 1973. Moving through the ranks he started as SEAL platoon point man and communicator at SEAL Team ONE; as an instructor at BUD/S; as a platoon cartographer/intelligence specialist, the intelligence department head, the ordnance department head, the command career counselor, and a platoon chief petty officer at SEAL Team FIVE; and as a boat crew leader at SEAL Team SIX. Rogers also served as an Operations Chief Petty Officer, Assistance Current Operations Officer at Naval Special Warfare Development Group. He studied Spanish at the Defense Language Institute. Additionally, he served as the Command Master Chief at Naval Special Warfare Unit EIGHT in Panama; Naval Special Warfare Group ONE in Coronado, California; and Special Operations Command, Europe in Stuttgart, Germany.

An expert in a variety in special operations skills,

Rogers was qualified as an open and closed circuit scuba diver, open and closed circuit diving supervisor, static line and free-fall parachutist, static line and free-fall jumpmaster, small arms range safety officer, close quarter combat range safety officer, and helicopter castmaster. He trained and

mentored recruits aspiring to become SEALs and Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman, trained indigenous forces throughout southwest Asia.

A seasoned combat veteran he held leadership positions in combat Operations Just Cause in Panama and Allied Force in Bosnia, and he became the first Theater Special Operations Command-Europe senior enlisted leader.

As the senior enlisted leader of USSOCOM he ushered in a new era for SOF, when the command transitioned from peacetime engagement to the war on terrorism.

Rogers retired from the Navy in 2003 and continues to work to improve the training and professional development of naval special warfare personnel as a civilian at the Center for SEAL and Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman. He became the driving force in the development of the new SEAL and SWCC ratings for enlisted personnel. Rogers also successfully negotiated additional senior enlisted billets from the Navy to ensure proper force structure for the community.

In May 2006, he assumed the N3 (Operations directorate) position at the Center for SEAL and SWCC, a learning center to manage the new SEAL and SWCC ratings, where he continues to improve the training and professional development of naval special warfare personnel.

In total, Rogers has dedicated 47 years to naval special warfare and special operations. Mentoring the special warfare community for nearly half a century, his contributions will have a lasting impact for future generations of naval special operators.



**Command Master Chief (SEAL)
Richard Rogers**

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command Artificial intelligence and its effects on the battlefield

USSOCOM partnering with Carnegie Mellon University hosts 19th Sovereign Challenge conference

By Michael Bottoms

USSOCOM Office of Communication

Imagine a bomber calling 911 threatening to blow up a school. A technician does a voice analysis of that phone call and determines the caller is a male in his mid-twenties, high on cocaine, and making the call from a room with a low ceiling. Most importantly, the technician can reconstruct his face from an algorithm analyzing vocal cords. This is not the future, this is today.

U.S. Special Operations Command partnered with Carnegie Mellon University to host the 19th Sovereign Challenge Conference held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania April 30 – May 3, 2019. The theme of this year's conference, "Technological Change and Its Effect on Future of Irregular Warfare," was discussed and debated by a professors and influencers who are acknowledged experts in the field. The efficacy and ethics of using machine learning and artificial intelligence on the battlefield, especially the determination of responsibility when something goes wrong with the technology.

The conference had more than 120 representatives from countries around the world and kicked off with Air Force Lt. Gen. James Slife, USSOCOM vice commander, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto and the Secretary of the Air Force the Honorable Heather Wilson, all addressing the conference at the Senator John Heinz History Center about how technology is moving at a faster and faster pace and society must be wary of its pitfalls.

"Machine learning has transformed the customer service fields where today's consumers are often unknowingly talking to a robot and still having their needs met. But it's also led to the development of deep fakes, where machines can replicate audio and video personas of actual people and force our citizens to question what is real and what is fake," Slife said. "This will require a continued focus on missions like military information support operations, cyberspace operations, and



A student from Carnegie Mellon University gives a demonstration on robotics during the 2019 Sovereign Challenge Conference May 1. Sixty-four countries were represented at the conference and the theme was "Technological Change and Its Effect on Future of Irregular Warfare." USSOCOM partnered with Carnegie Mellon University to host the 19th Sovereign Challenge Conference held in Pittsburgh, Penn. April 30 – May 3, 2019. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

counter-threat financing. This is why our Sovereign Challenge program is so valuable. It provides a forum where we can increase our collective understanding, not only of the problems in front of us, but the tools with which we'll solve them."

Mayor Peduto described how Pittsburgh has evolved from a steel, industrial city to a respected technology hub that analyzes how technology will affect its citizens.

"During the second Industrial Revolution, Pittsburgh led in steel and aluminum, and we built every city in this country. We built every bridge. Every skyscraper was being made with Pittsburgh steel," said Peduto. "And then Pittsburgh died. We died. ... The mills were closing. We lost more people in the 1980s than New Orleans lost after Hurricane Katrina. And they never came home. Our unemployment was greater than America's during the Great Depression."

The mayor then explained the blue-collar city picked itself up and began to rebuild itself by refocusing its economy through medical services and the technology sector.

