

Tip OF THE Spear

United States Special Operations Command
MacDill Air Force Base, Florida

December 2020

**'A tribute to persistence:'
SecAF presents Air Force Cross
to Cannon Special Tactics Airman**

**US, Japan sharpen skills
during exercise Keen Sword 21**



United States Special Operations Command



'A tribute to persistence:' SecAF presents Air Force Cross to Cannon Special Tactics Airman ... 24

Tip of the Spear

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(Cover) A CV-22 Osprey assigned to the 21st Special Operations Squadron conducts air support for U.S. Army Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), during Keen Sword 21 at Combined Arms Training Center, Camp Fuji, Japan, Nov. 4, 2020. Approximately 9,000 U.S. service members from the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, Army, and Air Force conducted training with their Japan Self-Defense Force counterparts from military installations throughout mainland Japan, Okinawa prefecture, and their surrounding territorial waters. Photo by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Brieana Bolfig.

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U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



Air Commandos, NATO allies conduct a combined readiness exercise in Baltic Sea region

*By U.S. Air Force Capt. Kevyn Stinett
352d Special Operations Wing*

U.S. Air Commandos with the 352nd Special Operations Wing, along with F-15E Strike Eagles from the 48th Fighter Wing deployed to Aalborg, Denmark, to support a combined readiness exercise in the Baltic Sea region.

This multilateral exercise enables these partners to train, increase readiness, enhance collective defense and

provide the flexibility to effectively respond to any contingency. The NATO allied and partner nations' Special Operations Forces will continue increasing interoperability to enable any multi-domain mission.

Agile combat employment within the Baltic and surrounding nations' airspace is key to regional defense and stability. Collective training events enhance the ability of NATO forces to work together effectively and develops the capability to fight from other locations and respond to any threats.



U.S. Airmen assigned to the 352nd Special Operations Wing prepare a U.S. Air Force MC-130J Commando II for flight in support of a combined readiness exercise at Aalborg Air Base, Denmark, Oct. 28, 2020. Multilateral Agile Combat Employment exercises within the Baltic airspace and surrounding nations are key to the regional defense and stability. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Christopher S. Sparks.



A U.S. Air Force Airman assigned to the 352nd Special Operations Wing surveys the surrounding area during a reconnaissance training mission at Bornholm, Denmark, in support of a combined readiness exercise, at Aalborg Air Base, Denmark, Nov. 3, 2020. Special Operations Forces adapt in contingency environments, enabling the mission to continue for a maintained and ready posture throughout the European area of responsibility. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Christopher S. Sparks.

U.S. Navy Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman assigned to Naval Special Warfare Command navigate a Combatant Craft Medium through the Baltic Sea near Karlskrona, Sweden, during a bilateral exercise with conventional and Special Operations Forces on Nov. 6, 2020. The Swedish-led exercise occurred in land, air and maritime regions to test combined military options, rapid response capabilities, and readiness to support Swedish defense and the Baltic Sea Region. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew Young.



U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



US, Swedish Special Operations Forces conduct major joint exercise with air, land and sea assets

By U.S. Army Sgt. Monique O'Neill
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe

Special Operations Command Europe participates in a joint exercise with the Swedish Armed Forces and Home Guard. This training includes Special Operations Forces from both partner nations using land, air, and sea components who are working together to increase interoperability and relationships for future collaborative events.

“The U.S. forces are incredibly honored that our Swedish Special Operations Command partners invited us to stage and exercise with them here in Sweden. Our partners are highly capable professional operators, and we look forward to our continued collaboration throughout the Baltic Sea region,” said Joint Special Operations Task Force deputy commander of the exercise, Lt. Col. Houston Hodgkinson.

This bilateral exercise includes U.S. CV22-B Ospreys, MC-130J Commando IIs, F-15E Strike Eagles, Polaris MRZR-D, Combatant Craft Mediums, along with Swedish HSwMS Trosso, Saab JAS-39 Gripen, Visby-class corvettes, Combat Boat 90, Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats, and C-130H Hercules to further the ability of Swedish and U.S. Special Operations Forces with conventional forces, to deploy and respond to a crisis in this area of responsibility.

“This exercise provides the opportunity to train with SOF partners as well as U.S. and Swedish conventional forces across all warfighting functions and domains. This allows us to train how we will fight, while also highlighting the credibility and capability of our combined forces,” said JSOTF commander of the exercise, Col.



Swedish Special Forces together with U.S. Navy Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman and Special Reconnaissance Unmanned Underwater Vehicle operators assigned to Naval Special Warfare Command perform UUV launch and recovery training utilizing a Combatant Craft Medium in the Baltic Sea near Karlskrona, Sweden during a bilateral exercise on Nov. 6, 2020. Altered photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew Young.

Nathan Owendoff. “The additive benefit is the critical value of building trust and strengthening relationships between commanders, element leaders, and Special Operations Forces across multiple echelons.”

Swedish Armed Forces conduct qualified exercises together with partners to strengthen defense capabilities across multiple domains. These exercises integrate both partner nations’ SOF capabilities with conventional force missions to improve upon overall collaborative initiatives.

“The strength of Swedish and U.S. Special Operations Forces together enable conventional armed forces to defend the region. We remain committed to cooperative security around the Baltic Sea,” said the Swedish exercise director, from SWESOCOM.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



Conducting pre-flight checks during bilateral exercise in Sweden

U.S. Air Force pilots, assigned to the 352nd Special Operations Wing, conduct pre-flight checks on a CV-22B Osprey during a bilateral exercise in Sweden, Nov. 12, 2020. Special Operations Forces create conditions for a rapid response to an imminent threat with land, air and maritime capabilities to enhance stability in the Baltic Sea region. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Patrik Orcutt.



U.S. Special Operations Command - Pacific



US SOF, Nepal take partnership to great heights

Courtesy story

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) recently participated in the training opportunity of a lifetime with their Nepali Army partners.

Throughout September and October, two Green Berets from 1st Battalion, 1st SFG (A) trained in some of the world's most severely restricted terrain at the Nepali Army's High Altitude and Mountain Warfare School.

For the past 30 years, the HAMWS has traditionally hosted approximately 16 foreign students from 23 participating countries. However, in the face of heightened travel restrictions and quarantine requirements, only four students from the U.S., Pakistan, and Bangladesh accepted this year's training opportunity.

The HAMWS training program centers around the tactics and techniques used by military elements to traverse, survive, and conduct offensive operations in high altitude areas and mountainous terrain. Throughout history, Green Berets have contended with the rough terrain that creates natural borders between people groups and provides a safe-haven for guerrilla forces. Recent border skirmishes between India and China demonstrate the strategic importance of these areas. As great power competitors test historical borders, the ability to incur costs on forces encroaching through high altitude and mountainous regions remains a principal capability in the defense of sovereignty.

The six-week program of instruction consisted of extensive training on ascending and descending techniques, survival and rescue techniques, the use of special equipment, and tactics of the cliff assault in both rock and alpine areas.

For the culminating exercise, the students used the previously trained techniques and equipment to scale Thorang Peak, a 20,200 ft. mountain.

The course curriculum contained many acclimatization exercises and excursions that took students to some of the most remarkable terrain in the world. This included Lake

Tilicho, the world's highest lake (16,138 ft.), and Thorang La, the world's highest mountain pass at 17,769 ft.

The Nepali Army's planning, commitment to readiness, and unwavering invitation for partnership enabled this training opportunity.

With instruction from the Nepalese training cadre, two of the participating Green Berets will return not only with freshly honed mountain warfare skills but also having secured three of the four HAMWS performance recognition awards.

