



Tip OF THE Spear

United States Special Operations Command
MacDill Air Force Base, Florida

August 2020

The tour--SWCC's Hell Week



United States Special Operations Command



The tour--SWCC's Hell Week ... 18

Tip of the Spear

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(Cover) Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewman (SWCC) candidates from Basic Crewman Selection Class 111 participate in team-building exercises with hawser line during "The Tour" at Naval Special Warfare Center in Coronado, Calif., June 3, 2020. The Tour is a 72-hour crucible event, which develops intelligent and highly-motivated candidates who will perform as a team under the most demanding conditions. NSW Center provides initial and advanced training to the Sailors who make up the Navy's SEAL and Special Boat Teams. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Anthony W. Walker.

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U.S. Special Operations Command - Central



Ribbon cut on new Special Operations outdoor training facility

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt Steven M. Colvin
SOCCENT Public Affairs

during a time where most public fitness facilities are closed due to COVID-19.

Rear Adm. H. Wyman Howard III, SOCCENT

U.S. Special Operations Command-Central cut the ribbon on a new outdoor human performance facility at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Fla., June 3, 2020.

The facility provides the opportunity to conduct a safe and socially distant workout while allowing a venue to maintain personal wellness. SOCCENT deemed it necessary to open the outdoor facility

This is a great moment for us to be able to expand the HP [human performance] facilities. With this new workout area, our teammates will have ample room to perform workouts necessary to keep the team fit for the fight.

— Rear Adm. H. Wyman Howard III

commander, performed the ribbon cutting, and thanked the teammates that were able to attend.

“This is a great moment for us to be able to expand the HP [human performance] facilities,” said Howard. “With this new workout area, our teammates will have ample room to perform

workouts necessary to keep the team fit for the fight.”

The facility is nearly the length of an American football



Construction workers began tear down procedures of the existing base supply and equipment shed, March 6, 2020, that has transformed into the new U.S. Special Operations Command-Central's human performance outdoor facility at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Fla. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Steven M. Colvin.



U.S. Special Operations Command-Central personnel participate in the initial exercise session after the ribbon cutting ceremony of the new human performance outdoor facility located on the SOCCENT campus at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Fla., June 3, 2020. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Steven M. Colvin.

field; stretching 247 feet, half of the flooring is made of synthetic turf and the remainder is rubber matting for the equipment workout area. New lighting and industrial fans were installed throughout the facility as well as a purified drinking station. The open-air, yet covered space allows athletes to work out without being exposed to the direct sunlight.

After the ceremony, Mike Renteria, the SOCCENT strength and conditioning coach, invited a small group of personnel to stay for the initial workout session at the new facility.

This workout area is the first expansion-phase of the HP facilities. There are plans for two more buildings located on the SOCCENT campus to be converted as indoor HP facilities.

“The expansion of our Human Performance Training Center is going to be a world class facility, with the best trainers, for the best warriors in the world,” said U.S. Army Maj. Juan Salas, SOCCENT Headquarters Commandant. “It will serve as the pinnacle for all Special Operations Forces while stationed at MacDill Air Force Base.”

The expansion and renovation project for the HP

workout areas, physical therapy and rehabilitation facilities will span three fiscal years – 2019, 2020 and 2021.

“The project is moving nicely,” said Salas. “The gym equipment will be installed in the new buildings by September of this year.”

The project is scheduled to be completed before the end of 2020.



The new U.S. Special Operations Command-Central human performance outdoor facility was dedicated at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Fla., June 3, 2020. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Steven M. Colvin.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



Green Berets conduct Counter Improvised Explosive Device training

Special Forces Soldiers from the U.S. Army's 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) exfiltrate a Counter Improvised Explosive Device lane in a MRZR off-road utility vehicle at Panzer Local Training area near Stuttgart, Germany, June. 11, 2020. The Counter Improvised Explosive Device training was a 5-day course with both day and nighttime lanes with various types of simulated explosives and scenarios. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Patrik Orcutt.





U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



POTFF team brings quality care before, during, and after COVID-19

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Thomas Mort
SOCEUR Public Affairs

The name of the game for SOCEUR's Preservation of Force and Family program is accessibility and continuity of care. The program aims to build and implement a holistic approach to address the strain of the high pace environment and mission on the special operations force.

The availability and capability to take care of our forces are critical and a top priority. For the SOCEUR POTFF team, this is seen in the timeliness, quality, and specialty of care. One of the advantages of having an internal team so close to help service members is the immediacy to meet with patients.

POTFF programs and initiatives are based on four key domains; Psychological Performance, Physical Performance, Social Performance, and Spiritual Performance. A new Cognitive Performance domain will be added soon. Providing behavioral, physical performance, social and spiritual services, allows for SOF service members to be best supported so they can focus on their mission as well as extend the length of their careers.

"Being embedded in SOCEUR allows me to be uniquely positioned when and where I'm needed most," explains Dr. Roger Schmidt, the POTFF psychologist assigned to SOCEUR. "When the stress becomes a strain, when

people feel overwhelmed but aren't willing to talk to their chain of command about it, and when functioning is starting to deteriorate personally and professionally."

Due to the internal connection of the POTFF team, service members have the ability to be seen at an expedited pace as compared to traditional sites.

If it weren't for the POTFF program I wouldn't be having the conversations I am right now. I've needed to have these conversations for years but resisted. If it wasn't for POTFF, I'd probably continue holding on to it until after retirement.



Dr. Roger Schmidt, the POTFF psychologist assigned to SOCEUR, takes a few minutes at Patch Barracks, June 8, 2020, to discuss the Psychological Performance Program. Being embedded in SOCEUR allows him to be uniquely positioned when and where he's needed most. The PPP is designed to improve the cognitive and behavioral performance of the force. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Thomas Mort.

"If it weren't for the POTFF program I wouldn't be having the conversations I am right now", said a recent

patient and member of SOCEUR. "I've needed to have these conversations for years but resisted. If it wasn't for POTFF, I'd probably continue holding on to it until after retirement."

Mind

The Psychological Performance Program is a POTFF program designed to improve the cognitive and behavioral performance of the force. Important aspects of this include helping service members cope with stress and improving the resiliency of SOF and their families.

Despite being elite, high yield performers, most



operators are exposed to exceptional pressure every day, which brings a lot of emotional and psychological strain. Schmidt says it’s his job to mitigate the impact of these stressors so mental performance and health are firing on all cylinders.

“There are unique demand characteristics in special operations,” says Schmidt. “While as a group these folks seem to have another gear to be able to manage the stress, the reality is that everyone has vulnerabilities and a threshold to which performance declines.”

The PPP is the area among all POTFF services that is most affected by a sense of stigma. One of the primary objectives of PPP is to decrease this stigma as no operator wants to stand out negatively or give anyone reason to doubt their ability, adds Dr. Schmidt.

“For this reason, I am embedded in SOCEUR and not connected to the behavioral health clinic,” Schmidt concluded.

Body

The Physical Performance Program (PhPP) is designed to meet the unique physical needs of the SOF operator. This conditioning is accomplished through a holistic pre-habilitative physical training program that involves focused strength and conditioning, performance nutrition, and physical therapy.

Having a psychologist, nurse case manager and physical therapist has allowed for much more immediate access, explains Joseph Adamchak, POTFF physical therapist.



Under the guidance of Joseph Adamchak, POTFF physical therapist assigned to SOCEUR, a service member performs physical therapy exercises during an appointment at the Patch Fitness Center on Patch Barracks, Germany, June 4, 2020. Physical therapy is a key element of POTFFs human performance program, which is designed to meet the physical needs of the SOCEUR community. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Thomas Mort.



Joseph Adamchak, POTFF physical therapist assigned to SOCEUR, works on a patient during a physical therapy appointment at the Patch Fitness Center on Patch Barracks, Germany, June 4, 2020. Physical therapy is a key element of POTFFs human performance program, which is designed to meet the physical needs of the SOCEUR community. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Thomas Mort.

Adamchak’s role is to provide the most appropriate and up to date interventions and strategies to treat a service member’s current limitations. He would like to provide patients the tools to maintain healthy movement long term.

“This program has been invaluable,” says one SOCEUR service member, when asked about his experience with the PhPP. “My last unit, if I would’ve had this injury, I probably would’ve been ostracized as the black duckling [due to injury].”

Taking advantage of the benefits of the POTFF program, he was told to get in and get it fixed.

“I injured myself in October, I didn’t think it was that serious at the time and I went away to school and I was able to kinda maintain the pain,” he explains further. “I came back and the cold weather was kinda buggin’ it so I thought, well it’s time to get checked out.”

The service member said he went in and saw the SOCEUR doctor, had an MRI the same day and surgery three weeks later. The quality and fast implementation of care enable the elite ability of SOF to be ready and postured at all times.

