AIR COMMANDO JOURNAL

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

Battlefield Airmen
CCT • SOWT • TACP • PARARESCUE

Foreword:
Gen (ret) Paul Hester

Special Tactics
The Early Days

Technology
At the Tip of the Spear

Winter 2011/12

Sailor's Appreciation of Special Tactics
By Former SECAF Dr. James G. Roche

Vol I: Issue 2

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ON THE COVER

FOREWORD

On a chilly day in December 2001, we drove through the gates of Hurlburt and opened an Air Force door that was unknown to us. For the next 2 ½ years, my pride grew everyday at the opportunity to be a part of the Quiet Professionals and to tell your story when and where it was appropriate.

What could not be seen at that moment was the growth spurt that the Commandos and all of SOCOM were going to experience. Nor the closeness we would draw to our Air Force conventional forces. Yet, it was you, the one with the mission in this now War on Terror, who set the requirements…trained and taught those who came to help and in doing so, exposed a greater audience to the professionalism of your Command. None of this came as a smooth road, for change is never easy…yet, persistence found a better way to do our Nation's business and Air Commandos, recognized as never before, found themselves leading and serving all across our Air Force and DoD. It has now become the norm to find Air Commando Airmen at every level of NCO and Officer Leadership. The challenge is to keep that professionalism every day on the top shelf in both staff and field operations. This new magazine affords you the place and space to offer thoughtful and questioning discussions on the issues of yet more change. Use it to your benefit!

As an example, in this issue, is a terrific article by former Secretary of the Air Force, Dr James Roche, on the growth of Special Tactics. It is but one example of how vision and hard work can make change a reality. If you need more visuals, go to the Hurlburt Field or Cannon AFB flight lines.

Lastly, the holiday season we just completed from Thanksgiving through Christmas to New Year's Day is often the highlight of the year for American families. Each day gave us 24 hours to focus on the blessings in our lives from where we live and the bounty of liberties…who we work and play with…and of course, the excitement…and yes, a bit of tension, in being at family gatherings.

But this time was also a very strong reminder that the excitement is often tempered with the everyday reality of Air Commandos and other service members deployed away from family and, too often, in harm's way. This in itself is yet another blessing for all Americans…that there are strong men, women, and their families who are willing to stand for the protection of us all….it sustains us for this New Year!

Our English language is short on gratitude expressions…so from the heart of all who walk free in the US … THANK YOU!

PAUL V. HESTER
General (ret) USAF
AFSOC/CC 2002-04

CHINDIT CHATTER

It is almost passé to discuss where one was when the country was attacked on 9/11. In this context though, it sheds some light on what the country was in for and how it would respond. I was the Director of Staff at AFSOC and one of our executive officers, Major Hardy, came in to my office and said, "Sir, an airplane just ran into one of the twin towers of the World Trade Center." Thinking that was a bizarre accident, we turned on CNN just in time to witness the second aircraft plow in. It was very apparent that this was no accident, particularly when a short time later, there was a vague story developing that the Pentagon had also been attacked. It also became apparent that this was an event that would shape history and launch the US into a new and different kind of warfare.

The nation's response was swift and lethal, and AFSOC's role was key to the very early successes the nation enjoyed in Afghanistan. Special Forces coupled with the use of conventional airpower, quickly routed the Taliban and hit Al Queda particularly hard.

This new kind of warfare spawned a bunch of American heroes that heretofore were relatively unknown and were truly Quiet Professionals. Accompanying those Special Forces were Air Force Special Tactics (ST) specialists. Those ST specialists' agility on the battlefield and their ability to call in precision air strikes quickly became legend. It was also apparent that this was a new kind of warfare when one of the first requests from our forces forward was to airdrop saddles. We had airmen on the ground who were going into harm's way on horses and the Afghan saddles, which were made of wood, were particularly uncomfortable! (The photo of combat controller MSgt Bart Decker, mounted on a nostrils flared steed is legendary.)

In addition to those brave airmen, Pararescue specialists (PJs), Special Operations Weather Teams (SOWTs) and Tactical Control Party (TACP) airmen all played, and continue to play, significant roles in the global war on terror. Collectively they have become known as Battlefield Airmen. Together, they make up the Special Tactics Squadrons (STS). No other members of AFSOC nor the Air Force at large, with the exception perhaps of the Explosives Ordinance Disposal specialists, have made greater sacrifices nor garnered more well deserved medals and awards than this group of special airmen.

This edition of the Air Commando Journal (ACJ) is dedicated to those brave young men. The reader will find that these groups all have significant and, perhaps heretofore unknown, storied backgrounds. ACJ is particularly grateful to former Secretary of the Air Force, the Honorable James Roche, who has written a very compelling piece on his involvement with Special Tactics in the aftermath of 9/11.

Col Dennis Barnett USAF (ret)
ACA Vice President and Editor In Chief

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HOTWASH

It is our desire that readers will look at the Air Commando Journal with the discerning eye and keen insight that is inherent in the makeup of Air Commandos. As such, we welcome criticism that will help us improve and any suggestions for articles that naturally follow what we have published or new topics that need exploration. We also would like "Hot Wash" to become a realm for professional discussion of concepts that are explored in the Journal. ACA reserves the right to eliminate those that are not deemed appropriate. However, we will answer each and every input, whether it is placed in this column or not. Thank you in advance for your interest in the Air Commando Journal. Submissions can be e-mailed to info@aircommando.org or mailed to Air Commando Association, P.O. Box 7, Mary Esther, FL 32569.

"A Zorro Tale" *(Fall 2011)*

I Really enjoyed the first issue of the Air Commando Journal; a first-class publication.

Please pass this email on to General Loy. With great surprise in the picture of his squadron members I found Don Gephardt. Gep and I roomed together at Willie Field as Cadets learning to fly T-28s and T-33s. I have not seen him or heard from him since our graduation in December 1954. If General Loy knows how I can contact Gep, I would appreciate the information.

Don Dineen
Fort Walton Beach, FL

I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed the Air Commando Journal, especially the article by Brig. Gen Noah E. Loy and his recognition of the role T-28's played in the Viet Nam War, especially the Zorro group. His article is the best written, giving credit to the mission of the Air Commando Zorros.
I was line chief for T-28's in 1967-68 and would have followed Col. Heinie Aderholt to the end of the world... He was my hero who placed his faith in his crew and I pledged to do my best for him.

I am forwarding these pictures for Brig Gen. Loy thinking he might enjoy looking at them since they were the planes he flew during the time he was at Nakhon Phanom. Would you please forward them to him.

TSgt (ret) John D. Measley
Wichita Falls, TX

Dear Col Barnett,

Congratulations on your first edition of the Air Commando Journal! I really appreciate the mix of old and new!

However, there seems to be a trend among your authors to use considerable jargon, acronyms and abbreviations without explanation, apparently on the assumption that your readers will all be familiar with them.

While the "modern day" Air Commandos may understand the current acronyms and abbreviations, many of us old timers do not. When I first joined the Air Commandos in 1965 as an information specialist I was taught to always spell out terms before I used their abbreviations, i.e., "Special Operations Force (SOF)." It was spelled out the first time it was used in the article, with the abbreviation in parentheses. The objective of this style was to always present a "reader-friendly" article.

I believe that as an editor you have the right to ask your writers to practice this same technique, but when they fail to do so, you can edit the article accordingly.

I look forward to more interesting editions of Air Commando Journal.

Arthur H. James, Jr., Maj (Ret.)

Art,

Many thanks for your letter. You are exactly correct. The practice you highlight is still the accepted norm. In the future we will endeavor to ensure acronyms are spelled out the first time.

You and the team hit a HOME RUN on the initial issue of the Air Commando Journal, what a great product!

Well done to all and thanks from all of us for taking that daunting task on…

Maj Gen Otis G. Mannon
USAF AFSOC AFSOC/CV

I wanted to take this opportunity to say that the few days I spent with my fellow Air Commando's last week/weekend were VERY enjoyable. This was my first Reunion but it certainly won't be my last!

An added surprise awaited me upon my return... my copy of Air Commando JOURNAL was in my mailbox! Jeanette, you rock! I will stay in touch!!!

MSgt Steve Herberth (Ret)
Louisville, KY

I just received the first issue of the new journal. All I can say is WOW! It is extremely well done....congrats to all involved!

Joe Cochran

Maj Gen Secord,

Thanks much for sending subject journal. Have already read it (very well done) and passed it to one of our Air Commandos here. I think you have a hit.

Steven D. Cage
JSOC Historian

Advertisers in this issue:

The Dawn of Air Force Combat Control Teams

By Gene Adcock, CMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired

Introduction

It has long been assumed that USAF Combat Control Teams were first spawned in 1953 from the US Army Pathfinder model. This is partially true but the whole truth was discovered in documents recently found during research for the book *CCT @ The Eye of the Storm*, a history of USAF Combat Control Teams (CCT). The whole truth goes back to the closing days of the Second World War (WWII).

By 1944, the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) Troop Carrier Command (TCC) had grown weary of criticism from US Army Airborne commanders and mission planners who complained of poor air drop performance at Normandy and in the Netherlands (Operation Market Garden). The TCC commanders had earlier concluded the poor performance was a reflection of inadequate training, and the poor quality navigation aids and communications equipment employed by the US Army Pathfinders. So, for the final push into Europe - the 1945 airborne invasion of Germany - USAAF commanders elected to form their own forward operating command and control teams, calling them Combat Control Teams. The USAAF trained and outfitted the teams with air traffic control skills, and provided them state-of-the-art navigational aids and modern communications gear.

Unveiling

On 8 March 1945, General Paul L. Williams, IX Troop Carrier Command reported to General Lewis H. Brereton, Ninth Air Force Commander that nine, five-man gliderborne CCTs had been specially equipped and trained to perform the duties previously carried out by US Army Pathfinders during earlier operations. Operationally, each five-man CCT could function as a completely self-sustaining unit.

General Williams stated that two teams would be assigned to each of four American Airborne Divisions to ensure reliable communications. He pointed out that in Normandy, two out of four Pathfinder Teams were lost due to enemy

action, while during Operation Market Garden six out of eight teams suffered casualties and damage with three units completely knocked out.

A further reason for employing a spare, ninth team was the fact that all combat control personnel and equipment could not be carried in a single glider. This factor necessarily caused a dispersal of team members. Under such conditions, an extra combat control team would permit reshuffling of personnel on the spot and reestablish necessary communications in a minimum of time.

In addition to basic combat skills, the combat control teams had been thoroughly trained in the use of codes, ciphers, and the maintenance of their radio equipment.

Under the plan outlined by General Williams, two combat control teams were scheduled for assignment to XVIII Corps (Airborne) during the first phase of Operation Varsity. D-Day was scheduled for March 24, 1945. The second phase was scheduled for the following day.

The Tasking

A broad range of responsibility was delegated to the teams which were to establish themselves with XVIII Corps headquarters for the purpose of coordinating all outgoing messages through the Corps or Division commander. Further coordination was to be established with Corps G-3 to arrange glider pickups from combat landing zones if emergencies dictated such measures. In preparation for such

HEADQUARTERS
IX TROOP CARRIER COMMAND

2
E-HUM-6
APO 133, US Army
SUBJECT: Airborne Invasion of Germany 23 January 1945

TO: Assembled Combat controllers
1. You men gathered here today have been hand-picked from twenty-five hundred (2,500) glider pilots of this command to do your part in a special project for the Commanding General of the IX Troop Carrier Command.
2. This project is the formation and training of nine (9) Troop Carrier Combat Control Teams.
3. Nine (9) pilots who have a minimum of 500 hours of power time and two (2) combat missions will take a course in command and control procedures. This will complete your qualifications for assignment as operations officers in command of a combat control team. Your project officer is Captain Maurice M Orovitz, Command Flying Control Officer.
4. Twenty-six (26) glider pilots will be trained in code, ciphers, maintenance, operation of 299, 183 and 522 communications sets, cryptographic and air coordination procedures. Your project officer will be Capt G. W. Powell of the Communications Section.
5. The ranking officers of each group will be in command and responsible for the control of all personnel in his training class.
6. It cannot be overemphasized at this time that all members of Combat Control Teams must devote their efforts 100% to learning all they can while they are here. It will be too late to try to learn on the battle field. Absenteeism will not be tolerated.
7. All personnel will report to Billeting Officer in Building B-26 for assignment to quarters at this station.
8. The Troop Carrier Command Officers Club is available for your use and bus transportation is provided each night between 1800 and 2300 hours.
9. Mess facilities are provided on this base at the Officers' Mess.
10. A combat control team and equipment schematically shown aboard the CG-4A glider follows:

Original Signed
Glynne M. Jones
GLYNNE M. JONES, Colonel,
GCS, Asst C/S, A-3

Operations order tasking the newly formed Combat Control Teams.

COMBAT CONTROL TEAM CG-4A WACO GLIDER LOAD PLAN
Graphically shown are two CG-4A Waco Gliders used by each Combat Control Team.
O – Glider Pilot/Operations Officer **X** – Glider Pilot/Radio Operator **L** – Enlisted Radio Operator / Maintainer
JP – Jeep – ¼ Ton Truck **RT**– Radio Trailer – Custom designed and configured radio trailer.

USAAF Combat Control Team

Shown here, left to right are:
Tech-4 Neil R. Long
F/O Lawrence E. Moyer
1st Lt. Norman C. Wilmeth (Commander)
2nd Lt. William D. Fasking
F/O Leon V. Rounds.

Wilmeth commanded the first CCT deployed in support of Operation Varsity, phase one, launched on 24 March 1945.

(Photo from Norman C. Wilmeth files)

a contingency, necessary pickup ropes and stations would be sent in with the combat control teams. Both IX Troop Carrier Command and XVIII Corps had agreed upon the desirability of such action if permitted by the tactical situation.

In line with this procedure, 16 gliders committed for the movement of a medical Battalion were equipped with litter straps in the event it was considered practicle to evacuate patients by glider. The decision to make such a pickup was reserved for General Williams. If the method was directed to be employed, the glider pickup location would be designated by the grid coordinate system. Previously, two gliders loaded with wounded had been 'snatched' very successfully from the Remagen bridgehead and TCC was prepared to evacuate large numbers of patients by glider in Operation Varsity under the direction of a combat control team, if conditions warranted.

For the CCTs, two gliders were normally adequate to lift the necessary personnel and equipment of each team. In order to accomodate the medical evacuation potential, an additional two gliders were assigned to the CCTs to haul the special pickup apparatus for both teams, bringing the total number of CCT gliders to six. Every effort was being made to insure the operational success of the combat control teams, General Williams stressed.

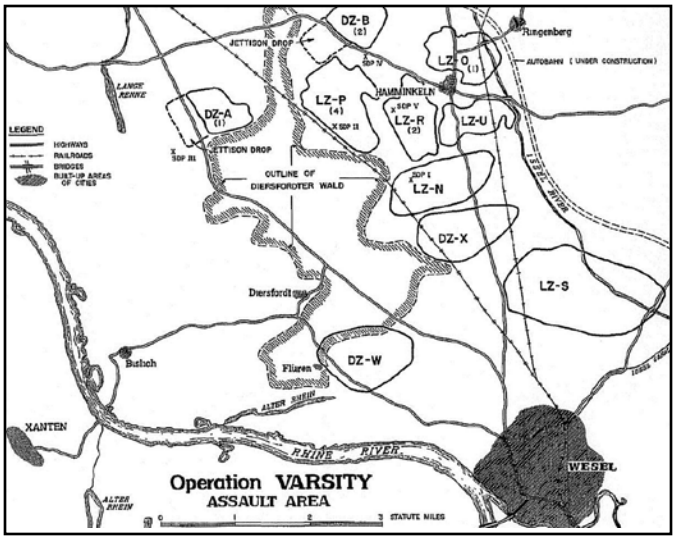
The Mission

As previously stated, TCC had begun in January to organize five-man combat control teams from its glider pilots and enlisted technicians on the basis of two teams for each American airborne division. During Operation Varsity two teams, one a spare in case of accidents or casualties, were to be landed at opposite ends of LZ N to operate several assault zones for XVIII Corps.

For the invasion of Germany, a total of four American and one Canadian Airborne division drops were scheduled for two separate operations; Varsity and Arena. For these operations, the IX TCC tasked two CCTs for each of the four US Airborne Divisions, plus one spare. Two separate Operation Varsity drops were planned just across the Rhine River, along with two additional drops for Operation Arena - over 100 miles deep into Germany. The second Varsity Drop in both Arena Drops were canceled by General Eisenhower after the resounding success of the first phase of Operation Varsity. The USAAF CCT contribution to Operation Varsity was also viewed as a major success and a dramatic improvement over previous US Army Pathfinder operations. But alas, within months World War II ended and the Combat Control Teams were lost during the post-war draw down of forces.

Birth of the USAF

The United States Air Force (USAF) was formed as a separate branch of the military on September 18, 1947 under the National Security Act of 1947. Under terms of that Act, the Air Force was assigned the responsibility for manning, training and equipping the forward air traffic control teams required to support the aerial delivery of US Army troops, equipment and supplies. At the time, the Air Force intention was to support the aerial delivery mission with automated navigation and communication systems.



Operation Varsity invasion map shows the drop and landing zones (near Wesel, Germany) used by the Combat controllers; the American and Canadian Airborne divisions.

From 1947 through 1952, the Air Force did little to support the forward air traffic control responsibility and the automated systems never materialized. After several heated exchanges between General officers in the Army's XVII Corps and the USAF's Eighteenth Air Force, action was initiated to form

Members of the first US Air Force Pathfinder Team; the name was changed in March 1953 to Combat Control Team. The photo was taken on the day the team was officially formed – 15 January 1953. Shown (L to R) are TSgt Alcide S. "Bull" Benini – first NCOIC, A1C Ray Litz, SSgt Robert Combs, A2C Joe Hunnicut, A2C Frank Barrett, Major General Robert W. Douglass, Jr., - 18th Air Force Commander, A3C Lonnie Walker, Captain Richard Baker, - 18th Air Force Pathfinder Project Manager, A3C Mavon Jernigan, A2C Dennis Mazakowski and A1C James McElvian. (Air Force Photo)

USAF Pathfinder teams.

Activation of the Pathfinder Squadron

In anticipation of an influx of trained pathfinder personnel, the Eighteenth Air Force activated a Pathfinder Squadron (Provisional) at Donaldson AFB, SC on 15 January 1953. This was the first step toward implementing Air Force responsibilities in pathfinder activities.

It was anticipated that this organization, attached to Headquarters Squadron Section, Eighteenth Air Force for administrative and logistical support, would be the forerunner of a Table of Organization unit. The Eighteenth Air Force had forwarded a proposed pathfinder squadron table of organization to higher headquarters as early as December 1952. Premised on this expectation, action was initiated in January to recruit Army personnel to man the new unit. Included in those requirements was a request for 1 officer and 13 enlisted men from the airborne.

CCT Morphs in the new Millennium

From inception, Combat Control Teams prospered and expanded while skills and capabilities grew exponentially. Lessons learned during the Vietnam War, the hostage rescue attempt in Iran, and the global war on terror were a catalyst for service-wide acceptance and respect. Today, sister-service SOF often call upon USAF Special Tactics combat controllers to augment high-risk missions and covert operations.

About the Author: CMSgt Gene Adcock retired as Chief Combat Control Inspector, Military Airlift Command, Office of the Inspector General on 31 January 1977. As a combat controller he deployed to Vietnam in 1965 and three times during the period 1969 - 1971 to Laos in support of Project 404. He was awarded two Bronze Stars, the AF Meritorious Service Award, six Air Medals and the AF Commendation medal with Combat "V".

During his second career, he was instrumental in the introduction of specialized SOF equipment to DOD and allied military forces. Adcock is the author of CCT @ The Eye of the Storm – a history of combat control teams; President of the Combat Control School Heritage Foundation and a member of the ACA Hall of Fame, Class of 2010.

Credits: 1. Most of the information in this article was extracted from copies of original documents sent to the author by Mr. Norman C. Wilmeth, the commander of the first Combat Control Team. 2. Editing assistance provided by Wayne Norrad, CMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired.

Photo by John Dominis / Time Life Pictures / Getty Images

Flying for **Vang Pao**

By Darrel Whitcomb, Raven 25 1972-1973

Earlier this year (2011), General Van Pao died. His passing triggered a powerful memory buried in my personal past. During the long war in Southeast Asia – vice Vietnam, he was a key leader of the Hmong tribes, strongly anti-communist forces in northern Laos, a theater of operations little known or appreciated in the larger story of that war. As a young Air Force forward air controller (FAC), I served with the general and his troops – then covertly – and provided direct air support as his forces fought the invading North Vietnamese and their Laotian allies. Our all-volunteer program was called Project 404, and we were known as the Raven FACs.

After six months as an OV-10 FAC in Thailand, I applied for and was selected for the program. I went up to the Ravens in September 1972, and became Raven 25 – a moniker I still proudly carry. After quickly qualifying to fly the smaller O-1 aircraft, I flew all of my missions over the Plain Des Jarres or PDJ as we called it, and its environs. Most were either direct support missions with ground forces in contact with enemy elements, or interdiction sorties where we intercepted and destroyed enemy forces infiltrating from North Vietnam.

While I was a Raven, John Carroll, Hal Mischler, and Skip Jackson were shot down and killed. Several more of us were also shot down and/or wounded. It was an incredibly violent time as American blood was shed to support those who so wanted to remain free of the heavy yoke of communism.

I directly worked with Vang Pao several times. Most occasions were at operational briefings or meetings. He especially thanked me for finding and killing several 130 mm long-range artillery guns which were bombarding his forces and villages. The day I was shot down he also came out and welcomed me back. He was a tough field general and aggressively fought the invading North Vietnamese and their Laotian allies. In January 1973, the general took a bunch of us up to Boum Long, one of his northern-most outposts - a fortress really - to celebrate their successful defense against numerous enemy attempts to overrun it. While there, he took us on a long tour of the outer defenses. He specifically pointed out the bodies of several North Vietnamese soldiers who had been caught in the barbed wire and killed by our air strikes. He honored us Ravens for putting in those strikes. Such was war in Northern Laos - no quarter given nor asked. This part of the war rarely made the national news.

My last sortie was on 22 February 1973, when we were ordered to stop flying because of the overall conflict cease-fire. As we were returning from that last sortie, the ground teams were in heavy enemy contact and calling for "Any Raven" for immediate air strike support. We could no longer help them – those radio calls linger as bitter memories for us Ravens. Vang Pao and his forces fought on without us until they were overwhelmed by the unrestrained forces of North Vietnam.

Several years after returning from the war, I traveled to Santa Ana, California, to visit with Vang Pao. He was there with several thousand of his countrymen who fled in 1975, when Laos was given up to the communists. We had a nice talk and he shared several memories of the Ravens with me. I apologized to him for the fact that in their hour of greatest need our country abandoned him and his people and all of the others with whom we had stood and fought in all of the countries of Southeast Asia. I asked him about the impact of the "Yellow Rain," the chemical mycotoxants which had recently been used against his people. His light-hearted demeanor changed to sorrow. He cupped his hands and said in his choppy English, "I had the Yellow Rain in my hands. I took it to the people in your Congress. They laughed at me."

