

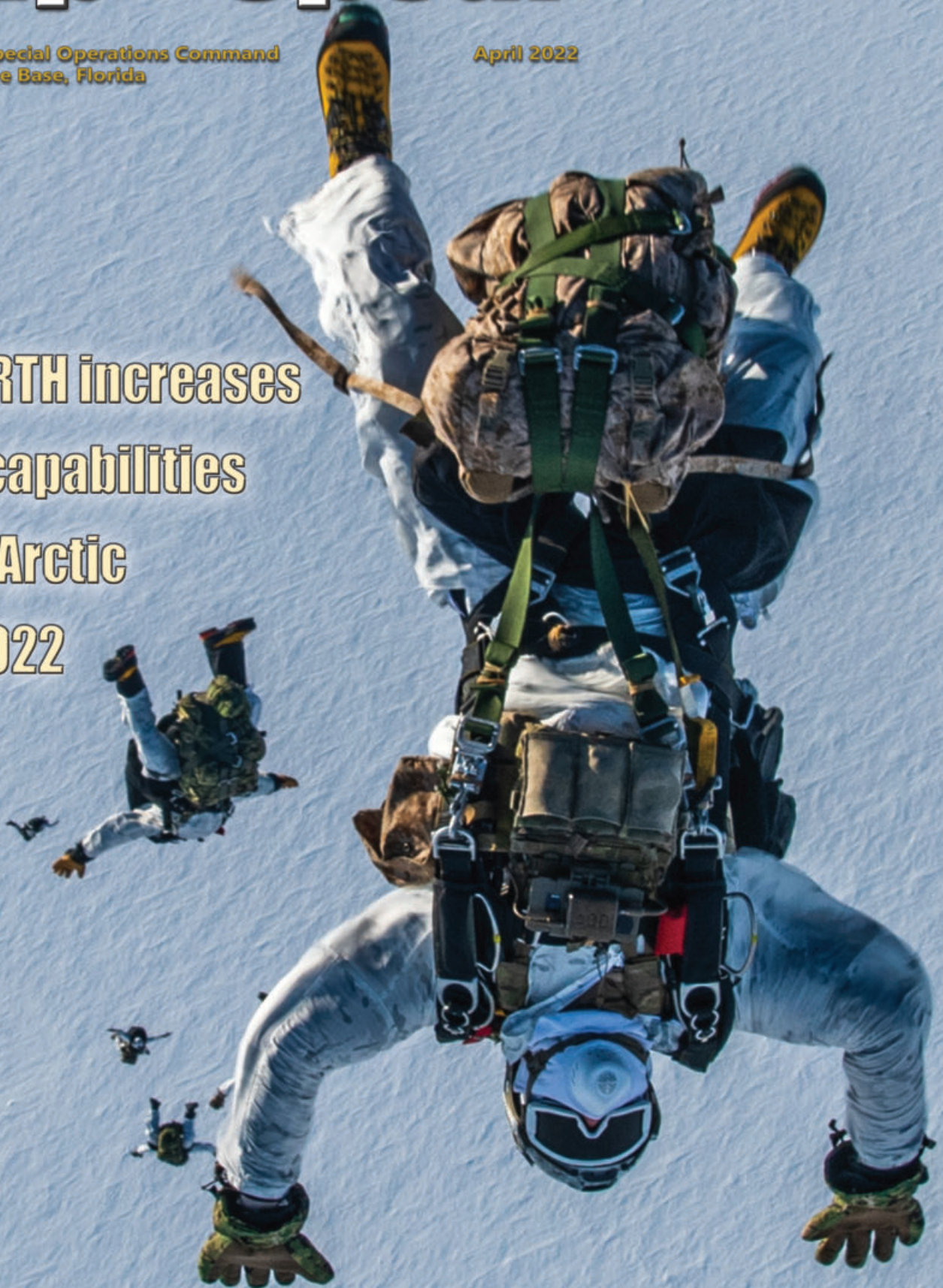


Tip OF THE Spear

United States Special Operations Command
MacDill Air Force Base, Florida

April 2022

**SOCNORTH increases
Arctic capabilities
during Arctic
Edge 2022**



United States Special Operations Command



SOCNORTH increases Arctic capabilities during Arctic Edge 2022 ... 12

Tip of the Spear

U.S. Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke
Commander, USSOCOM

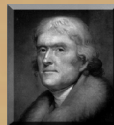
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A Naval Special Warfare team performs a high-altitude low-opening jump, during the 2022 Arctic Edge Exercise. Arctic Edge is a U.S. Northern Command biennial defense exercise designed to demonstrate and exercise the ability to rapidly deploy and operate in the Arctic. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Trey Hutcheson.

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U.S. Special Operations Command - Africa



Tanzania joint combined exchange training

U.S. Army Green Berets assigned to 3rd Special Forces Group score targets during a basic marksmanship range training with Tanzanian People's Defense Force, Marine Special Forces during a Joint Combined Exchange Training in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania March 3, 2022. The teams focused on honing basic skills such as basic marksmanship, small unit tactics, and mission planning. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Andrew Fox.





U.S. Special Operations Command - Africa



Precise work in dangerous places: Purple Heart ceremony sheds light on the work of Quiet Professionals in Northwest Africa

Courtesy Story

Special Operations Command Africa

In a rare public recognition of U.S. special operations forces in Africa, Master Sgt. Steven Corley, an intelligence noncommissioned officer with 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne), was awarded the Purple Heart during a ceremony in Stuttgart, Germany, April 8, 2022.

The Purple Heart medal is one of the U.S. military's oldest medals dating back to 1782. It recognizes military members who were wounded or killed in combat.

Corley earned the award in January of 2022 while serving as the leader of a six-person team in northwest Africa where he was responsible for intelligence exploitation and integration with partners and allies. Though wounded in an attack on base where he was assigned, he assisted partner forces in locating the point from which his element was attacked.

"Wherever you look in Africa, when it's somewhere tough or dangerous, SOCAFRICA is there," said Gen. Steven Townsend, AFRICOM commander. "Master Sergeant Corley did what U.S. forces typically do when wounded, stay in the fight until they pass out or are instructed to stand down."

Corley was medically evacuated the following day and has spent his time since the attack focusing on physical recovery and staying in the fight from SOCAFRICA headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany.

"This has been an amazing rotation in seeing how much the battalion has done for the mission," said



U.S. Army Master Sgt. Steven Corley receives a Purple Heart medal April 8, 2022, in Stuttgart, Germany. He was wounded during an attack while serving as the leader of a six-person team in northwest Africa. The Purple Heart medal is one of the U.S. military's oldest medals dating back to 1782. It recognizes military members who were wounded or killed in combat. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Jasmonet Holmes.

Master Sgt. Corley. "I especially want to thank my family, my battalion, and the staff at Landstuhl [military hospital], especially the rehab team, for doing an amazing job taking care of me. I'm very fortunate to be here to accept this medal."

Special Operations Command Africa engages with partner-force militaries on the African continent daily, both in person and virtually.

“Master Sgt. Corley’s service and sacrifice are indicative of the great work our teams do across the continent,” said Rear Adm. Milton J. Sands III, Special Operations Commander Africa. “We have folks in Africa who are in harm’s way to ensure we see threats coming that could threaten our nation. There are those out in the world who would attack America – Special Operations Command Africa service members, like Master Sgt. Corley, stands as a sentinel.”

Master Sgt. Corley joined the U.S. Army in

September 2001, enlisting in 2nd Battalion 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Mississippi Army National Guard. He has deployed in support of

Operation Enduring Freedom six times, including three times to Afghanistan, once to Lebanon, and currently serving his second tour with Special Operations Task Force – Northwest Africa under Special Operations Command Africa.

Some of his previous awards and decorations include two

Bronze Stars, a Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Service Commendation Medal, six Army Commendation Medals, and the Humanitarian Assistance Medal for Hurricane Katrina.

We have folks in Africa who are in harm’s way to ensure we see threats coming that could threaten our nation. There are those out in the world who would attack America – Special Operations Command Africa service members, like Master Sgt. Corley, stands as a sentinel.

