

Tip of the Spear

April 2024



**400+ Allied, joint
special operations
forces secure the Arctic**



United States Special Operations Command



400+ Allied, joint special operations forces secure the Arctic ... 16

Tip of the Spear

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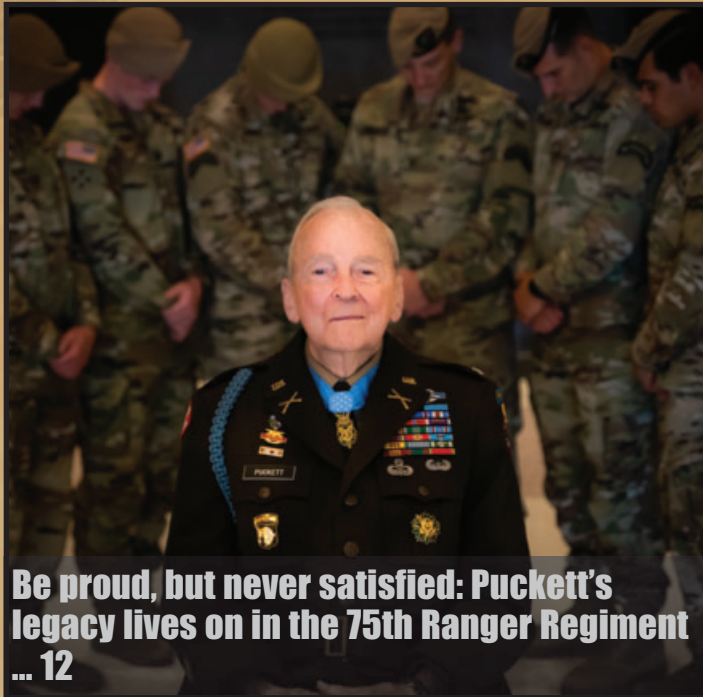
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(Cover) A C-130 Hercules assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, part of the New York Air National Guard, flies over East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs), Norwegian Naval Special Operations Commandos and the Los Angeles-class attack submarine USS Hampton (SSN 767) during an integration exercise designed to bolster skills in an Arctic environment Mar. 9, 2024, as part of Arctic Edge 24. AE 24 provided Special Operations Command North the opportunity to test a range of capabilities and response options to deter, disrupt, degrade, and deny competitor activity in the Arctic in support of globally integrated layered defense and deterrence of the homeland. Photo by U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Jeff Atherton.

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U.S. Special Operations Command - Africa



US Special Operations Command hosts knowledge exchange with Somali and Kenyan partners

Courtesy Story
Special Operations Command Africa

U.S. Special Operations Command Africa conducted a joint knowledge exchange with the Somali National Army-Danab Special Engagement Cell and Kenya Defence Forces in Kismayo, Somalia, Jan. 10-16, 2024. The 95th Civil Affairs Brigade (Airborne) forces in support of SOCAFRICA, as well as servicemembers from the 40th Forward Resuscitative and Surgical Detachment, hosted the week-long course with approximately 12 participants.

The Joint Knowledge Exchange 2024 included sessions sharing expertise on weapons handling, key leader engagements, combat medical care, and communication techniques. Airmen from the 1st Combat Camera Squadron also instructed a course on media training. The KDF engaged in the knowledge exchange by participating in the COMCAM-led media training, shadowing the team throughout the week.

Members from SOCAFRICA conducted a weapons training session during the knowledge exchange, refining weapons handling techniques, tactical movements, and troop leading procedures with SNA-Danab forces while the KDF captured imagery.

At the combat medical care course, the 40th FRSD provided hands on medical training. Participants practiced tourniquet and chest seal applications, wound packing, and combat casualty care. Honing medical skills ensures an agile and capable force for greater mission readiness and success.

Cooperating on a wide array of operational skills with African partner forces boosts interoperability to further enhance the security climate in the Horn of Africa. The Somali people continue to combat the persistent threat of violent extremist activities from al-Shabaab. This threat



U.S. service members deployed in support of Special Operations Command Africa and the Somali National Army's 162nd Danab Special Engagement Cell prepare weapons for range training during Joint Knowledge Exchange 24 in Kismayo, Somalia, Jan. 11, 2024. JKE 24 provided U.S. Forces an opportunity to train alongside African forces to share expertise in topics ranging from weapons handling to troop leading procedures. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Anabel Del Valle.

underscores the urgency of the SNA-Danab to leverage their partnerships to bolster security efforts throughout the region.

“What I’ve learned from the partner force, specifically the Somali Army, is this is real life for them. They go out and do this every single day, so they have a lot of knowledge on how to interact with the civil population during time of war,” said U.S. Army Capt. Chad Libby, Team Commander, Civil Military Support Element South, 91st CA Battalion, 95th CA Brigade. “It’s important for us to maintain partnerships with the African forces so they have that continued trust in us.”

The U.S. maintains a strong security cooperation with Somalia, supporting the SNA-Danab and KDF to boost regional security measures through collaborative engagements and a whole-of-government approach to enable greater security.

USSOF civil affairs forges African bonds

*By U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Anabel Del Valle
Special Operations Command Africa*

U.S. Special Operations Forces Civil Affairs elements under Special Operations Command Africa collaborated with African partner forces in Kenya and Somalia during a series of knowledge exchange engagements to augment collective capabilities as they work to counter regional threats and provide safety and security to citizens.

From hosting small arms training and tactics to providing medical training, the Civil Affairs mission is to conduct combined information exchanges and establish long-lasting relationships with partner forces in Kenya and Somalia.

Civil Affairs members coordinated specific engagements with partner forces in Somalia and Kenya to benefit both countries' needs, with Somalia focusing on deterring extremists and Kenya continuing to develop their defense forces and maintain regional stability.

Civil Affairs efforts recently brought Soldiers, Airmen, Marines and members from an all-women Kenyan SWAT team together to conduct Tactical Combat Casualty Care training in Nairobi, Kenya, Mar. 13-15, 2024. The training echoed the SOCAFRICA Women, Peace and Security initiative to empower women in security occupations. Trainings like this are meant to empower women with knowledge to promote equal and meaningful participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts throughout Africa.

"Working with the all-women SWAT team was an amazing experience," recalled a U.S. Civil Affairs medical sergeant, and instructor of the class. "I admire police officers and especially these women, since they work in a traditionally male profession. It was a privilege to work alongside of them in their mission to keep the people of Kenya safe [and] great to see the close relationships that developed between Kenyan police officers and American service members."

While Civil Affairs forces successfully conducted information exchanges and built relationships during their deployment, they say some of the most rewarding moments of their time in Africa has been their exposure to different lifestyles and meeting people they've grown to love, most notably in Somalia. As the people of Somalia continue to fight for a stable region by battling threats from violent extremist organization, Al-Shabaab, Civil Affairs members only gained a greater passion for their work. They stated the opportunity to see their teachings in real-world operations completed by the Somali National Army was a once in a lifetime opportunity.



A U.S. Army servicemember deployed with Special Operations Command Africa, simulates Tactical Combat Casualty Care on a member of "Lioness," an all-women Kenyan SWAT team, during joint medical training in Nairobi, Kenya, March 13, 2024. The joint training was part of international women, peace and security objectives, a long-standing effort to increase African partner capabilities and leverage contributions from women in security occupations. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Anabel Del Valle.

"Working with the partner force in Somalia has been an experience, one I will never forget," explained U.S. Army Capt. Chad Libby, Civil Affairs team commander. "These soldiers are fighting for freedom and love their country through and through. This is real life for them."

Through hosting joint knowledge exchanges over a variety of topics including combat documentation, medical training, tactical movements and civil affairs engagements, Civil Affairs efforts support the SNA in their fight to boost regional security and ultimately save Somali citizen's lives.

Although it has been an eventful and eye-opening experience for the Civil Affairs team, they are looking forward to their return home.

"I'm excited about a ton of little things, like exploring the woods with my wife and kids again," the medical course instructor expressed. "I am also really looking forward to teaching my kids about [Africa] and the people I met here. The individual relationships I have formed by working here has given me a human-level and personal understanding of their culture and what makes our mission in East Africa so necessary."

U.S. Special Operations Command - Europe



SOCEUR leads Trojan Footprint 24: the premiere special operations forces exercise in Europe

*By U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Tim Beery
Special Operations Command Europe*

Ranging from the Black Sea to the Balkans and extending between Germany, Greece, and Georgia, the month of March was kinetic for the special operations community in Europe as 12 nations participated in exercise Trojan Footprint, sending approximately 2,000 total participants to various training locations in Bulgaria, Georgia, Germany, Greece, North Macedonia, and Romania. Trojan Footprint is a biannual exercise and the largest special operations forces exercise in the European theater in which the U.S. participates.

