



Tip OF THE Spear

United States Special Operations Command
MacDill Air Force Base, Florida

August 2021

**1st Special Forces Group
(Airborne) jungle warfare training**



United States Special Operations Command



1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) jungle warfare training ... 14

Tip of the Spear

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

Chief Master Sgt. Gregory A. Smith
Senior Enlisted Leader, USSOCOM

U.S. Army Col. Curtis Kellogg
Special Operations
Communication Office Director
Daniel Wade
Command Information Chief
Michael Bottoms
Managing Editor

U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo
Photojournalist



Thomas Jefferson Award Winner

This is a U.S. Special Operations Command publication. Contents are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense or USSOCOM. The content is edited, prepared and provided by the USSOCOM Communication Office, 7701 Tampa Point Blvd., MacDill AFB, Fla., 33621, phone (813) 826-8800, DSN 299-8800. An electronic copy can be found at www.socom.mil. The editor of the Tip of the Spear reserves the right to edit all copy presented for publication.

U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Jacob Johnson
Staff Writer/Photographer

(Cover) Green Berets with 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) alongside their Marine counterpart move through a swamp during the 4th Marine Regiment Jungle Warfare Exercise at the Jungle Warfare Training Center, May 23, 2021. The exercise includes forward reconnaissance, terrain analysis, practice using a variety of communication platforms, small unit tactics and patient extraction procedures. Courtesy photo illustration.

The Quiet Professionals

Highlights



U.S. Africa Command special operations forces train alongside its SOF partners in Côte d'Ivoire ... 7



Army Capt. Christina Plumley breaks the glass ceiling ... 16



Naval Special Warfare welcomes CQT Class 115; First woman operator ... 20

Departments

Theater Special Operations Commands

AFRICOM special operations forces train alongside partners in Morocco ... 4

Côte d'Ivoire, U.S. Africa Command SOF train together ... 7
US and Jordanian special operations forces go subterranean ... 8

Serbian SAJ and Green Berets conduct joint combined exchange training ... 10

ISTC Desert Sniper Course 21 ... 12

1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) jungle warfare training ... 14

U.S. Army Special Operations Command

Army Capt. Christina Plumley breaks the glass ceiling ... 16

USASOC Memorial Day ceremony honors fallen warriors ... 18

Soldiers awarded honorary Green Beret posthumously ... 19

Naval Special Warfare Command

Naval Special Warfare welcomes CQT Class 115; First woman operator ... 20

NSW Sailor receives Military Vanguard Award for heroic actions during California Valley Fire ... 22

Naval Special Warfare completes Transformative Leader Assessment Program pilots ... 24

NSW exchanges training with Palau Bureau of Public Safety, Division of Marine Law Enforcement ... 27

Air Force Special Operations Command

AFSOC at "Strategic inflection point" ... 28

New Mission Sustainment Team stood up at Cannon AFB ... 30

AFSOC joins Michigan ANG, ACC in conducting historic highway landing ... 32

Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command

Full Spectrum: Marine Raiders certified for deployment through RAVEN exercise ... 34

Headquarters

USSOCOM hosts the 2021 Warrior Games training camp ... 36

Memorial

Fallen Heroes ... 39

U.S. Special Operations Command - Africa



AFRICOM special operations forces train alongside partners in Morocco

*By U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Bryan Franks
Special Operations Command Africa*

U.S. and Moroccan special operations forces completed the third joint combined exchange training this year July 19, 2021, in Tangier, Morocco.

JCETs enhance the readiness of U.S. and partner forces while also improving interoperability between nations. The exercises help set the foundation for sustainable and productive military relationships.

“Our U.S. and Moroccan special operations teams put together an exceptional training plan that executed operations in the air, on the ground, and at sea,” said U.S. Army Col. Brian Hughes, U.S. Special Operations Command Africa deputy commander, during the closing ceremonies. “The high level of readiness and interoperability we collectively achieved is a testament to the professionalism of the teams, the interoperability of U.S. and Moroccan forces, and our strong enduring partnership.”

During the JCET, U.S. special operations teams and their Moroccan counterparts trained for two months on marksmanship, small unit tactics, helicopter and maritime infiltration techniques, maritime interdiction operations, combat casualty care, and mission planning and execution. This JCET was unique in that it incorporated Moroccan SOF units from the Gendarmerie, Army and the Navy.

“The JCET is yet another excellent example of the close and enduring security partnership between the United States and Morocco,” said Chargé d’affaires Lawrence Randolph of the U.S. Embassy in Morocco. “It comes as we are celebrating the bicentennial of the Tangier American Legation, our first diplomatic post in



U.S. and Moroccan special operations forces conduct joint combined exchange training in Morocco July 9, 2021. The training spanned months and involved security forces from the Moroccan army, navy and gendarmerie. Courtesy photo.

Morocco and a symbol of 200 years of friendship between our countries.”

This training event was one of many exercises in Morocco designed to increase U.S. and Moroccan security cooperation and interoperability. This JCET comes shortly after the 17th iteration of African Lion, U.S. Africa Command’s premier joint annual exercise held this year in Morocco and Tunisia.

Morocco was also critical to the success of Flintlock 2020, U.S. Africa Command’s largest annual special operations training exercise and will be a key contributor to the Flintlock 2022.



U.S. and Moroccan special operations forces conduct joint combined exchange training in Morocco June 30, 2021. The training spanned months and involved security forces from the Moroccan army, navy and gendarmerie. Courtesy photo.



U.S. and Côte d'Ivoirian special operations forces conduct joint combined exchange training in Côte d'Ivoire July 5, 2021. The teams focused on honing basic skills such as close quarters combat, first aid, mission planning and jungle warfare. Courtesy photo.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Africa



Côte d'Ivoire, U.S. Africa Command SOF train together

*By U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Bryan Franks
Special Operations Command Africa*

Special Operations Command Africa forces concluded joint combined exercise training in Abidjan and Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire July 9, 2021. The team partnered with Côte d'Ivoire Forces Speciales Ivoirennnes to hone special operations skills.

"Training alongside partners not only sharpens our military skills but also builds the relationships we all need in difficult times," said Special Operations Command Africa Commander Rear Adm. Jamie Sands. "We are proud to work alongside our Ivoirian counterparts as they face violent extremist encroachment on their northern border."

The JCET program's primary purpose is to provide special operations units specific training that can only be accomplished in friendly foreign countries. JCETs often enhance U.S. relationships with partner nations by developing and maintaining critical military-to-military

connections and improving joint and allied readiness and interoperability.

"Today, the level of professionalism required of those who wear a uniform is higher than ever before," U.S. Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire Richard Bell said at the closing ceremony. "Security is fundamental to creating an environment conducive to progress. Mutual trust between authorities and civilians is crucial; it is precisely this trust that the enemy is trying to break."

These engagements are part of a series of U.S. engagements with the Côte d'Ivoire military that provide opportunities units to work together, learn from each other, build interoperability, and strengthen relationships. Côte d'Ivoire is also scheduled to host one of the training locations for Flintlock 2022. Flintlock is the premier special operations exercise in Africa with 30 participating nations.

U.S. Africa Command and special operations forces are committed to mutually beneficial engagement with partners.



