

U.S. Special Operations Command MacDill AFB, Florida

Tip of the Spear

February 2024



**SEALs, Cypriot Navy forge alliance
in eastern Mediterranean waters**

United States Special Operations Command



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Tip of the Spear

**U.S. Army Gen. Bryan P. Fenton
Commander, USSOCOM**

**Command Sgt. Maj. Shane W. Shorter
Senior Enlisted Leader, USSOCOM**

U.S. Army Col. Alexandra Weiskopf
**Special Operations
Communication Office Director**

Michael Bottoms
Managing Editor

U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Demetrius Munnerlyn
Staff NCOIC

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marleah Miller
Photojournalist

2022 Defense Media Merit Award Winner

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(Cover) East Coast-based U.S. Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) and Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewmen (SWCC) conduct maritime training with Cypriot Underwater Demolition Command (MYK) forces near Limassol, Cyprus on Jan. 25, 2024. This training strengthens the relationship between U.S. Special Operations Command Europe and its Allies and partners throughout Europe, reinforcing the United States commitment to the region. Naval Special Warfare Group TWO produces, supports, and deploys the world's premier maritime special operations forces to conduct full-spectrum operations and integrated deterrence in support of U.S. national objectives. Photo by U.S. Navy Mass Petty Officer 1st Class Bill Carlisle.

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U.S. Special Operations Command - Africa



US Special Operations Africa supports donation of humanitarian assistance to Equatorial Guinea



U.S. servicemembers from Special Operations Command Africa (left) pose for a photo with U.S. Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea David R. Gilmour (second from right) and Ramon Bengono Miko, Presidential Counselor for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender (right) during the delivery of humanitarian aid, February 2, 2024, in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

Courtesy Story Special Operations Command Africa

Through a joint effort, U.S. Special Operations Africa delivered a donation of humanitarian supplies with assistance from II Marine Expeditionary Force USS Hershel “Woody” Williams (ESB-4) Detachment in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, February 2, 2024. U.S. forces worked concurrently with the government of Equatorial Guinea to facilitate this engagement signifying sustained relations between the two nations.

The Equatorial Guinea Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender received the donation of \$24,000 worth of supplies and will disburse it to local shelters and orphanages within the community.

“We are very thankful to have the opportunity to work with the Equatorial Guinea ministry leaders as well as our U.S. military and embassy colleagues to complete this collaborative effort to combat human trafficking and provide aid to help vulnerable populations,” said U.S. Army Maj. Brittany Fraser, SOCAFRICA Civil Affairs Branch Chief.

The nation’s relative remoteness, comprised of a mainland region and volcanic islands off the Gulf of

Guinea, presents procurement and logistical challenges. U.S. forces are currently postured to support these complex delivery logistics. This humanitarian donation will benefit the most vulnerable of the population in the

host nation. One of the recipients of this donation is the first shelter dedicated to victims of human trafficking. The aid items delivered included baby formula, diapers, rehydration salts, pediatric medicines, and first aid kits for distribution to the

local populace.

“We hope that this donation is the beginning of additional cooperation and illustrates the broad range of programs available through U.S. forces to help strengthen not only security but improve the livelihoods of the people of Equatorial Guinea,” said Defense Attaché to the U.S. Embassy in Equatorial Guinea Cdr. Michael White.

SOCAFRICA, II MEF HWW Detachment, and the USS Hershel “Woody” Williams (ESB-4) procured the original donation at Naval Station Rota, Spain, August

16, 2023, through a coordinated effort. U.S. forces remain postured to support our African partners and continue maintaining the rapport with Equatorial Guinea for future cooperation.

“We hope that this is the first of many opportunities to partner with not only the Ministry of Social Affairs, but the government of Equatorial Guinea,” said U.S. Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea David R. Gilmour. “The U.S. Embassy strives to increase cooperation to make progress on our shared goals of strengthening regional security, promoting economic prosperity and human development, and encouraging good governance and respect for human rights.”

II MEF HWW Detachment conducted this humanitarian assistance through a scheduled deployment in the NAVEUR-NAVAF area of operations, employed by U.S. Sixth Fleet to defend U.S., European allied and African partner interests throughout Africa to attain greater security and stability for their population.

SOCAFRICA remains actively engaged in supporting our partners throughout Africa to attain greater security and stability for their population.

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— U.S. Army Maj. Brittany Fraser, SOCAFRICA Civil Affairs Branch Chief.

The U.S. Embassy strives to increase cooperation to make progress on our shared goals of strengthening regional security, promoting economic prosperity and human development, and encouraging good governance and respect for human rights.

— U.S. Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea David R. Gilmour.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



Family is forever – a life of service

By *U.S. Army Staff Sgt. James Bunn*
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe

It's often said that the military becomes a family to those who serve. Sitting with a Military and Family Life Counselor like Janet Escobedo, that adage rings true. Looking at Escobedo's grandmotherly exterior, it's hard to believe she was a trailblazer who dominated during the Air Force survival, evasion, resistance, and escape course, and ran ultra-marathons. She belies the energy of a woman half her age.

"I don't know, I just never thought to slow down!" Escobedo exclaimed when asked about her drive and passion for serving the military, civilians, and family members of U.S. Special Operations Command Europe.

Escobedo came to Stuttgart, Germany to serve as the MFLC (pronounced em-fleck) for the 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in 2023, bringing her effervescent spirit and can-do attitude to the unit. After her stint with 1-10, she moved across town to support the SOCEUR headquarters team.

She recounted the feeling of stress and excitement during her first few visits to SOCEUR, saying she could feel the tension but also the passion everyone had for their jobs. During her time with SOCEUR, Escobedo was known for having sweet treats to brighten the day of those she came across, and always making time for those who needed her.

"She gave the best hugs," said Army Master Sgt. Kelly Simon adding, "She was always a ball of energy, and she would leave folks feeling better than before she stopped by."

Among her many achievements, Escobedo was the first woman to run the 20.5 mile stretch of the Grand Canyon, from the North Kaibab trail to the South Rim.

"We ran a 50-mile ultra marathon to get into condition for that event," Escobedo said nonchalantly, as if it's just another day.

Accomplishing the extraordinary is ordinary for Escobedo. In another instance, when she completed SERE school, two instructors presented her with a leather belt



Cadet Janet Escobedo, right front, and other Virginia Tech Cadet Corps students in 1973. Courtesy photo.

buckle from the People's Democratic Republic of Vietnam as a symbol of her perseverance, fortitude, and resilience. Escobedo recognized the significance of the honor; the belt buckle had only been given three times in 11 years.

Those weren't her only firsts. Escobedo was part of the first all-female Cadet Corps at Virginia Tech in 1973, where she threw discus and javelin for the university track and field team, hinting at her life-long love of sport. She commissioned in the Air Force as an intelligence officer, and officially began her first career at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona, then on to Germany where her passion and skill, both for the military and sports, led her to a spot on the U.S. team in the Continental Sports Conference in Berlin, where she won Gold in track and field.

"We competed and stayed in the Berlin Olympic Stadium in 1982," said Escobedo. "It was a thrill seeing my name on the big Olympic scoreboard."

During her assignment in Germany, Escobedo was instrumental in getting an intelligence system known as the Battlefield information and Exploitation System (BICES), operational during Desert Storm. She helped negotiate



Janet Escobedo scuba diving between the tectonic plates that separate the African continent from the Asian continent. Courtesy Photo.

many agreements with partner nations to get the system online.

“Probably the most important legacy in my intelligence career is that I helped get the BICES program operational,” she said.

In 1995, Escobedo took command of a squadron at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California. It was here she found her calling as a counselor.

“One day I was putting on my uniform and while adjusting my name tag, I literally heard a voice say, ‘I want you to become a counselor,’” Escobedo recalled.

She said her faith was strong, even if she had never considered this as a career path after the Air Force.

“I was a techie through and through, developing sophisticated intelligence architectures for Desert Storm,” she explained, though she recounted numerous times she had counseled subordinates throughout her military career.

Ever one to persevere, Escobedo completed her schooling and began working with at-risk youth in New Mexico. In 2013 she began working as an MFLC with the New Mexico National Guard. Eventually, she made her way to Kenya and worked with special operations units.