Family

The Social Performance Program (SoPP) incorporates family resilience programs designed to enhance the standard service provided programs. These programs are adapted for the uniqueness of the SOF family. POTFF is providing dedicated staff and programs for SOF families that will enhance communication and improve relationships.

Typically, in a healthy environment, the SoPP would hold events and unit functions to help boost morale and family ties.

“Since we cannot hold events [due to COVID-19 restrictions at the time], my interactions are limited to digital and telephonic versus conversations and in-person training”, said Jess Donnelly, the family readiness coordinator assigned to SOCEUR. “I am hopeful as soon as gathering restrictions are lifted, we will be able to host social programs such as a family resilience camp, spouse’s conference, marriage retreats, and newcomer’s orientations.”

According to various surveys and forums, the SOCEUR community definitely misses the social events provided by SoPP.

“Venture walks, marriage retreats, and other fun and informative events help maintain a family environment in the unit,” explains Donnelly. “COVID-19 has limited that family feel and I believe people are missing the connection. I hope that we can be back together as a SOCEUR family soon.”

Spirit

The Spiritual Performance Program is designed to enhance core spiritual beliefs, values, awareness, relationships and experiences. These elements form the basis to promote healthy living, sound decision-making, meaningful relational interaction, sense of transcendent life purpose, and meaning. This is



Dan Rice, the chaplain assigned to SOCEUR, leads a church service at the Panzer chapel in Panzer Kaserne, Stuttgart, Germany, June 6, 2020. The Spiritual Performance Program seeks to enhance spiritual wellness and resilience, and worship service is one way to accomplish this. SPP is designed to enhance core spiritual beliefs, values, awareness, relationships, and experiences. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Thomas Mort.

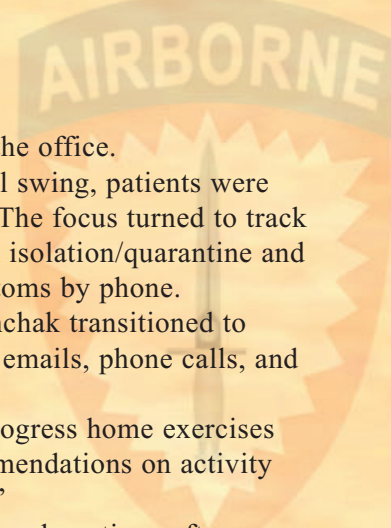
For me the POTFF program means teamwork. I see it as a great unifier for resources. We can do a lot in the spiritual domain, but I think POTFF does a good job bringing in the mind, body, family and spirit together so we all work together to help our service members.

— Dan Rice, chaplain assigned to SOCEUR.

accomplished through chaplain led or chaplain supported programs for service members and their families.

“For me the POTFF program means teamwork,” said Dan Rice, the chaplain assigned to SOCEUR. “I see it as a great unifier for resources.

We can do a lot in the spiritual domain, but I think



POTFF does a good job bringing in the mind, body, family and spirit together so we all work together to help our service members.”

Humans are more important than hardware. People make the difference, not equipment.

“We focus on people,” Rice adds. “POTFF, especially during COVID-19, we still have resources here in the building that we can refer other people too.”

The right people, highly trained and working as a team, will accomplish the mission with the equipment available. On the other hand, the best equipment in the world cannot compensate for a lack of the right people.

“I might be talking to a couple about their spiritual life and I realize, hey they could use the help of a psychologist,” Rice adds. “Well next door to me is our POTFF psychologist, I can actually walk them over there and say, ‘hey Roger, here’s someone who could use help from you.’ With the continuity of care, we’re one team taking care of our team.”

POTFF before, during and after COVID-19

The level of service from the POTFF team here at SOCEUR has not wavered, even during COVID-19.

Before COVID-19, Alicia Murphy, the nurse case manager assigned to SOCEUR, says the ability to see patients was understandably much easier. Patients could come in during sick-call every morning, make an

appointment, or just walk into the office.

Once COVID-19 was in full swing, patients were attended to by phone or email. The focus turned to track patients and family members in isolation/quarantine and screening for COVID-19 symptoms by phone.

With the gym closed, Adamchak transitioned to managing current patients with emails, phone calls, and some video chats.

“I was able to create and progress home exercises for them as well as give recommendations on activity modifications, Adamchak said.”

POTFF services will adjust and continue after COVID-19. During the height of the pandemic, most interactions with patients were strictly about COVID.

“Now people are getting back to their normal health questions and concerns,” explains Murphy.

The POTFF program brings essential continuity of care. Patients are able to move from one provider to another in a more unified manner. Working as a team cooperatively for the ongoing care of each service member enables the POTFF team to provide a more expedient and higher quality of care over time.

“The POTFF program is great,” concludes Murphy. “I am so thankful and honored for the opportunity to be a part of such an amazing program that helps service members and family members in the SOF community.”



A service member assigned to Special Operations Command Europe strains as she performs the plank exercise, at the Patch Barracks gym, June 10, 2020. Physical fitness is a key element of POTFFs human performance program, which is designed to meet the physical needs of the SOF community. Photo by Staff U.S. Army Sgt. Thomas Mort.

*U.S. Special Operations
Command - Europe*



U.S. Navy special operators practice VBSS exercises with Hellenic Navy



U.S. Naval Special Warfare Operators and U.S. Navy Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewmen assigned to Naval Special Warfare prepare for a visit, board, search, and seizure exercise during a training mission at the NATO Maritime Interdiction Operational Training Center, Greece on July 31, 2020. The SWCC transported U.S. Naval Special Warfare Operators and Hellenic Navy Instructors from the NMIOTC for the VBSS. Joint training missions enhance readiness and maintains proficiencies to support multiple NATO allies and partners in Europe. Portions of image obscured for operational security. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Aven Santiago.



U.S. Special Operations Command - Pacific



Thai Cave Rescue: Two Years Later

*By U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Renee Douglas
353rd Special Operations Group*

The two-year anniversary of the Thai-led, multi-national operation to rescue the Wild Boar youth football team from Tham Luang cave park was remembered recently. The rescue happened July 8-10, 2018 and involved a highly organized and synchronized effort involving critical coordination with multiple governments, international companies and foreign non-government agencies.

It's believed the boys and coach set out into the cave on a team building exercise, something they had done before. With dry weather, the boys were able to hike back through the cave. But when it began to rain, the cave flooded. On June 24th reports of the boys missing began surfacing and their bikes were discovered by the mouth of the Tham Luang cave.

Soon after, the Royal Thai Army Special Forces Regiment and the Royal Thai Navy SEALs began search and rescue operations at the cave site. As news spread, the search drew the attention of local residents and international civilians looking to help in any way they can. With multiple lines of effort to determine the best way to enter the flooded cave and search for the boys, Thai Special Forces initiated patrols across the mountainside to find another way into the cave. It quickly became evident the massive size of the cave system the search area had to expand.

At the request of the Royal Thai government, the U.S., through U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, sent a search and rescue team from Okinawa, Japan to assist Thai rescue authorities in locating the team. Approximately 40 U.S. military personnel from U.S. Indo-Pacific Command including pararescuemen, survival specialist and support personnel to include medical, communications and

logistics, and U.S. Embassy Bangkok were brought on-site to assist with the rescue efforts.

During the initial phase of the operation, the U.S. military team accessed the environment and worked with Thai authorities and international search and rescue teams on the development of potential courses of action to locate the missing boys and coach. The combined rescue efforts included dive operations, land surveys with the Royal Thai Army, establishment of helicopter landing zones and high-angle rope operations in confined spaces.

Once the youth football team had been discovered alive, the U.S. military continued its support while in close coordination with Thai authorities and international search and rescue teams. Serving in an advise and assist capacity, the U.S. military team supported the development on potential courses of action for extraction and contributed to the logistical resupply effort with the donation of food and dive equipment.

The Thai Navy SEALs demonstrated incredible leadership by diving back to the boys and staying with them day-in and day-out throughout the 8-day rescue. Retired Thai Navy SEAL Suman Kunan voluntarily came to support his SEAL brethren and unfortunately died due to dive complications during the rescue. His passing underscored the risk these divers were willing to take to save the children and their coach.

The U.S. and Thailand, as longstanding allies and friends, have worked together to address challenges in both countries and around the world. The U.S. stands with our allies and partners during difficult times and we are committed to providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief throughout the world as requested. We constantly conduct multilateral humanitarian assistance and disaster relief exercises with our key allies, so when a disaster strikes, we are better prepared to work together.