U.S. and Côte d'Ivoirian special operations forces conduct joint combined exchange training in Côte d'Ivoire July 5, 2021. The teams focused on honing basic skills such as close quarters combat, first aid, mission planning and jungle warfare. Courtesy photo.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Central



US and Jordanian special operations forces go subterranean

*By U.S. Army Sgt. Robert Torres
U.S. Army Central Public Affairs*

Fifth Special Forces Group (Airborne) Green Berets trained side-by-side with Jordanian 101st Special Forces in Amman, Jordan, as part of a joint combined exchange training in June 2021.

Combined training allows U.S. Special Operations Forces and partner nations SOF the opportunity to enhance their capabilities, build relationships, and gain military and cultural experiences.

“This is the first JCET focused on subterranean training between United States and Jordanian SOF, and

this is a partnership that the two units will continue to build upon together in future engagements,” said the 5th Special Forces Group JCET team leader.

The relationship between the United States and Jordanian military spans decades. Partnerships like these make the United States and its partners a more effective and lethal fighting force.

“When we work together, we’re able to draw on the best attributes of each special operations force. The end result is a better product as a result of working together. That partnership and expanded capability is what U.S. Special Forces is all about,” said the 5th Special Forces Group JCET team sergeant.



Soldiers from the U.S. Army 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and Jordanian 101st Special Forces Unit clear a building during a joint combined exchange training near Amman, Jordan, June 2021. JCETs allow U.S. SOF to improve and share their military tactics and skills in new settings while increasing bilateral relations and meeting common security challenges within the U.S. Central Command’s area of operations. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Justin Stannard.



Soldiers with the Jordanian 101st Special Forces Unit secure a building while team members conduct close-quarters battle during joint combined exchange training with U.S. Army 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), near Amman, Jordan, June 2021. JCETs allow U.S. SOF to improve and share their military tactics and skills in new settings while increasing bilateral relations and meeting common security challenges within the U.S. Central Command's area of operations. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Justin Stannard.

Being Special Forces is more than just being physically fit and able to shoot, it's about understanding the different operational environments; building relationships with host nations and learning from the people make these opportunities valuable.

"As Special Forces, it's in the nature of what we do, to work with other countries. We study their language, we learn about their culture, and we plan to operate with those partners in training and in combat. So right off the bat, we get a ton of benefit just by being here and being able to train with them provides exponential training value for us," said the 5th Special Forces Group JCET team leader.

The relationships built from exchanges like these are critical to future operations where the two forces would need to shoot, move and communicate as one force without degradation. The cultural nuances brought by coexisting for weeks – even months or more – at a time strengthens the understanding of the threats the U.S. and our partners face.

"In our modern day, you never want to fight alone, especially when you are talking about army SOF relationships," said the Jordanian 101st Special Forces Unit JCET team leader. "Building a relationship with a professional army, such as the American Army, is very important for the Jordanian Army. We need to have good

relationships with other partners so we can face mutual problems."

The 6-week JCET included training such as small unit leaders and noncommissioned officers development, small arms training, operational planning, close quarter combat, physical fitness, field medical activities and subterranean training. JCETs are part of Special Operations Command Central's Theater Security Cooperation program with partner countries across U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility.



Members of the Jordanian 101st Special Forces Unit perform a medical evacuation in a subterranean environment during joint combined exchange training with the U.S. Army 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) near Amman, Jordan, June 2021. This marks the first time the two forces conducted subterranean training together. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Justin Stannard.

*U.S. Special Operations
Command - Europe*



Serbian SAs, Green Berets conduct joint combined exchange training



Serbian Police from the Special Anti-terrorist Unit (SAJ) and U.S. Army Green Berets conducted a Joint Combined Exchange Training in Goč, Serbia, June 28 - July 9 2021. The JCET aims to improve planning, maneuvering, and crisis response for Serbian and U.S. forces in mountainous terrain. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Monique O'Neill



U.S. Special Operations Command Europe ISTC Desert Sniper Course 21



*Photo essay by U.S. Army Sgt. Patrik Orcu
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe*

An Italian Special Forces sniper looks downrange at his targets during morning shooting rehearsals at the International Specialty Training Center's Desert Sniper course in Chinchilla, Spain July 15, 2021. ISTC is a multinational education and training facility for tactical-level, advanced and specialized training of multinational special operations forces and similar units, employing the skills of multinational instructors and subject matter experts.



A German International Specialty Training Center sniper instructor speaks to the class of the 2021 Desert Sniper course in Chinchilla, Spain July 14, 2021.



A Dutch Special Forces sniper engages targets downrange during morning shooting rehearsals at the International Specialty Training Center's Desert Sniper course in Chinchilla, Spain July 14, 2021.



A three-man Dutch Special Forces sniper team engages multiple targets in sequence at the International Specialty Training Center's Desert Sniper course in Chinchilla, Spain July 14, 2021. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Patrik Orcu.



A Greek Special Forces sniper instructor from the International Specialty Training Center surveys his surroundings at the ISTC Desert Sniper Course in Chinchilla, Spain on July 15, 2021.



German and Greek Special Forces instructors from the International Specialty Training Center conduct a live-fire exercise at the ISTC Desert Sniper Course in Chinchilla, Spain on July 15, 2021.



A Green Beret with 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) moves through ankle high water during the 4th Marine Regiment Jungle Warfare Exercise at the Jungle Warfare Training Center, May 23, 2021. The exercise includes forward reconnaissance, terrain analysis, practice using a variety of communication platforms, small unit tactics and patient extraction procedures. Courtesy photo illustration.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Pacific



1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) jungle warfare training



(Above) Green Berets with 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) move through the jungle terrain during the 4th Marine Regiment Jungle Warfare Exercise at the Jungle Warfare Training Center, May 23, 2021. The exercise includes forward reconnaissance, terrain analysis, practice using a variety of communication platforms, small unit tactics and patient extraction procedures. Courtesy photo illustration.

(Below) A Green Beret with 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), camouflages his tent with his surroundings during a 4th Marine Regiment Jungle Warfare Exercise at the Jungle Warfare Training Center, May 23, 2021. The exercise includes forward reconnaissance, terrain analysis, practice using a variety of communication platforms, small unit tactics and patient extraction procedures. Courtesy photo illustration.



A Green Beret with 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), releases a small tactical recon drone to scout out enemy locations during a 4th Marine Regiment Jungle Warfare Exercise at the Jungle Warfare Training Center, May 23, 2021. The exercise includes forward reconnaissance, terrain analysis, practice using a variety of communication platforms, small unit tactics and patient extraction procedures. Courtesy photo illustration.



U.S. Army Special Operations Command

Army Capt. Christina Plumley breaks the glass ceiling



*By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Joseph Truckley
USASOC Public Affairs*

Capt. Christina Plumley, Civil Affairs Team leader, 97th Civil Affairs Battalion, 95th Civil Affairs Brigade, Special Operations, Airborne, completed the Reconnaissance Surveillance Leader Course and became the first female to graduate from the course, April 16, 2021 at Fort Benning Georgia.

The RSLC is a 26-day course taught by Echo Company, 4th Ranger Training Battalion, Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade at Fort Benning. The course is designed to teach the fundamentals of dismounted reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition to Soldiers. RSLC is physically and mentally challenging to the students, where one block of instruction builds upon the next.

“The training for this course was hard,” said Plumley. “I’ve spent weeks rucking and doing land navigation, with my civil affairs team non-commissioned officer and a medic from my company. Having my team non-commissioned officer definitely helped when we were training because we pushed each other.”

The medic and my team’s NCO completed the course with me, which I feel helped because no matter what we were going through, we knew we had each other’s back and it gave each one of us someone to lean on,” Plumley said.