— Rear Adm. Milton J. Sands III



U.S. Africa Command Commander, General Stephen J. Townsend and Master Sgt. Steven Corley pose for a photo during a Purple Heart ceremony April 8, 2022, in Stuttgart, Germany. Corley was wounded during an attack while serving as the leader of a six-person team in northwest Africa. The Purple Heart medal is one of the U.S. military’s oldest medals dating back to 1782. It recognizes military members who were wounded or killed in combat. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Jasmonet Holmes.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



Exercise Cold Response 22

Members of 1-10 Special Forces Group (Airborne) participate in maneuvering drills in preparation for their participation in II Marine Expeditionary Force (II MEF)'s Exercise Cold Response 2022 in Sweden in February. 1-10 SFG(A) attended the Swedish Armed Forces Subarctic Warfare Center in order to prepare for the Marine-led exercise. Certification included maneuvering on skis, snowmobiles, and on foot in austere environments like the high north. This training in support of Cold Response ensured all allies and partners were prepared for the demanding training scenarios faced throughout the exercise in Norway. Photo by U.S. Army Cpt. Margaret Collins.





U.S. Special Operations Command - Korea



SOCKOR hosts its first African American leaders panel

Courtesy Story

Special Operations Command Korea

On Feb. 24, 2022, U.S. Special Operations Command – Korea organized its first African American leaders panel. This event provided a forum for panelists to share their unique stories and the experiences they had during their military careers.

Panelists included U.S. Army Capt. Christopher White, U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt Gwendolyn West, U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Blaine Williams, and U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Latoya Greene from 2nd Infantry Division.

The panel, organized by SOCKOR's Diversity and Inclusion team, created opportunities for dialogue amongst leaders of different backgrounds.

Following a family tradition of service, White shared from his ten years of military experience.

"One of the most important things that my parents taught me and that I've applied to my time in the Army is to always treat people with dignity and respect," said White. "That perspective fostered this desire to continually learn and grow. These are the same characteristics that I've tried to maintain and pass onto my soldiers."

Encouraged by her mother to join and having grown up around military installations, West shared from her 20 years of service experience.

"I've never accepted 'can't' as a response," said West. "There is always a way to get to 'yes' and I've fought for that throughout my career. I won't accept 'can't' when it comes to achieving my goals."

Chief Williams emigrated from Trinidad and Tobago and focused on the strategies he employed in navigating 19 years of both enlisted and Warrant Officer experience.

"I did feel pressure to be 10 times better than anyone else to succeed," said Williams. "There were times it was challenging to be successful as a minority in a competitive group setting. I had to be strategic and intentional in choosing my moments when I needed to be smarter or to work harder to



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Latoya Greene represented the 2nd Infantry Division as a panelist for U.S. Special Operations Command-Korea's first African American Leaders Panel. Greene challenged the U.S. Army height, weight and body composition program by creating a petition to showcase the strength of differing body types and their value to the military mission. Greene felt motivated to advocate for the change after supervising and mentoring soldiers who trained for Army fitness tests but were facing challenges in measurements. Photo by U.S. Army Cpl. Dae Hyeon Choi.

see the outcomes I wanted."

The first U.S. Army soldier who filed a petition to change height, weight and body composition standards was also part of the panel. Greene shared her experiences in advocacy and mentoring soldiers to bring out their potential.

"I've worked hard to have a seat at this table and to be a part of the conversation," said Greene. "Everyone is unique and I recognize that not everyone has had the same opportunities or have had their voices heard. If I'm not the right person to understand you, I'm going to find someone who will."

SOCKOR's first African American Leaders Panel may have concluded Black History Month for 2022 but ultimately helped foster conversations in the command on inclusivity and respecting how different experiences helps make us stronger.

US service members support local orphanage, donate COVID-19 supplies

*By U.S. Army Pfc. Dong Gun Han
Special Operations Command Korea*

In partnership with United States Forces Korea, U.S. Special Operations Command-Korea served a local orphanage, Jacob's House, as part of the Good Neighbor Program. The Preservation of the Force and Family (POTFF) of SOCKOR, along with the support of Camp Humphreys' chapels, delivered donations to the Pyeongtaek orphanage for the Lunar New Year.

Jacob's House supports orphans through early childhood development as they prepare to transition to other care facilities. SOCKOR and Jacob's House have maintained their relationship for more than three years as part of the command's community outreach efforts.

This includes donation drives throughout the year that often coincide with shared celebrations of holidays in Korea such as Chuseok, Christmas, and Lunar New Year.

The donations for this drive focused on necessary COVID-19 quarantine and health mitigation supplies such as wipes, gloves, thermometers, and masks. The items were prepared with donations from SOCKOR and Camp Humphreys' chapels.

"I encourage SOCKOR teammates to continue participating in these donations," said Dr. Richard Sohn, SOCKOR psychologist and Jacob's House liaison. "It shows these children love and care and it helps promote our good neighbor spirit."

Jacob's House is focused on two future projects for the sustainment of the program. The facilities provide space available when children have to be quarantined, but in order to maintain care they need access to appliances like refrigerators and washing machines. The road to the facility also needs to be remodeled so that children with disabilities have easier access. Both present future opportunities for SOCKOR and others to give back.

"SOCKOR puts family first," said command

chaplain U.S. Army Maj. Jesse McCullough. "This opportunity helped us show children in our community that they are a part of our family, too. As future opportunities arise, SOCKOR members will be notified so they can help give items or volunteer at Jacob's house."

Jacob's House is enthusiastic about teaming up with SOCKOR for future events like Children's Day. It's an opportunity for service members to volunteer, teach classes, and interact with the children in the program. SOCKOR members have volunteered to the program in the past and will keep working with COVID safety measures so that service members can continue in the future.

"Giving to others is an important part of living a purposeful life," said McCullough. "We are thankful to

I encourage SOCKOR teammates to continue participating in these donations. It shows these children love and care and it helps promote our good neighbor spirit.

— Dr. Richard Sohn

Jacob's House."

SOCKOR is grateful for the opportunity to work with Jacob's House while its service members are stationed in South Korea. The command will continue with philanthropic projects as we learn and share in the Korean culture.



SOCKOR teamed up with Camp Humphreys' chapel programs as part of the Good Neighbor initiative to donate necessary COVID-19 quarantine and health mitigation supplies to a local orphanage. Courtesy photo.

U.S. Special Operations Command - North



SOCNORTH increases Arctic capabilities during Arctic Edge 2022



U.S. Navy Special Warfare Combatant-Craft crewmen traverse through a lake on a Special Operations Craft-Riverine (SOC-R) during a training maneuver in support of exercise Arctic Edge 2022 in Juneau, Alaska, March 7, 2022. Arctic Edge is a U.S. Northern Command exercise hosted by Alaskan Command, where Special Operations Command North can demonstrate its special operations capabilities in the extreme cold. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Arnell Ord

*By U.S. Army Maj. Daisy Bueno
Special Operations Command North*

Special operations forces from the Army, Navy, Air Force worked with the U.S. Coast Guard, international partners, local and state police, interagency and Alaskan natives to execute extreme cold weather training, expand survival skills and test arctic equipment during exercise Arctic Edge, Feb. 28 – March 17, 2022.

Arctic Edge is an arctic-focused U.S. Northern Command biennial exercise hosted by Alaskan Command. This year, Special Operations Command North (SOCNORTH) not only amplified its participation and

training scenarios, but it was the first time it tested its capability to quickly mobilize its headquarters from Colorado Springs, Colorado, to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska. The ability to mobilize, deploy and establish a Joint Force Special Operations Component Command to command-and-control SOF units is a critical task for SOCNORTH's homeland defense mission.

Exercises like Arctic Edge, give SOCNORTH the platform to demonstrate its proficiency to rapidly deploy, operate, and conduct command and control of SOF units in the Arctic. The exercise also provided an opportunity to test tactics and field equipment in severe cold temperatures.



A Naval Special Warfare jump master performs in-flight duties before a high-altitude low-opening jump, during the 2022 Arctic Edge Exercise. Arctic Edge is a U.S. Northern Command biennial defense exercise designed to demonstrate and exercise the ability to rapidly deploy and operate in the Arctic. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Trey Hutcheson.

“Special operations forces tested equipment and looked at innovative ways to not just survive in the Arctic but thrive in the Arctic,” said Brig. Gen. Shawn Satterfield, commander, Special Operations Command North. “They also developed relationships within local communities to include Alaskan natives, gaining knowledge from their techniques, practices and procedures on how they succeed in the cold weather.”

In northern Alaska, also known as the ‘The High North,’ 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne) conducted a series of long-range snowshoe and snow machine movements along the North Slope, Arctic Ocean, and Bering Strait while integrated with state/local law enforcement and Alaskan tribal organizations in harsh weather. Additionally, both units worked heavily with local and federal agencies to provide integrated deterrence under a homeland defense scenario.