That is a hard memory to carry, but one that lingers from my youth. I would bet that all Air Commandos have memories like this in some form. 'Tis the nature of the business.

Publishers note: I was in Laos in late 1966 when the Raven program was conceived. Air Commandos manned this unique operation until the US withdrew from the war in SE Asia in 1973. Col Whitcomb has captured a sense of the poignancy we all felt for our comrades, the Hmong and Gen Vang Pao. - *General Secord*

About the Author: Darrel Whitcomb is the author of: The Rescue of Bat 21 (1998), Combat Search and Rescue in Desert Storm (2006), Call Sign - DUSTOFF: A History of US Army Aeromedical Evacuation from Conception to Hurricane Katrina (2011), and On a Steel Horse I Ride: A History of the MH-53 Pave Low Helicopters in War and Peace (2011).

CCT'S FIRST KIA

By Gene Adcock
CMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired

Combat Control Team (CCT) NCOs Harry Genes and James Procter control follow-on, main-force parachute assault by Vietnamese paratroopers in April, 1966. This was the first combat jump made by CCT personnel. (USAF photo)

Editor's note:
In the early 1960s, the US armed forces were developing units specifically designed to counter guerrilla warfare. The first unit in the USAF of this nature was the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron code named "Jungle Jim" that was later renamed the 1st Air Commando Group after the same unit who served in the China-Burma-India theater during World War II. In October 1961, John F. Kennedy authorized the deployment of a detachment of Air Commandos to South Vietnam. The 4400th CCTS headed from their home at Hurlburt Field to SE Asia. Their mission was to train the Vietnamese Air Force using older aircraft. Crews were trained to fly the T-28 Trojan, C-47 Dakota and B-26 Invader. The codename for the 4400th CCTS and the mission was Farm Gate.

While the aircraft involved in the Farm Gate operation were often piloted by American "advisers," for training purposes, it was required by Washington that a South Vietnamese national be part of the crew aboard any combat missions. In the event an aircraft did get shot down in hostile territory, the presence of an Asian crewman would be enough to dodge any accusations of Geneva Accord violations. The interpretation of this regulation was somewhat liberal however. The following is a dialogue between three commandos who were participating in Farm Gate when the first recorded combat controller was killed.

The following are excerpts from an informal after-action report titled *The Buon Enao Project* authored by the team of Art Fields, Bill Chambers and Charlie Jones. The paper was written in the 2002 timeframe, long after the Vietnam War ended. It was an attempt by the authors to pull together the facts concerning the loss of three special operations warriors on 15 October 1962. The complete article was released to the author by Art Fields in 2008 for inclusion in the book *CCT@The Eye of the Storm*. NOTE: Charlie Jones was a long-time combat controller, the NCOIC at the 1st Air Commando Wing, England AFB, LA (1967-1968); past-president of the Combat Control and the Air Commando Associations. He is a member of the Air Commando Association's Hall of Fame, Class of 1969.

Crude airfield "control tower" in Southeast Asia manned by Air Commandos. *(Photo credit: Charlie Jones)*

15 October 1962 - BAN ME THOUT (BMT) SOUTH VIETNAM

The first combat controller killed in action in SE Asia was TSgt Richard L. Foxx, a seasoned combat controller with more than 15 years experience.

On 15 October 1962, Sergeant Foxx was killed while performing Forward Air Control (FAC) duties in a U-10 Helio Courier. The South Carolina native was a pioneer in the enlisted forward air control program. TSgt Foxx's plane was shot down near the village of BMT, Vietnam, while controlling air strikes in support of US Army Special Forces A-teams. Special Operations CCTs (SOCCT's) performed as either airborne or ground FACs, depending upon the assigned mission. For more than five years, Air Force combat controllers operated as FACs in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

The following is a recorded discussion between three of the participants involved in the operation and recovery. It documents the events surrounding the loss of combat controller Dick Foxx and two others.

PERSONAL NARRATIVES

CHARLIE JONES (SSgt, Air Commando CCT): There were three SOCCTs assigned to the Buon Enao Project. We were assigned as FACs and provided air support for the Special Forces (SF) team in the Buon Enao Project; TSgt Dick Foxx, SSgt Charlie Jones, and A1C Charles "Lucky" Luckhurst. We worked very closely with Art Fields, an SF Team Sergeant.

ART FIELDS (MSG, US Army Special Forces): My team from the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) was stationed on Okinawa. We were sent to Vietnam on a special mission to expand the Buon Enao Project in August 1962. Teams back then wore civilian clothes and carried special ID. Our primary weapon was the newly acquired AR-15.

Our base camp was located in the Rhade (Montagnard) village of Buon Tah Mo, Darlac Province, South Vietnam. My job on the team, as a Master Sergeant, was Team Sergeant for Operations and Intelligence.

The Buon Enao Project as we knew it, was formally named The Tribal Area Development Program, then the Village Defense Program and finally the Civilian Irregular Defense Group or CIDG). There were four A-detachments deployed on the mission. My team - from B-Company and three teams from C-Company, 1st SFG were assigned to relieve Captain Ron Shackleton's team -- which had set up the initial base at Buon Enao. he vast majority of the work of training and securing the villages, as well as patrolling, was done by the outlying and unheralded A-teams.

Upon arrival, we loaded our gear and supplies on our vehicles. With a small, lightly armed group of Rhade we set out through the jungle for the village. There were no roads, so the going was slow and rocky as we hacked our way through the jungle. The Rhade had no vehicles and therefore needed no roads. Foot and animal paths worked for them. Upon arriving, we built our team house, communications bunker, ammo storage bunker, infirmary, and other facilities that were needed. We did this in conjunction with training the men of the village in the use of weapons and tactics. We also trained and armed a strike force battalion.

Next, we started reaching out and bringing in the surrounding villages. We trained and armed them and then sent them back to their villages, along with strike forces to defend them while they fortified their villages and made them secure. All the while we kept up our patrols in ever increasing range, using secured villages as patrol bases in a stepping stone fashion.

As we went along, we had to develop new techniques and tactics. As we advanced toward the Cambodian border, the VC started emptying out the villages that we had not yet reached -- taking the villagers into the jungle and going underground. We discovered the VC had established a training camp in the foothills of the Cu Ken Mountains near Ban Don along the Song Srepok River. This VC base stood between us and Ban Don, so we decided to take it out. We cleared a landing zone at our primary base in Buon Tah Mo and readied our Strike Force, equipping them with German 9mm MP-40 submachine guns, new web gear, black uniforms, bush hats and Batta boots. The plan was to hit and destroy the VC training camp and then one company would sweep north in a "U" and the other company would sweep south in a "U", with both companies returning by foot back to base camp at Buon Tah Mo. There were no officers on the ground for this operation. The code name and my call sign for this operation was Powder Blue.

For air support, we had one A-26 bomber and two Farm Gate T-28s. The aircraft involved in this operation were:

1. Three H-21C Shawnee helicopters which flew two lifts each to bring troops into the battlefield.

2. One Douglas A-26 Counter Invader bomber which flew air cover and dropped bombs on the VC complex. The pilot was Captain Van Hovel.

3. Two Farm Gate T-28 Trojans aircraft which flew air cover for the operation. The pilots were Captain Bill Chambers and Captain Robert Walker. Chambers was shot down on the morning of 16 October 1962.

4. One U-10 Helio Super Courier.

BILL CHAMBERS, Air Commando PILOT: Bob Walker and I were getting bored sitting around waiting for something to happen. The U-10 and crew was also sitting on the ground, just waiting for some word from the field that they had contact with the bad guys. The SF Captain Cordell said he was sure he could find some targets for us and he went up with Capt Booth and Sgt Foxx in the U-10. They were going to make contact with the forces on the ground and find some targets.

U-10 Super Courier by the Helio Aircraft Company, Pittsburg, Kansas. Approximately 100 were purchased for Special Operations Forces operating in Vietnam.

We planned to follow the U-10 about 30 minutes later. The assigned CIA agent was going to fly in the back seat with me, but the night before, he had finished off too many bottles of gin and could not even climb up on the wing of my aircraft. We decided he could fly with me later; that was one time a bottle of gin may have saved a life.

CHARLIE JONES: We sporadically made contact with Art's SF troops who had moved in by helicopter across a ridge west of us. We talked to the U-10 (Foxx was working on the FM radio) that over flew us in preparation of air strikes by Commando T-28's. Soon we received a single radio transmission that the U-10 was hit, on fire and was going down. We could not raise anyone on the radios; so Helmick and I set out on foot toward the crash site.

BILL CHAMBERS: When I arrived, I remember seeing your orange smoke on the ground. We had been briefed that

you would mark your position with smoke. Too bad our communications were so bad - maybe I would have avoided being shot down. I also remember being briefed that if you needed air support you would lay down panels on the ground with an arrow pointing in the direction of the target with strips indicating distance to the target.

CHARLIE JONES: I also used those marker panels, with holes cut in them for the Rhade to wear like a capes so you could see us. I was scared you guys would shoot at us. One or two of the Rhade kept saying, "We must run, airplane shoot!" I kept yelling, "No, no! If we run we are dead!" I finally told my interpreter, Peter Gunn, to tell them that I would shoot the first man to run myself. They calmed down after you guys flew down and inspected us and continued to make low passes as we moved.

BILL CHAMBERS: Charlie, I wondered about them wearing orange with the VC around, but it sure made it easy for us to see you. They looked like they were moving very orderly. I remember some of you waving at us. I sure wanted to have radio contact with you.

CHARLIE JONES: My waving included me clasping my hands over my ears as though placing headsets. I wanted to try, against all odds, to see if you could contact us on the pitiful PRC-10 (FM) set we were using. I remember the one low pass you or Walker made at your own risk to check us out and I'm probably alive today because (1) you made a low-pass and saw we were Caucasians and not Asians, and (2) flying cover over us till dark.

ART FIELDS: In the early morning of 15 October 1962, three H-21C Shawnee helicopters flew in. The first lift was quickly loaded and the helicopters departed immediately.

I was standing in the door of the lead chopper and it was struggling with the heavy load. All of a sudden the door filled with tree branches and leaves, I thought we were going down for sure, but the pilot gave it full power and quickly lifted us above the treetops. When we landed at the objective we immediately captured two VC. The VC prisoners were brought over to me and upon questioning them, my interpreter, pointing to the jungle, said to me, "Many VC, many VC!" I threw a smoke grenade toward the VC encampment and the A-26 started its run, dropping bombs and strafing the area. Not all the VC in the camp had small arms and those that were not killed scattered into the thick jungle. They were in small groups that we encountered during the remainder of the operation. We had to be careful of the women and children that were with them.

By the evening of 15 October 1962, we had destroyed the VC training camp and were securing the objective. I was in communication with the senior Special Forces commander, CPT Terry Cordell, coordinating the resupply of ammo and supplies in order to continue the mission. My radio operator was up in a tree putting up the jungle antenna for better communication. CPT Cordell was in the U-10 observation aircraft, flying overhead -- low and slow. I was speaking with him on the FM radio (PRC-10) and suddenly he went blank. My radioman shouted, "Look, look!" I looked up and saw the aircraft going straight up with fire coming from the front. It looped over and started spiraling down into the jungle. On board the plane were CPT Terry D. Cordell and two USAF personnel, Capt Herbert W. "Willoughby" Booth Jr., the pilot, and TSgt Richard L. "Dick" Foxx, the combat controller. All were killed in the resulting crash.

CHARLIE JONES: As night fell we came upon a small, unoccupied grass hut. We torched it to generate smoke, expecting this would aid the anticipated arrival of T-28s the next morning. At about the same time, Art's group was approaching from the west toward the crash site. We soon joined them.

Art's group got to the downed U-10 first. All

aboard were dead and very badly burned; the aircraft was a total loss. Art was the ranking man and he immediately took charge of the crash site. We had a weak defense in terms of numbers and under Art's command we decided not to try to outshoot the VC. They probed us all night, and sounded trumpets or whistles. Helmick and I pulled the horizontal stabilizer from the wreck and propped it up so we could lay on it during the long night.

ART FIELDS: It was late and very dark in the deep, thick jungle when we reached the crash site. The Viet Cong were also trying to reach the crash site and we killed a few in the process of searching for the wreckage. When the plane went down through the jungle trees, the left wing had broken and folded over the cockpit. I found all three aboard dead with their bodies severely burned.

I set up a defensive perimeter around the crash site to keep the VC from the bodies and the still smoldering wreckage. Since I had no way of knowing for sure if there were VC within the perimeter, so I gave the order that anything that moved within or outside the defensive position would be shot. Luckily we had sealed off the area before the VC had penetrated it. I radioed my coordinates and called for a chopper to evacuate the KIAs. I was told that the chopper would be coming from Pleiku and would arrive early in the morning. We left the bodies in the wreckage overnight. The VC probed our defenses all night with sporadic small arms fire, bugles and whistles.

At daybreak I sent out a party to search for a clearing to be used as a landing zone (LZ) for the incoming chopper. A clearing was found, it was checked for obstacles and colored panels were placed to mark the landing area. It was later verified from the air that the clearing we had marked for the LZ was in fact the only clearing for miles. First to arrive was an unannounced C-47 and H-34 helicopter. The C-47 made a couple of passes over the crash site and flew off toward BMT. The H-34 with USAF Air Commandos Lt Col Mike Doyle (CO), TSgt Hap Lutz (medic) and SSgt William Cody (combat controller) aboard landed at the LZ we had marked. The H-34 was flown by an American with a Vietnamese adviser in the other seat. The H-34 came under fire and lifted off. It went around a couple of times before it could land.

About that time, we had extracted the bodies from the wreckage and loaded them on stretchers. When the H-34 finally touched down again we quickly loaded the remains, along with the recovery team. It immediately lifted off heading for Ban Me Thout where a C-47 was waiting to take them to Saigon.

Just as the H-34 was lifting off, a Farm Gate T-28 came in low and slow and was shot down. It came screaming into the ground and almost hit us. People were running for cover. I am sure that it was one of the same planes that provided air cover the previous day. The crashed T-28 was fully loaded and ammo was exploding like the 4th of July in the burning wreckage. Despite exploding ammunition and ordnance shrapnel set off by the intense heat and thick smoke from the devastating fire of the burning aircraft I got the pilot, Capt Bill Chambers out

Picture of Jim Betts with Charlie Jones. It is believed they are at the hill top village of San Tiau with local villagers. (Photo submitted by SrA Andrew Powell, 700AS Loadmaster.)

of the wreckage alive. I almost lost some of our people looking for the second pilot before we realized there was none. The pilot had taken off without his Vietnamese counterpart. A short time later an H-21 came wobbling in and we placed the badly injured Capt Chambers aboard for evacuation.

Later that day we tracked down the group of VC that had shot down the two aircraft. They were hiding in a straw shack at the edge of a rice-field. We surrounded the hut and engaged them in a firefight. They were all killed. As we were mopping up, we discovered that the weapon used to bring down the aircraft was an American BAR, probably left over from the French Indo-China War.

BILL CHAMBERS: Yes, I did fly air support on 15 October, but we didn't expend any ordnance. We saw you on the ground but you had not made contact with the VC. It may have looked like there was only one aircraft; you probably never saw us close together as we always flew a wide-spread formation. But, we always flew a two aircraft mission. I'm not sure of the A-26 pilot, but I think it might have been Capt Van Hovel from our unit. We were the only ones flying A-26s and T-28s at that time. I was told that the A-26 later finished off my T-28 with bombs. I learned later that they found only one bullet hole in the aircraft - right in the carburetor. What a lucky shot.

CHARLIE JONES: First one of the wobbly H-21s came, then the beautiful T-28s. Then, the Air Commando Commander Lt Col Miles Doyle and TSgt Hap Lutz arrived in either an H-19 or H-34. It was piloted by an American Army advisor, a Vietnamese observer and the American crew chief. It came under fire and went around once or twice. Doyle wanted to see the crash site, so we had to move him along the trail to the site. We finally got the bodies positioned on stretchers to place aboard the chopper, when I heard the sounds of gunfire I thought it was a fifty-cal. Art later said it was a BAR. We had Billy overhead flying cover for us. The saddest thing in cases like this is the lack of communication. I could not tell Billy what I was hearing, to warn him, and sure enough, he was downed, almost crashing into us as the H-19 lifted off.

Air Commando Charlie Jones in 1966. (Photo submitted by SrA Andrew Powell, 700AS Loadmaster.)

BILL CHAMBERS: We took off and tried to contact the U-10 on the radio and could not raise them. We called the camp to see if they had contact with them -- they didn't. Bob and I flew around in the area looking for them. Finally we saw smoke coming up from the ground and it was their aircraft. One wing was folded over the cockpit.

The next morning Bob and I were flying cover for the recovery team, which included Lt Col Miles Doyle, our commander from Bien Hoa who had flown in the night before. We had contact with the recovery team on the ground and they reported no contact with hostile forces. I was making passes over our people, really just showing the Eagle to try to keep the VC from attacking. I was in the middle of a pass when my engine lost power and smoke started streaming out of it. I didn't know whether I'd blown a jug or what.

I let Walker know I was going down and apparently the Chopper was on our frequency and took off immediately. I was too low to bail out, had no ejection seat and had to ride it in. About all that was left of the T-28 was the cockpit laying on its side. I couldn't get the canopy open more than about one third. I remember when the aircraft finally stopped, I tried to blow the canopy but it wouldn't move; since it used compressed air to blow back the canopy and the air line was apparently ruptured. I then moved the canopy handle to manual and tried to pull it open. It opened a few inches, enough to get part of my shoulder on it. I finally got it opened enough to try to squeeze out, but the shoulder holster hung up on the railing. I had to get back inside and move the holster under my armpit, then was barely able to get out. Had the gin-drinking CIA officer been aboard, I would never have been able to get out of the back seat.

I then moved, bent over because my back was injured and I couldn't stand up, to the nearest undergrowth and prepared to fight it out. We had been told by our Intel Officer that the VC would capture you if you could walk, otherwise they would put a bullet in your head. Almost immediately, I saw the H-21 coming into the landing. A crewman was standing the doorway with a machine gun. I stood up as much as I could and waved my arms and started moving toward the chopper. The guy in the chopper waved for me to stay put. Unknown to me at the time, the Rhade Montagnard Strike Force under the command of Art Fields had secured the clearing. It was the only clearing around. It was to be used as a landing zone for the H-21 flying in from Pleiku to evacuate the bodies of the three KIAs. Art Fields and some of his troops got a stretcher from the chopper, placed me on it, and then loaded me on the H-21 for evacuation. The H-21 took me to the Ban Me Thuot airfield where a C-47 was standing by to fly me out. I know this has been windy, but I wanted to tell you everything I remembered. An interesting note: While I was in the hospital at Clark AFB having X-rays taken, I was visited by a CIA agent. He wanted to let me know what to say if anyone asked me questions. I was to say that I did have a Vietnamese in the back seat with me. As you know, I can't verify any of what he told me but he told me they had captured two Chinese advisors. He further said that the CIA had turned the interrogation of the two over to a French team.

ART FIELDS: An H-21 helicopter was called in to take out the KIAs, however they had already been evacuated aboard the H-34 before it arrived. Since Bill Chambers T-28 had just crashed, we placed him aboard the H-21 and it took him to Ban Me Thout where the C-47 was waiting to fly them all to Saigon. I returned to base camp, at Buon Tah Mo with over four hundred villagers that we had liberated from the VC. We were greeted by the brass from Saigon who debriefed us. So far as can be determined this was the first helicopter assault of the Vietnam War led by an American.

In the meantime, we continued to train villagers and kill VC until we deployed back to Okinawa in February 1963.

CHARLIE JONES: We flew the bodies to a one room masonry structure and posted a Vietnamese guard outside. We re-boarded the chopper to return and try to get Billy out. Art and an H-21 had extricated him; an event unknown to us until we landed back there. It was back at the village, Buon Enao, when I was questioned closely by some regular US Army Colonels about the previous actions. I also discussed with Doyle who sent me back to Bien Hoa for even more reports. We were all worried about the possible consequences of not having a Vietnamese adviser aboard either the T-28 or the U-10.

About a week later, we stood in formation as the bodies were loaded aboard a C-123 for the flight to the Philippines, to be further processed for shipment home.

This is my abbreviated story of the events surrounding the actions of Art and his life-saving actions of Billy Chambers and facts concerning the first FACs to be KIA in the SEA war.

COMBAT CONTROL

FIRST THERE

LAST OUT

Compiled using published data in CCT's historical archives by Gene Adcock, CMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired

One C-130 was hit by ground fire on landing. It lay crumpled on the side of the runway. The runway and camp were strewn with the wreckage of helicopters, bulldozers, vehicles and other aircraft. (DOD Official Photo)

INTRODUCTION: 1st Air Commando Wing (Jungle Jim) Special Operations Combat Control Teams (SOCCT) operated in Vietnam as early as 1961 and soon thereafter were in Laos. The following is one story of conventional CCTs that were first introduced to Vietnam during President Johnson's build-up of forces in July 1965. The first conventional CCT to arrive was deployed TDY from the 7th Aerial Port Squadron (APS), headquartered at Tachikawa Air Base, Japan. The 7APS and Detachment 1, 7APS CCTs rotationally shared the combat mission from July to December 1965. In December 1965, a new CCT was formed at the 8th Aerial Port Squadron, Tan Son Nhut AB, Vietnam. The new CCT would be responsible for all in-country operations until the evacuation of Vietnam in 1975. True to their Vietnam-era motto, an 8th APS CCT, led by MSgt Lew Brabham, would be the last American airmen to leave Vietnam on 29 April 1975.

November 1968

Combat controllers TSgt Mort Freedman and Sgt Jim Lundie and their airlift mission commander, Maj John Gallagher, lay in a ditch along what was left of the Kham Duc runway. Sweat poured from their dirt-caked bodies and etched tiny rivers of grime down beard-stubble faces. Flak vests and steel helmets provided protection on the outside but kept the heat on the inside swirling into a built-in steam bath. They had been this way for three days. There was no hint of the typical, spit-and-polish, combat control image. No starched fatigues topped with a blue beret nattily cocked to one side. Not that it mattered now.

They squinted hard into the glare of the Vietnam day, searching for some sign, any sign, of a rescuer who would pluck them from this nightmare.

Kham Duc

Until a week earlier, it had been just one of many Special Forces camps dotting the Vietnamese countryside. Now it was destined to capture the attention of the entire country.

For two days, the two combat controllers had labored under a fierce barrage of enemy mortar fire, directing Air Force C-130 Hercules, C-123 Providers, C-7 Caribous, and even Army Hueys into and out of the airstrip. Their MRC-108 radio jeep had been peppered by deadly shrapnel when the jeep's generator trailer was completely destroyed by a mortar round. During the attacks they had dragged wounded from exposed areas to cover where they could give first aid. They had even directed fighter strikes on enemy positions around the perimeter until an airborne forward air controller (FAC) arrived overhead.