As she was winding down her training to begin the course she received some news about her class.

“I found out about a week before the course started that I was going to be the only female in the class,” said Plumley. “I saw this as an opportunity to show my classmates that when working with a female in a reconnaissance and surveillance mission after the course, I wanted to set the impression that I could change how



Capt. Christina Plumley, 97th Civil Affairs Battalion, 95th Civil Affairs Brigade, Special Operations, Airborne participates in a culminating exercise during the Reconnaissance Surveillance Leaders Course at Fort Benning, Ga. Plumley became the first female to graduate from the course on April 16, 2021. Courtesy photo.

they view working alongside women Soldiers.”

Once Plumley arrived at Fort Benning to begin RSLC, she found out some more news. She found out that if she graduates from the course, she would be the



Capt. Christina Plumley, 97th Civil Affairs Battalion, 95th Civil Affairs Brigade, Special Operations, Airborne, becomes the first female to graduate from the Reconnaissance Surveillance Leaders Course at Fort Benning, Ga., April 16, 2021. “This was important to me because I wanted to set an example for other women in the military who might have been discouraged from attending RSLC before knowing that no female has passed the course, that it was a possibility for women to graduate.” Courtesy photo.

first female to graduate from the Reconnaissance Surveillance Leader Course.

“This definitely added more pressure for me to not only finish the course but graduate,” Plumley stated. “The course is tough enough as it was and now finding out that I was not only the only female in the class, but if I graduated just added more pressure on me to prove to the other students and cadre that a female could complete this course. This was important to me because I wanted to set an example for other women in the military who might have been discouraged from attending RSLC before knowing that no female has passed the course,

that it was a possibility for women to graduate.”

Plumley graduated from West Point as an intelligence officer in 2014. Her first duty station was in Germany where she was assigned to the 4th Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment. There she completed the Spur Ride and earned her silver spurs.

Plumley said, “The Spur Ride was a challenge that at that time, I had not experienced before. It consisted of a 48 hour event where we completed a 12-mile ruck while carrying 75 pounds, followed by events that tested basic Soldier skills, tasks and assessments then concluded with a recon mission. This was my first opportunity to show those who I supported as an intelligence officer, that I belong by working alongside other scouts and earn credibility among my peers. After earning my Silver Spurs, it gave me more pride when I wore them on our Friday formations that, though not a cavalry scout, I earned my spurs just like they did.”

In 2017, Plumley went through Civil Affairs Assessment and Selection and then completed the CA Qualification Course in 2019 to become a civil affairs officer.

“Two things that really appealed to me about joining Special Operations civil affairs,” said Plumley. “First was the opportunity to be a team leader. I found the idea of being a leader at the lowest echelon really exciting. The second reason was that I was really interested in the CA mission, not only do you have to demonstrate tactical proficiency but above and beyond that you have to demonstrate emotional intelligence, cultural competency, the ability to communicate in a variety of different environments”

RSLC teaches students how to lead under stress and tests you on how to operate as a leader,” said Plumley.



Capt. Christina Plumley, 97th Civil Affairs Battalion, 95th Civil Affairs Brigade, Special Operations, Airborne, becomes the first female to graduate from the Reconnaissance Surveillance Leaders Course at Fort Benning, Ga., April 16, 2021. Courtesy photo.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command

USASOC Memorial Day

ceremony honors fallen warriors



By USASOC Public Affairs

Ten additional names were added to the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Memorial Wall during a ceremony at the USASOC Memorial Plaza Fort Bragg, North Carolina, May 27, 2021.

The sacred gathering of Gold Star Family Members, Department of the Army Civilians, and service members both past and present was the first in-person USASOC tribute since the COVID-19 pandemic. The event was held to recognize Army Special Operations Forces Soldiers who gave their last full measure of devotion while supporting USASOC operations abroad.

“Since September 11, 2001 this command alone has lost 376 extra-ordinary Army Special Operations brothers and sisters who left in our care over 1,600 Gold Star Family members,” Lt. Gen. Francis Beaudette, USASOC commanding general said. “Their loss in defense of our freedom leaves us no longer whole.”

Beaudette highlighted the roles of ARSOF Soldiers in closing out the Afghanistan conflict along with other combat operations. The American Homeland is safe and standing unafraid due to the patriotic actions of those being honored, he said.

“They are forever irreplaceable and we owe each and every one them and their family members left behind a debt we know we can never repay,” Beaudette said. “These are our greatest heroes.

Today, we recognize for the first time in person ten of those we owe so much. Taken together these ten men deployed 50 times to combat. Fifty times they said “send me” asking for nothing in return. There are never words that will ever express the depth of our gratitude or describe the heartfelt loss that remains in their absence.”

Following remarks, the black curtain concealing the wall



U.S. Army Soldiers unveil the names of fallen Special Operations Forces on the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Memorial Wall during a ceremony at the USASOC Memorial Plaza on May 27, 2021. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Ramon Wright.

was drawn back revealing it to the Gold Star Families and Soldiers in attendance. The names of the ten fallen heroes added to the memorial wall join the 1,241 USASOC Soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice from the Korean War to present day.

USASOC leaders placed wreaths in front of the wall following the reading of the names. Wreath laying is a time honored tradition that represents the continuance of life and immortality.

“It’s here at this Memorial Wall where we can see and touch names, remember stories. Recall our connections and reaffirm our pledge to never forget our Nations heroes,” Beaudette said. “Here at this Memorial wall we renew our commitment to our team mates and to their loved ones. Our memorial wall grounds us and it keeps us connected. It reminds why we stand ready, willing and able to confront evil anywhere to protect the unalienable rights of our fellow citizens and to help our partners and our allies do the same.”

Soldiers awarded honorary Green Beret posthumously



Sgt. 1st Class Jeremiah Johnson, a chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear specialist, assigned to 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), was welcomed into the ranks of the Special Forces family and was posthumously awarded an honorary Green Beret in a private ceremony hosted by Lt. Gen. Francis Beaudette, USASOC commanding general. He was honored for his valiant acts during the tragic events in Niger, Oct. 4, 2017. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Brandon Allums.

By USASOC Public Affairs

An honorary Green Beret induction ceremony was held at the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Headquarters, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, honoring the service and sacrifice of two 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) Soldiers, July 20, 2021.

Sgt. 1st Class Jeremiah Johnson, a chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear specialist, and Sgt. LaDavid Johnson, a wheeled vehicle mechanic, both assigned to 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), were welcomed into the ranks of the Special Forces family and were posthumously awarded an honorary Green Beret in a private ceremony hosted by Lt. Gen. Francis Beaudette, USASOC commanding general.

"Today, we honor two national heroes, exceptional American warrior patriots and special operators who made the ultimate sacrifice along with their teammates, [Staff Sgt.] Dustin Wright and [Staff Sgt.] Bryan Black," Beaudette said.

"These men represent the very finest our nation has ever produced, stalwart in their dedication to duty, selfless in every aspect of act and of deed, valorous in the face of overwhelming odds and danger, and committed to freeing the oppressed," he said.

Recognizing the service and bond the two Soldiers had

with the Special Forces Regiment, Beaudette said, "They lived on an ODA, they fought with their ODA and they gave their lives on an ODA."

The Soldiers were honored for their valiant acts during the tragic events in Niger, Oct. 4, 2017. The two were killed in action alongside two of their Special Forces teammates, when their formation was overwhelmed by enemy contact.

