



# THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SENTINEL

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 8 • AUGUST 2018



## MACV-SOG GREEN BERETS KILLED 50 YEARS AGO

**SSG Talmadge Horton Alphin, Jr. - PFC William Henry Bric III - SFC Tadeusz Marian Kepczyk**

**SFC Donald Ray Kerns - SGT James Thomas Kickliter - 1LT John Edward Miller**

**MSG Charles Raymond Norris - SGM Richard Epps Pegram, Jr. - 1LT Paul Douglas Potter**

**MSG Rolf Ernst Rickmers - SP4 Anthony John Santana - MSG Gilbert Arthur Secor**

**SGT Robert Joseph Uyesaka - SSG Howard Steven Varni - SFC Harold Robert Voorheis**

**SFC Albert Marion Walter - SFC Donald Walter Welch**

# WE NEVER FORGET



**ATTACK ON FOB 4 – 50TH ANNIVERSARY  
17 SF KIAs — August 23, 1968**



# SENTINEL

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 8 • AUGUST 2018

## From the Editor

### IN THIS ISSUE:

President's Page .....	1
The Evisceration of the Buon Enao Program, the CIDG and the Montagnards.....	2
July Chapter 78 Meeting Presentation: U.S. Horse Soldiers in Afghanistan .....	5
17 SF KIAs — August 23, 1968 .....	6
USSF Casualties at FOB 4.....	15
Cops Corner .....	17
SFA Chapter 78 July 2018 Meeting.....	18

**COVER:** August 23, 2018 marks the 50th anniversary of the attack on Forward Operating Base 4 (FOB 4), the single deadliest attack in SF history. The names of the seventeen Green Beret's lost during the three-hour attack are listed. In the words of Laurence Binyon — *At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we shall remember them.* (Cover design by Debra Holm)



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**MISSION STATEMENT:** The *Sentinel* will provide interesting and meaningful information relative to the Special Forces experience — today, yesterday and tomorrow. Articles will be published that were written by knowledgeable authors who will provide objective and accurate accounts of real world experiences.

The *Sentinel* is published monthly by Special Forces Association Chapter 78, Southern California. The views, opinions and articles printed in this issue do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Army or the United States Special Operations Command, the Special Forces Association, or Special Forces Association Chapter 78. Please address any comments to the editor, "*Sentinel*" to [dhgraphics@earthlink.net](mailto:dhgraphics@earthlink.net).



Lonny Holmes  
Sentinel Editor

This August 2018 edition of the *Sentinel* is essentially the Memorial Issue for those MACV-SOG Green Berets killed in action on the 23rd of August 1968 at FOB 4, I Corps, Vietnam. No memorial service was ever held for them in Vietnam since the unit and its activities was classified as Top Secret. The Special Operations Association at its annual reunion, SOAR XLII, will hold a Memorial Breakfast on Wednesday October 17, 2018

for the families of the 17 SF KIA. Surviving members of the MACV-SOG assault and other SOA members and guests are invited to attend to pay our respects for our fallen Green Beret Brothers.

Chapter 78 president John S. Meyer, noted author, and 1-0 of MACV-SOG Recon Team Idaho, pens a moment-by-moment description of the assault of FOB 4 in this issue with vivid details provided by surviving SOG members, thus giving us never before published information of that horrible night in Vietnam with Special Forces suffering its highest single day casualties to this day. Printed copies of the *Sentinel* will be provided to SOAR attendees and the family members of those KIA.

As the *Sentinel* nears the one year mark since the establishment of *The Forgotten Warriors: Updates on the Montagnards* column by Chapter member Tom Turney, he provides in this issue a broad overview the history of the Montagnard People following the creation of the Buon Enao Program and the CIDG Soldiers to the "Fall of Saigon" and thereafter. Future columns will discuss the Montagnards leadership, political aspirations, and the FULRO. He has been corresponding with noted expert Mike Bengé and will provide our readership with an inside look into this history, preserving the story of these soldiers who worked and fought alongside many Green Berets in Vietnam from our early TDY deployments thru the rotation of the 5th Special Forces Group, Airborne, into Vietnam in 1964 until its relocation back to Fort Bragg in 1971. Still, Montagnards continued to work with classified SF projects and other secret units until the fall of Saigon in the spring of 1975.

I would like to thank Alex Quade for presenting "The War Reporter Award" to the *Sentinel* for the chapters commitment to documenting Special Forces history. Our publisher, Richard Simonian, Debra Holm the *Sentinel's* graphic designer and all our writers and contributors deserve the credit for our achievement. ❖

Lonny Holmes  
Sentinel Editor





John Stryker Meyer  
President SFA 78

Gentlemen of Chapter 78,

I wanted to start the president's column by thanking Chris Spence for his outstanding presentation to our chapter during our July 14 meeting. But, I have to bring more immediate good news first:

I just got off the phone with SFA Executive Director **Cliff Newman** who confirmed that the SFA membership of OSS, WWII/SOG living legend **John "Jack" K. Singlaub** has been transferred officially to Chapter 78.

Jack attended Van Nuys High School, as did Chapter 78 member **Doug "The Frenchman" LeTourneau**. Jack went to UCLA where he was commissioned as a lieutenant before joining the OSS during WWII. "It seems only natural that I transfer my membership to Chapter 78 as I'm a Southern California native son, and that chapter is active while caring about SF history," Singlaub told the *Sentinel*.

Our newest member turned 97 on July 10, and celebrated his birthday with family and friends in his home in Franklin, TN. He, his wife Joan and daughter Debra, moved there a few years ago. Family physicians have limited his travel due to Jack having heart valve replacement surgery following his 96th birthday. He remains active, assisting SOCOM in refining the SF Jedbergh program, and is working on a film and new book based on his OSS assignment in Manchuria, after serving with valor in Europe fighting the Nazis with indigenous forces. Please welcome Jack to our Chapter.

And, speaking of new members, we just submitted the paperwork to bring SF **Lt. Col. John T. Bleigh** into Chapter 78. John is the SF Commander for So Cal Recruiting BN, which includes Palm Desert, Inland Empire, and High Desert including Ft. Irwin. Los Angeles has a separate recruiting command. John will be our guest speaker for the August 11 meeting, addressing some of the surprising challenges confronting SF recruiters today. Please welcome him to our Chapter.

Getting back to Chris Spence: I want to thank him for an insightful presentation, working hand in hand with SF war correspondent and Chapter 78 writer Alex Quade. I saw no nodding heads during their presentation — unlike when I speak. To say that MSG Spence is a major, significant figure in SF history is an understatement. As an active participant in the first A-Teams to land in Afghanistan after 9/11, that is an SF

landmark moment that we all salute. Chris promised that he'll return to Chapter meetings if he can during his quarterly, scheduled job-related meetings in LA. And, we again thank Alex for her role in his presentation and for bringing some "sunshine" to our meeting.

Changing gears: As you remember Cliff Newman was on the cover of the July *Sentinel*, because he went to Laos with DPAA in an effort to locate six American KIAs from the secret war in Laos. Cliff was able to get within "six meters" of where his recon team stacked the body bags containing those six men in 1971. However the recon team barely survived the mission under extreme enemy attacks — thus leaving the men behind. We're waiting for an update from DPAA on future missions at that site.

See you at the next Chap. 78 meeting. Details below:

**Date & Time:** August 11, 8:30 a.m. Breakfast will be served.

**Location: Embassy Suites**

**3100 East Frontera**

**(The SE Corner of Hwy 91 & Glassell St.)**

**The Spanish Moss Room**

Anaheim, CA 92807

### **CRITICAL REMINDER:**

Please contact Chapter Vice President Brad Welker or me to confirm your attendance. We need an accurate headcount. ❖

John Stryker Meyer  
President, SFA Chapter 78



Jim Duffy, film producer/talk show host Jack Scalia, Richard Simonian, Alex Quade, John Meyer and Chris Spence at Artemis Defense Institute after the July Chapter meeting on July 14. Photo courtesy Jim Duffy

# THE FORGOTTEN WARRIORS



## Updates on the Montagnards



"Montagnards in field" by Icemanwcs is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.



Tom Turney

### The Evisceration of the Buon Enao Program, the CIDG and the Montagnards

By Tom Turney

*In the article entitled, "The Buon Enao Project — The Creation of the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG)," which appeared in the July 2018 issue of the Sentinel, Mr. Bengé discussed the success of the Buon Enao Project and how the CIDG program*

*was created. This article is intended to give the reader an understanding of happenings after the Buon Enao Project. This column draws heavily from two articles written Mr. Bengé including "Special Forces and the Montagnards" to be published in the Vietnam Veterans for Factual History's book series, "INDOCHINA: In the Year of the ....." and "The History of the Involvement of the Montagnards of the Central Highlands in the Vietnam War" which appeared in "The Fall of Saigon" SACEI Forum #8. March 2011 which have been modified by the author.*

.....

Tragically, contemporary with the success with the Buon Enao Project and its subsequent expansion, events on the other side of the world derailed the CIA/Special Forces partnership with the Montagnards that was so effective in Vietnam. The "Bay of Pigs" invasion intended to topple the government of Fidel Castro was an unmitigated disaster. The review report chaired by General Maxwell Taylor, and a CIA in-house review, both concluded that by staffing, planning, and supervision, that operation exceeded the Agency's capabilities. A period of JCS – CIA antipathy ensued. The result for programs in Vietnam was that all paramilitary activities operated by the CIA were switched to MACV.

Although referred to as "Operation Switchback" it would have been more accurate to have called it "switchover." New rules stipulated that only military personnel were to thereafter participate in operations, and it was to be financed only by the military. Thus, the CIA operatives associated with these programs departed in October

1962; Dave Nuttle resigned from the CIA in protest. Anthropologist and expert on the Montagnards Dr. Gerald Hickey noted, "One reason the programs were effective was that the Americans participating in them were not bound by bureaucratic restraints". Thus, began the slow decline in operations.

