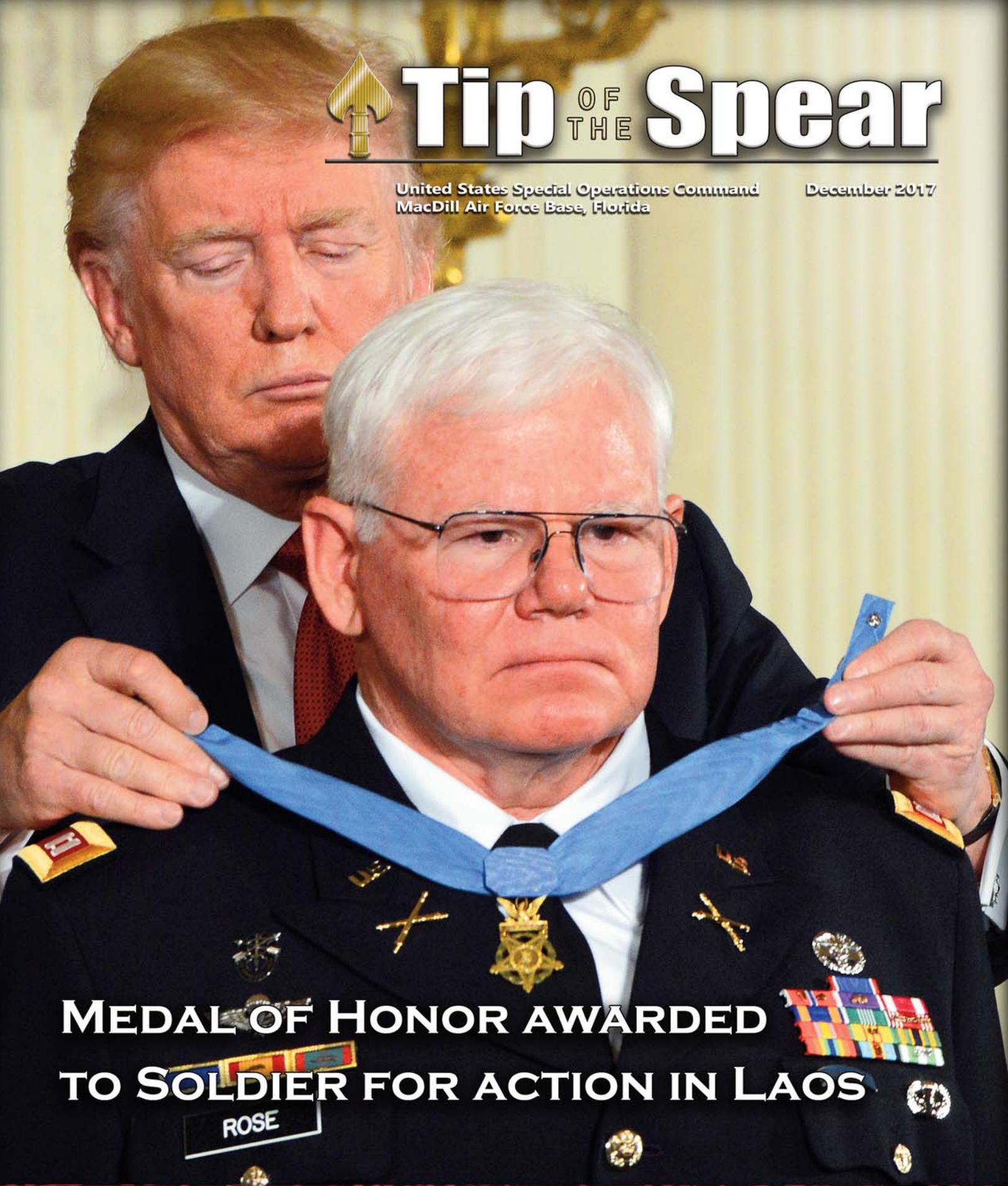




# Tip OF THE Spear

United States Special Operations Command  
MacDill Air Force Base, Florida

December 2017



## MEDAL OF HONOR AWARDED TO SOLDIER FOR ACTION IN LAOS

ROSE





# U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



**Medal of Honor awarded to Special Forces Soldier for action in Laos ... 12**

## Tip of the Spear

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Commander, USSOCOM**

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**Command Information Chief**  
Michael Bottoms  
**Managing Editor**

U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Ryan Scranton  
**Staff NCOIC  
Command Information**

U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo  
**Photojournalist**

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Heather Kelly  
**Staff Writer/Photographer**

U.S. Army Master Sgt. Timothy Lawn  
**Staff Writer/Photographer**

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jerimiah Richardson  
**Staff Writer/Photographer**

U.S. Army Sgt. Jose Reyes  
**Staff Writer/Photographer**

*(Cover) President Donald Trump places the Medal of Honor around the neck of retired U.S. Army Capt. Mike Rose, during an Oct. 23, ceremony at the White House, in Washington, D.C. Photo by C. Todd Lopez.*



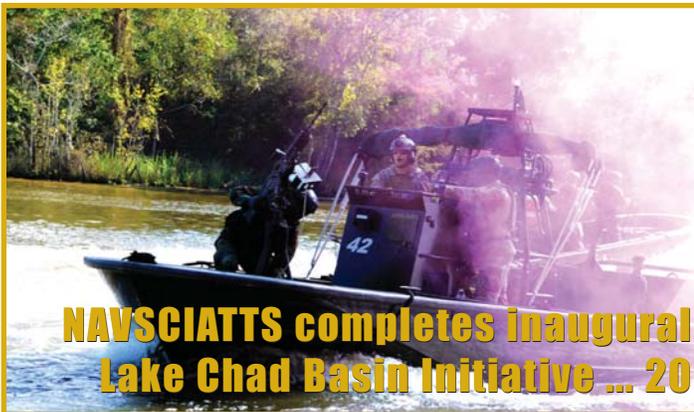
**Thomas Jefferson  
Award Winner**

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*A CV-22 Osprey conduct tilt-rotor air-to-air refueling while receiving commands from a C-130 Hercules crewman Sept. 14 in Sweden during the Swedish exercise Aurora 2017. Aurora 2017 was designed to increase the national and joint military capabilities necessary to protect the Swedish homeland and was the country's largest military exercise in more than 20 years. More than 19,000 personnel from Sweden participated in the exercise alongside an estimated 1,500 personnel from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Lithuania, Latvia, Norway, and the United States. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Aaron Duncan.*

# **Aurora 17 strengthens ties between participating countries**

*By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Aaron Duncan  
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe*

Aurora 2017 was a Swedish exercise designed to increase the national and joint military capabilities necessary to protect their homeland. The exercise, the largest for Sweden in 23 years, included over 19,000 Swedish personnel along with an estimated 1500 personnel from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Lithuania, Latvia, Norway and the United States. Not

only was it the largest exercise for Sweden in 23 years, but it was also the first time in 20 years that Sweden's parliament exercised its wartime powers.

"Aurora is the largest exercise in 23 years, in which the army, air force and navy is participating in a joint exercise. The exercise sends an important signal about our security policy," said Swedish Minister for Defense Peter Hultqvist. "It raises the deterrent threshold against different types of incidents and provides important data for evaluation of our military capabilities."

U.S. Special Operations Command Europe

contributed personnel as well as special operations aircraft in support of the exercise.

“Any opportunity to train with a joint partner, in another country or region of the globe, is invaluable,” said Lt. Col. John Leachman, the U.S. Air Force Special Operations Forces mission commander. “Swedish SOF enhance our own training by providing our aircrews with professional and highly capable users which gives us realistic tasks and challenging scenarios.”

In addition to the direct benefits that multinational training provides, the exercise also served as a way to strengthen the strategic partnerships between the U.S., NATO allies and partners, and the Nordic countries in particular. The ability to work alongside foreign militaries is not a simple task and one that exercises such as Aurora helps build into the capabilities of those participating.

“Anytime you work in another country, the way they operate is completely different,” said a U.S. Air Force Special Operations Forces C-130 Hercules crewman. “We operate with different militaries from

around the world so training in a different country gives you the real-world experience but in a safer setting.”

The special operations forces participating in the exercise not only helped the Swedish military by enabling them to train against a capable opponent but also gave the U.S. air crews a unique challenge.

“In terms of flying, the weather is very unique here,” said a U.S. Air Force special operations forces CV-22 Osprey pilot during the exercise. “The forecast on one airfield does not necessarily translate to the surrounding areas. Unlike what we are used to where if you have a forecast of the cloud height it is generally widespread without much variation. Here in Sweden, it can have a large variance over the area we are flying.”

The training during the exercise will undoubtedly prove to be valuable to those involved, however, Sweden itself left its mark on the Soldiers participating.

“Sweden is a beautiful country, full of friendly people and wonderful places,” said Leachman. “The food, countryside, and hospitality have been incredible.”



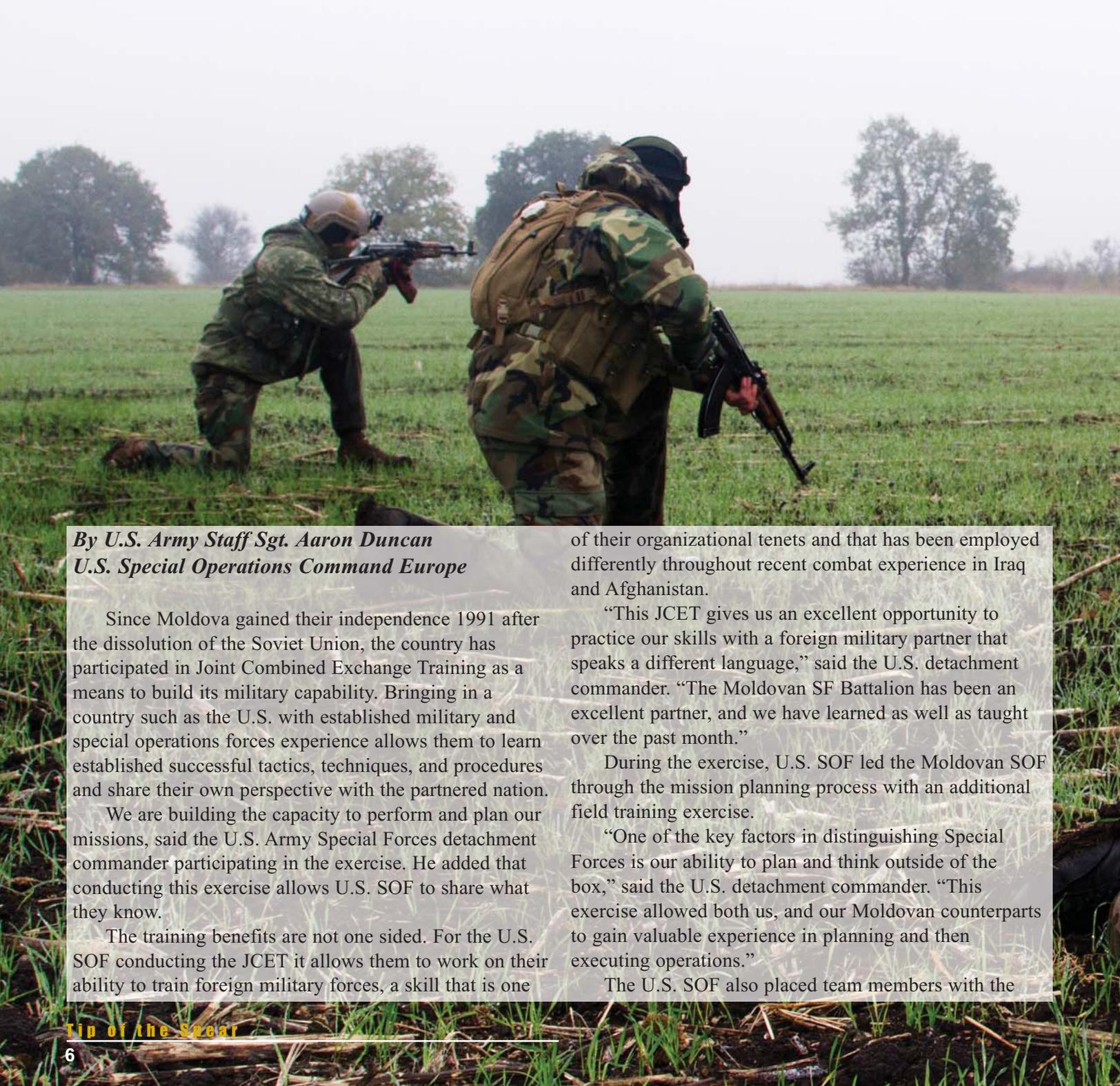
*(Above) A U.S. Air Force pilot goes through preflight checks on a CV-22 Osprey Sept. 15 in Sweden during the Swedish exercise Aurora 2017. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Henry Gundacker.*