Airmen from the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command visit Tham Luang Cave in Northern Thailand to meet with Royal Thai military officials and authorities to assess conditions June 28, 2018, at Chiang Rai, Thailand. The United States, through USINDOPACOM, sent a search and rescue team to Tham Luang cave in Northern Thailand at the request of the Royal Thai government to assist in the rescue of the missing Thai soccer players and their coach. Photo by U.S. Air Force Capt. Jessica Tait.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command

10th Group Soldiers Win 1st

SFC(A) Best Warrior Competition



*By U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Charles Crail
10th Special Forces Group (Airborne)*

Two Soldiers from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) emerged victorious in a virtual Best Warrior Competition hosted by 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne), beating out service members from across country.

The privilege of competing at this command level required each team to win their home unit's Best Warrior Competition in June.

Each unit's team consisted of one junior enlisted and one non-commissioned officer, who took part in multiple events over the course of a week. Both hailed from 2nd Battalion, 10th SFG(A).

This year's competition was performed virtually due to COVID-19 considerations. It necessitated each team perform a modified event schedule at their duty station and send the results to 1st SFC(A). The events included an Army Physical Fitness Test, M4 qualification, written essay, an exam covering military knowledge, 12-mile ruck march, and an oral military board.



Soldiers from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) compete in the Best Warrior Competition June 25, 2020. Each unit's team consisted of one junior enlisted and one non-commissioned officer, who took part in the competition which included an Army Physical Fitness Test, M4 qualification, written essay, an exam covering military knowledge, 12-mile ruck march, and an oral military board. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Charles Crail.

Normally, Best Warrior involves a more robust schedule, however several events were not included due to the competition being held remotely.

“Certain events they couldn’t do like a stress shoot or some PT events,” said the 10th Group green beret engineer sergeant competing in the NCO division. “Not being able to do them wasn’t my favorite, but such is life.”

After winning at the unit level, the 10th Group Soldiers commenced a demanding training regimen to ensure success at the next tier, which was sure to be more challenging. They worked tirelessly on shaving time off their ruck march, spent hours on the range honing their abilities with the M4 carbine, and studied every subject they could to prepare for the board which also demanded their Army Service Uniform be pristine. They did all this while accomplishing their day-to-day tasks in the office, demonstrating their commitment to be the best.

“Right from the beginning you could tell that they were putting in the effort to study and brush up on warrior tasks,” said the 2nd Battalion, 10th SFG(A) command sergeant major. “Ultimately they displayed impressive levels of physical and mental toughness.”

Competing virtually added an interesting stressor to the events, as it took the social aspect of competing away from the teams.

“It was definitely weird for us because you can’t see who you’re competing against,” said the 10th Group nodal network systems operator-maintainer competing in the junior enlisted division. “It’s a different feeling for sure and in a competition that really drives me.”

The oral board was held on a virtual conference call with senior 1st SFC(A) NCO’s grilling the teams on Army and special operations knowledge.

Both the exam and essay were sent to 1st SFC(A) for grading.

After completion of the APFT, ruck, and weapon qualification, the results were sent to 1st SFC(A) to be compared to the other competing teams along with the board, exam, and essay. It was then determined 10th



Soldiers from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) compete in the 12-mile ruck march during the Best Warrior Competition June 26, 2020. Two Soldiers from 10th Group emerged victorious in the virtual Best Warrior Competition hosted by 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne), beating out service members from across country. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Charles Crail.

This battalion has a blue-collar work ethic, so if they’re going to do it, they’re going to do it to the best of their ability.

Group were the winners, qualifying them to advance to the United States Army Special Operations Command

Best Warrior Competition taking place later this month.

The victory of 10th Group’s team thrilled their leadership, who has

supported them every step of the way.

“Hands down I’m proud, they represent the battalion very well,” said 2nd battalion’s command sergeant major. “This battalion has a blue-collar work ethic, so if they’re going to do it, they’re going to do it to the best of their ability.”

Although the purpose of the Best Warrior Competition is to compete and win, events like these are always a learning experience for those involved, teaching them something about themselves or their profession they may have not previously considered.

“I have very little background in Army doctrine and the reasons they do certain things,” said the engineer sergeant. “It got me out of my comfort zone and now I have a greater base of knowledge than I did prior to this.”

Last year at the 1st SFC(A) Best Warrior, 10th Group won the NCO division.

Naval Special Warfare Command SEALs in Space



Capt. (SEAL) William Shepherd. Courtesy NASA photo.

**By U.S. Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Alex Perlman
Naval Special Warfare Command**

It is no secret that Navy SEALs, the special operations force of the U.S. Navy, are constantly striving to out-perform themselves and each other, but how far can they go? In 1984, one of them went above and beyond his teammates and made history.

“At the time, NASA was taking astronaut candidates who were not just pilots,” said Capt. William Shepherd, retired SEAL, and the first commander of the International Space Station. “There were candidates made up of doctors, engineers and scientists, and I looked at that and said, ‘You know I’ve spent a lot of time in the water in my SCUBA gear, and that’s an awful lot like being in a space suit, so I think I’ll just apply and see what happens.’”

Not long after, Shepherd learned he would become a member of the NASA Astronaut Corps, making him not only the first military non-aviator, but also the first Navy SEAL to go through astronaut training in U.S. history.

After four years of training, Shepherd embarked on the space shuttle mission STS-27 (Space Transformation System 27), and launched into space for his first time Dec. 2, 1988 from the John F. Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral, Fla.

“We are now at a crossroads, deciding whether we

are bound to inhabit only the Earth, or if humans are to live and work far from the home planet,” said Shepherd in an interview regarding the 5th anniversary of continuous life aboard the International Space Station. “Let us continue now with new explorations which are more expansive and more bold; voyages which will define us as a space-faring civilization.”

Shepherd’s path to becoming an astronaut in service to the country started with Underwater Demolition Team Eleven, then SEAL Teams One and Two, and Special Boat Unit Twenty, all operating in the Pacific, Atlantic and European theaters.

Although Shepherd was standing in the ranks among the most highly trained warriors in the world, he looked towards the stars to achieve more, he wasn’t the only one. Capt. (SEAL) Chris Cassidy, a current astronaut, spent more than 10 years in the SEAL teams and was directly influenced by the previous achievements of Shepherd.



Capt. (SEAL) Chris Cassidy. Courtesy NASA photo.

“In my experience with the SEAL teams and with going through BUD/S, it’s given me the confidence to know I can accomplish anything that I want,” said Cassidy in an interview with U.S. Navy SEAL & SWCC Page. “If you look at SEALs after their life in the teams, you’ll find people in all different sectors of industry doing all types of things. I personally always had an

interest in astronauts, and I followed Capt. Shepherd's career and was inspired by him to be an astronaut."

In 2004, Cassidy was selected for NASA's Astronaut Candidate Class and joined a group of fellow explorers including pilots and engineers. Shortly after selection, he began intensive training that included land survival, T-38 jet ground and flight training, Shuttle orbiter systems training, space station systems training, science and engineering briefings and orientation tours at all NASA centers, including the Kennedy Space Center and Marshall Space Flight Center, Huntsville, Alabama.

Currently, Cassidy is in command of the International Space Station on 'Expedition 63.' The current mission he leads is conducting research investigations focused on biology, earth science, human research, physical sciences and technology development, as well as providing the foundation for continuing human spaceflight beyond low-earth orbit to the Moon and Mars which is central to future space exploration as part of NASA's Artemis program.

The Artemis program is an ongoing U.S. government-funded crewed spaceflight program with the goal of landing "the first woman and the next man" on the Moon by 2024, and it is likely that a U.S. astronaut currently serving in the program will be the next American to step on the surface of the Moon.

It is possible that astronaut could be Lt. (SEAL) Jonny Kim.

In 2002, Kim decided to leave his hometown of Santa Monica, Calif. to enlist in the Navy and join the ranks of Naval Special Warfare operators.

"I didn't like the person I was growing up to become. I needed to find myself and my identity," said Kim in an interview with former SEAL, Jocko Willink. "And for me, getting out of my comfort zone, getting away from the people I grew up with, and finding adventure, that was my odyssey, and it was the best decision I ever made."

After completing Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S), Kim was assigned as a Special Warfare Operator to SEAL Team THREE Charlie Platoon and served as a Special Operations Combat Medic, sniper, navigator and point man on more than 100 combat operations spanning two deployments to the Middle East including Ramadi and Sadr City, Iraq.

His experiences as a medic taught him about teamwork, humility and service. Upon returning home, he decided to challenge himself yet again and applied for a commissioning program that put him on the path to become a medical doctor. Kim's application was accepted and he began his residency to Harvard Medical School, Boston, Mass.

In 2017, Kim was a resident physician in emergency medicine with Partners Healthcare at Massachusetts General Hospital, and Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. He finally met his goal of becoming a doctor, but he didn't stop there. That same year, he applied to become an astronaut and was accepted, joining NASA's team on the Artemis program.

"I was told that with the right attitude, and with enough hard work, if you get up after every time you fail, you can amount to something and you can do positive work. You can leave a positive mark for our world, and that's what I aim to do," said Kim.