The President of South Vietnam brother, Nhu, like so many of the Vietnamese hierarchy, including the generals, culturally feared the Montagnards (who they referred to as "Moi" — savages). As the Buon Enao program spread and the Montagnards became armed, their increasing power-base became a force to be reckoned with — it struck fear into the Vietnamese which had reached a high point of paranoia. Nhu in particular was extremely fearful of a resurrection of the Montagnard ethno-nationalistic Highland autonomy movement — BAJARAKA — and began pulling the rug out from under the program. In the second half of 1962, the Diem government drastically reversed its policy, demanding that the CIDG be dissolved and dispersed, and that the villages in the Buon Enao Project revert to direct control of the South Vietnamese provincial authorities.

However, South Vietnamese authorities offered the Highlanders virtually nothing in return. Village chiefs and elders indicated that, if stripped of the bulk of their arms, they would, in effect, retreat into neutrality. They would no longer risk their lives to keep the Communists out of their villages. This resulted in a resurgence of a high-level communist activity in the Central Highlands.

Though instrumental in setting up the Buon Enao Project, the American establishment in Vietnam offered little if any effective resistance to its closure. There were overlapping Ambassadors, a time when little diplomacy is accomplished, with Frederick Nolting, a career FSO, arriving on scene on May 10, 1961 and leaving on August 15, 1963. He was replaced by Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., a political appointee, arriving on August 26, 1963 and leaving on June 1964. Neither knew much, and cared little, about the value of counterinsurgency, the Montagnards, and the Central Highlands.

At a time when the outcome of the war hung in the balance, there was no major objection by MACV. General Paul Harkins, commanding MACV coveted the CIDG and wanted total control, so it



could be militarized. In late 1962 and early 1963 the conventional warriors thus got the upper hand so there was a shifting emphasis in CIDG, where it had not been dissolved, “from the establishment of mutually supporting village defense systems to carrying out offensive strike operations”. No longer was there a population-centric approach to counterinsurgency that emphasized material and psychological benefits to the social groups involved in the Highlands (winning the hearts and minds of the people in order to protect themselves). MACV’s priorities were border surveillance, reconnaissance and kinetic action against enemy troops (i.e., locate and liquidate the opposition).

According to Dr. P.J. Harris, “the most unrestrained comments sent to General Harkins came from Colonel ‘Ted’ Serong, his Australian advisor. Serong argued that the Diem administration’s intent to destroy the Buon Enao project was motivated by a desire to extinguish the Highland tribes as distinct peoples. Like Diem, a Catholic and a fanatical anti-Communist, Serong realized that President Diem did not wish physically to exterminate Highlanders, merely to assimilate them into his essentially Vietnamese state. Serong nevertheless characterized this as a form of ‘genocide’ and doubted that it was appropriate to go along with it.”

To the Montagnards, Buon Enao was a symbol; it meant a great deal to them, a sense of pride, power and a distinct identity. The destruction of Buon Enao greatly exacerbated ethnic tensions in the Central Highlands, leading to the September 1964 “FULRO Revolt” (to be covered in a future column). While the Buon Enao Project was disbanded, American Special Forces operations in the Central Highlands actively recruited the Montagnards to serve at numerous A Camps in Vietnam, for the five MIKE Force battalions (one in each of the 4 Corps as well as one in Nha Trang), for the various Greek alphabet programs as well as the Studies and Observations Group (SOG). At its peak there were approximately 30,000 Montagnards serving with Special Forces. The relationship with Special Forces and the Montagnards was a great one for the Montagnards as it gave them a sense of pride, power and identity.

In 1972, all US Special Forces A-Teams and CIDG camps were turned over to the Army of the Republic of South Vietnam and became Border Rangers (Biệt Động Quân Biên Phòng). Put together with the MIKE Forces as battalions within the Border Rangers, they became the mobile reserve forces assigned to each of the military regions playing the same role as they had with former US Special Forces MIKE Forces. Several thousand Montagnards also served in the South Vietnamese regular and irregular forces; e.g., regular army units, rangers, airborne, regional and popular forces, village defense forces, Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU), and Kit Carson Scouts until the downfall of the country. They served in these roles until Vietnam fell.

After the massive staging of troops, tanks and other armament and supplies in Cambodia in March 1975, North Vietnamese troops swept across the border into the Central Highlands of South Vietnam, reminiscent of a Nazi Blitzkrieg in WWII. Known as Campaign 275, the goal of the communists was to capture the Tay Nguyen (Central Highlands) in order to kick-start the first stage of a full-scale offensive on South Vietnam termed the Ho Chi Minh Campaign. The psyche of the Vietnamese and many military strategists was “Those who control the Tây Nguyên hold the key to all of South Vietnam.” The defeat at Ban Me Thuot and the 10-day battle for the rest of II Corps resulted in a disastrous evacuation from the Central Highlands. By March 11, the NVA consolidated their hold on Ban Me Thuot, and on March 12, South Vietnam’s President Thiệu, ordered the 23rd ARVN Division to abandon city and the highlands. This caused a snowball effect and South Vietnam began imploding and ARVN troops abandoned their positions throughout the Central Highlands. Panicked troops exchanged their uniforms for civilian clothes and fled to the coastal provinces and Saigon in hopes of evacuation.

The Border Rangers fought bravely against overwhelming odds. Lacking air, artillery and reinforcement support from other units because the US had cut off funding, they soon ran out of ammunition. Their positions soon were overrun, and those who weren’t killed outright in battle, but wounded, were often shot on the spot; some Border Ranger units fought to the last man. Those who were able to flee the carnage were hunted down like animals by the NVA and when captured they too were often executed on the spot. The few that could evade the NVA fled to the mountains and the jungle in hopes of eventually joining other Montagnard other resistant fighters and FULRO in Cambodia.

Those Border Rangers who survived the onslaught and subsequent executions and were not able to flee to Cambodia were taken prisoner and sent by the NVA to “re-education”/concentration camps only to suffer the depravity of lack of food and medicine,



CIDG soldiers. Photos courtesy Tom Turney

torture and executions. These brave defenders became a mere statistic of the tens of thousands of deaths of the peoples of South Vietnam sent to these camps. The very few who survived, suffered this inhumanity for as many as 15 years. Those who were not killed by the NVA, soon stripped the jungle of edible roots, leaves, nuts, berries and fruits, and ate all of the animals, birds, insects and aquatic life they could find, in an effort to survive. Thousands suffered and died from malnutrition and disease; and even some died from eating unfamiliar plants that turned out to be toxic.

Benge states "The Vietnam War extracted its toll, and one of the most tragic and little-known consequences was the decimation and destruction it brought to the Highland People. By War's end in 1975, around 85 percent of their villages were either in ruins or abandoned. Of the estimated one million highlanders, between 200,000 and 220,000 had died or were killed, including around one-half of their adult male population. But a great many were not killed by bullets or bombs. They perished because their world was shattered."

A French census in 1943 reported a highlander population of one million. Other surveys in the 60s and 70s indicated that the Montagnard population in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam may have been as high as 1.5 million people. Noted anthropologist Dr. Gerald Hickey reported that a survey during the war indicated the highlander population to be close to one million. However, the census takers did not go into many areas that contained significant populations of Montagnards since they were unsecure and not under government control.

Today the communist regime publicizes the population as being only 750,000 and admits that Montagnards are among the "poorest of the poor" in Vietnam, and their children suffer the highest percentage of malnutrition and infant mortality. If not treated with outright hostility, Montagnards are at best treated with benign neglect; and evidence suggests that ethnic cleansing, cultural leveling and environmental genocide is taking place.

Those Montagnards who fought for the South Vietnamese government and for the Americans during the war and the relatives of those living the U.S. suffer the most. They, their children and grandchildren are not granted the same amenities as Vietnamese families receive. Montagnards are required to pay for medical assistance and schooling, which of course they cannot afford. Thus, few can achieve the secondary level of schooling much less any higher education.

The Montagnards are being deprived of their cultural heritage. The communist government took away their ancestral lands, their longhouses have been burnt, and they have been forced to build their houses on the ground — Vietnamese style. There are no more "Montagnard villages;" thus, their culture is being destroyed. Government policy requires all villages to be integrated, with every other house occupied by an ethnic Vietnamese family. The communist regime has a policy to assimilate the hill tribes into their culture through forced inter-racial relationships and marriages.

The Montagnard extended family structure has been destroyed. Elders, "keepers" of the Montagnard culture and traditions, have been forcibly relocated to "retirement villages" far from their families and relatives, where they have little or no means of sup-

port, access to medicine, etc., and have to fend for themselves. Montagnards are no longer permitted to make rice wine for their cultural ceremonies, conduct sacrificial ceremonies, or own buffaloes. Now their harmony with the spirits and the environment is in turmoil, and their world has been turned upside down.

Traditionally a great share of the Montagnards practiced swidden (sometimes called slash and burn) farming, however, their ancestral lands have been taken from them by the government, and much of it is now used for the establishment of vast parastatal plantations of cash crops. Montagnard families have been regulated to small plots of land (about 1.5 acres) insufficient to grow enough food to adequately feed their families. There are little or no employment opportunities for the Montagnards in the Central highlands other than working as cheap laborers on parastatal plantations of coffee, rubber and other cash crops or on the larger farms of the Vietnamese. Thus, although it is not an openly stated policy, the Vietnamese communist government is reducing the Montagnards to a status of servitude not too dissimilar to the slave culture in early American history.

Several million Vietnamese have also been resettled in the Central Highlands and given plots of land with the government stipulation that they must plant half of it in cash crops. Thus, the jungles and mountains that used to provide food and other resources for the Montagnards have been denuded, erosion is rampant and waterways are polluted with sediment, fertilizers and pesticides killing off the aquatic life. As a result, Montagnards have little or no clean potable water to drink and bathe. Montagnards who "go to the mountains" without governmental permission are accused of being rebels and FULRO supporters, and whatever food they have is taken and the people frequently are killed outright.

The plight of the Montagnards continues to this day. In May 2018, the Montagnard Human Rights Organization released a publication entitled *Vietnam's Relentless Repression of Montagnards* which can be found here:

[http://www.stoptorture-vn.org/uploads/2/5/9/2/25923947/montagnard\\_rights\\_abuses\\_2018-5.pdf](http://www.stoptorture-vn.org/uploads/2/5/9/2/25923947/montagnard_rights_abuses_2018-5.pdf)

This is why the author and other former SF Troopers are working with The Vietnam Fund to help the Forgotten Warriors who remain in Vietnam. ❖

## SUPPORT THE YARDS

Contribute to the Vietnam Fund which is helping Montagnards still in Vietnam.

