

AIR COMMANDO

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

JOURNAL

HALL OF FAME

2017 Inductees



**Commander
Leadership
Awards**

**Immigrant to
Air Commando**

**The Forgotten Emblems
of the World War II
Air Commandos**



Vol 6: Issue 3

**Foreword by Wayne Norrad
CMSgt, USAF (Ret)**

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5

Foreword: *Wayne Norrad, CMSgt, USAF (Ret)*

8

2017 Air Commando Hall of Fame

14

2017 Commander's Leadership Awards

30

919th FID in Central and South America

37

Immigrant to Air Commando

48

Difficulties in Changing an Air Force Unit Emblem



42

Forgotten Emblems of the World War II Air Commandos

6

Chindit Chatter

7

Hotwash

20

ACA 2017 Convention Photos

23

Air Commando Heritage Seminar

36

Quiet Professionals don Brown Beret

49

Book Review: *Rogue Heroes*



ON THE COVER

Air Commando 2017 Hall of Fame inductees honored at the ACA convention. Five individuals were recognized for their contributions to the betterment of Air Force Special operations. (Photo by Sco



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FOREWORD

After serving 10 years on the Hall of Fame (HoF) Committee I decided to resign last year. I had served long enough and wanted to give someone else the opportunity. ACA President Dennis Barnett asked me to write the foreword for this edition of the Journal and to talk about my experience serving on the HoF Committee.

I was truly honored when asked to serve and also excited to be able to read about so many great Air Commandos. After serving on the committee for several years, Col (ret) Jim Ifland, the HoF Committee Secretary, asked if I'd consider serving in that position. I accepted. Jim and I had a meeting where he graciously passed on his wisdom, insight and files.

As secretary, I started making suggestions to improve the process and format. I suggested limiting the number of inductees to five in any year, making those still serving and those recently retired or separated ineligible for three years, limiting the package narrative to three pages, and revising the HoF Form. Shannon, Melissa, Jeanette, and I tried to make the process better and more convenient for nominators and committee members. For example, most packages are now received electronically, and all are forwarded electronically to the voting members to read, screen, and vote on at their leisure.

Maj Gen (ret) Norm Brozenick, the HoF Chairman, asked Jeanette and I to update the changes on the web site. We developed "Word" and "PDF" documents that allow nominators to fill out the HoF nomination form, narrative, and citation online in the specified font, format, and page length. We believe the changes improved the process and made it more user friendly.

Currently serving with Chairman Brozenick is Secretary CMSgt (ret) Mike Ramos with other voting members: Col (ret) Tom Bradley, Col (ret) Steve Connelly, Col (ret) Jim Connors, CMSgt (ret) Rick Crutchfield, and CMSgt (ret) Bill Turner. These committee members take their responsibility seriously and serve with the utmost integrity.

Just when I thought my involvement was over, Jeanette came up with the idea of having a HoF logo. She asked for my input and we went to work creating one. MSgt (ret) "Tazz" Felde, a former graphics artist, helped me design the 25th Anniversary of AFSOC coin. So, I went back to my friend and asked for his help. Tazz drew up the design and we presented it to President Barnett who gave it his stamp of approval. It went into effect immediately and was used on the citations and name tags for the 2017 inductees. That is the new logo you now see at the bottom of this foreword.

During the past three years I've been encouraged by the diversity of inductees. You don't have to be a general, colonel, or a chief master sergeant to be considered. Three Lt Cols and three MSgts have been inducted. Career field diversity is encouraging too, with the selection of a maintenance officer, maintenance NCO, and for the first time, pararescuemen.

Oh, I can't close without mentioning my latest suggestion. Let's present new inductees with a sports coat, like the green jacket at the Masters golf tournament. What do you think? Okay, I'm really done with the HoF. Over and out!



Wayne G. Norrad, CMSgt, USAF (Ret)
Vice President, Air Commando Association
Second AFSOC Command Chief



CHINDIT CHATTER

This edition of ACJ comes on the heels of another very successful Convention/Reunion... some say it was our best ever. ACA continues to grow and offer ever more support to Air Commandos--active duty, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves. This copy of the journal highlights some of those efforts as we feature the winners of the Commander's Leadership Awards that we sponsor, along with a host of other command level awards. This year's convention theme was "Past Meets Present," and that is not highlighted any better than when the younger generation, figuratively and literally, shared the stage with our Hall of Fame inductees. These are both key factions of one of the most critical functions of ACA--preserving the legacy and heritage of the Air Commandos who do so much to keep this country safe from nasty folks that would do us harm.



As such, one of the highlights of the convention was this year's Heritage Seminar where we featured Gen Charles Holland and Major Gabe Brown who were both engaged at different levels in the Battle of Roberts Ridge. Dave Mobley did a great job as moderator guiding these two keynote speakers through an outstanding discussion. Later in this journal Dave provides us a recap of how that progressed. These Heritage Seminars get better and better every year and we are already engaged with AFSOC in a joint effort to expand the concept further, with the ultimate aim to provide active duty attendees with even bigger and better professional development opportunities. Look for this in the future and plan on joining us next year.

This has also been a great and successful year of growth for your Air Commando Foundation. We are continuing to grow in this realm as the unmet needs of Air Commandos continue to expand. None of the accomplishments and growth would be possible without the great support of our Corporate Partners and our convention Title Sponsors. They are highlighted in another portion of this edition. A hearty thank-you goes out to all of them.

Please enjoy this edition of the *Air Commando Journal* as you explore and review some of the history and heritage that makes Air Commandos an integral part of the Quiet Professional team.

Any Time Any Place



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

ACA Partnerships

Dear Dennis Barnett, Col, USAF (Ret),

On behalf of Team Vector CSP, I'd like to thank the ACA for allowing us to use your space for our company All-Hands. I'd especially like to thank Jeanette and Melissa for their help to make it happen with smooth sailing. It proved to be an outstanding venue and a great success.

Houston Myers,
Col, USAF (Ret)
Fort Watlon Beach, FL
ACA Lifemember #L4353

“The Air Commando Journal...
Massively Successful! I save all mine.”

Lt Gen marshall “Brad” Webb
AFSoC Commander

(Used with permission by Lt Gen Webb)

Air Commando Foundation

Dear Bill Turner, CMSgt, USAF (Ret),

Our summit team would like to thank you for your attendance at the Benevolent Organization Spotlight on 27 April 2017 in Pensacola, Florida. By your company's presence, our Air commando warriors and caregivers were able to gather information and gain knowledge of the support available to them. We appreciate you partnering with us and hope you can join us again in 2018!

Sincerely,
Sherri Hayes/Lisa Dunaway
AFSOC Warrior C.A.R.E.
Hurlburt Field, FL

Thanks to Air Commando Laos Veterans

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Air Commandos who participated in the Laos history research project, a non-profit endeavor. After a couple of years of your participation, interviews, and help by sending your documents and photos, I was able to draft the first version of a book, titled *Special Air Warfare and the Secret War in Laos: Air Commandos 1964-1975*. In the fall of 2016, the draft book was submitted to the Air University Press at Maxwell AFB for potential adoption into a future book. After board review, the draft book was ready for publication by the end of the year, or at least in beginning of 2018. I strove to ensure the emphasis of the book was based on the personal experiences of the Air Commando Veterans who served, fought and flew in support of our US government objectives to keep the Kingdom of Laos free from communism. (This will be a government printing and I hope to get free books initially for each of the Air commandos who participated in the project.)

Regretfully, over the course of the research project, we have lost some Air Commandos. I would like to pass on our sympathies to the families who experienced these losses, and hope their loved one's legacy can be enshrined in this book and their contributions will not be lost to history.

Again, I cannot express the appreciation I have for the assistance and for the great new friends my wife and I have met over the last few years. Also, the entire Air Commando Association staff and the AFSOC History Office were more than instrumental and willing to help throughout the project to ensure a quality, military history project. Without everyone's help, this effort would not have come to fruition. Thank you.

Joseph D. Celeski, Col,
US Army Special Forces (Ret)
Buford, GA - ACA Member #5760

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

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Advertisers in this issue:

Air Commando Foundation.....	2
Air Commando Association Membership	51
Chief Commercial Claims Branch	35
Healing Paws For Warriors.....	17
Northrop Grumman.....	17
Special Operations Missions.....	7
Special Operations Warrior Foundation.....	13
ZTMotors.....	21



2017 Air Commando



CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT BRUCE BRANDEWIE

Chief Master Sergeant Bruce Brandewie distinguished himself through outstanding service to the nation and Air Force Special Operations Forces throughout his 30-year military career. As a young maintenance leader, he developed a reputation as a very capable aircraft electrician and flight line mechanic, and ultimately earned the rating of master instructor. His leadership during Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM helped the 1st Special Operations Wing win the Air Force Daedalian Award for Maintenance. In 1992 Chief Brandewie served as an initial cadre member charged with building Combat Talon II capability at Royal Air Force Alconbury, United Kingdom. His directive actions led to the successful beddown of \$1.5 million of equipment and 65 personnel. As Air Force Special Operations Command's Superintendent for Maintenance Resources and Requirements, Chief Brandewie developed and executed the Commando Gold Program, saving \$3 million and producing 350 mission capable parts. Finally, as Superintendent for the 4th, 15th, and 16th Aircraft Maintenance Units, Chief Brandewie led Airmen through multiple deployments including Operations INDY, GOALKEEPER I and II, IRAQI FREEDOM, and ENDURING FREEDOM. His sortie generation expertise earned recognition as the command's General Lew Allen Trophy winner in 1998. Chief Brandewie was awarded a Bronze Star for exceptional leadership of the very first combat zone deployment of Air Commandos in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. The singularly distinctive accomplishments of Chief Master Sergeant Bruce Brandewie reflect great credit upon himself, Air Force Special Operations, and Air Commandos of every generation.

Ando HALL OF FAME



Co Lon EL
STEVEN F. dr EYEr

Colonel Steven F. Dreyer's career of superior service to the nation and Air Force Special Operations Forces continues today following more than 35 years in uniform. After serving as a United States Marine guarding the United States embassies in Saigon and Phnom Penh, Colonel Dreyer became a Marine officer then cross-commissioned into the Air Force. Upon earning his wings, he became an HH-53 then MH-53 helicopter pilot, serving multiple tours in the 21st Special Operations Squadron and 352nd Special Operations Group in Europe. As Commander, 31st Special Operations Squadron, Osan Air Base, South Korea, he led his unit to the 1997 Air Force Rotary Wing Maintenance Effectiveness Award and the General Lew Allen Jr. Trophy. Well known for his "go forward" attitude and tremendous energy, he set the standard for mission planning and execution expertise during combat operations in Iraq, Bosnia, and Kosovo; humanitarian contingencies across Africa; and the defense of United States and Allied security interests on the Korean peninsula. After 35 years of service, he commanded an expeditionary group conducting joint terminal attack operations destroying terrorists in Iraq. Colonel Dreyer's most compelling strategic contributions came after retirement from uniformed service. In 2015 the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Supreme Allied Commander decorated him for tireless support of the multinational response countering illicit Russian activity in the Ukraine. The singularly distinctive accomplishments of Colonel Steven Dreyer reflect great credit upon himself, Air Force Special Operations, and Air Commandos of every generation.



2017 Air Commando



**LIEUTENANT COLONEL
JACKIE W. DRUMMOND**

Lieutenant Colonel Jackie “Jack” W. Drummond distinguished himself through renowned service to the nation and Air Force Special Operations Forces during and after his 20-year military career. Colonel Drummond flew 600 combat missions and earned three Silver Stars for gallantry in action. In 1967, he was an AT-28 Zorro pilot operating from Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Base, becoming the all-time leader for truck kills along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. He flew 125-night combat missions evading 37mm gunfire and delivering munitions at altitudes down to fifty-feet. Colonel Drummond joined the covert Project 404 Program in Laos, leading Royal Lao Air Force AT-28 pilots conducting strikes against advancing enemy forces. His mission was to prevent a communist overrun of Laos during the critical dry season; that is exactly what he did. In 1974, Col Drummond joined a classified unit in Thailand to help rebuild Cambodia’s Khmer Air Force. He designed a training program that produced mission ready aircrews in the AT-28D, AU-24, C-47, C-123, and O-1 aircraft. His initiative and expert advisory skills reestablished the Khmer Air Force as a highly lethal interdiction force. When Cambodia and Vietnam fell, the exodus of their aircraft to airfields, roads, and rice paddies in Thailand became a highly charged political issue. Colonel Drummond’s determined leadership enabled RAVEN forward air controllers to locate and fly the aircraft to United States control, resolving the issue. The singularly distinctive accomplishments of Lieutenant Colonel Jack Drummond reflect great credit upon himself, Air Force Special Operations, and Air Commandos of every generation.

