



TIP OF THE SPEAR



**INTERNATIONAL SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES
DEMONSTRATE THEIR CAPABILITY IN TAMPA BAY**

U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLA., JUNE 2016



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Gen. Schoomaker given 2016 Bull Simons Award ... 10

Tip of the Spear



Thomas Jefferson
Award Winner

Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III
Commander, USSOCOM

CSM Bill Thetford
Command Sergeant Major

Army Col. Tom Davis
Special Operations
Communication Office Director

Mike Bottoms
Managing Editor

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Gunnery Sgt. Ryan Scranton
Staff NCOIC
Command Information

Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence
Staff Writer/Photographer

Army Staff Sgt. Jerimiah Richardson
Staff Writer/Photographer

Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Jayson Price
Staff Writer/Photographer

Army Staff Sgt. Mark Shrewsbury
Staff Writer/Photographer

Tech. Sgt. Heather Kelly
Staff Writer/Photographer

(Cover) From May 23-26, 2016, U.S. Special Operations Command hosted more than 12,000 attendees in Tampa, Fla., for several events that comprised International Special Operations Forces Week. An international special operations forces capabilities exercise was conducted May 25. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.

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SOF AROUND THE WORLD - JORDAN
SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – CENTRAL

A U.S. Air Force Special Tactics pararescueman performs a jumpmaster personnel inspection on his Jordanian special operations forces counterpart during Exercise Eager Lion, May 19. Exercise Eager Lion 2016 is a bi-lateral exercise in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan between the Jordanian Armed Forces and the U.S. Military designed to strengthen relationships and interoperability between partner nations. Photo by Maj. Tiffany M. Collins.



With the addition of Special Tactics teams, SOCCENT provides joint SOF capability to Eager Lion 2016

*By Maj. Tiffany Collins
SOCCENT Public Affairs*

When one hears “ground special operations forces,” one’s mind naturally veers towards the U.S. Army’s Special Operations Command.

However, this year’s bi-lateral exercise showcased the lesser-known SOF ground component in a big way, providing valuable insight into Air Force Special Tactics’ unique air-ground capabilities and history.

While Special Tactics Airmen have built partnership capacity at Eager Lion in the past, this is one of the first times Special Tactics provided command and control of an exercise joint-task force. Jointly led by a Jordanian and American commander, Special Tactics directed U.S. Army and Jordanian SOF teams in Air Force ground missions.

“Special Tactics teams are training side by side with our U.S. and Jordanian SOF counterparts to execute personnel recovery, precision strike and global access missions. These exercises fuse air power to ground special operations in joint, combined, and unilateral teams,” said Lt. Col. Mike Jensen, the commander of the 26th Special Tactics who led the joint command with the Jordanian commander of the 101st Special Forces Battalion.

Since 9/11, Air Force Special Tactics has been involved in every major operation, using air power to solve ground problems.

Originally called Brand X upon its creation in the early 1970s, this small group of highly-skilled Airmen have been developed throughout the years to provide the U.S. military with tactical air-to-ground integration. The force, consisting of less than 1,200 operators, is a vital asset to U.S. Special Operations Command and the global SOF community. In addition to moving, shooting

and communicating like other SOF partners, Special Tactics teams can control airspace and survey airfields, direct air and ground strikes and provide tactical rescue and surgery in hostile or remote territories.

“Air Force Special Tactics forces are uniquely qualified to command and control these air-centric special operations missions,” said Jensen. “This exercise provided an exceptional opportunity to apply joint airpower to ground missions and forge relationships with our Jordanian partners as they combat common asymmetric threats.”

Exercise Eager Lion 2016 consisted of simulated real-world scenarios to facilitate a coordinated partnered military response to conventional and unconventional threats. The addition of this SOF asset enhances U.S. and Jordanian effectiveness and capability to respond to real-world crises and threats.



A combat controller surveys a valley during Exercise Eager Lion 2016, May 23. Photo by Spc. Darius Davis.



SOF AROUND THE WORLD - PERU SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – SOUTH



Fuerzas Comando multinational medics practice loading a simulated patient onto a U.S. Army UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter during rehearsal drills May 2, in Ancon, Peru. U.S. Army Sgt. Christian Ortiz (left) and U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jeremy Johnson (center) worked together with a Peruvian nurse during the drills. Rehearsing roles and reactions in the event of an emergency ensures smooth interoperability between the forces' medical professionals during Fuerzas Comando. Photo by Army Cpl. Joanna Bradshaw.

Fuerzas Comando takes place in Peru

*By Army Sgt. Eric Roberts
SOCSOUTH Public Affairs*

Hosted by the Peruvian military and sponsored by U.S. Southern Command, the May 2 opening ceremony kicked-off an 11-day event. Fuerzas Comando consisted of assault and sniper team competitions as well as events like the physical fitness test, confidence course, combined assault event, 19 kilometer rucksack march, and aquatic event. This marks the 13th year for the competition that tests the teams' fitness, agility, mental toughness and tactical abilities.

Through teamwork and collaboration, the competition promotes military-to-military relationships, increases tactical capabilities and improves regional security.

“The Fuerzas Comando [competition] represents the vigor and energy of working together no matter the challenges,” said Peruvian Gen. Moises del Castillo Medino, chief of Peru’s Joint Intelligence and Operations Command. “I encourage competitors to never give up and do their best.”

Even though competition is a big part of Fuerzas Comando, relationship building between competing countries is another major goal of the event.

“By training with our partner nations in a multinational competition like this one, we build the capacity to confront common challenges,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Brian Pazzaglia, operations officer, Special Operations Command South, Mississippi National Guard. “Many of the problems we face today are transnational, such as organized crime and terrorism, narcotics trafficking, money laundering,

illegal migration and human trafficking. All require regional partnerships focused on common goals and cooperation.”

Peruvian Lt. Hugo Vilca, Peru’s team captain, said the brotherhood among countries is important, as it helps promote peace, familiarity and understanding among the participating countries.

“We welcome everyone to Peru and wish every team the best,” said Vilca. “We value the brotherhood, the technical operations and the exchange of culture with each team that is participating. These are valuable to our team.”

All the teams gain valuable experiences throughout the competition.

“Fuerzas Comando is [a] great experience and exposure for Guyana,” said Guyana 1st. Lt. Lionel Medford, team captain for Guyana. “It helps us obtain

better knowledge of how militaries around the world operate tactically.”

Belize Sgt. Miguel Guerra said the competition, while a challenge, is essential for a small country such as his. He expects the road march to be a challenge for his team, as the elevation and climate are different between Peru and Belize.

“It is a good experience to have interaction with other commandos here in Peru,” said Guerra. “We expect to be the best here. We expect to make our country proud. I hope the best team wins.”

The 20 countries competing this year are Argentina, Belize, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and the United States.



(Left) A U.S. Army UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter lands in preparation for Fuerzas Comando 2016, May 1 in Ancon, Peru. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Kimberly S. Hill. (Above) Competitors from Team Honduras march along a rugged section of terrain, May 9, Santiago de Tuna, Peru. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Fredrick Varney. (Below) A Mexican special operations competitor rounds a bend during the assault team event, May 4, in Ancon, Peru. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Chad Menegay.





SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – EUROPE



After raiding an objective, Soldiers from Lithuania's Special Purpose Service Counter-Terrorism unit are exfiltrated on U.S. Army UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters during Exercise Flaming Sword in Panevėžys, Lithuania, May 19. Since 2012, Lithuanian SOF has organized Exercise Flaming Sword with NATO SOF and allied Partners. The aim of this exercise is to train SOF elements at the Special Operations Task Group level to improve interoperability between regional partners. SOCEUR courtesy photo.

SOCEUR tests skills in Trojan Footprint

*By Sgt. 1st Class William Patterson
SOCEUR Public Affairs*

The Special Operations Component Command of the NATO Response Force recently had an opportunity to test their systems and demonstrate their capabilities during Exercise Trojan Footprint 2016 which occurred May 8-20.