"The training provided by the Nepali Army's HAMWS was truly world-class," said a detachment commander with 1st SFG (A). "Marrying a deep expertise in mountain warfare tactics and mountaineering techniques with breathtaking terrain, the program succeeded in not only sharpening our capabilities but in forging strong bonds between new friends," the detachment commander added.

1st SFG (A) remains committed to readiness for conflict, relentless pursuit of excellence, and engaging with partners across the theater wherever opportunity exists, no matter the obstacles.



Two 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) Green Berets stand along with their course mates and instructors atop Thorang Peak during the culminating exercise for Nepali Army's High Altitude and Mountain Warfare School in Nepal, October 2020. Altered courtesy photo.

Green Berets with 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) navigate difficult terrain during the Nepali Army's High Altitude and Mountain Warfare School in Nepal, October, 2020. For the past 30 years, the HAMWS has traditionally hosted approximately 16 foreign students from 23 participating countries. A detachment commander with 1st SFG (A) said, "Marrying a deep expertise in mountain warfare tactics and mountaineering techniques with breathtaking terrain, the program succeeded in not only sharpening our capabilities but in forging strong bonds between new friends." Courtesy photo.



U.S. Special Operations Command - Pacific



US, Japan sharpen skills during exercise Keen Sword 21

*By U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Gabrielle Spalding
374th Airlift Wing*

Units from the 374th Airlift Wing, and from the 353rd Special Operations Group accomplished a variety of missions alongside their Japanese Self-Defense Force and joint partners across the Kanto Plains, allowing the enhancement of bilateral operations between the U.S. and Japan.

“As we develop new and better ways to operate and integrate, exercises like this clearly demonstrate the

growing strength of the U.S.-Japan Alliance,” U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Kevin Schneider, U.S. Forces Japan commander, said. “In spite of the immense global impact from COVID, the U.S.-Japan Alliance did not falter and we have remained ready to fight and win.”

Continuing to foster that alliance takes commitment and teamwork. For the Airmen assigned to the 374th Logistics Readiness Squadron, the 36th Airlift Squadron and the 730th Air Mobility Squadron, working harmoniously with their Japanese counterparts led to the successful completion operations like mission planning,



Members of the 320th Special Tactics Squadron and Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) descend from a CV-22 Osprey during a fast rope and hoist training as part of exercise Keen Sword 21, at Yokota Air Base, Japan, Nov. 3, 2020. Units from the 374th Airlift Wing, and from the 353rd Special Operations Group accomplished a variety of missions alongside their Japanese Self-Defense Force and joint partners across the Kanto Plains, allowing the enhancement of bilateral operations between the U.S. and Japan. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Gabrielle Spalding.



A CV-22 Osprey, assigned to the 353rd Special Operations Group, arrives at a landing zone during a search and rescue training as part of exercise Keen Sword 21, at the Combined Arms Training Center Camp Fuji, Japan, Oct. 29, 2020. U.S. service members from the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, Army, and Air Force conducted training with their Japan Self-Defense Force counterparts from military installations throughout mainland Japan, Okinawa prefecture, and their surrounding territorial waters. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Gabrielle Spalding.

personnel jumps, and cargo inspections, uploads, and air drops.

“The importance of doing cargo loading and air drops in these kinds of exercises, is to increase the combat readiness between us and our host nation,” said Staff Sgt. Joshua Baerga, 374th LRS Combat Mobility Flight supervisor. “So, if anything ever happens real world, we should be able to work swiftly, quickly and accurately to put whatever we need on these aircraft and deliver them wherever we may need them.”

KS21 also comprised of unilateral training between the 353rd Special Operations Support Squadron, the 753rd Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, the 21st Special Operations Squadron and the 320th Special Tactics Squadron, during which personnel conducted a nighttime search and rescue at the Combined Arms Training Center Camp Fuji and a fast rope and hoist training at Yokota.

Metal barrels simulated an aircraft having had to make an emergency landing in the woods, while 753rd SOAMXS Airmen played injured and isolated personnel as part of the SAR scenario. The STS team used land

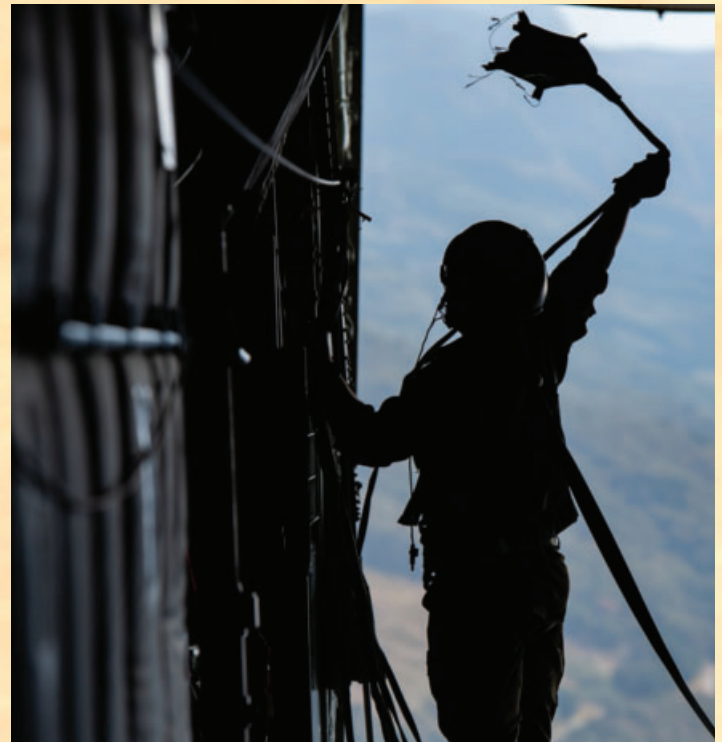
navigation techniques to locate the isolated personnel and get them securely to the waiting CV-22 Osprey.

“Keen Sword gives the SOG the ability to practice search and rescue and combat search and rescue on a larger scale,” said Tech. Sgt. Sean Moore, 353rd SOSS survival, evasion, resistance and escape specialist. “We have conventional Air Force assets that are also participating in KS, and that gives us an entire architecture of aircraft that can be over head.”

This was the first time Special Operations Forces were integrated in this exercise. The 353rd Special Operations group, with units at both Yokota and Kadena Air Base, conducted joint training with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) and the USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) in addition to observing training with JSDF partners.

KS21 has ensured the U.S.-Japan alliance continues to serve as the foundation for regional peace and security in the Indo-Pacific, for the past 60 years.

“While taking part in Keen Sword, we are sharpening our skills as a military entity, to ensure that whenever we need to be lethal, we are ready,” Baerga said.



Staff Sgt. Vincenzo Gallegos, 36th Airlift Squadron loadmaster, retrieves a parachute line during a cargo drop during Keen Sword 21, at the Combined Arms Training Center Camp Fuji, Japan, Oct. 30, 2020. KS21 is a joint, bilateral, biennial field-training exercise involving U.S. military and Japan Self-Defense Force personnel, designed to increase combat readiness and interoperability of the Japan-U.S. alliance. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Gabrielle Spalding.

U.S. Special Operations Command - South



First Colombian JSOFSEA graduate poised to continue lasting partnership with the US

*By Sgt. 1st Class Victor Aguirre
Special Operations Command South*

Colombian Army Soldiers routinely attend military courses within the continental United States. However, no Colombian Soldier has ever attended the Joint Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy at U.S. Special Operations Command's Joint Special Operations University located on MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.

