

Tip OF THE Spear

United States Special Operations Command
MacDill Air Force Base, Florida

August 2022

**Fenton becomes
13th USSOCOM commander**

**Vietnam era Green Beret
receives the Medal of Honor**

**USSOCOM athletes participate
in the DoD Warrior Games**



United States Special Operations Command



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Tip of the Spear

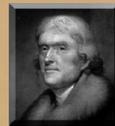
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Thomas Jefferson Award Winner

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(Cover) General Clarke relinquished command to General Fenton, who assumed command as the 13th Commander of USSOCOM after previously serving as the Commander of Joint Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, N.C.. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Eric Alabiso.

(Above) Retired U.S. Army Maj. John J. Duffy received the Medal of Honor from President Joseph R. Biden in the East Room at The White House in Washington, D.C., July 5, 2022. Duffy distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty, while serving as the Senior Advisor to the 11th Airborne Battalion, 2d Brigade, Airborne Division, Army of the Republic of Vietnam in the Republic of Vietnam, during the period of April 14 to 15, 1972. Duffy was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions on Dec. 1, 1972. On April 16, 2018, the Secretary of the Army recommended upgrade of his award to the Medal of Honor. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Henry Villarama.

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U.S. Special Operations Command - Africa



MARSOC Marines conduct joint combined exchange training in Kenya

U.S. Marines assigned to Marine Forces, Special Operations Command, conduct a specialized training exercise with members of the Kenyan Army during a joint combined exchange training in Isiolo, Kenya, July 1, 2022. The teams focused on honing basic skills such as basic marksmanship, small unit tactics, and mission planning. Phot by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Alysia Blake.





U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe

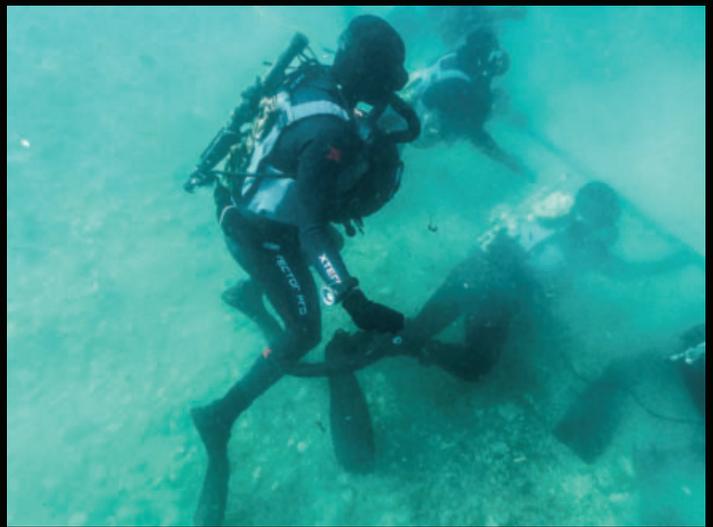


U.S. Naval Special Warfare Task Unit Europe conducts JCET in Croatia

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

Members of U.S. Naval Special Warfare Task Unit Europe conduct maritime visit, board, search, and seizure training alongside Croatian Zapovjedništvo Specialjalnih Snaga (ZSS) in Split, Croatia, April 14 -15, 2022. For the Croatian ZSS, Joint Combined Exchange Training, or JCET with partner nations is not uncommon. The ZSS were founded in 2000 as the Special Operations Battalion and since then, its operators have participated in multiple operations, including stints in Afghanistan as part of NATO's International Security Assistance Force.





U.S. Special Operations Command - North



20th SFG (A) and RBDF enhance partnership during JCET in the Bahamas

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

20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) engaged in a six-week joint combined exchange training with the Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF) April 26 – June 3 in Nassau, the Bahamas, which enabled the U.S. Green Berets to hone their military tactics and skills in a new and different setting, train on existing processes, procedures and instructing techniques, and bolster their military-to-military relationship with the RBDF.

During the JCET, U.S. Special Forces and their RBDF counterparts trained in marksmanship, medical and communications training, close quarter battle, and maritime

safety and operations.

Another important component of the exchange included mission planning and leadership skills development, to enhance the RBDF's professional growth. They also trained in decision-making, concentrating on techniques to improve critical thinking skills on how to respond to emergency and crisis situations.

“Including planning for a crisis action plan is something they can use for a real-world scenario,” said the 20th SFG (A) JCET team leader. “They now have the tools and processes to implement if the situation should arise.”

The last week of the JCET was comprised of a three-day culmination exercise which was tailored to their actual mission set. The first event was a maritime



Royal Bahamas Defence Force members conduct an open-water interdiction of migrants portrayed by 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Green Berets during their culmination exercise as part of joint combined exchange training in Nassau, the Bahamas. Training with our partners in their homeland allows U.S. Special Forces the opportunity to train and prepare in various environments. Photo by U.S. Army Maj. Daisy Bueno.



20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Green Berets and Royal Bahamas Defence Force members enter a building during a base-wide active-shooter training event on the last day of their culmination exercise during joint combined exchange training in Nassau, the Bahamas. Photo by U.S. Army Maj. Daisy Bueno.

interdiction which included casualty care of a dehydrated migrant on a boat adrift at sea. They interdicted the vessel and provided medical aid on site, then they towed the boat back to shore.

The second day was a beach raid where they received intelligence that there was a human trafficking camp in an abandoned building. The RBDF participants planned a mission where they had to find the camp site, conduct a raid on the facility, save the human trafficking victims and capture the adversaries.

The third day was an on-base active-shooter event which was directed by the base commander for their emergency action plan. The entire base participated, including headquarters staff and their military working dogs' team.

“This JCET was an excellent way to continue our enduring partnership with the Bahamas, an important partner located in the southern approach to the United States,” said the 20th SFG (A) JCET team leader. “The RBDF has demonstrated itself as a valued partner to the U.S.”

This training event was one of many that Special Operations Command North coordinates to increase security cooperation and interoperability within U.S. Northern Command's area of responsibility



20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Green Berets and Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF) members conduct a swim test and water safety training during joint combined exchange training in Nassau, the Bahamas. Courtesy photo by 20th Special Forces Group [Airborne].

U.S. Special Operations Command - South



Fuerzas Comando 2022 competition held in Honduras

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

Fuerzas Comando 2022 closing ceremony was held at the Honduran military parade field in Campo Marte, June 24, 2022. Honduran President Xiomara Castro was the ceremony's principal speaker, with U.S. Southern Command International Affairs and Exercise Director Kevin Bostick as the honorary guest speaker. Colombia won the multinational Special Operations Competition Fuerzas Comando 2022 after ten days of grueling events and earned Fuerzas Comando 2022 Champions.

"Fuerzas Comando is now a tradition to compete for us with our allies since 2004. It is an honor to be part of the closing ceremony where 17 special forces teams represented their country in this prestigious event," said President Castro. "We face common threats like terrorism, narco-trafficking, and organized crime. We also can't ignore neighboring foreign forces massing near borders such as in Ukraine."

The exercise is part of the ongoing effort to mutually protect the region against destabilizing actions and demonstrate America's dedication and commitment to enduring peace and stability of our shared neighborhood.