Its primary aim was to refine NRF processes and demonstrate the deployment and employment capabilities of the SOF Component of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). These capabilities set conditions for follow-on VJTF Land, Air, and Maritime forces which will be conducting exercises throughout the summer, like the ongoing exercise Brilliant Jump II - a Joint Forces Command Brunssum-directed VJTF readiness exercise.

“Trojan Footprint 2016 was an absolute success from the Special Operations Component Command perspective,” said Col. Lawrence Daley, operations officer for the Special Operations Component Command of the NATO Response Force. “The exercise enabled the testing of the NRF alert and deployment sequence in addition to our forces ability to integrate and operate with host nations forces across the exercise’s training area. To me, this clearly shows that our Very High Readiness Joint Task Force elements are able to rapidly deploy and are ready for and capable of dealing with any contingency set before them.”

Trojan Footprint involved more than 1,200 participants from eleven partner and allied nations to include Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United States, and was executed at training venues spanning five different countries (Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland).

Trojan Footprint was a combined planned and coordinated exercise that was developed over the last year using NATO planning doctrine with input from all participating nations.

Exercise Trojan Footprint 16 was conducted using a “hybrid threat construct,” meaning forces that participated in the training found themselves operating against both conventional and nonconventional forces, as well as criminal elements. Land, air and maritime special operations tactical groups and teams coordinated activities with host

nation forces to neutralize enemy forces’ high value targets. Special operations tactical groups were led by 10th Special Operations Group when they stood up a Joint Special Operations Task Force.

The Special Operations Air Component saw the deployment and employment of Air Force MC-130J Commando II’s and CV-22 Ospreys, Army MH-47 Chinooks and approximately 250 aircrew, maintenance and support personnel with a goal of increasing the capability to integrate and operate with U.S. and foreign SOF partners using the NATO Response Force 16 construct.

“It’s amazing to me what these guys were able to accomplish in a relatively short period of time,” said Col. Nathan Green, Special Operations Air Component commander. “We were able to rapidly setup in two separate locations, work seamlessly with our foreign SOF partners and perform a variety of successful missions.”

The three-week exercise, resulted in the SOAC completing over 45 sorties including the supply and resupply of SOF personnel, infiltration and exfiltration training, air and personnel drops, and other mission-essential functions to refine NATO Response Force processes and demonstrate the deployment and employment capabilities of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force.

Trojan Footprint was linked to and executed concurrently with Estonia’s annual National Defense exercise (Dagger) and Lithuania’s annual multinational SOF exercise (Flaming Sword).

“This exercise (Flaming Sword) was a stepping stone to bigger and better actions in the future,” said Col. Modestas Petrauskas, the Lithuanian Special Operations Commander. The joint work with other forces, engaging multiple agencies, all worked towards building capabilities in the Baltic region.

Trojan Footprint 16 strengthened security institutions, promoted multilateral sharing of information, and increased interoperability among the partner nations of the NATO Response Force and the Baltic Region. The exercise also helped to achieve multinational regional cooperation.

This exercise validated the requirements set at the NATO Wales Summit in September of 2014 in time for members of the alliance to reconvene at the Warsaw summit in July.

Schoomaker given the 2016 Bull Simons Award

The Bull Simons Award is a lifetime Special Operations Forces achievement award and USSOCOM's highest honor.



By Tom Neven

USSOCOM Research and History Office

A fireball in the night sky on a bleak desert plain in Iran is the defining event in the career of retired Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker, the 2016 recipient of the Bull Simons Award. In a 35-year career full of significant events, the former commander of U.S. Special Operations Command and Chief of Staff of the Army looks back on what he calls a “successful failure” as the catalyst that shaped his career and made today’s Special Operations Forces what they are today.

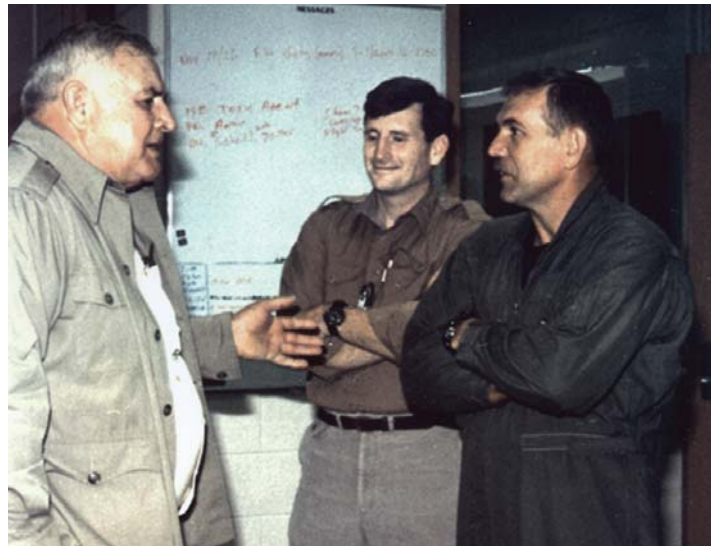
That fireball came during the night of April 24-25, 1980, at Dasht-e Kavir, Iran, known otherwise as Desert One to U.S. military planners. It was a refueling point on Operation Eagle Claw, a daring mission to rescue 52 Americans held hostage by Iranian militants who had taken over the American embassy in Tehran six months earlier. A series of problems and mechanical failures with helicopters led commanders to abort the mission, but while one helicopter was maneuvering to refuel it struck an EC-130 aircraft, and the ensuing explosion led to the deaths of five Air Force crewmen on the EC-130 and three Marines on the RH-53 helicopter. What had been a disappointing mission scrub had become a catastrophic failure.

Induction to SOF

Gen. Schoomaker had been a team leader with the Special Mission Unit that night and witnessed the accident from only a few dozen yards away, but he might not have been there at all if he’d followed his original plan to get out of the Army a few years earlier. He’d joined ROTC at the University of Wyoming, where he played on the championship football team and was commissioned a cavalry officer upon graduation in 1969. After eight years and achieving the rank of captain, having led a rifle company and cavalry troop, serving as a battalion operations officer and attending the Marine Corps’ Amphibious Warfare School, Schoomaker said the Army didn’t want him to go back to leading troops. “They wanted me to do some other things I didn’t care to do,” he said, hence the decision to leave the service. He planned to join the FBI.

But a senior leader saw a different future for the young officer. “I was working for Col. Bud Sydnor at the time, who was Col. Bull Simons’ deputy for the Son Tay Raid, and he didn’t agree with me leaving the Army,” Schoomaker said. “He sent me down to Fort Bragg and told me to report to a certain person and to make up my mind after I got through with that.”

That was in November 1977, and the “certain person” was the legendary Col. Charlie Beckwith, who was in the process of forming a different type of unit that would specialize in hostage situations and antiterrorist activities. It would be made up of carefully selected soldiers who had



Col. Charlie Beckwith (left) with then Capt. Peter Schoomaker (center). Courtesy photo.

undergone a rigorous assessment and selection process to make sure, according to Col. Beckwith, that only those from “the right cut of cloth” were admitted.

Many of those who applied came from Special Forces and Ranger backgrounds. For that reason, there were a few raised eyebrows and some joking about the young cavalry captain trying to join the premiere unit of the Army, according to retired Command Sergeant Major Mel Wick, who at the time was on the assessment and selection team for the nascent SMU. That was quickly turned around, though. “Everyone was seriously impressed with this young captain, his maturity and strategic vision and the way he approached everything,” Wick said. “We could see there was great potential and a great future for him in the organization.”

“I went down there as a captain and got involved with the kinds of things I enjoyed doing with the kind of people I enjoyed being with and the kinds of challenges I enjoyed, so I stuck with it,” Schoomaker said. The FBI’s loss was the Army’s gain.

The young captain soon found himself part of the planning process for what was to become Operation Eagle Claw. “He was a key part of the planning process and tamping down some of the wild ideas people wanted to try,” Wick said. “He was critical in keeping things focused on the reality of what we could accomplish, on what we could do and not on what we wish we could do.”