10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Green Berets then utilized 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment MH-60 Blackhawks to exfiltrate after a multi-day movement through the intense Arctic environment.

In southern Alaska, operating on Kodiak Island, U.S. Navy SEALs enhanced techniques and procedures for prospering in the cold maritime environment, by testing gear and conducting various reconnaissance training during the day and night. In Juneau, U.S. Navy Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewmen partnered with the U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Security Response Team for special

reconnaissance training on protecting critical infrastructure.

In addition, SEALs conducted several Military Free Fall jumps into Deadhorse, Alaska, on the northern coast of Alaska. During the final jump, they landed on an ice flow 177 nautical miles off land in the Arctic Ocean. Once they landed on the ice, they rendezvoused with the USS Pasadena submarine, which breached upward to four feet of ice in locations, as part of a U.S. Navy exercise, ‘ICEX’, that was taking place concurrently with Arctic Edge.

Air Force Special Operations Command also played an integral part in providing intra-state transportation throughout the exercise, as only 20 percent of Alaska is accessible by roads.

SOF regularly trains in this unforgiving climate to be effective in the Arctic, but they don’t do it alone.

“Our partners and allies are absolutely critical and foundational to our mission at SOCNORTH,” added Satterfield. “We train and coordinate with Canadian SOF routinely and Danish Special Operations observed Arctic Edge this year. We want to partner with allies that have interest in protecting our lands and approaches in the Arctic. Partnerships are critical in building all-domain awareness across U.S. Northern Command’s area of responsibility.”

Arctic Edge is a large-scale exercise that gives SOCNORTH not only the opportunity to test all its capabilities in the Arctic, but to strengthen partnerships and collaborate with new allies. SOF continues to chart new territory in the Arctic in support of Homeland Defense under the direction of Special Operations Command North.



Green Berets assigned to 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) approach an MH-60 Black Hawk helicopter with 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) during Exercise Arctic Edge 2022 in Wiseman, Alaska, March 14, 2022. AE22 is a biennial, multi-service exercise designed to provide realistic and effective training for participants using the premier training locations available throughout Alaska February 28 – March 17. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Anthony Bryant.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command

70 years and Counting: U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School celebrates anniversary



*By Christopher E. Howard
History Office, U.S. Army Special Operations
Command*

This year, the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School celebrates its 70th anniversary.

The U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School is the Army's Special Operations Center of Excellence, serving as the proponent for all U.S. Army Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, and Special Forces doctrine and training.

In April 1952, with war raging on the Korean Peninsula and Cold War divides deepening globally, the U.S. Army formally established the Psychological Warfare (Psywar) Center at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Assigned to the Third U.S. Army, the Psywar Center absorbed all psywar-related functions and personnel previously located at Fort Riley, Kansas. Then-Brig. Gen. Robert A. McClure, the Army's Chief of Psywar, selected Col. Charles H. Karlstad as the Center's first commander. A combat veteran of two World Wars and former Chief of Staff of the Infantry Center at Fort Benning, Georgia, Karlstad was the right man for the job.

Early Psywar Center missions included conducting individual training and supervising unit training for Psywar and Special Forces; testing and evaluating equipment; and developing doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures for Psywar and Special Forces, the Army's unconventional warfare specialists.

Assigned units were the 6th Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group, the Psychological Warfare Board, and 10th Special Forces Group. The latter was the first of its kind, having been activated June 11, 1952.

That October, the Center added the Psychological



Brig. Gen. William P. Yarborough, U.S. Army Special Warfare Center Commander, met with President John F. Kennedy during the President's Oct. 12, 1961, visit to Fort Bragg, NC. This moment inspired the statue of the two men that currently stands outside Kennedy Hall on the USAJFKSWCS campus. Courtesy Photo.

Warfare School, consisting of Psywar and Special Forces departments. The Army approved the Center and School's insignia design on Nov. 28, 1952, which is still in use today.

In December 1956, the Army renamed the Psywar Center and School as the Special Warfare Center and School.

During the early 1960s, the Special Warfare Center and School grew in response to the massive expansion of Special Forces and increasing U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Much of this growth occurred under the leadership of Brig. Gen.

William P. Yarborough. The Center added counterinsurgency operations courses and created an Advanced Training Committee to develop methods of infiltration and exfiltration, such as military freefall and underwater operations.

In 1964, the Center was redesignated as the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center. This was to memorialize the recently slain President, who was an avid supporter of U.S. Army Special Operations Forces. A year later, the Center consolidated all unit-level dive training into the Special Forces Underwater Operations course, conducted at Key West, Florida.

In May 1969, the Center was renamed the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Center for Military Assistance, and the School was renamed the U.S. Army Institute for Military Assistance.

On Sept. 15, 1971, the U.S. Army Civil Affairs School transferred from Fort Gordon, Georgia, to Fort Bragg, coming under the Center, alongside Special Operations and Psychological Operations.

A year later, the Center was assigned to the new U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), becoming the Army's proponent for Army Special Operations Forces.

Meanwhile, Special Forces regrouped amid post-Vietnam War force reductions, refining its mission and how it trained. One result of this was the implementation of the Robin Sage unconventional warfare exercise in 1974, which replaced earlier exercises such as Operation Snowdrop, Cherokee Trail, and Gobbler's Woods.

The 1980s were a period of revitalization and transformation for Army Special Operations Forces, and the Center was deeply involved in this process. In 1982, it became an independent TRADOC activity, under the name U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center.

Concurrently, the Army activated 1st Special Operations Command, which assumed command of operational Army Special Operation units, allowing the Center to focus on special operations training and doctrine.

In 1986, the Center was redesignated once more, taking its current name of U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS). It reorganized into six training departments: Special Forces; Special Operations Advanced Skills; Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape, based on the Vietnam-era POW experience of Special Forces officer James N. 'Nick' Rowe; Foreign Area Officer; Civil Affairs; and Psychological Operations.

It established a Noncommissioned Officer Academy in

1987, later named in honor of Master Sgt. David K. Thuma.

The following year, the Center initiated a three-week Special Forces Assessment and Selection course to test Special Forces candidates physically and psychologically, prior to entering the Special Forces Qualification Course.

In 1989, 1st Special Warfare Training Group was activated, initially consisting of three training battalions and one support battalion.

In June 1990, USAJFKSWCS was reassigned from TRADOC to the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, activated on Dec. 1, 1989 to control all components of Army Special Operations forces, less forward deployed units.

During this decade, the Special Operations Academic Facility (now Bank Hall) opened, military freefall training relocated from Fort Bragg to Yuma Proving Ground, Arizona, and foreign language training was instituted as part of Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, and Special Forces qualification.

In the two decades since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, USAJFKSWCS expanded and evolved to meet the growing demand for Army Special Operations forces, imposed by the Global War on Terrorism.

Organizational changes included the activation of the Special Warfare Medical Group; the creation of the Special Warfare Education Group and Special Forces Warrant Officer Institute; and the activation of additional battalions under 1st Special Warfare Training Group.

Additionally, Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations instituted their own assessment and selection courses, modeled off Special Forces Assessment and Selection. In 2012, the Army designated USAJFKSWCS as the U.S. Army Special Operations Center of Excellence.

Today, USAJFKSWCS consists of the Special Warfare Center, Special Forces Warrant Officer Institute, Noncommissioned Officer Academy, and three training groups: 1st Special Warfare Training Group, 2nd Special Warfare Training Group, and Special Warfare Medical Group.

Combined, they offer over 100 separate courses to Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, Special Forces, Allied and Sister Service students, from assessment and selection and military occupational specialty qualification, to foreign languages, advanced skills, and leader development.

After 70 years, USAJFKSWCS continues to provide the nation with highly trained, educated, disciplined, and adaptive Army Special Operations Soldiers, capable of operating in a complex, multi-dimensional world.



Naval Special Warfare Command NSW celebrates first woman commanding officer



*By U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Alex Smedegard
Naval Special Warfare Group ONE*

In honor of Women's History Month, Naval Special Warfare is celebrating Cmdr. Blythe Blakistone, who became the first woman to serve as a commanding officer of a Naval Special Warfare unit when she took command of Tactical Communications Command (TCC) 1.

Naval Special Warfare Group 1, which mans, trains and equips West Coast-based SEAL Teams, is comprised of SEAL Teams 1, 3, 5, and 7 as well as Logistics Support Unit 1 and TCC-1. Blakistone has served in her role since 2020 and her command supports SEAL Teams, other special operations forces, and conventional forces worldwide by providing tactical communications in all environments and levels of conflict.

