



Tip OF THE Spear

United States Special Operations Command
MacDill Air Force Base, Florida

October 2018



U.S. ARMY STAFF SGT.
RONALD J. SHURER II



PRESIDENT AWARDS
MEDAL OF HONOR TO
GREEN BERET MEDIC





President awards Medal of Honor to Green Beret medic for heroic actions ... 17

Tip of the Spear

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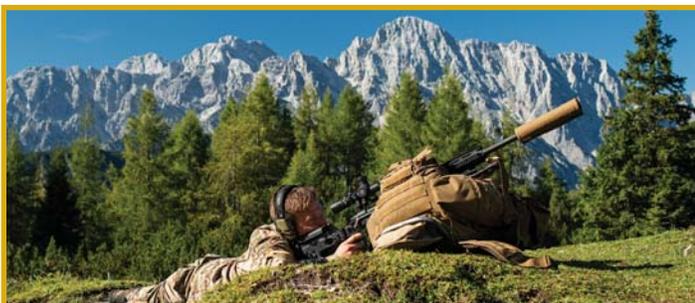
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(Cover) President Donald J. Trump presented the Medal of Honor to retired U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ronald J. Shurer II Oct. 1, in the East Room of the White House. Shurer who served with the 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), had his Silver Star upgraded to the highest military award for valor for his actions on April 6, 2008 in the Shok Valley, Afghanistan. On that day, Shurer braved direct fire and with complete disregard for his own life provided protection and first aid saving the lives of several members of his task force. Photo illustration by Michael Bottoms.

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SOF AROUND THE WORLD
SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – PACIFIC

Multi-national special operations forces participate in a submarine insertion exercise with the fast-attack submarine USS Hawaii (SSN 776) and combat rubber raiding craft off the coast of Oahu, Hawaii during Rim of the Pacific exercise, July 9. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Daniel Hinton.



Army Special Forces train in maritime environment during RIMPAC 2018

*By U.S. Army Maj. Kevin Boyd
Special Operations Command Pacific and Capt.
Matthew Song, 1st Special Forces Group*

As the USS Hawaii (SSN 776) slid silently through the waters of the Pacific Ocean offshore from a remote island, a team of multinational special operations forces prepared to disembark from a reconfigured torpedo room. Slowly and methodically they pushed several rolled up Rigid Hulled Inflatable Boats up through the submarine's lockout chamber into the waiting hands of sailors who began to inflate them.

Emerging from the reconfigured torpedo room SOF operators prepared their equipment on the deck of the Hawaii while the submarine sailors secured a ladder to allow the SOF teams to climb down into the RHIBs.

"It sounds like it should be easy, but it's a lot of work," said Cmdr. John C. Roussakies, commanding officer of the Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Hawaii (SSN 776). "The sub is wet and designed to silently slide through the water so it can be very slippery and dangerous."

The forces motored away from the submarine, allowing it to submerge into the depths while the partnered nation forces comprised of SOF from the U.S.

Army's 1st Battalion 1st Special Forces Group, Republic of Korea Navy Special Warfare Flotilla (ROK SEALs), Philippine Navy Special Operations Group (NAVSOG), Indonesian Navy Special Forces (KOPASKA), Indian Navy Marine Commando forces (MARCOS), Peruvian Naval Special Forces (FOE), and the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force Special Boarding Unit headed to their objective on a distant shore.

These forces came together under the umbrella of the bi-annual Rim of the Pacific exercise, the world's largest international maritime exercise. RIMPAC 2018 was originally planned to have a U.S. Navy SEAL task unit as the U.S. SOF component, however, due to a reassignment in tasking a Army Special Forces combat dive and direct-action operational detachment alpha team from the U.S. Army's 1st SFG (A) was partnered with PNFs naval SOF.

This allowed for a unique training opportunity as none of the forces had worked together previously.

"This exercise allowed us to build partner capacity and comradery," said Roussakis. "And in my 20-years with the U.S. Navy submarine force this is the first time I have ever worked with any [PNF or U.S. Army SOF] on the boat. This is an excellent opportunity for all of us to learn from each other."

The training for the forces was designed to test

Story continues on next page





SOF AROUND THE WORLD SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – PACIFIC



Members of the Philippine Navy Special Operations Group conduct fast rope insertion extraction system from an MH-60S attached to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron Four during Rim of the Pacific 2018 exercise, June 27. Photo by Chief Petty Officer Cynthia Z. De Leon.

the multi-domain expertise of modern naval SOF units, and consisted of ground, air and maritime based scenarios.

Learning together

Starting with the crawl, walk, run design the teams integrated early in their four week-long partnership opportunity beginning with a fast rope insertion extraction system insertion designed to build trust, capabilities and TTPs. Then progressed into several small-arms ranges led by both U.S. and PN SOF, where the teams conducted basic marksmanship, close-quarter battle tactics, and reflexive fire before they progressed into developing and integrating their respective clearing techniques.

Progressing into more complex range operations with a simulated ship built out of shipping containers called “Ship in a box” allowed the forces to practice maritime boarding and clearance procedures on a motor vessel; replicating a visit, board, search, and seizure mission

associated with maritime counter-terrorism operations.

Next was dive operations on the wreck of the USS Utah (BB31) where the divers paid their respects to the fallen sailors killed during the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

The teams then broke into two separate elements to begin the mission-planning phase and then the execution of three full mission profile scenarios. Each FMP consisted of a helicopter assault force conducted with U.S. Navy MH-60S Seahawk helicopters integrated with U.S. Army AH-64 Apache gunship coverage.

FMP-1 was led by Indonesia’s KOPASKA with support from the South Korean SEALs, Peruvian and U.S. SOF operators and allowed the PNFs to train on interoperability in TTPs for building clearance; perimeter security; and close security. FMP-2 had PNFs assaulting a single objective with a hasty fragmentary order to execute an unplanned clearance of a second objective; FMP-3 was designed to test command-and-control of the

PNFs with simultaneous attacks on two separate, beyond-line-of-sight objectives and was led by the ROK SEALs on one objective and the MARCOS on the second.

Airborne

The final week of training consisted of static-line and freefall parachute operations allowing PNFs to exercise their command and control abilities. PNFs were jump masters and drop zone safety officers during several days of airborne operations.

“Working together to safely execute dangerous airborne operations provides a unique opportunity to demonstrate our abilities to partner together during peacetime,” said U.S. Army Master Sgt. Juan C. Lopez, primary jumpmaster for the airborne exercise. “So that when we are called upon during an emergency we can safely operate together during dangerous missions and conditions.”

“Training with other nations is exciting. While I’ve worked with the U.S. many times I’ve never met anyone from Peru before, and learning how they operate is very

useful and allowed all of us to experience different ways to accomplish a mission,” said the Philippine NAVSOG team leader after being the jump master for several passes while the Peruvians worked the Drop Zone.

Maritime capability

While RIMPAC began as a maritime exercise it has evolved into a unique training environment allowing SOF to engage with their PNFs in a complex and dynamic environment. Developing interoperability in training enables them to operate together in complex operations whenever the need arises.

Roughly 70 percent of the world is water, 80 percent of the world’s population lives on or near a coast, and 90 percent of international commerce moves by sea. Capable maritime partners help ensure stability and prosperity around the world, and RIMPAC helps participating nations improve capability.

Developing capable SOF partners in the maritime environment helps ensure the stability and prosperity of the INDOPACOM AOR and the world.



(Above) A Soldier from the U.S. Army’s 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) and multi-national Special Operations Forces move and cover each other during Rim of the Pacific exercise, July 5. Photo by Chief Petty Officer William Tonacchio.

(Left) A member of the Philippine Navy Special Operations Group carries his parachute off the drop zone while participating in airborne insertion operations training during the Rim of the Pacific exercise, July 19. Photo by Chief Petty Officer William Tonacchio.



Joint, combined forces conclude Chilean-led Southern Star

*By Sgt. 1st Class Alexis Ramos
Special Operations Command South*

Under cloudy skies and a chilly temperature, the closing ceremony for Southern Star, also known as “Estrella Austral” in Spanish, was held in Cerro Moreno, Antofagasta, Chile, Aug. 30.

The Chilean-led exercise is a bilateral, operational-level joint staff training focused on enhancing mutual capabilities and increasing interoperability that was conducted Aug. 20 - 29.

Chilean armed forces were tested throughout the exercise with simulated scenarios for planning, execution, support, and command and control procedures in a combined and joint environment at the operational and tactical level while the U.S. forces observed and assisted in the planning throughout.

U.S. Army Col. Rafael Rodriguez, the operations director for Special Operations Command South, thanked Chile during the closing ceremony.

“We share the same values and interests. Our countries are united in a natural way and that was demonstrated in the last two weeks,” said Rodriguez.