Competitors, please share everything you have learned here at Fuerzas Comando with your teammates in your home nation, said Bostick. "What we have done here in the past two weeks strengthens partnerships, builds teams, and counter threats. Nobody can do it alone. We are stronger together than we are apart."

This year marked the 16th iteration of the competition since its inception in 2004. However, the competition did not occur in 2020-21 due to the coronavirus-19. The following countries competed this



Fuerzas Comando participants share a prayer before beginning their physical training test for the Fuerzas Comando competition in Tegucigalpa, Honduras on June 13, 2022. Fuerzas Comando multinational SOF skills competition showcases the diversity of the SOF community in the western hemisphere, strengthens our regional partnerships, and demonstrates the readiness and interoperability across regional boundaries. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Christopher Sanchez.

year: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haití, Honduras, Jamaica, Panamá, Paraguay, Perú, Trinidad and Tobago, and the U.S.

"The message we send here at the end of the competition is that only together can we face threats successfully. We are proud of our partnership, and may the best team win," said Bostick. "We have all won due to this exercise. All participating Latin American nations come out stronger from this event."

The President of Honduras, senior Honduran military leadership, and the U.S. delegation from Southern Command recognized seventeen judges and 119 competitors for their professionalism and the representation of their nation.



The Honduran military perform a demonstration for visiting officials during the Fuerzas Comando 2022 competition in La Venta, Honduras on June 21, 2022. Fuerzas Comando is a Foreign Military Interaction exercise designed to enhance multinational and regional cooperation, mutual trust and confidence, and to improve the training, readiness, interoperability, and capability of regional Special Operations Forces. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Christopher Sanchez.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command

Vietnam era Green Beret receives the Medal of Honor



By U.S. Army Public Affairs

John J. Duffy rose from sergeant to major while serving in special operations groups including the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in the U.S. Army. He served four combat tours in Vietnam, where he often operated behind enemy lines. In 1972, Duffy served as a special advisor with the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) Team 162, known as the

“Red Hats”.

Duffy has been honored with 64 awards and decorations, 29 of which are for valor, including the Distinguished Service Cross (currently in final stages to an upgrade), the Soldier’s Medal, four Bronze Stars with “Valor” device, eight Purple Hearts, seven Air Medals (six with “Valor” device), three Army Commendation Medals with “Valor” device, the Cross of Gallantry with Palm (Vietnam’s highest award for



Retired U.S. Army Maj. John J. Duffy receives the Medal of Honor from President Joseph R. Biden in the East Room at The White House in Washington, D.C., July 5, 2022. Duffy distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty, while serving as the Senior Advisor to the 11th Airborne Battalion, 2d Brigade, Airborne Division, Army of the Republic of Vietnam in the Republic of Vietnam, during the period of 14 to 15 April 1972. Duffy was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions on Dec. 1, 1972. On April 16, 2018, the Secretary of the Army recommended upgrade of his award to the Medal of Honor. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Henry Villarama.

valor), two Crosses of Gallantry with Silver Stars, one Presidential Unit Citation (Naval), three Presidential Unit Citations (Army), the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry w/Palm (Unit), the Vietnam Valorous Service Medal (Unit), the Combat Infantry Badge, Master Parachutist Wings, plus numerous other awards for service and merit.

Following his military service, he was president of a publishing company and the founder and president of an investment firm which was bought by TD Ameritrade Inc.

Duffy has been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize and has published six books of poetry. Two of his poems were selected to be inscribed on monuments, and others appear in countless publications and anthologies. His latest book is "The Battle for Charlie."

As a founding member of the Special Operations Association and a life member of the Special Forces Decade Association, the Legion of Valor, the Forward Air Controllers Association, the Jolly Green Giants Association, the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, the Air Commando Association, and the Team 162 "Vietnamese Airborne Advisor" Association, he is an active and honored veteran.

In 2013, Maj. Duffy was inducted into the Infantry Hall of Fame at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Duffy played a significant role in a major battle that was written about by Capt. Nam Nhat Phan in his award-winning book "Mua He Lua Do" or "The Red Flames of Summer."

Duffy's poem "The Forward Air Controller" is inscribed in a monument in Colorado Springs, Colorado, honoring the FACs who sacrificed all so others could live. Duffy wrote and delivered the "Forward Air Controller's Requiem" during the dedication ceremony, which concluded with a "Missing Man Formation" fly-over. The requiem was later added in bronze to the monument's center piece.

John Duffy currently resides in Santa Cruz, California.

THE BATTLE

April 14-15, 1972 | Central Highlands, Republic of Vietnam

Maj. John J. Duffy distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty, while assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and serving as a senior advisor to the 11th Airborne Battalion, 2nd Brigade, Airborne Division, Army of the Republic of Vietnam in the Republic of Vietnam, on April 14-15, 1972.

Two days earlier, the commander of the 11th

Airborne Battalion was killed, the battalion command post was destroyed, and Duffy was twice wounded but refused to be evacuated. Then on April 14, Duffy directed the defense of Fire Support Base Charlie, which was surrounded by a battalion-sized enemy element.

In the morning hours, after a failed effort to establish a landing zone for resupply aircraft, he moved close to enemy anti-aircraft positions to call in airstrikes. At this time, Duffy was again wounded by fragments from a recoilless rifle round and again refused evacuation.

Shortly after, the enemy began an artillery bombardment on the base and he remained in an exposed position to direct gunships onto the enemy positions, which eventually silenced the enemy fire.

Following the bombardment, Duffy assessed the conditions on the base and personally ensured that wounded friendly foreign forces were moved to positions of relative safety and the remaining ammunition was appropriately distributed to the remaining defenders.

The enemy resumed indirect fire on the base, expending an estimated 300 rounds. Nevertheless, Duffy remained in an exposed position to direct gunship fire on the enemy positions.

In the late afternoon hours, the enemy began a ground assault from all sides of the firebase, and Duffy moved from position to position to adjust fire, spot targets for artillery observers and, ultimately, to direct gunship fire on a friendly position which had been compromised.

During the early morning hours of April 15, the enemy ambushed the battalion, inflicting additional casualties and scattering some of the able-bodied service members. After withstanding the ambush, Duffy led the evacuees - many of whom were significantly wounded - to an established evacuation area, despite being continually pursued by the enemy.

Upon reaching the exfiltration site, Duffy directed gunship fire on enemy positions and marked a landing zone for the helicopters. Only after ensuring all of the evacuees were aboard, did Duffy board while also assisting a wounded friendly foreign service member. Once on board, he administered aid to a helicopter door gunner who had been wounded during the evacuation.

Duffy's extraordinary heroism and selflessness beyond the call of duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command



20th SFG (A) take part in Exercise Northern Strike

US Army soldiers, assigned to 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Alabama National Guard, jump out of CH-47 Chinook during Helocast training as part of exercise Northern Strike 22-2 at Camp Grayling, Mich., Aug. 11, 2022. Northern Strike is designed to challenge approximately 7,400 service members with multiple forms of training that advance interoperability across multicomponent, multinational and interagency partners. Photo by U.S. Army Pfc. Erich Holbrook.