It was a continuation of the traits he’d displayed during the early days of the SMU, according to Wick. “When Capt. Schoomaker was going through the operator training course, very early on it was noticeable his ability to cut through all the clutter and focus on what was important and what the key elements were and have that strategic vision and be able to clearly articulate the second- and third-order effects of the movements you were going to make.”



Gen. Schoomaker after the battle in Grenada October 1983. Courtesy photo.

Retired Air Force Col. John Carney Jr., who as an Air Force combat controller had secretly scouted the Desert One site weeks before the mission, recalled Schoomaker's natural leadership. "He was great at instilling confidence," Carney said, but he was also careful not to mistake

enthusiasm for capability. Unfortunately, despite extensive planning and no shortage of enthusiasm, Eagle Claw ultimately failed because the mission stretched the U.S. military's capabilities to the breaking point, a lesson Schoomaker would take into the rest of his career.

Taking command

Schoomaker went on to serve in various leadership positions within the SMU, eventually commanding the unit from June 1989 to July 1992. He moved from there to command the Joint Special Operations Command from July 1994 to August 1996. It was during those years that Schoomaker applied the lessons of Desert One. Wick, who served as Schoomaker's senior enlisted adviser during that time, recalled the challenges the commander tackled. "He faced problems with the manning of the components and the qualification and training processes," Wick said. "His leadership set the foundation for what you see today."

From 1996 to 1997 Schoomaker served as the commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command, again applying the lessons of Desert One. Among his emphases were fleshing out a full special operations capability, realizing that SOF was more than just trigger-pullers and door-kickers. He ensured that supporting elements such as Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations were fully integrated into USASOC and the Army's overall SOF capabilities.

In October 1997, Schoomaker was promoted to command the nation's entire SOF enterprise as commander of USSOCOM. Wick again served as his SEA. "When General Schoomaker came in, SOCOM was really at a crossroads," Wick said. "There was a lot of disagreement among the components, a lot of disagreement with big Air Force or big Navy or big Army where they didn't want to support SOCOM. He had a lot of challenges in getting SOCOM focused on what they were supposed to be doing

and what their charter was."

Dr. Brian Maher, the president of the Joint Special Operations University, said that Schoomaker's past experiences led him to understand the importance of joint capabilities inherent in a command like SOCOM. "He saw some of the worst failures our nation went through, and he was determined to see that those would not happen when he was in charge," Maher said. "A guy like Gen. Schoomaker didn't need a Goldwater-Nichols Act [which in 1986 established today's current joint force structure] to force the special ops force into jointness. He did that from the beginning. He knew that we needed to interoperate, that each had to use its own abilities to the maximum extent and that synchronous operations, where each supported the other, was the key to success. He drove that home."

One of Schoomaker's final actions as commander of USSOCOM was to finalize the establishment of JSOU in September 2000, pulling together and expanding several existing military academic programs into a single entity. That effort grew out of the Future Concepts Working Group, which was a forward-looking SOF think tank that the general created upon taking command of SOCOM. One brain child was specialized SOF education. "General Schoomaker knew we existed in a very complex world with an ambiguous enemy, and it took more than just training and skills to overcome," Maher said. What would eventually become JSOU was designed to build upon existing education from the Services, the staff colleges and war colleges and fill in the gaps for SOF operators. "JSOU became an item of emphasis for him," Maher said, "so that we could offer to our force the education, the critical analysis, the thoughtful probing that would be needed in this ambiguous world we were facing."

A final call

Schoomaker retired from SOCOM in November 2000, but he was not yet done serving the nation. In 2003, he was persuaded to don the uniform again to serve as Chief of Staff of the Army, but not until after a false start. The initial call from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld did not go well. At the time Schoomaker was in Wyoming, looking to buy a ranch. He was driving in his pickup truck when his phone rang.

Retired Army Maj. Gen. Bill Garrison, a longtime friend and potential partner in the ranch, described what happened next. "He did not believe it was Secretary Rumsfeld," Garrison said. "He thought it might be a practical joke."

"I was sitting in my truck when I got that call," Schoomaker said. "I thought it was Bill Garrison. We're always kidding each other. I said some profane stuff and hung up. They called back and said, 'This isn't a joke. This is real. Rumsfeld wants to talk to you.'"

Rumsfeld said he wanted someone who would help move the Army to a more mobile, adaptable and lethal force capable of dealing with asymmetric warfare rather than just

big armies facing each other. The name Peter Schoomaker had been recommended to him by a former congressional friend and Secretary of the Army Jack Marsh, whose son, Rob, had served with Schoomaker in the SMU. Rob Marsh had told his father that the exact person to lead the Army into the 21st century was Schoomaker.

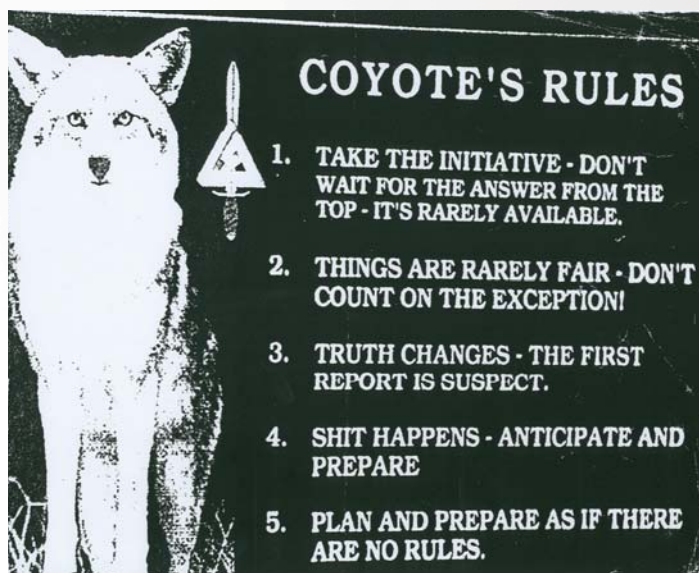
“He had done it all in the regular Army and Special Forces,” Rumsfeld said. “After meeting with Pete and looking at his background, it was clear to me he was the perfect person to serve as Chief of Staff of the Army.”

It took some persuading, but Schoomaker finally agreed to come back on active duty on Aug. 1, 2003. Again, he faced large challenges. “He [Rumsfeld] was tired of the recalcitrance, of everybody slow-rolling things,” Schoomaker said. “And I can see what he was talking about. I got up to the Pentagon, and no one was at war in the Pentagon. A damn airplane had hit the building, and nobody was at war. The Army was at war. The Marines were at war. Rumsfeld was at war, but nobody else was at war.”

Sgt. Maj. Ken Preston, at the time the Sergeant Major of the Army, said that while we had a lot of soldiers engaged in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, “you had a lot of people back at the Pentagon who were caught up in the bureaucracy of the building.”

In 1978, in the earliest days of the SMU, Col. Beckwith had asked his soldiers to visualize the future. “I wrote down a simple thing,” Schoomaker said. “We’re at war all the time. That’s all I wrote.” He took that insight and applied it to the Pentagon, putting up posters around the building with a stern Uncle Sam saying, “We’re At War. Are You Doing All You Can?” He also reemphasized to the entire Army what he called Coyote’s Rules, so named because of his call sign while in the SMU.

“These were the five special characteristics of special operations,” according to Air Force Gen. Norty Schwartz, who served as Schoomaker’s deputy commander at SOCOM. “He had a way to crystalize important themes.”



Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker. Courtesy photo.

A lasting legacy

During his four-year tenure as Chief of Staff, Schoomaker was driven by the same lessons he’d learned all those years earlier in Iran and had refined over his career. “He knows who he is and what he believes,” Rumsfeld said. “He’s perfectly willing to speak his mind, and if he doesn’t agree with you, he’ll look you in the eye and tell you.”

“He demanded excellence,” Garrison said, “not just from himself but from his subordinates and also his seniors. I believe Desert One was a total moment in his life. Every day thereafter he put a lot of time into identifying leaders, and the training, education, and nurturing of those leaders.”