First Sgt. Hector Ospina, an Instruction and Training Non-Commissioned Officer, became the first Colombian Soldier to graduate from the JSOFSEA, on Sept. 11, 2020. JSOFSEA Class #39 of 57 students graduated virtually due to COVID-19's impact on travel.

"At first, I was apprehensive when I was accepted to the academy as it is prominent in Colombia and I would be representing the Colombian military and my country abroad," said Ospina. "But with the support of my leadership and my U.S. partners, I was confident I would do well."

JSOFSEA bridges the gap from individual to organizational leadership by incorporating system thinking frameworks along with critical, creative, and ethical examination into highly developed approaches to solving complex problems.

"You are the critical element of profession of arms responsible for ensuring the application of standards, to develop our force to meet the challenges of the future," said Doctor Isaiah Wilson, president of JSOU, as he addressed the graduating class.

The JSOFSEA curriculum builds on foundational concepts by examining the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational environment and provides a whole government approach to operations. Students evaluate the nesting of operational plans and



Colombian 1st Sgt. Hector Ospina attends his graduation ceremony virtually from the Joint Special Forces Senior Enlisted Academy from Tolemaida, Colombia, Sept. 11, 2020. JSOFSEA class #39 virtually graduated 57 students due to COVID-19's impact on travel. Courtesy photo.

policy within higher strategic guidance.

"The knowledge of how U.S. Special Operations Forces operates, strategies they utilize, and experiences in the JIIM environment at a global level are awe-inspiring," said Ospina. "The course material and experiences of instructors and students immensely helps senior enlisted personnel understand how NCO's empowerment is beneficial for the organization."

Since the 1990s, USSOF have been working closely with Colombian partners to counter narco-trafficking operations and to bring stability in the region. Economic instability in neighboring Venezuela pours into Colombia, compounding their security concerns as the Venezuelan government depends on narco-trafficking and

foreign state actors for support.

“A significant amount of illicit economies in the region are based on drug trafficking, which provides terrorist organizations with the resources to sustain themselves, cause harm to a country’s civilian population, and export violence throughout the region,” said Ospina. “The U.S.’s access to technology and experience that the USSOF have is very broad and valuable in fighting illicit economies in the region and worldwide.”

USSOF works closely with partner nation forces in Central, South America, and the Caribbean on a myriad of issues to build interoperability and trust. Relations that USSOF build are both operational and personal.

“Ospina and I communicate on a weekly basis to talk about his papers and grades. He sends me a text on Fridays with his paper scores and the next week topics,” said 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Green Beret Sgt. Maj. Tony Perez. “We review Ospina’s papers to which I provide him feedback and give him pointers on how to write his next paper.”

In the U.S. military, NCOs are considered the backbone of the Army. NCOs coach and mentor subordinates in achieving tactical objectives so officers can focus operational and strategic goals. NCOs are in the middle between soldiers and officers requiring them to seamlessly operate between the tactical, operation, and strategic level.

“While working in the JIIM environment, I have seen how other countries rely heavily on their officers,” said Perez. “NCOs are the mid-level management and leadership, we provide task and purpose to the enlisted force, motivate them, and give them direction to execute what needs to be accomplish.”

JSOSEA provides its graduates the knowledge and skillsets necessary for operating in the JIIM environment through understanding how the profession of arms, organizational leadership and organizational communication achieve mission success.

“The knowledge and experience in this course will help me mentor my soldiers how unity of effort in the JIIM environment contributes to our operational objectives,” said Ospina. “I will also stress the importance of their professional development to attain the skills necessary to operate in the JIIM environment.”

USSOF are often requested as advisors to assist in developing national security strategies, provide specialized training to governmental agencies, or assist in humanitarian support.

“I have been working with USSOF for twenty years conducting counter-narcotic operations and special reconnaissance,” said Ospina. “The U.S.’s strategy has provided security and humanitarian aid to many countries

that fight against illegal drug trafficking.”

USSOF also works with the United States Agency for International Development and U.S. embassies to provide unity of effort assistance to partner nations around the world.

“USAID’s support benefit the population and improve the conditions of physical, food, and economic security which are impressive,” said Ospina. “It helps to remove the population’s support from criminal organizations and creates a peace and prosperity framework.”

Colombia has been an important U.S. strategic partner for more than 30 years. U.S. and Colombian governments have closely worked shoulder to shoulder in many areas to include economic trade, combating narcotic trafficking, and building of partner capacity to eradicate drugs, terrorist activities, solidify security cooperation, and strengthen their economic posture.



Colombian 1st Sgt. Hector Ospina and U.S. Green Beret Sgt. Maj. Tony Perez together in Tolemaida, Colombia after the Joint Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy graduation ceremony, Sept. 11, 2020. U.S. Special Operations Forces have worked with Colombian partners for more than 30 years and have developed interoperability, trust, and confidence in their ability to fight against transnational crime organizations. Courtesy photo



U.S. Army Special Operations Command

Combat Divers submerge inside Cheyenne Mountain



By U.S. Army Sgt. Angela Walter
10th Special Forces Public Affairs

A Special Forces Operations Detachment - Alpha (SFOD-A) with 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) put their combat dive skills to use Nov. 5, 2020 where one would least expect: in the heart of the Cheyenne Mountain Complex, Colorado.

Inside the complex are three reservoirs that hold water for a variety of uses, including cooling the mountain's generators and expelled exhaust. Because the mountain is designed to function independently, the water systems are vital to the success of the mountain's operations. Assessing the structural integrity of the reservoirs and ensuring the water is flowing freely through the cave systems that connect them keeps things running smoothly.

"They originally contracted with a civilian company to get this done," says the Officer in Charge of the Dive Life Support Maintenance Facility at 10th SFG (A). "My brother, an Air Force Logistical Officer tasked to

the Space Force, recommended they get in contact with (us) to do it for free."

The facility manager of the complex and the DLSMF and a chosen combat dive SFOD-A set out to accomplish the mission.

"Dive operations does not happen very often in Special Forces," says the OIC. "This was a good chance for us to go out and showcase our capabilities as a legitimate maritime force within (Special Operations Command) to actually do a real-world mission. It's not infiltrating into enemy country or territory, but it was a chance for us to show everyone that we do

have this capability and it's important to keep the capability within the Special Forces community."

10th SFG (A) established and developed relationships outside of the Army and Special Operations Command. It started a relationship with the Cheyenne Mountain complex to provide future opportunities for

real world missions, training and equipment testing. These relationships are essential to interoperability within different branches of the military enhancing our overall capabilities as one united force.



Dive operations does not happen very often in special forces. This was a good chance for us to go out and showcase our capabilities as a legitimate maritime force within (Special Operations Command) to actually do a real-world mission. It's not infiltrating into enemy country or territory, but it was a chance for us to show everyone that we do have this capability and it's important to keep the capability within the Special Forces community.

(Opposite page) Members of the 10th Special Forces Operational Detachment - Alpha prepare to submerge in one of the Cheyenne Mountain Complex's reservoirs Nov. 5, 2020. This opportunity provides hands on training for the 10th SFOD (A) while providing CMAFS the assessments of their reservoirs necessary to maintain operations. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Angela Walter.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command

JBLM Soldier receives Soldier's Medal for heroic life-saving actions



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

Valor, courage, and bravery. Those words are usually associated with combat action in regard to military personnel, but not all heroic acts by service members are based on wartime efforts, something that Sgt. Alexander Jabin experienced firsthand.

Jabin, a satellite operator/maintainer assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 4th Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), was awarded the Soldier's Medal, by Lt. Gen. Randy George, commanding general, I Corps and Joint Base Lewis-McChord, during a ceremony at the Memorial Wall located in the Master Sgt. Mark W. Coleman Compound, for saving the life of a driver from a burning vehicle.