Naval Special Warfare Command



Naval Special Warfare pivots to new Deploy-for-Purpose model

*By U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Paolo Bayas and Chief Petty Officer Eric Chan
Naval Special Warfare Group ONE*

Earlier this summer, West-Coast based SEAL Team platoons used the Deploy-for-Purpose model to innovate simultaneously with new equipment and tactics to meet new threats and expand the United States' national advantage in strategic competition.

"This is how we innovate for step changes and stay ahead of our peer competitors," said Rear Adm. H. Wyman Howard III, commander, Naval Special Warfare Command. "Previously, a SEAL Team would complete their Operational Readiness Cycle and certification for combat readiness, and then we would allocate the full capability through joint commander and department decisions & authorities. With DfP, we retain a third of these combat-ready forces to experiment with new equipment and innovate new tactics, techniques, and procedures for the high-end fight – learn faster at lower training risk because we're conducting this experimentation and concept development with combat ready forces."

SEALs and combat service support personnel traveled to southwest Florida to test several different pieces of underwater propulsion and navigation equipment across the spectrum of NSW dive operations.

Combat diving is a core mission set of the original Frogmen and remains a distinctive capability to the NSW mission today for access. With modern technology and digital navigation equipment, SEALs can travel longer distances, faster, while being better able to avoid detection.

"We're bringing combat swimmer capabilities into the digital age," said one special operator. "It's like the difference between using a rotary dial phone compared to using a smart phone."

The experimentation started with classroom sessions on programming and maintenance lessons for each piece



Sailor assigned to a West Coast-based SEAL Team uses a radio to coordinate extraction with air assets during a cold weather training exercise designed to replicate the harsh environment of the Arctic's High North. The training is part of Naval Special Warfare's Deploy for Purpose model, an optimized combat-ready force in reserve focused on innovation. This new design gives forces the time and space to experiment and develop new concepts to meet specific operational needs while increasing agility to respond to crises around the globe. Photo by U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Paolo Bayas.

of equipment. Once in the water, the special operators familiarized themselves with the equipment and practiced basic tactics, techniques, and procedures. They perfected the basics, then iterated on longer and more complex dives. The exercise culminated with the operators practicing different mission profiles with the new equipment.

While that platoon was innovating beneath the surface of the Atlantic, another platoon from the same SEAL Team was practicing for combat in the harsh environment of the Arctic High North.

These SEALs and combat support personnel

participated in Red Flag-Alaska, a Pacific Air Forces-sponsored joint, multinational exercise involving multiple services and platforms, all coordinated in a realistic combat scenario. The platoon developed and tested new tactics in a simulated extreme threat environment.

Capt. David Abernathy, commander, Naval Special Warfare Group 1, said the DfP model is a way to increase readiness.

“The strategic advantage of the Deploy-for-Purpose model is that it allows us to learn faster,” said Abernathy. “Those lessons learned are going to allow us to solve problems we weren’t able to see under our previous force

design. We can already see increased capability because of the new flexibility Deploy-for-Purpose brings.”

Howard said he hopes to see DfP setting the pace for innovation in Naval Special Warfare and beyond.

“This is completely different from how NSW has operated in the past, and it is a way to prioritize missions that only maritime special operators can do,” said

Howard. “This model allows us to rapidly innovate – build a little, test a little, and learn a lot – on a small level, experiment, and scale those lessons and successes to mitigate political, strategic and military risk on mission imperatives.”

This model allows us to rapidly innovate – build a little, test a little, and learn a lot – on a small level, experiment, and scale those lessons and successes to mitigate political, strategic and military risk on mission imperatives

— Rear Adm. H. Wyman Howard III,



Sailors assigned to a West Coast-based SEAL Team perform a personnel recovery during a cold weather training exercise designed to replicate the harsh environment of the Arctic’s High North. The training is part of Naval Special Warfare’s Deploy for Purpose model, an optimized combat-ready force in reserve focused on innovation. This new design gives forces the time and space to experiment and develop new concepts to meet specific operational needs while increasing agility to respond to crises around the globe. Photo by U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Paolo Bayas.

Naval Special Warfare Command Naval Special Warfare participates in RIMPAC 2022 southern California



Naval Special Warfare operators perform a ladder extraction onto an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 85 after completing Helicopter visit, board, search, and seizure training aboard aerial target launch ship (ATLS) 9701 during Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2022 in Southern California. Twenty-six nations, 38 ships, four submarines, more than 170 aircraft and 25,000 personnel are participating in RIMPAC from June 29 to Aug. 4 in and around the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California. The world's largest international maritime exercise, RIMPAC provides a unique training opportunity while fostering and sustaining cooperative relationships among participants critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's oceans. RIMPAC 2022 is the 28th exercise in the series that began in 1971. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Daniel Gaither.



Air Force Special Operations Command



First in-air refueling conducted between KC-46 and AFSOC CV-22



A CV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft assigned to the 20th Special Operations Squadron and a KC-46 Pegasus tanker aircraft assigned to the 349th Air Refueling Squadron conduct the first ever in-air refueling operation undertaken between the two aircraft over Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, June 1, 2022. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Max J. Daigle.

*By U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Max J. Daigle
27th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

One of the most versatile aircraft in the Air Force's fleet, the CV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft, combines the vertical flight qualities of a helicopter with the fuel efficiency and speed of a fixed wing plane. This combination makes it the ideal aircraft for conducting infiltration, exfiltration and resupply missions for

special operations forces across long distances.

Now, thanks to pathfinding efforts from the 20th Special Operations Squadron and the 349th Air Refueling Squadron, assigned to the 22nd Air Refueling Wing at McConnell Air Force Base, Kansas, CV-22 aircrews across Air Force Special Operations Command can ensure their aircraft's extended range by calling on Air Force Mobility Command's newest tanker.

The 20th SOS and 349th ARS brought a CV-22 and KC-46 Pegasus tanker together for in-air refueling

training over Cannon Air Force Base, June 1, 2022. The flight was the first time a KC-46 refueled an AFSOC CV-22.

“This being the first time we operationally refueled with a KC-46, we were able to get some good video for training and development,” said U.S. Air Force Maj. Anthony Belviso, the CV-22 aircraft commander. “We were also able to get some understanding of what it feels like to fly behind the jet, and work on some different refueling techniques and practices”

One of the new capabilities the KC-46 brings to the table is a hose and drogue system in the same centerline position as it’s refueling boom pipe for fixed-wing aircraft.

“This capability allows the KC-46 to the refuel the Osprey and other drogue compatible receiver aircraft without any modification,” said U.S. Air Force Maj. Benjamin Chase, the KC-46 aircraft commander. “This is important because it enables flexibility in mission planning and limits the amount of maintenance it takes to prepare for air refueling, especially compared to most aircraft in the legacy tanker fleet.”

The KC-46 is not the only aircraft the CV-22 can receive fuel from while flying. However, its advanced refueling, communications and defensive systems, range and large fuel storage capabilities make it an ideal system for getting CV-22s the fuel they need, even in or near contested environments.