Kim's unwavering perseverance led him to be the outstanding American that many call a hero, and he encourages many others to follow in his path of greatness as well.

"Don't let that hunger for the unknown go away," said Kim. "That curiosity is so important, so you should maintain that passion for what you do. Never in a million years would I have thought I could have been an astronaut candidate. I didn't have the confidence from my childhood, but dreams are possible and all good things in life are hard to get, so persevere and don't give up!"



Lt. (SEAL) Jonny Kim. Courtesy NASA photo.

Naval Special Warfare Command



The tour--SWCC's Hell Week

*By U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Sean Weir
Naval Special Warfare Command*

Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen (SWCC) operators complete demanding tactical training throughout their careers, but before becoming a SWCC operator they must first pass a 72-hour crucible during the fifth week of the SWCC Basic Crewman Selection course called the "Tour."

"On Time, On Target, Never Quit" is the SWCC motto, a valuable maxim the men and women learn at Basic Crewman Selection, take to heart when they embark on the Tour during Basic Crewman Training, and they take with them throughout their careers.

"The Tour is 72 hours of physically and mentally demanding training evolutions designed to replicate harsh environments that SWCC operators may encounter in their career as a Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen," said Chief Warrant Officer Four Joshua Hummel, SWCC school officer in charge.

During 23 hours of running and five miles swimming, the candidates complete grueling team building activities that develop unity, teamwork, character and humility. Pushed by a team of experienced SWCC instructors under demanding environmental conditions, candidates learn to work as a boat team and also to help the person next to them during life threatening situations.

"The hardest part for a student is changing their mentality and habits," said Hummel. "Anyone can show up to SWCC school for a day. It takes someone with self-discipline and mental perseverance to do it every day. From day one until they graduate the students have to realize becoming an elite operator isn't something you do one day a week or two weeks a month, it's something you do every day, it's a lifestyle."

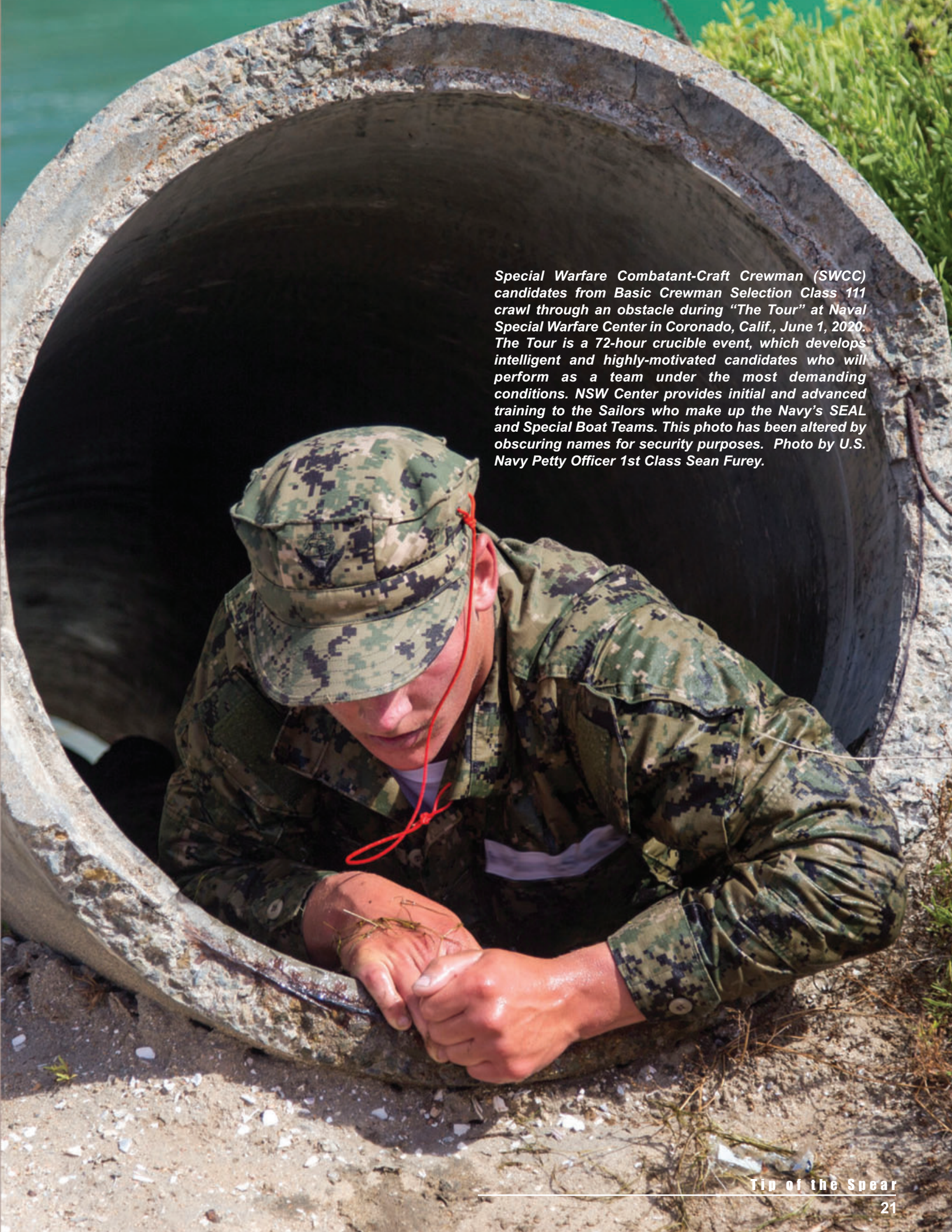
SWCC operators work closely with Navy SEALs by providing clandestine insertion capabilities in coastal areas while operating specialized craft used to deliver operators and provide heavy weapons and other critical support. They conduct special reconnaissance, patrol, as well as Visit, Board, Search and Seizure on suspected maritime craft. The Tour is the end of the initial training and where candidates

get selected to become SWCC operators, and proceeds the 14-week long Crewman Qualification Training which is just a portion of the six-month A-school.

BCS is administered by Basic Training Command, a component of Navy Special Warfare Center, in Coronado, CA. NSW Center provides initial and advanced training to the Sailors who make-up the Navy's SEAL and Special Boat Teams. For more information on SWCC and how to become part of it, visit www.SEALSWCC.com.



A Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewman (SWCC) candidate from Basic Crewman Selection Class 111 navigates a rope-slide obstacle during "The Tour" at Naval Special Warfare Center in Coronado, Calif., June 3, 2020. The Tour is a 72-hour crucible event, which develops intelligent and highly-motivated candidates who will perform as a team under the most demanding conditions. NSW Center provides initial and advanced training to the Sailors who make up the Navy's SEAL and Special Boat Teams. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Anthony W. Walker.



Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewman (SWCC) candidates from Basic Crewman Selection Class 111 crawl through an obstacle during “The Tour” at Naval Special Warfare Center in Coronado, Calif., June 1, 2020. The Tour is a 72-hour crucible event, which develops intelligent and highly-motivated candidates who will perform as a team under the most demanding conditions. NSW Center provides initial and advanced training to the Sailors who make up the Navy’s SEAL and Special Boat Teams. This photo has been altered by obscuring names for security purposes. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Sean Furey.

Air Force Special Operations Command



Special Tactics Airman awarded the Silver Star Medal

By U.S. Air Force Capt. Katie Spencer
24th Special Operations Wing

A Special Tactics Airman was awarded the nation's third highest award for valor, the Silver Star Medal, during a ceremony at Pope Field, North Carolina, Aug. 14, 2020.

Master Sgt. John Grimesey, a Special Tactics combat controller with the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, 24th Special Operations Wing, was recognized for his efforts in Afghanistan in 2013. He not only saved the life of a fellow special operations troop but called in multiple airstrikes while being under attack by the enemy.

It was supposed to be a routine mission. Then again, no mission in Afghanistan in 2013 was "routine." The objective was to clear and secure a village in Ghazni Province to establish local Afghan police presence without the threat of opposition forces. Grimesey and his team partnered with the local Afghan police and together they set out to clear the area. Until one of the teams encountered a large band of Taliban fighters.

"Our Afghan team got separated and started to take on enemy fire," said Grimesey. "Myself and an Army Special Forces Solider maneuvered to provide assistance and quickly found ourselves engaged with the Taliban."

When Grimesey peered around the wall to gain situational awareness, he noticed the wounded and dead Afghan police officers, to include the police chief. It was then Grimesey was struck by a rocket propelled grenade.

"I remember the ringing in my ears," recalled Grimesey. "I knew I was concussed from the blast because of the ringing, my vision was blurry, and I was fatigued."

Despite suffering a concussion and shrapnel wounds, Grimesey was able to drag his Army Special Forces teammate away from the immediate danger zone and assess the situation.