“I did a tour in Djibouti and Manda Bay, Kenya, and then became an embedded MFLC with the 352nd Special Operations Wing,” she explained. The 352nd is the air component subordinate to SOCEUR. Tragedy struck the ever-positive Escobedo in 2022 when her husband of 43 years passed away. She realized at that moment she had a decision to make.

“After that terrible tragedy I realized I had a choice; I could drown myself in self-pity, or I could go on living my life to the fullest,” said Escobedo. “I chose the latter, realizing that the MFLC program and serving others has

always brought me joy, I volunteered to do a year-long overseas assignment.”

That’s when she found herself back in the special operations community where she found that losing her husband broadened her perspective and aided her because she worked with many grieving service members in similar situations.

She shared her method to facing challenges, explaining that she approaches them with hope, love, and a positive attitude.

“She was an absolute delight whenever she walked into a room, she was a real asset and she will be surely missed,” said Lt. Col. Sean Raleigh, the SOCEUR personnel director.

“Escobedo will forever be part of the SOCEUR family.”

“When your military career is finished, you’re never going to say ‘gee, I wish I had spent more time in the office on my son’s birthday,’” said Escobedo. “When your military career is finished, it’s finished, but your family is forever.”



Lt. Col. Janet Escobedo at her military retirement in 1997. Escobedo continued her service to the United States as a Military and Family Life Counselor providing confidential support and guidance to service members and their families. MFLCs are an important part of the U.S. military’s mental health and counseling services. Courtesy Photo.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Korea



ROK-US demonstrate enduring SOF relationship with first combined training of 2024

*By U.S. Air Force Maj. Christopher Mesnard
Special Operations Command Korea*

The end of January 2024 marked the completion of the new year's first joint combined exchange training events conducted by U.S. Special Forces Command Korea aligned units. During the month, U.S. Navy Naval Special Warfare Command and U.S. Army Special Operations Command personnel partnered with their Republic of Korea counterparts, participating in various special operations forces-unique training events that enhanced both nations' capacity to respond to a variety of complex situations.

The NSW team partnered with ROK Army Soldiers from the 701st Special Airborne Regiment and personnel from the ROK Special Operations Unit. Together, they honed their ability to conduct advanced reconnaissance techniques, use specialized and off-the-shelf capabilities, and knowledge of cover and concealment techniques through in-class and practical exercises.

At a separate location, U.S. Army Special Forces personnel assigned to the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) trained with their counterparts from the ROK Special Warfare Command's 3rd Brigade. The two-week-long training focused on mission planning, a marksmanship course, and special reconnaissance with the intent of calling for simulated long-range fire missions as a joint fires observer.

Training iterations like these build trust and confidence between ROK and U.S. SOF personnel should they ever need to respond to mutual defense requirements. During both teams' training



U.S. Navy's Naval Special Warfare Command facilitators (center) prepare to demonstrate the capabilities of various weapons and reconnaissance aides during a combined training event with Republic of Korea Army soldiers assigned to the 701st Brigade at Paju, ROK, on Jan. 26, 2024. The combined team later participated in a special reconnaissance field exercise, helping individuals practically apply the skills they learned. Photo by Republic of Korea Army Cpl. Yeonung Kim.

curriculums personnel focused on the ability to operate, communicate, and survive as cohesive units in austere environments.

The missions of SOF historically span all phases of competition. As a means to meet security needs before they arise, both the ROK and U.S. regularly invest in the people who can conduct unique special operations missions. These credible networks of people enable an integrated deterrence posture that complicates the decisions of those who may seek belligerent actions to destabilize the region while also posturing both nations to prevail should deterrence fail.



Soldiers assigned to 3rd Brigade, Republic of Korea Special Warfare Command and a U.S. Special Forces Soldier assigned to 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) prepare to begin a special reconnaissance training event at Rodriguez Live Fire Range, ROK, on Jan. 31, 2024. Combined teams of ROK and U.S. special operations personnel regularly train together to meet their nations' mutual defense priorities. Photo by Republic of Korea Army Cpl. Yeonung Kim.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command



Top Army's generals for cyber, space and special operations convene for Triad partnership

By Dottie White

U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command

The Army's top generals for cyber, space and special operations forces met to discuss the Triad partnership and how they can further develop, operationalize and institutionalize the collaboration.

Commanding Generals Lt. Gen. Maria B. Barrett, U.S. Army Cyber Command; and Lt. Gen. Jonathon P. Braga, U.S. Army Special Operations Command; and Lt. Gen. Sean A. Gainey, U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command, met Jan. 31 for the third Triad 3-Star General Officer Steering Committee at USASMDC headquarters at Peterson Space Force Base.

Members of the GOSC emphasized the importance of the Triad due to the ever-changing character of warfare. Along with this evolution, the threats and the nature of deterrence are changing for the United States. The Triad looks to develop innovative and comprehensive solutions.

"The Cyber-Space-SOF Triad provides one of these solutions," Braga said. "It is a 'Modern-Day Triad' designed to converge unique accesses, capabilities, authorities, understanding, and effects in many of the

same ways we have implemented combined arms operations. Additionally, the Triad provides operational and strategic advantage during active campaigning, crisis and conflict, while presenting options to senior leaders that are less escalatory than current strategic deterrence options."

Gainey said that they must continue building upon the significant progress the Triad has already made in the development of concepts, capabilities and

formations that enable exquisite operational preparation of the environment. The commands have already developed a unified exercise, experimentation and engagement plan for fiscal year 2024 and fiscal year 2025.

"We are working with the Theater Special Operations Command to ensure they know the space and high-altitude capabilities we can provide and to develop the operational concepts of employment," said Gainey.

"(The Triad) is developing real-world employment concepts

designed to enable Army and joint force objectives anywhere in the world at a time and place of our choosing," Gainey said. "Additionally, the Triad will enable 'Left of Launch' trans-regional missile defeat and active campaigning to ensure the ability of our

It is a 'Modern-Day Triad' designed to converge unique accesses, capabilities, authorities, understanding, and effects in many of the same ways we have implemented combined arms operations. Additionally, the Triad provides operational and strategic advantage during active campaigning, crisis and conflict, while presenting options to senior leaders that are less escalatory than current strategic deterrence options.

— Lt. Gen. Jonathon P. Braga, U.S. Army Special Operations Command

nation's adversaries to strike the United States, as well as its partners and allies is prevented."

The Triad is a major way we can contribute to multi-domain operations and for us, the potential it provides our Missile Defeat efforts, as well as the access, understanding, and effects it can enable for the Joint Force are undeniable, Gainey said.

"As such, the Triad provides flexible deterrent options that can shape the threat environment in ways our adversaries are unaware of and can provide flexible response options if they choose to break international norms and escalate tensions into conflict," he said.

Braga said the Triad has an outsized impact against the adversary's capabilities as it relates to SOF, space and cyber.

"That is why it is inherent we work together, experiment together and learn together," Braga said.

Barrett said the Triad is coming up with solutions and tools together as a team.

"Triad operations disrupt adversary actions, demonstrate resolve, shape the adversary's perceptions and gain advantage for warfighters when deterrence fails," Barrett said. "ARCYBER has a track record of integrating cyber, electronic warfare and influence operations and can now deliver that to triad partners."



Commanding Generals Lt. Gen. Jonathon P. Braga, U.S. Army Special Operations Command; Lt. Gen. Maria B. Barrett, U.S. Army Cyber Command; and Lt. Gen. Sean A. Gainey, U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command receive briefings on capability displays during the Triad General Officer Steering Committee meeting, Jan. 31, at USASMDC headquarters in Peterson Space Force Base, Colorado. Photo by Dottie White.



Commanding Generals Lt. Gen. Jonathon P. Braga, U.S. Army Special Operations Command; Lt. Gen. Maria B. Barrett, U.S. Army Cyber Command; Lt. Gen. Sean A. Gainey, U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command, pose for a photo Jan. 31 prior to the third Triad 3-Star General Officer Steering Committee at USASMDC headquarters at Peterson Space Force Base, Colorado. Photo by Dottie White.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command



The crucible of fires: State of the art fires center named after legendary Ranger

*By U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Jordan Weir
U.S. Army Special operations Command*

After four years of planning, collaboration, design, and renovation, the U.S. Army's 75th Ranger Regiment cut the ribbon on the Domeij Fires Center on Nov. 2, 2023, marking its grand opening.