“The CV-22 is specifically designed for long range missions, and when you add on top of that an aerial refueling capability you can extend that distance to the point where you’re only limited by how long the crew is able to fly,” said Belviso. “The KC-46 can get enough fuel to get multiple CV-22s that much further both into and out of combat.”

“The 22nd ARW has showcased the capability of the KC-46 to operate out of austere locations in recent exercises,” said Chase. “This is unique among tanker aircraft, and replicates the types of environments the KC-46 to operate out of when refueling the Osprey in real-world missions.”

Another advantage of CV-22s being able to refuel from KC-46s is that it allows for faster refueling during real-world missions.

“Normally, an MC-130J aircraft would have to go

up to a tanker to get fuel, then fly to us and give us that fuel, and would have to repeat that process several times,” said Belviso. “Because KC-46s can refuel us directly, we can go straight to them and get everything done much more quickly.”

Normally, an MC-130J aircraft would have to go up to a tanker to get fuel, then fly to us and give us that fuel, and would have to repeat that process several times. Because KC-46s can refuel us directly, we can go straight to them and get everything done much more quickly.

— Maj. Anthony Belviso

With the successful training mission, both Chase and Belviso said it would provide the data and real-world experience the Air Force’s KC-46 and CV-22 fleets need to ensure the two airframes could work well together for a long time to come.

“The refueling of the CV-22 marks another success in the program,” said Chase. “It really paves the way for support of the Osprey and

other aircraft in the future.”

“I’m glad we were able to get the mission done for the CV-22 community,” said Belviso. “I think this new capability will be tremendous for us going forward, so I’m very happy about that.”



A CV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft assigned to the 20th Special Operations Squadron and a KC-46 Pegasus tanker aircraft assigned to the 349th Air Refueling Squadron conduct the first ever in-air refueling operation undertaken between the two aircraft over Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, June 1, 2022. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Max J. Daigle.

Air Force Special Operations Command



Communications, maintenance integrate, enhance Cannon's MQ-9 mission

*By Airman 1st Class Cassidy Thomas
27th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

At the 12th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, 727th Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, communications Air Commandos find themselves working not only on their usual networking and computer equipment, but also on cutting edge aircraft components in support of Air Force operations around the world. Their adaptability is put to the test as they enter a new

environment and take on a unique responsibility as an expeditionary launch and recovery element, one of Cannon's MQ-9 Reaper missions.

"It's unique to maintenance in that, especially as a MQ-9 GCS person, your pilot control station is separate from the aircraft," said U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Bryan Jones, 12 AMU MQ-9 ground control station (GCS) maintenance specialist.

The technical skills that communications Airmen use to maintain MQ-9 control stations are critical to support



An MQ-9 Reaper with the 27th Special Operations Group undergoes maintenance check at Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, Jan. 28, 2019. The Reaper is employed primarily as an intelligence-collection asset and secondarily against dynamic execution targets. Given its significant loiter time, wide-range sensors, multi-mode communications suite, and precision weapons, it provides a unique capability to perform strike, coordination, and reconnaissance against high-value, fleeting, and time-sensitive targets. Photo by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Vernon R. Walter III.



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Keith St. George, 12th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, 727th Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft ground control station (GCS) section non-commissioned officer in charge, and Staff Sgt. Gregory Stoquert, 12 AMU, 727 SOAMXS MQ-9 GCS maintenance journeyman, review system procedures for aircraft take off and landing at Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, May 6, 2022. The 12 AMU GCS specialists consist of traditional communications squadron Airmen integrated into aircraft maintenance, leveraging multi-domain skillsets in support of agile combat employment utilized by MQ-9 global operations. Photo by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Cassidy Thomas.

MQ-9 sorties from start to finish.

“We spend our time getting the equipment ready with our pre-flight checks and support them until they land,” said Senior Airman Nicholas Runyan, 12 AMU MQ-9 GCS maintenance specialist.

Once the aircraft lands, Airmen perform post-flight checks and execute any maintenance actions that are required to make the Containerized Dual Control Segment (CDCS) ready for additional field operations. The CDCS is a mobile ground control station that is used to operate and sensor the MQ-9 aircraft.

The 12 AMU, 727 SOAMXS communications Airmen help execute the mobile MQ-9 mission anywhere they are needed.

“We provide strategic information to the battlefield. And having the ability to do it from anywhere... halfway across the world, that’s very unique,” said Jones. “We have the ability to take the containerized dual control station from here to anywhere in the world, and be able to set it up and operate it.”

With the ability to do their job from anywhere, the multi-functional Airmen at the 12 AMU epitomize Agile Combat Employment doctrine thanks to their unique operational footprint.

“The multi-capable ground control station maintenance

airmen not only perform the duties of GCS maintenance, but they also perform actual communication duties in an ACE environment for network and radio setup,” said U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Jared Gunn, 12 AMU production superintendent. “This allows the 12th AMU to maintain the smallest manpower footprint, achieving part of what our concept of ACE is.”



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Nicholas Runyan, 12th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, inspects a portable ground data terminal at Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, May 6, 2022. Photo by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Cassidy Thomas.

Air Force Special Operations Command



Special Warfare Training Wing members collaborate with Colombian Special Air Commands delegation

*By U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Xiaofan Liu
Special Warfare Training Wing*

A delegation of Colombian Special Air Commands leaders visited the Special Warfare Training Wing for an immersion into the various Air Force Special Warfare pipelines, July 25, 2022.

As the Colombian Air Force works to broaden its special operations forces capabilities by bridging institutional and operational requirements, the delegation visited the SWTW to learn more about how the Air Force builds its ground combat operators specializing in airpower application.

“The purpose of visiting the Special Warfare Training Wing was to learn more about how the United States Air Force trains its warriors who carry out special operations,” said Brig. Gen. Pedro Sanchez, deputy commander and chief of staff of Colombian Joint Special Operations Command. “This collaboration is vital for Colombian Special Forces to further strengthen their capabilities in order to carry out their duty of protecting the population from different threats.”

The visit was also symbolic of a partnership that has not only withstood the test of time, but is even more important today for both organizations.

“Partnerships with our international allies are critical for the Special Warfare Training Wing’s



A delegation of Colombian Special Air Commands leaders observe Special Warfare Training Wing trainees conduct water confidence training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, July 25, 2022. The delegation visited the Special Warfare Training Wing for an immersion into the various Air Force Special Warfare career fields and pipelines. Photo by U.S. Air Force 1st. Lt Xiaofan Liu.

diversity of thought,” said Col. Nathan Colunga, SWTW commander. “We have an imperative to understand our partners so we can interoperate seamlessly with one another in the age of strategic competition.”

For the delegation, the visit represented a step in finding solutions to any who threatens the peace and



U.S. Air Force Col. Nathan Colunga (right), Special Warfare Training Wing commander, greets Columbian Air Force Brig. Gen. Frederico Bocanegra Bernal, chief of security and defense of base, at Joint Base San Antonio-Chapman Training Annex, Texas, July 25, 2022. Bocanegra and a delegation of Columbian Special Air Commands leaders visited the SWTW for an immersion into on the various Air Force Special Warfare career fields and pipelines. Photo by U.S. Air Force 1st. Lt Xiaofan Liu.

security of the Colombian nation.