Ando HALL OF FAME



Colonel
John S. HESTER III

Colonel John S. “Jack” Hester III distinguished himself through extraordinary service to the nation and Air Force Special Operations Forces during and after his 25-year military career. He joined the 20th Special Operations Squadron straight out of flight school, flying UH-1 helicopters and pioneering the use of first-generation night vision goggles. Colonel Hester pursued narco-traffickers across the Caribbean as part of the Vice President’s Anti-Drug Task Force, and was personally responsible for seizing more than \$330 million of contraband. After transitioning to the MH-53J, he joined a small cadre of instructors entrusted with developing classified tactics, techniques, and procedures supporting our country’s most elite units. During Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama, Colonel Hester earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism drawing enemy fire away from Navy SEALs pinned down at Paitilla Airfield. He expertly led MH-53 operations during DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, and helped integrate Pave Lows into the Pacific force structure. While commanding the 20th Special Operations Squadron he led the unit’s transition to the MH-53M then proved the new capability while rescuing two downed pilots during Operation ALLIED FORCE. The United States Special Operations Commander handpicked Colonel Hester to lead the first-ever international SOF conference, attended by senior leaders from 58 countries. Colonel Hester continues serving as a founding member and Secretary of the Tampa Bay Chapter of the Air Commando Association. The singularly distinctive accomplishments of Colonel Jack Hester reflect great credit upon himself, Air Force Special Operations, and Air Commandos of every generation.



2017 Air Commando HALL OF FAME



**Co Lon EL
BEnni E d . orr ELL**

Colonel Bennie D. Orrell's selfless leadership hallmarked his 30-year career of extraordinary service to the nation and Air Force Special Operations Forces. As a captain and HH-53C helicopter pilot, 40th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron, Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Base, he was awarded the Air Force Cross and Silver Star for heroism and gallantry while rescuing downed American pilots actively pursued by enemy forces in Laos and North Vietnam. As Deputy Commander for Operations, 1st Special Operations Wing, Colonel Orrell personally led Airmen planning and executing combat missions during Operations URGENT FURY in Panama as well as DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM in the Persian Gulf. He was uniquely responsible for developing the plan for night one of DESERT STORM, when MH-53 PAVE LOW helicopters led United States Army Apache helicopters to targets that punched a hole in Iraq's air defenses. As Commander, 39th Special Operations Wing, and Commander, 352d Special Operations Group, he skillfully led Airmen and families during unit moves to Royal Air Force Alconbury, and subsequently, Royal Air Force Mildenhall. Simultaneously, his wing and group provided personnel recovery packages supporting Operations PROVIDE PROMISE in Bosnia and PROVIDE COMFORT II in Iraq. A consummate mentor, Colonel Orrell completed his career as the United States Special Operations Command's liaison to the National War College, growing the next generation of senior special operations leaders. The singularly distinctive accomplishments of Colonel Bennie Orrell reflect great credit on himself, Air Force Special Operations, and Air Commandos of every generation.



Air Commando Association

Because of your support to the Special Operations Warrior Foundation, Catherine will fulfill her dream of a college education.

Empowering
through Education



Catherine is the daughter of Air Force Tech. Sgt. James Henry, who lost his life in Albania in 2005 while assigned to the 7th Special Operations Squadron.

Thank you so much for everything you guys do for us! Because of you people like us get to attend college and succeed in life and that's all I could dream of. So thank you so much, we deeply appreciate everything!

♥ Catherine Henry.



The Special Operations Warrior Foundation ensures full college educations to the surviving children of Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps special operations personnel who lose their life in the line of duty. The Special Operations Warrior Foundation also provides financial stipends to severely wounded special operators.



2017 COMMANDER'S

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

Technical Sergeant daniel A. Baxter

Technical Sergeant Daniel A. Baxter distinguished himself as an Evaluator Direct Support Operator and a Wing Planner, 1st Special Wing, 1st Special Operations Air Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Florida, from 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2017. During this period, Sergeant Baxter led the instruction of 18 Direct Support Operators, administering 98 hours of training for Instructor and Initial Qualification candidates, overseeing 360 ground and flight events. As a wing planner, Sergeant Baxter executed calls for fire and Range Safety Officer training, enabling the combat readiness of 2,800 aircrew and 45 Joint Terminal Attack Controllers from seven squadrons. Sergeant Baxter also executed 10 Air Force Special Operations Command exercises, integrating operators to provide training for 78 partner nation Joint Terminal Attack Controllers. Furthermore, Sergeant Baxter drove the update to the 1st Special Operations Wing Hurricane Evacuation playbook, authoring agreements across four Air Force bases for the seamless bed-down and security of 70 aircraft and 449 personnel. Finally, Sergeant Baxter organized disaster cleanup, rallying 120 volunteers, which provided aid to several families and fortified relations within the community. The distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Baxter reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Captain megan E. Biles

Captain Megan E. Biles distinguished herself by meritorious service as a C-146A Instructor Pilot and Flight Commander, 524th Special Operations Squadron, 492d Special Operations Wing, Duke Field, Florida. Captain Biles was handpicked to act as Special Operations Forces Liaison Element Officer in Charge to the American Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. During this time, she spearheaded the planning and execution for the country's first ever hosting of the Crisis Response Force exercise, EPIC GUARDIAN, and oversaw the deployment of 100 personnel and a budget of over 1.3 million dollars. Captain Biles's exemplary leadership and tireless effort

enhanced vital partner nation and interagency relationships resulting in requests for the country to host additional exercises, including FLINTLOCK, Special Operations Command Africa's premier training event. Additionally, while acting as the primary Squadron Flight Commander, she oversaw the move of 38 squadron members to Duke Field, ensuring seamless integration into a new Wing while safeguarding the squadron's ability to maintain its deployed commitments around the globe. Captain Biles was handpicked to train the 492d Special Operations Wing Commander and the AFSOC A31 Deputy Commander in the C-146A. Furthermore, she was instrumental in revising an instructional video for new emergency equipment, enabling aircrews to efficiently utilize new aircraft safety systems. As a testament to her abilities, she was named the 524th Special Operations Squadron and 27th Special Operations Group Instructor Pilot of the Quarter, first quarter 2017. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Biles reflect credit upon herself and the United States Air Force.

Technical Sergeant Kade T. Bollinger

Technical Sergeant Kade T. Bollinger distinguished himself as MC-130J Commando II Instructor Loadmaster and Flight Chief of Current Operations, 17th Special Operations Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Japan, from 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2017. During this period, Sergeant Bollinger coordinated the first infiltration of two USMC long range rocket artillery vehicles, personally certifying the 353d Special Operations Group's capability for the largest area of responsibility. This operational expertise was garnered from his experience in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, where he earned the Air Force Combat Action Medal. Sergeant Bollinger also authored the MC-130J airdrop checklist which was utilized for the first ever combat airdrop of the Massive Ordnance Air Blast weapon, supporting Operation FREEDOM'S SENTINEL, eliminating 94 ISIS fighters. He showcased his leadership prowess after being chosen to be the squadron's Operational Superintendent,



LEADERSHIP AWARDS

First Sergeant, and Loadmaster Chief Scheduler. Additionally, during the largest annual Special Operations exercise in the Republic of Korea, Sergeant Bollinger heroically intervened during a personnel airdrop, preventing a partner nation jumper from being inadvertently pulled from the aircraft and saving his life. Furthermore, Sergeant Bollinger's achievements earned him the distinction of AFSOC's Brigadier General Ross P. Hoyt Award nominee, the 353d Special Operations Group's nominee for the SSgt Henry "Red" Erwin Award and the Lieutenant General William H. Tunner Award, and the squadron's nominee for the MaKay Trophy and Lance P. Sijan Award. The distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Bollinger reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Staff Sergeant Jonathan m. Branch

Staff Sergeant Jonathan M. Branch distinguished himself as a CV-22 Instructor Special Missions Aviator, 71st Special Operations Squadron, Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico, from 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2017. During this period, Sergeant Branch supported Operation INHERENT RESOLVE as the deployed squadron's Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge of Operations where he oversaw operations for five CV-22 aircraft and 24 aircrew tasked to provide air support to special operations forces in a high threat environment. Sergeant Branch was also instrumental in the launch of two alert status CV-22 aircraft which were used to transport two insurgents in order to gather critical battlefield intelligence. As the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge of Plans, he was lead planner for 19 joint special operations forces exercises that trained 105 elite forces team members in infiltration, exfiltration, casualty evacuation, and transported over 2,000 pounds of equipment. As a formal training unit instructor, Sergeant Branch developed three realistic full mission profile scenarios that synchronized 34 grade book requirements with syllabus events. His outstanding commitment to the mission qualified him for upgrade to Evaluator Special Missions Aviator well ahead of his peers. Finally, Sergeant Branch's tremendous efforts culminated in his selection as Instructor Special Missions Aviator of the Quarter, all the while maintaining a 4.0 grade point average at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University while taking 15 credit hours towards his Bachelor of Science

degree in Aviation Science. The distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Branch reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Technical Sergeant ryan m. donnelly

Technical Sergeant Ryan M. Donnelly distinguished himself as a Joint Terminal Attack Controller-Instructor, 17th Special Tactics Squadron, 720th Special Tactics Group, 24th Special Operations Wing, Air Force Special Operations Command, Fort Benning, Georgia. During this period, he was deployed in support of Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT for a total of 172 days and was handpicked as the first ever Air Force member to serve as a head Operations Officer for a joint coalition, 54 man special operations forces team. While serving in this capacity, he skillfully led 21 combat vehicle movements, maintained over \$15 million worth of equipment, and led over 600 hours of partner force training. He bolstered special operations forces capability, spearheading the successful ground host of a guided missile from an undisclosed special operations forces aircraft in theatre for the first time ever. He also facilitated the successful combat operation of a multi-million dollar airborne data transfer system which cut 20 man hours outside the wire per day, effectively increasing the friendly survival rate beyond measure. His combined efforts resulted in five high value targets killed, five captured, zero friendly casualties, and the safe thwarting of two vehicle borne explosives. He also served as a lead Joint Terminal Attack Controller for seven missions to include the largest special operations forces operation since 2014; in which, he expertly controlled 68 aircraft, piloted an unmanned aerial vehicle for 8 hours, and located 36 enemy targets, resulting in 10 enemy killed in action and the safe return of an 800 man joint task force. Moreover, he orchestrated and led the first ever assessment for his specialized team consisting of 17 events over three straight days. Lastly, he assisted in raising \$12K for the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's disease research. The distinctive accomplishments of Technical Sergeant Donnelly reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Technical Sergeant michael T. Farthing

Technical Sergeant Michael T. Farthing distinguished himself as AC-130W Evaluator Aerial Gunner and Operations Flight Noncommissioned Officer in Charge, 16th Special Operations

Squadron, 27th Special Operations Wing, Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, from 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2017. Sergeant Farthing distinguished himself through superior conduct in the war on terrorism, testing and developing weaponry for the AC-130W “Stinger II”, and increased training capability and readiness both deployed and home station. He was selected as initial cadre for the 93.3 million dollar AC-130W Block 20 upgrade, vital to the advancement and deployment of Air Force Special Operations Command’s number one priority, adding the lethality of the 105-millimeter cannon and upgraded avionics system capabilities. Sergeant Farthing also flew 26 high priority combat missions in Iraq and Syria, certifying the aircraft’s new capability, resulting in 64 enemy killed in action. Furthermore, he drafted new AC-130W publications, standardizing aircrew operations and development of techniques, tactics, and procedures for new weapons employment, cementing capabilities for the next generation of gunship, the AC-130J “Ghostrider”. Sergeant Farthing also filled the 27th Special Operations Group Standardization and Evaluation position for five months during a staff manning crisis, overseeing eight flying squadrons and 93 aircraft worth 5.2 billion dollars. Additionally, he revamped the gunship formal training program, eliminated 41 courseware discrepancies, and streamlined 140 hours of instruction to maximize student capacity and training effectiveness. Finally, he lead 44 aerial gunners, managed 24 deployment crews and 22 alert cycles, ensuring aircrew combat readiness to fulfill Air Force Special Operations Command’s requirements. The distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Farthing reflect credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Staff Sergeant Micah S. Gillette

