

Tip OF THE Spear



United States Special Operations Command
MacDill Air Force Base, Florida

June 2017



**HISTORY MADE WITH CSAF
PRESENTATION OF SERVICE'S TOP
VALOR MEDAL TO TWO SPECIAL
TACTICS AIRMEN**





U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



History made with CSAF presentation of service's top valor medal to two Special Tactics Airmen ... 24

Tip of the Spear

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(Cover) The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds perform a flyover as the Pensacola Christian College choir sings the National Anthem during a dual Air Force Cross ceremony, April 20, at Hurlburt Field, Fla. For the first time in Air Force history, two Airmen were simultaneously awarded the service's highest medal for valorous action in combat. Miller, from the Air National Guard's 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, and Chris Baradat, a combat controller since separated, both received Silver Star Medals for their actions in combat, which were upgraded after a service-wide review. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.

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SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – EUROPE

A U.S. Air Force Air Commando, assigned to the 321st Special Tactics Squadron performs a static line jump from a MC-130J Commando II, April 6, over Norfolk, England. The designated drop zone was located on RAF Sculthorpe, England. The Air Commandos executed multiple static line jumps to become more familiar with and ultimately, qualified on the new RA-1 parachute system. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Justine Rho.

321st Air Commandos qualify on new parachute system

*By U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Justine Rho
352 SOW Public Affairs*

The cargo door slowly lowers revealing patchwork-like fields far below. The deafening noise of the MC-130 J Commando II forces the jumpers to rely on hand signals given by the instructor cadre. As the drop zone nears, the signal to jump cues the Air Commandos to execute a training mission they've performed countless times before – only this time they have a new parachute system to test out.

Air Commandos from the 321st Special Tactics Squadron performed double bag static-line configuration jumps (DBSL), April 13, over RAF Sculthorpe in Norfolk, England, to qualify on the new RA-1 parachute.

“The new parachute is going to replace the MC-4 parachute, which has been around for more than 40 years,” said a 321st STS combat controller. “The new parachutes have farther gliding distance and the canopies are larger with greater response to inputs. I was a fan of the new parachutes as they allow softer landings and the farther glide distance makes them more capable.”

The new gear is a higher performance system with some options not available on the previous parachute.

“The new RA-1 parachute has an increased glide ratio allowing jumpers to infill farther away from a target due to the better glide characteristics,” said the 321st STS red team flight chief. “The parachute also has the option to be used in the DBSL configuration. The DBSL configuration incorporates the highly maneuverable elliptical parachute, usually used for freefall operations from higher altitudes, with the method of a static line connected to the anchor line of the aircraft.”

The multi-purpose quality of the RA-1 parachute increases the altitude at which static lines were previously performed.

“Static line operations are performed at a lower altitude, typically 1,000 feet, where the parachute is pulled out of the container by a static line that is connected to the anchor line cables in the aircraft,” explained the flight chief. “The [new] parachute can be employed in this configuration from 3,500 to 35,000 feet.”

Testing any new equipment demands particular attention

to detail and a high level of experience, especially with equipment that could lead to death if it fails.

“There were very notable procedural differences in the new system; from the way you exit the aircraft to the improved canopy performance. There was a slight learning curve involved, but that's to be expected when using any new piece of equipment,” said a 321st Blue Team combat controller.

As expected, the new equipment will require some time to get used to but, the RA-1 parachute received positive reviews overall.

“The new parachute is complicated to pack,” continued the controller. “However, the selling points were as advertised: the openings were smooth and the canopy was very responsive to user input.”

The operation was marked successful because of precise planning and coordination between the various agencies involved in executing this flying mission.

“The mission went well – we ended up getting 22 members qualified on jumping DBSL and qualified on the RA-1 parachute system,” said the Red Team flight chief.

At the end of the day, adapting to and utilizing new gear is a part of the job.

“Essentially, it's something new and shiny that we can learn, master and use to our benefit,” said a Blue Team controller.



A U.S. Air Force Air Commando, assigned to the 321st Special Tactics Squadron lands near the designated drop zone, April 6, on RAF Sculthorpe, England. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Justine Rho.



U.S. special operations forces help train the Serbian Special Anti-Terrorist Unit at a pistol range during a joint combined exchange training at the Specijalna Antiteroriatička Jedinica headquarters complex, Serbia, April 3 - 30. The unit serves as a special operations and tactical unit of the Serbian police and will receive training in a variety of tactics and techniques over the course of the JCET to increase their effectiveness in future operations. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Nelson Robles.

US, Slovenian SOF train Serbian Special Anti-Terrorism Unit

*By U.S. Army Sgt. Nelson Robles
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe*

U.S. and Slovenian special operations forces converged in Serbia to help broaden the tactical and technical capabilities of the Serbian special anti-terrorism unit known as the Specijalna Antiteroriatička Jedinica during a joint combined exchange training event in the Goc Mountain of Serbia, April 3-30, 2017.

“Our special operations detachment is in Serbia to facilitate this joint combined exchange training event with the SAJ,” said a detachment commander for 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne). “They handle internal threats, high-level criminals and escorting VIPs within Serbia.”

The SAJ serves as a special operations and tactical unit of the Serbian police and received training in a variety of tactics and techniques over the course of the JCET to increase their effectiveness in future operations in rural environments, while building military and civilian partner capacity.

“They have a lot of special training and we’re here to give them basic rural-tactics training at the request of their commander because of the growing terrorist threat in the rural areas of Serbia,” said the U.S. commander.

This training provided a change in training venue for the SAJ, headquartered in Belgrade, who typically specialize in urban operations.

“A lot of the criminals are located inside Belgrade, but they are finding safe haven out in the woods,” the U.S. commander said. “We want to teach the SAJ the



A Serbian Special Anti-Terrorist Unit officer runs to the first station of a stress shoot during a joint combined exchange training with U.S. and Slovenian special operations forces at the SAJ headquarters complex, Serbia, April 3 - 30. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Simeon Trombitus.

ability to target, recon a house or compound in a rural environment and perhaps set up a raid, while teaching them the rules associated with that. You go there to show a positive presence, that the police are here to clean up, not add to the mess.”

U.S. Sen. John McCain, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, visited the SAJ headquarters complex in Belgrade, April 10, to observe the training.

“As I travel through Southeastern Europe, my message is simple: the United States’ commitment to a Europe whole, free and at peace, is ironclad,” said McCain in an official press release. “I hope future cooperation like this will deepen our security relationship and help to enhance the Serbian military’s interoperability with U.S. forces.”

Friction between political groups in the Balkans have led to increased security concerns in and around Serbia, according to the Chief of the Office of Defense Cooperation at the U.S Embassy in Serbia, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Corey Shea.

“Increases in tension in the region can lead to the greater likelihood of some sort of conflict or violence,” said Shea. “It also gave us an opportunity to highlight to the Serbian population who are probably largely unaware that there is any cooperation between the U.S. and Serbia

in the field of counterterrorism, and the senator’s visit allowed us to bring this to the public forum.”

The JCET fosters bilateral cooperation at the national level between the U.S. and Serbia.

“The partnership is an opportunity for both sides to show that there is a level of cooperation that exists between the U.S. and Serbia,” said Shea.

The SAJ took full advantage of the training exercise to bolster its operational knowledge and tactical capabilities.

“It is really important that we continue this joint training; this new knowledge will be included in our new standard operating procedures,” said Spasoje Vulevic, commander of the SAJ. “Our previous JCET with the Navy SEALs focused on urban fighting and we learned new ways to deal with that, we followed that up with the Green Berets to cover tactical techniques in rural environments to round out this valuable skill set.”

According to Shea, the U.S. will provide over \$7 million in military support to Serbia in fiscal year 2017 including over 100 bilateral engagements between the U.S. and Serbian militaries and civil authorities.



U.S. special operation forces greet U.S. Sen. John McCain, U.S. Ambassador Kyle Randolph Scott, Serbian Minister of Internal Affairs, Nebojsa Stefanovic and Serbian Special Anti-Terrorist Unit Commander Spasoje Vulevic during a joint combined exchange training at the SAJ headquarters complex, Serbia, April 10. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Nelson Robles.



SEALs, NATO SOF support 2nd Cavalry Regiment in Saber Junction 17

*By U.S. Army Capt. William Leasure
U.S. Special Operations Command Europe*

Naval Special Warfare operators from U.S. Special Operations Command along with NATO special operations forces from Albania, Bulgaria and Lithuania partnered with the U.S. Army's 2nd Cavalry Regiment during Saber Junction 17 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany April 25-May 19.

The exercise was 2CR's brigade-level validation exercise designed to prepare the unit for combat operations in the complex European theater of operations.

"The SOF cell at JMRC brought in a multinational special operations task group to train with 2CR," said U.S. Army Maj. Robert Temple, JMRC SOF cell officer-in-charge. "Our goal is to create a SOF training environment that provides realistic operational scenarios as well as

opportunities to build relationships with SOF elements."

One of these elements was a U.S.-based SOF team comprised of Navy SEALs. The team worked closely with 2CR during the exercise which included embedding a liaison officer with the unit.

"We learned what SOF can contribute and they certainly learned what our challenges are," said U.S. Army Col. Patrick Ellis, 2CR commander. "They put a liaison chief petty officer in the tactical operations center and he greatly contributed to the understanding of what they can do."

In a simulated European village, forward of 2CR's position, the U.S. SOF team surveilled the enemy from a rooftop.

The SOF platoon commander discussed how the covert nature of his team's operation aided in their intelligence collection capabilities.

"Our ability to conduct close area reconnaissance and



A Naval Special Warfare team surveys an enemy target during Exercise Saber Guardian 17 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center at Hohenfels, Germany, May 1. Exercise Saber Junction 17 is a U.S. Army Europe-directed exercise designed to assess the readiness of the Army's 2nd Cavalry Regiment to conduct unified land operations alongside NATO allies and partners. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Gage Hull.

low-visibility operations has provided 2CR a great resource to fill their intelligence gaps,” said the commander.