“Contemporary threats do not care about the borders between countries,” said Sanchez. “This means that building partnerships between nations is the only way to neutralize them, denying them the use of gray areas where they can survive and grow stronger...to protect our democracy and freedom, we must continue to strengthen cooperative security, because together we are invincible.”

Members of the delegation learned about each of the AFSPECWAR training pipelines overseen by the SWTW, which includes the tactical air control party (six-month pipeline), special tactics (12-20 month pipeline) and guardian angel (12-20 month pipeline) tracks.

“We are impressed with the Special Warfare

with a strengthened partnership and knowledge that will go on to affect the future battlefield.

“We are very impressed with the professionalism and vision that the Special Warfare Training Wing embodies, which enables them to develop extraordinary SOF warriors with specialized skills,”

said Sanchez. “Without a doubt, what we have learned will save lives and strengthen security, positively affecting the peace and prosperity of our country.”

Members of SWTW provide initial training for all U.S. Air Force Special Warfare training specialties, to include combat controllers, pararescue, special reconnaissance and tactical air control party Airmen.

To learn more about SW Airmen or other U.S. Air Force Special Warfare career opportunities, go to: <https://www.airforce.com/careers/in-demand-careers/special-warfare>.

Training Wing’s focus on building the resilience of their Airmen,” said Sanchez. “Considering how dangerous and demanding special operations are, it is very logical, but also revolutionary, to focus on the mind of the warrior, because in the end, the mind dominates the body. It is clear that this is what has allowed this wing to create the most decorated Airmen in the U.S. Air Force.”

The delegation also gained an insight into how the SWTW builds AFSPECWAR Airmen inherent to the United States Special Operations Command’s “Special Operations Forces Truths” that state: humans are more important than hardware, quality is better than quantity, SOF cannot be mass produced, competent SOF cannot be created after emergencies occur, and most SOF require non-SOF support.

“Building a single AFSPECWAR ground combat operator is not easy”, said Colunga. “The amount of work, time, and resources placed into each Airman by SWTW cadre, instructors, human performance and medical professionals, and mission support personnel is remarkable.”

Building a single AFSPECWAR ground combat operator is not easy. The amount of work, time, and resources placed into each Airman by SWTW cadre, instructors, human performance and medical professionals, and mission support personnel is remarkable.

— Col. Nathan Colunga

Air Force Special Operations Command



352d Osprey over the United Kingdom

A 352d Special Operations Wing CV-22B Osprey transits to conduct nighttime tilt-rotor air-to-air refueling Aug. 2, 2022, over the United Kingdom. The aircrew conducted the refueling alongside an MC-130J Commando II from the 352d SOW, ensuring readiness across the wing. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Brigitte Waltermire.



Marine Forces, Special Operations Command



Combat artist illustrates Marine Raiders

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

It was a hot day at Camp Lejeune while a Marine Special Operations Company conducted a portion of their pre-deployment readiness exercise. In the distance, Marine Raiders conduct a gear check as they prepare for the next segment of their training. In the foreground sat Capt. Charles Bauman and to his left, Capt. Michael Reynolds, as both expertly maneuver their choice of drawing tools across their sketch pads, illustrating the story unfolding right before them.

Baumann, a designated combat artist and logistics officer with Marine Wing Support Squadron 271, and Reynolds, ammunition officer with Marine Forces, Special Operations Command, document a pre-deployment culminating exercise while attached to a Marine Special Operations Company, June 13-16, 2022.

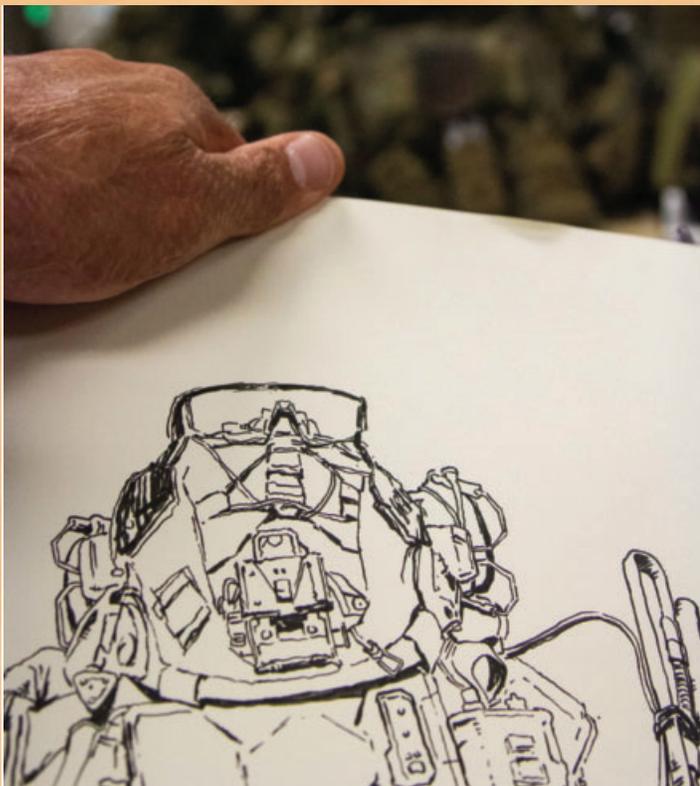
“The purpose of the [Marine Corps Combat Art Program] is to document Marine Corps operations via illustration for historical documentation,” explained Baumann. “I hope to contribute to the collections of work archived in the [National Museum of the Marine Corps] and provide a slightly different perspective to viewing the recorded history of the Marine Corps. I hope that in 10, 20, 50 years my artwork can be used to help tell the story of the Corps while I was in service.”

Baumann, initially, was not aware of the Marine Corps Combat Art Program. Once he became aware of the program, he reached out to retired Chief Warrant Officer 2 Michael Fay who was the last activated reserve combat artist during the early Iraq War years who then introduced him to retired Col. Craig Streeter, also a combat artist. Streeter then introduced Baumann to the NMMC’s director, deputy director and art curator, who encouraged him to submit a portfolio of artwork. They deemed Baumann’s artwork skilled enough to bring him into the program and he attained the free military occupational specialty of combat artist.

Combat artist is a free military occupational specialty that can be filled by any Marine regardless of primary MOS in addition to their regular duties. They illustrate military



Capt. Michael Reynolds, ammunition officer with Marine Forces, Special Operations Command, sketches Marine Raiders receiving a concept of operations brief prior to a pre-deployment culminating exercise at Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 13-16, 2022. Reynolds joined Capt. Charles Bauman, a combat artist and logistics officer with Marine Wing Support Squadron 271, to document MARSOC training for his application for the Marine Corps Combat Art Program. Combat artist is a free military occupational specialty that can be filled by any Marine regardless of primary military occupational specialty in addition to their regular duties. They illustrate military operations on behalf the Marine Corps’ historical collection efforts. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Charles J. Baumann.



Capt. Charles Bauman, a combat artist and logistics officer with Marine Wing Support Squadron 271, illustrates a Marine Raider's kit during a pre-deployment culminating exercise at Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 13-16, 2022. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Charles J. Baumann.

operations on behalf the Marine Corps' historical collection efforts as their schedule allows and is intended to capture military operations from an organic point of view.