The Commander of the Joint Special Operations Task Force of the Southern Star exercise, Brig. Gen. Pablo Muller Barbería, and U.S. Army Col. Rafael Rodriguez, operations director for Special Operations Command South, salute troops during the closing ceremony of Southern Star, Aug. 30. The Chilean-led exercise, also known as Estrella Austral in Spanish, is a bilateral, operational-level joint staff training focused on enhancing mutual capabilities and increasing interoperability. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Alexis Ramos.

“Chile is an important partner for the United States.”

The Commander of the Joint Special Operations Task Force of the exercise, Brig. Gen. Pablo Muller Barbería, said during the ceremony that since its inception the Southern Star Exercise has evolved to become a joint international combined training that has its counterpart in the U.S. in the Northern Star exercise.

“The purpose of this 2018 version was to consolidate a joint and combined work of military aviation special operations with the United States and friendly countries, executing in a first phase prior to the exercise combined-joint training and exchange of experts that allow to standardize procedures, techniques, update combat tactics and increase

interoperability between forces,” Muller explained.

Southern Star first started in 2007 with the U.S. Army in the lead. From 2009 onward, the Estado Mayor Conjunto (EMCO), Joint Chiefs of Staff in English, has taken the lead and provided the coordination.

We share the same values and interests. Our countries are united in a natural way and that was demonstrated in the last two weeks.

— U.S. Army Col. Rafael Rodriguez,

“The government of the United States and Chile have a strong relationship,” said Col. Brian Greata, deputy commander for SOCSOUTH. “This exercise demonstrates that the Special Forces of Chile are committed to

regional security and cooperation.”

The next exercise is Northern Star that will be held in a location yet to be determined in the U.S. followed by Southern Star in Chile again in 2020.



(Above) The Commander of the Joint Special Operations Task Force of the Southern Star exercise, Brig. Gen. Pablo Muller Barbería, and U.S. Army Col. Rafael Rodriguez, shake participants hands during the closing ceremony of Southern Star, Aug. 30. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Alexis Ramos.



(Right) U.S. Army Col. Rafael Rodriguez, speaks to attendees during the closing ceremony of Southern Star, Aug. 30. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Alexis Ramos.



SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – EUROPE

A Tajik soldier conducts ballistic breaching training using a shotgun during joint training with U.S. Army Soldiers from the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Fort Campbell, Ky., outside of Dushanbe, Tajikistan, Aug. 31.



5th Group Special Forces Soldiers, Tajik Armed Forces team up in JCET

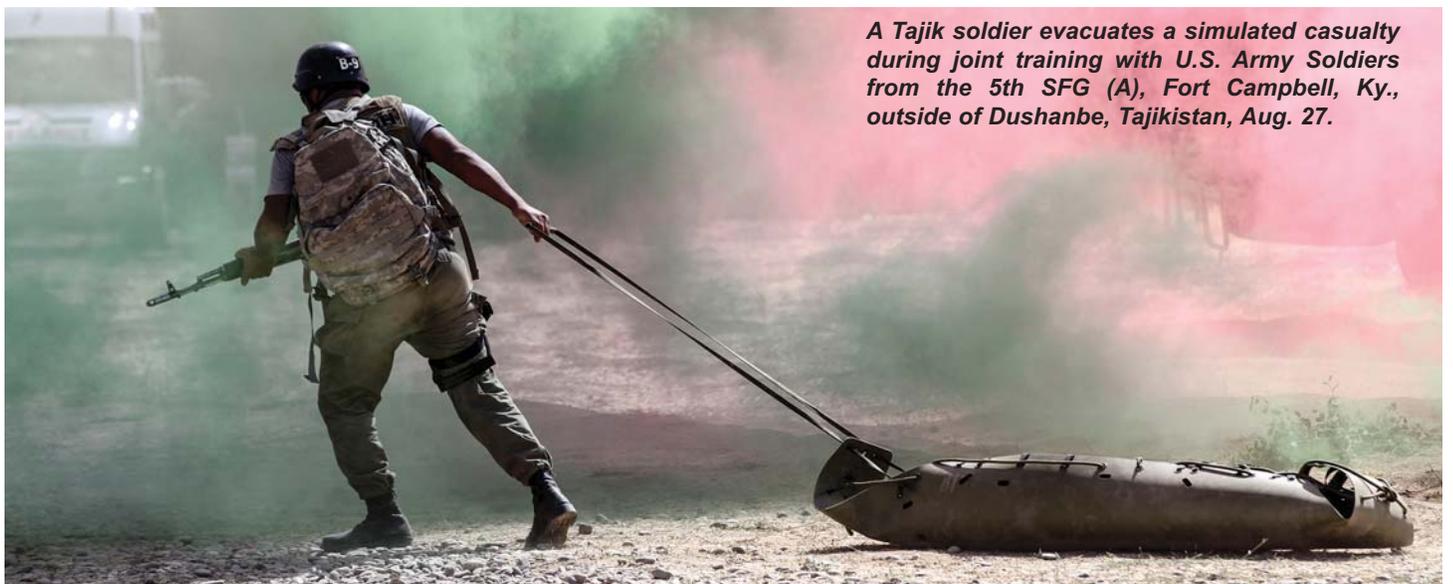
U.S. Army Special Forces Soldiers from the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Fort Campbell, Ky., and members of the Tajik Armed Forces, participated in a Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) program outside Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The week-long exchange consisted of weapons familiarization, medical, and realistic urban combat training to strengthen military-to-military relationships between partnered forces and enhance Tajik capabilities. Photo essay U.S. Army Spc. Johnathon Carter.



A Soldier from 5th SFG (A), and members of the Tajik Armed Forces, get ready to conduct close quarters battle during a Joint Combined Exchange Training program outside Dushanbe, Tajikistan, Aug. 27.



Marksmanship training was an important part of the Joint Combined Exchange Training program conducted outside Dushanbe, Tajikistan, Sept. 5.



A Tajik soldier evacuates a simulated casualty during joint training with U.S. Army Soldiers from the 5th SFG (A), Fort Campbell, Ky., outside of Dushanbe, Tajikistan, Aug. 27.



Lithuanian KASP, US SOF train together in exercise Saber Junction 18

*By U.S. Army 1st Lt. Benjamin Haulenbeek
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe*

Members of the 1st Territorial Unit Dainava of the Lithuania National Defense Volunteer Force, or KASP, and U.S. Army Green Berets assigned to 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) participated in exercise Saber Junction 18 Sept. 4-30, at U.S. Army Europe's Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany.

Saber Junction 18 is designed to assess the readiness of the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade to execute land operations in a joint, combined environment and promote interoperability with participating allied and partner nations. As part of the exercise, special operations forces work alongside the KASP to conduct irregular warfare in enemy occupied territory to set conditions on the battlefield that will ensure the success of conventional forces.

During SJ18 Soldiers from 20th SFG(A) and the KASP conducted missions behind enemy lines to degrade the enemy's ability to fight, allowing for the 173rd and coalition forces to conduct a joint forcible entry to mass combat power.

"Our primary mission is to support the 173rd joint force entry," said a team sergeant assigned to 20th SFG(A). "Integral to that is taking out air defense systems so they could safely project their forces through a mass tactical airborne operation and air assaults. With the KASP we were able to conduct recon and identify and destroy those high payoff targets.

Large joint, combined maneuver exercises provide a valuable opportunity for SOF to refine their ability to work in close cooperation with conventional forces. SJ18 also provides the KASP with a stage to refine their ability to work with SOF.

"The goal is to work together with the U.S. Special Forces," said Corporal Mantas, assigned to 1st Territorial Unit Dainava. "We share tactical techniques and [procedures] to ensure we can better work together. If we were to work with a Special Forces unit again in the future it will be much easier to understand them during operations in the field."

The KASP is part of the Lithuanian Land Force and a



A U.S. Army Special Forces Soldier (left) assigned to 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and a Lithuanian National Defence Volunteer Forces (KASP) member provide overwatch during the 173rd Airborne Brigade's joint forcible entry into exercise Saber Junction at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, Sept. 19. Special operations forces worked alongside the KASP during Saber Junction 18 to conduct irregular warfare in enemy occupied territory to support the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade as they executed land operations in a multinational joint environment. Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Benjamin Haulenbeek.

modern active reserve comprised of volunteers, tasked with territorial defense.

"The KASP is part of the Lithuanian Land Forces and the mission is to prepare soldiers for the armed defense of the nation against aggression," said Maj. M. Pečiukonis, the planning chief assigned to 1st Territorial Unit Dainava. "For KASP soldiers the training we are doing here at the Saber Junction Exercise is very important. The operations and missions we are doing here are very similar to those we train at home in preparation of defending our homeland. It is good to conduct this training in a large-scale exercise, we are able to learn many lessons and we can use those to improve for the future."



