



# GUNG-HO

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**GERMAN  
LRRPs**

**ELITE UNIT SPECIAL**

**BEIRUT MARINES**

**L.A.  
COP SHOW**

**FIGHTING  
GUERRILLAS**

**WINNING THEIR  
HEARTS & MINDS**

**MERCENARY  
TRAINING**

**WHERE TO GET IT**

**VIET CONG  
ROCKET —**

**LAUNCHING TECHNIQUES**

**EXCLUSIVE**

**FIRST TEST OF THE NEW  
JATI SUBMACHINE GUN**

**USAF SPECIAL  
OPERATIONS WING**

**"ANY TIME, ANY PLACE"**



A Pig This Unit Ain't!

# The USAF SOW

A big MC-130E Combat Talon (Blackbird). Note nose boom's "whiskers" for STAR (Fulton) system and radar "bump" in nose.



by Roger R. Baker LTC. USAF

# ELITE UNIT

Unarmed version of the HH-53H Pave-Loe chopper. Note refueling probe in nose.



**Eglin AFB, Florida** — The Air Commandos of Vietnam fame are alive and well at Hurlburt Field on the Florida Gulf Coast, one of many installations in the sprawling complex known as Eglin Air Force Base.

The 1st Special Operations Wing, the only active-duty Air Force outfit still flying AC-130H Spectre gunships and MC-130H Combat Talon insertion and recovery aircraft has continued to serve as the Air Force's cutting edge in counter-insurgency warfare and special operations since hostilities ended in Vietnam.

The wing's latest operation — spearheading the invasion of Grenada — indicates that some lessons have been learned since its last published major undertaking, the disastrous attempt to rescue American hostages in Iran in May 1980, an attempt that ended in flaming disaster at Desert One, the final staging area outside Teheran.

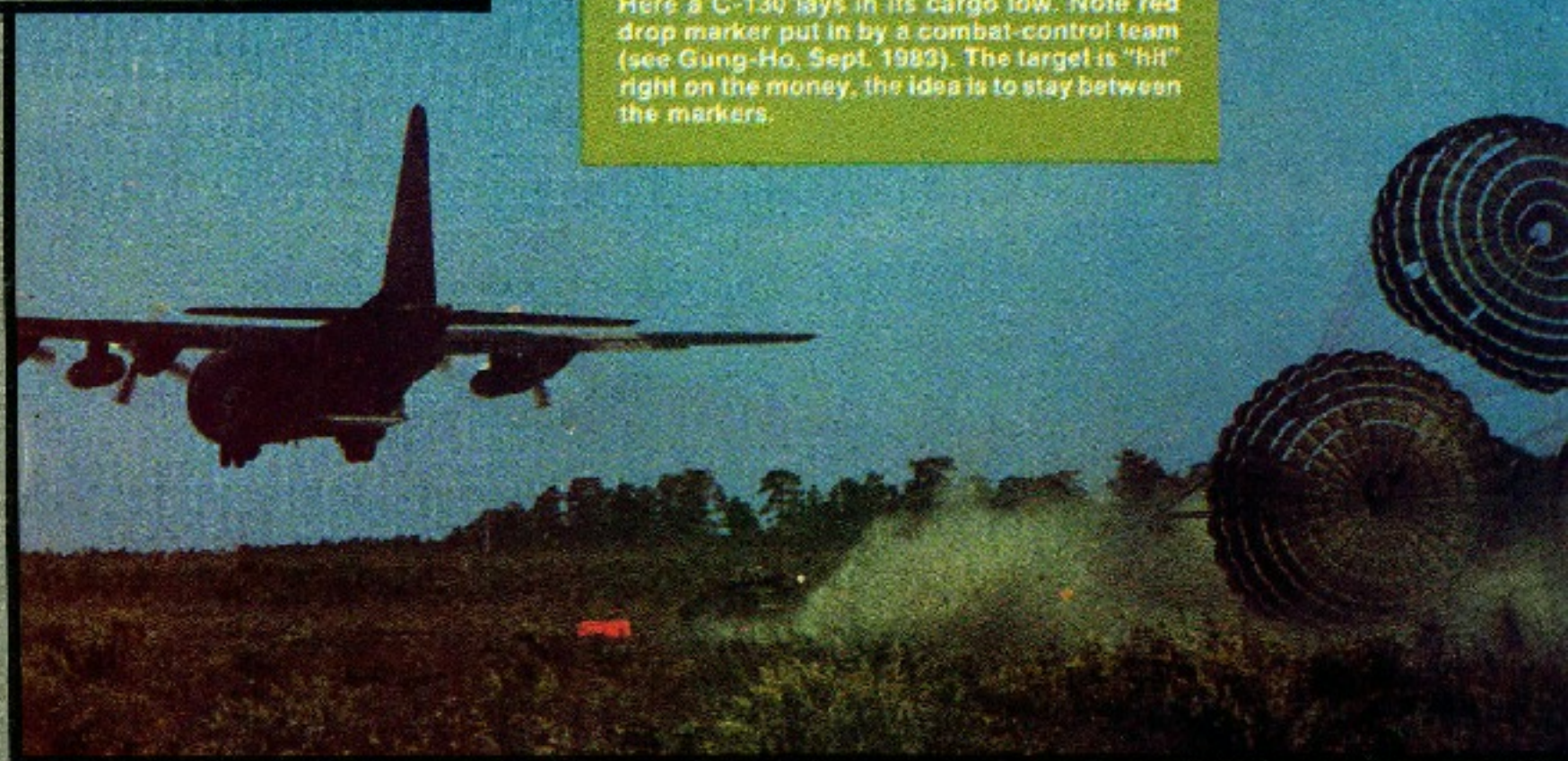
The "First SOW" is the main-force striking arm of the 2nd Air Division, which has responsibility for all unconventional warfare operations for the Air Force.