"Once I realized I could combine my passion [and] skill for art and my calling to serve in the USMC, I was immediately inspired to see my military experience as medium to be illustrated," said Baumann. "My initial body of work that was submitted as a portfolio was praised by people I respected and admired as veteran artists, which had a huge impact on my self-confidence and determination to develop my skill."

Reynolds is currently applying to join Baumann as a combat artist for the Marine Corps Combat Art Program.

"I can directly attribute my desire to become a combat artist to the influence of Marine Corps Combat Artists like Capt. Baumann and former Staff Sgt. Elize Mcelvey," said Reynolds. "Just as in marksmanship, if you have the foundational understanding of what is supposed to happen and have the ability to receive and grow from constructive criticism, you can consistently get better with more practical application."

Baumann was coached early on by Fay, Streeter and Richard Johnson, a civilian field illustrator, to draw from observation and life-to-life experiences. Once he grasped the

concept of illustrating by direct observation, new opportunities came with the confidence to draw what he observed in person. He now keeps a sketch pad and camera on hand for any opportunities that may arise worth illustrating.

"I hope my art is able to connect with the viewer in an emotional and personal way," expressed Baumann. "I want my civilian audience to gain an appreciation for the details of what it means to serve in the military. I feel like I can provide an insider perspective as both the illustrator and active-duty service member."

Reynolds shares what he hopes to accomplish with his art.

"When observing artwork by former Marine Corps combat artists like retired Chief Warrant Officer Mike Fay, I'm brought back into the scene I'm looking at," said Reynolds. "I recall the smell of JP8, the feel of moondust beneath my boots, and the sounds of the rumbling engine of the Humvee in the distance. It's that level of connection that I aim to achieve in hopes that someday, someone can recall and connect with what I've illustrated to tell a story using non-verbal communication."

The NMMC is currently taking applications from artistically talented Marines to serve as combat artists. For more information on the program and how to apply, refer to MARADMIN 267/22.



Capt. Charles Bauman, a combat artist and logistics officer with Marine Wing Support Squadron 271, finishes a Marine Raider's kit illustration during a pre-deployment culminating exercise at Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 13-16, 2022. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Charles J. Baumann.

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

Fenton becomes 13th USSOCOM commander



Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III presided over the change of command ceremony where General Clarke relinquished command to General Fenton, who will assume command as the 13th Commander of USSOCOM after previously serving as the Commander of Joint Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, N.C. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Eric Alabiso.

*By U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Jason Baker
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

U.S. Army Gen. Bryan P. Fenton assumed command of U.S. Special Operations Command from outgoing commander Gen. Richard D. Clarke during a change of command ceremony at the Tampa Convention Center Aug. 29, 2022. General Fenton previously served as the commander of Joint Special Operations Command in Fort Bragg, N.C.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III officiated the ceremony and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, U.S. Army Gen. Mark A. Milley was the

honorary guest speaker. Several senior defense leaders from the U.S. and international military partners; allies; USSOCOM's component commanders; and other distinguished visitors were also in attendance.

"Bryan Fenton is the right leader," said Milley. "He is the right leader at the right time, with right skills to lead this command. Like Rich Clarke, Bryan Fenton has the perfect blend of character, competence, and courage. He has all the right expertise and knowledge to take what Rich has done and take it to the next level."

Fenton assumes command during an important transition for Special Operations, as large-scale

deployments and operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have mostly ceased. Competition with Russia and China are the focus of current national strategy, as Special Operations Forces will be expected to build upon the global SOF network it forged during the Global War On Terror-era to support global integrated deterrence.

“General Fenton has served in and commanded at every level of Special Operations Forces,” said Austin. “He’s been a part of operations in nearly every region around the world and General Fenton has built up extensive expertise in the Indo-Pacific. In fact, he managed to get four consecutive assignments in Hawaii and it culminated in General Fenton becoming the first Special Operations officer to serve as the deputy commander at U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.”

Secretary Austin went on to say that Fenton embodies the first SOF truth – humans are more important than hardware, by focusing on people and creating an environment where people want to perform.

“In a command where ‘humans are more important than hardware,’ this is a day to pause for a moment and recognize the exceptional men and women who make up the United States Special Operations Command along with their incredible achievements,” said Fenton. “A day to pause, and note, that these SOCOM teammates –

these quiet professionals who work tirelessly at home and abroad to keep our nation safe – are the comparative and competitive advantage of this command.”

“This team has been – and will continue to be – called upon to protect our country,” continued

Fenton. “Even more so now at this crucial time with a National Defense Strategy outlining challenges with China, Russia, Iran, Al Qaeda and ISIS, to name but a few. Yet your Special Operations Forces ‘were born’ for challenges just like these. It’s in our DNA... has been since the beginning.”

Clarke leaves USSOCOM after commanding for three and a half years and retires after more than 38 years of military service. He commanded at every level of the 75th Ranger Regiment through his career and deployed to combat several times, serving in key



General Clarke relinquished command to General Fenton, who will assume command as the 13th Commander of USSOCOM after previously serving as the Commander of Joint Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, N.C. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Eric Alabiso.

leadership positions throughout the Joint Airborne and SOF community.

“Congratulations, Bryan. No one is more ready to lead our Special Operations community than you,” said Clarke, welcoming his replacement. “With a

depth of experience in the Indo-Pacific, you’re already poised for our most pressing security challenges. I have watched you lead with enthusiasm and positivity. You have the vision, you have the experience, and most of all, you live and breathe our ‘1st SOF Truth: Humans are more important than hardware.’”

“Our people are without question the unmatched advantage of this command,” continued

Clarke. “They’re innovative, they’re problem-solvers, and they are absolutely committed to keeping Americans safe at home and our Nation free.”

USSOCOM develops and employs fully capable SOF to conduct global special operations and activities as part of the Joint Force to support Combatant Command operations and campaigns against state and non-state actors to protect and advance U.S. policies and objectives.

Bryan Fenton is the right leader. He is the right leader at the right time, with right skills to lead this command. Like Rich Clarke, Bryan Fenton has the perfect blend of character, competence, and courage. He has all the right expertise and knowledge to take what Rich has done and take it to the next level.

Gen. Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

USSOCOM hosts change of responsibility and retirement ceremony for its top enlisted leader

*By U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Jason Baker
U.S. Special Operations Command*

U.S. Special Operations Command held a combined change of responsibility and retirement ceremony inside the headquarters' Wargame Center, Aug. 3, 2022. Command Sgt. Maj. Shane Shorter assumed responsibility of USSOCOM from Command Chief Master Sgt. Gregory Smith, who held the position for more than three years.

Gen. Richard Clarke, commander of USSOCOM, was the host of the ceremonies. During his speech, Clarke spoke about Smith's career spanning more than 32 years of service, with 26 of those years being in the special operations.

"I know for me personally, I absolutely hired the right guy into this command, because he made a difference," said Clarke about selecting Smith as his command senior enlisted leader. "He is brilliant, anyone who knows Greg, knows he is brilliant. He really is the savant of SOCOM. He can tell you, 'Back in 2010 when I was at the commander's conference we did this' and this is why this decision was made."