“The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate the ability of the U.S., along with our allies and partners to respond decisively to any threat in any direction,” said U.S. Special Operations Command Europe Commander, Maj. Gen. Steven G. Edwards. “Completing this exercise enhances interoperability between forces and demonstrates the capability of our ready and postured special operations forces within the European theater,” he said.

International cooperation is vital to European security, and exercises like Trojan Footprint enable partnerships on a broad scale, explained Darek Coker, a civilian senior exercise planner at SOCEUR and the lead planner for Trojan Footprint.

“What we look to do is to deploy U.S. forces into Europe and stand up a coalition of the willing, pre-conflict,” he said. “We try to set resistance and stand-up resilience before conflict actually happens.”

Coker explained that deploying special operations forces prior to combat is a key component in the SOF mission and building resistance and resilience in nations prior to conflict



Marines assigned to U.S. Marine Forces Special Operations Command move to assault the objective during a situational training exercise with Georgian rangers and Georgian special operations forces soldiers during Trojan Footprint 24 near Batumi, Georgia, March 14, 2024. Exercise Trojan Footprint 24 is a demonstration of Allies and partner nations’ ability to seamlessly operate together to maintain global freedom and stability. NATO partners are an integral part of Alliance success that is critical to the Alliance’s ability to project stability beyond our borders. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Cahugh Giles.

acts as a galvanizing measure to promote peace, stability, and ultimately security in Europe through shared readiness, seamless integration, and building a posture of readiness across the continent.

Forces from Albania, Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, Romania, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States participated in the exercise which lasted for two weeks.

“I’ve been very pleased with the participation,” said Coker. “Now the exercise has a gravitational pull. I get solicited by countries, who seemingly have no affiliation to

the region, such as Colombia, and various African countries who now ask to participate,” he said. “A lot of countries want to come in and train with NATO forces to NATO standards. We train under NATO standards because we want to prepare to fight under NATO authority as a NATO force,” he continued.

Coker explained that while Trojan Footprint is a U.S. led exercise, this year each respective country has been in the lead for training objectives in their region.

“This year we’ve put our allies and partners first,” he said. “Georgia is in the lead in Georgia, Romania is in the lead in Romania. The Greeks are in the lead in the Balkans, and the U.S. is filling a supportive role to ensure success, but we are not out front.”

Allowing participating nations to fill the lead roles not only assisted with the objective of the exercise, but it fortified security in eastern Europe, while building relationships that will benefit both the U.S. and partner nations for years to come.

“Trojan Footprint was a very positive dynamic for us within the special operations field,” said Georgian Lt. Col. Dimitri Demetraidze, operations planner for the Georgian Defence Forces during the exercise.

“This time we were able to combine kinetic actions with operational planning.”

Georgian participation had a major impact on Trojan Footprint, despite the fact that they are not a member of NATO. Over 1,700 troops, both Georgian and partner nations, were mobilized and conducted training within Georgian boundaries during Trojan Footprint 2024. “We are dedicated to the safety and security in our region,” said Demetraidze.

While host nations had the opportunity to lead objectives within their boundaries, other participating nations were able to build interoperability on a broad spectrum of objectives.

“It’s important for us to learn how others operate on a day-by-day basis,” said Sgt. Maj. Stefano Stainer, a liaison officer for Italian special operations forces. “Working in a joint staff is always an opportunity to improve.”

Stainer explained that communication was a challenge initially, but through working together it was overcome.

“For sure the communication was a big milestone,” he said. “Not just speaking, but even using the same systems. To be a part of NATO means to be part of a 32-nation team and we have to be on the same page.”

Getting on the same page means building cohesion between NATO Allies, partner nations, and all participants to deter threats and secure a large portion of the world, explained Lt. Col. Erik Sarson, the chief of staff for the exercise.

“This is important based on the current situation in Europe. Looking back to 2008, and looking at Russian

aggression, the European landscape has changed a lot,” said Sarson.

He mentioned that progression of participating nations has increased exponentially over the last decade.

“I’ve been involved with this theater since 2014,” he said. “I’ve seen a tremendous improvement on the ability to integrate with partners, both on the U.S. side and on partner nations.”

In 2024, Trojan Footprint falls under the umbrella of NATO’s Steadfast Defender, which is part of U.S. Department of Defense’s Large Scale Global Exercise 24, an all-domain exercise series that executes a range of joint multinational military activities and operations. LSGE 24 is designed to demonstrate the robust global presence of NATO Allies and partners, as well as the cohesion of our enduring global partnerships. Coker said enduring cohesion and partnerships is the ultimate objective for Trojan Footprint.

“That, I think, is the future of this exercise; Allies and partners take the lead in their own countries while we participate,” he said.

“I think we sent a powerful strategic message by having this exercise in the Black Sea and the Balkans. It shows that we are here to support our Allies and partners. We are on the lookout for any tricks our adversary might try to pull,” added Coker.

As explained by Maj. Gen. Edwards, solidarity between NATO Allies and partner nations in Europe is the overarching goal for Trojan Footprint. The aim of partnerships is to ensure that European nations, along with allies and partners, are not just waiting for the fight. They are in position, ready, working together, and poised to meet any challenge presented to promote peace, security, and stability in the European theater.



A Marine assigned to U.S. Marine Forces Special Operations Command participates in exercise Trojan Footprint 24 near Batumi, Georgia, March 14, 2024. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Cahugh Giles.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Korea



Command post to field; combined SOF personnel complete semi-annual exercise

*By U.S. Air Force Maj. Christopher Mesnard
Special Operations Command Korea*

The adage, ‘don’t fight the scenario, fight the problem,’ applies at all levels of military training. During the recent Freedom Shield 24 exercise that took place from Mar. 4-14, 2024, combined special operations elements and personnel in the Republic of Korea maintained the mantra. Centered around multinational staffs in combined command posts, exercises Freedom Shield and Ulchi Freedom Shield, the annual summer equivalent, test headquarters and field elements to solve problems creatively and realistically while also honing their ability to work together.

“The real return on investment for our people is their ability to come together as a combined battle staff, understand and work through the information in the scenario, and then plan unique courses of action based on critical problem solving,” said Brig. Gen. Derek N. Lipson, Special Operations Command Korea commander, United Nations Command Special Operations Component Command commander, and Combined Special Operations Component Command deputy commander. “We challenged the team to think through the problems presented in the exercise, how they would solve them in a real-world context, and then how we would conduct the cross-component coordination with multi-domain effects in mind.”

Republic of Korea Air Force combat controllers observe a U.S. Air Force MC-130J from the 1st Special Operations Squadron approaching an alternate landing surface on Mar. 7, 2024, near Namji, Republic of Korea during exercise Freedom Shield 24. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jon McCallum.



Throughout Freedom Shield, SOCKOR personnel joined with their ROK counterparts to form the CSOCC staff while also working with various UN Command elements to simulate UNCSOCC roles in the exercise scenarios. The readiness of both special operations commands plays a role in ensuring the credibility of those unique capabilities senior leaders rely on to prevent escalation as a part of a holistic integrated deterrence posture, while remaining ready to prevail against belligerent action if called upon.

According to Lipson, a credible and trained force in the field is fundamental to the readiness of the command post staff's ability to meet exercise requirements. Concurrent with the CSOCC and UNCSOCC headquarters training, combined special operations personnel participated in a variety of field training scenarios and events.

Demonstrating the ability to flexibly support special operations requirements on the Korean Peninsula, personnel and equipment from all services and around the Indo-Pacific region participated in Freedom Shield. The deployment of Air Force Special Operations Command MC-130J Commando II aircraft and Airmen based at Kadena Air Base, Japan offered the most visible demonstration of flexible response to the Korean Peninsula.

"I am truly inspired and so very proud of the work our Airmen did during Freedom Shield 24," said Colonel Shawn Young, 353d Special Operations Wing Commander. "This was a small force that deployed forward to join our Korean allies, but our combined team demonstrated extraordinary interoperability, resilience, and capability that far outmatches our size."

The training spanned a broad breadth of combined U.S. and ROK special operations capabilities, including MC-130J landings on an alternate surface, over-the-beach training between U.S. Naval Special Warfare and ROK Naval Special Warfare Flotilla personnel, and airborne and infiltration training operations between U.S. Army Special Forces and ROK SWC personnel.

"Whenever we work with our ROK counterparts, we always know to expect a well-trained and proficient partner" said a U.S. Army Special Forces Soldier participating in combined field training events and whose name is withheld for personal security reasons. "It really opens up the training options we can work through and allows us to collaboratively plan out more advanced and specialized scenarios that can be used to meet a range of potential requirements."