The SOF team also contributed to 2CR’s ability to coordinate fires according to U.S. Army Lt. Col. Thurman McKenzie, 2CR’s field artillery squadron commander and regimental fire support coordinator.

“In a high-intensity conventional conflict, SOF are able to identify and trigger the engagement of targets, often deep behind enemy lines,” said McKenzie, whose 155mm M777 Howitzers have the ability to deliver precision and conventional munitions.

The coordination and integration of these surface-to-surface fires was a unique training opportunity for the SOF team.

“There are nuances that come inherent with artillery as opposed to close air support,” said the SOF commander. “The training provides better situational awareness for ground force commanders and the fires community alike.”

Having spent time in the SOF community including a rotation with a SOF element at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, Ellis saw the value of the integration efforts.

“The SOF team did a great job down here,” said Ellis. “They were heavily integrated and leaned forward.”

In addition to the integration of U.S. SOF forces, a simulated resistance force was introduced into the exercise through the use of the Lithuanian National Volunteer Defense Force.

According to Temple, exercising the capabilities of a unit trained to fight as a resistance force is very unique and the first time he’s ever seen this scenario employed.

“We are meeting the LNVDF’s training objectives by exercising their small unit tactics in nonpermissive environments,” said Temple. “We are also meeting our own objectives by training with the LNVDF and learning how to work with a resistance force.”

Living in a simulated village, behind enemy lines, the Lithuanians operated in civilian clothes while living side-by-side with civilian role players.

“When we arrived here at JMRC, we quickly assimilated within the simulated training environment,” said a sharpshooter with the LNVDF. “By day two, we had integrated fully into the village and began training closely with the Bulgarian SOF team.”

The sharpshooter discussed some of the training objectives his unit worked toward during the exercise.

“The most important things we’ve learned from this exercise were tactical and technical insights from each

nation’s SOF forces,” the sharpshooter said. “We’ve also learned how to effectively react in high-stress, tactical environments.”

Facilitating SOF interdependence, interoperability and integration is something the SOF cell at JMRC ensures is embedded deeply in every rotation that comes through the facility.

According to Temple, the SOF cell works to meet JMRC and Special Operations Command Europe’s objectives for SOF and conventional forces integration in a high-intensity conflict environment.

Temple discussed how the SOF cell supports special operations training groups and task units to develop their capabilities in the full spectrum of special operations alongside a live brigade and division headquarters in a realistic joint task force training environment.

“We often assume everyone is going to work perfectly together should open conflict arise,” said Temple. “But finding those interoperability challenges will only happen if we bring the actual aligned units together and let them work their issues out independently.”

The SOTG supervising SOF operations during the exercise was commanded by the Bulgarian 1st Battalion, 68th Special Forces Brigade. The Bulgarian SOTG at Saber Guardian 17 is the supporting SOTG for the NATO Response Force for 2017.

The exercise featured approximately 4,500 participants from 12 allied and Partnership for Peace nations, including Georgia, Italy, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.



A Naval Special Warfare operator pauses to assess the terrain during a tactical mission as part of Exercise Saber Guardian 17 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center at Hohenfels, Germany, May 1. Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Gage Hull.



SOF AROUND THE WORLD
SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – CENTRAL



An Air Force Special Tactics Airman with the 24th Special Operations Wing rappels into the Al Biadia cave complex during a personnel rescue mission for exercise Eager Lion May 13, in Mafraq Province, Jordan. Special Tactics teams have the ability to conduct personnel recovery missions, from rapid mission planning to technical rescue, treatment and exfiltration. With in-depth medical and rescue expertise, along with their deployment capabilities, ST Airmen are able to perform rescue missions in the world's most remote areas. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.

US Air Force Special Tactics trains to lead, build partnership in Jordan

*By Senior Airman Ryan Conroy
24th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

Explosions reverberate throughout the city, and rapid gunfire echoes off the stucco buildings as a joint nation special operations force fast-rope onto a three-story building to infiltrate the hostile city.

Air Force Special Tactics teams, Jordanian Armed Forces Special Task Force and Italy's 17th Stormo Incursori

special operations forces secure each building in the compound-- searching for a missing U.S. service member and rendering aid to casualties along the way.

This wasn't a real-world mission; it was personnel recovery training at Eager Lion 2017, an annual U.S. Central Command exercise in Jordan designed to strengthen military-to-military relationships between the U.S., Jordan and more than 20 different international partners.

"This is a combined fight just about everywhere you

go,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Rodger Jennrich, commander of the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron and Special Operations Task Force Cedar during this exercise. “We have to learn to work with our partners in training -- so that when we go into real combat scenarios, it’s not the first time we’ve seen it.”

Behind the scenes of these complex military operations is the Air Force’s ground special operations forces, Special Tactics -- training to command and control joint coalition forces in a SOTF.

“Future conflicts and crises will continue to require interdependence between air and ground forces, and it’s in Special Tactics’ DNA to integrate those two,” said U.S. Air Force Col. Michael Martin, commander of the 24th Special Operations Wing, who leads the Air Force’s only Special Tactics wing. “This nation relies upon special operations forces to accomplish high-stakes, no-fail missions. We train so our Airmen can solve some of the enemy-centric problems -- from a unique leadership perspective and air/ground capabilities.”

SOTFs are headquarters that command and control ground units to accomplish special operations missions -- constructs that Special Tactics Airmen haven’t often led in the past, but are this year as SOTF CEDAR.

Special Tactics forces have worked toward leading a joint SOTF in both air and ground-focused exercises in the U.S.: in December, during Air Combat Command’s Weapons School integration exercise, and in March, during Exercise Emerald Warrior, a U.S. Special Operations Command-directed irregular warfare exercise.

“Special Tactics must continue to train to contribute at this level of responsibility,” Jennrich said. “During Emerald Warrior, the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron stood up a SOTF, and we took the lessons learned from that operation and built off of it.”

Primarily, SOTF CEDAR’s special operations teams completed global access, precision strike, direct action and personnel recovery operations -- missions that Special Tactics Airmen specifically train for.

Joint nation partners are integrated into every phase of the operations, from mission planning to briefing to executing the training mission. In fact, Italians and Greek SOF forces were injected into the SOTF to help run operations and build partnership capacity.

“Eager Lion is like a deployment -- but expedited,” said a Special Tactics officer with the 23rd STS, who is working within SOTF CEDAR alongside his Jordanian counterparts.

“We’re trying to do as much as possible in a very compressed timeframe -- and we are leading these missions, so we own the responsibility to execute them successfully.”

Special Tactics’ exercises in command and control come as the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen. David L. Goldfein, has called for the Air Force to develop joint leadership, and revitalize squadrons as a unit of action.

“The CSAF is empowering us to train leaders to be more joint minded,” said Jennrich. “Working inside the SOTF, under the Combined Joint SOTF, means we are constantly working with our Army, Navy, Marine and combined counterparts. This creates combined joint leaders, and our Special Tactics Airmen can take the lessons learned from this further into their career.”

For Special Tactics, the training won’t stop with Eager Lion, but repetitions like this exercise are essential for developing best practices, Jennrich believes -- until it becomes second nature for Airmen to contribute to the joint fight as they lead and execute ground missions.

This is a combined fight just about everywhere you go. We have to learn to work with our partners in training -- so that when we go into real combat scenarios, it’s not the first time we’ve seen it.

— Lt. Col. Rodger Jennrich



An Italian special operations force member clears a building during a personnel recovery training mission at Eager Lion May 11, at King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.



Afghan Ambassador Mohib honors USASOC's fallen

By USASOC Public Affairs

Dr. Hamdullah Mohib, the Afghan ambassador to the United States, addressed U.S. Army Special Operations Command Soldiers who have served in or are deploying to Afghanistan, and laid a wreath at the USASOC Memorial Wall honoring the fallen on May 11.

"I am deeply humbled by the sacrifice any soldier makes for their country. It is a great honor to be able to lay a wreath at this memorial and pay tribute to these fallen warriors, many of whom served alongside my country's own brave special forces," said Ambassador Mohib. "Afghan and American soldiers are brothers and sisters-in-arms, fighting for the cause of peace. We will never forget them."

Lt. Gen. Ken Tovo, USASOC commanding general, said the wreath laying signifies the importance of the relationship between Army Special Operations and the Afghanistan government. He noted that our nations have worked side by side since 2001.

"We've lost a lot. The American military has sacrificed a lot, the American people have sacrificed treasure on behalf of Afghanistan," Tovo said. "It's also important to remember the heaviest price in human loss has been paid by the Afghan people themselves. Their military and their police and their civilians have paid an order of magnitude more than we have in this long-running conflict. I think it's an important step that the Afghan government acknowledges our sacrifice."

Dr. Mohib came to the home of Army Special Operations at the request of Maj. Gen. James B. Linder, outgoing commander of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, to attend Linder's change of command ceremony and pay his respects to the

men and women who gave the full measure in defense of their country.

"Since 2001, the men and women of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command have been on continuous rotations to Afghanistan. Our Soldiers have formed enduring friendships with our Afghan Commandos and special forces brothers. We have cemented our brotherhood through blood, sweat and sacrifice," said Linder. "It is an honor to stand here today with Ambassador Mohib and pay respects to those who paid the ultimate price for freedom."

Maj. Gen. Linder's next assignment is to the Special Operations Joint Task Force in

Afghanistan, where he will direct the actions of U.S. special operators working to stabilize the nascent democracy.

I am deeply humbled by the sacrifice any soldier makes for their country. It is a great honor to be able to lay a wreath at this memorial and pay tribute to these fallen warriors, many of whom served alongside my country's own brave special forces.