*(Right) An CV-22 Osprey Air Force crewmember looks out over the Swedish landscape Sept. 15 in Sweden during the Swedish exercise Aurora 2017. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Henry Gundacker.*





# US, Moldovan SOF conduct combined training to build capacity



*By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Aaron Duncan  
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe*

Since Moldova gained their independence 1991 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the country has participated in Joint Combined Exchange Training as a means to build its military capability. Bringing in a country such as the U.S. with established military and special operations forces experience allows them to learn established successful tactics, techniques, and procedures and share their own perspective with the partnered nation.

We are building the capacity to perform and plan our missions, said the U.S. Army Special Forces detachment commander participating in the exercise. He added that conducting this exercise allows U.S. SOF to share what they know.

The training benefits are not one sided. For the U.S. SOF conducting the JCET it allows them to work on their ability to train foreign military forces, a skill that is one

of their organizational tenets and that has been employed differently throughout recent combat experience in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“This JCET gives us an excellent opportunity to practice our skills with a foreign military partner that speaks a different language,” said the U.S. detachment commander. “The Moldovan SF Battalion has been an excellent partner, and we have learned as well as taught over the past month.”

During the exercise, U.S. SOF led the Moldovan SOF through the mission planning process with an additional field training exercise.

“One of the key factors in distinguishing Special Forces is our ability to plan and think outside of the box,” said the U.S. detachment commander. “This exercise allowed both us, and our Moldovan counterparts to gain valuable experience in planning and then executing operations.”

The U.S. SOF also placed team members with the

Moldovan teams as they executed the planned missions which included ambushes and raids on objectives.

“Integrating into a team of foreign soldiers is the quintessential Special Forces mission,” said a U.S. Army SF detachment member. “It is what allows us to be force multipliers and to accomplish the missions that are given to us. This training mission gave my team and I an excellent opportunity to gain more knowledge and

experience in the very tasks that define us as a Special Forces Regiment.”

The benefits of training missions like JCETs go beyond the direct military benefits. It allows the nations participating to form long lasting bonds and friendships while allowing each other to see and appreciate the other’s culture.

“Our detachment has made a lot of great friends in the international SOF community during the course of our training in Moldova,” said the U.S. detachment commander. “We look forward to continued training opportunities and the chance to work with the Moldovan SF Battalion in the future.”



*Moldovan Special Operations Forces provide security during an ambush Oct. 26 as part of a Joint Combined Exchange Training exercise with U.S. SOF near Budesti, Moldova. The JCET consisted of both countries participating in training on the combined planning process as well as a field training portion. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Aaron Duncan.*



# Estonian, US Special Operations Forces fast-rope train together

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Matthew Britton  
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe

“One minute!,” a U.S. Air Force Special Operations rope master shouts back to a team of Estonian and U.S. Special Operations Forces from the ramp of a U.S.A.F. CV-22 Osprey with the 352d Special Operations Wing.

“One minute!,” they thunder back over the sound of powerful rotors, as they prepare to fast-rope out the back of the aircraft.

U.S. SOF conducted fast rope insertion and extraction system training with their Estonian partners testing the capabilities of the system and how effectively it could be implemented, Dec. 12, in Amari, Estonia.

FRIES is a technique where troops make use of a thick rope to exit an aircraft in places where it cannot land.

“Fast-rope insertion and extraction system, most people just call it fast-rope,” said the U.S. SOF assistant detachment commander. “That’s getting out of a rotary wing aircraft in an expedient, but controlled manner.”

The system has a wide array of capabilities to offer in real-world scenarios, challenging terrain and the battlespace.

“Think of it as a Leatherman tool,” said the U.S. SOF assistant detachment commander. “Do you need every little screw, wrench and file? Sometimes you do, and like that, the fast rope is a specific skill. It’s a very fast way to get guys on the objective, especially in a confined space. It offers tactical commanders the option to get their guys as close as possible to the X and go after it.”

Having the capability of these tools is also very important to U.S. SOF Estonian partners, whose country is covered with a canopy of trees.

“Estonia is more than half covered with forest,” said an Estonian SOF operator. “Infilling with the fast rope

where an aircraft can’t land is critical to us.”

Although an incredibly useful system to have, there’s a certain amount of risk involved with the actual execution. Training and preparation is crucial to operation success.

“This is categorized as high-risk,” said the U.S. SOF assistant detachment commander. “We really have to think through what we’re going to do, our training, the resources, and if the guys are physically fit and able to conduct the training.”

Sliding down the ropes creates a lot of friction, so having the proper gloves and boots helps mitigate the risk of injury.

“One of the big things that guys overlook is the protective hand wear,” said the U.S. SOF assistant detachment commander. “You’ve got to have the right gloves. There’s so many things that could go wrong, it really does take a lot of insight from the leadership and

master trainers to ensure the guys are conducting this high-risk training as safely as possible.”

Working together provides an opportunity for U.S. and Estonian SOF to hone and exchange their skills.

“The Estonians are wonderful partners,” said the U.S. SOF assistant detachment commander. “They’re incredibly technically and tactfully proficient. They’re very competent peer partners. Working with them has been one of the best experiences in my military career.”

It’s a shared opinion held by both militaries.

“It’s good to have this capability,” said an Estonian SOF soldier. “But more important, is to work with our partners. To overcome the experience and exchange language. To me, that part is more important than the fast rope itself.”

The multinational training deepens the relationship between U.S. and Estonian SOF while strengthening an already capable force.

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*Estonia is more than half covered with forest. Infilling with the fast rope where an aircraft can’t land is critical to us.*

— An Estonian SOF operator

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*An Estonian Special Operations Forces operator fast-ropes out of a U.S. Air Force CV-22 Osprey assigned to the 352d Special Operations Wing near Amari, Estonia, Dec. 12. Estonian and U.S. SOF conducted fast rope insertion and extraction system training to build combined NATO SOF readiness. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Matt Britton.*



## NATO SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMPONENT COMMAND - AFGHANISTAN

*U.S. Airmen with Air Force Special Operations Command discuss results of an airfield survey during operations in Faryab province, Afghanistan, Nov. 29. The Special Tactics Airmen ensure access to traditional airfields and landing strips to increase the operational reach of coalition and Afghan aircraft for reconnaissance, troop delivery and strategic air support operations. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Doug Ellis.*

# AFSOC Special Tactics Airmen survey multiple Afghan airfields to gain an operational advantage

*By U.S. Army Maj. Tony Mayne  
NATO Special Operations Component Command-  
Afghanistan*

Special Tactics Airmen from Air Force Special Operations Command conducted multiple airfield surveys with their Afghan Air Force counterparts in Faryab province. Airfield surveys are executed prior to the arrival of special operations and conventional aircraft to traditional airfields and field landing strips.

“Our work is critical to extending the access and reach to fight our adversaries in their safe havens,” said a Special Tactics Airman. “Planning, leading and executing global access missions is a core task that we provide to the joint (special operation forces) effort.”

During the operations, Afghan Army and Air Force representatives meet with the Special Tactics Airmen to discuss how to increase airpower at Faryab province

airfields. Based on the team’s findings, multiple airfields in Faryab province meet the specified needs of the NATO Resolute Support mission. The locations have the potential to support Afghan and coalition reconnaissance, troop delivery and strategic air support operations.

“This is my fifth deployment as a Special Tactics Airman conducting precision strike, global access and personnel recovery missions,” another Special Tactics Airman said. “You can feel the difference this year, a new commitment to extending the fight to the heart of the enemy.”

AFSOC Special Tactics force is the Air Force’s tactical air and ground integration element that enables global access, precision strike and personnel recovery operations. The Special Tactics Airmen are experts in the conduct of airfield reconnaissance, assessment and control, personnel recovery, joint terminal attack control and environmental reconnaissance.



*Special Tactics Airmen from Air Force Special Operations Command load a C-130J Hercules before testing runways for a range of coalition aircraft in Faryab province, Afghanistan, Nov. 29. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Doug Ellis.*

**AIRBORNE**

# U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



*U.S. Army Sgt. Gary M. Rose is helped from a helicopter landing area after Operation Tailwind, 1970. Photo courtesy of Ted Wicorek.*



# Medal of Honor awarded to Special Forces Soldier for action in Laos

By C. Todd Lopez  
Army News Service

More than 47 years after his heroic actions in the nation of Laos, during the Vietnam War, Capt. Mike Rose was recognized with the Medal of Honor.

“This will enshrine him into the history of our nation,” said President Donald J. Trump, during the Oct. 23, 2017 Medal of Honor ceremony at the White House.

During the Vietnam War, Rose served as a combat medic with the Military Assistance Command Studies and Observations Group, part of Special Forces. He was recognized for actions during a four-day period that spanned Sept. 11 through 14, 1970, in Laos. The mission he was part of, called “Operation Tailwind,” had for many years been classified.