Over the course of Freedom Shield 24, SOCKOR personnel contributed to the broader readiness of the U.S. Forces Korea personnel stationed on the Korean

Peninsula in support of mutual defense priorities between the U.S. and ROK homelands.

The presence and readiness of special operations forces on the Korean Peninsula dates back more than 70 years and remains a part of the holistic integrated deterrence posture in the region.



A Republic of Korea Air Force combat controller clears an alternate landing surface in preparation for a U.S. Air Force MC-130J landing near Namji, Republic of Korea on Mar. 7, 2024. The MC-130J and aircrew, assigned to the 1st Special Operations Squadron, participated in a variety of training events during exercise Freedom Shield 24, which lasted from Mar. 4-14, 2024. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jon McCallum.

U.S. Special Operations Command - Pacific



Soldier broadens military intelligence skillsets using live environment training

By U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Theanne Tangen
Special Operations Command Pacific

The U.S. Army 25th Infantry Division and U.S. Special Operations Command Pacific intelligence communities are deepening their collaboration through the Live Environment Training Program (LET).

The LET program provided Sgt. Kelsey Reid, Intelligence Analyst, a six-month augmentee opportunity to capitalize on lessons learned from training with the 25th Infantry Division and apply them to real-world missions in a joint environment.

Serving in the SOCPAC military intelligence community opens the doors for career advancement.

“Soldiers like Sgt. Reid had the opportunity to cut their teeth through a conventional perspective,” said Master Sgt. Nicholas Tripplehorn, SOCPAC counterintelligence coordinating authority. “Now they get to flip the paradigm and look through a special operations forces lens with more access and experience, to complement what they’ve already know and prepare them for future endeavors.”

LET is a tool utilized throughout the intelligence community to recruit and retain talented Soldiers to

develop expert knowledge of our pacing challenges and apply that strategic thinking to operations throughout the Indo-Pacific.

Reid is one of the talented Soldiers who comes from a family tradition of serving.

“My dad served for 21 years as a Black Hawk



U.S. Army Sgt. Kelsey Reid, an intelligence analyst from the 25th Infantry Division, center, follows her family's tradition of serving in the military and shares this photo of her father, who served for 21 years as a U.S. Army Black Hawk pilot. Reid participated as an augmentee in the six-month Live Environment Training program, a tool utilized throughout the SOCPAC intelligence community to recruit and retain talented Soldiers. LETs goal is to develop expert knowledge of our pacing challenges, inject new thought into complex missions, and apply that strategic thinking to operations throughout the Indo-Pacific. Courtesy photo.

pilot for the Army,” said Reid. “My Grandfather also flew the B-17 [Flying Fortress] in World War II, and I decided to enlist for military intelligence.”

Reid sought a career that would allow her to contribute from both a tactical and strategic environment.

“I like the idea of contributing to national outcomes with accurate and timely analyses,” said Reid. “It is taking puzzle pieces

My dad served for 21 years as a Black Hawk pilot for the Army. My Grandfather also flew the B-17 [Flying Fortress] in World War II, and I decided to enlist for military intelligence.

— Sgt. Kelsey Reid



2nd Lt. Robert Reid, a B-17 pilot who served during World War II, inspired a tradition of serving. His granddaughter, U.S. Army Sgt. Kelsey Reid, an intelligence analyst from the 25th Infantry Division, follows her family's tradition of serving in the military. Courtesy Photo.

and different information from the intelligence disciplines to create an image for the commander to make the best decision he or she can make.”

The experience of working with SOCPAC’s military intelligence community inspired Reid to reenlist for three more years.

“I’m grateful to have contributed to the intelligence community of 25th Infantry Division,” said Reid. “The opportunity to continue contributing to the mission in the Indo-Pacific with SOCPAC is exciting. I’m looking forward to broadening and honing my technical skills.”

Building relationships between SOF and conventional forces improves current and future war-fighting advantages, consistently adding fresh ideas to complex problems.

“The SOCPAC Intelligence Enterprise is in a unique position to offer multiple opportunities for intelligence professionals to earn valuable experience, receive training, and network with joint partner forces to further develop critical skills and be able to apply those skills in meaningful ways to address challenges in the U.S. Indo-Pacific area of responsibility,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Gregory Kippe, SOCPAC director for intelligence.



U.S. Navy Capt. Gregory Kippe, U.S. Special Operations Command Pacific director for intelligence, presents U.S. Army Sgt. Kelsey Reid, intelligence analyst from the 25th Infantry Division, with the Joint Service Achievement Medal at Camp H. M. Smith, Jan. 19, 2024. Photo by Jesus “JD” Davis.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command



Be proud, but never satisfied: Puckett's legacy lives on in the 75th Ranger Regiment

*By U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Jorden Weir
The 75th Ranger Regiment*

One-hundred and forty-six servicemembers earned the Medal of Honor for their actions during the Korean War. On April 8, 2024, the last living recipient, Col. (Ret.) Ralph Puckett Jr., who, once upon a time, led a company of elite U.S. Army Rangers in a fierce battle against a numerically superior enemy force in Korea, passed away peacefully at his home in Columbus, Ga.

During the battle in Korea, Puckett led the 8th Army Ranger Company in securing the strategically important Hill 205 near Unsan. It was here that Puckett earned the Medal of Honor by repeatedly and intentionally sprinting across the open area to draw enemy fire so that his Rangers could find and destroy hidden enemy machine-gunners. Though outnumbered 9 to 1, Puckett's Rangers successfully fought back multiple waves of determined Chinese soldiers before eventually being overrun. At one point, two mortar rounds landed in Puckett's foxhole, ravaging his feet, backside, and left arm. With no regard for his own health and out of concern for the safety of his Rangers, Puckett ordered his men to leave him behind. They refused, instead fighting to his side and carrying him off Hill 205 to safety.

He was initially awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second highest honor, for his actions



Col. (Ret.) Ralph Puckett Jr., Medal of Honor recipient, poses with members of the 75th Ranger Regiment at the National Infantry Museum in Columbus, Ga. on Aug. 10, 2021. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Garrett Shreffler.

and leadership. Seven decades later, on May 21, 2021, it was upgraded to the Medal of Honor.

But to only link the memory of a man like Puckett to this single moment in time would be a massive disservice. "His story best starts with the heroism that he

displayed during the Korean War, where he earned the Medal of Honor,” said Col. J.D. Keirsey, Commander of the 75th Ranger Regiment. “And If that wasn’t enough, he spent his entire life [afterward] fully invested in making Soldiers, leaders, infantrymen, and Rangers, the best that they could possibly be.”

Aside from his combat accolades in Korea, he also fought in Vietnam, planned, supervised, and established a Ranger School in Colombia, was among the first to be inducted into the Ranger Hall of Fame, and served as the Honorary Colonel of the 75th Ranger Regiment from 1996-2006.

Well into his 90s, it was very common to see Puckett in and around Fort Moore, Ga., either out in the rain at Ranger School, rooting for the students to get their “GO’s” on patrol, attending Ranger Selection and Training Program graduations, or cheering competitors on at the Best Ranger Competition.

He wanted to be involved, and more than that, he wanted the best for everyone he met.

“If you knew Col. Puckett, you knew that he had this special knack for instantly seeing what you were made of,” said Gen. James J. Mingus, the vice Chief of Staff of the Army. “And what you could achieve with just a bit of encouragement and a whole lot of faith.”

Puckett held a deep and powerful belief that, with guts and brains, anyone could rise to the top, and he challenged everyone he met to rise above the ordinary.

This included Sgt. 1st Class Caleb Togami, a Ranger assigned to the 3rd Ranger Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment.

“I wasn’t even in the Army the first time I met Col. Puckett,” said Togami. “He was doing a book signing at my brother’s Ranger School graduation. I went up to him to get his book signed and he asked me if I was in the military. I told him, “No, I am not.”

Togami continued, “That’s when he stopped writing, looked me dead in the eye, and asked, “Why not?”

Togami credits that moment, that sincere, matter-of-fact question, delivered by this legendary Ranger who clearly believed that Togami could make it if he tried, with playing a large role in his decision to join the Army and assess for selection into the 75th Ranger Regiment.

That day Puckett signed Togami’s book with the message:

“To Caleb,
Best wishes for great success”

Years later, Togami met Puckett again, and presented him that same book, which Puckett signed a second time: “To SSG Togami (6 years later a U.S. Army Ranger) I’m proud of you!”

The Ranger Regiment is filled with stories like that,

small moments in time where Puckett, with his remarkable ability to make human connections with everyone he met, would impact the lives of those around him.

“Puckett poured his heart and soul into the Ranger community, his entire life,” said Mingus.