“We became very good at managing decline because we thought that’s what post industrial cities were supposed to do, manage decline. But something else happened back in 1979. At Carnegie Mellon University, they created a new program, the first of its kind in the world, and it was a Bachelor of Science in robotics. People started to come to Pittsburgh. By the mid 1980s, they had created the first Ph.D. in the world in robotics. More people started to come to Pittsburgh,” said Peduto. “They started in the field of artificial intelligence in the 1970s, and not only through the science side of it, but through the humanities and the psychology of it as well. Herb Simon won a Nobel Prize in it in the 1980s.”

Wilson discussed how artificial intelligence and machine learning on the battlefield are ever increasing with decision cycles becoming shorter and moral decisions are becoming increasingly paramount.

“To be sure, artificial intelligence and machine learning are going to enable new modes of warfare. That gives all of us pause, or at least it should give us pause. Because as people of conscience, we are afraid that machines will teach themselves how to win the game, irrespective of any moral code undermining the limitations on the use of force that our societies have built over centuries,” Wilson said. “Will machines decide what to do based on utility or based on a moral worldview? And how, as leaders of our nations, will we address these kinds of questions? There is a moral imperative here. When it comes to warfare, humans must continue to bond and decide the why and the when, even as technology increasingly becomes part of the how.”

During the three-day conference a diverse group of speakers addressed the conference attendees. Among the presenters were best-selling author Max Brooks, whose books include “The Zombie Survival Guide” and “World War Z,” and August Cole, co-author of “Ghost Fleet.” Brooks challenged the conference to quit thinking in old paradigms.

“We need to get rid of the transgender ban; it demonstrates hate and alienates a generation of recruits who are growing up in an identity politics culture. Seek to recruit the recruiters to find new types of talent from Silicon Valley and the tech center,” continued Brooks. “We (the military) must gain trust in these new technology tribes. Embrace identity politics as a reason to defend the U.S. U.S. adversaries do not respect individuality. We (the military) are not embracing and informing the country of the existential crisis that exists beyond (and in) our borders.”

The conference included a visit to Carnegie Mellon University, a world-renowned institution known for producing industry leaders in the fields of science and engineering.

CMU President, Dr. Farnam Jahanian, welcomed the

conference to the university and their engineering department would give lectures and demonstrations on face recognition techniques, profiling humans from their voice and robotics.

“Melding of cyber and the physical world means access to data is growing, but lines are becoming blurred,” said Jahanian. “The professors and students at this university are in the forefront in trying to understand how the physical and cyber will intersect.”

Dr. Rita Singh, associate research professor at CMU’s Language and Technologies Institute, gave a ground breaking presentation on how you can build a human profile just from voice analysis.

“This technology is currently at its early stage of development. The human voice carries much information, it is able to provide insights into, age, physical build (such as weight, height), environment, personality, background, social behavior and facial characteristics,” said Singh. “Human vocal projection is a very complex process. Every individual’s vocal track contains micro-features and they are unique that is like a barcode. The generation of the human face is constructed using the micro-features of the voice and matching them to a collection of data. CMU is not only able to recreate the human face but the entire human body through analyzing the human voice. The reverse is also possible, CMU was able to recreate the voice from Rembrandt’s ‘face’.”

Founder and Director of the CMU Biometrics Center, Dr. Mario Savvides, gave a lecture on facial recognition technology explaining how they focus in on the iris of the eye because each person’s iris is unique to include identical twins.

“The human eye iris does not change as one ages. Every iris is unique. Even identical twins have unique irises. LASIK surgery does not alter or distort the iris; thus, it will not affect the recognition. CMU’s facial recognition technology can capture a human iris from behind a windshield, helmet and even a masked face. As long as the iris can be captured,” said Savvides. “Without telling the algorithm about the gender and ethnicity, the AI software can generate a facial construction.”

USSOCOM Commander, Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke, gave the final speech of the conference and emphasized the need for international partnership and especially when sharing artificial intelligence.

“Almost one-third of the world’s countries are attending this conference, and we have common values and common priorities. An alliance formed by states committed to democracy is a time tested way to defeat hegemonic states. If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together,” Clarke said. “Resisting technological change risks us being left behind. There are challenges integrating AI into warfare. Specific attention in the information domain is warranted – especially where it intersects with our partnerships.”

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command



(Left to right) Second Lt. Henry A. "Hank" Potter, Lt. Col. James "Jimmy" Harold Doolittle, Staff Sgt. Fred Anthony Braemer, 2nd Lt. Richard E. Cole and Staff Sgt. Paul John Leonard stand in front of a B-25 Mitchell bomber. Courtesy photo from doolittle-raider.com.

Honoring a legend

Last Doolittle Raider, Lt. Col. Richard "Dick" Cole, dies at 103

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

U.S. Air Force retired Lt. Col. Richard "Dick" Cole, the last surviving member of the Doolittle Raid and an original Air Commando, passed away at the age of 103 April 9, 2019.

Cole made a lasting impact on Air Force Special Operations Command.

"He was an Air Commando that understood the responsibility of freedom," said Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, commander of AFSOC. "He was, in every sense of the word, a hero."