It was coming to a foreboding climax. They had come close to death during the past two days. Now, they thought, their time had indeed come. Earlier that afternoon, the entire camp had been evacuated in one of the most harrowing and spectacular airlifts ever carried out. One C-130 was hit by ground fire on landing. It lay crumpled on the side of the runway. The runway and camp were strewn with the wreckage of helicopters, bulldozers, vehicles, and other aircraft.

Now the relative silence was deathly. Gone were the sounds of aircraft landing and taking off. Gone was the evacuees' high-pitched banter as they waited to be picked up. The combat control radio jeep had been destroyed in preparation for a quick air evacuation. The survival radio was also out. Everything was gone. Everything, that is, except the three Americans; and the North Vietnamese soldiers who were closing in around the camp. The three men could see the figures darting back and forth between gun emplacements, waiting for the order to charge down and take the camp.

It was normal for the combat controllers to be the last out of a camp. They were always the first in and the last out, according to their unofficial motto. But where was that last plane, the one that was to take them out? Have they left us? Have we been forgotten?

Then, the sound of airplane engines, the greatest sound in the world, snapped them back to reality. A C-123 swooped in low and touched down. The three airmen sprang to their feet and made a dash to the taxiing plane. Enemy automatic weapons blazed away. Tracers lighted a deadly path toward the moving plane. Mortar rounds were landing all around the aircraft.

Then, airplane picked up speed. It wasn't stopping!

Lundie and Freedman yelled at the tops of their voices, but it was to avail. Their pleas were lost in the thunderous roar of the engines and jet boosters. "They didn't see us. They didn't see us," cursed Lundie.

North Vietamese tracer bullets from machine gun emplacements at the end of the runway followed the C-123 as it climbed out of range. Quickly the enemy gunners pivoted back down on the runway where the three lonely figures stood, their hopes of rescue now dashed. And just as quickly, the controllers bolted for the relative safety of the ditch, firing their M-16s from the hip as they ran, silencing at least one of the guns.

"That was really it," Freedman recalled later. "They sent in a plane, but the pilot saw no one left on the ground, so he took off. No one would come back. At that point we had two choices. Either be taken prisoner or fight it out. There was no doubt about it. We had 11 magazines left among us and we were going to take as many of them with us as we could."

"I told Lundie that if he made it and I didn't, to be sure to get my wallet so those bastards wouldn't take it."

The C-123 crew had seen them, but was too far down the runway to stop. And soon another C-123, piloted by Lt Col Joe Jackson and Major Jesse Campbell, landed in a barrage of enemy bullets and mortar shells, screeched to a stop long enough for the combat controllers and their mission commander to jump in, and took off trailed by the "biggest hail of tracers you've ever seen."

Lt Col Joe Jackson, 311th Air Commando Squardon, who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions that day as the pilot of the C-123 that saved the three airmen at Kham Duc.

Mort Freedman and Jim Lundy's experience at Kham Duc is by no means "all in a day's work" for combat controllers; but it serves to underscore the combat in combat control. Vietnam provided CCTs with their first real test under fire since becoming part of the Air Force in 1953.

"Our purpose for being, as planned in 1952, and as practiced in Vietnam, is basically unchanged," explained Maj Robert Barinowski, head combat controller in Vietnam. "We've had a few variations in theme, but our primary task is still that of performing as air traffic controllers in a forward, austere airstrip

or drop zone."

The need for the combat control teams surfaced in World War II when, in Sicily, Army paratroopers were scattered all over the countryside because no one was controlling the drops from the ground. The dispersal of men and equipment made the airborne force ineffective as a combat unit.

Since the end of the Second World War, Air Force combat controllers had been a part of US troop deployments to meet crises in Lebanon, the Congo, and the Dominican Republic, and were put on alert during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. During troop and cargo airlifts, they are always the first deployed to an airstrip or drop zone to survey the area, set up marker panels and the portable communication and navigational gear necessary to accurately guide the main wave of airlift aircraft in.

But never had the combat control team concept and the mettle of the controllers been tested like it was in Vietnam. And, as the nature of the Vietnam War was one of constant change in tactics and strategy, so it followed that combat controllers had to adapt and innovate with the shifting priorities.

One combat controller who speaks with great authority on the job of the Blue Berets in Vietnam is Capt Hayden F. Sears, Jr., who had been in country since 1965, longer than any other controller.

"When I arrived we had 24 men and were housed in a shack here at Tan Son Nhut," he recalls. "Now we are three times that number. In the beginning, we had many air traffic control (ATC) missions, because control towers had not yet been constructed at various remote airstrips."

"But today many of those strips have permanent towers and some navigational equipment. As a result, our ATC mission has decreased and our role as a field extension of the airlift command and control system has become more prominent."

Using high-frequency radios, the combat controllers fed vital data from remote airstrips back to the 834th Air Division Airlift Control Center at Tan Son Nhut, the nerve center for all in-country airlift operations.

"Also during the first year, we had very few rocket and mortar attacks to hinder our job," Sears continued. "That sure has changed! Now we're always sandbagging the radio jeep and always digging a foxhole on the DZ for the combat controller."

At the peak of their activity in Vietnam, combat controllers were deployed throughout the country by the Airlift Control Center. The men were divided into three teams, each headed by an officer and consisting of air traffic controllers and radio maintenance specialists. One team was always on alert, ready with jeep and portable navigational aids to deploy by airlift in as little as 15 minutes.

Their missions were varied. Like a one-day air traffic control job at a remote airfield guiding in airlift C-130s, C-123s or C-7s laden with badly needed supplies; or accompanying the 1st Air Cavalry Division tramping through the jungles for 30 days, providing necessary control for emergency airdrops of ammunition, rations, and fuel. The operating conditions vary, too--from the relative quiet of nearby outgoing friendly artillery, to the terrors of "incoming rounds of a Kham Duc or Khe Sanh."

Between field missions, the combat controllers went through numerous standard checks at their Tan Son Nhut home station, maintaining proficiency in air traffic control procedures, packing parachutes, performing radio maintenance, cleaning their weapons (the M-16 and the shortened version, the CAR-15 used in parachute jumps) and honing their shooting skills on the weapons range.

Perhaps the clearest image of what a combat controller's life in Vietnam was all about is found by snatching glimpses of experiences during various operations.

Since most of the CCT was at Khe Sanh at one time or another during the

78-day siege, that operation, in which 8 controllers received Purple Hearts, provides a good look.

Jim Lundie was there, crouched in a foxhole, directing aircraft in and out of the airstrip on February 23, when the NVA fired over 1,000 artillery rounds into the combat base, or the equivalent of nearly one round a minute. He'll never forget that day. It was his 21st birthday.

Following the crash of a Marine helicopter, Capt Sears and his team of SSgt Jimmy Grishom, Sgt Arthur Hosey, Freedman and Lundie, ignored the possible explosion of the helicopters fuel and incoming mortar rounds to pull the crew members out of the burning wreckage. Although two were already dead, the third was saved by their action.

TSgt Thomas Monley and his team of Sgts David McCracken, Erwin Rhodes, and Walter Smith were awarded Silver Stars for moving a burning pallet of mortar rounds away from Khe Sanh's populated bunkers.

During another operation the 1st Air Cavalry Division pushed into the A Shau Valley, an enemy stronghold. TSgt Richard Taylor, SSgt James Philpot, and Sgts Gary Brock and Michael Welding went into the valley's thick, jungle carpeted floor with the first wave of assault helicopters, which received some of the heaviest enemy antiaircraft fire of the war. Once in the valley, the CCT marked the assault landing strip for C-123s and C-7s and directed C-130s over the drop zone for emergency drops of ammunition, rations and fuel. During the same operation, SSgt Robert Mahaffey withstood five straight hours of enemy shelling to perform the combat control mission.

On one of the rare airborne operations, Capt Danny M. Pugh, a 19-month Vietnam veteran, led his 8-man team in combat control's classic role, support of a mass parachute assault. Jumping 30 minutes ahead of a 1,000-man Vietnamese paratroop formation at Van Kiep, the CCT was dropped short of the drop zone. Realizing the error and realizing the potential disaster if the mass formation was also dropped short, Pugh led his team at a rapid clip, overland, through enemy territory. They found the DZ, set up communications equipment, and guided the formation in right on schedule. There was no doubt about the value of combat controllers on that occasion.

On another jump, Capt Sears, who had four combat jumps to his credit (more than any other controller at the time), parachuted into a drop zone in the Northern II Corps Tactical Zone.

"We jumped from about 800 feet," he said, "and immediately could hear ground fire coming up at us. All of a sudden, I felt something, and looked up to see two bullet holes in my 'chute. When we hit the ground, we started receiving a lot of sniper fire."

More Than Guts and Glory

But, combat control was more than the guts and glory of combat. It took a special breed to overcome all the obstacles set in the path of earning and keeping the combat controller's blue beret. In addition to jump school, combat controllers attended other schools: control tower, combat control, survival, tropical survival, arctic survival, water survival, amphibious training, High Altitude Low Opening, parachute rigging, and radio maintenance. And what's more, failing any one school meant elimination from combat controller training.

"In Vietnam, in a given month, we worked more airfields than drop zones," said Maj Barinowski. "Consequently, I placed heavy emphasis on proficiency in air-landing techniques; operating three or four radios, proper voice procedures, stacking airplanes, and on two other tasks which have become part of our mission in Vietnam, coordinating artillery firings with landings of aircraft and installation and maintenance of the Ground Proximity Extraction System, a method used by the C-130s to delivery bulky cargo loads to the ground forces."

But no matter what role combat controllers performed, one fact was certain: they were a vital part of the airlift effort in Vietnam. It doesn't really matter whether they were the first in and last out. It's what they did while they were there that counts. And that added up to quite a lot.

8th Aerial Port Squadron, Combat Control Team (Circa 1968 USAF Photo)

SSgt Luke Brackett gives TACP Candidates instructions on portable radio operations. (US Air Force Photo)

Mastering the Basics

By Tech Sgt William Shepherd

Advise, Assist, Control has been the primary and relatively unchanged mission of USAF Tactical Air Control Party (TACP) for over four decades. TACPs are aligned with every form of maneuver unit to include Infantry (Airborne, Air Assault, Light, Mechanized), Armor, Rangers and Special Forces. Every ground commanding officer has and continues to count on the Close Air Support (CAS) employment expertise that every aligned TACP possesses. This expertise does not come quickly or easily. Training to support these units begins at Hurlburt Field where every TACP begins their career as a student at the TACP Schoolhouse.

TACP candidates begin their training at Hurlburt Field, where over the course of 84 training days, students get a snapshot of their future. Holding steady at an average of 65% graduation rate, the TACP Apprentice Course produces approximately 250 graduates per year. Students learn a multitude of job specific tasks that will prepare them for the critical mission they will perform during combat operations. Before their combat experience begins, every TACP must first master the basics. This means becoming an expert communicator, a sound operator in austere environments, and an expert in CAS procedures.

The foundation for learning combat skills begins during the first block of instruction. During this block of instruction, students learn to establish and maintain communications under less than ideal situations. Students are constantly drilled on the importance of effective communication through multiple training exercises and performance-based examinations. Instructors emphasize strict standards to ensure students understand their communications link to multiple, forward-based, warfighting nodes is essential for mission success. Students spend a great deal of time studying radio frequency propagation theory and concepts so they can apply what they have learned to actual operations. Bottom line: No comms, no bombs!

Students then move on to learn basic field skills, ranging from field hygiene to foot navigation to ambush techniques. During this phase, students learn the requirement to properly prepare and ensure their equipment is functional in order to execute the upcoming tasks. Students also gain an appreciation for the equipment, while accomplishing performance-based objectives. The old saying, "Take care of your equipment, and it will take care of you" - drives home an entirely new meaning. Those students who neglect their equipment, typically find themselves repeating the training or are washed back to day one.

The field-training block of instruction is immediately followed by the CAS phase of training. Students are instructed

Left to right: MSgt Rob Lee, SrA Michael McCaffrey, and TSgt Tavis Delaney pictured in Afghanistan following their 13-hour combat mission. (US Air Force Photo)

in CAS procedures and the identification of battlefield weapon systems. The instructors familiarize candidates with the process of advising ground commanders on CAS aircraft capabilities, assisting the Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) with planning the CAS mission, and providing final control to the strike aircraft. This process most often occurs at an incredibly rapid pace and vulnerable time on the battlefield, therefore all of the necessary tasks must be seamlessly executed.

With a pronounced sense of accomplishment and pride, those candidates who reach graduation receive the coveted black beret, flash, and crest of the TACPs. Though they have proven they have what it takes to comprehend and apply the apprentice course material, 3-Level TACPs will not begin their JTAC upgrade training for at least another 18 months. Until that point, TACPs train to become experts on all CAS mission related equipment, so when they are on the battlefield the transition from radio operator and communicator to JTAC is seamless. The importance of this transition was made very clear for 2 TACPs over the course of a 13-hour battle in Afghanistan.

During a mission which was supposed to be a quick "meet and greet" with village elders… 18 controls, 14 airframes and several thousands pounds of ordnance later, every coalition member walked away, while over 200 enemy lay dead. The ability to seamlessly transition from radio operator and communicator to CAS controller was a result of mastering the basics.

According to an article written by Scott Fontaine in the Air Force Times, dated 19 August 2011, TSgt Tavis Delaney and SrA Michael McCaffrey received less than 1 hour of notice to board a CH-47 that would fly them to a village. The TACPs were told to prepare for a three-day mission, with less than one hour of notice. Applying the skills they acquired at TACP Apprentice School, both TACPs were able to meet the short notice task. When their unit arrived at the landing zone, a deadly battle began. Delaney described the engagement as, "…seven hours of full blown, slug fest, back-and-forth…." The landing zone was at the base of a valley with steep terrain on both sides. The TACPs relayed a request for CAS aircraft. Moments later two F/A-18 Super Hornets responded to the request, but due to the high terrain, the TACPs were unable to effectively communicate with the F/A-18s. The TACPs knew that communication was critical and, in this case, could be the difference between life and death. Using skills learned through years of training and multiple deployments, the TACPs were finally able to establish communications to engage and neutralize the combatants. For his actions that day, Delaney was recommended to receive the Silver Star.

TACPs are able to perform in extreme and deadly situations that demand flawless execution of their duties. That demand can only be met when the repetitive nature of training gives way to the mastering of a skill.

About the Author: Tech Sgt. William Shepherd is an instructor at the Tactical Air Control Party at Hurlburt Field, FL.

Keith Grimes (pictured center), considered to be the grandfather of Special Operations Weather

Quietly Serving for 70 Years

By Captain Charles R. Cunningham and SMSgt Christopher M. Decorte

SPECIAL OPERATIONS WEATHER TEAMS

The roots of today's Special Operations Weather Teams can be traced back to World War II when the Office of Strategic Services (the CIA predecessor) trained 36 volunteers from the 19th Weather Squadron. These weather volunteers were trained in parachuting, close quarters combat, escape and evasion, and advanced weapons qualifications. Armed with these advanced skill sets, the intent was to deploy these "Weather Commandos" as part of the Allied Forces' first wave of the Normandy invasion in order to collect forward weather observation data. Perhaps the best historical account is that of SSgt Robert A. Dodson. At 0230hrs on June 6th, 1944, Sergeant Dodson jumped with Force "A", a small Air Support Party from the Ninth Air Force attached to Headquarters, 82nd Airborne Division onto a field of grazing cattle just northeast of St. Mere Eglise, France. For the next 15 days, he conducted weather observation duties. Each hour he sent back present weather, wind direction and speed, visibility, ceiling and cloud heights, temperature, and dew point data with his VHF radio to headquarters elements. On 21 June, he was evacuated to the hospital in Bouteville for treatment on a knee injury he sustained during the airborne insertion on D-Day. Weather parachutists also participated in follow-on operations in both the Netherlands and Yugoslavia. These 'Combat Weathermen', as they became known, had also participated in the Pacific theater against Imperial Japanese forces, developing austere weather networks in 1942.

In the 1960's, members of Detachment 75, 5th Weather Wing, established austere weather networks in Vietnam and Thailand. Combat Weathermen operated in remote hostile areas for extended periods to train foreign forces and indigenous weather personnel to collect environmental data, establish clandestine weather observation networks and transmit information back to weather collection centers. These observations proved very useful in improving weather forecasts briefed to aircrews operating against the Ho Chi Minh Trail and North Vietnam. In 1966, the 10th Weather Squadron was reactivated (the 10th Weather squadron had originally been activated in 1942 and then deactivated after the war) at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base in Thailand and subsequently played an important role in the Son Tay rescue attempt (Operation Kingpin) in 1970. Combat weathermen provided observations and weather forecasts that facilitated the main body rotary wing insertion of US Army Special Forces 56-man assault force. Of note, Maj Keith Grimes was attached to the raid planning staff where his first-hand expertise in Southeast Asian weather forecasting and working with the US Special Forces to establish weather observation links at

various outposts known as "Lima" sites proved invaluable during the planning stages of the operation. Maj Grimes was able to bridge the gap between the conventional weather architecture of the Air Weather Service (operating under the Military Airlift Command) and the specific weather forecast requirements of the operation. Joint Contingency Task Group Ivory Coast, the joint special operations task force that exectued Operation Kingpin, was an early demonstration of joint operating capability and, among several other key operations, was a model for the later creation of United States Special Operations Command. Ultimately, Maj Grimes' colleagues recognized his contributions to Air Force Special Operations by inducting him into the Air Commando Hall of Fame in 1996.

After demonstrating the value of forward environmental collection capability during WWII and Vietnam, Special Operations Weathermen have participated in most major contingencies in modern Special Operations history, including: OPERATION URGENT FURY (Grenada), OPERATION JUST CAUSE (Panama), OPERATIONS DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM (Iraq), Task Force RANGER (Somalia), OPERATION UPHOLD DEMOCRACY (Haiti), operations in Bosnia, counter narcotics operations in South America, OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, as well as present day OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM and NEW DAWN.

During the first Gulf war, Sgt Ronald H. Kellerman was assigned to the 39th Special Operations Wing when Iraq invaded Kuwait in August of 1990. While deployed to the United Arab Emirates, he single-handedly built the largest ever weather network using HF radio capability. Traveling to 23 locations, Sgt Kellerman worked to get other weather teams on line. He acted as the "network manager" and ensured air, ground, sea, SOF, and coalition commanders, and mission planners had the weather intelligence that they needed when they needed it. Thousands of observations, pilot reports, forecasts, and surf zone conditions were transmitted on his watch. Without this effort, it would have been impossible to provide accurate and time-sensitive weather information to combat forces throughout the AOR. In 2005, SMSgt (Ret.) Kellerman was inducted into the Air Commando Hall of Fame.

In March 2003 during OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, SSgt John "Dusty" Lee was instrumental in providing critical weather support both at the strategic and tactical levels. SSgt Lee was in northeastern Iraq, near the Iranian border for the purpose of conducting

SSgts Lee (Left) and Galdamez (Right) are pictured in northeastern Iraq in 2003.

chemical downwind messaging in the event the Iraqis decided to use chemical warfare against US and coalition forces. Additionally, he was responsible for conducting forward weather observing as environmental data in that region was sparse. This data was critical to enabling the close air support assets supporting Special Forces elements from the 10th Special Forces Group that were linked up with the Peshmerga (armed Kurdish fighters), who were fighting Saddam Hussein's forces in northeastern Iraq. With the aid of Special Forces advisors, the Peshmerga were successful in evicting the terrorist forces of Ansar-al-Islam from the region and later fighting elements of Iraq's V Corps. SSgt Lee's element was involved in heavy fighting on at least six separate occasions during these series of engagements.

The special operations weather community has experienced significant growth and development in the last in the last ten years. Major highlights include standing up a separate enlisted AFSC, 1W0X2, establishing a formal training pipeline, and codifying regulations and funding necessary to resource and field such a capability. Beginning on 1 October, 2008, the special operations weather community finalized the stand-up of the Special Operations Weather career field and for the first time ever, the Air Force could enlist recruits off the street directly into the SOWT specialty instead of asking existing conventional weather forecasters to volunteer for special operations duties. With this came the formalization of a training pipeline necessary to provide the appropriate weather skills combined with the tactical special operations skills and capabilities required to become a SOF qualified individual.

The present day pipeline consists of attending the Special Operations Weather Selection Course after basic training. From there SOWT candidates attend the 30-week Initial Skills Course, where they learn the academics and initial skills of weather forecasting and observing alongside the conventional weather trainees. However, while at the initial skills course SOWT candidates are required to maintain high levels of physical fitness through a stringent daily physical training regimen, in addition to their rigorous academic responsibilities. After graduating the initial skills course, SOWT candidates attend basic Airborne School, Basic SERE, water survival, and underwater egress schools. Next, trainees attend the 13-week Special

SSgt Gruber and A1C Graham pose after being awarded the coveted Grey Beret, as the first graduates of the SOWT pipeline in 2010.

Operations Weather Apprentice Course (SOWAC) at the Combat Control School. After graduating SOWAC, they move to Hurlburt Field and attend 14 weeks of training at the 23rd Weather Squadron where they hone their operational and tactical weather forecasting skills.

Finally, they get their top-off Operational Readiness Training from the Special Tactics Training Squadron. After a little over two years they are considered basic mission qualified and are assigned to the 10th Combat Weather Squadron at Hurlburt Field, FL -- the Air Force's only Special Operations Weather Squadron.

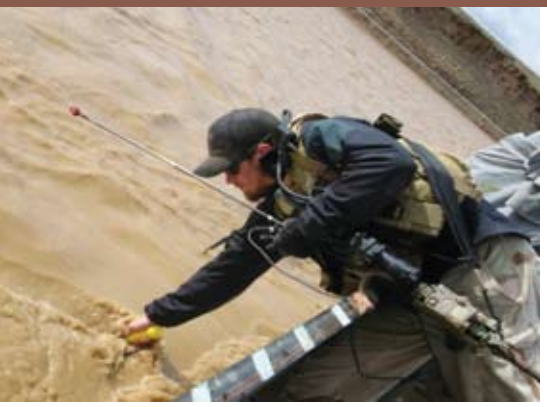
On the officer side, the weather officer career field stood up an official career field shred (C-suffix) rather than a separate AFSC. Due to the extremely low numbers of required SOWT officers, it was determined that a separate career field would not be feasible in terms of offering appropriate professional progression opportunities. The pipeline for officers is essentially the same as the enlisted side with one exception. The officers attend the Weather Officers Course in place of the initial skills course of their enlisted counterparts.

What makes SOWT unique from the conventional weather community is their ability to shoot, move, and communicate with their Army and Navy SOF counterparts. SOWTs are able to provide valuable environmental feedback in permissive, non-permissive, and politically sensitive locations where weather data is typically very sparse. SOWTs are able to provide manual forward weather observations, emplace a host of tactical environmental sensors, and use small unmanned aerial vehicles in order to collect environmental information. This data is shared with the larger weather community to build a better characterization of environmental conditions in a particular combat theater.