Puckett lived the Ranger Creed, and regarded all Soldiers, leaders, and Rangers, as his comrades. To the best of his ability, he tried always to be there for them.

Whether that meant seeking out new lieutenants at the 75th Ranger Regiment to offer his advice or walking the grueling field training exercise lanes with tired and hungry Ranger School students to dole out much-needed encouragement, he made it a point to always be where he was needed.

And in the Global War on Terror era, that often meant going back into dangerous lands.

“I remember seeing him in Afghanistan,” said Keirsey, “This is a man well-past the age limit we place on servicemembers, but you could recognize him at night, under nods, because he was so frequently amongst us. He was there, never failing us when we needed him. Never failing his comrades.”

And although he was widely regarded as a compassionate and caring man, he was also the first to share hard truths, especially with leaders within the Ranger Regiment.

“He would visit our training events,” said Keirsey, “And he would tell us all the great things that Rangers were doing, and then he’d follow it up with a long list of all the things we could be doing better.”

He had a keen understanding that improvement was a lifelong endeavor, and that no one, not even Rangers, will ever write the final word on Soldiering. His constant message to Rangers was, “You’re the best. You’re the best to ever do it. But you can always be better.”

“That’s his legacy,” said Keirsey, “His legacy is one that tells us we can be better. It takes hard work. Puckett lived that. He showed us how to do it, and we’re glad and very fortunate to have had him as part of our lives and part of our unit.”

Ralph Puckett, by all accounts, was proud of every Ranger and servicemember he ever met. He was very generous with expressing his pride.

“You set the standard for all of us,” he said back in 2023, while speaking at the Best Ranger Competition at Ft. Moore. “You’re always on display. You are a Ranger. And that’s something special.”

But with that pride came an uncompromising expectation. Puckett’s call to action.

“I’m proud of you. Be proud of yourselves,” he said, “and never be satisfied! You can always do better!”

Rangers assigned to the 75th Ranger Regiment render military honors to lifelong Ranger, Col. Ralph Puckett Jr. attend a celebration of life service at Fort Moore, Ga. Apr. 20, 2024. Photo by U.S. Army Maj. Justin Wright.





Naval Special Warfare Command

400+ Allied, joint special operations forces secure the Arctic



By U.S. Navy Lt.j.g. Martin Carey
Naval Special Warfare Group TWO

Recognizing the importance of the Arctic region to defense of the homeland from potential adversarial threats, elite special operations forces from the U.S. Navy, U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, Canada, Denmark, Norway, and the United Kingdom recently concluded high-impact training events throughout the pan-Arctic region, stretching from Alaska, in the Arctic Circle, across Canada and into Greenland. Arctic Edge 24, a U.S. Northern Command exercise, brought together more than 400 special operations forces (SOF) to integrate, share lessons and refine their tactical effectiveness in diving operations, fast-roping from helicopters, snow mobile transits, long-range movements across the Arctic Circle, and a marquee event involving a

fast-attack Submarine. These past few weeks of training epitomize an unwavering commitment to fortifying U.S. and Allied national security against potential aggression, echoing directives outlined in the National Defense Strategy and the National Strategy for the Arctic Region documents.

“Naval Special Warfare’s unique ability to conduct complex operations in the water column, and in maritime domains such as the Arctic, discourages aggression from potential adversaries,” said Capt. Bill Gallagher, Naval Special Warfare Group TWO Commodore. “Given the frequency with which we are training alongside our Allied partners and demonstrating our combined expertise in some of the most severe environments on the planet, we are sending a clear message about our warfighting ability and our preparedness to defend the homeland across the Arctic region.”



East-Coast based Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) and Norwegian Naval Special Operations Commandos set up a command-and-control tent on the ice next to the Los Angeles-class attack submarine USS Hampton (SSN 767) during an integration exercise designed to bolster skills in an Arctic environment Mar. 9, 2024, as part of Arctic Edge 24. AE24 provided Special Operations Command North the opportunity to test a range of capabilities and response options to deter, disrupt, degrade, and deny competitor activity in the Arctic in support of globally integrated layered defense and deterrence of the homeland. Photo by U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Jeff Atherton.

These ideals were on display during the culminating event that took the SOF commando's training beyond the northern most point of the United States, past Utqiagvik Alaska, deep into the Arctic Circle. Flying inside special operations MH-47G Chinook helicopters, approximately 15 SOF personnel pioneered a historic event when they received ice depths from the submarine and landed in a secure zone where four snow mobiles exited the aircraft. The team set up a command-and-control tent where they coordinated an air-drop of a critical package from a C-130 Hercules assigned to the 109th Airlift Wing, part of the New York Air National Guard. The Allied SOF team then crossed the frozen tundra via snow mobile, retrieved the package, and navigated to the waiting USS Hampton (SSN 767), where it was handed off to a Sailor assigned to the boat. Just moments before, the Los Angeles-class fast attack submarine had surfaced through the thick sheet of ice, emerging from the sea below. This marked the first-ever integration of SOF personnel, SOF aircraft, and snow mobiles coming together to conduct an operation with a submarine that surfaced that deep in the Arctic Circle.

In recent remarks delivered at the Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies, Adm. Daryl Caudle talked about his responsibility for defending the homeland and his theory of success in the Arctic which involves maintaining an enhanced presence, strengthening cooperative partnerships and building a more capable Arctic maritime force. Caudle commands U.S. Fleet Forces and is the Navy's Component Commander for both US Northern Command and US Strategic Command, where he oversees all maritime homeland defense including much of the Arctic. He went on to discuss some of his priorities which focus on an increased presence, campaigning through Joint training and exercises, and a close collaboration with Allies.

Arctic Edge 24 reinforced this vision, bringing together Joint, Allied, conventional forces and interagency partners in the Arctic region. Arctic Edge 24 stands as a decisive demonstration of warfighting readiness, providing a platform for testing and refining capabilities in the extreme-harsh weather environment in the Arctic. The collaboration between U.S. East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs), U.S. Army Green Berets from 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, Danish Special Operations Forces, Norwegian Naval Special Operations Commandos (MJK) and United Kingdom Special Forces refined the collective capabilities of these Arctic nations to operate effectively across a range of training iterations to ensure a safe and secure pan-Arctic.

In Kodiak Alaska, SEALs, Green Berets and MJK forces conducted multiple diving operations in water temperatures of 37 degrees Fahrenheit. Deploying from



East-Coast based Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) and Norwegian Naval Special Operations Commandos exit out of an MH-47G Chinook helicopter assigned to the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) during an integration exercise designed to bolster skills in the extreme Arctic environment during Arctic Edge 24. Photo by U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Jeff Atherton.

beach heads and small rubber boats, the team practiced pier-side vessel ship attacks, utilizing combat swimmer infiltration method with underwater navigation to target a training ship at the pier. The group also partnered with the U.S. Coast Guard where they refined techniques of fast-rope from an MH-60T Jayhawk helicopter under rainy conditions.

Further North in Utqiagvik, Alaska, the SEALs and MJK Commandos embraced the challenges associated with temperatures of -40 degrees Fahrenheit as they prepared for the culminating event with the US Submarine Force. Leading up to that event, they conducted snow mobile familiarization training, practiced clearing ice to create a helicopter landing zone and trained on cold weather survival drills, ensuring a successful SUB/SOF integration.

Additional training occurred throughout Alaska in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Kotzebue, and Greenland, with personnel from interagency partners at the FBI and U.S. Marshals Service, United States Marine Corps, Alaska National Guard, New York Air National Guard, 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne) among others.

Safeguarding Arctic security is not merely a national endeavor but a collective responsibility. The total force contributions during Arctic Edge 24 supports the strategic significance of this area and improved the Allied-Arctic-nation's presence and operational effectiveness in the pan-Arctic region. The scenarios, simulated missions and sharing of best practices contributed to advancing the collective warfighting readiness, homeland defense and operational acumen of these elite forces in this extreme environment.

Naval Special Warfare Command

Naval Special Warfare remembers two fallen SEALs



A Naval Special Warfare Operator stamps a trident onto a wooden plaque during a memorial service for Special Warfare Operator 1st Class Christopher Chambers and Special Warfare Operator 2nd Class Nathan Gage Ingram at Silver Strand Training Complex in Coronado, Calif, April 18. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Chelsea D. Meiller.

*By Petty Officer 2nd Class Alex Perlman
Naval Special Warfare Group ONE*

Special Warfare Operator 1st Class Christopher J. Chambers and Special Warfare Operator 2nd Class Nathan Gage Ingram were honored during a memorial service at the Silver Strand Training Complex, April 18.