"Today, we stand on hallowed ground," said Master Sgt. Ian Pletch, the 75th Ranger Regimental Fires Noncommissioned Officer. "Not just because of the bricks and mortar that shape the structure behind me, but because of the legacy it represents. We are here to honor a man whose journey was truly the stuff of legends."

The center is named after Sgt. 1st Class Kristoffer Domeij, who served as the Fires Support Noncommissioned Officer for 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, when he was killed during combat operations, Oct. 22, 2011, in Afghanistan.

It was his 14th combat deployment.

The man

Domeij was a fire supporter of legendary proportions within the Ranger Regiment, whose incredible career laid the groundwork for what would become Ranger Fires Support as it exists today.

"[Domeij] walked amongst us during one of the toughest periods in Ranger history," said Col. J.D. Keirsej, Commander of the 75th Ranger Regiment. "Back-to-back deployments in the places that others feared to tread. This was an important time in Ranger history."

"The rest of the joint force was on the ropes," he



Rangers Fires Supporters with the 75th Ranger Regiment unveil the sign for the Domeij Fires Center. After four years of planning, collaboration, design, and renovation, the U.S. Army's 75th Ranger Regiment cut the ribbon on the Domeij Fires Center on Nov. 2, 2023, marking its grand opening. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. David Soflin.

said, "and needed Rangers to track down the leaders and high-level facilitators of the enemy. Kris did it each and every night."

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Reynolds, a forward observer with the 75th Ranger Regiment, who had never met the man in person, told the story of Domeij with reverence and awe.

"[Domeij] came to Ranger Regiment pre-9/11," Reynolds said. "In a world where things were changing, capabilities were being delegated down, he oversaw all of it. He led the way. He was a man who could layer effects and layer fires in a way that was kind of next level."

Domeij earned the distinction of becoming one of the first Joint Terminal Attack Controller qualified members in the U.S. Army at the time.

It is a distinction that has rippled across time and left a permanent mark on the Regiment. Now, Ranger Fire Supporters are required to become JTAC qualified when they become NCO's.

"Not only are we good Rangers," said Sgt. Jack Masterson, a forward observer with the 75th Ranger Regiment, "but we're also really good fires guys. It's not one or the other. They go hand in hand. And [Domeij] was really the first to show that we can do that."

Reynolds hammering the breadth of Domeij's influence on the Ranger Regiment home by bridging the past with the present.

"We look back at our history," said Reynolds. "We look at WWII and the Rangers who climbed Point du Hoc on D-Day ... I personally didn't climb Point du Hoc. You know what I mean? And so, I ask myself: how do I carry forward, and how can I be the guy who climbs Point du Hoc ... when MY Point du Hoc comes around?"

"Kris Domeij showed us how," he said.

The Domeij Fires Center

The Center's inception began when retired Chief Warrant Officer 3 Gregory Funk, former Fires Officer for the 75th Ranger Regiment, recognized the need to accelerate its lethal effects capabilities in the special operations forces environment.

"When you look at the training path of fire supporters and special operators that are JTACs, there's a lot that goes into it," Funk said. "If you look at the SOF Truths, these skills can't be easily replicated, and mass produced. It's a unique skill that requires detailed training. It's not a hobby. It is a very serious skill set that can either make or break a mission."

Building on a history, dating back to then Secretary of the Army, Gen. Creighton Abrams' Charter to the Regiment in 1974, which charged the elite special operations unit to "be better with their hands and weapons than anyone," the 75th Ranger Regiment set out to bridge the significant gaps that exist in the Army's fires capabilities by building a physical representation of groundbreaking technology coupled with the unmatched fighting spirit of the Rangers.

"The problem was that getting the actual training reps in relied too heavily on factors outside of the unit's control," said Funk. "Bad weather rolls in, training can't happen. Aircraft malfunctions, training can't happen. Even when things go perfectly, the amount of time between iterations for the lanes to reset means that individual Fire Supporters and JTACs may only get one

or two reps in during the exercise."

There is a cosmic divide that exists between simply having proficiency in a skill set and having mastery of it, and it's a divide the Domeij Fires Center aims to close.

Here they will get the reps necessary to gain true mastery of their craft. The center offers a dynamic space where Ranger and partner Forward Observers can experience tough battlefield problems and solutions firsthand and envision applications within their own operations.

"It's designed for the next generation of fires Rangers and Soldiers," Masterson said. "I think that it's probably honestly going to revolutionize things, not only for forward observers, but also Army JTACs."

It is a \$2.2 million fires training facility, unrivaled in all the Army, that exemplifies cutting-edge fires technology in both the special operations realm and beyond.

It is a total immersion simulator, able to not only replicate the most complex combat scenarios that a forward observer could face in the real world, but also to capture real time data that Ranger Forward Observers can use to gain a profound understanding of their equipment, technology, tactics, and perhaps most importantly, themselves, in order to meet the ever-evolving challenges facing the Army and the nation.

Spanning more than 1,500 square feet, the Domeij Center combines a joint operations center and individual virtual training simulators to provide the greatest training benefit possible to every fire supporter in Regiment and beyond. The deliberate inclusion of the latest fires technologies and equipment underlines the 75th Ranger Regiment's commitment to continual, realistic, and exhausting training as it strives to build and field the best possible fire supporters in the Army.

"The infantry owns the last 100 yards of the battlefield, no question," Reynolds said. "But they're not going to get that close without substantial amounts of fire support."

That, at its core, is what the Domeij Fires Center is all about. Setting the conditions necessary for Rangers to continue to dominate any mission they are called upon to fight. This center embodies a steadfast commitment to actively contribute to advancing solutions in the battle space and setting new Army standards.

"This building is the arena," Pletch said. "This building is the crucible where Ranger Fires professionals are built. Forged through fire, led by Ranger NCOs who give you the opportunity to fail forward; to get 1% better every day. This building represents the Ranger spirit of Sgt. 1st Class Kristoffer Domeij. His legacy lives on. It is our turn now to do for others ... what he did for us."

U.S. Army Special Operations Command

US Army Rangers Support JPMRC 24-02

A U.S. Army Ranger from the 75th Ranger Regiment pull security during Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center 24-02 at Donnelly Training Area, Alaska, Feb. 12, 2024. JPMRC 24-02 depends on joint, multi-component and multinational partners to succeed, including U.S. Air Force air and ground crews, U.S. Marines, and international military participants from more than five countries, a testament to the realism and authenticity of its world-class training capability. Photo by U.S. Army Pfc. Mike Godinez-Martinez.

AIRBORNE





Naval Special Warfare Command



SEALs, Cypriot Navy forge alliance in eastern Mediterranean waters

*By U.S. Navy Lt.j.g. Martin Carey
Naval Special Warfare Command*

In a constant demonstration of partnership in the Eastern Mediterranean, U.S. East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) and Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewmen (SWCC) collaborated with Cypriot Navy Underwater Demolition Team (MYK) partners Jan. 22 – Feb. 14, 2024, refining their operational expertise in the maritime domain throughout waters

surrounding Cyprus. This relationship serves as a powerful deterrent, showcasing a united front against potential threats to regional and maritime security in the area.

“Our partnership with the Cypriot Underwater Demolition Team sends a clear message to our adversaries. Together, we stand as a resolute force, ready to respond to any challenge and defend the shared interests of our nations,” said Capt. Bill Gallagher, Naval Special Warfare Group TWO Commodore. “This is not just a collaboration; it’s a crucible of excellence. Through joint endeavors, we fortify our capabilities and make clear that



East Coast-based U.S. Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) and Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewmen (SWCC) conduct maritime training with Cypriot Underwater Demolition Command (MYK) forces near Limassol, Cyprus on Jan. 25, 2024. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Bill Carlisle.



East Coast-based U.S. Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) and Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewmen (SWCC) conduct live fire weapons training with Cypriot Underwater Demolition Command (MYK) forces near Limassol, Cyprus on Jan. 29, 2024. This training strengthens the relationship between U.S. Special Operations Command Europe and its Allies and partners throughout Europe, reinforcing the United States commitment to the region. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Bill Carlisle.

any aggression will be met with a swift, unyielding response.”

One of the marquee iterations involved the special operations forces deploying from the expeditionary fast transport ship USNS Yuma (T-EPF 8) at night in the technologically advanced Combatant Craft Medium boats, navigating to a vessel of interest, climbing aboard, conducting close quarters clearance and site exploitation. Naval Special Warfare’s integration with Fleet assets like Yuma extends their tactical reach and provides multi-domain response options to counter national security threats and deter aggression from potential adversaries.