Staff Sergeant Micah S. Gillette distinguished himself as the 919th Special Operations wing’s Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape Specialist, 919th Special Operations Support Squadron, Duke Field, Florida, from 1 June to 31 May 2017. During this time Sergeant Gillette stood up the entire Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape program covering Water and Land Survival training, Conduct after Capture, and initial qualification training on the new Combat Survivor Evader Locator aircrew radio for 7 entire active duty and reserve squadrons flying 7 different aircraft. Due to his comprehensive survival training, Sergeant Gillette enabled hundreds of active duty and reserve Special Operation Forces Airmen to deploy on world-wide contingency operations into any environment at any time. As a qualified military dive instructor Sergeant Gillette qualified over 2500 joint service and civilian personnel in both water survival and underwater egress training. In his personal time Sergeant Gillette is actively engaged in earning his Community College of the Air Force degree with a 4.0 grade point average and is working towards a Federal Aviation Agency Senior Rigger License. Sergeant Gillette, showed his unwavering commitment to duty and high level of survival expertise when he selflessly intervened in two separate automobile accidents, acting as a first responder and rescuing three civilians. Sergeant Gillette ensured the safety and security of numerous travelers that day affected by the collisions by

managing both crises with the quiet professionalism expected of an Air Commando. The distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Gillette reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Captain Barton F. Gunter

Captain Barton F. Gunter distinguished himself by outstanding performance and leadership as MC-130J Aircraft Commander and Plans Flight Commander, 67th Special Operations Squadron, 752d Special Operations Group, Royal Air Force Mildenhall, United Kingdom from 1 June 2016 through 31 May 2017. During this time, Capt Gunter led a seven-person flight that planned six Presidentially-directed counter-terrorism operations and coordinated 26 exercises with 14 partner nations. His efforts culminated in the deployment of 340 personnel, the execution of 453 combat and combat support hours, and the elimination of 589 enemy combatants. Additionally, Capt Gunter led his MC-130J crew on a Presidentially-directed combat deployment. While conducting a direct action mission, his crew was re-tasked to execute a casualty evacuation of a downed aircraft where he successfully evaded active anti-aircraft artillery and saved the lives of seven Americans. Furthermore, he showcased his leadership abilities as mission commander for a three-nation joint combined exercise where he commanded 12 arctic missions and garnered valuable extreme cold weather operations experience for his aircrew while he facilitated patrol, rescue, and snowmobile training for Denmark Special Operations Forces. Most notably, Capt Gunter and his crew responded to an on-call rescue of an Icelandic vessel in distress. Following a diligent three-hour search in marginal weather, the crew successfully located a small life raft and immediately relayed its position to the Icelandic Coastguard, saving the lives of two local fishermen. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Gunter reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Technical Sergeant Raymond A. Kessner

Technical Sergeant Raymond A. Kessner distinguished himself as Test Director, 18th Flight Test Squadron, 492d Special Operations Training Group, 492d Special Operations Wing, Air Force Special Operations Command, Hurlburt Field, Florida, from 1 June 2016 through 31 May 2017. During this period, Sergeant Kessner’s leadership abilities were crucial as airborne test director and scenario facilitator for the Initial Operational Test and Evaluation of the AC-130J, while directing a four-person evaluation team, 44 opposing forces, command and control, and friendly ground elements. He choreographed 27 complex, full mission profiles while simultaneously developing the rules of engagement and products for both aircrew and ground teams to test the capabilities of the AC-130J under operational conditions. Additionally, Sergeant Kessner was instrumental during the Air Force Special Operations Command’s Weapons and Tactics Conference where he led the test prioritization team, sorting 23 test requests in order of urgency before presentation to the Command Staff. Furthermore, Sergeant Kessner spearheaded Hurlburt Field’s AC-130H airpark emplacement, personally

installing the aircraft's sensor system and saving the Air Force over \$100,000. Sergeant Kessner also led a team of 600 volunteers to construct a playground for autistic children after acquiring building materials and tools. Finally, Sergeant Kessner completed the First Sergeant Symposium learning the roles and responsibilities of this important position allowing him to take on the responsibility of helping other Air Force members. These distinctive accomplishments of Sergeant Kessner reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Captain Luke m. Lagace

Captain Luke M. Lagace distinguished himself by outstanding achievement while assigned to the 415th Special Operations Squadron, 58th Operations Group, 58th Special Operations Wing, Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico. During this period, as the deployed squadron's lead planner, Captain Lagace executed a Presidentially-directed counter-terrorism operation against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. He brilliantly orchestrated the 22.3 flight-hour mission in which four MC-130Js offloaded 39,000 pounds of fuel to a special operations helicopter assault force at an austere forward operating area's ground refueling point, then another 6,500 pounds in-flight. Captain Lagace's meticulous attention to detail and sustained efforts resulted in 18 enemy compounds destroyed and 34 enemy combatants killed, including one high value target. As the lead MC-130J instructor combat systems officer, Captain Lagace's innovation was integral to establishing the Air Force's sole 1.7 billion-dollar C-130J Center of Excellence. His efforts directly contributed to the Air Force's 11.7 billion-dollar AC-130J recapitalization effort and initial operational capability while moving the MC-130J's successful global recapitalization rapidly toward fully operational capable. Moreover, Captain Lagace's efforts helped realize a four-month training time savings per student and over 10 million dollars annually. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Lagace reflect credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



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Captain matthew J. Luman

Captain Matthew J. Luman distinguished himself as Mission Commander and MQ-9 Evaluator Pilot, 12th Special Operations Squadron, Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, from 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2017. During this period, Captain Luman deployed for 145 days on two combat tours to Africa and was named squadron pilot of the year. Captain Luman led operations for a \$260 million fleet of 13 MQ-9s, and commanded 246 launch and recovery missions, enabling over 4,600 armed combat hours, resulting in 400 enemies killed in action and 75 targets destroyed. During his second deployment of the year, Captain Luman served as expeditionary Mission Commander in West Africa where he authored and executed a bi-lateral agreement between the United States and French forces, securing the ability for armed operations and munitions storage for the United States Air Force and its partners. Under his command, the 28 member unit flew 85 sorties, providing real time full-motion video for seven named operations in four different countries, directly supporting the elimination of 84 enemy combatants and capture of 17 more. In garrison, as squadron Chief of Standardization and Evaluations, Captain Luman led 88 aircrew members and was the Major Command's lead launch and recovery pilot for new MQ-9 software testing, completing ten assessments and identifying 12 critical discrepancies in the software and technical orders. Additionally, Captain Luman's decisive actions allowed him to safely recover three separate aircraft with critical emergencies, saving \$54 million in assets and earning his squadron the Command's Accident Free Flying Hour Award for 2016. Due to his exceptional leadership, he was the first to be appointed as the chief launch and recovery pilot assigned to the 27th Special Operations Group Standardization and Evaluations office. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Luman reflect credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Captain Taylor G. Petty

Captain Taylor G. Petty distinguished himself as a U-28 Evaluator pilot while assigned to the 5th Special Operations Squadron, Eglin Air Force Base, Duke Field, Florida from 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2017. Captain Petty proved a model instructor shaping the future of AFSOC by flying two hundred and fifty eight hours, instructing and graduating ninety six U-28 pilot to upgrade to evaluator. Captain Petty deployed overseas flying two hundred and ten combat hours, facilitated five kinetic strikes, resulting in fifteen enemy killed in action and two high valued individuals captured. Captain Petty began USAF weapons School in December 2016 as the first ever Air Force Reserve U-28 pilot to attend. Captain Petty graduated USAF Weapons School having made significant contributions to the future of U-28 tactics through his research and thesis. Captain Petty is continually requested by active duty organizations for special projects that need aircraft exercise, professionalism and initiative including being selected for the revolutionary Light Attack Experiment. He is the winner of squadron instructor pilot of the quarter and squadron company grade officer of the year. Captain Petty's leadership both in and outside of the aircraft shaped U-28 pilots who attended training

at the 19th Special Operations Squadron and paved the way for future Reservists who desire to attend USAF Weapons School. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Taylor G. Petty reflect credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Captain Benjamin T. Temple

Captain Benjamin T. Temple serves as a Global Access Flight Commander, 23d Special Tactics Squadron, 720th Special Tactics Group, 24th Special Operations Wing, Air Force Special Operations Command, Hurlburt Field, Florida. In this capacity, Captain Temple led the Group's largest operational flight where he led 48 Battlefield Airmen through 200 training events, upgrading 15 personnel and setting the squadron up for success during combat operations. He also led a joint combined exchange training mission with a diplomatically sensitive ally that furthered United States relations, increasing the partner's combat capability. Captain Temple also deployed to Afghanistan as a Squadron Commander for five months where he led 45 air commandos that controlled 2,500 aircraft during 210 combat missions, eliminating 443 enemy from the battlefield. He expanded the Joint Task Force operational reach by successfully establishing 17 airfields that were pivotal for search and rescue and medical missions. He also dual hatted as the Mission Commander for a forward staged personnel recovery team providing alert coverage for 200 aircraft for a major offensive spanning 11 days, resulting in the capture of 10 high value individuals. Additionally, his leadership proved vital during a hostage crisis where he planned and executed 13 consecutive nights of airfield operations that was essential to 15 operations deep inside of enemy territory. Lastly, Captain Temple was chosen to lead a new initiate to provide a ground maneuver element for a Combined Forces Air Component Commander. He developed a robust training plan for the new mission set and led his 20 man team through a 3 month train up culminating at a Weapons School Integration Exercise where he led his team through 15 missions in the Nevada desert, showcasing the advantages of the capability. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Temple reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Captain Forrest J. Underwood

Captain Forrest J. Underwood distinguished himself as MC-130J Commando II Instructor Pilot, Flight Commander, Chief Pilot, and Executive Officer, 353d Special Operations Group, Kadena Air Base, Japan, from 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2017. During this period, Captain Underwood commanded the Pacific's first Operation FREEDOM'S SENTINAL MC-130J deployment, executing 40 combat missions where he earned the Air Force Combat Action Medal and enabled the removal of the Taliban's top leader from the battlefield. Captain Underwood showcased his leadership prowess during the development of the MC-130J checklist to airdrop the Massive Ordinance Air Burst munition. His knowledge and experience was critical to the rapid development of this unique capability for a key ground offensive and was successfully employed for the first time in combat, eliminating 94 Islamic State fighters. Also, as the sole fuel provider to forward operating bases

in Afghanistan, Captain Underwood provided the logistical lifeline to ground forces in austere locations by validating the newest MC-130J refueling capability in combat, reducing ground time in hostile territory by 50 percent. As the Current Operations Flight Commander and squadron Chief Pilot, he executed a 13 million dollar, 2,424 flight hour program, a 14-year high, while establishing AFSOC's newest fully operational squadron. Demonstrating exceptional leadership skills as an Executive Officer, Captain Underwood synchronized the group's five engine rooms to successfully execute two change of command ceremonies and eight General Officer visits, including the commanders of both U.S. Special Operations Command and Air Force Special Operations Command. Finally, his leadership and expertise earned him recognition as the Group's Pilot of the Year and nomination for the Mackay Trophy and Tunner Award. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Underwood reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Captain Charles A. Wallace


Captain Charles A. Wallace distinguished himself as Flight Commander and U-28A Evaluator Pilot, 319th Special Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Florida from 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2017. During this period, Captain Wallace deployed 101 days to Iraq in support of Operation INHERENT RESOLVE as Director of Operations, overseeing 3,000 combat flight hours spanning 585 sorties. Under his leadership, aircrew supported 59 kinetic strikes, three direct action missions and removed 110 enemy combatants including 16 high value individuals. While personally leading his crew on 60 combat missions, he was also able to orchestrate four aircraft redeployments over 49 days and 10 different countries in order to bring 2.3 million dollars in hardware upgrades to bear against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. Taking the fight to the Islamic State, Captain Wallace personally led a pre-deployment site survey for 70 personnel, 83 pallets and four aircraft to an austere forward basing location, increasing Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance coverage by 60 percent. Captain Wallace guided 23 Airmen through an intensive six month, 3,000 flying hour pre-deployment training plan ensuring readiness for all members of his flight. Returning home, he was handpicked to lead the squadronwide Standardization and Evaluation program. Captain Wallace oversaw 225 check rides and personally administered 28 check rides totaling 104 hours. He was instrumental in authoring and implementing Air force Special Operations Command-wide U-28A publication changes, spending over 20 hours identifying and correcting publication errors. The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Wallace reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Technical Sergeant Thomas J. Wojak