Sgt. LaDavid Johnson was posthumously awarded the Silver Star and Sgt. 1st Class Jeremiah Johnson was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star with "V" device.

At the private ceremony, the families of each Soldier were each presented with a certificate describing their honorary induction into the Special Forces Regiment as well as a shadow box containing their honorary Green Berets. Also in attendance were members of Staff Sgt. Wright and Staff Sgt. Black families.

"We strive to honor Soldiers' achievements in ways commensurate with their service," said Beaudette. "This is a tangible and important recognition of the dedication and exemplary service of both Sgt. 1st Class Jeremiah Johnson and Sgt. LaDavid Johnson."

The Green Beret is the distinctive headgear of U.S. Army Special Forces. The uniform piece is worn by those serving as special forces soldiers and is generally awarded after passing the Special Operations assessment and selection.



Sgt. LaDavid Johnson, a wheeled vehicle mechanic, assigned to 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), was welcomed into the ranks of the Special Forces family and was posthumously awarded an honorary Green Beret in a private ceremony hosted by Lt. Gen. Francis Beaudette, USASOC commanding general. He was honored for his valiant acts during the tragic events in Niger, Oct. 4, 2017. Photo by Staff Sgt. Brandon Allums.

Naval Special Warfare Command

Naval Special Warfare welcomes CQT Class 115; First woman operator



Courtesy Story

Naval Special Warfare Command

Candidates of Crewman Qualification Training Class 115 completed Naval Special Warfare's assessment and selection pipeline to become Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen, earning their pins and graduating, Thursday, July 15, 2021 at Coronado, California.

Graduates of any NSW assessment and selection pipeline have met the rigorous standards to enter their chosen profession, demonstrating they possess the character, cognitive and leadership attributes required to join the force. Historically, about 35 percent of SWCC candidates make it to graduation.

Among the 17 graduates is NSW's first woman operator. The SWCC assessment and selection pipeline challenges candidates through adversity, always upholding validated, gender-neutral and operationally-relevant standards.

"Becoming the first woman to graduate from a Naval Special Warfare training pipeline is an extraordinary accomplishment, and we are incredibly proud of our teammate," said Rear Adm. H. W. Howard III, commander, U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command. "Like her fellow operators, she demonstrated the character, cognitive and leadership attributes required to join our force."

Following graduation, the newly-minted SWCCs will report to either a Special Boat Team or follow-on training. The continuum of qualification and training over the course of an NSW operator's career includes continuously advancing skills in core and additional competencies.

SWCC are experts in covert insertion and extraction, utilizing a unique combination of capabilities with



Cmdr. Brad Geary, Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Basic Training Command commanding officer, addresses members of Crewman Qualification Training Class 115 during a ceremony at Naval Special Warfare Center in Coronado, Calif., July 15, 2021. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Anthony W. Walker.

Becoming the first woman to graduate from a Naval Special Warfare training pipeline is an extraordinary accomplishment, and we are incredibly proud of our teammate. Like her fellow operators, she demonstrated the character, cognitive and leadership attributes required to join our force.

— Rear Adm. H. W. Howard III

weapons, navigation, radio communication, first aid, engineering, parachuting and special operations tactics.

Naval Special Warfare Center, located on Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, provides initial assessment and selection and subsequent advanced training to the Sailors who make up the Navy's SEAL and Special Boat communities. These communities support the NSW mission, providing maritime special operations forces to conduct full-spectrum operations, unilaterally or with partners, to support national objectives. For more information on the NSW pipeline, visit <https://www.sealswcc.com/>.



A member of Crewman Qualification Training Class 115 receives a compass prior to a graduation ceremony at Naval Special Warfare Center, July 15, 2021. NSW is the nation's premiere maritime special operations force that extends the Fleet and Joint Force's reach for collection and lethality, delivers all domain options to undermine our enemies' confidence, and strengthens diplomatic leverage. The command's diverse Sailors and their leadership, character, and cognitive traits form the core of its creative problem solving and asymmetric approaches to solving the Nation's hardest problems. The command continues to accelerate its orientation to the distinctive capabilities that only NSW can deliver while emphasizing humility, urgency to evolve and pursue excellence, and the obligation to be stewards of the incredible trust the Nation places in its Naval Commandos. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Anthony W. Walker.

Naval Special Warfare Command

NSW Sailor Receives Military Vanguard Award for heroic actions during California Valley Fire



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

The Valley Fire ripped through Southern California's vast area of back country in September 2020, destroying 20 homes and 28 outbuildings.

From a nearby vantage point, a Sailor watched as the destructive inferno moved closer to his family's home and quickly devised a plan of action to preserve and prevent any more damage to his community.

For his efforts during the fire, Petty Officer 1st Class Chris Miletich, assigned to a West Coast-based SEAL Team in Coronado, Calif, received the 2021 U.S. Navy Military Vanguard Award during the Non Commissioned Officers Association 57th Annual Conference in San Antonio, July 22.

"The actions that earned him this award were selfless, brave and a great reflection of our Navy's fighting spirit," said Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell Smith.

Miletich received the award for his leadership of a group of volunteers and his individual actions during the Valley Fire. He directly prevented 10 of his neighbors' homes from being destroyed and personally escorted two of his elderly neighbors outside the fire's destructive path minutes before it engulfed their home.

According to local news outlets in the area, the blaze erupted for unknown reasons in early September and burned an estimated 17,565 acres over the course of 19 days.

"My family and I saw a huge plume of black smoke rising from behind the ridge of our property," said Miletich. "Once I moved my family out of the area, I went to help neighbors move their semi-trucks, tractors and farming equipment. It was then that we noticed the fire was starting to crest the ridgeline, and the wind was blowing it our



A local resident, and neighbor of Petty Officer 1st Class Chris Miletich, extinguishes flames during Southern California's Valley Fire in Jamul California, Sept 5, 2020. Miletich and his neighbor were part of a group of 20 volunteers that led firefighting efforts in the community which directly prevented 10 homes from being destroyed. Courtesy photo.

way."

He was certain that his home, along with many others, would soon be engulfed in flames. Miletich and approximately 20 neighbors made their way back to salvage what they could and prevent as much damage as possible.

"We realized that many of our homes were not directly damaged, but could be soon, due to the large amount of vegetation already on fire," Miletich explained.

Drawing upon the firefighting training he received on the Tarawa-class amphibious assault ship USS Peleliu (LHA 5) and Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Cape

St. George (CG 71), he boldly took charge of the situation.

"I divided us into two separate working parties to extinguish the immediate threats by utilizing a neighbor's water pump and 300 feet of 1.5-inch fire hose, chainsaws, shovels and axes," said Miletich. "We fell over 20 trees and cleared countless square yards of thick brush from the area to remove the fire's fuel source. We smothered multiple hot spots and additional flare-ups that ignited due to the dry climate and high winds."

It was not until the next day that Miletich reached his own house to discover it too had survived the fire.

Over the next four days, overcoming temperatures that exceeded 110 degrees Fahrenheit, rugged terrain and lack of sleep, he selflessly spearheaded the effort to extinguish the immediate surrounding fires to prevent further damage to his community.

"Military service is based on a sense of duty, on the assumption that the common good is more important than the individual, and he demonstrated that," said Tina M. Kish, Director of Member and Chapter Services at NCOA. "His heroic actions and leadership exemplify the spirit and intent of the Military Vanguard Award. Petty Officer Miletich is a perfect candidate to receive this award."