<http://vietnamemifund.org/donate.html#SFlogo>

**Any SFA or SOA member contributing \$100 or more to the Vietnam Fund will receive a free Commander Membership at Front Sight Firearms Training Institute in Nevada courtesy of John Turney, a former member of 5th SFG. Contact [jturney@gmail.com](mailto:jturney@gmail.com) for details.**

*Do you have a story about the Yards you worked with in Vietnam. Tell your story – contact Tom Turney ([turney@newcap.com](mailto:turney@newcap.com)) for details.*



# July Chapter 78 Meeting Presentation: U.S. Horse Soldiers in Afghanistan



Mike Keele

By Mike Keele

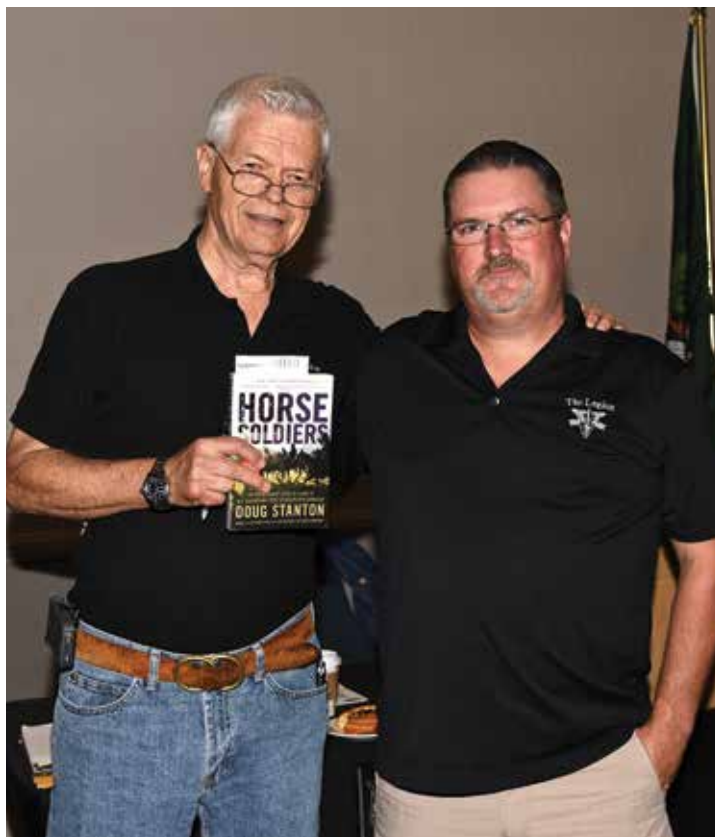
If Chapter 78's July speaker Steve Spence thinks that our monthly meetings are always as raucous and well attended, he'd only be a little wrong; by about 40%. The oversized crowd was the result of Steve's fame, as he is known as the SF guy who took the famous photo which inspired the statue known as *The Horse Soldier*, which stands at Ground Zero in New York City to honor

America's leap into the War on Terror, and leading to the movie *Twelve Strong*. Steve is a polished speaker with a great slide show (is that what you call it when all the slides are crammed into a computer?) and some well placed humor.

Example: an anonymous individual, who could have been a guest, asked (in all political correctness : ), if it was true that the movie *Twelve Strong* actually used "squeals," as the technical advisors? Owing to this reporter's lack of short term memory, as I recall, Steve did a nervous "ha, ha", took a back step, then a side step, and reported that Green Berets originally had the job of keeping the movie accurate, but when the producers wanted action—no matter how hokie it looked—one of the original tech advisors remembered that he had another commitment, and that's sort of how the second string was hired.

But enough. Steve was part of a B-Team that supported ODA 595, and he put a lot of time in on the ground and across the fence with the A-Team. Since Steve was a camera shooter, the A-Team guys got a lot of documentation throughout their tour, on how war is conducted when Agent M meets Genghis Khan. The secret weapon? Air support like the Taliban had never seen before.

The objective of Task Force Dagger, which ODA 595 was a part of, was to assist the Northern Alliance in taking Mazar-E-Sharif. No small task, when the good guys had horses, AK-47's and rocket propelled grenades, and the bad guys were dug in with their AK-47s, RPDs, mortars, artillery and tanks. If you believe the movie, the battle was won by a good old-fashioned cavalry charge (yay for our side), when in reality, the good guys augmented their AK-47s with some good old-fashioned, high tech air strikes. Then, the guys on the cavalry horses rode slowly and arrogantly into town and threw a bar-b-que for the losers. Th-that's my s-s-story and i'm s-s-stickin' to it. ❖



SFA C-78 President John S. Meyer and guest speaker, Chris Spence, retired SF Commo from the first SF Team into Afghanistan following 9-11 Horse Soldiers.



The sculpture *The Horse Soldier* is dedicated to the United States Special Forces and commemorates the servicemen who fought in the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom. It was created by sculptor Douwe Blumberg. Photo credit: "America's Response Monument-De Oppresso Liber.jpg" by Douwe Blumberg is licensed under CC BY 3.0



# 17 SF KIAs — August 23, 1968



FOB 4, CCN, the site of the assault.



John Stryker Meyer  
President SFA 78

By John Stryker Meyer

**Editor's Note:** On August 23, 1968 Special Forces suffered the single, largest number of Green Berets killed in the unit's history. Seventeen Green Berets fell during a well-planned VC/NVA Sapper attack at FOB 4, in south Da Nang, in the early morning hours of August 23rd. The attack was timed at the beginning of a new moon cycle, meaning there was no moon shining, the darkness helped conceal the clandestine infiltration

of the top secret Military Assistance Command Vietnam – Studies and Observations Group (SOG) base that sat on the north side of Marble Mountain. The attack coincided with the transfer of SOG Command and Control staff from the Da Nang Air Base, into the FOB 4 headquarters. On August 22, the compound's base population swelled with dozens of Green Berets appearing before a promotion board — no exact number is known. Additionally, the monthly SOG staff meeting of all six FOB commanders and S-2/S-3 personnel at those bases was held August 22, 1968 — some of them remained overnight. The following recounts the horror and heroism that unfolded that morning from excerpts in *On The Ground – The Secret War in Vietnam*, co-authored by SOG Recon men John S. Meyer and John E. Peters – a survivor of that attack, and interviews from Meyer's next book.

A few minutes after midnight, August 23, after an evening of heavy drinking by many soldiers in FOB 4, the nine sober men of recon team ST Rattler were enjoying a quiet night, sitting atop the highest of the five peaks that consisted of Marble Mountain. Assistant Team Leader Larry "Gambler" Trimble was monitoring the FM PRC-25 radio, when a loud explosion sounded at the Marine outpost, located on a smaller hill in the mountain chain east of his location.

As the men of RT Rattler awoke, Trimble called FOB 4 to inform them of the explosions at the Marine locations that were on the other mountain peaks and that there was no response to the Marine Corps troops assigned to those areas.

"About that time, all hell broke loose at the [FOB 4] compound," he said. Trimble moved to the north side of Marble Mountain, staring in complete disbelief at the explosive drama unfolding before his eyes below him in the top secret SOG base.



Within a matter of minutes, Trimble heard many explosions from satchel charges that the NVA/VC sappers threw into recon team buildings that were made from plywood. As he observed those explosions, the indigenous mess hall, transient barracks and the communications bunker exploded from satchel charges, while enemy weapons opened fire across the base. The men of ST Rattler watched in disbelief and frustration as the well-orchestrated attack developed. Wave after unrelenting wave of NVA sappers swept in from the east, the side of the compound that faced the South China Sea. It was clear the enemy had achieved total surprise.

Sappers were unquestionably the elite troops of the NVA. They received six months of concentrated, highly-specialized instruction in assault tactics that combined the use of stealth and demolitions. Their focus was on barrier and defense penetration. They were fanatically dedicated troops, and their missions were often self-destructive. They were more than willing to blow themselves up to achieve their objectives. They were undoubtedly one of the most effective and frightening NVA units anyone could face. Most wore only loin clothes. Written in blood on their white, cloth headbands were written the words: "We came here to die."

Within minutes, NVA sappers made their way undetected to the entrance of ST Rattler's observation point, attainable only by climbing ropes hung on the steep mountainside. At the same time, 82mm enemy mortars opened fire upon FOB 4, from a position south of ST Rattler on Marble Mountain while grenades began detonating

all around the ST's small perimeter. Several team members were hit by shrapnel. But the veteran recon men immediately responded with a savage fusillade of CAR-15 gunfire and grenades, American grenades — dropping them down on the approaching NVA, stopping the assault dead in its tracks.

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Privates First Class John E. Peters and Doug Godshall found themselves crawling on the floor in a recon team hootch in the Recon Company area, in the northeast corner of the base, next to the South China Sea. Both men had appeared before the promotion board and both had "many screwdrivers" that night and both assumed FOB 4 was a safe, secure compound, said Godshall. "John and I put away many screwdrivers that night, so when the fireworks started we were a little slow reacting," he said. They could hear massive explosions all around the hootch and bursts of small-arms fire ripping through the darkness. Peters' mind worked frantically; where exactly was he and where the hell was his weapon? Private First Class William H. Bric III, grabbed his web gear and CAR-15, shouted some words that did not make sense to either Peters or Godshall, and charged out the door to his assigned defensive position.

.....

In a nearby recon hootch, Green Beret medic Specialist Fourth Class Ron Jungling and his roommates were awakened by the same sudden eruption of sounds. A series of concussions rocked the hootch and it was raked by gunfire. The enemy bullets nar-



Larry Trimble's MACV-SOG Recon Team

rowly missed Jungling but tore into Sergeant First Class Rolf E. Rickmers, killing him instantly – Rickmers was due to return home August 23rd. Jungling signaled to his other roommate, Sergeant First Class Charles R. Norris that they needed to get the hell out of the plywood hootch post haste as it offered no protection. Outside, Jungling linked up with Bill Surface while Norris headed toward the eastern perimeter to rally security forces on the side of the camp facing the South China Sea.