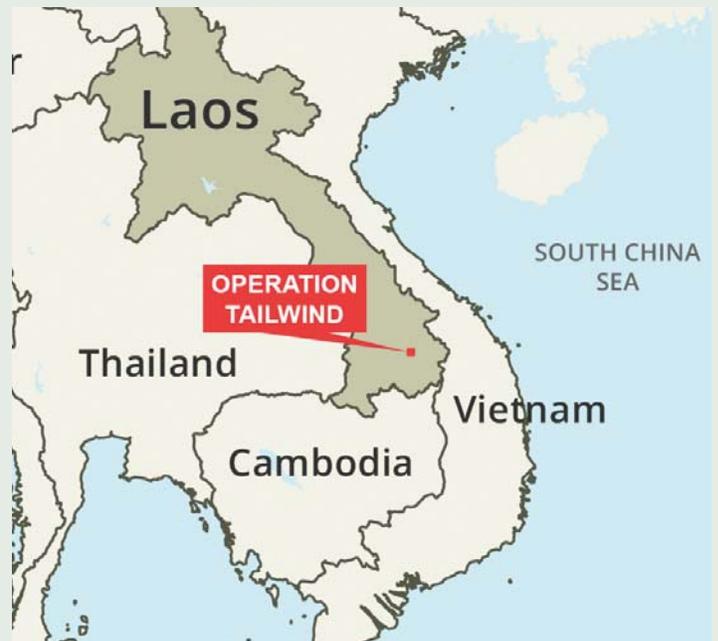
Trump said Operation Tailwind was meant to prevent the North Vietnamese Army from funneling weapons to their own forces through Laos, along the Ho Chi Minh trail. The operation involved about 136 men, including 16 American Soldiers and 120 Montagnard fighters, who were Vietnamese indigenous people from the Central Highlands.

The operation put those involved deep inside Laos. The men had been inserted by helicopter.

“Once they landed in the clearing, they rushed to the jungle for much needed cover,” Trump said. “Soon, another man was shot outside their defensive perimeter. Mike immediately rushed to his injured comrade, firing at the enemy as he ran. In the middle of the clearing, under the machine gun

fire, Mike treated the wounded Soldier. He shielded the man with his own body and carried him back to safety.”

That was just the start of the four-day mission Trump



Map depicting the Operation Tailwind insertion point near Chavane, Laos, Sept. 11, 1970.

said. There was much more to come.

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— President Donald J. Trump

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said.

“Throughout the engagement, Mike rescued those in distress without any thought for his own safety,” Trump

“Mike and his unit slashed through the dense jungle, dodged bullets, dodged explosives, dodged everything that you can dodge because they threw it all at him, and continuously returned fire as they moved deeper and deeper and deeper into enemy territory,” Trump



said. “I will tell you, the people with him could not believe what they were witnessing. He crawled from one Soldier to the next, offering words of encouragement as he tended to their wounds.”

Rose would repeat those selfless actions throughout the four-day

Operation Tailwind mission.

Rose was himself injured, Trump said. On the second day, Rose was hit with a rocket-propelled grenade, which left shrapnel in his back, and a hole in his foot.

“For the next 48 excruciating hours, he used a branch as a crutch and went on rescuing the wounded,” Trump said. “Mike did not stop to eat, to sleep, or even to care for his own serious injury as he saved the lives of his fellow Soldiers.”

On the fourth day in Laos, Rose and others boarded the third of four helicopters that had been sent in to evacuate participants of Operation Tailwind. So many had boarded those first three helicopters, that the fourth remained empty. It would seem to be the end of his mission and a return to safety. But it was not.

That third helicopter was already damaged by enemy



*Sgt. Rose in Kontum, Vietnam, 1970. Photo courtesy of Gary M. Rose.*

fire when it picked up Rose and the remainder of the fighters, and it took off with only one engine operational. Shortly after lifting off, its remaining engine failed, meaning the aircraft would have to be “auto-rotated” to the ground.

On board that aircraft was an injured Marine door gunner who had been shot through the neck and was



*U.S. Army Sgt. Gary M. Rose (third from left) and members of Operation Tailwind, Sept. 15, 1970, the morning after the operation. Photo courtesy of Gary M. Rose.*

bleeding profusely. As the helicopter pilots attempted to bring a helicopter with no power safely to the ground, Rose tended to that young Marine's neck -- saving his life.

Ultimately, that helicopter crashed to the ground, and the resulting wreckage would provide yet another opportunity for Rose to prove his valor.

"Mike was thrown off the aircraft before it hit the ground, but he raced back to the crash site and pulled one man after another out of the smoking and smoldering helicopter as it spewed jet fuel from its ruptured tanks," Trump said.

At the conclusion of Operation Tailwind, thanks to the efforts of Mike Rose, all 16 American Soldiers were able to return home. All of them had been injured. All but three of the Montagnard fighters returned as well.

During those four days in Laos, "Mike treated an astounding 60 to 70 men," Trump said. And of the mission, which proved to be a success, "their company disrupted the enemy's continual resupply of weapons, saving countless of additional American lives."

At the White House for the event were members of Rose's family, including his wife, Margaret, his three children, and two grandchildren, and nine previous Medal of Honor recipients.

Also in attendance were 10 service members who fought alongside Rose during the operation. They included Sgt. Maj. Morris Adair, Sgt. Don Boudreau, 1st Sgt. Bernie Bright, Capt. Pete Landon, Sgt. Jim Lucas, Lt. Col. Gene McCarley, 1st Sgt. Denver Minton, Sgt. Keith Plancich, Spc. 5 Craig Schmidt, and Staff Sgt. Dave Young.

"To Mike and all the service members who fought in the battle: You've earned the eternal gratitude of the entire American nation," Trump said. "You faced down the evils of communism, you defended our flag, and you showed the world the unbreakable resolve of the American armed forces. Thank you. And thank you very much."

After speaking, Trump placed the Medal of Honor around Rose's neck.

Following the Medal of Honor ceremony, Rose said he believed the medal he'd been awarded was not only for him, but for all those who served -- especially those who had fought in combat but who had not been able to be recognized due to the classified nature of their operations.

"This award, which I consider a collective medal, is for all of the men, to include the Air Force and the Marines who helped us," Rose said. "This is our medal. We all earned it. And to a great extent, it is for all the men who fought for those seven years in MACSOG, and even further



**Gary M. Rose promoted to the rank of Captain at Fort Sill, Okla., Dec. 19, 1977. Photo courtesy of Gary M. Rose.**

than that, for all the Special Forces groups who fought and died in that war.

"In honor of all those individuals that went for so many years, when the military didn't recognize the fact that MACSOG even existed, and all of those men that fought -- this kind of brings it home. And now our story has been told, and now with this award I am convinced that they have been recognized for the great service they provided to this country. Thank you and God bless the republic of the United States."



**Gary Michael "Mike" Rose, the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) medic received the Medal of Honor, Oct. 23, for his heroic actions in Laos back in September 1970. U.S. Army courtesy photo.**

**AIRBORNE**

**U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND**



# SF chief model of resilience

*By U.S. Army Staff Sgt.  
Christopher Harper  
1st Special Forces Group  
(Airborne)*

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Shane Gandy, the company operations officer for Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) is one of those few. While serving in Afghanistan in 2010 Gandy survived an ambush involving an improvised explosive device made from more than 150 pounds of homemade explosive, a common tactic used by Taliban forces at the time. Among Gandy's injuries were the partial amputation of his right hand and the shattering of both of his legs.

"I was fortunate in my situation, we had our battalion surgeon, Shawn Alderman, on this patrol and none of my guys were killed," Gandy said. "I took the brunt of the IED and of the injuries. I'll take that every day and twice on Sunday."

Suffice to say he viewed his survival not as a signal that his service to his country had been completed, but rather as an opportunity to continue to fight.

"My goal was to finally be put in a category where they were actually fixing me; putting things back together enough that I would get the most of what remained" Gandy said. "This was a dark time for me as the final outcome for my injuries and recovery always seemed to be in flux and I just wanted to get back to anything familiar. I just wanted to get back to what I knew."

Gandy chose to endure years of painful surgeries and rehabilitation with one goal in mind – to return to the force.

Initially, while in the hospital "small victories" seemed to carry the day.

"Almost a year post injury I had actually made the decision to have my left leg amputated," he explained. "At this point I had my leg but it had very little functionality. While at the Center for the Intrepid in San Antonio, I had an orthopedic corrective surgery and was fitted for an ExoSymbiotic orthotic device."

For the first time in more than a year he was able to walk without pain and without a limp.

That's when Gandy began to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

"Now my goal of being back in my unit continuing to



*Chief Warrant Officer 4 Shane Gandy, the 2017 Peter J. Ortiz-OSS Award recipient, showing the partial amputation and recovery of his right hand at his wedding in 2011. The award, named highly decorated World War II Marine Corps Col. Peter Ortiz, is presented annually by the Office of Strategic Services Society, a group dedicated to preserving and honoring the legacy of the World War II organization recognized as the predecessor to U.S. Special Forces. Courtesy photo of Chief Warrant Officer 4 Shane Gandy.*

contribute was actually a reality," Gandy said.

Never knowing if he'd ever be able or capable to return, Gandy used his recovery time to both lead and mentor other injured service members as well as service providers.

"I made several friends along the way, men and women who had been wounded by war" he said. "When I was first injured I felt isolated and in a 'fish bowl' stuck within a world of strangers looking in at me. I made it a point while at Walter Reed and while at Brook Army Medical Center to meet the newly injured special operations Soldiers as soon as I could when they arrived. I offered myself up as a resource, a sounding board, or just someone to vent to. Shared experience, suffering, and hardship are a powerful unifier."

In addition to serving as a patient advocate for

wounded Soldiers, he provided feedback to the 1st SFG (A) Tactical Human Optimization, Rapid Rehabilitation and Reconditioning (THOR3) team staff and Madigan Army Medical Center on the most effective methods for caring for combat injured Soldiers.

“Some of the best medicine I received was being back in my unit amongst my brothers” Gandy said. “The THOR3 program is an amazing program, coupling a facility, strength conditioning coaches, and physical therapist all under the same roof.”

It was being around his like-minded, unforgiving, cut zero slack, no excuse accepted teammates in the Special Forces community that finally made Gandy feel like he was home. He found himself in a unique position, wedged firmly between the THOR3 staff and elite Green Berets he called his teammates.

“I became the intersection of these two disciplines,” Gandy said. “The strength coaches, physical therapist, and I, would get together and modify my workouts to fit my needs and my degraded abilities. They are every bit as responsible for my recovery as the doctors who put me back together. This facility is where the magic happened.”

While still recovering from his injuries, Gandy also served a key role as an instructor at the Achilles Dagger Course and Special Forces Sniper Course ensuring his wealth of knowledge could be passed on to the next generation of Green Berets.

He did not stop there.

Once medically cleared, Gandy returned to Afghanistan in 2013-2014 where his expertise was utilized as a member of Special Operations Task Force - West, Afghanistan (SOTF-W) as the Targeting and Affects Cell leader. Throughout the course of his career, Gandy has deployed in support of operations across Afghanistan, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Korea, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Malaysia.

Gandy’s contributions over his 23 year career was not lost on the Special Forces community in which he served.

Air Force Lt. Gen. Scott Howell, vice commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, presented Gandy the 2017 Peter J. Ortiz-OSS Award at the William J. Donovan Award Dinner in Washington D.C. on Oct. 21, 2017. The award, named for the highly decorated World War II Marine Corps Col. Peter Ortiz, is presented annually by the Office of Strategic Services Society, a group dedicated to preserving and honoring the legacy of the WWII organization recognized as the predecessor to the Special Forces.

