

TIP OF THE SPEAR



Eager Lion 12



U.S. Special Operations Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., August 2012



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Eager Lion 12 takes place in Jordan ... 14



Tip of the Spear



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(Cover) Combined Joint Special Operations forces air assault onto a live-fire training objective during Exercise Eager Lion 12. Exercise Eager Lion is an irregular warfare themed exercise including 19 countries and more than 11,000 participants, focused on missions coalition partners might perform in support of contingency operations. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Wynnfred Hoke.

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SOF AROUND THE WORLD SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – SOUTH



During a 2-day Medical Civic Action Program, hundreds stood in line on June 2-3, in Arroyito, District of Horqueta, Department of Concepcion, Paraguay in order to be seen by medical professionals and to obtain medical treatment. Rural residents received treatment for a total of 9,379 different medical cases in the areas of internal medicine, gynecology, pediatrics, ophthalmology, dentistry, and outpatient surgery. Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Larry W. Carpenter Jr.

SOCSOUTH assists Paraguayan residents with free medical care

By Kelsey L. Campbell, SOCSOUTH and Air Force Master Sgt. Larry Carpenter, USSOCOM

With the advice and assistance of Special Operations Command South Civil Affairs planners, Paraguayan military civil affairs soldiers teamed up with Paraguayan National Police units to provide medical attention and education to rural Paraguayans June 2-3. The two security services provided medical care to more than 2,400 rural residents at the “12 de Abril” school, Arroyito, District of Horqueta, Department of

Concepcion.

The area is only accessible by dirt and mud roads, providing no access to ambulances and little patrolling for national police. The local residents had little to no past positive exposure to municipal or national security forces operating in their district. The Medical Civic Action Program provided the opportunity for the military and police to serve a vulnerable population, develop rapport between the two partner nation services, and build community relations.

“Projects like these are important in Paraguay because of the vast under-governed parts of the country

which are taken advantage of by either drug trafficking organizations or violent extremist organizations in the region,” said Sgt. 1st Class Hansel Delgadillo, a SOCSOUTH Civil Affairs planner. “These programs portray a positive unified front on behalf of the local government, the national police and military in an area where residents routinely protested against the local government and had little to no trust in the police because of perceived corruption.”

Gen. Gonzalez, the Paraguayan 4th Army Division commander, oversaw the entire military-police operation in Arroyito. He noted that due to the community outreach, this was the first instance his troops could fully operate in Arroyito.

The military and police brought a group of doctors, surgeons, dentists, nurses and dental technicians to provide medical services to the community members. The Ministry of Public Health deployed a mobile dental clinic unit for the event. Rural residents received treatment for a total of 9,379 different medical cases in the areas of internal medicine, gynecology, pediatrics, ophthalmology, dentistry, and outpatient surgery. In addition, laboratory and pharmacy services were provided.

“The medical staff was very attentive and we are very thankful for their services,” said a woman who attended the event. “This is the first time we have received this type of treatment. The hospitality has been great, along with the treatment and excellent service.”

SOCSOUTH Civil Affairs planners received a \$70,000 operating budget from the U.S. Southern Command Humanitarian Assistance Program. The funds were used to pay for medical equipment and prescriptions donated to the Paraguayan government for the MEDCAP, as well as school supplies that were donated to the “12 de Abril” school and medical supplies donated to the local Arroyito clinic.

Arturo Rene Urbieto Cuevas, the mayor of Horqueta, was ecstatic to have the military and police collaborate to provide needed medical screening and treatments to the residents of his district. To aid with the operation, he donated 100 kilograms of meat for the meals that were served to the attendees.



A Paraguayan military doctor performs a dental evaluation on a local citizen during a Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP), June 2 in Arroyito, District of Horqueta, Department of Concepcion, Paraguay. Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Larry W. Carpenter Jr.

“I’m thankful for the training the U.S. has provided us and I’m going to teach the police the same type of training so that they can build up their capability,” said Col. Monges, leader of the Paraguayan military civil affairs directorate.

In the past, the police and military have not always presented a unified front. In the recent past, however, the military civil affairs and national police have collaborated on civil registrations throughout Paraguay. This MEDCAP, named Plan Nepohano 17, was the first full partnership between the military and police for community medical outreach. Together, they provided medical screening and treatment, security for the event, transportation for rural residents, and provided a lunch meal both days of the operation.

“I’m very thankful and like the joint effort of everyone working together so we could answer the call for all the necessities that are out here,” said a general



SOF AROUND THE WORLD SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – SOUTH

surgeon with the national police's FOPE (Fuerzas de Operaciones de Policías Especiales). "It feels good.

It's a good opportunity to work with another force."

In addition to the medical care rendered, representatives from the Ministry of Justice and Work were present to register rural residents into the national database, update and issue identification cards, and register firearms. For many residents, this was the first instance of receiving a Paraguayan ID card.

In addition to sending the military and police medical staff to Arroyito, MEDCAP staff provided a shuttle, transporting residents from the outlying rural townships to receive the free medical services. Most residents of the Horqueta area live well below the poverty line. They are subsistence farmers, selling just enough vegetables or livestock to pay for gasoline for their motorcycles. Many families do not own cars and are not able to make regular trips to metropolitan areas for medical attention.

"Without them coming here, we would have to travel to Concepcion or Horqueta and we don't really have the means to do that," said a local elderly woman. "Sometimes when we go there, they do not give us medication, so this is big for us and we are very happy about it."

"The objective is for the people to gain trust and for there to be a dialogue, for them to get closer in the relationship between the people and the police department," said the chief of the national police's Rural Operations Unit (Comandos de Operaciones Rurales). "It's clear that when we talked to the communities, it's about gaining their trust and letting them know that the government and police are here to support them."

Commissioner Lara, the chief of the national police's COR unit said, "The working relationship between the military and the national police is coming along really well, they have invited me to come along and be a part of future MEDCAPs."

"Working with our partner nation civil affairs counterparts was an incredible experience," said Delgadillo. "Their long hours of work before, during and after an operation to ensure all aspects of the mission is covered and executed to standard makes our job in Paraguay that much easier."



A Paraguayan military orthodontist shapes a denture prosthetic for a patient during a Medical Civic Action Program, June 3 in Arroyito, District of Horqueta, Department of Concepcion, Paraguay. Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Larry W. Carpenter Jr.

SOC SOUTH Civil Affairs planners are already coordinating the concept of operations for three more MEDCAPs to be conducted in collaboration with the Paraguayan military and national police in the near future.

SOCSOUTH, Uruguayans build bonds through training exchange

*By Air Force Master Sgt. Larry W. Carpenter Jr.
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

In support of Special Operations Command South, Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen attached to Naval Special Warfare Group 4 participated in a Joint Combined Exchange Training event in Uruguay May 15 to June 15.

These specialized U.S. military personnel had the opportunity to sharpen their skills and swap techniques during the month-long JCET with the Uruguayan Sección de Reconocimiento (SECRON) of Fusileros Navales (FUSNA), Uruguayan Coast Guard and Special Operations Police. During the four weeks of training, they worked on honing their special tactics techniques in order to increase their ability to conduct missions more effectively. By working together, they were able to learn from each other and function as a more proficient unit.

“We hope that they go back to their respective units and they show their guys what we trained on, or at least the basics so that everybody has a working knowledge of what everyone does and that way they can operate better,” said a Petty Officer Special Operations medic.

According to the executive officer of the FUSNA, the main goal he wanted was that his men gain a better grasp of how to perform counter illicit trafficking, which is a big part of their mission.

“Working with the FUSNA and SECRON guys has been awesome, they are eager and hard working,” said the Special Operations medic.

All participants received the opportunity to learn from this experience by being able to share information with each other and learn from each other’s real-world experiences.

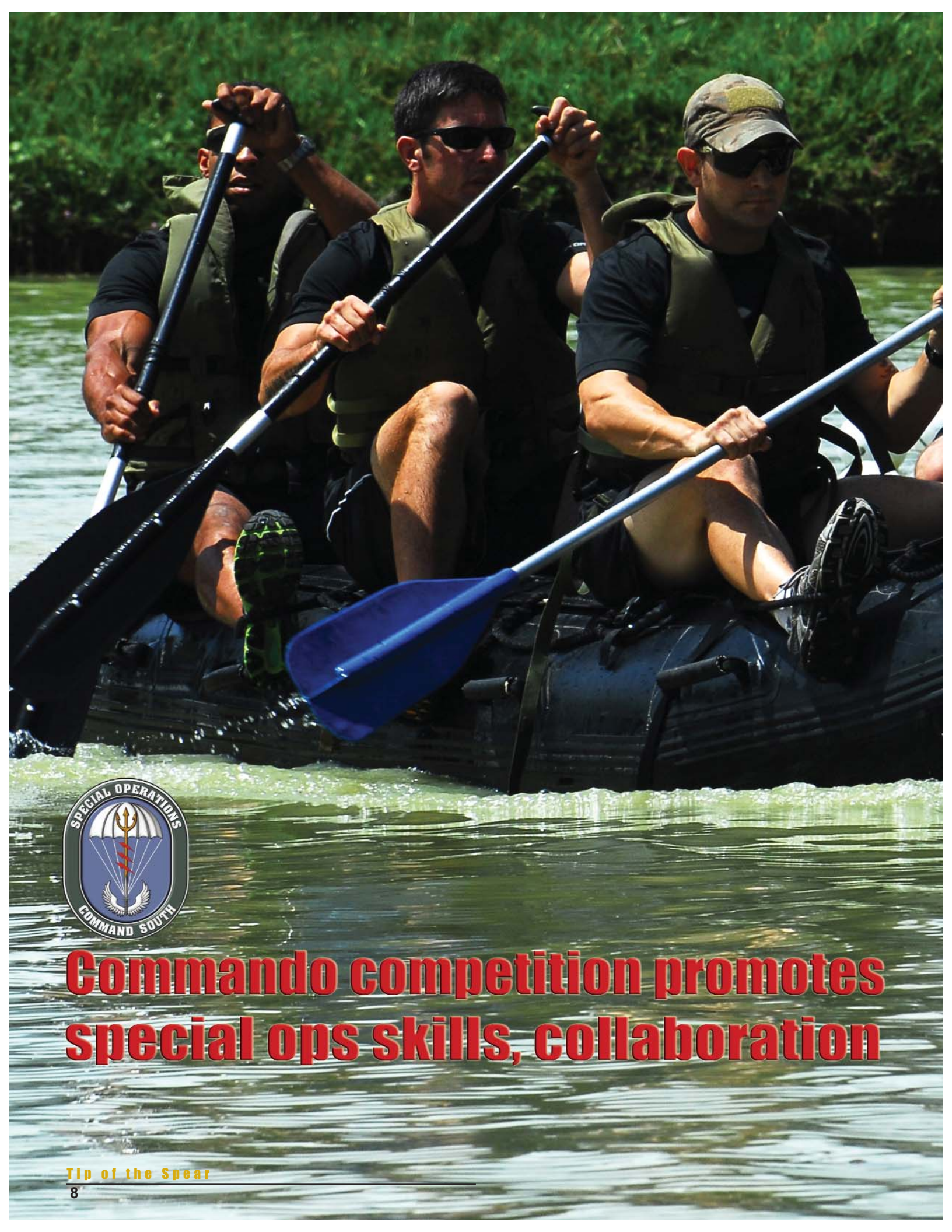
“It’s a big ego boost for us to be able to do this with the Americans and it’s good for morale,” said a SECRON boat operator. “I would like to see something become of this, so that it doesn’t end right here, so we can improve our capacity in the future.”



Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen attached to Naval Special Warfare Group 4 work with their Uruguayan counterparts on vessel boarding techniques during a Joint Combined Exchange Training event in Uruguay May 15 to June 15. Throughout the four weeks of training, they worked on honing their special tactics techniques in order to increase their ability to conduct missions more effectively. Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Larry W. Carpenter Jr.

The training included a three-day class on tactical combat casualty care, water navigation techniques, vessel boarding techniques, and infiltration and extraction methods. It concluded with a field training exercise in the form of a simulated mission, which continued the exchange of training techniques and mutual enhancement of military professionalism. In addition, the FTX was observed by members of the Uruguayan Department of Defense and Congress, who stated they were very impressed with the caliber of training.

JCETs are frequently conducted by SOCSOUTH throughout the Caribbean and Central and South America’s at the request of partner nations in order to enhance bilateral relations and interoperability through military-to-military contacts and are a valuable tool in the command’s Theater Security Cooperation program.



Commando competition promotes special ops skills, collaboration



Special Forces Soldiers from the United States practice different rowing techniques June 3, for the aquatic event that will take place later in the Fuerzas Comando competition at the Colombian National Training Center in Tolemaida, Colombia. Fuerzas Comando, established in 2004, is a U.S. Southern Command-sponsored Special Forces skills competition and senior leader seminar conducted annually in Central and South America and the Caribbean. The ninth annual event is aimed to strengthen regional and multinational cooperation, mutual trust, enhance training, readiness and interoperability of Special Forces in the region. Photo by Army Sgt. Karen L. Kozub.



SOF AROUND THE WORLD SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – SOUTH

By Donna Miles
American Forces Press Service

As elite commandos from across the Western Hemisphere compete in a grueling counterterrorism and special operations skills competition, the commander of Special Operations Command South said they're building the relationships required to confront transnational organized crime gripping much of the region.

Fuerzas Comando 2012 kicked off June 6 at the Colombian National Training Center in Tolemaida, Colombia.

Competitors from 21 nations across the Americas and the Caribbean took part in the ninth annual event, sponsored by U.S. Southern Command and designed to promote military-to-military relationships, increased interoperability and improved regional security, Navy Rear Adm. Thomas L. Brown, II, told American Forces Press Service.

The participants in this year's Fuerzas Comando were from The Bahamas, Belize, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States and Uruguay.

The eight-day competition consisted of sniper, assault, aquatic, physical fitness, strength and endurance events that challenged commandos psychologically, as well as physically. It wrapped up with a multinational airborne operation and wing exchange June 13, with a closing ceremony the next day.

The event has sparked healthy competition among participants, Brown said, but added that they also get to learn a lot about other regional forces and how they operate. "The practical side is that we gain a better understanding of each other's equipment, capabilities and skills," he said.

Along with better understanding, he said competitors develop the kind of mutual trust they need to work together.

"Special operations is a very human-centric business. It's not as much dependent on platforms and technical capabilities. It is really about people," Brown said. "Relationships are critical... to confront the threats that we face in the hemisphere together."

Transnational organized criminals, violent extremist



A member of the U.S. Special Operations Forces competes in the rifle qualification event for Fuerzas Comando, June 7, at the Colombian National Training Center. Fuerzas Comando, established in 2004, is a U.S. Southern Command-sponsored Special Forces skills competition and senior leader seminar which is conducted annually. Photo by Army Sgt. Karen Kozub.

groups and dangerous non-state actors present a particular challenge because they operate without respect for national boundaries and sovereignty, he noted.

Nations working to confront them don't have that advantage. "We must respect them, so we have to overcome that advantage through increased cooperation and increased information flow wherever we can," Brown said. "In a nutshell, that's the science behind why we have to work hard at this."

As special operators test their tactical skills this week, their senior military and government leaders are coming together in Bogota to explore ways to promote those efforts. Each participating nation has sent senior special operations commandos and ministerial-level policymakers associated with the country's terrorism policies, procedures and strategies to the seminar.

"This is the one forum that we have annually where we can come together as a region and talk about ideas, [about how to] increase our effect, collectively, against these dangerous non-state-actor threats we face," Brown said.

Representatives of Southcom, U.S. Special Operations

Command and the U.S. interagency will participate in panel discussions and speaker engagements designed to stimulate dialogue about transnational organized crime and ways to address it. They'll share best practices and lessons learned by U.S. special operators and tips about tools they've found valuable, particularly low-cost ones with a high return. "You just can't have enough communication on that," Brown said.

While acknowledging a temptation to overload participants with as much information as possible, Brown said he's committed to providing "a little less PowerPoint and more time for an exchange of ideas" that better promotes relationship-building.

Brown said he's particularly pleased that Mexico, Canada and the Bahamas – countries that fall under U.S. Northern Command's area of responsibility – have joined this year's event.

"Many of the challenges we face are hemispheric challenges, and they don't follow a dividing line of our national security system," he said. "We have to draw [organizational command] lines somewhere, and that is fine," he continued. "But we are working hard to break down those stovepipes and ensure that Northcom and Southcom are working together as a team. And I think this exercise is an example of how we are doing that."

Brown called Fuerzas Comando 2012 and its associated senior-leader seminar examples of a concerted effort to promote regional cooperation and engagement across the special operations community.

He noted another recent example, the International Special Operations Forces Conference that Navy Adm. Bill H. McRaven, the SOCOM commander, hosted last month in Tampa. Delegates from 96 countries gathered to exchange ideas, along with their different tactics, techniques and procedures and explored ways to establish a global special operations partnership.

"I watch the region's special operations leaders making connections and increasing the level and value of the cooperation between them," Brown said. "And I see that as a direct outshoot of exercises and forums where we develop these relationships between special operations forces across national and regional boundaries."

Brown is working with Air Force Gen. Douglas Fraser, the SOUTHCOM commander, to explore ways to expand these partnership-building initiatives into new areas. In

doing so, he said he's tapping capabilities from throughout the Defense Department, including SOCOM, the Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Defense Analysis, the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies and Joint Special Operations University, as well as civilian academic institutions.

"We are increasingly working on the cognitive side, sharing ideas," and encouraging more countries to work together, multinationally, he said. "So we are increasingly trying to connect the dots across the region."

As they connect the dots, Brown said he's pleased by the media attention Fuerzas Comando is receiving. It's helping to educate to the public across the hemisphere about how the United States is cooperating and sharing ideas and facilitating cooperation in support of regional security, he said.

But Brown said it's also drawing attention to the special operators from across the region who have stood up to provide that security.

"The quality and dedication of the troops from these partner nations, the pride they show, and the important role they play in security in the region is having a direct effect on people's quality of life," he said. "And I think that's a good message to get out there."

For the fifth time in the history of the exercise, Colombia earned the coveted title of champion. Ecuador took second place and Uruguay took third place.



A member of the special operations forces from Belize competes in the push-up portion of the physical fitness event for Fuerzas Comando 2012 at the Colombian National Training Center, June 6, 2012. Photo by Army Sgt. Christopher Vann.

ANA Special Operations Command stands up first division in Afghan history

Story and photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Cory Rose, NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan Public Affairs

The Afghan National Army Special Operation Command hosted an official stand-up ceremony at Camp Commando, Kabul, Afghanistan July 16.

With the growth of the Commandos and Special Forces within the ANA, and with the addition of a special aviation and elite mobile strike force units, ANASOC grew from a brigade-sized element to the first division-sized special operations force unit in Afghan military history.

“Now that we have the ANASOC division, we will work together to scare the enemy so that the enemy will run away from us,” said Brig. Gen. Abdul Karim, ANASOC commander.

The newly-formed division provides Afghan and Coalition forces with a distinctive unit that serves both as a command and staff for a unique, enduring and elite military organization.

“The best way to beat the enemy, defeat the enemy, is to play with him the way that he plays,” said Gen. Sher Mohammad Karimi, Afghan National

Army chief of staff, through an interpreter. “You need small units, teams, to go after him where he hides.”

After 10 years of Coalition forces partnering and mentoring ANASOC soldiers, there are now approximately 10,000 ANA soldiers serving within the division.

“Now that we have entered the third transition phase, where Coalition forces are handing over control to the

Afghans, we will not let the enemy come to our areas,” said Karimi. “You [ANASOC forces] are the most elite and you have the training to defeat the enemy in the direst conditions. This is the reason

that we have this division covering the whole country, there will be no time and opportunity given to the enemy to move freely.”

The mission of ANASOC is to organize, man, train, lead, and equip ANA special operations forces and to provide responsive and decisive action in support of Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan security objectives.

The ceremony concluded with Karimi hosting the first commanders conference since the stand-up of the division.

“The best way to beat the enemy, defeat the enemy, is to play with him the way that he plays. You need small units, teams, to go after him where he hides.”

— Gen. Sher Mohammad Karimi,
Afghan National Army chief of staff



Afghan National Army Special Operation Forces soldiers stand in ranks during the stand-up ceremony at Camp Commando, Kabul, July 16.





**SOF AROUND THE WORLD
SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - CENTRAL**

Coalition forces train together at Eager Lion 12

Coalition partners from Combined Joint Task Force Spartan maneuver through a mock village at the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center in Jordan May 16. Photo by Spc. Samantha Parks.



*Story by Spc. Samantha Parks
14th Public Affairs Detachment*

Conflict arose when Redland invaded Blueland, displacing more than 75 personnel in the Jabal Petra area. Then came a threat of possible insurgent attacks and improvised explosive devices.

At least that is the situation coalition partners with Combined Joint Task Force Spartan were presented with during Exercise Eager Lion 12.

Exercise Eager Lion is an irregular warfare themed exercise including 19 countries and more than 11,000 participants, focused on missions coalition partners might perform in support of contingency operations.

The intent is to strengthen military-to-military relationships and interoperability through a joint, whole-of-government, multinational approach to meet current and future complex national security challenges.

In response, Jordanian Armed Forces, Lebanese Armed Forces and the United States military work together to set-up, maintain and run a dislocated civilians camp.

For the JAF, it is the first time they have had to deal with dislocated civilians, but for the U.S. military, it's an opportunity to step back and teach.

"We are here basically [in] an advisory role," said Sgt. 1st Class Lynard Gerber, 96th Civil Affairs Battalion. "Everything we do is planned together with the JAF and Lebanese. Our aspects of planning go hand in hand with theirs."

Col. Muhammad Almawajdeh, JAF's Crisis Management Center director, said the exercise is very important and provides an opportunity for great training with other nations.

"We are still learning of course, but we are improving," Almawajdeh said. "This is a very good opportunity for us as soldiers to learn from each other and to share with one another."

Gerber said aside from the language barrier, working with the Jordanians and Lebanese has been easy.

Each person has a role, Gerber said. The focus is to maintain security around the camp perimeter and make sure no one gets in unless they enter through the main gate and provide proper identification.

"The Lebanese have been very professional,"



Maj. Gen. Ken Tovo, Combined Joint Task Force Spartan commander, and Jordanian Special Operations Col. Aref S. Al-Zaben pin their corresponding countries' jump wings to each others' uniforms after a friendship jump to kick off Exercise Eager Lion 2012. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Julius Clayton.