The on-site SEAL commander stated, “The interoperability and camaraderie displayed here transcend conventional military cooperation. These face-to-face iterations of training not only bolster our combat capabilities but ensures the U.S. and Cypriot relationship remains steadfast.”

Navigating persistent waves, the SEALs and their Cypriot partners engaged in synchronized drills, honing their skills in covert operations, maritime operations, and visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) at sea. The intensity of these exercises reflects the unwavering commitment Naval Special Warfare has to training their personnel to ensure readiness and the ability to operate in dynamic maritime environments.

Yuma is one of 14 Spearhead-class expeditionary fast transport ships that provide a high-speed, shallow draft vessel for rapid intra-theater transport of medium-sized cargo payloads. These ships have a flight deck and a load ramp which allows the rapid transit and deployment of conventional or special operations forces, equipment and supplies.

The MYK special operations forces are highly skilled operators of the Cypriot Navy who conduct special reconnaissance, direct action, military assistance, combat search and rescue, and maritime operations to safeguard the interests of Cyprus and promote regional security.

Naval Special Warfare Group TWO produces, supports, and deploys the world’s premier maritime special operations forces to conduct full-spectrum operations and integrated deterrence in support of U.S. national objectives.



East Coast-based U.S. Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) and Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewmen (SWCC) conduct over the beach training with Cypriot Underwater Demolition Command (MYK) forces near Limassol, Cyprus on Feb. 1, 2024. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Bill Carlisle.

Naval Special Warfare Command



Navy SEALs train with Beale defenders during Exercise Dragon Trident

By U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Samuel Burns
9th Reconnaissance Wing Public Affairs

Forty Airmen from the 9th Security Forces Squadron (SFS), 9th Medical Group (MDG) and 9th Operations Support Squadron (OSS) from Beale Air Force Base, California, teamed up with East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) for joint Exercise Dragon Trident 1, Jan. 29-31, 2024. This 3-day training exercise involved base defense operations, weapons training and re-capture operations.

The exercise kicked off with 9th SFS Airmen establishing air base ground defense with command and control, mobile security patrols and defensive fighting positions at the forward operating site (FOS). Beale's defenders were on guard with ultimate training munitions (UTM) to defend themselves from a series of unknown maneuvers from SEAL team operators infiltrating the FOS. Under the cover of darkness, the SEALs conducted a free-fall enabled nighttime raid supported by fixed wing and rotary wing assets.

"After getting set up, we knew an attack was coming, but we didn't know where it would come from," said U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Aaisha Banks, 9th Security Forces Squadron cyber security liaison. "This is new training for most of us, and it helps us prepare for real world encounters by showing where our deficiencies are and where we can improve."

Alongside the 9th SFS Airmen were the 9th OSS Airmen, including airfield management, air traffic control, radar airfield and weather systems, who assisted in drop zone setup and integrated with SFS for multi-capable Airman training.

On the second day of training, Beale Airmen went to the firing range to train on the M-249 light machine gun, M-240 machine gun, M-4 carbine and P320-M18 pistol. They also utilized the Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station (CROWS) system inside Mine Resistant Ambush Protected



East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) fire a M224 mortar during Exercise Dragon Trident 1 at Fallon, Nevada, Jan. 30, 2024. This joint exercise gave SEALs and 9th Security Forces Airmen from Beale Air Force Base an opportunity to train on various weapons systems, increasing their efficiency and lethality. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Samuel A. Burns.

All-Terrain Vehicle (M-ATV) firing the .50 caliber machine gun and MK-19 grenade launcher. The SEALs provided tips and techniques to enhance 9 SFS efficiency and lethality with various weapons systems.

"The most memorable experience was using the CROWS system in the M-ATV since it gives us a safe position to strike our targets," said Airman 1st Class Jaylin Charles, 9th SFS protection level 1 entry controller. "[The SEALs] also gave us great hands-on training on grip and stance for firing our handguns and rifles, as well as better squad tactics for machine gun firing."

The roles reversed on the third day of training as Beale Airmen executed re-capture operations alongside SEAL teammates. Using UTMs, the joint unit infiltrated the forward operating site, utilizing squad tactics to raid and secure the



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Tristen Moncel, 9th Security Forces Squadron standardization and evaluations security forces evaluator from Beale Air Force Base, California (left), fires a M-4 Carbine while an East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) evaluates his technique at Fallon, Nevada, Jan. 30, 2024. During Exercise Dragon Trident 1. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Samuel A. Burns.

site. This exercise was beneficial for the Airmen and the SEALs, as it allowed them to see how the other side functions and how to operate as one cohesive unit.

“When we look at strategic competition and future conflict, we need to establish the relationships in our joint community to ensure success on the battlefield,” said Chief Master Sgt. Christopher Ricks, 9th SFS senior enlisted leader.

Training between Air Force security forces and Navy SEALs is not common, but a collaboration of senior leaders made it possible.

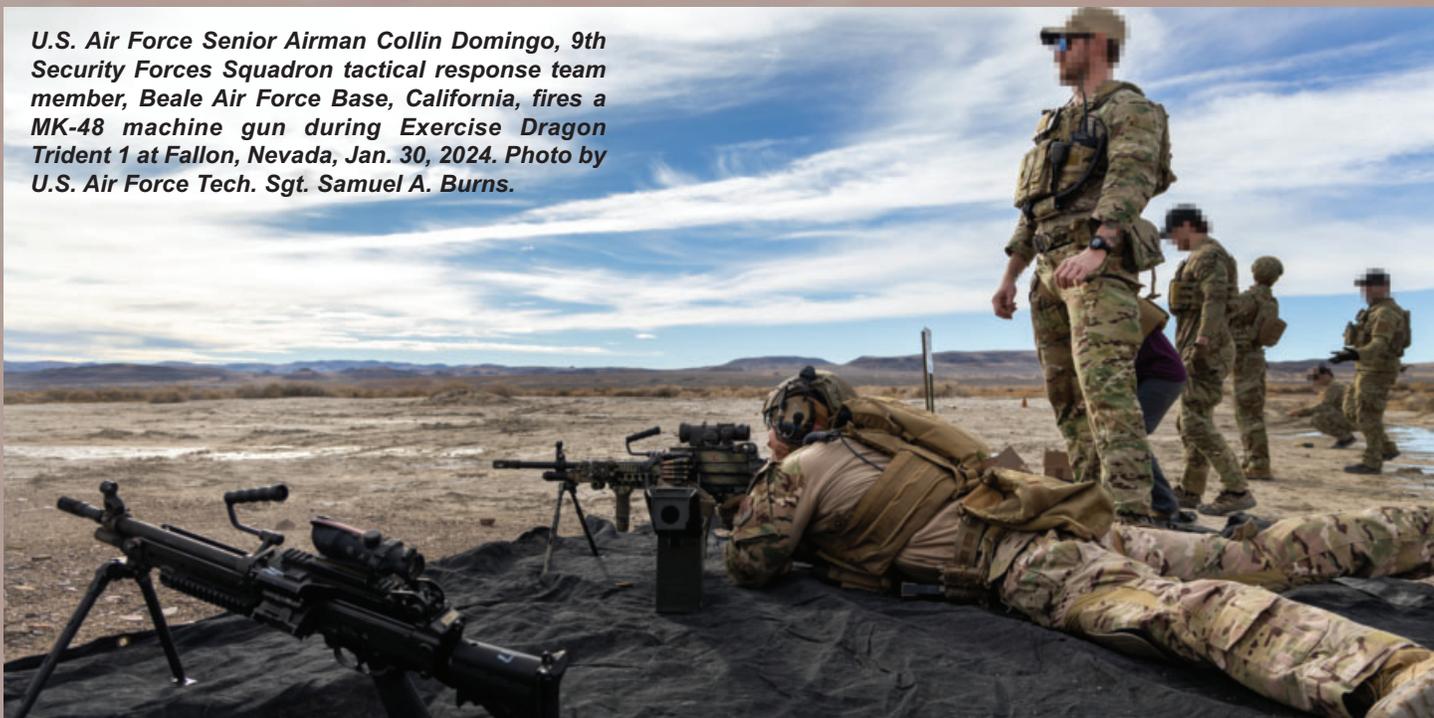
“In November of 2022, [a Navy SEAL] and I were classmates at the Joint Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy (JSOFSEA) and had numerous conversations about the importance of joint operations and bringing our units together to train,” said Ricks.