— Ambassador Mohib



Dr. Hamdullah Mohib, ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, addresses Soldiers who have served in or are deploying to Afghanistan at the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Memorial Wall, May 11. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jacob Braman.



Special Forces soldiers conduct search and rescue training during Vigilant Guard 17-03, a natural disaster response exercise, at Magens Bay in St. Thomas, May 15. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Priscilla Desormeaux.

Special Forces train in VG 17-03

*By Sgt. Priscilla Desormeaux
51st Public Affairs Detachment*

Members of a Special Forces team conducted a search and rescue mission at Magens Bay, St. Thomas during Vigilant Guard 17-03, a large scale disaster exercise that occurred May 15 - 19 on St. Thomas and St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Special Forces team participating in the exercise usually performs such training in South America so it was a welcome change to train in a U.S. territory in the Caribbean. Another difference in this training was the scale of the disaster relief.

“We got the call that there was a large scale disaster relief effort that was needed in the Virgin Islands and we were in Puerto Rico,” said a member of the team. “We were able to respond with our helicopter assets and load our boats onto the helos and were able to get in before everyone else by helocasting into the ocean and come ashore.”

The team’s mission was an integral part of the

scenario. If it were a real life situation, the team would be the first on the ground and would be tasked with initial scouting of the disaster area.

“Well we had to get in early to see what’s going on and conduct patrols so we could send back the information to the Coast Guard and other assets that are coming in, such as what roads are accessible,” said the member. “Based upon our medical capabilities we will be able to treat casualties as we find them. Also because we have aerial assets, we can use those assets to get those out that are really hurt badly.”

The five-day exercise will include other search and rescue missions, road clearing, water purification, and the transporting and care of casualties conducted by the Virgin Islands National Guard alongside other military forces in support of the territory’s response agencies.

The team is set to continue to provide assistance throughout the exercise.

Vigilant Guard 17-03 is a national disaster response exercise hosted by the Virgin Islands National Guard and U.S. Northern Command.



USASOC Soldiers showcase driving skills in Truck Rodeo

By U.S. Army Sgt. Kyle Fisch
USASOC Public Affairs

The U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School’s maintenance company’s motorpool parking lot was converted into a rodeo April 26, with big orange traffic cones designating the course as far as the eye could see.

The truck rodeo was a skills competition for 88M Motor Transport Operators, organized by B Company, 1st Special Warfare Training Group at USAJFKSWCS, according to Lt. Col. Michael Summers, battalion commander for Support Battalion 1st SWTG.

The competition required 88Ms to maneuver five- to 10-ton vehicles through tight spaces and orange traffic cones, in the fastest, safest way possible. The driving portion was prefaced with a test of physical ability for the teams participating.

“I think it’s great; B-Company has done a great job running the event. It’s a very professional setting for Soldiers to compete in. I think it challenges them to the maximum level that they can be as Soldiers,” Summers said. “(The) physical events really wore them down, I don’t think they were expecting that much physical activity, but it is just as important as testing their military occupational speciality knowledge.”

The participants for this event included two teams from Company B and a team from 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command, but all drivers across the Army were invited to compete.

“It hones the skills of our drivers and gives them an opportunity to showcase those skills in a competitive environment,” said Sgt. Maj. Randall Krueger, Operations Sergeant Major for Support Battalion 1st SWTG. “It also gives the winners some bragging rights among their peers.”

“In an event like this, just like any other competition or sporting event between units, it fosters esprit de corps,” Krueger said. “It’s not only a driving event, but also a test of physical fitness by way of a team-building road march and an obstacle course, as well as a written test.”

The tight distance between cones and the truck’s wide



A Soldier competing in the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, 1st Special Warfare Training Group Support Battalion’s Truck Rodeo, navigates the course through a set of cones, April 26, at the support battalion motorpool. This competition was held as a way of building camaraderie, esprit de corps and unit cohesion for motor transport operators across Fort Bragg and the Army, in a competitive setting. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Kyle Fisch.

turn radius make it a difficult course to navigate in addition to the physically demanding activities participants were faced with the day prior.

“Getting 88M’s together from across Fort Bragg and across the Army is exciting; they can network and share experiences,” Summers said. “I think it is critical that we make time for these events, as a logistician, I’ve been a part of rigger rodeos, truck rodeos, water rodeos, and it’s critical because they have to be able to train and network and learn what their peers are doing and what skills they individually bring to the table.”

The scoring for the truck rodeo is done in a points-awarded based system. Points were awarded for the physical and written tests as well as the heavily weighted driving test.

“They’ll be given scores from the road march, obstacle course, and driving portion based on time and they’ll be scored on their written test as well,” Krueger said. “The scores will then be added together for a total, and the team with the highest score wins.”

These truck rodeos were very common in the past according to 1st Sgt. Jermaine T. Wiley, B-Company's first sergeant.

"Back in the old days, we used to have these truck rodeo competitions between units to build esprit de corps and to see who has the best drivers," Wiley said. "They kind of fell off the radar around 2011 or 2012, and since I got here, this was something I wanted to do. I want to give my Soldiers a chance to compete in anything they want to."

Summers noted that in this competitive setting, leadership can observe strengths and determine which Soldiers may need more training on a particular vehicle.

"I think overall they are doing very well. You can see some Soldiers don't have as much experience on certain vehicles, but this also helps them assess their capabilities and where they are at currently and where they may need more training and experience in the future," Summers said.

Assessments and training aside, Wiley explains that these types of events are very important for unit cohesion, building trust among Soldiers and enhancing unit readiness.

"I think it boosts morale and camaraderie. The first day we did the physical events, we did a four mile ruck and within that event they had a special task to (as a team) carry a HMMWV tire that weighed approximately 197 pounds with a pole," Wiley noted. "They had to carry that for about a mile, so they had to work as a team to accomplish that task."

Despite Company B's high operation tempo, they were able to successfully host this year's competition.

"I would argue that they drive the most miles outside of the continental United States units than any other transportation unit in the U.S. Army right now," Summers said.

The Soldiers who took part in the competition seemed to agree with the benefits of these types of competitions for both skill-improvement, and morale-boosting.

"This is my first time competing and I'm happy and willing to compete in all of them. I think we're doing great, I'm confident and I feel comfortable," said Pfc. Jadzel Reyes Portela, an 88M with, Company B, Support Battalion 1st SWTG. "It's all about the training that our cadre has given us. It makes you feel right at home and confident in your skills."

"It's important because you can see all the work that your sergeants are putting into training you, and when you see other people or units competing against you, you feel like it's worth it and it pays off," Reyes said. "You know that your leadership has set you up for success."

Wiley said that while support elements within a unit may sometimes be forgotten, unknown, or overlooked, they are vital to the mission.

"I came out of 7th Special Forces Group and they didn't call us support Soldiers, they called us enablers. We enabled them to complete their mission. When you work with Special Forces units you understand that oftentimes you're going to be asked to do more than you have to," Wiley said. "We do more with less, and it is exemplified in the special operations community."



The winning Soldiers from the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, 1st Special Warfare Training Group Support Battalion's Truck Rodeo, stand with Company B's first sergeant, 1st Sgt. Jermaine T. Wiley during the awards presentation, April 26, at the Support Battalion motorpool. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Kyle Fisch.



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



The 75th Ranger Regiment team of Capt. Michael Rose and Master Sgt. Josh Horsager won the 2017 Best Ranger Competition. Photo by 75th Ranger Regiment Public Affairs Office.

75th Ranger Regiment team wins 2017 Best Ranger Competition

By 75th Ranger Regiment Public Affairs Office

The 75th Ranger Regiment team of Capt. Michael Rose and Master Sgt. Josh Horsager has won the 2017 Best Ranger Competition, according to officials with the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade. The team maintained the number one ranking going into the third day after a strong showing overnight and through the final day of events, which included the Darby Queen obstacle course, water confidence course and the final buddy run. Rose won the competition in 2014.

They were able to push out Staff Sgt. Carlos Mercado and 2009 winner Master Sgt. Chad Stackpole of the 82nd Airborne Division who finished in second place.

Rounding out the top three is last year's winning team

of Capt. Robert Killian and Staff Sgt. Erich Friedlein of the National Guard.

Of the original 53 teams to begin the competition, only 21 completed the buddy run on the final day of competition.

U.S. Army Ranger teams from around the world competed in the annual David E. Grange Jr. Best Ranger Competition at Fort Benning over the weekend. The three-day Best Ranger Competition has been compared to Ironman and Eco Challenge competitions.

The competition challenges two-man Ranger teams in events that test their physical conditioning, Ranger skills and team strategies. The events are purposely scheduled back-to-back and around the clock for 58 hours, allowing little time for rest and meals.

Special operations medics refine Tactical Combat Casualty Care

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. William Reinier
10th Special Forces Group (Airborne)

Special operations medics are among the best trained and most proficient in the world. But, to maintain a high level of readiness, they must practice their skills in controlled environments under the mentorship of senior medical professionals.

As a 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) battalion surgeon, Maj. Hunter Winegarner assists in the planning and execution of medical training across the group. On April 6th, Winegarner led a group of medics through some of the most realistic training Fort Carson has to offer.

“The best training is when they [Soldiers] are able to figure out the problems without input,” Winegarner said. “Sometimes it’s hard to convey what the difference is between real life and training.”

To help close that gap as much as possible, group medics use the Medical Simulation Training Center to provide realistic scenarios that they can work through. The MSTC provides training aids that simulate casualties who can bleed from their extremities, have difficulty breathing, and have eyes that are unresponsive to light.

“We have the ability to hook [the casualties] up to monitors, and they’ll give real live feedback,” Winegarner said. “They’ll breathe, you’ll see the rise and fall of the chest; if you were to listen to them you could hear the heart rate, you could hear the lungs.”

Winegarner said they can make the casualty talk, blink, even look around.