Almawajdeh said.

The Jordanians work with the camp personnel and mitigate any issues that arise with the dislocated civilians.

"We have no individual missions out here," Gerber said. "It's just one big team. We are working with the Marines, the Army, the Lebanese and the Jordanians to accomplish all the aspects of the mission."

First Lt. James Everett, assistant operations officer, Marine Battalion Landing Team 1/2, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, said the training that led up to the execution of the dislocated civilians camp was great.

"We went from unilateral training to almost immediately going to bilateral training as our partner nations arrived," Everett said. "Working with the Lebanese, as well as our Jordanian partners, has been an incredible experience. I've highly enjoyed it."

"It's been a perspective changing experience for myself and I know from talking with a lot of other Marines, it's been the same for them. The Jordanians have been great hosts and this exercise has been a great success because of all their efforts."

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Green Berets awarded Distinguished Service Cross

*Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Marcus Butler
USASFC (A) Public Affairs*

Two Green Berets from 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross in a ceremony held at the John F. Kennedy Auditorium, Ft. Bragg, N.C., June 12.

Chief Warrant Officer Jason W. Myers and Staff Sgt. Corey M. Calkins received the U.S. Army's second highest award for valor for two separate missions in Afghanistan in 2010. The Distinguished Service Cross is second only to the Medal of Honor.

"I am extremely honored and humbled to receive this award," said Calkins, a senior weapons sergeant and native of Midland, Mich. "I was just the one called on that day but I know any other guy on my team would have done the same thing."

Calkins distinguished himself on Feb. 18, 2010, as part of a dismounted patrol consisting of U.S. Army, Marines and Afghan National Army Soldiers. During this patrol Calkins faced a formidable size of enemy force in fortified positions. Facing this threat, Calkins assaulted his way through the area successfully suppressing the enemy force to allow the safe evacuation of three injured Marines.

"Corey Calkins constantly exposed himself to effective RPG, PKM and mortar fire as he almost single handedly routed the entrenched Taliban in order to regain the vital terrain and to save the lives of his fellow Americans and Afghan partners," said



Staff Sgt. Corey M. Calkins, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), shakes the hand of Adm. Bill H. McRaven, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, after receiving the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions on Feb. 18, 2010, as part of a dismounted patrol consisting of U.S. Army, Marines and Afghan National Army Soldiers.

Adm. Bill H. McRaven, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command.

"The ANA, spurred on by Sergeant Calkins' undaunted drive towards the enemy, hurled themselves against the enemy in an apparent effort to match their mentor's bravery and aggression. Undaunted drive...that says it all."

— Adm. Bill H. McRaven

During the ceremony, vignettes were presented describing the actions of Myers and Calkins. McRaven referenced the vignette when describing Calkins' ability to rally troops to action.

"The ANA, spurred on by Sergeant Calkins' undaunted drive towards the enemy,

hurled themselves against the enemy in an apparent effort to match their mentor's bravery and aggression" said McRaven. "Undaunted drive...that says it all."

Only two months after Calkins' valorous actions, Myers distinguished himself along a single lane road in the mountains of Afghanistan on March 27, where his patrol was ambushed by an enemy force of approximately 75 to 100 insurgents. During this ambush Myers took command of the situation by directing movement, returning fire and providing medical aid, all while exposing himself to enemy machine guns and rocket propelled grenades.

"There are so many heroes on my team and I am just so honored to be here," said Myers. "I just did what needed to be done and I know that anyone else would have done the same."

"Chief Myers did what no normal man would do," said McRaven. "Chief Myers did what only a very small percentage of Soldiers in the history of the U.S. Army have done - he fought his way out of a deadly ambush by constantly exposing himself to RPGs, and PKM fire and rallying his force, saving the lives of his Afghan and American partners and then taking the fight to the enemy until victory was assured."

Towards the conclusion of the ceremony McRaven put into perspective the actions of both Myers and Calkins and what it means to be a Green Beret.

"The Green Beret isn't just a piece of headgear; it is a symbol of all that is good and right about America. It represents the finest Soldiers ever to take the battlefield. Jason Myers and Corey Calkins represent all that is good about the men who wear the Green Beret," said McRaven. "For those that witnessed the actions of Chief Jason

"Chief Myers did what no normal man would do. Chief Myers did what only a very small percentage of Soldiers in the history of the U.S. Army have done - he fought his way out of a deadly ambush by constantly exposing himself to RPGs, and PKM fire and rallying his force, saving the lives of his Afghan and American partners and then taking the fight to the enemy until victory was assured."

— *Adm. Bill H. McRaven*

Myers and Staff Sgt. Corey Calkins on those fateful days in Afghanistan, they will forever be in awe.

"I want to thank you again for your incredible service to the Regiment, the Army and this great Nation. To the men of 3rd Special Forces Group, your reputation continues to grow. Your legacy will be

found not in the wars that you fought, but in the men that fought them," said McRaven. "You, and the families that give you strength, have earned the respect and admiration of an entire nation."



Adm. Bill H. McRaven, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, pins the Distinguished Service Cross on Chief Warrant Officer Jason W. Myers, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) for his actions on March 27, 2010. Myers distinguished himself along a single lane road in the mountains of Afghanistan where his patrol was ambushed by an enemy force of approximately 75 to 100 insurgents.

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Cooper retires after 27 years

By USASOC Public Affairs

The Army bid farewell to one of the most decorated aviators in Army history Friday at Chief Warrant Officer 5 David Cooper's retirement ceremony. Cooper, the first Army Aviator to receive the Distinguished Service Cross since the Vietnam War, and the only one to receive it non-posthumously, retired after 27 years of service.

Receiving the DSC changed Cooper's life in multiple ways, both personally and professionally. As a valorous award recipient he became a sought after public speaker and traveled around the country sharing his experiences. Cooper relished his role at speaking engagements as a chance to tell America the Army story, and talk about heroes, including the other aviators and Soldiers on the ground involved in the mission where he earned the DSC. It was also a chance to show that "the mission of the Army warrant officer continues to evolve. Once merely the technical expert, today's U.S. Army warrant officers are leaders," Cooper said.

This was actually the third time that Cooper submitted his paperwork to retire from the Army. His first attempt to retire was in October 2006, a month before his valorous actions in Iraq. Shortly after, then Col. Kevin Mangum talked him into becoming the Regimental Warrant Officer at the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne). "His actions speak to what he is and how he does things, but they had no impact on my decision. Dave was the right guy for the job. His perspective, maturity and approach to business make him an invaluable part of any organization," said Magnum.

Cooper's second attempt at retirement came in November 2009 after his senior position at the 160th was complete. Once again, then Brig. Gen. Mangum talked him out of it. Mangum was building his staff at the new Army Special Operations Aviation Command, and thought Cooper would be a great asset as the unit's first Command



Chief Warrant Officer 5 David Cooper receives his Certificate of Retirement from Maj. Gen. Kevin Mangum June 29, at the Airborne and Special Operations Museum in Fayetteville, N.C. Courtesy photo.

Chief Warrant Officer. Cooper saw this as a tremendous opportunity, so with the support of his wife and family, again withdrew his retirement packet, and became one of only two warrant officers in the Army to work directly for a general officer. Cooper saw serving as the first CCWO for a new command helped "empower Army leadership and rely more on senior warrant officers as part of the command team," Cooper said.

Highlights of Cooper's career include being part of 2nd Squadron, 6th Cavalry in 1988, the first AH-64 Apache unit in Europe. Another highlight was in 1991, when Cooper was the flight lead of the AH-64 section that escorted Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf to peace talks at the conclusion of Operation Desert Storm, where Cooper was able to stand in the tents and witness history. His distinguished career also led to numerous encounters with U.S. Presidents, including flying escort for President George H. W. Bush in Iraq, and bringing his wife Barbara Bush to dinner with the Obamas at the White House.

Now, after 27 years of service, it is finally time for Cooper to bid farewell to active duty Army life and move on to the next phase.

"The Army has changed a lot in the last 27 years." Cooper stated. "We've had several uniform changes, there is new equipment, new tactics. Something that hasn't changed is that during this era of persistent conflict, quality young men and women continue to sign up for our Army."

3/75 Rangers receive awards for valorous combat actions

By Tracy A. Bailey
75th Ranger Regiment Public Affairs

Rangers from 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment gathered together July 12 to honor four of their own for heroic actions during combat operations in 2011 and 2012.

“If you ask anyone of them they would downplay the events of that day for which they are about to be recognized,” said Lt. Col. Marcus Evans, Battalion Commander, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. “But as you hear the narratives and read what these Rangers did you cannot help but feel a sense of pride and comfort that these warriors will deploy again and selflessly display the same tenacity and courage under fire that they have done on so many occasions.”

Silver Stars, the nation’s third highest award for valor, were presented to Staff Sgt. Scott Anderson and Staff Sgt. James Wilbur for their valiant actions during the battalion’s 2011 spring deployment.

While conducting combat operations, March 8, 2011 in Northern Afghanistan, Anderson courageously led his squad on an assault against a fortified compound, housing heavily armed enemy combatants, while faced with intense enemy direct fire from close range during the mission.

Despite being outnumbered, Anderson selflessly remained in exposed positions several times throughout the mission, putting himself at risk in order to engage and destroy the enemy and ensure the safety of Afghan civilians as well as his fellow Rangers.

“Rangers are unique and have a lot of capabilities,” said Anderson. “We play a large role in what’s going on in Afghanistan and around the world.”

His fearless actions under direct and indirect fire resulted in the elimination of all entrenched enemy combatants, including two senior level Taliban commanders and enabled the successful casualty evacuation of a Ranger wounded during the mission.

“The Rangers in this battalion have never lost sight of their commitment to this fight,” said Evans.

During combat operations on April 27, 2011, Wilbur’s platoon was tasked with clearing several areas of interest in Northern Afghanistan. He led his squad on an assault on heavily armed enemy combatants and utilizing direct fire and hand grenades, he eliminated multiple enemy combatants attempting to maneuver and engage the assault force with automatic weapons.

While braving enemy fire from extremely close range and imminent threats from multiple locations, Wilbur continued to close with and destroy the enemy while maneuvering his squad through complex terrain and eliminating additional enemy combatants.

Wilbur’s actions resulted in the destruction of enemy fighters and prevented the enemy from inflicting any casualties on the assault force.

“My actions are a representation of the rest of the unit and I was in the right place at the right time,” said Wilbur.

Additional awards included a Joint Service Commendation Medal for Valor to Staff Sgt. Ryan Flora for actions on Jan. 15, 2012 and an Army Commendation Medal for Valor to Cpl. Ian T. Seymour.

“The men standing before you today and seated in this auditorium represent the best of America,” said Evans. “They represent a commitment to excellence and an audacious desire to be the best and win on the field of battle.”



Staff Sgt. Scott Anderson



Staff Sgt. James Wilbur



USASOC receives new Commanding General

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Marcus Butler
USASFC (A) Public Affairs

Soldiers, family and friends of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command bid a fond farewell to a cornerstone and well known figure within this community and welcomed another pillar of special operations during a change of command ceremony on Meadows Field, Ft Bragg, N.C., July 24.

Lt. Gen. John F. Mulholland Jr., relinquished command of USASOC to Lt. Gen. Charles T. Cleveland after more than three years as the commanding general, marking another chapter in the history of the command.