Members of the Lithuanian National Defence Volunteer Forces (KASP) and a U.S. Army Special Forces Soldier assigned to 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) conducts a raid during exercise Saber Junction 2018 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, Sept. 22. Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Benjamin Haulenbeek.

For both the 20th SFG(A) and the KASP, the training they are able to conduct during SJ18 wouldn't be possible without a venue like JMRC hosting the exercise.

"It's great to be here because it is in a foreign environment," said the U.S. team sergeant. "We have done similar exercises at Joint Readiness Training Center, but everyone there speaks English and it is home turf so nothing is unfamiliar. Here we are working with the KASP, where we need to figure out how to blend in with the populace, use their transportation systems, obtain supplies on the local economy, and rotate safe houses nightly without revealing that we are part of an exercise."

As the premier Europe-based combat training center, JMRC is capable of preparing multinational leaders, staffs, and units up to brigade combat teams for dominance in unified land operations anywhere in the world.

With its vast resources and expansive training area, the scenarios constructed for training units at JMRC can accurately replicate those they might face in future operations.

"Here at an exercise like Saber Junction the most important thing that we are able to get out of the training that we cannot get at home is the ability to work with different countries and learn their procedures," said Pečiukonis. "One of the tasks of the KASP is to prepare for the territorial defense in coordination with the Lithuanian land defense and in cooperation with allies, so we fulfill this training task

during the exercise by training with allies. It is a good challenge for the leadership, and for the soldiers it is valuable experience to work with all the other units and in a different environment."

The presence of U.S. and multinational SOF at a large multinational training rotation like SJ18 is greatly beneficial to building readiness amongst NATO and partner forces.

"What 20th SFG(A) brings to this rotation is very seasoned and experienced operators that understand building relationships is as important as teaching partner forces how to fight," said a battalion executive officer assigned to 20th SFG(A). "Special operation forces cannot fight without conventional forces support; we are dependent on each other. We don't have the capacity to take on an entire enemy brigade; SOF must set the conditions for the conventional fight."

Exercises like Saber Junction also build the core competency of SOF. For Army Special Forces elements like 20th SFG(A), this means the opportunity to exercise their core irregular warfare tasks, such as working alongside foreign internal defense forces like the KASP.

"Working with the KASP helps us integrate our operational tempos for planning into joint missions that we feel might replicate future potential conflicts," said the U.S. team sergeant. "The KASP is the perfect partner force to work with because they understand the Irregular Warfare mission, blending in, being undetected, and the tasks like raids, ambushes, sabotage and intelligence gathering."



Members of the Lithuanian National Defence Volunteer Forces (KASP) and U.S. Army Special Forces assigned to 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) conduct mission planning during exercise Saber Junction 2018 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, Sept. 8. Photo illustration by U.S. Army Sgt. Karen Sampson.



NATO snipers practice high-angle shooting in the Alps of Austria

By U.S. Army 1st Lt. Benjamin Haulenbeek
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe

Military snipers from Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia and United States conducted training on high-angle shooting during the International Special Training Centre's High-Angle/Urban course Sept. 9-14, at the Hochfilzen Training Area, Austria.

ISTC is a multinational NATO accredited institution providing education and training facilities for tactical-level, advanced and specialized training of multinational special operations forces and similar units. The training center employs the skills of multinational instructors and subject-matter experts. The High Angle/Urban Course is a two-week course qualifying experienced snipers to operate and engage targets in mountainous and urban terrain. The second week of the course is dedicated to mastering high angle shooting techniques in the Austrian Alps.

"High-angle shooting is when you shoot further than 300 meters at angles greater than 15 degrees," said Lt. Alexander Rishovd, a sniper instructor assigned to the Norwegian Army Land Warfare Centre. "Imagine the whole shooting process being a triangle and the sniper is on top, the line of sight to the target at the other end is greater than the distance the bullet travels in a flat line. With the greater the angle the more the deviation between the line of sight and the distance that gravity has to affect the bullet."

Engaging targets from high-angles requires the sniper team to do additional calculations in order to figure out how much the bullet will drop on its way to the target.

"Each degree of angle will have an associated number value called its cosine," said Rishovd. "For snipers shooting at high-angles they need to measure the range to the target in line of sight and multiply it by the cosine to get the actual range the bullet is going to fly. Then the sniper will set his bullet drop compensation from that distance."

As with all fundamentals of marksmanship the further away the target the greater effect any variable will have. When shooting at a high angle calculating the trajectory is only part of the challenge. The positions that snipers must fire from are often awkward, making long-distance high



A Belgian Special Forces sniper team identifies targets 2000-meters away, across a valley on Sept. 11, during the International Special Training Centre High-Angle/Urban Course at the Hochfilzen Training Area, Austria. Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Benjamin Haulenbeek.

angle engagements more difficult than a shot at an equivalent distance on a flat range.

"The calculations are not very difficult," said a Belgian Special Forces soldier. "The challenge is the shooting positions. To aim at targets at odd angle requires getting into difficult and sometimes unstable and uncomfortable positions. It is also difficult for the spotter to get a good line of sight. The further out you shoot the more the angle and other factors effects your shot. Operationally it is one of the most commonly used skills, so it is good to refine them here."

One of the strengths of ISTC is the ability to seek out training facilities across Europe best suited to teaching specialized courses.

"The benefit of an ISTC course, and high angle in particular, is the ability to use facilities that best suits our needs," said a U.S. Army Special Forces sniper instructor assigned to ISTC. "Hochfilzen compared to most is very user friendly and accommodating, we prefer to come here now because the students love the facilities from the barracks to the ranges. There are few other ranges that allow us to teach high angle so effectively in natural terrain."

A Norwegian Army Telemark Battalion sniper team takes aim at targets across a valley on Sept. 11, during the International Special Training Centre High-Angle/Urban Course at the Hochfilzen Training Area, Austria. The high-angle portion of the two-week course is designed to teach trained sniper teams the necessary skills to operate in mountainous terrain. Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Benjamin Haulenbeek.



AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Army Staff Sgt. Ronald J. Shurer II in Gardez, Afghanistan, August 2006. Photo courtesy of Ronald J. Shurer II.



President awards Medal of Honor to Green Beret medic for heroic actions

By Devon L. Suits
U.S. Army Public Affairs

President Donald J. Trump presented the Medal of Honor to former Staff Sgt. Ronald Shurer II at a ceremony Monday, for his heroic actions during an operation in Shok Valley, Afghanistan.

Shurer, who serves as a member of the Secret Service Counter Assault Team, and his wife Miranda, were invited to the White House to meet with the president several weeks ago. However, Trump said they had no clue as to why.

“(Shurer) walked into the Oval Office, and I told Ron he was going to receive our nation’s highest military honor,” the president said. “It will be a moment I will never forget.”

Born in Fairbanks, Alaska, Shurer spent most of his life growing up in Washington State. With a desire to serve, he tried to enlist but was initially rejected by the military due to a medical condition, the president said.

“I can’t believe it! That was a bad mistake,” said Trump, garnering a laugh from the audience.

After the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, Shurer enlisted as a medic with the U.S. Army. He quickly completed his advanced individual training, and it didn’t take long for Shurer to join Special Forces.

On his second deployment, April 6, 2008, Shurer put his life on the line to save the lives of four Special Forces Soldiers and 10 Afghan commandos.

“Ron was among the few dozen Special Forces [Soldiers] and 100 Afghan commandos that dropped by helicopter into Shok Valley -- a rocky, barren valley, far away from any reinforcements,” Trump said. “Ron was the only medic on the team, and while he was still at the base of the mountain, the first team began to scale the cliffs toward the village.”

As the lead element moved up the mountain, more than 200 well-trained enemies ambushed the American and Afghan forces. A storm of rocket-propelled grenades and machine gun and sniper fire rained down on the joint force. Former Staff Sgt. Ryan Wallen was one of the first to be injured. Shurer ran to him to treat his injuries.



President Donald J. Trump presents the Medal of Honor to retired U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ronald J. Shurer II, Oct. 1, in the East Room of the White House. Official White House photo by Shealah Craighead.

“[The team] heard over the radio that American fighters near the top of the mountain were pinned down, and some were critically injured,” Trump said. “There was blood all over the place. It was a tough, tough situation to be in.”

Shurer joined a small team of Soldiers and commandos and began to move up the mountain, fighting back and dodging gunfire along the way.

When he reached the top, one of Shurer’s close friends -- an Afghan interpreter named Edris Khan, who went by C.K. -- was already dead. Then-Staff Sgt. Dillon Behr and then-Staff Sgt. Luis Morales were also injured,



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



and Shurer did all he could to treat their wounds.

“Ron’s presence during that time was calm, cool and collected, and he is the only reason why I am alive today,” Behr said during a media roundtable Sunday. “At one

end,” Trump said, adding that Shurer just said a prayer, “asking that his wife and son would be okay with what was going to happen.”