“His vision was core to setting the stage so that when the first units deployed into Afghanistan [in 2001] and the war on terror began in earnest, his vision was realized,” Wick said.

“Desert One was part of the education of Peter J. Schoomaker,” added Army Lt. Col. Bucky Burruss, who was deputy commander of the SMU on Operation Eagle Claw. “He always paid attention to what could be learned from any situation, whether successful or not. It’s one of the things that helped him develop into the superb general officer he eventually became.”

“Pete was one of the captains from the Desert One era who said never again,” Schwartz said. “He set about making sure the country never experienced the searing sadness of Desert One again.”

“That event, in my view, was one of the most successful failures in history,” Schoomaker said. “It led directly to the creation of the special operations forces we have today.”



Green Beret returns to service after amputation

*By Army Maj. Thomas Cieslak
7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)*

A Special Forces noncommissioned officer has returned to full active duty service two and a half years after his hand was amputated to free him from underneath a vehicle before a suicide bomber could strike a deadly blow against him and his team.

Sgt. 1st Class Ivan Morera, a Miami native and a Special Forces Medic, continues to serve with the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), despite being severely wounded in a vehicle roll-over in Afghanistan.

In August 2013, an insurgent on a motorcycle drove up to the front-left tire of the MRAP All-Terrain Vehicle that Morera was driving. Aware of intelligence reports stating insurgents were employing suicide bombers on motorcycles, Morera swerved to avoid the attacker. The insurgent pursued Morera's vehicle, even as he swerved multiple times. The final time Morera swerved, the vehicle went off the road. When he over-corrected to return to the road, the vehicle began to roll over. While the vehicle flipped, the driver's side door next to Morera broke off its hinges and combat lock.

"I woke up and noticed my hand had been crushed. I called out for my team sergeant. He unstrapped himself and put a tourniquet on my arm," said Morera recalling the aftermath of the roll-over. "He called over my junior medic who put an additional tourniquet on and they had to complete the amputation in order to pull me out of the vehicle."

In addition to the loss of a hand, he suffered severe damage to his left shoulder and knee during the roll-over. After Morera was medically evacuated, the motorcycle-borne suicide bomber returned to attack the Special Forces team, killing himself by detonating his improvised explosive device and wounding a number of the Green Berets still at the scene of the accident.

The remaining medic immediately began to evaluate and treat wounds caused by the blast as other members of the team continued to recover the damaged vehicle back



Sgt. 1st Class Ivan Morera conducts strength conditioning under the supervision of a Tactical Human Optimization, Rapid Rehabilitation and Reconditioning Program coach in the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)'s Combat Readiness Training Facility, Feb. 10. In August 2013, the Green Beret's left shoulder and knee sustained severe damage and his left hand was crushed when the vehicle he was driving rolled over while avoiding a suicide bomber in Afghanistan. Morera has since returned to full service with the Group. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Bryan Henson.

to a coalition base.

Morera began his recuperation at the Center for the Intrepid at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. Only fifteen days after his initial hospitalization, Morera reported for physical and occupational therapies.

“My recovery, at first, was pretty easy and I was excelling. But within three months, I started to get depressed when things got a little harder,” said Morera about his recovery. “In January 2014, I had reconstructive knee surgery and set new goals on getting out of the CFI [Center for the Intrepid] and returning to 7th Group within five months. I was able to reach that goal and come home.”

Extremely competitive and fitness orientated, the loss of a hand and severe wounds to his left shoulder and knee dealt a critical blow to Morera’s identity as a husband, father and Special Forces operator. Physical performance is critical to a Special Forces Soldier and initially he had no idea how he was going to recover to his previous capabilities. Family and faith proved to be the inspiration the former Green Beret Medic needed.

“It’s because of my spiritual identity that I was able to stay strong and because of my faith in God,” says Morera about the source of his inner strength and drive to recover.

In physical therapy, he began the arduous task of strengthening his knee and shoulder to prepare them for reconstructive surgery. Efforts in occupational therapy focused on learning how to use his prosthetics. Especially challenging was learning how to contract specific muscles in his arm to control his prosthetic hand.

Morera returned to the 7th SFG (A)’s compound at Eglin Air Force Base in Northwest Florida in June of 2014. The very next day after his arrival, he reported to the Group’s Force Preservation Directorate housed in the unit’s Combat Readiness Training Facility. The FPD’s approach to the recovery of wounded Green Berets like Morera is both holistic in manner and comprehensive in aspects of mental, physical and spiritual recovery. The directorate’s cadre, which includes a dietician, psychologists, performance coaches and a physical therapist, embraced Morera and worked to channel his drive to excel once again.

Morera spends much of his time with members of the Group’s Tactical Human Optimization, Rapid Rehabilitation and Reconditioning Program. Mike Sanders, director of the THOR3 program, coordinates much of Morera’s physical conditioning. Sanders often says to visitors the mental identity of a Soldier and especially a Green Beret is often tied to their physical performance on the battlefield, in the gym and in everyday life. The THOR3 program is an essential component to the recovery of a Special Forces Soldier

like Morera, continues Sanders, because it helps restore something that is often violently taken away from them and leaves not only physical trauma, but mental trauma as well.

“Being able to see my kids every day and being able to show them if you continue to push forward and have faith, you can get through anything,” says Morrera about the inspiration that continues to drive him towards his ultimate goal of returning to a Special Forces team. “I love my children deeply and when they tell me I’m their hero, that motivates me to go further.”

Morera passed a major milestone towards his goal in April of 2015 when he conducted his first static-line parachute jump since being wounded. Since then, he’s completed seven more jumps with his prosthetic arm. His next intended breakthrough takes him above the clouds to be able to conduct military freefall operations. He and a team of experts are looking into the dynamics of conducting High Altitude Low Opening parachute jumps with prosthetics and what specialized gear might be necessary to make it possible.

“Continue to move forward. Don’t let your situation define who you are,” Morera advises other members of the Special Forces community who have sustained such life-altering wounds. “Don’t let your situation stop you from your goals. Everything and anything is possible with faith and determination.”



Sgt. 1st Class Ivan Morera, center, stands with members of the Tactical Human Optimization, Rapid Rehabilitation and Reconditioning program at the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)’s Combat Readiness Training Facility. The THOR3 staff was instrumental in the Green Beret’s physical rehabilitation after his left shoulder and knee sustained severe damage and his left hand was crushed in August 2013 when the vehicle he was driving rolled over while avoiding a suicide bomber in Afghanistan. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Bryan Henson.

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Thomas Travis, a rotary wing advisor and pilot with U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command, and his son Pvt. Joshua Travis, a parachute rigger on Fort Bragg, North Carolina, prepare to board a UH-60 helicopter for their jump on St. Mere Eglise Drop Zone during the Law Day Airborne Operation, May 5. Chief Warrant Officer 5 Travis joined the military in 1984, and his son joined in 2015. Photo by Spc. Rachel Diehm.

Airborne, it runs in the family

*By Army Sgt. Kyle Fisch
USASOC Public Affairs*

There are traditions passed down from generation to generation in families all across the world, and while these can range from farming to large-scale business corporations, for the Travis' it's jumping out of an aircraft, ready to take the fight to the enemy.

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Thomas Travis joined the Army in 1984, and is now a jumpmaster and rotary wing advisor for U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command with approximately 126 jumps. Thirty-one years later, his son followed in his footsteps.

“Our family’s military history goes all the way back to a Norman chief named Travers who crossed the channel with William the Conqueror,” Travis said. “In the U.S. our family fought in the Revolution, the war for Texas independence, both sides of the Civil War; and my father and uncle fought in WWII in the Pacific.”

“Its part of the family business, there’s a long tradition of military in our family, so I’m honored that he decided to take this route,” Travis said.

Pvt. Joshua Travis, is a parachute rigger on Fort Bragg, who joined the Army in 2015, after deciding that, like his father before him, he too would continue the military legacy of the Travis family.