Gen. Raymond Odierno, the 38th U.S. Army Chief of Staff, officiated the ceremony and passed the unit colors from Mulholland to Cleveland symbolizing the transfer of authority.

“Shakespeare himself would have found it hard to describe and articulate how great it is to be around these men and women every day. They are our nation’s greatest treasure....who seek nothing more than the opportunity to do it again,” said Mulholland speaking to hundreds of families, friends, and distinguished guests among whom were North Carolina Gov. Beverly Perdue.

Mulholland continued by thanking the Soldiers in formation for a job well done and reiterating that no leader is successful on their own, but it is because the people with whom they work.

“Here is the simple truth, I have had the incredible honor and privilege to command the world’s finest Special Operations Force,” he said. “They are the men and women who day in and day out take on our nation’s most dangerous, tenacious and committed enemy and

consistently defeat them on the field of battle.

“You are here for one reason – because this is your day. This is your tribute and to honor you in the great work that you have done in helping these Soldiers do what they do on the battlefield,” said Mulholland. “This is why we exist. This is the only reason we exist to make sure that the men and women of this fantastic formation are successful wherever our nation sends them.”

Adm. Bill H. McRaven, commander U.S. Special Operations Command, had words of motivation and admiration for both Mulholland and Cleveland.

“It is my honor for me to be here today to watch the

passing of the colors from one great Special Operations officer to another,” said McRaven. “The Soldiers who are standing in the formation today represent the very best of what John Mulholland and USASOC have given our nation.

“They are Soldiers of legend – the Green Berets, the Rangers, the Night Stalkers, civil affairs and military information

operators – all volunteers,

many three times over,” he said. “The Soldiers before me are as brave as they are effective. Albert Einstein once said the world is a dangerous place to live. Not because of the people who are evil but because of the people that would do nothing about it. I can guarantee you that there are no spectators, no on-lookers within these formations. They are doing something about the evil in this world.”

After the passing of the unit colors, Mulholland made reference to his time at USASOC and reiterated on how proud he was to be the commander.

“It is impossible for me to do justice to everyone here in attendance but I am honored that you are here to honor these brave warriors in formation in front of you,”

“Here is the simple truth, I have had the incredible honor and privilege to command the world’s finest special operations force. They are the men and women who day in and day out take on our nation’s most dangerous, tenacious and committed enemy and consistently defeat them on the field of battle.”

— Lt. Gen. John F. Mulholland

said Mulholland. “To our comrades within this great headquarters, the world’s only and the world’s finest Special Operations headquarters that does what this organization does, it is phenomenal that I have been so incredibly well served and supported by the great civilians and Army officers in this command.”

Mulholland also recognized the sacrifice of USASOC families who make it possible for their Soldiers to be able to do the job that needs to be done.

“I do ultimately want to thank my great family. To my wife, I could not have done this without you. Whatever has been good, it has been because of you. Thank you so very much for all of your love and support,” said Mulholland. “To my children, we are so very proud of all that you have done and we are so very proud of you.

“We cannot do this without family and I would like to thank all of our special operations families from the bottom of my heart for all of their support,” he said. “To our friends and families that have come from so far way, I would like to thank you so much for all that you have done for these brave men and women,” said Mulholland.

Following his tenure at USASOC, Mulholland will take the position of deputy commander of USSOCOM at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.

Cleveland also assured Mulholland and everyone in attendance that he is up for the challenge and would do his very best to continue on the legacy of this command.

“I commit myself and the command to ensuring that we continue the progress of the past decade of making the application of Army Special Operations and our conventional forces seamless,” said Cleveland. “USASOC will do its part to finish the fight, support the Special Operation Forces operational commands and commit to preserving the war fighting strength of this



Gen. Raymond Odierno, the 38th U.S. Army Chief of Staff passes the unit colors to Lt. Gen. Charles T. Cleveland commanding general of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command during the Change of Command Ceremony for USASOC, July 24 on Ft Bragg, N.C.

magnificent force.

“Soldiers and civilians of USASOC, be proud of who you are, what you do and who you do it with. You are without equal,” he said.

“The Special Operations Forces have never been better and their role never more central to the success of our ongoing campaigns in Afghanistan and around the globe,” said Cleveland. “I am honored to be here and I am sure glad to get started.”



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

Members of SEAL Team-1's Alpha Platoon pose for a photo on the Cau Mau Peninsula in South Vietnam following an operation circa 1968. U.S. Navy photo.



Navy SEALs in Vietnam

*This year, Navy SEALs celebrate two historic events:
The establishment of the first teams, their first missions in Vietnam.*

*By Petty Officer 2nd Class Shauntae Hinkle-Lymas
NSW Public Affairs*

During a speech at the 2011 UDT/SEAL Muster, which kicked off the 50th anniversary of Navy SEALs and the organization's first missions in Vietnam, Vice Adm. Joseph Kernan, a SEAL and deputy commander, U.S. Southern Command, spoke about the sacrifice of SEAL and UDT members.

"Maybe the ironic aspect of combat is that years later, what people remember most are the people we lost, as it should be," Kernan said. "We remember less the successful missions and more the sacrifices that made them possible."

When Vietnamese government elections failed in 1956,

it was a turning point in world history that led to a north versus south civil war. In 1958, President Eisenhower began sending military advisors to South Vietnam. Under President John F. Kennedy, armed forces members continued to go to Vietnam and SEALs were sent shortly after their establishment in 1962.

For the first time, and shortly after their inception, Navy SEALs entered combat operations in Vietnam. A relatively young and unproven force tested the waters and set the precedent for all Naval Special Warfare operators 50 years past to present.

"We entered country with a certain amount of trepidation," said Charles "Chuck" Chaldekas, NSW range operations manager. "We were fairly certain of what we

were going to do and we were confident in our abilities. We heard the stories of predecessor platoons, but we knew that we were in a learning mode when we first got there. The first couple of ops were very edgy for many of us. We were putting on our face paint for real. We were loading up live rounds for real.”

In the book “The Men behind the Trident: SEAL Team 1 in Vietnam,” Barry Enoch, a SEAL Team 1 plank owner and Navy Cross recipient, said that his 12-man platoon left for Vietnam in March 1963. Once they arrived, they were issued aliases and khaki uniforms without name tapes.

“There was a reason for the fake names,” Enoch said. “The first detachment from SEAL Team 1 went over in 1962 and consisted of only two people. The two men worked for the Central Intelligence Agency and some of the people that they trained were captured.”

According to the book, the men who were captured disclosed the names of the agents while being interrogated. Soon after, their names were broadcast over North Vietnamese radio.

For the safety of the two men, they were transported out of the country and from then on, operators used fake names.

Early on, the primary SEAL mission was to serve as advisors to Vietnamese Special Forces. From 1962-1965, SEALs trained and advised the Biet Hai commandos (or the Vietnamese Coastal Force personnel), the LDNN (Lien Doi Ngoui Nhia) and the Vietnamese Mobile Training Team (MTT). SEALs taught their South Vietnamese counterparts reconnaissance, sabotage and guerilla warfare.

In Da Nang, retired Master Chief Petty Officer Pete Slempa worked singularly as an advisor for the South Vietnamese.

“You ate with them, slept and lived with them, trained them and buried them,” Slempa said. “You get to a point where you become hardened. If you let it get to you, it would. I had to think ahead, I completed this mission, I’ll come back for another one.”

Vietnam was more than just fighting an opposing force. Unlike wars of the past, the opposition was not a different race or wearing different colored uniforms. It was often impossible to tell whose side anyone was on, especially civilians.

“The people in Vietnam saw what was coming before we did. They wanted to be friends with us, but they couldn’t. They wanted to help us, but they couldn’t. People from the other side would report them and when the North came down and took over, everyone knows what



Lt. j.g. Ripley “Rip” Bliss, SEAL Team-1’s Alpha Platoon officer in charge, directs a slick, a military helicopter with limited ammunition supplies, during an extraction operation in Vietnam circa 1968. U.S. Navy photo.

happened,” Slempa added.

In 1966, the North Vietnamese military invaded South Vietnam, which marked the beginning of combat operations for SEALs in country.

“Throughout 1966, there was a detachment of SEALs in Nha Be and they operated in a place called the Rung Sat Zone, which means ‘Killer Swamp,’” said Don Crawford, a retired SEAL and former Team 1 operator. “The operations that we ran were intelligence gathering, ambushes and direct action. We would get information, usually from Vietnamese that had been captured.”

Crawford said that the detachments ran very successful operations and were eventually spread throughout the Mekong Delta, the southern area of South Vietnam, where they engaged in similar operations.

“Eventually they went into operations where they would try to free prisoners of war held in camps,” Crawford said. “They also went after the Viet Cong (VC)



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

infrastructure. Not necessarily the guys carrying weapons, but the political wing of the insurgency.”

Larry “Doc” Hubbard, a former SEAL Team 1 member, said the mission was multifaceted.

“We operated on targeted information,” Hubbard said. “Our mission was interdiction and denying enemy supply routes.”

When combat operations began, SEALs found that they had to make major adjustments to how they carried out their missions. The learning curve was steep and serious, but in war as in life, there is always room for humor.

“A number of very humorous things occurred within the platoon,” said Chaldekas, a former SEAL Team 1 member. “One in particular; I was very keyed up in ensuring that we stayed very quiet. I was very diligent about taping up all my gear, so that it didn’t have clinks and clanks ... I was very precise about how I entered and exited the boats.”

Chaldekas explained that he was so procedurally exact, that habitual steps he followed in training didn’t exactly go to plan in an operation. In training evolutions, he would enter and exit boats on their port side, where there was a handle on each side of the bow to help SEALs enter and exit the water with speed and stealth.

“I was really concerned about all of these sounds, because I didn’t want to alert the Viet Cong reaction forces,” he said.

During one of his first operations, the team prepared to exit the boat, only this time, they were on the starboard side. He turned around to step off the boat backwards, reached down for the handle and realized that there was nothing to grab hold of.

“I had already put my right foot in the top rung of the ladder and my left foot in the second rung – and no handle,” he said. “Here I was with my hands up in the air, as I fell backward off the bow of the boat and there was a gigantic splash. I ended up in about two feet of water with my right arm sticking out and holding my machine gun above the surface. As I was submerged, I was laying there thinking, ‘should I just swallow a whole bunch of water and die right here or do I get up and listen to the disgust, the loathing and ribbing that I was going to take after making all the noise?’ It was especially awful after I had been the one harassing everyone else about taping



Members from SEAL Team-1’s Alpha Platoon coordinate with Underwater Demolition Team-11’s SEAL Delivery Vehicle platoon in 1972 for Operation: Thunderhead in Vietnam. Operation: Thunderhead was a top secret mission to rescue two American prisoners of war from the Haiphong area of Vietnam. U.S. Navy photo.

everything down and making sure everything was quiet. Here I am making all the noise out in the middle of the jungle and perhaps within hearing of an enemy reaction force.”

Water created more problems than just noise for Vietnam vets. Swamp-like areas wreaked havoc across the country.

“We were stationed in My Tho, which is down in the delta where they grow rice,” said retired SEAL Master Chief Petty Officer Rudy Boesch, a SEAL Team 2 plank owner. “Your boots would get wet the first day and never dried the whole time you were down there.”

Hubbard said that his chain of command found operating in boots hazardous, so they often went without shoes. Operators opted to lose their constantly wet boots and eliminated a noisy safety hazard in the process.