“This is clearly a man, like Col. Ortiz, who likes to be in the thick of things and continues to work tirelessly in defense of our great nation,” said Howell of Gandy.

Gandy humbly accepted the prestigious award on behalf of the quiet professionals he’s served with throughout his career and gave credit to the hidden brothers and sisters of Special Operations.

“Not a day’s gone by that when I don my Green Beret, I somehow feel unworthy of the legacy entrusted to me from these giants who came before,” Gandy said.

Humility appears to be among professionalism, competence, resilience, and patriotism in defining Gandy.

“Since 2004, it’s been an honor to have known and worked with CW4 Shane Gandy,” said Lt. Col. Matthew Gumlak, commander of 2nd Battalion, 1st SFG (A). “He is a humble man, a dedicated and competent professional, and a fierce fighter. Shane has always been there for his fellow Soldiers, whether in combat or while navigating the military health care system. He inspires us all to be better Soldiers and Green Berets.”

Gandy credits U.S. Special Operation Command’s policy of retaining injured troops and recognizes their commitment to their own values when they say, “Troops are more important than hardware.”



**Air Force Lt. Gen. Scott Howell, vice commander, U.S. Special Operations Command (left) and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Shane Gandy, 2017 Peter Ortiz-OSS Award recipient and operations officer for Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) at the William J. Donovan Award Dinner in Washington D.C. on Oct. 21, 2017. Courtesy photo.**





AIRBORNE

# Special Forces winter warfare training

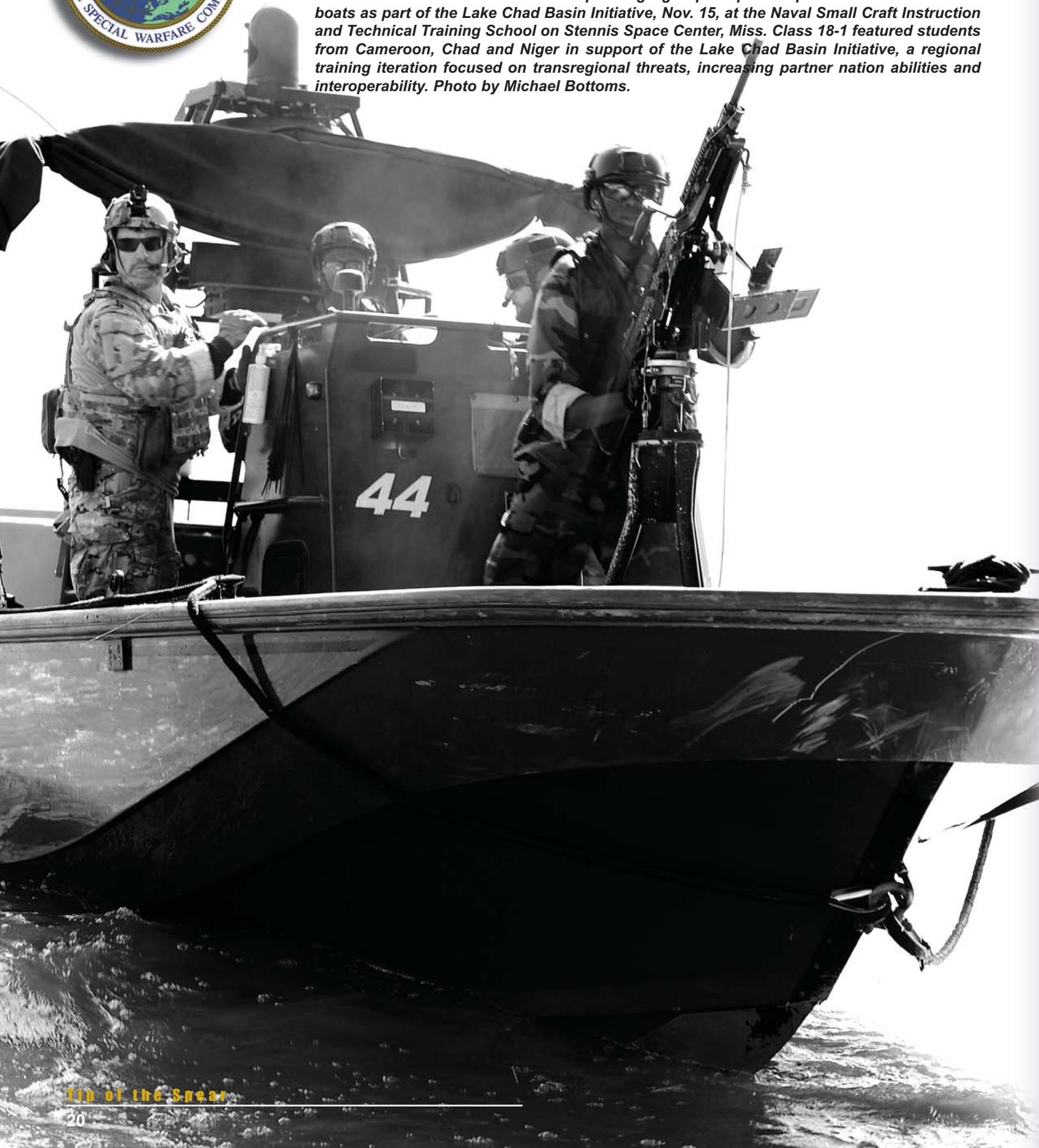


*Soldiers from the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) transport a 180-pound mock-casualty down a mountain using a stretcher they fabricated from skis and ski poles during the Winter Warfare Trainer Course at Telluride, Colorado, Dec. 6 - 15. The course teaches Green Berets the fundamentals of high-altitude and cold-weather movement, avalanche and rescue, field operations, casualty extraction, and combat tactics. The student instructors will take these skills back to their units, improving 10th Group's ability to accomplish any mission, in any environment, anywhere in the world. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jordan Weir.*



## NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

*An African team comes ashore after operating a group of Special Operations Craft – Riverine boats as part of the Lake Chad Basin Initiative, Nov. 15, at the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School on Stennis Space Center, Miss. Class 18-1 featured students from Cameroon, Chad and Niger in support of the Lake Chad Basin Initiative, a regional training iteration focused on transregional threats, increasing partner nation abilities and interoperability. Photo by Michael Bottoms.*



# NAVSCIATTS completes inaugural iteration of Lake Chad Basin Initiative

*By Angela Fry  
Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical  
Training School*

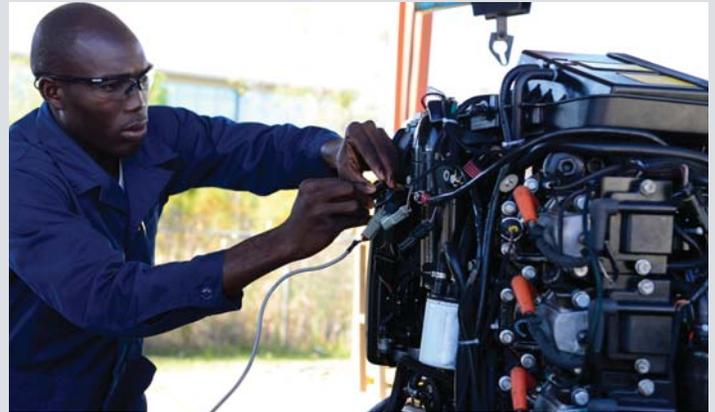
With a focus on transregional threats, increasing partner nation abilities and interoperability, the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School recently completed its inaugural iteration of the Lake Chad Basin Initiative at its facilities on the John C. Stennis Space Center in Mississippi.

Demonstrating a proven methodology for developing partner nation capacity and capabilities, NAVSCIATTS' first semester for Fiscal Year 2018 featured almost 50 security force professionals from Cameroon, Chad and Niger; all countries located in the embattled Lake Chad Basin region of West-Central Africa.

"Between April and June 2017, there have been more than 200 Boko Haram attacks within the Lake Chad Basin area," stated Chief Warrant Officer 4 Craig Griffin, NAVSCIATTS training officer. "The four countries within this area, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, are taking the initiative to protect their countries while Boko Haram steps up its recruiting within the area. Shortly after these students arrived at Stennis, the U.S. experienced those attacks, as we lost four of our own Army special operations forces along with five Nigerien counterparts."

Offering 20 formal courses of instruction, the Naval Special Warfare command incorporated seven tactical, operational and strategic courses into the iteration: Strategic Leaders International Course, Outboard Motor Maintenance and Overhaul, Technical Welding and Applied Repairs, Instructor Development Course, Patrol Craft Officer – Riverine, International Tactical Communications Course and International Small Arms Maintenance.

"The seven courses implemented in this initiative covered the full spectrum of operations," explained Griffin, who has served almost 30 years in the U.S. Navy, 24 of those years as a special operations combatant-craft crewman. "It was important for us to create this initiative using the total package approach, which is the only way to make this training a success."



***A student from Africa repairs an outboard boat engine as part of the Lake Chad Basin Initiative, Nov. 15, at the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School on Stennis Space Center, Miss. Photo by Michael Bottoms.***

On top of fielding the same mud boats and radios to the countries within Lake Chad through funding provided by the Department of State, NAVSCIATTS has provided these partner nations with the proper training to use the equipment, the right tools to fix the equipment, and education regarding proper upkeep and storage. The training has given them the ability to maintain their outboard motors, repair their hulls through fiberglass repair training and provide proper maintenance on their weapons systems. Through the Strategic Leaders Course, senior level officers received training from a regional approach and were able to witness the fruits of their junior troops' labor through the operational and tactical courses."

While future plans include mobile training team engagements within the Lake Chad Basin region, Griffin expressed the importance of training conducted within the U.S. "CONUS-based training was imperative," he expressed. "We were able to bring them to a neutral environment where the students were able to remove any barriers and focus simply on the training."

With \$2.3 million in Peacekeeping Operations funding through FY22 through the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, Griffin explained the importance of recognizing any training shortfalls. "For the future, we have to recognize our shortfalls. We already know that future



# NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

planning should include diesel engine training for generators, intel fusion training and also Unmanned Aerial Systems training. That will be addressed in LCBI 2.0, here at NAVSCIATTS' facilities. As we are able to train the trainers here at NAVSCIATTS, we will take the training into the countries. Using the "train the trainer" approach, we are creating force multipliers throughout the Lake Chad Basin area in order to set these countries up for success."

As the type units from the Lake Chad Basin region varied from land and amphibious, to special operations forces from various branches of service, the level of prior training across the forces was an issue that NAVSCIATTS instructors addressed when creating training programs for the students.

"The LCBI operators participating in the training had many different backgrounds and levels of experience," explained a special operations combatant-craft crewman currently serving as a riverine instructor at NAVSCIATTS. "Some have been in the teams at an operational level for many years with some boat experience, with others having never even ridden a bicycle before. Taking all these people with varying skill sets and forging them into a cohesive unit in a short eight weeks is a challenge in itself; add to that, you are requiring them to drive and shoot weapons from high-speed vessels with precision," the instructor continued.