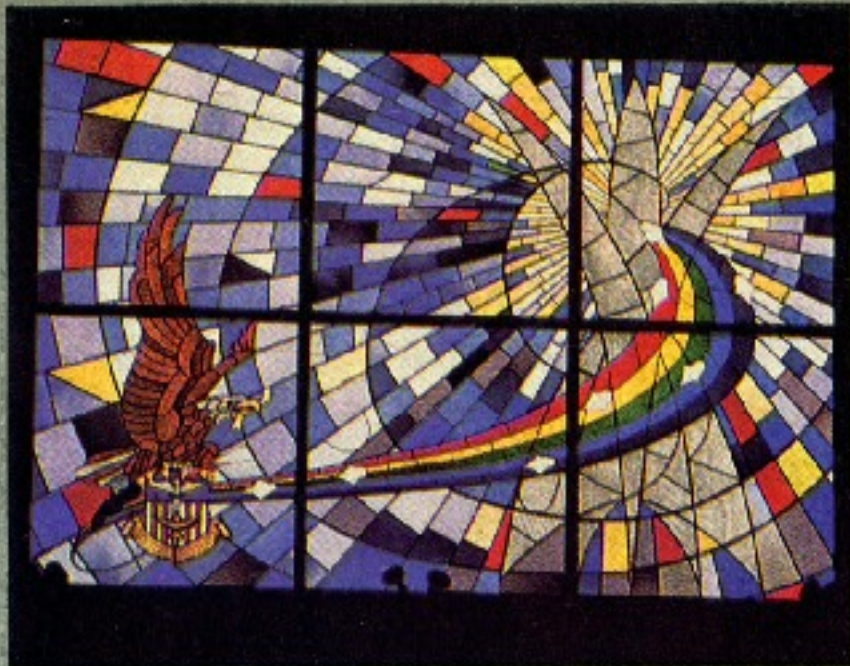
Oddly enough, this first-line combat outfit, which probably flies the hairiest missions currently available to U.S. pilots, is under the command and control of the Military Airlift Command and has been since March 1983.

The reason is simple, according to the public affairs officer for the wing: virtually all of its aircraft are modified transport types, mostly armed or specially equipped versions of the venerable Lockheed C-130 Hercules transport.