“We operated barefoot a lot, because of the sucking sound of mud against your boots - that actually saved my life,” Hubbard said.

Hubbard described a time when he stepped on a punji stake— a sharp bamboo stake covered in excrement and concealed in grass. They were meant to gash the feet and legs of enemy soldiers and cause infection. The punji stake Hubbard encountered was slightly different.

“I stepped on a punji stake one time and as a natural

reaction, I jerked my foot back off. If I would have had a boot on, I would have lifted a brick, which had a demolition charge underneath it.” Hubbard explained that because his foot was slippery from the mud, his foot slid off the charge rather than planting down on it. He believes if he would have had boots on, he would have certainly detonated the charge.

From 1966 to 1972, SEALs were involved in several programs that were successful in the fight against VC guerillas. The Kit Carson Scout program was one of them.

According to the Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War, the Kit Carson Scout program was enacted by the U.S. Marine Corps and allowed former VC guerillas who surrendered under the Chieu Hoi Program (open arms) to be employed by American military members for tactical, combat and pacification efforts. Chaldekas explained that his platoon often employed Kit Carson Scouts.

“Kit Carsons were used as point men under our control,” said Chaldekas. “They were in the front of the element, so if anyone was encountered, they could identify who the targets were.”

Chaldekas explained that they often kept the Kit Carsons in their hometown.

“Many VC were kept in areas where they volunteered for the VC army or where they grew up. It was beneficial, because they knew the area and the local people. They knew who was VC and who was not.” Chaldekas said that they were also very good at intelligence gathering, serving as local area guides, ammunition suppliers and platoon guides.

Shannon McCrary, a retired SEAL officer and SEAL Team 1 “Mike” platoon commander in 1971, was assigned to the last SEAL platoon that exited Vietnam in December of that year.

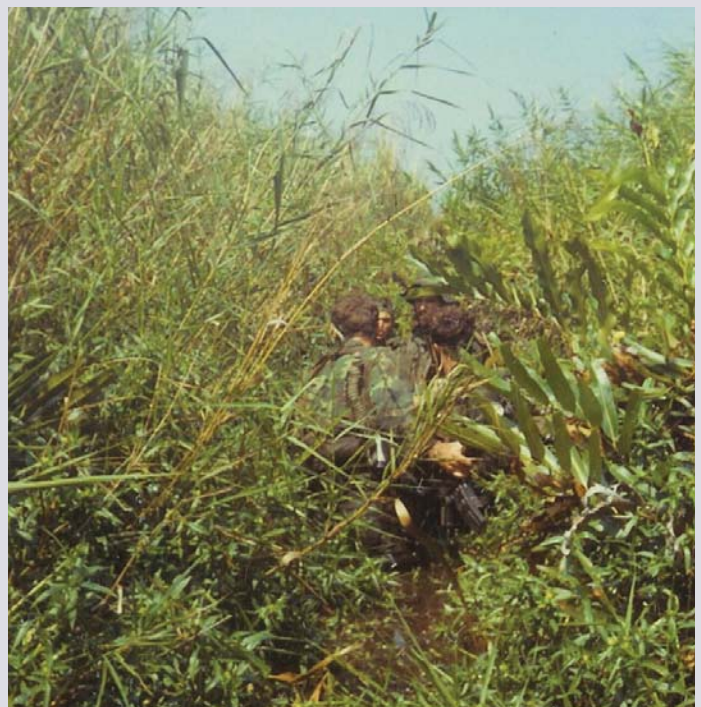
“When I was there, the American military was in the process of transitioning to the Vietnamese military taking over combat operations. They called it Vietnamization,” McCrary said. “The first province they did it in was just south of Saigon. As Vietnamization moved ahead, it became harder for us to coordinate unilateral missions, because the Vietnamese were in charge of the coordination. Security was a problem. We didn’t know if there were any leaks or spies.”

On March 23, 1973, President Richard Nixon declared the end of America’s involvement in the Vietnam War and sent all U.S. forces home. All American troops and support personnel withdrew from Saigon April 29, 1975 and North

Vietnam took Saigon the next day, leading to South Vietnam’s defeat.

Since their first missions in Vietnam 50 years ago, SEALs have earned a reputation as the world’s most elite band of SOF warriors. Every SEAL who has worn the uniform has been connected to a focused set of ideals. Courage, humility, honor, discipline and integrity embody every man who has served in the Teams. While they seek challenge, a life of service and being a part of something greater than themselves – NSW’s quiet professionals aren’t in the game for recognition or praise.

“One thing I do know about the teams of yesterday and the teams of today is that we don’t go to battle for accolades or for medals,” Medal of Honor recipient Mike Thornton said at a 50th Anniversary celebration for SEAL Team 1. “We go to battle for the greatest nation in the world. We go to battle for the man on the right of us and the man on the left of us, we go for the man in front of us and the man behind us – our comrades-in-arms. We go to battle for each other because we want to sustain freedom as we know it, and we want to sustain that same freedom for the future of America. We loved, and we gave, and we understood each other - that’s what SEAL teams are about. We would have given our lives for each other.”



SEALs conduct pre-deployment training in Niland, Calif., circa 1971. U.S. Navy photo.



Smaller. Lighter. Faster. NSW's newest ground mobility platform

Light-weight tactical all-terrain vehicle students get hands on experience driving the vehicles in various environments and situations to prepare them for operations in overseas contingency operations.

*Story and photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Megan Anuci
NSW Public Affairs*

Over the river and through the woods ... or just about any other terrain or obstacle associated with ground mobility, Naval Special Warfare operators have found the right tool for their driving jobs. War fighters operate in some of world's harshest conditions. Thanks to a new rugged and reliable vehicle that can withstand whatever Mother Nature has to dish out, operators will be able to increase mission effectiveness in an unforgiving battlefield environment.

Across the deserts of Iraq and Afghanistan, forward deployed NSW operators have required an array of vehicles for different types of missions. When Operation Enduring Freedom commenced, there was a specific vehicle needed to complete the mission that lay ahead.

As OEF began, SEALs relied on Ground Mobility Vehicles-Navy and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles for mobility and protection in a hostile environment.

These platforms were built to be sturdier – they had to be; GMV-Ns transported troops through urban areas susceptible to improvised explosive device or gunfire attacks. When the enemy unfurled its barrage

of gunfire, if a vehicle was hit, the human cargo inside would remain safe.

Although these types of vehicles were designed to protect personnel, they eventually became enemy IED targets. Since the makeshift bombs are often planted along roadsides where troops are guaranteed to pass at some point, the huge armored GMV-Ns and MRAPs don't always evade these types of hidden bombs.

But now, a new vehicle is stepping up to replace the huge, heavy GMV-Ns and MRAPs. SEALs are acquiring a vehicle that matches their operating style – quiet, fast and agile.

The light-weight tactical all-terrain vehicle is a Special Operations Command funded program that provides SEALs with a commercial base model of the Kawasaki "Teryx," which can be bought by any go-getter with a sense of adventure.

"We went through a lot of testing," said Senior Chief Special Warfare Operator Andrew, a West Coast tactical ground mobility senior enlisted advisor. "We knew this machine needed to be built to withstand the rigors of overseas stress. You name the situation; this vehicle can drive in it."

The LTATV is commonly referred to as the "side-by-side" and can carry two SEALs in addition to 500 pounds of gear. The extra suspension, four-point

shoulder harness, roll cage and four-wheel drive make it perfect for rocky or desert-like environments.

SPEED VERSUS SECURITY

The LTATV can travel in excess of 48 mph, has a curb weight of 1,428 pounds and a minimum turning radius of just less than 14 feet. These small, light-skinned vehicles don't compare to the 16 ton steel caged MRAPs when it comes to security, but in terms of mobility, the LTATV is a huge step forward.

When the program first got off the ground in 2007, only a few LTATVs were operating in theater. There are now 167 strategically deployed to forward operating areas.

They successfully navigate nearly any terrain operations throw at them: steep, sandy hills or in deep, narrow crevices; rocky mountain trails or bumpy desert hills. One feature that aids the vehicle's rugged mobility is its front differential lock system.

Its swift responsiveness allows SEALs to go off-road and avoid the hazards of venturing through towns. By losing the armor and gaining speed, the LTATV provides operators with a more efficient way to travel and complete their mission.

"You can't solve everything with a hammer," said Special Warfare Operator 1st Class Garrett, the West Coast Training Detachment mobility communications lead. "Sometimes you have to be more tactical and precise. By using a smaller, lighter vehicle, you might not be as protected, but you're faster and more maneuverable so you can avoid threats. Just like you have different weapons for different missions, you have different vehicles for different missions."

Another benefit to the LTATV's compact size is the ability to be dropped from the sky by airplane or helicopter. When only the SEALs and their gear are needed they can swoop in silently from above and have their transportation there when they hit the ground.

NOT JUST ANOTHER DRIVING COURSE

In order to complete future missions that will include the LTATV, operators must train for the environment and vehicles they'll be working with. One aspect of unit level training is a mobility block where operators are exposed to five different vehicle platforms. After completing the initial mobility school, some operators are selected by their commands to attend the LTATV professional development individual skills driver's course.

This five-day course is located at the Ocotillo Wells State Park in Borrego Springs, Calif., and is held six to 10 times a year with a maximum of 12 students per class. The limited numbers mean that only a certain amount of operators can attend, therefore the operators

chosen must be in predeployment training and are expected to teach the other members of their team the skills they acquire.

During the course, operators learn how to drive the LTATV to its limits. A huge part of the instruction is putting students in various situations on the driving course, forcing them to discover solutions. For instance, instructors will lead students down into a huge, sandy pit and then tell them to find a way out. The first instinct of most operators is to back up as far as they can and try to "gun it" up the hill. In this situation, the tires spin out after the forward momentum is lost and they find themselves rolling back down into the pit and in an even deeper hole than before. Students quickly realize that overcoming the many obstacles throughout the course will take more than just stomping on the gas pedal.

During another situational training block, instructors take students down into deep narrow valleys that are only wide enough to accommodate half of the vehicle, which until drivers learn to navigate properly, usually causes the LTATV to tip onto its side. Through trial and error, students learn to keep their vehicles upright by weaving through the narrow valley crevices.

"One time we were at the peak of this cliff and we hit a rock," said David, a SEAL operator and LTATV course student. "We rolled back and did three summersaults to the bottom. No one was hurt and as it was happening, we were laughing. Now that I've been through the course, I know I would have attacked that cliff a different way."

The students are expected to push their driving abilities to the limit, so if they ever find themselves in a difficult situation, they are able to control and maneuver the vehicle with confidence.

