

AIR COMMANDO JOURNAL

A Professional Publication by the Air Commando Association
Dedicated to Air Commandos Past, Present, and Future

HALL OF FAME

2014 Inductees

Commander's
Leadership Awards

Laos: Part 3

Finding
History

Battlefield
Airmen
Accident



Vol 3: Issue 4

Foreword by Wayne G. Norrad, CMSgt, USAF (Ret)

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FOREWORD

The history and evolution of the Hall of Fame are interesting -- and at times, controversial. The concept was started by recognizing a Founder's Group of nine individuals that included the famous co-commanders of Project 9, (later officially designated as the 1st Air Commando Group) Philip Cochran and John Alison. In 1969, the Air Commando Association was founded by Brig. Gen Robert Cardenas and then Col Harry C. "Heinie" Aderholt. Leaders of the ACA decided to establish an Air Commando Hall of Fame (HoF) to recognize the outstanding contributions of Air Force commandos. There were 20 selected into the inaugural class. Some of the more familiar inductees included "Jumping" Joe Kittinger, "Hap" Lutz, Charlie Jones and "Heinie" Aderholt. Evidently it caused some controversy because it was another 25 years, in 1994, that the ACA resurrected the HoF and selected 32 more -- presumably to "catch-up for lost years." The following year, another 17 members were inducted. For the next 14 years, from 1996 to 2010, the number of selectees varied from none in 2006 and 2009 to 11 in 2000.

It is my opinion the process was ad hoc at best with the "good ol' boy" network often having too much power and influence in deciding who was selected. Eventually, ACA leaders appointed a Hall of Fame Committee. They were asked to develop guidelines and procedures, cast their votes, and forward their recommendations to the Board of Directors who had final approval authority. As with any process, adjustments were made over the years. For example, new rules now state that nominees must have been assigned to Air Force Special Operations for at least three years and must be separated or retired from the Air Force for at least three years.

Following the ACA Annual Convention Banquet in 2010, the HoF Committee recommended a limit on the number of annual inductees. The previous year, ten inductees just seemed too many to properly honor each Hall of Famer. The Board of Directors agreed with that rationale and set the limit to no more than five. Last year was perfect. Each of the five inductees was presented their HoF plaque at the ACA Annual Convention Banquet while their citation was read, and each delivered a brief acceptance speech. The positive response from the audience, for each and every inductee, was overwhelming -- as it should be!

I consider it a privilege to be on the HoF Committee and take this responsibility very seriously, as do the other committee members: Chairman Lt Gen (Ret) Mike Wooley, Col (Ret) Steve Connelly, Col (Ret) Jim Connors, Col (Ret) Dave Mobley, CMSAF #9 (Ret) Jim Binnicker, and CMSgt (Ret) Lamar Doster.

What do we look for during the evaluation process? We look at the whole person concept to include levels of responsibility held, major development of weapons systems or changes to tactics, techniques and procedures, total years served in special operations, deployments in harm's way, significant awards and decorations, involvement in fraternal organizations, charities, assistance to our wounded warriors or support for the families of our fallen. We are not just looking to induct heroes. We look at those who made significant contributions to special operations while serving on active duty and have continued to contribute in civilian life. I highly recommend visiting the ACA website (www.aircommando.org) to read the list of Hall of Famers, and also consider submitting a package on a deserving Air Commando for induction in 2015.

The HoF is comprised of an elite group. Of the thousands of Air Commandos who have served in special operations over the past 70+ years, only 170 (117 officers and 53 enlisted) are in the Hall of Fame. Gen Duane H. Cassidy, former Commander-in-Chief, US Transportation Command and Military Airlift Command, once told me "Elite means...few; too many means...average." "Average" does not have a place in special operations or in the Air Commando Hall of Fame.



Wayne G. Norrad, CMSgt, USAF (Ret)
Secretary, Air Commando Hall of Fame Committee
Former AFSOC Senior Enlisted Advisor



CHINDIT CHATTER

As noted in the foreword by Chief Norrad, this issue of *Air Commando Journal* highlights the newest members of the Air Commando Hall of Fame. One fact that is often misinterpreted is that the Air Commando Hall of Fame is not the Air Commando Association Hall of Fame. Rather, any individual that meets the criteria Chief Norrad pointed out is eligible for this highly prestigious recognition. In addition to the 2014 Hall of Fame inductees, we also highlight the citations for the 2014 AFSOC Commander's Leadership Awards (CLAs). I expect this outstanding group of Air Commando leaders contains one or more future Hall of Famers. The future of the Air Commando legacy is in their extremely capable hands.



This is the fifth year the ACA has been honored to sponsor and present the CLA awards to these exceptional performers. Five years ago, Lt Gen Wurster, then the AFSOC Commander, crafted the concept of this award. ACA gladly accepted responsibility for providing the means and the venue for the presentations. It should be noted that ACA plays no part in the selection of the CLA winners. Rather, the commanders of AFSOC's major units and agencies nominate their units' selectees to AFSOC for final approval. AFSOC in turn sends the final citations to ACA, at which point ACA puts together the packages and medallions to recognize the winners at our annual banquet. Along with the CLAs, ACA also sponsors the AFSOC Squadron of the Year, the Chief Hap Lutz Combat Medic of the Year award, the SrA Julian Sholten ISR Commando of the Year award, and the Deployed Aircraft Ground Response Element (DAGRE) award. These AFSOC-level awards are a small, but significant, way that ACA lives up to our credo of "Supporting Air Commandos ... Past, Present and Future."

In addition, this issue contains a range of articles covering significant events in the history of Air Commandos. We are happy to report that we continue to hear praise about the ACJ from wide variety of sources and we can never thank our contributors enough. Unlike other similar publications, our authors continually provide great reads without one penny of compensation. If you have an opportunity, please let them know how much you appreciate their efforts or send us a note and we will pass it on in the Hot Wash. Please enjoy this edition of the *Air Commando Journal*.

Any Time—Any Place



Dennis Barnett, Col, USAF (Ret)
ACA President and Editor In Chief



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HOTWASH

Dear Editor,

My name is Patrick Falaro, I am a cadet with AFROTC at NC State University. I am contacting you to see if you offer your journal in a print version that can be subscribed to or if it is only available as an electronic copy. If you could please respond at your earliest convenience I would greatly appreciate it. Thank you and have a great day.

Very Respectfully,
C/Falaro

Dear Mr Falaro,

The Air Commando Journal is free to all members of the Air Commando Association (ACA). If you would like to join you would be eligible as an Associate Member, you can find us online at www.aircommando.org.

Sincerely,
Jeanette Moore
Membership Coordinator

Dear Col RonTerry,

...I was not previously familiar with the *Air Commando Journal*. It is an impressive publication. Interesting information, well presented.

As to who I am: I was the editor of Air Force Magazine for many years. I am now retired but still writing articles regularly, with the Vietnam War being one of the frequent topics.

John Correll

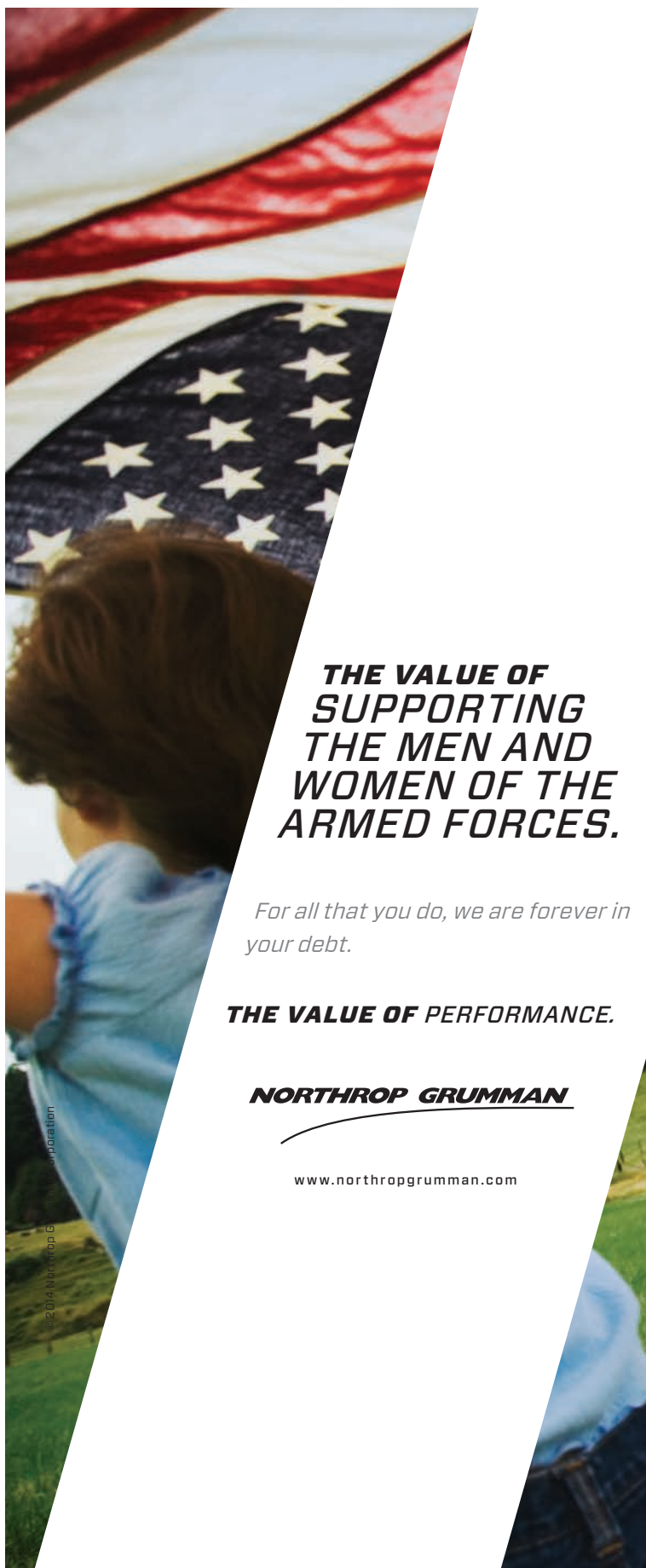
Mr Correll

Thanks for your very kind words about the *Air Commando Journal*. That means a lot coming from you. We are very proud of the progress we have made with it over the last few years starting from scratch with little or no guidance. Would you mind if we used your note in future promotional materials?

If we can be of any further assistance ... please let us know.

Col (ret) Dennis Barnett
President Air Commando Association

Submissions can be e-mailed to info@aircommando.org or mailed to Hot Wash c/o Air Commando Association, P.O. Box 7, Mary Esther, FL 32569. ACA reserves the right to eliminate those that are not deemed appropriate. Thank you in advance for your interest in the *Air Commando Journal*.



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2014 Air Commando



Juan "Johnny A" Alvarez

Colonel "John" Alvarez was the US Navy's first pilot to be selected for the personal exchange program with US Special Operations Command and paid a tremendous sacrifice while on a foreign internal defense mission losing his left leg. With unprecedented personal courage and determination, and support from the Navy Special Warfare and Air Force Special Operations communities he became the first US military pilot reinstated to combat flying status with an amputation. He continued to serve for 14 years in key leadership positions and led the transformation and expansion of the combat aviation advisor mission. He qualified in over 30 aircraft notably the MH 53J/M, UH-1H/N and the Mi-8/17 Hip. He led and flew combat missions supporting

elite Special Operations Forces units in Operations JOINT ENDEAVOR, ASSURED RESPONSE, and ALLIED FORCE. He also led CAA teams throughout the globe in counter narco-terrorism missions, and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. During Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, he commanded the first direct-assist aviation advisory mission in combat since Vietnam. As a warrior diplomat he was an advisor to the Hungarian Air Staff, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, and Romania rescue forces, and Defense Attaché to Bolivia. He continues to serve as an advocate and mentor for wounded warriors and their families. His selfless service and duty to country represent the embodiment of the traditions of the Air Commando. The singularly distinctive accomplishments of Col Alvarez reflect great credit on himself, Air Force Special Operations, and all Air Commandos.

JAMES R. ANDERSON

Chief Master Sergeant James "Randy" Anderson distinguished himself through sustained performance as an Air Commando during his long and distinguished career, culminating as the AFSOC Functional Manager for the Flight Engineer career field. He was also one of only eight active MH-53 flight engineers to achieve the highest enlisted rank. As the Command's top flight engineer, his outstanding professionalism and leadership were essential to the sustained readiness of AFSOC in peacetime and the successful prosecution of military actions in the Global War on Terrorism. His perseverance ensured the success of ten major avionics upgrades, an improved 7.62mm mini-gun feeder, and equipping AFSOC aircrews with the more modern M-4 Special Operations Peculiar Modification (SOPMOD) carbine. Realizing the Pave Low mission would eventually be drawn down he turned his focus to becoming a staunch advocate for the foreign internal defense mission and ensured the manpower and skillset requirements for the CV-22 Osprey were met. He was also instrumental in introducing a revolutionary cross-skilled enlisted aircrew concept reducing the number of enlisted aircrew specialists required to perform mission duties on an aircraft. His concept served to inspire the model of the recently created Enlisted Aircrew Special Operations Air Force Specialty Code. Throughout his career he deployed as a combat crewmember to 16 major operations, culminating with Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. Chief Anderson's selfless service and duty to country represent the true embodiment of the ideals, standards, and traditions of the Air Commando. The singularly distinctive accomplishments of Chief Anderson reflect great credit on himself, Air Force Special Operations, and all Air Commandos.



ando HALL OF FAME

CRAIG F. BROTCHE

Colonel Craig F. Broatchie distinguished himself in the performance of outstanding service to the United States during a long and exemplary career. Colonel Broatchie's accomplishments as an Air Commando span over twenty years from early beginnings as a Special Tactics Team leader through every command echelon of combat control and special tactics leadership. As he advanced through detachment and squadron commands he always left those units better organized, trained, and equipped to meet their operational requirements. He was consistently hand-picked for ground breaking leadership roles to ensure a top-notch combat control and pararescue force was combat ready for world-wide deployment. His ability to conceptualize joint plans and tactics, as a Joint Special Operations Command planner, allowed him to successfully manage and coordinate complex and sensitive contingency operations. Operation URGENT FURY, the 1984 Summer Olympics, and Operation JUST CAUSE all served testimony to his reputable interoperability with Defense, Federal and Joint agencies. His envisioned leadership opened doors for expanded training opportunities with allied forces during combined service exercises. Colonel Broatchie's unparalleled motivational leadership style was accented by setting clear standards, displaying relentless dedication to duty, maintaining honor-bound integrity, and consistently making timely and accurate decisions. During Colonel Broatchie's tenure as the third 720th Special Tactics Group Commander, he brilliantly implemented CSAF direction to consolidate all combat control resources under AFSOC. Whether implementing peacekeeping measures in the Balkans or evacuating American citizens from threatened countries, his special tactics teams delivered essential air-to-ground interface. The USSOCOM Commander described Colonel Broatchie as a superb combat commander, proven as in the Persian Gulf. The singularly distinctive accomplishments of Col Broatchie reflect great credit on himself, Air Force Special Operations and all Air Commandos.



RICHARD COLE, Honorary Member

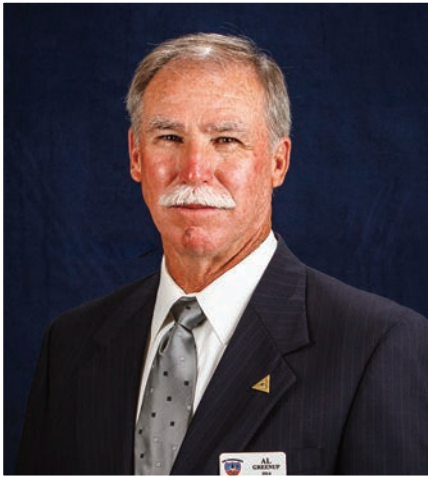
In the early days of World War II, the United States was desperate to avenge the Japanese's cowardly attack on Pearl Harbor. After consultations with senior Army Air Force and Navy commanders, a special operations mission was personally ordered by President Roosevelt to strike the Japanese. On 18 April 1942, 80 brave men flew 16 B-25 bombers off the deck of the aircraft carrier Hornet deep in the western Pacific. These brave warriors were all volunteers, unaware of the mission, destination or the risks they faced, but went into harms way knowing their country needed them. This was at a critical time in the war with morale sagging due to a series of military setbacks. Sitting alongside then Lt Col Jimmy Doolittle, aircraft commander of aircraft number 1, was copilot, 1st Lt Richard Cole.

The success of the raid was historic in precedence and was an immediate morale booster to the American fighting spirit. The Japanese responded quickly and their devastating defeat at the Battle of Midway turned the tide of the war in the Pacific. After successfully evading the Japanese and bailing out over China, Lt Cole was assigned combat duty in the China/Burma/India theater flying both fighters and trooper carrier aircraft. Two years later, Captain Cole as an Air Commando C-47 pilot, participated in "Operation Thursday," the aerial invasion of Burma which introduced a new concept of fighting deep behind enemy lines supplied solely by air. After turning 99 years of age on 7 September 2014, Lt Col Richard Cole is the oldest of the 4 remaining Doolittle Raiders and is the only airman to have participated in both the Doolittle Raid and the aerial invasion of Burma, two of the most important and daring missions in special operations history.

The distinctive accomplishments of Lt Col Cole in a lifetime of dedicated service to his country have elevated him to icon status as again manifested in the recent 71st Doolittle Raiders final reunion in Fort Walton Beach, FL and reflects great credit upon himself, Air Commandos, and the United States Air Force.



2014 Air Commando HALL OF FAME



ALVA D. GREENUP

Colonel Alva D. Greenup distinguished himself during 33 years of military service of which 27 were spent in USAF Special Operations as an operator, manager, and leader. He served as a US Army Green Beret in covert missions during the South East Asia War in 1967. As a member of Project Delta, 5th Special Forces Group in South Vietnam, he was a reconnaissance team leader on missions along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and other strategic areas of interest. After leaving the Army, he provided outstanding service to the USAF Reserve at Duke Field, Florida, as an AC-130A Spectre Gunship instructor pilot and chief of the pilot section. Instilling a warrior spirit into the pilots and fellow Reservists, he led from the front as he developed training and deployment programs for the 711th Special Operations Squadron. A key planner, manager, participant, and leader in the 919th Special Operations Group foreign internal defense program in the 1980s, he had the same warrior spirit effect

on aircrew members of the Honduran, Colombian, and Peruvian Air Forces. Colonel Greenup also led missile security support missions for the USAF and NASA missile launches. He commanded an AC-130A during combat missions in Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama in 1989 and deployed with the 711 SOS to Operation DESERT STORM in 1991. He also set up and flew missions over Haiti during RESTORE DEMOCRACY. He was the first pilot Air Reserve Technician to complete conversion to the MC-130E Combat Talon and played a key role in the complex and difficult 711 SOS conversion to the Combat Talon I and the successful association with the 8th Special Operations Squadron at Duke Field. He was a key participant in the 711 SOS as it earned the coveted Grover Loaning Award multiple times as the top flying squadron in the Air Force Reserve. As the 919 SOG Assistant Director of Operations and then commander of the Operations Support Squadron, he passed on his warrior spirit throughout the 919th Special Operations Wing. He completed his long and outstanding service as a senior Individual Mobilization Augmentee in HQ AFSOC providing superior advice and counsel to the senior staff and commander. Following his military retirement, Colonel Greenup served as a United States government contract civilian transport pilot flying worldwide missions, specifically into Afghanistan and Iraq. The singularly distinctive accomplishments of Col Greenup reflect great credit on himself, Air Force Special Operations, and all Air Commandos.