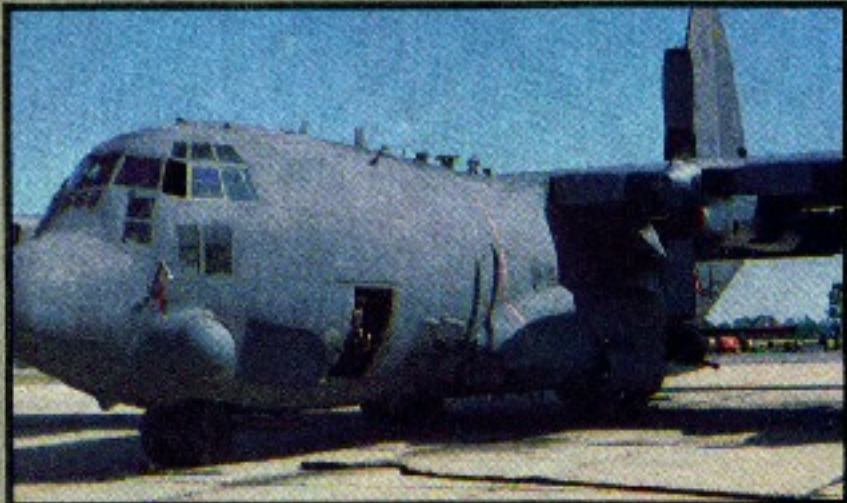
All of their pilots are drawn from MAC, and so are the ground crews that service the 14 Hercules in the wing. MAC has access to the spare parts and potential replacement pilots and crews, and so the wing was trans-

Here a C-130 lays in its cargo low. Note red drop marker put in by a combat-control team (see Gung-Ho, Sept. 1983). The target is "hit" right on the money, the idea is to stay between the markers.





SOW lost several people in the Iran raid (see Gung-Ho, Jan. 1983). This chapel window is in their memory.



Views of AC-130H Spectre. Armament forward to aft is: two 20mm Vulcan cannon, 40mm Bofors gun, 105mm howitzer at rear. Red objects on Bofors and howitzer barrels are flash suppressors and integral to the weapon. All armament is mounted on the port side. No, the Spectre does not make a sharp left turn when the 105 is fired. See next month's issue for comprehensive spectre article.

ferred from the Air Force Tactical Air Command (TAC) to MAC; the 2nd Air Division was activated to serve as the administration unit for all special operations activities in the Air Force; and the 1st SOW, along with other active and reserve Air Force units, was placed under its operational control.

The wing's primary mission is flying command teams into hostile areas, providing air support for them while they're there, and extracting them when it's time to move out.

To do this, the wing can field a variety of specially-equipped aircraft, all of them unique in the Air Force.

These include the wing's prime mover, the MC-130 Combat Talon, a converted Herc able to drop troops or supplies with pinpoint accuracy, and make midair rescue snatches of troops or air crewmen on the ground; the AC-130H Spectre gunship, mounting an awesome array of weaponry; the HH-53H Pave-Lo helicopter, and the venerable UH-1N

Huey, which serves as both a troop and cargo carrier and a gunship in SOW missions.

The MC-130-E Combat Talon, sometimes known as "Blackbird" for its role in "black" flights — the kind where you cross international borders without getting your passport stamped — was custom-made for carrying Special Forces or Navy SEAL teams on clandestine missions, getting them in, and getting them out.