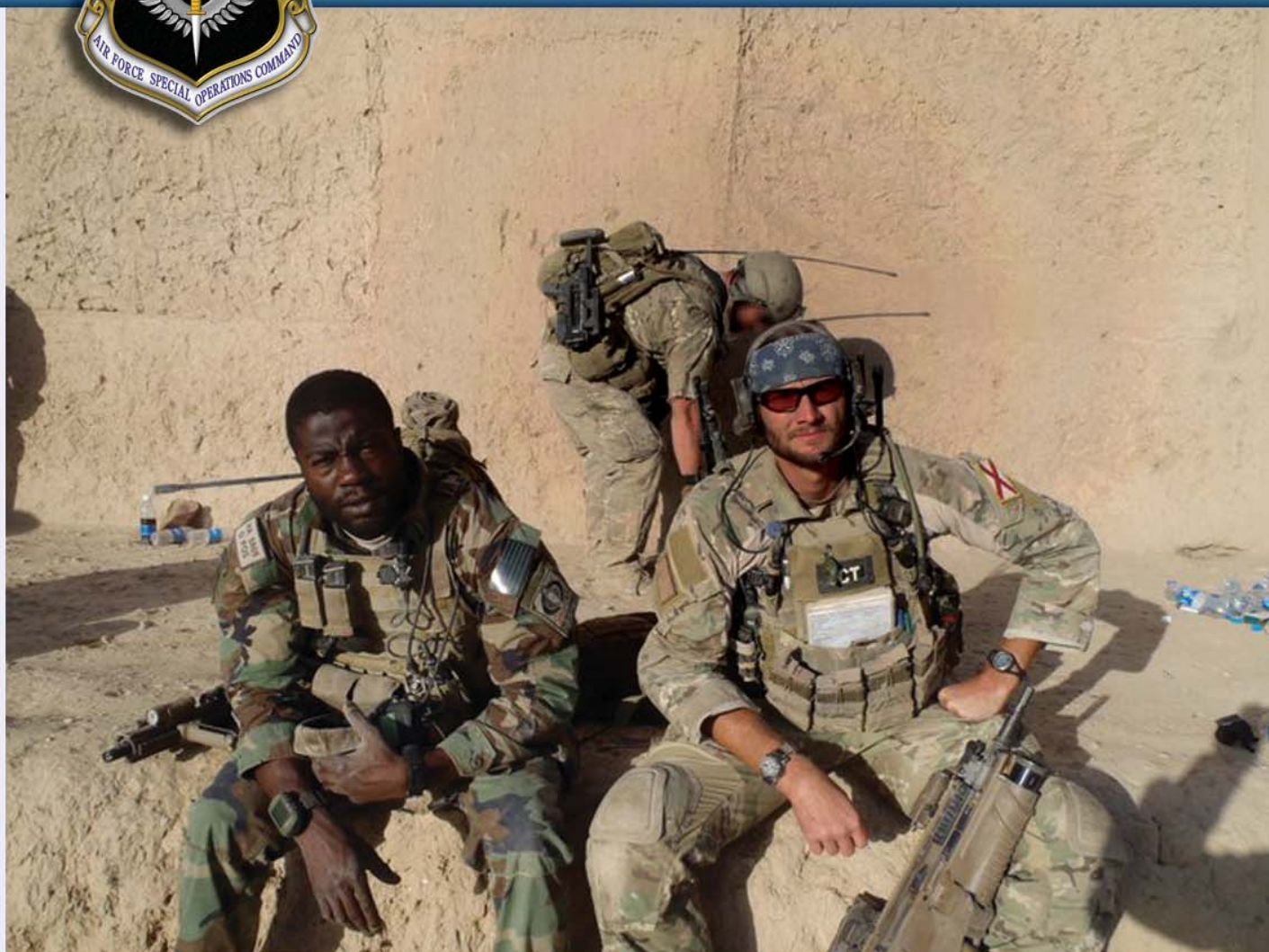
"I think it would serve everyone well to attend the course and learn about these vehicles," said David. "They show you the extremes and challenge your skills and decision making. If we were on a mission, we would find the easiest and most tactical way, but this course shows what you can and can't do with these vehicles and how to get out of tough situations."

Unlike the standard mobility course, students get five days of driving with the LTATVs, rather than a week to learn five different vehicles. Thanks to the extensive training, the level of knowledge about this vehicle is much higher.

"Every SEAL is required to learn basic skill sets, one of those being driving," said Senior Chief Special Warfare Operator Bobby, the West Coast TRADET mobility senior enlisted advisor. "We train a percentage and that percentage trains the rest."



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



This image was taken on Senior Airman Mark Forester's camera the same day he (right) and Army Sgt. First Class Calvin Harrison, (left) were killed. Forester was awarded the Silver Star posthumously for leading the team to rescue his fallen comrade, Harrison. Forester was fatally shot by enemy sniper fire in the rescue attempt during the battle Sept. 29, 2010, in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan. Courtesy photo.

Combat controller posthumously awarded Silver Star for gallantry

*By Rachel Arroyo
AFSOC Public Affairs*

Senior Airman Mark Forester had an American flag wrapped around his chest plate inside his body armor when he was fatally wounded by an enemy sniper's fire Sept. 29, 2010.

This simple act is a testament to how Forester lived his life, a life respected by all who knew him.

Forester, a combat controller assigned to the 21st Special Tactics Squadron at Pope Field, N.C., was posthumously awarded the Silver Star on June 15 in a ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla.

The Silver Star, the third highest combat medal, is

awarded for gallantry in action against an enemy of the U.S. while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force.

The medal was presented to his parents, Ray and Pat Forester of Haleyville, Ala.

Forester, 29, was killed in action while moving to the aid of a fallen teammate during an assault of an insurgent safe haven in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan.

His courage on this mission led to the elimination of 12 insurgents and capture of a significant weapons cache.

Air Force Special Operations Command Commander Lt. Gen. Eric Fiel said Forester embodied the Air Force core values of integrity first, service before self and excellence in all we do.

“Though he cannot be here to accept this recognition and probably would have shunned the attention if he were, we honor and document his heroic actions in the presence of his family, his teammates and his friends,” Fiel said. “We commit his actions forever to memory as is due a true hero and brother-in-arms. He will be remembered, as we remember all heroes, who have the greatest valor driven from deep dedication to our nation and our way of life.”

Members of the special tactics community came from across the country by the hundreds to witness the presentation and to pay respects to their brother, their role model and beloved friend.

Forester had a monumental impact on Staff Sgt. Johnnie Yellock, a close friend and fellow combat controller assigned to the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Fla.

So much so that Yellock maintains frequent contact with the Forester family and travels to Alabama each year to spend Thanksgiving with them, a practice he started with Mark Forester before he died.

Yellock, who was injured in an IED explosion in Afghanistan last year, respected Forester for walking the walk.

“Mark always stuck to his morals. Mark was one of those people who would keep everybody in line,” Yellock said. “You always looked up to him. He had unwavering

character, charisma and morals that his parents obviously instilled in him from a young age.”

Thad Forester also credited his little brother for being a standout. He said he was both humbled and honored to see he served as a role model to so many.

“Mark really was unique, and he had such high character and consistency in values that this is what should happen,” he said. “We should honor people who are good examples.”

Thad Forester said his family has been trying to learn everything they can about the time his brother spent in

the military. He said he finds himself imagining what happened in his brother’s last battle.

The Mark Forester he goes back to, however, is not wearing a scarlet beret or a special tactics kit.

“Most everyone sees pictures of Mark in uniform, but I picture him more as my little brother,” he said. “He was my best friend and my roommate in college.”

After accepting the award on behalf of his son, Ray Forester acknowledged the outpouring of love and support from his son’s second family, the special tactics brotherhood.

“It has been a tough almost two years, but I want to thank each of you for being there, for supporting us,” he said. “And I especially want to thank the special tactics community. What a family it is.”

Thad Forester also thanked special tactics for remaining steadfast alongside their family.

“From the very beginning, from the very first notification and visit, they told us ‘we will be with you every step of the way,’” he said. “Honestly, it sounded like something anybody would say, but it’s true. The special tactics community has been right by our side.”

Students at the Special Tactics Training Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Fla., walk by Forester’s picture each morning as they enter the building, and they work out each afternoon beneath a portrait of him drawn by a teammate that hangs in their gym.

His presence is a constant, reminding old and new generations of combat controllers of the ultimate price of freedom.

“Mark always stuck to his morals. Mark was one of those people who would keep everybody in line. You always looked up to him. He had unwavering character, charisma and morals that his parents obviously instilled in him from a young age.”

— Air Force Staff Sgt. Johnnie Yellock



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Air Force Special Operations launches new special tactics wing

*By Rachel Arroyo
AFSOC Public Affairs*

U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command stood up the 24th Special Operations Wing in a ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla., June 12 to meet the growing demand for the unique capabilities special tactics Air Commandos provide.

AFSOC commander Lt. Gen. Eric Fiel said creation of this new brand of wing better prepares the special tactics community to meet the swiftly evolving requirements of a global special operations forces partnership.

“While the pace of global special operations has been demanding throughout this past decade, we cannot expect to slow down over the next,” he said.

It is this pace that makes the activation of the 24 SOW so monumental.

America has been at war, running operations for more than a decade with a volunteer force, Fiel said. The special tactics Airmen who have been a constant presence in these operations comprise less than half of a single percent of the population.

In assuming command of the 24 SOW, Col. Robert Armfield recognized the magnitude of what is being asked of his Airmen and what they are accomplishing under a highly demanding operational tempo.

Since Sept. 11, special tactics Airmen have been awarded five Air Force Crosses, 29 Silver Stars, 217 Bronze Stars with Valor and 96 Purple Hearts.

The special tactics career field is among the most decorated career field in the Air Force, Fiel said. But more notable is the fact that almost every month, one special tactics Airmen is critically wounded or killed.

“We’ve got to be able to look the fathers and the mothers, the wives and the husbands, and the kids straight in the eye and tell them we have done everything possible to make them successful in battle and bring them back,” Armfield said. “That’s what this new wing is all about.”

The 24 SOW will be successful, he added.

“Our challenge now is to take this investment that you’ve made in resources and turn it into combat capability for the AFSOC portfolio, and we’re going to do it,” Armfield said.

The mission of the 24 SOW is to provide special tactics forces for rapid global employment to enable airpower success.

“Establishment of the 24th Special Operations Wing allows a single commander to lead the recruiting, training and development of our special tactics warriors and ultimately provide combatant commanders with world-class Airmen to accomplish their mission,” Fiel said.

By creating the 24 SOW, not only is a single special tactics commander enabled to lead, but pressure is alleviated by removing the responsibility of logistical planning from the groups so they can concentrate on the operational mission.

Capabilities of the Wing include airfield reconnaissance, assessment and control. Special tactics Airmen also engage in joint terminal attack control, personnel recovery, weather and environmental reconnaissance.

The 24 SOW, activated June 1, will comprise the 720th Special Tactics Group and the Special Tactics Training Squadron based at Hurlburt Field, Fla. The 724th Special Tactics Group, Pope Field, N.C., and 16 recruiting locations will also fall under the wing.

The 24 SOW will be the third wing under AFSOC alongside the 1st Special Operations Wing located and the 27 Special Operations Wing at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M.



U.S. Air Force members stand at parade rest during the activation ceremony of 24th Special Operations Wing on Hurlburt Field. Photo by Airman 1st Class Christopher Williams.

An MC-130E Combat Talon I taxis onto the flightline during an aircraft retirement ceremony at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., June 22. This particular Talon I was the lead aircraft in the 1970 Son Tay Raid in Vietnam. Photo by Airman 1st Class Alexxis Pons Abascal.



Talon makes final flight to Cannon

*By Airman 1st Class Alexxis Pons Abascal
27th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

The 27th Special Operations Wing held a special aircraft retirement ceremony on the flightline at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., June 22.

Col. Buck Elton, 27th SOW commander, was on board the MC-130E Combat Talon I, tail number 64-0523, as it made its final flight into Cannon from Duke Field, Fla.