Chambers and Ingram were both reported missing at sea while they were conducting a night-time seizure

of a vessel that was illegally transporting advanced lethal aid from Iran to resupply Houthi forces in Yemen in early January 2024.

“Chris and Gage epitomize Naval Special Warfare’s core values: integrity, courage, and selflessness,” said Capt. Blake L. Chaney, Commander, Naval Special Warfare Group 1. “Our solemn duty is to pay tribute to their unwavering sacrifice, service, and dedication to duty.”

Throughout the ceremony, close friends and family

recalled special moments that celebrated and honored the lives and legacy of both Chambers and Ingram.

“Chris will always be remembered as a true hero, not for his actions, but for the way he embraced life,” said one of the speakers during the ceremony. “He was revered by both his superiors and his subordinates alike.”

Chambers enlisted in the Navy on May 17, 2012, and graduated from boot camp at Recruit Training Command Great Lakes, Ill., in July 2012. He served with West Coast-based SEAL units since graduating from SEAL qualification training in Coronado, Calif., in 2014. His awards and decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medal with Combat “C,” three Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medals, the Army Achievement Medal, the Combat Action Ribbon, and other personal and unit awards.

Ingram enlisted in the Navy on Sept. 25, 2019, and graduated from boot camp at Recruit Training Command Great Lakes, Ill., in November 2019. Ingram served with West Coast-based SEAL units since graduating from SEAL qualification training in Coronado, Calif., in 2021. His awards and decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal and various personal and unit awards.

“Gage was someone – if you met him, you would never forget him,” said one of the speakers during the ceremony. “He had a way of making everyone he interacted with feel special.”

Following the remarks during the ceremony, teammates of Chambers and Ingram stood in formation and, one by one, pressed their Tridents into a wooden plaque emblazoned with the fallen operators’ names, carrying on a long-held tradition immortalizing their profound respect for their fallen brothers.

The events leading to the loss of Chambers and Ingram remain under investigation. Naval Special Warfare’s top priority is to respect the families’ privacy while providing unwavering support to them, their loved ones, and our personnel affected by this loss.

Chris and Gage embodied the virtue of love, the kind that warriors of great renown are known for,” said

one of the speakers during the ceremony. “Their presence enriched our lives in countless ways, continuing to serve as a source of inspiration, motivation, and growth within our community. Their legacy lives on in our hearts and minds, a timeless reminder of their forever legacy.”

Chris and Gage epitomize Naval Special Warfare’s core values: integrity, courage, and selflessness. Our solemn duty is to pay tribute to their unwavering sacrifice, service, and dedication to duty.

— Capt. Blake L. Chaney



Naval Special Warfare Operators stamp tridents onto a wooden plaque during a memorial service for Special Warfare Operator 1st Class Christopher Chambers and Special Warfare Operator 2nd Class Nathan Gage Ingram at Silver Strand Training Complex in Coronado, Calif, April 18. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Chelsea D. Meiller.

Naval Special Warfare Command

Washington, D.C. native assumes command of Tactical Communications Command 1



Courtesy Story
Naval Special Warfare Group ONE

Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Tactical Communications Command (TCC) 1 held a change of command ceremony Mar. 22, 2024.

Cmdr. Jonathan R. Alston, a native of Washington, D.C., assumed command of Tactical Communications Command 1, relieving Capt. Taylor Forester, a native of Electra, Texas.

Tactical Communications Command 1 serves as Naval Special Warfare Group 1's Command, Control, Computers, and Intelligence (C4I) provider, tasked with maintaining and enhancing tactical communications capabilities while developing expertise to address future information battle space complexities.

"It's been an honor to serve with this team. Thank you to all the sailors of [TCC-1] for your unwavering support and partnership," said Forester. "TCC-1's work in the communications environment demonstrates that NSW sets the standard of excellence across the Department of Defense."

Forester will go on to the office of the Department of the Navy, Chief Information Officer at the Pentagon.

Cmdr. Jonathan R. Alston was previously assigned to USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) as the Combat Systems Officer. While onboard Vinson, he and his team executed the 2022 Planned Incremental Availability



Cmdr. Jonathon R. Alston, a Washington, D.C. native and incoming commanding officer, speaks during a change of command ceremony for Naval Special Warfare Tactical Communications Command (TCC) 1, Mar. 22, 2024. Naval Special Warfare is the nation's elite maritime special operations force, uniquely positioned to extend the Fleet's reach and gain and maintain access for the Joint Force in competition and conflict. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Alex Perlman.

and a 2023-2024 Western Pacific Deployment.

Alston said he looks forward to leading TCC-1.

"I am humbled and honored to be a part of this team and to carry forward what Captain Forester has established," said Alston. "Stepping into this role and collaborating with NSW personnel is a privilege and a challenge I look forward to."

Naval Special Warfare is the nation's elite maritime special operations force, uniquely positioned to extend the Fleet's reach and gain and maintain access for the Joint Force in competition and conflict.

Cmdr. Jonathan R. Alston, a Washington, D.C. native and incoming commanding officer, is piped aboard during a change of command ceremony for Naval Special Warfare Tactical Communications Command (TCC) 1, Mar. 22, 2024. Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Alex Perlman.



Air Force Special Operations Command



Emerald Warrior tests Air Commandos mettle

*By U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Cassandra Saphore
Air Force Special Operations Command Public Affairs*

Air Force Special Operations Command's 17th annual Emerald Warrior exercise concluded recently having exercised in three extreme cold weather environments throughout the midwestern U.S. with many firsts.

This U.S. Special Operations Command-supported exercise aligned with the Special Operations Command-Europe exercise Trojan Footprint under the large-scale global exercise construct to demonstrate Special Operations Forces value to the Joint Force and strengthen military relationships with U.S. and partner forces.

"Our Nation has entered a new era of competition," said Lt. Gen. Tony Bauernfeind, AFSOC commander. "We must continue to innovate and transform to remain the most capable, most lethal Air Force in the world...and that's exactly what AFSOC is doing."

Air Commandos trained on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear readiness incorporating new decontamination systems like the CBRN MRZR that supports decontamination during infiltration, exfiltration, tactical movement and maneuver where force size and composition constraints exist.

A continued focus area this year was building autonomy through mission command to ensure Special Operations Task Groups and Special Operations Task

Units are trained to operate in today's dynamic operating environment.

"Every Emerald Warrior, we build on lessons learned from previous iterations and this year was no different," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. David Allen, Emerald Warrior exercise director. "We further developed the Agile Combat Employment concept through Mission Sustainment Teams by successfully relocating two Special Operations Task Groups, to multiple locations. These SOTGs exercised flexible response options conducting strategic fires, air-to-ground integration with close air support and non-kinetic effects to deter aggression."

In addition to kinetic effects, EW exercised non-kinetic effects and capabilities like space, cyber, public affairs and information operations. They employed technical and deceptive activities in support of exercise objectives for the participants to enhance overall combat operability.

"From strategic messaging to incorporating effects in the gray zone, Emerald Warrior provides the joint force the ability to adapt and create dilemmas for tomorrow's adversaries," said Allen.

Emerald Warrior ensures preparedness of Special Operations Forces, conventional force enablers, partner forces and interagency elements through realistic and relevant, high-end pre-deployment training encompassing multiple joint operating areas.



Airman 1st Class Karl Vincent Santos, 9th Special Operations Squadron loadmaster, prepares to load a GMV 1.1 onto a MC-130J Commando II during exercise Emerald Warrior 24 at Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, Mar. 4th, 2024. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Aaron Irvin.



A Special Tactics Airman assigned to the 24th Special Operations Wing conducts a military free fall over Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico on Mar. 1, 2024. Supported by U.S. Special Operations Command, Emerald Warrior is a joint special operations exercise that prepares U.S. Special Operations Command forces, Conventional Enablers, Partner Forces, and Interagency Elements to respond to various threats across the spectrum of conflict. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Natalie Vandergriff.

Air Force Special Operations Command Emerald Warrior 24



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Andrey Almann, a Tactical Communications specialist, watches Staff Sgt. Alex Hoover, a Tactical Communications supervisor both assigned to the 27th Special Operations Communications Squadron, align a GATR SATCOM terminal during exercise Emerald Warrior 24 at Wendover Airport, Utah, Mar. 5, 2024. Emerald Warrior provides annual realistic, relevant, high-end pre-deployment training in a complex and evolving security environment using all aspects of live, virtual and constructive training aspects. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Keegan Putman.





Air Force Special Operations Command



859th SOS, TFI partners

reach milestone in Wolfhound

*By U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt Dylan Gentile
919th Special Operations Wing*

Aviators and aircraft maintainers who support the C-146A Wolfhound mission celebrated a major milestone April 5, 2024, surpassing 200,000 flying hours while meeting Air Force Special Operations Command's global mobility requirements.