Jungling found himself almost dispassionately contemplating the odd way a rapidly approaching NVA soldier was dressed. He was wearing essentially nothing but a loincloth, and had pieces of cloth tied around his arms and legs. He also had what looked to be a cravat around his head, and on it was some kind of writing. When he was less than 20 feet away, the sapper began firing his AK-47.

This brought Jungling out of his reverie. He returned fire, dropping the enemy at his feet. Tragically, one of the rounds that missed Jungling found Sergeant Major Richard E. Pegram Jr., who had crouched for protection behind a sandbag bunker. He had been hit in the left eye, the only part of him showing. Jungling tried his best to save him, but there was nothing he could do. In the few seconds it took Jungling and Surface to orient themselves, they saw one of the Nung recon team members cut down as he attempted to reach his assigned position. Jungling and Surface retreated back toward the second row of recon hootches in the hopes of finding better cover and more survivors.

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Private First Class William T. Barclay, the night duty radio operator, was joined by Private First Class Robert D. Leathers in the newly-opened Tactical Operations Center (TOC) on the western side of the compound. They could tell that the NVA were steadily walking mortar rounds towards them and the eight other Americans, including Sgt. Michael Byard, inside the semi-underground, heavily-fortified bunker. With each explosion the TOC shook a little bit more violently. Barclay figured they didn't have a hell of a lot of time, so, as a few others prepared thermite charges that would be used to destroy all the classified materials, Barclay grabbed the .30 caliber machine gun and headed towards the reinforced steel door. As he moved towards it, "I remember looking up at the clock, the time was 00:15 hours. I'll never forget it." He was planning to make his way to his assigned defensive position on the camp's western perimeter.

Just as Barclay yanked open the heavy, metal door, an enemy soldier rushed into view. He was wearing nothing but a loincloth, a bandana and carrying two woven baskets full of hand grenades. The NVA soldier dropped the baskets, swung his AK-47 toward Barclay, and opened fire. Fortunately, his momentum meant his aim was off and Barclay was able to slam the door before the enemy soldier could fully adjust. As Barclay secured the door, he could hear rounds ricocheting off of it. In his surprise, he turned to his compatriots in the TOC and stated the obvious, "We're under attack!"

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In the transient barracks, an exhausted Green Beret Gene Pugh was awakened by "some muffled explosions." As he stuck his head out of the door to check out the center hallway, a homemade VC

grenade was tossed just "outside the door to the barracks." Pugh yelled "Grenade!" as he tried to prevent troops from running out of that door. The grenade had a long fuse. Pugh and a captain moved cautiously toward it. Suddenly it exploded, peppering them with minor shrapnel wounds. Both were thankful the grenade hadn't been an American M-26 fragmentation grenade. As everyone in that barracks scrambled into their clothes and web gear, a massive explosion from a satchel charge knocked everyone to the floor and inflicted wood splinter wounds on Pugh and the captain.

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When the first aerial flares ignited over the FOB 4 compound, Pat Watkins and Sergeant Joe "Pigpen" Conlon hit the floor of the transient barracks amid the rattle of gunfire. An inexperienced first lieutenant stood looking out a window. The lieutenant's silhouette made a perfect target. A huge explosion erupted just outside the barracks, knocking the lieutenant flat on his ass. He sat there in shock clutching his right arm where a piece of shrapnel had gouged a nasty wound. As Conlon moved to dress the lieutenant's wound, another massive explosion rocked the building so hard the light fixtures fell from the ceiling. Figuring that the transient barracks were next in line to receive a satchel charge through a window or doorway, Watkins shouted that they should move out into the larger area of the hallway, where they might have a chance to fend off an attack.

Conlon low-crawled to the left to cover the east end of the hallway. Watkins snaked his way right, cursing himself as he went. He had let Staff Sergeant Robert "Spider" Parks talk him out of his Swedish K 9mm submachine gun. Parks, who had made the Kingbee flight down from Phu Bai to Da Nang with Watkins, Peters, Godshall and a few other FOB 1 troops, had opted not to spend the night celebrating with the others at the FOB 4 compound, but at the SOG safe house, House 22. Parks' argument that his pursuit of booze and women in downtown Da Nang would expose him to the greater danger, thus making him more deserving of the Swedish K than Watkins, had seemed reasonable at the time. After all, FOB 4 was the new headquarters for Command and Control North. It was filled with officers. It was believed to have good security and safe. Now, trapped inside a nearly demolished building with nothing but a .45 caliber pistol, surrounded by a large number of very determined sappers, he recognized the error of that decision.

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In the northeast end of the camp Specialists Fourth Class John T. Walton and Ron Podlaski were fumbling with their boots. As they struggled to get them on, someone began yanking violently on the door handle of their hootch. The door had an especially strong spring making it annoyingly difficult to open. Earlier in the day, Walton had cursed the door, but now it saved his life. Before the struggling NVA sapper could throw his pack of explosives into the room, the spring yanked the door shut and the satchel charge bounced off of it and onto the ground. The ensuing explosion totally obliterated the NVA soldier, cured the aggravating door problem, and removed the steps to the hootch in one blinding flash. This last result would shortly prove most fortunate.

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Peters, still on all fours, suddenly recalled where his weapon was. It wasn't particularly comforting. Like a number of others, Peters had traveled to Da Nang for a promotion board and also like a number of others, believed FOB 4 was a secure compound and had left his CAR-15 and web gear at Phu Bai, and had taken off from FOB 1 with nothing but a .45 caliber pistol for protection. This now appeared to be an exceedingly dumb move. Bric, a friend of Peters' from Special Forces Training Group, had told Peters to bunk with him in the Recon Company, instead of the transient barracks. The .45 in question was locked securely in Bric's footlocker, and Peters couldn't quite remember where it was. Recalling all of this took time, especially in Peters' state. Figuring out exactly where the footlocker was took more time, and breaking the lock took a goddamn eternity, especially with the hootch being rocked every few seconds by thundering explosions.

It was a perfect microcosm of the larger scene. Everyone had been caught unprepared and, as a result, everyone was momentarily confused. In Peters' and Godshall's case this confusion, and the delayed reactions it caused, saved their lives. They finally exited Bric's team hootch for more secure, sand-bagged defensive positions in the camp. After Peters exited the hootch he was shocked to see Bill Bric lying motionless in the sand not far away. He had been gunned down by the NVA as soon as he rushed outside. Had Peters been able to respond as quickly and surely as Bric had, he would be lying next to him. Peters hesitated, but then picked up Bric's weapon and ammo and quietly thanked him. With bullets cracking past him, and sand kicking up all around, Peters completed his mad dash to the enclosure. SF medic Jungling confirmed that Bric was KIA.

Back in the transient barracks, Watkins continued crawling toward the end of the hallway. He froze. Silhouetted by flare light in the open doorway, an NVA soldier cautiously peered in to determine if anyone inside was still alive. He was also trying to ignite a satchel charge, but was having some difficulty. The sapper gave up on the satchel and Watkins saw a hand grenade rolling down the hall towards him. Watkins quickly fired two rounds at the sapper and shouted, "Grenade!" Instinctively, he covered his head with his hands. The force of the explosion pushed Watkins backward down the hall, peppering his hands, arms, and back with shrapnel. He figured this was it; he was as good as dead.

In his barracks, Pugh saw a VC sapper wearing tan shorts silhouetted in the doorway. Pugh opened fire and the VC sapper promptly returned fire. "I could feel the round snap the air around my eardrum," Pugh said. "I raised my weapon just a tad and fired again. This time there was a thud-like sound as the VC fell to the ground."

The entire compound was now a swirling battleground, with dozens of small but deadly firefights in progress. It was difficult to tell the scantily-clad Americans and indigenous personnel from the enemy. There was no command coordination, just a lot of individuals struggling against uncertain and overwhelming odds. The air was filled with enough chaos to overload the senses: screams, shouts, bullets, dust, smoke, and the smells of cordite, burning wood, rubber, and fuel, and lastly, the smell of seared flesh.

From his new vantage point, Peters could observe a steady crisscrossing of enemy troops. Some had their bodies wrapped with explosives and many carried satchel charges and baskets of grenades, along with their AK-47s. It was clear they had come prepared for a long night. Like many of those around him, Peters had operated in the chaos of jungle warfare, where unexpected things happened quickly and at close quarters, but he had never seen a large-scale battle like the one currently raging around him.

Peters was brought out of his daze by a sapper who was running across in front of him firing his AK-47 as he ran. Peters fired a short burst from Bric's CAR-15 and the sapper pitched forward to his knees, his forehead resting in the sand like a Muslim in prayer. He never fell over, and for the rest of the night, Peters could see his near naked body bowed over as if offering a final homage to whatever brought him to this place on this night.

In their semi-exposed position, Peters and his group made inviting targets and so drew their share of attention, including periodic volleys of grenades that had to be returned. In a bizarre twist of fate that none of them had anticipated, their protective enclosure began dribbling away around them as more and more rounds hit the sandbags, the bags steadily deflated as the sand ran out. Time to find new cover.



Damage at FOB 4 after the attack.

There is absolutely no doubt that without the hundreds of illumination rounds provided that night, the carnage would have been much worse and FOB 4 would in all probability have been overrun. Much of the initial illumination was supplied by the American-run POW camp, situated just beyond the northern perimeter of FOB 4.

A good bit of it was also supplied internally by an unidentified Special Forces soldier and a nine-year-old orphan boy the troops at FOB 4 had nicknamed "Spike." The American and his young Vietnamese sidekick worked all night from a mortar pit near the US mess hall. Spike worked tirelessly setting time-delay fuses on the mortar rounds. He would then pass them to the American who would make any necessary aiming adjustments and drop the rounds down the mortar tube. Spike's bravery and skill proved extremely beneficial.

Ironically, the brightest bit of much-needed illumination was provided when several sappers ran in to the complex of supply buildings and set off the explosives they had wrapped around their bodies.