Throughout 2023, the conversations turned into actions that brought this unique training opportunity to life. Within 14 months of the initial idea, Exercise Dragon Trident 1 kicked off.

“It’s always easy to say ‘no’ but it takes a lot of effort to say ‘yes’ and follow through on your promises and put forward the effort to make this type of training happen,” said the SEAL senior enlisted leader. “We wanted a near-peer adversary to present a difficult target set for our final end of cycle training exercise before going downrange. The planning during the exercise was very in depth and detailed. Upon assessing the base defense that was established, it forced the assault team to change the game plan on the fly, presenting a whole different level of complexity, which provided outstanding training value.”

After three adrenaline-filled training days, both sides wrapped it up with in-depth feedback, pointing out areas for improvement for everyone involved. Those improvements are hoped to be implemented in the near future, as the 9th SFS and SEALs are expecting this to be the first of many joint exercises. This new training environment sharpened both the 9th SFS and SEALs skills, keeping them primed and ready for real-world wartime operations.

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Collin Domingo, 9th Security Forces Squadron tactical response team member, Beale Air Force Base, California, fires a MK-48 machine gun during Exercise Dragon Trident 1 at Fallon, Nevada, Jan. 30, 2024. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Samuel A. Burns.



Naval Special Warfare Command NSW with Allied Special Ops



East-coast based U.S. Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) conduct military free fall training with Allied Special Operations Forces near Athens, Greece Dec. 12, 2023. This training strengthens the relationship between U.S. Special Operations Command Europe and its Allies and partners throughout Europe, reinforcing the United States commitment to the region. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Bill Carlisle.





Naval Special Warfare Command



USSOUTHCOM, NAVSCIATTS honor Panamá's Minister of Public Security

By Angela Fry

Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School

In a historic ceremony recognizing the accomplishments of a distinguished graduate and the command's past, the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS) recently presented its 2021 Distinguished Alumni Award to Juan Manuel Pino Forero, the minister of public security for the Republic of Panamá.

Gen. Laura Richardson, commander of U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), presented the ninth annual award at a ceremony held on Feb. 2, at the minister's office in Panamá City, with dignitaries such as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Daniel Erickson, Deputy Assistant Secretary Eric Jacobstein, Amb. Sarah-Ann Lynch, deputy civilian to the SOUTHCOM commander, and component service chiefs from Panamá in attendance.

In remarks to the audience, Richardson addressed the history of NAVSCIATTS across Latin America and the Caribbean and its impact from a global perspective. "For 60 years, this command has established relationships and assisted in the development of partners across the globe; many of whom have ascended to the highest echelons of command in their countries," Richardson expressed.

Richardson, who assumed leadership of the unified combatant command responsible for an area that encompasses 32 nations in Central and South America and the Caribbean, and 14.5 million square miles in October 2021, also described NAVSCIATTS' relationship with Panamá, and other allies and partners within the area of operation.

"The ties between NAVSCIATTS and Panamá are strong. Almost 10 percent of the security force professionals who have trained with NAVSCIATTS hail from the Republic of Panamá," she explained. "As NAVSCIATTS continues to train future leaders from its global network, it is in the spirit of hard work, achievement, and commitment



Gen. Laura Richardson, commander of U.S. Southern Command, presents the ninth annual Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS) Distinguished Alumni award to Juan Manuel Pino Forero, the minister of public security for the Republic of Panamá, at a ceremony held on Feb. 2, at the minister's office in Panamá City. NAVSCIATTS is U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command's premier security force assistance training command operating in support of geographic combatant commands' theater security cooperation priorities. Photo by Angela K. Fry.

to sharing that we all look forward to a new generation of leadership to follow in Minister Pino's footsteps."

"Strong Leadership in this region absolutely matters," the general continued. "The many cross-cutting threats and challenges require a 'call to action' to show that democracies can deliver for their people. As Minister Pino often says, 'Individually we are strong, but together we are invincible.' And together, we will continue to demonstrate the power of partnership and the power of Team Democracy."

Pino, a graduate of NAVSCIATTS' coastal operations and boarding officer courses in the early nineties when the command was located at the Rodman Naval Station in Panamá, was chosen for this award because of his many contributions in service at both the national and international levels. With a notable career in public service to his country, the minister has demonstrated a commitment to upholding law and order, ensuring the safety of Panamá's citizens, and safeguarding its maritime interests.

During his acceptance remarks, Pino conveyed his journey from a junior officer attending NAVSCIATTS courses at Rodman Naval Station to his current position, a journey that reflects the school's success in producing capable leaders. He also recited the impact his experiences with NAVSCIATTS had on his institutional leadership throughout his career.

"When NAVSCIATTS left Panamá, they left two boats," the minister stated, referencing NAVSCIATTS relocation from Panamá to the United States in 1999. "One was a training boat and the other was a small riverine patrol vessel. I can say, with pride, that both of those boats are still functioning in Panamá. We have used them ever since the transfer of NAVSCIATTS, and I am grateful for this gesture."

He continued his remarks by discussing the many years of memories and experiences gained through his training with NAVSCIATTS, to include gaining knowledge of what is required to provide the necessary leadership to a public force.

"When I visit the different institutions as the minister, I still see myself in uniform," Pino reflected. "To them, they see me as the minister, but I remember the uniform and I tell them this to make them better and to leave them better than I was. Monday (Feb. 5) marks four years of my service as minister. I have a lot of satisfaction and pride and I tell the forces that the only difference between them and me is I have the responsibility. But we are all the same. I tell them with humility, you will capture the people's hearts."

Pino ended his remarks to the audience by thanking the general and NAVSCIATTS commander for the presentation. "I have a lot of history and a lot of stories from my 35 years of service," he added. "I appreciate this gift and I will take it home to my children because I continue to have all the pictures and have great appreciation for the memories from my time at NAVSCIATTS."

NAVSCIATTS Cmdr. Robert LeClerc, a U.S. Navy SEAL who assumed command in September 2023, reiterated that the recognition of Pino as a distinguished alumnus serves as a reminder of the school's enduring impact and the importance of investing in the education and training of future leaders in naval and security affairs.

"The Distinguished Alumni Program supports our ability

to recognize our allied and partner leaders who have helped strengthen and expand our country's collective network of global partners and we look forward to training the next group of leaders who own the responsibility of ensuring global stability," stated LeClerc, a 2006 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. "Minister Pino, NAVSCIATTS' transition to a global command would not have been possible without Panamá, and our relationships and friendships continue to strengthen, enabling both countries to work towards our shared interests of peace, security, and prosperity,"

In his closing remarks, LeClerc thanked the SOUTHCOM commander for her continued support of NAVSCIATTS, support that led to her testimonies to both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees and ultimately, to the command being addressed in the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act.

NAVSCIATTS, now located at the John C. Stennis Space Center along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, is home to some of the finest riverine and coastal training areas in the world. The international training command plays a crucial role in shaping skilled security force professionals, as its curriculum focuses on the full spectrum of operations that provides U.S. allies and partners with the training necessary to aid in the detection of criminal networks as they combat activities pertaining to regional and global issues such as terrorism, narcotics and human trafficking, transnational organized crime, and violent extremist efforts. To date, almost 14,000 foreign security force professionals from 125 partner nations have trained with the command.



Juan Manuel Pino Forero, the minister of public security for the Republic of Panamá, provides remarks after receiving the 2021 Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS) Distinguished Alumni award at a ceremony held at his office on Feb. 2. Gen. Laura Richardson, commander of U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), presented the ninth annual award, with dignitaries such as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Daniel Erickson, Deputy Assistant Secretary Eric Jacobstein, Amb. Sarah-Ann Lynch, deputy civilian to the SOUTHCOM commander, and component service chiefs from Panamá in attendance. Photo by Angela K. Fry.

Air Force Special Operations Command



The 352nd Special Operations Wing hosts Chindit veterans and families in celebration of Air Commando Heritage

Courtesy Story

The 352nd Special Operations Wing welcomed World War II Chindit veterans Sid Machin, Robbie Robertson, and their families, to RAF Mildenhall in a celebration of Air Commando heritage, Jan. 24, 2024.