"The words 'Soldier's Medal' and 'for valor' are etched into the backside of the medal," George said during his remarks. "Sgt. Jabin absolutely personified these words...as he reminded us by his actions, what a ready Soldier looks like. Acting with initiative, he moved quickly to save another person's life, and he did this at the very real risk of sacrificing his own life."

On March 16, 2019, around 2:30 a.m., Jabin responded to a collision and a cry for help on Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

"That night, Sgt. Jabin ran past me, yelling 'Help! Call the fire department!'" said Sgt. Komi Ameny, the noncommissioned officer on-duty at the barracks near the scene of the incident, as he described the scene. "Jabin dove quickly under the fence and ran to the car which was on fire."

Before Jabin arrived, former Soldiers, Spcs. Josiah Caro-Yost and Aaron Cavazos, who were previously assigned to 1st SFG (A) at the time of the incident, had already arrived to the scene of the incident, but the driver was stuck and the heat from the flames became worse, according to Cavazos.

"The fire had gotten pretty intense, so we backed away," said Cavazos.



Lt. Gen. Randy A. George, commanding general, I Corps and Joint Base Lewis-McChord, presents the Soldier's Medal to Sgt. Alexander Jabin, satellite operator/maintainer, 4th Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), Dec. 1, 2020, at the Master Sgt. Mark W. Coleman Compound on Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Joshua Belser.

Jabin immediately rushed in and attempted to free the driver from the car despite the intense heat.

"I tried to rip the door open but I was only able to rip off some of the car parts," said Jabin. "It was a cold night, but the fire from the collision grew more and more intense, like a big bonfire."

Upon the realization that he couldn't get the door open, Jabin reached into the car to try to unbuckle the seatbelt. Unsuccessful at that attempt, he realized that he needed something to cut away the seatbelt, Jabin recalled.

"I went back under the fence, yelling for someone to get me a knife to cut the seatbelt," said Jabin. "Sgt. Amenyo tossed me his knife, but then I looked and immediately noticed that the flames had engulfed the car and the driver had caught on fire."

At this point, the once-dazed driver was more alert and had partially positioned his upper body out of the driver's

door window, and was screaming for help, according to Jabin.

“He couldn’t fully get out of the vehicle because of his injuries and contorted lower-body position,” Jabin said, “but I figured since he had just enough mobility, we could pull him out the rest of the way.”

Jabin rushed back and grabbed the driver, and called for Cavazos and Caro-Yost to assist, completely removing him from the raging fire.

“I took off my jacket and Sgt. Jabin took off his shirt, and we started using them to (smother) the flames that were still burning on the victim’s body,” said Caro-Yost. “Sgt. Jabin then proceeded to use the knife to cut the belt and burning clothes off the victim’s body.”

The crew then carried the injured driver further away from the scene to a safer location, and Jabin provided first aid that he learned through his Army training and comforted the soldier until paramedics arrived.

Jabin’s actions reminded him of particular words of wisdom from Gen. George Patton, a historic military leader during WWII, George said.

“General Patton often reminded other Soldiers and leaders that a good plan that is violently executed now, is better than a perfect plan next week,” George said to Jabin. “I

would suggest your actions absolutely bore that out on that early morning. It was your discipline, your expertise, your fitness, your presence of mind, amidst so much uncertainty and danger that saved another person’s life.”

Jabin’s selflessness was the best example for all, said George.

“With this medal it is our honor to recognize your willingness to put another’s life ahead of your own, and we are blessed to have you in our ranks,” George said.

Rescuing the driver and saving his life was not accomplished by alone, Jabin said during his remarks.

“I did what anyone else would have done in my position, but I did not save him by myself,” said Jabin. “In the Army, no one succeeds alone. I did my part alongside others.”

The lifesaving efforts and teamwork continued with military police and medical staff providing emergency assistance to the injured driver, said Jabin.

Jabin sustained second-degree burns to his face, arms and hands while rescuing the injured driver.

“I do not know, but I pray the (driver) made a full recovery and that his soul is not forever chained to that terrible event, that he can continue his journey and make good on his second chance in life, which few ever get,” said Jabin.



From left to right, Col. Ryan Ehrler, commander, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), Sgt. Alexander Jabin, satellite operator/maintainer, 4th Battalion, 1st SFG (A), and Lt. Gen. Randy A. George, commanding general, I Corps and Joint Base Lewis-McChord, pose for a photo after Jabin was awarded the Soldier’s Medal, Dec. 1, 2020, at the Master Sgt. Mark W. Coleman Compound on Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. Jabin was awarded for rescuing a driver from a burning vehicle following a collision in March of 2019. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Joshua Belser.

Naval Special Warfare Command NSW observes National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month



By Naval Special Warfare Command Public Affairs

September was National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and Naval Special Warfare used the observance to foster discussion about the importance of seeking mental health care and highlight suicide prevention resources available to members of the force and their families.

Jeanne Lagorio, a licensed clinical social worker and the NSW Force Suicide Prevention Coordinator

works with Chad Rodamer the Force Suicide Prevention Manager to take a holistic approach to preventing suicide within NSW.

“I’ve approached this effort from a family system perspective to include the command, spouses and children,” said Lagorio. “Suicide affects everyone in the family and the command to varying degrees.”

Spouses have easy access to a variety of resources on a website available to them through their ombudsmen, according to Lagorio.



Naval Special Warfare Command Force Suicide Prevention Coordinator Jeanne Lagorio, left, and Command Master Chief (SEAL) Jay Linzy hang the Connect to Protect Remembrance Quilt on NSWC’s quarterdeck. The quilt honors those lost to suicide from 2012 to 2019 and emphasizes NSW’s commitment to personal wellness and connection to others. The quilt will travel between Naval Special Warfare commands starting in November 2020. Photo by Chief Petty Officer Anderson Bomjardim.

“Another one of the things we’ve done is open up and invite spouses and all departments within NSW to receive intensive suicide prevention training through ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training),” said Lagorio.

The two-day, intensive workshop includes role-playing scenarios that teach participants how to ask difficult questions, to recognize when someone is thinking about suicide, and to help them get the support they need.

Spouses often see the first signs of concern at home, according to Lagorio, and this is an early intervention point. Spouses are also - briefed on who they can call if they have concerns and told any discussion held with a chaplain can remain 100 percent confidential. NSW Chaplains also facilitate ASIST training, which is another opportunity to build rapport and trust within the force.

“Vulnerability to suicide is not just with those who deploy but reaches up to the highest leadership positions and widens to all positions,” said Lagorio. “We are creating a large safety net by working together to be the eyes and the ears of those closest to us and taking care of each other.”

NSW Force Master Chief Bill King noted that self-awareness and being in tune with the people around you is part of the warrior mind-set.

“We train to be self-reliant, independent operators in fierce environments, which can make it difficult to notice the signs that something may be wrong,” said King. “It’s important that we develop not just as warriors, but also as people who notice and care for one another when our teammates may be down. It can be the difference between life and death.”

The expressive arts are also being used to encourage dialogue within NSW, according to Lagorio. NSW spouses have the spotlight this year, creating and sharing artwork that expresses what’s often difficult to put into words, and encouraging help-seeking behavior. Last year, several NSW operators also participated in the program to create artwork that expressed how suicide impacted their lives.

“Suicide is a topic some people tend to back away from,” said Lagorio. “The artwork featured on the portal creates curiosity and an emotional response. The artist’s statement adds depth and meaning to what

is being viewed. A fact about suicide and an inspirational quote packs a lot of messaging into a 60-second glance. This approach is another way to chip away at the stigma.”