"We are the voice of the nation's most elite warfighters," said Blakistone. "I am privileged to be in a position overseeing Sailors operating at the forefront of technology to maintain an edge over our adversaries."

She described what makes her successful in her role at NSW.

"I think I bring a different perspective," said Blakistone. "Not just as a woman, but also serving in the fleet aboard ships with my background, I believe, has made me hugely valuable to not only the Naval Special Warfare enterprise but also to my Sailors and the team at TCC-1."

During her tenure she has furthered the partnership between the fleet and NSW by bringing a sense of enthusiasm to everything she does, according to Capt. David Abernathy, commander of Naval Special Warfare Group 1.

"It has been incredible to watch Blythe lead over the past two years," said Abernathy. "She is exactly the officer we need in our toughest situations – her strong character, sharp intellect, and innovative spirit are second to none."

Rear Adm. H.W. Howard, commander, Naval Special Warfare Command, said diverse backgrounds like



Cmdr. Blythe Blakistone, commanding officer of Naval Special Warfare Tactical Communications Command (TCC) 1. TCC-1 is the premier provider of reliable and effective tactical communications which include integrated voice, data, and imagery to support Naval special operations forces, coalition, and conventional forces worldwide. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer Alex Smedegard.

Blakistone's are what give NSW teams a competitive edge.

"NSW values diversity," said Howard. "We simply cannot accomplish the mission without diversity of roles, responsibilities, backgrounds and perspectives. Blythe's innate ability to lead, along with her unique background and

expertise are just one example of how diversity gives our teams the ability to fight and win when it matters most.”

Blakistone is a native of Bremerton, Wash., and is a 2002 graduate of the United States Naval Academy where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Ocean Engineering. Upon commissioning, she served 11 years as a surface warfare officer where she led Sailors operating some of the most advanced warships in the world.

“A lot of my experiences as a Midshipman [at the United States Naval Academy] really influenced my approach to leadership,” said Blakistone. “I was able to observe a lot of styles of leadership, and I took the points that resonated most with me as I went into the fleet as a young [surface warfare officer].”

In 2013 Blakistone was re-designated as an information warfare officer, entering the vast evolving battlespace of technological and cyber domain dominance.

“I really enjoy [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics]. I always have,” said Blakistone. “I started to look at what more could I do. I made the change because I wanted better technology, bringing technology to the fleet, and then also the cyber aspect. At [TCC-1] I love that we are doing experimentation and bringing that new technology forward to the mission.”

Blakistone credits much of her success to the role models she has had along the way. One of those role models was the first woman officer in the history of the U.S.

military to command a major unified combatant command, U.S. Air Force General Lori J. Robinson.

“I love her tag line: ‘I’m a good officer. I’m a good airman. I just happen to be a woman – and that’s not how I got here.’ It was a privilege working for her and to see her at the top and how she handled things.”

Vice Adm. Kelly Aeschbach, the top information warfare officer and commander of Naval Information Forces, was another key influencer and former boss of Blakistone.

“I took a lot from her playbook on how she leads and influences at all levels,” said Blakistone. “I learned to instill in my Sailors to continue learning and to invest in the Sailors around them. Include everybody. Embrace diversity. These are the building blocks to successful teams.”

From the women cryptologists who cracked the German U-boat enigma codes in World War I and the Japanese naval codes in World War II; to women who provided combat intelligence for every major conflict since the Cold War, women have been at the forefront of information warfare since information warfare existed.

Navy history is full of trailblazing pioneers who paved the way for more than 135,000 active, reserve, and civilian women serving in the Navy today. In honor of women’s history month, we honor and pay tribute to those women – active and reserve, uniformed and civilian – who have served our Navy and our nation.



Cmdr. Blythe Blakistone, second from the right, commanding officer of Naval Special Warfare Tactical Communications Command (TCC) 1, and Sailors assigned to TCC-1 pose for a group photo at the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association-U.S. Naval Institute West Convention. TCC-1 is the premier provider of reliable and effective tactical communications which include integrated voice, data, and imagery to support Naval special operations forces, coalition, and conventional forces worldwide. Courtesy photo.



Hook and climb training

Photo Essay by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Alex Perlman





Navy Divers assigned to a West Coast Naval Special Warfare unit prepare to raise a hooked ladder during a training exercise at the Silver Strand Training Complex. Naval Special Warfare is the nation's premier maritime special operations force, uniquely positioned to extend the fleet's reach and deliver all-domain options for naval and joint force commanders.

Naval Special Warfare Command

Naval Special Warfare medical officer recognized as Navy Physician Assistant of the Year



By U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Alex Smedegard
Naval Special Warfare Group ONE

Lt. Cmdr. Joe Kaleiohi was selected as the 2021 Navy Medicine's Physician Assistant of the Year for his contributions as the deputy senior medical officer at Naval Special Warfare Group 1.

"In my 36 years of being in the military, 20 of those as an enlisted SEAL medic, I have been privileged to be surrounded by great leaders and phenomenal Sailors," said Kaleiohi. "While at NSWG-1 the team has taken ownership, worked hard and achieved amazing results."

In 2007, Kaleiohi, who was serving as a chief special warfare operator deployed in western Iraq, seized a remarkable opportunity. He was selected to become a physician assistant and officer in the Navy.

I loved being a SEAL medic and I love what I do now. My choice to become a physician assistant came from wanting to continue my growth in the medical field and being a service to others, as well as increasing my knowledge and being able to use that and my experience to help bolster the team and those around me.

— Lt. Cmdr. Joe Kaleiohi

"I loved being a SEAL medic and I love what I do now," said Lt. Cmdr. Kaleiohi. "My choice to become a physician assistant came from wanting to continue my



Lt. Cmdr. Joe Kaleiohi, deputy senior medical officer at Naval Special Warfare Group (NSWG) 1, poses for a photo inside an emergency room. Kaleiohi was selected as the 2021 Navy Medicine's Physician Assistant of the Year for his contributions at NSWG-1 in Coronado, Calif. NSWG-1 mans, trains, equips, deploys and sustains NSW forces throughout the world to support combatant commanders and U.S. national interests. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer Alex Smedegard.

growth in the medical field and being a service to others, as well as increasing my knowledge and being able to use that and my experience to help bolster the team and those around me."

Over the past year, Kaleiohi supervised the implementation of the medical operational, training and readiness directorate at NSWG-1 which culminated training and qualifications for 213 SEAL medics, physician assistants, independent duty corpsman and field medical technicians.

"Our full spectrum of medical staff provided clinical medicine functions across all NSWG-1 and its



Lt. Cmdr. Joe Kaleiohi, a forward-deployed physician assistant from Naval Medical Center San Diego, poses for a photo while conducting a patrol. Kaleiohi was selected as the 2021 Navy Medicine's Physician Assistant of the Year for his contributions as the deputy senior medical officer at Naval Special Warfare Group (NSWG) 1 in Coronado, Calif. NSWG-1 mans, trains, equips, deploys and sustains NSW forces throughout the world to support combatant commanders and U.S. national interests. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer Alex Smedegard.

approximately 2,000 warfighters,” said Kaleiohi.

As a certified emergency medicine physician assistant, Kaleiohi also serves as a surgical resuscitation

team leader in the Joint Medical Augmentation Unit within Joint Special Operations Command.

“Lt. Cmdr. Kaleiohi’s vast experience and astute understanding of the NSW community, medical programs, and policies have greatly increased the survivability of our SEAL teams and supporting commands,” said Capt. David Abernathy, commodore of NSWG-1. “He is never satisfied with the status quo and approaches all problems with an innovative mindset. We are lucky to have him on our team.”

Kaleiohi’s selection as 2021 Navy Medicine’s Physician Assistant of the Year was made public Dec. 24, 2021, via a video released from by Rear Adm. Timothy Weber, director of the Medical Service Corps.

“This award is a testament to Kaleiohi’s outstanding service to Navy Medicine and Naval Special Warfare through his unique skill set, impressive leadership, and mentoring ability,” said Weber.

Each year, the director of the MSC recognizes officers whose leadership and professional knowledge have made significant contributions toward enhancing warfighter performance, operational capabilities and Navy Medicine.

“It is an honor to receive this award,” said Kaleiohi. “As a young physician assistant I never would have imagined the opportunities I have had this past year. It is an absolute privilege to be here.”