In addition to the tactical mission, SOWTs are tasked with providing more traditional staff support roles at the company, battalion, and group levels. Staff and C2 integration is where weather input is perhaps most critical. SOWTs are important contributors to joint planning, where they help synchronize air and ground assets with forecasted weather and environmental effects of the battlespace. Additionally, SOWTs provide commanders with critical real-time situational awareness when enemy engagements require quick-reaction forces, close air support, and/or medical evacuation capability. Being able to advise commanders of weather impacts on these assets is critical to mitigating risk during the mission planning process. In addition to supporting Army Ground SOF units, SOWTs are also responsible for providing weather support to USASOC's elite aviation units.

In the years since 9/11, SOWTs have proven to be a critical SOF enabling capability in overseas contingency operations. In Iraq, SOWTs have provided the full spectrum of environmental support to SOF air and ground component forces throughout the OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM and now OPERATION NEW DAWN campaigns. SOWTs aided in the opening of numerous airfields early in the campaign. They were responsible for placing forward weather sensors, exponentially increasing the theater's weather sensing network.

SSgt Tom Dishon inserted into Iraq with a 6-man combat reconnaissance patrol tasked to establish a Landing Zone for the 173rd Airborne Aviation Brigade prior to the largest airborne assault since the Panama invasion in 1989. He was tasked with forward observations, limited-data forecasting and the very difficult decision of finding a window of opportunity despite persistent fog and low cloud decks below the limits of the fifteen C-17s flying non-stop from Italy. With the C-17s 30 minutes out and the weather still below minimums, he used his own observation coupled with the forecasts provided from Germany and Offutt AFB to make his "go" recommendation. In his words, he felt he was the "man of the mission" and how this was his most rewarding moment as a SOWT. His hard work in inhospitable weather enabled the successful airborne assault of 954



SSgt Howser conducts a river assessment in southern Afghanistan spring of 2009.

paratroopers into Iraq.

In Afghanistan, known for its austere and non-permissive nature, the SOWTs capability has been called upon more than ever before. SOWTs have been responsible for collecting and producing more than 450 Terrain Reports (tactical environmental collection snapshots of a specific area or region on the battlefield). Terrain Reports provide a full-spectrum summary of terrain and weather effects for a location and considers variables such as body of water analysis, soil type/composition analysis, and vegetation analysis among other variables. SOWTs take these data points and develop an environmental sight picture for impacts to ground operations, vehicle and foot traffic, river crossings, airdrops, and rotary wing operations. In addition to terrain reports, SOWTs have been heavily tasked with providing forward weather observations in order to produce a better weather picture of an otherwise fairly data-sparse battlefield. Forward weather observations are fed into the larger sensing network to give all weather personnel operating in the theater a better characterization of the environment.

In more recent years, SOWTs have refined their ability to effectively and accurately conduct riverine assessments. Augmenting human analysis with the latest in sensor technology, Special Operations Weather Teams have been able to advise SOF commanders on the state of the river systems in Afghanistan. Riverine assessments are extremely critical in Afghanistan as the annual surge in enemy activity is tied to the spring thaw. Armed with the knowledge of flood plains, river levels, currents, and temperatures, commanders can better assess and determine the likelihood of enemy movement and activity. The riverine assessment capability has proven valuable both tactically and operationally.

Another typical SOWT mission was preformed during the summer of 2011. Coalition forces conducted a humanitarian assistance operation to deliver 200 tons of aid to the remote Afghan provinces of Kunar and Nuristan. To be a success, this operation required that a 100-vehicle convoy negotiate a difficult route in order to reach the isolated area. TSgt Gibson, a SOWT operator was positioned on a strategically important ridge overlooking the convoy route and provided continuous real-time observations directly to higher-echelon conventional weather units. His observations were used to provide GO/NO GO weather recommendations during 14 medical evacuations and were communicated directly to aircrews during 46 close air support engagements. During the 12-day operation, TSgt Gibson and the other SOF on the ridge endured persistent insurgent mortar and rocket bombardment. Additionally during the later stages of the operation, the SOWT correctly forecast a severe storm that washed away much of the main supply route. However, armed with advanced warning of the storm, combat engineers mitigated the damage by pre-staging bulldozers and heavy equipment and rapidly repaired the road once the storm passed. In the end, TSgt Gibson's forward weather observations enabled the successful delivery of the humanitarian aid, the safe extraction of 106 soldiers from the exposed ridge under the protection of air support, and the medical evacuation of 25 US and Afghan casualties.

Drawing on their roots from Vietnam, SOWTs operating in Afghanistan have also worked to establish clandestine weather observation networks by training indigenous personnel in basic environmental data collection, mainly through the use of handheld weather sensors. Local weather observers transmit information back to SOWTs operating at headquarters locations. This information is used for Terrain Report development and for ingestion into the larger weather enterprise. Weather forecasters are then able to use this data to complement and verify model data which is used to produce many varieties of weather support products, from large-scale weather outlook forecasts and specific point forecasts, to mission execution forecasts.

In 2001, Gen Charles Holland presented SSgt Craig Musselman (pictured above) the Purple Heart. SSgt Musselman was SOWT's first wounded in action conducting combat operations in Afghanistan. There have been a total of four SOWT Purple Heart recipients to date from OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM.

The current day SOWT operator is a culmination of more than 70 years of evolution. In an age of warfare where joint operations demand the seamless integration of maritime, air, and ground forces to operate in concert with one another, the ability to accurately characterize and forecast the environment is more important than ever. The simple fact is that wherever Special Operations Forces are asked to go there will be a critical need for SOWT to provide meteorological support to them.

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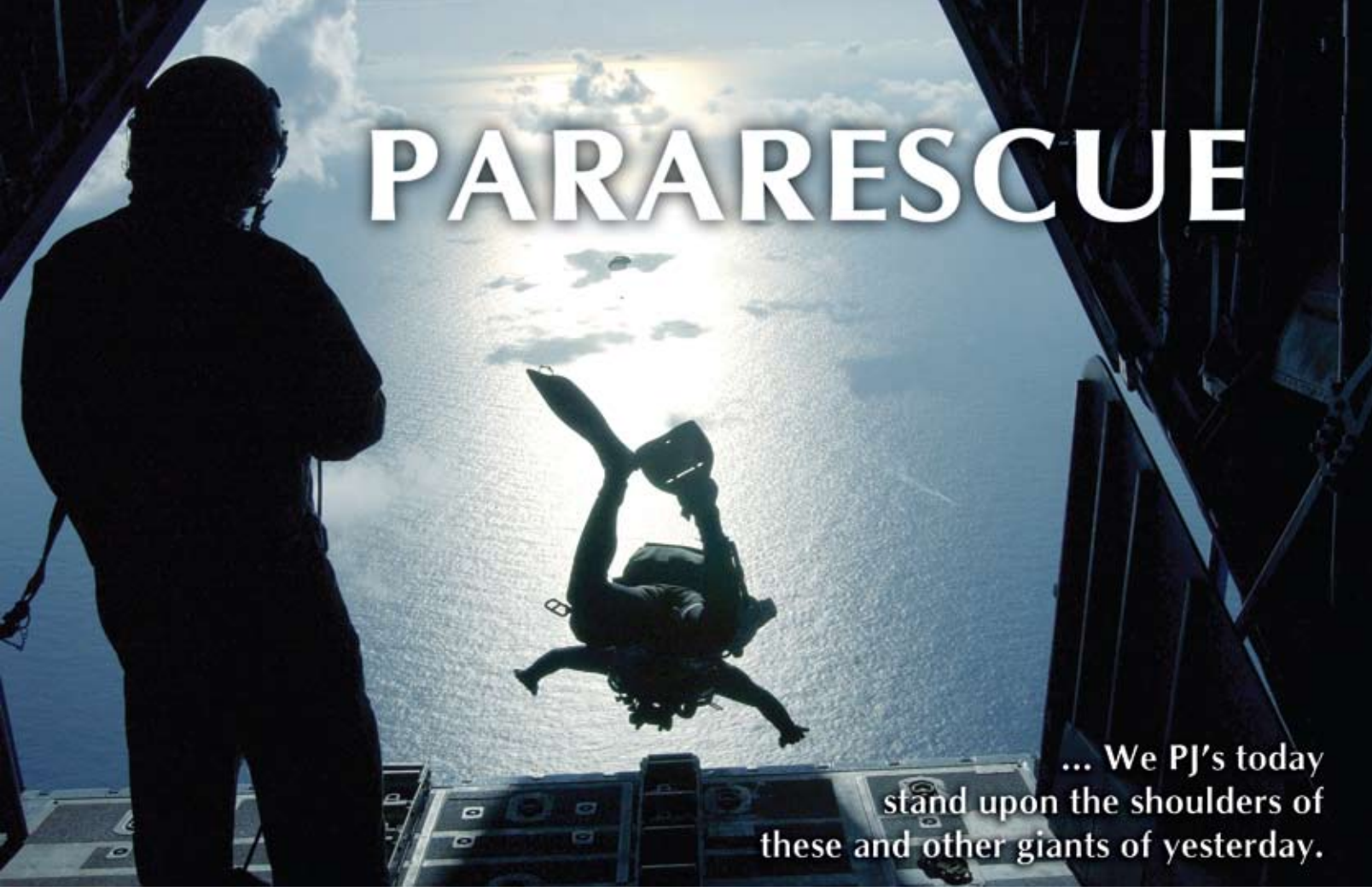
SMSgt Chris DeCorte is currently the Manager of Standards and Evaluation, AFSOC A3W. He has served as a SOWT for the last 15 years.



Written and compiled by CMSgt Lee Shaffer,
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Air Force Pararescuemen, also known as PJs, are the only Department of Defense (DoD) elite combat forces specifically organized, trained, equipped, and postured to conduct full spectrum Personnel Recovery (PR) to include both conventional and unconventional combat rescue operations. These Battlefield Airmen are the most highly trained and versatile Personnel Recovery specialists in the world. Pararescue is the nation's force of choice to execute the most perilous, demanding, and extreme rescue missions anytime, anywhere across the globe. The 500+ PJs are assigned to Guardian Angel and Special Tactics Squadrons throughout the Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve Air Force components. They operate most often as independent teams but routinely serve alongside with other US and Allied Special Operations Forces.

Mission: To rescue, recover, and return American or Allied forces in times of danger or extreme duress. Whether shot down or isolated behind enemy lines; surrounded, engaged, wounded, or captured by the enemy; PJs will do whatever is required to deny the enemy a victory and bring our warriors home to fight another day. "Leave no Airman, Marine, Soldier, or Sailor behind" is our nation's supreme promise and responsibility to our brave war fighters. The Air Force holds true to this moral imperative. Personnel Recovery is an Air Force Core Function; one of twelve functions the Air Force provides the nation. The PJs are the elite ground forces that provide our nation with the capability to execute this noble responsibility.

Capabilites: To execute the PR mission, Pararescue teams assault, secure, and dominate the rescue objective area utilizing any available DoD or Allied, air, land, or sea asset. Their qualifications and capabilities are extensive. All PJs are qualified experts in Advanced Weapons and Small Unit Tactics, Airborne and Military Free Fall, both High Altitude Low Opening (HALO) and High Altitude High Opening (HAHO) parachute operations, Combat Divers, High Angle/Confined Space Rescue operations, Small Boat/Vehicle Craft utilization, Rescue Swimmers, and Battlefield Trauma/Paramedics. All can fast rope/rappel/hoist from any vertical lift aircraft to both land and open ocean rescue objectives. All PJs can perform both static line and HALO jump operations utilizing boats, vehicles, or other equipment from any fixed wing aircraft. In addition, 1 in 12 personnel are tandem jump qualified and can HALO/HAHO both equipment and non-jump personnel into the objective area.

As required, all PJs can jump in with and utilize extrication devices to remove war fighters or civilians trapped in wreckage or collapse structures. PJs also utilize the latest subsurface technology to locate and recover submerged equipment or personnel.

Recent History: Since 9/11 alone, these elite warriors have executed over 12,000 life saving, combat rescue missions. They've also eliminated and captured numerous enemy combatants during the execution of these missions. Additionally, because of their unique capabilities, they have been called upon to rescue over 5,000 civilians worldwide during catastrophic natural disasters and other responses to include Hurricane Katrina and the Haitian Earthquake.

Operations ENDURING FREEDOM AND IRAQI FREEDOM:

Pararescueman have utilized every capability mentioned above during rescue missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Horn of Africa. They've performed numerous combat jump operations. One of the more notable operations was a night HALO from a USAF HC-130 to rescue an Allied soldier struck by a mine. The 3 man team landed adjacent to the mine field, recovered the soldier, and moved to an extraction site; 30 minutes later, two USAF HH-60's exfiled the team and mortally wounded soldier. PJ's have even performed several dive recovery missions in both AORs, under fire, to extract soldiers and aircrew from wreckage in lakes, rivers, and canals. PJs, working side by side with their SOF brothers have executed several hundred direct action missions to eliminate or capture high value targets and have engaged in hostage rescue operations. One of the most notable is the rescue of Pvt Jessica Lynch. PJs execute both conventional and unconventional rescue missions multiple times a day across the AOR, they along side with the brave rescue aircrews who fly them into hotly contested objective areas, are saving US and Allied lives at a historic rate.

Origin and Brief History of Pararescue. The concept of PARARESCUE began in August of 1943, when 21 persons bailed out of a disabled C-46 over an uncharted jungle near the China-Burma border. So remote was the crash site that the only means of getting help to the survivors was by paradrop. Lieutenant Colonel Don Fleckinger and two medical corpsmen volunteered for the assignment. For a month these men, aided by natives, cared for the injured until the party was brought to safety. News commentator Eric Severeid was one of the men to survive this ordeal. He later wrote of the men who risked their lives to save his: "Gallant is a precious word; they deserve it". This rescue mission was the seed from which the concept of PARARESCUE was born. From this event the need for a highly trained rescue force was validated; Pararescue teams where officially authorized and established on 1 July 1947. The first teams were fielded and assigned to each Air Rescue Squadron in November 1947 to provide global rescue coverage. PJ teams were equipped and trained to jump to the aid of crashed airman in contested and uncontested areas inaccessible by other means.

The history of Pararescue since 1947 is full of heroic actions both in combat and in peacetime. PJs have performed rescues in virtually every corner of the world. Below are some of the more notable operations, but due to the constraints of this short article, it is not an all-inclusive list.

Korean War: Air Rescue squadrons with assigned PJs were tasked to rescue pilots and other UN personnel from behind enemy lines and evacuate critically wounded men from front line aid stations. Air Rescue crews and PJs rescued 996 from enemy territory; 86 from within friendly lines; and evacuated a total of 8,598, most of whom were front-line ground casualties.

PJs were often required to make extended excursions from the helicopters in enemy territory to recover downed pilots. Excursions frequently required a surface stay of 24 to 48 hours with 2 to 3 miles of overland travel. The longest known excursion, Lone Wolf, lasted 72 hours in enemy territory.

PJs executed at least one airborne operation at Suwon and Seoul. A 3-man Pararescue element inserted as part of a reception party, 23 March 1951, on the Munsan-ni drop zone prior to the airdrop of 3,500 paratroopers, 187 Airborne Regimental Combat Team (RCT).

16 April 1954: Two pararescuemen jumped to the crash site of a Navy patrol bomber high on the polar ice cap. They landed in high winds and traveled more than a mile over treacherous ice ridges to the crash. A storm with temperatures below zero and winds, often times exceeding 100 knots, howled around them for 11 days. On the 12th day, the storm abated and they and the bodies (all aboard the bomber died upon impact) were lifted from the crash site by helicopter. Previously, no expert considered military operations in the Arctic practical or even possible on any significant scale because of the extreme cold, high winds, and difficult terrain. This and other ice-cap rescue jumps proved conclusively that with proper expertise, minimal equipment, and "guts," troops can survive and operate for significant periods of time under the worst of arctic conditions.

1956: By 1956, it is estimated that the Air Rescue Service and assigned PJs rescued over 4,078 people from certain death.

NASA Support 1961 – to present: PJs provide rescue and recovery support to all of the manned space flights from the Mercury Program through the 2011 Space Shuttle Flights. Contingency recovery operations were worked for manned as well as some unmanned flights. Missions of note include the recovery of Astronaut Scott Carpenter and his Aurora 7 Mercury spacecraft after landing 250 miles from recovery ships. Two pararescuemen jumped from an ARS SC-54 and secured astronaut Carpenter and the capsule until pickup by the USS Intrepid. During the Gemini program, a three-man pararescue team jumped from an HC-54 and secured the Gemini 8 spacecraft after its emergency splashdown with astronauts Neil A. Armstrong and David R. Scott.

May 26, 1966: The Chief of Staff approved the pararescue uniform. He noted: "Pararescue personnel are highly trained specialists who perform extremely hazardous duties demanding the very highest of mental and physical discipline

and thus deserve to wear the distinctive attire consisting of maroon beret, bloused trousers with combat boots, and special badge, both on and off base."

Southeast Asia (SEA): Some of the most inspiring and heroic stories of PJs originate from the conflict in SEA. PJs along with the valiant rescue crews of the Air Rescue Service risked their lives flying over hostile territory to rescue friendly forces needing aid. Daily, PJs volunteered to ride the rescue hoist through a hail of bullets into the Vietnamese jungle to rescue shot down aircrews and evacuate wounded soldiers and marines. During the SEA conflict, PJs were credited with 4,120 lives saved, of which 2,780 were combat saves. PJs took part in the raid on Son Tay POW camp and the recovery of the SS Mayaguez and its American crew from the Cambodian Khmer Rouge. The Air Force awarded 19 Air Force Crosses to enlisted personnel during the SEA conflict; 10 of the 19 were awarded to PJs. Seventy-nine PJs were awarded the Silver Star. Three PJs were recipients of both a Silver Star and an Air Force Cross. Five PJs received three Silver Stars and ten PJs received two Silver Stars. Twenty pararescuemen were killed in action and two became POWs.

1981: Air Rescue and Recovery Service, to which PJs were assigned, logged their 20,000th life saved during a rescue mission in the Philippines.

Just Cause: PJs were among the first US combatants to parachute into Panama during Operation Just Cause (1989). Their combat rescue expertise was heavily utilized during this short, intense operation. In fact, using specially modified vehicles dubbed "RATT-V's" they rescued and recovered the majority of US casualties on the two Panamanian controlled airfields that were taken by the initial invasion forces.

Desert Storm: PJs were tasked with rescue missions involving downed aircrew members and injured combatants during United Nations Operation Desert Storm. This action for the liberation of Kuwait again proved the value of the Air Force PJs. Among the missions they performed was the rescue of a downed F-14 navigator in a very hostile area and involved the destruction of enemy forces in very close proximity to the survivor. PJs also provided extensive support for airlift and ground operations providing humanitarian relief to Kurdish refugees fleeing into northern Iraq.

Bosnia Operations: PJs provided 24/7 Combat Search and Rescue coverage for NATO and USAF operations in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia. PJs operated from HH/MH-60s, MH-53s, HC-130s and MC-130Ps in support of Bosnia operations. Early in the Bosnia effort, PJs participated in the unsuccessful CSAR effort for a shot down French fighter crew, but in 1999 they flew successful CSAR missions to retrieve shot down USAF F-117 and F-16 pilots.

Somalia: PJs were involved in the struggle to capture Somalia leader Mohammed Fhara Aidid. Assigned jointly with Army Rangers, PJs were tasked to operate in a Search and Rescue (SAR) role on Army helicopters. After the initial assault began, two Army helicopters were shot down, PJs responded to the scene to rescue the survivors. The helos crashed in the middle of the battle zone. The PJs, along with a combat controller and additional Army Rangers, were inserted into the firefight, extricated injured personnel from further danger and administered life saving emergency medical treatment. Many lives were saved and enemy combatants eliminated as a direct result of their heroic actions. One PJ was award the Air Force Cross and another, a Silver Star.

Humanitarian Rescues: Since their inception in 1947, PJs have performed thousands of peacetime humanitarian rescue missions through the world. They've rescued victims from every continent and every ocean following catastrophic events. For example, in a two week period, PJs were called upon to aid two Russian transport merchant seamen in two different areas. The first mission involved a badly burned sailor on a Russian transport vessel in the Atlantic, 700 miles from the nearest land. Two PJs, stationed in the Azores were flown to the Russian ship. They parachuted near the ship and treated the sailor until the ship reached port days later saving his life. Two weeks later another distress call from a Russian ship was relayed. This time the ship was a fishing vessel in the Pacific Ocean off the Oregon Coast. A team of three PJs from Portland parachuted into the Pacific. They treated the Russian sailor for serious back and head injuries caused by a fall. When the ship was close enough, a Coast Guard vessel picked up the sailor and took him ashore to a hospital.

In 1989, PJs were instrumental in recovering and treating injured motorists at a collapsed section of highway following a devastating earthquake in the San Francisco, California area. PJs were the only rescue people "on-scene" who would volunteer to crawl between the sections of collapsed highway to access conditions and recover casualties. President Bush personally recognized the heroic actions of these men. PJs recently executed similar responses during the earthquakes in Pakistan and Haiti.

Decorations: PJs are the most highly decorated Air Force enlisted force. They've been awarded one Medal of Honor, 12 Air Force Crosses, and 105 Silver Stars.

Their motto, "These Things We Do, That Others May Live," affirms Pararescue's dedication and commitment to saving lives and self-sacrifice. To date: 54 Pararescuemen have paid the ultimate sacrifice during the performance of their duty. Ten pararescueman have been killed in action during OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM and OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. Twenty pararescuemen were killed in action during the Viet Nam war. And 24 pararescuemen have been killed during peacetime rescue missions or during training incidents.

A Sailor
Special

’s Appreciation of Tactics

By Dr. James G. Roche, Former Secretary of the Air Force

Former Secretary of the Air Force James G. Roche

The history of my interest in USAF Special Tactics is convoluted. It begins with Chief Warrant Officer Philip “Moki” Martin, US Navy, a SEAL still held in the highest regard today as he was during his active duty career. Moki was an officer in the engineering department of the ship I commanded, a guided missile destroyer, USS Buchanan (DDG–14.) He was also the first SEAL with whom I served in the course of my career in the Navy.

In those days, the 1960s and 1970s, Navy SEALs were thought of as being in the “other” category. The real Navy consisted of ship drivers, submariners, and pilots. In the “other” category was all the rest of the Navy. It was not in the course of our education or training to spend any time with the special operations part of the Navy, although we all knew about Navy frogmen in World War II (mainly from movies.) So having an officer like Moki on board my ship was my introduction to the Special Forces part of US Navy. The SEALs were considered to be so out of the normal mainstream of the Navy that “regular officers” (Naval Academy graduates and NROTC 4-year scholarship officers) were not permitted to join the SEALs. The thinking was that the Navy did not know what to do with SEALs once they became Lieutenant Commanders. Therefore, it made more sense to just have reserve officers in the SEAL community who could be released back to civilian life without making a career in the Navy. Moki, however, was an example of an officer who had progressed through the enlisted ranks.