This particular Talon has historical significance to Air Force Special Operations Command's lineage.

"This Talon I was part of the 7th Special Operations Squadron and first flew in 1966," said Richard Shea, 27th SOW base historian. "This tail number was the lead aircraft that performed a Prisoner of War extraction in North Vietnam called the Son Tay Raid in 1970."

During the raid, the original call sign for the Talon was Cherry 1. In an effort to truly commemorate today's flight, the Talon once again flew under the call sign Cherry 1 for its final mission.

Retired Lt. Col. Irl "Leon" Franklin, who piloted this exact craft during the raid more than 40 years ago, was invited to be present on the aircraft during the final engine shutdown.

"I was the aircraft commander of crew SG06, the group was the original combat unit," said Franklin. "This aircraft

was one of the first four aircraft to be modified for the Combat Talon mission."

During the nation's conflict with Vietnam in the 1970s, the U.S. received intelligence that suggested North Vietnam had dozens of POWs detained in a prison camp just west of Hanoi. The U.S. Air Force and Army put together a Special Forces team in an effort to recover the Americans being held within the camp.

Planning and training for the operation took place at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., while additional intelligence was gathered. When the U.S. infiltrated the prison camp, they discovered the prisoners had already been moved to another camp.

"It's an honor to have been invited to this ceremony and given the opportunity to participate in the aircraft shutdown," said Franklin. "I spent 23 years of my life on active duty and I take pride in actively engaging myself in military functions."

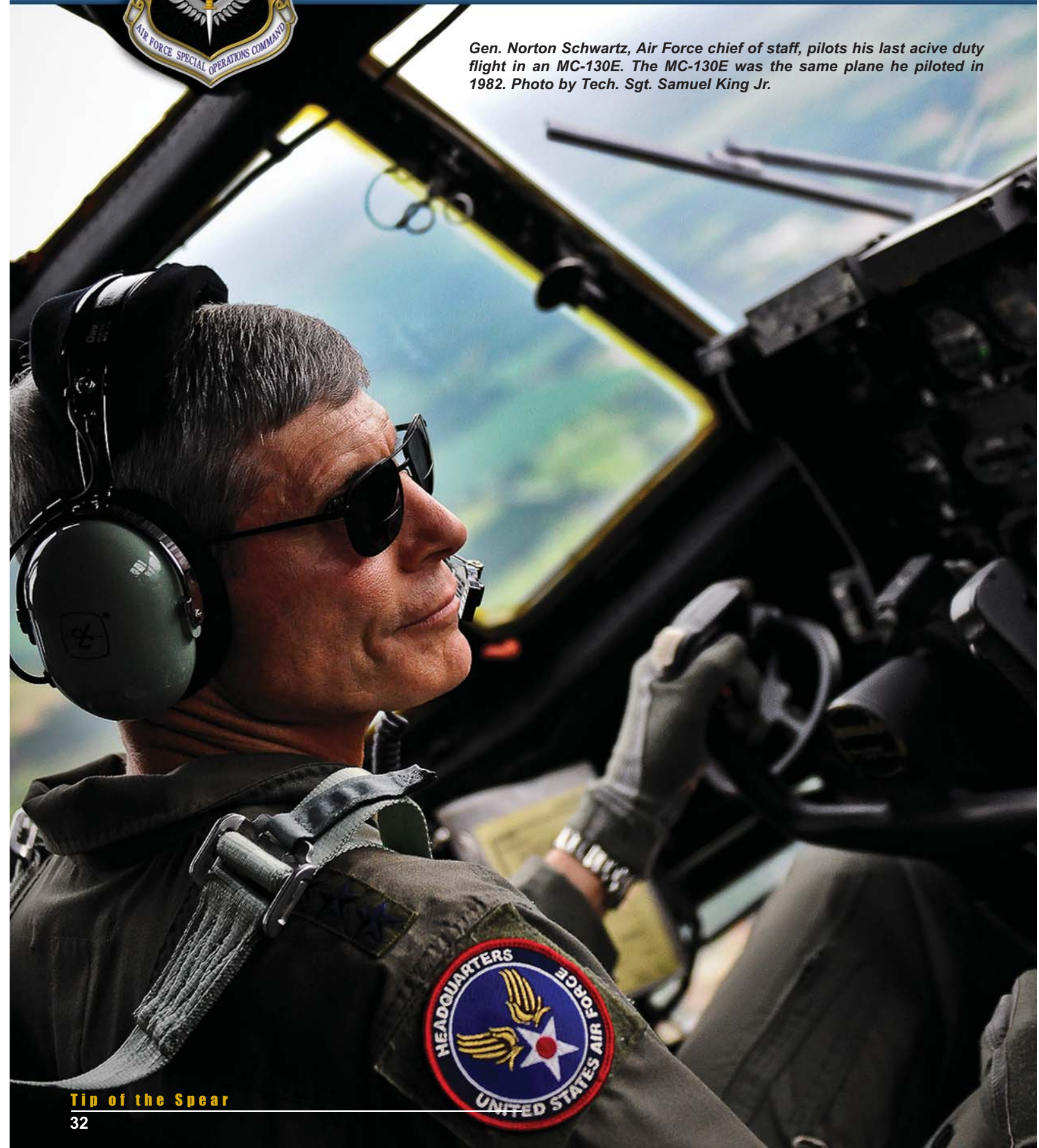
The aircraft will now undergo several months of demilitarization and will be put on permanent display at the airpark on base.

"We are extremely proud of our Special Operations Forces heritage and what this aircraft means to AFSOC," said Elton. "Having this aircraft here at our air park will remind us of our lineage beginning with Son Tay and moving forward."



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Gen. Norton Schwartz, Air Force chief of staff, pilots his last active duty flight in an MC-130E. The MC-130E was the same plane he piloted in 1982. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Samuel King Jr.



CSAF's remembrance 'fini flight'

*By Tech. Sgt. Samuel King Jr.
919th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

When Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz climbed aboard the MC-130E Combat Talon I on Hurlburt Field, Fla., July 12, for his last flight as an active duty officer, he immediately began to reminisce on his flying career with special operations and the C-130 Hercules community.

"This is more than a little sentimental for me to be back in this seat again," the general said. "It's a special privilege to complete my flying career on this aircraft."

During a visit to Hurlburt Field to meet with Airmen and Air Force Special Operations Command leadership, Schwartz joined an MC-130E crew on a local training sortie, which served as Schwartz's "fini flight" in the Air Force.

The MC-130E he flew, No. 64-0568, belongs to the 919th Special Operations Wing, an Air Force Reserve wing at Duke Field, Fla. Schwartz, who piloted No. 568 on a memorable but arduous mission in 1982, said the aircraft holds a special place in his heart. Before boarding, he stopped and saluted the aircraft, which along with the general is also scheduled for retirement.

Many of the flight crew for the mission had either flown with him or served under him during his special operations tours. The flight engineer, Chief Master Sgt. Tyler Outten, flew with him when he commanded the 36th Tactical Airlift Squadron at McChord Air Force Base, Wash., in 1987.

"It's very special to have you here for this final flight, Tyler," Schwartz said over the radio before the takeoff. "It's amazing thinking about those fun times. Who would've thought we'd have ended up the way we did?"

Outten said he was thrilled to engineer one more flight for his former commander.

"It was an honor and a privilege to fly the

general's fini flight," Outten said. "I consider him one of the most respected men to wear the uniform. He has been an overarching influence to me and many other Airmen over the years. He's a class act."

Between an airdrop and an aerial refueling of a CV-22 Osprey over the Gulf of Mexico, Schwartz and the crew shared stories and memories over the radio, remembering the "good ol' days." The general said jokingly that it had "been awhile" since he had seen that Combat Talon control panel he knew so well.

Lt. Col. Thomas Miller, the co-pilot for the flight, said Schwartz knocked the rust off quickly and got down to the mission at hand.

"In his early years, General Schwartz was highly regarded as an outstanding Combat Talon pilot, and he was able to regain those same flying skills within a matter of minutes," Miller said. "I was very impressed with his ability to adapt to mission changes. It was a true honor for all of us to share that last flight with him."

The training flight ended with three touch-and-goes before returning to the Hurlburt Field runway where Schwartz's wife Suzie and a group of well-wishers waited. Upon exiting the Combat Talon, Schwartz received the ceremonial "hose down" before greeting his old friends and colleagues, many of whom still live in the local area.

Even though he had just completed the last flight hours of his 39-year Air Force career, afterward the general was all smiles.

"To have the opportunity to join this outstanding crew on their training sortie, for one last flight while in the Air Force, was truly special," Schwartz said. "They are true professionals dedicated to their country, and like all our Airmen, I will always be proud to have served alongside them."

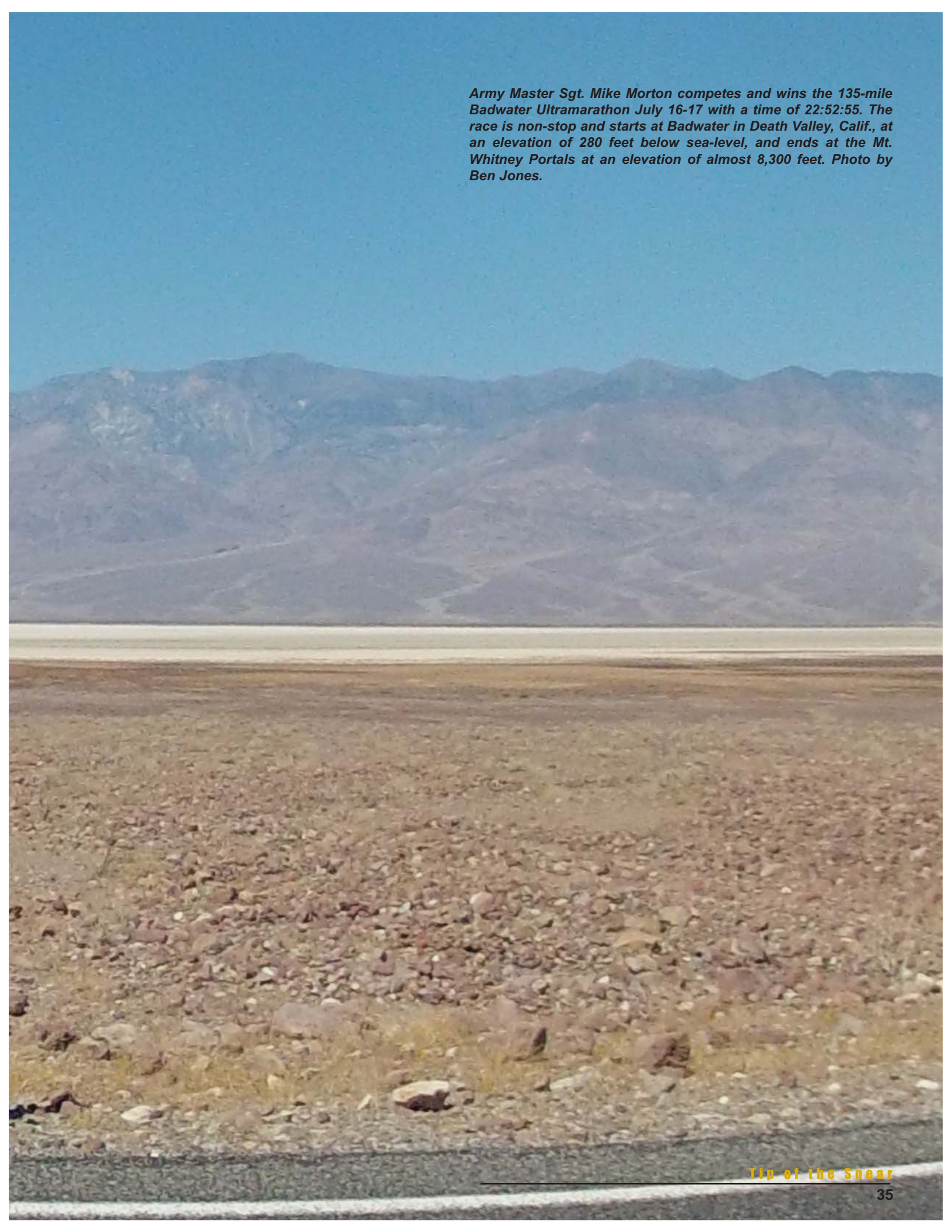
Schwartz retires Aug. 10 at Joint Base Andrews, Md.