EUGENE RONSICK

Colonel Eugene Ronsick distinguished himself through a long and distinguished career in Air Force Special Operations and made many long and lasting contributions. His first assignment in special operations was as an AC-130 gunship pilot, instructor, and evaluator in the 16th Special Operations Squadron. During his time in Thailand he devised and led the unit's move from Ubon Air Base to Korat Air Base. After successful tours as a squadron commander at Dyess AFB, Texas, Colonel Ronsick returned to special operations as the 39th Special Operations Wing Vice Commander and later Commander. During this critical period, he organized and led the wing's DESERT SHIELD/STORM mobilization, deployment, and redeployment for the combat rescue mission in Turkey and again for Operation PROVIDE COMFORT. From his wing command position he moved to the Pentagon to provide advice and counsel to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict. Colonel Ronsick was the ASD's "go to guy" during the aftermath of BLACK HAWK DOWN and again for the tragic loss of the AC-130 off the coast of Africa. After a very successful tour in the Pentagon, Colonel Ronsick moved to Hurlburt Field, Florida as the Director of Staff of Air Force Special Operations Command. During this time he devised a senior officer game plan that has had lasting positive effects for the Command. Colonel Ronsick's contributions in this capacity have been the template for this critical aspect of AFSOC growth and development since his retirement. The singularly distinctive accomplishments of Colonel Ronsick reflect great credit on himself, Air Force Special Operations, and all Air Commandos. 🦅



Tuesday

242 DAYS PAST

31

AUGUST

123 DAYS TO COME

remark to us - to criticize our camp - and to attempt to discourage the operation. He has held the lime-light for so long that he appeared jealous of the Commandos and downright sad that the operation did succeed.

Cochran's briefing of his men was very informal

and almost most of the time form depended on a bit of the shop. I hope from some of the



Capt Enloe is pictured slightly left and above Col Phil Cochran on right side of photo.

Finding History

How Captain Cortez Enloe's Journal
Sheds New Light on the History of
the World War II Air Commandos
and Operation THURSDAY

By Patrick J. Charles

Determining what constitutes myth versus history is always a concern among historians. Much of it centers on whether there can be such a thing as a truly accurate and objective historical account. Given that all historical information grows out of the respective historian's ideological mind, it is argued that harnessing historical information is not so much about truth-gathering as it is learning about the ideological process

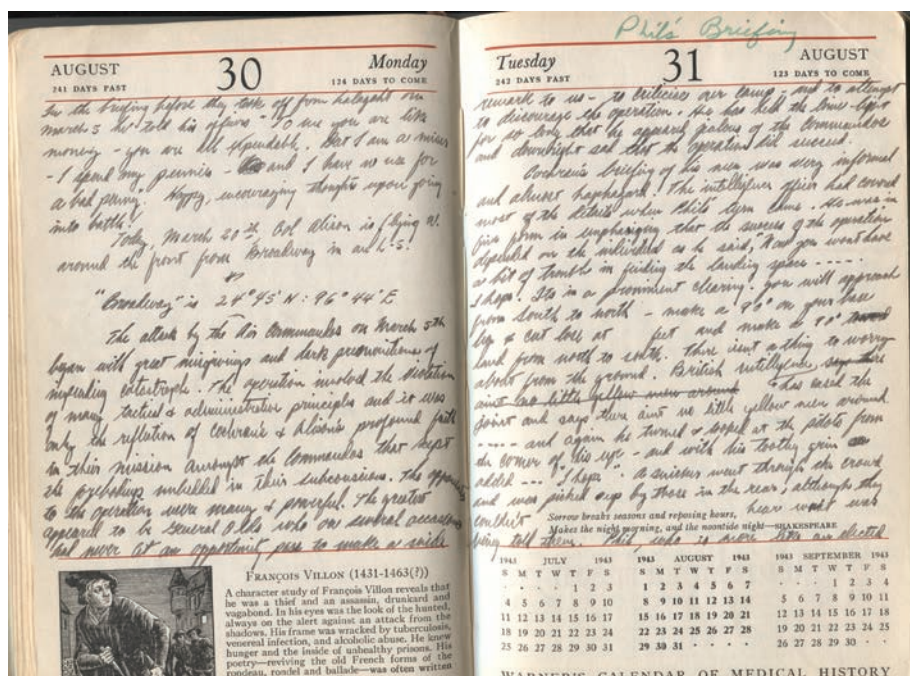
commanded the British Commandos—that the name ‘Air Commandos’ was chosen for the special operations unit. It was at this juncture that Arnold recruited Colonels Philip G. Cochran and John R. Alison, who then developed and honed the concept of air-centric special operations.

As feasible as this story seems on its face, unbeknownst to those that were telling it, uncovered historical evidence

historical narrative of the British initiating the formation of the Air Commandos did not have any substance. Without Wingate's request for aerial supply the air commando concept would have never taken off. For whatever reason—perhaps due to General Arnold's graciousness and diplomatic rapport—both Wingate and Mountbatten came to the conclusion that the Air Commandos were their creation; however, nothing could be further from the truth. It would be one thing for Wingate and Mountbatten to state that the British plan to retake Burma aided in the “formation” of the Air Commandos. But for them to assert that they took part in the “creation” of the Air Commandos is another. The former is substantiated by the historical evidence. The latter is revisionist history at its finest.

It is the rare occasion that a historian comes across an unknown or undiscovered piece of historical evidence that alters society's view of the past. As it pertains to Arnold's role in creating the Air Commandos, the finding breathes new life and insights into the evidentiary record. And what becomes abundantly clear is just how invested Arnold was in the Air Commandos. It was a unit that Arnold took part in developing, of which he approved the formation, for which he selected the commanders, and with which he hoped to show the world that air power could both operate independently and alter the battle space. Thus when Mountbatten sought to reorganize the Air Commandos for his own strategic purposes it was an action that Arnold sternly objected to as a “step backward,” writing:

In order to get the maximum value from our Air Commandos, and develop new principles for their participation in air warfare, we must have extreme flexibility. The greatest possible freedom for this development can be secured only by creating a self contained ground and air command which can accomplish the type of mission we visualize....The Cochran force as we outlined in Washington when you were here was nothing more than an idea—an idea which visualized putting down by air considerable ground forces far behind the enemy's lines and at places where he could offer no serious opposition...While I



Cortez Enloe's notes on Operation THURSDAY, particularly Cochran's briefing before the mission. (Photo courtesy of Air Force Academy Library)

of the respective historian. In other words, critics of accurate and objective history frequently claim that what one historian considers the truth is another's falsehood. What drives this criticism is the frequency in which historical narratives can change, but in the case of the Air Commandos and Operation THURSDAY, for over half a century the story has largely been set in stone.

Until just recently the story was the idea for an Air Commando unit was agreed upon at the 1943 Quebec Conference through the request of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, following Major General Orde C. Wingate's briefing on Long Range Penetration Groups operating in Burma. It was allegedly General Henry “Hap” Arnold's respect for Mountbatten—particularly how he

revealed the entire narrative to be highly dubious. What historians overlooked was the Air Commando concept had been developed a year earlier by Major General George C. Kenney. It was an idea which Arnold modified and subsequently approved. Arnold followed up this approval by issuing a July 1942 press release, informing the world of a new “Troop Carrier Command” consisting of “an air commando force.” The press release also highlighted how the air-centric special unit would use gliders, air-borne combat troops, and aerial resupply to “strike the enemy where he is least prepared.” It was the very concept of what would later become the working parts and pieces of the 1st Air Commando Group.

This is not to say that the previous

am confident that [the Air Commando] concept has practically unlimited possibilities for development in Burma, enthusiastic support from the theatre is most essential to determine the eventual capabilities of such operations.

As touched upon earlier, for a historian to find unknown or undiscovered evidence that significantly alters the historiography of any event is rare, but for it to happen twice is quite extraordinary. What I am referring to here is the only surviving Air Commando account of the unit and Operation THURSDAY. Written by 1st Air Commando Group flight surgeon Captain Cortez Enloe, the journal offers interesting insights on everything from the leadership styles exhibited by Cochran and Alison, to the character of Wingate, and the launch of Operation THURSDAY.

The reason for the journal's absence from previous historical accounts is two-fold. First, the journal—which is the centerpiece of a larger collection accumulated by Enloe—had been

unavailable to researchers until 1996, when his daughters, Cynthia and Margaret Enloe, donated it to the Air Force Academy Library Special Collections Manuscript Division. Initially, Enloe kept the journal as a personal memento, but as the Burma campaign progressed and he began to reflect on the historical significance of what was taking place. He foresaw the possibility of transforming the journal into a book manuscript. “I don’t know what I will do with [the journal] for now [but] I have written over 200 pages of events & anecdote...[These recent events have] made me think that if I should ever write a book about the Air Commandos, I’d call it *They Found Their Souls*,” wrote Enloe in a letter dated 14 Apr 1944.

This tentative title was homage to Cochran’s speech just before the execution of Operation THURSDAY, where he stated: “Tonight you’re going to find out if you’ve got a soul. Nothing you’ve ever done or nothing you are ever going to do counts now.” As the years passed by, the book never came to

fruition. It was not until the 1980s that Enloe seriously explored its possibilities. By then the tentative title of *They Found Their Souls* was replaced by *Far, Far, the Unknown*. In total the book was to consist of thirty-one chapters, but only three were drafted before Enloe passed away.

The second reason the journal may not have been included in previous historical accounts is that its contents were hidden from plain sight. Enloe did not write his notes in a journal clearly marked “Air Commandos,” “Operation THURSDAY” or even “1944.” Instead, they were conspicuously annotated in a 1943 edition of *Warner’s Calendar of Medical History*. It is unclear exactly why Enloe chose to write about 1944 historical events—particularly those as important as Operation THURSDAY—in a 1943 medical calendar, but Enloe’s correspondence hints that the calendar was the best means available at the time.

As far as the journal’s contents, its historical significance lay in what it tells us about the Air Commandos. While the



Quebec Conference 1943—sitting left to right is Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall, Army Air Corps Chief General Henry H. Arnold, Brigadier General J.R. Deane, Admiral Ernest J. King, and Chief of Staff Admiral William D. Leahy. (Photo courtesy of Air Force Academy Library)



Captain Cortez Enloe at Broadway (Photo courtesy of Air Force Academy Library)

traditional historical narrative paints a cheerful story of Cochran and Alison as faultless leaders, Wingate as an admired strategist, and Operation THURSDAY as a virtually unimpeded success, Enloe's journal reminds us that such storybook narratives are often nothing more than revisionist history. As anyone privy to the behind-the-scenes of a joint military operation will attest, there are multiple layers of conflict taking place, not only between the different participating units, but also within each unit. It is not until after the execution of the operation—once passions and disputes have had time to settle—that the storybook narrative begins to supplant the historical reality.

Given that Enloe's journal includes over two hundred pages of commentary and notes, in this venue it is impossible to cover each instance where the journal provides new insight into the history of the Air Commandos. Instead, this article will examine three topics. Perhaps one of the more interesting topics within Enloe's journal is the leadership of Colonel Cochran. For over the last fifty years, Cochran's leadership has been only celebrated in the pantheon of Air Commando history. Finding any criticism of Cochran is like looking for a needle in a haystack, but what Enloe's journal does is it reminds us that the 1st Air Commando Group commander was not flawless.

To the Air Commando traditionalist, Enloe's criticisms of Cochran may be dismissed as nothing more than a subordinate's personal conjecture. However, to dismiss Enloe outright would be a grave historical error. For one, Enloe's criticisms were written contemporaneously with events as they unfolded, meaning to the professional historian they are the best source documents available. But, most importantly, Enloe's criticisms matter because not only was he a fellow Air Commando officer, he was a personal friend of Cochran—a friendship that lasted until death.

One criticism levied was Cochran's questionable demeanor at times. As a British military report dated 4 Oct 1944 captured, whenever the Air Commandos outperformed their RAF counterparts Cochran "did not help matters by expressing his poor opinion of the RAF at favourable opportunities." Enloe's journal provides a similar assessment: "[Cochran] is quite sophomoric in his actions and attitude. None of the men doubt his flying ability, but many—including Al [Wedemeyer] are disturbed by his lack of leadership and sense of responsibility." According to Enloe, there were times where Cochran referred to "every other General" in theater as a "nincompoop." Then there was Cochran's first meeting with Wingate. With the latter operating under the assumption that the Air Commandos were, in fact, his personal air unit, Wingate stated to Cochran, "Now Colonel we will let you know when we want you and you can support where we want." Instead of providing a tactful or diplomatic response, Cochran stated: "No, General, you tell us what you want and if I think it is satisfactory you will have the support. I am commanding the air. You command only the ground."

Enloe attributed Cochran's lack of leadership to his pilot background:

It is the eternal curse of the pilot that he is profoundly egocentric and what is true to a greater or lesser degree of all pilots is actuated in the pursuit pilot. This makes them generally poor leaders in everything but actual guidance during flight. Cochran is a classic example of the egocentric who can view the world only as it affects himself—i.e. from the world inward not as the leader must—from himself outward.

As harsh as Enloe's criticism may seem it has teeth when one takes into account Cochran's psyche. First, Cochran was in rather poor health at the time he led the Air Commandos. In August of 1943, at the time of recruitment by Arnold, it was determined that Cochran was no longer fit to fly. It was a medical diagnosis that Cochran purposely hid from Arnold and others. Originally, Cochran had only been diagnosed with "flying fatigue," but, according to Enloe, it later developed into a fear of flying. Cochran did not help his medical state whenever he worked himself to exhaustion. According to Enloe, Cochran was constantly moving to prevent physical fatigue from setting in. Thus, in essence, Cochran's questionable demeanor was in many ways an extension of his poor medical state.

Cochran's inability to fly must have also instilled conflicting emotions as to affect his demeanor. Previously a fighter pilot with 58th Fighter Squadron, Cochran wanted nothing more than to be flying the mission alongside the Air Commandos, but he knew that he was no longer physically capable of doing so. One must also consider Cochran's burden as the commander. Despite both Cochran and Alison wanting to take part in the glider invasion of Burma, one of the two would have to stay back. It was a somewhat humorous situation that Enloe recorded:

Cochran and Alison both want to go into Burma on the nite [sic] of the invasion. I am opposed and although they see the wisdom of not going they won't say they will bow to their responsibility and stay home. [Cochran then stated,] "Christ Doc. When old man Arnold sent us here he knew he was just

sending a couple of crazy kids. You have to be a little cracked to do this job and I'm just nuts enough to want to fly that first glider in. Hell, I'm no brass but they ruined a damn good flight leader then they gave me these chicken wings."

Here we learn just how close Enloe was to Cochran. Despite levying a number of criticisms—criticisms that were never intended to see the light of day—Enloe truly cared about Cochran's welfare and the operational success of the Air Commandos. This is made abundantly clear throughout the journal, but it was not until after the success of Operation THURSDAY that Enloe felt Cochran had fully developed into a leader. "[Cochran] is finally growing up to his ability," wrote Enloe on 12 Mar 1944. Still, Enloe could see that Cochran was growing frustrated with the responsibilities of being a commander. According to Enloe, at one point Cochran complained: "This job is killing me. There ain't no future in it. Look at me. The kids are up flying their hearts out...And what the hell am I doing...giving plots. Only thing I'm flying is a telephone!"

Taken altogether, Enloe's observations provide interesting insight into what it must have been like to serve under Cochran. Again, it is worth noting that they are observations that would have likely never seen the light of day, even if Enloe had finished his manuscript on the history of the Air Commandos. To those individuals that experienced Operation THURSDAY, the only story they would tell was one of unit persistence, operational success, and military kinship. Meanwhile, those moments of disagreement and conflict were set aside as either insignificant or having never taken place.

This rule of thumb can be seen upon exploring the working relationship between the Troop Carrier Command Commander, Brigadier General William D. Old, and Colonel Cochran and the Air Commandos. Early historical accounts conveyed that there was a significant amount of friction between Old, Cochran, and the Air Commandos. Not only was Old in disagreement with the theoretical premise behind Operation THURSDAY, he even resented the special operations air unit's operational independence. It was also Old that prompted Cochran to issue the famous 'tongue and cheek' shave memo upon complaining about the Air Commandos "unkept" appearance. Then there was Old's curious omission of Cochran, Alison, and the Air Commandos in his Operation THURSDAY report. In fact, the report was in many ways a slight against Cochran and the Air Commandos, given that Old wrote, "It is interesting...that the entire operation was carried out from the planning stages through execution with no one individual actually directing the operation."

But neither Cochran nor Alison ever acknowledged that there was a problem with Old. In fact, during an April 1979 historical interview, when Alison was asked about the tumultuous relationship, he immediately dismissed it as "no real problem" and claimed that Old always supported the Air Commandos "despite what you might hear." As well intentioned and noble Alison's revising the historical narrative may be it contradicts the evidentiary record, particularly what Enloe captured in his journal. According to Enloe, it was in the very midst of the glider invasion of Broadway, at the

point when Alison had cut off all communication and it was unknown whether the landing force was under attack by the Japanese, that Old took the opportunity to berate Cochran for what at the time seemed an operational failure:

[S]hortly after two, Alison called Phil saying, "Don't send anymore tonight." It was apparent that the operation was not going perfectly...Everyone was perplexed and no one could understand the reason for the sudden cryptic message from inside Burma. Phil reacted quickly: "If little John says no more planes then that is good enough for me. Stop all air operations and call everyone back until we find out what's up." It appeared as if the [sic] had fallen when Wingate received a message from his ground Commander, Brigadier Calvert reading in code 'Soya Link' meaning 'bother on the ground.' Then Broadway radio shutdown. It was like a nightmare...

Phil looked haggard as he stood in the doorway of the lighted command tent. He was tired, dead tired as only a man who has directed every energy of his being toward one goal can be. This was [supposed to be] the greatest night of his life, yet he had lost the false sense of frivolity with...his more serious thoughts. He was serious as he remarked: "Looks like they have got us Doc. God damn it, why can't I be there in the fight?" And then the real Phil came back for a second as with the slightest suppression of a smile he said: "We ain't lost yet or have we?"...

Phil had started for bed when he encountered General Old. For Phil it was an unfortunate encounter for Old had all along been piqued at being left out of the picture when he had dominated the American scene for publicity for so long. He must have felt some chagrin as having his first pilot be relegated to flying co-pilot to our own second pilots who took over troop carrier ships for the invasion and in our troubles he found his opportunity. Like hitting a man while he is down, Old made capital of the allied difficulties that night.

Employing his rank to get Cochran's attention, he harangued Phil for nearly a half an hour on his "failure." He said the Commandos were an unkept, undisciplined rabble that had no idea what they were doing. He said he knew double tows wouldn't work and he hoped that now Phil wouldn't be so hard headed about it. It was a strange display for an officer, much [more] a general, to gloat over what then seemed [like] the failure of his own army & unfair as a man to take the opportunity when he cares of the man, who had tried so hard, [then] to berate him and cry, almost jubilantly: "I told you so!"



Captain Cortez Enloe at Broadway (Photo courtesy of Air Force Academy Library)

Later in the journal, at a point where Enloe again reflected on Operation THURSDAY, he wrote how a number of individuals had “great misgivings and dark premonitions” concerning the Air Commando theory of operations. However, no one was more adamantly against the theory than General Old. According to Enloe, Old made every opportunity to “criticize our camp and to attempt to discourage the operation.” While certainly one may question Enloe’s retelling of the Old, Cochran, and Air Commando dynamic, he was not the only person to make note of Old’s poor behavior on the night of Operation THURSDAY. In a 10 Mar 1944 3rd Tactical Air Force report, Air Marshal Jackie Baldwin also captured the historical event, writing, “There was an occasion on the first night when a certain amount of friction developed between OLD and COCHRAN[], when things were going badly, and an impasse was only averted through the very tactical handling of the situation...”



Captain Cortez Enloe (Photo courtesy of Air Force Academy Library)

Here again, through Enloe’s journal, we find new information on the history of the Air Commandos and Operation THURSDAY. What the entries pertaining to General Old highlight is how the past is often revised by those who lived it. In the case of Cochran and Alison, their revising of historical events could be the result of any number of factors. Perhaps one explanation is that Cochran and Alison were forced to rely on their memories, which generally fade over time and can be modified upon learning of other historical accounts. It complicates matters that most of the Air Commando records were lost in a plane crash; but even if those records had survived, neither Cochran nor Alison was much of an administrator. In fact, General Arnold had expressly told

Cochran and Alison: “To the hell with the paperwork, go out and fight.” According to Enloe, it was an order that Cochran and Alison took to heart.

But the most likely explanation as to why Cochran and Alison revised the historical narrative is the ethos of the Air Commandos today—the motto “Quiet Professionals.” Indeed, although Cochran and Alison at times embellished their own contributions to the Air Commando theory of operations, a theory that was primarily conceived by Kenney and Arnold, the two leaders never took all the credit. Praise was lavishly bestowed on many. Moreover, Cochran and Alison refused to negatively criticize those that took part in the Burma campaign, particularly anyone that paid the ultimate sacrifice.