Clarke thanked Smith for his leadership, sage advice and commended him for his unique strategic intellect and knowledge. He then explained Smith's true value to the command was his due to his focus on, what he termed 'the three P's,' - partnership, people and professionalism.

"The other 'P' that I just want to hit with Greg is people. Gregg, values our people," said Clarke. "Greg and I have had the opportunity to go to Walter Reed many times to visit our wounded service members



After serving three years as the Command Senior Enlisted Leader of U.S. Special Operations Command, Command Chief Master Sgt. Greg Smith retired and hands the responsibility to Command Sgt. Major Shane Shorter during a change of responsibility ceremony held in the headquarters, Aug. 4, 2022. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

over the last three years and Greg values our people. He saw how important the ties, the families, the things that needed to be done, because he truly cares



After serving three years as the Command Senior Enlisted Leader of U.S. Special Operations Command, Command Chief Master Sgt. Greg Smith hands the responsibility to Command Sgt. Major Shane Shorter during a change of responsibility ceremony held in the headquarters, Aug. 4, 2022. Here, Smith passes the command flag to the USSOCOM Commander Gen. Richard D. Clarke. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

deeply about our people. And I got to witness that every day, not just in his personal interactions with the people but also with the systems that he tried to set up within this headquarters.”

Smith, who served as the USSOCOM command senior enlisted leader since July 2019 accepted his retirement award, orders and certificate prior to passing the USSOCOM Colors to Shorter. During his comments Smith thanked the many senior leaders who attended representing the U.S. joint force and the international SOF partners and allies.

“To the staff, the team, and the SOCOM enterprise, it has been an unbelievable honor to work for you,” said Smith. “To the men and women of USSOCOM, thank you. Thank you for allowing me to be a member of your team. I love you all, God bless this command and the United States of America.”

Clarke expressed his confidence in Shorter to take the reins of responsibility from Smith due to his previous experience and assignments mostly centered in the Indo-Pacific theater.

“The great news about this community is that we

He is brilliant, anyone who knows Greg, knows he is brilliant. He really is the savant of SOCOM. He can tell you, ‘Back in 2010 when I was at the commander’s conference we did this’ and this is why this decision was made.

— Gen. Richard D. Clarke

have amazing draft choices and when one person leaves there are so many others that can come in and take their place,” said Clarke. “Shane with a just phenomenal career, much of it spent at our 1st (Special Forces) Group and out in Okinawa. Given where this command is and where the National Defense Strategy is (focused). Shane Shorter is the right guy to come in here at this point in time.”

Shorter thanked Clarke for his confidence in him and thanked Smith for the thorough transition prior to replacing him as the CSEL for USSOCOM.

“I would like to take a moment to personally thank Gregg for his long service to the nation and his service and dedication to the SOF enterprise.” said Shorter. “I will finish with my last thanks, thanks to all of you, every single person that makes up the SOF enterprise. In my opinion, the best organization on the

planet. Without each of you this organization would not be as strong. I am honored to serve with you, I am humbled for the opportunity in front of me and proud to be one of your teammates.”

Shorter, comes to the position after serving as the Commandant of the Joint Special Operations University. He previously

served as command senior enlisted leader for U.S. Indo-Pacific Command at Camp Smith Hawaii and has served as a Special Forces NCO for 30 years.



Command Sgt. Major Shane Shorter accepts the command’s colors from USSOCOM Commander Gen. Richard D. Clarke during a change of responsibility ceremony held in the headquarters, Aug. 4, 2022. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

Headquarters - U.S Special Operations Command Green Beret competes in his 4th DoD Warrior Games

*By Michael Bottoms
USSOCOM Office of Communication*

Green Beret Sgt. 1st Class Brant Ireland was on his sixth combat deployment in the mountains of eastern Afghanistan when he was travelling to a mission aboard a Chinook helicopter. It was two o'clock in the morning and the propellers from the helicopter were kicking up dust and causing brown out conditions. Loaded for a long mission, Ireland was carrying a heavy rucksack when he exited the aircraft. He walked out and then his life would change

forever.

“We were doing a big night operation and we were not doing anything out of the ordinary flying in on Chinooks. It was dark, two o'clock in the morning, brown out conditions and I went 20 or 30 meters and fell into a drop off, with a 150-pound pack on my back and all that weight broke my left leg. I tried to get back up, but I could not walk. The leg dislocated backward. It folded underneath me,” Ireland said.

The fall forced his femur to shatter the tibia plateau into 3 dozen pieces. One of the Chinooks came back and



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Brant Ireland competes in the cycling competition during the DoD Warrior Games, Aug. 22, 2022, and would go on to win the Gold Medal. The DoD Warrior Games are composed of more than 200 wounded, ill and injured service members and veteran athletes, competing in 12 adaptive sporting events Aug. 19-28, 2022, at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Disney in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. Photo by Michael Bottoms.

with the help of his teammates they put him back on the bird. They flew him back to the medical facility and took an X-ray, and at that point, the doctors informed him that his leg was badly broken.

“I was in disbelief at first. I did not want to go home,” said Ireland.

Ireland was transported to Landstuhl, Germany where he received more extensive care and where he was met by a USSOCOM Warrior Care Program representative who began to guide him and his family through the rehabilitation process. He was told, with this kind of fracture, they could put it back together, but with the nerve damage his leg would not be normal again. Not giving up, he endured two years of multiple surgeries.

“I grew up an athlete and I had been a Green Beret for a while so I thought I would tough it out and get better. So, I endured several surgeries at the University of North Carolina,” Ireland said. “They set me up a full leg Ideo brace and I was able to deploy back to Afghanistan with the team as a support person. I was happy I got to deploy with my team one more time. Made it there and back with my team. That was something I needed for my mental well-being.”

Unfortunately, during that deployment his leg just started bowing badly so he went down to San Antonio to the Center of the Intrepid where he talked to the surgeon there and he decided to opt for amputation.

“It was almost two years to the day from injury to amputation,” Ireland said.

While recovering, Ireland was watching the Invictus Games, the international military adaptive sports program, on television and immediately became interested in competing.

“I saw the 2016 Invictus Games on TV and I thought that might be something I would want to be involved with. So, the USSOCOM Warrior Care Program introduced me to the DoD Warrior Games and allowed me to try different sports,” Ireland said.

Always an athlete, the games reinvigorated Ireland and gave him a new purpose.

“While the SOCOM Warrior Care Program did an amazing job introducing me to Adaptive Sports, the Warrior Games provided that competitive goal to strive for every day at training. It is like a culmination exercise where you can highlight the blood, sweat, and tears you put in through the rehabilitation process,” Ireland said. “It



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Brant Ireland is interviewed by host from the television show Good Morning America, Aug. 17, 2022. The DoD Warrior Games are composed of over 200 wounded, ill and injured service members and veteran athletes, competing in 12 adaptive sporting events Aug. 19-28, 2022, at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Disney in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Eric Alabiso.

is also an amazing opportunity to show our families how much we appreciate them supporting us and sticking with us, even through some of the most challenging times.”