U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, commander, Air Force Special Operations Command, presents the Silver Star Medal to Master Sgt. John Grimesey, a Special Tactics combat controller with the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, during a ceremony at Pope Field, N.C., Aug. 14, 2020. Grimesey received the nation's third highest medal against an armed enemy of the United States in combat for his actions while deployed to Afghanistan in 2013. Courtesy photo.

"I snapped into a problem-solving mode," he said. "The situation was dire and the only way to solve it was to rely on my extensive training and attempt to break down the large problem into small chunks. I had to prioritize with what I was being faced with."

The Special Tactics combat controller was able to call in additional support from other Army Special Forces units, and from aircraft for close-air-support; all the while engaging in a fire fight with opposition forces.

"Eventually we were able to gain control and eliminate the Taliban resistance while also finishing the mission to secure the village," he said.

Grimesey said it was later discovered there was a Taliban training team who had made their way to the village thus drastically increasing the number of fighters they encountered.

Lt. Gen. James Slife, commander, Air Force Special Operations Command, presided over the ceremony and remarked on Grimesey's actions.

"You may not call yourself a hero Master Sgt. Grimesey, but I do," said Slife. "Because of your actions that day, families and friends did not experience loss. The men whose lives you saved will continue to positively impact those around them creating a chain of reaction that ripples across generations."

"I think about it every day. I even dream about it," reflected Grimesey. "It's an event that left an impression on me. While it was a harrowing experience, I look back with great pride and believe that my team and I were able to save lives and help ensure the security of the village."

Grimesey's Silver Star Medal was upgraded from an

Army Achievement Medal. During the ceremony he also received the Bronze Star Medal, second oak leaf cluster with Valor for another battle in the Middle East in 2017.

As Grimesey looks ahead to start his medical retirement process, he remembers his time in the Special Tactics community fondly

"If there are any other young men and women out there looking for a community with a sense of purpose and opportunity to make a positive impact on the world at large, they don't have to look any further than Air Force

I snapped into a problem-solving mode. The situation was dire and the only way to solve it was to rely on my extensive training and attempt to break down the large problem into small chunks. I had to prioritize with what I was being faced with.

— Master Sgt. John Grimesey

Special Tactics."

Special Tactics Airmen are U.S. Special Operations Command's tactical air to ground integration force, and AFSOC's special operations ground force, leading global access, precision strike, personnel recovery and battlefield surgery operations.

Since 9/11, Special Tactics Airmen have received one Medal of Honor, 11 Air Force Crosses and 49 Silver Star Medals making Grimesey's the 50th.



U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, commander, Air Force Special Operations Command, presented the Silver Star Medal and Bronze Star Medal with Valor to Master Sgt. John Grimesey, a Special Tactics combat controller with the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, during a ceremony at Pope Field, N.C., Aug.14, 2020. Courtesy photo.

Air Force Special Operations Command



Special Tactics Airmen integrate combat capabilities during Commando Crucible

*By U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Alejandra Fontalvo
24th Special Operations Wing*

Air Force Special Tactics teams have a wide range of core responsibilities they provide and combatant commands rely on ST operators to hone their skills long before arriving to a deployed location.

To meet those required standards, Special Tactics teams successfully planned and executed Commando Crucible, a comprehensive 2-week exercise from June 18-July 3, 2020, which took place at both Hurlburt Field, Florida and Kinston, North Carolina.

“Despite logistical frustrations due to COVID-19 restrictions, the exercise allowed Special Tactics flights

and attachments to conduct critical training on global access, precision strike, personnel recovery, and foreign internal defense capabilities,” said a Special Tactics Officer and lead planner for the exercise.

Special Tactics operators led the training, which consisted of 253 participants and leveraged 40 aircraft from across Air Force Special Operations Command and Air Combat Command. One team of participants included members from the 53rd Air Traffic Control Squadron assigned to Robins Air Force Base, Georgia. The members played the role of a simulated host nation force, which Special Tactics operators were responsible for training on fundamental tactical skills and guiding them through a direct action training mission.



An Air Force Special Tactics operator helps secure an airfield for an F-15 fighter aircraft during a Forward Air Refueling Point training mission, as part of exercise Commando Crucible, June 30, 2020 in Kinston, N.C. The training demonstrated Special Tactics teams’ ability to conduct global access operations and integrate Air Force Special Operations Command and Air Combat Command forces for strategic deterrence. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Henry Hoegen.



An Air Force Special Tactics operator positions his MK20 rifle on top of a berm to pull security for the command and control element during a full mission profile as part of Commando Crucible at Eglin Range, June 30, 2020. Special Tactics is U.S. Special Operations Command's premier tactical air-to-ground integration force and the Air Force's special operations ground force, leading global access, precision strike, personnel recovery and battlefield surgery operations. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Rose Gudex.

“The ST flights did a great job providing a plan of instruction in only three days to effectively integrate with the teams conducting the raids,” said the STO. “This is extremely realistic for a lot of the different partner forces we integrate with in deployed areas of operation.”

Leadership from the 24th Special Operations Wing including Col. Matt Allen, 24th SOW commander, Col. Allison Black, the 24th SOW's new vice commander and Chief Master Sgt. Jeff Guilmain, 24th SOW command chief, were present for portions of the exercise to observe how the tactical units were hitting their training objectives.

“We saw really well-rehearsed combat capability,” said Guilmain. “It was really valuable to watch how operators’ skills both as individuals and as teams have been refined over the months of training to provide incredible capability to the forward commanders. I’m glad we have that process in place where commanders can validate those capabilities and ensure readiness.”

Another critical readiness component teams were evaluated on was their ability to plan and carry out Agile Combat Employment concepts. Special Tactics forces have been aligning this priority in response to near-peer competition as well as AFSOC's strategic guidance.

Special Tactics operators traveled from Hurlburt Field to Kinston, N.C. to rapidly secure an airfield to use as a Forward Air Refueling Point, integrating Combat Air Force assets such as F-15s, F-22s and AFSOC MC-130 aircraft.

“The ability for our aircraft to operate swiftly in contested areas improves U.S. Air Force lethality and presents strategic dilemmas for our adversaries. It also helps develop procedures to habitualize AFSOC and ACC units working together in support of the Air Superiority mission.” said the STO. “Overall, despite initial planning difficulties, the exercise execution went flawlessly and according to plan.”



Simulated partner forces learn how to package and transfer patients using a portable stretcher during Commando Crucible with Air Force Special Tactics operators at Hurlburt Field, June 29, 2020. The exercise provided a rigorous operating environment which tested ST operators, their support teammates and outside agency participants on the abundance of moving parts and products required in a deployed environment. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Rose Gudex.

Air Force Special Operations Command



125th Special Tactics Squadron dives into new underwater capability

*By U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Valerie Seelye
142nd Wing Public Affairs*

Note: Names have been left out of the following article due to mission requirements.

It would be pointless to swim subsurface into enemy territory in regular scuba gear, as the adversaries may notice bubbles coming out of the water. That's why members from the 125th Special Tactics Squadron recently adopted a different type of diving.

U.S. Air Force 125th STS Airmen from the Portland

Air National Guard Base, along with members of joint forces, participated in closed-circuit dive training at Joint Base Lewis McChord, Washington, July 31, 2020, to train with new equipment and conduct recurrency dives for Special Tactics operators.

"What is unique about closed-circuit diving is it is an infiltration method that allows you to be subsurface and not have any bubbles showing, so as you are moving in to the beach, you are unobserved by the enemy," said one 125th STS operator.

The training was the first time the Air Force has



U.S. Air Force 125th Special Tactics Airmen from the Portland Air National Guard Base, along with members of joint forces, participate in closed-circuit dive training at Joint Base Lewis McChord, Wash., July 31, 2020. Special Tactics operators conducted recurrency dives and training on new equipment. Photo by U.S. Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Emily Moon.

been certified to conduct closed-circuit diving with the new equipment.

“We recently procured the equipment, attained the appropriate certifications, and this last week we culminated all of those things with new equipment training,” said the 125th STS operations superintendent.

In the past, the U.S. Navy primarily conducted this type of diving.

“The Navy is the proponent for diving within the Department of Defense,” the superintendent said. “They are required to come in and certify your program before you can begin diving with this very particular type of equipment.”

He said it took about three years of obtaining equipment, writing instructions, inspections, and other preparation to make the training happen. Now, the 125th Special Tactics Airmen don’t have to rely on other branches for combat diving.

He said the unique gear, called Modular Oxygen Diving Equipment, can be donned in less than 15 seconds.

“It is literally a closed system that you wear on your chest in which you rebreathe your own air after it gets cleaned and goes through a chemical process,” the superintendent said. “There are no bubbles, it is very small and very light, and as a military employment capability, it’s very stealthy.”

The operator reflected on his experience.