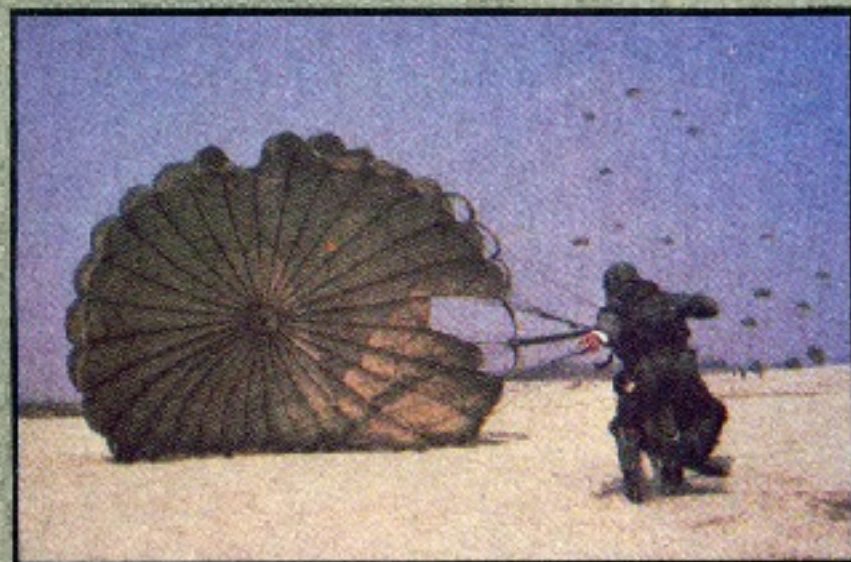
It is equipped with the Fulton Surface-to-Air Recovery (STAR) system, specialized aerial delivery equipment, communication, electronic warfare, and aerial refueling systems.

Its electronic gear includes FLIR (forward-looking, infrared) sensors, terrain-following radar that allows the plane to fly at altitudes as low as 250 feet, a K-band radar for high-resolution ground mapping, an inertial navigation system, and a LORAN-C receiver.

Electronic countermeasures include the AN/ALR-46 radar warning receiver, AN/ALE-27 chaff dispensers, and the AN/AAQ-8 infrared decoy system to draw off heat-seeking, surface-to-air, or air-to-air missiles.

The STAR system. (See Gung Ho, Dec. 1982, "Sky Hook") consists of an inflatable balloon, a 525-foot nylon lift line, a bottle of helium, and a safety harness that can be dropped to the ground. The user straps on the harness, attaches the line to the harness and balloon, inflates the balloon, and releases it. The MC-130E makes a low pass and catches the line with a pair of booms mounted on the nose of the aircraft, secures it, and lifts the man in the harness off the ground.

The Air Force says the force of the recovery system's snatch is less than the shock of an opening parachute. The system can recover two men simultaneously or up to 500 pounds of equipment. Once grabbed from the



Here a USAF SOW pathfinder gains control of his chute.



H.Q. of the 16th Special Operations Squadron.



A member of a USAF SOW-supported unit makes a HALO insertion. SOW supports all unit special-operations efforts.

ground, the recovered men or equipment are reeled in by the crew.

There are 14 Combat Talons in the Air Force, six assigned to the 1st SOW's 8th Special Operations Squadron at Hurlburt, four to the 7th SOS at Rhein-Main Air Base in the Federal Republic of Germany, and four with the 1st SOS at Clark Air Base in the Philippines.

All these units are under the command of the 2nd Air Division, along with several Air Force Reserve units: the 302nd SOS at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona; the 919th Special Operations Group at Duke Field, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida; and the 193rd Electronic Combat Group at Harrisburg International Airport, Pennsylvania.

The reserve units fly the earlier version of Spectre, the AC-130A, as well as the EC-130 and CH-3 helicopter, the "Jolly Green Giant" of Vietnam fame.

The MC-130E Combat Talon is powered by four T56-A-15 turboprop engines developing 4,200 shaft horsepower each, flies at more than 300 mph with a ceiling of 30,000 feet, and has a 2,000-mile range without midair refueling. Maximum gross takeoff weight is 155,000 pounds, and the plane carries a crew of six officers and five enlisted men.

On airdrop operations, the Combat Talon will slow to 144 mph for personnel, 150 to 288 mph for equipment drops, and will unload equip-

ment at minimum altitudes of 50 feet.

The plane's array of radars and sensors is designed to provide it with capabilities for locating drop zones in unknown territory and making precision airborne deliveries.