A run like no other

Army Master Sgt. wins grueling 135-mile Badwater Ultramarathon



Army Master Sgt. Mike Morton competes and wins the 135-mile Badwater Ultramarathon July 16-17 with a time of 22:52:55. The race is non-stop and starts at Badwater in Death Valley, Calif., at an elevation of 280 feet below sea-level, and ends at the Mt. Whitney Portals at an elevation of almost 8,300 feet. Photo by Ben Jones.





Army Master Sgt. Mike Morton crosses the finish line and wins the 135-mile Badwater Ultramarathon July 16 - 17 with a time of 22:52:55. Courtesy photo.

**By Marine Corps Master Sgt. F.B. Zimmerman
USSOCOM Public Affairs**

Standing at 5 feet 4 inches, and weighing in at 130 pounds, Army Master Sgt. Mike Morton is a giant in the ultramarathon community.

Morton, an Army Special Operations Command liaison officer at Special Operations command, won the Badwater Ultramarathon – a 135-mile race from Death Valley to Mt. Whitney in California. This was his first Badwater, and he completed the course in 22 hours, 52 minutes, 55 seconds, a time that was just shy of the 22:51:29 course record. The Badwater Ultramarathon starts off at 280 feet below sea level, and ends at an approximate altitude of 8,300 feet.

“It’s a very competitive race – you had two former winners and two guys who are on the U.S. 24-hour team with me – a handful of guys that I consider serious competition, but I knew I had the potential (to win),” said Morton, who is on the U.S. 24-hour team that competes in races that see how far competitors can run in one day. “I was elated to win – just to finish it.”

In order to even enter the race, runners must submit an application that is reviewed by a panel of five race staff members, and a total of 90 runners are selected, according to the Badwater Web site. Applicants must meet one of three other criteria: finished a prior Badwater and another ultra

event in the past year; finished three 100-mile races, at least one in the last year; or, have finished the Brazil 135 in less than 48 hours, completed one 100-mile race, and completed one significant ultra event in the last year. Morton had finished and won three 100-mile races so far this year, all in under 14 hours.

When asked if he was trying to break the course record, Morton said he and a friend, Eric Clifton, who had won the race in 1999, had talked about it.

“In January, I ran a 100 in 13 hours, 18 minutes, in March I ran a 13:11 100, and then in May I ran a 13:42, and those were all relatively flat courses,” Morton said. “Eric laid out a plan and he was expecting around a 21 hour finishing time, but I don’t speculate like that. I said using those splits is a good tool, but you can’t account for the variables of the heat and the three substantial climbs.

“So in my mind, the course record was a strong record. I had a super-smart runner telling me 21 hours, but in my mind I was content even being near Valmir’s (Nunez) record because I knew those variables were going to play a role, even with the wind during the day – it’s a strong wind, it’s something I didn’t account for.”

Badwater allows entrants to have a pacer run with them after the first 17 miles, and that comes in handy as the pacer can “mule,” carry food and water for the runner. Morton had Clifton running with him for the last 20 miles of the race and

Morton said he was doing the math and letting him know he could break the record.

“He was spitting out times, but it got to the point where I wasn’t talking, I didn’t want to hear him, I was just like, ‘Hey man, you can tell me all I have to do is run 15 minute miles, I’m going as fast as I can go,’” Morton said. “At some point, there’s no more effort available, you’re running at max capacity.”

One of the hardest points of the race came at mile 42 for Morton – a 14-mile climb that he power-walked most of the way. He had a 19-minute lead when he started the climb, but by the time he reached the peak, the second place runner had caught him.

Temperatures throughout the race reached 119 degrees during the day, and dropped to mid-50s in the night. Morton said he changed out of his singlet into a T-shirt at night, but didn’t realize how cold it got until he saw photos of his support crew wearing hats and jackets. Due to the extreme heat, Morton said he went through four gallons of Gatorade, one gallon of water, and the occasional Coke to take in some sugar.

Badwater is a race where there are no provided supplies, so traveling with him was a small support crew and two minivans full of supplies.

“I’m more of a minimalist runner – a lot of people have this big layout of food and take everything they may desire,” Morton said. “I usually find one thing in a race that I like and I stick with it. I don’t require anything fancy.”

Morton, who has won between 25 and 30 races, began competing in ultramarathons, which can vary from 50 miles, 100 miles and 24- and 48-hour competitions, in 1994. He served 11 years in the Navy before doing an inter-service transfer to the Army, and began running marathons when stationed on Diego Garcia. He was introduced to ultramarathons by a chief petty officer he was stationed with after he was transferred to Norfolk, Va.

“I wasn’t a competitive marathoner at the national level – I could run a six-minute pace and not even come in the top 10,” said Morton, who has served a total of 22 years. “But then I moved up to running 50s and 100s and I was winning, so it became exciting.”

In 1998 he was forced to give up competing after suffering a knee and hip injury after slipping and falling on ice while carrying scuba tanks. The injury, and training and deployment cycles after joining the Army kept him from competing for 14 years. He said the injury still bothers him a little bit, but he’s learned to deal with it.

When training for a race, Morton said he puts in 140 miles a week running twice a day during the week, and once a day on the weekends, and goes through a pair of shoes in about 10 days. He runs nearly every day, even about 8 miles the day before a race to stay loose. He completed the 135-mile Badwater race on the morning of July 17 and went out for a run on the evening of July 18.

Up next for Morton are the 24-hour World Championships this September in Poland where he will compete on the U.S. team. The American record for a 24-hour race is just over 165 miles, and Morton said he would like to break it. He came close in September 2011 when he ran 163.9 miles, just 1.8 miles off the record, at the Hinson Lake 24-hour in North Carolina.

“If everything goes well in Poland and I meet my goals, I’m kind of content with doing some fun runs,” he said. “Maybe just chilling out and not running twice a day for a little while.”



Army Master Sgt. Mike Morton (left) and his pacer, Eric Clifton, begin an arduous climb during the 135-mile Badwater Ultramarathon July 17. Photo by Ben Jones



Trouble in the Gulf

25 years ago U.S. SOF played a key role in countering malign Iranian actions in the Persian Gulf

By USSOCOM History & Research Office

A quarter century ago special operations forces provided the critical skills necessary to help U.S. Central Command gain control of the Persian Gulf and counter Iran's harassment of oil tankers during the "tanker wars" of the late 1980s. SOF's ability to work at night proved vital, since Iran used darkness to hide its actions.

Iraq's Saddam Hussein had invaded Iran in September 1980, with major fighting in and around the Shatt al-Arab waterway and northern Persian Gulf. The war ebbed and flowed, but after a few years it had settled into a stalemate. Beginning in 1984, both sides started attacking neutral shipping in the Persian Gulf, imperiling the flow of oil through the Gulf and the Straits of Hormuz.

Persistent Iranian attacks on oil tankers prompted Kuwait in December 1986 to ask the United States to register 11 Kuwaiti tankers as American-flagged so that they could be escorted by the U.S. Navy. President Ronald Reagan agreed to the Kuwaiti request on March 10, 1987, hoping it would deter further Iranian attacks. The protection offered by U.S. naval vessels did not stop Iran, however, which used underwater mines and small boats to harass the convoys steaming to and from Kuwait. This led the president to authorize Operation Earnest Will, planned by U.S. Central Command under Gen. George B. Crist.

For the operation the U.S. needed surveillance and patrol forces in the northern Persian Gulf and bases for these patrol forces. Special Operations Forces, including Army helicopters and Navy SEALs and Special Boat Units, had the best-trained personnel and most capable equipment for monitoring hostile activity, particularly at night when the Iranians conducted their missions. The Army's Special Operations helicopter crews were trained to fly and fight at night. Their helicopters were difficult to spot on radar and relatively quiet, allowing them to get close to a target. Shallow-draft Naval Special Warfare patrol boats could ply waters that had not been swept for mines.

In late July 1987, Rear Adm. Harold J. Bernsen, commander of the Middle East Force, requested six Mark III patrol boats, other special boat assets, and two SEAL platoons; all deployed in August. At the same time, two MH-6 and four AH-6 Army Special Operations helicopters

and 39 men received orders to the region in a deployment called Operation Prime Chance 1.

The Middle East Force decided to convert two oil servicing barges, Hercules and Wimbrown VII, into mobile sea bases. In addition to obviating the need to ask for land bases, the mobile sea bases

would allow Special Operations Forces in the northern Persian Gulf to thwart clandestine Iranian mining and small-boat attacks. Each mobile sea base would house more than 150 men as well as 10 small boats, 3 helicopters, fuel, ammunition, equipment, and workshops to support operations.

In the interim, U.S. Special Operations Forces operated from various surface vessels. On Aug. 8, helicopters designated Sea Bats escorted the third Earnest Will convoy and looked for signs of Iranian mine-laying. Patrol boats began escort missions on Sept. 9.

Soon Special Operations forces showed what they could do. On the evening of Sept. 21, one MH-6 and two AH-6 helicopters took off from the frigate *USS Jarrett* to track an Iranian ship, the *Iran Ajr*. The helicopters observed the ship extinguish its lights and begin laying mines. Receiving permission to attack, the helicopters fired guns and rockets, stopping the ship. As the *Iran Ajr's* crew began to push mines over the side, the helicopters resumed firing until the crew abandoned ship.

Rear Adm. Bernsen then ordered the SEAL platoon from the *USS Guadalcanal* to board the *Iran Ajr*. Two patrol boats provided security. Shortly after first light, the SEALs boarded the ship and found nine mines and various arming mechanisms. The patrol boats rescued 10 Iranians in a lifeboat and 13 in life vests floating nearby. Documents found aboard the ship showed where the Iranians had laid mines, implicating Iran in mining international waters. The *Iran Ajr* was sunk in deep water Sept. 26.



Mines aboard the *Iran Ajr*.



Photo not available

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2d Marine Special Operations Battalion



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**Army Staff Sgt.
Brandon R. Pepper**
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**Gunnery Sgt.
Daniel J. Price**
1st Marine Special Operations Battalion

Editor's note: Honored are Special Operations Forces who lost their lives since June's Tip of the Spear.

Light-weight tactical all terrain vehicle students get hands-on experience driving the vehicles in various environments and situations to prepare them for operations overseas. The LTATV is a Special Operations Command-funded program that provides SEALs with a new combat capability. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Megan Anuci.