This was especially the case with the highly controversial Wingate. Neither Cochran nor Alison ever openly criticized their British counterpart. In fact, immediately following Wingate’s death by plane crash on 24 Mar 1944, Alison gave Wingate much of the credit for the success of Operation THURSDAY. Alison even described Wingate in such glowing terms as a “great man,” “man of vision,” “genius,” and “great leader.”

Of course, following Wingate’s death, Alison was not the only contemporary to describe Wingate in such a favorable light. In eulogy to Wingate, a number of prominent individuals, to include King George VI, General Arnold, and General Joseph Stillwell delivered similar remarks. But the truth of the matter is that Wingate was often difficult to work with, foolhardy, egocentric, and paranoid.

In all fairness, this historically critical perception of Wingate did not come to the public’s attention until 1951, when Volume III of the British government’s *Official History Against Japan* was published. It was strengthened five years later when Field Marshall Viscount Slim published *Defeat into Victory*. However, many that served with Wingate took issue with altering his legacy. Members of Wingate’s family even went so far as to prevent access to the general’s papers and correspondence in order to minimize any further criticism. Thus, from the perspective of Wingate’s sympathizers and supporters, such critical assessments were nothing more than, in David Rooney’s words, an inaccurate and “dismissive description of Wingate and what...the Chindits had achieved.”

Both Cochran and Alison fell squarely within this camp. Alison even expressed his sympathy for Wingate’s legacy in a 1979 interview, stating: “The official British history downgrades Wingate and really undeservedly so. I know Wingate’s associates, the people who fought with him, thought a great injustice had been done to a great man, historically. He was accused of a lot of things. Actually, Wingate was a great soldier.”

Here much like the scenario involving the memory of General Old, Alison’s remembrance of Wingate reeks of revisionism. A close examination of the historical evidence reveals that Wingate, in fact, was narcissistic at times and often took credit for military ideas and successes not of his own doing. Moreover, Wingate was not immune from trying to get the upper hand at the expense of others. As Enloe recounted in an 4 Apr 1944 entry:

Cochran likes Wingate, thinks he is a great man because he is a fighter. W[ingate] could double dial if need be. He is sharp and relentless. We had trouble with him only on a couple of occasions when he tried to gain an advantage at our expense. Cochran accused him of it an[d] all Wingate said: "Yes, I did. I'm sorry, Colonel." It left Phil sort of helpless, but he said: "Well, General, if you want to play that way with us, John and I are artists at it." That was the last time.

This is not the only instance where Enloe provides insight into Wingate's character; there are a number of entries where Enloe is rather critical of Wingate. For example, consistent with those historical assessments that have classified Wingate as having a "God complex", in a 21 Feb 1944 entry, Enloe wrote:

Wingate is an executive with a messiah complex. I am sure he has a great sense of destiny in what he is doing. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that he believes Providence sent him here just for this. He was very sure of himself before us... In his speech, he referred to God, good luck, and other expressions of chance several times and although there is, to be sure, a terrible risk in all of this—I am inclined to think he believes God is with him. Then too—he is a man with something to sell.

Then there is Enloe's account of how Wingate presented himself to others. According to Enloe, Wingate was often "consciously dramatic" when speaking, to the point that his officers could not "make heads nor tails" of the speech and doubted whether Wingate "himself knows what is he attempting to convey." To Enloe, Wingate was "essentially an egotist" that was willing to "use every trick to gain his own way even when it must be obvious to him that his way is not the most effective contribution to the cause he represents." But despite Wingate's faults, Enloe did respect the British general, particularly his knack for convincing others to support his plans. "The men above Wingate have more often than not counseled against his undertakings on the grounds they were too costly for the contribution they would make to the overall strategy," wrote Enloe, yet somehow Wingate could sway the opinions of "one or two important individuals to alter their plans."

What also impressed Enloe was Wingate's "mystic devotion" to the mission. At the same time, however, Enloe witnessed how this very devotion could make Wingate a "dangerous cruel man." Despite having his troops' undivided loyalty, Wingate openly declared that they were expendable. According to Enloe, in a speech right before executing Operation THURSDAY, Wingate stated as much: "To me you are like money—you are all expendable." In response to this, Enloe sarcastically wrote in his journal, "Happy, encouraging thoughts upon going into battle!"

Taken altogether, one might be inclined to dismiss Enloe's opinions of Wingate as just that—opinions. They may also be dismissed on the ground that Enloe was never part of Wingate's circle. He was an officer and flight surgeon for the Air Commandos, not the Chindits. Therefore, it may be argued that unlike Enloe's close association with Cochran and Alison, Enloe was merely observing Wingate as an outsider, nothing more. However, to completely dismiss Enloe's commentary on these grounds would be erroneous. First and foremost, Enloe's



Alison, Wingate, and Cochran, notice Cortez Enloe is pictured with them on the far right. (Photo courtesy of Air Force Academy Library)

commentary was written contemporaneously with the events, and therefore must be given proper consideration by historians. More importantly, Enloe's commentary is consistent with other contemporary accounts detailing Wingate's behavior. As British General Sir Henry Pownall wrote in an October 17, 1943 diary entry:

[Wingate] is a genius in that he is quite a bit mad....In many ways Wingate is very good and can be made useful provided his is kept in order. But he is resentful of anything that is normal, deliberately runs counter to authority, demands first priority for his affairs and if he thinks he isn't getting it...threatens to wire direct to the Prime Minister.

In summary, as this article has outlined, there is much to discover about the Air Commandos through Enloe's journal. Whether it is Cochran's leadership style or the behind the scenes of Operation THURSDAY, Enloe breathes new life into Air Commando historiography. Certainly, historians should be cautious when reading the journal—particularly those portions discussing the Air Commandos' background history. This is because Enloe was not assigned to the Air Commandos until 15 Oct 1943, nearly a month after the unit was formed. Regardless, it will no longer do for historians to omit Enloe's notes and observations from the narrative.



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LAOS: THE SECRET WAR



Part 3: Combat Training and Logistics

*By Ramon E. "Ray" de Arrigunaga, Lt Col, USAF (Ret)
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The Geneva Accords signed on 20 July 1954 after the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu. They provided that Laos would become a neutral state and that a ceasefire would be implemented on 6 August 1954. The Accords also required the French military to withdraw from Laos which was done on 1 August 1954, except for a residual training mission to bolster the Royal Lao military. The Viet Minh/North Vietnamese troops were required to withdraw from Laos back to Vietnam within 120 days of the ceasefire. And finally, the Pathet Lao (PL) army would disband and could regroup to the two northern provinces already under their control, Phong Saly and Houaphan/Sam Neua.

Once the Pathet Lao had regrouped into the northern areas under their control, the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) established a small support group with a staff of some 100 personnel, known as Group 100, in the town of Ban Nameo situated on the Laos-North Vietnam border. Group 100's mission was to provide logistical support and training to the PL army. In September 1959, Group 100 was replaced by a very much larger organization known as Group 959.

The war in Laos would gradually escalate. It would turn out to be incredibly complex and confusing, largely because of the secrecy surrounding the conflict. The secrecy was driven by the political desire to maintain the thinly-veiled myth of non-involvement in Laotian internal affairs held by the US and its allies on the one hand, and North Vietnam and its Chinese

and Soviet allies on the other. Alongside this hodge-podge of international subterfuge, one must also consider the roles played by the three principal factions within the Laotian political and military landscape: the neutralists, led by Souvanna Phouma; the rightists, led by Gen Phoumi Nosavan; and the leftists/PL, led by Souphanouvong.

It must also be recalled that Laos was a country in name only. The population of Laos, numbering approximately 2.0 million in 1958 was fragmented ethnically and geographically. There were some 45-50 different ethnicities and many more languages and dialects. Thus, there was virtually no ethnolinguistic identity upon which to build a concept of Laotian citizenship within the population, other than possibly among the upper strata.

An unbelievable and largely incomprehensible scenario began to evolve. As once said by Mark Twain, "Truth is stranger than fiction ..." In the case of the Laotian conflict, not even Tom Clancy could have written a story as strange and as unlikely as the impending war in Laos!

Notwithstanding the Geneva Accords of 1954 (and the Geneva Accords of 1962) regarding the neutrality of Laos, North Vietnam had no intention of honoring Laotian neutrality or withdrawing its troops from Laos. North Vietnam's primary objective was to subjugate the government of South Vietnam and to create a unified Socialist Republic of Vietnam. North Vietnam needed control of the eastern portion of the Laotian

panhandle to establish a logistics corridor by which it could transport troops and war material to supply Viet Cong guerrillas and NVA forces in South Vietnam. This corridor would be called the Ho Chi Minh Trail (HCMT), and it began to take shape when the NVA captured the critical town of Tchepone in December 1958, which would become its center point. (See map below).

The Pathet Lao and the NVA also conducted military operations in North Laos in the vicinity of the Plaines des Jarres (PDJ). The purpose of these operations was to put continuous pressure on the Laotian government situated in the capital in Vientiane and eventually, to cause its collapse. North Vietnam's effort to subjugate South Vietnam would thus be greatly facilitated, and North Vietnam would then gain an invaluable ally in a Communist-controlled Laos. (See map on page 20).

The US was determined to prevent Laos becoming a Communist-controlled country. Laos was seen as a critical component of Eisenhower's "Domino Theory." (as espoused in his famous 7 Apr 1954 news conference). If Laos fell to Communism, then Thailand, South Vietnam, Cambodia, Burma, Malaya, and Indonesia would become even more vulnerable. Clearly, the Royal Lao government would need a great deal of military and economic assistance to protect itself from the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese Army. The Royal Lao Army (RLA) was, and would be, incapable of this task. However, there were no options other than to try to build up and train the RLA, and turn it into an effective fighting force. By 1955, the entire Laotian Defense Budget was being underwritten by the US.

In 1961, the CIA's legendary James W. "Bill" Lair proposed establishing a viable combat force in northeastern Laos, primarily composed of Hmong tribesmen. The proposal was approved and by mid-1962 vigorous training efforts were underway to develop the Hmongs into a credible force largely independent of the RLA. This force would eventually number some 30,000 troops under the command of Gen Vang Pao and its control would be vested in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

The normal conduit for US military assistance to a foreign government was the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), but the Eisenhower administration felt that employing such an entity would comprise a violation of the Geneva Accords. Accordingly, an organization called the "Programs Evaluation Office" (PEO) was created in December 1955, which would be a de facto MAAG (See "Laos: The Secret War, Part 2: Prelude to US Involvement," *Air Commando Journal* Vol 3, Issue 3), and surreptitiously provide equipment and training to the RLA through the legitimate French military training mission, an entity still allowed under the 1954 Geneva Accords. On 19 Apr 1961, President Kennedy directed the PEO to operate openly as a MAAG, feeling that the need to operate covertly had passed.

In January 1959, the PEO, through the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Command (CINCPAC), requested a series of 12 US Army Special Forces Mobile Training Teams (MTTs), to train and equip the RLA. They arrived in Laos in July 1959.

These MTTs were code-named HOTFOOT and would provide training together with, and through, the French military training mission to the RLA at four regional training centers throughout Laos. The MTTs were drawn from the US Army 77th Special Forces Group (re-designated 7th Special Forces Group, May 1960). Because of the secret nature of this training, the MTT members were all dressed in civilian clothing. French participation came to an end in February 1961 when France withdrew completely from the program.

In spite of the training received by the RLA, their combat effectiveness was still below par. By March 1961, HOTFOOT advisors were being attached to many RLA combat infantry battalions. Dr. Timothy Castle indicates in his book, *At War in the Shadow of Vietnam*:

Instances were reported of the collapse of RLA units (in combat) that had no US advisors with them, or whose advisors did not stay with the Commanding Officer through the engagement. In cases where it was reported that the advisors withdrew, they were immediately followed by the officers of the unit, after which the unit itself panicked.

As a result, CINCPAC recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) that American advisors be allowed to participate in combat operations. This recommendation was implemented. On 22 Apr 1961, two members of TEAM MOON were killed while participating in combat with the RLA against the Pathet





Lao on the PDJ. The team leader, Captain Walter Moon, was captured and eventually executed.

By now, the PEO had started operating openly as a MAAG. The HOTFOOT MTTs were renamed WHITESTAR and were involved in all aspects of training for the RLA and for the Hmong tribesmen.

Gen Vang Pao and the Hmong would soon become the principal (and virtually the only) Laotian ground fighting force in northern Laos, in the vicinity of the PDJ.

In addition to the PEO/MAAG actions to strengthen the RLA and the Hmong, the Thai government and its military, strongly encouraged and supported economically and militarily by the US, increased their efforts exponentially to improve the combat operations capability of the Laotian military. These actions were not all altruistic.

Thailand felt very threatened by the Vietnamese insurgency, as well as the others taking place in Burma and Malaya, believing that if Laos became Communist, it, too, could succumb and lose its freedom and independence. Even

if Laos were to remain neutral, it would still pose a continuing existential threat to Thailand, as the Kong Le coup in Laos of 1960 and the new government's subsequent alliance with the Pathet Lao exacerbated this potential menace. Accordingly, Thailand became a full and willing partner of the US in its war in Laos and Vietnam. Most veterans and students of the war in Southeast Asia are probably unaware of the Thai government's gargantuan efforts and contributions to prop up the minimally effective combat effectiveness of the Royal Lao Army.

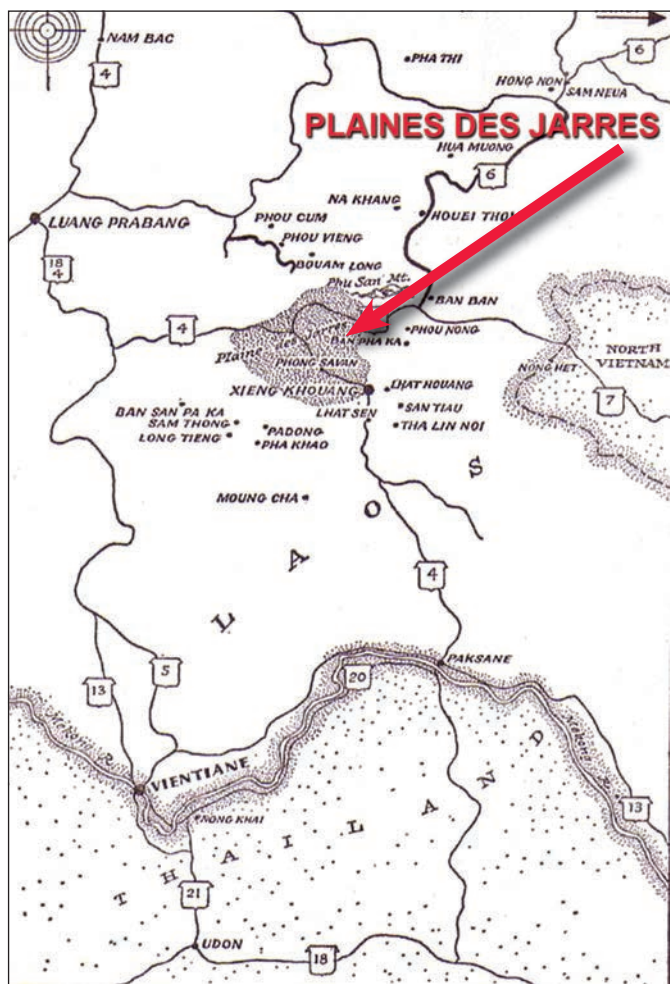
In exchange for services provided, Thailand received several billion US dollars in military and economic assistance for counterinsurgency operations, especially in northeast Thailand, and for the use of its air bases at Udorn, Ubon, Takhli, Korat, Don Muang, Nakhon Phanom, and U-Tapao. The air bases were used for air strikes against North Vietnam, the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the Laotian Panhandle, and elsewhere in Laos.

As far back as 1957, the Thai government had provided covert combat training to RLA units in Thailand, as well as officer and artillery training. Pilot training for the Royal Lao Air Force (RLAF) was also included. Eventually, this assistance would include the deployment of entire Thai military units into Laos to bolster the ineffective combat capability of the RLA and, later, reinforcements to the Hmong irregular combat units under Gen Vang Pao. Mostly operating in northeastern Laos, the General's forces' continuing combat losses and concurrent reductions in their manpower replacement base eventually began to degrade their outstanding combat capability. By January 1968, most new Hmong replacements were younger than 16 years or older than 35.

By February 1973, there were some 17,000 Thai troops fighting in Laos, organized into 27 infantry and 3 artillery battalions. Command and control for Thai forces in Laos was vested in a Thai unit at Udorn known as Headquarters 333. It had a CIA counterpart, the 4802nd Joint Liaison Detachment, headed by Bill Lair, a legendary CIA Indochina expert. These two organizations worked together as one.

The overall training effort in Thailand continued to expand and soon reached a point where the US Army established the 46th Independent Special Forces Company (Oct 1966 – Feb 1974), headquartered at Fort Narai, Lop Buri, Thailand. It had multiple training locations throughout Thailand and was heavily involved in training Thai ground forces, including Thai Border Patrol Police, as well as Laotian ground forces (both RLA and Hmong irregular units) cycled through Thailand for retraining and equipment replacement.

The 46th Independent Special Forces Company was under the dual operational control of the Deputy Chief Joint US Military Advisory Group Thailand (DEPCHIEF), as well as the CIA. In 1962, a new set of Accords was signed in Geneva agreeing to Laotian neutrality. The US MAAG in Laos, therefore, had to be shut down or it would continue to exist in violation of the Accords. Its function, however, was vital in keeping the Laotian military strong enough to keep Laos from falling under Communist control. The solution was to relocate MAAG Laos to Bangkok and give it a new name: DEPCHIEF. It would ostensibly be part of MAAG Thailand,



but would continue to function as MAAG Laos, reporting directly to CINCPAC.

According to Dr. Castle, DEPCHIEF's orders were to undertake the "... planning, programming, requisitioning, receipt, and storage in Thailand, and onward shipment to Laos" of US Military Assistance Program materials. (On 8 June 1971, DEPCHIEF relocated from Bangkok to Udon). It maintained four major warehouse facilities at the Air America facility at Udon, at a 380-acre munitions storage facility south of Udon (codenamed PEPPERGRINDER), at the port of Sattahip, and at Don Muang airport in Bangkok. The CIA maintained its own secret warehouse at Takhli RTAFB for its own covert, CIA-only missions.

If DEPCHIEF was the beginning of the pipeline, the end lay in Vientiane, the capital of Laos. Once more, to keep the myth of Laotian neutrality alive, a small office, called the Requirements Office (RO), was established within the American Embassy. RO would become an entity ostensibly within the US Agency for International Development, itself a fully accredited component of the embassy. USAID/RO would thus serve as the eyes and ears of DEPCHIEF in Laos, generating requests for military supplies, equipment, training, and funds, which would be filled by DEPCHIEF and sent onward to Laos, mostly through Thailand.

The CIA's involvement in Thailand and Laos was huge. According to Dr. Castle, as far back as 1951, the CIA's Bill Lair and the Thai National Police began a joint project to build a paramilitary force that would "... operate in small-unit patrols, parachute behind enemy lines, commit sabotage, and engage in espionage and surveillance." By 1958, these 10-man units, known as Police Aerial Reinforcement Units (PARU), were among Thailand's most effective combat forces. By 1960, they were being deployed to fight in Laos as needed alongside RLA and Hmong irregular guerrilla forces. PARU units accompanied Gen Nosavan's forces when he marched from Savannakhet to Vientiane to oust Kong Le and his army from the capital.

The CIA was involved in virtually all aspects of the Laotian government and

the Laotian military (to greater or lesser extents), most especially in the Hmong's combat operations areas. By 1961, the CIA was focused on recruiting, training, and equipping the Hmong guerrilla forces (Operation MOMENTUM), while also providing direct combat support to Gen Vang Pao's forces. This would include assigning case officers to accompany the General's forces into combat, providing him with strategic and tactical intelligence updates, and furnishing combat operations planning advice and support, to include tactical air support.

The CIA's principal field office in Laos for these activities was collocated with Gen Vang Pao's headquarters in Long Tieng, southwest of the PDJ. (During the period March-August 1970, the author was a RAVEN FAC stationed at Long Tieng and had first-hand knowledge of the activities of the CIA and Gen Vang Pao, as well as their respective staffs). The CIA also maintained important field offices in Pakse and Savannakhet. These offices, however, were focused on road watch operations along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the eastern Laotian Panhandle.