The training tested medics on the multiple phases of caring for a casualty - from initial care under direct contact, all the way through the eventual evacuation of the casualty from a hostile environment.

“The first phase is care under fire, which is basically putting tourniquets on any major bleeding that’s life-threatening,” Winegarner said. “Other than that, you basically ignore any injuries until they’re in a place that’s safe for you and the patient to get more care.”

Often, operators find themselves in areas where

medical evacuation is not readily available, making it important for medics to know how to keep a casualty stable until that evacuation comes.

Making sure that these medics have the skills needed to address any situation is what makes training like this so important.

“You never want to have to use your medical skills,” Winegarner said, “but, if a guy sustains an injury, having these skills is of the most importance.”

“Hopefully, we’ll never have to use them.”



Special operations medics assigned to 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) assess casualty training aids during a medical simulation training exercise at Fort Carson, Colo., April 6. The training is designed to refine their tactical application of casualty care under fire. The medics practiced their ability to assess, treat, and evacuate a casualty in a controlled environment under the mentorship of senior group medics. Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Will Reinier.



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



USASOAC unveils new statue dedicated to Army Special Operations Aviation

*By Sgt. Kyle Fisch
USASOC Public Affairs*

U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command unveiled a life-sized bronze statue depicting the Greek god of war, Ares, riding a Pegasus centaur, set atop a granite base, in an unveiling ceremony held Tuesday, May 23.

The sculpture was donated to USASOAC by artist Jim Shore as a tribute honoring the men and women of

special operations aviation, and now sits along the path to the front entrance of its headquarters building.

Brig. Gen. John R. Evans Jr., host of the ceremony, expressed gratitude to Shore for his generous donation.

"I would like to thank Jim Shore for his incredible contribution," Evans said. "It is through Mr. Shore's benevolence, his patience, and his magnificent artisanship that we are privileged to be able to dedicate this statue today honoring our special operations warriors."



Brig. Gen. John R. Evans Jr., commanding general of U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command, gave a speech during a statue dedication ceremony held May 23, in front of the USASOAC headquarters building on Fort Bragg, NC. The ceremony was held to pay tribute to the union between U.S. Army Special Operations ground forces and the aviation command. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Kyle Fisch.

The statue is aptly named “Volare Optimos,” after the USASOAC motto, which stands for “To fly the best,” and Evans explains why it is unique to have it placed in front of the headquarters building.

“It is fitting that as we unveil the ‘Volare Optimos’ statue, we do so at this installation that for decades has served as the flagship for developing, maturing, enhancing, and evolving special operations ground-force tactics, techniques, and procedures,” Evans said.

Evans also noted that “it is here also that over the course of many years, Army special operations ground components pioneered the integration of Special Operations aviation to achieve devastating effect against our enemies.”

Shore, who had been invited to a capability demonstration of U.S. Army special operations forces at Fort Bragg some time ago, said he was inspired to create the monument after that experience and what it meant to him.

“I’m deeply honored to be here today. It’s humbling to be in the presence of what I feel is greatness,” Shore said. “The level of humility among you, the warriors that when I consider what you have achieved, it touches my heart in a way that I have never experienced before.”

Shore, who completed projects for various corporations and celebrities, explained that this project has meant more to him than other projects combined.

“I’ve been doing artwork for an awful long time, and this I consider the absolute pinnacle of my artistic career,” Shore stated.

Evans explained that the statue depicts the union of SOF and precision aviation and tells the story of the collaboration, coordination, and collegiality between the two.

“Each assault we conduct, each close air munition we fire, each search and rescue or resupply mission we support, is executed to provide the lethality, mobility, and versatility required by our SOF ground units so that they might achieve decisive overmatch against our enemies in any environment, at any place, at any time,” Evans said.

“It will stand in front of this headquarters as a constant reminder to all who enter the USASOAC, that Army special operations ground-forces and USASOAC

are inseparable,” Evans said. “That we provide greater benefit and effect when we work together recognizing that our individual strengths, while formidable, can never eclipse the whole of our achievements when brought to bear collectively.”

Evans concluded with an explanation of why this particular monument was different from other typical aviation statues, and why he believes this was an appropriate choice for USASOAC.

“It stands as a personification of man and machine, of skill and courage, and of duty and sacrifice. It is gratifying to know, that when I tread the path to my headquarters each morning for the remainder of my command tenure, I will not be met with a museum-relic helicopter,” Evans said. “I will not be met by a cold piece of granite with the words of some long-dead

poet on it, I will instead be met with a reminder that the men and women of the USASOAC have enjoyed the privilege to fly the best.”

“It will stand in front of this headquarters as a constant reminder to all who enter the USASOAC, that Army Special Operations ground-forces and USASOAC are inseparable.”

— *Brig. Gen. John R. Evans Jr.*



Jim Shore, artist and creator of the ‘Volare Optimos’ statue, Brig. Gen. John R. Evans Jr., commanding general of U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command, Command Sgt. Maj. Stephen H. Helton, USASOAC command sergeant major, and Chief Warrant Officer 5 Mark A. Meyer, USASOAC chief warrant officer, unveil the statue during a dedication ceremony held May 23, in front of the USASOAC headquarters building on Fort Bragg, NC. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Kyle Fisch.



USASOC showcases combat ability in capabilities exercise

*Photo essay by Mike Bottoms
USSOCOM Office of Communication*



(Above) Spectators watch an MH-47 helicopter from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) fly by during a capabilities exercise hosted by United States Army Special Operations Command on Fort Bragg, N.C., June 6.



(Left) Special Operations Soldiers fire upon an enemy vehicle during a capabilities exercise on Fort Bragg, N.C., June 6.

(Below) An Army Ranger sniper sets up a shot during the capabilities exercise June 5, on Fort Bragg, N.C.





(Top left) A member of USASOC's Black Dagger parachute team comes in for a landing June 6, on Fort Bragg, N.C.

(Above) U.S. Army Rangers fast-rope onto a building during the capabilities exercise June 5, on Fort Bragg, N.C.

(Left) U.S. Army Rangers leave a landing zone during the capabilities exercise June 6, on Fort Bragg, N.C.

(Below) Blackhawk helicopters from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) hover while U.S. Army Rangers prepare to fast-rope onto buildings during the capabilities exercise June 6, on Fort Bragg, N.C.





NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

Navy SEAL honored in his hometown park

By Chief Petty Officer Roger Duncan
U.S. Southern Command

More than 500 people gathered to honor U.S. Navy Boatswain's Mate 1st Class (SEAL) Brian J. Ouellette at the dedication of a portion of the town common in Waltham, Massachusetts May 20. He was killed in action on May 29, 2004 in Afghanistan.

Peg Ouellette, Brian's mother said, "I'm overwhelmed – and honored. This is wonderful – not just for Brian, but for the people of Waltham to recognize one of their own who became one of the bravest of the brave."

Ouellette died with three others while conducting a mounted patrol in Zabul Province. Their vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device as it swerved to avoid another IED on the road ahead. They had been returning to their base of operations near Kandahar Airport. He was assigned to Naval Special Warfare Group Two, Little Creek, Virginia.

The city of Waltham erected an elevated signpost near the corner of the urban town park. Mike Ouellette, Brian's older brother, worked together with city, regional officials and several veteran organizations to find the right venue for a memorial. "This has been a long time coming. But we got it done and this is the right thing for Brian. When we were kids we lived on Central Street, only a few blocks from here. We had a saying -- meet me at the common," he said.

Francis Cormier played high school lacrosse with Ouellette and recently returned to his hometown. He remembers Brian as a hard-nosed guy whose upbeat approach built good teams. "He was always in charge – the driver." Ouellette was driving the Humvee when he died.

Retired U.S. Marine Gunnery Sgt. and local church deacon Dan Donovan coached Brian Ouellette in martial arts classes in boyhood. "Brian had a chip on his shoulder then. I helped him decide on service as a career choice." Donovan walked him into the recruiter's office. "He was a good kid – a tough pain sometimes – but there was a part of him that



Peg Ouellette, mother of slain SEAL, Petty Officer 1st Class Brian J. Ouellette, unveils a signpost in the Waltham Common May 20. More than 500 people gathered at the Waltham Common to dedicate a portion of the park to Ouellette, who was killed in action in Zabul Province, Afghanistan on May 29, 2004. Photo by Chief Petty Officer Roger S. Duncan.

really wanted to succeed," said Donovan, who provided the invocation for the ceremony at the commons.

"This is phenomenal," said Michael Donnelly, of Miami, a retired member of SEAL Team 4 and a teammate of Ouellette's. "It hit me hard." Donnelly served on Ouellette's boat crew at Basic Underwater Demolition School. He now is an entrepreneur and owner of a fire alarm company in Florida.

Mark Hooper, a member of Ouellette's BUDS class, number 173, said, "I'm proud of the brothers for getting it all together. It was great to send him off right."

Retired Master Chief Special Operator Eddie Everett roomed with Ouellette for three years and as part of the ceremony spoke to the crowd, telling stories of time together and of Ouellette's character. He closed his remarks by saying, "Thank you Waltham. You raised a fine damn man."

SEAL Team 18 Sailor posthumously promoted to Chief by MCPON

By Naval Special Warfare Public Affairs

A Sailor from SEAL Team 18 who passed away recently from colon cancer has been posthumously promoted to Chief Petty Officer by the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Steven S. Giordano, one of only three reservists to receive the honor.

Giordano issued the promotion of Chief Gunner's Mate Juan Ithier in January, only the fourth such honor he has approved since taking office in September 2016. Ithier, who spent 19 of his 33 years of service with Naval Special Warfare, passed away earlier this year after a six-year battle with colon cancer.