“I feel as though I am not swimming in a straight line,” he said. “My compass is telling me I’m moving in the correct direction, and even though my brain is telling me that may not be the case, I have to have 100 percent confidence the equipment is working properly for me.”

He said the Airmen conducted this training in their initial entry courses, but did not stay current. For many years, the Air Force was primarily focused in land-based theaters, such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Now the squadron is requalified in closed-circuit diving, which contributes to the operators’ global-access capabilities.

“Diving as a method of getting stealthily into an environment is just one of the many ways within special tactics that we say we, ‘get to work.’ It’s not the mission, it’s how we get to the mission,” the superintendent said. “We’re buying ourselves options to ‘get to work,’ get to the target, and get to where we can execute our mission on behalf of U.S. Special Operations Command and the Air Force.”

He said the closed-circuit certification and program



A U.S. Air Force 125th Special Tactics Airmen from the Portland Air National Guard Base participates in closed-circuit dive training at Joint Base Lewis McChord, Wash., July 31, 2020. Photo by U.S. Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Emily Moon.

at the 125th STS buys capability and capacity for USSOCOM.

“We troop led this from beginning to end. Now, within Air Force Special Operations Command, the other units will be able to follow on in a much faster way,” he said. “That gives a ground-force commander or a geographic-combatant commander operational agility and strategic flexibility. We’ve increased options and increased lethality within the force.”

The operator said they will now dive every six months to remain current in their training.

“We may be called upon at any time to use any of those qualifications,” he said. “If we lose those currencies for long durations of time, it is going to take a longer timeframe to become requalified to execute that mission.”

The superintendent said the Air National Guard here gets things done well.

“We’re very agile and forward thinking, and it allows us to do things like this,” he said. “The commander advises of his intent, places trust in individuals, and intent is executed at the lowest level. You’re enabling people to get things done — that’s what we did here.”

Air Force Special Operations Command



AFSOC Airman first in command to gain Sikh religious accommodation waiver

*By U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Janell Venerable
1st Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

Promoting the core values of loyalty, unity, and selfless service; these are the goals of the Sikh American Veterans Alliance (SAVA).

On June 7, 2020, U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Dominic Varriale, a geospatial intelligence analyst with the 11th Special Operations Intelligence Squadron, became the first member of Air Force Special Operations Command to gain a religious accommodations waiver. He accomplished this by way of the SAVA, who helped guide him through the process from start to finish.

The waiver allows for religious accommodations through wear of the Air Force uniform.

“They [the SAVA] sent me Air Force Instruction-approved religious articles of faith such as my operational camouflage pattern-colored turban,” said Varriale, the Long Branch, New Jersey native. “They also made it possible for me to speak to a Gurdwara back in my hometown to get a proper letter of sincerity from a Sikh Temple.”

In addition to support received from the SAVA, Varriale’s direct leadership assisted him through his journey.

“I was able to inform Senior Airman Varriale that his waiver request had been approved, and that he now had the opportunity to openly exercise his religion,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Brian Lightsey, commander of the 11th SOIS. “His reaction was immediate. It was part relief, part a sense of pride, but most importantly it was evident to everyone in the room that it meant a great deal to him.”

Varriale noted the support of his command when beginning the waiver process, which was initially expected to take up to three years for approval. After



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Dominic Varriale, a geospatial intelligence analyst with the 11th Special Operations Intelligence Squadron, poses for a portrait at Hurlburt Field, Fla., July 17, 2020. Varriale is the first member of the Air Force Special Operations Command to get a religious waiver, allowing him to wear a turban for his Sikh faith while in uniform. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Joseph P. Leveille.

the process was reconstructed earlier this year, incorporating new constraints for the waiver, Varriale was able to submit an application directly through his chain of command to be approved by the wing

chaplain, which accelerated the process to taking only three months.

“My command has been extremely supportive every step of the way,” said Varriale. “For a long time, the military had a more ‘mind your business’ attitude. With recent [diversity focused] changes, there is a much larger interest in my religion and people are not afraid to ask and learn more.”

It was on a trip to New Orleans, Louisiana, in 2019 where he learned of the Sikh faith and began his journey.

He spoke with converts in the area where he drew from his military service as it relates to Sikh religious objectives of fighting religious extremism and intolerance and strengthening the military by promoting inclusion and fostering a diverse force.

Varriale grew up as a military brat living in Florida, Tennessee and Peru. His father, a U.S. Army warrant officer, served in roles as a medical evacuation pilot and military intelligence for 14 years. Varriale decided early on he wanted to follow in his father’s footsteps, ultimately committing to an Air Force career as a geospatial intelligence analyst.

Varriale’s focus on research, geography and cultural awareness through his training combined with his personal travels served as inspiration to learn more about religion, leading to finding Sikhism.

“The Sikh values and religion are anti-tyranny and anti-oppression,” said Varriale. “Good morals are a huge principle within Sikhism and the Air Force has only doubled-down on it through our core values.”

Updates to Air Force Instruction 36-2903, Dress and personal appearance of Air Force personnel, released Feb. 7, 2020, allow Airmen with approved waivers to wear turbans in colors closely resembling headgear for an assigned uniform and includes guidance on hair and beard wear authorized for religious accommodation as long as they are “neat and conservative.”

Varriale is proud not only to serve his

country as an American Airman but now also doing so with his faith and religious items intact.

“Nothing I do religiously gets in the way of my job which is the American way,” said Varriale.

The Air Force encourages religious freedoms of service members as one of four pillars of resiliency to help build and sustain a strong and healthy workplace and community. In addition to promoting one’s own well-being and four pillars, respecting others whose viewpoints differ from them is

My command has been extremely supportive every step of the way. For a long time, the military had a more ‘mind your business’ attitude. With recent [diversity focused] changes, there is a much larger interest in my religion and people are not afraid to ask and learn more.

— Senior Airman Dominic Varriale

expected from the total force.

“Since being allowed to fully practice his religion, we have observed a significant increase in his morale and work ethic,” Lightsey noted. “Senior Airman Varriale was always a capable analyst beforehand, but I sincerely believe the practicing of his faith has provided the extra motivation to hone his craft as a mission analyst and continuing to improve as an Airman. I expect him to do great things in the future.”



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Dominic Varriale, a geospatial intelligence analyst with the 11th Special Operations Intelligence Squadron, holds a Kirpan at Hurlburt Field, Fla., July 17, 2020. The kirpan is a knife or dagger of any shape or size, carried by Sikhs. Varriale is the first member of Air Force Special Operations Command to get a religious waiver, allowing him to wear a turban for his Sikh faith while in uniform. Photo by Senior Airman Joseph P. Leveille.

Marine Forces, Special Operations Command



Maj. Gen. James F. Glynn takes command at MARSOC

*By U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Christian Ayers
Marine Forces, Special Operations Command*



Marine Forces Special Operations Command hosted a change of command ceremony, June 26, 2020, as the Marine Raiders bid farewell to Maj. Gen. Daniel D. Yoo and welcomed Maj. Gen. James F. Glynn. Glynn addressing the audience returns to MARSOC to serve as its eighth commander, having previously served as the commanding officer of the Marine Raider Training Center. As the MARSOC commander, Glynn will be responsible for manning, training and equipping Marine Raider task forces for deployments in support of the theater special operations commands. MARSOC maintains continuous deployed presence in the areas of operations for U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, U.S. Central Command and U.S. Africa Command. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Christian Ayers.

Marine Forces Special Operations Command hosted a change of command ceremony today, as the Marine Raiders bid farewell to Maj. Gen. Daniel D. Yoo and welcomed Maj. Gen. James F. Glynn.

Glynn returns to MARSOC to serve as its eighth commander, having previously served as the commanding officer of the Marine Raider Training Center from 2011-2013.

“You don’t get too many opportunities to come back to a unit,” said Glynn, “but when you come back, you stand among giants... people of character, people who care, people of concern that transcends the operational mission. It is personal.” Glynn summarized his feelings about taking command. “Pride, at the opportunity to come back to this formation and have the opportunity to stand amongst you. Humility at the opportunity to command in an organization like this. And some would call it a burden of command. It is actually a privilege to have the opportunity to be a part of and to contribute to all the great things that this force and its families do.”

As the MARSOC commander, Glynn will be responsible for manning, training and equipping Marine Raiders for deployments in support of special operations missions across the globe. MARSOC maintains a continuous deployed presence in the areas of operations for U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, U.S. Central Command and U.S. Africa Command.

“We have lots of stuff in the Marine Corps three Divisions, three Wings, three Logistics groups. We have one MARSOC, it is that unique,” said Gen. David H. Berger, 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps and the senior officer presiding over the ceremony. “There is no part of the globe that this command does not operate in,” going on to explain how much the organization provides the service. “We get back so much from MARSOC in the Marine Corps, in

equipment, in training...the most that we are going to draw from MARSOC in the next couple of years, is not a technique, it's not a weapon and it's not a radio. It is the focus on the individual."