The instructor, who has served as a SWCC operator for 10 years, further explained the necessity to shift from a



***A student from Africa practices welding as part of the Lake Chad Basin Initiative, Nov. 15, at the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School on Stennis Space Center, Miss. Photo by Michael Bottoms.***

"train the trainer" to a "train the fighter" mentality. "This shift provides us with students who have a desire to stay engaged and motivated during the training because their lives depend on it," he explained. "With LCBI, we are giving operators the tools necessary to take the fight to the enemy and not the other way around."

The 12-year naval veteran explained that one of the most important elements of this initiative was the ability to tailor the courses of instruction to the specific countries involved in the training.

"At NAVSCIATTS, we have a basic course of instruction that we teach to bring operators to a certain level of proficiency in order to secure and defend their native lands against all enemies. What was unique about LCBI, is we were able to tailor our course of instruction to fit the needs and demands of the real-world threat environment that they see on a daily basis. We were even able to bring in specific mud boats to integrate into the training that more closely resembled the craft that they will be working on when they return to their own countries."

NAVSCIATTS, which serves as U.S. Special Operations Command's international training center, typically offers courses in English and Spanish to its partner nation military and law enforcement agency personnel. With French being the primary shared language within the Lake Chad Basin region, NAVSCIATTS cemented its position as the premier "by, with and through" unit within the Department of Defense, by instructing all LCBI courses in French.



***An instructor teaches African students how to assemble a Mark 19 machine gun as part of the Lake Chad Basin Initiative, Nov. 15, at the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School on Stennis Space Center, Miss. Photo by Michael Bottoms.***



***International students participate in mud boat familiarization exercises in the Patrol Craft Officer – Riverine course at Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School facilities on the John C. Stennis Space Center in Mississippi. Photo by Angela Fry.***

“Missions fail and missions succeed because of the inability or ability to communicate,” explained NAVSCIATTS commander, Cmdr. John Green. “LCBI is not only the first regional iteration that NAVSCIATTS has conducted. It is also the first semester to be conducted in French.”

“This mission would not have succeeded without our 10 partner nation instructors from the special operations commands of France, Belgium and Canada. They are not merely instructors or interpreters. They are now part of the NAVSCIATTS family,” added Green, who has served more than 15 years as a Navy SEAL.

This regional training initiative also gave the NAVSCIATTS command the opportunity to work with personnel from NSW’s Cultural Engagement Unit, a unit established to assist in operations conducted in complex overseas environments through the use of language and regional experts. Petty Officer 3rd Class Paul Ela Nsa, a Cameroonian-born logistics specialist assigned to the CEU, spent nine weeks at the schoolhouse serving as instructor and interpreter with the International Small Arms Maintenance Course.

“I am very glad to have been given this opportunity to perform as an instructor and interpreter for the Lake Chad Basin training,” explained Ela Nsa, who enlisted into the U.S. Navy in 2013. “This opportunity has really provided me with the feeling that I am serving my new country, while also helping my native country of Cameroon and all

of its partners to defeat their enemies.”

Ela Nsa, who arrived in the United States on Dec. 29, 2013, was born in the village of Nkomakak in Cameroon. The 37-year-old sailor, who carries around a vacuum-sealed American flag in his car to express his pride in citizenship and service, knows all too well the value of military training within the states.

“The fact that these troops from Cameroon, Chad and Niger are training together in the United States will assist in building a strong network among them,” Ela Nsa expressed. “The fact that some also bring established friendships and familiarization with shared interests and issues are benefits for this training evolution, as it will reinforce future troop interaction and increase teamwork for mission success.”

Those future relationships and teamwork are instrumental as these security forces return home and return to the battlefields of their countries. “It was a very good idea to bring these troops together to train,” Ela Nsa explained. “They are all fighting against the same enemy and this training will provide them with more discipline, devotion to mission and motivation.”

As the first iteration of LCBI completed with a formal graduation on Nov. 30, the way forward for NAVSCIATTS is to determine what the transregional issues are that affect each global combatant command. Whether it is the region of the Black Sea pertaining to Romania and Bulgaria, or narcotic/human trafficking within regions of the U.S. Northern and Southern Commands, NAVSCIATTS continues to plan regional initiatives for fiscal year 2019.



***African students practice operating in a group of Special Operations Craft – Riverine boats as part of the Lake Chad Basin Initiative, Nov. 15, at the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School on Stennis Space Center, Miss. Photo by Michael Bottoms.***



# SECAF awards Air Force Cross, medals to Air Commandos

By U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy  
24th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs

The team was trapped, outnumbered and bombarded by grenades and machine gun fire from elevated positions. Bullets ricocheted around them.

Ordnance from circling, friendly aircraft exploded meters from their position, shaking the ground, as smoke from an exploded cache smothered the village.

Their mission was originally to kill or capture high value Taliban leaders that fateful night Nov. 2, 2016, in Kunduz province, Afghanistan, but as the enemy closed in around them, they quickly realized their mission had changed: survive.

## SECAF commends Airmen for valor

The 24th Secretary of the Air Force, Heather Wilson, awarded ten valorous medals, including the Air Force Cross, to Air Force Special Operations Command Air Commandos in a ceremony, Oct. 17, at Hurlburt Field, Florida.

“This mission was a perfect example of the power of our Special Tactics Airmen when teamed with American airpower and the nation’s elite ground forces,” said Wilson. “It reminds the world of what makes us who we are, and it reminds our enemies that there is no place to hide.”

Staff Sgt. Richard Hunter, a Special Tactics combat controller with the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron, was awarded the Air Force’s highest medal, the Air Force Cross, for gallantry against an armed enemy of the U.S. in combat.

Special Tactics Airmen are the Air Force’s ground special operations force, specializing in everything from precision strike to personnel recovery on the battlefield and during humanitarian crises.

Additionally, five members of Spooky 43, the AC-130U gunship aircrew that supported the ground special operations team during the same operation were awarded Distinguished Flying Crosses and four received Air Medals with Valor.

The AC-130U “Spooky” Gunship’s primary missions are close air support, air interdiction and armed reconnaissance.



*Secretary of the Air Force, Heather Wilson, pins the Air Force Cross on Staff Sgt. Richard Hunter, a Special Tactics Airman with the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron, during a combined medal ceremony, Oct. 17, at Hurlburt Field, Fla. The SECAF awarded ten Air Force Special Operations Command Air Commandos valorous medals, including the Air Force Cross, for their combined efforts during a fierce firefight in a village near Kunduz Province, Afghanistan on Nov. 2, 2016. Staff Sgt. Richard Hunter, a combat controller with the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron, was awarded the Air Force Cross and nine aircrew members on Spooky 43, an AC-130U Gunship with the 4th Special Operations Squadron, received Distinguished Flying Crosses and Air Medals with valor. Their actions on the ground, and in the air, were credited with saving more than 50 lives and eliminating 27 enemy forces. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.*

Close air support missions include supporting troops in contact and providing convoy escort. The gunship is outfitted with 40mm, 105mm cannons and a 25mm Gatling gun for precise and powerful strikes on the battlefield.

“This mission proved to be the ultimate test of our Air Commandos in air-to-ground integration on the battlefield,” said Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, commander of AFSOC. “Hunter and Spooky 43’s precision strike capabilities were pushed to the limits under extreme fire to eliminate our enemies and defend our joint partners.”

The actions of Spooky 43 in the air and Hunter on the ground were credited with eliminating the enemy and saving the lives of the U.S. Army Special Forces team and 43 Afghan soldiers involved in the deadly ambush.

“What was truly extraordinary when I read this story was the amazing precision and professionalism of the team,” said Wilson. “When we need swift, precise violence, we call them. There is no better friend and no worse enemy than the United States special operations forces.”

### **Chaos on the ground, hate raining from above**

Hunter was embedded with a U.S. Army Special Forces team and their Afghan partners when they were ambushed by heavy machine gun fire from an elevated position as they entered a village, Nov. 2, 2016, near Kunduz, Afghanistan.

“We came across a large, metal gate that had been closed prior to our arrival; I want you to imagine something 12 feet tall, about a quarter inch thick steel, a pretty massive piece of metal in front of us,” said Hunter. “We found ourselves in a three-way ambush, 270 degrees all around us.”

Finding themselves trapped in the village, and in a dire situation, Hunter and his team withstood an enemy ambush of grenades and machine gun fire, resulting in four friendly force injuries.

Hunter charged forward under enemy fire, leaving cover to drag a wounded teammate back with one hand, while using his free hand to call in suppressive fire through close air support from the Spooky 43 crew overhead.

“At this point, [the team] is dragging [casualties] down the alleyway while still returning fire, and we’re using all of our weapons on the aircraft to destroy fighting positions and buildings ... all within about 12 meters of Staff Sgt. Hunter,” said Maj. Alexander Hill, aircraft commander of Spooky 43. “We told Hunter to put his head down, and we fired closer than I think anyone’s ever fired an air-burst round.”

As the Spooky 43 crew received the calls from Hunter on the ground for the firepower necessary to deter the enemy, they were required to exceed cooling requirements on the 105mm Howitzer cannon, risking potential detonation inside the aircraft. With their expert skill and coordination, the crew was able to support the ground forces with the 40mm cannon and at times forced to manually fire rounds called on by Hunter to defeat the enemy.

According to Hill, the crew actively fired every weapon available to them for 107 consecutive minutes during the battle.

“To see the teamwork in particular and how good and professional everyone was, when they absolutely had to be – I couldn’t be more proud to be a part of that,” said Hill.

With the smoke from the battle becoming too thick for the team to maneuver through the village, Hunter took direction from the aircraft overhead as he continued to call in enemy positions. Hunter expended all AC-130U point-

detonate 105mm rounds, with only eight airburst rounds remaining. With the enemy element closing on the ground forces, the aircrew was able to stabilize the aircraft and fire an airburst round, typically used in open fields, at an unprecedented 12 meters from friendly forces, annihilating the insurgents.

Hunter and the Spooky 43 crew worked together to call in fire from AH-64 Apache helicopters, preparing medical helicopters to evacuate casualties and activating the quick reaction force needed to evacuate the friendly forces from the village.

“There was so much chaos on the ground, and everybody above us had our backs completely,” said Hunter. “It was a beautiful, beautiful thing, because as scared as we all were, and as bad as the situation was – at no point did I fear for my life and neither did my brothers because overhead we have these guys in the gunship raining all kinds of hate and taking care of us completely.”

The combined actions of Hunter and the Spooky 43 aircrew proved decisive on the battlefield and demonstrated the enormous impact of AFSOC’s precision strike core mission. Precision strike provides ground forces with specialized capabilities to find, engage and assess targets. This synergy is credited for saving thousands of lives over the last 16 years of war.

“I am extremely proud of what our Airmen accomplished when they were tested on the battlefield,” said Webb. “They did what I know every Airman in this command would do when facing a relentless enemy. They overcame, adapted and pushed the boundaries of possible.”