Laos was divided into five Military Regions (MR). MR I was centered on Luang Prabang and encompassed the north, northwest, and western portions of Laos; MR III was centered on Savannakhet and encompassed the upper two-thirds of the Laotian Panhandle; MR IV was centered on Pakse and encompassed the lower third of the Panhandle; MR V was centered on Vientiane and its surrounding environs.

These four Military Regions were commanded and controlled by the RLA and its General Staff through the Joint Operations Center (JOC) in Vientiane. Unfortunately, RLA combat units in these MRs were generally ineffective.

MR II, commanded and controlled by Gen Vang Pao, was different. It was centered on the secret CIA base in Long Tieng, southwest of the PDJ, and encompassed the PDJ itself, as well as the provinces of Xieng Khouang and Houaphan/Sam Neua. The General's forces were the irregular guerrilla units mostly from his Hmong tribe, and were by far the most effective and aggressive ground fighters in the entire Laotian military. They also suffered unimaginable

losses!

These combat troops were very family oriented and in order to convince these hardy tribesmen to join the fight against the Pathet Lao/NVA, promises had to be made that their families would not suffer hunger and other deprivations. Rice and other types of food and military supplies thus had to be provided to the Hmong villages surrounding the PDJ, located for the most part in areas with no roads or surface transportation infrastructure. What few roads were available would become impassable during the rainy season. Accordingly, an aerial supply line was established that could fulfill these logistics requirements, a supply effort later known as Air America.



Air America's role in Laos was ubiquitous, covert, and overt as well. Its main base was at Udon RTAFB. From there, virtually all missions into Laos would be dispatched. It was the air arm of the CIA and flew every type of mission conceivable within a combat zone. It flew resupply missions in support of the RLA, RLAF and Gen Vang Pao's guerrillas. Its missions also supported USAID activities, parachuting food and supplies to beleaguered Hmong villages, mostly in MR II. Whenever there were suitable landing strips (or LIMA SITES, as they would eventually be called), Air America would land and deliver supplies, equipment, and personnel, to include combat troops (RLA, Hmong, and Thai). On many occasions, it rescued US aircrews who had been forced down in Laos and provided resupply missions to USAF secret radio navigation sites

in-country. Air America flew visual and photo reconnaissance missions in hazardous areas, to include the Ho Chi Minh Trail. On a few occasions, its pilots also flew AT-28 attack missions against Pathet Lao/NVA targets, mostly while participating in combat search and rescue missions.

Arguably, the most hazardous of all Air America missions was the insertion and extraction of CIA road watch teams in vicinity of the Ho Chi Minh Trail (HCMT), from the Mu Gia Pass on the Laos-North Vietnam border, southward to the Cambodian border. The teams'



Gen Vang Pao (Photo by John Dominis / Time Life Pictures / Getty Images)

mission was intelligence gathering, primarily on movements of NVA troops, equipment, and supplies emanating from North Vietnam to South Vietnam.

There was some overlap between the CIA road watch teams and the Recon Teams of MACVSOG. At any one time, the CIA had 80-100 road watch teams deployed on the HCMT as well as in North Vietnam, according to Maj Gen Richard Secord (Ret), who at the time was detailed to duty with the CIA at Udorn as Director of Air Operations for Laos. His duties in this regard included tasking Air America for special missions and maintaining liaison with the US Air

Force.

Air America's fleet included helicopters and airplanes. The most common airplanes were C-130s on loan from USAF, C-123Ks, C-7s, Turbo Porters, Volpars (turboprop tricycle version of Beech 18/USAF C-45), Twin Otters, U-10 Helio Couriers, C-47s, and C-46s. The most common helicopters were Bell 205/UH-1Es, and UH-34Ds.

Clearly, landing strips would be necessary throughout Laos to support this massive airlift effort. A joint program involving the CIA, Air America, and the US Air Force was established to survey and construct these landing strips -- the so-called LIMA SITES. Some 200 of these Lima Sites would eventually be constructed by 1970, as close as possible to villages which needed Air America resupply. Most of these were constructed of dirt and/or grass, were approximately 1000 feet in length, and could accommodate both Short Takeoff and Landing airplanes (e.g., U-10, Turbo Porter) and helicopters. USAF Search and Rescue helicopters would also employ these sites, from which they could stand ground alert and launch missions to recover downed airmen in Laos and North Vietnam. Some Lima Sites had a hard surface and were a few thousand feet in length, such as Lima Site (LS) 20-A, which was the designation for Long Tieng. Then-Major Harry C. "Heinie" Aderholt was the key USAF officer involved in getting this program underway.

In order to make up for the RLA's lack of combat capability, it became obvious that some sort of equalizer had to be provided to the Royal Lao Government to make up for this shortfall. By 1970, the RLAF, with massive assistance from the US, had thus expanded its fleet to include AT-28s, C-47s, AC-47s, and various helicopters. A critical adjunct to augment this fleet of aircraft was the training of pilots.

On 6 Dec 1963, CINCPAC requested Washington to provide a contingent of T-28 instructor pilots from the 1st Air Commando Wing at Hurlburt Field, Florida. Accordingly, 38 officers and enlisted personnel, led by Major Barney Cochran, arrived at Udorn in mid-March 1964, and became

the cadre of Det. 6, 1st Air Commando Wing, known as WATERPUMP. The unit was re-designated as Det. 1, 56th Special Operations Wing, in Oct 1967. Over the next several years, they would provide basic and advanced tactical flight training to the RLAF, to Thai pilots, and eventually even to Hmong officers from Gen Vang Pao's irregular forces. Aircraft maintenance training was also provided to the RLAF by WATERPUMP maintenance personnel, and the Air America maintenance facility at Udorn also provided aircraft maintenance and training to WATERPUMP as-required.

To identify the various types of pilots in WATERPUMP, the USAF and Air America pilots were designated as the "A" Team, the Thai pilots as the "B" Team, and the Lao pilots as the "C" Team. Not only did WATERPUMP provide a combat training capability to the RLAF, it was also a combat-ready asset that could be used to provide interdiction and close air support when needed to the RLA and to the Hmong.

The war in Laos was under the strict control of the US Ambassador. On 29 May 1961, President Kennedy sent a letter to the ambassadors in all US diplomatic missions advising them that they were in charge of all elements within the embassy, to include the State Department and representatives of all other US agencies. His letter further indicated that this authority did not include control of US military personnel and activities when there was a US area military commander. Because of the continuing myth of Laotian neutrality, there was no US area military commander for Laos. As a result, the US Ambassador to Laos became the de facto chief of all US military activities and personnel within Laos! In this regard, the CIA had another role in Laos, to act as the principal military advisor to the Ambassador. The air attache became the Ambassador's advisor on the effective and efficient application of airpower within Laos.

Under the ambassador's control was the embassy staff, the Agency for International Development (AID), the CIA, the air attaches, the Army attaches, other US government agency representatives, and Project 404/



Anti-communist Hmong guerrilla troops in 1961. (Photo courtesy of Air America Archives - Kenneth Conboy, War in Laos 1954-1975, Squadron/Signal Publications 1994)

PALACE DOG personnel. These latter individuals were assigned to DEPCHEIF in Bangkok, but were on temporary duty in Laos. Some of the Project 404 personnel worked out of the embassy and others were in the field at the various MR headquarters, providing technical assistance and support to the RLA and RLAF. Their fields of expertise included command and control, intelligence, communications, aircraft maintenance and munitions, and operations coordination. They also evaluated the condition and maintenance of US-supplied equipment.

The combat training and logistics support provided by the US and Thai governments to the RLA, RLAF, and the Hmong guerrilla forces evolved and expanded as it became patently clear that the RLA would be no match for the Pathet Lao/NVA combat units. Unfortunately, time proved this perception to be true. The brunt of the ground combat in north Laos would be borne by Gen Vang Pao and the Hmong guerrilla forces, heavily reinforced by Thai infantry and artillery units. USAF fighters and bombers, as well as Air America and the RLAF, would play a huge role in supporting Gen Vang Pao. However, the largest USAF effort would reside in conducting the air interdiction campaigns on the Ho Chi Minh Trail.



About the Author: Ramon E. "Ray" de Arrigunaga retired from the Air Force as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1982 as a Command Pilot after 20 years of service. In 1981, he was selected for promotion

to Colonel, but chose to retire instead. His flying career was mostly in special operations aircraft (C-47, B-26K/A-26A, U-10, OV-10, O1-E, O-2A). He has 707 hours combat flying time in Southeast Asia, where he flew the OV-10 in support of the US Army 1st Infantry Division in South Vietnam, and as an O-1E "Raven" FAC in North Laos. He was awarded the Silver Star, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, and 11 Air Medals. After retirement, he was a government executive for 19 years. In 1992, he was awarded the Doctorate in Public Administration. In 2002, he became a member of the Political Science Department Faculty (full-time in 2004) at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, FL, where he taught courses in counterinsurgency and guerrilla warfare, terrorism and international relations.

References and Bibliography

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Space does not permit the inclusion of a bibliography in this article. However, for those interested in the complete bibliography, please contact the author at: rdearrig@bellsouth.net, and a comprehensive bibliography will be provided.

New British Army unit
'Brigade 77' to use
Facebook and Twitter in
psychological warfare



Army Setting up New Force Modeled on Chindits of Burma

By Kim Sengupta



The British military is setting up a specialist force modeled on the Chindits, the commandos who gained renown through their daring missions behind enemy lines in Burma during the Second World War.

They will specialize in “non-lethal” forms of psychological warfare, using social media including Facebook and Twitter to “fight in the information age.”

The Chief of the Army, General Sir Nick Carter, believes that the radical new plan is essential to face the “asymmetric” battlefields of the 21st century, where tactics and strategies differ significantly between enemies, such as with Isis. Key lessons, he says, can be learned from the campaign carried out against the Japanese by Allied troops using unconventional tactics seven decades ago.

The 2,000-strong brigade will have the same number, 77, and the same emblem – of a Chindit, a mythical Burmese beast – as the one under Brigadier Orde Wingate. But, as well as being ready for combat, the troops will be armed with modern skill sets including being adept in social media and new technology.

One of the key reasons behind the successful operations of the Chindits was the support they received from the local population against the Japanese forces. General Carter believes the winning of “hearts and minds” has never been more important.

Senior officers hold that a range of current conflicts, from Iraq to Ukraine, have shown how the information war is as vital as the ones fought with weapons. The brigade, which will be formally unveiled in April with headquarters at Hermitage, near Newbury in Berkshire, will be responsible for all “non-lethal deployment” of the UK military abroad.

The troops are supposed to deliver “means of shaping behavior through the use of dynamic narratives” with teams focusing on psychological operations and interaction with the media. They will also take the lead in providing reconstruction and humanitarian assistance and help with strengthening civic society and local security forces.

The make-up of the brigade also reveals the shrinking size of the Army, with no less than 42 per cent of the recruits coming from the reserves. Increasing numbers of them are replacing regular troops amid cutbacks.

But General Carter insisted the large contingent of part-time soldiers is actually a major advantage. “The brigade consists of more than just traditional capabilities. It is an organization that sits at the heart of trying to operate ‘smarter’. It comprises a blend of regular troops from all three services as well as reserves and civilians. It will be seeking to draw the very best talent from the regulars and reserve as well as finding new ways of allowing civilians with bespoke skills to serve alongside their military counterparts.”

“The brigade,” said the Ministry of Defense, “has been formed to respond to ever changing character of modern conflict and to be able to compete with agile and complex adversaries.” The Chindits “fought in such difficult conditions adopting a new type of warfare, using a mixture of original creative thinkers who integrated with local indigenous forces to multiply effects, the exact requirement for the modern age.”

The 77th Infantry Brigade of the Indian army was formed in 1942 from British, Indian and Burmese troops commanded by Wingate, who had led an irregular force of Sudanese and Ethiopians against the Italians in Africa. The name Chindits, after those of statues of animal spirits guarding Buddhist temples, was suggested by Captain Aung Thin of the Burmese army.

“Long-range penetration units” were sent to Burma to sabotage Japanese supply and communications lines. The operations received widespread publicity but there was also criticism, some of it directed personally at Wingate who was accused of producing self-aggrandizing reports and unfairly blaming other officers. There was also deep suspicion among the military hierarchy to the concept of elite specialist forces, with some senior officers charging that they syphon off the best troops and create divisions within the force.

Field Marshal William Slim pronounced at the time: “Anything, whatever the short cuts to victory it may promise, which weakens the army spirit is dangerous.” He also held that while “the Chindits gave a splendid example of courage and

hardihood,” their achievements were inadequate returns for the resources bestowed on them.

Winston Churchill, however, regarded the force as highly valuable, not least for the way the accounts of its exploits boosted morale during some of the darkest days of the war. He took Wingate to conferences across the Atlantic, and the Americans were sufficiently impressed by the brigadier’s presentations to launch their own irregular forces in the Far East.

The Chindits: Guerrilla force

At a time during the Second World War when the Japanese seemed unbeatable, the Chindits – an elite British Army unit which resorted to guerrilla warfare – was formed to give the enemy a bloody nose.

They were the idea of the unconventional army officer, Lt Col – later Brigadier– Orde Wingate, who believed Long Range Penetration (LRP) groups operating behind enemy lines could inflict severe damage on the Japanese.

In February 1943 the Chindits, taking their name from a mythical Burmese half-lion half-eagle beast, launched their first operation, crossing the River Chindwin and into enemy territory in Burma.

Wingate’s men were, crucially, supplied by air which made them independent of ground based supply lines. Air drops included food for the mules which carried the equipment.

The innovation worked: the Japanese spent crucial days directing troops to find and cut the non-existent land-based supply lines before realizing their mistake.

In its first operation, the Chindits split up into several columns to attack and disrupt Japanese positions. Bridges were blown, rail lines were cut and military positions were attacked before a retreat was ordered in the face of massive Japanese force.

Of the 3,200 men who set out, only 2,182 came back after walking up to 1,500 miles through enemy territory. Only 600 were fit enough to go back into active service.

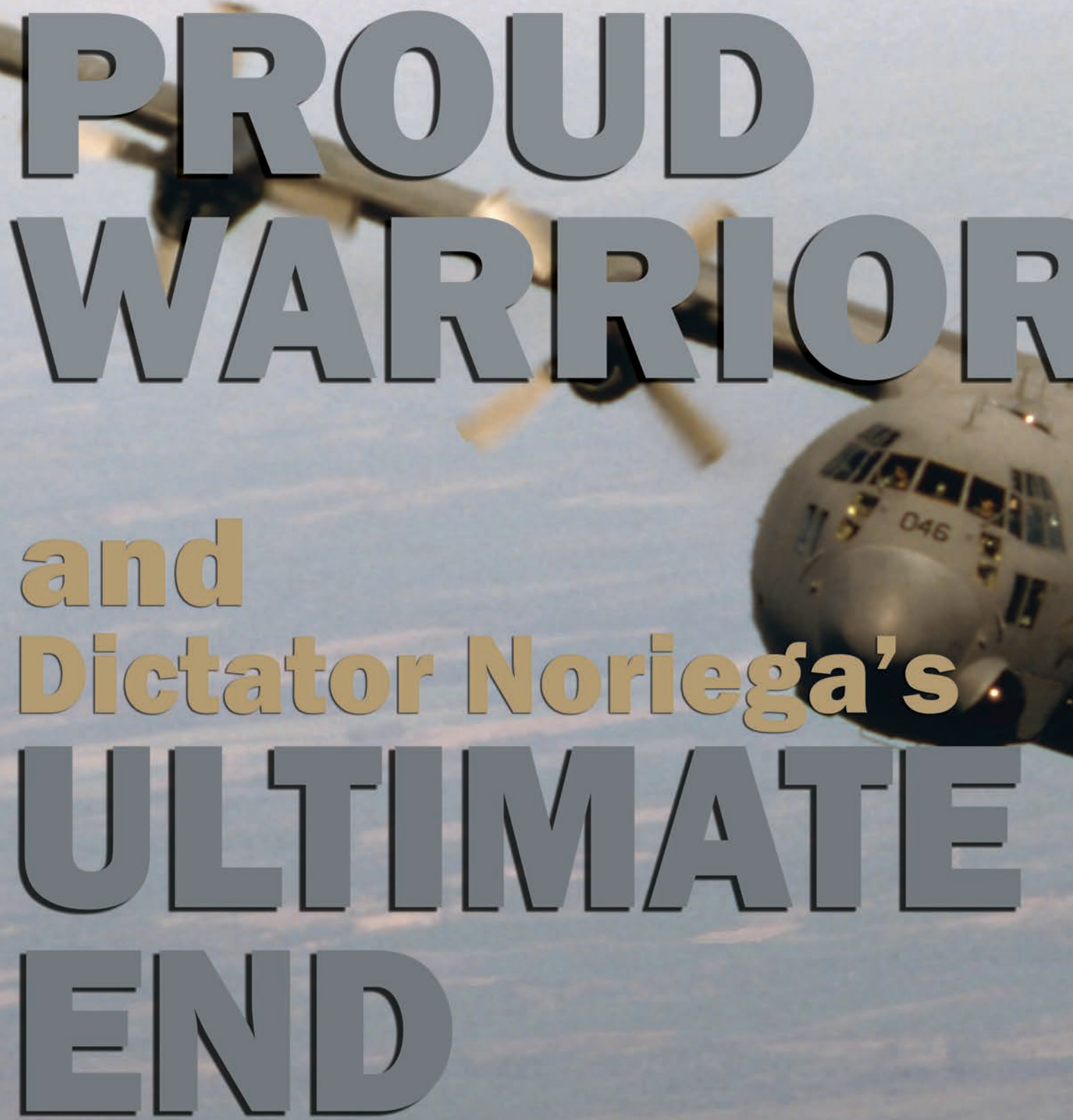
Strategically the merits of the Chindits are still debated. They didn’t hold any ground and the fright they gave the Japanese prompted later attacks intended to destroy the British hold on India.

However, as a morale booster, the Chindits were invaluable. They proved the British, who had suffered a succession of defeats in the east in 1942, were capable of matching the supposedly superhuman Japanese soldiers in the jungle.

Winston Churchill loved their aggressive spirit and authorized a second and much bigger assault in 1944 which repeated the feats of derring-do, though failed to live up to Wingate’s hopes. Wingate, who dreamt up the idea of a guerrilla force after leading ‘Gideon’s Force’ on the Ethiopian-Sudanese border, died in 1944 in a plane crash.



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A military helicopter, likely a Black Hawk, is shown in flight against a cloudy sky. The helicopter is positioned on the right side of the frame, with its rotor blades blurred from motion. The tail section of the helicopter is visible, featuring the number '046'. The overall tone of the image is dramatic and military-themed.

PROUD WARRIOR and Dictator Noriega's ULTIMATE END

By Clay T. McCutchan, Maj Gen, USAF (Ret)



711 SOS, AC-130A #046 Spectre Gunship "Proud Warrior"
above Eglin Range after JUST CAUSE. (Photo by Randy Jolly)

AFSOF Reservists and Operation JUST CAUSE

Just before Christmas Eve, 1989, Air Force active duty, Reserve, and National Guard special operators flew in the darkness above the Panama Canal Zone and played a major role in one of the most successful American military conflicts. The dagger of the Air Force Quiet Professionals was felt in all facets of Operation JUST CAUSE as they deposed the

Panama, December 1989

tyrannical regime of Manuel Noriega and devastated his Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF). All of the missions were flown under threat of small arms fire, anti-aircraft artillery, and the possibility of surface-to-air missiles. There was also great danger in the crowded, active, and blacked out operating conditions in the air and on the ground at Howard AFB, Panama.

Spectre, Talon, Shadow, Pave Low, Pave Hawk, Volant Solo (now Commando Solo), Special Tactics, and Air Commando support teams all participated. Far from family and home, they successfully accomplished the mission, sweated in the wet heat of Panama, and ate MREs next to a chem-light Christmas tree. They also developed friendships with the local, always hungry Couteau-mondie small animals. JUST CAUSE was the most significant military operation for Air Force Special Operations Forces since Operation URGENT FURY over Grenada in 1983.