“Yes, it is incredibly competitive and there are individuals competing their hearts out, but the environment of the DoD Warrior Games is such that everyone is rooting for everyone, and there is so much mutual respect for the battles all the competitors have fought to overcome. Everyone, military and civilian, should witness a Warrior Games at least once in their lives,” he concluded.

Ireland is also grateful for how the USSOCOM Warrior Care Program helped him, and his family navigate his recovery.

“The USSOCOM Warrior Care Program has been with me through every step of the way of my injury recovery. It is hard to put into words how much they have supported me, my family, and my career. Administratively, medically, and personally, they advocated for me throughout this entire process, and will continue to,” Ireland said. “The Military Adaptive Sports Team specifically has played a huge role in my physical and emotional rehabilitation. They opened my eyes to the whole new world of adaptive sports and the benefits that come along with them.”

Ireland is competing in track, field, swimming, cycling, rowing, wheelchair rugby, wheelchair basketball, and seated volleyball. The DoD Warrior Games was held in Orlando, Florida Aug. 19 – 28.

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

Not all injuries are visible



Lt. Cdr. Alanna Ball (retired) would go on to win 5 Gold Medals in the swimming competition during the DoD Warrior Games Aug. 26, 2022, Orlando, Florida. The DoD Warrior Games are composed of over 200 wounded, ill and injured service members and veteran athletes, competing in 12 adaptive sporting events Aug. 19-28, 2022, at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Disney in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Eric Alabiso.

*By Michael Bottoms
USSOCOM Office of Communication*

Lt. Cmdr. Alanna Devlin Ball formerly assigned to SEAL Team TWO as a naval supply officer is competing in her first DoD Warrior Games in the swimming, rowing, and powerlifting competitions.

Ball, a cancer survivor, began having headaches over a several year period.

“I had been with SEAL Team TWO for about a year and for three years before that I had been at the Pentagon and Bahrain. I had these headaches, and I would have to leave during the duty day. I just dealt with it and went back to work,” Ball said. “After a year at SEAL Team TWO it got worse, so the doctor

ordered an MRI, and it came back that I had a mass in the right frontal lobe of my brain. That stopped everything in terms of work. I had the mass removed about a month later and was diagnosed with brain cancer.”

She remained committed to serving with SEAL Team TWO but decided to get further treatment in her hometown of Boston.

“I was still with the Team, but I decided to get treated in Boston at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute since I was raised in Boston. My husband is also active duty and was on a ship, but his command allowed him to accompany me during my treatment. So, we packed up three dogs and stayed with family there,” she said. “I went through about ten weeks of chemo and



Lt. Cdr. Alanna Ball (retired) competes in the 50-meter breaststroke at the DoD Warrior Games Aug. 26, 2022, Orlando, Florida. Photo by U.S. Michael Bottoms.

radiation and then went back to Virginia Beach back to the Team and became part of the USSOCOM Warrior Care Program. I would stay on a pill-based chem for another year and a half. Unfortunately, I was unable to deploy with my team which was frustrating.”

While she was still receiving treatment, she was contacted by Marina Letourneau who is the USSOCOM Warrior Care Program Recovery Care Coordinator assigned to Naval Special Warfare Group TWO. Letourneau asked Ball if she wanted to go to USSOCOM’s DoD Warrior Games selection camp.

“I did not even know what the DoD Warrior Games were. I had been in the Navy for quite a while. Marina explained what the games were, and it sounded like fun. I could concentrate on something other than my treatment,” said Ball. “I swam my whole life competitively, so the swimming competition was a definite for me. The rowing and powerlifting were fun too; so, I will compete in those as well.”

In 2020, the Warrior Care Program encouraged her to try out for Team USSOCOM at their selection camp held in Tampa, Florida.

“I had been training everyday throughout radiation and chemotherapy treatment so I knew I could do it. I tried all the sports and ultimately was selected to compete in swimming, rowing, and powerlifting events for the games,” Ball said. “Participating in this camp

Participating in this camp enabled me and my husband to focus on something other than the immense physical, psychological, and emotional effects my surgery and treatment had on me. The Warrior Games represent an exceptional display of motivation and perseverance, and I am excited and grateful to represent Team USSOCOM.

enabled me and my husband to focus on something other than the immense physical, psychological, and emotional effects my surgery and treatment had on me. The Warrior Games represent an exceptional display of motivation and perseverance, and I am excited and grateful to represent Team USSOCOM.”

Although she was enduring a traumatic time in her life, she expressed gratitude for the USSOCOM Warrior Care Program for helping her navigate her healthcare.

“The USSOCOM Warrior Care Program has provided me and my family with amazing support and empathy, while providing incredible opportunities to explore and experience alternative avenues to both heal and thrive,” Ball said. “The people in the USSOCOM Warrior Care Program also assisted me with my USSOCOM fellowship and the medical board process, providing insight and guidance, from start to finish.”

Ball expressed not all the competitors at the DoD Warrior Games will show visible injuries and some of those competing will have hidden conditions.

“One of the biggest things I have experienced is that

people cannot always see an injury. You will see people in the DoD Warrior Games who do not show an injury, but there is a reason they are there. It’s why I am there,” Ball said.

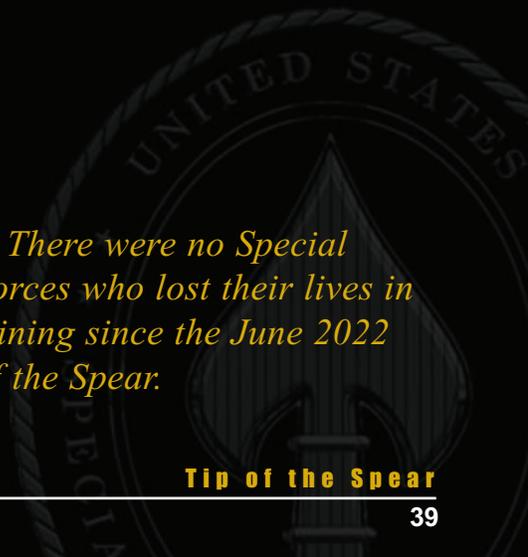
The DoD Warrior Games was held in Orlando, Florida Aug. 19 – 28.



Lt. Cdr. Alanna Ball (retired) competes in the powerlifting competition at the DoD Warrior Games Aug. 25, 2022, Orlando, Florida. Photo by Kevin Smith.



GILBERT ALANIZ JR. RALPH L. THOMPSON WESLEY B. ALDRIDGE ALAN C. BAY
PVT USA 840125 SGT USA 810126 SGT USA 840527 SGT USA 840128
VANCEY WILLIAM C. HAYES ROBERT A. BRANNAN



Editor's note: There were no Special Operations Forces who lost their lives in combat or training since the June 2022 issue of Tip of the Spear.

Team Army and Team SOCOM compete in the bronze medal wheelchair rugby game at the 2022 DoD Warrior Games, Aug. 22, 2022. The Warrior Games are composed of over 200 wounded, ill and injured service members and veteran athletes, competing in 12 adaptive sporting events Aug. 19-28, 2022 at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Disney in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Oneg Pilsner.