Technical Sergeant Thomas J. Wojak distinguished himself as Pararescue Craftsman, 321st Special Tactics Squadron, 752d Special Operations Group, Royal Air Force Mildenhall,

United Kingdom, from 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2017. During this period, Sergeant Wojak led his 11-man Special Tactics Team to execute 19 missions across 15 nations and three Combatant Commands. Under his leadership the team deployed four times to provide airfield control and combat search and rescue coverage to national mission units executing dynamic strikes against terrorist organizations in North Africa and the Middle East. Additionally, Sergeant Wojak made significant contributions to the joint force during a four-month deployment with Naval Special Warfare. In this position he was entrusted with all medical, rescue, and recovery tasks during a clandestine infiltration through three countries, a visit board search and seizure of four cargo ships, and a highly technical assault onto an oil platform. Furthermore, during an exercise with American Army, Polish, and Greek Special Forces, Sergeant Wojak served as the primary jumpmaster and lead insertion-extraction instructor. This training delivered advanced insertion capabilities to the Greek force and also dramatically increased the 352d Special Operations Wing's ability to conduct nighttime long-range parachute operations. Finally, he directly contributed to the 2016 United States' Arctic Strategy by deploying to Greenland where he partnered with Danish military personnel to complete a 1,000 kilometer snowmobile security patrol through the most punishing and isolated terrain. The distinctive accomplishments of Technical Sergeant Wojak reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Staff Sergeant Katelyn Zimmerman

Staff Sergeant Katelyn B. Zimmerman distinguished herself as an Integrated Instrument and Flight Control Systems Craftsman, 193d Special Operations Maintenance Squadron, Middletown, Pennsylvania from 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2017. During this period, she selflessly deployed in support Operation INHERENT RESOLVE. She drove over 50 EC-130J combat sorties and enabled 138 hours of Military Information Support Operations messaging. The targeted broadcasting supported Task Force efforts throughout the theater. She also embraced the Total Force Initiative and assisted in the identification, repair and replacement of a faulty altimeter on a co-located AC-130W. Her technical knowledge resulted in the aircraft being fully mission capable six hours prior to the estimated time in commission. Additionally, her tireless devotion to the mission was apparent when she worked countless hours to troubleshoot and repair an erratic fuel quantity indicator. The aircraft was scheduled to deploy in less than 72 hours and with her leadership, the issue was repaired in less than 24 hours and facilitated an on-time departure. She also crafted her section's training plan, which resulted in four Airmen trained to manufacture, test and install the 1553 data buss harness. Her efforts and focused task management alleviated a shortage of qualified members to perform the task. In addition, her maintenance discipline and expertise contributed to 2,675 mishap free flying hours. The distinctive accomplishments of Staff Sergeant Zimmerman reflect great credit upon herself, the Air National Guard and the United States Air Force. 



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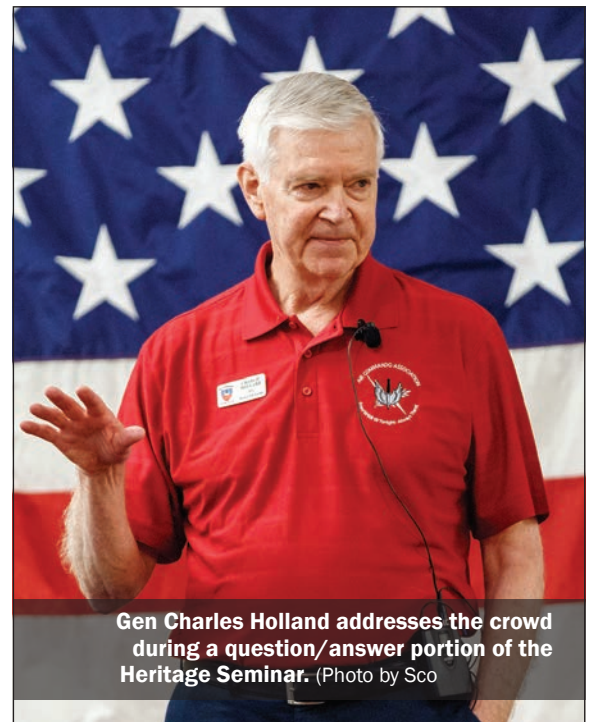
over 225 attended the 2017 Air Commando Heritage Seminar at the Hurlburt Soundside Club this past October. Active duty, retirees, and community members enjoyed discussion from Gen Holland and Maj Brown, CLA award presentations, and breakfast. (Photo by ACA member Sco, Lt Col, USAF (ret) of ScottPhotoWorks.com)



“Learning from the Past, Teaching for Tomorrow”

By Dave Mobley, Col, USAF (Ret)

The ACA preserves Air Commando history by continuously publishing and telling the stories, new and old, of men and women who definitely had an impact on the future of AFSOC, even when their particular mission did not seem grandiose or even overtly successful at the time. Many



Gen Charles Holland addresses the crowd during a question/answer portion of the Heritage Seminar. (Photo by Sco)



Jay Norton, Tracy Stage, and Maj Gen Robert Secord. (All photos by Sco)



Lt Gen Brad Webb comments during the discussion of Robert's Ridge – former AFSOC Commander Lt Gen Bruce Fister and others enjoy the discussion.



Active duty Air Commandos and "ACA volunteer extraordinaire" Harry Bright, at breakfast during Friday's seminar.



Lt Gen Donny Wuster contributing to the discussion at the Heritage Seminar.



Lt Gen Brad Webb, Gen Robert Charles Holland, and Command Chief Greg Smith with the 2017 ACA sponsored Commander's Leadership Award recipients at the seminar.



major Gabe Brown talks about his experiences at robert's ridge. (Seminar photos by SCO)

of them made enormous sacrifices as a result, and a few of these heroes died in the line of duty. We owe it to them to keep publishing, talking about, learning from, and formally highlighting their accomplishments.

In addition, America honors current and former AFSOC leaders and troops in a number of ways: medals, awards, and even opportunities to share their experiences publicly. Air Commando Association audiences also honor and support these men and women by being present, conveying their personal thanks, applauding (literally and figuratively) their accomplishments, and conducting insightful dialogue about events and history. As a result, we convey a better sense of appreciation for our Air Commandos writ large. AFSOC warriors have certainly played and continue to play a successful leading role in worldwide military, humanitarian, economic and political operations. And our heroes deserve nothing short of full military honors and complete ACA support.

Air Force special operators appreciate a tight-knit esprit de corps and an incredible history. I would argue that both are stronger than that of conventional forces. Thus, opportunities to hear incredible first-hand accounts of special operators' shared experiences and lessons learned while hacking the mission are revealing, motivating, and highly instructive. This is especially true for those Airmen new to the community and those Air Commandos on the periphery of the operational missions. We all want to know what happened, how the mission progressed, what went right or wrong, and why. As mentioned above, the Air Commando Association provides several venues to accomplish these goals. One of the most prominent and educational are our Heritage Seminars conducted at our annual Convention. These are evolving into a superb professional development opportunity for young and old alike.

This past fall, we were fortunate to host Gen Charlie Holland and Maj Gabe Brown at the 2017 Heritage Seminar. They discussed their roles at opposite ends of the command & control spectrum during the Battle of Roberts Ridge. The insights these two leaders provided were extremely compelling. Maj Brown's very personal and meaningful account of how special operations airmen from AFSOC and the Army's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, plus conventional air power, all came together to help his team on the ground, is an important story that will shape the next generation of special operations warriors. Learning through first-hand discussions from the troops who were on the ground and engaged in the mission should be mandatory for all AFSOC airmen, regardless of weapon system, career field—operations or support, or status—active, Guard, or Reserve. Air Commandos should listen and know how important their jobs, preparation, planning, attention, and accuracy can be, especially during combat or other operational encounters.

Furthermore, those at the tactical level need to learn from former strategic leaders like Gen Norton Schwartz, Gen Peter Schoomaker, Gen Charles Holland, Lt Gen Donald Wurster, Maj Gen Richard Comer, and others. The view from on high is vastly different than the tactical perspective. We are all better warriors and leaders when we understand why strategic factors are so important up and down the chain, and how they affect the entire decision-making chain. We often forget how fast a

We all want to know what happened, how the mission progressed, what went right or wrong... and why.

seemingly innocuous tactical event can become a strategic-level national or international headline.

Since their inception just a few years ago, the Air Commando Heritage Seminars have improved thanks to the support of an increasing number of AFSOC's warrior leaders. If you have avoided or simply missed them (or the convention in general), then you have missed an incredible opportunity. These venues will only get better. They have become and should remain a critical element of AFSOC's professional development and, as was mentioned in Chindit Chatter, the ACA is teaming with HQ AFSOC to make that a reality.



About the Author: David Mobley moderated the 2017 ACA Heritage Seminar. He was the Deputy Commander, 1st Special Operations Group, Hurlburt Field, FL and an MC-130P Combat Shadow Navigator prior to his retirement.



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Sunday ACA Memorial Service





Engine running off/on load of Peruvian Marines by 919th SOG C-130A slick at Tingo Maria, Peruvian Amazon in the late 1980s. Maj Mike Hayes, mission commander instructing Peruvian pilots on short field heavy landings and takeoffs. Maj McCutchan assisting with on load as US civilian contract C-123 pilots approach.



919TH FID IN CENTRA

By Mike Hayes, Col, USAFR (Ret)



Maj Mike Hayes (3rd from left) with locals during 919th SOG FID mission to Latin America in the 1980s.



The First Lady, AC-130A of the 919th SOG near Laciba, Honduras during FID deployment led by Maj Al Greenup.



L AND SOUTH AMERICA



majors Charlie Curry and Clay McCutchan provide joint operations training to Colombian AC-47 pilots at Apia AB, CoL, in 1990.





during a mission to Peru, the Peruvian AF provided familiarization over the Andes Mountains, on a Soviet An-32 Cline.



maj mike Hayes and 919th SoG loadmaster Bob davis during An-32 orient Peruvian Air Force.

Foreign Internal Defense (FID) doctrine is based upon a working partnership between the host nation (HN) and the US, combining government, military, diplomatic, economic, and other specialties for the mutual benefit of both nations. During the 1980s, the 919th Special Operations Wing was involved with many operations and activities in support of US counter-drug, counterinsurgency, and civic action programs. Not all commanders fully embraced the concept of FID for an AC-130A gunship wing, a direct action special air warfare unit.

During the 1980s, the 919th SOW owned the only A-model simulator in the US Air Force and was the schoolhouse for A-model training. The United States had sold or gifted C-130As to a number of developing nations through the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program. These FMS programs included academic and flight training in Florida for aircrews and ground training for the maintainers. Among the nations represented were Honduras, Peru, Mexico, and Bolivia; countries being used by the Soviet Union and Cuba as “back doors” to subvert peace and stability in the Western Hemisphere.

Other countries, including El Salvador, Indonesia, Thailand, Laos, and the Philippines had been flying side firing gunships such as the AC-47 since the late 1960s. Although marginally connected, the 919th SOW used bilateral training opportunities related to both the AC-130A and the gunship mission to expand their role with

Lt Col (dr) reddoch Williams assisting Honduran counterparts during humanitarian/medical civic action training.



Honduran people and children waiting patiently to see the doctor at the school house medical Clinic.



a number of host countries. Success bred success and requests for joint and combined training became more frequent. Even with the successes, however, it is unlikely that the 919th SOW would have become as involved with FID-type missions if it had not been for the Operations Group Commander, Col James “Jimmy” Jones. Not only did he fully embrace these missions, he had the confidence of wing commanders and often traveled into austere jungle regions to personally conduct many of the activities.