Over time, my friend Moki taught me much about the SEALs. He also lived up to their legends. For instance, if we had a ship’s picnic, Moki would arrive by parachute with streamers of colored smoke coming out of his heels. Or, once when we had an officers’ picnic, he emerged from the waters of Mission Bay in San Diego with a basket full of abalone because he knew that my wife liked abalone. Moki Martin was and is a remarkable gentleman, a very stoic individual, a wonderful military officer, and continues to do remarkable things even to this day. (A number of years ago, he was in training for a triathlon competition. He was riding his bike with his head down, and collided head-on with another bike rider. Moki was paralyzed from the neck down. But, with his incredible focus and determination, a wonderful wife, Cindy, and a lot of physical therapy, now Lieutenant Phillip “Moki” Martin, US Navy (ret) has become an established and award winning artist who paints with his brush clenched in his teeth.)

While careful in describing his exploits in Vietnam, he educated me on his training and the kinds of missions for which he prepared. Among other things, I’ll never forget that he was a SEAL who was trained to parachute into snow-packed mountains. Therefore, he was sent to some of the best ski resorts and schools to perfect his skiing skills. He was aghast when I suggested that the ski resorts might be a bit of a waste of taxpayer monies.

Later, while serving in the Pentagon, I visited the BUDs unit in San Diego. Moki was my host, and was most proud to take me through the equipment on which they trained, and the weaponry that was available to them. He even showed me some Navy issued skis…. And, so, my interest in special warfare continued. But, I had no idea that the Air Force also had similarly skilled Airmen.

In my time in industry, I led the team that built an Advanced Swimmer Delivery Vehicle for the SEALs. It was a dramatic fight almost every week with the Navy submarine acquisition community because they did not believe that any firm should build a non-nuclear submarine, no matter how small. In my battles with them, my background knowledge of the SEALs gained through Moki Martin provided me with the incentive to keep fighting. In one argument, a Vice Admiral and I were exchanging words, and when I pointed out that this vehicle would allow SEALs to get to the beach dry and warm, he remarked, “The nation is better off if the SEALs are kept cold and wet.” The boat carried a small contingent of SEALs, and was piloted by one SEAL and one submariner. It was a remarkable device that could operate independently for about three days.

After much agony, the ASDS was delivered to the Navy, and was based in a new building in Pearl Harbor named in Moki’s honor. It was designed to be carried by a modified nuclear submarine, and it was used for a few covert missions. When in Pearl, I visited the SEAL unit, and they were ecstatic about the system.

However, because we were at the forefront of new and powerful batteries, we learned that the batteries on board discharged an explosive gas when they were being charged, as well as when they were discharging. To handle this danger, we built in a venting system. Unfortunately, during one charging cycle in Pearl, something went amiss and the venting system was not activated. A spark was all that was needed to cause a massive fire within the vehicle, and it was a total loss. Still, I felt that we had kept faith with the SEALs by making the ASDS a reality (financially, the company never made a dime on the thing.)

When I entered the Air Force in 2001 as the Secretary, I knew a little about AFSOC and its gun ships, but, as noted above, I knew nothing whatsoever about Special Tactics. In the summer of 2001, I was a having a conversation with the then Chief of Staff of the US Army, Gen. Rick Shinseki, about various pieces of equipment that the soldiers carried. This was part of my long-term interest in trying to make each individual fighting man so superior that when in a group, the unit would be an extraordinary weapon against any enemy. A retired Israeli Air Force general convinced me of this proposition when I visited his small think tank for a day in Tel Aviv. It was he who taught me about the multiplier effect of the Longbow archers at the battle of Agincourt where the English king, Henry V, defeated a much larger French army. I became a believer.

So, when Rick told me about a pair of binoculars that had a built in laser range-finding system that provided x, y, and z coordinates of a potential target, I became excited. I knew that if these binoculars could be tied in with a GPS unit and a small computer and radio, one could give aircraft accurate and actionable targeting information. With such a system, one could have air controllers on the ground bring aircraft onto targets with a precision that simply had not existed in the past. He agreed. With his backing, I ventured down to Tampa to speak to the SOCOM staff about the notion of building units that would allow someone on the ground to be able to put a laser on target and have that information transmitted up to an aircraft which would then use the information for attacking the target with either GPS or laser guided bombs. It is sad to say, but no one in Tampa was really interested.

But, the people who were interested turned out to be the Special Tactics Airmen. The combat controller community had come up with a similar idea, and was using an experimental kluge of equipment in Afghanistan after 9/11. During one debriefing in my conference room attended by two Special Tactics Controllers, Lt Col Mike Martin and Master Sergeant Matt Lienhard, Matt told General Jumper and me about how he and his partner quickly departed from a hilltop as the Taliban came up the hill. When the Controllers got to the next hill, they brought down upon the Taliban a number of 2000 pound bombs. I smiled and said, "You must enter each of your stops as a waypoint in your GPS unit, and therefore would have had the precise coordinates to target the attack." He genuinely looked surprised, so I told him that I spend a lot of whatever free time I have underway on the Chesapeake, and am quite familiar with hand-held GPS units.

Not long thereafter, I had the privilege of going to Hurlburt

Field to visit this group of people about whom I had known nothing. It was on this visit that I met and began a friendship that continues to this day with Lt Gen (now General) Paul Hester. While there, I was asked to officiate at the awarding of a Purple Heart to a Combat controller who had been severely injured in combat while he and his partner were bringing aircraft onto specific targets using the hodgepodge of GPS and other instruments. His name was SSgt Alan Yoshida.

In the course of reading up on Alan's experience, I was struck by the fact that Airmen, like Alan, were willing to experiment and use new systems, even if not fully developed, in ways that might make their ability to bring airpower to bear even better than before. At the end of the ceremony, I started a conversation with Alan. He, like Moki, is a remarkable gentleman, and equally stoic. He was concerned that his days in the Air Force might be limited because of his injuries. This encounter led to two decisions. One, I decided that the Air Force would never separate an Airman from the Air Force who had been injured in combat if it were possible to bring him back onto active duty. If we had to separate an Airman for reasons of combat related injuries, we would train him or her as a civilian and offer that same young person a meaningful position as a civilian in the Air Force. The second decision I made was to ask Alan to take the lead on telling us exactly what should be part of the battle kits for Combat controllers. The former decision eventually led the DoD to create the Wounded Warrior Program, but the Air Force was at least two years ahead of anyone else. To be fair, we were facing a far smaller number of injured Americans than were our sister Services, and we could move much more quickly. The latter decision was one of the best I made in my tenure as Secretary, and I could not have chosen a better "action officer" than Alan.

Alan was interested and we decided to chat sometime later. We were honest with each other. I told him that he would have a lot of senior people working for him, if I had my way, but they would be doing so out of admiration for him and his colleagues, and not as a matter of rank. Alan fully understood, and told me there were a lot of things that could be done to make Combat controllers, and later Special Tactics Airmen, even more effective than they were. And so, with General Hester's blessings, began a wonderful relationship that has led to a number of innovations in the Special Tactics Community.

None of what has happened could have happened was it not for the sustained support I received from two of our senior general officers: Gen John Jumper, who was the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and then Lt Gen Paul Hester, who was the commander of AFSOC at the time. John Jumper encouraged me to go at it and do what I could, and Paul Hester was kind enough to put up with my ideas and my lobbying and everything else. On one occasion shortly after Alan began working with his fellow Controllers on deciding what we should be doing with the equipment carried by a Combat controller, I invited him up to Washington along with a few of his colleagues to discuss Combat Control and Special Tactics with my Secretary of the Air Force Advisory Board. This Board was made up of senior people from industry and academia, and was a knowledgeable group of people who wanted very much to help the Air Force be better and better. As one might expect, if you know Alan, he brought along a couple of sergeants who have to be listed as some of the best salesmen on the face of the earth. They not only told the advisory board about Combat Control and Special Tactics, they talked about replacing the kluge of instruments with a single unit that would be lighter. They called this the Battlefield Airmen's Operation (BAO) Kit and even brought a cardboard model of what it might look like and how it would contain a laser system that was both an illuminator and designator, and how it would have the computer and GPS and radio all as part of it, and, therefore, increase the efficiency and effectiveness of a CCT.

The Board members were thoroughly impressed, and asked them when they thought they could have this BAO kit in service. And that's when the sergeants played their trump card. They responded that it was going to take about $6 million to do this, but they simply did not have the money to do it. One of the Board members said that's ridiculous, you can get that kind of money. The sergeants innocently asked, "From where?" And the Board members all pointed to me and one said, "Obviously you can get these guys $6 million." I had little choice but to say, "Yes, they will have the $6 million," and I so directed my staff. The sergeants simply smiled in innocence, but did face a "one sided conversation" with some senior officers upon their return. Later, when Paul Hester found out about this, he felt that he had to say, "Boss, forgive me, but you're interfering with my budgeting process." I looked at him smiling and said, "Paul, I know I am, but you'll like it in the end, and this probably won't be the last time." He continued to smile, and I understood. He had spoken for his "iron majors," but he was delighted to give me the chance to use additional monies to push for more innovation in this community. While there has been some progress in design, the BAO kit still isn't fielded after almost ten years, and that's a shame.

In the course of a year or two, Alan did a number of remarkable things for which we all owe him a debt of gratitude. For instance, he approached the problem by talking to his colleagues to get ideas as to where to begin. For example, the basic rucksack that the Combat controller carried weighed about 135 pounds. I asked him what would be a reasonable goal toward which we should work to get that weight down. He responded something like 85 pounds. I said, "Let's do it," and Alan proceeded to take apart a typical rucksack and studied each and every part in it. Besides weight, he identified the problem of that the Controllers often had to pause to switch radio antennas, possibly in a firefight. Along with another sergeant, they designed and built a connector that would allow a Controller to switch between antennas easily and quickly.

As he looked at each thing in the rucksack, he found that they had a number of tripods and other base units that were made of metal. When he discussed this with me, I pointed out that in the modern era we could substitute carbon composite materials for most of the metal and, thereby, lower the weight carried. He next went looking at batteries and realized how much weight was taken up by carrying spare batteries. A team from the Air Force labs and from small companies looked at whether or not we could invent something that was able to charge rechargeable batteries and not have to just keep tossing a lithium-ion batteries onto the ground. He tried many things from fuel cells to others to see if there was a way to build a sensible charger. This process continues to this day because it's just a very, very difficult problem. By the time I left the Air Force to retire, he had gotten the weight down below 110 pounds.

Alan had an interest in making sure that the Controller on the ground could see what was on the other side of a hill. So, he decided to press to have a very tiny drone developed which could fit into a rucksack and which could give the Controller or the PJ on the ground about 30 minutes of visual information sent back to a small computer. A device that was the size and shape of a pistol grip controlled the little UAV. Even I flew it. The small company came up with the idea of using materials that are normally used in sailboards. This allowed for the wings to be wrapped around the drone, and placed into an easily carried tube. We knew it was an 80% solution, but we wanted to get something to the Combat Control community as soon as we could.

Unfortunately, shortly after I left the Air Force, the acquisition community decided that they had to take over this program. It was not until the summer of 2007 that they decided to procure a similar but different drone. In fact, the UAV they developed is better (I was asked to test fly it at Hulburt). It is 20% better at best, can be fitted into a rucksack, and it will stay aloft for 30 minutes (5 minutes more than the system Alan had developed). Its advantage is that you can switch the nose and have either an electrical-optical or an infrared seeker on the front. It was better, but it was not available in the field until we had been at war for more than five years. There is a doctoral dissertation in Systems Engineering done at MIT that talks about how sometimes an acquisition community can cause more difficulties than it should because of program delays like this. The dissertation specifically discusses Alan's little UAV as a case in point.

That's not to say that acquisition officials were not helpful. Many were, and they helped Alan to determine what was and was not feasible. Most of these officers who worked on Alan's project were extraordinarily thoughtful and were just delightful to Alan. But they had set processes that they knew had to be followed. When I asked one of them later on why they grabbed the UAV program and forced it into the usual system that seemingly takes forever to get things done, they told me the following: "Sir, when you were here, we knew we had top cover, and we could be innovative. When you left, we just knew that someone was going to yell at us one day for not following standard procedures. Therefore, we had to bring this program into our normal set of processes." That's a sad commentary on our acquisition system and on how our people have to fear someone yelling at them because they try to do something innovative and as quickly as possible to aid our Airmen fighting in the field.

Among other innovations with which Alan experimented was one that just absolutely tickled me. He found by working with the labs and small companies that he could take the earpieces for the headsets worn by each of the Airmen on the ground, and because of GPS information shared by all, he could actually modify the headset such that if an Airman to your left that you couldn't see spoke on his headset, you turned your head to your left because things came through stereophonically. Similarly for someone behind you, or to the right of you, or ahead of you. It would greatly reduce the probability of friendly fire at night, or even in the daytime. I'm not sure whether this innovation was ever adopted, but it is an example of the sorts of things that Alan's mind generated. In summary, he wanted to lower the weight of materials carried by a Controller. Two, he wanted a Controller or PJ to have situational awareness vastly superior to what he

currently has. And, three, he wanted the Combat controller or PJ to be prepared for what was ahead of him long before he was in hostile fire. These and other innovations are exactly the way to think about how our Special Tactics Airmen should be equipped to go into the field. The more I worked with Alan, and we only saw each other maybe once every nine months, the more I learned about the Combat controllers, Pararescuemen, and Combat Weathermen.

In 2003, it was my sad honor to join with my partner, General Jumper, in awarding two Air Force Crosses posthumously to two very wonderful Airmen who died at Roberts Ridge in 2002. My memory of those two occasions, the widows, children, parents, families, and hundreds of Special Forces colleagues, and my memory of all that I've read about Roberts Ridge haunt me to this day. These young men, SrA Jason Cunningham and Tech Sgt John Chapman, sacrificed their lives to aid their SEAL and Ranger brothers. Special Tactics Airmen can operate on their own as they did in the opening months of the conflict in Afghanistan. But, it is an interesting characteristic of the Special Tactics culture that, unlike others, their doctrine makes it clear that they can contribute the most to the success of a mission for the United States by supporting fellow special operators as they go about their missions. This selfless way of looking at how they can make the greatest contribution is something to be admired. And, in fact, Navy SEALs and Army Special Operators very much do admire the Special Tactics Airmen who serve with them. As is often pointed out, the most powerful warrior on the ground is an Airman with a radio in his hand and the United States Air Force overhead. And, they were present in numbers at the awarding of the Air Force Crosses to the widows of the fallen Airmen at Roberts Ridge, and never fail to attend the funerals of fallen Special Tactics Airmen to this day.

When you work with someone as engaging and as bright as Alan Yoshida, it only causes you to be even bolder in doing more. This was the case in the year 2002. I became interested in the V-22 because Paul Hester said he thought it would be a good adjunct to our AFSOC capabilities. I had difficulties with it coming from an airplane design and manufacturing world in that it was too small, couldn't carry a whole lot, and had the radar cross-section of the Eiffel Tower. But Paul convinced me that this could be a good thing for our Air Commandos. So, while there was a debate going on in the Pentagon over the future of V-22, I approached the Secretary of the Navy and the Commandant to ask if it would be possible for AFSOC personnel to join the program at this early stage, and try to help the program rather than waiting until it was finishing and then deciding whether or not it worked well enough for AFSOC to buy 50 of them. They were both more than willing to have this happen, General Jumper was all for it and Gen Hester assigned some AFSOC acquisition officers to the program office. This made great sense for the Air Force because we had our operating and maintenance people deep into the program to be able to influence its development.

About a year or so later, the senior Marine Corps general for aviation came to my office to talk to me. He was a wonderful officer and we still have a mutual enjoyment of "targeted humor." He entered my office and said, quite angelically that he had a problem and was wondering if I could help. His problem was that as they looked at the program and recognized that the Marine officer who was the program manager was about to retire, they just had no one who could take over the program who was anywhere near as good as the senior Air Force officer. I sat back and started laughing because I could see that my friends in the Marine Corps wanted us to get deeper into this program to assure that at least 50 of the V-22s would be bought for the Air Force. In consultation with Lt Gen Hester and General Jumper, I agreed that we would let this happen. It was a good thing to do.

When later, along with General Jumper, I went down to New River to do a flight test of the V-22, I was delighted to notice that every other officer in the plane or with the program was an Air Force officer. I was especially delighted when I worked with the maintainers to find that the Air Force and Marine maintainers were working far closer together than I might have expected, and doing some very good things for the program. I also had a chance to observe that V-22 engine maintenance differs from other jets in that the engine is vertical when it is being worked on instead of being horizontal. This means that things like rivets falling fall into the engine rather than on the ground, and the drawings for engine assumed that it was horizontal. So, that led to a program to get drawings that were done for the correct size and orientation, and then having them mounted with some masking tape nearby so that the maintainers had the proper aspect to use. I don't know if the falling rivet issue has ever been solved, but I hope it has.

In 2003, I asked General Hester for his ideas about my finding candidates for an aide to replace mine who was going off to command in the AMC world. He smiled yet again and told me that he had just such a candidate in mind: Major "RA" Armfield. RA was chosen, and I was the first SecAF or Chief of Staff to bring a Special Tactics officer into the front offices of the Air Force. Secretly, Paul and I agreed that poor Major Armfield would probably prefer to fight the Taliban, but all good officers should know about the seemingly endless fights that take place in the Pentagon between those who will go into harm's way, and those who wouldn't think of it, but who only fought budgets.

Much of my now graduate-level thinking about Special Operations comes from the brains of Major Armfield. He is a combat controller who is now a full colonel as the commander of the 720th Special Tactics Group. It was RA who could look at something like the interior of the V-22 and visualize what had to be changed to make it more effective for AFSOC and for the Special Tactics Airmen who are going to be traveling in it. He also made sure that my education of AFSOC went to a new level by having me get into a gunship and fire the guns, and also figure out if the guns were older than I was. Or, experience the "thrill" of flying in a Pave Low helicopter, ducking the routine but plentiful hydraulic fluid leaks, and checking whether or not it was built before I was commissioned an Ensign. RA also taught me a lot about Special Operations doctrine, techniques

and procedures. He is a storehouse of information and one of the finest military officers I have ever met. Among other things, he taught me three rules used by the Special Tactics people to remember small but important items. They are as follows:

1. Heat sucks; cold hurts.
2. Cotton kills.
3. Two is one, one is none.

These are little mental reminders of how to pack for a mission (#3 is for things like spare batteries). And, I will remember them till my dying day, for they are as useful to sailors on the Chesapeake Bay as they are for Special Tactics Airmen.

From this work with Alan Yoshida and RA Armfield, many other ideas came to our minds, some of which are reality and others hopefully someday will be a reality. It became clear that we needed to build a special school for advanced concepts for our Special Tactics personnel. The school is built and operating at Hulburt today. And, to my joy, the advanced school for TACPs is less than a block away; this will help in the exchange of thought and experience they bring with them.

It also became clear once we checked on it, that the Air Force Academy was providing no officers to the Special Tactics field. It turns out that, like the Navy at one time, the Air Force Academy simply had no reason or interest in telling the cadets about Special Tactics. It was especially ironic to me because we had superlative cadets graduating from the Air Force Academy who took commissions in the United States Navy in order to join the SEALs! Remarkably, they had no idea whatsoever that there was within the Air Force a professional field equal to the SEAL community in all respects. This was changed in short order. Now some of the finest officers coming into the Special Tactics field are graduates of the Air Force Academy, as it should have been all along.

When RA accompanied me to Colorado Springs, one could see cadets looking at him and wondering what kind of an Air Force officer is he? Today, they would know.

One day, a Midshipman at the Naval Academy, the son of a former shipmate, asked me to join with some Midshipmen for evening meal at the Academy. He was going to join the SEALs, and is an officer among them today. I brought RA with me. It soon became clear that a third of the Mids at the table wanted to become SEALs. It also didn't take long for me to recognize that, in reality, I was accompanying the real VIP, an Air Force CCT. While Air Force cadets knew next to nothing about Special Tactics, these future SEALs knew about Special Tactics because of their summer assignments with the SEALs, but had never met one. After dinner, RA and I were shown the room of our hosts on the third floor of Bancroft Hall (where all 4400 Midshipmen live,) and we declared that we could find our own way out. This gave us a chance to check on the cleanliness of the Midshipmen's quarters, heads and passageways. So we wandered the halls. They all were spotless. As we came upon Mids, they gave me a once-over, but they snapped to attention and saluted RA with his bloused combat boots, red beret, and rather copious number of ribbons.

Another thing that came to mind as John Jumper and I discussed the future of Special Tactics was that we should at some point in the future begin the development of UAVs specifically designed to be used by Special Tactics in support of their missions with SEALs or with Army Special Forces or anyone else. The concept John Jumper and I had, and have to this day, was that you could put a couple of very stealthy drones on top of where the Special Tactics Airmen were operating, and allow them to control and to release specific types of weapons from the UAVs to specifically designated targets either in GPS terms or based on a laser spot. I used to call this a "covert, soda dispenser in the sky." What we like about this idea is that we can envision a small number of drones being used with a covert team of Air Commandos, or larger drones used for covert surveillance deep inside defended territory. The concept is easily scaled, and it remains our fond hope that this idea is one that gets developed and gets fielded. Consider the impact such systems could have for Special Tactics: immediate artillery of mixes of weapon types, and greatly enhanced situational awareness. In infil missions, the UAVs would precede the actual insertion, and monitor the potential battlefield. During insertion, they would serve as artillery. And, during exfil, they would remain overhead for a period of time to support the mission, and to monitor enemy reactions.

Alan Yoshida is now a highly decorated Chief Master Sergeant (select), and it must be difficult for him to fathom the many ideas his work fathered. It does call to mind the fact that some of the best thinking we ever could have will originate with the Airmen who operate in circumstances with which most of us have little experience. Alan was able to work with colleagues, seniors, juniors, civilian and military people with equal ease. For example, all the major defense firms agreed informally to provide what intellectual property they might have which he would need for his project. They did this because of their admiration for Alan and the role of Special Tactics.

The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan called upon the US Air Force to be more imaginative about close air support operations than it ever has been in the past. It is another tribute to our Air Force that it has been able to adapt to the circumstances and bring to the forefront airpower concepts like Special Tactics and Battlefield Airmen to bear on the conflicts that characterize operations today. Security Forces, Tactical Air Control Parties, Explosive Ordinance Specialists, and newly formed Convoy Operations Airmen all have "come into their own" in the last ten years. Most of these specialties were there for decades, but dramatically jelled in response to our country's needs in combat in the AOR.

The reason that I discuss our Combat controllers in terms of the battle of Henry V versus the French at Agincourt, as I mentioned earlier, is that, like the Longbow archers King Henry employed for the first time in a significant battle, a small group of highly trained and specially equipped Airmen have conducted warfare in ways that would have been difficult to imagine as recently as a decade ago. Henry's Longbow archers made a critical

difference against the French many, many, years ago. And, I have no doubt that we will find that Special Tactics Airmen will make major contributions to American military capability for decades and decades to come.