Lt. Cmdr. Joe Kaleiohi, right, the deputy senior medical officer at Naval Special Warfare Group (NSWG) 1, provides feedback to a West-coast based special warfare operator during a tactical combat casualty care scenario. Kaleiohi was selected as the 2021 Navy Medicine's Physician Assistant of the Year for his contributions at NSWG-1 in Coronado, Calif. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer Alex Smedegard.

Naval Special Warfare Command

NAVSCIATTS honors Semester 22-2 partner nation graduates



A formation of riverine crafts sets out for training from Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School facilities located along the Pearl River in South Mississippi in support of Semester 22-2 training iterations. Semester 22-2's recent formal graduation ceremony featured partner nation students from the Bahamas, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Jamaica, Latvia, Mauritania, Mauritius, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, and Ukraine. NAVSCIATTS is a security cooperation schoolhouse operating under U.S. Special Operations Command in support of foreign security assistance and geographic combatant commanders' theater security cooperation priorities. Photo by Michael Williams.

By Angela Fry
Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School

U.S. Special Operations Command's security cooperation training center, the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School, recently honored graduates from Semester 22-2 in a formal ceremony at command headquarters located on the John C. Stennis Space Center in South Mississippi.

NAVSCIATTS Cmdr. Don Speights served as host and keynote speaker as he awarded diplomas to the partner nation security force professionals from the Bahamas, the Czech

Republic, Estonia, Germany, Jamaica, Latvia, Mauritania, Mauritius, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, and Ukraine.

In opening remarks, Speights expressed his appreciation for the graduates' dedication to duty and for permanently joining the NAVSCIATTS global network, which consists of more than 13,000 international partners from 124 different countries.

"We realize how difficult it is to take you from your service and responsibilities, and from your homes and families to train in a new environment," Speights expressed. "But your dedication to duty and willingness to increase your security force skills are representative that working together



International security force professionals from Ukraine plot coordinates for a Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School Patrol Craft Officer Coastal course training exercise at command headquarters located on the Stennis Space Center in South Mississippi. Photo by Michael Williams.

and learning from each other serve only to further enhance our global relationships, further demonstrating that our global network is stronger together.”

With a primary objective of this international training command being to build and strengthen relations between partners and allies, Speights, who has served in the Navy for almost 30 years, reiterated that while this semester’s students may represent 12 different countries, partners and allies often experience shared global challenges.

“While this semester featured partners and allies from five different geographic combatant commands with seemingly different cultures, languages, religions, and challenges, the semester demonstrated that we all share the same global issues: terrorism, narcotics and human trafficking, organized crime, great power competition, and countering aggressions that threaten the security of all our nations,” the Louisiana native explained.

In closing, Speights addressed NAVSCIATTS partner nation students from Ukraine, who participated in the command’s patrol craft coastal, diesel systems overhaul and maintenance, and international tactical communications courses, highlighting President Woodrow Wilson’s January 8,

1918 speech to Congress, articulating the multiple point program that recognized the basic premises of peace and a nation-state’s indelible right to self-determination.

“You, your families, your countrymen, your nation are in our thoughts and prayers,” the commander stated. “It is undeniable that the future of world peace and acceptable norms are in the balance. Critical to the future of peace, democracy, and our children is how the world responds to this great transgression against our beloved partner, Ukraine.”

With NAVSCIATTS’ ability to assist in U.S. Department of Defense’s efforts to build capacity of strategic partners and allies, Speights specified that regardless of complexities of global challenges, providing those partners with world-class training will continue to be the command’s priority. The command, originally formed as a U.S. Coast Guard mobile training team in 1961 in Rodman, Panama, trains and educates foreign special operations, combat support, and combat service support forces across the tactical, operational, and strategic spectrums through in-residence and mobile training team iterations.

NAVSCIATTS’ five regionally focused in-resident training semesters assist in developing, shaping, and maintaining strategic relationships with diverse partner forces. Offering the ability to form professional and personal bonds that reach across oceans and continents, NAVSCIATTS has allowed for the establishment of networks that have aided in counterterrorism, counternarcotic, and counter human trafficking operations in a global environment.



International security force professionals participating in the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School’s Semester 22-2 UAS Operations and Planning course track an in-flight UAS at NAVSCIATTS facilities located at the John C. Stennis Space Center in South Mississippi. Photo by Michael Williams.

Naval Special Warfare Command

Naval Special Warfare's presidential ties: The Kauffman and Bush family connection



By Dr. Pedro Loureiro
Naval Special Warfare Command History Office

Americans popularly view Presidents' Day, the federal holiday originally established in 1885 in recognition of President George Washington's birthday, as a day to celebrate all United States presidents, past and present.

In honor of President's Day 2022, Naval Special Warfare's history office chose to highlight one of the lesser-known ties between two highly distinguished U.S. Navy families – the Bush and Kauffman families – and the early history of Naval Special Warfare.

The first connection occurred when Prescott Bush, the older brother of President George H. W. Bush, married Elizabeth Kauffman, the sister of Lt. Cmdr. Draper Kauffman during World War II.

In May of 1943, Kauffman led the project to organize the U.S. Navy Combat Demolition Units (NCDUs) as part of the U. S. Atlantic Fleet Amphibious Forces training program. He subsequently became the first commanding officer of the NCDU school at Naval Amphibious Training Base, Fort Pierce, Fla. In April 1944, he was ordered to Maui, Hawaii, and became the first commanding officer of Underwater Demolition Team 5. Draper's WWII achievements – for which he was twice awarded the Navy Cross – and his unparalleled tenacity and foresight in founding the forebears of the Navy SEALs made him one of the legends in the pantheon of Naval Special Warfare combat leaders.

It is noteworthy that the family ties between Kauffman, Bush, and NSW have not attracted more attention, given they included two U.S. presidents.

This relationship by marriage began at the height of the Pacific War when Elizabeth, known as Betty Lou to her family, decided to wed Prescott Bush in Miami, Fla., in



Rear Adm. James Kauffman left with Lt. j.g. George H.W. Bush in 1944. From the George H.W. Bush Library and Museum. Courtesy Photo.

December 1944. Both father, Rear Adm. James (Reggie) L. Kauffman and son, Lt. Cmdr. Draper Kauffman were serving during some of the heaviest fighting in the Pacific. It was on Oct. 25, 1944, that U.S. forces saw the first Japanese suicide or kamikaze attacks, launched against U.S. vessels in Leyte Gulf, Philippines.

Lt. j.g. George H. W. Bush, a U.S. Navy aviator on the aircraft carrier USS San Jacinto was also caught up in the



Downed pilot Lt. j.g. George H.W. Bush rescued by USS Finback, Sept. 2, 1944. From the George H.W. Bush Library and Museum. U.S. Navy Courtesy Photo.

fierce fighting in the Pacific during 1944. During an operation against the Japanese on Chichi Jima, Bush and his two-man crew flew their Avenger on a bombing run against an enemy radio tower Sept. 2, 1944. Though the crew managed to successfully hit the target, heavy Japanese anti-aircraft fire brought down the plane as it was returning to the San Jacinto. Both crew members died but George Bush parachuted and landed in the water. Unlike the fate of many other downed American pilots, Bush was rescued by the submarine USS Finback two hours later.

Elizabeth Kauffman and Prescott Bush announced their engagement in July 1944 and informed family and friends that the wedding would be held on Belle Isle near Miami Beach Dec. 30 of the same year.

News of the wedding plans reached Adm. Kauffman within weeks, despite the war and slow mail delivery. Elizabeth provides a delightful account of how the Admiral and George Bush met:

“Deciding to check out the family, Adm. Kauffman located George Bush and invited him on board the flagship for lunch. George wrote a very funny letter back to his parents in Connecticut, which they forwarded to Pres [Prescott]. According to George, he was told to report to the skipper of his carrier. ‘What have I done now?’ he wondered. The skipper told him that Adm. Kauffman would be sending a boat for him if he were free to come aboard his flagship for lunch the next day. ‘Yes, sir!’ said Ens.[sic] Bush, who went and polished his shoes and made sure his uniform was in perfect shape. After ‘a great lunch,’ Draper Kauffman’s father escorted George back to the San Jacinto in his admiral’s barge.”