“I realized that this situation was deteriorating and I remember saying a prayer out loud, ‘God, you’ve just got to help us,’” said then-Capt. Kyle Walton during the media event. Walton was the commander during that

moment I thought I was going to pass ... Ron slapped me across the face and said, ‘Wake up, you’re not going to die today!’”

According to Behr, the bullet that struck him went through the ball in his hip, barely missing his femoral artery. Behr was the communications sergeant during the operation.

Ron’s presence during that time was calm, cool and collected, and he is the only reason why I am alive today. At one moment I thought I was going to pass ... Ron slapped me across the face and said, ‘Wake up, you’re not going to die today!’

— *Then Staff Sgt. Dillon Behr*

Through all the chaos, there was a brief moment that “Ron realized that this was probably (going to be the)

when we were sure that it was over, Ron was still thinking about Dillon, Luis, and the other guys around.”

operation.

“We’d already called in innumerable danger-close air strikes. Right after I said that prayer, there was a pretty devastating explosion directly on top of our position.”

“I remember, as my ears were popping and the dust cleared ... Ron Shurer had his body over the casualties. Even at the final moment,



Staff Sgt. Ronald J. Shurer (back row, second from the left) and members of Operational Detachment Alpha 3336 waiting for exfiltration on a mission in Afghanistan, May 2008. Photo courtesy of Ronald J. Shurer II.



Then-Sgt. Ronald J. Shurer II with his wife, Miranda, at Special Forces Qualification Course graduation at Fort Bragg, N.C. in May 2006. Photo courtesy of Ronald J. Shurer II.

Ron continued to care for his comrades. Later on in the fight, then-Staff Sgt. John Walding was shot and received a traumatic amputation to his leg. Shurer “directed another (Soldier) to help stem the bleeding,” Trump said.

Then-Master Sgt. Scott Ford, the team sergeant during the operation, was also injured. Initially, Ford was shot in the chest plate. Shortly after, another sniper bullet hit Ford -- this time penetrating his left arm and bouncing off Shurer’s helmet.

“Ron said it felt like he had been hit over the head with a baseball bat,” Trump said. “He got up, and in pretty bad shape, bandaged Scott’s arm.”

Egressing from the scene, Shurer and a team of commandos and Special Forces Soldiers used some tubular nylon webbing to help lower the casualties down the side of the mountain.

“When they reached the base of the mountain, Ron raced to each patient, giving them lifesaving care. They were bleeding profusely and [he prepared] them to be evacuated by helicopter,” Trump said. “Ron was not done yet. He charged back to the mountain ... and then rejoined the fight.

“For more than six hours, Ron bravely faced down the enemy. Not a single American died in that brutal battle, thanks in great measure to Ron’s heroic actions,” the president said.

Many of Shurer’s team were in attendance for the momentous occasion, including: Retired Sgt. 1st Class

Dillon Behr, then-Spc. Michael Carter, then-Staff Sgt. Luis Morales, then-Master Sgt. Scott Ford, Sgt. 1st Class Seth Howard, Sgt. Maj. Daniel Plants, Lt. Col Kyle Walton, Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Willams, and then-Sgt. 1st Class Karl Wurzbach.

Two former Afghan interpreters also were in attendance, BaRoz Mohammad and Zia Gahforri.

Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of the Army Dr. Mark T. Esper, Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Mark A. Milley, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, and Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey were also in attendance to acknowledge Shurer’s heroic actions.

“Ron epitomizes the values of our team, of the Green Berets everywhere, the U.S. Army, and of the American population. And all those things came together during that battle,” Walton said during the media event. “We are all here today in large part due to Ron’s efforts. And we’re able to help our nation recognize this guy, as well as the service he continues to provide to our nation.”



President Donald J. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence pose for a photo with Medal of Honor recipient retired U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ronald J. Shurer II, his wife Miranda, and sons Cameron and Tyler Monday, Oct. 1, in the Oval Office of the White House. Official White House photo by Shealah Craighead.

AIRBORNE

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



A Green Beret from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) shows an example of ground disturbance to a member of the Colorado Springs Police Department SWAT team during a K-9 tracking exercise at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado on Oct. 3. The exercise was hosted by 10th SFG (A) to bolster interagency relations and teach advanced K-9 tracking techniques. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Justin Smith.

Interagency training brings mutual benefits to Colorado Springs area

By U.S. Army Sgt. Justin Smith
10th Special Forces Group (Airborne)

Members of the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) K-9 team hosted the Colorado Springs Police Department SWAT team at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado on Oct. 3, to train them on basic tracking techniques with working dogs.

These training events help the local SWAT team to more effectively use their department's non-lethal K-9 assets to track and apprehend suspects in large areas, such as mountainous, non-urban terrain.

"I consider these guys a great resource," said CSPD SWAT Sgt. Troy Bauer, speaking about the 10th Group K-9 handlers. "They can help us with the security element, visual tracking, and to get our guys to

understand how they're going to work with the dog.”

The training started with a familiarization of working with the dogs where a mock “suspect” hid in the area, making similar ground disturbances common to someone evading capture. A 10th Group soldier took a group of SWAT officers and demonstrate with a K-9 how they track until they caught the “suspect.”

The officers then took turns tracking both with, and without the dogs.

Afterwards was a classroom portion where a Group instructor showed the SWAT team members different types of footprints to look for in soft soil. Another class covered how best to utilize the dogs during tactical movements and other non-tracking situations.

Upon completion of the classes, the SWAT officers suited up in their tactical kits and grabbed their weapons for a full-dress rehearsal in tracking. A 10th Group Soldier put on a “bite suit,” a standard training suit that working dogs can attack without harming the person wearing it, and fled the area to hide as a decoy for the dog to find.

The officers stepped off in a tactical formation, led by a K-9 team from CSPD, in search of their suspect by utilizing the training received earlier. Once they found the decoy, they released the dog to hold the suspect until he could be apprehended.

CSPD SWAT and 10th Group have a long history of training together.

10th Group’s kennel master said the working relationship with the police department is mutually beneficial. CSPD provides much sought-after variety of urban training environments unavailable on Fort Carson.

Interagency training is a Presidential directive to enhance the effectiveness between different levels of government agencies. Group and SWAT both bring skills and assets to the table that the other may lack access to regularly, so these opportunities are a great way to hone their craft.

“They get some of the best training and they deploy all over the world,” said Bauer. “While training with them, I always learn something new.”



(Above) Two members of the Colorado Springs Police Department SWAT team and a K-9 officer along with his dog search for a mock suspect during a tracking exercise with 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado on Oct. 3. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Justin Smith.

(Left) An officer from the Colorado Springs Police Department SWAT team keeps his weapon trained on a mock suspect during a K-9 training exercise with 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne). Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Justin Smith.



Passionate 1st Group Soldier achieves his American dream

By U.S. Army Sgt. Ian Ives
1st Special Forces Group (Airborne)

“I came to the United States of America at 27 years of age,” said Gustavo Salvador, a native of Ecuador. “I arrived in the USA in order to achieve the American dream. At this moment I can say with great confidence that I have achieved my American dream.”

The American Dream means many different things to different people, but for Salvador, just recently promoted to United States Army Chief Warrant Officer 2, Aug. 24, it meant serving in the United States Army. Salvador grew up in Quito, Ecuador, the son of two Ecuadorian army veterans. His father served in the Ecuadorian army for 33 years retiring with the rank of sergeant major; his mother also served in the Ecuadorian army for 36 years as a sergeant first class and a military-civilian nurse.

“Growing up with military parents is a unique experience,” said Salvador. “Since I’ve had the use of reason, they inculcated in me good principles, honor, respect, commitment, discipline, and loyalty that to this day have helped me to be the person that I am.”

Being influenced by his parents’ military service, Salvador attended the Superior Military School “Eloy Alfaro,” which is the Ecuadorian equivalent to the United States Military Academy (West Point). Upon his graduation he was commissioned into the Ecuadorian army as a 2nd Lieutenant. After serving as a commissioned officer in Ecuador, Salvador chose to leave his home and travel to America enlisting into the U.S. Army at the age of 27.

Enlisting into the U.S. Army did not come without some major changes. Instead of being in a leadership position as he was in Ecuador, Salvador was now a Private 2nd Class. He initially also had trouble with transitioning from speaking Spanish to English.

“Without a doubt language was my biggest challenge,” said Salvador. “However, I had been preparing myself day by day to be able to progress in my military career.”

Quickly overcoming the adversity of serving in a different country, Salvador utilized every opportunity the Army offered him; obtaining a Bachelor’s degree in Supply



Chief Warrant Officer 1 Gustavo Salvador, a property book officer with 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), is pinned the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 2 by his father, a retired Ecuadorian army sergeant major, Aug. 24, during his promotion ceremony. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Ian Ives.