The visitors toured an MC-130J Commando II and a CV-22B Osprey aircraft, saw demonstrations by Special Tactics Airmen, and learned how Chindit ancestry shaped the mission of the 352 SOW. They

also toured a KC-135 tanker aircraft of 100th Air Refueling Squadron and the RAF Mildenhall Air Traffic Control Tower.

The Wing's history is deeply rooted in both the Chindits, who conducted ground operations in Burma during World War II, and the 1st Air Commando Group, the U.S. Army Air Force element that provided insertion, close air support, and resupply capabilities to the Chindits deep in Japanese-occupied jungles.



The 352nd Special Operations Wing hosted World War II Chindit veterans Sid Machin and Robbie Robertson, their families and representatives of the Chindit Society, in a celebration of Air Commando heritage as well as the camaraderie between U.S. and U.K. special operations forces, RAF Mildenhall, United Kingdom, Jan. 24, 2024. Photo by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Remington Sawade.



The 352nd Special Operations Wing hosted World War II Chindit veterans, their families and representatives of the Chindit Society, in a celebration of Air Commando heritage at RAF Mildenhall, United Kingdom, Jan. 24, 2024. The event highlighted how bonds between SOF personnel can transcend generations. Photo by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Remington Sawade.

“It’s an incredible honor to have Sid and Robbie visit the 352nd to see how the foundation they laid for special operations forces has grown and developed over the years, and for them to teach current Air Commandos the history of the Wing,” said U.S. Air Force Col. Mark McGill, 352nd Special Operations Wing Commander.

The 1st Air Commando Group laid the groundwork for the modern special operations wings that make up Air Force Special Operations Command. Following World War II, the group was disbanded, reformed with other missions, consolidated with other units, moved from the U.S. back to Europe and finally came to live at RAF Mildenhall in 1995 where it was upgraded from a special operations group to the 352 SOW in 2015.

Despite restructuring throughout the 20th century, the need for units dedicated to special operations missions was recognized in the 1960s and the story of the Air Commando grew. This necessity fueled the evolution into today’s special operations wings, like the 352 SOW, that take on the most challenging missions the Air Force has to offer.

The 321st Special Tactics Squadron carries on

the legacy of special operations and disruption of adversary activities as a ground element integrating air and ground operations. The 67th and 7th Special Operations Squadrons provide specialized access and resupply support to ground elements with the MC-130J and CV-22B, respectively.

The Chindit Society, an organization dedicated to honoring and preserving the legacy of the Chindits, helped coordinate the event and was represented by Lt. Col. (Ret.) Paul Corden of the British Army’s 77th Brigade, named after the original Chindit Brigade, formed by Maj. Gen. Orde Wingate in 1942.

Machin, his son Neil, and Corden flew on an MC-130J during the visit as well. The flight was Sid’s first time on a military aircraft since his time on active duty.

The 352 SOW and the Chindit Society look to continue their strong partnership through events such as Chindit Reunions, the Wing’s Formal Dining Out, and other collaborations between the U.S. and the U.K.



The 352nd Special Operations Wing hosted World War II Chindit veterans, their families and representatives of the Chindit Society, in a celebration of Air Commando heritage as well as the camaraderie between U.S. and U.K. special operations forces, RAF Mildenhall, United Kingdom, Jan. 24, 2024. Photo by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Remington Sawade.

Air Force Special Operations Command



371st Special Operations Combat Training Squadron increases reach, brings training to audience

*By U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Cassandra Saphore
Air Force Special Operations Command*

Members of the 371st Special Operations Combat Training Squadron Mobile Training Team (MTT) brought the new Special Operations Task Unit-192 course to a mission sustainment team assigned to Cannon Air Force Base last quarter.

Over the course of a month, 371st SOCTS executed two iterations of SOTU-192, training fifty Air Commandos for deployment. This specialized ground combat training included instruction in land navigation, combatives, practical weapons training, tactical combat casualty care, and active shooter/care under fire scenarios. Additionally, they covered Special Operations Task Group and Joint Task Force awareness in preparation for operations in each echelon's respective future operating environment.

"The planning for this course, which started in November 2022, provided learning through realistic hands-on training and adaptive scenario-based exercises to reinforce learning," said Colonel Robert Johnston, Air Commando Development Center-Provisional commander. "The training objectives are designed to sharpen their skills and encourage critical thinking to adapt to operations before the adversary can react."

The 371st SOCTS, which falls under the ACDC-P, is the formal training unit responsible for conducting Programmed Ground Training of Air Force Special Operations Forces on behalf of all core-SOF and non-core SOF personnel.

The SOTU-192 is one of several formal training courses offered by 371st SOCTS that uses an attribute and scenario-based training model to deliver combat ready airmen who can think and operate in all domains.



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Dejanee Harvey, 27th Special Operations Mission Sustainment Team supply journeyman, fires an M4A1 carbine under the guidance of a 371st Special Operations Combat Training Squadron instructor at the Special Operations Task Unit-192 course at Melrose Air Force Range, N.M., Nov. 2, 2023. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Vernon R. Walter III.

"Our goal is to provide the training our Air Commandos need to operate competently and confidently," said Johnston. "By bringing this training to Cannon, we're developing empowered leaders with the skills to impose dilemmas for our adversaries and ultimately deliver the lethality needed to win."

The mission of 371st SOCTS is to enable AFSOC Force Generation development by providing SOTU, Special Operations Task Group, Mission Sustainment Teams, and Theater Air Operations Squadron elements combat ready airmen who can think and operate in the air, land, and human domain.



U.S. Air Force Air Commandos with the 27th Special Operations Wing practice basic combat techniques during the Special Operations Task Unit-192 course with the 371st Special Operations Combat Training Squadron at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., Oct. 27, 2023. The course curriculum included medical response training, radio communications and combat exercises. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Vernon R. Walter III.

Air Force Special Operations Command



Understanding AFSOC's adaptive airborne enterprise

*By Senior Airman Alexcia Givens
27th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

The 27th Special Operation Wing's Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) community and industry partners completed several capability demonstrations throughout December 2023 as part of Air Force Special Operations Command's Adaptive Airborne Enterprise (A2E) development.

As directed in the 2022 U.S. National Defense Strategy, AFSOC has shifted its priority from Counter-Violent Extremist Organization operations to also being capable of countering near-peer and peer adversaries in contested or denied environments. A2E is a result of

that shift, marking an evolution beyond using the MQ-9 exclusively for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) and strike operations.

"Adaptive Airborne Enterprise is vital to thickening the Joint Force kill web throughout the spectrum of conflict and continues to be AFSOC's #1 acquisition priority," said Lt. Gen. Tony Bauernfeind, AFSOC commander. "Our Air Commandos are incredibly innovative, capable, and driven...they are bringing A2E to life. We will continuously develop the concept to full capability through multiple demonstrations over the next few years."

A2E is broken into five phases, with the first three phases currently underway.



Two MQ-9A Reaper remotely piloted aircraft operated by the 3rd Special Operations Squadron undergo pre-flight checks before an experimental multi-aircraft control flight for the Adaptive Airborne Enterprise (A2E) at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., Dec. 6, 2023. MQ-9 units will leverage multiple platforms and later incorporate autonomy to deliver capabilities to special operations forces and the joint force across the spectrum of operations. This photo has been edited for security purposes by blurring out aircraft information. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Vernon R. Walter III.

In phase one, AFSOC aims to transition to a government-owned Uncrewed Aircraft System (UAS) command and control interface, replacing the stationary RPA control system. The new A2E interface will shrink a traditional RPA crew's deployed footprint and provide operators with the flexibility and mobility to fly various aircraft from austere locations – whether operating from the back of an AC-130, home station, or even urban environments.

“In the future, we'd like to take this from where we've fought in the past, a more permissive environment, to contested and denied spaces,” said U.S. Air Force Maj. Lindsay Scott, AFSOC Headquarters Rapid Capabilities Development Chief of Autonomous Capabilities. “Our goal is to ensure we are always bringing effects to the battle space.”

In phase two, AFSOC's objective is creating the capability for a single crew to fly multiple MQ-9s. According to the director of the 27th Special Operations Group's RPA Operations Center, U.S. Air Force Maj. Joshua Radford, AFSOC plans to evolve past the historical standard of one crew operating one aircraft, the status quo for MQ-9 operations.

“We're moving towards a crew or a single operator controlling multiple aircraft,” Radford said. “And it doesn't necessarily need to be the same platform.”