Also in attendance were U.S. Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke, the commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, previous commanders of MARSOC, and various dignitaries from the local government, as well as the Marine Corps and interagency.

"When I think of MARSOC, I always think of SOCOM's Sparta. When you look at this force, it is 2% of our budget from SOCOM, 6% of our manpower, conducting over 10% of SOCOM's missions globally. It's a great payback for what we put into it. Much of it is the human capital invested...the great Marines represented out here on the field," said Clarke.

Yoo departs the command after two years leading the organization. During his time commanding MARSOC, Yoo drove the implementation of MARSOF 2030, the vision document designed to shape and inform the next decade of acquisitions, capability development, and operations for the command. In the same vein, he merged the G-5 Plans Directorate, and the G-8 Requirements Directorate, creating

the Combat Development and Integration Directorate to continue expanding MARSOC's role beyond the traditional battlespace. Yoo directed the establishment of MARSOC's Cyber Integration Working Group to build the command's future cyber capability and implemented the annual Cognitive Raider Symposium to increase awareness and critical thinking of key issues facing the Department of Defense and Special Operations Forces.

"As a commander, your time is fast, and as the commandant eluded to, we are the caretaker of the organization and the organization is a reflection of the individuals," said Yoo. "From the moment you take the colors as a commander, you hope you can move the organization forward and that the things you do will have lasting impacts. It has been a life time of honors to be a part of these different formations, but to conclude with you all here at MARSOC, makes me very, very grateful."

MARSOC is the Marine Corps service component of U.S. Special Operations Command and was activated Feb. 24, 2006. Its mission is to train, organize, equip and deploy task-organized Marine special operations forces worldwide.

Pride, at the opportunity to come back to this formation and have the opportunity to stand amongst you. Humility at the opportunity to command in an organization like this. And some would call it a burden of command. It is actually a privilege to have the opportunity to be a part of and to contribute to all the great things that this force and its families do.

— Maj. Gen. James F. Glynn



Marine Forces, Special Operations Command



Marine Raider awarded Silver Star Medal for valor in Afghanistan

Courtesy Story

Marine Forces, Special Operations Command

A Marine Raider was awarded the Silver Star Medal for heroic actions while deployed to Afghanistan in 2019, at a ceremony at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, July 10, 2020.

The master sergeant and Critical Skills Operator, was serving as a Team Chief with 2nd Marine Raider Battalion in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel when his team was engaged by enemy combatants. According to the award citation, during a heliborne raid into difficult enemy-controlled terrain in Southern Afghanistan, he led his team of Marine Raiders and partner nation forces in four hours of close combat with more than a dozen Taliban fighters occupying defensive strongholds. The Team Chief exposed himself to enemy fire to lead an assault across 30 meters of open terrain, attacking Taliban fighters entrenched in a bunker with his rifle and hand grenades. While he and his team took accurate enemy fire, the Team Chief again exposed himself by climbing on top a building to employ a roof charge in order to recover a wounded Afghan soldier. With enemy fighters barricaded just a few feet away, he heroically pulled the wounded man to a covered position in a valiant attempt to save his life, while allowing his team to engage the barricaded fighters

with fragmentation grenades.

Throughout the four-hour close combat engagement, multiple team members bravely exposed themselves to enemy fire and employed small arms fire, fragmentation grenades, and shoulder-fired rockets to suppress or destroy additional enemy fighting positions. For their actions, one CSO, one Special Operations Capability Specialist, and one Special Operations Officer also involved in the assault were awarded the Bronze Star with Valor for their actions, while four others were awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with Valor. The combined efforts of this Marine Raider team resulted in the complete destruction of a determined enemy, including three high-value enemy commanders.

"The entire team remained calm, concise over the radios. They were controlled, efficient, synchronized, and ultimately, brutally lethal to end that fight," commented the awardee of the men he led during the deployment. "One thing I did want to recognize is that this was not an isolated incident. This is the incident we are recognizing these guys for, but this happened multiple times, with the same, if not, very similar circumstances and many of the Marines being honored today did the exact same actions and performed just as well multiple times. You guys humbled me throughout the entire deployment. It was an honor to serve with you."

(Opposite page) A Marine Raider was awarded the Silver Star Medal for heroic actions while deployed to Afghanistan in 2019, at a ceremony aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune. July 10, 2020. The master sergeant and Critical Skills Operator, was serving as a Team Chief with 2nd Marine Raider Battalion in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel when his team was engaged by enemy combatants. According to the award citation, during a heliborne raid into difficult enemy-controlled terrain in Southern Afghanistan, he led his team of Marine Raiders and partner nation forces in four hours of close combat with more than a dozen Taliban fighters occupying defensive strongholds. The Team Chief exposed himself to enemy fire to lead an assault across 30 meters of open terrain, attacking Taliban fighters entrenched in a bunker with his rifle and hand grenades. While he and his team took accurate enemy fire, the Team Chief again exposed himself by climbing on top a building to employ a roof charge in order to recover a wounded Afghan soldier. With enemy fighters barricaded just a few feet away, he heroically pulled the wounded man to a covered position in a valiant attempt to save his life, while allowing his team to engage the barricaded fighters with fragmentation grenades. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Lynn Kinney.



Headquarters - U.S Special Operations Command Bringing tomorrow's technology to the Warfighter today

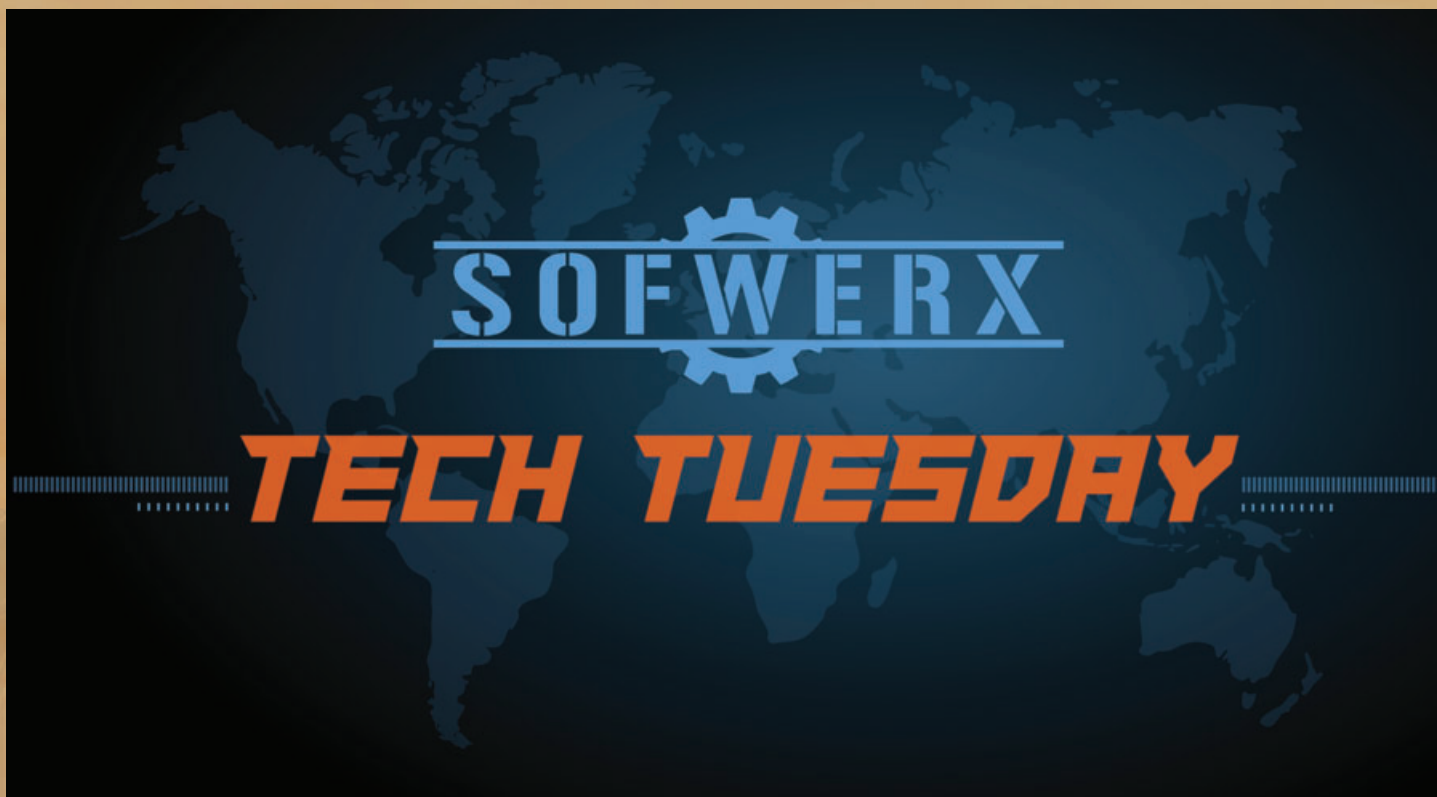
By Christina Heard
SOFWERX

Innovating for the military is not solely about making today's technologies better but creating capabilities that will prepare the Warfighter for tomorrow's battlefield. To satisfy this need, the United States Special Operations Command has several initiatives in place that helps discover innovative technologies. With broad topics of high priority, such as tactically relevant situational awareness, communications and navigation in all environments, tailored lethality, and biotechnologies, it will take a vibrant ecosystem of Subject Matter Experts to ensure our Nation's heroes are properly equipped for modern

warfare.