Chain Management from Ashford University, with magna cum laude honors, and a Master’s degree in Business Administration with specialization in Supply Chain Management with summa cum laude honors. The culmination of his continued education, years of hard work, and many military achievements led to him commissioning as a Warrant Officer in 2016.

“Becoming a Warrant Officer is not just a dream for me, it is a passion,” said Salvador. “The Army, Soldiers, and command deserve the best guidance and support that an officer can give. My knowledge of supply chain management, civilian and military experience in logistics make me confident that this is the reason why I wanted to become a Warrant Officer in the United States Army.”

Salvador now serves in the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) as a Property Book Officer managing the supplies and the distribution of supplies throughout all theaters of operation within the group’s responsibility. He plans to further his education even more by starting his doctoral program in Business/Finance sometime next year. This is Salvador’s American Dream.

Leadership solidified by heritage

*By Sgt. L'Erin Wynn
7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)*

As a second-generation Colombian American, Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Sanchez, the senior enlisted advisor of 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), embodies the Army ethos, and his leadership style reflects that daily.

"Though we are a melting pot of different cultures, in the Army we are one," said Sanchez.

Hispanics like Sanchez play vital roles in Special Forces as Soldiers, operators, and enablers. For these reasons, the Army understands the value and strength that an all-inclusive, diverse environment generates and that is why the Army celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month.

National Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated from September 15th to October 15th. During Hispanic Heritage Month, the U.S. Army commemorates the long-standing and remarkable contributions that Hispanics have made, and continue to make in building and defending the Nation.

Sanchez's desire to enlist came from a neighbor who wore jump boots and a beret. He also happened to be of Hispanic descent.

"It was the first time I'd ever seen anything like it," Sanchez said. "He gave me hope. I knew right then and there that I wanted to be a paratrooper."

He says that his family upbringing and the values he was taught in his mother's Latin household were similar to his upbringing in the Army in that he learned respect, dignity and hard work.

"It made for an easy transition from civilian to Army," continued Sanchez.

He's come a long way from his California neighborhood. Starting as a young infantryman who ultimately rose to the rank of command sergeant major. He takes pride in being able to contribute to his family's name through dedication to a life of service.

"Today, as a leader, it's all about the troops and developing better Soldiers," said Sanchez.

Sanchez expressed that his Soldiers need not focus on his being Hispanic, because knowing their purpose is far more critical.

"When I see the guys growing and flourishing, I know I did my job," said Sanchez. "When I see them

failing or fumbling, that's where I try to pick them up."

In his position as the senior enlisted member of 7th SFG(A), Sanchez's ultimate goal is to pass the torch of his knowledge and experience on to the guys coming up under his direction -- a broad focus of his term.

"At this level, I'm trying to develop the guy below me to develop the guy below him. Ultimately, reaching that first-line supervisor who will develop, train, and pick up that Soldier -- because that's what it's all about: professional development," continued Sanchez.

As his two-year charge comes to a close, he still aspires to leave the Group better than when he took responsibility.

"This is my purpose," said Sanchez. "To mentor and groom junior Soldiers who are ready, successful and capable of one day replacing me."

As for his plan to tackle his goals, Sanchez stays with the fundamentals and likens his responsibility as command sergeant major to turning a large ship.

"It takes forever to turn," said Sanchez. "As long as I hit the basics, the Group will be much stronger so the next guy can turn it even faster."

Sanchez said that his youngest son, Romy, aspires to follow in his father's footsteps by joining the Army, and eventually earning the coveted Green Beret. He hopes his son will one day tell him that the essence of the group is still there.



Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Sanchez, the senior enlisted advisor of 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), presents his youngest son, Romy, with a challenge coin at the ceremony marking his assumption of responsibility of 7th SFG(A) in the 7th SFG(A) Liberty Chapel, Feb 6. Photo U.S. Army Spc. Jose Vargas.



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

Naval Special Warfare Command changes commanders

By Naval Special Warfare Command Public Affairs

Rear Adm. Collin Green relieved Rear Adm. Tim Szymanski as commander, Naval Special Warfare Command during a Sept. 7 change of command ceremony at Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado, California.

Army Gen. Raymond “Tony” Thomas, commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, and Adm. Bill Moran, Vice Chief of Naval Operations, were guest speakers for the ceremony.

During opening remarks, Moran stressed that there is no richer pool of leadership in our Navy than the leadership teams that are formed as part of the NSW force.

“We are so fortunate not only to have had Tim Szymanski running the show..., and now he is being relieved by another terrific leader in Collin Green,” Moran said.

“We have enormous confidence in these two leaders and it’s because of the leadership depth on the bench that exists on this team.”

A career SEAL officer, Szymanski previously served



Rear Adm. Collin Green speaks to an audience after relieving Rear Adm. Tim Szymanski as commander, Naval Special Warfare Command during a Sept. 7 change of command ceremony at Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado, Calif. Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Alex Perlman.

as assistant commanding general to Joint Special Operations Command; deputy commanding general sustainment to Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan/NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan; and commander of Naval Special Warfare Group 2 among other assignments.

Szymanski highlighted how the National Defense Strategy guided his tenure as the commander. “It’s all about the warfighter in special operations. It’s a team sport working on all the initiatives we have underway [to take care of our people],” Szymanski said. “We’ve got to make our warfighter tougher, more ready than they already are. We have to make our capabilities even better to get after that near-peer competition.”

Szymanski’s time as commander was marked by a profound commitment to taking care of his personnel and families, and aggressive efforts to focus on innovation and force optimization to maintain the highest level of warfighting readiness. Thomas said he was impressed by Szymanski’s efforts to research and implement a neurocognitive health baseline of the NSW force and advance operational capabilities at a greater speed relevant to the pace of technology in order to outpace our adversaries.

“Over the past few years, I’ve also been impressed by the profound commitment you’ve demonstrated in taking care of your people, our most precious asset. NSW’s human-capital enterprise is arguably the industry standard for SOCOM,” Thomas said.

“(To the force) I charge you to do your best, today is not tomorrow,” Szymanski said as one final challenge to NSW. “Tomorrow is going to be tougher ... and we’re only as good as our last game.”

Szymanski was relieved by Green, who most recently served as commander of U.S. Special Operations Command South. Other notable command assignments include SEAL Team 3, Naval Special Warfare Task Group – Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Naval Special Warfare Unit 3 and Naval Special Warfare Group 1.

Green said he was honored to take command from Szymanski.

“I’m grateful to take command from a leader who is deeply respected by all and has served as a mentor and a friend to me for many years,” Green said. “Tim really embodies competence and character more than anybody I’ve ever served with, and I’d add a genuine care and concern for troops and families which has always been a

hallmark of his leadership.”

NSW is comprised of approximately 10,000 personnel, including more than 2,900 active-duty SEALs, 780 Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen, 748 reserve personnel, 4,000 support personnel and more than 1,250 civilians.

Naval Special Warfare Command in San Diego leads the Navy’s special operations force and is maritime component of USSOCOM, headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Fla. NSW groups command, train, equip and deploy NSW squadrons to meet the exercise, contingency and wartime requirements of the regional combatant commanders, theater special operations commands and numbered fleets located around the world.



Rear Adm. Tim Szymanski commander, Naval Special Warfare Command reads his orders during a Sept. 7 change of command ceremony at Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado. Rear Adm. Collin Green took command from Rear Adm. Tim Szymanski. Photo courtesy of Naval Special Warfare Command Public Affairs.



Special Tactics Airmen train alongside conventional Army forces

*By U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Rose Gudex
24th Special Operations Wing Combat Camera*

As night fell, two special operations reconnaissance teams made up of Special Tactics Airmen with the 21st Special Tactics Squadron based out of Pope Army Airfield, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, maneuvered to separate locations in what is known as “the box.” Their mission was to infiltrate more than 30 miles into enemy territory undetected, provide information on the enemy, and call in possible threats to facilitate movement of joint forces.

For 10 solid days from Aug. 30 to Sept. 9, the Special Tactics Airmen teamed up with the U.S. Army 3rd Special Forces Group, also from Fort Bragg, and the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division from Fort Drum, New York, for NTC 18-10. A simulated conflict where conventional forces wage war against one another, NTC

18-10 was an intense, realistic and complex training scenario to validate their interoperability in the world’s largest force-on-force training at the National Training Center on Fort Irwin, California.

Due to their smaller footprint, special operations forces are often used to shape an operating environment to facilitate a larger, conventional way to move forward on the battlefield, also known as a scheme of maneuver.

According to Lt. Col. Randall Harvey II, commander of the 21 STS, over the last 10 years the nature of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have largely been SOF-centric. As a result, the crucial link between SOF and conventional forces, often known as integration, interoperability, and interdependence (I-3), may have been diminished.