A ceremony was held at the Navy SEAL Heritage Center on Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek April 23 to honor Ithier's promotion to Honorary Chief Petty Officer and celebrate his 33 years of service to a grateful nation. His wife Sandra was presented a shadow box, combination cover, and paddle among other gifts. It was attended by SEAL Team 18, guests, former teammates and members of Ithier's family.

After enlisting in the Navy in 1980, Ithier served as a Torpedoman's Mate until the rate was disestablished in 2007. He reported to Naval Special Warfare Group 2 Reserve Detachment 107 – the predecessor of SEAL Team 18 – in 1994. He also was a plankowner of Operational Support Team 2 and SEAL Team 18.

Serving on both active duty and in the reserves, Ithier deployed once to Afghanistan and several times to the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility, including Colombia, Panama, and Jamaica. He served as the unit's primary armorer and during overseas exercises he served as an interpreter, range safety officer, weapons instructor, and as the senior enlisted advisor of the support element. The Colombian commandos who successfully executed Operation Jaque in July 2008, which rescued 15 hostages - including three American contractors - were trained by the team of NSW trainers who Ithier supported.

In the late 1990's and early 2000's before the restructuring of NSW reserves, he served as the command career counselor, training department leading petty officer, and primary Range Safety Officer as well as a small arms

instructor for Naval Special Warfare Group Two Reserve Detachment 107, and then later NSW Operational Support Team 2.

After Sept 11, 2001, he was instrumental in training reservists for mobilization, and assisted in facilitating the mobilization of over 150 Naval Special Warfare operators and enablers to active duty in support of the War on Terrorism. His personal awards included the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for heroism, Navy Commendation Medal and Navy Achievement Medal.

"Juan was the epitome of a chief petty officer - he had a detailed knowledge of all subjects, he managed multiple personalities and departments which kept everything and everyone on target, and he was always the first to arrive and last to leave," said Lt. Ryan Clapper, a former SEAL Team 18 teammate. "Like any good chief petty officer Juan made everyone around him better. I am extremely proud that I was able to be mentored by one of the greats."

"Juan Ithier was the best friend and teammate anyone could ever ask for," said Chief Petty Officer Rich Gapski, from SEAL Team 18. "Up until this year, the proudest moment in my 28-plus year Navy career was nearly ten years ago when I had my wife pin on one of my anchors and my mentor, Juan Ithier, pin on the other. From now on, my proudest moment was the day I was able to welcome Chief Juan Ithier as my brother into the chief's mess as a fellow chief petty officer."



Gunner's Mate 1st Class Juan Ithier poses while on deployment to Afghanistan. Ithier, who passed away earlier this year after a six-year battle with colon cancer, was posthumously promoted to Chief Gunner's Mate by Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Steven S. Giordano. Photo courtesy of the family of Chief Petty Officer Juan Ithier.



History made with CSAF presentation of service's top valor medal to two Special Tactics Airmen

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

A seven-foot bronze statue stood prominently over a sea of multi-colored berets, flanked by the 21st Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the Air Force's newest Air Force Cross recipients.

Two Airmen, whose heroics were separated by 11 years and 100 miles in the same war zone, solidified a Special Tactics legacy that has seen a great deal of action since 9/11.

"You represent the finest traits America can ask of its warriors, as you fight alongside joint and coalition teammates in crises of the highest consequence," Gen. David L. Goldfein, 21st Chief of Staff of the Air Force, said. "When lives are on the line, you move carefully and deliberately into harm's way with protection of others in mind."

For the first time in history, two Air Force Crosses were simultaneously presented to Airmen at the Special Tactics memorial as a result of a service-wide review of medals April 20.

Goldfein presided over the historic event, presenting Christopher Baradat, a combat controller since separated, and retired U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Keary Miller, a pararescueman, the service's highest valor award.

The Air Force Cross is presented for extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations against an enemy of the United States. These are the eighth and ninth Air Force Crosses to be awarded since 9/11-- all have been awarded to Special Tactics Airmen since the end of the Vietnam War.

"This is the essence of Special Tactics," Goldfein said. "You do what others cannot, or will not do, and you do it because it must be done, and because there is no one better."

Miller and Baradat were previously presented the



Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen. David L. Goldfein, presents presents retired U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Keary Miller, a retired Special Tactics pararescueman, the Air Force Cross at Hurlburt Field, Fla., April 20. For the first time in Air Force history, two Airmen were simultaneously awarded the service's highest medal for valorous action in combat. Miller, from the Air National Guard's 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, and Chris Baradat, a U.S. Air Force staff sergeant combat controller at the time, both received Silver Star medals for their actions in combat, which were upgraded after a service-wide review. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.

Silver Star Medal for their actions in Afghanistan in 2002 and 2013, before a service-wide review in 2016.

Both medal upgrades were due to a DOD-directed review of medals from recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan to ensure service members are appropriately recognized for their actions.

"We are a highly trained and capable ground combat force leading global access, precision strike, personnel recovery, battlefield surgery and command and control

missions; when tandemed with air and space power, we can make the impossible, possible -- the decisive edge in battle,” said Col. Michael Martin about the Special Tactics force, commander of the 24th Special Operations Wing. “Keary Miller and Chris Baradat are prime examples of our professional and battle hardened ground combat force.”

During a 17-hour battle on an Afghan mountaintop, then-Tech. Sgt. Miller, a Special Tactics pararescueman -- against overwhelming odds and a barrage of heavy fire from Al Qaeda militants -- dashed through deep snow into the line of fire multiple times to assess and care for critically-wounded U.S. service members, March 4, 2002.

“The legacy of Keary Miller is not one of momentary heroism, but of deliberate professional assessment, the application of great skill, and the willingness to risk his life to save another,” said Lt. Col. Shane Mclane, commander of the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, an Air National Guard unit of Special Tactics Airmen in Louisville, Ky. “Keary dashed into the line of fire repeatedly -- not out of disregard for the risks he faced -- but because of his regard for his fellow operator. Each time he did so, he made a deliberate decision to risk his own life to save another. He lived by the Pararescue Motto ‘That Others May Live.’”

At the time, Miller was assigned to the 123rd STS. He was the combat search and rescue lead to recover two fellow special operations members from the top of Takur Ghar. During this mission, Miller is credited with saving the lives of ten U.S. service members, and the recovery of seven who were killed in action.

“We always had a saying, ‘Train as you fight,’ and that’s what we did,” said Miller. “We were used to training to the point of failure so we wouldn’t fail for real. That’s the community we work in; we learn to adapt to stressful and unrealistic environments as a team.”

Eleven years later and more than 100 miles north of Miller’s mission, then-Staff Sgt. Baradat precisely directed thirteen 500-pound bombs and more than 1,100 rounds of ammunition during three hours of intense fighting against the Taliban in a steep valley, contributing to the safety of 150 troops and destruction of 50 enemy and 13 separate enemy fighting positions, in Afghanistan, April 6, 2013.

To many, Baradat helped turn the tide of the battle, bringing close air support to deter an overwhelming

enemy force. Teammates and aircrew recalled him stepping into the line of fire without regard for his own safety to protect the ground force.

“I don’t feel like I was doing anything above or beyond or heroic that day; I was doing my job that I was supposed to do, with my team,” said Baradat. “I had an amazing Special Forces team that I was with that day ... I was just a piece of the puzzle, and we couldn’t have done it without everyone that day.”

At the time, Baradat was on his third deployment to Afghanistan and was assigned to the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, the most highly decorated unit in modern Air Force history.

For both medal recipients, the upgrade was both unexpected and humbling – but the focus will always remain on their time serving their country.

“I don’t feel a responsibility as a medal recipient; it’s the oath we take and the enlistment to serve our country,” said Miller. “In the military, you take pride into what you are signing up for...the Air Force has core values you believe in, and that’s your day-to-day lifestyle.”



Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen. David L. Goldfein, presents Chris Baradat, a combat controller since seperated, the Air Force Cross at Hurlburt Field, Fla., April 20. For the first time in Air Force history, two Airmen were simultaneously awarded the service’s highest medal for valorous action in combat. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.



Special Tactics Airman honored for role liberating Afghan city

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

It was a 96-hour battle: four ambushes, 17 airstrike missions and the eventual safety of a 150-person team that led to one special tactics combat controller receiving the Silver Star April 7, 2017, at Pope Army Airfield, North Carolina.

Tech. Sgt. Brian Claughsey, a combat controller assigned to the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, was awarded the nation's third highest valor medal for his role in liberating Kunduz City, Afghanistan, from the Taliban over four days, Sept. 30-Oct. 4, while assigned to a joint special operations team.

"Brian is a consummate special tactics professional," said Chief Master Sgt. Jeffrey Guilmain, the chief enlisted manager of the 720th Special Tactics Group. "His recognition exemplifies the ground combat skill, airmanship expertise, and bravery that our Airmen bring to the joint special operations force."

Claughsey's medal contributes to his unit's legacy of valor; the 21st STS is one of the highest decorated Air Force units in recent history in terms of individual valor awards, totaling five Air Force Crosses and 10 Silver Stars since 9/11—there have only been nine Air Force Crosses awarded since Sept. 11. All have been awarded to special tactics Airmen.

"The teams here aren't seeking any of this recognition; it's really about the job for them, and it's about the service to our nation," said Lt. Col. Stewart Parker, commander of the 21 STS. "If you saw these folks on a day-to-day basis in the squadron, it's just how we do business."

The night before the four-day battle, Claughsey, attached to a Special Forces team alongside Afghan National Army forces, was notified that an airfield in Kunduz province was overrun by Taliban forces. That night, the joint special operations forces team successfully took back and secured the airfield, with the Afghan army



Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, presents Tech. Sgt. Brian Claughsey, a combat controller with the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, a Silver Star Medal April 7, at Pope Army Airfield, N.C. Following a 96-hour battle with Taliban forces in Afghanistan, Claughsey was credited with coordinating 17 close air engagements, resulting in 47 enemy killed in action without a single civilian or friendly casualty. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.

forces maintaining control of it.