Aircrew from the Active Duty's 524th Special Operations Squadron, and their Reserve counterparts in the 859th SOS, recognized the significance of the achievement while also thanking those who made the occasion possible.

"These aircraft are doing the mission every day operating from locations all over the world, racking up hours," said Lt. Col. Michael Clapp, 859th SOS assistant director of operations. "I think this milestone is pretty significant. I would love to get to 300,000 hours in [the Wolfhound]."

Leadership from both squadrons came together with contractors from Sierra Nevada Company (SNC), who maintain the aircraft, in recognition of the milestone.

The respective organizations filled up a hangar where they discussed their feats onboard the Wolfhound and the camaraderie they've formed along the way. A representative from SNC gifted lithographs featuring the plane to the squadrons to show appreciation for the mission.

"The entire community came together in one place to honor the feat which made it special for everyone," said Emily Smithwick, 524th SOS resource advisor. "No one knew how long this program was going to last, so hitting 200,000 flying hours is a really big deal."

The C-146A primarily serves as a troop carrier and has austere international destinations. The aircraft can carry a maximum of 27 passengers, 6,000 pounds of cargo, or up to four litters for medical evacuation patients. It arrived at Duke Field in 2012, and according to event attendees, it took some time for others to appreciate the aircraft's strategic capabilities and cement it within Air Force Special Operations Command inventory.

The April 5th date was especially exciting to the aviators. On top of their new milestone, the ribbon was cut on their new state-of-the-art non-standard aviation facility at Duke Field. With the finishing touches complete, Air Commandos from the 524th SOS and their 859th SOS counterparts could begin moving into the space and working together.

"It's not every day you hit 200,000 flying hours, but doing it with these people at this time was awesome," said Smithwick. "I'm stoked, [working with the Wolfhound] was a huge opportunity for my family and me to be a part of this community. Getting to stay here and be at Duke has been great."



859th Special Operations Squadron members, 524th SOS members, and contractors who conduct maintenance and acquisition for the airframe, gather together to celebrate reaching 200 thousand flying hours on the C-146A Wolfhound at Duke Field, Florida, April 5, 2024. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Dylan Gentile.

Dedication ceremony honors Senior Airman Daniel Sanchez



Ceremonial honor guardsmen with the Hurlburt Field Honor Guard present the colors at the Special Tactics Training Squadron Schroeder Building, Apr. 8, 2024. A dedication ceremony was held in honor of Senior Airman Danny Sanchez, who was killed-in-action in Afghanistan on Sept. 16, 2010, at the Special Tactics Training Squadron. Photo by U.S. Air Force Capt. Savannah Stephens.

*By U.S. Air Force Capt. Savannah Stephens
24th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

Members of the Special Tactics community past and present, and the family of Senior Airman Danny Sanchez gathered for a dedication ceremony of the Special Tactics Training Squadron Schroeder Building auditorium, Apr. 8, 2024.

The 720th Special Tactics Group commander, Col. Matthew Psilos, presided over the ceremony.

“This dedication ensures Danny will never be forgotten and that we will always keep his family close,” said Psilos. “He chose to stand between the enemy and all the people he loves and respects, and every American citizen that day.”

Sanchez was killed-in-action in the vicinity of Kajran District, Afghanistan, when his team came under enemy insurgent fire within the Afghan National Army partner

force. He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star with Valor while engaged in ground combat from Aug. 4, 2010, to Sept. 16, 2010.

A large plaque donning his scarlet beret, Bronze Star and Purple Heart medals, and name were unveiled before Special Tactics leaders, and friends and family members of Sanchez, including his mother and half-brother.

“It is a duty and privilege to honor his sacrifices,” said Psilos. “May the next generation understand that obligation and carry it on for years to come.”

A native of El Paso, Texas, Sanchez enlisted in the Air Force on June 27, 2006. After graduating Basic Training, he successfully completed the Combat Control training pipeline and reported to the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron. Sanchez’s military decorations include the Bronze Star Medal with Valor, Purple Heart, Air Force Combat Action Medal, and Afghanistan Campaign Medal.

Marine Forces, Special Operations Command

Marine Raiders conduct language immersion training with French Special Operations Forces



By U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Henry Rodriguez II
Marine Forces, Special Operations Command

Marine Raiders with Marine Forces Special Operations Command recently conducted a two-week language immersion training with French special operations forces from the 13th Parachute Dragoon Regiment in France.

Throughout the evolution, the Raiders were exposed to a variety of scenarios and were encouraged to use their acquired language skills in all situations, giving the Marine Raiders the opportunity to practice working with an ally in their native language.

With the help of the French soldiers, they were exposed to cultural integration, navigating cities like Paris, with all matters being conducted in French.

“Outside of the hours spent conducting tactical and operational tasks, our SOF brethren from 13RDP accompanied us on in town excursions,” said a Marine Raider. “They guided us through the civil aspects of the culture to an extent beyond what a constrained training environment can typically provide.”

In addition to the cultural experience, the Marine Raiders spent time on the French Pyrenees mountains with the 13RDP, honing their mountaineering and cold weather skills, while developing their vocabulary on more military and survival specific terminology. Between hiking, digging out snow caves for shelter, and other rigorous activities, the operators needed to keep their mind active to continue to speak to their counterparts exclusively in the target language.

“This was the perfect blend of partner exchange in tactics and operations, and language application,” said a Marine Raider. “The two weeks included mobility training, survival in mountainous terrain, maritime and riverine

operations planning, and more while continuing to deepen our partnership with 13RDP and French SOF to continue to grow the practical application of U.S./French interoperability.”

“This training only exists due to the relationship we have already built and the continuing iterations that have refined how we train together,” He added.

In preparation for this type of training environment, the Marine Raider Regiment Language Program developed a more specific curriculum for the Raiders going out.

“We created targeted vocabulary for what we thought they might be doing, but of course we didn’t know exactly what it would look like, so it was on them to drive the point on what they needed,” said Marni Geist, the French Instructor for the MRR Language Program. “We also knew they would be driving and navigating cities, so we put an emphasis on reading road signs and understanding cultural norms.”

The Marine Raider Regiment Language Program specifically targeted this and other training opportunities that allow for realistic, in person language experience, while giving the Marine Raiders the ability to continue to develop their operational capabilities. The program itself is a specialty continuing education resource for Marine Raiders as they prepare for mission requirements. Through the language program, Marine Raiders can continue the language skills they gained through their pipeline training, and even develop new language skills from scratch.

“The goal is always to do operational tasks in another language,” said Ed Walsh, the MRR Language Program Manager. “The work that the MRR Language Program puts into this, and our other trainings, is to give the operational aspect of language and culture that cannot be learned in books or classrooms.

Marine Raiders with Marine Forces Special Operations Command recently conducted a two-week language immersion training with French special operations forces from the 13th Parachute Dragoon Regiment in France. Courtesy Photo.



*Marine Forces, Special
Operations Command*



ITC Students train for clandestine landing and withdrawal



Students in the Individual Training Course, Marine Forces Special Operations Command train on clandestine landing and withdrawal techniques during amphibious operations training, Mar. 21, 2024. MARSOC places a heavy emphasis on developing littoral special operations capabilities beginning in the training pipeline and continuing on as students become Marine Raiders and transition to their Marine Special Operations Companies and Teams. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Henry Rodriguez.



Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command

USSOCOM inducts 18 new members into Commando Hall of Honor

By Michael Bottoms
USSOCOM Public Affairs

U.S. Special Operations Command inducted 18 former special operators to include nine Medal of Honor recipients into the USSOCOM Commando Hall of Honor located at the USSOCOM headquarters, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, April 17, 2024. More than 100 people attended the ceremony and watched as each inductee received a medal from U.S. Army Gen. Bryan P. Fenton, USSOCOM commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Shane Shorter, USSOCOM command senior enlisted leader.

The Commando Hall of Honor was established in 2010 by former USSOCOM Commander Admiral Eric T. Olson and the award recognizes individuals who have

served with distinction within the special operations forces community. The inductees join the storied ranks of those who preceded them.

This year's Medal of Honor inductees were Vice Adm. John Duncan Bulkeley, Lt. j.g. (SEAL) Joseph R. Kerrey, Petty Officer Second Class (SEAL) Michael A. Monsoor, LT. (SEAL) Michael P. Murphy, Lt. (SEAL) Thomas R. Norris, Seaman David G. Ouellet, Lt. Cdr. Arthur M. Preston, Senior Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Britt Kelly Slabinski, and Lt. (SEAL) Michael E. Thornton.