As mentioned in the 2018 National Defense Strategy signed by Defense Secretary James Mattis, the U.S. has



Special Tactics Airmen from the 21st Special Tactics Squadron and Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group move toward a target to execute an attack on a nearby city during a training scenario at the National Training Center on Fort Irwin, California, Sept. 6. The 21st STS supported Army Special Forces and conventional forces in a joint training environment to take down a common enemy and build working relationships. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Rose Gudex.

shifted priorities of focus from defeating Violent Extremist Organizations to the Great Power Competition.

To this end, relearning how to integrate SOF in order to best support conventional forces will be very important, Harvey said. One of the main objectives of NTC 18-10 was to reinvigorate that relationship.

“Our role out here, first and foremost, was to validate our own training for our deployment because we wanted the most realistic scenario possible,” said a Special Tactics officer and troop commander with the 21 STS. “The second thing we wanted to do was demonstrate our capabilities to our joint peers, both special operations and conventional. In doing so, we are providing that I-3 link (U.S. Army Special Operations Command) is looking for between special operations and conventional forces.”

Not only does validating tactical training benefit their own Special Tactics team, but it gives confidence to Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd SFG because both units will be deploying together in the future. Alpha Company will be the battlespace owners downrange, therefore demonstrating their capability while training together helps build trust. This prepares the teams for seamless, downrange operations together and allows them to hit the ground running.

“Any time that we get to work with a Special Tactics element and (conventional) forces is going to help because our missions are always going to be mutually supporting,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Scott Siegfried, 520th Infantry Battalion commander, whose unit is based out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, and was also part of the exercise. “The fact they get an opportunity to train with us and we get an opportunity to train with them, I think both elements are going to do better in the future.”

In the NTC training scenario, ST and the BCT worked together to seize terrain and secure resources for an allied nation, who were threatened by a mutual enemy. By working together, the Special Tactics officer said they helped the allied nation defend their borders and maintain sovereignty.

“We, as Special Tactics, conducted special reconnaissance in support of the brigade combat team,” the Special Tactics officer said. “We acted as an early network and forward observers by highlighting enemy location, their disposition and composition, and where they were moving. That gave the brigade a huge advantage because they could maneuver onto the enemy.”

Not only can ST provide early intelligence to the conventional forces from inside enemy territory, but they

have several ways to move about the battlefield undetected due to their small size and capabilities. Siegfried said that maneuver capability and real time intelligence gave the brigade flexibility and helped them with where and how to employ their forces.

“What this team allowed us to do is gain intelligence early on, build a plan of action that’s more suitable for the environment that we’re going into, and then be able to execute with more precision,” Siegfried said. “What that allows us to do is have less of an environmental impact, less of a human impact and really just targeting those entities that are confrontational.”

Additionally, because ST are experts in integrating air and ground capabilities while providing reconnaissance, the Special Tactics Officer said they were also able to strike targets with precision fires, slowing down the enemy and enabling the brigade to rapidly seize and hold key terrain.

NTC 18-10 provided Air Force Special Tactics an opportunity to not only demonstrate their inherent capability that is well-suited for this type of operation, but also fill the much-needed gap between conventional forces and SOF.



A Special Tactics operator with the 21st Special Tactics Squadron from Pope Army Airfield, Fort Bragg, N.C., observes enemy locations and movement through a scope during a scenario as part of NTC 18-10 at Fort Irwin, Calif., Sept. 1. Special Tactics Airmen have the capability to provide early intelligence for the conventional force from inside enemy territory due to their small size and maneuverability. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Rose Gudex.



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Participants of South Florida Tactical Athletes, a preparatory school for those looking to join special operations, practice water confidence skills, Aug. 8, at a pool in Plantation, Fla. The program is led by Lt. Col. (Dr.) Arnold T. Stocker, a clinical nurse with the 920th Aeromedical Staging Squadron who held two special operations careers as an Army Special Forces medical sergeant and Air Force pararescueman. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jared Trimarchi.

Passing the torch: Ex-commando inspires youth for special operations

*By U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jared Trimarchi
920th Rescue Wing*

While most people spend their off time catching up on their favorite shows, playing video games, or catching up on social media, one Reserve Airman and clinical nurse with the 920th Aeromedical Staging Squadron, spends his evenings training the future men and women of special operations.

Lt. Col. (Dr.) Arnold T. Stocker, a certified registered nurse anesthetist in Broward County, Florida, has served in the military for more than 40 years and operates South Florida Tactical Athletes, a preparatory school for those wishing to join the most coveted jobs the U.S. military has to offer.

During his military career, Stocker has completed two

special operation duties as a former Army Special Forces medical sergeant (with combat diver certification) and Air Force Pararescueman. Regardless of branch of service, special operation programs have a high standard of acceptance and a passing rate of lower than 10 percent. According to Stocker, thousands will try out, a hundred will get chosen for selection training and less than 10 will graduate.

“To come to our program takes a lot of guts, dedication and motivation,” Stocker said. “We get men and women who are a cut above the rest; many of them are former athletes who think they are in great shape, but it’s not about being the fastest or strongest. It’s about expanding your circle of comfort and your mind, developing as a young adult and learning to work as a team.”

Four days a week Stocker and four other instructors, a



Lt. Col. (Dr.) Arnold T. Stocker of South Florida Tactical Athletes, a preparatory school for those looking to join special operations, calls out instructions, Aug. 8, at a pool in Plantation, Fla. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jared Trimarchi.

former pararescueman, a Coast Guard Rescue Swimmer, and two Marine Corps Force Reconnaissance members, coach more than 20 men and women in running, swimming, water confidence, and team building exercises for two to three hours.

Each week participants spend two days in the water and two days on land. They also participate in one extended training session a month on the weekend. The training includes warming up, calisthenics, underwater tasks, rucksack marching, sprinting, working together and listening to directions.

“Each day is different and when people come to our program, we brief them beforehand but they don’t really know what to expect,” Stocker said. “We provide them with a challenge and we focus on proper form and technique; with that comes the speed.”

Stocker envisioned SFTA to be the beginning step for future special operations men and women who will one day lead the nation’s defenses. So far, the program has trained more than 100 men and women since 2012, but Stocker’s journey training others to follow in his footsteps started 6 years prior. While visiting his home state of Pennsylvania, a friend told Stocker that his son would like to become a pararescueman.

“He’s the first guy I can say I prepared to become a PJ (pararescueman),” Stocker said. “It’s an awesome feeling for me and every one of the instructors at SFTA, when one of ours makes it through selection. We aren’t just giving them a physical challenge, we are setting them up for the rest of their lives.”

Stocker is versed in special operations, but his military journey began in the Air Force as a jet engine mechanic and then he later joined an aeromedical evacuation team on C-141 Starlifter aircraft. He wanted to join the pararescue career field, the military’s combat-search-and-rescue tip of the spear, but didn’t know how to swim. He hired a swim coach to learn stroke techniques and was later sent to the pararescue indoctrination course.

“I failed the swim,” Stocker said. “I do (SFTA) because when I was training there was no program around. I told my swim instructor what I wanted to do and he had no idea about water confidence training. I also do it because I enjoy training and mentoring.”

Today as a traditional reservist, Stocker oversees patient triage from aircraft to hospital and acts as a patient’s advocate while confirming patients are kept in stable conditions before the next echelon of care. He has two daughters and says the greatest challenge has been juggling his family, anesthesia profession, his reserve duty and SFTA. He couldn’t do it without the help of his instructors and his love for helping others.

One other SFTA instructor who works with Stocker, former pararescueman Mike Mahoney, said he also does this job for the enjoyment of developing young adults into great men and women.

“Just the other day I had one of those moments when I saw a guy swimming and I thought to myself, wow that’s good form,” Mahoney said. “I wanted to know who that person was, and it turned out to be one of our students who came to us not knowing how to swim. Now he’s working as a lifeguard and wants to become a pararescueman.”

Leo Fernandez, one of the participants who joined SFTA not knowing how to swim said Stocker and the coaches have changed his life, both physically and mentally.

“I can honestly say I would not have stood a chance in selection without Colonel Stocker,” Fernandez said. “He has worked with me on my swims and has taught me how to get out of my shell. Now I can say I am comfortable being uncomfortable.”

According to Stocker, SFTA participants aren’t always looking to don a beret, many of them want to be police officers, firefighters, do other jobs in the military or even are just looking to lose weight.

“We are a joint service prep training, but your end goal doesn’t have to be in special operations,” Stocker said. “Whatever your goal is in life, do your homework, find your target, and stick to it.”



MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

LEWIS
DRIVE

G
GIFFORD
DRIVE



First road named for a Marine unveiled at Arlington cemetery

By U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Janessa Pon
Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command

The Arlington National Cemetery honored Gunnery Sgt. Jonathan W. Gifford with the dedication of Gifford Drive during the opening ceremony for its Millennium extension project, Sept. 6.