Phase three entails a single crew controlling multiple types of UASs, ranging from Group 1 small uncrewed aerial systems (sUAS) like the RQ-11B Raven, to larger Group 5 UASs like the MQ-9A Reaper.

In phase four, a single crew will control formations of UASs from mobile and austere locations, leading into the final phase: creating new effects-based ISR units. These units could be comprised of UASs, forward deployed ground forces, cyber operators and space operators that can collaboratively employ UAS capabilities in permissive, contested or denied environments.

The A2E demonstrations conducted in 2023 at Cannon AFB successfully validated many of the capabilities described in phases one through three. In June, the 27th SOW hosted Exercise Talon Spear, AFSOC's first A2E sUAS collaboration exercise.

“The goal of Talon Spear was to build a continuous improvement exercise,” said U.S. Air Force Capt. Mitch, the exercise coordinator assigned to the 27th SOG. “Throughout the exercise, several industry and DOD partners integrated various systems, to include weapon systems, specific cameras, onboard computer systems and tactical situational awareness tools.”

During December's demonstrations, a single 27th

SOW RPA crew successfully exhibited two novel capabilities: controlling three MQ-9s utilizing a single common control interface and attaching and air-launching a Group 2 sUAS from an MQ-9A. The next A2E demonstration is planned for Summer 2024.

As the MQ-9 and its crews acquire the capability to direct sUASs carrying standoff sensor payloads, crews will be able to control swarms of air vehicles from anywhere. Additionally, AFSOC aims to continue developing and procuring A2E-compatible platforms, allowing the MQ-9 to act as a “mothership” for sUAS and loitering munition command and control, as well as a data transport node for mesh networks.

These mesh networks, in concert with Artificial Intelligence technologies and an advanced Human Machine Interface, will allow AFSOC crews to operate multiple large and small UASs simultaneously, covering more terrain and prosecuting more targets in environments that are not currently accessible.

“We depend on our innovative Air Commandos and industry experts to develop, experiment and grow this concept,” said Bauernfeind. “AFSOC is committed to advancing this capability and we appreciate the support of our defense partners and decision makers in prioritizing this acquisition.”

By collaboratively pathfinding alongside defense industry partners and innovative Air Commandos, A2E will transform the current AFSOC MQ-9 enterprise into the robust UAS architecture required to deliver specialized airpower to current and future fights: any place, anytime, anywhere.



Altius employees perform pre-flight checks on a dual launch pod attached to an MQ-9 Reaper before an Airborne Adaptive Enterprise (A2E) demonstration at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., Nov. 28, 2023. Adaptive Airborne Enterprise will utilize large and small uncrewed aircraft systems at scale, including a mix of attritable and expendable systems with modular payloads. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Nicholas Swift.

Air Force Special Operations Command



123rd and 21st STS conduct CSAR operations during Raven24-3

Special Tactics Airmen assigned to 123rd Special Tactics Squadron and 21st STS prepare to board a U.S. Marine Corps MV-22 Osprey aircraft assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 266 prior to conducting combat search and rescue operations during Exercise Raven 24-3, Nov. 9, 2023. Exercise Raven is a training exercise held to evaluate all aspects of a Marine Special Operations Company prior to a special operations deployment. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Evan Jones.



Marine Forces, Special Operations Command



Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict visits MARSOC

*By U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Henry Rodriguez II
Marine Forces, Special Operations Command*

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, Christopher Maier recently visited Marine Forces Special Operations Command at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Jan. 17, 2024.

Maier, who provides civilian oversight of the special operations forces enterprise, took time to meet with MARSOC's senior leaders and Marine Raiders throughout the command.

The goal of Maier's visit was to learn more about MARSOC's organization, current efforts, modernization, and command programs. He also had the opportunity to meet and speak with members of a recently deployed Marine Special Operations Team.

"We are grateful for our opportunity to host the

Honorable Mr. Maier," said Maj. Gen. Matthew Trollinger, commander, Marine Forces Special Operations Command. "We discussed our command's evolution from a counterterrorism focused force to one now more appropriately aligned and centered on supporting integrated deterrence, particularly in the littorals, while maintaining strong ties to the Marine Corps and our Raider Legacy."

MARSOC's mission is to recruit, train, sustain, and deploy scalable, expeditionary forces worldwide to accomplish special operations missions assigned by U.S. Special Operations Command. To accomplish that, MARSOC equips and trains Marines to succeed in austere conditions against a wide range of adversaries in competition through conflict. Marine Raiders execute complex, distributed operations globally in uncertain environments, achieving silent success and strategic impact.



Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, Christopher Maier meets with Marine Forces Special Operations Command on Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Jan. 16, 2024. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Henry Rodriguez II.



Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, Christopher Maier meets with Marines, Sailors, and civilians from Marine Forces Special Operations Command on Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Jan. 16, 2024. During his visit, Maier had the opportunity to learn about MARSOC's current and future operations as well as the programs they use to keep Marine Raiders in the fight. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Henry Rodriguez II.

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

USSOCOM hosts NATO secretary general during visit with SOF members

*By U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marleah Miller
U.S. Special Operations Command*

U.S. Special Operations Command hosted NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, Feb. 1, during his final stop in the U.S. after meeting with leaders in D.C. and visiting Lockheed Martin in Troy, Alabama.

Stoltenberg's visit included a series of meetings with leaders and U.S. SOCOM's Operations-International Engagement Branch NATO partners; however, his main reason for the visit was to meet with members of U.S. SOCOM

"I'm impressed to see your NATO and global partners working in your HQ," said Stoltenberg. "You are the best of the best – the key to the Alliance."

Stoltenberg assured members in the audience NATO understands we need to work together, and allies are investing more in special operations.

"Thank you for your service – what you do every day," said Stoltenberg. "It's important for the NATO alliance."

American and international partners filled the room to hear Stoltenberg speak and they had the chance to ask him questions before he departed the headquarters.

"I felt it was a privilege to get the opportunity to hear directly from the head of such a historic and important organization," said U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Brandi Reynolds, senior enlisted leader of U.S. SOCOM's Intelligence Capabilities and Requirements Division (J24).

With Stoltenberg's last visit to MacDill in 2017, this was seen as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for military members who attended.

"It's important because it comes back to one of our SOF truths," said Reynolds. "Just like most special operations require non-SOF support, our enduring alliances and partnerships are vital to getting after our current and future strategic challenges – NATO is definitely one of those vital partnerships."



The NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, right, meets with members of U.S. Special Operations Command during his visit to U.S. SOCOM headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, Feb. 1, 2024. U.S. SOCOM hosted NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to discuss our special operations relationships, our role in NATO SOF and where we share technology to support NATO's mission. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marleah Miller.



The NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, hosts a public engagement with members of U.S. Special Operations Command during his visit to U.S. SOCOM Headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, Feb. 1, 2024. U.S. SOCOM hosted NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to discuss our special operations relationships, our role in NATO SOF and where we share technology to support NATO's mission. The trans-Atlantic alliance of 31 like-minded North American and European countries within NATO have been securing peace for nearly 75 years and serves as the bulwark of our shared values of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marleah Miller.

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

Father and son football coaches visit USSOCOM, talk leadership

By Michael Bottoms
USSOCOM Public Affairs

Legendary football coach Lou Holtz and his son Skip, also a successful football coach, visited the headquarters to give a seminar on leadership on Jan. 26, 2024. This was the first time the father and son spoke together lecturing a seminar.

The father son duo touched on many aspects on how to be a successful leader.

Holtz senior began by saying he got his MBA in that he was “made by the army.”

“I learned more in the Army than I ever did in college classes,” said Holtz senior. “I got to travel to

16 countries to speak to troops from Korea to Afghanistan.”

Holtz senior would go on breakdown techniques and methods behind successful leadership.

“Never lower the standard to be well liked or popular. Have a vision. Lead by example. Get rid of the excuses why you cannot do something,” he said. “When you are a leader it is your obligation to make them to the best by showing them how to reach it.

“There are three rules to follow if you want to lead an effective team. First, do what is right, know the difference between right and wrong ... be honest, on time, loyal ... racism, sexism, spousal abuse are wrong. Second, do everything to the best of your



(From left to right) Coaches Skip and Lou Holtz, Gen. Bryan Fenton, commander, U.S. Special Operations Command and Command Sgt. Major Shane Shorter conduct a leadership seminar at the headquarters on MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, Jan. 26, 2024. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Demetrius Munnerlyn.

ability... maintain the little things ... when you let them slide, the big ones go,” he continued. “Last, show people you care.”