Tip of the Spear

The elder Travis recalls his son, expressing an interest in the military at a very young age, he specifically remembers his son telling him; “I want to be in the Army and fly like you do.”

“My dad was my inspiration to join the Army, and to go to Airborne School. While I was at Airborne School, he got to jump with me on my second jump,” Josh Travis said. “I feel a lot of pride being able to jump with my dad, and in him basically passing on the torch to me, so to speak.”

The opportunity to jump together seemed to almost blur the inherent danger of what they were about to do, however, Tom and Josh Travis are confident in their training and their equipment.

“As I like to say; the parachute wants to open. You have to have a healthy respect for what you are doing, and not get complacent. As I JMPI’d [Jumpmaster Personnel Inspection (A required procedure, conducted on each jumper, prior to every jump.)] him before the jump, I actually did think; ‘wow I am inspecting my son!’” Tom Travis said.

With more than 30 years in the military, Tom Travis says that his time in the Army is just about up, though he’s had “a lot of fun” doing what he loves. He knew that jumping with his son as an opportunity that may be

gone someday soon. His son, shares the sentiment.

“Before I joined the military, I knew jumping with my dad before he retires would possibly be one of the benefits of being stationed here at Bragg, and today it all kind of just came together” the younger Travis said.

Tom Travis states that he has learned a lot during the last 30 years of his military career, and with this experience he plans to prepare his son for a long, successful career in the Army with some words of wisdom.

“Always do the right thing, even when no one is watching and learn from both good and bad leadership experiences,” Tom Travis said. “Remember that all jobs are important, so give those troops the respect they deserve. Be able to lead and follow.”

“I am very proud of my son for choosing this path. I have always tried to guide and advise him, but the decision to join the military should always rest with the individual. A parent should never push their son or daughter into serving,” Tom Travis said.

Josh Travis notes that he looks forward to the possibility of one day sharing the same experiences he’s had with his father, with his own son or daughter.



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Thomas Travis, a rotary wing advisor and pilot with U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command, and his son Pvt. Joshua Travis, a parachute rigger on Fort Bragg, North Carolina, prepare to board a UH-60 helicopter for their jump on St. Mere Eglise Drop Zone during the Law Day Airborne Operation, May 5. Photo by Spc. Rachel Diehm

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Soldiers participated in the U.S. Army Special Operations Command's Best Warrior Competition, held June 6-10. Staff Sgt. Clint Bahme of 1st Special Forces Command, was named the Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year, and Spc. Trey Caster of 75th Ranger Regiment, was named Soldier of the Year. USASOC courtesy photo.

USASOC honors its best warriors

*By Sgt. Kyle Fisch
USASOC Public Affairs*

The U.S. Army Special Operations Command announced the winners of the command's 2016 Best Warrior Competition (held June 6-10) in a ceremony at the headquarters building, June 10.

The Soldiers were from the four subordinate units within USASOC; 1st Special Forces Command, U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command Combat Aviation Command, U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, and 75th Ranger Regiment.

Staff Sgt. Clint Bahme of 1st Special Forces Command, was named the Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year, and Spc. Trey Caster of 75th Ranger Regiment, was named Soldier of the Year.

"As warriors, we love to compete. We compete against each-other and represent the organizations that we come from," Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Abernethy said, USASOC Command Sergeant Major. "I think this is a great opportunity to build relationships, and to have a better understanding of the capabilities that exist in each of our formations."

"One of you Soldiers or NCOs will replace me or my replacement one day, you are the future leaders there is no doubt about it," Abernethy said. "You are the reason why USASOC exists, and why we operate without fail and without equal."

Lt. Gen. Kenneth Tovo, the USASOC Commanding General, shared the CSM's sentiment, stating some of the reasons why he believes these events are so important.

"You know another reason we compete, is because it 'sharpens the steel.' Hopefully along every one of the competitions, it has not only improved your capabilities, but it has improved the capabilities of all those who didn't quite make it to this level, but did learn something along the way," Tovo said.

The competitors were judged on the following events: written essay and general Army subjects exam, the Army Physical Fitness Test, a stress-fire range, day and night land navigation, combatives, Army Warrior Tasks testing, and concluded with a military board featuring a panel of sergeants major from across the command.

The NCO and Soldier of the year will represent USASOC at the Sergeant Major of the Army's Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the year "Best Warrior" competition in October.

Sgt. Isaiah Thompson of 75th Ranger Regiment and Pvt. Patrick Sargent of 1st Special Forces Command, were this year's runner ups for USASOC's Best Warrior competition.

The runner-up NCO and Soldier of the Year must be prepared to assume the responsibility for representing the command, if for some reason, either of the winners cannot complete their requirements over the next year.



Soldiers compete in the combatives portion of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command's Best Warrior Competition, June 6-10. Staff Sgt. Clint Bahme of 1st Special Forces Command, was named the Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year, and Spc. Trey Caster of 75th Ranger Regiment, was named Soldier of the Year. USASOC courtesy photo.



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND



Polish Rear Adm. Piotr Stocki receives the Distinguished Alumni Award of the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School from Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, during a ceremony held at the headquarters, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, May 20. Photo by Mike Bottoms.

USSOCOM and NAVSCIATTS honor Poland's Rear Adm. Piotr Stocki

By Glenn Sirey

Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School

Gen. Raymond Thomas, commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, presented Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School's 2015 Distinguished Alumni Award to Polish Rear Adm. Piotr Stocki, commandant, Border Guard Maritime

Branch, May 20 at USSOCOM.

The Distinguished Alumni program was established in 2013 in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of NAVSCIATTS. Specifically, this award recognizes the impact and specific accomplishments of former NAVSCIATTS graduates who leverage the collaborative network of global partners to pursue and implement multinational and transregional solutions. This network enables partners to reach across regional lines and facilitate

information sharing and has proven beneficial in countering extremism, piracy, and criminal activities.

“This is really an honor for us here at SOCOM,” said Thomas. “Rear Adm. Stocki has served with distinction for over 28 years in various key positions with the Polish Navy and the Border Guard Maritime Branch. He embodies the NAVSCIATTS motto of ‘Stronger Together,’ and I look forward to an

ongoing and ever-strengthening relationship between Poland, the United States, and USSOCOM.”

Stocki first came to NAVSCIATTS in July 2011 when he participated in the Strategic Level Small Craft Combating Terrorism Course. In 2012, he returned to NAVSCIATTS as a SLC guest lecturer and speaker to share his experiences and emphasize his successful use of NAVSCIATTS’ network of global partners.

The SLC course provides international officers a forum to discuss shared challenges, while helping facilitate the formation of networks and transregional synchronization between partners who operate in the same geographic area and face similar problems. This network reaches across oceans and continents allows for efficient information sharing between U.S. forces and facilitates efforts with other agencies and international partners.

According to Stocki, the Polish Border Guard Maritime Branch takes measures to neutralize border protection issues through regional cooperative networks, and NAVSCIATTS’ SLC was the perfect course to familiarize him with planning, organizing and conducting operations in support of these regional issues.

“I consider this course to be one of my greatest professional training experiences, and a perfect opportunity to establish a dialogue, share experiences and build strategic relationships with other partner nations,” said Stocki. “I greatly

appreciate the numerous lessons and good practices [I] learned while at NAVSCIATTS, and to receive such an award is such an honor and a privilege.”

In addition to recognizing the accomplishments of NAVSCIATTS graduates, the Distinguished Alumni Award also helps serve as a conduit to support the maintenance of strategic relationships within the network of global partners. NAVSCIATTS

does not view relationships in terms of weeks, months, or years; nor attempt to build them only after a crisis has been identified. NAVSCIATTS views relationships in terms of decades and nourishes these strategic partnerships through courses of instruction across the tactical, operational, and strategic spectrums to provide viable partners to U.S.

leaders to support transregional synchronization.

“Rear Adm. Stocki has been and continues to be an ambassador at large for NAVSCIATTS,” said Cmdr. Clay Pendergrass, commanding officer of NAVSCIATTS. “We are drawn together by the common goals of protecting our families, our nations, and our world. I can’t thank Rear Adm. Stocki enough for being a key partner nation advocate within the network of global partners.”