In Apr 1988, Citizen Airman magazine’s “Lost in the Crowd” article highlighted the first FID efforts by the 919th SOW. “The newest building at Duke Field is home of a flight simulator complex. Currently, training for Air Force Reserve C-130 crews (A- and B- models) is conducted by the 919th. ... In addition to teaching Americans, they also conduct training for foreign crews as part of the US Foreign Military Sales Program. It’s challenging work, according to SMSgt Joe Billoni, an instructor at the simulator and flight engineer at the 711th SOS. ‘Yeah,’ he said, ‘I’ve started taking Spanish courses at night.’ Also, as part of foreign military sales, the 919th has prepared aircraft for delivery to other nations. This year the unit will also be training a cadre of maintenance people from Peru.”

The associations that began during training evolved into relationships with those nations’ air forces and public leaders, and expanded to



majors mike Hayes and Clay McCutchan with 919th SoG maintainers on shopping trip in Lima, Peru during Fid mission in 1980s.

include the range of military medicine.. HN leaders invited the 919th to their countries to build upon those relationships. The 919th SOW also participated in US Southern Command joint exercises with 7th Special Forces Group, demonstrating the advantages of airpower when combined with land forces operations.

The April 1992 Spectre magazine article “76 Deploy To Honduras” highlighted the wing’s accomplishments during PATRIOT AMIGO 92-2 at Goloson AB, Honduras. 76 Reservists worked alongside their Honduran Air Force counterparts to exchange employment techniques and to familiarize aircrews with a potential operating area and support personnel with the working conditions and resources available in their potential deployment location. An added dimension PATRIOT AMIGO was the humanitarian civic actions of the 919th Medical Clinic.

Maj Al Greenup, operations officer for the deployment, said, “I knew we had achieved a major goal when the base commander asked us how soon we could come back.”

Another example of neighbors helping neighbors, while also learning from each other was the humanitarian civic action program. 919th SOW medical personnel worked with their Honduran counterparts to diagnose and treat tropical diseases, seeing and treating medical conditions that do not exist in the US. “We provided medical care for US and Honduran Air Force members in the morning,” said Lt Col (Dr) Reddoch Williams, who headed up the medical team. “In the afternoons, we helped Honduran Ministry of Health officials treat citizens in small villages.” Many of the villagers had not seen a physician in three to five years. Some had illnesses that had progressed to life-threatening stages. The Honduran physicians were very

knowledgeable and experienced, but they did not have the resources to treat the people. The group members treated about 500 Hondurans during the deployment.

Following the 1992 PATRIOT AMIGO deployment, the commander of AFSOC, Maj Gen Bruce Fister, wrote, “I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the men and women of the 919th Special Operations Group for their outstanding performance during Exercise PATRIOT AMIGO 92-2.” Gen Fister specifically highlighted the mission training that integrated AC-130 gunship employment with the US Army Special Forces, Honduran C-130 maintenance refresher, pilot and flight engineer systems refresher seminars, and medical civic action.

The 919th continued to contribute to AFSOC’s FID mission until it a new mission, forward support of special operations forces using the C-146 Wolfhound.

No doubt the 919th will continue its stellar performance and contribution to the AFSOC mission just as it has done since the early 1980s. During the years of FID deployments to Latin America the 919th always exceeded what the US and host nations expected and in the process they made lifetime friends for ourselves and the US. We shared our knowledge and expertise, and in the process learned a great deal from our hosts.



About the Author: Colonel (Ret) Mike Hayes is a 1972 Citadel graduate serving 32 years military service with 29 years various C-130 models. His last C-130 assignment was 17 years at Duke Field as the 919th Operations Group Commander AC-130A Gunships and MC-130E Combat Talons.

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Combat Aviation Advisors assigned to Duke Field, Florida are now authorized the wear of the brown beret on Air Force Special Operations Command installations by the AFSOC commander, Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, January 6, 2018. (Photo by USAF Senior Airman Joseph Pick)

Quiet Professionals don BROWN BERET

By Capt. Monique Roux, 919th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs

After decades of distinguished service, the Combat Aviation Advisor community donned the newly minted brown beret as their symbol of distinction during a ceremony held here Jan. 6.

Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, Commander, Air Force Special Operations Command, presided over the ceremony and shared his perspective on the significance of the event.

"Today, CAAs, you're being granted the honor and privilege of your own Combat Aviation Advisor beret. It's an important cultural symbol," said Webb.

"I can tell you what I expect when I see a brown beret. I expect to see a cultural expert—one that has a complete understanding of a host nation's customs, culture, and way of life. I expect to see a joint warfare expert...an expert in our way of warfare and expert in understanding our partner nation's way of warfare. I expect [our members] to have the maturity to know how to blend those two together."

Combat Aviation Advisors have a long and storied history of special operations, working alongside their joint service counterparts to conduct activities by, with, and through foreign aviation forces.

The CAAs' history of dedicated service was highlighted in the ceremony which served as a visual display of a recent ruling authorizing wear of the beret on Air Force Special Operations Command

installations by the AFSOC commander.

President John F. Kennedy awarded the Green Beret to the U.S. Army Special Forces before it was officially authorized. The Combat Aviation Advisor community had the honor of presenting the first brown beret prototype to the current Command in Chief, President Donald J. Trump, thus paying homage to the tradition of this distinctive headgear.




"You're being granted the honor and privilege of your own Combat Aviation Advisor beret." Webb told the CAAs in the crowd.

The wearer of the charcoal brown beret is accountable to be professional, mature, trustworthy, a trade expert, and most importantly, a team player committed

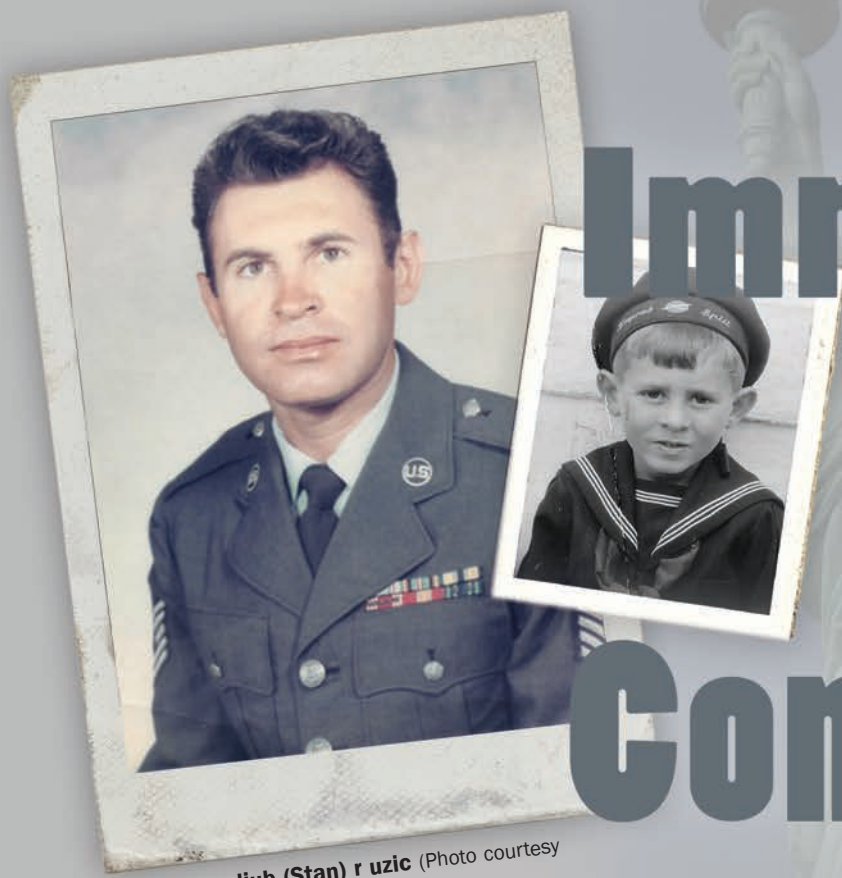
to mission accomplishment. The color signifies fertile soil and reminds the wearer daily to look for potential where others see barrenness. It signifies grit, hard work, and commitment to transform potential into capability by, with, and through our foreign partners... "Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere."

Also present at the ceremony was the man considered as the "Godfather of the CAA community," retired Lt. Col. Jerome Klingaman, who addressed the crowd and his fellow CAAs.

"The team is the alpha and omega," said Klingaman. "It is the beginning and the end of everything you stand for as Combat Aviation Advisors. It's what this beret is all about for the Combat Aviation Advisor and it puts you on the same ground as Army [Special Forces] and SEALs with the mission."

Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Myers, 6th Special Operations Squadron, spoke for the CAA community saying, "To all prior CAAs, thank you for laying such a strong foundation for us to build upon. To you we guarantee we will not waste any opportunity to build, and build smartly. We will be hard on ourselves and we will approach this mission and capability with an attitude of stewardship. We will serve our joint force, partner force, and one another in such a way as to honor the legacy that you leave us to carry." 

Immigrant to Air Commando



TSgt Slavoljub (Stan) Ruzic (Photo courtesy of Norman K. Cobb)

By Norman K. Cobb, LTC, USA (Ret)

While reviewing archived US Air Force Special Operations Command historical presentations developed by the Special Operations School, I thought I recognized the individual in a Vietnam War era historical photograph from the slide representing the USAF's 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS). In 1964, Air Commandos of the 1st Air Commando Wing (now 1st SOW), deployed to Laos and Thailand under the code name, Water Pump. Theirs was a foreign internal defense operation to train Royal Laotian Air Force and civilian Thai pilots and mechanics to support the Royal Lao Army fighting Communist insurgents. The Water Pump air commandos had a two-fold mission: counterinsurgency training and unilateral combat operations, similar to the current Combat Aviation Advisors. Upon seeing the photograph, I contacted my nephew and asked that he confirm the photograph was his father, Slavoljub (Stan) Ruzic. My nephew confirmed that the non-commissioned officer in the photo was indeed his father and subsequent conversations led to this story.

This is not only an Air Commando story, but also an American story. An energetic, even troubled, young man escaped Communist Eastern Europe after the Second World War and did well in the service of his new country. He did so well that he would eventually retire from the US Air Force enlisted ranks and from the civil service as a respected aircraft engine technician. He became an American patriot with a knack for home design and apt construction skills.



Brand new - ready for anything. (Photo provided by N.K. Cobb)



Preparing f
Cobb)

(Photo provided by N.K. Cobb)



checks before Call-for-Fire Missions. (Photo provided by

N.K. Cobb)

Stan's father was a general serving in a mechanized division under King Alexander I of the former Yugoslavia, in what is now Serbia. His father was captured by the Italians, allied with Germany during that war. Stan's father was sent to a prisoner of war camp in Italy in 1943. The Germans eventually sent Stan, his mother, and his sister to a concentration camp near Munich, Germany. The Russian Army liberated the family in 1945, and sent them back to Belgrade, Serbia, through Budapest. Stan's father was also freed at the end of the war and sent back to Yugoslavia. In 1947, Communist Yugoslavian police arrested his mother in the middle of the night because she had been too outspoken and negative with her public comments about communism. He and his sister moved to Rijeka, Croatia, with their father and they heard nothing from their mother nor knew her status or location until her release in 1950.

Due to the volatility of the era and the environment, Stan was an academically troubled student. His behavior was worse than his grades. After being thrown out of two schools, he crossed the Yugoslavian border and into Trieste, Italy, where he was captured by the Italians and spent a little time at refugee camps in Opicina and San Sabo Trieste, Italy. There he met an American woman who would eventually insist on his medical care. Fortunately, his benefactor turned out to be an important dignitary in the International Refugee Organization. She and Stan met for the first time when, as a slightly arrogant young man used for labor, Stan was washing her vehicle and insisted he could drive. They were soon face-to-face after he smashed her vehicle. Fortunately, she found humor in the incident and found the skinny young teenager interesting enough to change his circumstances. She sent him to Salerno, Italy, completed all the necessary paperwork to get him to America, and ensured he get medical tests. After passing all the tests, he was transferred to Bremerhaven, Germany and on to the United States in 1950, where he was placed in a New York City orphanage. He had not told his family of any of these adventures.

A full year after leaving his home country, Stan finally contacted his father, who told him that Stan's mother had finally been released from custody. His father contacted Stan's uncle in Ohio and Stan eventually tried attending school again, and again without much success. Stan soon became too much for the uncle, who insisted on his returning to an orphanage, this time in Ohio.