The AC-130H Spectre, designed as a replacement for the AC-47D Dragon Ship and AC-119K Stinger used in Vietnam, is armed with two 20mm Vulcan cannon, a 40 mm Bofors gun, and a 105mm howitzer, all mounted on the port side of the aircraft.

Spectre is intended to orbit combat zones and provide precision firepower for commando teams on the ground. In addition to the basic weapons configuration, the Spectre can be fitted with two 7.62mm miniguns, grenade launchers, and gun or rocket pods, as well as other air munitions which can be carried under the wing.

Along with the weaponry, Spectre is fitted with FLIR sensors for target detection by day or night, through haze or battle smoke; a gated laser



illuminator for covert illumination, whose source can't be seen from the ground; a laser target designator and range finder; a 2,000-watt searchlight; four AN/ALQ-87 ECM jamming pods; the AN/ARN-92 inertial navigation system; LORAN-C and Doppler radar; a "Black Crow" system to detect ground radio emissions; a special radar to pick up coded ground radar beacons; and two LLLTV (low-light-level television) cameras mounted on a gimbaled platform, one with a wide angle, the other with a high-resolution lens. Video recorders are also carried on board for post-mission analysis.

Powerplant for Spectre consists of four Allison T56-A-15 engines developing 4,910 shaft horsepower each, with takeoff weight, speed and ceiling approximately the same as

the Combat Talon. Spectre carries a crew of nine enlisted men and five officers.

In addition to its gunship mission, Spectre has served effectively in search and rescue missions, most notably when a commercial airliner crashed near Miami in 1973 and a Spectre orbited the crash site, using its 2KW searchlight to guide rescue workers and illuminate the ground for them.

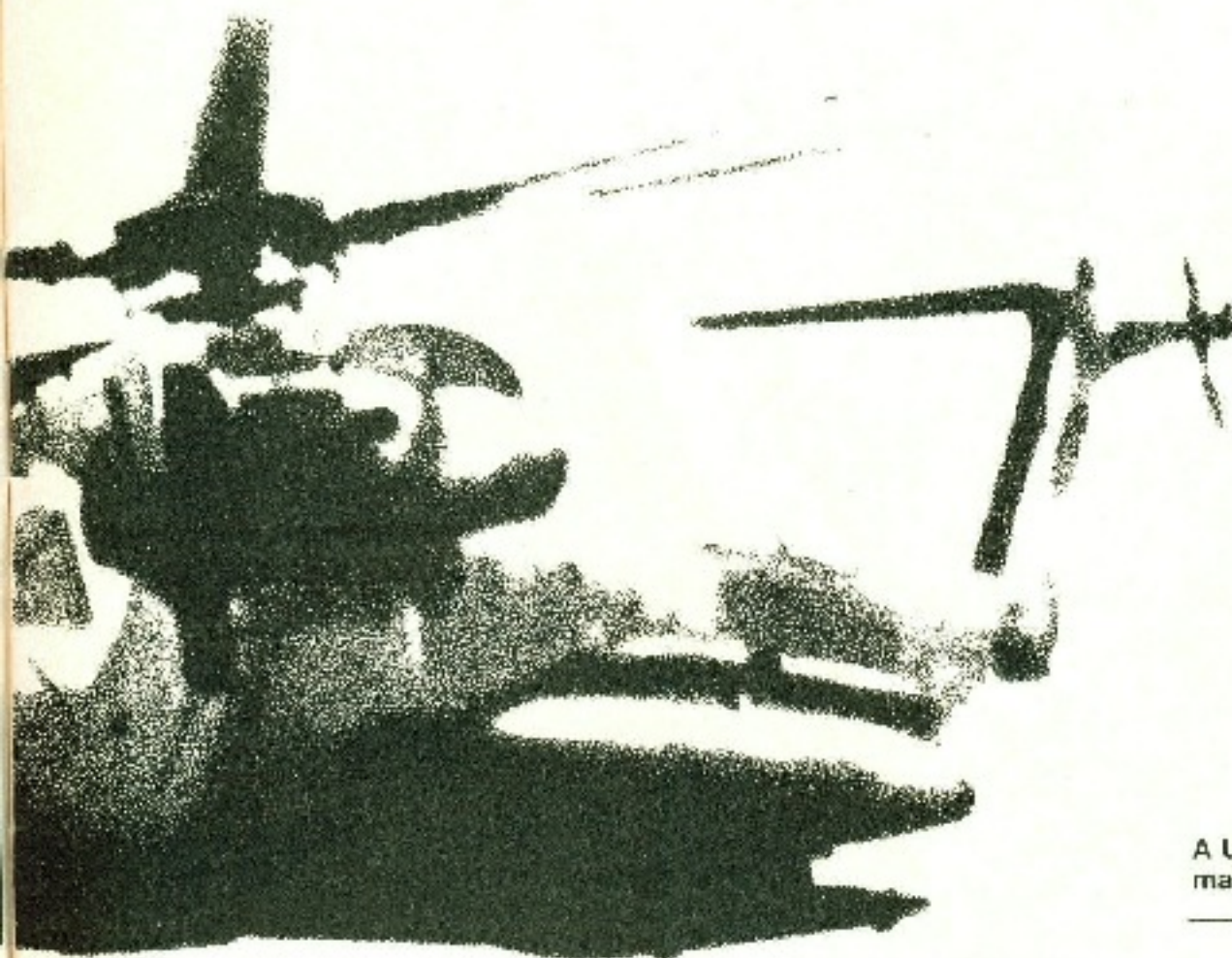
The nine Spectres under 1st SOW are flown by the 16th SOS at Hurlburt, the only active-duty Air Force squadron equipped with them.