The special operators inductees were Air Force Col. Stephen L. Baker, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Lewis H. Burruss, U.S. Army Col. Jerry M. King, U.S. Marine Corps Col. Craig S. Kozeniesky, U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Wesley H. Rice, U.S. Navy Capt. William M. Shepherd, U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Peter Stalik, U.S. Army Lt. Gen.



U.S. Special Operations Command inducted 18 former special operators to include nine Medal of Honor recipients into the USSOCOM Commando Hall of Honor located at the USSOCOM headquarters, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, April 17, 2024. More than 100 people attended the ceremony and watched as each inductee received a medal from U.S. Army Gen. Bryan P. Fenton, USSOCOM commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Shane Shorter, USSOCOM command senior enlisted leader. The Commando Hall of Honor was established in 2010 by former USSOCOM Commander Admiral Eric T. Olson and the award recognizes individuals who have served with distinction within the special operations forces community. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marleah Miller.



Retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Lewis H. Burruss is inducted U.S. Special Operations Command's Commando Hall of Honor at the headquarters, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, April 17, 2024. More than 100 people attended the ceremony and watched as each inductee received a medal from U.S. Army Gen. Bryan P. Fenton, USSOCOM commander, Command Sgt. Maj. Shane Shorter, USSOCOM command senior enlisted leader. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marleah Miller.

William P. Tangney, and U.S. Air Force Lt Gen. Marshall B. Webb.

"Today for us is historic. This ceremony is about our people and really reflects our first SOF truth that humans are more important than hardware," Fenton said. "Today we will reach eight decades inducting 18 heroes into the Hall of Honor who took on some of the toughest missions in special operations."

Buruss is a Vietnam veteran who conducted frequent cross border operations against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army and was also heavily involved in sensitive activities. For his numerous valorous acts and courage under fire, he was awarded the Silver Star Medal, four Bronze Star Medals with valor, the Air Medal and three Vietnamese Crosses of Gallantry.

"It's just a real honor to be inducted to the Commando Hall of Honor," Buruss said. "I know there are so many more deserving, but I am still honored and proud."

Webb had a myriad of assignments over his 38 years of dedicated service to special operations. He participated in the search and recovery effort of United States Commerce Secretary Ron Brown who was on an official trade mission in Bosnia, when the Air Force CT-43 he was traveling in crashed into a mountainside near Dubrovnik, Croatia. Immediately following that mission, Webb participated in Operation Assured Response, the noncombatant evacuation operation of the United States

Embassy located at Monrovia, Liberia. During both events, in recognition of his extreme fortitude, airmanship, and devotion to the humanitarian effort, he earned the 1996 Cheney Award. Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, he commanded a contingent of three Pave Low helicopters, crews, and support personnel to assist with recovery, search and rescue, and provided critical assistance to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, he led a flight of seven Pave Low helicopters that inserted several teams of United States SEAL teams and British Royal Marines in the al Faw area to safeguard oil platforms to prevent an ecological disaster. During the operation to kill or capture Osama bin Laden, he coordinated and facilitated the real-time video feed in the White House Situation Room as the United States President, Vice President, and members of the national security team looked on.

"This induction ceremony is so unique to SOCOM because it reached back 8 generations inducting people from World War II. You could see pride in the face of the families seeing their relatives inducted into the hall," Webb said. "For me personally, it is an honor to be in the company of these heroes."

The newest members will join other recognized warriors in the Commando Hall of Honor, which includes such legendary names as Aaron Bank, Charles Beckwith, Ted Linger, Sidney Shacknow, William Darby and Army Col. Ralph Puckett, Jr.. Their contributions and legacies to the special operations community and this country have been unquestionably influential and are truly inspirational.



Retired U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Marshall B. Webb is inducted U.S. Special Operations Command's Commando Hall of Honor at the headquarters, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, April 17, 2024. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Marleah Miller.

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command MacDill's AirFest: Inspiring generations and fostering dreams

*By U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Michael Killian
6th Air Refueling Wing*

The Tampa Bay AirFest, known for its stunning aerial displays and as a beacon for aviation enthusiasts, holds a special place in the heart of U.S. Marine Corps Major Adam Luff, Aide-de-Camp to the Deputy Commander of United States Special Operations Command. From a young age, Luff was captivated by the power and grace of military aircraft, a fascination that would chart the course of his life and career in the Marine Corps.

Luff's journey into the world of aviation began at just five years old, sparked by witnessing a Harrier jet, a marvel of engineering and power, take off at Clearwater International Airport.

"I remember the smell of the ocean, how hot it was, and seeing a Harrier take off," Luff recalls. "It was that moment I knew what I wanted to do."

Throughout his youth, Luff's enthusiasm for airshows never waned. He attended every event possible, his fascination growing with each performance. The bombers, fighters, and agile demonstration teams weren't just machines to him; they were beacons of possibility.

Today, Major Luff is not just a spectator at airshows but a mentor and father, eager to share his passion with his children. The Tampa Bay AirFest, in particular, stands out as a family tradition and a potent reminder of his own journey from an awe-struck child to decorated Marine. Luff sees the airshow not just as an exhibition but as a vital opportunity to inspire the next generation, to light the same spark in his sons and their friends that was lit in him decades ago.

For Luff, the AirFest is a powerful reminder of the role such events play in shaping futures. It's a chance for



Adam Luff sits inside a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress "Memphis Belle" during the 1992 MacDill AirFest at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, April 11, 1992. From a young age, Luff was captivated by the power and grace of military aircraft, a fascination that would chart the course of his life and future career as a major in the Marine Corps. Courtesy photo.

parents to connect with their children over shared interests, for kids to dream of flying among the stars, and for the community to come together in celebration of

human achievement and potential.

"Stay as long as the kids are excited," Luff advises parents planning to attend. "Let them have it, let it develop, experience this opportunity in the moment alongside them."

As Tampa Bay AirFest 2024 draws near, the base stands ready to inspire a new generation of aviators, engineers, and dreamers. It's a reminder that the sky is not the limit but the beginning, and for many like Major Adam Luff, it's where the journey truly begins.

I remember the smell of the ocean, how hot it was, and seeing a Harrier take off. It was that moment I knew what I wanted to do.

— Major Adam Luff

U.S. Marine Corps Major Adam Luff, Aide-de-Camp to the Deputy Commander of United States Special Operations Command, poses for a photo at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, Mar. 15, 2024. Throughout his youth, Luff's enthusiasm for airshows never waned. He attended every event possible, his fascination growing with each performance. The bombers, fighters, and agile demonstration teams weren't just machines to him; they were beacons of possibility. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Michael Killian.



Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command USSOCOM Care Coalition hosts its 2024 Warrior Care Conference



U.S. Special Operations Command's Warrior Care Program (Care Coalition) held its Warrior Care Conference in Orlando, Florida, April 9-11, 2024. More than 330 people participated in the two-day conference which had panels discussing novel and emerging therapies, cancer treatment, suicide prevention, and traumatic brain injury. Also, there were more than 60 federal and non-federal organizations in attendance providing important networking and veteran care opportunities. The Warrior Care Program focuses on wounded, ill and injured USSOCOM service members and their families and provides advocacy and care coordination services to more than 25,000 people. Photo by Gunnery Sgt. Demtrius Munnerlyn.

*By Michael Bottoms
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

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The annual conference is a unique opportunity that brings together those who support special operations forces wounded, ill, and injured warriors and their families to share best practices, discuss current trends within the warrior care community, and learn from each other in a dynamic environment. Topics discussed include updates from the command's surgeon and Preservation of the Force and Family Task Force as well as current information from therapy panels.



Air Force Lt. Gen. Sean Ferrell, deputy commander USSOCOM, gives opening remarks during the 2024 Warrior Care Conference April 10, 2024, in Orlando Florida. The Warrior Care Program focuses on wounded, ill and injured USSOCOM service members and their families and provides advocacy and care coordination services to more than 25,000 people. Photo by Gunnery Sgt. Demtrius Munnerlyn.

The conference kicked off with Air Force Lt. Gen. Sean Ferrell, deputy commander of USSOCOM, giving opening remarks and presenting the USSOCOM Patriot Award. The Patriot Award recognizes exceptional and enduring contributions to the welfare of USSOCOM's wounded, ill and injured service members, veterans, and their families.

This year's recipient, David Winters, was recognized for more than 14 years as President of the Black Dagger Military Hunt Club, providing outdoor expeditions for severely ill, injured vets, and active-duty service members.

"Our family has a rich and long history of service to our nation. My father was a Vietnam veteran and served 24 years in the Air Force. My brother was an Army veteran whose life was ended in a training accident in Korea," Winter said. "I myself served 20 years in the Air Force and just want to continue to give back to those that have served and then are serving."