NAVSCIATTS is U.S. Special Operations Command’s International Center specializing in mobile and in-resident training across the tactical, operational and strategic spectrums strengthening partner nation capabilities and capacity.

NAVSCIATTS currently offers 19 courses with an average of nearly 1,000 personnel graduating from in-resident and mobile training events annually. Since 1963, nearly 11,000 students from 108 partner nations have graduated from NAVSCIATTS. Courses are offered in English and Spanish or in other languages through the use of translators.

For more news from Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School, visit <http://www.navy.mil/local/navsciatts/>.

Rear Adm. Stocki has been and continues to be an ambassador at large for NAVSCIATTS. We are drawn together by the common goals of protecting our families, our nations, and our world. I can't thank Rear Adm. Stocki enough for being a key partner nation advocate within the network of global partners.

— Cmdr. Clay Pendergrass



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Wounded warriors and Air Force pararescuemen Staff Sgt. August O'Neill, right, and Staff Sgt. Nick Robillard prepare to deliver the Air Force Wounded Warrior Program flag during the opening ceremony of the 2016 U.S. Air Force Trials at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, Feb. 26. O'Neill is training to recertify for duty as a pararescueman after he lost his leg due to wounds suffered in Afghanistan. Photo by Senior Airman Taylor Curry.



PJ seeks to rejoin pararescue team despite loss of leg

By Jeremy Gerlach
Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Public Affairs

In July 2011, Air Force Staff Sgt. August O'Neill, a pararescueman, was sent to rescue a group of Marines pinned down in Afghanistan when enemy insurgents opened fire on his team's helicopter.

A round bounced off the helicopter's door, tearing through both of O'Neill's lower legs. A critical wound to his left leg, required 20 surgeries in the next three years, as doctors tried to save the limb.

After all the surgeries, O'Neill finally told doctors to remove his left leg last year, but he remains determined to continue his career as a pararescueman.

Determined to Resume Career

"I haven't looked back since," said O'Neill, who's training with the 342nd Training Squadron, on Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, as he prepares to requalify for assignment to a pararescue team.

"I knew I wasn't done doing this job," he added.

Pararescue isn't an easy job for any airman, let alone one who's had their leg amputated just above the knee, but O'Neill believes he's still up to the task.

"There are going to be issues that come up here and there," O'Neill said. "But I'm sure I'll make it back on a team. Just like anybody who hasn't been in their job for a long time ... I basically need to make sure everybody else knows that I'm capable of doing the job, and ... I need to make sure I haven't lost anything that I need."

Pararescuemen serve in one of the most physically demanding fields in the armed forces, with the journey from basic training to joining an operational unit spanning almost two years.

Seeking a 'New Normal'

O'Neill said he isn't expecting any special treatment as he trains over the next few months to demonstrate his mission readiness.

"I wouldn't want to do this job if I couldn't meet the same qualifications as everybody else, because that would put the people on my team at risk," he explained. "You're only as strong as your weakest member, so if I can't keep up with them, that means they're carrying me and that's not something that I want."

Living with a prosthetic is a minor annoyance in terms of his daily routine, O'Neill said. He doesn't sleep with the leg on, for example, so he has to hop to the bathroom or the refrigerator when he wakes in the middle of the night.

"It's just finding a 'new normal' for all the things I was able to do with two legs before," he explained. "I've just been finding ways to get everything done."

That minor annoyance turns into a bigger challenge during pararescue training, where O'Neill will have to depend on his ingenuity and adaptability to meet the other demands of the job.

"Anything from picking up a patient -- where I can't just roll down on a knee and lift them up -- I have to find a different way to brace myself to get people up and move out," he noted. "Everything is challenging, but it's just a matter of finding out how to do it."

As if navigating this "new normal" wasn't enough, O'Neill said his training has been grueling.

"It's tough mentally and physically," he said. "You aren't pushed to your limit -- you're pushed beyond that -- to the limits that the instructors know you can reach. There are so many qualifications that you need to keep up with that you ... can't do so without being mentally prepared."

One thing, at least, hasn't changed for O'Neill since returning from his injury.

"I don't like running," he chuckled. "I've never been a distance runner and after four years of not running ... that's still difficult, but I can still run. It's not as pretty as it was before, but I'm able to at least get the job done."



Combat Aviation Advisors: Strong, silent, professional

*By 1st Lt. Monique Roux
307th Bomb Wing Public Affairs*

A small team of Airmen arrive at a foreign airfield as the sun peaks over the horizon. They have been flying for hours and fighting their internal clocks to stay awake. They are Air Commandos, Combat Aviation Advisors, and they are the quiet professionals.

“We have to be strong, but silent,” explains Master Sgt. Richard Smith, senior enlisted advisor for the 6th Special Operations Squadron. “Our unit symbol is a question mark and our success is heightened because of our anonymity.”

If a question mark symbolizes the work of this unit, it is no wonder so little is known about this elite group of Airmen working to help American allies around the globe. Coming together from across more than a dozen career fields, Combat Aviation Advisors are rigorously trained Airmen. They represent a cross-section of the Air Force and use their varying perspectives to help carry out their mission conducting special operations activities by, with and through foreign aviation forces.

“It’s an enjoyable challenge,” explains Lt. Col. Bryan Raridon, 6th SOS commander. “On one hand, we are executing SOF missions and specialties that we are intimately familiar with as Air Commandos. On the other, we are doing it by, with, and through foreign forces; with their equipment, processes, people, and often in their language.”

The work of the 6th SOS is mirrored by their Air Force Reserve counterparts, the 711th SOS. Executing the mission together helps create an even greater



Combat Aviation Advisors help partner nation mechanics with aircraft engine maintenance during a deployed mission in March. A CAA deployment sends a small team of Airmen to assess, advise, train, and assist friendly and allied forces with their own airpower resources. Duke Field is the home of the only two CAA squadrons in the Air Force, the active-duty 6th Special Operations Squadron and the Reserve 711th SOS. Courtesy photo.

footprint of CAA affect in partner nations.

“We never think of ourselves as active duty or reservists. We only present ourselves as a team, because that’s what we are,” said Senior Master Sgt. Bruce Tims, a CAA airdrop specialist.

Over the past several years, the need for the work of CAAs has grown. As a result, their presence will increase to facilitate the higher demand for assistance in

geographic combatant commands.

So what does it take to be a Combat Aviation Advisor?

According to Raridon, the job requires flexibility, empathy, toughness and an understanding that if the job is done right, most victories are quiet victories.

To be a CAA requires a selfless individual that understands how critical teamwork is to accomplishing the mission.

“We don’t champion the individual here, we champion the team,” said Smith.

Many operations take the team into harsh conditions, testing their training and ability to help foreign partners utilize their assets to complete the mission.

“The range in differences between our culture and the rest of the world can be truly vast and in some of the places we go,” said Smith. “If you lack empathy, the [local contact] will pick up on that.”

Being a CAA is not for everyone. To be considered, a person must be an expert in their field, prove language proficient on the defense language aptitude battery, have excellent physical fitness scores and have a personality that can fit with the challenges faced in such a critical position.

“We need people who are charismatic and can help further relationships with our partner nations,” said Master Sgt. Todd Chandler, 6th SOS operations superintendent. “The training is rigorous and challenging. It makes you think outside the box.”

Once selected, a person will complete a demanding 12 to 18 month training program. This program is specifically designed to yield members who are enabled with relevant foreign language skills, aware of the unique cultures represented by partner nations and prepared to provide the assistance needed for the operation.

“People who want to do hard work for their country and do it in a team environment are the ones who are going to do the best here,” said Smith.

From the short-term, 60-day campaigns to the long-term tours that can last several years, CAAs from both the 6th and 711th SOS work to be ambassadors of Special Operations Forces across the globe.

“One of the most rewarding things [about this job] is working with partner nations to get them where they need to be,” said Chandler. “The experiences you get are great.”