The HH-53H Pave Low helicopter, a

version of the rear-loading CH-53C, is a twin-turbine engine, single rotor, heavy-lift chopper with a mission similar to the MC-130E.

Flown by the 20th SOS at Hurlburt, which also flies the 1st SOW's Hueys, the HH-53H is equipped with a night adverse weather capability through terrain following and terrain-avoidance ground-mapping radar, FLIR system and Doppler inertial navigation systems.

The Pave Low is equipped with a



A USAF HH-53 Pave-Low chopper makes a high-speed pass.

## **HISTORICAL SKETCH: 1ST SPECIAL OPERATIONS WING**

More than a dozen years ago, a special category of U.S. Air Force warriors were reincarnated. Called "air commandos" during World War II, they are presently assembled under the emblem of the 1st Special Operations Wing (SOW) at Hurlburt Field in the panhandle of northwest Florida.

The wing's lineage dates back to the 1st Air Commando Group which was created March 29, 1944, at Hailakandi, India. The unit first won fame providing fighter cover, air strikes, and airlift for "Wingate's Raiders" who were operating behind enemy lines in Burma. It was over Burma's jungles that the air commandos earned their World War II reputation as unorthodox air fighters.

According to the commandos, General Henry "Hap" Arnold told them, "To hell with administration and paperwork, go out and fight!" They took him literally, and before they were through, the "Burma Bridge Busters" had been awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation for extraordinary heroism. After World War II, the group was transferred to the United States and disbanded with full honors on Oct. 8, 1948.

The air-commando legacy was revived with the activation of the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron at Hurlburt Field in 1961, and the wing's recent history began. Nicknamed "Jungle Jim," this nucleus anticipated President John F. Kennedy's order to the armed forces in May 1962 to strengthen the ability to fight guerrilla warfare, especially communist "wars of national liberation."

The squadron was expanded to the 4400th Combat Crew Training Group on March 20, 1962, less than one year after its birthdate. The unit was redesignated the 1st Air Commando Group on April 27, 1962. It was later enlarged and, by July 1, 1963, was converted to the 1st Air Commando Wing. The unit became the 1st SOW of the U.S. Air Force's Special Operations Force (USAFSOF) on July 8, 1968.

Missions of USAFSOF and the 1st SOW were consolidated under the wing on July 1, 1974, and the wing was redesignated as the 834th Tactical Composite Wing, reporting directly to the commander of the Tactical Air Command (TAC). Effective July 1, 1975, the wing once again assumed its more historic name of the 1st SOW. The 1st SOW was directed to report to the commander of Ninth Air Force, effective July 1, 1976. The Wing reported to Ninth Air Force until September 1980, when it was designated to report directly to the Commander, Tactical Air Command.