***The Secretary of the Air Force, Heather Wilson, applauds four members of Spooky 43, an AC-130U Spooky Gunship aircrew with the 4th Special Operations Squadron, after presenting them Air Medals with Valor, Oct. 17, at Hurlburt Field, Fla. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.***



*Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, pins the Silver Star Medal on Chief Master Sgt. Michael West, a Special Tactics operator with the 24th Special Operations Wing, during a ceremony Dec. 15, at Hurlburt Field, Fla. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.*

# Finding the way: Special Tactics chief awarded Silver Star Medal

*By U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy  
24th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

Their mission was to act as a blockade for a NATO ground operation tasked with clearing an insurgent safe haven. But what began as an ancillary tasking, ended with one Airman decimating the majority of enemy forces and saving his team from devastation.

Chief Master Sgt. Michael West, a Special Tactics operator with the 24th Special Operations Wing, utilized 58 coalition aircraft delivering 24,000 pounds of munitions, turning the tide of battle, and now he's receiving the Silver Star Medal.

During a ceremony Dec. 15, on Hurlburt Field, Florida, the commander of the Air Force Special Operations Command, Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, presented the nation's third highest medal for gallantry against an armed enemy of the U.S. in combat to West. West's actions occurred 11 years earlier, when he was deployed with U.S. Army Special Forces

teams in support of Operation Medusa.

"This ceremony is about the Air Commando culture epitomized in Special Tactics and Special Tactics being epitomized in that chief right there," said Webb. "It's a culture of willingly facing seemingly insurmountable problems; it's about courage, endurance, wisdom. It's figuring out how to solve problems and getting 'er done. It's about finding the way."

West was originally awarded the Bronze Star Medal for his actions in May 2007, but due to a recent DOD-wide review, his package was resubmitted for an upgrade.

"I am honored and humbled for the recognition, and I wish the [Special Forces] team guys were here to share this," said West. "It was a great opportunity to work with a bunch of professionals, and I know that I have friends for life."

As a Special Tactics combat controller, West is a part of a highly-trained special operations force who integrates air power into the special operations' ground scheme of maneuver.

“Special Tactics is the connective tissue between the ground and air and you can ask our Army and Navy counterparts who will not leave home with Special Tactics,” said Webb. “Special Tactics exemplifies what it means in that “find the way” Air Commando culture, and West epitomizes Special Tactics.”

Webb said we are living in a “golden age” of Special Tactics, citing the 10 Air Force Crosses and this ceremony marking the 42nd Silver Star Medal awarded to a Special Tactics operator since 9/11.

### **Operation Medusa**

On Sept. 5, 2006, then-Master Sgt. West was assigned to three different Special Forces teams alongside three platoons of Afghan National Army forces during a deployment to Panjwai Village, Afghanistan.

Operation MEDUSA was a Canadian-led effort to clear a village, believed to be a Taliban safe haven of 700-1000 enemy forces. A Canadian ground force would clear the village from west to east and the Special Forces teams, alongside West, would set up a blockade position south of the village.

As the NATO coalition ground force began their movement, they were met with fierce resistance, resulting in a crippling amount of casualties that forced them to disengage. In an attempt to salvage the operation, the task force directed the special operations teams to seize and hold elevated terrain to observe and attack enemy positions.

“The first day we approached this hill, we met heavy resistance ... the enemy saw us coming from the south, and we started to get shot at from tree lines on either side of us,” said West.

At this time, West coordinated airpower from a B-1 Lancer bomber aircraft to drop eight bombs on the enemy and their resupply compound. This was the first time West would utilize airpower to eliminate the enemy, but it would not be his last.

Following that firefight, the teams decided to advance up the hill further to investigate and clear an old enemy compound. Due to the high probability of enemy engagement, West coordinated two A-10 Thunderbolt aircraft to watch over them.

They cleared the buildings and as they began to climb higher, an ANA soldier stepped on an anti-personnel mine.

“We were all blown back trying to figure out what happened and once the dust settled, we heard the screaming,” said West. “The soldier was lying there with half of his leg gone, and he was really banged up.”

West and his team leader quickly assessed the man for injuries and applied a tourniquet to stop the bleeding and

decided he needed to be evacuated. As the team struggled to carry the injured ANA soldier off the hill, a vehicle in the team’s convoy hit an improvised explosive device, which triggered a full-on assault from enemy forces.

“As soon as it blew, the tree lines on either side of us fully erupted with gunfire ... like they were waiting for that IED to explode,” said West. “We started receiving [rocket-propelled grenade] fire and small arms fire and my team was completely exposed.”

The joint special operations team began to fire back, but West did what multiple Special Tactics Airmen before and after him have done countless times, he called for airpower.

“I immediately put those A-10s into action and started putting them in gun runs on the tree line,” said West. “I was so focused on ensuring the enemy shooting at us was getting eliminated that I didn’t hear my team leader yelling at me to duck for cover – I was completely exposed up there.”

Multiple gun runs on the tree line allowed for his team to move behind cover using the convoy of vehicles.

Eventually, the enemy began to maneuver away from the relentless gun runs and into an open field. This allowed West to call in a danger-close 500-pound air-burst bomb to eliminate the remaining enemy. That was just the first day.

According to Webb, the Special Forces team continuously stated, “We knew we could sleep when Mike was working.” Webb said, “There is no higher praise in special operations.”

On the final day of the operation, the team began to clear areas around the hill for remaining enemy forces. They were split into three groups and once West and his team were a few kilometers away, one of the teams was ambushed while clearing huts used to dry grapes.

“I heard my name over the radio and they needed my help – and they needed it quickly,” said West.

His team drove directly at the enemy forces firing from yet another tree line. This time, West utilized two F-18 Hornet fighter aircraft to push the enemy out. West used this as another opportunity to eliminate the remaining forces with another danger-close 500-pound bomb.

“It completely eliminated the threat,” said West. “It went from a chaotic situation, screaming over the radio, to the enemy is now running away.”

At the end of the five-day operation, West was credited with saving 51 American lives and 33 coalition partners while eliminating more than 500 enemy from their safe haven. West’s team came over following the final engagement with the team leader shaking his hand.

“Mike will never buy a beer when he’s in front of me,” said the team leader.



# Last living WWII OSS maritime frogman relives history

By U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Bryann K. Whitley  
Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command

1st Marine Raider Support Battalion held an event giving U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command personnel the opportunity to learn about the involvement of World War II Raiders in the war and their legacy that lives on at Camp Pendleton, Calif., Sept. 29. World War II Marine Raiders played a large role in the success of World War II, on and off the battlefields.

Many in attendance know of the World War II Raiders' victories on the battlefield, but their aid off the battlefield is less known. With the establishment of the Office of Strategic Services came the creation of the OSS Special Maritime Unit A Swimmer, also known as the country's "first frogmen." The Raiders' facilities and training methods became the foundation of the frogmen's training and preparation for the war.

The assistant operations chief for 1st MRSB's Supply and Logistics section introduced Erick Simmel, the battalion's guest speaker who would lecture on the history of the OSS Maritime Unit. Accompanying Simmel at the lecture was the last living OSS Special Maritime Unit A frogman, Henry "Hank" Weldon.

In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt reorganized the Office of the Coordinator of Information into the Office of Strategic Services, after U.S. entry into World War II. OSS founder Maj. Gen. William J. Donovan, a World War I hero and Wall Street lawyer, restructured the organization to similarly match the British Special Operations Executive and Secret Intelligence Service operations.

"The intent was to create an elite agency with units created for conducting guerrilla warfare as well as collecting and sabotaging intelligence behind enemy lines," said Simmel, an OSS Maritime Unit descendant and historical expert of World War II special operations forces.

One of the many units created were the frogmen. These men received an extraordinary waterman-operative skillset to use during World War II operations. The men who made it into the unit were the first swimmers sent to attend the Marine Raider Training Course at Camp Pendleton in the fall and winter of 1943-1944. These men were trained in both



**Erick Simmel, left, Office of Strategic Services Maritime Unit descendant and historical expert on World War II special operations forces, presents a lecture alongside the last living frogman from the Office of Strategic Services Maritime Unit, Henry Weldon, on Camp Pendleton, Calif., Sept. 29. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Bryann K. Whitley.**

Marine Raider skills and underwater demolition techniques.

The purpose for both training courses was to prepare the frogmen for reconnaissance, underwater demolition, infiltration and exfiltration by sea and intelligence gathering. Though equipment, tactics and techniques have changed over the last 70 years, today's Raiders and the OSS frogmen emphasize the same skillsets in training.

After the lecture, the Raiders were introduced to weapons and equipment used during that time period at a series of static displays. Amongst those displays were images of the frogmen and Raiders collaborating with allied British forces.

British special operators also participated in the frogman training pipeline, developing their skills under the tutelage of Raider instructors. Along with attaining new training, British and U.S. forces exchanged information on warfare tactics, technology and logistical concepts to use against German forces. The training consisted mainly of techniques needed for infiltration by sea.

Instructors for this course consisted of World War II Raider officers and enlisted personnel, who trained the

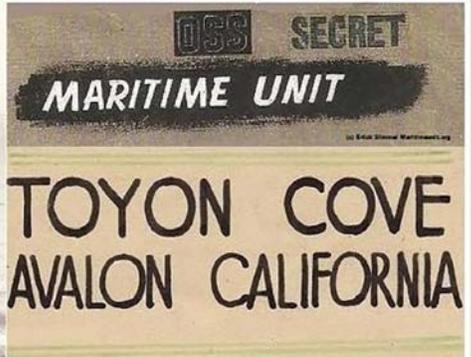
frogmen in mock attacks designed to test harbor defenses. In one exercise scenario, combat swimmers were tasked with successfully breaching America's maritime harbor defenses.

"They gave us a bunch of dummy TNT at high tide, dropped us off about a half-mile offshore and told us to plant it all along the coast while our commanding officers kept watch," said Weldon. "One of the commanding officers said he thought he saw something, but they didn't see us. When daylight came, the tide went out and all you could see was the dummy TNT all along the shore."

This ability to get in and out without detection, allowed

the World War II Raiders and Navy frogmen to be two of the most effective fighting forces of World War II. The skills learned from the World War II Raiders and used by the OSS Special Maritime Unit A swimmers proved the value of their direct action operations behind enemy lines during World War II.

As World War II came to a close, President Harry S. Truman dissolved the OSS and its special maritime units. The lineage and legacy of the first frogmen carries on today in elements of U.S. Army Special Operations Command and the U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command's underwater demolitions and SEAL community.