The next morning, their team learned the entire city was under Taliban control—and their mission was to liberate the city of Kunduz. The team planned quickly for the infiltration, borrowing light-skinned pickup trucks from the Afghan army and Special Forces Humvees to drive a 50-vehicle convoy into the city.

"As we passed the airfield, civilians were leaving in droves, which is a telltale sign that the Taliban took over," Claughsey said. "The state of the city upon infiltration was completely desolate, with the exception of the Taliban."

Shortly after passing the airfield they secured the night before, the convoy was ambushed from a fortified building. Claughsey, riding in the fourth vehicle with the ground force commander, suppressed enemy fire by coordinating an AC-130 gunship strike on the building.

From that point on, Claghsey was constantly coordinating with aircraft above to relay information on the enemy's whereabouts along the route.

"The entire route was covered with Taliban forces, so there were several strikes along the way-- one of the strikes was about 70 meters from friendly forces," Claghsey said. "The AC-130 did a phenomenal job of putting those rounds down and keeping us safe and allowing us to continue on."

Then, the convoy tripped a wire, triggering a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device and halting the convoy in its tracks. Claghsey's vehicle was at a four-way intersection and came under fire from two different machine gun locations at close distance. While Claghsey fought back with his personal weapon, two Special Forces Soldiers in an all-terrain vehicle mounted with an M-240B machine gun put themselves between Claghsey's vehicle and the attackers to protect and suppress the ambush.

"Those two Soldiers who placed themselves between us and the attack were the only reason we survived that ambush," Claghsey said of the two who also received Silver Stars for their actions during the firefight.

With the enemy forces fleeing their positions to maneuver behind the convoy, Claghsey quickly coordinated an AC-130 strike and eliminated the threat.

Claghsey and the team secured the Kunduz provincial chief of police compound, where they would continue to be attacked almost constantly for four days and nights.

At the compound, Claghsey received a call for help from an Special Forces element receiving accurate and relentless mortar, grenade launcher and small-arms fire.

"All that was going through my mind was that those guys needed my help and we're all out there together as a team," Claghsey said. "I can't do my job without them and vice versa."

Claghsey neutralized the enemies when he maneuvered to the attack site, coordinated with F-16 Fighting Falcon fighter jets, and controlled strafing runs from about 140 meters away.

"The precision of the aircraft and the confidence that we have in each other as a team, from the controller on the

ground and the aircrew ... we have a lot of faith in each other and they certainly didn't let us down out there," Claghsey said.

A couple of hours later, the Taliban began their final attack on the compound attempting to retake the team's position. Attacked from three sides, Claghsey willingly put himself in harm's way to coordinate airstrikes from the roof.

"I was exhausted ... it was a four-day firefight; however, at a certain point, your training kicks in and takes over," Claghsey said. "This wasn't the first time that I hadn't slept or been stressed out for four days straight -- our training pipeline is two years and it does a really good job of building resiliency and putting you in stressful situations so you can immediately adapt to the situation."

To hear children playing in the street and people moving back into their homes ... to know that we were successful ... and these people were back in their homes, it was an incredible feeling.

— Tech. Sgt. Brian Claghsey

Once on the roof, a Special Forces Soldier and Claghsey were immediately pinned down by small-arms fire for about an hour. They continuously fought back with their rifles, with Claghsey marking enemy positions with his grenade launcher for aircraft to effectively strike.

Despite rounds impacting less than a meter away,

Claghsey controlled two danger-close, 500-pound bombs within 185 meters of friendly fighting positions, effectively stopping the onslaught of enemy forces on the compound—and ending the fight to liberate Kunduz.

Over the course of 96 hours of sustained and intense firefights, Claghsey coordinated 17 separate close air support engagements, with no civilian or friendly casualties, ensuring the safety of the 36 U.S. Special Forces personnel and 110 Afghan partner forces.

"I have absolutely no doubt that the [special forces team] would have taken casualties and would not have been successful if not for Brian on this mission," noted the Special Forces ground force commander in his eyewitness statement about that mission.

For Claghsey, it isn't about the recognition; it is about doing his job, and doing it well.

"To hear children playing in the street and people moving back into their homes ... to know that we were successful ... and these people were back in their homes, it was an incredible feeling," Claghsey said.



SOST doctor to receive Jackson Foundation Award

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

Four hundred fourteen trauma evaluations, 141 gunshot wounds, 270 blast injuries, 102 damage-control resuscitations, 51 chest tubes, 21 intubations and 15 urgent surgical operations...for some this may be a list of numbers and medical jargon.

For others, it meant life instead of death.

This is the direct impact Lt. Col. and doctor Benjamin Mitchell, an emergency medicine physician assigned to a Special Operations Surgical Team, had as the primary care provider during deployments in support of operations Inherent Resolve, Resolute Support and Enduring Freedom.

Special operations surgical teams are Air Force teams of mobile surgical specialists with advanced medical and tactics training, employed in austere or hostile areas where there is little to no other surgical support. These teams train to save lives within the golden hour, and are placed close to the battle outside of any established healthcare facilities—reducing time between injury and care.

“Battlefield surgical capabilities are decisive to mission success, and Mitchell is absolutely representative of the professionalism and skill required for the mission,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Travis Woodworth, the 720th Special Tactics Group deputy commander. “When you combine SOST’s close proximity to combat and crisis with the ability to conduct high-level surgical operations, it does more than save lives: it builds relationships with the local population, combats Da’esh rhetoric and military effects, and provides the ground forces psychological stability, knowing they will be taken care of quickly if they’re wounded.”

The six-member SOST is composed of an emergency physician, general surgeon, nurse anesthetist, critical care nurse, surgical technician and respiratory therapist, and provides four unique medical capabilities: advanced trauma resuscitation, tactical damage control surgery, post-op critical care and critical care evaluation.

Now, Mitchell is being recognized by the Jackson



Lt. Col. (Dr.) Benjamin Mitchell, recipient of the 2017 Heroes of Military Medicine Award presented by the Jackson Foundation. Courtesy photo.

Foundation with the 2017 Heroes of Military Medicine Award at an annual awards banquet, May 4. The annual award is given to active-duty military medical professionals -- one recipient each from the Army, Navy and Air Force.

During his most recent deployment to an austere location in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, he treated multiple patients at a field casualty collection point while there was an ongoing mortar attack occurring within 250 meters of them.

“Colonel Mitchell is a natural leader who has been instrumental in shaping the future of medicine within the Special Tactics community,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Richard French, the SOST commander. “His decisive and intuitive leadership has forged strong bonds with those

who served under him -- through these efforts, Colonel Mitchell has raised the bar for mission success and positive patient outcomes.”

The Heroes of Military Medicine Awards honors outstanding contributions by individuals who have distinguished themselves through excellence and selfless dedication to advancing military medicine and enhancing the lives and health of our nation’s wounded, ill and injured service members, veterans, and civilians.

As far as advancements in medicine, Mitchell personally spearheaded a first for deployed medical techniques: the use of a resuscitative endovascular balloon occlusion of the aorta. REBOA is a technique used for patients rapidly bleeding to death from injuries to their chest, abdomen or pelvis—essentially stopping all blood flow temporarily so surgeons can address the most traumatic wounds.

In a small, concrete house operating with tools from their rucksacks, he and his SOST used four ER-REBOA catheters on four seriously injured patients with a 100 percent survival rate. This was the first time in the Defense Department this was done outside of a hospital.

“In SOST, you get to work with some of the best medical care providers in the military,” said Mitchell. “We operate at a high level of readiness and focus, and my team reflects the highest professionalism under extreme conditions.”

When he wasn’t deployed, Mitchell sharpened his medical skills in and outside the hospital. He led an 18-person team at the University of Alabama level-one trauma center, and served on a humanitarian mission to Guatemala, where he and his team treated 3,000 patients in 10 days.

“He is an extremely driven leader; constantly mission focused and ensures his team is prepared to face whatever comes our way,” said U.S. Air Force Capt. Cade Reedy, who works with Mitchell at University of Alabama at Birmingham and on his SOST. “His medical knowledge, compassion, teaching ability and calmness under pressure are exceptional.”

Mitchell specifically remembers one moment when a local fighter arrived at their makeshift operation room, shot through the collar bone and bleeding to death. Their team was short on blood due to the constant flow of patients arriving at the casualty collection point, so Reedy donated his own blood to save him.

“Our team was so well trained and focused; we controlled the bleeding, got him in surgery and saved his

life,” said Mitchell. “Ten days later that guy walked into our tent and thanked our team ... it was incredible and rewarding.”

For Mitchell, the award is humbling, but credits his team with keeping their composure during chaotic and stressful situations.

“This last deployment took a lot out of my team physically and emotionally because of the high level of casualties we saw,” said Mitchell. “I am really proud of my team. The professionalism and courage those guys showed, pulling off a stellar mission and saving a lot of lives.”

Mitchell’s parents, Mark and Cathy, say his humility cuts through the accolades.

“He is a very humble person and rarely talks about his accomplishments, but does talk about how important it is that those serving in the military receive the highest medical care possible,” said Mark Mitchell. “He also talks about how crucial all of his team members are in providing that care ... He has touched so many lives and we know that he loves what he is doing.”

A perfect example: Mitchell requested that his teammates be publicly recognized for their incredible dedication and hard work during the last deployment, citing that none of the successes are his alone.

Everything that happened required a highly-skilled team of specialists who could work under intense pressure in a combat zone.