It’s commonly perceived that seeking help for emotional distress, addiction or family problems can negatively impact a service member’s career. The truth, according to Lagorio, is that less than one percent of security clearances are revoked due to someone seeking mental health services.

Lagorio works with leadership to dispel this persistent myth.

Leaders at NSW must continue to promote help-seeking services as a strength and a form of mental fitness, she said. Striving for excellence in all areas of your life and training around compassionate leadership is something that always needs to be fine-tuned.

“I’ve experienced suicide as a friend, teammate, and leader throughout my career,” said a retired SEAL Captain who spoke about his experience as part of opening the dialogue about suicide prevention and mental health care across the force.

“All of us go through tough things in life, but because we tend to compartmentalize it can be hard to share our struggles, or know what’s really going on inside with our teammates. It’s ok to seek help; we have great resources in our community. It’s important that we look out for one

another. I’ve gotten to the point where asking, ‘Are you ok?’ is just the start of the conversation. If we do see any of the warning signs with someone we know, we shouldn’t be reluctant to be direct and ask the awkward, but important question, “‘Are you thinking of harming yourself?’”

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, you can connect with the Veterans Crisis Line to receive immediate support by dialing 1-800-273-8255 and then pressing 1.

NSW is committed to its Sailors and the deliberate development of their tactical excellence, ethics, and leadership as the nation’s premiere maritime special operations force supporting the National Defense Strategy. NSW is the maritime component of USSOCOM, and its mission is to provide maritime special operations forces to conduct full-spectrum operations, unilaterally or with partners, to support national objectives.

It’s important that we develop not just as warriors, but also as people who notice and care for one another when our teammates may be down. It can be the difference between life and death.

– NSW Force Master Chief Bill King

Naval Special Warfare Command SEAL conducts freefall training



A Sailor assigned to Naval Special Warfare Group 1 free falls during sustainment training. NSWG-1 deploys and sustains Naval Special Warfare forces throughout the world to support combatant commanders and U.S. national interests. Photo by Naval Special Warfare Group 1.





Air Force Special Operations Command



'A Tribute to Persistence:'

SecAF presents Air Force Cross to Cannon Special Tactics Airman

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

Snapped awake by the sound of belt-fed machine gun fire, then-Senior Airman Alaxey Germanovich, a combat controller assigned to the 26th Special Tactics Squadron, surveys the compound he had dozed off in after several sleepless days of combat.

"I look around and I don't see any of my American teammates," said Germanovich. "(At that moment I said to myself) I need to find my friends right now."

Grabbing his helmet and rifle, Germanovich bolted out of the compound and into the fight, where he saw several of the U.S. Army Special Forces Soldiers he was embedded with huddling for cover from behind a small rock.

"I knew then that I had to go get to my teammates and help them," he said.

Germanovich's base instinct would quickly turn into a grueling battle for survival, but it was those selfless impulses to save and protect his teammates that proved to be the difference between life and death for many of his teammates on that fateful day.

SecAF commends Combat Controller for valor

The 25th Secretary of the Air Force, Barbara M. Barrett, presented the Air Force Cross to now-Staff Sgt. Germanovich during a ceremony here, Dec. 10, 2020.

Germanovich was awarded the medal, second only to the Medal of Honor, for his actions on April 8, 2017, during combat operations against enemy forces in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan.

"This Air Force Cross is a tribute to your persistence (Staff Sgt. Germanovich)," said Barrett. "You risked your life and weathered blistering enemy fire to save the lives of others."



The father of Staff Sgt. Alaxey Germanovich, 26th Special Tactics Squadron combat controller, pins the Air Force Cross medal on his son during a medal ceremony Dec. 10, 2020, at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M. Barbara Barrett, Secretary of the Air Force, presented the Air Force Cross to Staff Sgt. Germanovich for his actions during a fierce firefight in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan, April 8, 2017. Germanovich's efforts were credited with saving over 150 friendly forces and destroying 11 separate fighting positions. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Michael Washburn.

In attendance were Col. Matthew Allen, 24th Special Operations Wing commander, the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) team Germanovich was attached to during the combat operations, and Germanovich's family and friends.

Following the ceremony, Germanovich led those in attendance in memorial pushups to commemorate the event, the firefight and the ultimate sacrifice paid during the clash by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Mark De Alencar, a Special Forces Soldier assigned to 7th SFG (A) and a member of the team Germanovich was assigned to.

“This battle was a case study in toughness and extraordinary competence,” said Allen. “But it was also a case study in love. The type of love that demands teammates fight for one another and give everything they have.”

Germanovich’s actions as the air-to-ground liaison for his special operations forces team were credited with protecting the lives of over 150 friendly forces and the lethal engagement of 11 separate fighting positions.

Facing hell, calling for fire

A native of Boiling Springs, S.C., Germanovich enlisted into the Air Force in November, 2012, with two goals in mind.

“I always knew I wanted a challenge,” said Germanovich. “I wanted to have a direct impact on the battlefield wherever I went.”

Five years later, both of those wishes would be granted when he deployed to Afghanistan and embedded with 7 SFG (A) Soldiers and their Afghan partners.

During his tour, the joint force was tasked with clearing several valleys in Nangarhar of fighters. As the multi-day operation progressed and the coalition forces pushed the insurgents closer to the Afghan border of Pakistan, the fighting became more and more violent, and it reached a head as Germanovich sprinted through heavy enemy fire to help the Special Forces Soldiers on that fateful day.

After reaching the rock his teammates were pinned down behind, Germanovich began to call in airstrikes to try and suppress the attack.

“It was working to a degree,” said Germanovich. “But we were still receiving extremely effective fire, and one of our partner force members had gotten shot.”

To evacuate the wounded Afghan commando, Germanovich began to call for strikes extremely close to their position in order to create more separation between the coalition forces and the insurgents.

“As the bombs were falling out of the sky, I started screaming at everybody to run for cover,” said Germanovich.

After the partner force member was evacuated, the Special Operations Forces team launched their counter-attack. A separate unit from across the valley was able to pinpoint a key enemy bunker during the firefight, and Germanovich’s element, led by De Alencar, crawled their way towards the position.

Once the fire team reached the top of the bunker, Germanovich and De Alencar dropped grenades into its entrance. Then, as Germanovich secured the opening and De Alencar and the other Special Forces soldiers began to breach the bunker, insurgents ambushed the team from hidden positions to the south, mortally wounding De Alencar.

“The situation just became complete and utter chaos,” said Germanovich. “The team and I had expended all of our ordnance engaging enemy targets. We expended all of our grenades, there was no more pistol ammunition, and we were out of ammo completely.”

Lying prone with no cover from the attack,

Germanovich put out a call to an AC-130W Stinger II gunship aircraft that was leaving the area in order to refuel.

“As they were leaving, I said ‘if you don’t come back, we’re

The situation just became complete and utter chaos.

The team and I had expended all of our ordnance engaging enemy targets. We expended all of our grenades, there was no more pistol ammunition, and we were out of ammo completely.

dead.” said Germanovich.

The gunship did return and began to fire on the enemy fighters, which gave Germanovich and the soldiers the opportunity to move away and evacuate De Alencar.

“All the while, we’re still taking effective fire from the enemy,” said Germanovich. “We began dropping ordnance and basically bombing up this mountainside until we got to safety.”

Germanovich’s actions proved decisive on that battlefield and demonstrated the enormous impact of AFSOC’s precision strike mission, which provides ground force with specialized capabilities to find, assess and engage targets.