Although expansion of the wing was closely associated with the buildup of United States presence in Southeast Asia (SEA), the employment of the wing's special-operations concepts in the Republic of Vietnam was somewhat altered, since its operation in SEA was tailored to the support of general purpose forces. It was not until the waning years of the Vietnam conflict that a truly special-operations mission was planned and executed. The daring Son Tay prison raid in North Vietnam was carried out Nov. 20, 1971.

Throughout its present history, the basic mission of the 1st SOW has remained unchanged. As the focal point for Air Force special-operations matters, the wing has more sophisticated capabilities than the original air commandos. Its special-operations capabilities include assisting in the internal defense of allied nations, conducting psychological operations, managing unconventional warfare assets, and related activities. The wing is capable of training the forces of allied nations to defend against the subversive guerrilla operations so commonly in use around the world today.

retractable air refueling probe, external hoist, two jettisonable auxiliary fuel tanks, armor plating, and may be configured with three 7.62mm miniguns or three .50-caliber machine guns to deliver suppressive fire. Its powerplant consists of two T64 GE-7A turbo shaft engines developing 2,935 horsepower each.

Maximum speed of the aircraft is 196 mph, range without midair refueling is 600 miles, and maximum gross takeoff weight is 42,000 pounds.

The Pave Low carries a crew of six and can haul up to 37 commandos, 24 litter cases with four medical attendants, or 16,000 pounds of cargo.

The UH-1N provides the 1st SOW with gunship coverage as well as infiltration and exfiltration of reconnaissance and combat-control personnel, as well as medical-evacuation missions.

The chopper carries a crew of three or four depending on mission requirements, including an aircraft commander, pilot, flight engineer, and gunner for armed missions.

The aircraft is capable of carrying 11 passengers; a normal mixture for the UH-1N would include the crew plus six parachutists or six litters. The Huey could also carry 2,500 pounds of cargo internally or 5,000 pounds in a sling load.

The Hueys can be fitted with a variety of equipment, including searchlights, personnel-rescue hoists, pylon-mounted machine or Gatling guns, grenade launchers, rocket pods, and loudspeakers.

In addition to the 20th SOS, the chopper is also flown by Detachment 1 of the 2nd Air Division at Howard Air Base in Panama.

Flying isn't everything in the 1st SOW. Its Special Operations Combat Control Team's mission is to provide forward air guidance and air-traffic control, including limited weather observation at forward operating areas in unconventional-warfare situations; to position and operate visual and electronic navigation aids, target designation and communications equipment for striking targets; train, advise, and assist selected U.S. Army, Navy, and foreign military forces in the capabilities and use of Air Force special-operations assets; act as liaison to other U.S. military unconventional-warfare forces during joint operations, and perform reception site (drop zone, landing zone, and recovery zone) operations, as well as provide ground control for tactical aircraft during special operations.

Team members are trained in static line and free-fall parachuting, use of both open- and closed-circuit

## WING EMBLEM



The emblem of the 1st Special Operations Wing (SOW) is symbolic of the organization's history and its mission.

The blue of the background represents the sky and the Air Force. The 13 red and white stripes stand for the nation's original colonies, the first American force to engage in limited war. The silver dagger is winged to indicate that the 1st SOW brings support through the air. A golden lamp of knowledge reflects the wing's civic-action role and indicates that members of the 1st SOW serve as teachers, as well as warriors, in helping our allies determine their own way of life and form of government.

The wing's motto, "Any Time, Any Place," emphasizes that the 1st SOW is the single focal point for all Air Force special-operations matters and is prepared to accomplish its mission whenever or wherever it is called upon to do so.

SCUBA gear, amphibious operations in small boats and air-dropped inflatable boats, and overland missions in arctic, desert, or tropical conditions.