As the Pacific War intensified, the wedding took place without father and son Kauffman being able to attend although George Bush was present as the best man – he was on scheduled leave. After the Bush-Kauffman wedding, the couple moved to Brazil where they lived for several years. This amazing story would probably still be a buried footnote in history if Elizabeth had not written a biography about her brother, Draper. Titled, America’s First Frogman: The Draper Kauffman Story, it was published in 2004 with a rare introduction by George W.H. Bush. As he explained:

“This book is about a true American hero. It is about ‘duty, honor, and country.’ It is about service and sacrifice. When Adm. Draper Kauffman’s sister, my own sister-in-law, asked me to write this brief introduction, I set aside my policy of not writing forewords or blurbs for books. I did this because of my great respect for Adm. Draper Kauffman, about whom this book is written.”

In 2009, the connection between the Bush family and NSW came full circle when President George W. Bush Jr. conducted a visit with East Coast-based SEALs. NSW commands are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Navy SEAL teams throughout 2022 by hosting events and ceremonies and highlighting the rich history of NSW’s proud warfighting heritage, including celebrating unique connections in NSW history such as the Kauffman and Bush families’ shared past.

Built on the legacy of Kauffman’s Navy Combat Demolition Units, Naval Special Warfare is the nation’s premier maritime special operations force – a highly reliable and lethal force – always ready to conduct full-spectrum operations, unilaterally or with partners, in support of national objectives, and uniquely positioned to extend the Fleet’s reach, delivering all-domain options for Naval and joint force commanders.



Rear Adm. James Kauffman, left, and Lt. Cmdr. Draper Kauffman right in 1945. From the Draper Kauffman Papers Collection, NSW History Office. U.S. Navy Courtesy Photo.

Air Force Special Operations Command



20th SOS, Wings of Blue partner for CV-22 jump training

*By U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Drew Cyburt
27th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

The U.S. Air Force Academy's Wings of Blue parachute team partnered with the 20th Special Operations Squadron assigned to Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, to conduct jump training from two CV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft, March 23, 2022.

The Wings of Blue's primary mission is to run the Air Force Academy's Basic Freefall Parachuting course. They also have competition and demonstration teams that travel across the country to represent the Air Force in air shows and sporting events, as well as competitions against other teams from around the country. To enhance their two-week training exercise at Marana, they worked with 20th SOS CV-22s and HH-60 Pavehawks assigned to the 305th Rescue Squadron, Davis Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona.

"Cadets in training get exposure to various flying communities as part of their officer development," said Maj. Mike Bush, the director of operations for the 98th Flying Training Squadron which oversees the Wings of Blue. "The more we can expose them to various services in addition to the Air Force, the more prepared they'll be for active duty."

This event featured more than 100 members, most of whom never jumped from a CV-22. The training was conducted by both demonstration and competition team members and instructors, as well as the Wings of Green, the sophomore class who are mentored by the Wings of Blue in hopes of becoming inducted onto the team.

In the past, the 20th SOS has supported the Air Force Academy with flyovers and aerial demonstrations. This time, the Wings of Blue took advantage of the CV-22's vertical take off and landing capability.

"The Osprey has rotary capabilities and ramp jumping, which prepares us for most aerial exercises," said Bush. "Between the two CV-22s, we completed six sorties and had over 100 jumpers, 95 of which were cadets."



U.S. Air Force Academy cadets assigned to the Wings of Blue parachute team board a CV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft assigned to the 20th Special Operations Squadron, 27th Special Operations Wing, Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, at Marana Regional Airport, Arizona, March 23, 2022. The Wings of Blue and the 20 SOS conducted an exercise involving six sorties from two CV-22s with more than 100 jumpers. Photo by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Drew Cyburt.

The training was also helpful for the 20th SOS, as it allowed one of the CV-22 pilots to earn their certification to fly military freefall missions.

"We also logged currencies for all our aircrew to stay proficient in military freefall operations," said Capt. Brandon Belcher, 20th SOS CV-22 Osprey pilot. "Everything involved in conducting these jumps directly carries over to our operational mission."

With the CV-22's standard payload capacity of 24 seated personnel, the 20th SOS spread 101 jumpers across six sorties with approximately 20 jumpers per flight to support the Wings of Blue. It presented the 20 SOS the opportunity to work on a larger scale than normal.

"So the fact that we were able to meet up and support 101 jumpers in one day was amazing," said Belcher. "It also gives the 27th Special Operations Wing an avenue to showcase our own capabilities."

U.S. Air Force Academy cadets assigned to the Wings of Blue parachute team jump from a CV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft assigned to the 20th Special Operations Squadron, 27th Special Operations Wing, Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, over Marana Regional Airport, Arizona, March 23, 2022. Photo by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Drew Cyburt.



Air Force Special Operations Command



919th SOW celebrates 50th Anniversary



Guests of the 919 special Operations Wing tour a MC-130H Combat Talon II aircraft on display as part of the unit's 50th Anniversary Wing Family Day at Duke Field, Florida, April 2, 2022. In addition to aircraft displays, the Wing Family Day festivities also included axe throwing, a bouncy castle, face painting, aircraft static displays, and a free lunch for 919th SOW military members and their families. Photo by Michelle Gigante.

By U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. James R. Wilson
919th Special Operations Wing

The Air Force Reserve's only special operations wing celebrated its 50th anniversary with events intended to honor the sacrifice of service members and their families April 1-3.

The 919th Special Operations Wing hosted a social for current and past members, a Wing Family Day, an annual awards banquet and a memorial dedication as part of its tribute to Citizen Air Commandos who have served the country with distinction for more than 50 years.

"This is our opportunity to honor anyone who has ever worn the 919th patch while serving the nation and the

families they left behind to do so," said Col. Jason Grandy, commander of the 919th SOW. "The 919th has a long and distinguished history dating back to July 1971 when the Air Force Reserve first established its presence at Duke Field. We're here because of these heroes who came before us who have fought and defended America's interests with valor at points around the globe."

The Wing Family Day activities included a petting zoo, axe throwing, face painting, a resource fair with more than 50 vendors representing helping agencies throughout the Emerald Coast and much more. As part of the event, the unit also had seven of the aircraft Reservists fly in support of Air Force Special Operations Command on display to highlight the diverse nature of the mission sets

currently performed by members of the 919th SOW.

“The Wing Family Day showcased the capabilities we provide to the warfighter while also giving our members and families a chance to stay connected with each other and the local community,” said Grandy.

The spotlight continued to shine on America’s Citizen Air Commandos in an awards banquet later that night with guest speaker Retired Maj. Gen. Richard Haddad, a former 919th SOW pilot and squadron commander, who flew combat missions in Afghanistan following the attacks on 9-11.

The formal dinner highlighted service members who made significant contributions to the wing’s global mission in 2021 in the midst of a global pandemic.

“While we don’t do what we do for accolades or for adulation, our members deserve this recognition,” said Grandy. “We do this work because it’s part of who we are and our uncommon desire to be the very best.”

More than 200 members of the 919th SOW, families, alumni and community partners attended the formal dinner. Several members who were part of the Air Force Reserve when it was first established at Duke were at the banquet.

“When I came to the 919th in 1971, I made some great friends and worked with a lot of wonderful people who had tremendous talent,” said Retired Lt. Gen. James Sherrard III who was among the small group of “pioneers” who attended the awards ceremony.

Sherrard went on to experience a remarkably successful career and eventually became the commander of the Air Force Reserve in 1998.

“Our people were quite talented, and we were very proud to be part of special ops,” said Sherrard. “The pride in our performance carried the 919th through the fantastic record the unit had when mobilized and deployed for Operation Desert Shield and Storm. It proved we had fantastic people with great talents and showed what the Reserve can do, and will do, for the country if asked.”

In addition to the Gulf War, the 919th SOW also supported Operations Just Cause, Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom and Inherent Resolve among others since its activation. Countless Airmen from the 919th SOW earned

recognition for their performance in combat after returning home making it one of the most decorated units in the Air Force Reserve.

The culminating event occurred April 3 when the unit dedicated a memorial to honor members of the 3205th Drone Group. Members of the group were part of the first unit to conduct training at Duke Field operating some of the earliest drones in the Air Force in 1946.

Local businesses and Chambers of Commerce throughout the area provided resources to support the milestone for the 919th SOW and its 1,700 Citizen Air Commandos.

“The only reason this weekend happened was because of our community partners,” said Grandy. “We celebrated the 50th Anniversary because we have people who care about us, understand we are part of this community and want to celebrate the 919th [SOW] just as much as we do. I couldn’t be more grateful for the outpouring of support

we’ve received from the community. It’s been amazing and is a testament to the legacy of service that started with those early pioneers and continues with our Airmen today.”