“You (Germanovich) told me earlier that you did what any one of your teammates would have done in the same situation,” said Allen. “But we don’t know that. We do know what you did that day: face and devastate a numerically superior enemy...this is why America’s enemies do not take us head on.”

Germanovich’s ability to enable precision strike operations and his bravery in the face of hostile fire are incredibly courageous in their own right, but it was the reason behind his valiant performance that makes him an unquestionable hero.

“It was 100% my teammates,” said Germanovich. “If I’m in danger, I know without a doubt in my mind that my teammates are going to do everything in their power to make sure that I come back, and I would do everything that I could possibly do to make sure that they come back.”

Air Force Special Operations Command



Groundbreaking AFSOC pilot retires

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

U.S. Air Force Col. Shelley Woodworth, formerly Col. Rodriguez, retired after almost 29 years of dedicated service to the United States Air Force and Air Force Special Operations Command on Nov. 23, 2020.

Woodworth was the first female pilot in AFSOC, flying the MC-130P/J Combat Shadow, and went on to a distinguished career as a command pilot with over 3,500 flying hours, serving in Operations Provide Comfort, Eagle Guard, Northern Watch, Allied Force, Enduring Freedom, and Odyssey Dawn.

In May 2018, Woodworth began serving in her final assignment at AFSOC headquarters as the Chief of Programming, Force Structure, and Basing Division where she resourced and equipped nearly 20,000 personnel worldwide to build a more ready and lethal future for AFSOC's weapons systems.

"I've been fortunate to have countless favorite moments while serving - courtesy of my crew mates, squadron mates, and people who I have had the honor to lead," said Woodworth. "The travel, the different cultures, the challenge of the mission, and the people are all the favorites, and honestly, Lt Gen Slife's gracious send off at my retirement. I am humbled and very grateful."

During the retirement ceremony U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, Air Force Special Operations commander, shared stories of Woodworth throughout her career.

"While at the United States Air Force Academy, Woodworth ran into a Navy SEAL instructor who told her, 'You're not going to be allowed to join the Special Operations community because you are a woman,'" said Slife.

In 1993, Congress repealed the ban on women serving in combat aircraft. Shortly after, AFSOC led the way, integrating women into all fixed wing aircrew positions and Woodworth found herself flying combat airframes with one of the first pilot training classes that included women.

"I had no idea I was the first when I selected an



U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, pins the Legion of Merit on U.S. Air Force Col. Shelley Woodworth during her retirement ceremony on Nov. 23, 2020. Woodworth was the first female AFSOC pilot and retired with 3,500 flying hours. Photo by U.S. Air Force Capt. Savannah Stephens.

AFSOC aircraft out of pilot training. I was well into my aircraft-specific training before I had any clue," said Woodworth. "Honestly it was the last thing on my mind and still is today," continued Woodworth. "I wanted nothing more than to be the best copilot I could be, which continued over the course of my career...to work as hard as I could to be the best at the task at hand."

Slife shared a story about Woodworth's Christmas Eve in 1999 with the 17th Special Operations Squadron at Kadena Air Base, Japan.

"Woodworth spent her Christmas Eve rescuing a teacher and 10 students stranded afloat in the Pacific Ocean," said Slife. "As the aircraft commander, she flew her team out in the Pacific to conduct a long search effort. She flew in and out of the clouds until they found the boat, dropped down rescue packages, vectored a South Korean tanker to come pick them up, and successfully saved lives."

Woodworth shared advice for future AFSOC service members at the end of the ceremony. "Listen more than you speak and you'll learn more than you know, find job satisfaction in developing others' careers over your own, and take pride in defying those who say you can't. Cherish every minute of it because it goes by fast."

Providing Airmen predictability through four-cycle force generation

By U.S. Air Force Capt. Savannah Stephens
AFSOC Public Affairs

Air Force Special Operations Command is moving towards a four-cycle force generation model (AFSOFORGEN) to provide predictability for our Airmen and their families and reinforce the squadron's place as the beating heart of the Air Force. AFSOFORGEN is squadron-focused, articulates availability of Airmen, and empowers engaged, present, and accountable leaders.

“Our primary organizational adjustment over the last year is a transition to a deliberate, unit-based force generation model which affords commanders the opportunity to be more invested in the training and development of the Airmen under their charge,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, commander of AFSOC.

AFSOC Strategic Guidance states, “AFSOC’s human capital is our competitive advantage.” AFSOFORGEN will unburden our Airmen by resourcing our training architecture and fielding four operational squadrons based in the continental United States in almost every capability area.

This new force generation cycle also allows squadron commanders to set training cycles as they see fit for mission requirements. This deployment model has already taken root within portions of AFSOC. The 24th Special Operations Wing at Hurlburt Field, Fla. has been deploying on a four-cycle force generation model since 2014.

“Our job as a command is to protect to our teammates,” said Lt. Col. Matt Novotney, AFSOFORGEN Project Lead. “The last 19 years for AFSOC Airmen has been defined by a heavy, often last minute, deployment tempo, and it’s time to give predictability to our Airmen’s lives. When Airmen and their families know exactly when they’re deploying, that helps them plan for the future.”

“The question we were faced with was, ‘How do we give time back to our Airmen?’” continued Novotney. “We’re telling our squadrons to get ready to meet National

Defense Strategy priorities on top of what they’re already doing, and we realized that people were burnt out and that was our responsibility, as the command, to find a solution.”

The force generation cycle is currently 20 months long spread across four phases – rest, prepare, ready, and commit.

Rest focuses on our Airman’s time. It is an opportunity to focus on resiliency and get time back with their families.

Prepare is meeting training requirements and ensuring we are relevant to the joint force.

Ready is set ready to conduct the global mission in the squadron’s specific area of responsibility.

Commit is when that Airman is trained, certified, and available to deploy.

“Creating this cycle will facilitate camaraderie and true integration among SOF personnel,” said

Novotney. “This will benefit Airmen across our command – maintenance, communications, aircrew, you name it. This will be one of those situations where it’ll be hard, change is hard, but as we develop new habits and ask for new things, we’re going to be a stronger command for it.”

Our primary organizational adjustment over the last year is a transition to a deliberate, unit-based force generation model which affords commanders the opportunity to be more invested in the training and development of the Airmen under their charge.

– Lt. Gen. Jim Slife



Airmen from the 193rd Special Operations Wing connect with friends, family and loved ones, Oct. 24, 2020 at the 193rd SOW in Middletown, Pennsylvania. Nineteen 193rd SOW Airmen returned home onboard the unit’s EC130J Commando Solo aircraft after completing a deployment overseas. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Tony Harp.

Air Force Special Operations Command



Dedicated crew chiefs say farewell to Tail Number 1303

*By Staff Sgt. Luke Kitterman
27th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

The 16th Aircraft Maintenance Unit said farewell to one of its AC-130W Stinger II gunships as it took its final flight from Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, Oct. 19, 2020, before permanently retiring from air operations.

Officially labeled as Tail No. 1303, the aircraft was received from the Lockheed-Martin factory June 6, 1989, with the original nickname of ‘City of Hurricane.’

Since that time, but before becoming part of the

gunship arsenal, Tail No. 1303 served in numerous, varying mission sets including critical supply drops into Bosnia, transportation of Special Forces during Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, humanitarian missions providing relief for Hurricane Katrina, and refueling duties for the 73rd Special Operations Squadron.