The Air Force Reserve's 919th Special Operations Group (SOG), and the 711th SOS based at Duke Field, Florida, supported the operation. Throughout the 1970-80s, the 919th had been involved in Panama Canal security and joint operational training. The Duke Field Air Commandos had also operated throughout Honduras, Peru, and Columbia with security and joint training, foreign internal defense, and counter drug missions.

Spending time at Howard AFB, Panama, during peace time, the Reservists enjoyed realistic training and the Mongolian BBQ at the Officer's Club, movies in the base theater, athletics on the base playing fields, and the nicety of only one job for a change. The Duke Field gunships of the 711th SOS were participating in what had become a reserve volunteer Christmas rotation so that the heavily tasked active duty 16th SOS gunships and crews could return to Hurlburt for the holidays. The Reservists gave up Christmas with their families so that they could pull their "summer camp" training in Panama when it was most needed.

Consequently, the 711th SOS crews and support package at Howard AFB were swept up "Cinderella-like" in the invasion. Because they had not been part of the pre-mission planning and training at Hurlburt Field during the previous six months, mission planners directed them to provide backup support to the overall mission by providing airfield defense of Howard AFB, and on-call fire support elsewhere when needed. As the operation unfolded, though, the Reservists quickly and actively participated in all parts of the gunship employment over Panama. The 711th SOS crews were the first Air Force



The 919 SOG, 711 SOS aircrew of AC-130A #046, "Proud Warrior" immediately after landing on 20 Dec 1989 after logging 5.3 hours of combat. Standing: (L to R) MSgt Tom Grimes, TSgt James Dombrosky, Capt Adrian Wells, TSgt Steven Gardinier, TSgt Larry Johnson, TSgt Billy Marcus, SSgt Jeffrey Choplin, Maj Michael Milton, TSgt Richard Kelly, Capt Bruce Fernald. Kneeling: MSgt Walter Watley Sr., Maj James Strength, TSgt Jerry Allen, and Maj Clay McCutchan. (Photo courtesy of author)



The 919 SOG, 711 SOS aircrew of AC-130A #509 "Ultimate End." Standing: (L to R) 1Lt Tim Sokolowski, Capt Jon Wilson, Capt James Wood, A1C Kenneth Moerscher, MSgt Larry Windsor, TSgt Daniel Mosley. Kneeling: TSgt Robert Fortenberry, MSgt James Lewich, MSgt Bruce Jogensen, SSgt Brian LaFlamme, SSgt Gregory Fullerton, Capt Mike Wilson, and SSgt Dale Williams. (Photo courtesy of author)

Reservists without a presidential call-up to enter direct combat and be fired on and return fire, and the first Panama based gunships to launch on the night of the attack.

The mission commander for the Duke Field Reservists was Lt Col Ronald E. Edinger, a reserve gunship navigator and resident of Niceville, FL, who, as a civilian, worked as a civil service engineer at Eglin AFB, FL. Lt Col Edinger was recognized for his tireless, intense, positive leadership example despite the exhausting stress of combat operations. Edinger was ably supported by CMSgt Roger A. Hearin, the ranking supervisor for the deployed 919th maintenance organization and also a full time Air Reserve Technician in that unit. MSgt Hearin, a resident of Crestview, FL, provided outstanding leadership for his 27 maintenance troops as they kept their two, 35 year old AC-130A gunships flying without an abort. They did it from an alert posture, without enough personnel, and under adverse conditions, including the threat of sniper and mortar fire.

Lt Col Edinger's two aircrews were experienced in the region because they had already deployed on previous annual training deployments to Honduras, Colombia, Peru, and Panama. Most had varied backgrounds in the USAF and civilian community that enhanced their service with the 919th

SOG. Several of the reservists were also combat veterans of the war in Southeast Asia.

Capt Mike Wilson commanded the crew of Aircraft #509, "Ultimate End." He was a resident of Navarre, FL. As a civilian, he flew for Delta Airlines and was one of the most experienced gunship pilots in the operation. He had grown up in Panama and was fluent in Spanish. While on active duty he had been stationed in Panama, flying O-2 Forward Air Control aircraft. He knew Panama inside and out. Capt Wilson had also spent seven years at Hurlburt, Field in the 16th SOS flying active duty AC-130H model gunships and now was a fully qualified AC-130A aircraft commander.

Wilson's crew and "Ultimate End" provided outstanding service, supporting the attack on Patitilla Airfield and on Fort Cimarron. Besides dropping flares for attacking Air Force fighters, they destroyed enemy positions in the barracks and nearby PDF vehicles. Throughout the week, they routinely provided sensor and communications support for ground and air assets and oversight coverage for PDF surrenders. They also provided escorts for Army convoys, flew armed reconnaissance, covered helicopter assaults, and conducted search and rescue missions. Wilson's crew also provided many hours of orbits over the Papal Nuncio while the PDF leader



TSgt Jerry Allen, Illuminator Operator of AC-130A #046 "Proud Warrior" in position on the plane's ramp where he spent his combat hours in flight. (Photo courtesy of author)



Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney congratulates Maj Clay McCutchan and Capt Mike Wilson, 919 SOG, 711 SOS AC-130A aircraft commanders during JUST CAUSE. (Photo courtesy of author)



Former dictator Manuel Noriega aboard an 8 SOS Combat Talon 1 just before flight to US and justice. (Photo courtesy of author)

Noriega hid inside.

Maj Clay T. McCutchan commanded the crew of aircraft #046, "Proud Warrior." He was a resident of Harold, FL, and worked in civil service at Eglin as an historian for the 33rd Tactical Fighter Wing. McCutchan had flown the AC-130A gunships with the 711th SOS for 13 years and also had multiple deployments to Panama and Central/South America since 1979.

In JUST CAUSE, "Proud Warrior" provided the last pre-strike reconnaissance of the Commandancia, Toboga Island, and Gamboa Prison prior to the initiation of the attack. It was also the first gunship to launch when the main attack was initiated. They provided close-air support for troops in contact, conducted search and rescue, armed escort, interdiction missions, and provided oversight coverage of PDF unit surrender ceremonies. "Proud Warrior" escorted elements of the 82nd Airborne to the Marriott Hotel to rescue 29 Americans before the civilians could be taken as hostages. During this escort they destroyed enemy positions within 100 feet of the American paratroopers. When the gunship crews questioned a fire order on the Fort Amador Causeway, their action ended up saving the lives of about 30 Americans.

The reserve gunships continued multiple missions past the initial days of combat. After the first week of combat, many of the Reservists were rotated back home and replaced by fellow Reservists who in turn, flew many of the same type missions. Despite the Christmas season, there was no shortage of volunteers in the 919th.

During that operation, an 8th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) MC-130E Combat Talon crew earned the William H. Tunner Award as the most outstanding airlift crew of the year, and a 16th SOS AC-130H Spectre crew earned the Clarence Mackay Trophy for the "most meritorious flight of the year."

One of the 16th SOS' mission planners, Capt Robert Gabreski received the James Jabara Award for outstanding airmanship. Additionally the maintenance personnel of the Hurlburt based 1st Special Operations Wing earned the Daedalian Award, partially attributed to their accomplishments in Panama. A Reserve crew earned the President's Award and several members of the two Reserve crews received Distinguished Flying Crosses, Air Medals, and Bronze Stars for their actions. JUST CAUSE also proved to be one of the most intense AC-130 Spectre conflicts of all time with seven active and two reserve gunships airborne at one time in the tightly constricted airspace over Panama.



About the Author: Clay T. McCutchan, Maj Gen, USAF (Ret), grew up in Fort Walton Beach Florida and has lived on his private airport since 1979 in Harold, Florida. He spent 37.5 years in the USAF active duty and reserve. During this time he flew at Duke Field in the AC-130 Spectre and MC-130P Shadow. Later he served as a reservist at the Historical Research Agency and the Air War College at Maxwell AFB, AL. He was recalled to active duty for Iraqi Freedom and ended up serving at Shaw AFB, SC as the Provisional Commander of 9th Air Force. He also served as the senior reservist for 18th AF at Scott AFB, IL and HQ AFSOC, Hurlburt Fld, FL. On the civil side, he flew as a commercial spray pilot and taught high school in NW Florida for five years. He then served in USAF civil service as an historian for 31 years at Eglin AFB and Hurlburt Field.

JUST CAUSE

An aerial night photograph of Panama City, Panama, showing the city lights and a large plume of smoke rising from the urban area, likely from the attack on the Bridge of Americas and Howard AFB.

AFTER THE ADRENALINE RUSH

By Al Greenup, Col, USAF (Ret)

Panama City burning after the first night's attack. The Bridge of Americas and Howard AFB are in the background. (Photo courtesy of author)

We had deployed to Howard AFB in Panama many times over the years prior to Operation Just Cause. The previous couple of years, we were principally charged with providing a reaction capability for the US military in Panama generally and specifically for US Marines guarding and defending the fuel tank farm just North of Howard. I was briefed that infiltration and attacks on that facility were the graduation exercise for the Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF) commando group. Supposedly, the exercise was for these groups to infiltrate this area, do some indiscriminate shooting, and break contact before US forces could effectively react to the attack. This was the reason we had two AC-130As and crews from the 919th Special Operations Wing on station at Howard during the outbreak of hostilities on 20 December 1989.

It is certain the PDF knew exactly what those aircraft were there to do and were hardly alarmed by their presence when the outbreak of hostilities began. More importantly, our aircrews were very familiar with the Howard AFB and the Panama Isthmus. As the Panamanian situation deteriorated our aircrews fully understood the possible consequences of

the developing volatile conditions. Although the 919th SOW Christmas deployment was not included in the original Just Cause plan, they were inserted into the operational plan very early once hostilities began. Their participation turned out to be instrumental and in some cases crucial to the success of the mission.

By the time I arrived at Howard on 23 December, the shooting activity had pretty much ended for the AC-130s. I call this the post-adrenalin phase. However, there was plenty of work for the AC-130s to do using the airplane's sensors to assist US forces on the ground. The aircraft overhead also provided a reminder to remaining PDF units of what might happen if they attacked US forces. What remained was finding Noriega, apprehending some of his cronies, and neutralizing the potential residual resistance in some of the outlying areas. It was still serious business and some of those missions were very exciting and definitely interesting.

Although there was minimal threat to the aircraft and aircrews, there remained considerable risk to the ground forces conducting those operations. Interestingly, although any serious



JUST CAUSE mobile hospital on north end of flight line on Howard AFB, Panama Dec 1989. (Photo courtesy of author)

threat to aircraft had been neutralized, flying time was counted as combat until sometime after 27 December.

Among the hazards that required heightened awareness by the gunship crews was the number of aircraft in the air, many of them flying lights-out at night, and the lack of air traffic control services. Howard AFB only had one runway and the tower controllers were busy with all the landing traffic in the pattern. Additionally, the ramp at Howard AFB was filled to capacity. The

gunships were using a taxiway on the west side of the field to park. Crews had to use increased awareness during taxi operations about hitting other aircraft or taxiing off the hard surface onto the soft ground around Howard AFB.

Our crew flew two sorties on 24 December for a total of 9.7 flying hours. The first was a very interesting mission involving the “Ma Bell” program developed by a Special Forces officer. We were dispatched from Howard AFB to western Panama very early in

the morning and told to go to a specific airfield and await instructions. Arriving at the deserted airfield in the dark, we watched as the sky began to show an early morning glow. Eventually a Blackhawk helicopter arrived and made contact with us. Soon after, we reported a fast moving vehicle approaching from the north.

The Blackhawk pilot told us “that’s my contact” and to keep an eye out for any other activity. After about 30 minutes the Blackhawk pilot told us to establish an orbit over specific coordinates. By now the morning was in full bloom and with great visibility we rolled into an orbit over an obvious military garrison/cuartel in the middle of a town.

I don’t think we had completed one orbit before the quad area was filled with troops who immediately used a flag pole to raise the white flag.

Years later at a capabilities briefing for newly appointed ambassadors at Fort Bragg, NC, I used this story to illustrate the gunship’s ability to influence behaviour without firing a shot. Gen Wayne Downing, then commander of USSOCOM, held back after the



711 SOS crew members during JUST CAUSE, Capt Joe Norris, Maj Al Greenup, Maj Don Dearde, Capt Adrian Wells, and (kneeling) Maj Clay McCutchan. (Photo courtesy of Clay McCutchan, Maj Gen, USAF (Ret))

ambassadors had moved on to the next exhibit to explain the “Ma Bell” program. When the PDF stationed themselves inside towns, American Special Forces would use the public telephone system (there were no cell phones in 1989) to call the PDF garrison commander. With an AC-130 orbiting overhead, the garrison commander would be invited to surrender. If the commander refused, the gunship would fire a few rounds into the jungle or a harmless clearing, near enough for the commander and his troops to see. In nearly every case, the PDF commander accepted the invitation to surrender.

After a quick refueling and grabbing a case of MREs, we were off for our second mission of the day. Although we supported both conventional forces and special operations forces, it was very easy to distinguish between the conventional and special ops operations missions. One of those differences was how they used helicopters.

On this particular mission, we were briefed to shoot any vehicles leaving town. As we orbited overhead and watched the assaulters go through the town, I saw a vehicle using the main highway out of town departing at a high rate of speed. When we caught up with the vehicle, I was disappointed to discover it was an AH-6 Little Bird.

Initially, it looked like an automobile was in a big hurry to get out of town and for a minute I was certain we were chasing a high value target. When we discovered the target was a Little Bird, the rest of the crew had a big laugh at



Looking through the gunsight of an AC-130A at the Vatican Embassy on 25 December 1989. (Photo courtesy of author)

my exuberance. No doubt, the helicopter was probably given the same rules of engagement we had been given and was looking for the same target.

When we checked in with Operations 25 December, we were told Noriega had taken refuge in the Vatican Nuncio in downtown Panama City. Our mission that day was to provide aerial surveillance over the Nuncio. The first sortie lasted 4.3 hours. After a quick fuel stop and another box of MREs, we were off for the second sortie. By the time we landed 4.5 hours later, it seemed like we had spent the week circling over the Nuncio. And, we had missed the Christmas dinner the Ranger Battalion cooks had prepared.

We continued to fly missions until December 29th, but by then the operational atmosphere was noticeably

less frenzied. After the 29th, our flying activities ceased and Howard AFB began to return to some semblance of normalcy. We were able to go to the commissary to get some food and evenings were spent at the base theatre which we shared with the Rangers. On one occasion before the start of a movie, the Rangers rose in unison to serenade a young lady in the audience. It was enjoyable to watch the camaraderie of the young Rangers who just made the first combat jump since the Vietnam war.

We returned to Duke Field on 7 Jan 1990, not realizing that in 10 short months we would deploy once again, but this time it would be to Middle East for Operation DESERT STORM. Just Cause turned out to be excellent preparation for our next adventure.



711 SOS Maj Al Greenup and crew on alert at Howard AFB. (Photo courtesy of author)

About the Author: Al Greenup, Col, USAF (Ret) served 33 years of military service of which 27 years were in USAF SOF. He served as an Army Green Beret in the South East Asia War with Project Delta, 5th Special Forces Group. After Army service, he joined the Air Force Reserve at Duke Field, Florida and served as an instructor pilot, mission commander, planner, senior manager, and leader with the 711 SOS and 919 SOW. He completed his long and distinguished military service as a senior Individual Mobilization Augmentee at HQ AFSOC. Greenup then served as a civilian US Government contract pilot. He was inducted into the Air Commando Hall of Fame in October 2014.

Highlights of PROJECT HONEY BADGER

By Col (Ret) Roland D Guidry



I was fortunate enough to be involved in all three phases of the resurgence of special operations capability resulting from the Iran Hostage Crisis: 1) Operation EAGLE CLAW, the Iran hostage rescue mission (Editor's note: See Vol 1, Issue 3, of ACJ for Col Guidry's article on Operation Eagle Claw); 2) Project Honey Badger, the preparations for a second attempt to rescue the hostages in Iran, and 3) the establishment of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC).

Night one of the two-night Operation Eagle Claw mission was conducted on 24 Apr 1980, and ended in tragedy at the Desert One staging base in the Iranian desert. After we buried our dead, testified before the US House and Senate Armed Services Committees, helped write the after-action report, and demonstrated the new tactics and procedures we had learned during Eagle Claw preparations to the Holloway commission, we were still faced with hostages being detained by the Iranians. But this time a possible second rescue attempt was complicated by the constant movement of the hostages within Iran. The luxury of all the hostages being held in only two locations – the Embassy main building and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – had been eliminated.

There was still a need to proceed with preparations for a second rescue attempt though. Between the period May and December of 1980, when JSOC was declared operational and ready to assume the mission, Project Honey Badger continued to refine the tactics and procedures and train the task force.

To prepare for the second rescue attempt, the same headquarters and joint task force structure was retained, but with significant staff changes. The headquarters and focal point was still the Pentagon office of JCS Special Operations Division. US Army Maj General James Vaught was retained as the joint task force commander, but his new deputy commander and Air Force Component Commander was US Air Force Maj Gen Richard V. Secord. The chief US Air Force planner was Col Bob Dutton, who was the one who picked the name "Honey Badger." Every asset that could be adapted for use in

a special operations rescue mission was now made available to the joint task force, including additional Military Airlift Command assets, such as C-5s, and US Army helicopters. Countless options were developed during the seven months of Honey Badger. A complete description of all aspects of Honey Badger is beyond the scope of this article. Therefore, only a brief summary of the operation and the description of two key aviation-related capabilities developed will be described.

Members of the task force, along with their aircraft and support personnel, deployed to Condrion Army Airfield in the White Sands Missile Range during the summer of 1980. The purpose was to ramp up joint training which had been lacking prior to this time. A repeating cycle of four days was used as follows. On Day 1, the target and mission objectives were given to the planners from which to design a military option to rescue the hostages. On Day 2, the different segments of the mission force would conduct unilateral and sometimes multi-lateral training to develop and perfect the tactics needed to accomplish the military option. On Day 3, a joint exercise was conducted and debriefed. Day 4 was dedicated to servicing the aircraft and other weapons systems and correcting problems encountered during the joint exercise. This 4-day pattern was repeated over and over, and advanced the concept of joint training to levels not seen before.

The new tactics, procedures, and equipment developed during Honey Badger could only have been accomplished in the climate of crisis response to the continuing hostage situation. In essence, we had carte blanche, to develop new tactics, procedures, and equipment to achieve a difficult mission objective. It cannot be overemphasized that the JCS' direction to the Services to cooperate fully in making assets available to Honey Badger was key in rapidly expanding special operations capabilities.

There were only eight Pave Low helicopters in the USAF Air Rescue Service at that point. Even after transferring those Pave Lows to Air Force Special Operations, there was

not enough vertical lift capacity to meet all the requirements. During the period that USAF HH-53s were being modified to MH-53 Pave Lows, the void was filled in part by US Army helicopters from Fort Campbell. The US Army created a new unit named Task Force 160, the predecessor of today's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne), also known as the Night Stalkers. Its primary aircraft were OH-6 "Little Birds," UH-60 Blackhawks, and CH-47 Chinooks.

The number of available stateside MC-130 aircraft at that time numbered between four and six, far too few to accommodate the buildup of special operations. The use of EC-130 Airborne Battle Command Control and Communication (ABCCC) aircraft, with the communications capsule removed to free-up cargo space (as was done for Eagle Claw C-130s) was only a stop-gap solution. Honey Badger also resulted in Military Airlift Command's Special Operations Low Level (SOLL) program, where strategic airlift crews were flown by aircrews trained to land using night vision goggles (NVGs), modified aircraft landing lights, and runways illuminated only by a "box and one" portable light pattern. This is a systems of four portable lights designating the touchdown area and a single light designating the end of the useful runway.

One of the biggest benefits of Honey Badger was the preservation, improvement, and increase in the joint tactics, procedures, and equipment developed during Eagle Claw, sometimes in haste. The partial list includes the improvements in the use of NVGs for blacked-out and minimum light landings, enhanced airfield seizure tactics (e.g. reconfiguring from air-land to airdrop mode), expanded use of hatch-mounted satellite communication antennas, helicopter ground refueling, helicopter infiltration of assault forces using the fast rope technique, AC-130 enhanced tactics, minimum-electronic-emission airborne refueling for MC and AC-130s, enhanced cover-of-darkness operations for all units, increased capabilities of combat control units, proper orchestration and control of special operations missions, and other capabilities still classified to this day. But probably the most significant long term benefit of Honey Badger, was the advancement to the next level of jointness in military special operations.