Just think for a moment. A small number of these warriors with special equipment brought major bombardment of a mountain ridge within 20 minutes of asking for air support. They routinely placed laser spots on some critical targets. And, everyone should know that all the criticism against the USAF for reducing the size of the B-1 bomber force, but enhancing the reliability of the remaining 60 plus aircraft, went silent because of our Combat controllers. When the B-1s flew higher, slower, extended their wings, and removed the fuel bladder from one of the bomb bays to be replaced by yet more weapons, the B-1 finally found a solid and good spot in history. For this much maligned aircraft carries more bombs than any other aircraft and it has become the weapon of choice for our Combat controllers operating in areas where the US maintains total control of the skies. The poor "Bone" now is getting the respect it never could get before, and deservedly so.

But benefitting from the capabilities of Special Tactics will not happen over the long run without a number of things being done by our Air Force. First, the Battlefield Airmen and the Special Tactics Airmen need the kind of top cover and support from great leaders like Paul Hester, John Jumper, Mike Wooley, Donny Wurster, Eric Fiel, and Norton Schwartz, to name just a few. Typically, AFSOC is competing for funds against other Air Force needs, even though SOCOM pays for some. But, whereas the Navy doesn't pay for the SEALs, but requires the Special Operations Command to do so, the Air Force pays roughly $.80 on every dollar, as I recall. I really believe that this is a good thing, as odd as that might sound. Why? It's good thing because it gives the Air Force a deep, vested interest in ensuring that this special operations capability is as good as it can be. None spotted the dramatic contributions of Special Tactics more quickly than the AF generals who had flown jets for most of their careers. This kind of enlightened leadership needs to continue.

Second, the work done by Alan Yoshida shows that having a team of Combat controllers, PJs, and Combat Weathermen to think through how to do things better as part of a continuous process improvement program is essential for the long run. They need to continue to innovate and experiment, even if some ideas don't work out. After all, the kinds of equipment these Airmen carry and use are just not that expensive compared to other systems we build for the Air Force.

Third, I believe that the Air Force should take the lead in developing a modern combat helicopter that could be used by SOCOM, the Air Force, Army, Marines and Navy that exploited "stealth" technology in the original sense of the term. The wing tips on helicopters can be modified to not break the sound barrier, and, thus, the helo could be much quieter. The fuselage could be modified and treated so as to be less "visible" by radar and the "Mark 1 Eyeball." The canopy plastic in the helo could be replaced with modern, bullet-resistant glass composite as has been done in the MRAP vehicles. And, the situational awareness of the crew can be greatly enhanced, as well as the weaponry. No more should we allow a precious cargo of a squad of Special Ops warriors be packed into helos which are ancient in design, old in realty, and suited more for hauling cargo than combat operations.

There once was a special program to develop an advanced helicopter. But it never received the support it deserved from the Army or the staff of the Secretary of Defense. It's time to start such a program again. The unheralded cooperation of the Marine Corps and the Air Force to field the V-22 is instructive. But, even this project could not have succeeded had it not been for the joint support of the leadership of the Corps and the Air Force.

If we are to use Special Tactics and Special Forces generally in more places and at more times, then we have to get past the notion that they must make do with hand-me-downs except when it would be foolishly expensive to do otherwise. For our Air Force, we have another combat capability of which we can be very proud. The Airmen involved have earned our respect. They need the support of the Air Force on a continuing basis.

And, Fourth, I fear that there are those in policy positions in Washington who may be tempted to say things like, "Well, we can take out all our major forces from Iraq or Afghanistan because we'll leave Special Forces behind." My fear is that these people simply don't understand, they just don't get it. Special Forces, to include Airmen in AFSOC, can do a lot, but they are not a substitute for large numbers of ground forces and appropriate air forces. To put them by themselves into harm's way for extended periods of time makes no sense, for they are too few in number to be able to handle large masses of opponents no matter the size of the quality gap in their favor.

It has been my pleasure and honor to serve with Special Tactics Airmen like Alan Yoshida, RA Armfield, Paul Hester, and some fabulous AFSOC Command Chiefs and officers. I am proud to be an Honorary Member of the Combat Control Association, and to be known as "RE."

This sailor has come to appreciate the Airmen of Special Tactics. They are special because they are picked specially, they are trained specially, and they daily uphold their culture of "First There… That Others May Live." And, I have no doubt that my shipmate, Moki, would be equally proud of them.

About the Author: Dr. James G. Roche was the 20th Secretary of the Air Force. Prior to this appointment, he was Corporate Vice President and President, Electronic Sensors and Systems Sector of Northrop Grumman Corp. Prior to joining Northrop Grumman in 1984, he was Democratic Staff Director of the US Senate Armed Services Committee. Secretary Roche's previous military service spanned 23 years in the US Navy, retiring as captain in 1983. He commanded the USS Buchanan, a guided missile destroyer, and was awarded the Arleigh Burke Fleet Trophy in 1974.

Secretary Roche has served as a member of the Secretary of Defense's Policy Board and is a member of the Council of Foreign Relations and the International Institute of Strategic Studies.

Special Tactics operators pose for a group picture after attending the Silver Star and Air Force Cross ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla. on October 27, 2011, for Tech. Sgt Ishmael Villegas and SSgt Robert Gutierrez. Villegas (Left) and Gutierrez (Right) are in service dress in the center, second row.

By CMSgt Wayne Norrad, USAF, Ret.

Special Tactics

Special Tactics (ST) forces are organized, trained, and equipped Battlefield Airmen who execute operational air and space power functions in forward battle spaces. These specialized forces provide the decisive link between air assets and ground forces, personnel recovery missions, terminal attack control strikes, and environmental weather assessments for sensitive, low-visibility and clandestine operations, often operating under austere conditions for extended periods of time. ST operational Airmen consist of the following career fields.

Operational Forces

- Combat Controller (CCT)
- Special Tactics Officer (STO)
- Pararescuemen (PJ)
- Combat Rescue Officer (CRO)
- Tactical Air Control Party (TACP)
- Air Liaison Officer (ALO)
- Special Operations Weather Team/Technician (SOWT)
- Combat Weather Officer (CWO)

Most Highly Decorated Airmen Since 9/11

These elite warriors volunteer for hazardous duties, go through extensive training pipelines, continuously train to advance their skills and when asked "who will go on the next dangerous mission"… to a man, they say "Send Me." Almost daily -- and often at night, ST operators go into battle with other special operations forces (SOF) and literally take the fight to the enemy. ST Airmen were among the first military forces on the ground in Afghanistan and later in Iraq and will likely be among the last out of these nations... and other nations harboring terrorists.

ST Air Commandos are the most highly decorated Airmen in the Air Force. Since 9/11 four Air Cross medals have been awarded by the Air Force – all four to ST operators. ST Airmen have also garnered 26 Silver Star medals, over 600 Bronze Stars, more than 200 with Valor device. Unfortunately, over 95 Purple Hearts have been awarded… many posthumously, including combat controller TSgt John Chapman and pararescueman Senior Airmen Jason Cunningham. They were both killed-in-action (KIA) during Operation Anaconda, also commonly known as "The Battle of Roberts Ridge" named after Navy SEAL, Petty Officer 1st Class Neil Roberts, who fell out of the helicopter when the chopper took heavy fire on the initial infiltration on the mountain near Tahur Ghar, Afghanistan on March 4th, 2002. Both were also awarded the Air Force Cross for extraordinary heroism in combat.

TSgt John A. Chapman

Without regard for his own life Sergeant Chapman volunteered to go back and try to rescue his missing SEAL team member from the enemy strong hold. Shortly after insertion, the team made contact with the enemy. Sergeant Chapman engaged and killed two enemy personnel. He continued to advance reaching the enemy position then engaged a second enemy position, a dug-in machine gun nest. At this time the rescue team came under effective enemy fire from three directions. From close range he exchanged fire with the enemy from minimum personal cover until he succumbed to multiple wounds. His engagement and destruction of the first enemy position and advancement on the second position enabled his team to move to cover and break enemy contact. In his own words, his Navy SEAL team leader, Senior Chief Petty Officer Britt "Slab" Slabinski, credits Sergeant Chapman unequivocally with saving the lives of the entire rescue team.

TSgt John A. Chapman

Back in Fayetteville, North Carolina, Valerie Chapman was anxiously awaiting her husband's return from deployment. John "Chappy" Chapman was an avid NASCAR fan and Valerie had a nice surprise waiting for him. She had already purchased four tickets to the Coca Cola 600 Memorial Day race at Charlotte Motor Speedway on May 26, 2002, for John, herself and their two young daughters. John never got to see that race, but Valerie did.

As coincidence would have it, AFSOC's Stars Parachute Demonstration Team was scheduled to jump during pre-race ceremonies. One of "Chappy's" former teammates, SSgt Mike West, was a member of the Stars Team and asked me if I (as the Team Coordinator) could somehow work with the pre-race event coordinator, Jay Howard, to have TSgt Chapman honored and have Valerie, SSgt Keary Miller and SSgt Gabe Brown introduced. Keary and Gabe were on Operation Anaconda and both earned the Silver Star medal for their heroic action.

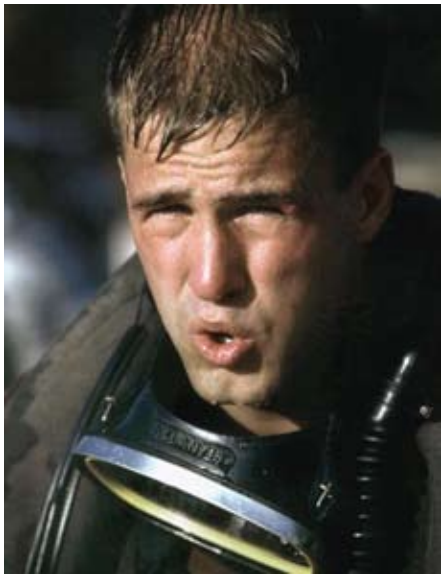
Mike West knew that "Chappy's" favorite driver was Mark Martin, so during the pre-race driver introductions Mike worked with Martin's publicist and arranged to have Valerie meet him. She told Mark that he was her late husband's favorite driver – then she reached into her purse and presented Mark Martin with Chappy's CCT coin. She said the CCT motto is "First There" and wished him good luck in winning the race. Mark Martin took the checkered flag for the first time in over two years that day with Chapman's "First There" coin in his pocket. We all shed a few tears of joy that he won… and tears of sadness, because "Chappy" wasn't there to witness the victory.

SrA Jason Cunningham

SrA Jason Cunningham died doing what he wanted to do most, saving lives. He also perished March 4, 2002, during Operation Anaconda.

"I don't want to kill people. I want to save them," Cunningham said in a story published in Airman Magazine" in February 2000. It's just what he did on that bloody Afghan hillside near Gardez. Cunningham was part of a team sent to rescue Neil Roberts and John Chapman.

Leading up to Operation Anaconda, the PJs were housed on the ground floor of the Bagram airfield tower building. Fifteen yards down the corridor were the expert field surgeons of the 274th Forward Surgical Team. It wasn't long



SrA Jason Cunningham

before Cunningham's hunger to improve his medical skills had propelled him down the corridor. He had just finished the grueling PJ training pipeline eight months earlier and was still eager to

learn as much about emergency medical procedures as he possibly could. Soon he was spending a couple of hours every day with the medical staff, learning by doing under their tutelage.

"Every time we had a casualty event he was always the first one here offering to help," said Dr. (Maj.) Brian Burlingame, the surgical unit's commander. "His enthusiasm was just genuine to the core, which was what endeared him to us. He was like a little brother."

One of the outcomes of Cunningham's time with the surgical team docs was a decision to start sending the pararescuemen out into combat with blood for transfusions. The use of blood in the field was a controversial topic, according to Burlingame. "Blood is an FDA-controlled substance," he said. "It's very, very regulated." Special training, not to mention lots of paperwork, is required before medics are considered qualified to administer blood in the field. After Cunningham and Burlingame's talk, all the PJs there took the classes and filled out the paperwork. "We then pushed blood forward with [Cunningham's] group," Burlingame said.

By the time the MH-47 rescue helicopter, carrying Cunningham, three other Airmen, SSgt Keary Miller (PJ), SSgt Kevin Vance (TACP), SSgt Gabe Brown (CCT) and an Army Ranger Quick Reaction Force (QRF), approached Takhur Ghar, the sun was rising… the enemy was waiting. A rocket-propelled grenade hit the aircraft in the tail rotor, bullets shattered the cockpit glass. A round smashed one pilot's thigh bone, another knocked his helmet off. A bullet or fragment ripped a silver-dollar-sized hole in the other pilot's wrist, while yet another tore into his thigh.

As rounds peppered the helicopter, the QRF ran off the back ramp into a hail of fire. Two or three dropped immediately, dead or badly wounded. As the Rangers, Brown and Vance sprinted for cover, the Chinook's door gunners laid down a base of fire with their 7.62 millimeter mini-guns. Operating in the fuselage 'a bullet sponge', the QRF's medical personnel, including Cunningham, Miller, two Ranger medics and a 160th medic, had their hands full. The Chinook's cargo area became the casualty-collection point. In the mean time Sergeant Vance was laying down fire with the Rangers while Brown was making radio contact with air assets to engage the enemy with close air support.

Just when things seemed as if they couldn't get worse, the forward compartment of the helicopter caught fire, enemy fire increased including incoming mortar rounds that bracketed the Chinook.

About four hours after the helicopter hit the ground, Cunningham decided the cargo compartment had become too dangerous for his patients. Using a small sled-like device, he dragged the wounded troops to a safer spot away from the aircraft. In doing so, he crossed the line of enemy fire seven times. The enemy's movements forced Cunningham and the 160th medic to move the casualties to a second and then a third location, exposing them to enemy fire. During the last movement, the 160th medic was shot twice in the abdomen. Shortly thereafter, Cunningham's luck ran out. An enemy round hit him just below his body armor. The bullet entered low from the right side and traveled across his pelvis, causing serious internal injuries. Despite his worsening condition, he continued to treat patients and advise others on how to care for the critically wounded. One of the two blood packs he had brought saved a badly wounded Ranger. The medics gave the other packet to Cunningham himself, whose life was slowly flowing out in a red stream of blood onto the white snow.

In the early afternoon, leaders directed that no more rescue attempts be risked until darkness. It was a decision made to save lives, and it probably did. But it sealed Cunningham's fate. Seven hours after he was hit, the other medics began to perform CPR on Cunningham. They continued for 30 minutes, until it was clear nothing more could be done. He died two hours before rescue helicopters arrived. Jason Cunningham became the first PJ to die in combat since the Vietnam War in the hands of an Army medic and his PJ teammate, Keary Miller.

Back at Bagram, the medical staff was preparing for mass casualties. When the casualties arrived, Burlingame and the other doctors went to work in the operating room. As head of the surgical team, Burlingame also was responsible for filling out the medical paperwork on the deceased. One by one, he unzipped the body bags. As he methodically noted the likely causes of death, he found himself slightly relieved that each corpse wasn't Cunningham's.

"I was hoping against hope that he'd survived," he said. Then he unzipped the last body bag and found himself staring at Cunningham's lifeless face. It was too much, even for the experienced trauma surgeon, and he broke down. "This was probably the least professional moment of my career," he said. "It was a very, very difficult moment."

"As a result of Cunningham's extraordinary heroism, his team returned 10 seriously wounded personnel to life-saving medical care." Jason did everything he could do – and certainly lived up to the PJ motto "That Others May Live."

The "Battle at Roberts Ridge" to date, is the operation with the most highly decorated Airmen since 9/11. In addition to the Air Force Cross for Chapman and Cunningham, SSgt Gabe Brown (CCT), SSgt Keary Miller (PJ) and SSgt Kevin Vance (TACP) were also awarded the Silver Star medal.

Other Air Force Cross Heroes

"This is a combat controller's (CCT) kind of war" has been said by many and for good reason. Col Mike Haas, USAF, retired, former Deputy Commander of the 720th Special Tactics Group wrote the following statement in "The Year in Special Operations" publication, 2008 Edition. "The most dangerous American on today's battlefield is a Special Tactics combat controller with a radio in one hand and the U. S. Air Force overhead." Of the four Air Force Cross medals presented since 9/11 three have been earned by CCT. In addition to TSgt John Chapman, SrA Zach Rhyner and most recently, SSgt Rob Gutierrez, have earned the Air Force Cross. Here's a brief description of their stories.

SSgt Zachary Rhyner

On April 6, 2008, during his first deployment to Afghanistan, (then) SrA Zachary Rhyner deployed into the Shok Valley with about 100 Special Forces

(SF) and Afghan soldiers. As they began to climb from the valley into the village where they hoped to capture some high-value targets, they met an ambush from about 200 insurgents.

SSgt Zachary Rhyner

Shot through the leg in the opening minutes of a firefight, Rhyner kept his focus and called in airstrikes that kept his pinned-down unit from being overrun by insurgents in the mountains of Afghanistan.

At a disadvantage because they were trapped in the valley, the team began to pull back to find cover. Rhyner's job was to call in air support to destroy the enemy. He controlled more than 50 attack runs, according to the Air Force, with many of the strikes within 100 meters of his position. On the final attack run, Rhyner called in a 2,000-pound bomb.

"That explosion went off, and you literally couldn't see two inches in front of your face because of the dust and debris," Rhyner said. More than half of the Americans there that day were wounded, but none of them were killed. The Air Force estimates 40 enemy fighters were killed and 100 were wounded. SF members on that team would be presented 10 Silver Stars for their actions during the battle, the most on any single mission since Vietnam.

During the AF Cross ceremony General Norton A. Schwartz, Air Force chief of staff, said it's almost impossible to imagine the battle in Shok Valley. "If you saw a movie, you'd shake your head and say, "That didn't happen," Schwartz said. "We could not be more proud of all that they do. It's hard not to stand in awe." He said Rhyner will forever be a perfect example of a "teammate, Airman, warrior."

SSgt Rhyner quickly healed from his wounds and volunteered to go to back into battle and later "selection" for a special mission unit. He certainly didn't live on past heroics, as he's back into the fight and continues to say – Send Me!

TSgt Robert Gutierrez, Jr.

The Air Force Cross was awarded to then SSgt Robert Gutierrez, Jr. for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an armed enemy of the United States in Herat Province, Afghanistan, on October 5th, 2009. The Joint Terminal Attack Control (JTAC) qualified Combat controller was attached to an Army SF operational detachment. He and his team conducted a high-risk nighttime raid to capture the number two Taliban leader in the region. During the initial assault, the team was attacked with a barrage of rifle and heavy machine-gun fire from a numerically superior and determined enemy force. Sergeant Gutierrez was shot in the chest, his team leader was shot in the foot, and the 10-man element was pinned down in a building with no escape route. In great pain and

TSgt Robert Gutierrez, Jr.

confronting the very real possibility that he would die, Sergeant Gutierrez seized the initiative and refused to relinquish his duties as the sole JTAC. Under intense fire, he engaged Taliban fighters with his M-4 rifle, first killing the enemy fighter who wounded him.

After calling in two F-16s for a "show of force," because the enemy was too close to drop bombs on them, he then brought airpower to bear, controlling three "danger close" A-10 strafing runs with exceptional precision against enemy forces just 30 feet away. After the first A-10 attack, the team medic performed a needle decompression to re-inflate Sergeant Gutierrez's collapsed lung, allowing him to direct the next two strafe runs which decimated the enemy force and allowed the team to escape the kill zone without additional casualties. Traveling on foot several kilometers to a rescue helicopter landing zone, he took another needle decompression in order to keep breathing and enabling him to call in his own medical evacuation helicopter. Throughout the four-hour battle, Sergeant Gutierrez's valorous actions, at great risk to his own life, helped save the lives of his teammates and dealt a crushing blow to the regional Taliban network. The Taliban leader they were searching for ended up dying a few hours later from the A-10 strafing rounds.

This wasn't Gutierrez' first combat action mission, he was previously awarded three Bronze Stars, two with Valor and a Purple Heart, with a second Purple Heart pending board results.

TSgt Gutierrez went through extensive medical rehabilitation and he is now back on "status" and serves as an instructor at the Special Tactics Training Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Fla. The SF team medic, Sgt 1st Class Mike (last name withheld), who helped save Gutierrez' life, moved with the 7th Special Forces Group (SFG) to Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. in 2011 as part of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) commission's decision some six years ago. Mike and Gutierrez have become such good friends that Mike decided to move to the same town and on the same street as Rob, even though it's over an hour drive to the 7th SFG compound. You can often find them fishing together from the Navarre Beach Pier. I even joined them one Saturday morning. They are much better fighters than fishermen… we didn't catch a thing, but it was a joy just being around them – both great humble American heroes.

National Museum of the US Air Force Battlefield Airmen Display

After many years of obscure coverage of the Airmen who fight on the ground, the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, opened a new "Warrior Airmen" exhibit that highlights how today's Airmen are contributing to the war on terrorism, both in the air and on the ground. The exhibit, which opened to the public January 12, 2009, is divided into three sections, each highlighting a way the Air Force is supporting efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. The first section, "Battlefield Airmen," is dedicated to Air Force special operations forces such as combat controllers, pararescuemen, tactical air controllers and special operations weather personnel. The most compelling display in the "Battlefield Airmen" section is an immersive video recreation of the battle for Takur Ghar. It portrays the actions of Airmen -- John Chapman, Jason Cunningham, Gabe Brown, Keary Miller and Kevin Vance with voice testimony by Miller and Brown. It's a "must see" the next time you tour the museum.

Other Heroes and Award Winners

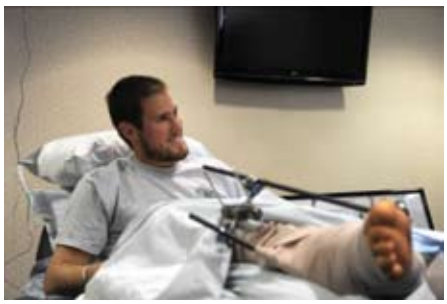
The number of Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC), Bronze Star medals with Valor and other combat decorations earned by ST operators does not allow enough space to recognize each of them in this article. A few of note are CCT TSgt Sean Harvell, recipient of two Silver Stars and a Bronze Star with Valor. PJs MSgt Patrick Harding, TSgt Michael Ames and CMSgt Patrick Malone and CCT TSgt Ruben Reyes earned the Distinguished Flying Cross. TACP TSgt Thomas Case was awarded a Silver Star and three Bronze Stars with Valor and the Joint Service Commendation Medal with Valor device while TACP TSgt Earl Covel earned a Silver Star and Bronze Star. Special operations weather team members, SSgt Travis Sanford and SSgt Thomas Howser are among many Bronze Star with Valor recipients. Combat controller, MSgt Christopher Grove, alone -- has seven Bronze Star medals and an eighth not presented yet, five with Valor. As documented by his numerous awards with valor, Grove continues to say -- "Send Me" on the most dangerous missions.