“The aircraft was a MC-130W being utilized for refueling missions when I arrived in 2008,” said Master Sgt. Kevin Shafer, 16 AMU crew chief section chief and prior Dedicated Crew Chief to Tail No. 1303. “I was its Dedicated Crew Chief in 2009 and it wasn’t until 2012



Master Sgt. Kevin Shafer, 16th Aircraft Maintenance Unit crew chief section chief, left, and Staff Sgt. Joshua Ohienmhen, 16 AMU Non-Commissioned Officer in charge, stand in front of an AC-130W Stinger II gunship, Tail No. 1303, prior to the aircraft’s final flight before retirement at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., Oct. 19, 2020. Shafer was Tail No. 1303’s Dedicated Crew Chief in 2009 while Ohienmhen served as the most recent DCC for the aircraft. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Luke Kitterman.

when it was converted into an AC-130W.”

As a gunship, Tail No. 1303 made its claim to fame by being the first gunship to record a combat kill on Feb. 9, 2011. It then went on to achieve another milestone by having the distinction of being the first 105mm cannon-installed whiskey to confirm a 105mm kill in December of 2016.

However, even though serving a critical role as a lethal option in the Air Force Special Operations Command’s firepower, the whiskey models’ purpose in a sense was a temporary capability, or a long-term solution, for its eventual and intended replacement – the ‘J’ models.

“The Air Force has a new generation of gunships, the AC-130J models, that are ready to come off the assembly line and we have to make room for them,” said Master Sgt. Jesse French, 16 AMU production superintendent. “Eventually, all whiskey models will be replaced by the J models.”

While the Air Force is always looking to improve its weapons systems and preparing for the future, it doesn’t mean that one can’t pay homage to the equipment that got it to this point. A 31-year career for an aircraft that has seen combat doesn’t happen without countless maintainers providing extreme care over the years.

It takes dedicated individuals.

“Dedicated Crew Chief is a program that units offer to highly-skilled maintenance technicians,” Staff Sgt. Joshua Ohienmhen, 16 AMU Non-Commissioned Officer in charge and most recent DCC for Tail No. 1303. “Of course you take care of multiple aircraft but the aircraft you are dedicated to is your baby. This is the one you take the most pride in and try to make it look and work the best. It promotes healthy competition within the unit and ownership over your aircraft.”

For a long time, Cannon did not have a DCC program so the unit decided to mirror their program after the Flying Crew Chief program.

“Since we don’t have Flying Crew Chiefs here, we have just tailored our DCC program to match the FCC requirements,” Ohienmhen explained. “So all of our DCCs should have a FCC mentality even though we cannot fly with the plane.”

Ohienmhen has been working on Tail No. 1303 for a few years but has been its DCC for approximately six months since when the DCC program was officially created.

“It takes a special kind of maintainer to walk in knowing that the aircraft is going to be retired soon and still take an immense pride in taking caring of it,” Shafer said about Ohienmhen. “I couldn’t ask for a better DCC to take over this aircraft.”

That pride, and mindset of still giving it the best treatment possible, comes from Ohienmhen’s history with

the aircraft.

“I was actually there helping [Tail No. 1303] get modified for the 105mm,” Ohienmhen said. “So it was kind of like nostalgia for me when we took all the weapons systems back off in preparation for retirement because I was reminded of all the hard work I had put into it. It was sad to be honest. I don’t want my plane to go.”

Fortunately, ‘retirement’ is not synonymous with ‘out-of-use’ in the case for Tail No. 1303. The aircraft’s final destination was Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas, which falls under the Air Education and Training Command, where it will permanently stay to be repurposed as a weapons training system.

“Sheppard needed an aircraft they could train on for weapons school,” French explained. “This way, Airmen at the school can work on a real-world weapons system to be proficient at their job before arriving to their first operating unit.”

The weapons systems on 1303 were stripped off the aircraft prior to its final flight and shipped off to a different installation where they will be altered to meet safety regulations for school before returning to 1303 in December.

As a farewell, Shafer and Ohienmhen, both once DDCs of Tail No. 1303, rode with the gutted, empty aircraft on that final flight to Sheppard AFB.

“You know in the movies where people are walking away and not looking back...that wasn’t us,” Shafer said. “We were both practically walking backwards looking back at the aircraft for the last time.”



An AC-130W Stinger II gunship, Tail No. 1303, takes off on the runway at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., for its final flight prior to retirement Oct. 19, 2020. As a gunship, Tail No. 1303 made its claim to fame by being the first gunship to record a combat kill on Feb. 9, 2011. It then went on to achieve another milestone by having the distinction of being the first 105mm cannon-installed whiskey to confirm a 105mm kill in December of 2016. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Luke Kitterman.

Marine Forces Special Operations Command



Marine Special Operations Team executes direct action night raids

A Marine Special Operations Team assigned to 3rd Marine Raider Battalion, Marine Forces Special Operations Command, executes a direct-action night raid during Training Exercise II at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, July 26, 2020. The exercise gives the MSOT the ability to practice full-scale ground assault and demonstrate team-level proficiency, cohesion and agility for evaluators. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Brennan Priest.



Headquarters - U.S Special Operations Command Special Operations Forces Wounded Warriors receive specialized brain-health care

*By U.S. Air Force Maj. Ryan DeCamp
USSOCOM Office of Communication*

U.S. Special Operations Command's Warrior Care Program-Care Coalition helps injured Special Operations Forces and their families while they serve and after they leave the military.

SOCOM medical providers and WCP-CC, in cooperation with Home Base Military Outreach Coordinators, formed a Special Operator Cohort Program in 2018 as another tool to support service

members' brain health called the Comprehensive Brain Health and Treatment program, or ComBHaT. The program builds treatment plans designed for each member. These focus largely on traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, but also address interrelated health concerns including sleep disturbances, substance abuse, reactions to stress, hypervigilance and memory, among others.

ComBHaT's care options range from two days to a two-week intensive clinical program. These services are offered in Boston at Home Base, a Red Sox



U.S. Army Gen. Richard Clarke, U.S. Special Operations commander, visits with staff at Home Base, a Red Sox foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital program in Boston Nov. 19, 2020. The program offers advanced medical care to service members and veterans in conjunction with SOCOM's Warrior Care Program-Care Coalition. Courtesy photo.

Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital program. Many of their medical providers and researchers who care for SOCOM's members also work with New England's professional sports teams including the Red Sox, Patriots, Bruins and Revolution.

"I attended ComBHaT's four-day treatment program that looked into my prior TBI and it has helped me immensely," said a Navy operator with 26 years of service. "What sets this program apart is the team of doctors that can share and discuss the whole patient and their family. ... This program provided an excellent

baseline from which I have been able to start discussions with my primary case managers."

He said the four-day program he attended provided him brain-health care involving a neuropsychological evaluation to test and review his cognitive function and an evaluation focused on his sleep problems. The comprehensive approach the program offered also checked out his musculoskeletal issues and introduced him to programs allowing him to manage pain, rehabilitation for spinal issues and a cardiac evaluation following his prior open-heart surgery.

He is one of more than 130 special operations members who have gone through ComBHaT at Home Base. While in Boston, the combined WCP-CC and Home Base program also offers care beyond brain health in other medical disciplines such as resiliency, family outreach, nutrition, orthopedics and physical therapy.

"This assessment and treatment program is life changing for many service members," he said. "The clinical support, education, programs and whole-family focus is a must for many of our personnel who do not have the skills or time to seek out individual programs."

The WCP-CC was founded in 2005 and currently has more than 18,000 recovering service members, veterans and family members enrolled. WCP-CC offers a range of services, some of which include linking

members with medical care options such as ComBHaT, but also recovery, rehabilitation, reintegration, career transition, information on financial support and family assistance services.