The Special operations surgical team, including Lt. Col. (Dr.) Benjamin Mitchell, poses at a forward location. Lt. Col. Mathew Uber, Maj. (Dr.) Justin Manley, Maj. Nelson Pacheco, Capt. Cade Reedy and Tech. Sgt. Richard Holguin are part of Mitchell’s SOST. (Courtesy photo)



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



A U.S. Air Force special operations surgical team from the 720th Operations Support Squadron secure patients on an MC-130J Commando II during Emerald Warrior 17 at Hurlburt Field, Fla., March 2. Emerald Warrior is a U.S. Special Operations Command exercise during which joint special operations forces train to respond to various threats across the spectrum of conflict. Photo by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Keifer Bowes.

Special Tactics trains joint leaders to win in Emerald Warrior

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

Emerald Warrior is an annual air-centric irregular warfare exercise directed by U.S. Special Operations Command, but this year, something different happened: the Air Force's ground special operations force specifically trained joint leaders how to win across multiple domains.

For the first time during EW17, Air Force Special Tactics executed command and control of all ground special operations forces during the two-week irregular warfare exercise, which ended March 10.

"This was the first time that Special Tactics has fielded a SOTF headquarters -- everything from leadership to sustainment, planning of operations to execution," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Daniel Magruder, commander of the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron.

For Special Tactics Airmen, EW17 was a proof of concept for the Air Force's role in future joint operations: employing Airmen in leadership positions against an enemy-centric problem.

"EW 17 provided us a great opportunity to further refine and train toward the responsibility to lead at the O-5/E-9 joint special operation forces task force level," said U.S. Air Force Col. Michael E. Martin, commander of the

24th Special Operations Wing. “Lt. Col. Magruder and Chief Innis surpassed our expectations and the joint standards to lead and employ as special operations task force command team.”

The ground component of EW17 was led by an ST Airman, Magruder, who acted as the exercise’s SOTF commander, and Chief Master Sgt. Scott Innis, who acted as the senior enlisted leader.

Magruder and his staff led EW17’s entire ground component special operations force, including 300 operators from France, the Netherlands, the U.S. Army’s 7th Special Forces Group and Air Force Special Tactics teams.

The SOTF planned and executed 21 full mission profiles in a compressed timeline of 10 days. Primarily, special operations teams performed an array of congressionally mandated missions spanning global access, direct action and personnel recovery.

“From our perspective, this was about developing joint leaders in the Air Force,” said Magruder. “This is a great venue in terms of developing some experience in the ground scheme of maneuver and translating that into

something that Airmen understand in terms of what higher headquarters is expecting to achieve from a joint-force perspective.”

Special Tactics Airmen were the preponderance of ground special operations force, and integrated the air component, to include fighter and global strike bomber aircraft into their missions, instead of visa versa. As with many firsts in a complex operating environment, the Air Force-led SOTF faced and overcame a multitude of challenges.

According to Magruder, it was challenging to effectively manage information and synchronize resources while meeting training objectives and executing safe operations on such a large scale, another reason Special Tactics dedicates itself to training like they will fight.

“Special Tactics is all about looking at ways to solve hard problems and contribute to the win,” said Martin. “The 22 STS successfully deployed and led a SOTF at Weapons School Integration phase on Dec. 16, and then to EW 17. I have all the confidence in them to lead during crisis and combat.”



(Top left) A 58th Rescue Squadron pararescueman conducts disaster relief training during Emerald Warrior 17 at Perry, Ga., March 9. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Corey Hook.

(Left) U.S. Air Force Special Tactics Airmen assigned to the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron conduct precision strike call for fire during Emerald Warrior 17 at Eglin Range, Fla., March 4. Photo by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Nicholas Dutton.

(Above) French air force special operations forces members perform a static-line jump during Emerald Warrior 2017 at Hurlburt Field, Fla., March 8. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Douglas Ellis.





Air Force Special Tactics integrate into Marine Raider training

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

For the first time in history, members from another service spent three months in Marine Special Operations Command's Individual Training Course, with one goal in mind: learn how to lead a joint ground force.

Alongside nearly 100 Marines, two U.S. Air Force special tactics officers assigned to the Special Tactics Training Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Fla., completed the first phase of the Marine Raider's rigorous training pipeline, which produces the U.S. Marine Corps' special operations force.

This was the first time another service took part in

any of the Marine Raider training pipeline, and represents efforts to build joint mindsets across special operations forces.

MARSOC's ITC is a seven-month, physically and mentally challenging course designed to produce Critical Skills Operators who can operate across the spectrum of special operations in small teams under Spartan conditions. Phase one focuses on the basic skills including physical fitness, swimming, land navigation and mission planning.

"Special operations forces rely on trust to produce strategic effects," said U.S. Marine Corps Col. Brett Bourne, commander of the Marine Special Operations School. "Trust between maneuver forces and fires, trust



A U.S. Marine MV-22 Osprey takes off after Marine Special Operations School students infiltrate their objective during Field Training Exercise Raider Spirit, May 1, at Camp Lejeune, N.C. For the first time, U.S. Air Force Special Tactics Airmen spent three months in Marine Special Operations Command's Marine Raider training pipeline, representing efforts to build joint mindsets across special operations forces. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.

between find-fix functions and those closing with the enemy -- the only way to establish trust inside Special Operations Command is to train and operate together.”

The two STOs who integrated into the training were only recently selected by Special Tactics to go through the two-year training program and become part of the Air Force’s ground special operations force. With little previous experience, the Airmen had never been involved in this level of training before.

While there were expected challenges in terminology and baseline training, the two Airmen performed well in most every area – commensurate to the performance of their officer peers within the course, according to the staff NCO in charge of special operations Training Cell-1.

“At the tactical level, the not-so-distant future may find one of these young special tactics officers controlling the battlespace for Marine Raiders deployed,” said Bourne. “At the enterprise level, one of these special tactics officers may be the aide de camp to a theater special operations command or the executive officer to the SOCOM commander -- I predict that the operators from this course will serve together many times over in the future -- Air Force and Marine Corps alike.”

Over the course of three months, both STOs completed several special operations core tasks, from vessel navigation and scout swimming to small unit tactics and weapons marksmanship.

“Joint training like this is imperative to real-world mission success -- this may be the first time we sent special tactics officers to MARSOC’s initial training course, but we hope it won’t be the last,” said U.S. Air Force Maj. Joseph Gross, commander of the STTS, the school house that builds Special Tactics operators for operational units. “This sort of integration is part of our efforts within the Special Tactics training pipeline to develop Air Force ground force commanders, before these young officers become operational.”

Special Tactics is a ground special operations force that solves air and ground problems across the spectrum of conflict and crisis, specifically personnel recovery,



A U.S. Marine and Airman perform scout swimmer training during Marine Special Operations School’s Individual Training Course, March 24, at Key West, Fla. Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Conroy.

global access and precision strike missions -- Special Tactics operators can either conduct operations as Special Tactics teams, or embed as a single operator into joint Navy SEAL, Army Special Forces, or Marine Raider teams.

“The most enjoyable aspect of this training exchange was that the Air Force officers were indistinguishable from their Marine counterparts after the first day,” said Bourne. “They quickly established reputations for physical prowess and initiative and they left a very strong marker for the superb assessment and selection program of the 24 SOW.”

At the end of phase one is a culmination exercise called Raider Spirit where students’ application of learned tactics, techniques and procedures is challenged - from mission planning to patrolling to tactical combat casualty care, all done with little sleep and little time. After finishing, the STOs returned to their service’s two-year training pipeline with new skills, perspective and joint knowledge.

“Training like this isn’t just about making a better operator and leader on the battlefield; this cross training and integration is a part of a deliberate approach to develop our Special Tactics officer corps,” said U.S. Air Force Col. Michael Martin, commander of the 24th Special Operations Wing, the Air Force’s sole wing dedicated to Special Tactics forces. “Trust, shared understanding and solidarity between sister services will pay dividends across the spectrum of conflict and crisis.”



U.S. Air Force Maj. Robert Riggs, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command air mobility liaison officer (AMLO), prepares for his mission on the flight deck of a C-17 aircraft at MCAS Cherry Point. As MARSOC's AMLO, Riggs provides a critical link of communication between the airlift and ground forces in the area of operations. He facilitates the timely flow of critical information between the air mobility network and MARSOC units into sensitive, forward-deployed environments around the globe. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Salvador Moreno.

MARSOC air mobility liaison officer streamlines deployment process

*By U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Salvador R. Moreno
Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command*

U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command strives to move troops and supplies around the world where needed to answer the nation's call. MARSOC utilizes its U.S. Air Force counterparts from the Air Mobility Command to expedite the process of quickly and efficiently getting those troops and supplies to areas of interest.

U.S. Air Force Maj. Robert Riggs, MARSOC's air mobility liaison officer (AMLO), recently conducted a flight in support of the U.S. Africa Command area of operations. AFRICOM is one of six U.S. Defense Department geographic combatant commands and is responsible for military relations with African nations, the African Union and African regional security organizations.

As MARSOC's AMLO, Riggs provides a critical communication and coordination link between the airlift and ground forces in the area of operations. He

facilitates the timely flow of critical information between the air mobility network and MARSOC units that are frequently deployed in support of isolated, dangerous or politically sensitive operations in dozens of countries around the world.

A recent deployment of MARSOC personnel and equipment required a large military transport aircraft to support their deployment of cargo and troops. Riggs, a C-17 pilot, planned and coordinated the movement before taking his job one step further -- piloting the aircraft during the mission. The opportunity gave him the chance to work intimately with the Marines he was supporting and gave them the benefit of reduced deployment friction.

“It just so happens Major Riggs is a C-17 pilot and MARSOC’s general airframe of choice is a C-17,” said U. S. Marine Corps Capt. Rich Charest, MARSOC’s assistant strategic mobility officer. The C-17 commonly performs tactical and strategic airlift missions, transports troops and cargo and performs airdrops.

Riggs’ mission required movement of the aircraft from its home base, embarkation of the Marines and

their equipment, deployment to theater and the re-deployment of another MARSOC company following the end of their mission. The total flight took several days and spanned multiple continents.