Two key events during this period were instrumental in convincing the military and civilian authorities that special operations had recovered from the Desert One ordeal and was on its way to becoming the most significant military element to fight terrorism. Those events were demonstrations of new, highly technical, and fully joint capabilities.

The Holloway Commission was formed to make recommendations to JCS on what needed to be done to prevent another failure such as Eagle Claw. The members of the commission visited each of the special operations units that had participated in Eagle Claw to assess their capabilities and to get a feel for the new tactics, procedures, and equipment developed during the five and half month period between the embassy capture and Eagle Claw. Here is what the 1st Special Operations Wing staged as a demonstration of the new capabilities developed.

One of the military airfields in northwest Florida was an unattended airfield known as Holley airfield. The Holley airfield



Figure 1. Holley Airfield used in demonstration for Holloway Commission. (Courtesy of the author)

runway used for the Holloway Commission demonstration was approximately 3,500 feet in length. The commissioners were positioned near the runway at Holley and given NVGs to witness the following exercise in total darkness. All runway and approach lights at Holley were turned off. Two blacked-out MC-130s with combat controllers rigged for air drop flew over Holley at high altitude and executed a HAHO (high altitude, high opening) parachute insertion. The combat controllers, on NVGs, landed on target on the runway using their steerable chutes and "secured" the runway for subsequent landings. They did not set up the "box and one" portable lights in order to allow the MC-130s to demonstrate blacked-out landings to the commissioners. A few minutes later, the two MC-130s landed blacked-out on the short runway, 30 seconds in trail, with #1



Figure 2. Depiction of MC-130s on Holley Field runway after blackout landing. (Courtesy of the author)



Figure 3. Airfield seizure in which 4 MC-130s land in 30 seconds on dual runways. (Courtesy of the author)

rolling to the end hugging the left side of the runway, and #2 hugging the right side. (See Figures 1 and 2.) The blacked-out landings were made more difficult by lights from passing automobiles on the highways at the approach and departure ends (horizontal yellow lines in Figure 1), which interfered with the NVGs. Needless to say, the commissioners were



Figure 4. Reese AFB dual runways with portable lights in place for minimum light landings. (Courtesy of the author)

duly impressed with this remarkable display of airmanship conducted in total darkness.

The second key event was of a much bigger scale and was designed to demonstrate the new-found jointness of the elements of the task force, as well as the magnitude of operations that could be mounted for a joint airfield seizure.

One of the options developed during Honey Badger was to employ the “Trojan Horse” concept of using C-130s and C-141s to airland Little Birds which were offloaded and reassembled within minutes for use by assault forces to attack the embassy compound and other targets. Reese AFB near Lubbock in the Texas panhandle, was selected to simulate the airfield in Iran.

Because of the size and reaction capability of the expected opposition force at the airfield selected, it was determined that the number of C-130s and C-141s needed would be 14: four MC-130s for the initial airfield seizure and 10 “Trojan Horse” aircraft to airlift the Little Birds, their pilots and handlers, additional airfield security forces, and the assault forces that would ride the Little Birds. The selected airfield had dual parallel runways. The procedures for airfield seizure by blacked-out air-land tactics had been developed during Eagle Claw, but the threat at the subject airfield required more Army Rangers and their vehicles to be landed at a faster clip than could be provided by the usual single-runway operation. To make it work, four MC-130s and the Rangers had to land within 30 seconds in order to neutralize the resistance force.

When I told General Secord we did not currently have that capability, his instructions were immediate and forceful, “Go develop the capability!” So the excellent MC-130s aircrews adapted a tactic from the days when C-130s flew in close formation in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Two MC-130s, blacked-out in a two-ship close formation (MC-130 #2 on the right wing of #1), would come down final approach in landing configuration, lined up on the left runway guided by the navigator’s Airborne Radar Approach. When the pilots of MC-130 #1 had a positive visual identification of the left runway, a short radio call or a flash of wing-tip lights would inform the wingman to break right to line up on the right runway. Both MC-130s would land abreast on their respective runways and roll to the end using brakes and avoiding reverse thrust due to the the loud noise from reversing propellers. Another pair of MC-130s, 30 seconds in trail, would follow the same procedure except for stopping short using only wheel brakes if possible. (See Figure 3.)

The Ranger package would rapidly offload and attack their assigned targets. Combat controllers, now referred to as special tactics operators, would then set up the box and one runway lighting system to allow follow-on aircraft, not equipped or trained for blacked-out landings, to safely land using minimum light landing procedures. The follow-on aircraft, flown by aircrews trained to land using NVGs on runways marked with the box and one light pattern, were four regular C-130s and six C-141s. (See Figure 4.)

All 14 fixed wing aircraft were scheduled to land within 32 minutes and park as shown in Figure 5. Fixed wing aircraft numbers 5 through 14 carried additional assault forces,

aircraft handlers, helicopter pilots, and dozens of “Little Bird” helicopters as shown in Figure 6. Onboard were aircraft handlers trained to offload the helicopters in total darkness and secure their rotor blades as shown in Figure 7.

Members of the assault force boarded the helicopters and practiced assaulting their assigned targets. The helicopters and the assault force would then return to the seized base for uploading the helicopters and departure. AC-130 gunships would circle overhead providing perimeter security.

Reese AFB was chosen to simulate the target airfield because of its dual parallel runways, similar taxiway layout, and similar field altitude and topography. This operation was rehearsed twice after dark on Sunday nights in July and September of 1980. All 14 fixed wing aircraft landed within 32 minutes without incident under the cover of darkness with the only visible lights being the box and one used by the follow-on C-130s and C-141s for landing.

VIPs from the Pentagon and Washington area, including the senior leadership selected to command JSOC, were flown in for the second running of the “Reese AFB Raid” and were quite impressed. I suspect that an airfield seizure using 14 fixed wing aircraft landing within 32 minutes, conducted twice under the cover of almost total darkness, was and still is the most aggressive example of a joint airfield seizure ever conducted. And there are old timers in the Lubbock, Texas, area that still believe their quiet West Texas community was twice invaded by aliens.

The two feats of airmanship and joint special operations just described were the key events that convinced the nation’s leaders that special operations was indeed a prime example of “phoenix rising from the ashes” and of Desert One, as symbolized by the lapel pin given to the Eagle Claw participants at the 24th Anniversary commemoration event. (See figure 8.)



Figure 8. Lapel pin given to Eagle Claw participants at 24th anniversary commemoration event. (Courtesy of the author)



About the Author: Colonel Roland D Guidry, USAF (Ret.), is a frequent contributor to the ACA Journal. In 1970 he was a DC-130 aircraft commander on several Top Secret Buffalo Hunter drone photo reconnaissance missions gathering intelligence in support of the Son Tay Raid. In 1980, he was the 8th Special Operations Squadron Commander and the safety pilot on the lead MC-130 on Eagle Claw. During Honey Badger, he was one of the primary USAF planners. He is a founding member of the Joint Special Operations Command, where he served as the first chief of air operations (J-3 Air), the J-5, and, as JSOC’s Air Force Component Commander, he served as the Air Component Commander for the JSOC exercises during the period just before Operation URGENT FURY, the Grenada Mission. He is an inductee into the Air Commando Hall of Fame.



Figure 5. Parking plan for 14 fixed wing aircraft on Reese AFB. (Courtesy of the author)



Figure 6. US Army OH-6 helicopters used in Honey Badger Operation. (Courtesy of the author)



Figure 7. Aircraft handlers assembling rotor blades of OH-6 helicopters in total darkness. (Courtesy of the author)



2014 Commander's Leadership Awards

This award recognizes AFSOC's outstanding performers from any AFSC/career field who have made the most significant contributions to mission accomplishment as determined by their respective commanders. Their outstanding accomplishments make them truly deserving of this prestigious recognition.



Capt John Paul Andree

Captain John Paul Andree distinguished himself as a Combat Aviation Advisor and Chief of Weapons and Tactics, 6th Special Operations Squadron, Duke Field, Florida, from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. Captain Andree's unique background in Non-

Standard Aviation and Foreign Internal Defense allowed him to expertly lead Combat Aviation Advisor tactics through a critical mission transition, simultaneously serving as subject matter expert in the C-145A and lead tactics development for combat aviation advisors. Serving as the Chief of Tactics, he singlehandedly authored a 166 page C-145A Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures manual, codifying four years of aircraft techniques for the first time. He also created the first Combat Aviation Advisor library, a centralized electronic repository of over 10 years of advisor history, techniques, and products. Captain Andree also was instrumental to tactics development command-wide, submitting improvements to airdrop, air-land, military free fall, and landing zone operations. Deployed, Captain Andree's Spanish proficiency was invaluable as he was handpicked to stand up the first C-145A flying operations in Southern Command. He led 10 personnel in missions within 8 countries and ensured success for persistent operations. His leadership resulted in over 80 missions flown in support of counter-narcotics missions including, in two of Special Operations Command South's highest priority countries, the first operational military free fall mission in the C-145A with partner nation forces and air support resulting in the destruction of 2 cocaine mills. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Andree reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



Capt Daniel Balch

Captain Daniel A. Balch distinguished himself as Silver Team Flight Commander, 321st Special Tactics Squadron, Royal Air Force Mildenhall, United Kingdom, from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. Captain Balch expertly led a team of highly-skilled special tactics airmen in multiple operations across the

United States European Command and United States Africa Command. He deployed as a team leader to Africa, providing vital aircraft runway surveys for special operations in three separate countries. Captain Balch also planned and executed four separate personnel recovery missions in which his team enabled the first CV-22s to be safely delivered to Royal Air Force Mildenhall. Additionally, he led numerous North Atlantic Treaty Organization partner forces in multiple high-profile exercises to include Italy, Greece, Denmark, Turkey, and Slovenia. Furthermore, as the only combat rescue officer in Special Operations Command Europe, he has provided vital personnel recovery expertise which proved invaluable to his two hour response to a real-world event. Captain Balch led a team of four special tactics airmen in a joint operation with United States Navy SEALs in a command-directed mission to recover a stolen oil tanker from Libya. His team provided personnel recovery, casualty evacuation, and tactical communications expertise to the assault force while he relayed updates and provided contingency planning to the ground force commander. His leadership ensured the execution of a successful mission minutes after the approval of the President of the United States of America. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Balch reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



Capt Steven Cooper

Captain Steven K. Cooper distinguished himself as Assistant Director of Operations, 24th Special Tactics Squadron, 724th Special Tactics Group, 24th Special Operations Wing, Pope Field, North Carolina, from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. During this period, Captain Cooper was deployed for four months as the Operations Officer of an elite joint task force in Central Command. He led a 50-man joint special operations forces team, tasked with relentlessly pursuing al Qaeda's most dangerous leaders in an environment known to be the preferred sanctuary for the enemy. Under his superb leadership, the team built close relationships with host-nation forces, theater special operations forces, and key nodes within the US Embassy. Daily, Captain Cooper's team gathered intelligence, fused that information, and rapidly planned and executed the nation's most difficult missions.

During his deployed tenure, his team was responsible for capturing six and killing ten high-value al Qaeda actors. The team's actions prevented multiple al Qaeda attacks against host-nation government targets and were instrumental in denying enemy freedom of maneuver in a strategically important region. Finally, as the Task Force Commander in exercise ADVANCE GUARD, he led two special mission troops and a robust planning staff in scenarios simulating the nation's most difficult emerging operational environments. Captain Cooper planned with precision, fusing air and ground components, further validating the unit's important future role in operations within the most denied environments. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Cooper reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



TSgt Michael Dawson

Technical Sergeant Michael C. Dawson distinguished himself as a Security Forces Craftsman, 193d Special Operations Security Forces Squadron, Harrisburg International Airport, Pennsylvania from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. Sergeant Dawson deployed as the team leader

for a nine-person deployed aircraft ground response element supporting Joint Special Operations Air Detachment Africa. As the deployed security coordinator for special operations forces throughout Niger, Africa, he expertly oversaw security operations for 39 personnel and 2 aircraft, ensuring successful completion of 78 missions in support of Operation SERVAL. Furthermore, Sergeant Dawson coordinated the installation of perimeter closed circuit television, strengthened defensive fighting positions, and improved emergency and evacuation capabilities, thereby creating a robust defensive posture. Additionally, he masterfully pioneered an inaugural bilateral training exchange with Burkinabe security forces which directly served to strengthen force protection initiatives and coalition interoperability under combat conditions. Moreover, Sergeant Dawson provided fly-away security for six classified missions to unsecured airfields within Central and South America, expertly assessing threat concerns, thus ensuring the safety of vital Air Force assets. As a training manager, Sergeant Dawson was instrumental in teaching tactical first aid to 26 Pennsylvania State Police Governor's Detail Troopers. Finally, he was crucial to the success of the first wing active shooter response exercise that integrated civilian responders. The distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Dawson reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



SSgt Michael Duckens

Staff Sergeant Michael C. Duckens distinguished himself as Noncommissioned Officer in Charge, Host Aviation Resource Management, 58th Special Operations Support Squadron, Kirtland Air Force Base, New

Mexico, from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. During this period, Sergeant Duckens led the Host Aviation Resource Management office while the Chief was deployed, managing over 800 flight records, supervising five airmen and flawlessly running one of Air Education and Training Command's largest Host Aviation Resource Management offices. Sergeant Duckens meticulously managed the wing's flight and jump pay, submitting over 500 pay cases to finance, resulting in over 75,000 dollars in incentive pay being paid out. While deployed with a joint unit, Sergeant Duckens processed over 3,000 Air Mission Requests, transporting more than 30,000 passengers, over 500,000 metric tons of cargo, along with coordinating Air Weapons Team missions and distinguished visitor flights for all of Eastern Afghanistan. His outstanding commitment to the deployed mission was recognized by the commander of Camp Morehead with a letter of appreciation and an Army Commendation Medal from the 10th Mountain Division. Finally, Sergeant Duckens tremendous efforts culminated in him winning Noncommissioned Officer of the Year for 2013 for the 58th Operations Support Squadron, while maintaining a 4.0 grade point average at Grand Canyon University while taking eight credit hours towards his Bachelor of Religious Studies degree. The distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Duckens reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



TSgt Patrick Hafel

Technical Sergeant Patrick B. Hafel distinguished himself as Section Chief, 27th Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. During this time, Sergeant Hafel expertly led 187

maintenance personnel in the largest maintenance squadron within Air Force Special Operations Command, ensuring the safe completion of over 1,200 sorties and 4,800 flight hours. As a Section Chief, he developed a comprehensive training plan which cut unit overdue training 25 percent. Moreover, he flawlessly filled unit deployment taskings and provided qualified maintenance personnel for 52 aircrew training and airframe testing operations. Additionally, Sergeant Hafel skillfully recognized his subordinates by crafting three winning Below the Zone packages, three winning annual awards packages, and one winning Stripes for Exceptional Performers promotion package. Leading from the front, Sergeant Hafel volunteered for a short notice deployment to Afghanistan where his masterful aircraft maintenance management contributed to over 1,800 combat sorties and the elimination of 73 enemy combatants. Upon his return, Sergeant Hafel continued to lead from the front by taking on the challenges of additional duty First Sergeant for the 522d Aircraft Maintenance Unit helping sustain 220 Airmen round the clock. Despite the demanding workload, he maintained an impressive 3.9 grade point average while completing 38 credit hours towards his bachelor's degree, simultaneously coaching 2 youth sports teams while

also providing mentorship to 35 local children. The distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Hafel reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



Capt Christopher Ibsen

Captain Christopher J. Ibsen distinguished himself as Flight Commander and U-28A Instructor Pilot, 319th Special Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Florida, from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. During this period, Captain Ibsen deployed over 250 days to the African area of responsibility

as Operations Officer and site commander, directing flight operations at three geographically separated locations, and orchestrating more than 425 sorties flying over 1,600 combat hours with a 98 percent mission effectiveness rate. He personally commanded over 120 combat missions in support of United States and French operations across the African continent and was the catalyst for a high profile kinetic strike against the number one high value target. With minimal manning, he implemented bold operational strategies that effectively doubled the reach of manned assets by standing up two new U-28 operating locations, managing \$36 million in deployed assets, and over \$300,000 in contracts, as well as briefing foreign dignitaries, congressional delegations, and general officers on the U-28's expanding role on the African continent. At home, he led 25 fellow officers as flight commander, synchronizing more than 1,200 mobility, 690 flight currency, and 920 ground training requirements. He authored a squadron pre-deployment training program for austere sites focusing on emergent requirements and qualified as one of the community's first landing zone safety officers. His leadership was recognized among his peer group with his selection as initial cadre to lead the command's transition to a new platform. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Ibsen reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



Capt Michael Kasputis

Captain Michael J. Kasputis distinguished himself as an Intelligence Officer, 193d Special Operations Group, Harrisburg International Airport, Pennsylvania, from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. Captain Kasputis exemplified the volunteer spirit of

the citizen airman of the National Guard by volunteering to fill a critical short notice tasking. Captain Kasputis deployed as Director of Intelligence for Joint Special Operations Air Component Africa. Captain Kasputis led a 16-person intelligence effort that supported 19 aircraft operating from 5 widely separated locations in a vast and resource constrained theater. During this tour, Captain Kasputis was the lead air intelligence representative for the Niger Security Sector

Working Group and fused counter-terrorism collection efforts and opened venues for ensuring the sharing of actionable intelligence with coalition and inter-agency partners. Captain Kasputis spearheaded the completion of six airfield studies which provided critical information for Special Operations Command Africa and enabled wider operations in central Africa. Additionally, he was the lead air intelligence planner for a personnel recovery effort that led to the safe repatriation of a United States person in less than 48 hours. Immediately upon redeployment, Captain Kasputis continued to operate at a high tempo by improving home station intelligence section training. He did so through the creation of detailed exercise scenarios which resulted in the timely completion of training for five analysts. This effort alleviated a shortage of qualified analysts within the group. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Kasputis reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



TSgt Sascha Kvale

Technical Sergeant Sascha J. Kvale distinguished himself as Element Leader, 21st Special Tactics Squadron, Pope Field, North Carolina, from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. During this period, Sergeant Kvale served as primary joint terminal attack

controller, attached to United States Army Special Forces team fighting alongside Afghanistan's premier commando unit in order to disrupt enemy safe havens. His leadership directly contributed to the rapid development of the junior controller assigned to him, by guiding him through the protection and close air support of 100 special operations forces members and 2,000 local villagers. Sergeant Kvale and his junior controller integrated more than 100 aircraft into the ground force commander's intricate scheme of maneuver. During one commando clearing operation, despite direct enemy fire, Sergeant Kvale calmly directed air-to-ground munitions, shielding the entire joint force from an imposing enemy attack; ultimately resulting in two enemy fighters killed and enabling a critically wounded Afghan soldier's immediate medical evacuation. On another operation, as rocket-propelled grenades airburst over his position and crashed into his covering wall, Sergeant Kvale selflessly exposed himself to enemy fire in order to direct three 30 millimeter strafing runs from two A-10s, scattering the insurgents and freeing his team to maneuver out of the kill zone. His flawless integration of air support on the battlefield during 14 separate large-scale operations proved crucial to mission success, resulting in 36 enemies killed-in-action and 308 detainees. The distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Kvale reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

TSgt Jason Lemke

Technical Sergeant Jason P. Lemke distinguished himself as MC-130H Combat Talon II Evaluator Loadmaster and Group Standardization and Evaluations Non-Commissioned Officer,



353d Special Operations Group, Kadena Air Base, Japan, from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. During this period, Sergeant Lemke managed the group's "No Notice" evaluation program, tracking 28 evaluations across 2 squadrons, where his exacting standards honed the group's combat readiness.