Combat Aviation Advisors help partner nation mechanics with aircraft engine maintenance during a deployed mission in March. Courtesy photo.



Emerald Warrior 16 increases joint forces interoperability





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Story on next page

Tip of the Spear



Special Tactics Airmen transport simulated patients to a MC-130J Commando II at Eglin Range, Florida, May 4, during Exercise Emerald Warrior 16. Emerald Warrior is a U.S. Special Operations Command sponsored mission rehearsal exercise during which joint special operations forces train to respond to real and emerging worldwide threats. Photo by Senior Airman Logan Carlson.

**By Capt. Zach Anderson
AFSOC Public Affairs**

The final mission of Emerald Warrior 2016 was completed May 13, concluding two successful weeks of intense irregular warfare training designed to reinforce U.S. special operations forces interoperability and capabilities.

More than 1,500 special operations and conventional military personnel from the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force participated in the 16th iteration of the Air Force Special Operations Command-hosted Department of Defense exercise, which takes place in several locations throughout the southeastern United States.

Emerald Warrior focuses on irregular warfare and hones special operations forces air and ground combat skills. The exercise meshes each service's special operations and conventional assets together in scenarios that mirror those often encountered in a deployed environment.

"Interoperability is the key to successful combat

operations on the modern battlefield and Emerald Warrior does this better than any other exercise in the Department of Defense," said Lt. Col. Eric Sullivan, deputy director for Emerald Warrior.

Emerald Warrior is an air-centric, tactical level pre-deployment exercise. Sullivan said the primary training audiences are AFSOC Airmen, followed by sister-service special operations air participants and ground participants. Conventional forces participating in the exercise support the special operations participants training objectives.

"Our focus training areas are close air support, tactical airlift, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance," said Sullivan. "This year was the first year we had Naval Special Warfare personnel as our primary special operations ground participants, so to accommodate their training objectives we also added visit board search and seizure missions along with gas and oil platform assault missions."

Putting a two-week exercise of this magnitude together took the efforts of a dedicated team of planners made up of conventional and special

operations personnel as well as civilian contractors.

“The planning team, both the Emerald Warrior contractors and the unit planners, work very well together to craft a challenging event for the participants,” said David Patterson, Emerald Warrior air operations planner. “The exercise participants received injects and worked exceptionally hard through difficult problems to achieve the exercise objectives.”

One of the changes to this year’s iteration of Emerald Warrior was the deliberate minimization of direction from the exercise control group to the operators in the field. The exercise control group is the central hub for the exercise and plans out the scenarios faced by the operators in the field. Sullivan said this hands-off approach enhanced the effectiveness of the overall training experience.

“It significantly improved the quality and the realism of the training and replicated the fog of war,” said Sullivan. “In previous years, the exercise control group was more directive in helping the training audience along through the mission sets, which significantly minimized the fog of war element.”

With this year’s Emerald Warrior completed, exercise planners are already beginning to develop their strategy on how to build upon the success of this year’s exercise with a continued focus on the important training this annual event provides.

“Outside of combat, there is little opportunity to get this diverse of a group of assets together to train at this level,” said Patterson. “This year’s exercise was better than last year, but not as good as next year’s.”



A Special Tactics Training Squadron Airman from the 24th Special Operations Wing pulls ropes from a U.S. Army UH-60 Black Hawk at Hurlburt Field, Florida, May 4, during Emerald Warrior 16. Photo by Senior Airman Trevor T. McBride.



An Airman with the 1st Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, walks to an AC-130U “Spooky” in a rain storm before preflight checks during Emerald Warrior 16 on May 3, at Hurlburt Field, Florida. Photo by Senior Airman Jordan Castelan.



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Dave Wieznicki, a combat medic assigned to the 27th Special Operations Support Squadron, Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, prepares to litter carry a patient to a U.S. Navy MH-60S Seahawk at Eglin Range, Florida, May 4, during Exercise Emerald Warrior 16. Photo by Senior Airman Jasmonet Jackson.



MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Marine Corps special operations sergeant major passes legacy forward

*Story and photo by Marine Corp Sgt. Donovan Lee
MARSOC Public Affairs*

United States Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, bid farewell to one sergeant major and welcomed another during a relief and appointment ceremony at Stone Bay, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, April 22.

Sergeant Maj. John W. Scott, relinquished his duties as sergeant major of MARSOC to Sgt. Maj. Doug Schaefer.

“Everyone in the command has come to understand

what a tremendous leader that he is,” said Maj. Gen. Joseph L. Osterman, commander, MARSOC, speaking of Sgt. Maj. Scott, during the ceremony.

Osterman continued saying that Scott is truly a selfless Marine that has dedicated himself not only to making MARSOC better, but to ensuring that MARSOC, within the Marine Corps and the SOF community, is both well represented and a shining example of Marines.

Schaefer, who joins MARSOC after leaving his post as the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit sergeant major, said he is humbled to have the opportunity to be here.



Sgt. Maj. John W. Scott salutes Maj. Gen. Joseph L. Osterman, commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, (MARSOC), during his relief and appointment ceremony at Stone Bay, aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, April 22.

“I am going to do everything I can to advocate and support everything the Raiders and their families need,” said Schaefer.

Schaefer said he is proud to follow in the footsteps of a leader such as Scott, and that he hopes to continue what Scott has accomplished during his time at MARSOC.

Scott said in a recent interview that there are some differences but overall the responsibilities of being a Sergeant Major don’t differ from special operations forces to the conventional Marine Corps.

“Both the Marine Corps and SOCOM recognize the

importance of its people. In the Marine Corps it is frequently stated, it is our Marines and sailors who are our most valuable asset. I liken this to the SOF truth ‘humans are more important than hardware’,” said Scott.

During his career, Scott participated in exercises and operations throughout Americas, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. He deployed in support of operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Restore Hope, and Enduring Freedom.

Scott closed his remarks by saying, “Americans, Marine Raiders are alive and well, and they are on the watch.”



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS



Chief Master Sgt. William Speck graduated U.S. Army Ranger School at Fort Benning, Georgia, April 22. Speck is the first Air Force chief master sergeant to graduate from the Army's premier leadership course. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.

Chief becomes first Air Force E-9 to graduate Army Ranger School

By Mike Bottoms
USSOCOM Office of Communication

For more than two months, Ranger students train to exhaustion. They push the limits of their bodies, minds and souls, and on average, one in three candidates makes it through the grueling course.

The average U.S. Army Ranger School student is in the rank of E-4 through E-6 on the enlisted side and O-1 through O-3 for the officers. Most are between 19 and 27 years old, and only about 21 Airmen graduate each year.

Then there are candidates like 39-year-old Chief

Master Sgt. William Speck, who in April, became the first Air Force chief master sergeant to graduate from Ranger School.

"I always had aspirations of attending Ranger School, back when I was a much younger security forces member in the mid-90s," Speck said. "However, the opportunity never presented itself, that is, until about six months ago when I got the go-ahead to attend. At the age of 39, the desire was still strong, but at this stage of my career it wasn't just for the thrill-seeking part that comes with the training, it was more to gain a better understanding of the Ranger mission set."

Tip of the Spear

The Dayton, Texas, native is currently serving as the U.S. Special Operations Command's J6 operations superintendent where he supports the Rangers on a daily basis with their communications requirements.

"I had the privilege prior to Ranger School to fill in as the deployed regimental J6 sergeant major, where I learned and experienced a great deal, to include picking up on some of the communication challenges the Rangers are faced with on the tactical edge," Speck said. "Although the deployment was a success, I felt it was important in my position to gain a better understanding of the dynamics and experience firsthand what it's like to be a Ranger, so I jumped on the opportunity to go to Ranger School and make my lifelong dream a reality."

Speck started Ranger School weighing 194 pounds; by graduation, he weighed 155. Out of 360 students, he was one of only 90 who graduated. The weight loss resulted from the

daunting physical aspects of the course, but the real challenge was mental, caused by sleep deprivation and constant hunger.