Cole enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps in November of 1940, commissioning as a second lieutenant in July of 1941. During World War II, in January and February of 1942, Cole volunteered for a top secret mission under the command of Lt. Col. James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle.

The mission was to conduct air raids against Japan following the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 4, 1941. Members who volunteered for the mission became known as the Doolittle Raiders. They carried out the first air raid on April 18, 1942.

“As Jimmy Doolittle’s copilot, he was aboard the first B-25 Mitchell bomber to leave the USS Hornet to strike back at Imperial Japan following Pearl Harbor,” said Webb. “He went on to carry that fight forward to the China-Burma-India Theater throughout World War II.”

Cole and Doolittle’s B-25 was one of 16 bombers loaded onto the USS Hornet. Due to improper fuel amounts required for their intended landing sites, the raiders had to either ditch or crash land after striking their targets.

“The Doolittle crew had climbed to 8,000 feet over China that night in the midst of a thunderstorm, then jumped into the black hole and came down through a thick layer of clouds,” said Dennis Okerstrom, author of “Project 9, the Birth of the Air Commandos in World War II.” “Cole’s parachute settled over the top of a pine tree on the side of a vertiginous mountain. He wrapped himself in the silk canopy and waited for daylight. The next day he climbed down and was reunited with the rest of his crew.”

Upon the Doolittle Raid’s success, Cole stayed in the China-Burma-India Theater until April of 1943. Cole conducted a high risk aviation mission known as “Fly the Hump,” while piloting cargo aircraft. The mission, supporting those defending China, spanned the 530-mile long passage over the Himalayan Mountains. When Cole finished the Hump, he returned home.

Shortly after returning home, Cole received a phone call from Col. Johnny Alison, who was forming the 1st Air Commando Group. The elite group carried out special operations against the Japanese.

Cole served as a pilot of the C-47 Skytrain and engineering officer for the transport section. While he was in the India-Burma sector, Cole landed over 200 soldiers deep behind enemy lines to establish an airfield. This occurred during Operation Thursday, otherwise known as the birth of the Air Commandos.

Cole’s contributions to Operation Thursday also marked the first Allied all-aerial invasion into enemy territory and the first nighttime heavy glider assault landing.

“Operation Thursday provided concepts that you and I

have perfected over the years and execute on a daily basis around the globe,” Webb said. “We share, at a fundamental level, the same attitude, the same spirit, the same character as the men of the 1st Air Commando Group.”

After Operation Thursday, Cole returned to the U.S., impacting multiple commands with his expertise.

Lt. Col. Cole’s legend will forever live on in our AFSOC community. It’s Airmen like him that pave the way for the future of AFSOC and our Air Commandos.

— Chief Master Sgt. Gregory Smith

“Lt. Col. Cole’s legend will forever live on in our AFSOC community,” said Chief Master Sgt. Gregory Smith, command chief of AFSOC. “It’s Airmen like him that pave the way for the future of AFSOC and our Air Commandos.”

Cole often visited Hurlburt Field and the Airmen of AFSOC, telling his story.

“He was a living legend, a participant in our storied history and a founding member of our Air Commandos,” said Webb. “I had the privilege of getting to know him in his later years and he is a part of the AFSOC family. A grateful nation joins the Cole family in paying tribute to a true American hero.”



U.S. Air Force Col. Michael Conley, left, commander of the 1st Special Operations Wing, and Chief Master Sgt. William Adams, right, command chief of the 1st SOW, presents a token of appreciation to U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. retired Richard Cole, during a veteran discussion panel at Hurlburt Field, Fla., March 5, 2019. The breakfast was one of several events held to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Operation Thursday. Operation Thursday was an unorthodox operation in which the first Air Commandos worked alongside British “Chindits” to insert thousands of troops behind enemy lines during World War II. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Kentavist Brackin.





**U.S. Marine Corps
Staff Sgt.
Joshua Braica
1st Marine Raider Battalion**



**U.S. Army
Staff Sgt.
Jacob A. Hess
97th Civil Affairs Battalion**



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

Editor's note: Honored are those special operations forces who lost their lives in combat or training since the April issue of Tip of the Spear.

A U.S. Army Ranger assigned to the 75th Ranger Regiment, rehearses his ascent of the battle worn cliff-face of Pointe du Hoc on the northwestern coast of Normandy, France, June 4, 2019. During the American assault of Omaha and Utah beaches on June 4, 1944, U.S. Army Rangers scaled the 100-foot cliffs of Pointe du Hoc and seized the German artillery pieces that could have fired on the American landing troops at Omaha and Utah beaches. At a high cost of life, they successfully defended against determined German counterattacks. More than 1,300 U.S. service members, partnered with 950 troops from across Europe and Canada, converged in northwestern France to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Operation Overlord, the WWII Allied Invasion of Normandy, commonly known as D-Day. Upwards of 80 ceremonies in 40 French communities in the region took place between June 1-9, 2019, the apex being held June 6th at the American Cemetery at Colleville-sur-Mer. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Henry Villarama.