The idea of the NCOA Military Vanguard Award was conceived in 1980, an annual award created to recognize and honor a single member from each of the armed services who distinguished himself, or herself, through acts of

heroism. The selection to receive the Military Vanguard Award is done through a rigorous nominating and screening process within each of the military services.

The senior enlisted chief of each uniformed service is requested, by letter from NCOA, to submit their respective service's selection. Individuals are nominated by their command and solicited to the senior service chief's office where the selection is done. The U.S. Navy's award recipient is selected by the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy.

"Congratulations to MM1 Miletich," said Smith. "I'm so proud to see that his training and intuition kicked in. His heroism and quick thinking saved lives and will likely leave an enduring

impact on the San Diego community."

Whether it is fighting a fire or making his wife breakfast, Miletich believes the action is not as important as the intent behind it.

Miletich said his actions that day were fueled by his love for his family, community and country.

"[My time with Naval Special Warfare] has given me a much deeper and greater appreciation for those around me," he said. "It's about the mission of the team and sticking together. If through my actions my kids see what a good man is, and they strive to be even better men and women, then I'll have succeeded as a father."

Miletich plans to continue to reside in the community he helped save alongside his wife and five children.

[My time with Naval Special Warfare] has given me a much deeper and greater appreciation for those around me. It's about the mission of the team and sticking together. If through my actions my kids see what a good man is, and they strive to be even better men and women, then I'll have succeeded as a father.



Petty Officer 1st Class Chris Miletich, second from the left, receives the 2021 U.S. Navy Military Vanguard Award during the Non Commissioned Officers Association 57th Annual Conference. Miletich received the award for his heroic efforts during Southern California's Valley Fire in September 2020. Courtesy photo.

Naval Special Warfare Command

Naval Special Warfare completes Transformative Leader Assessment Program pilots



Courtesy Story
Naval Special Warfare Command

Naval Special Warfare in Coronado, California, concluded the second and final pilot round this week for its newest initiative, the NSW Leader Assessment Program, which focuses on transforming how it selects and promotes future leaders.

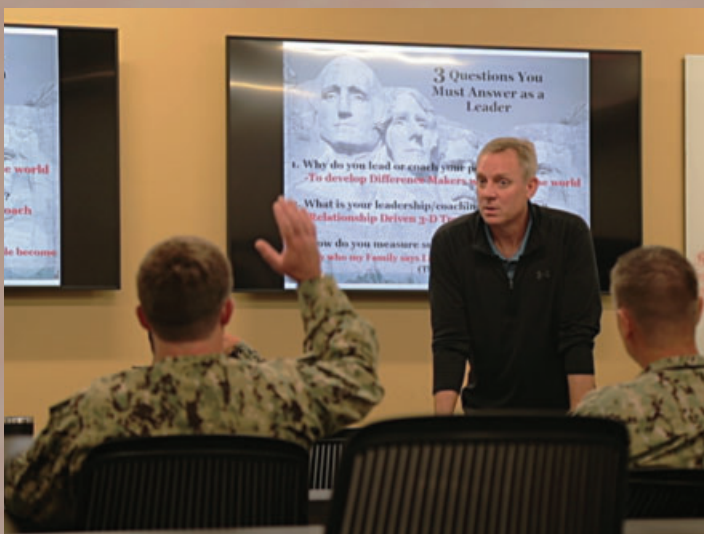
NLAP serves as an integral component to NSW's focus on informing, developing and implementing a reliable and repeatable talent management paradigm.

NLAP increases precision and selectivity in NSW's assignment processes for every milestone of officer and enlisted leadership, putting the right people in the right positions by assessing attributes known to be correlated with successful leaders.

"We place emphasis on superior leadership as our principal asymmetric advantage over the nation's adversaries and embrace the mission imperative to evolve the ways we assess the character, cognitive and leadership attributes within the force," said Rear Adm. H. W. Howard III, commander, Naval Special Warfare Command. "We



Naval Special Warfare Leader Assessment Program participants undergo physical performance testing during an NLAP pilot, June 14, 2021. NLAP, run by Naval Special Warfare Center, is NSW's new initiative to transform how it selects and promotes future leaders, increasing precision and selectivity in the assignment process for officer and enlisted leadership. NSW Center provides initial assessment and selection and subsequent advanced training to the officers and enlisted who make up the Navy's SEAL and Special Boat communities. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Benjamin K. Kittleson.



Naval Special Warfare Leader Assessment Program participants discuss leadership techniques during an NLAP pilot, June 15, 2021. NLAP, run by Naval Special Warfare Center, is NSW's new initiative to transform how it selects and promotes future leaders, increasing precision and selectivity in the assignment process for officer and enlisted leadership. NSW Center provides initial assessment and selection and subsequent advanced training to the officers and enlisted who make up the Navy's SEAL and Special Boat communities. Photo by Brad Houshour.

recently accelerated the development of the NLAP pilot to rapidly experiment with an approach that increases officer and enlisted selection precision, development opportunities, and leader pairing decisions – and addresses cognitive biases that can adversely impact selection decisions.”

This round of NLAP pilots consisted of four separate convenings with two in Little Creek, Virginia and two in Coronado. Naval Special Warfare Center, which has been charged with running the assessment program, screened more than 90 participants eligible for either executive officer or command master chief positions. In the future, the four-day process held on the premises will apply to all levels of leadership from major command to O-5 command as well as tactical level commanders and senior enlisted advisors.

“To meet tomorrow’s national security objectives, we must improve leader selectivity and assignment precision while promoting a culture of development,” said Capt. Bart Randall, commodore, Naval Special Warfare Center. “We will produce a stronger, more self-aware, lethal NSW force by assessing participants’ leadership potential, cognitive aptitude, communications skills and personality attributes and providing that information to inform selection decisions and the participants’ own professional development process.”

NLAP evaluated the readiness of prospective leaders in

a transparent, fair and merit-based fashion. Among other criteria, panel considerations included peer and subordinate surveys completed by service members who have worked with or for each participant. Additionally, participants underwent physical, psychological and writing assessments to establish performance and psychometric baselines. Panel members also conducted double-blind interviews to further assess participants’ leadership potential.

NSW completed its initial NLAP pilot in March 2021, assessing 48 officers across the spectrum of attributes required for strong leadership. This convening, along with other services’ experimentation with similar programs, served as a proof of concept to inform the latest round of assessments.

Altogether, the pilots will form the basis for the implementation of formal policies and procedures to establish the NLAP program as part of NSW leader selection in 2022. The iterative nature of the pilots was by design, a strategy to methodically “build a little, test a little, learn a lot,” according to Howard. Because the program is still under development, results from the NLAP pilots will not be used for future Navy administrative selection panels.

Naval Special Warfare Center, located on Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, provides initial assessment and selection and subsequent advanced training to the Sailors who make up the Navy’s SEAL and Special Boat communities. These communities support the NSW mission, providing maritime special operations forces to conduct full-spectrum operations, unilaterally or with partners, to support national objectives. For more information on the NSW pipeline, visit <https://www.sealswcc.com/>.



Naval Special Warfare Leader Assessment Program participants undergo physical performance testing during an NLAP pilot, June 14, 2021. NLAP, run by Naval Special Warfare Center, is NSW's new initiative to transform how it selects and promotes future leaders, increasing precision and selectivity in the assignment process for officer and enlisted leadership. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Benjamin K. Kittleson.