**OSS MARITIME UNIT OPERATIONAL SWIMMER TRAINING  
AREA WP & WA  
SPECIAL MARITIME GROUP-A  
PADDLE BOARD / SURFBOARD TRAINING**  
(Note: "Cadre and gear all participants as used on the OSS Swimmer mock attack on City of Avalon Harbor, Catalina Island)  
OSS Area WA Toyon(Bay)Cove Beach  
(with Cove pier in background),  
Santa Catalina Island California; December 1943  
Cadre Pictured:  
1-Warren Christensen 6-Leonard L. Barnhill  
2-Robert A. Black 7-William C. Wright  
3-Gordon Soltau 8-Gerald L. Bennatts  
4-Henry T. Weldon 9-Leslie L. Bodine  
5-William E. Moore 10-Wright S. Travis

A group photo of the Office of Strategic Services Special Maritime Unit Group A frogmen from World War II on Santa Catalina Island, Calif., December 1943. Erick Simmel, OSS Maritime Unit descendant and historical expert on World War II special operations forces, presented a lecture alongside the last living frogman from the OSS Maritime Unit, Henry Weldon. Courtesy Photo.



*Marines and Sailors with U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, demonstrate proper removal of a gas mask from a simulated chemical contact victim while training for the medical management of chemical and biological casualties during an exercise at Stone Bay on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., Dec. 6. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Salvador R. Moreno.*

# Combating chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction

*By U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Bryann K. Whitley  
Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command*

Marines and Sailors with U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command conducted a countering weapons of mass destruction course for service members to learn to combat, adapt to and overcome chemical and biological contaminations, at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Dec. 5-8, 2017.

Chemical weapons have been around since World War I, but have seldom been used in battle following international horror at their inhumane effects and devastation. Chemical weapons include nerve, blister and choking agents that can be dispensed as liquids,

vapors, gases and aerosols. Biological weapons can include toxins, bacteria, viruses and fungi released into the world with the intent to kill and maim.

“The threat is very real today,” said Timothy Byrne, director of the Chemical Casualty Care Division at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense. “Chemical weapons, such as mustard and chlorine gases, have been used in Iraq and Syria in recent events.”

Operation Inherent Resolve, the international coalition effort to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, conducted airstrikes on ISIL chemical weapons facilities the week before the training, underscoring Byrne’s point.

Marines and Sailors learned to detect signs and symptoms of a weapons employment, how to don protective clothing and how to treat victims without contaminating themselves in the process. Service members also studied past cases of chemical and biological incidents, in order to evaluate what could or could not have been done differently to improve the medical outcome.

“While chemical weapons symptoms can be seen in minutes to hours, biological weapons can take days before symptoms are seen,” said U.S. Army Capt. Perry Wiseman, a nurse with the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Disease. “It is important for them to be able to recognize any symptoms as soon as possible to limit any spread that can occur.”

Common chemical weapons symptoms can include vomiting, convulsions, skin irritation, headaches, and respiratory difficulty. Biological symptoms tend to present themselves as flu-like, making it difficult to differentiate between a biological weapon and a common cold. It is imperative for the Marines and Sailors to be actively cognizant of these signs and symptoms to mitigate further contamination and expedite triage and care for victims.

“This training afforded our Marines and Sailors an opportunity to be of the highest state of readiness,” said MARSOC’s force health protection officer with Health Services Support. “[It allows them] to go out and operate in an environment where they can potentially face a chemical or biological warfare agent and mitigate harmful exposures.”

Marines conduct biennial chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) training as part of their required training. MARSOC wanted to identify gaps in the current requirement, so they could develop sustainable training solutions and prepare deploying teams with this knowledge. While the course reinforced basic skills learned in CBRN training, CWMD focused more on chemical and biological threats and how to counteract their effects with appropriate medical aid.

“This is multi-service training on field management, decontamination, and medical treatment of biological and chemical warfare agents,” said Byrne. “It is also customized to the needs of the units in order to be mission ready.”

During the course, the Marines and Sailors donned their Mission Oriented Protective Posture gear and executed reaction drills for numerous scenarios regarding

a chemical weapons attack, including decontamination of chemically-contaminated patients. They also analyzed steps and procedures to take when handling biological weapons and what treatments or medicines are available to control these biological threats.

“Our hope is that they never encounter a chemical or biological environment, but if the teams do, we want them to have the skills to effectively treat and mitigate exposure,” said MARSOC’s force health protection officer. “The next life they may save could be their own, and being able to recognize signs, symptoms and exposure could be that lifesaving factor.”



**Marines and Sailors with U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, work to decontaminate a simulated chemical contact victim during a medical management of chemical and biological casualties training exercise at Stone Bay on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., Dec. 6. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Salvador R. Moreno.**



# **Gulf Coast region hosts realistic military training RAVEN**

*By U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Bryann K. Whitley  
Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command*

Service members and staff with U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command executed a realistic military training exercise in the Gulf Coast region, Nov. 1-11 to prepare Marines and Sailors with 1st Marine Raider Battalion for their upcoming deployment.

MARSOC personnel partnered with different U.S. military forces and Marine Corps units during Unit Readiness Exercise RAVEN 18-02. RAVEN is the culminating exercise for Marine special operations

companies and subordinate Marine special operations teams, and is designed to assess the MSOC's and MSOTs' capabilities to effectively complete their missions.

MARSOC's Training and Education Branch conducts six such exercises each fiscal year. During these exercises, MARSOC units get their first opportunity to work with supporting units and subject matter experts they will likely work with during a deployment, said an exercise role player.

"The MSOTs get out what they put into the exercise," said the G-7 exercise branch chief. "They are paired with a replicate partner-nation force and are provided a varied problem set that allows them to work



*Marines with Marine Air Control Group-28 and 2nd Marine Information Group perform casualty evacuation with Marines from 1st Marine Raider Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command during a medical training exercise in Hattiesburg, Miss., Nov. 4. Marines with 1st MRB participated in RAVEN 18-02, a 10-day realistic military training exercise designed to assess the Marine special operations companies and Marine special operations teams' capability to effectively complete their missions. Marines with MACG-28 and II MIG played the role of partner nation forces during the exercise. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Bryann K. Whitley.*

through internal processes as an enabled MSOT.”

MARSOC units frequently deploy with intelligence, communication and logistics enablers to execute a variety of special operations missions to include sensitive activities, tactical collections, special reconnaissance and direct-action raids. It takes an average of three enablers for every shooter to execute a mission effectively, said the G-7 exercise officer.

RAVEN 18-02 depended upon the joint help of Army and Air Force units along with Marines from Marine Air Control Group-28 out of Cherry Point, N.C., and 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group out of Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Marines with MACG-28 and II MIG participated as the partner nation force during this exercise. Critical skills operators with the MSOTs were tasked with training, advising and assisting the forces in preparation for operations.

“Supporting units, from the Marine Expeditionary Forces, provide a list of desired training objectives to be accomplished during RAVEN, based off their unit’s training plan,” said the G-7 exercise branch chief. “The MSOTs design a program of instruction that accomplishes these objectives, while meeting the required training to allow for a successful bilateral execution of the event.”

The G-7 assigns mentors to the MSOTs to better evaluate the units’ effectiveness and abilities as they train their partner-nation force role players. The mentors offer operational experience and leadership to the units in order to prepare them for the deployed environment. To add more value to the overall exercise, mentors are assigned to the teams according to their recent deployed experience within the units’ anticipated area of operations. Those areas of operations are Special Operations Command (SOC) Pacific, SOC Central, or SOC Africa.

“They are provided critical feedback from mentors across the major subordinate commands, who have recent and relevant operational experience,” said the G-7 exercise branch chief.



**Marines with Marine Air Control Group-28 and 2nd Marine Information Group provide cover during a raid with the guidance of Marines from 1st Marine Raider Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command in Hattiesburg, Miss., Nov. 6. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Bryann K. Whitley.**

The units’ ability to train realistically in populated areas is also critical to the exercise. Marines with MARSOC and the role players practiced insertion and breaching, fast-roping, close quarter combat, along with other critical skills. Because each RAVEN exercise spans across three southern states on the Gulf Coast, the G-7 exercise officer said the training would not be possible without the cooperation and assistance from local government officials and the community.

“Rapport is important and relationships matter,” said the G-7 exercise officer. “The local community feels they are a part of our unit readiness and success.”

Being able to complete these simulated deployment missions in and around cities and in populated areas presents valuable elements to the exercise. This prepares the units for similar situations and environments when deployed.

“Being able to replicate real-world situations during this exercise is key to determining the units’ readiness for deployment,” said a mentor. “It allows us, and the teams, to see how effective they can be in a situation as close to a real-life scenario that we can give them.”

Overall, Marines gained self and unit awareness, learned their strengths and weaknesses, and determined what changes they need to make before deployment based on what they learned during the exercise.



# SOFWERX: A smart factory of innovation helping the warfighter

By Michael Bottoms

USSOCOM Office of Communication

Located in the historic Ybor City district in Tampa, Florida, SOFWERX is a dynamic thought laboratory designed to create a high rate of return for all participants. The historic red brick walls of the old cigar factories of Ybor contrast with the tall stools, wooden tables and high-definition television screens looking like facilities in Silicon Valley. Walking through the facility you see a variety of circuit boards, 3-D printers, and specialty tools laying around. On the walls hang pictures of the operators from War II's Office of Strategic Services. Old and new complement each other.

A factory of ideas and innovation, SOFWERX is a public-private innovator of technology designs fusing academia, civilian companies and other nontraditional DoD partners who work on United States Special Operations Command's most challenging problems. The prototyping, experimentation and radical collaboration conducted at SOFWERX is at the heart of special operations forces centered innovation. Also, warfighters are brought in at the center of innovation creating a roadmap to better identify solutions meeting their needs and keeps them grounded in the process of discovery.

"Today, we are seeing increasing threats from the use of commercial off-the-shelf technologies employed as weapons or manipulated for other threat purposes. This creates an imperative for using new tools and approaches such as SOFWERX to off-set these tactics," Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commander U.S. Special Operations Command said. "I view SOFWERX as an integral tool and process of how we conduct effective requirements and resource management, drive a culture of rapid and meaningful innovation and continuously seek efficiencies in our acquisition process while taking reasonable risk for big trade-offs in value for our force."

SOFWERX is a techy acronym roughly translating to Special Operations Forces Works and was created under a partnership intermediary agreement between the Doolittle Institute and USSOCOM, signed in 2015. Doolittle is



**U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, visited SOFWERX's ThunderDrone Rapid Prototyping Event II in Tampa, Fla., Jan. 31. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.**

chartered to facilitate and assist SOCOM with accelerating delivery of innovative capabilities to USSOCOM through exploration, experimentation and assessment of promising technology.

"The agreement created an avenue for USSOCOM to reach entrepreneurs, small businesses, and creative talent outside the traditional DoD market, as well as have a place where the SOF operator, acquirer, and inventor could collaborate and think about the challenges of the future," said Kelly Stratton-Feix, director, Acquisition Agility Special Operations Forces Acquisition, Technology & Logistics.

SOFWERX has created a network of more than 7000 members in what they call their ecosystem. Through the use of a growing ecosystem, promotion of divergent thought, and neutral facilitation, SOFWERX is bringing the right minds together to solve challenging problems.

"The SOFWERX ecosystem has proven that a non-traditional and diverse community can produce valuable new and novel solutions to our problem sets and challenges," Stratton-Feix said. "Providing the platform for our operators to interact and collaborate with the ecosystem to discover the art of the possible is at the heart of the SOFWERX mission."