We celebrated the 50th Anniversary because we have people who care about us, understand we are part of this community and want to celebrate the 919th [SOW] just as much as we do. I couldn’t be more grateful for the outpouring of support we’ve received from the community. It’s been amazing and is a testament to the legacy of service that started with those early pioneers and continues with our Airmen today.

— Col. Jason Grandy



Airmen of the 919th Special Operations Wing salute during the National Anthem at the unit’s 50th Anniversary Wing Family Day event at Duke Field, Florida, April 2, 2022. Community partners, 919th SOW retirees, and Airmen and their families came out for the fun-filled event to recognize the contributions of Citizen Air Commandos. Photo by Michelle Gigante.

Air Force Special Operations Command



Duke Field Airman among newest DAGREs

*By U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Dylan Gentile
919th Special Operations Wing*

A lone security forces Airman ran through plumes of purple smoke while fighting off opposing forces before taking cover behind a building with their own ammunition flying through the streets of the mock village.

The sound of gunfire consumed the “city” comprised largely of shipping containers while the determined service member rejoined his wingmen to get a wounded Airman to an evacuation point. This was a small taste of what any DAGRE needs to be prepared for in a contingency environment.

Deployed Aircraft Ground Response Elements provide security for Air Force Special Operations Command assets and personnel in environments where security is unknown or deemed inadequate. They are highly specialized security forces members that receive more training than their counterparts and can perform a variety of defensive operations in remote environments.

“I joined initially because I thought it was one of the coolest slots in my unit,” said Senior Airman Amahd Rasheed, 919th Special Operations Security Forces Squadron member. “Everybody wanted to be ‘that guy’ so they could do those missions and wear that DAGRE tab.”

The first step for Rasheed in achieving his goal was passing the 919th SOSFS assessment. In this phase of training, DAGRE candidates learn and perform many of the tasks they will have to demonstrate during their qualification course. The assessment involves ruck marching, sleep deprivation, shooting, land navigation, and a multitude of other tasks and skillsets.

He pulled through and advanced to the next step of his DAGRE training at Hurlburt Field with the 371st Special Operations Combat Training Squadron. Here, Rasheed went through the Air Commando Field Skills Course, the first stop for all Airmen supporting Special Operations Forces.

“Most of the Airmen in this course are learning how to



Two Airmen fend off oppositional forces during a scenario as part of the Commando Field Skills Course at a remote location on the Eglin range in northwest Florida, Nov. 5, 2021. The course teaches members in support function basic tactical skills to enhance readiness for future deployments with Special Operations Forces. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Dylan Gentile.

hold their own while supporting special operations,” said Dirk Baier, course director for ACFSC. “In this course, they’re learning how to go downrange, shoot, move, communicate, and get themselves out of a bad situation.”

The Airmen in this course work in support functions such as medical, communications, logistics and other career fields that provide for AFSOC’s special operations forces.

At ACFSC, Air Commandos from bases around the command learned advanced weapons tactics, participated in Tactical Combat Casualty Care training with robotic lifelike dummies, learned Defensive driving, practiced combatives, and mastered some security techniques.

“This course is geared towards on-the-ground tactics,” said Baier. “It gets them used to remote locations typical to DAGRE.”

According to Baier, the DAGRE program is relatively



An MC-130H Combat Talon II prepares to land as students in the Air Commando Field Skills Course ruck with a simulated casualty south of the runway at Hurlburt Field, Florida, Oct. 26, 2021. During the course, students receive a wide range of training to include Tactical Combat Casualty Care where they learn how to treat the wounded in combat scenarios Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Dylan Gentile.

new. Leadership recognized the need for a capability similar to the Ravens (a team that provides security for Air Mobility Command airframes) to protect AFSOC assets and personnel.

“The difference is our security teams tend to operate in more remote environments,” said Baier.

For Rasheed and his fellow DAGRE candidates, they combined the skills they learned from the ACFSC course with their DAGRE qualification training.

“When they come to us, we sharpen the skills they learned in ACFSC and their time in security forces,” said Tech. Sgt. Thomas Geerts, NCO in Charge of the DAGRE qualification course. “We expect a lot from them and train them in a whole new range of skill sets.”

The qualification course moved the trainees to various locations across the Eglin Range over the course of five weeks. Some days are devoted to academics and some days they covered their combat boots with Florida’s red clay.

“Every day was like the night before Christmas where you just stayed up all night,” said Rasheed. “I never knew what to expect next with all the different classes and training that was planned for us.”

Students learned advanced tactics on weapons many had never used before and were required to complete tasks associated with higher skill levels such as mission planning.

The DAGRE trainees took on close quarter battle exercises, small unit tactics, tactical security details, and incorporated some of the lessons of their experienced instructors into their operations.

“They spent a lot of time doing urban operations and recovery, normal security forces also possess these skills but we sharpen them,” said Geerts. “As we transition into a new style of warfare, these small specialized teams are going to become more important.”

Rasheed and his wingmen’s training culminated in a field exercise, where instructors validate the knowledge students were expected to retain over the past several weeks.

During the exercise, they defended airframes from oppositional forces, de-escalated tensions with local nationals, and secured a Forward Operating Base tucked in the woods where they planned their mission.

At one point, they had to secure and protect the encampment from enemy fire while providing emergency medical care to a wounded local.

After the team successfully completed their culmination exercise, instructors decided who went on to graduate and wear the DAGRE tab, and who went back home to their units without one.

Two months of training, demonstrations, and academics for the team going through the courses culminated with a graduation ceremony December 2021. Rasheed was the first 919th Special Operations Wing Citizen Air Commando to graduate the full course and earn the tab in four years.

“My family and my team motivated and pushed me through the training,” said Rasheed. “I felt like I was cloud nine, I was so excited to have pushed through and finally graduated. I would highly recommend this training course to others”

While one journey ended here, another one began for Rasheed and other newly minted DAGRE team members who are fully trained and ready to defend AFSOC assets and SOF members wherever the Nation needs them.



A security forces member and student in the Deployed Aircraft Ground Response Element qualification course stand in front of a plume of purple smoke on the Eglin range in northwest Florida, Dec. 14, 2021. DAGRE team members have specialized skills needed to provide a wide range of security in austere environments. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Dylan Gentile.

Air Force Special Operations Command



137th CTF teaches land nav skills during MST training

*By U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Brigitte Waltermire
137th Special Operations Wing*

The 137th Combat Training Flight taught 33 students land navigation, radio communication and radio programming skills during Mission Sustainment Team training held at Will Rogers Air National Guard

Base, Oklahoma City, Feb. 7-10, 2022.

The students, from squadrons around the base, were divided into two teams and learned from four 137th CTF instructors throughout the week. The MST members worked with specialized equipment and learned how to read maps, find a grid coordinate, and use compasses to navigate over terrain.



Mission Sustainment Team students use AN/PVS-31A binocular night vision goggles during a field exercise in Oklahoma City, Feb. 10, 2022. The MST students used the night vision devices to learn how to observe their surroundings as well as conceal their movement in the dark. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Brigitte Waltermire.



U.S. Air Force Maj. Jeffrey Hansen, 137th Combat Training Flight director of operations, Oklahoma Air National Guard uses a red light to examine a pair of AN/PVS-31A binocular night vision goggles during Mission Sustainment Team training in Oklahoma City, Feb. 10, 2022. The MST students used the night vision devices to learn how to observe their surroundings as well as conceal their movement in the dark. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Brigette Waltermire.

“With this training we are taking a skill set we have built specifically for joint terminal attack controller qualification and are transferring that to the rest of the force,” said Maj. Jeffrey Hansen, 137th CTF director of operations. “Using our instructors’ teaching experience means we are more effectively tailoring the classes to the students, who range from tactical backgrounds like security forces members to technical backgrounds like civil engineers.”

Learning skills outside of regular training will ensure long-term mission sustainment in austere locations, making Airmen more capable to operate in diverse deployed environments.

“It was good going back to basics as far as land navigation, moving as a team with a weapon and pulling security,” said Tech. Sgt. Justin Davis, 137th CTF joint terminal attack controller qualification course manager. “These skills — for our Air Force specialty — are some of the first we learn because they

are how we get to work. It was interesting finding the cutoff of what we needed to teach these students to help them understand basic land navigation and radio operation without getting into the weeds of the specific skills we instruct that help a JTAC drop bombs.”