In addition to Home Base, SOCOM medical providers and WCP-CC work together to refer service

members to additional brain health programs at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center's National Intrepid Center of Excellence and the Neurobehavioral Health Program. SOCOM medical providers and the WCP-CC also refer members to Veterans Health Administration

Polytrauma/TBI System of Care, and Intrepid Spirit Centers nation-wide.

"Our team adheres to the SOF truth that 'humans are more important than hardware,' and we recognize there is nothing more important than taking care of our service members and their families," said H. Kelly Ammerman, SOCOM WCP-CC Acting Director. "We assist members by educating them on brain health initiatives and work with SOCOM's medical providers on referrals to those initiatives."

For some, the ComBHaT program may be the right fit. For others, it may take that program in conjunction with other care plans to fully address all of their ailments. The WCP-CC team works to coordinate care for the range of concerns a service member, veteran or their families may have, Ammerman added.

"Due to the nature of their service, many of our special operations population have TBIs as well as a host of other Injuries. Their injuries often cross into multiple medical disciplines and the impact of the effects often transcend the individual, so it is vital that we take care of the family as well. The members of the WCP-CC do great work in conjunction with SOCOM's medical providers, and we are all thankful to be able to work with medical experts outside of the military to continue providing additional resources and optimal levels of care to those who need it most," Ammerman said.

Due to the nature of their service, many of our special operations population have TBIs as well as a host of other Injuries. Their injuries often cross into multiple medical disciplines and the impact of the effects often transcend the individual, so it is vital that we take care of the family as well. The members of the WCP-CC do great work in conjunction with SOCOM's medical providers, and we are all thankful to be able to work with medical experts outside of the military to continue providing additional resources and optimal levels of care to those who need it most.

— H. Kelly Ammerman, SOCOM WCP-CC Acting Director

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

SOCOM Commander connects with West Point seniors, talks leading through adversity

*By U.S. Air Force Maj. Ryan Decamp
USSOCOM Office of Communication*

U.S. Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke, U.S. Special Operations Command commander, spoke to the U.S. Military Academy's senior class Oct. 3 as the school hosted a banquet honoring its senior class.

More than 1,000 seniors received their class rings the day before in a ceremony that marked the beginning of their final year at West Point. The tradition of wearing class rings at West Point dates back to 1835. Clarke said the senior class motto of 'Until the Battle is Won' is significant as it speaks to the resolve they'll need to exhibit as leaders.

"The challenges we face constantly evolve and test our resilience," Clarke said. COVID-19 prevented families from seeing the ring ceremony live and has stopped other social events on campus since last spring. In light of that, Clarke later asked the class, "What if this challenging time is one of the easiest you'll face in your careers?"

The message struck a chord with the Corps of cadets as they reflected in their time at the academy, particularly this year given the restrictions in place to mitigate COVID-19.

Cadet Reilly McGinnis, the highest ranking member of the Corps of Cadets, noted that Clarke, "put our years at the Academy in perspective...they prepare us for the greater challenges that lie ahead. He reminded us that 'it is not the will to win, but rather the will to prepare to win that matters.'"

This class will graduate 20 years after 9/11. The class of 2001, "Sat where these seniors are now, enjoying their ring weekend, completely unaware they were on the cusp of massive change," Clarke said.

He challenged the class to care deeply for the men and



U.S. Army Gen. Richard Clarke, U.S. Special Operations Command commander, and West Point Graduate of 1984 speaks to cadets during a banquet honoring the West Point senior class Oct. 3, 2020. Courtesy photo.

women placed under their charge, "to reach Soldiers on a deep, human level...[and] inspire a passion for personal growth, courage, and virtue."

Cadet Adam McElligott, the Class Ring Committee Chairman, reflected on Clarke's remarks and said, "His message was a message of hope. We may have conflict in our future, but there is also good to come. Our first battle starts here at West Point, but it's how we follow through in the future long after we leave that will define who we become and what we make of ourselves and the people around us."

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command Tampa dedicates Gold Star Families Memorial in downtown MacDill Park

*Photo essay by Michael Bottoms
USSOCOM Office of Communication*

The city of Tampa dedicated a Gold Star Families Memorial at the downtown MacDill Park Nov. 7, 2020. A Gold Star Family is the immediate family member(s) of a fallen service member who died while serving in a time of conflict. The Gold Star Families Memorial is part of retired Marine Corps Chief Warrant Officer and World War II Medal of Honor recipient Hershel “Woody” Williams’ effort to build a Gold Star Memorial in every state to honor the sacrifice of families who have lost a member in service to the nation.

“Nearly 400,000 veterans and Gold Star Families call [the Tampa] area home. The Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force don’t order them to retire here, they choose it...because it feels like home,” Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke, Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command told Tampa Mayor Jane Castor and the audience during his remarks at a Gold Star Families Memorial dedication ceremony in downtown Tampa’s MacDill Park.

(Below) Army Gen. Richard Clarke, commander U.S. Special Operations Command and Tampa Mayor Jane Castor meet before the Gold Star Families Memorial dedication in downtown Tampa Nov. 7, 2020. (Top right) World War II Medal of Honor recipient retired Chief Warrant Officer Hershel “Woody” Williams give remarks during the Gold Star Families Memorial dedication. (Right) Army Gen. Richard Clarke speaks during the Gold Star Families Memorial dedication.



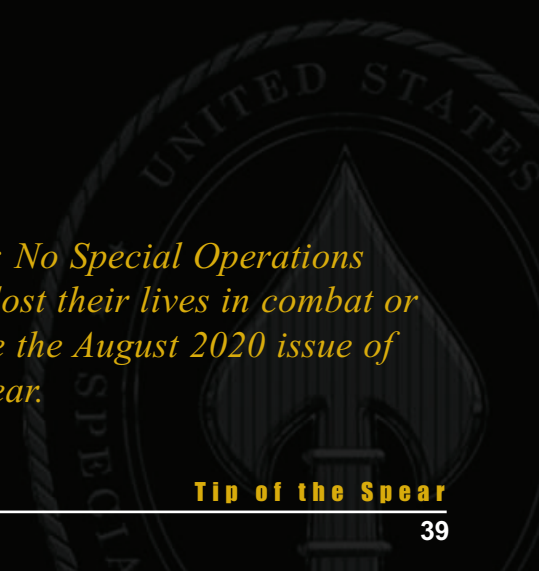


(Left) A Gold Star Family member lays a rose at the Gold Star Families Memorial at MacDill Park in downtown Tampa Nov. 7, 2020. (Above) The back of the Gold Star Families Memorial located at MacDill Park in downtown Tampa. (Below) The front of the Gold Star Families Memorial located at MacDill Park in downtown Tampa.





CILBERT ALANIZ (S) RALPH L. THOMPSON WESLEY B. AN. DAVID ALAN C. BRY
S/MSG PVT USA 880125 MSG CPT USA 810120 SMO PVT USA 840922 MSG CPT USA 8
JANISRY WILLIAM C. HAYES ROBERT A. BRADMAN



Editor's note: No Special Operations Forces have lost their lives in combat or training since the August 2020 issue of Tip of the Spear.

The USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112) sails through Pearl Harbor, HI., in commemoration of National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. This year marks the 79th anniversary of the Dec. 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor that took the lives of an estimated 2,403 United States personnel, injured 1,178, and drew the United States into World War II. The USS Michael Murphy is named for Medal of Honor recipient U.S. Navy Lt. Michael Murphy (SEAL) killed in combat in Afghanistan June 28, 2005. Photo by U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Christopher Perez.