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The tremendous blast caused by the stored munitions and explosives slammed Jungling to the ground. When he looked up, he watched in horror as Sergeant First Class Gilbert A. Secor was crushed by an entire section of wall that had been blown off its foundation by the force of the blast. Secor had been running toward the supply complex, perhaps in an effort to intercept the sappers. Jungling ran over to help Secor, but he was already too late.

More than 100 meters away, Barclay too, was knocked to the ground. He watched as the three huge supply buildings literally melted to the ground under huge fireballs that roared into the air. The flames and heat ignited several of the metal, torpedo-shaped propane and oxy-acetylene tanks. Some simply exploded, but others were launched like rockets or sent skimming along the ground. Fireball after fireball billowed into the air as ammunition, hand grenades, C-4, and millions of dollars worth of supplies were consumed.

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On Marble Mountain, Trimble then made his way toward the south side of the mountain with several of his Nung team members. The Nung, who had an uncanny ability to ferret out an enemy's location, even in darkness, pointed silently to the place where the mortar and its crew were hidden. On Trimble's command, he and one of the Nungs fired a volley of HE (high explosive) 40mm M-79 rounds at the target while the others poured CAR-15 rounds into the brush. In short order both the attack on ST Rattler and the enemy mortar fire came to an abrupt and permanent halt. Silencing this well-positioned mortar saved a number of lives and relieved some pressure on those in FOB 4 who were fighting hand-to-hand in a frenzied effort to keep from being totally annihilated.

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At almost the same time as the supply complex was being attacked, another tragedy was unfolding, this time in the old TOC bunker. It had been abandoned just two days earlier upon completion of the new facility, so there was nothing of strategic importance inside. Unfortunately, the camp map the NVA planners had relied upon identified the old bunker as the active TOC. Four sappers ran

inside the virtually undefended structure and blew themselves up. The blast instantly killed Sergeant Robert J. Uyesaka, SFC Harold Voorheis and SSG Talmadegge Alphin.

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Watkins and Conlon could see blood everywhere around the doorway to the transient barracks, but no sign of the sapper who had rolled the grenade down the hall. As they made their way past debris and crawled outside the building, they could see NVA troops pouring heavy fire in and around the new TOC while a group of Special Forces troops furiously defended it. It was a raging battle that Watkins figured he could contribute little to, so he headed toward another set of barracks where he thought he could do some good. As he did so, a sapper suddenly appeared just a few meters away from him. Instead of shooting, the sapper threw a grenade. Watkins rolled behind some cover and the sand absorbed most of the blast. When the sapper saw that Watkins was still alive, he again ignored his AK-47 and threw a hand grenade. Watkins couldn't believe it.

He responded with his near useless .45 pistol. He had never been particularly good with a pistol, but he remembered his training and aimed low, firing several rounds at the sapper's crotch. At least one of the bullets made its mark. Watkins moved on. He picked up an AK-47 off of a dead NVA. He watched as Staff Sergeant R.L. Hoffman stood up to go rescue a troop crying for help. Hoffman only made it a few steps before he was hit. Watkins continued moving. Another man was seriously wounded and he too, screamed for help, but as Watkins knew, the NVA used them as bait. Anyone who went to help them was shot, or shot at, pronto.

As Watkins approached one of the officer latrines, he saw a body lying next to it. Whoever it was, he could tell he had been severely injured. It turned out to be Sergeant First Class Robert L. Scully. Scully had been the chief medic at FOB 3 in Khe Sanh when Watkins was running recon there earlier in 1968. Watkins knew and respected him. As Watkins moved in closer, he could see how bad the damage was. The sergeant had an open head wound; gray matter was lying in the sand. Scully was in severe shock, his breathing rapid and shallow. If he was to have any hope for survival, Watkins desperately needed to get him to the dispensary.

As Watkins checked Scully's condition, a grenade was tossed toward them. Unable to reach it, Watkins threw his body over his friend. Again the sand absorbed most of the blast, but both Watkins and Scully received shrapnel wounds to their legs. Watkins rose to his knees and shot the NVA with the AK-47.

A second medic, Hospital Corpsman Third Class Henry Valentino (Val) Santo, appeared on the scene. Sergeant First Class Roscoe D. Henderson first made sure the NVA sapper was dead and then joined Watkins. He and Scully had been roaming the camp looking for wounded men when the sapper Watkins had just killed had thrown a grenade at them, inflicting the head wound on Scully. Realizing they had no other alternative, Henderson put Scully on his back and began moving towards the dispensary. It was going to be a long and painful haul for Scully because help was on the far south side of the camp. He cried out in such anguish that Watkins was forced to put his hand over his mouth in an attempt to avoid





drawing unwanted attention. They had only gone a few meters when a jeep pulled up. It was driven by a First Lieutenant Robert Blatherwick, who had been directed to them by Phippen Conlon. Once Scully was placed in the jeep and the lieutenant drove away, Conlon, Watkins, and Henderson made their way back toward the still-burning barracks. [Scully survived his head wound, became a physician's assistant and died in 1986, at age 47.]

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Jungling was catching his breath in a bunker in the recon area when Captain Charlie Pfeiffer and Master Sergeant Leo Simpson dashed over to join him. Simpson handed Jungling a cold beer and nonchalantly asked if he'd like to join him and the good captain in their efforts to deal with three sappers that were holed up behind the mess hall and giving everyone a lot of trouble. Jungling said he'd be happy to oblige. The trio quietly approached the mess hall. Pfeiffer tossed a few grenades into the midst of the sappers while Jungling and Simpson finished them off with their M-16s.

Once this little mission was accomplished, Jungling began running back toward the recon area. As he zigzagged his way along, he came across an unidentified American whose body was partially under a door that had been blown off a nearby hootch. He was peppered with shrapnel from head to toe. Jungling started checking him for potentially fatal wounds when the man suddenly spoke. "I don't care about that shit. Are my nuts still there?" It was obvious where his priorities were, so the medic lifted him up by the belt and told him it appeared as though his family jewels were still in place. But the troop wasn't satisfied. "Doc, check good, pull my pants down and make real sure they're okay." He had a death grip on Jungling's arm,



At top of page and directly above, FOB 4 three years after attack — layout is similar to original.

so he loosened the man's belt, pulled down his pants, and reported that everything was in place. Only then did the soldier relax. "Thanks, Doc," was all he said.

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Recon Team Leader 1st Lt. Travis Mills was asleep in a hootch in the southeast corner of Recon Company, with several other officers when the attack was triggered. A "tremendous explosion" and AK-47 gunfire awoke Mills, who quickly dressed and promptly exited the hootch followed by Hatchet Force Platoon Leader First Lt. Ron Crabbe. As Mills exited the hootch out of the back door that faced the South China Sea, a sapper opened fire with a blast of full automatic gunfire. He shot Mills in the stomach. The sapper

was so close to Mills, who was turned slightly sideways when he fired, that the 7.62mm tracer round entered the right side of his stomach, cut through stomach muscles, before exiting on the left side – fortunately, the round didn't tumble, or tear open the digestive track. As the impact of that bullet threw Mills to the ground, the next round struck Crabbe, driving him back into the hootch and into Hatchet Force Platoon Leader 1st Lt. Geoffery E. Fullen, who was attempting to follow them out of the east door of the team room.

Fullen said the sapper was only six inches away from Mills when he opened fire. Crabbe rocked back into Fullen. "The Sapper stepped astraddle Mills shoulders and continued to fire into the doorway," said Fullen. "Crabbe rocked back into my chest and then started to topple to the right like a big tree just starting to fall. I grabbed his pack straps to throw him under Bobby's (1st Lt. Robert Blatherwick) bed....I pitched him head first under the bed and jumped back."

Fifty years later, Fullen vividly remembers the NVA sapper's AK-47 muzzle that was pointed at him, it "...was no more than three or four feet from my fatigues as he sprayed the room from left to right. One tracer started burning a mattress. I stood there watching the tracers as they approached. They were in slow motion, like I could reach out and catch one in my hand and I thought to myself, 'What a stupid fucking way to die!' But, there was no fear. I was calm." The bullet burned when it hit Fullen's left hand. It drove him to his hands and knees, where he discovered that the enemy's rounds had torn and strewn boxes of thumb tacks across the floor, inflicting additional pain to all four.

At that precise moment in time, Fullen called out "not to God, not to country, not to anything or anyone but a short, blond friend from nowhere North Dakota: 'Hey, Bobby I'm hit!'" And through the darkness Blatherwick replied, "How bad are you? I'll be right there!" But they changed direction toward Crabbe, because his legs were sticking out from under the bed and they could see that he was "pumping blood across the room like a garden hose. His femoral artery had been hit. He gave me his scarf. I knotted it around his thigh and pulled it down tight. He continued to bleed."

Still working in the context of the first 10-20 seconds of the attack, outside only a few inches away, Mills recounted his reaction to being shot: "My first reaction was I was pissed. Really pissed. At first, I thought I had been accidentally shot by one of our own indigenous troops. When I yelled, 'You son-of-a-bitch — I'm an American!', he shot me again, this time in the arm I went down again. Now I'm REALLY PISSED! I'm going to shoot this bastard, I don't care if he is a friendly, so I start to get up again, and the same result, he shoots me again! This time he hits me just under the shoulder blade. So I try to get up again, he hits me in the back of the head; down on the sand again. One more time I'm going to get up and shoot this bastard — one more time he fires — this time in the back of the neck. FINALLY — I get the message — he knows who you are and he's still trying to kill you! So I finally come to the obvious conclusion — if you stop trying to get up maybe he'll stop shooting you. (Brilliant deduction Dr. Watson). So, I laid still with my head facing him. He walked over, stood over me with one foot on each side of my head."

"Although I couldn't see him, I knew he had the muzzle pointed directly at my head for the kill shot.... it all happened in about 10 to 15 seconds." Fortunately for Mills, at that precise second, a loud commotion occurred in the hootch. The sapper immediately ignored Mills and spun around, stepped to the door of the hootch and sprayed the hooch on full automatic "...After he emptied his magazine, he casually walked to the south corner of the hootch, putting in a new magazine. I watched as he got to the corner, kneeled down behind some sand bags so he could see back around the corner to watch the back door of our hootch," Mills said.