The Millennium Project began in the 1990's as a movement to preserve and extend the life of the burial grounds with a 27-acre expansion.

During the event, veterans of all services, city officials and honored guests gathered for the unveiling of the two new roads connecting the extension to the main cemetery, one in honor of Gifford, a U.S. Marine Raider, and Ida Lewis, a U.S. Lighthouse Service keeper. Gifford is the first U.S. Marine to receive the honor of having a namesake street dedicated at

Arlington National Cemetery. He was a founding instructor at U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command's Marine Raider Training Center and posthumously received the Navy Cross, the nation's second-highest award for valor, for his actions in Afghanistan in 2012. Gifford led a counterattack against enemy forces, killing multiple enemy combatants, before being mortally wounded.

Distinguished guests at the ceremony, including Secretary of the Army, the Honorable Mark Esper, gave a standing ovation in recognition for Lisa Gifford, Jonathan's wife, as well as her sons and other members of the Gifford family who attended the ceremony.

(Opposite page) Secretary of the Army, the Honorable Mark Esper, left, and Kathryn Condon, former executive director of Army National Military Cemeteries, right, unveil the newest street names in Arlington National Cemetery, Sept. 6. The unveiling was part of the Millennium Project Ceremony, which officially marked the opening of 27 acres of newly developed and enhanced burial grounds and the renaming of two streets. Lewis Drive, named after Ida Lewis, of the U.S. Lighthouse Service, exemplifies the first street on the grounds named after a female representative. Gifford Drive commemorates the heroic actions of U.S. Marine Gunnery Sgt. Jonathan W. Gifford in Afghanistan. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Janessa Pon.

Lewis, the additional honoree at the ceremony, is the first female Coast Guard veteran honored with a street in Arlington. She served as a U.S. Lighthouse Keeper, received the Congressional Gold Lifesaving Medal and was officially credited with saving more than 18 lives.

"It is my honor, and that of all those present here who have made this day possible, to acknowledge the contribution of these American heroes today," said Karen Durham-Aguilera, executive director of the Army National Military Cemeteries. "Gunnery Sgt. Jonathan W. Gifford

gave his life when he led a counterattack and rerouted the enemy in Afghanistan, saving many lives. The heroes commemorated here today have irrevocably changed American history."

The street name dedications were followed by the burial of two Union Soldiers discovered at the Manassas National Battlefield.

"The two Union Soldiers we honor today were gravely wounded and sent to a field hospital, succumbing to their wounds soon after," said P. Daniel Smith, deputy director of the National Park Service. "Now, we are blessed and honored to bring these Soldiers home."

At the ceremony's conclusion, service members of all branches stood to recognize the honorees.

"We are proud to continue to honor the men and women who have given their lives on behalf of our grateful nation," said Smith, deputy director of the National Park Service. "Through these developments, we will continue to share their stories and ensure the enduring memory of their sacrifices."

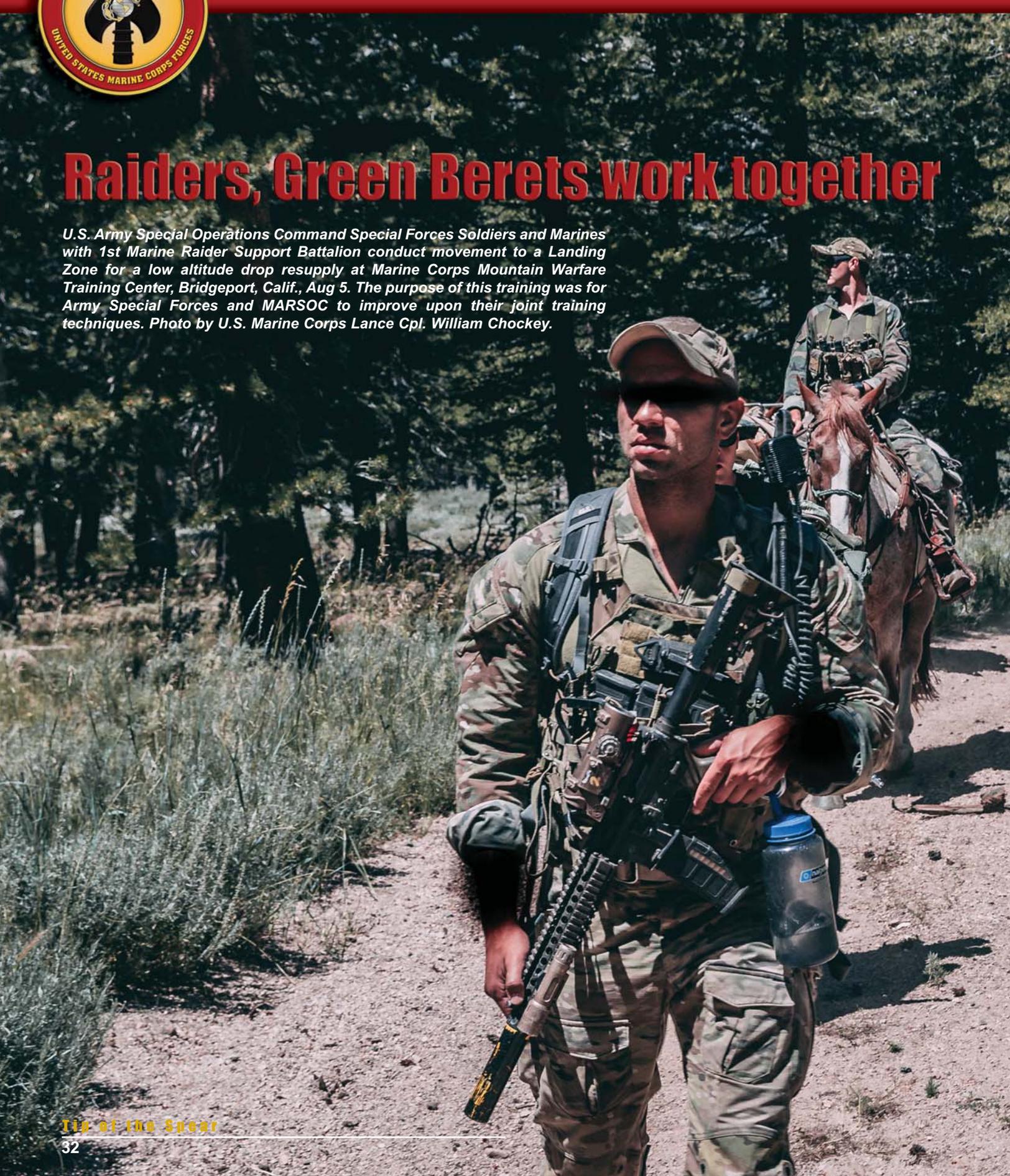
Gunnery Sgt. Jonathan W. Gifford gave his life when he led a counterattack and rerouted the enemy in Afghanistan, saving many lives. The heroes commemorated here today have irrevocably changed American history.

— Karen Durham-Aguilera



Raiders, Green Berets work together

U.S. Army Special Operations Command Special Forces Soldiers and Marines with 1st Marine Raider Support Battalion conduct movement to a Landing Zone for a low altitude drop resupply at Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, Bridgeport, Calif., Aug 5. The purpose of this training was for Army Special Forces and MARSOC to improve upon their joint training techniques. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. William Chockey.