Liaison officers serve a behind the scenes but critical role within their host commands.

“We have a dedicated Air Force pilot who understands the Air Force process and U.S. Transportation Command process,” said Donald Johnson, mobility specialist with MARSOC G-4.

Riggs’ perspective and experiences means he can reduce friction points along the process and can keep the MARSOC staff informed as the mission progresses. This real-time information flow is vital when it comes to the nature, value and sensitivities involved with special operations forces and their missions. According to Charest, Riggs’ eyes on the ground gave them first-hand feedback to fix problems due to air transportation delays and aircraft ground support processes and help plan for mitigation in future operations. He added, it greatly benefits MARSOC and the Air Force’s ability to work together by giving an unbiased view during these critical movements of forces.



(Left) U.S. Air Force Maj. Robert Riggs, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command air mobility liaison officer, prepares for his C-17 mission on the flight line at MCAS Cherry Point, N.C. Riggs drove to Charleston, S.C., to fly the C-17 scheduled to deploy a Marine Special Operations Company to Africa and bring back a separate MSOC. The total flight took four days and visited four different countries on three continents. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Salvador Moreno.

(Above) U.S. Air Force Maj. Robert Riggs, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command air mobility liaison officer, assists in loading cargo aboard a C-17 aircraft at MCAS Cherry Point. Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Salvador Moreno.



Joint Special Operations University opens its new campus

By Mike Bottoms
USSOCOM Office of Communication

Sixteen years of planning, hard work and advocating for higher education at U.S. Special Operations Command became a reality with the formal opening of the Joint Special Operations University campus April 20. Today, JSOU educates 12,000 special operations forces students each year. Ongoing education is critical to adapt to constantly evolving threats around the globe.

The ceremony was attended by USSOCOM Commander, U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, U.S. Representative Kathy Castor, 14th District of Florida, USSOCOM Command Sgt. Major, Patrick L. McCauley and hosted by Dr. Brian Maher, president Joint Special Operations University and JSOU Command Sgt. Major John Campbell.

Speaking about the need for educating the SOCOM force Gen. Thomas said, “I can tell you on a daily basis that I can’t imagine things getting more frantic. Every day somebody ramps it up a little bit more. It is critical this institution breed leaders who have the ability to deal with these challenges.”

Representative Castor pointed out being a warrior today is much more than being proficient on the battlefield, but having an understanding and empathy for the global environment.

“These are the types of skills our special ops need,” said Castor. “It’s not just firing weapons and using drones -- it’s that cultural understanding, the language. We want our Special Forces to be educated and understand the threats. They’re not static. It’s evolving all the time.”

“We train for certainty but educate for uncertainty,” Maher said, quoting U.S. Army Gen. Peter Schoomaker, SOCOM’s commander from 1997 to 2000 who pushed



U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, (left) commander of U.S. Special Operations Command and Dr. Brian Maher, president Joint Special Operations University, unveil a plaque April 20, commemorating the grand opening of JSOU on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. Photo by Mike Bottoms.

for the university to be formed.

“Being smarter, being adaptive, outthinking, staying ahead, that’s what we teach here” Maher said. “We don’t teach physics and math and English. We do a lot of writing but it’s analysis.”

JSOU first opened at Hurlburt Field, Florida in 2000 as a way to educate operators and their enablers in subjects such as language, technology and culture. JSOU moved to Tampa, Florida in 2011 and had been housed in a building just outside MacDill’s main entrance. Moving on base gives students easy access to MacDill lodgings as well as the headquarters.

The two-story structure has 16 classrooms, two auditoriums, a library, a historian office and research center. The university offers 67 courses to more than 12,000 military students — 7,000 in person and 5,000 online. The students are mostly military from the United States and allied countries, but recently the university had an interagency student from Homeland Security graduate.



Dr. Brian Maher, (left) president of Joint Special Operations University, congratulates Dr. Paul Lieber for being chosen for the 2016 JSOU President's Award, March 31. Maher established the President's Award three years ago to recognize sustained excellence in teaching and support to the university's academic mission during the previous year. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.

Lieber presented the 2016 JSOU President's Award

By Joint Special Operations University

Dr. Brian Maher, president of Joint Special Operations University, presented the 2016 President's Award to Dr. Paul Lieber, a resident senior fellow during a ceremony, March 31, at the Joint Special Operations University. Maher established the President's Award three years ago to recognize sustained excellence in teaching and support to the university's academic mission during the previous year.

Frank Reidy from JSOU's Center for Special Operations Studies and Research, reflected on Lieber's accomplishments, "Paul came to JSOU with a rich and diverse academic background, plus some quality experience at USSOCOM Headquarters. He had a very productive year

including publishing his own research in several academic journals and leading a team for a command-directed study of the Syria train and equip mission."

Working with partners and students in any situation, Lieber seeks to bring research back to the enterprise and circulate that knowledge to the force.

"JSOU adds a necessary dimension to the command and, within JSOU, the Senior Fellows are a useful instrument for the commander to explore ideas or to conduct rigid academic analysis independent of headquarters staff functions," said Lieber.

During the year, Lieber contributed to five symposia, two courses, facilitated "thinker sessions" for the commander and command senior enlisted leader, and published more than six articles in peer-reviewed journals.

"He's definitely a workhorse," Maher said. "Whether facilitating a symposium in New Zealand in support of SOCPAC, teaching in a JSOU course, presenting on a panel with University of South Florida faculty, writing his own monograph, or reviewing manuscripts for publication in the JSOU Press, Dr. Lieber delivers insightful commentary that advances any discussion."

Lieber also provides invaluable advice to the JSOU Press and its authors. Rob Nalepa, editor-in chief of the JSOU Press praised Lieber's ability to establish effective, professional relationships with the authors of research projects for which he provides academic advice.

"In this business peer-reviewed comment and recommendations are often blunt and hard-hitting. Dr. Lieber has a knack for establishing the two-way communication and respect necessary to convey that feedback," Nalepa said. "He is also instrumental to success that begins in the early stages of projects by working closely with authors to hammer out organization and scope of a project. Although the authors' names are on the titles, without Dr. Lieber's feedback and guidance, very few manuscripts would attain the quality necessary for JSOU Press to publish."

"I am very humbled by this recognition," said Lieber. "I get a chance to work with talented people, doing research that matters, working with serious-minded students and military professionals, and supporting a command with a daily mission that affects people around the globe. If my work adds to the command's success, that's reward enough."

A life-long, anything-New York sports fan, Lieber added with a wry smile, "As much as I genuinely appreciate the award, the real highlight of my year was visiting the owner's box during a Knicks game."



SOCOM remembers Anzac Day



U.S. and international military partners, family and friends observed Anzac Day on a dimly lit beach on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. at sunrise for an Anzac Day commemoration service April 25. Anzac marks the anniversary of the first major military action fought by Australian and New Zealand forces during WWI. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.

***By U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence
USSOCOM Office of Communication***

U.S. and international military partners, family and friends gathered around a dimly lit beach on MacDill Air Force Base, Florida at sunrise for an Australian and New Zealand Army Corps Day commemoration service April 25.

Anzac Day is always honored on April 25 and marks the anniversary of the first major military action fought by Australian and New Zealand forces during WWI.

“For New Zealanders and Australians at home or abroad Anzac is their day to not only remember the people who died on that day, but to remember all Anzac. To remember all the former men and women of our defensive forces,” said New Zealand Army Col. Andrew Shaw, New Zealand’s senior national representative at U.S. Central Command.

The dawn service observed on Anzac Day has its origins in the military tactic to prepare before dawn so by the time the first light crept across the battlefield soldiers were awake, alert, and manning their weapons in case of attack. A dawn vigil became the basis for commemoration in several places after the war and has since become the Anzac Day Commemoration.

U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, U.S. Special Operations Command, commander supported his international counterparts during the commemoration. As part of the ceremony, members laid wreaths symbolizing the fallen comrades. Thomas participated in that portion of

the ceremony representing the United States.

In 1915, Australian and New Zealand soldiers formed part of the expedition that set out to capture the Gallipoli peninsula in Turkey. The ultimate objective was to capture the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople – now Istanbul.

The Australian and New Zealand Forces landed on Gallipoli on April 25, meeting fierce resistance from the Ottoman Turkish defender. The campaign quickly became a stalemate, and dragged on for eight months. At the end of 1915 the allied forces were evacuated from the peninsula, with both sides suffering heavy casualties and enduring great hardships.

Gallipoli had a profound impact on Australians and New Zealanders at home and April 25 soon became the day on which the sacrifice of those who died in the war are remembered.

Australian Army Brigadier Paul Kenny, USSOCOM deputy director of operations, recited the fourth stanza of the Ode of Remembrance during the ceremony, which is from a poem written by Laurence Binyon called “For the Fallen.”

“They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them,” Kenny recited.

The recitation of the Ode of Remembrance is a time honored tradition during the Anzac commemoration ceremony.



U.S. Army Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, commander U.S. Special Operations Command, salutes after placing a wreath on a memorial in remembrance of Anzac Day, April 25, on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Angelita Lawrence.



U.S. Army
Sgt. Corwin M. Burrowes
528th Sustainment Brigade



U.S. Army
Spc. Etienne J. Murphy
75th Ranger Regiment



U.S. Navy
Senior Chief Petty Officer (SEAL)
Kyle J. Milliken
Naval Special Warfare Command



U.S. Navy
Petty Officer 1st Class (SEAL)
Remington J. Peters
Naval Special Warfare Command



U.S. Army
Sgt. Joshua P. Rodgers
75th Ranger Regiment



U.S. Army
Sgt. Cameron H. Thomas
75th Ranger Regiment

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



Air Force pararescuemen prepare for aerial transport during a personnel recovery scenario at Pond Landing Zone during Angel Thunder 17 in Tucson, Ariz., May 11. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Marianne Santos.