Worried about Mills lying in the sand bleeding, Blatherwick went to the back door. Before he could exit, Mills warned him not to come outside because the sniper was waiting to shoot any American that left the hootch. Mills said, "Bob stopped and hunkered down in the door. He said: 'What's up Trav?' I said, 'He's right there on the corner, waiting for you.' Bob leaned out, looked to the south and said: 'I don't see anything.' I said: 'Do you see a sandbag about three sandbags up that's sticking out further than the other sandbags?'"

Blatherwick leaned out of the door and said he saw it. I said, 'Shoot it!' Bob said: 'You want me to shoot a sand bag?' I replied in a strong stage whisper: 'Shoot the f---ing sandbag!' He said, 'OK, OK, OK!' Bob leaned out the door, lined his M-16 down the edge of the sandbags and fired a burst of full automatic. When he fired the burst, I got up, grabbed my CAR-15 and got back in the hootch." Later Mills was told they found that dead sapper with a bullet through his forehead – apparently he was looking right down the barrel when Blatherwick squeezed the trigger. (A doctor later told Mills that the stomach wall had a burn mark all the way across it from the NVA tracer round. The arm wound was a through-and-through wound, but destroyed most of the nerve tissue in his right hand. That bullet missed the bone by two millimeters. The shoulder blade wound didn't penetrate very deep, causing muscle and tissue damage. The neck would missed the spinal cord by a few millimeters. Mills later added: "The doctor surmised that I was one of the luckiest people on the planet.")

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At some point Spooky, also known as "Puff the Magic Dragon," showed up. Spooky was the code name for an old C-47 that had been equipped with a very formidable array of firepower, most notably the M-134 Minigun. The M-134 was a six-barreled, electronically fired Gatling gun that could put out up to 6,000 rounds of 7.62mm per minute. After Trimble identified himself to the pilot and crew, the airmen asked him to light his strobe light in order to pinpoint the team's location atop Marble Mountain for them. Unfortunately, the aircrew members couldn't locate the strobe light, so Trimble, cut off a hunk of C-4, placed it on top of the highest rock he could find, and ignited it. It gave off an intense white light that the pilot had no trouble spotting.

Once the pilot had acknowledged visual contact, Trimble pulled all of his team members into a tight perimeter hugging the rock. He then told Spooky to work his Minigun fire in a 360-degree circle around the rock. As ST Rattler hunkered down, Spooky opened up and performed his magic dragon routine. The initial rounds were



so close to the team that they were struck by stones and debris. Spooky continued to walk his fire in an ever-increasing radius around the team, exterminating anything in its path.

Trimble then directed Spooky's attention to the enemy troops still moving over the beach and through the barbed wire from east side of the base. They were clearly visible against the sugar-white sands. As Spooky adjusted his aim, the thin filament of tracers undulated in waves, like a length of rope being snapped. As they hit the ground, the tracers ricocheted like sparks from a welder's torch. Once Spooky expended its ordnance, the aircrew continued to circle over FOB 4 and drop flares.

Trimble said "We asked for continuous flares over Marble Mountain so we could observe any more mortars or enemy movement in the area. This worked out because we were able to stop any further enemy mortar fire from Marble Mountain into the FOB 4 for the rest of the night. The M-79 grenadier on the team would fire into any area that looked like a mortar could be located or at any enemy troops moving for the rest of the night." Also, team members could spot any new enemy force moving into FOB 4 from either the South China Sea or from Marble Mountain. Thus, "we could alert the base about those enemy sappers," he said.

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Under this constant source of illumination, Watkins, Conlon and Henderson steadily made their way back to the barracks to see if anyone was trapped inside. As they approached, a voice called out to them, "Look out, there's a VC in there firing at me." Suddenly a sapper stood up in the midst of the wreckage and opened fire. Both Watkins and Conlon returned fire while charging the startled soldier. Watkins's AK-47 ran out of ammo as he charged and then tackled the sapper. As they rolled into the smoldering barracks, Watkins wrestled the AK-47 away from the smaller man and killed him with it. When they examined him afterward, the men could see he had an earlier wound in his throat and he'd lost a lot of blood. Given where they found him, Watkins figured he was the same sapper from earlier in the barracks, the one he'd shot at with his pistol. Apparently, he'd hit him after all. Henderson called out to the unseen American that all was clear, and Staff Sergeant George T. Holland emerged from his hiding place, weaponless and wearing only his underwear. The sapper had had him pinned down for a long time and he thanked them for saving his hide. Watkins handed him his pistol and told him to remain in the damaged barrack until sunrise.

Watkins and Henderson then moved on to the officer barracks, where they met Lieutenant Colonel D.L. Smith, the commander of FOB 2 at Kontum, and his Sergeant Major, R.G. Stratton, who were trying to find a safe area for three wounded soldiers. Watkins and Henderson helped them move the wounded troops to the latrine area that sat atop the northern most rise of the camp, a location that gave them both cover and a good vantage point. From the rise, Watkins could see people heaving hand grenades into the TOC area.

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One of those on the receiving end of the grenades was Bill Barclay, who along with an unidentified American, were catching them and

throwing them back. Both men were still outside the bunker itself. One landed about three feet from Barclay's head and he couldn't reach it fast enough. He buried his head and whatever else in the sand, remembering to keep his mouth open to equalize the blast pressure. Miraculously, the only thing Barclay received was a ringing headache and a blanket of sand.

Of the SF troops who began the night with Barclay, most were wounded. The enemy had pushed an air conditioner off its outside support brackets and through the hole into the operations center. Once the unit hit the floor, the NVA used the opening to pour weapons fire and hand grenades into the new TOC. The SF men fought back ferociously, keeping the NVA sappers from entering the TOC and finally forcing them to move on to other targets. After securing those openings, Mike Byard – who was due to go home in a few days, went outside to go to his assigned defensive position. He took only three steps before an enemy hand grenade exploded. "I saw the white light," Byard said 50 years later, "and flashed back to my mother and dog when I was a kid in Trenton. I don't know how long I was unconscious, but when I came to I didn't know if I was dead or alive. I did a full body check and I could hear the sound of Spooky machine guns working over Marble Mountain. It was good to be alive." Byard and other less-wounded SF men attended to each other's wounds and began making radio contact with FOB 1 in Phu Bai and Special Forces Headquarters in Nha Trang in order to report the details and the severity of the attack.

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John Walton urged Podlaski to hurry up and get his boots on. The hootch visibly pulsed as ordnance exploded around them. Podlaski struggled to decide which would be best, to continue trying to put on the second boot he was having trouble with, remove the one he had already laced up, or just say "screw it" and take off with only one boot. With hootches blowing up around them, Walton was not amused by his dilemma.

Podlaski finally mastered his footwear and the two lurched toward the front door, stumbling over debris. Because the steps had been blown away by the earlier satchel charge, their feet met nothing but air as they charged outside. They tumbled to the ground as the NVA soldier who was waiting for them opened fire. But he, too, was caught by surprise. He fired where they should have been, not where they were. A passing South Vietnamese recon team member killed the NVA soldier before he could adjust his aim and finish them off. Walton and Podlaski quickly scrambled to their feet and ran towards a nearby mortar pit.

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As Blatherwick and Recon Team Leader of ST New York, 1st Lt. Philip Bauso, fired from the back room of the battered hootch at enemy sappers, Fullen grabbed another cravat, placed it an inch or two below the first scarf he applied to Crabbe's leg, and finally stemmed the blood flow, while handing Crabbe his canteen for a drink. Throughout those critical early minutes of the attack, 1st Lt. David Carr, the assistant launch officer, secured the front door to the hootch. Somehow, an enemy grenade rolled through the door and stopped in the middle of the room, between "Bauso's right

side and Mills' head. Everyone saw it. Not a sound was made," said Fullen. "I laid down on top of Mills and covered my head with my hands. It didn't explode. It just laid in a pool of American blood there and sparked for a second....not a hero in the bunch."

Five of the six men in the hootch dashed to the 4.2 mortar pit, while Blatherwick headed west and returned shortly with a Jeep to take Crabbe and Mills to the Dispensary where a defensive perimeter had been established. Blatherwick asked the mortar team to continue sending up illumination rounds and flares because "it's the only way I can find my way around....they shot out my headlights."

From that mortar pit Fullen "could see the whole southern half of the compound. The supply depot was burning brightly 300 meters away, the old TOC was burning midway between the Mess Hall and Supply ...I watched two Marine positions fall, one on Crows Nest and the other on Alpha 6 (on smaller hills in Marble Mountain)." Several NVA sappers ran past the mortar pit and were killed by Fullen or other team members to the north of the mortar pit. By now that part of the sandy landscape was a killing zone for any enemy soldiers.

At some point, a mystery helicopter gunship appeared out of nowhere and began making gun runs down the middle of the compound. Fortunately, Fullen connected with him on the PRC-25 FM radio that was in the 4.2 mortar pit and contacted the pilot. "I told him that there were enemy mortars on the beach. He did a 180-degree turn, headed toward the beach, wiped them out. Just like that. He was incredible."

Fullen knew that the second radio in 4.2 mortar pit ran to the northern perimeter of FOB 4, "...and I heard someone on that radio say, 'they (the NVA) were placing Bangalore mines under the fence and barbed wire of the POW camp,' where there were an estimated 1000 captured NVA soldiers being held as POWs. They wanted to break out the NVA from the POW camp to join the fight....I still remember talking to that Cobra pilot, I told him what was happening, and he answered, 'I got 'em.' And, he did. He turned around, went to the southern perimeter of the POW encampment, which faced our northern perimeter, and killed all of the enemy soldiers on that mission. That man was a breath of fresh air for us. Imagine what that battle would have been like had three to four hundred NVA prisoners broken out and joined the fight?" Other sappers tried to break open the POW camp, but each following attempt was thwarted by camp defenders.

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From their perch up on Marble Mountain, Larry Trimble and ST Rattler could verify the insanity, as well as the extent of the carnage and destruction. There were simply too many bodies to count. The supply complex and the old TOC were leveled and glowing with fire, while the new TOC had been heavily damaged. A pall of dingy smoke floated over the compound. It looked like the recon area had suffered the most extensive damage, with virtually every building having been hit. The whole roiling mess resembled a harshly lit stage setting for a major battle scene.