Naval Special Warfare forces demonstrate how to operate a RQ-20B Puma unmanned aircraft system during a security cooperation engagement in Palau. Naval Special Warfare is the nation's premier maritime special operations force and is uniquely positioned to extend the fleet's reach and deliver all-domain options for naval and joint force commanders. Courtesy photo.



Naval Special Warfare Command



NSW exchanges training with Palau Bureau of Public Safety, Division of Marine Law Enforcement

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

Naval Special Warfare forces deployed to U.S. Special Operations Command Pacific concluded a security cooperation engagement in Palau, July 23, 2021.

The exchange was between the Palau Bureau of Public Safety, Division of Marine Law Enforcement and U.S. Navy SEALs and special warfare combatant-craft crewmen. The engagement focused on synchronizing the two nations military capabilities and building upon the long-standing friendship between the U.S. and Palau as codified through the Compact of Free Association.

“The opportunity to train together and enhance our relationship with the people of Palau has been incredible,” said the senior team leader in the Naval Special Warfare unit. “We’ve learned so much from each other, and knowing that we are doing our part to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific is very gratifying.”

The exchange included events focused on weapons

handling, close-quarters combat, prisoner handling, shipboard procedures, mission planning and tactical combat casualty care.

During the engagement, Naval Special Warfare forces hosted Surangel Whipps Jr., the President of Palau, aboard a combatant craft medium, June 28, 2021. Victor Remengesau, director of the Bureau of Maritime Security and Fish and Wildlife Protection, Jennifer Anson, National Security Coordinator for Palau, and U.S. Ambassador to Palau John Hennessey-Niland also participated in the tour which included an equipment familiarization and sea demonstration by the special warfare combatant-craft crewman.

While the engagement was planned to bolster interoperability between the two nations’ forces, Ambassador Hennessey-Niland said it was just one aspect of the U.S. commitment to Palau.

“The United States and Palau work closely together to ensure our mutual security,” said Hennessey-Niland. “We are true partners in working towards a more secure, peaceful, Indo-Pacific.”

Naval Special Warfare combatant craft medium approaches a Palau Division of Maritime Law Enforcement vessel during a security cooperation engagement. Naval Special Warfare is the nation’s premier maritime special operations force and is uniquely positioned to extend the fleet’s reach and deliver all-domain options for naval and joint force commanders. Courtesy photo.



Air Force Special Operations Command



AFSOC at "Strategic inflection point"

By U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Melissa Crisostomo
AFSOC Public Affairs

U.S. Air Force Lt Gen Jim Slife, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, addressed the Global SOF Foundation's 2021 virtual SOF Imperatives Forum to discuss the critical mission areas AFSOC will need to focus on to remain competitive in the future operating environment on June 6, 2021.

Slife was joined by Army Lt. Gen. Francis Beadudette, commanding general of U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

Linda Robinson, Global SOF Advisor, moderated the conversation with the two current SOF component commanders and begin with each commanders' view of the state of special operations today.

"When I think of where we are at in 2021, we are at a third post-Vietnam discontinuity, a point of time where the future is best understood as not a linear extension of the past, but rather as something requiring something different all together," Slife began.

"We have to maintain the ability to respond to crisis on behalf of the nation on a short notice anywhere around the globe, maintain pressure on counter violent extremist organizations," said Slife. "We have to be prepared for conflict with peer adversaries in contested environments, and we have to compete strategically with global competitors who challenge U.S. interests and our way of life."

Operating in contested environments, Slife continued, may require changes in how AFSOC deploys its forces.

"To the extent that we can, we need to be

To the extent that we can, we need to be independent of main operating bases such as large runways, large fixed facilities. We need to get smaller, lighter, and more expeditionary to succeed.

— Lt. Gen. Jim Slife



U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, speaks during the AFSOC Operations Center change of command ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla., June 24, 2021. AFSOC provides Air Force special operations forces for worldwide deployment and assignment to unified combatant commanders. The command has approximately 20,800 active-duty, Reserve, Air National Guard and civilian professionals. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Brandon Esau.

independent of main operating bases such as large

runways, large fixed facilities," said Slife. "We need to get smaller, lighter, and more expeditionary to succeed."

"It's imperative to lower our signature," he continued. "We have to be able to blend into the noise both physically and electronically around the globe, wherever we want to

compete."

In a fiscally constrained environment, Robinson asked Slife what areas of AFSOC might still see



A forward area refueling point Airman assigned to the 27th Special Operations Mission Sustainment Team 1 provides perimeter security during the 27th Special Operations Wing operational readiness exercise at Dugway Proving Grounds, Utah, March 22, 2021. The Mission Sustainment Team concept provides a way forward in building small, scattered teams capable of operating independent of main operating bases. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Vernon R. Walter III.

growth.

“Going forward I think we need to talk about language,” said Slife. “We need to take a look at ourselves in AFSOC and decide to what degree do we need regionally specialized forces who have deepened understanding of regions and cultures and nations inside those regions.”

When asked what AFSOC needs from its sister services in terms of cyber, electronic and communication capabilities, Slife stated he is not interested in growing an organic capability.

“While AFSOC has a range of kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities...as an enabler, I don’t want to be a duplicator of what people are already doing for us at scale,” said Slife. “I’m focused on the things that no one else can do and I don’t think we are in a resourcing environment that permits duplication for stuff that goes on elsewhere.”

When asked, “How much air support is enough?” Slife described his perspective on balancing the variables of mission, resources, and risk.

“The answer is it’s never enough. As you talk to ground formations, clearly they’ll tell you they need more aviation,” he said. “But it’s not a question of do we need more or not, it’s a question of, ‘At what level of risk?’”

“AFSOC is resourcing aviation at an appropriate level of risk. For every dollar we put into growing

our aviation capabilities, there’s an opportunity cost elsewhere,” he went on. “That’s why the armed overwatch program is so important to us, because it’s a very cost-effective way of providing that air support to our ground teammates who are going to be prosecuting these C-VEO operations for years to come,” said Slife.

In Slife’s closing remarks, he reiterated the men and women in AFSOC are a competitive advantage and it is up to leadership to ensure they are preparing a formation that is prepared and ready for tomorrow.

“Our challenge in leadership is to ensure that those middle school kids today who will put an AFSOC patch on in 10 years know when they come to AFSOC, they’ll still be relevant.”



An explosive ordinance disposal technician assigned to the 27th Special Operations Mission Sustainment Team 1 secures a post for an Alaska Small Shelter during the 27th Special Operations Wing operational readiness exercise at Dugway Proving Grounds, Utah, March 22, 2021. The Mission Sustainment Team concept provides a way forward in building small, scattered teams capable of operating independent of main operating bases. Photo by Senior Airman Vernon R. Walter III.

Air Force Special Operations Command



New Mission Sustainment Team stood up at Cannon AFB

*By U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Christopher Storer
27th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

A new unit has been generated in support of mission readiness and efficiency. Mission Sustainment Team 1 is a group of individuals with diverse skill sets selected from the 27th Special Operations Mission Support Group on Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, with the intent that they will cover and provide every asset required to sustain livable conditions in austere locations for an extended period of time.

The Mission Sustainment Team concept provides a way forward in building small, scattered teams capable of operating independent of main operating bases - a focus area highlighted by Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, Air Force Special

Operations Command commander, during his 2021 Special Operations Forces Imperatives Forum earlier this year.