One day of training consisted of land navigation skill development in the field. Instructors set up points and gave students a grid location. Students then plotted a trail to find and report those points using maps, compasses and protractors. Once they reported their first checkpoint, the Airmen were given the location for the next one.

“All of the skills we learned were brand new to me, so it was difficult to learn it all in the span of a week,” said Senior Airman Andrea Kuzilik, a services specialist with the 137th Special Operations Force Support Squadron. “The instructors were great, and super hands-on. It definitely got better the more we ran through it, and the field day really helped put everything together.”

This exercise tested students’ radio programming and communication skills in addition to navigation. Students also learned how to move in a formation, react as a team to a direct contact with an adversary, and use night vision goggles to move in the dark and drive a Humvee.

“It was good to see the different Air Force specialties come together for a common purpose during the training,” said Davis. “I think we as instructors are also excited to improve and streamline the course with each training iteration, especially because we saw a successful end result with this initial class using these skills in a practical setting versus a classroom setting.”



Mission Sustainment Team students with the 137th Special Operations Wing, Oklahoma Air National Guard practice tactical movement as a fire team during a field exercise in Oklahoma City, Feb. 10, 2022. The students learned how to move as a team while each member was carrying a weapon and how to maintain security. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Brigette Waltermire

Marine Forces, Special Operations Command



Critical Skills Operator commissioned as Marine Gunner



Master Sgt. Joseph A. Butrico poses in front of the Marine Raider Regiment sign on Camp Lejeune, N.C., Oct. 17, 2021. Butrico commissioned as a Chief Warrant Officer 2 Marine Gunner, Feb. 1, 2022. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Jesula Jeanlouis.

***By U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Jesula Jeanlouis
Marine Forces, Special Operations Command***

Master Sgt. Joseph A. Butrico, critical skills operator, is commissioned as a Chief Warrant Officer 2 Marine Gunner, Feb. 1, 2022.

The Gunner, also known as an infantry weapons officer, is a chief warrant officer specifically trained in the employment and training of Marine Corps infantry weapons, gear and assigned personnel.

“My ‘want’ to become a Gunner began on my first deployment to Iraq in 2005 when we first stepped foot in Camp Fallujah,” Butrico explained. “My company received a welcome aboard brief from the Battalion Gunner. His knowledge and professionalism inspired me, forever leaving a mark on my career, and instilling a desire to fill that role.”

Butrico was originally an infantryman assigned to 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, and became a critical skills operator upon completion of MARSOC’s Assessment and Selection. He served as an element

leader, team operations chief and team chief, and most recently held the billet of Raider Regiment Training and Exercise Group Senior Enlisted Advisor.

Gunners also assist in the development of training and employment plans such as new weapons systems acquisition, research and development. They are also employed as the principal advisor to commanders at the tactical level.

“I was able to observe the tremendous impact a Gunner can have on a unit, further instilling and solidifying my desire to be one,” said Butrico. “The incredible responsibility entrusted to a Gunner to mentor, train and build a Marine’s warfighting prowess in the image of our storied legacy is a great duty. As many leaders share this responsibility in the infantry, it is the true essence of the Marine Gunner to serve as the tactical expert and master trainer, uphold standards and, to continue the storied warfighting traditions of the Marine Corps.”

Gunners mentor both the officers and enlisted Marines of the unit in all applicable mechanical, doctrinal and conceptual weaponry, as well as required training matters in order to improve the general effectiveness and proficiency of the command.

“I will be provided the opportunity to mentor all levels of leaders in all subjects regarding infantry tactics and techniques, special operations forces capabilities and limitations which would aid in a commander’s critical decision-making [process],” said Butrico. “The most important opportunity I believe I will have is to utilize my education and experience to ensure small unit leaders are confident and capable of conducting effective training, and that every Marine is technically and tactically proficient in maneuver warfare.”

Butrico speaks on how his experience as a CSO

positively impacts the new community of Marine Corps chief warrant officers.

“To me, being a former critical skills operator is the same as being a former rifleman and infantry unit leader,” said Butrico. “I am in a unique position to offer an opportunity to increase my assigned unit’s

interoperability with special operations forces to create, develop and innovate unique capabilities.”

In accordance with the Marine Corps’ and MARSOC’s 2030 plan, conventional units will share domains with special operations teams creating a mutually beneficial interdependence. The battlespace is constantly evolving and

Headquarters Marine Corps and MARSOC have recognized the need to adapt to the changes.

“When I look at my career path and the different directions I chose as a Marine, there has always been one constant which has never changed no matter what

my billet or MOS was,” said Butrico. “That constant was never forgetting where I came from and continuing to be a student in the profession of arms.

“Our ability to put an enemy in the horns of dilemma by synchronizing the warfighting functions to conduct maneuver warfare, decentralized

command, ethos, and our trust in the small unit leaders is what makes us the force of choice. I am humbled and honored to be provided this opportunity and it is a commitment that I take very seriously. Being awarded the opportunity to serve as a Marine Gunner is one of the highest honors.”

Butrico’s personal awards include a Purple Heart, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with one gold star in lieu of second award and a Combat Action Ribbons with one gold star in lieu of second award.

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— Master Sgt. Joseph A. Butrico

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

US Special Operations commander visits ally Norway

By USSOCOM Public Affairs

Gen. Richard D. Clarke, Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, visited Evenes and Narvik, Norway March 25 and 26 as part of a routine, regional circulation through Europe.

Clarke met with Norwegian Chief of Defence Gen. Eirik Kristoffersen, Maj. Gen. Torgeir Gratrud, Commander of Norway's Special Operations Command, along with U.S. and Norwegian special operations service members participating in Norwegian-led Exercise Cold Response 2022.

Clarke's visit followed the March 18 crash of a U.S. MV-22B Osprey that killed four U.S. Marines.

"I want to thank the Norwegian military, our other NATO allies, and civilian first responders who supported recovery efforts of the U.S. Marines who were tragically lost last week," Clarke said. "We grieve for their loss, but we deeply appreciate the assistance provided by Gen. Kristoffersen and the Norwegian defense team. The combined level of effort and concern on display during these recovery efforts is a testament to the long-standing friendship established through years of working together with Norway and the rest of our NATO allies."

Norway formally announced Cold Response in June. The biennial training includes more than 30,000 troops from 25 NATO ally and partner nations. About 3,000 of those troops are from the U.S., including special operations elements.

"I also want to thank our Norwegian partners for the chance to see first-hand how our



Gen. Richard Clarke, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, joined the Chief of the Norwegian Armed Forces Gen. Eirik Kristoffersen, Maj. Gen. Torgeir Gratrud, the Commander of Norwegian special forces, and Capt. Kare Karlsen, the commander of Norway's naval special warfare command, in Ramsund, Norway on March 25 and 26, 2022. The group experienced a familiarization ride on a U.S. combatant craft medium that participated in Exercise Cold Response 2022. Courtesy photo.

combined special operations forces train and perform in extreme environments," Clarke said. "Cold

Response is an opportunity to test how we function in remote, arctic locations where we have to integrate large forces and diverse capabilities. This kind of exercise allows our combined force to make strides toward improving readiness and interoperability in difficult terrain.

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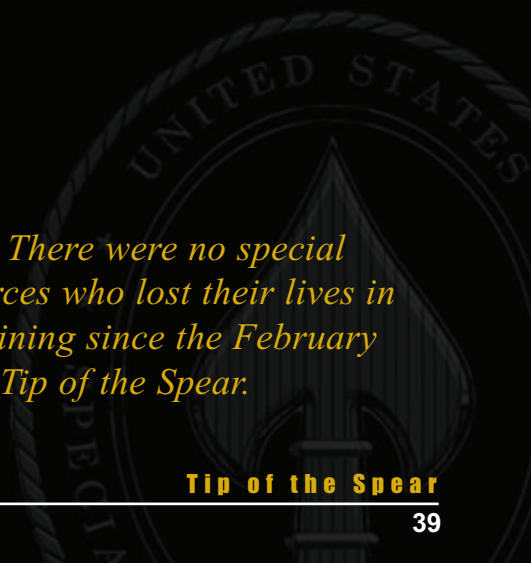
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Editor's note: There were no special operations forces who lost their lives in combat or training since the February 2022 issue of Tip of the Spear.

Green Berets with 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) prepare to load into a helicopter during Exercise Arctic Edge 2022 in Wiseman, Alaska, March 14, 2022. AE22 is a biennial, multi-service exercise designed to provide realistic and effective training for participants using the premier training locations available throughout Alaska February 28 – March 17. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Anthony Bryant.