Official military spokesmen have been tight-lipped about the specific role of the 1st SOW in the Grenada operation; Pentagon spokesmen and those at Hurlburt have refused to confirm or deny any involvement of the wing at all.

Eyewitness news accounts of the early stages of the Grenada landings, however, make mention of the Spectres' role in providing air cover (They helped vaporize two BTR-70 APCs) around the capital of St. Georges, and the complex timing and coordination of the Marine helicopter assault at Pearl Airport near the capital and the Cuban-built runway at Point Salines on the other end of the island point to the handiwork of the SOS Combat Control Teams in providing air-traffic control and recon, and the 8th SOS in delivering the Rangers to the field. (Not all of them jumped; later waves of Rangers debarked from planes on the ground at the airfield.)

Capt. Dennis F. Stone, executive officer of the 2nd Air Division, said the command operates a three-month school for C-130 pilots and crews drawn from MAC and assigned to special operations with the 1st SOW, to familiarize them with their planes' unique equipment and special flying missions. By the time they arrive at Hurlburt, he said, they will have already received Air Force survival training and all the lore they'll need to function in the squadron, besides operation of special armaments, rescue equipment, and electronics, which are taught at Hurlburt and in live-fire missions at Eglin's extensive-gunnery ranges.

Quite a few of them will have already been to Eglin before for tropical survival training, labeled "Prime Beef

and Ribs Training" by the Air Force.

"We try to take only the more experienced C-130 pilots," Stone said, though less-experienced co-pilots are accepted in the 1st SOW.

The wing also provides special training for its load-masters in high-speed airdrop techniques, the STAR system, and other specialized functions.

Like many elite units, the 1st SOW traces its origins back to World War II, when the 1st Air Commando Group was formed March 29, 1944, at Haikandi, India.

The group won fame providing fighter cover, air strikes, and airlift for Maj. Gen. Orde C. Wingate's "Chindit" raiders in Burma, where the Air Commandos earned a reputation as unconventional air fighters, winning a Distinguished Unit Citation before the group was disbanded in 1948.

The Air Commandos were revived with the activation of the 4400th Combat Crew Training Group on March 20, 1962. By July 1963, the group was expanded and redesignated the 1st Air Commando Wing. It became the 1st Special Operations Wing of the Air Force Special Operations Force on July 8, 1968. During the peak of the Vietnam conflict, the Special Operations Force included 31 squadrons, more than 10,000 personnel, and 550 aircraft.

Many of these aircraft included vintage A-1 Skyraiders, AC-47 Dragon Ships, AC-119 Stingers, and AT-28 Trojans; all these aircraft are shown in a static display at the entrance to Hurlburt Field.

The Special Operations Force also flew the first operational versions of Combat Talon and Spectre.

On July 1, 1974, missions of the Special Operations Force and 1st SOW were consolidated and the wing was redesignated the 834th Tactical Composite Wing, reporting directly to

the commander of Tactical Air Command. The wing resumed its original designation of 1st SOW a year later and assigned to TAC's Ninth Air Force, then was again placed under direct control of TAC in September 1980.

The wing is currently staffed by more than 3,200 military personnel, is authorized 15 C-130 aircraft and 15 helicopters, and participates in 10 joint training exercises annually, including low-level infiltration and exfiltration missions, search and rescue, armed reconnaissance, convoy escort and close air support, working with Green Beret and SEAL teams, as well as other specialized operatives.

The wing operates the Air Force Special Operations School, first established in October 1964, to present orientation courses on Southeast Asia, and was a directorate of the 4400th Wing. It became the Special Air Warfare School under the U.S. Air Force Special Air Warfare Center in April 1967, and was redesignated the Air Force Special Operations School in July 1968.

The school trains selected U.S. and allied military personnel in the geopolitical, psychological, sociological, and military implications of U.S. Air Force special operations and trains selected U.S. personnel for the Security Assistance Program, to serve as trainers and advisors. The program also teaches methods of dealing with or preventing terrorist attacks or kidnappings of personnel assigned to potentially hostile areas. The unit's motto speaks for itself: "Any Time, Any Place."