His non-profit was inspired when the Care Coalition was stood up by then commander SOCOM Gen. Doug Brown.

"We actually thought of starting the Hunt club when General Brown stood up the Care Coalition we started working with some of the early wounded in their program. We met Brian Brennan, a double leg amputee and that is

really what got started in 2010. In 2012 we started our 501 (C)(3) because it was too expensive out of pocket volunteer nonprofit and takes a salary," said Winters. "Our nonprofits mission and philosophy are to get veterans connected, not only to the outdoors but to a caring community. We feel when veterans are isolated and are not connected. They have more of a chance of having issues. Additionally, our niche is paralyzed and blind veterans, we are a community partner with the James Haley, VA hospital, spinal cord injury unit and their adaptive sports program."

Reflecting on receiving the Patriot Award Winters takes great pride in what his organization does for the wounded, ill and injured service members.

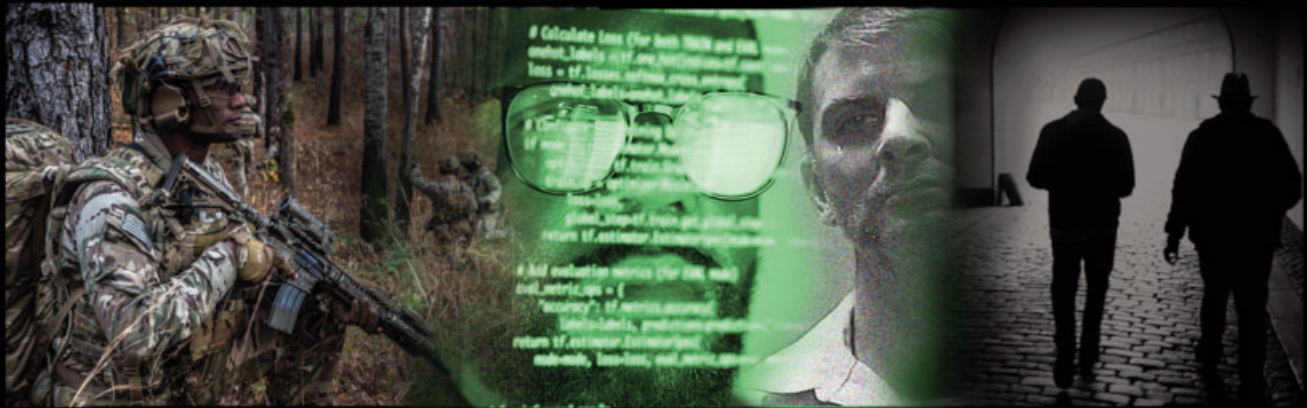
"Winning the Patriot Award means a lot to me. But most importantly it is not from what I have done for what a large and caring group of volunteers and sponsors have provided over the past 13 years. When someone comes out and sees what we do, they get it immediately," said Winters.

The Warrior Care Program (Care Coalition) focuses on wounded, ill and injured USSOCOM service members and their families. Established in 2005 to provide special operations forces wounded, ill, or injured service members and their families advocacy after life changing events, to navigate through recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration as quickly as possible, strengthening SOF readiness. It also provides career transition assistance when necessary. The program currently provides advocacy and care coordination services to more than 25,000 people.



Air Force Lt. Gen. Sean Ferrell, deputy commander USSOCOM, presents the USSOCOM Patriot Award to Ryan and Jillian Winters, the children of this year's USSOCOM Warrior Care Program's Patriot Award, David Winters, during the 2024 Warrior Care Conference April 10, 2024, in Orlando Florida. The Patriot Award recognizes exceptional and enduring contributions to the welfare of USSOCOM's wounded, ill and injured service members, veterans and their families. Photo by Gunnery Sgt. Demtrius Munnerlyn.

Headquarters - U.S. Special Operations Command Empowering counterintelligence agents to get after the threat



*By Timothy Lawn and Stephanie Gillespie
U.S. Special Operations Command*

The Situation: At precisely 0100 hours, a U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) team partnered with a host nation indigenous force stepped off to conduct a clandestine foreign internal defense mission focused on an adversary's communications network. Yet, the joint team was unaware both their mission and activities were already compromised. Little did they realize in the months and days preceding the operation, foreign adversarial elements and a disgruntled insider were coordinating, employing, and sharing travel, communications, and related data about the team and the mission. This open-source data and information provided threat actors with real-time actionable intelligence, ultimately putting the mission and the lives of the U.S. operators and partner force members at risk.

Although this is a fictitious scenario events like

this are becoming more common. This evolving threat demonstrates the urgency in which the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and its Components must proactively leverage their counterintelligence (CI) capabilities. The USSOCOM Director of Intelligence (J2) in conjunction with the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) developed and offered an intermediate level SOF CI Integration Course (SCIC) to educate and equip CI agents within the SOF Enterprise to effectively integrate full-spectrum CI activities into SOF operations, activities, and investments (OAIs).

National security crimes that keep CI agents up at night permeate the headlines daily. For example, in May, 2023, USA Today published an article on the recent influx of Chinese citizens posing as tourists and attempting to access restricted Department of Defense facilities and training areas. Another example is the recent arrest of U.S. Army Sergeant and Intelligence Analyst Korbein Schultz. Schultz was arrested and



Zhao Qianli, pleaded guilty last year to illegally taking photographs at the Naval Air Station in Key West.

charged with selling top-secret information to a Chinese handler. These threats have propelled the intelligence community and USSOCOM to prioritize CI education and require SOF CI agents to proactively integrate CI functions and missions into SOF OAs

However, a close examination of the SOF Enterprise reveals CI is often stove-piped and underutilized. In some cases, CI assets have been tasked to guard ammo dumps or motor pools. This is a clear example of the military's misconception and underutilization of one of its most valuable tools at their disposal to enable mission success. This lack of understanding of the CI agent's value to the commander and mission was a catalyst for the course. The course aims to sharpen the skills and capabilities of SOF CI agents and help them understand how to effectively communicate CI's value proposition as the subject matter experts within SOF units.

The course consists of two phases. Phase one is an online distance learning program that prepares agents for the resident phase of the course by familiarizing them with SOF cultural considerations and nuances in CI authorities that are unique to SOF.

Phase two is a challenging week-long, face-to-face, learning environment that boasts a star-studded subject matter expert panel designed to mentor, educate, and equip both newly minted and veteran CI agents with an arsenal of strategies and tools to empower them in their efforts to fully integrate CI within their formations.

This course will help empower and re-align CI professionals to get in the fight, pursue the threat, educate our units, partner, and win. - SCIC Alumni

With over 120 years of combined government service, these four executive experts helped shape much of the SOF, CI and Intelligence landscape. Their experiences include: AFSOC Commander, JSOC Commander and J2, first MARSOC G2, USSOCOM and NORTHCOM Deputy J2, CENTCOM J2X, senior advisor to the White House Executive Office of the President and the National Security Staff, Deputy Chief of Staff G-2, Senior CI advisor, and Assistant Director Army CI Coordinating Authority just to name a few

"The amount of experience in the room made the quality of instruction all the more valuable. Listening to vignettes and 'sea/war' stories helped significantly because it illustrated how to go about what specific CI activities and instances." - SCIC alumni.

Most importantly, the course stresses the concept of integrated deterrence within the contemporary strategic competition environment. Students are assessed with

both formative and summative evaluations. Additionally, throughout the course the students collaborate in small groups around the project they chose during the distance learning phase.

Upon course completion, students successfully are able to grasp and apply National and DoD strategies, doctrine, and policy; demonstrate working knowledge of SOF culture, lexicon, relationships, processes, and authorities; and be able to initiate coordination with interagency partners to leverage capabilities. Furthermore, students leverage strategic communication to commanders, SOF units, the interagency, and within an intergovernmental multinational-combined (JIIM-C) environment.

"This course will help empower and re-align CI professionals to get in the fight, pursue the threat, educate our units, partner, and win," - SCIC Alumni.

Keep an eye out, the next - SOF Counterintelligence Course for Enterprise CI Agents - will occur at the end of August!

Editors note: This course, SOC 3776, SOF CI Integration Course, is currently being offered through JSOU twice annually. If you are interested in learning more about this course please contact the university.



Special Tactics Airmen assigned to the 353rd Special Operations Wing, and Armed Forces of the Philippines service members attend the Jungle Environment Survival Training course during Exercise Balikatan 24 in Subic, Zambales, Philippines, April 24, 2024. BK 24 is an annual exercise between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the U.S. military designed to strengthen bilateral interoperability, capabilities, trust, and cooperation built over decades of shared experiences. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Ernesto Lagunes.