Since 2015, SOFWERX has produced new designs for



**Individual Aerial Mobility System single-man flying machine. Courtesy photo.**

consideration enabling more rapid follow-on acquisitions for next generation communication systems for special operations forces vehicles; concepts, initial designs and prototypes for new bow bumpers for SOF surface craft; casualty evacuation modifications for SOF vehicles and initial design studies for weaponizing SOF surface combatant boats to name a few.

“Government used to be the leader of research and development with civilian corporations following behind. Now that has flipped,” said Tambrein Bates, director of SOFWERX. “You have Airbnb as the largest hotel and they own no buildings, Uber is the world’s largest taxi service yet own no cars, Amazon is the largest shopping center, but is not brick and mortar. They are all platforms and marketplaces. We want SOFWERX to be a platform, a market place for the warfighter.”

An example of SOFWERX’s innovation is the GPS puck. “Until recently, a combat controller would typically carry the GPS for a unit and it is heavy and the size of a brick. The puck is light and the size of tape measure and every operator can carry it so everyone knows exactly where they are,” Bates said.

Another potential unique platform developed for SOF is the Individual Aerial Mobility System single-man flying machine invented in France. “We at SOFWERX collaborated its military development and conducted training on this

product with a one-man, 350 pound payload, traveling up to 120 mph untethered. In fact, a SOF operator was taught in one week how to fly the machine.”

Another example of SOFWERX’s innovation was a prize challenge event called “Jump the dog,” a canine oxygen mask for High Altitude High Opening parachute jumps. The challenge was to design a system capable of providing 100% oxygen on demand for 15,000-35,000 feet jumps. Three prizes were awarded and now SOFWERX is doing a rapid prototyping for the winning design team concept.

SOFWERX heavily invests in innovation, but also leverages commercial off-the-shelf products for SOF use. An example of this is the Go-Tenna, which allows use of cell phones as point to point or network radios. “We have access to the supply side and an important role we have is to expand that supply side,” said Bates.

The combination of innovation, ideas and exploiting off-the-shelf technology has the support of the USSOCOM commander and he recognizes the full value of the unique contributions of SOFWERX.

“SOFWERX has proven to be a valuable tool for the command. Operators and staff elements across all components have engaged their unique capabilities to have rapid and meaningful innovation,” Gen. Thomas said. “Headquarters, component and theater special operations command’s efforts to continue and expand use of SOFWERX capabilities demonstrate our initiative in support of the secretary of defense lines of effort to restore readiness, attract new partners and bring business reforms to the DoD.”



**Service members and Praxis Technologies Inc. employees discuss unmanned aircraft systems technology at SOFWERX’s ThunderDrone Rapid Prototyping Event II in Tampa, Fla., Jan. 30, 2018. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.**



# **USSOCOM's J3-International: A model strengthening relationships among global SOF partner nations**

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

U.S. Special Operations Command permanently hosts the largest gathering of international Special Operations Forces personnel outside of NATO, known as J3-International, according to U.S. Air Force Maj. Eric Doi, J3-I engagement branch chief.

J3-I and its international representatives form a unique team, and provide unique opportunities for coordination, collaboration, and learning for the USSOCOM enterprise.

“We embody the SOF truth: people are more important than hardware,” Doi said.

The broad purpose of J3-I is to provide a headquarters component for personnel seeking to coordinate or collaborate with partner nation SOF on current or future operations, capability development, or other multinational issues.

“Every officer and senior noncommissioned officer assigned was handpicked by his nation’s special operations command to serve a one to three year tour at USSOCOM headquarters,” said Doi. “All representatives come with a broad range of special operations experience, often gained in combat.”

Collectively, the J3-I representatives have amassed more than 30 years of combat deployments since 9/11, and most have forces currently deployed in support of ongoing global operations, he said.

“In addition to a history of strategic and operational skillsets, many have tactical backgrounds as snipers, combat divers, counter-insurgents and more,” he said. “The J3-I ranks include former commanders and representatives from many globally respected conventional and special operations organizations, including France’s Commando Kieffer, the Lithuanian Jaegers, and the German Kommando Spezialkräfte among others.”



***New Zealand soldiers conduct a simulated raid on a mock village during the Bold Quest 17.2 capabilities demonstration on Fort Stewart, Ga., Oct. 26. U.S. Special Operations Command conducted the demonstration with U.S., allied and partner nations to enhance communications network interoperability to enhance warfighter capabilities. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.***

To further enable collaboration, J3-I acts as a hub for USSOCOM’s special operations liaison officers, who serve at select U.S. embassies overseas.

J3-I conducts events working with the theater special operations commands, partner nation SOF headquarters, and other entities such as USSOCOM’s service components.

An important aspect of the J3-I mission is to identify and help close SOF partner nation interoperability gaps to enhance their ability to exchange information, services and data with U.S. forces. One specific way to do so is through the Joint Staff’s Bold Quest series of technical and capability demonstrations, where J3-I is USSOCOM’s office of primary responsibility.

From Oct. 2 to Nov. 4, 2017, J3-I SOF exchange officers teamed with international partners from seven

nations to form a combined joint special operations task force response cell for Bold Quest 17.2 at Fort Stewart, Georgia.

“This is less an exercise than an experimental platform,” said U.S. Army Col. Matthew McHale, USSOCOM J3-I division chief and Bold Quest 17.2 CJSOTF cell director. “J3-I’s primary role in Bold Quest 17.2, was to ensure international SOF received doctrinally appropriate SOF command and control during the event, which focused on air-to-ground coordination.”

The demonstration allowed mission partners to share information as they would when fighting together in a coalition environment. It involved approximately 1,800 personnel both on-site, and operating or supporting from distributed locations, where international participants assessed capabilities associated with digitally-aided close air support, friendly force tracking and ground-to-air situational awareness, countering unmanned aerial systems, and cyber simulation capabilities.

“We need a lot of nations to be here so we can verify what we have put together actually works when we plug it in,” said Norwegian Army Col. Tollak Tollaksen, director of Norwegian Battle Laboratory and Experimentation. “It’s a great networking experience.”

During BQ 17.2, Norwegian SOF worked toward enhancing joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, joint targeting, and joint fires, as well as the communications platforms supporting them all.

“Ultimately, enhancing network communications integration will better allow the U.S., as well as its allied and partner nations to fight current and future conflicts,” McHale said. “By having cohesive networks, multinational SOF can operate more readily in a multitude of environments. And that helps us to fight together faster wherever we come to the battlefield.”

Bold Quest is just one example of how the international SOF representatives within J3-I are helping to improve warfighting across the enterprise. Through J3-I, international SOF representatives participate in the global synchronization processes, joint pre-mission training for Operations Inherent Resolve and Resolute Support, and other joint and component-level training.

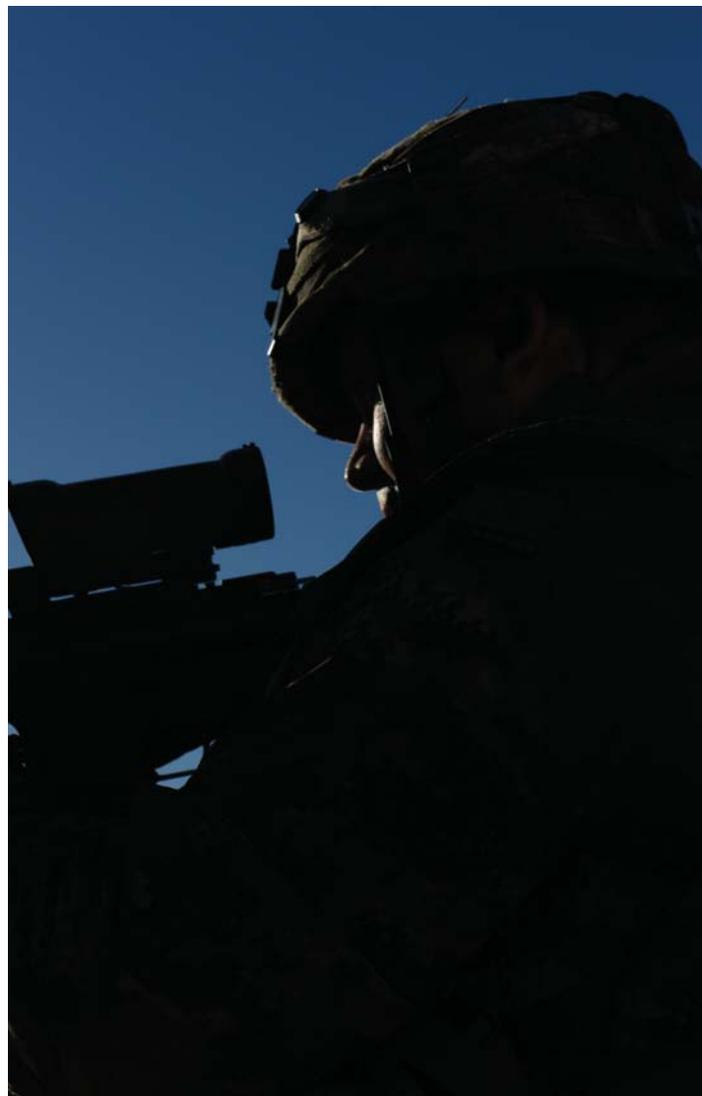
In September, Lt. Col. Darius Baricus, J3-I’s Lithuanian SOF Exchange Officer, deployed to the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center in Indiana to support pre-deployment training by U.S. Army Special Operations Command’s 6th Psychological Operations Battalion, providing Soldiers there insight on the operational

environment and threat from a European perspective, as well as the U.S.-Lithuanian partnership plan.

“It was an invaluable experience, and we look forward to doing it again,” he said.

Over time, J3-I has continued to grow its ranks. With member nations currently at 23, they will continue to expand the number of coalition partners to enhance and strengthen the international SOF community.

“In a world of constantly evolving, globally-oriented threats, it’s critical that we continue to develop interoperability with our allies to enhance and strengthen the international SOF community,” said McHale.



*A Canadian soldier conducts a simulated raid on a mock village during the Bold Quest 17.2 capabilities demonstration on Fort Stewart, Ga., Oct. 26. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.*



**Tip of the Spear**

GILBERT ALANZ JR. WALTER L. THEISSMAN WESLEY B. MALDEN ALAN T. BURT  
PVT USA 888125 SGT USA 810120 SGT USA 880927 SGT USA 880121



**U.S. Army**  
**Sgt. 1st Class Stephen B. Cribben**  
**10th Special Forces Group**  
**(Airborne)**



**U.S. Army**  
**Sgt. 1st Class Mihail Golin**  
**10th Special Forces Group**  
**(Airborne)**



**U.S. Army**  
**Chief Warrant Officer Jacob M. Sims**  
**160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment**  
**(Airborne)**

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

*A Canadian soldier conducts a simulated raid on a mock village during the Bold Quest 17.2 capabilities demonstration on Fort Stewart, Ga., Oct. 26. U.S. Special Operations Command conducted the demonstration with U.S., allied and partner nations to enhance communications network interoperability to enhance warfighter capabilities. Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Barry Loo.*