"I thought the physical piece would be the toughest, but it was more of a mental hurdle for me. The long walks, especially at nighttime, were really challenging," Speck said. "We only slept 15 to 30 minutes a night and we were starving because we were

burning way more calories than we were consuming, and then having to walk 7 or 12 kilometers a night in the steep mountains of Dahlenoga, Georgia, and the swamps of Florida, carrying 60 to 90 pound ruck strapped to our backs was really mentally challenging. Being tired and hungry, there were times where I really had to go to my happy place. I had to think there was an end to everything, and the only thing the RIs (Ranger instructors) couldn't stop was time."

According to Speck, the Ranger School gives participants a complete sensory overload and can really overpower them.

"If you let it, the whole course can overwhelm you. I had to approach the course one event at a time. Whether it was the Darby Obstacle Course to the land navigation course, five-mile run or the 12-mile ruck, (my mindset was) survive today and make tomorrow," the chief said. "I had doubts everyday whether I would make it through. I had a saying, 'I'll quit tomorrow.' Everybody who goes through that course second-guesses themselves. I'm an older guy and I was praying every day that my body would hold up."

The Ranger School is designed as a team concept where no one individual can make it through the course alone.

"They have a saying, 'You don't earn your Ranger tab; your buddies earn your Ranger tab.' That is a 100 percent truth. It's a team event. Everybody has a role, and if one person fails in their role, then the team fails," Speck said.

If you let it, the whole course can overwhelm you. I had to approach the course one event at a time. Whether it was the Darby Obstacle Course to the land navigation course, five-mile run or the 12-mile ruck, (my mindset was) survive today and make tomorrow. I had doubts everyday whether I would make it through. I had a saying, 'I'll quit tomorrow.' Everybody who goes through that course second-guesses themselves. I'm an older guy and I was praying every day that my body would hold up."

— Chief Master Sgt. William "Ryan" Speck

Speck said the most valuable lesson he learned from Ranger School was to re-examine the leader and follower roles.

"As an E-9 with 21 years of service, the leadership piece came naturally for me, but my biggest takeaway was how to be a better follower," Speck said. "As we all know, it's just as important to be a good follower as it is to be a good leader, and sometimes as senior enlisted leaders, we

forget that."

Being a chief, and now wearing the Ranger tab, Speck said he wants others to learn from his experience.

"I don't want to just wear the Ranger tab, I want to give back," Speck said. "Since my return, I've had numerous Airmen, including joint service members, reach out to me to gain more insight on my experiences in the hopes of one day earning their own Ranger tab. It is my goal for those who really want it, to make their dream a reality, just like my leadership did for me."



USSOCOM wins at the international 2016 Invictus Games

*Story/photos by Army Staff Sgt. Jerimiah Richardson
USSOCOM Office of Communication*

The 2016 Invictus Games may have come to a close but the inspiration it gave for the athletes of USSOCOM will last a lifetime. The Invictus Games are a paralympic-like competition featuring men and women who have faced life-threatening and life-changing injuries while in military service to their countries.

“The competition has been fierce with performances of the highest international standard across a number of events,” said Britain’s Prince Henry of Wales, commonly referred to as Prince Harry and who was the catalyst for the Invictus Games foundation.

Fourteen nations participated in the games with over 500 military competitors who took part in ten categories of sport at Walt Disney World’s ESPN Wide World of Sports

in Orlando, Florida. USSOCOM service members competed in swimming, seated volleyball, wheelchair rugby, track and field events, para-cycling, archery, and rowing.

The word “Invictus” means “unconquered” and it embodies the warrior spirit of USSOCOM members who have suffered injury while in the line of duty. For many of them, just having the opportunity to compete here is a fulfillment of the long arduous road through rehabilitation to recovery.

“I lost a lot of friends after the war who were members of my group that shouldn’t be gone. They made it through (the war) only to not be able to deal with the tediousness of recovery,” said USSOCOM’s Army veteran Sgt. 1st Class Josh Lindstrom.

When dealing with the long road to recovery, paralympic-like competitions like the Invictus Games show



U.S. Team member Air Force Staff Sgt. Seastiana Lopez-Arellano rushes the goal line in an attempt to score while being sparring by an Australian veteran during the U.S. vs Australia wheel chair rugby match held at Invictus Games 2016 in Orlando, Florida, April 6.

how the power of sport can change mindsets.

“Sometimes they felt like the clouds were never going to part, but if they’d learn that they could just come out and play in the rain and shoot some arrows or participate in some other (sport) it could do so much for them,” said Lindstrom.

And for some injured service members, it gives a new focus.

“It gives you a sense of purpose, an objective and a mission that we at USSOCOM are used to. With the adaptive sports they give me something back in life to look forward to,” said USSOCOM Army veteran Sgt. 1st Class Sualauvi Tuimalealiifano.

Over the four days of games, USSOCOM athletes made

friends with service members from around the world and were pushed to their limits in competition. USSOCOM’s team did very well against that competition pulling in a total of 16 medals with 7 Bronze, 4 Silver and 5 Gold. But as Prince Harry said, “This was never about the medals.”

The Invictus Games highlighted the extreme debt owed to those who pay the price for serving their country and showed how inspiration can change any man or woman no matter their ailment.

Vice President Joe Biden remarked on the country’s debt to the competitors when speaking to the competitors, “You are defined by your courage and redeemed by your loyalty. You are the captain of your country’s soul,” said the vice president.



(Left) USSOCOM’s Team member Sgt. 1st Class Yancy Taylor dives in for the 50M breast stroke competition at Invictus Games 2016 held in Orlando, Florida, April 6. (Above) USSOCOM para-cycle team Maj. Ivan Castro and Master Sgt. Mark Vomund react to winning the silver medal in the blind tandem team time-trials at Invictus Games 2016 in Orlando, Florida, April 4. (Below) U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Israel Del Toro Jr. throws the winning standing Shot Put for the Gold medal at Invictus Games 2016 held in Orlando, Florida, April 5.





Two rigid-hulled inflatable boats and a MH-6 Little Bird approach the Tampa Convention Center during a capabilities demonstration in Tampa, Florida, May 25. Photo by Tech Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.

International SOF demonstrate combat capabilities in Tampa Bay

By the USSOCOM Office of Communication

Delegates from 84 nations attended the International Special Operations Forces conference, which focused on “strengthening the Global SOF Network.”

ISOF is a way for the global SOF community to meet, learn from each other and advance a coordinated effort to meet global security challenges.

ISOF week coincides with the annual Special Operations Forces Industry Conference, which was also held at the Tampa Bay Convention Center.

SOFIC had panels with the component and theater special operations commanders as well as presentations by Special Operations Forces Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Directorate.

The capabilities exercise demonstrated the international special operations spirit of cooperation and abilities. Aside from U.S. Special Operations Forces, commandos from Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Jordan, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Poland and Thailand took part in the demonstration.

The demonstration featured snipers on the roofs of



A MH-60 Black Hawk helicopter and crew take part in the capabilities exercise in Tampa, Florida, May 25. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.

Tampa General Hospital and Tampa Convention Center, six-man teams on helos, attacking and fast roping onto a cruise ship, performing a hostage rescue. Another scenario featured a 14-man team converging and attacking an enemy encampment by ground military vehicles and two 14-man teams infiltrating via water on rigid-hull inflatable boats.



(Left) Two Navy SEALs climb a caving ladder boarding a cruise ship. (Above) An MH-6 Little Bird provides oversight of the cruise ship. (Below) A Special Tactics Airman parachutes into Tampa Bay. (Bottom) A Special Warfare Combat-craft Crewman fires a .50 caliber machine gun from the rigid-hulled inflatable boat. Photos by Tech Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.







*Petty Officer First Class (SEAL)
Charles H. Keating IV
Seal Team One*

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



From May 23-26, U.S. Special Operations Command hosted more than 12,000 attendees in Tampa, Florida, for several events that comprised International Special Operations Forces Week. An international special operations forces capabilities exercise was conducted May 25. Photo by Greg Clarkson.