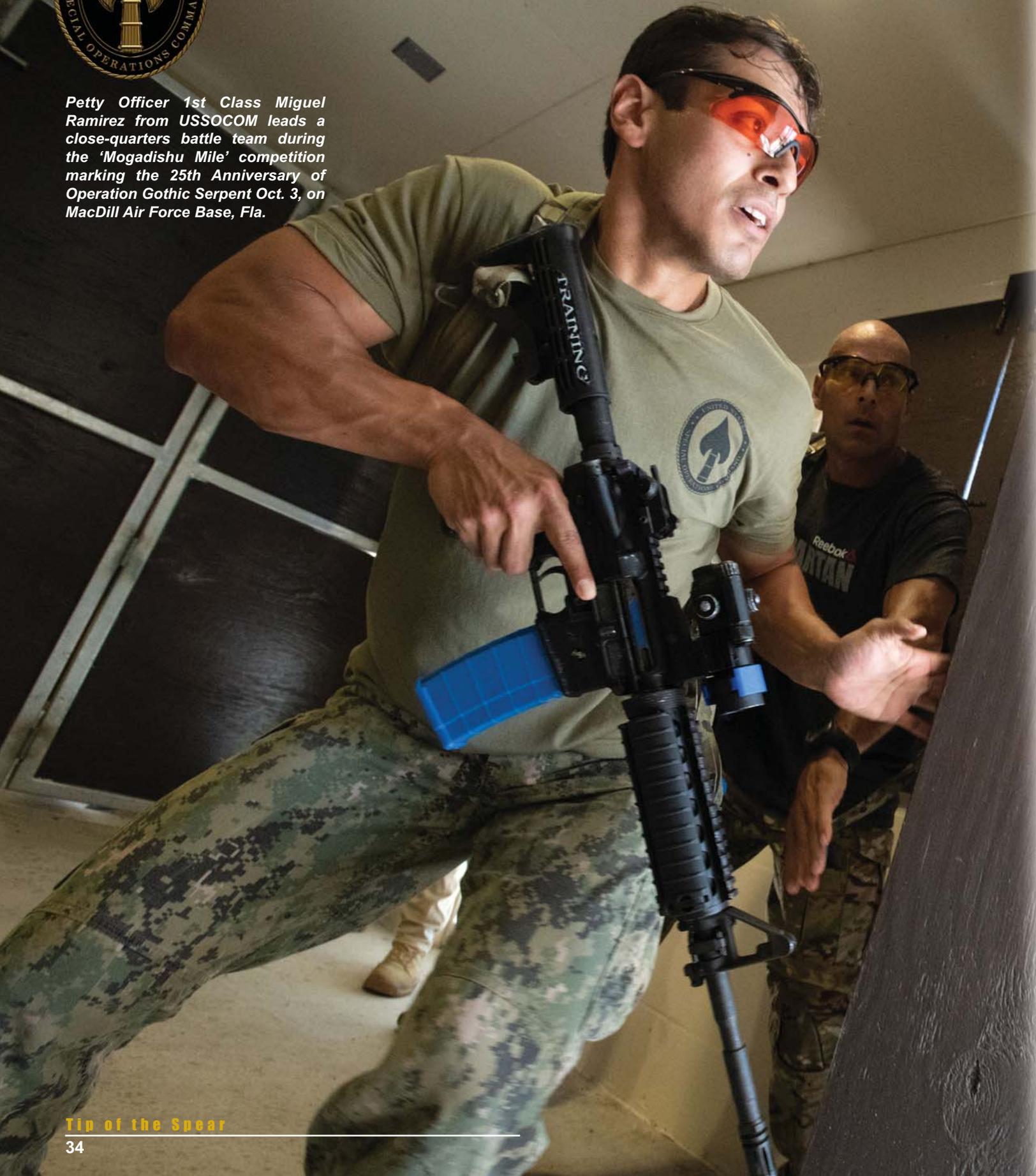






U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS

Petty Officer 1st Class Miguel Ramirez from USSOCOM leads a close-quarters battle team during the 'Mogadishu Mile' competition marking the 25th Anniversary of Operation Gothic Serpent Oct. 3, on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.

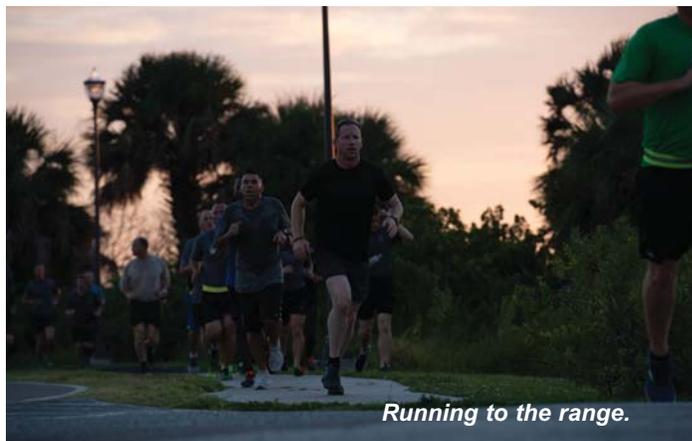


USSOCOM headquarters marks 25th anniversary of 'Mogadishu Mile'

*Photo essay by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo
USSOCOM Office Of Communication*

On Oct. 3, 1993, during Operation Gothic Serpent, SOF helicopters carrying special operators from Task Force Ranger at Mogadishu airport in Somalia were given the mission to capture Gen. Muhammad Farah Aideed. During the mission, two MH-60 Blackhawks were shot down forcing a rescue operation. The task force faced an overwhelming Somali mob that overran the crash sites and the ensuing battle cost 17 men their lives with 106 wounded. Army Master Sgt. Gary Gordon and Sgt. 1st Class Randall Shughart were posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions trying to save a downed helicopter crew.

USSOCOM personnel and local law enforcement participated in the "Mogadishu Mile" event marking the 25th anniversary of the battle beginning with an opening ceremony at the Special Operations Memorial, followed by a run to the range, rope-climbing, close-quarters battle, live-fire, and evacuation of a simulated casualty from a downed helicopter.



Running to the range.



Shots on target.



Climbing the rope.



Evacuating the wounded.



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS



Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Combating Terrorism Andrew Knaggs moderates a panel discussion during the U.S. Special Operations Command Sovereign Challenge program's 2018 Fall Seminar at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., Sept. 19. The seminar, entitled "Message or Counter-Message: Crafting Effective Information Campaigns in the Internet Age," provided an opportunity for subject matter experts, military personnel and world leaders to discuss global information challenges. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.

Message or counter-message

Crafting effective information campaigns in the internet age

By U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo
USSOCOM Office of Communication

Seventy-seven participants from 27 countries converged for the U.S. Special Operations Command Sovereign Challenge program's 2018 Fall Seminar at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., Sept. 19.

The seminar, entitled "Message or Counter-Message: Crafting Effective Information Campaigns in the Internet Age," provided an opportunity for subject matter experts, military personnel and influencers to

discuss global information challenges.

"Truth is not always enough to counter an adversary's narrative," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. James Slife, vice commander, USSOCOM. "...[B]y being better storytellers, not simply couriers of facts and raw data, we may be better equipped for future challenges."

The event featured two keynote speakers, a panel discussion, and networking opportunities.

Executive Editor of the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting Indira Lakshmanan and Director of the German Marshall Fund's Future of Geopolitics and Asia program Jamie Fly served as the key note speakers.

Each spoke about foreign disinformation campaigns.

“Americans of all political stripes need to realize that they are potential targets,” Lakshmanan said. “We can all be inadvertently weaponized.”

They spoke about the influence of social media networks and how their use by foreign intelligence agencies can exacerbate existing divides in U.S. society.

“What they will aim to do with these social media networks is they will just try to amplify the fringes so the most vocal voices on both sides of an issue will be amplified through these networks,” Fly said. “They just want to sow division.”

“It’s fanning the flames and creating deeper divisions than maybe actually exist in real life,” Lakshmanan said.

A six-member panel followed the speakers, including Ambassador Deborah McCarthy of the American Academy of Diplomacy, Adjunct Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations Farah Pandith, Professor Sara Cobb, Director of The School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University, as well as communications experts from the State Department and U.S. Central Command.

The panelists spoke about increasing the effectiveness of delivering messages through more effective means of communication.

“I think all afternoon we’ve had some very interesting perspectives on what is happening to us as humans on this planet with the surge of social media and the very manipulative processes that bad actors use to influence us,” Pandith said. “...[W]e are losing because we are not culturally listening...to the experience of Muslim millennials and Generation Z. ...[T]here is a singular point that connects Muslim millennials and Generation Z around the world, and that is the issue of identity, who am I and what’s the difference between culture and religion.”

The panelists also interacted with the seminar participants, answering their questions and providing feedback on how they could better reach their objectives.

“To be more effective from a policy point of view, my sense coming out of this experience is that we need to work with positive messages that resonate with the intended audiences,” McCarthy said.



U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. James Slife, vice commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, delivers opening remarks for the Sovereign Challenge program’s 2018 Fall Seminar at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., Sept. 19. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.

“The bottom line is that the United States, our partners and allies need to get better at telling our story. While we understand that narratives have their foundation in policy goals and national interests, what we too often forget is that successful narratives are

constructed more in the eye of the beholder than by the communicator,” said Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Combating Terrorism Andrew Knaggs,

who moderated the panelists.

Sovereign Challenge was established by USSOCOM in 2004 and is focused on preserving the sovereignty of independent nations. Several Sovereign Challenge events are held annually to bring together foreign defense attaches and associated diplomats and experts to develop a trusted network serving the interests of sovereign nations and their security.

Truth is not always enough to counter an adversary’s narrative.

— Lt. Gen. James Slife



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U.S. Army
1st Lt. Connor J. Bednarzyk
3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment

Editor's note: Honored are special operations forces who lost their lives since August's Tip of the Spear.



A sniper team from the Netherlands collects ballistic data during a nighttime range session on July 9, during the International Special Training Centre Desert Sniper Course at Chinchilla Training Area, Spain. The two-week course is designed to teach trained sniper teams the necessary skills to operate in a desert environment. Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Benjamin Haulenbeek.