Beyond the combat medals, ST operators have garnered an unprecedented number of Air Force and national level awards since 9/11.

- 11 - Lance P. Sijan U. S. Air Force Leadership Award.
- 12 - 12 Outstanding Airman of the Year.
- 10 - Air Force Sergeants Association William H. Pitsenbarger Award.
- 5 - Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs Grateful Nation Award
- 6 - Non-Commissioned Officer Association Vanguard Award.
- 1 - Air National Guard NCO of the Year Award.
- 1 - United Service Organization Airman of the Year Award.

You can be justly proud of our present day Special Tactics – Air Commandos!

Staff Sgt. Shaun Meadows shares a laugh with his son Trevor after completing his jump June 14, 2010.



Airman Alex Eudy, a special operations weatherman in the 10th Combat Weather Squadron at Hurlburt Field, FL, is on the mend and in good spirits after extensive surgery to his lower legs. (U.S. Air Force photo by Chief Master Sgt. Ty Foster)

Severely Wounded and Killed in Action

ST warriors have also paid the price in flesh and blood. Approximately 100 have been wounded in action, some severely including SSgt Shaun Meadows (double leg amputee above the knees). Before being medically retired, Shawn's last request was to jump again with his teammates. His request was approved and he did complete the freefall jump with his team while his family anxiously awaited the results. He walked away from the jump, unscathed and smiling from ear to ear.

SrA Alex Eudy and SrA Johnnie Yellock both incurred severe leg and ankle damage due to improvised explosive

Tech. Sgt. John W. Brown, a pararescueman assigned to the 24th Special Tactics Squadron, Pope Field, N.C.

Tech. Sgt. Daniel L. Zerbe, a pararescueman assigned to the 24th Special Tactics Squadron, Pope Field, N.C.

Staff Sgt. Andrew W. Harvell, a combat controller assigned to the 24th Special Tactics Squadron, Pope Field, N.C.

device (IED) incidents. SSgt Gino Kahaunaele took a round through his arm pit in a firefight and has yet to regain 100% movement in his right arm due to a severed nerve. MSgt Mike Bowers lost an eye in battle. Many others have serious injuries from gunshot wounds, IEDs and fragmentation from rocket propelled grenades. Blast concussions from these and other explosives have left several with traumatic brain injury.

Seventeen ST warriors have paid the ultimate sacrifice. The most recent occurred on August 6, 2011, in Afghanistan when 31 Americans and seven Afghan commandos were killed in the biggest American loss of life since US military operations began in Afghanistan. Three of those brave Americans killed were ST members, two PJs, TSgt John Brown (promoted posthumously) and TSgt Daniel Zerbe and one CCT, SSgt Andrew Harvell, the younger brother of CCT TSgt Sean Harvell.

Humanitarian Assistance Missions

Special Tactics Airmen are not just trained to fight… they are often called upon to be first responders after natural disasters. Despite being heavily committed in combat operations, ST forces with their unique skill sets are often needed for humanitarian assistance and disaster response. From Operation UNIFIED ASSISTANCE—the 2004 Southeast Asia Tsunami or Hurricane Katrina in 2005 that wreaked havoc upon the Louisiana and Mississippi coast, to more recent disasters such as the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti, or the ravaging floods that plagued Pakistan, to the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami that decimated a portion of Japan's coastal communities—Special Tactics have always led the way so others may follow… and ultimately so "That Others May Live."

Organization and Manpower
Then – Sept. 11, 2001

When terrorists hit the twin towers in Manhattan, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. and the countryside in Pennsylvania, on Sept. 11th, 2001, Special Tactics forces were authorized approximately 750 manpower positions, but many were not filled due to recruiting and training shortfalls. The 720th Special Tactics Group, Hurlburt Field, Fla., was the sole ST Group in the Air Force with command of five subordinate squadrons in the continental United States:

- 10th Combat Weather Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Fla. The 10th CWS had five subordinate active duty detachments, and three Air National Guard combat weather flights.
- 21st and 24th Special Tactics Squadrons, Pope Air Force Base, N.C.
- 22nd Special Tactics Squadron, McChord Air Force Base, Wash.
- 23rd Special Tactics Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Fla.

The 720th STG also provided functional management for AFSOC's two overseas Special Tactics squadrons: the 320th under command of the 353rd Special Operations Group, Kadena Air Base, Japan, and the 321st under the command of the 352nd Special Operations Group at RAF Mildenhall, England. The 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, an AFSOC gained Air National Guard unit, based at Standiford Field, Kentucky, often provides augmentation to the 720th STG in supporting national security objectives, humanitarian efforts and training. The 720th STG carried out war-fighting group responsibilities and staff directorate expertise to the Air Force Special Operations Command headquarters staff.

Now – Jan. 2012

Recruitment and getting qualified ST forces through their applicable training pipelines were big issues. Since 2002, when the first members graduated from the CCT Advanced Skills Training (AST) Course, things have steadily improved. The AST gained manpower and responsibility for other Air Force specialty training and grew to squadron status, the Special tactics Training Squadron, currently subordinate to the Air Force Special Operations Training Center (AFSOTC). To help Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS) find the right

guys with the "right stuff", AFSOC leadership approved the concept to co-locate CCT and PJ operators in AFRS recruiting groups/squadrons to help in that effort. Finding the right recruit is critical because once an individual starts training – even if it's only for a day, you cannot get that slot back for someone else to give it a try. Attrition rates are lower and graduation rates are higher, attesting to the success of the special operations recruiting liaison program and AST training concept.

Numerous additions have occurred since 9/11. On May 1, 2005, the 125th Special Tactics Squadron, a second ANG unit, based at Portland International Airport, Ore., was activated. The 17th Air Operations Support Squadron (ASOS), Fort Benning, Georgia, was cross-walked from Air Combat Command to AFSOC and placed under the 720th STG effective, October 1, 2008. The main mission of the 17th ASOS is to provide Joint Terminal Attack Control (JTAC) qualified Tactical Air Control Party (TACPs) to the US Army Ranger Regiment and its subordinate battalions. The 61 TACP Airmen of the 17th ASOS joined the ranks of more than 900 special tactics Airmen and support personnel. On April 29, 2011, the 724th Special Tactics Group was activated with three subordinate squadrons, 24 STS, 724 OSS and a Data Mask unit all located at Pope Field, N.C. Throughout the last 30 years the 24th STS grew significantly in manpower, scope of responsibility and in new mission sets -- resulting in the stand-up of the new ST group reporting directly to AFSOC.

A significant announcement was just made on January 11, 2012, by Lieutenant General Eric Fiel, AFSOC commander. "Air Commandos, it is with great pleasure I announce AFSOC's newest wing, the 24th Special Operations Wing to be stood up this summer at Hurlburt Field. Establishment of the 24 SOW allows a single commander to lead the recruiting, training and development of our ST warriors and ultimately provide combatant commanders with world-class Airmen to accomplish their mission. Encompassing all ST units (720 STG, 724 STG, STTS and 12 recruiting locations), the 24 SOW reflects the demand for their unique capability. I am also pleased to announce the leadership team for the 24 SOW: Col. Robert Armfield – Commander, Col. Eric Ray - Vice Commander. I'm certain their leadership will lay the foundation for success and an enduring legacy for the 24 SOW. Please join me in congratulating them and wishing them every success."

Presently AFSOC has approximately 1,300 ST operator and support personnel positions, with growth planned through fiscal year 2019.

Later – Fiscal Year 2019

The future looks even brighter. A new Special Tactics squadron is proposed, bed-down location yet to be determined, but likely in the western United States. The AFSOC strategic plan for ST forces identified a need for like capabilities and mission sets for every ST squadron and an affiliation with Army Special Forces Groups (SFG). That means CCT, PJ, SOWT, and TACP enlisted operators and officer equivalent specialties are planned in each ST squadron -- and each unit will align geographically with its affiliated SFG.

A study is underway to evaluate the possibility of establishing an Air Force Reserve Component ST squadron. The location is to be determined, but likely under the administrative command of the 919th Special Operations Wing, Duke Field, Fla., with operational control to the 24 SOW.

If all goes as planned, manpower end-strength for ST forces in 2019 will be approximately 1,800 authorizations – and hopefully most of those will be filled by highly trained operators and the best combat support personnel the Air Force has to offer.

Send Me

At the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year banquet in Washington D.C., September 2010, the Air Force Band Rock Group called "Max Impact" performed a song with action music video called "Locked and Loaded." The 720th STG commander, Col. Robert "Gwyn" Armfield and Group Chief, Chief Master Sgt Mike Lamonica, were impressed by the production and talked to the band members after the banquet. The lead singer told them they would love to do another action video… this time featuring Special Tactics Airmen. The band went to work writing the lyrics and produced the music for a song named "Send Me." The song is in honor of the ST operators who continue to raise their hand and say "Send Me." In early 2012, ST Airmen will be filmed to fill in the storyboard action items and still pictures that correspond to the words. The words include such lyrics as "First There" the CCT motto and "That Others May Live," the PJ motto. The song includes the Air Force creed and the chorus goes like this:

Who will be the one to stand and fight for you
And be the first there
We give our all, that others may live
And why we say… Send me… Send me.

About the Author: Chief (ret) Wayne Norrad is the former Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Commander Air Force Special Operations Command and is now Analyst, Public Relations for the 720th Special Tactics Group.

Our ST Battlefield Airmen require state-of-the art equipment and top-notch training to withstand an extremely high operations tempo, physically punishing missions, and be capable of performing in austere conditions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, regardless of the environment.

Technology at the TIP OF THE SPEAR

By CMSgt (Ret) Mickey Wright

Modular Tactical System (photo provided by Black Diamond Advanced Technology)

In the decade long global war on terror, Special Tactics Battlefield Airmen have altered the public's perception of our airmen while simultaneously manipulating the very nature of warfare through unilateral, joint, and combined force operations. Whether attached to a US or foreign special operations team or on a unilateral airfield or survey mission deep in enemy territory, these young men are performing heroic actions under hostile fire on a daily basis.

The Air Force has coined a term, Battlefield Air Operations (BAO) to describe the deep engagements where our airmen are searching out, identifying, and eliminating enemy strongholds with the integrated and synchronized use of air and space power.

The men performing these impressive missions are highly trained and well equipped airmen known as Combat Control Teams (CCT) or Tactical Air Control Party (TACP) specialists.

These Special Tactics Group (STG) CCT and TACP airmen, grouped together with Pararescuemen (PJs) and Special Operations Weather Teams (SOWT), called Battlefield Airmen, are at the tip of the spear conducting special operations missions, from asymmetric and kinetic warfare operations to demanding lifesaving and humanitarian operations. They require advancements in operator centric technologies to improve tactical communications, situational awareness, and information management.

Our ST Battlefield Airmen require state-of-the art equipment and top-notch training to withstand an extremely high operations tempo, physically punishing missions, and be capable of performing in austere conditions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, regardless of the environment. However, both training and equipping come at a cost—a very high cost to be the best and the best equipped.

Developing and Procuring Technology

The need for advanced technology to fly, fight, and win in the battlespace while performing these combat and humanitarian missions is now more prevalent than ever. The quality of equipment, from clothing items to critical mission radios, night vision goggles, and miscellaneous gear are light years ahead of when I first came into CCT in the early 1980s.

At the start of what we know as the Global War on Terror, our force was highly trained and our technology was good, yet enterprising airmen still had visions to improve what we had. We were never satisfied with what we had and always wanted to improve our equipment, processes, and tactics.

I can recall as a young airman I had absolutely no understanding of the procurement or acquisition process and was annoyed when the commander or Chief would not just purchase what the other airmen and I thought were mission critical necessities or equipment upgrades. The NCOs and airmen would sit around and "discuss" how to improve our mission equipment and develop processes to position equipment in the hands of the operator in a more expeditious and efficient manner. These discussions are still occurring today, in the same team room we sat in, by the latest generation of airmen.

Due to over-the-counter commercial advancements and human ingenuity, our equipment and acquisition process, while top-notch, is not as easy as visiting the mall and walking out with a few bags of equipment.

At a time when the defense budget is under scrutiny for every penny

CCT equipment from the 1980s and 1990s on display.

spent, our Airmen realize technological advancements and equipment improvements may suffer. While industry will continue to develop new technology and equipment, we fear the speed from conceptualization of these advancements to battlefield implementation will slow without a known and guaranteed paying customer.

Within the Department of Defense's budget, weapons programs, as well as personnel and force structure, will likely take a significant cut. Simultaneously, we will continue to face the reality of a fiscally constrained, but operationally demanding combat and humanitarian environment that will significantly stress our forces' current manning levels and budget limitations possibly causing dangerous consequences.

Fratricide Incident Causes Research and Development

Unfortunately, due to a tragic fratricide incident during a high intensity ground battle in Afghanistan, our technological advancements received a high-level boost.

Shortly after the start of Operation Enduring Freedom, a mistake occurred on the battlefield resulting in a US B-52 dropping ordnance on an elite group of American special operators and Afghan anti-Taliban fighters. An exhausted combat controller handed off the radio to another individual who cleared the B-52 "hot" which resulted in the inadvertent bombing of the friendly location.

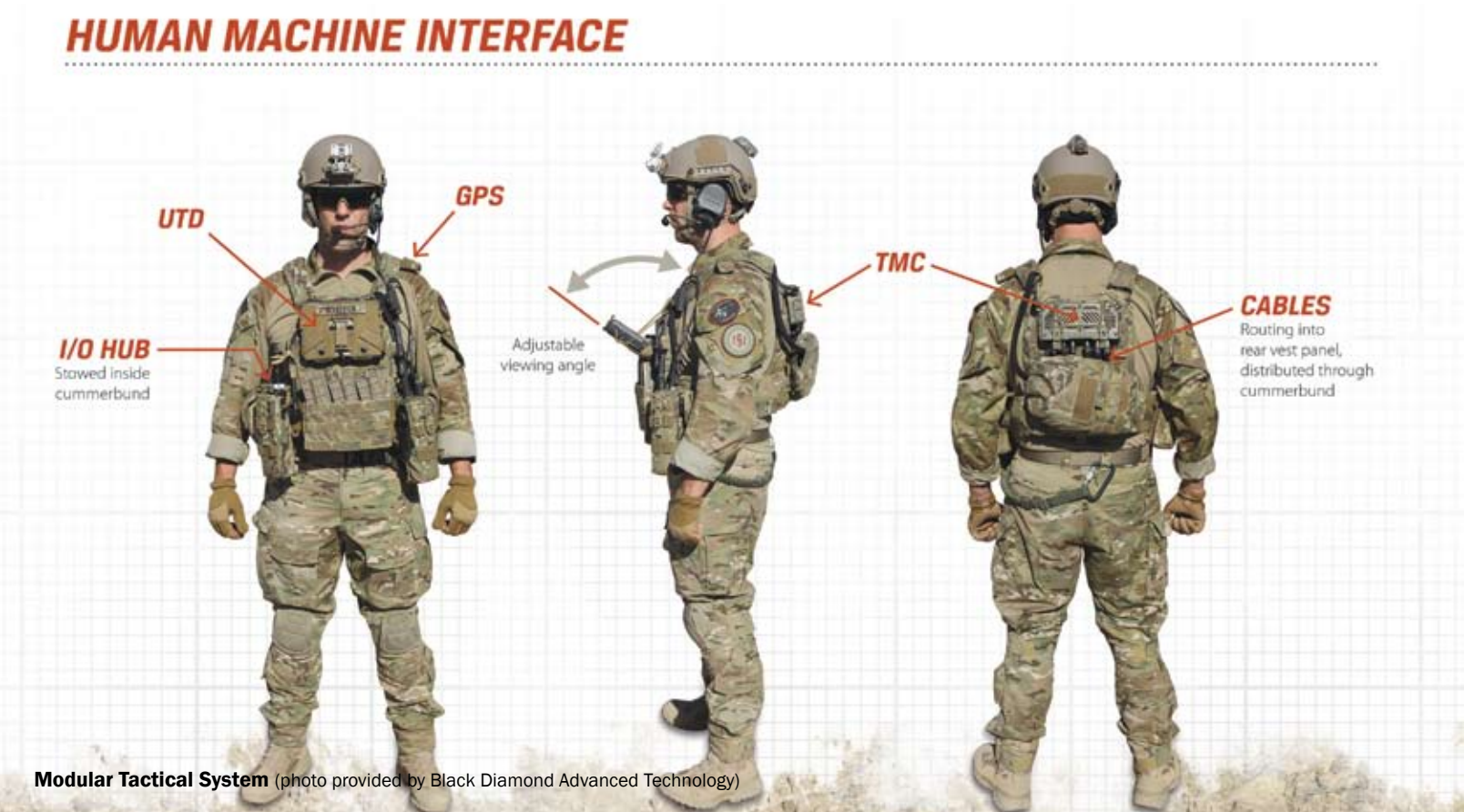
The entire DoD community sought out methods to improve our technology and stop these fratricide incidents. As it turns out, one of the injured, a combat controller remained on active duty and the Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF), Dr. Roche challenged the Special Tactics community to put together a "mini task force". The 720th STG expanded their Research and Development (R&D) Cell and the noncommissioned officers (NCOs) involved in the project took a think "out-of-the-box" approach and considered every idea.

Every operator contacted had a similar answer, "smaller, lighter, and better." We want to have a primary, secondary, and if able, a tertiary set of mission critical equipment carried. The size, weight, and power (SWAP) of the equipment essentially limits what is carried on a mission.

The STG's R&D cell had some dynamic and promising ideas to develop new equipment. One of the dozens of ideas implemented was to build a new communications kit—radios, computers, and accessories—to replace our current equipment. Each manual transfer of data was a possibility for a human induced error causing the R&D cell to investigate a direct digital "radio-to-bomb" action known as "machine-to-machine" or M2M. The goal was to reduce fratricide and substantially reduce the weight carried, allowing Battlefield Airmen to recognize, identify, range, nominate, and designate targets during both day and night operations.

The Battlefield Air Operations Kit

The outcome was a BAO Kit—a suite of equipment allowing improved communications while processing target and friendly position information. The



Modular Tactical System (photo provided by Black Diamond Advanced Technology)

Combat controller using a laser range finder in Haiti. (USAF photo)

BAO Kit is part of a system of "kill-chain" (find, fix, track, target, engage, and assess (F2T2EA) a target) developments increasing the capability of the battlefield operator while lowering the overall equipment weight. By the "old" standard, the basic CCT rucksack load outs weighed between 80-160 pounds. The BAO Kit is smaller, weighs about half of what the previous gear weighed and requires less battery power, therefore eliminating the need for so many heavy batteries.

Officially, the BAO Kit is a Family of Systems (FoS) providing a state-of-the art Command, Control, Communications, Computer, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) suite to enhance Line of Sight (LOS) targeting, Beyond Line of Sight (BLOS) targeting, and Battlefield Air Operations Human Machine Interface (BAO HMI).

Stakeholders sought out the SECAF to fund the BAO project then worked to broker an agreement between AFSOC and Air Force Material Command (AFMC). AFMC assigned the Air Force Research Laboratory's (AFRL) Office of Battlefield Airman Tactical Targeting and the 711th Human Performance Wing's Aeronautical Systems Center's, Special Ops Forces & Personnel Recovery Division to work with the defense industry and attempt to "fast track" effective capability and products to the battlefield.

Supported by key leaders, the STG R&D cell and AFRL originally justified five components—Human Input/Output (I/O), Machine-to-Machine software, Power Generation and Management, Communication, and Small Wearable Computers. These five areas combined and now make up the HMI program. The "BAO technology family" now has three key systems: HMI, Integrated Targeting Device (ITD), and Battfield Air Targeting Camera Micro Air Vehicle (BATCAM).

The BAO Kit is a multi-level project with continual updates scheduled. BAO Kit development has a phased plan to "Reorganize, Optimize, and Revolutionize" using a "spiral" type model of acquisition, development, and battlefield placement. The spiral design timing has gradually released technology and advanced products, allowed incremental refinement, and most importantly incorporates a "plug-and-play" approach easing financial constraints, operational fielding, and operator training and upgrade requirements. Rather than replace the entire rucksack of equipment, we are gradually replacing a few pieces of equipment at a time. This ensures 100% integration and incorporates futuristic technology in these replacement items.

Combat controller preparing his equipment in Japan. (USAF photo)

"Summer Camp"

Throughout the entire process, our AFRL engineers oversaw Air Force, Army, and other DoD Laboratory engineers, federally funded research and development corporations, academia engineers, and Systems Program Offices (SPO). These engineers were highly engaged in design and development with industry partners and continually asked for Battlefield Airmen buy-in.

Rarely do operators have an opportunity to meet with design engineers and make recommendations on high-tech equipment items. However, for the last six years, AFSOC's ST Battlefield Airmen and AFRL's engineers and acquisition teams have teamed up to bring newly designed battlefield "tools" to the men.

"Summer Camp" started a few years ago as the brainchild of CCT senior noncommissioned officers (SNCOs) and AFRL's BAO Kit Development Team to provide hands-on feedback and technology requirements to industry engineers.

Summer Camp is not a typical conference with booths and displays. Rather this event provides a free-flowing

forum for the ST Battlefield Airmen community to acquire hands-on time with tip-of-the spear equipment and technological designs specifically aimed at our community.

The Summer Camp event allows industry partners and the ST Battlefield Airmen community to exchange ideas about current and future technology needs. Industry participants are required to bring technologies and products that are relevant to the Battlefield Airmen deficiency needs and expect direct feedback from our ST Battlefield Airmen and AFRL engineers and experts.

Special Tactics Battlefield Airmen, AFRL engineers, and industry engineers teamed up to work together during BAO training scenarios on local training ranges. This integration allows engineers a "near first-hand" opportunity to experience training environments simulating the battlefield during day and night scenarios. Engineers witness their equipment in use and make notes of operators comments, such as, "button too small", "equipment too heavy and bulky", "can't read the screen in the sunlight", etc. This interaction allows engineers an opportunity to "fix" equipment flaws early in the design phase.

In fact, every industry partner who attends mentions this is the only opportunity they have to gain unprecedented feedback and expectations while associating with the end user. While some of the industry partners are former "operators," most are design engineers and require end user feedback to understand how the products are used during a mission.

Conclusion

The FoS methodology of today eliminates many of the rudimentary acquisition processes and equipment teaming failures of yesterday. Equipment was procured in individual buys as separate items and rarely was interoperability taken into consideration. In many instances, commercial over the shelf (COTS) was a primary goal, which filled many niches, however, incorporated a hodge-podge of different pieces of equipment into a man's rucksack.

From vision to reality, the goal is to push a few buttons in the silent of night and connect to the right aircraft, enable the right munitions with precision accuracy, to the right target at the exact second required. This M2M accuracy will enable the ground forces to plan the next several steps, like a world-class chess player, in the destruction of the enemy combatant forces and achieve mission objectives. Fielding the BAO Kit provides a revolutionary tool to battle terrorism and save lives.

Battlefield Airmen and Air Force engineers took the initiative and designed equipment now proven successful on the battlefield. By investing in BAO Kit development, the result directly benefitted other DoD and Coalition large scale procurement programs requiring similar technology.