Sergeant Lemke further showcased his leadership skills while serving as ramp coordinator during two Joint Chiefs of Staff-directed exercises in Guam and Korea. He directly led the successful completion of 489 flying hours, 165 missions, 225 training events, and the movement of 544,000 pounds of cargo and 868 personnel. His professional competence was lauded by the Air Force Special Operations Command Inspector General during the group's Unit Effectiveness Inspection, garnering the first "Highly Effective" rating awarded in the command. After a devastating super typhoon ravaged the central Philippines, Sergeant Lemke deployed to conduct disaster relief operations, where he proved crucial to safe aircraft ground operations. Overcoming a dangerously congested ramp and demonstrating calmness under pressure, he ensured the safe completion 36 relief missions, delivering 653,000 pounds of life-saving aid and rescuing 3,009 displaced persons. Finally, Sergeant Lemke's professionalism and operational acumen earned him distinction as the 2013 Air Force Special Operations Command Loadmaster of the Year. The distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Lemke reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



SSgt Kyle Presley

Staff Sergeant Kyle A. Presley distinguished himself as MC-130P Flight Engineer and Commando Pride Airman Center Team Leader, 9th Special Operations Squadron, 1st Special Operations Wing, Hurlburt Field, Florida, from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014.

Sergeant Presley demonstrated exceptional flight engineer expertise as he computed emergency fuel calculations, expediting the aircraft's configuration to pass 10,000 pounds of critically needed fuel, saving 3 aircraft and 37 personnel. His actions executing the emergency refuel under austere conditions with battle damaged and crippled CV-22 aircraft saved four wounded Navy SEALs, which earned the crew the Air Force Special Operations Command's nomination for the Brigadier General Ross G. Hoyt Award highlighting their exceptional efforts as the Air Force's most outstanding air refueling aircrew. Additionally, Sergeant Presley, as a Commando Pride Airman Center Team Leader, championed the fourth largest wing's professional development program, conducting 24 seminars and assisted in presenting "Informed Decision" briefs which mentored 960 Airmen on military life and benefits. His influential mentorship to first-term career airmen advised 334 Air Force members on vital career decisions

which garnered significant impacts on airman retention due to his superb counseling and presentation techniques. His actions as a Commando Pride Airman Center Team Leader earned him recognition as the Air Force Special Operations Command's Professional Development Team of the Year Award recipient. The distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Presley reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



Capt Herman Rainey III

Captain Herman L. Rainey III distinguished himself as Aircraft Commander and Flight Commander of Awards and Decorations at his unit, from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. During this period, he was selected to serve as Mission Commander for

a deployed joint task force team consisting of 34 personnel and 3 aircraft. While in this role, he commanded air assets that provided critical support to special operations forces conducting operations in austere locations. He masterfully planned an airdrop to five challenging mountain locations, where his team successfully delivered 15,000 leaflets to locals in hostile territories. His direct planning efforts validated training and resulted in 5 high value individuals being captured or killed. In addition, he deployed in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, where he commanded 150 sorties totaling 230 combat hours. Captain Rainey flexed his crew and aircraft to serve as on scene commander wherein he provided direct support to the capture of the number one joint task force high value individual. His team's efforts resulted in a flawless operation, and were lauded by the joint task force commander. While in garrison, he displayed exceptional leadership by authoring a deployed location threat analysis, showing the way forward for higher headquarters and resulting in a proclamation of "outstanding" by joint task force leadership. Furthermore, Captain Rainey earned his unit's Support Officer Aircrew of the Quarter for the first quarter of 2014 and Officer of the Quarter for the second quarter of 2014. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Rainey reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



TSgt William Register II

Technical Sergeant William L. Register II distinguished himself as a Combat Aviation Advisor, and Southern Command Flight Chief, 6th Special Operations Squadron, Duke Field, Florida, from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. During this time, Sergeant Register has

consistently been the special mission aviator of choice to instruct partner nation militaries, his counterparts on active duty in the Air Force Reserves. He was a key member of the squadron's initial cadre of C-145A aircrew, and successfully employed the aircraft in its first ever aviation foreign internal defense operation. He facilitated and directly trained 57 partner

nation forces on tactical operations, meeting a key Southern Command priority. Additionally, during a time of transition in the unit, Sergeant Register established himself as a critical member of squadron leadership as the Southern Command flight chief while leading 21 advisors. He spearheaded the training plan for 7 new combat aviation advisors accounting for 15 months of training increasing operational capacity. Furthermore, Sergeant Register was critical in a special operations training detachment and joint readiness training exercise. He planned and executed three interoperability iterations with four Special Force groups while enhancing United States Army Special Operations Command's vital irregular warfare combat role. Finally, as Team Sergeant, Sergeant Register led 19 combat aviation advisors on joint combined exercise training to Panama, resulting in 146 partner nation personnel trained in search and rescue procedures, meeting key Air Force South requirements. The distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Register reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



TSgt David Ripley

Technical Sergeant David F. Ripley distinguished himself as an Airborne Mission Systems Specialist and Noncommissioned Officer in Charge, Weapons and Tactics, at his unit from 1 June 2013

to 31 May 2014. During this period, Sergeant Ripley aided in the development of weapons and tactics that enabled the execution of 3,413 flying hours in support of Secretary of Defense directed missions. He flawlessly managed a communications security program worth \$850,000 that synched command, control, communications, and intelligence support to elite special operations forces across 3 areas of responsibility. His actions enabled the delivery of more than 4 million pounds of sensitive wartime cargo and over 6,000 passengers executing classified overseas contingency operations. Sergeant Ripley deployed over 117 days in support of task force operations for which he flew 382 clandestine missions, totaling 428 combat flight hours. During these missions, he transported over 1,500 special operations forces that targeted 52 high value individuals, resulting in 15 enemy combatant kills. Sergeant Ripley also spearheaded the test and evaluation of a one-of-a-kind clandestine intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability, which led to battlefield targeting less than two weeks after concept. Finally, Sergeant Ripley led his unit's mission into a denied airfield that allowed senior government officials to complete key leader engagements with surrogate forces, critical to securing international support for future United States military operations and essential to national security. The distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Ripley reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



Capt William Sides

Captain William P. S. Sides distinguished himself as MC-130P Aircraft Commander and Assistant Flight Commander of Scheduling, 17th Special Operations Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Japan, from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. During

this period, Captain Sides flew a total of 270 hours and deployed for 114 days in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM Philippines. Captain Sides' leadership guided the squadron through a 1,950 hour flying program and executed over 9,000 training events for 57 aircrew members. He led his crews through 21 missions during multiple South Korean bilateral training exercises, successfully delivering 281 paratroopers and validating joint combat capabilities. Additionally, Captain Sides deployed in support of the disaster relief efforts after a super typhoon devastated the Philippines as the 353d Special Operations Group liaison to the 3d Marine Expeditionary Force for Operation DAMAYAN. He coordinated 36 missions, which delivered over 653,000 pounds of aid and evacuated over 3,000 displaced civilians. Further, Captain Sides deployed to the Philippines as operations officer, supporting two joint task forces sustaining operations in 14 locations via 8 aircraft to deliver 394,000 pounds of cargo along with 4,902 special operators. Lastly, he planned, executed, and controlled the landing zone for 6 casualty evacuation missions which delivered 12 injured Armed Forces Philippines members to life-saving medical care. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Sides reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



Capt Jordan Siiteri

Captain Jordan E. Siiteri distinguished himself as an MQ-9 Evaluator Pilot, 33d Special Operations Squadron, Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, from 1 June 2013 through 31 May 2014. Captain Siiteri led 36

pilots and sensor operators as flight commander, overseeing all currencies, upgrades, training, and administration essential to the success of more than 240 armed intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance sorties across 3 areas of operation. As aircraft commander, Captain Siiteri executed 2 high-level precision airstrikes and provided instructor oversight for 14 more, employing a total of 46 missiles which resulted in 52 enemy combatants killed in action. When his aircraft's generator failed during an instructional sortie 156 miles from the nearest landing facility, Captain Siiteri's technical expertise and decisive action enabled the safe recovery of a \$17 million asset and averted an international incident. Additionally, his unparalleled skill and leadership was crucial to the accelerated fielding of several emerging MQ-9 capabilities, including a new Hellfire variant and special mission equipment. Captain Siiteri

became the first remotely piloted aircraft pipeline graduate in the command to earn the title of MQ-9 Evaluator Pilot and later became the Chief of squadron Standardization and Evaluation. Lastly, despite the demands on Captain Siiteri's time, he completed his master's degree in Homeland Security with a perfect 4.0 grade point average, which earned a place on the university's President's List. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Siiteri reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



Capt Eric Waters

Captain Eric D. Waters distinguished himself as Chief of Safety and CV-22 Instructor Pilot, 71st Special Operations Squadron, Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico, from 1 June 2013 through 31 May 2014. During this period, Captain Waters' leadership

was crucial to the success of both the United States Special Operations Command's Horn of Africa counterterrorism operations and Air Education and Training Command's CV-22 formal training mission. While serving as the deployed liaison officer, he advised both the United States State Department and the Combined Forces Land Component Commander on the development and establishment of a new forward operating base. In addition, Captain Waters integrated specific CV-22 capabilities with ground special operations force requirements which ensured the success of future counterterrorism missions in the region. His efforts were also critical to the success of two Operation ENDURING FREEDOM train-ups for 25 personnel, over 200 flight hours, and the transatlantic deployment of two aircraft boosting Central Command's tiltrotor operational capabilities by 83 percent. Captain Waters' devotion to the advancement of the CV-22 mission was critical to the very first shipboard operations training mission, which resulted in new qualifications for 44 squadron aircrew members. As an instructor pilot in the Air Force's only CV-22 formal training unit, he hit the ground running performing programmed flight training within one week of arrival, resulting in the graduation and qualification of 13 new CV-22 mission-ready aircrew. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Waters reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



TSgt Michael Weller

Technical Sergeant Michael D. Weller distinguished himself by his outstanding performance and leadership as Non-Commissioned Officer-in-Charge, Standardization and Evaluation and MC-130J Evaluator Loadmaster, 67th Special Operations Squadron,


352d Special Operations Group, Royal Air Force Mildenhall, United Kingdom, from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. During

this time, Sergeant Weller took part in multiple Secretary of Defense directed African counterterrorism missions, involving newly developed tactics and procedures which facilitated the delivery of 73,000 pounds of cargo and fuel. These actions decimated insurgents' operating capabilities and led to three terrorists killed-in-action and a 40 percent increase in intelligence collection. Additionally, Sergeant Weller expertly executed Operation MORNING GLORY, a short-notice, "no-fail," command-directed mission which involved the infiltration of a United States Navy SEAL team and assault craft and resulted in the successful seizure of a hijacked 57-ton ship carrying 847,000 gallons of oil. Furthermore, as a subject matter expert, Sergeant Weller directly trained nine squadron loadmasters on forward area refueling point procedures and was pivotal to the success of Air Force Special Operation Command's first mission design series in-stride transition and stand up of the first overseas MC-130J Commando II squadron. As a final testament to his professionalism, Sergeant Weller was handpicked by the group commander to showcase the MC-130J to members of the British Royal Family. The distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Weller reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

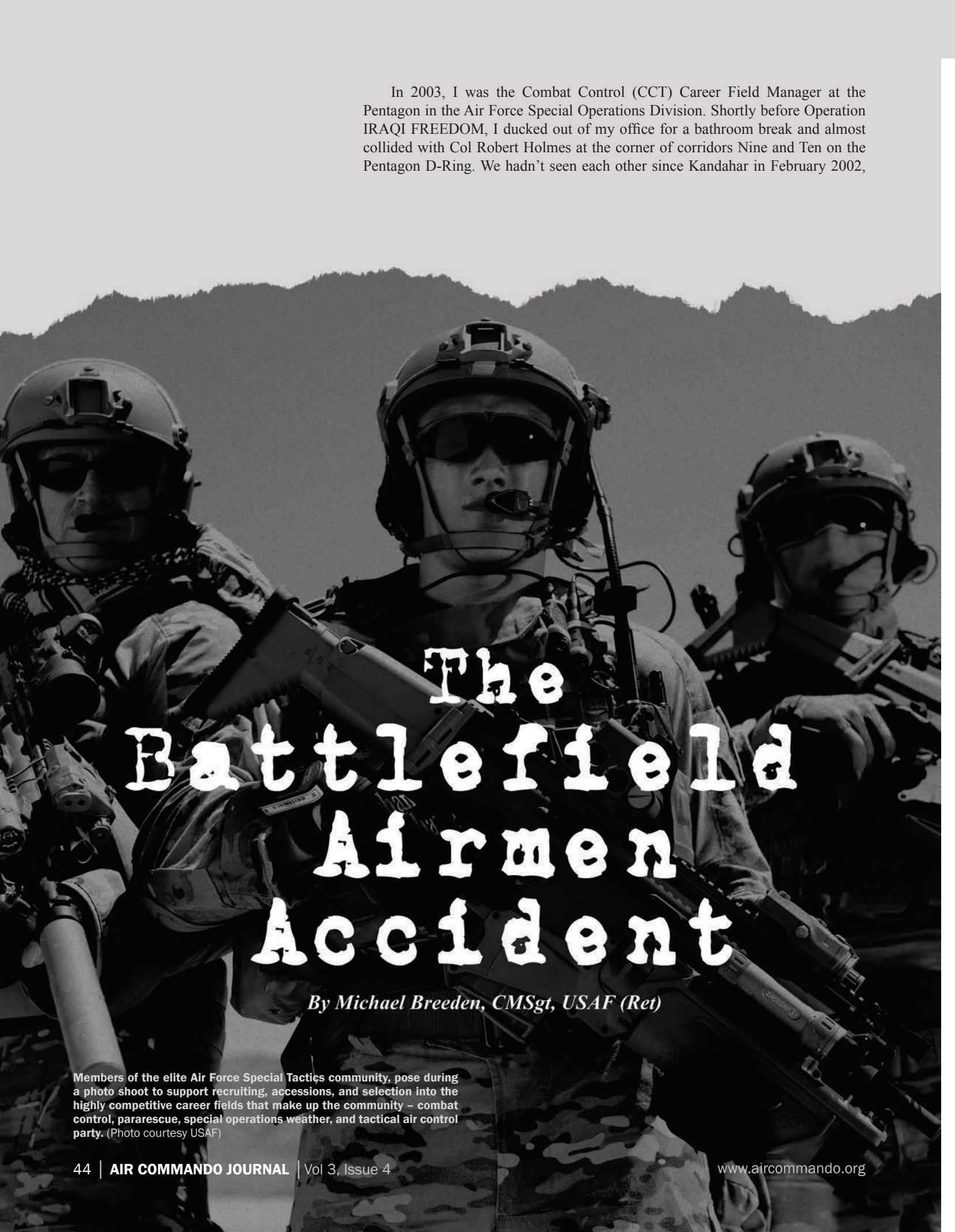


1st Lt Michael Zecca

First Lieutenant Michael J. Zecca distinguished himself as a C-145 Mission Pilot, 711th Special Operations Squadron, 919th Special Operations Wing, Duke Field, Florida, from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. During this period, Lieutenant Zecca was deployed in direct support of the

Secretary of Defense Execute Order, Joint Special Operations Air Component South, Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras, as a C-145 mission pilot where he was the first copilot from the 711th Special Operations Squadron to deploy to the new site. He planned and executed 36 missions and 83 sorties to austere landing zones while operating under the threat of small arms fire engagement in uncontrolled airspace. These missions directly resulted in the timely movement of 147 special operations forces personnel and 10,550 pounds of cargo, directly contributing to 55 arrests through 41 overall events, and the seizure of more than 28 metric tons of illicit narcotics worth in excess of \$56 million, as well as the timely casualty evacuation of a host country national after receiving a life-saving, medical emergency operation. Lieutenant Zecca also showed incredible initiative at home station by identifying squadron deployment processing shortfalls and providing tremendous oversight in the development of new mobility procedures for two areas of responsibility that reduced deployment processing times by 50 percent and increased squadron continuity for future deployments. Finally, he executed a real world hurricane evacuation of the C-145 fleet and a joint special operations forces pre-deployment military free fall training exercise. The distinctive accomplishments of Lieutenant Zecca reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force. 

In 2003, I was the Combat Control (CCT) Career Field Manager at the Pentagon in the Air Force Special Operations Division. Shortly before Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, I ducked out of my office for a bathroom break and almost collided with Col Robert Holmes at the corner of corridors Nine and Ten on the Pentagon D-Ring. We hadn't seen each other since Kandahar in February 2002,



The Battlefield Airmen Accident

By Michael Breeden, CMSgt, USAF (Ret)

Members of the elite Air Force Special Tactics community, pose during a photo shoot to support recruiting, accessions, and selection into the highly competitive career fields that make up the community – combat control, pararescue, special operations weather, and tactical air control party. (Photo courtesy USAF)

and paused to exchange stories and catch up. He said he was going to invite a few active and retired Special Tactics Officers in the Washington, DC, area to talk about the airpower lessons of Afghanistan and the future of Special Tactics. He invited me to sit in.

Weeks later, Col Holmes, Col (Ret) Craig Brothie, Maj Glenn Palmer, Maj Brett Nelson, and I met in a conference room and exchanged facts, rumors, observations, speculations, and gossip about the unprecedented combination of precision weapons and precision ground attack control in Afghanistan. Airpower had made a quantum leap and it felt like we were the only ones that understood it. The US Army Green Berets were touting a picture of MSgt Bart Decker (USAF) on horseback and calling Afghanistan a textbook “Special Forces victory.” The big blue Air Force was hailing it as a victory of tactical airpower. They were both right and both wrong. What had really made the difference in Enduring Freedom was the “glue” in the joint of joint operations.

The Glue

Since the days of World War II, airmen have sought a way to provide precise aerial bombardment. But, it took the development of Global Positioning System (GPS) guided munitions, laser rangefinders, advanced optics, and compact hardened computers, to bring this dream to fruition. This is not meant to demean pilots. Dropping unguided bombs in a 100 meter circle from 500 feet at 500 knots while people are shooting at you is an act of supreme skill and daring. Getting ordnance in a three-meter circle from an 18,000 ft. orbit is a technological wonder. The difference between the effectiveness of airpower application in the Balkans just a few years earlier, and the effectiveness of airpower in Afghanistan was “boots on the ground with eyes on the target.”

As a group, we observed:

1. “Precision can simulate the effects of decisive mass.” Precision eliminates the requirement for scores of high-altitude bombers dropping hundreds of unguided bombs in order to destroy a relatively small target. It doesn’t take an army to destroy an army if every shot is a bulls-eye and your bullets are 2,000 lb. GPS-guided Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs). Precision delivery of a few well-placed bombs can achieve almost the same effects as decisive mass.

2. Small ground control elements, utilizing and applying overwhelming, precision airpower, were able to get inside the enemy’s decision cycle. By being in a position to see the enemy, but denying him the ability to know where the blow was coming from is classic special operations methodology. SOF airmen on the ground, embedded with the Special Forces teams and the indigenous partners, provided great perspective and situational awareness, while remaining difficult to detect. The combination of a small air control element and power of the precision weapons equaled decisive surprise. In the field, it was like hitting a boxer whose eyes are almost swollen shut.

3. “WWII-style” strategic bombing constitutes an anomaly limited to peer-vs-peer, conventional warfare. The more likely, limited conflicts against irregular/guerrilla type enemies that we will likely face in the coming decades do not present

strategic targets for modern airpower. With limited ability to strike leadership targets or conduct strategic attacks, airpower is used to attack enemy forces...considered among the least effective uses of airpower as noted by Col (USAF, ret) John Warden in “The Enemy as a System.” Against an irregular/guerrilla style enemy, there are no strategic or operational-level targets.



SSgt Bart Decker, combat controller, on horseback with Northern Alliance forces during the opening days of Operation Enduring Freedom. He was responsible for calling in B-52 and B-1 bombers, as well as Navy F14 and F18 attack aircraft, and AFSOC AC-130 air support. (Photo courtesy of US Army)

We observed this organizational oddity:

- a. If the Land Component Commander wants terminal ground control of an aerial attack mission, he has OPCON (operational control) of a tactical air control party (TACP).
- b. If the Naval Component Commander wants terminal ground control of an aerial attack mission, he has OPCON of the Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO).
- c. If the Special Operations Component Commander wants terminal ground control of an aerial attack mission, he has OPCON of CCT, some TACPs, and SEAL teams.
- d. If the Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC) wants terminal ground control of an aerial attack mission he has no assigned assets capable of the mission. The guy who controls most of the airplanes doesn’t have OPCON of any terminal attack controllers, even though he is doctrinally responsible for attack in the deep battlefield.