"This idea is not new or unique to the Air Force as a whole, but it is to the Air Force Special Operations Command," said Senior Master Sgt. John Spencer, 27th Special Operations Mission Support Group, Detachment 1 MST 1 team lead. "AFSOC is used to providing for the operators for a short duration, but something like this has never been done before in this major command."

AFSOC currently does not have an on-demand capability to provide and sustain a livable environment in areas without pre-established facilities. To fix this issue, the MST consists of Airmen from different Mission Support Group specialties, and trains them all on necessary expeditionary functions.



A deployed aircraft ground response element Airman assigned to the 27th Special Operations Mission Sustainment Team 1 provides security during a 27th Special Operations Wing operational readiness exercise at Dugway Proving Grounds, Utah, March 22, 2021. The Mission Sustainment Team concept provides a way forward in building small, scattered teams capable of operating independent of main operating bases. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Vernon R. Walter III.



A forward area refueling point Airman assigned to the 27th Special Operations Mission Sustainment Team 1 provides perimeter security during the 27th Special Operations Wing operational readiness exercise at Dugway Proving Grounds, Utah, March 22, 2021. The Mission Sustainment Team concept provides a way forward in building small, scattered teams capable of operating independent of main operating bases. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Vernon R. Walter III.

“We are taking roughly 60 people from different shops in the MSG and making them work together to create livable conditions for a base worth of personnel,” Spencer said. “We have to try these things, see where they fail, then learn from our failures and do it better the next time.”

There are many unknowns surrounding the MST, as with any new unit. The team hopes to benefit from these unknowns however, documenting their experiences and applying the lessons learned to ultimately teach and train those who follow in the future.

The team had the opportunity to test themselves recently in an Operational Readiness Exercise. Select individuals from Cannon AFB were involved in a mock deployment to an austere location and required support from MST 1. This entirely new scenario helped participants as it was an ideal testing ground for the capabilities of sustained support for multiple personnel.

Within a limited resourcing environment, MST 1 gives AFSOC the ability to enable the larger joint force with unique capabilities; things that no one else can do.

The opportunities to blaze new trails are plentiful for MST 1. As the first of its kind in AFSOC, there is no manual or guidebook to follow. Instead, the team will take the knowledge and practices of similar groups in other MAJCOM’s and tailor them to their needs.

During the 2021 SOF Imperatives Forum, Slife spoke

on the necessity for the development and continuous acceleration of SOF and AFSOC forces, including those a part of MST 1.

“The standards of yesterday were applicable to yesterday,” Slife said. “The question is, what are the standards of tomorrow and how do we build the force we need, to be most effective in the future? Our competitive advantage will continue to be the men and women who make up our formation, but the challenge for leadership is ensuring... those men and women in AFSOC know that they are relevant to the nation.”

Not many in support roles have the opportunity to see how their work directly affects the mission downrange. The work of this new unit provides Airmen a tangible link between their efforts and the final product, something that boosts morale while transforming them into a team of lethal, multi-faceted Airmen.

“It brings me real joy to see how folks who, before joining this group, had never worked with a services Airman, and then see them training on a field kitchen three days later,” Spencer said. “This is what I like to do. I like building teams, being out in the field, and doing what the Air Force trained me to do in defending airfields. Seeing all this [come together] from my personal perspective is unique and amazing. It also helps the Air Force as a whole as it takes someone from their regular unit for a while, and then returns them 100% better than when they left because they got to learn all the things they would normally never do.”

MST 1 may be new, but they have their work cut out for them. Providing support for active personnel at austere and un-furnished locations is no easy feat, but it means the work done by MST 1 will be vital in helping similar units in AFSOC for years to come.



Security forces Airmen assigned to the 27th Special Operations Mission Sustainment Team 1 provides security during a 27th Special Operations Wing operational readiness exercise at Dugway Proving Grounds, Utah, March 22, 2021. The Mission Sustainment Team concept provides a way forward in building small, scattered teams capable of operating independent of main operating bases. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Vernon R. Walter III.



A U.S. Air Force 127th Wing A-10 Thunderbolt II, with ground air traffic control and guidance provided by Special Tactics operators from the 24th Special Operations Wing, lands on a closed public highway Aug. 5, 2021 at Alpena, Mich., for the first time ever as part of a training exercise during Northern Strike 21. The joint training event tested part of the agile employment concept, focusing on projecting combat power from austere locations. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Ridge Shan.

AFSOC joins Michigan ANG, ACC in conducting historic highway landing

By U.S. Air Force Capt. Alejandra Fontalvo
AFSOC Public Affairs

Air Force Special Operations Command units, including Special Tactics Airmen from the 24th Special Operations Wing, as well as C-146A Wolfhound aircraft assigned to the 492nd and 919th Special Operations Wings, participated in the first ever intentional landing of modern aircraft on a U.S. highway Aug. 5, 2021 near Alpena, Michigan.

The training event was conducted in conjunction with units from the Michigan Air National Guard as well as Air Combat Command. The joint effort helped to advance the Air Force's agile combat employment

tactics and better prepare forces for future operations.

"Today's training is directly applicable to what we would do during a deployed scenario in either combat or peacetime operations," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Jeff Falcone, the Special Tactics lead for the exercise. "We're working on agile combat employment concepts, which basically makes the force more flexible, more maneuverable and creates challenges for our adversaries in different environments. It also increases the survivability of U.S. forces as we're able to move around to more unpredictable locations to resupply, refuel or anything else we may need."

To start the training event, a team of Special Tactics Airmen infiltrated, secured and controlled the



A U.S. Air Force 492nd Special Operations Wing C-146A Wolfhound, with ground air traffic control and guidance provided by Special Tactics operators from the 24th Special Operations Wing, lands on a closed public highway Aug. 5, 2021 at Alpena, Mich., for the first time ever as part of a training exercise during Northern Strike 21. The joint training event tested part of the agile employment concept, focusing on projecting combat power from austere locations. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Ridge Shan.

airfield or in this case, the closed public highway. Special Tactics Airmen are a special operations ground force, experienced in conducting global access missions such as establishing austere landing zones around the world.

“The training event would not be possible without our Special Tactics Airmen,” said Falcone. “Our Special Tactics are the critical team providing air ground communications including air traffic control, making sure the air assault zone is suitable for aircraft. We also have medical personnel embedded in our Special Tactics team, which provides an additional capability not only for protection of our team, but also for the other forces and anyone else in the area.”

Once the airfield was ready, the ST Airmen on the ground called in the first A-10 Thunderbolt II assigned to the 127th Wing, Michigan Air National Guard

followed by the C-146A Wolfhound.

“The main mission of the C-146 is rapid responsive air mobility,” said the lead C-146 pilot for the exercise and aircraft commander assigned to the 492nd Special Operations Wing. “Our users are primarily special operations forces, but we can move other members around from the Department of Defense, other government agencies as well as host nationals. The type of aircraft we have in our mission set is ideal to work with the Special Tactics Airmen to make this effort come to fruition. Without our ability to infiltrate we wouldn’t be able to operate the A-10s from that austere location.”

The exercise team successfully landed six aircraft across four wings, demonstrating the units’ ability to maintain interoperability as well as AFSOC’s commitment to serving as enablers to the total joint force.

“We really would not be doing any of this without AFSOC support,” said Lt. Col. Brian Wyrzykowski, the mission

commander and a KC-135 pilot assigned to the 127th Wing, Michigan Air National Guard. “This has been done overseas on roads that were made for aircraft, but this road was not made for aircraft. This really

represents a new capability for the Department of Defense being able to operate off of a true highway.”