Stan eventually joined the Air Force in 1953, attended basic training at Sampson AFB, NY, and attended reciprocating engine mechanic schooling at Chanute AFB, IL. Less than a year after enlisting, he petitioned and was granted citizenship. His first duty was with Strategic Air Command, working on the Convair B-36 Peacemaker bombers. The B-36 was the biggest warplane ever to wear an American star and an intercontinental bomber. He was assigned to the 95th Bombardment Wing, 334th Bombardment Squadron at Biggs AFB in El Paso, TX. With this unit, Stan would see Japan, Alaska, Guam (four times), the Azores, Newfoundland, and many other places. The Air Force assigned six B-36 bombers to deliver the first H-bombs positioned in the Pacific Theater.

On the first leg of the flight, to Travis AFB, CA, Stan's

B-36 experienced a torque problem. The initial maintenance attempts were unsuccessful, so the crew had to leave the aircraft at the end of the runway while the other five aircraft continued their flight. Stan remembers the maintenance electrician being shot, but thankfully not killed, by an Air Policeman one night for approaching the aircraft without going through the mandated check point. Once the bomber was repaired, the crew departed Travis AFB only to develop an oil leak and land in Hawaii. This brought the attention of the Honolulu Press, reinforced by a photograph of the crew making an extremely low pass along Waikiki Beach. A general from Biggs AFB was quickly dispatched. Arriving by B-47, the General asked Stan if the aircraft could make it to their destination. Stan replied in the affirmative. The General turned to the pilot, ordered him to get his ass in the air, and they delivered their cargo. After their two-week return trip to Biggs AFB, delayed by more mechanical issues, the crew was dissolved, the pilot grounded, and Stan was promoted at the next opportunity.

Stan wanted to see more of the world, so he volunteered for overseas assignments and was soon serving at an air base in Prestwick, Scotland. He eventually returned to the US, to Langley AFB, VA. There, he volunteered for duty in Vietnam after earning his civilian pilot license. He and five friends received unclassified special orders that included verbiage such as "... having been assigned 6223 CAM Sq (PACAF), APO S/F 96215, which unit is not in existence, per Special Orders." According to Air Force historian, Robert Futrell, the secrecy of air commando operations in Southeast Asia was about to change,

Still the Air Force was generally hidden behind the name Farm Gate, even though newspapers covered Army and Marine Corps helicopter operations and the work of the Special Forces. If the air commandos and the USAF echelons above them were denied the recognition they wished, there was nevertheless a movement toward the conventional. On May 20, PACAF suggested and Air Force headquarters later approved re-designating the supporting detachments in South Vietnam. The 6220th, 6221st, 6222d, and 6223d Air Base Squadrons were formed respectively at Tan Son Nhut, Bien Hoa, Da Nang, and Nha Trang. All four units were assigned to 2d ADVON on June 7. Detachment 7 became Headquarters 2d Advanced Echelon, Thirteenth Air Force, and Detachment 10 became Headquarters 6010th Tactical Group.

In 1965, Stan arrived at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam, where his unit received US Army observation aircraft, O-1 "Bird Dogs." He flew test flights, including an unapproved one over the city of Saigon. After training on these aircraft, he and his mates established a new squadron at Bien Hoa and later at Coa Lanh flying seek and destroy missions. Their missions included close air support and aerial reconnaissance in support of the 25th Infantry Division at Lai Khe. He was soon off again with orders that stated destinations such as Korat AB or Udorn AB, both in Thailand, but actually flying out of a secret base, Nakon Phanom, with such organizations as Air America and other agencies supporting a Hmong (Laotian mountain peoples) secret army commanded by General Vang



(Photo provided by N.K. Cobb)



in Vietnam, with an AK-47 used by the Hmong. (Photo provided by N.K. Cobb)



Hmong tribe members, in their t. (Photo provided by N.K. Cobb)



interagency and infantry partners. (Photo provided by N.K. Cobb)



interagency prisoners ready for transport. (Photo provided by N.K. Cobb)



indigenous forces impressed by mechanic skills. (Photo provided by N.K. Cobb)

Pao. Here Air America was flying mostly the ten-seat, single engine, turbo prop U-10 Helio Courier STOL (short take off & landing) aircraft.

Vang Pao was the only ethnic Hmong general officer in the Royal Lao Army. He was loyal to the King and always a champion of the Hmong people. He commanded the effective, CIA trained and supported, force that fought against the Communist Pathet Lao and People's Army of Vietnam. The United Nations eventually granted the General's ethnic Hmong, his veterans, and their refugee families, the status of political refugees because of persecution and genocide by the Lao Marxist government and Communist Vietnam who took control in 1975. The Hmong refugees were allowed to resettle in the United States, France, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere. Many of Vang's former veterans formed the Lao Veterans of America, Inc. and the Lao Veterans of America Institute, with offices in Fresno, CA, Washington, DC, and other locales.

Stan recalls working with Air America in Laos, "When I was in Laos, Air America primarily flew helicopters in this area and I think you can see it in one of the photos I sent. I flew with an interagency guy who transported men, prisoners, money, and supplies. He was moving civilians once and one of them walked into the prop and decapitated himself and bending the prop."

"Standard procedure was to first make a low pass over the landing zone to ensure it was clear of people, animals, and other obstacles. In Laos, though, we would land without making a first pass because the Communists knew the US safety procedures. They would normally see the first pass and run to the airfield, waiting on the second pass and actual landing. The usually very cautious agent landed on a second pass, was ambushed and killed. Years later, I saw that the agent's daughters were involved in a Military Channel documentary about operations in Laos."

"I remembered the first night I was sitting with the agent and General Vang Pao. We were eating rice. I decided to imitate my hosts. I would grab a handful of the rice and make a ball, just like my hosts. Like them, I would then dip it into the sauce. Unfortunately, the rice would stick to the palm of my hands and then fall apart when I dipped it. I kept scraping it off my hand, dipping it, and it would fall apart. I did not realize that the General was watching. He said, "Ruzic, no, no. You see the bowl of oil? You first put oil in the palm of your hand, then you scoop the rice." Of course, by that time I had nearly a bowl's worth of rice between my legs!"

"I remember one conversation between the agent and the General focused on if we had brought the money to pay the Hmong troops. The agent replied that it would be on the next C-130. General Vang Pao replied, "Good, good. My brother [the rebel Air Force commander] was angry with me and he bombed some of my barracks. He thinks I kept the money." The agent then asked about a fire at Lima Site 22, one of the covert landing areas, typically dirt strips on ridgelines and near fortified villages that had been set up to resupply the Laotians and to transport personnel and casualties. When the general explained that the Communists had overrun the base,

we asked about the new 105 Howitzers that had been delivered to his Hmong fighters. “The Commies got them!” he told us. Frustrated, the agent said, “Dammit, General, why didn’t you destroy them? They were rigged in case they got into the wrong hands?” The general tried to explain that the Communist attack had come quickly, and the fight was over before the guns could be disabled. At that point, the agent asked if the Hmong had failed to fight and abandoned the weapons. “It looks like that,” was the answer. By this point, the completely exasperated agent could only reply, “Dammit again, General. I can’t just keep bringing guns in every week!” Stan remembers that when watching all this at the time, he didn’t know if he should have started laughing or crying.”

Certainly, as an Air Commando in Laos, Stan learned much more than aircraft maintenance. Those Air Commandos during the early 1960s rarely wore uniforms and, sometimes, in the bush, would receive their pay from an American who would just emerge from the jungle dressed in shorts and sporting long hair. He enjoyed the relationships built with indigenous locals and regretted the losses brought by the Communists. Stan loved the work, especially, the trust given by the chain of command and the subsequent independence.

Stan’s unit flew numerous missions over the Mu Gia Pass into Laos, the crossing point from North Vietnam into Laos on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. With their small, lightly armed aircraft piloted by a USAF pilot, they would act as forward air controllers (FAC) for the fighters. Flying in pairs, one aircraft would fly low to draw enemy small arms fire from the ground, which would then identify the target. His partner in the sister aircraft would then call for fire support and direct the fires to the target. The FACs would then swap roles. After the mission was over, the pilot would usually allow Stan to fly the return leg back to base and do the landing. The next day it was “Rinse and repeat” until he redeployed home.

SSgt Ruzic redeployed a little more than a year after his arrival into theater and, six months later was at his next duty station, Tyndall AFB, FL. At Tyndall, he was promoted and awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal for his service in Vietnam. He was then stationed in Germany and finally retired in 1973 after 20 years active duty, as a Master Sergeant. He soon became an Industrial Engineer Technician at Robins AFB, GA, where he retired again, from the civil service. Stan eventually turned his hobby of developing blueprints into a dream vocation, got his licenses, and developed property and built homes in the greater Warner Robins area. Today, Stan is well into his retirement, still enjoying the Warner Robins area, and proud of his service, yet humble about his accomplishments.



About the Author: LTC N. K. “Kenny” Cobb was a Non-Commissioned in the Marine Corps 1978-1982 and served in the Army as an Infantry Lieutenant and Special Forces 1986-2006. His SOF experience includes detachment and company commands, battalion operations , Theater Special Operations Command and SOF JTF operational in Restore Hope, OEF-P and OEF-A, and MARSOTF Plans in OEF-A. He retired from active duty in 2006, and is currently the Liaison for JSOU at Hurlburt Field, FL. He has a BA in Political Science and an MS in International Relations.



A job well done. (Photo provided by N.K. Cobb)

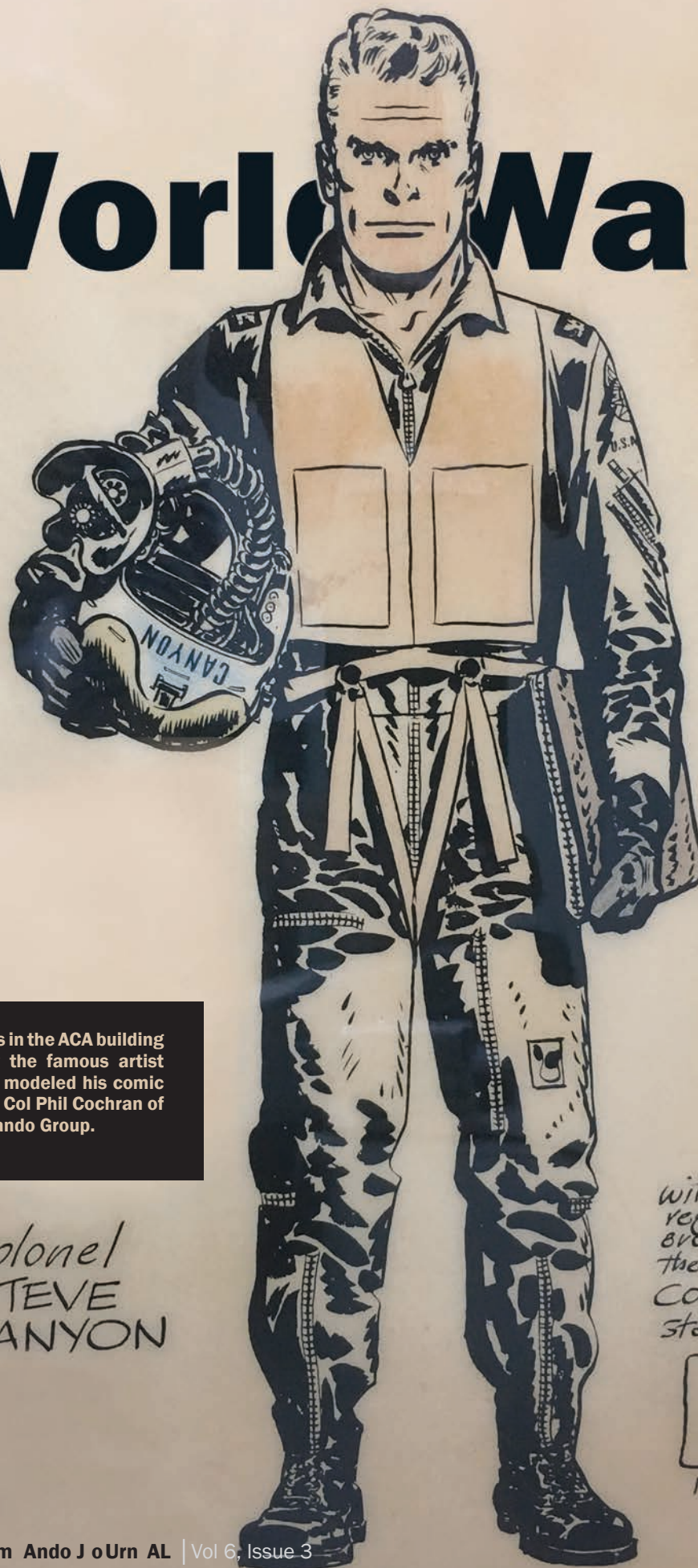


Seasoned Air Commando. (Photo provided by N.K. Cobb)



Standard post-mission operations. (Photo provided by N.K. Cobb)

Forg World War II A



This drawing hangs in the ACA building and was done by the famous artist Milton Caniff who modeled his comic strip after the real Col Phil Cochran of the 1st Air Commando Group.