The Spark

In our discussions, we further surmised that if the JFACC is going to be tasked with attacking fielded forces and mobile targets, especially when opposed by a peer military, he would need teams capable of precision targeting and terminal control. After our discussion, I drafted a briefing suggesting there was a place in the future for a unilateral Air Force Airpower Control team of various specialties that could go into the deep battlefield at the JFACC’s bidding to hunt the enemy’s mobile targets and deny him any safe haven. The title of that briefing was “The Future of Airpower and the Battlefield Airman (BA).”

If the term Battlefield Airman had been used before that,

it's been forgotten. We were suggesting that even on a battlefield with a peer military, there was a place for a unilateral special operations team OPCON to the JFACC which would make interdiction of maneuvering forces a precision effort. Col Bill Bassett, the Special Operations Division Deputy, and I showed those slides to Brig Gen Norman Seip, the HQ/USAF Deputy Director for Operations and Training, and got our teeth gently "kicked in" for asking a general officer doctrine/policy questions without also having a fully formulated and staffed "right" answer. He sent us back to the drawing board. Coincidence and political maneuvers prevented us from formally presenting this idea directly to a general officer again.

Confusion

As we were developing our "visionary" Battlefield Airman effort, we also worked a "high priority" tasking from the Air Force Chief of Staff (CSAF) to improve funding (See Dr. James Roche's article in Vol 1, Issue 2 of the *Air Commando Journal*) to Special Tactics, and augment the funding for TACP and Combat Weather units that are OPCON to US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and the US Army. The units attached to the Army historically been woefully underfunded. Air Combat Command (ACC) pararescuemen (PJs) were lumped into this effort because they were also heavily supporting special operations forces. Lacking any official title, program managers attached the term "Battlefield Airmen" to this funding package.

Add more Confusion

As Iraq decayed into a free-for-all, we struggled for control of the term. After the initial invasion, truck drivers and even finance clerks were described as Battlefield Airmen. Our office received phone calls from leaders all over the Air Force who wanted their deploying airmen to get in on the new Battlefield Airmen funding and pre-deployment Battlefield Airmen training. In fact, no such course existed at the time, but a course specifically for transportation troops was soon developed. At one point, the officer working the creation of

what would become the Combat Rescue Officer career field, proposed naming the new specialty, "Battlefield Airman Officer." That proposal was immediately rejected.

Top-Down

After about a year of BA staff work rattling around the Air Staff, the Secretary of the Air Force, Dr. Roche, tasked us to draft a BA Policy Directive. By direction of the Director of Operations and Training (XOO), we had to start with CCT, PJ, TACP, and Combat Weather since the senior leaders had now grown accustomed to seeing those associated with the CSAF BA funding effort. At that time we made a last ditch stand to define Battlefield Airman as the specialties that live and sleep outside the protective wire of a base and further forward than the regimental level if deployed with the Army. CCT, TACP, SOWT, and Pararescue operate offensively in hostile territory or at least right at the front. Combat Weather, Security Forces, and other Air Force "shooters" provide security and support from secured areas and bases. The non-linear nature of modern irregular conflict has blurred the differences between deep-battle and secure rear areas, which further confused the definition of a Battlefield Airman.

We continued to propose ACC Airpower Control Teams. The force programmers on the Air Staff didn't like any of those ideas. Isolating SOWT out of Combat Weather and suggesting the ACC teams were non-starters. The various program action officers were interested in growing their existing programs and nothing else. Our ideas were rejected.

Cast in Stone

From the perspective of our little insurgency, the current definition of Battlefield Airmen is watered down. The HQ/USAF XOO regurgitated the perception of what she thought the CSAF wanted it to be. We were unable to convince her that the CSAF had never been presented with the argument. I earnestly discussed this with more than one general officer, but it didn't matter. The Air Staff Special Ops Division Chief signed off on it over some strenuous objections.

Three Afterburns

Upon final review of the draft BA Policy Document, CSAF Gen John Jumper asked, "Who selected these Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSCs) as the Battlefield Airmen?" The Director for Ops and Training said: You did, sir!" In reality, though, it was the force programmers that controlled the money for each AFSC. It's not very close to what we wanted it to mean. The official definition of "Battlefield Airmen" was determined by the fight over a pot of money. A senior leader that heard the debate seemed unwilling to tell her boss that there was a strenuous debate about the definition of the BA and the real battlefield operators. The CSAF's question confirms that he never heard the debate. Maybe he would have preferred a broader definition. Maybe he would have tightened down to the operators that are specifically focused on offensive uses of airpower. For us, it was meant to be the airmen volunteers that pick up a gun and a rucksack full of gear and go into the enemy's yard to enable airpower. They are different and distinct from airmen that are in defended positions or those that find themselves in a battle by chance or misfortune. The CSAF and the SECAF never got the chance to hear the other side of the argument.

When Gen Seip made his farewell rounds of the XOO directorate as he was leaving, he shook my hand and winked and said, "You guys were really onto something with that Battlefield Airman briefing, weren't you!"

During a later ceremony in Secretary Roche's office, the Secretary credited Gen Jumper with coining the term "Battlefield Airmen." One of my coworkers elbowed me in the ribs. But the SECAF can't be faulted. There were many entities doing their best to make sure he didn't hear what we had in mind. At present, a Google search on Battlefield Airmen will yield hundreds of thousands of links. When I see the term Battlefield Airman in an article or recruiting video, all I can do is laugh.



About the Author: CMSgt Michael Breeden retired in 2007 after serving for 29 1/4 years of active duty as a combat controller.

In Remembrance of *Fallen Air Commandos*

Editor's Note: The following is CMSgt Dixon's speech during the Air Commando Association's annual memorial ceremony at Hurlburt Air Park, on 19 Oct 2014.

*By Bruce W. Dixon, CMSgt, USAF
Command Chief, 24th Special Operations Wing*

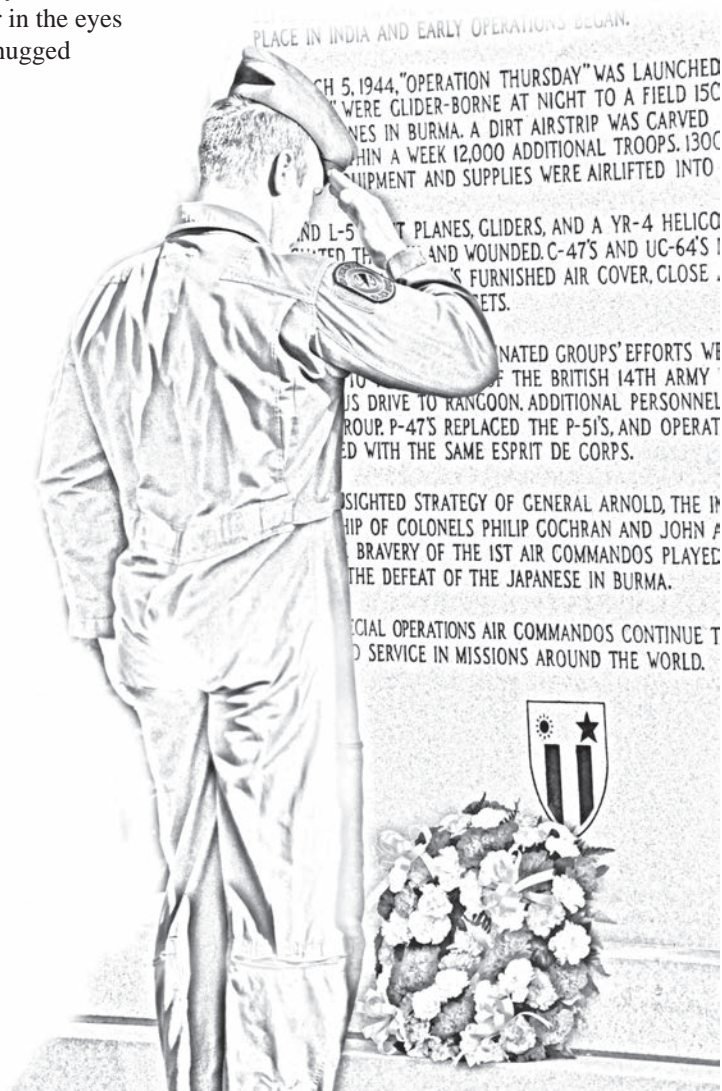
Distinguished visitors, ladies and gentlemen, Air Commandos, and Gold Star families welcome—you honor us with your presence. Thank you ACA for allowing me to be your guest speaker for this memorial. As I look around I see many of you who are better qualified to speak at such an important occasion. I know most of you know this, but we are truly in the presence of heroes this afternoon and I can't tell you how honored I am and at the same time extremely humbled to be able to speak at this Air Commando Memorial. And while I'm at it, let me take this opportunity to thank the Air Commando Association for their untiring compassion and dedication to take care of our Airmen and their families. It is truly amazing how much you do for our Airmen and their families and it does not go unnoticed. Thank you!

When asked to be the speaker I was a little hesitant because I knew that I would be in the presence of some great American heroes and possibly some of our Gold Star families that have sacrificed so much for our freedom and I don't want to disappoint these heroes, especially the Gold Star families. As we gathered here this morning to pay tribute to our fallen Air Commandos, our teammates—the very best our country has to offer, I realize that no words or compliments will ever be enough to honor these warriors and their families. However, I will do my best this afternoon to pay tribute to our Air Commandos.

Friday morning I got up early and went for a run. I purposely ran through this airpark like I have done so many times in the past and I stopped for a moment at each of the memorials to revisit each incredible story. As I read each story I was amazed once again at the extraordinary history of our Air Commandos. I looked at the names of all our fallen and although I knew some of these fallen warriors and their stories...I did not know all of them. But I know men and women like them; I see them everyday in our AFSOC units. I read about some of their heroic exploits on the battlefield in our situation reports that we get from the forward commanders. In fact, right now as we honor our fallen Air Commandos, many of our teammates are in harm's way preparing to face a ruthless enemy. At this moment they are busy hunting the evil that some people in our society want to pretend doesn't exist. I thank God for these men and women...these Air Commandos that continue to sacrifice so much for our freedom. They don't fight because they hate the enemy, they fight because they love their brother and their sister next to them and they love what they left behind...just

like our fallen Air Commandos. And they truly honor our fallen comrades and loved ones by the courage and tenacity in which they face the enemy.

Like some of you, I deployed very quickly to Afghanistan right after 9/11. Early on in Afghanistan, before we had many boots on the ground, Col Ken Rodriguez established a habit of getting all of us to pray together before we went out on missions. We prayed for the safety of the men going on the mission and the courage required to face the enemy. We looked each other in the eyes and hugged each





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other, not saying it, but knowing that this may be that last time we see each other. These days I may not be down range with our Airmen as much as I'd like to, but I continue to pray for all of them and I ask you to keep them in your thoughts and prayers as well.


While this is a remembrance of our fallen Air Commandos, we should also remember that this is a celebration of their lives and their accomplishments. Let us not remember or dwell on how they died, but rather how they lived. Let us remember and celebrate their great accomplishments as fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and teammates. I ask that when we think of these heroes, we remember them for what they stood for and for how they lived their lives. I ask that we honor them by never forgetting who they were and what they did for us in the defense of our freedom. And to the Gold Star families that are here today and to the families that could not make it, your loved ones are gone, but they will never be forgotten--you will never be forgotten. You will always be part of our Air Commando family. God bless all of our Gold Star families.

I'm not sure how many of you made it to the ACA Awards Banquet last night—it was truly incredible and inspiring. We often talk about the Air Commando mentality, the attitude, the character, and what it really means and I think we all have our own definition. For me, it is the “warriors heart” that you see in each of our Air Commandos that makes us different. It is the understanding and sense of urgency we have because we know how merciless our enemy is. There is a quote on the wall of our STTS gym that our young ST warriors read every day that reminds them of our enemy. The quote reads:

“Somewhere a true believer is training to kill you. He is training with minimal food or water, in austere conditions, training day and night. The only thing clean on him is his weapon and he made his web gear. He doesn't worry about what workout to do—his ruck weighs what it weighs, his runs end when the enemy stops chasing him. This true believer is not concerned about how hard it is; he knows he either wins or dies. He doesn't go home at 1700—he is home. All he knows is the cause...still want to quit?”

Every time I read this quote it inspires me to be the best I can be and instills in me the “warrior's heart,” the Air Commando mentality or character that we all strive for.

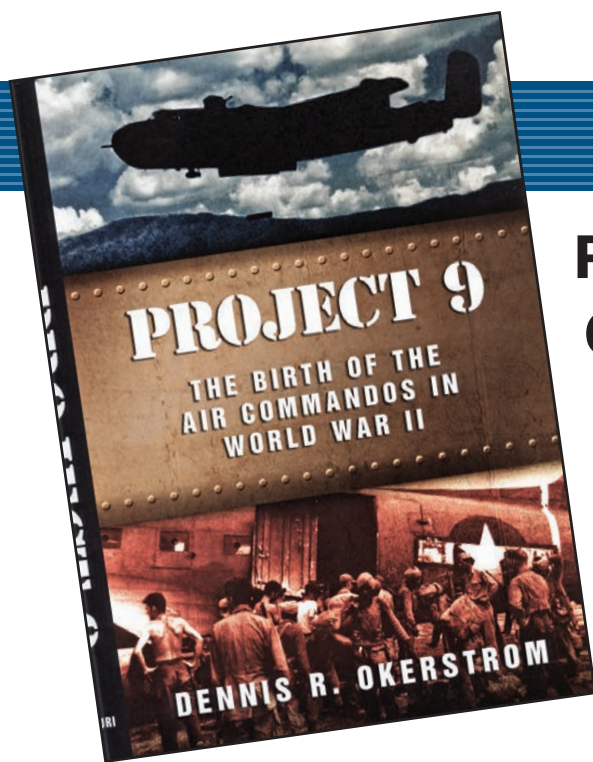
As we celebrate the lives of these heroes, I want to thank you for being here to acknowledge and honor our fallen and their families. We owe a debt of gratitude to these heroes and their families that we can never repay. In closing, I want to leave you with these words from Gen George S Patton.

“It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather we should thank God that such men lived.”
Thank you! 

BOOK REVIEW

Project 9: The Birth of the Air Commandos in World War II by Dennis R. Okerstrom

Reviewed by Maj Scott McIntosh, USAF



The Allies held several conferences in the Second World War to map out both the path to victory and what the globe should look like when the smoke cleared. At the Quebec Conference in 1943, FDR and Winston Churchill famously talked about D-Day and the atomic bomb, but they also tackled the strategic issue of keeping China in the fight. They did that, in part, by introducing Gen Hap Arnold to Brig Orde Wingate. The subsequent arrangement, whereupon American air power was married to Wingate's long-range penetration group to provide sorely-needed air mobility and CAS, was a resounding success and fully proved special operations forces to be a strategic asset—but one that demands vigorous top-cover and top-notch, vigorous leadership throughout the order of battle. In *Project 9: The Birth of the Air Commandos in World War II*, Professor Dennis R. Okerstrom clearly and concisely describes this concept, providing one of the best narratives on the men and equipment the US Army Air Corps pushed into the China-Burma-India Theater to support our British allies in jungle warfare against the Japanese.

Certainly, there were morale issues in marrying up troops from two distinct nations, but they were no more volatile than those encountered by the Combined Chiefs in North Africa, Italy, or Normandy. Okerstrom's book describes the two personalities Arnold chose to lead the American effort—John Alison and Philip Cochran—in some detail, but makes it clear that like Arnold and Wingate at Quebec these were the right men at the right time going to the right place to execute Project 9. There were, of course, complications in an endeavor this big. In the book's introduction, the author describes how the Japanese weren't the only adversary Alison and Cochran had in the Theater. American General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell and British Field Marshal Claude Auchinleck each attempted to "absorb [Project 9's] personnel and materiel into their own units," demanding intervention from General Arnold, Winston Churchill, and the Southeast Theater commander, Lord

Mountbatten to keep the unit intact. Again, at the level where men clean engine oil from under their nails or drop tools to grab carbines to defend an airfield, the leadership was solid. Alison had already flown P-40s for Claire Chennault as a Flying Tiger in China and had experienced the war from England, Russia, and the Middle East. Cochran, already made immortal as Flip Corkin in Milton Caniff's "Terry and the Pirates" comic strip, had landed his own P-40 at Rabat Airfield, Morocco, during Operation Torch and single-handedly received the French garrison's surrender before touring the base and flying back—again alone—to Casablanca. Here, working for Jimmy Doolittle on a very long tether, Cochran honed his personal style of very-decentralized mission execution (what men like Rommel and Guderian called *Auftragstaktik*). As Okerstrom describes it:

With no one directly above him, Cochran was free to be creative, and since he was not a graduate of a military academy and had no long family history of military service, he was not shackled to any traditions or an undue reverence for manuals, codes, or history. He was thus able to think in ways that might not have been possible for a career-oriented tradition-bound officer, who would first have considered the chain of command. (p.58)

Thus, when Cochran began choosing his personnel for this special mission in the CBI Theater and relaxing their grooming standards, his superiors mostly left him alone to get the job done.

The job was fraught with danger. While Wingate's Chindits had previously fought the Imperial Japanese forces in the Burmese jungle (Wingate himself had an impressive resume, leading irregular forces in Palestine and Ethiopia before deploying to South Asia), the American Air Commandos (Mountbatten himself was a Royal Navy Commando, so the American airmen going to work for him co-opted the name, as the author narrates) had to bring not only physical courage, but innovation to the task.

As Arnold learned while flying "the Hump," the strategic airlift mission from Burma to China to resupply the Chinese forces, the theater's weather and terrain was not hospitable for air operations. Introducing gliders to always-too-small jungle clearings and helicopters for medevac were monumental



10 January 1944, Col Phil Cochran completes the briefing. Col John Alison is on the far left of the photo. (Photo courtesy of AFSOC Historian)

accomplishments. With each page (and they turn quickly in *Project 9*), though, any reader familiar with the military history of this region will find himself thinking one or two decades ahead to Indochina.

The Air Commandos' issues with flares, radios, and cross-loading in these operations are now something every airborne and air assault operation has in his checklists, but they did not originate in Vietnam. As Okerstrom further illustrates, neither did Tactical Air Control Parties. RAF pilots were sitting in the back of the gliders with the Chindits, ready to hit the ground and switch on radios to control the airflow

into the LZs and the B-25s and P-51s providing fire support. There were, as the author describes, further Air Commando innovations for jungle warfare such as air-to-ground rockets, the first air unit designed for complete autonomy, and the practice of gliders hauling animals (mules). He also makes a pretty good case for signals intelligence as one of the unit's big successes. It's hard to counter Okerstrom's observation that even catastrophes added operational success to the Project's resume. As he points out the end of Chapter 18, 9 gliders that missed the objective and crashed "in widely dispersed locations" around Japanese-occupied Burma "created a

sense among the Japanese that a huge force was hitting them, striking at many targets throughout Burma." The enemy, in effect, believed the effort against them was far bigger than the reality. The Wingate/Cochran/Alison operation was thus greater than the sum of its parts.

His conclusion argues that the unit's biggest accomplishment was "the coordinated use of air power and ground action in unconventional ways to effect limited goals as part of a larger strategy. The 1st Air Commando Group could be called the father of modern special forces warfare, the progenitor of special operations commands that use a variety of weapons and tactics in most unconventional ways."

Project 9 thus does a fine job of telling this amazing unit's story, to include the origin of "Any Time Any Place," and the personalities necessary for its success in combat. Chapter 16, in describing Operation Thursday, says "A glance at the topographic map of the area..." and this is indicative of the book's one flaw: while the photos are superlative, there are no maps, and any military historian or pilot wants to see some charts. Taken in aggregate, however, the book's strengths far outweigh this one oversight.

There is a pressing need today to study the capabilities and limitations of our best military units—from the highest levels of national security policy to the young professionals filing down C-130 ramps in austere locations around the globe—and this particular history represents an immensely readable and well-researched step in that direction.



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As my brothers and sisters before me, I am proud to step into history as a member of the Air Force Special Operations Command. I will walk with pride with my head held high, my heart and attitude will show my allegiance to God, country and comrades. When unable to walk another step, I will walk another mile. With freedom my goal, I will step into destiny with pride and the Air Force Special Operations Command.



Combat Talon I (#64-0567) at Hurlburt Field Air Park, Florida.
1 of 14 C-130s modified for US Air Force Special Operations.
Photo by Scott Schaeffler of Scott Photo Works (Pave #220)

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