Today's technology developments include radio antennas sculpted to a man's body with multiple connections to work with every radio carried, even allowing SATCOM communications on the move. We are also designing body worn batteries weighing one third of the standard load out and taking up one half the normal space with pigtail connection to each radio and wrist mounted android device carried.

Throughout history, yesterday's generation has told today's generation how easy things are today. If 30 years ago you told me about the BAO Kit and M2M technology I would have laughed and asked if you were watching James Bond or Maxwell Smart.

In the next 30 years, innovations in nanotechnology will provide the greatest changes to battlefield actions ever seen in modern combat. Through advancements in nanosensors and nanoprocessors coupled with human advancements in mental perseverance and medical breakthroughs will prove a distinct advantage and directly influence warfare.

Future BAO operations will occur simultaneously across the globe with exacting precision and amazing situational awareness. I envision radios the size of your watch and global positioning system chips embedded into your night vision contact lenses all connected together with the 2040's version of Bluetooth.

Future ST Battlefield Airmen will control and shape battlespace with zero error and complete awareness of enemy intentions through specialized equipment, intelligence, and data fusion. Yesterday's technology at the tip of the spear has forever changed the battlefield. However, tomorrow's technology will dazzle even further.

About the Author: Mickey Wright is a retired Chief Master Sergeant with over 30 years as a combat controller. In addition to sitting on the Board of Directors for the ACA, he currently works for Rally Point Management interfacing with AFRL, academia, and industry engineers on technology advancements..

Air Force Cross Recipient

TSgt. Robert Gutierrez, Jr.

To stand in his shadow…
is to stand in the shadow of greatness.

By Harry J. Bright

Combat Controllers were first formed during WWII as US Army Pathfinders and assigned the "first in" job to establish drop zones for airborne operations, and then resurrected in 1953 in the US Air Force and reclaimed the title "combat controllers." They are a very unique group of men who do what no others can; combat soldier, combat diver, expert at all forms of parachuting methods, alternate insertion/extraction master, rappel and fast rope exits, combat zone air strike coordinator, and FAA-certified air traffic controller. Combat controllers are skilled to operate in extreme weather conditions and use most any off-road vehicle. And, as seen in recent years with countries that experienced devastating earthquakes and tsunami disasters, humanitarian "first in" operators establish landing zones and control incoming and outgoing aircraft, using radios they carry in with them.

These men are embedded into other special operatons teams and train with those teams to execute the missions assigned. The teams may be of different military services, but they are a true "Band of Brothers."

Sgt Robert Gutierrez is an Air Force Combat controller who was assigned to the Army's 7th Special Forces Group (SFG) on 5 October 2009. The mission of the 10-man team was to capture the second highest Taliban leader in the Herat Province of Afghanistan during a high-risk night time operation. A much larger enemy force attacked his team with machine gun and rifle fire, wounding the team leader in the leg and striking Sgt Gutierrez in the left upper arm triceps muscle. The team was pinned down inside a building without a safe escape route. They were in a "Kill Zone."

The bullet that hit Sgt Gutierrez deflected off of bone, travelling to the shoulder, scapula, left chest, and his back. It broke two ribs and collapsed one lung before exiting his back and lodging in his body armor. The exit wound left a hole big enough to "put a fist in it," as one doctor would later state. This is a severe wound that has about a three- minute window of life and will cause death if not treated almost immediately. Even though he knew this and was suffering great pain, Sgt Gutierrez took control of his situation as the joint terminal attack controller and called in A-10 aircraft for a strafing run. He was also engaging the enemy with his M-4 rifle. He would not give up his radio or his will to engage the enemy, even while bleeding profusely.

After the first A-10 run, Army Medic SFC "Medic Mike" (name withheld by request) was able to perform life saving medical actions, including the insertion of a hypodermic needle into the collapsed lung to re-inflate it and stabilizing the injuries to the point that Sgt Gutierrez was able to call in two more air strikes. These strafing runs took out the enemy forces, within 30 feet of their own position at times. These "Danger Close," pin-point attacks were so successful, the 10-man team was able to evacuate their position without any additional casualties. Sgt Gutierrez also suffered two ruptured ear drums during the strafing runs. This battle lasted approximately four hours.

After the enemy threat was eliminated, the 10-man team had to walk approximately 1 mile to reach the landing zone (LZ) for air evacuation, where he also coordinated as the on-scene LZ controller. His lung collapsed again and he had to be treated by Medic Mike. Only then did Sgt Gutierrez give up his radio and gear for further treatment of his injuries. He would spend the next 16 days in hospitals, ending up in Walter Reed, endured multiple blood infections, three blood transfusions, three chest tubes, and seven surgeries. It would take well over a year for a full recovery from his injuries.

The Air Force Cross

For his actions that day, Sgt Gutierrez was presented the Air Force Cross on 27 October 2011 by Gen Norton A. Schwartz, USAF Chief of Staff. The ceremony took place in the Freedom Hanger at Hurlburt Field, where Sgt Gutierrez is stationed as an instructor. There were over 1,000 people in attendance. The citation with the Air Force Cross details Sgt Gutierrez's actions on 05 October 2009. The last sentence reads:

"Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness in the face of the enemy, Sergeant Gutierrez reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force."

At the ceremony Sgt Gutierrez stated: "I didn't have time to sit there and be hurt, I didn't have time to give up, I didn't have time for that. I never thought about me, I only thought about my guys, my team, who is there, who I'm fighting with. Their safety, their lives are more important than mine on the battlefield."

"This award is not for me, this award is for every Airman fighting, everyone that's fighting downrange right now. It's for everyone that's been wounded, every sacrifice that we've given, all the men, all my teammates that have fallen. This is for them; this is a representation of them. I just get to wear it for them."

Also at that ceremony the Silver Star was presented to TSgt Ismael Villegas for his actions during combat at Bagh Khosak, Afghanistan, in September of 2009.

The Interview

I was given the opportunity to talk with Sgt Gutierrez during the 2011 ACA reunion. We had a thirty minute interview on base at HQ AFSOC Public Affairs office under the supervision of Capt. K. D. Duncan.

When did you enlist in the Air Force and what was the primary reason? I tried to enlist after 9/11 and was put in the delayed enlistment program. I felt that it was needed. I wanted to go fight. I got up that morning and saw what was going on. I thought "Someone has to go, so I'll go. I'll go fight". I was sent to basic training in July of 2002.

Why did you choose Combat controller? When I went to sign up, everything was shut down right after 9/11 (recruitment offices). The Army was shut down, the Marines weren't there, and I didn't want to go into the Navy as I grew up in San Diego. The Air Force was the only one that was open. The recruiter asked me what I wanted to do, and I told him I wanted one of the hardest things you have, I wanted to make an impact. He showed me pamphlets of Combat controller and Pararescue. He said these are the hardest; they have the highest attrition rates. There is a real in-depth selection process. You can make your choice. Do you want to save people here or do you see all the air strikes on TV? I said yes, I see that on TV and I want to do that.

Where was you initial training base and how long was your total training? After basic I went straight to Medina Annex at Lackland. I went to Combat Control orientation course there, then Ft. Benning jump school after that. Next was Keesler AFB for air traffic control. I graduated Air Traffic Control School and then went to Fairchild for survival training, S.E.R.E. course, and water survival course. Next was Combat Control School at Pope AFB. After graduating there I came here to Hurlburt for advanced skills training. That whole segment of training took about a year and a half up to this point. Then I was sent to RAF Mildenhall, U.K.

Where was your first duty base? That would have been here, at Hurlburt.

Would you share with us some facts of your first mission? I was in eastern Afghanistan in the mountains. We were conducting clearing operations. I was a SrA, three stripes. The operation was fairly large. It lasted two days, two nights, about 48 hours. I controlled close air support for attack helicopters, resupply, ISR, recon. I handled close to 45 sorties. We were in six fights lasting from five minutes to an hour. Some ended real fast, some took awhile.

What were your thoughts the first time you were in combat? The training kicked in automatically. Honestly, I was so preoccupied working my aircraft, making sure everything was done, and protecting myself that I really didn't have time to think about anything except getting the job done.

I had strong leadership and mentorship back home and at Mildenhall. I knew that I would have to write a report when I got back and the Army would write one too. I did not want my performance to be subpar at any point. I wanted to prove to myself that I signed up for a reason, that this is what I signed up for. I wanted to make sure that I got the job done. The Air Force, AFSOC, my career field, my unit, our name was on the line. It always is, so if you're not giving 110, 120%, doing everything you can plus more, to me, it brings dishonor to them, the people that trained me. The guy that was there before me did an incredible job and I had to meet that standard and beyond. I didn't want to let him down. I didn't want to let my guys, my supervisor down. At that point I am the only Air Force guy on the ground within 100 miles.

In the picture I saw of you in Afghanistan, you had a beard. Can you tell me why? You don't look at all like you do now, and I was expecting to see someone older. The relaxed grooming standards are an operational thing. It's for cultural reasons and blends with the male population. It's a sign of wisdom, honor, and respect. The last thing you want to do with forces like that is to disrespect their culture. We needed to fit in and blend in, mainly blend in. Plus, I didn't have a razor with me.

Also in the pictures, your helmet looks different from others. Yes. It is job specific. I have the best equipment there is for the job I do.

Can you tell us how heavy is the equipment that you carry on missions, can list some of it? The armor, the water bottles, the radios--sometimes more than one, the ammo, the man-pack, trauma kit, probably about 85 pounds. Ammo weighs a lot and I carry a lot.

How many times have you been wounded or struck on your Body Armor and Helmet? I've been very fortunate. I've been hit twice in the helmet and knocked unconscious. I've been fragged, my radio has been shot, my ammo magazine has been hit a couple of times. When that stuff gets hit we usually throw it away as it doesn't work anymore. And if I am not bleeding it doesn't count (laughing here). Most of the time you don't know it even has happened. If you don't see it you just keep going. I've been hit where it rocked me real hard, by a mortar round or RPG. It knocked me unconscious. You come to and check yourself out and check everybody else, "Nobody bleeding? You're good? You're good? Okay, let's go." I don't have to sit there and think, "Man, what's going to happen next?" I'm going to make what happens next, I'm going to end it. Keep moving forward.

You mentioned leadership, mentors. Is there any one person that has been a guiding influence or mentor for you

during career so far? It's really hard to say. I've had so many supervisors and co-workers that have done just amazing things. You can't say that one guy has helped me more then another. Everyone at our level and what we do, we're so close and tight-knit that everyone looks out for each other. We are looking out to make sure that our guys are getting better, they are being taken care of, and making sure they can be effective on the battlefield. Anything that is flawed we work to fix, as it can mean the difference between life and death. I had a group of NCOs that have just been amazing. There is just a ton of people that have helped me. Just about everyone that has helped train me has been a mentor. I looked up to those guys. I wanted to be exactly what they were, plus more.

We always say, "There is a standard. A standard for what we do. It's not good enough to just meet that standard; you have to exceed that standard every time." My instructors instilled that in me, and I hand it down to my guys.

As an instructor, what is your "Personal Mission" with the students you come in contact with? I want to give back what someone has taught me because it saved my life. So in return, I want to teach that to my guys so it will keep them safe on the battlefield. I want them to strive to always do better and be effective on the battlefield. I can teach them my mistakes so they won't make those. If they already know about it they won't make the same ones. I want them to survive and do better than me.

What is your long range plan or goal for your career with the Air Force? It's hard to say right now because I want to be helpful with the Air Force. I'll do whatever the Air Force asks me to do. I'll go where ever they want me to go. If they tell me to haul the mail, I'll haul the mail. It doesn't bother me. I'll do whatever it takes to get the job done, even if it takes 20 years. Or more, if necessary. I am so thankful for where I am now; the Air Force has given me so much. I never dreamed I would have this. I'm very thankful to have the opportunity to have all that I do. If they need me longer than 20 years then I'll go longer.

Author Harry Bright with Air Force Cross Recipient Sgt Robert Gutierrez Jr.

Do you have any plans for your post Air Force career? Not right now. But I like teaching so much that I would like to be a teacher. I would like to be a farmer, also. I'm from the city and being stationed in places that are farm lands, I love that stuff. I don't know if I could go back to the city. I think those are two very good choices, to be a farmer or a teacher. I know people that do both. I'd like to do that, unless the Air Force wants me to come back. Then I'd come back to the Air Force. If duty calls, duty calls. I'm not going to say no. (He has a big smile here).

What would you like to tell the young men and women of today that would inspire them to choose the Air Force as the next step in their life? I would tell them that it is a wonderful opportunity to do many things an to see many things that they normally wouldn't. To be a part of a small percent of the military to make a difference and help protect this nation. It's an awesome opportunity to do so many things and the Air Force will give you so much in return. For your hard work it pays off in the Air Force. There so many benefits and you can do a lot of things in regards to education, and if you want to go fight you can definitely go fight. If you want to make a difference this where to be.

Where were you raised and where did you go to school? I'm from San Diego, California but was raised in National City, California. I went to school in Chula Vista, California for the educational and sports opportunities.

Where did you and your wife meet? I met her at the air traffic control tower at RAF Mildenhall where she yelled at me and made fun of me. I knew then that I had to take her off the market. She was a better traffic controller, and she will say that. She knows it. I'm better at other things, but at air traffic controller, she was really good at it. (This was really funny, we were laughing here. I asked him if I can quote him and he agreed, and Capt. Duncan said "Be sure to include the part about her being a better Air Traffic Controller.") She is an awesome wife and mother, and she has made sacrifices for my career.

Having been deployed to countries that have a different and much harder lifestyle then we do here in the USA, what would you like tell people about raising children and living in general? Be thankful for what we have. We have wonderful rights and freedoms, and a great country. It's rare, rare in the world to have the rights and freedoms that we have. It's extremely rare to have all that we have here.

Do you have any final thoughts or words of advice that you would like to share with us? I can't thank enough my wife and my family, the Air Force, AFSOC, everyone in general that has helped me. Nothing here is ever completed by one person; it is a complete team effort on everyone's part. I'm thankful that

everyone does their part, because I couldn't do my part without their help. I'm grateful to be able to go out and fight, to be the tip of the spear. I am thankful for the support we get from our counterparts.

Some interesting and lesser known facts about Sgt Gutierrez

- He has the bullet that struck him under lock and key.
- His wife was in the Air Force and served two tours in Iraq. She left the Air Force when they got married.
- They had their second little "Air Commando" in January 2012.
- SSgt Gutierrez was promoted to Tech Sergeant at the end of 2011.
- He participated in the Ruck March from Lackland to Hurlburt last year and this year. The Army Medic that worked on him in Afghanistan participated in the Ruck March with him. They have remained close friends. The Ruck March is to honor fallen Air Force Special Ops members from the present year.
- He was on the same Afghan operation in 2009 that SSgt Zachary Rhyner would be awarded the Air Force Cross. Sgt Gutierrez received the Bronze Star with Valor and Purple Heart for his actions on that mission.
- He has nineteen major awards and decorations.
- He has attended Southwestern Community College and Troy University. He has 110 semester credit hours toward a degree in criminal justice/homeland security.
- Sgt Gutierrez is only the second living combat controller to receive the Air Force Cross. There have been only five Special Ops members to receive it. Approximately 180 Air Force Cross presentations have been made. The Air Force Cross is second only to the Medal Of Honor.
- He likes to fish for relaxation.

A Final Word

After the interview concluded Capt. Duncan asked if I wanted a picture of Sgt Gutierrez to go along with the interview, to which I happily agreed. She then asked if I wanted one with him and me standing together. I agreed. We were standing about 2 feet apart and as she raised the camera to take the picture, he reached his arm around my shoulder and pulled me next to him and said "Take the picture now". That is just the type of guy he is.

… I have stood in the shadow of greatness.

Sources for this article:

World Wide Web

Special thanks to:

Capt. K. D. Duncan

US Air Force, HQ AFSOC Public Affairs

Hurlburt Field

Mrs Julie Gutierrez

TSgt Robert Gutierrez

Interview arranged by Col. Dennis Barnett (Ret.), VP ACA, and Dawn Hart, AFSOC Public Affairs, Hurlburt Field

Article researched and constructed by Harry J. Bright, ACA life member #4040

The McCoskrie Threshold Foundation (MTF)

Humanitarian Arm of the Air Commando Association (ACA)

By Lt Col (ret) Felix Sambogna

The McCoskrie Threshold Foundation (MTF), the all-volunteer nonprofit humanitarian arm of the Air Commando Association (ACA), provides aid and assistance locally and worldwide to those in need. The aid may be in the form of medical teams/supplies, identified specific needs, or bulk shipping of general humanitarian items such as clothing, school and medical equipment, furniture, and food. The primary objective is to provide equipment and supplies in support of US Military Humanitarian Assistance Programs (HAP) and nation building efforts, thus projecting US forces in the best possible light. When a military partnership is not available, the MTF provides humanitarian aid representing the United States of America through other nonprofit organizations including Bless the Children (BTC), and the Thailand, Laos, Cambodia (TLC) Brotherhood.

Retired Air Force Brig Gen Harry "Heinie" Aderholt founded the Air Commando Association (ACA) in 1967. The ACA has always had a humanitarian mission. The mission was formalized in South East Asia when Air Commando units went to many villages in Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos to provide medical and humanitarian support. General Aderholt, in addition to being acknowledged as Air Commando 1, was a great humanitarian. He was dedicated to helping the needy especially in Thailand and Laos where he spent many years.

BGen Harry C. 'Heinie' Aderholt

The humanitarian arm of the ACA, the McCoskrie Threshold Foundation (MTF), was formally established in 1986 as a 501C(3) tax-exempt organization with an all-volunteer staff. Financial support is obtained through contributions from the ACA membership and periodic fund drives to cover storage, shipping, donations for special projects, and administrative expenses. To date, approximately $230,000 dollars have been donated to the MTF. The Foundation was named in honor of Colonel McCoskrie, former commander of the 56th Special Operations Wing at Nakhon Phanon Royal Thai Air Base, and one of the principal founders of the MTF. Since he passed away, his family members have made very generous contributions in honor of Colonel McCoskrie.

The number of humanitarian projects over the past 45 years is too numerous to mention, but some details follow:

Medical teams spent three years in Guatemala providing much needed medical and dental support. In 1984 Colonel McCoskrie was the Task Force Commander for the ACA Medical Relief Program in Central America. Civil strife in the area caused great suffering for the civilian population, and the MTF was able to alleviate some of the suffering.

Thanks to the efforts of Air Commandos Dick Geron and Hap Lutz close ties were maintained with the World Medical Relief Organization that provided more than $100 million of supplies for projects in South East Asia, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala.

In the local area, furniture and household items are provided to many needy families. MTF volunteers work with the Airmen's Attic at Eglin Air Force Base to help young airmen and their families who need household items including furniture and appliances.

Millions of pounds of goods (clothing, shoes, medical supplies, furniture, appliances, bicycles, books, school desks and equipment) have been sent to many countries: Honduras, Panama, Thailand, Vietnam, Peru, Haiti, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Montserrat, Jamaica, the Republic of Georgia, and many more.

In the 1980s, retired helicopter pilot John Grove became the driving force in the continued efforts. He established additional contacts with numerous agencies that provided the medical supplies/equipment and all forms of other items valuable to the needy. John would pick up the items using his truck and

trailer and deliver them to storage units paid for by John and the MTF. He would arrange the delivery of ship containers, coordinate a volunteer loading team, and have the load delivered to the port for shipping. John also established a school in mountainous area of Honduras that has been supported by the MTF. The John Grove School is providing an opportunity for many young Hondurans who desperately desire an education.

Assistance was also provided to families in North Carolina after hurricane Floyd and to families in Alabama after tornados. Volunteers used their own vehicles to deliver the items.

Relocation of the Montagnards, Vietnamese and Lao tribesmen who fought alongside US Special Forces in Vietnam, in North Carolina was supported. Hundred of refugee families arrived with no worldly possessions. The MTF provided truckloads of clothing, furniture, bedding, bicycles and toys for this gallant and needy group.

Each year the MTF supports the "Christmas Wish" program. Originally it was in coordination with the Hurlburt Field Air Commando Wing that supported two orphanages in Honduras. Christmas packages were delivered and distributed by C-130 crewmembers. Currently, funds are sent to a representative in Honduras to purchase needed supplies, appliances, and sports equipment on the local economy. This effort is coordinated with BTC.

After John Grove passed away, the scope of the MTF effort decreased, but continues. Current President Bob White, Dave Freeman, and team continue to pick up valuable items, especially medical equipment and supplies that are stored in units provided without cost by a local businessman. Overseas shipments are coordinated with Bless the Children in Clearwater FL. MTF volunteers deliver the items to Clearwater using personal vehicles.

The MTF has also kept close ties with the Thailand, Laos, Cambodia (TLC) Brotherhood, a humanitarian organization dedicated to helping the needy in those three counties. Representatives of the TLC identify projects such as schools, medical facilities, water systems that need to be constructed or repaired. The MTF has provided monetary assistance for several of these projects. The latest donation of $7,500 was for a school facility in Nakhon Phanon that was dedicated to General Aderholt. When General Aderholt passed away, ACA members donated $8,600 to the MTF in his memory. Mrs. Aderholt requested that these funds be used for projects in Thailand or Laos because her husband was so close to the Thai and Lao people.

The MTF band of volunteers makes a difference in the lives of so many needy folks in so many countries. The goal of General Aderholt to help the needy by establishing the humanitarian arm of the Air Commando Association continues to be fulfilled. The donations of ACA members and friends continue to make this humanitarian effort possible. When the call for volunteers is made to load, deliver, or do other tasks, the response is inspiring. Men like John Grove and so many others make this world a better place.

The reason the volunteers spend so much time and personal resources to help the less fortunate may be found in the following:

"You must give some time to your fellow man…something for which you get no pay but the privilege of doing it. For remember, you don't live in a world all your own, your brother lives here, too." –Albert Schweitzer

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The McCoskrie Threshold Foundation office is located in the Air Commando Association building at 2502 Highway 98 W, Mary Esther, FL 32569. Information about the MTF is available on the ACA Web Site: www.aircommando.org.
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Directors: John Connors, Steve Connelly, Dave Freeman
Advisors: Karen Kramer, Karen Hubbard with Blessthechildreninc.org

The McCoskrie Threshold Foundation is a charitable organization operating as a tax-exempt, non-profit corporation in accordance with IRS Tax Code section 501(c) 3. The FEIN is 59 275 5196. Donations are tax deductible as provided by law.

MTF truck used in many humanitarian missions.

Clockwise from top: **BGen Aderholt and volunteers. Honduran girl receives toy donated by MTF. Dr Arnold Wheat administers dental care in Guatemala. John Grove with George Mealer and Honduran volunteers at the John Grove High School. Water purification station built by Thai Laos Cambodia Brotherhood (TLCB). Choak Amnuay Elementary School named in honor of BGen Aderholt located in Nakhon Phanom Province, Thailand.**

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.

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