Colonel
STEVE
CANYON

with great
regard for
everything
the AIR
COMMANDOS
stand for -

MILTON
CANIFF

N.Y. March
1963

Forgotten Emblems of the Air Commandos



Above, Col Phil Cochran in his cockpit. Also pictured, a mule is coaxed into a glider sometime in march 1944. notice the glider has the encircled question mark of the 319th Troop Carrier Squadron (319 TCS) on its tail. (Photo courtesy AFSOC Histor

Within academia it is often stated that the past is never lost but rather misplaced, misremembered, or forgotten. This mantra has shown itself to be particularly applicable to the Air Commandos of World War II. In recent years, historians have found the only surviving personal journal of an Air Commando to have witnessed Operation THURSDAY. (Editor's Note: See Mr Charles' article in ACJ vol. 3, no. 4, "Finding History") Historians have also uncovered new insights on the origins of the Air Commandos. In particular, new historical evidence definitively shows that the Air Commandos were not established in 1943 as Colonels Philip G. Cochran and John R. Alison believed, along with everyone involved with the standup of Project 9. Rather, the Air Commandos were first established in 1942, albeit with little success beyond performing basic glider maneuvers. Additionally, historians can state with certainty that the concept of air-centric special operations was not the brainchild of Colonels Cochran and Alison or of the British leadership of Major General Orde C. Wingate and Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, as many previous historical accounts have inferred. Rather, the concept of air-centric special operations originated with Major General George C. Kenney

and was improved upon by General Henry "Hap" Arnold.

Ultimately what these new historical findings teach is that the past is both stagnant and fluid. It is stagnant because, well, it has already happened. It cannot be undone. At the same time, the past is fluid because our understanding of history can change based upon new historical information, whether this new information is acquired by digging deeper into existing historical evidence, uncovering new historical evidence, or asking different historical questions. Needless to say, as time changes so too does our understanding of the past.

This brings me to the subject of this article—the forgotten emblems of the World War II Air Commandos. In December 2010, when I first came onboard as a historian for Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), I noticed that although the Air Commandos traced their heritage back to World War II, virtually every unit emblem within AFSOC, including the AFSOC emblem, did not incorporate this heritage. Indeed, while the AFSOC emblem was designed with the heritage of World War II special operations in mind, particularly the heritage of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), there is nothing expressly within the AFSOC emblem and its

accompanying significance statement that links it to the Air Commandos of World War II.

In recent years, however, as AFSOC expanded and activated new units, the historical disconnect between the World War II heritage of the Air Commandos and AFSOC unit emblems has gradually been rectified. For instance, in 2010, when the 371st Special Operations Combat Training Squadron (371 SOCTS) was activated, the unit emblem contained a chinthe, a lion-like creature that was believed to guard Burmese temples and was the symbol adopted by Major General Wingate's Gurkha rifle companies due to their operations in China-India-Burma (CBI) Theater. Wingate's Long Range Penetration Groups adopted the name "Chindits" as an evolution of the chinthe. In 2013, the 1st Special Operations Air Operations Squadron (1 SOAOS) followed suit by also including a chinthe as a key element within its unit emblem.

Also, in between the activation of the 371 SOCTS and the 1 SOAOS, the 352nd Special Operations Group (352 SOG) embraced its World War

ACG emblem was stenciled on the 352 SOG's aircraft. And in 2015, when the 352 SOG was reorganized and expanded into the 352nd Special Operations Wing (352 SOW), the newly formed 752nd Special Operations Group (752 SOG) included key elements of the 2 ACG



752 SoG emblem

emblem into its own unit emblem, thus further linking the World War II heritage of the Air Commandos with that of the 352 SOW.

The emphatic embrace of the 2 ACG emblem by the 352 SOG left me curious about whether there were other Air Commando emblems of World War II that might be salvaged for heritage purposes. My initial search did not turn up anything beyond what was already publicly available, such as the encircled question mark of the 319th Troop Carrier Squadron (319 TCS), the 319 TCS's glider section's winged-mule carrying



2 ACG emblem

II heritage. It began at a staff meeting, where I, as the unit historian, presented the 2nd Air Commando Group's (2 ACG) emblem and suggested that the 352 SOG find ways to incorporate it. To my surprise, the 352 SOG's leadership emphatically embraced the idea, and the 2 ACG emblem gradually became a staple within the 352 SOG. At first, the 2 ACG emblem appeared on morale t-shirts, unit awards, and booster club items. A bit later, with permission, the 2



319 TCS emblem

a kukri knife (the traditional weapon of the Gurkhas), and the 2 ACG's 2nd Fighter Squadron's diving eagle carrying

a Thompson submachine gun.

For years, my search for other World War II era Air Commando emblems turned up nothing of substance—that is until I was tasked with preparing a series of historical displays for US Special Operations Command's (USSOCOM) 30th Anniversary. For one of the displays I wanted to include selected portions of Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates*, a comic strip whose main character, Flip Corkin, was loosely based on the exploits of Colonel Cochran. Given that most of the imprints for *Terry and the Pirates* are maintained at The Ohio State University (OSU), Caniff's and Cochran's alma mater, I reached out to the university's archives. It was here that I learned there was much more being held at the OSU archives on Cochran and the Air Commandos than imprints from *Terry and the Pirates*.

Curious as to what new historical evidence might be found, I scheduled a research visit. While there I found a treasure trove of seemingly forgotten information on the history of the Air Commandos. The archives contained everything from photos of the Air Commandos in action (including color photos), to virtually unknown articles on the Air Commandos' operational exploits. There was also correspondence between Caniff, Cochran, and other Air Commandos. To my surprise, also within the archives were sketches of four Air Commando emblems. Two of the emblems Caniff completed, although the Air Commandos never used them. A third emblem never made it past the sketch phase. Meanwhile the fourth and last emblem—that of the winged-mule carrying a kukri knife—was adopted by the 319 TCS's glider section, although it was not generally attributed to Caniff. It was only after conducting intensive newspaper archival research that I was able to confirm that Caniff was in fact the creator.

The fact that Caniff sketched multiple Air Commando emblems is not at all surprising. In fact Caniff had sketched hundreds of emblems for military units spanning from World War II to post-Vietnam. But Caniff's first unit emblem was in 1941 at the request of Cochran, who at the time was the commander of



65 FS emblem as drawn by Caniff

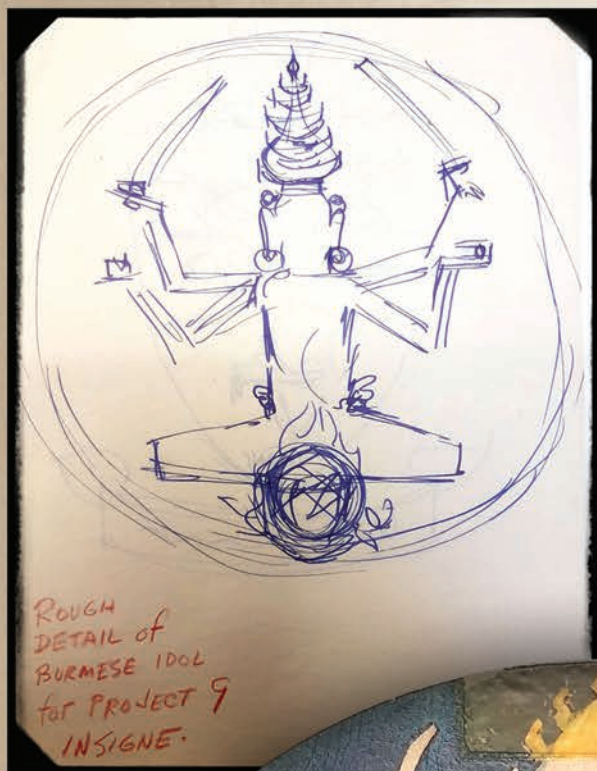
the 65th Fighter Squadron (FS). The story is that Cochran told Caniff, "I don't care what you come up with [for the 65 FS], Milt, just so long as he's a fighting son of a gun." Based on this guidance, Caniff then designed the 65 FS emblem using the 65 FS's mascot, a red rooster named Uncle Bud.

Two years later, when Cochran was appointed commander of what was then Project 9, Cochran once more reached out to Caniff about sketching emblems for each unit under his command. It is lost to history exactly what guidance and direction, if any, Cochran relayed to Caniff in sketching these emblems. However, what can be historically surmised is that Cochran must have relayed to Caniff that the units were operating in the CBI Theater. What is also known is that Caniff drew different iterations of the emblems as Project 9 was redesignated the 5318th Provisional Air Unit, and then later the 1st Air Commando Group (1 ACG).

For Project 9, Caniff sketched an emblem on a blue background that centered on a statue of the Hindu goddess Kali, known both as the destroyer of evil forces and the divine protector of liberation. At the base of the statue is a golden chinthe, which indicates Cochran would

Cartoon of Cochran directing Caniff





Caniff Project 9 emblem sketch

have communicated to Caniff that his force was working alongside Wingate's Chindits. As far as can be historically determined, the emblem was never used or incorporated by the Air Commandos.

The second emblem drawn by Caniff was a modification of the first emblem. Caniff removed the golden chinthe and placed a leopard across the center of the Kali statue. Additionally, the background of the emblem was now two-toned, which was seemingly used to indicate that the Air Commandos carried out day and night operations. Like the first emblem, there is no evidence to suggest the second emblem was ever used or incorporated by the Air Commandos.

The third emblem drawn by Caniff never made it beyond the sketch phase. It was actually drawn on the reverse side of the second emblem and consisted of a shield with a scroll. Above the shield is a depiction of fire, which in Hindu scripture denoted the primordial powers to consume, transform, and convey—a suitable depiction of the air-centric special operations capabilities that the Air Commandos provided. The shield itself was divided into five fields, each of which depicted a different capability of the Air Commandos: fighter, glider, light plane, helicopter, and transport.

The fourth and last emblem drawn by Caniff is undoubtedly the most recognizable—a winged-mule carrying a kukri knife. The idea for the emblem actually came from the Air Commando CG-4A glider



Caniff Project 9 emblem patch

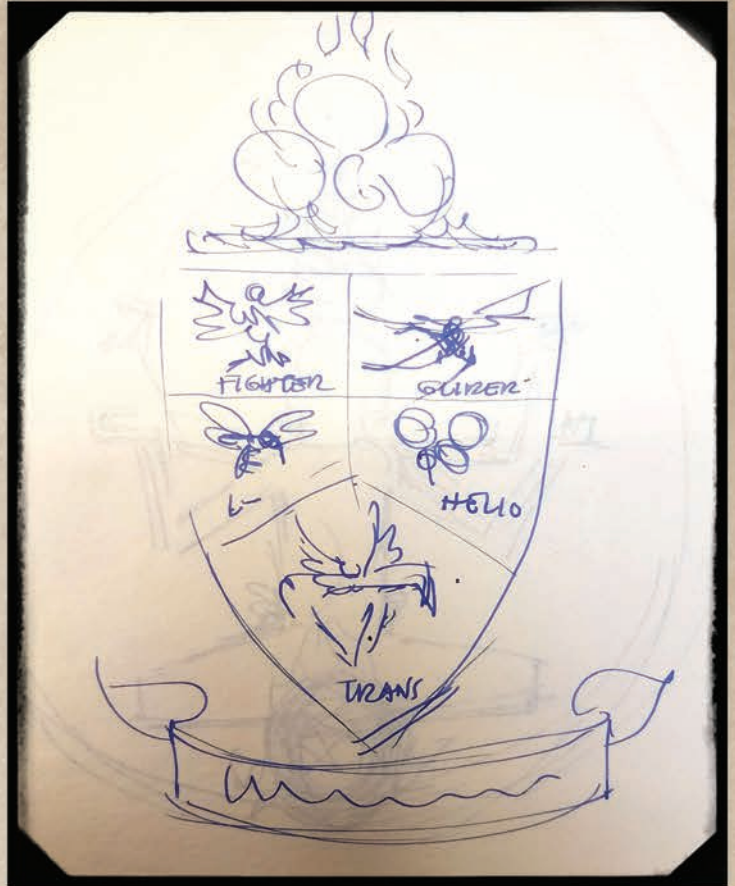


Caniff jaguar emblem sketch

pilots. It was intended to be a tongue-in-cheek take on their mission to transport mules in support of Major General Wingate's operations, a mission set that Cochran would later affectionately refer to in an article as "The Flying Mules." The incorporation of the kukri knife was an important detail, for it signified the Air Commandos' joint operations with the Chindits. According to World War II journalist Lowell Thomas, this emblem was so well liked that Wingate wanted to adopt it for all of his forces.