On the ground at FOB 4, Barclay and another SF soldier decided to stay put outside the bunker along the northern TOC wall, with

Barclay looking east and the other SF troop west. Slowly, the gunfire began to ebb and the satchel charge explosions ceased in the north-western segment of the compound where the TOC was situated.

Nonetheless, Barclay felt it was too quiet and asked his SF counterpart to look around the corner for NVA troops. No sooner had he moved to the corner to do so than two sappers appeared out of nowhere and charged Barclay's counterpart. The SF soldier's reflexes killed them instantly. The momentum of the two dead NVA landed them at Barclay's feet. He put his boots on their faces just to make sure they weren't moving. Inscribed on the head bandanas of the dead NVA sappers were the words "We came here to die." And so they did. As Barclay sat with his feet firmly planted on the dead enemies, he could hear intense gunfire in the eastern part of the compound where the indigenous soldiers continued to fight feverishly helping turn the tide of the battle. Despite the fact that many indigenous soldiers had been killed or wounded in the initial attacks on their hootches, the survivors had rallied and launched a counteroffensive against the NVA sappers.

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Peters, Watkins and others had remained stationary for the rest of the night, fending off whatever attacks came their way. Henderson, Jungling and a few other medics moved quietly from wounded soldier to wounded soldier, providing whatever treatment and comfort they could give with the limited supplies they carried that night. Watkins and Henderson began moving wounded troops to the Dispensary. The place was a madhouse; bodies were everywhere. The SF medics got them triaged as quickly as possible and then went to work on the most seriously wounded.

Gene Pugh soon found himself in the Dispensary too, having helped a wounded soldier along the way and to get treatment for his shrapnel wounds and cuts. "There were people everywhere," he said. "To this day, the one that stands out vividly in my mind is the one with a huge hole in his right side. He was just lying there on the floor, just inside the door. I don't know if he was U.S. or Vietnamese. I had acute tunnel vision. He was all I saw...then I said to myself, 'I don't belong here.'"

Had Pugh looked toward the back door of the Dispensary, he would have seen a wounded and heavily bandaged 1st Lt. Travis Mills guarding it, lying on two chairs, facing the door with his CAR-15. "When I entered the dispensary" Mills said, "it was organized chaos. One of the medics checked me out, put a large, ace bandage type of wrap around me. The pressure really slowed the bleeding and the support eased the pain somewhat. He put me in the 'waiting room,' told me to watch the back door, and they would get to me as soon as they could. They had some guys in really bad shape that needed their attention. So I pushed a couple of chairs together, laid down across them so I could see the back door, and as long as I didn't make any quick movements, I was reasonably comfortable.

"In the meantime, one of the really critical guys was Scully....The medics were working frantically over him. I heard one of them say, 'If we don't get him to a hospital soon, he's not going to make it.' Another said, 'It's too hot to get a medivac in. What other options

Continued on page 16



# USSF Casualties at FOB4

Information provided by  
Bonnie Cooper, retired military intelligence analyst

## **SSG Talmadge Horton Alphin, Jr.**

Birth: 27 May 1943 Raleigh, Wake, NC  
MOS: 05B4S, Radio Operator, Special Forces Qualified  
FOB-4, Recon Company, RTO  
Awards: ARCOM w/ 'V' device, Purple Heart, CIB, Basic Jump Wings, Vietnam Jump Wings

## **PFC William Henry Bric, III**

Birth: 11 Mar 1949 Burbank, CA  
MOS: 11B1P, Light Weapons Infantry  
C&C Det, FOB-4  
Awards: Bronze Star w/ 'V' device, Purple Heart, CIB, Basic Jump Wings, Vietnam Jump Wings

## **SFC Tadeusz Marian Kepczyk**

Birth: 24 Sep 1924, Poland  
MOS: 11C4S Infantry Indirect Fire Crewman, Special Forces Qualified  
C&C Det, FOB-4  
Awards: CIB, Purple Heart, Master Jump Wings, Vietnam Jump Wings

## **SFC Donald Ray Kerns**

Birth: 1 Mar 1934 in Lowndes County, Mississippi  
MOS: 11B4S: Infantryman (Special Forces Qualified)  
C&C, FOB-4  
Awards: Purple Heart, Bronze Star, CIB 2nd Award, Master Jump Wings, Vietnam Jump Wings

## **SGT James Thomas "Tommy" Kickliter**

Born: 12 Oct 1945 Saint Petersburg, Florida  
MOS: 05B4S, Radio Operator. Special Forces Qualified  
C&C, FOB-4, Radio Operator  
Awards: CIB, Basic Jump Wings, Purple Heart, Vietnam Jump Wings

## **1Lt John Edward Miller**

Birth: 17 May 1944 Washington, D.C.  
Branch: Psychological Operations Officer, Civil Affairs (Officer)  
Unit: HHC, 6TH PSY OPS BN, USARV SPECIAL TROOPS, ARMY  
HQ AREA CMD, USARV  
Died of wounds (on 24 Aug)  
Awards: Purple Heart

## **MSG Charles Raymond Norris, Sr.**

Birth: 10 May 1931 Artie, West Virginia  
MOS: 11B4S Light Weapons Infantry, Special Forces Qualified  
C&C Det, FOB-4  
Awards: ARCOM w/ 'V' device, CIB, Master Jump Wings, Purple Heart, Vietnam Jump Wings

## **SGM Richard "Dick" Epps Pegram, Jr.**

Born 26 Oct 1927 at Jackson, Tennessee  
MOS: 11GS, Infantry Senior Sergeant, Special Forces Qualified  
FOB-4 Command Section SGM  
Awards: CIB, 2nd award, Purple Heart, Master Jump Wings, Vietnam Jump Wings

## **1Lt Paul Douglas Potter**

Birth: 24 Apr 1945 Allentown, PA  
Branch: Infantry  
FOB-2, S4 officer  
Awards: CIB, Basic Jump Wings, Purple Heart, Vietnam Jump Wings

## **MSG Rolf Ernst Rickmers**

Birth: 23 May 1934 Cuxhaven, Niedersachsen, Germany  
MOS: 12B4S, Combat Engineer, Special Forces Qualified  
FOB-4, 1SG, Hatchet force  
Awards: Purple Heart, Basic Jump Wings

## **SP4 Anthony John Santana**

Birth: 1 Aug 1948 in Bay Shore, New York  
MOS: 11B2S - Light Weapons Infantry, Special Forces Qualified  
CCN, FOB-4  
Awards: CIB, Bronze Star, basic jump wings, Vietnam Jump Wings

## **MSG Gilbert Arthur Secor**

Birth: 6 Jan 1932 New Jersey  
MOS: 11F4S Infantry Operations and Intelligence Specialist  
FOB-3, Medical Sections  
Awards: Silver Star, Bronze Star w/ 'V' device, CIB, Master Jump Wings, Vietnam Jump Wings, Purple Heart 2nd award

## **SGT Robert "Bobby" Joseph Uyesaka**

Born: 30 Jun 1945 from Santa Barbara, CA.  
MOS: 05B4S, Radio Operator, Special Forces Qualified  
CCN, FOB-4 Radio Operator  
Awards: Bronze Star w/ 'V' device, Purple Heart, Basic Jump Wings, Vietnam Jump Wings

## **SSG Howard Steven Varni**

Birth: 4 Dec 1941 (New York) from Los Angeles, CA  
MOS: 11B4S, Light Weapons Infantry, Special Forces Qualified & 91B4S Medic  
FOB-1, Medical Section  
Awards: Purple Heart, CIB, Senior Jump Wings, Vietnam Jump Wings

## **SFC Harold Robert Voorheis**

Birth: 18 Feb 1939 Trumansburg, NY.  
MOS: 76Y4S - Unit supply specialist, Special Forces Qualified  
CCN  
Awards: CIB, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Master Jump Wings, Vietnam Jump Wings

## **SFC Albert Marion Walter**

Birth: 3 Aug 1929 in Organ, Doña Ana County, NM  
MOS: 76Y4S, Unit Supply Specialist, Special Forces Qualified  
C&C Det S4 NCOIC  
Awards: CIB, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Basic Jump Wings, Vietnam Jump Wings

## **SFC Donald Walter Welch**

Birth: 16 Aug 1934, Tyrone, PA  
MOS: 11F4S, Infantry Operations and Intelligence Specialist, Special Forces Qualified  
FOB-4 Nung Reaction Force Company 1SG  
Awards: Purple Heart, CIB, Jump Wings

## 17 SF KIAs — August 23, 1968 continued

do we have?’ Someone said, ‘We’ve got the old cracker box ambulance – we could try to get him the Naval Hospital down the road. Someone said it’s totally unsecure, but it’s our only option. One of the medics volunteered to drive the ambulance. One of the medics came to me and asked if I would ride ‘shotgun’ to try to get Scully to the hospital. I said, ‘Sure, let’s go.’ So they loaded Scully and a couple more of the critical wounded in the back, the medic drove, I was in the right seat. I gave the driver my 9mm (pistol), I took his M-16. Just as we were going out the gate he looked at me and said, ‘I sure hope they don’t want to waste a good ambush on one raggedy old cracker box ambulance.’ With that, we made the right turn out of gate for the three-mile trip to the hospital. I don’t remember his name or what his background was before the military, but he would have done any NASCAR driver proud. I never thought that old cracker box could go that fast.

“As we barreled down the road the ambulance took a few rounds but no one was hit. Our next biggest concern was the Marine check point/roadblock at MCAS. We didn’t know how they would react to a vehicle racing down the road toward them in the dark. Normally, once the roadblock was set up every night, the road was closed – so any traffic was considered unfriendly. When we thought we were getting close, the driver started flashing the lights; I hung out the window yelling as loud as I could, “Americans! Americans!” I guess the strategy worked – they didn’t shoot. After a brief stop, they let us through and we made the rest of the trip uneventful.”

As Colonel Jack Warren, the FOB 4 commander made his way through the camp the stress was beginning to show on him. Outside the TOC, he found Barclay with his feet still planted on the sappers. Warren demanded to know if the sappers were dead. Barclay answered in the affirmative.