As an innovation arm for USSOCOM, SOFWERX helps solve our Warfighters' most challenging problems and anticipate future areas of interest. SOFWERX provides an unclassified platform for traditional and non-traditional partners to collaborate with USSOCOM stakeholders and provides access to novel capabilities in a timely and affordable manner. When introducing these disruptive capabilities, they are identified and further refined by their level of innovation.

The three different levels of innovation are incremental, adjacent, and transformational. Incremental innovation is usually tied to the core of a business and involves improving or refining a product



or service for an existing customer or market. Think along the lines of upgrading from a 5x scope to a 10x scope. The next level is adjacent innovation, which is simply an expansion of an adjacent business or customer arrangement. This innovation typically leverages the company's expertise but does so in new or innovative ways. For the Government, this often means the adoption of dual-use technologies. The third level, transformational innovation, is the creation of a completely new product or service. It is considered the most high-risk style of innovation and is often the most difficult level to correctly identify and subsume. It is subsequently one of SOFWERX top priorities in its support to USSOCOM Science and Technology.

To support the discovery and delivery of transformational technologies, SOFWERX has begun an initiative called Tech Tuesday. On behalf of USSOCOM, SOFWERX uses this forum to engage with selected provocateurs every Tuesday from 1500-1700 EST. These selected participants pitch their unique capabilities in 30-minute time slots to interested USSOCOM and Other Government Agency Partners.

The streamlined process is simple: Interested participants submit their capabilities for review. Once the technology has been verified as truly transformational, those selected organizations are provided a date and time to pitch or demonstrate their technology. During their allotted session, presenters have the opportunity to answer questions directly from the audience. All companies are considered equal in the process, regardless of size or history working with the Government.

"Tech Tuesday is the easiest, fastest way to get your new technology in front of military decisionmakers ... It was great to show military leaders the new life-saving technologies we are working on," said Rodger Goosen, CEO/Founder ROGOFire .

Connections provided through the Tech Tuesday

platform are merely the launching point for game-changing solutions. The true test of success is the conversations that occur after the calls are over. Andrew Wilson from JGW Group/AMD stated, "... We were able to reach government users who we did not have contact with, and have now followed up with them, and are progressing with conversations and exchange of data..."



Industry partners are not the only ones commenting on Tech Tuesday. After several successful Tech Tuesday events, Government Stakeholders are reaching out to express how they have benefited from the platform. Attendees not only receive the pitch, but also have access to the main point of contact from each company and can reach out for further teaming opportunities. A member from the Office of Strategic Development said, "I will be providing the vendor's briefing to several colleagues working projects that might benefit

from this capability."

The SOFWERX team has been encouraged by the zeal and support from Government and Industry to provide necessary capabilities to SOF. Tech Tuesday is quickly gaining the momentum needed to make a lasting impact for USSOCOM and our Industry Partners.

"It's great to see the connections being made and hear the success stories following the calls," stated Keri Cline, Technology Transfer Manager at SOFWERX. "This platform has linked, not only USSOCOM, but Government Agencies around the world, to true innovators with bleeding-edge technologies.

The need for innovation in the military will only increase moving forward. SOFWERX is making strides to anticipate those needs ahead of time, ensuring SOF soldiers are always equipped for the battle ahead. To join the initiative, visit sofwerx.org/techtuesday and either submit a capability or sign up to participate in the scheduled presentations. Together, we can discover solutions believed to be outside the realm of possible.

Headquarters - U.S Special Operations Command Lessons Learned Program captures global SOF activities

*By Troy Secor
Lessons Learned Operational and Strategic
Studies Branch*

In the early months of 2007 Headquarters USSOCOM made a strategic decision to invest in its future by significantly improving Special Operations Forces's ability to collect, analyze and disseminate lessons learned across the SOF enterprise. The result was the new and improved SOF Lessons Learned Program (SOFLLP), a network of Lessons Learned Specialists (LLS) working full time to collect observations, insights, lessons and best practices from

SOF activities around the globe, analyze that information for its impact to the force, and disseminate findings and recommendations to the rest of the enterprise.

That same year, the 2007 USSOCOM Posture Statement stated, "Effectively integrating SOF lessons learned and those of our joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and coalition special operations partners is crucial to countering and defeating international threats."

The newly formed SOFLLP, currently residing in SOCOM's J59 as the Lessons Learned Operational and Strategic Studies Branch, was chartered to execute a



Special Forces Soldiers from the U.S. Army's 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) conduct room-clearing tactics while searching for a high-value target during a Counter Improvised Explosive Device course at Panzer Local Training area near Stuttgart, Germany, June. 11, 2020. The Counter Improvised Explosive Device training was a 5-day course with both day and nighttime lanes with various types of simulated explosives and scenarios. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Patrik Orcutt.

lessons learned process across the SOF enterprise and integrate those lessons throughout the SOF and Joint communities. “Applying these lessons is important to support a practice of continuous change and improvement,” says current Branch Chief, U.S. Navy Capt. Timothy Parker. “And lessons captured are paramount in contributing to the further development of doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P).”

The SOFLLP has collection and analysis capabilities within the Component commands, sub-unified command, Theater Special Operations Commands, and select forward-deployed headquarters, and maintains a deployable Lessons Learned collection team capability comprised of both government civilian and contractor LL Specialists (LLS).

“We currently have LLS deployed to some select locations supporting SOF lines of operation for the train, advise, and assist mission,” says Deputy Branch Chief, Mr. Troy Secor. “The Remote Advise and Assist Virtual Assistance Kits have worked well in Afghanistan and our program is spreading the word on these kits to other theaters.”

The program’s mission focus includes circulation of battlefield information, assisting with pre-deployment training, and after action reporting; with the primary objective of enhancing joint operational effectiveness by saving lives, resources and time.

“Lessons Learned submissions, referred to as “Observations”, are stored in the Joint Lessons Learned Information System (JLLIS),” says Mr. Tom McArthur, the SOFLLP database manager. “The database is used for future analysis, collaboration, and resolution. Observations and Best Practices are collected and then shared with SOF subject matter experts to determine SOF-wide staffing, remediation, and institutionalization for maximizing their full educational and training potential.”

The SOFLLP averages 600-700 new observations every month, derived from multiple LL products. For example, in 2019, the SOFLLP conducted 151 Before



Air Force Special Tactics operators and simulated partner forces load a CV-22 Osprey, assigned to the 8th Special Operations Squadron at Hurlburt Field, after executing a full mission profile during Commando Crucible at Eglin Range, Florida, June 30, 2020. The exercise provided a rigorous operating environment which tested ST operators, their support teammates and outside agency participants on the abundance of moving parts and products required in a deployed environment. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Rose Gudex.

Action Reviews, compiled 591 After Action Reports, conducted 701 post-operations key participant interviews, supported 229 local training events, and provided information to support the resolution of 334 DOTMLPF-P issues. The SOFLLP network, with LLSs assigned throughout the SOF Enterprise, has established a sterling reputation and is consistently recognized by the Joint Staff as the premiere LL Program within the DOD.

The big focus of late is COVID-19 and the SOFLLP is fully engaged across the Enterprise. Information collected thus far addresses issues such as training, readiness, battlespace impacts, and our technology tools necessary for operating in a limited manning environment. To date, the SOFLLP has gathered hundreds of COVID-19 observations and will be helping prepare after action reporting at key levels of the Enterprise. Look for those AARs in the near future.

To find your local LLS contact HQ USSOCOM LL at 813-826-7038, or Mr. Troy Secor at troy.secor@socom.mil.



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Editor's note: Honored are those special operations forces who lost their lives in combat or training since the June 2020 issue of Tip of the Spear.

Special Forces Soldiers from the U.S. Army's 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) conduct an after action review after Counter Improvised Explosive Device training at Panzer Local Training area near Stuttgart, Germany, June. 10, 2020. The CIED training was a 5-day course with both day and night time lanes with various types of simulated explosives and scenarios. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Patrik Orcutt.