The historic event serves as a proof of concept, demonstrating that AFSOC, the Air Force and allies are not constrained to traditional runways and are ready to

answer the call anytime, anywhere.

“Today’s exercise not only helps the United States but also our allies and partners around the world,” said Falcone. “We are moving fast trying to advance concepts, gain increased capability to make sure the United States Air Force, the United States military and our nation as a whole is ready for whatever challenges our adversaries may present to us in the future.”

Today’s exercise not only helps the United States but also our allies and partners around the world. We are moving fast trying to advance concepts, gain increased capability to make sure the United States Air Force, the United States military and our nation as a whole is ready for whatever challenges our adversaries may present to us in the future.

– Lt. Col. Jeff Falcone

Marine Forces, Special Operations Command



Full Spectrum: Marine Raiders certified for deployment through RAVEN exercise

*By U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Brennan Priest
Marine Forces, Special Operations Command*

Marine Raiders with Marine Forces Special Operations Command recently completed RAVEN unit readiness exercises near Nashville, Tennessee, alongside Marines from across the Fleet Marine Force as well as U.S. Army Special Forces, Apr. 24-June 1, 2021.

RAVEN is MARSOC's pre-deployment unit readiness exercise, designed to evaluate Marine Special Operations Companies and Marine Special Operations Teams as well as provide valuable training and experience to supporting units.

"This exercise has evolved over time to encompass a broad range of military operations," said a Marine special operations team commander. "It stresses interoperability with partner nation forces, other services, and government agencies and departments."

The exercise places the MSOC into a notional country, simulating a deployment. The training environment includes a vast network of internet simulation and civilian and military role-players that comprise the host-nation military security forces. The company and supporting units constantly work through scenarios that require them to gather intelligence, control narratives and public perception, train host-nation forces, complete strikes, coordinate with the Department of State, conduct reconnaissance and execute raids. As a supporting unit, Marines with Force Reconnaissance Company, 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion provided their capabilities to the MSOC.

"Reconnaissance Marines are valuable both to conventional and the special operations community," said 1st Lt. Rex Vankoeverying, a platoon commander with Force Reconnaissance Company, 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion. "We provide that connecting file between the conventional forces and the special



Marine Raiders provide medical care to a simulated casualty during a RAVEN unit readiness exercise in Nashville, Tenn., May 11, 2021. RAVEN is a training exercise held to evaluate all aspects of a Marine Special Operations Company prior to a Marine Forces Special Operations Command deployment. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Brennan Priest.

operations capability. Additionally, another asset we provide is that persistent near real-time ground reconnaissance and battlespace shaping capability, allowing special operations and conventional forces to free up and complete other mission sets."

The reconnaissance Marines supported multiple missions using various insertion and extraction techniques including military freefall. They worked alongside the MSOC to provide intelligence on objectives that ultimately supported the commander's decision to approve mission execution and provide an elevated level of safety and confidence prior to any mission execution.

3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment supported the MSOC during the final RAVEN evolution, while



A Marine Raider photographs a simulated detainee during a RAVEN unit readiness exercise in Nashville, Tenn., May 11, 2021. RAVEN is a training exercise held to evaluate all aspects of a Marine Special Operations Company prior to a Marine Forces Special Operations Command deployment. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Brennan Priest.

various other units from the Fleet Marine Force acted as partner-nation forces throughout the exercises. U.S. Army Special Forces acted as a peer-to-peer competition force, gathering information and attempting to disrupt the MARSOC's operational foothold.

"We are here to provide that peer-to-peer threat," said a U.S. Army Special Forces member. "We are working on our tactics through surveillance, counter surveillance and electronic warfare. While completing our training we are providing similar challenges to each other. With MARSOC having the same level of

capabilities as a Special Forces group, we have the same goals, we are learning good lessons and getting better as a force."

This exercise emphasizes that there is more to being a Marine Raider than direct action raids. The company must prove their proficiency in all skill sets that will be required during a deployment. Every critical skills operator, special operations officer, special operations capability specialist and support Marine demonstrates their effectiveness as a part of the MARSOC team.

Everything that Marines do, especially at MARSOC is rehearsed. This is an opportunity not only to complete direct-action raids, reconnaissance and intelligence operations but to practice strengthening partnerships with the host-nation forces prior to deployment. Marine Raiders ensure that they speak a common language and incorporate any agencies or partners that could add to the fight wherever they are across the globe.

"It's been long days, long nights, it's been stressful, we are all pretty tired but we are going to come out of this exercise fully prepared for a deployment," said the Marine special operations team commander.

MARSOC units provide scalable, expeditionary Marine Raider teams worldwide to accomplish special operations missions assigned by U.S. Special Operations Command.

To learn more about the Marine Raider Regiment and other MARSOC units, visit <https://www.marsoc.marines.mil/>



U.S. Marines with 3rd Battalion, 2d Marine Regiment (3/2), 2d Marine Division, and Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command search a building during a night raid as a part of Exercise Raven in Nashville, Tenn., May 24, 2021. Exercise Raven is an integrated training event with Marines from 3/2 and MARSOC which simulates real-life tactical scenarios to enhance overall unit interoperability, effectiveness and lethality against an adversarial force. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Patrick King.

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command USSOCOM hosts the 2021 Warrior Games training camp

Twenty-three SOCOM Team Sports athletes participated in a week-long training camp focused on the three DoD Warrior Games Team Sports (sitting volleyball, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby, cycling) July 11 - 16th, 2021, on MacDill AFB in Tampa, Florida. The live training camp gave the team sports competitors the opportunity to meet their USSOCOM coaches and fellow team members in-person, progress their individual training plans and refine team strategies. Army Gen. Richard Clarke, commander, USSOCOM and Chief Master Sgt. Greg Smith, USSOCOM senior enlisted leader, paid a visit to the camp and participated in wheelchair rugby with the athletes. The Games create camaraderie surrounding competition in Paralympic-style adaptive sports.

Photo essay by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo

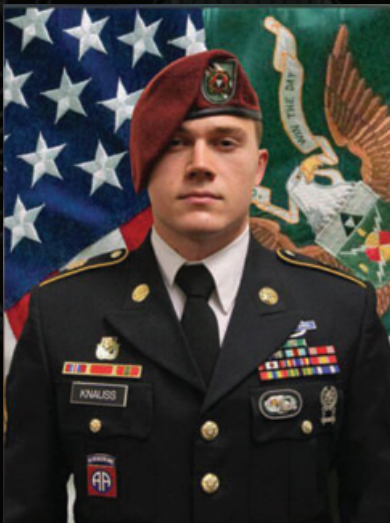








U.S. Army
Staff Sgt. Micah E. Walker
10th Special Forces Group (Airborne)



U.S. Army
Staff Sgt. Ryan C. Knauss
1st Special Forces Command (Airborne)

Editor's note: Honored are those special operations forces who lost their lives in combat or training since the June 2021 issue of Tip of the Spear.

An AC-47 from Topeka, Kansas, and an AC-130J Ghost Rider from the 4th Special Operations Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Fla., conduct a gunship legacy flight during EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2021, around Wittman Regional Airport, Wis., July 30, 2021. Air Force Special Operations Command Airmen and aircraft were one of the featured programs at AirVenture, giving attendees the opportunity to learn about recruitment opportunities, specialized airpower, military aviation heritage, and humanitarian capabilities. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Peter Reft.