“I’ll never forget that exchange between Colonel Warren and Barclay,” Watkins said. “There was no doubt in Barclay’s mind, those NVA were dead. Warren asked again and Barclay replied that ‘yes sir, they were dead.’ Then Warren told Barclay to shoot them. Barclay explained that he’d had his feet on them for hours and that there was no need to shoot the dead sappers.” The colonel angrily turned and headed into the TOC.

Warren remained there a few minutes before continuing down to the Dispensary, where he ran into Bahr, Captain Charles Pfeiffer, Spider and Watkins. Bahr gave a SITREP (situation report) explaining there were still sappers inside the wire and that snipers were firing into the camp from the mountain. The group drifted toward the east side of camp. As they did so, a sniper opened fire on them from Marble Mountain. Parks and Watkins instinctively took cover behind a pallet stacked with Black Label beer. Colonel Warren however, turned toward the mountain and, in utter frustration, fired his CAR-15 on full automatic, yelling at the top of his lungs.

Back on Marble Mountain, Trimble and a few of his ST Rattler team members had moved off of their perch and were repelling down the ropes in order to inspect the area where they had directed heavy

firepower on the NVA mortar site earlier in the morning. As Binn and other indig were sliding down the ropes ahead of him, Trimble heard a voice yelling something in Vietnamese. It was an NVA soldier trying to convince Binn and the other Nungs to surrender. Binn responded with a burst of automatic weapons fire. With One-Zero Ed Ames laying down machine gun fire ahead of the team, ST Rattler moved but a short distance before it found an enemy 82mm mortar emplacement. After confirming that neither the mortar nor an abandoned rucksack containing rounds was booby-trapped, ST Rattler patrolled a short while longer before returning to the ropes with the weapon and the rucksack in hand. Later that day, the rucksack was taken back to FOB 4 Headquarters.

At first light, Spider Parks returned to FOB 4 carrying Watkins’ sub-machine gun. As he walked east up the main road leading into the compound, he could smell the cordite from all the weapons fire and could see the haze hanging over the camp. Inside the compound it was an unbelievable scene of mass destruction and chaos. People were running everywhere, some of them still dazed by the night’s tragic events. Snipers were occasionally firing down from Marble Mountain and sappers were still roaming the camp. He headed for the Dispensary. When he saw Watkins moving among the wounded he gave a silent prayer of thanks for his friend’s safety.

Trimble and ST Rattler were forced to spend three more nights on Marble Mountain. A Kingbee picked up Trimble and ST Rattler Monday August 26th, finally taking them back to FOB 4. One-Zero Ed Ames rode a Kingbee back to FOB 4 and carried the seized NVA ruck sack into S-2 August 23rd. On Monday afternoon, Trimble took his two wounded indig to the Dispensary, where they were treated and released. Trimble walked around FOB 4 to inspect the damage. It had been one thing to watch it from the mountain, but to see the damage firsthand, on the ground, was painful to look at. His own hootch had been heavily damaged by a satchel charge, an explosion that killed his dog.

But, for Trimble there was a piece of good news: When Col. Warren commended him and ST Rattler earlier in the week for snuffing out enemy mortar and sniper positions, he hadn’t been able to say over the radio that the recovered NVA rucksack contained not only mortar rounds, but also a stash of documents outlining NVA plans for a major attack on the Amphibious Marine outfit located on the south side of Marble Mountain. The attack was set for 24 August. This information was hand-delivered to the Marines, who took appropriate defensive measures. Perhaps because of these vigorous countermeasures, no attack materialized.

Two weeks later, a contingent of Marines picked up Trimble and his Nungs and chauffeured them to their officers club, where they treated them to a splendid meal and thanked for having gathered the intelligence that prevented the Marines from being caught by surprise. In a sign of honor, the Marines had the entire team sign their guest book. ❖



# COPS CORNER

By Brad Welker

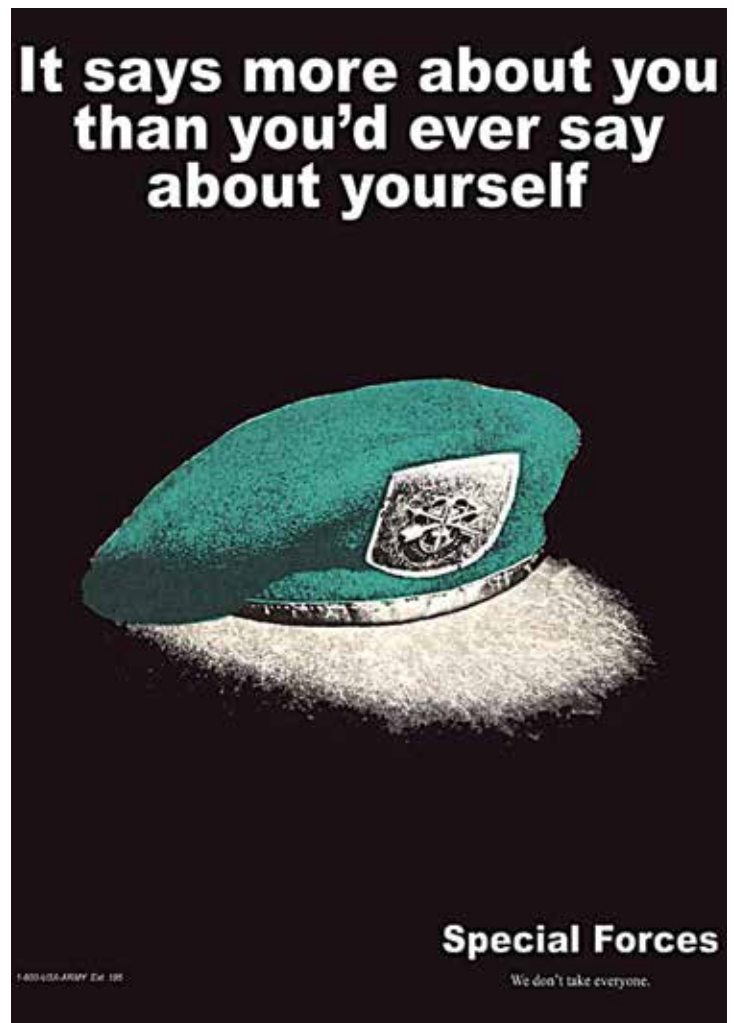
The ability to maintain the operational tempo required of Special Forces units is becoming ever more challenging due to the numerous missions that are currently facing our country. Recruitment of future generations of Green Berets is increasingly more difficult as American youth are quite frankly going soft. Medical journals are reporting that the physical fitness and conditioning levels of young men and women are far below previous generations.

The demand for fully trained Green Berets has never been higher and the pipeline containing individuals that successfully meet the standards to become an SF soldier has fewer potential candidates. The ability to navigate through the Q course is only the beginning of the challenge. Once a soldier becomes an integral part of an ODA, and begins to work in the demanding operational tempo of frequent deployments they in turn become highly desirable as civilian contractors. These civilian contracts are frequently highly paid positions with many other benefits, which lure many to leave SF.

I cannot help but find a similarity between the issues facing SF recruitment and that facing Law Enforcement agencies. Both need physically and emotionally fit candidates. Both require applicants to undertake training and qualification courses. They each require that those who achieve operational status work to under difficult conditions, frequently in hostile environments. While the SF soldier faces far more dangerous working conditions with respect to death and injury, Law Enforcement officers must work in an environment that is increasingly hostile and dangerous.

Personality traits common to successful Green Berets provide a strong basis for transitioning into Law Enforcement careers. The ability to remain calm in stressful situations, the ability to work with civilians that are not necessarily friendly, and above all the ability to think out of the box are common facets in SF soldiers. Just as SF soldiers often work within political restraints, cops often must work within the restraints of local politics.

The ability to do a job that is not often recognized or given due credit is common to a Green Beret and to Law Enforcement officers. Both careers require special personnel to operate efficiently, reaching that level is handicapped by the paucity of the pool of potential recruits. The temptation for management is to lower the standards to expand that pool. Neither SF or Law Enforcement will benefit if those standards are eliminated.. ❖



*Cops Corner* will continue to carry stories related to or about law enforcement. Anyone interested in publishing a story about their experiences is encouraged to contact Chapter 78 Vice President Brad Welker at [wbwelker@gmail.com](mailto:wbwelker@gmail.com).

# SFA Chapter 78 July 2018 Meeting



- ❶ Mark Miller and Kenn Miller unfurling the Special Forces Regimental Flag for the Chapter meeting.
- ❷ SFA Chapter 78 President John S. Meyer speaking and Vice President Brad Welker operating the computer and projector for a presentation; hard working officers!
- ❸ SFA Chapter 78 President John S. Meyer presenting the V-42 knife & case to Richard Simonian for his 86th birthday.
- ❹ Lonny Holmes Editor of the *Sentinel* holding the SFA Crossed Arrow Award for Excellence (2018, first awarded), Richard Simonian Publisher, Debra Holm Graphic Designer and on right SFA Chapter 78 President John S. Meyer.
- ❺ The War Reporter Award was presented to Special Forces Chapter 78 *Sentinel* staff by war reporter and film producer Alex Quade for the chapters commitment to documenting Special Forces history. *Sentinel* graphic designer Debra Holm is the holding award. L to R: Editor Lonny Holmes, Publisher Richard Simonian and Chapter President John S. Meyer second from the right.
- ❻ Eating Richards and Lonny's birthday cake; Gary Macnamara Chapter secretary, Kenn Miller, Mark Miller Chapter Sergeant at Arms, Debra Holm the *Sentinel's* graphic designer, ... and the Honorable Thad Gembacz.
- ❼ Melting ice cream birthday cake for Richard Simonian and Lonny Holmes. Thank you Mike Keele and SFA Chapter 78.
- ❽ Front row L to R: Denise Turner, John Creel member of 10th SFGA in Bad Tolz, Germany from 1955 to 1960. Back row Juan Gonzalez, Denis Paez and Greg Creel, John's son.
- ❾ V-42 knife case. Knife is in the mail! Richard Simonian's 86th birthday present from SFA Chapter 78.