The younger Holtz would take over for his father and expounded on his leadership principles.

“What I learned from my father is that accountability and attitude are everything,” he said. “You stop worrying about what’s in your way, you achieve success.”

He would relate a story when he was fired from college head coaching job and how he did not think it was fair, so he called his father and asked him what he thought.

“He told me ‘Your job is not to make people happy. It is to lead the team. Write down what you would do differently. Instead thinking it is unfair, look internally at what you can do,’” he said. “It’s great advice.”

The younger Holtz would also explain leadership is easy when things are going well, but a real leader gets evaluated in challenging times.

“Adversity is a leader’s dream; adversity brings us together. You must lead with substance,” he said. “A football team, like the military, is like an iceberg – the hype is the 15% you see, 85% under water is the real value. That is where the heart and intangibles are.”

The younger Holtz would go on to what he thinks makes a championship team.

“You must learn how to compete because you execute the fundamentals. You learn how to win because you do the little things right. You need to learn how to manage winning – some teams win so much they take it for granted. Get the players/soldiers to take charge of the culture ... get on each other without the leader/coach,” he said. “Talented people determine capability – how well you do is determined by attitude ... we choose whether we succeed or fail. We choose to be positive or negative... proactive or reactive. We cannot be managed by public opinion. You need to lead from the inside out, not the outside in.”

A question was asked how can you tell when your team owns their culture?

“When your people understand what you are trying to do, and they buy into it. Your championship ring

will be the same size. When your team takes charge and have pride,” the elder Holtz said. “They believe that what you have built is something special. They

have pride and understand what they are doing is important.”

“Your people must learn to follow before you learn how to lead. Culture is taught every day. People need to have a goal,” the younger Holtz said.

Another question raised is how do you maintain your energy?

“Everyone has problems. Those smiling are the ones who can manage them. You cannot have a bad day. You cannot have a low day. Every morning wake up, choose to be positive,” the younger Holtz said. “When you are leading your organization your frame of mind is to be successful.”

The father and son really became connected near the end of the seminar with a touching moment on stage. Holtz senior looked at his son, and said “Son, I’m so proud of you.”

Everyone has problems. Those smiling are the ones who can manage them. You cannot have a bad day. You cannot have a low day. Every morning wake up, choose to be positive. When you are leading your organization your frame of mind is to be successful.

— Coach Skip Holtz



Coach Lou Holtz gives remarks during a leadership seminar at the headquarters on MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, Jan. 26, 2024. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Demetrius Munnerlyn.

Headquarters - U.S Special Operations Command

Sharpening the tip of the spear: USSOCOM experiment yields valuable user feedback for CBRN defense developers

By Matthew Gunther

*Joint Program Executive Office for Chemical,
Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defense
(JPEO-CBRND)*

Delivering lifesaving capabilities into the hands of warfighters who need them is a mission that the Joint Program Executive Office for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defense (JPEO-CBRND) doesn't take lightly. Rapid access to cutting edge CBRN defense equipment is critical to the readiness and safety of the joint force, particularly for those who are at the "tip of the spear," like US Special Operations Command operators.

To that end, almost 400 individuals descended on Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story in Virginia Beach, Virginia in October to participate in Dragon Spear, a CBRN research, development, and acquisition training experiment (RDAX). Over the course of the four-day event, the JPEO-CBRND joined service members from 10 joint force units, along with interagency and industry partners and leaders from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Programs, to put new CBRN defense technologies to the test in realistic operational scenarios.

This was the second year for the experiment, which grew significantly since RDAX Dragon Spear was piloted in 2022. Experiments like Dragon Spear are critically important for both technology developers and end users like the special operations community. It gives the special operators a chance to "kick the tires" and provide real-time feedback on equipment that is still being developed. That feedback allows developers to adjust and improve during the early stages of development and, ultimately, deliver the best possible equipment and technologies. Additionally, RDAX allowed the JPEO-CBRND teams to train users on

how they can combat new threats with new defense technology and decision support tools.

The training scenarios used during RDAX Dragon Spear were designed to be realistic – simulating not only the environment, but also the operational challenges that teams face in a CBRN-contested space. This type of training allows SOF, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and CBRN units to try new approaches to solving problems and mitigating threats with new tools and technologies.

Nearly half of the 40 technologies used during RDAX Dragon Spear were from the JPEO-CBRND's portfolio and included protective gear, sensors and wearable health monitoring technologies. These products were rigorously evaluated by service members training in several different threat scenarios and JPEO-CBRND program offices received direct insight into how their products could be refined or enhanced to better meet warfighter needs.

Three of JPEO-CBRND's Joint Project Managers (JPM) attended RDAX Dragon Spear to introduce and receive feedback on their gear and technology. The JPM for CBRN Special Operations Forces (JPM CBRN SOF) had the largest footprint at the event, which provided their developers with a crucial opportunity for connection and information exchange with the SOF community. Maj. Alberto Rios, who organized RDAX Dragon Spear, highlighted the significance of the interactive technology demonstrations, "Ultimately, showing is better than telling and gives us the opportunity for meaningful insights," he said.

As technology advances and devices become smaller, there are more opportunities to integrate CBRN sensors with unmanned air or ground vehicles. The team who attended from JPM CBRN Sensors collected feedback and provided training on the CBRN sensor integration on robotic platforms (CSIRP), which incorporates the compact

vapor chemical agent detector (CVCAD) and the proximate chemical agent detector (PCAD).

For JPM CBRN Protection, RDAX Dragon Spear was an ideal venue to introduce and test its new CBRN protective suit and gloves, the uniform integrated protection ensemble family of systems general purpose (UIPE FOS GP). UIPE FOS GP is an Acquisition Category I program and will replace the legacy joint service lightweight integrated suit technology (JSLIST) that must be worn on top of a service member's duty uniform.

The UIPE FOS GP suit incorporates the required CBRN protection elements into the duty uniform itself, eliminating the need to wear two sets of separate garments and significantly reducing the gear's weight and thermal burden. Bobby Brooks, Lead Program Analyst for the UIPE FoS GP, impressed upon service members, "this suit is not only your duty uniform, but it's also lifesaving gear you can effectively operate in." Unencumbering the warfighter so they can be successful in CBRN contested environments is paramount for the JPEO-CBRND.

As the Defense Department looks to harness the power of wearable technology to inform medics, squad leaders, and command decision makers about the health and

wellness of their troops, RDAX Dragon Spear included a focus on wearables with the potential to alert a wearer to CBRN agent exposure and early onset medical issues. The JPM CBRN SOF team evaluated multiple commercial-off-the-shelf wearable devices as part of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Wearables Pilot program. The devices included three wearable hydration monitoring systems, a biometric device (known as the Halo) worn behind the ear, and the Hexoskin, a base-layer "smart garment" used to collect vital signs without monitors that adhere to the skin. The team was particularly interested in learning about users' attitudes on device fit, form and function during CBRND operations, and hearing how they want to use the data collected by these devices.

The RDAX Dragon Spear experiment offered a unique environment for JPEO-CBRND developers to work directly with and get feedback from the joint force—the men and women who will one day rely on these technologies to protect them and their battle buddies from some of the scariest threats imaginable. Ultimately, RDAX Dragon Spear reinforced the JPEO-CBRND's role as the Department's lead for advanced development and rapid delivery of critical CBRN capabilities to the warfighter.



A service member participates in a simulated CBRN training scenario during RDAX Dragon Spear 2023. The service member wears the uniform integrated protection ensemble family of systems general purpose (UIPE FOS GP) suit and M50 joint service general purpose mask (JSGPM) and uses robot dogs equipped with CBRN sensors. Photo by Alex Hillman.



A Naval Special Warfare operator repels from an MH-60S Sea Hawk, assigned to the "Black Knights" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 4, onto Arleigh-Burke class guided-missile destroyer USS Sterrett (DDG 104) during a helicopter visit, board, search and seizure (HVBSS) drill. Sterrett is assigned to Carrier Strike Group ONE and deployed to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific. Naval Special Warfare is the nation's maritime special operations force, uniquely positioned to extend the Fleet's reach and gain and maintain access for the Joint Force in competition and conflict. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Cole C. Pielop.