The fact that the winged-mule emblem has never been appropriated by an AFSOC unit may come as a surprise. Not only is this emblem a familiar symbol in the World War II history of the Air Commandos, but it was drawn by Caniff, who was awarded the distinguished status of honorary Air Commando back in 1964. One might also be surprised to learn that, to date, only one AFSOC unit can boast that it maintains a Caniff-drawn emblem. This distinction belongs to the 353rd Special Operations Group (353 SOG). In 2010, the 353 SOG adopted the 553rd Reconnaissance Wing's (53 RW) emblem—one of the units the 353 SOG traces its lineage to—that Caniff sketched back in 1967.

With that said, there is indeed an argument to be made for an AFSOC unit taking the initiative and adopting (even partially) one of Caniff's Air Commando emblems. The winged-mule emblem, in particular, would perfectly mesh with the adaptability and toughness required of any special operations support squadron or special operations maintenance squadron. In the case of a maintenance squadron, one might even replace the kukri knife with a wrench. But, as with most things in the U.S. Air Force, it is not that easy. There are rules, particularly Air Force Instruction (AFI) 84-105, governing unit emblems—rules that make it quite difficult for units to either modify or replace existing emblems. Still, whether or not an AFSOC unit will ever be able to appropriate one of Caniff's Air Commando emblems, nothing, not even AFI rules, can erase Caniff's Air Commando emblems that have been found.



Caniff shield sketch



Caniff glider section sketch



About the Author: Patrick J. Charles is a senior historian for United States Special Operations Command at MacDill Air Force Base.

The Difficulties *in Changing an* **AIR FORCE** **Unit Emblem**

By Patrick J. Charles

In the previous article it was noted that Air Force unit emblems are subject to rules. These rules, which fall under Air Force Instruction (AFI) 84-105, are intended to ensure that every Air Force unit is provided with emblems that “promote esprit de corps, morale, and a sense of heritage.” They are rules that govern virtually every aspect of the unit emblem. Some of the rules are general, such as the number of elements an emblem may contain (a maximum of three), the types of colors (a selection from twelve colors) and number of colors used throughout the emblem (a maximum of six), and the number of characters and spaces placed within an emblem scroll (a maximum of thirty). Other rules governing unit emblems are more subjective, for example, every unit emblem must be “dignified and in good taste” and be “symbolic” of the unit’s “history, accomplishments, and mission.”

In addition to governing the content within the unit emblem, the AFI also dictates when and how an Air Force unit emblem may be modified or changed. These rules are far more limiting. An Air Force unit with an approved Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA) emblem may only modify or change its emblem in one of two scenarios. The first scenario is that the unit emblem violates any of the ten current criteria for Air Force unit emblems. Here, the unit emblem may be modified, but only so much as is necessary to put it in compliance with AFHRA standards. No new design elements or colors may be introduced. The end goal is to “maintain the lineage and tradition of the organization.”

This brings us to the second scenario where the rules permit the modification or changing of a unit emblem—the historical emblem exception. The rules regarding this exception are far more restrictive than the first scenario. The historical emblem exception only allows an Air Force unit to change from its existing unit emblem to its first emblem. Any emblems that may have been used by the Air Force unit in between the existing emblem and first emblem are not allowed. Additionally, although there is no such requirement within AFI 84-105, AFHRA further stipulates that the first emblem has to be an officially approved unit emblem. What this AFHRA interpretation means is that any historical emblem must have been officially approved by the Air Force (or previously the Army Air Corps) in order for it to qualify for use.

However, in recent years, due to pressure from major command (MAJCOM) historians, this additional, unwritten rule has been subject to waiver. The MAJCOM historians argued that such a rule was far too stringent. More than half of all World War II units were unable to get their respective emblems officially approved, and an administrative error or administrative oversight should not negate a unit’s link to their historical emblem. The MAJCOM historians’ position is that as long as the respective Air Force unit can prove their historical emblem was widely appropriated at the time of its inception, AFHRA should approve said emblem. This perspective ultimately paved the way for the 752d Special Operations Group (752 SOG) and the 492d Special Operations Wing (492 SOW) to incorporate elements from their historical emblem into their current

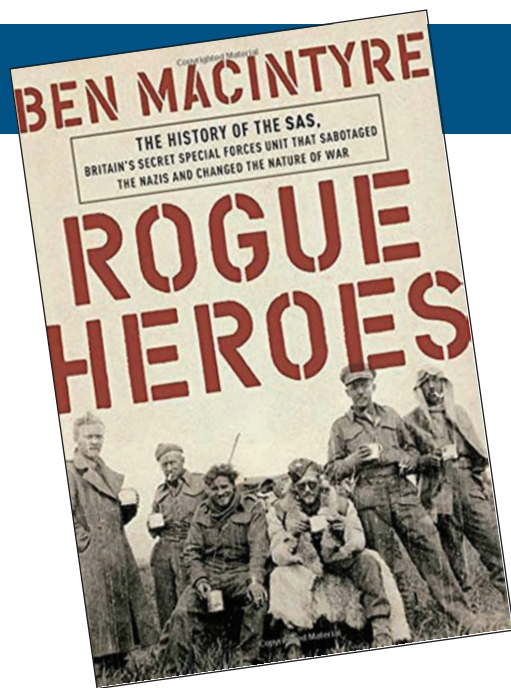
unit emblems. It did not matter that the historical emblems of both units had never been officially approved. Because the evidentiary record showed that the 752nd SOG and 492nd SOW’s historical emblems were widely appropriated during World War II, elements from said emblems were approved for current use, albeit with slight modifications in order to comply with AFI 84-105.

So what do all these rules mean should an Air Force unit want to adopt (even partially) one of Caniff’s unused Air Commando emblems, or any other unused Caniff emblem drawings? Unless the Air Force unit is a new activating unit the answer from AFHRA will almost certainly be a “no.” But even in those cases where the Air Force unit is newly activated, adopting one of Caniff’s Air Commando emblems may prove difficult. This is because often times the lineage and honors of newly activated units come from previously deactivated units. In such instances, the rules dictate that the unit should maintain the emblem of the previously deactivated unit, regardless of whether the newly activated unit maintains a completely different mission than the previously deactivated one.

At this point, if you are scratching your head with a perplexed look on your face, you are not alone. The rules governing unit emblems are sometimes confusing. However, should you have any questions reach out to your unit historian(s). They will be able to provide you with the answers.



About the Author: Patrick J. Charles is a senior historian for United States Special Operations Command at MacDill Air Force Base.



Book Review

By Scott McIntosh, Maj, USAF (Ret)

Rogue Heroes

By Ben Macintyre

Broadway Books, 2017, 400 pages

(e.g., Special Operations Forces cannot be mass produced), but there are other concepts that are woven like threads into the narrative and consistently reveal themselves throughout.

For example, Stirling himself was an innovator and expected to see that quality in each of his operators. His SAS concept was also innovative; as Stirling sold it to co-founder Jock Lewes: "I believe it would be possible, not too difficult in fact, to infiltrate small numbers of men into selected German positions from the desert flank. I think we could then have a pretty dramatic effect on their efficiency and morale by sabotaging aircraft, runways, and fuel dumps." Subsequently SAS pioneers created and produced their own tailor-made explosives and modifications to vehicles for this mission in the deserts of North Africa.

Stirling, however, knew that his men would have to embrace centralized control and decentralized execution in this kind of fight, so he needed independent thinkers who could continue the mission when communications with the HQ broke down. Stirling, according to the book, stated that these independent-minded individuals were hard to control but "[t]hey were harnessable. The object was to give them the same purpose [and capability] to grasp what they had to do in order to get there." Fortunately, the British Middle East Headquarters in Cairo under General Auchinleck "allow[ed] Stirling extraordinary latitude in the planning and execution of operations. Contact with headquarters was maintained by radio, but there is no evidence that the commanding officer either demanded, or expected, to be told exactly what Stirling was doing until after he had done it."

As a lieutenant, I had devoured Alan Vick's *Snakes in the Eagle's Nest: A History of Ground Attacks on Air Bases* (1995), so I knew that Stirling's novel approach to war had yielded significant

results. Macintyre's book, however, makes it clear that this groundbreaking special operations endeavor affected the enemy in ways far more significant than shattered airframes and cancelled sorties.

Soon, imperiled German and Italian convoys avoided traveling by night along the North African coast, an evasion which made them vulnerable to RAF interdiction when they did so in the daytime. At airfields like Benghazi and Agheila, the SAS honed its tactics, techniques, and procedures, "attacking the most valuable strategic targets without warning and then melting away again, forcing the enemy to remain on constant, debilitating alert." Later on, the SAS parachuted into France with their heavily-modified jeeps and trained the Maquis (French Resistance) on how to harass the retreating Nazi units into a state "close to despair." The strategic effects the SAS contributed were thus arguably far greater than the sum of their individual parts. "Killing the enemy," to David Stirling, "was only one aspect of the process. If, using surprise and guile, the enemy could be disorientated, alarmed, and embarrassed, then the three-dimensional impact could be far greater than traditional tactics."

As I implied earlier, Macintyre's art is in his objectivity and refusal to gloss over the facts. The Special Air Service lost a significant number of men during the Second World War, not only in battle, but also to the desert and a personal order from Adolf Hitler. The infamous *Kommandobefehl* mandated that all enemy soldiers found operating behind Axis lines be immediately executed without trial. Like the early Air Commandos, flag officers also occasionally viewed these elite professionals as plug-and-play assets in the theater order of battle, and the SAS was put into conventional battlefield roles like infantry "shock troops", scouts,

The Special Air Service is notoriously "quiet professional" about the Regiment, its operations, and its training. Indeed, the most well-known recent account of the SAS, Andy MacNab's *Bravo Two Zero*, the biggest-selling military history book of all time according to *The Guardian*, is still a source of great controversy in both the SAS and the UK. When I learned that the unit had opened its archives to journalist and historian Ben Macintyre so he could write an account of its early history, I picked up a copy immediately. I had read Macintyre's book *Operation Mincemeat* (2010) while serving in Iraq—a superb account of how MI6 deceived the Nazis into thinking the D-Day landings would occur at Calais instead of Normandy, by floating a corpse in a Royal Navy uniform off the Spanish coast, handcuffed to a briefcase containing fake invasion plans. Macintyre has a gift for illuminating the personalities before placing them in the events he reports upon, and he continues to do so in *Rogue Heroes*.

He duly points out that the men who cobbled the SAS together in July 1941, were real people with real human issues, to include the unit's founder and "peculiar character" David Stirling. Macintyre delves into drunken brawling and PTSD concerns in the book, but consistently emphasizes the innovation and independent thinking that Stirling demanded from recruits. I found myself writing the SOF Truths in the margins on many of the pages

or serial ambush units far too close to the forward line of advancing Allied armies to be of much strategic value. In the China-Burma-India Theater, Col Philip Cochran had to fight the perception up the chain that his C-47s and P-51s were simply airplanes needed elsewhere. David Stirling, and later Paddy Mayne, had a similar battle to keep his veteran special operators and equipment from being snatched and committed piecemeal to conventional missions.

On a more human level, *Rogue Heroes* also describes the perils downstream from a downward spiral of violence. Both 1 and 2 SAS were

learning on the other side of the Elbe, Hitler Youth and SS units were often committed, like their Führer, to a flaming Wagnerian end in lieu of surrender. The brutality was reaching a crescendo, and the “gentlemanly, jovial, dangerous, and exciting warfare pioneered by Stirling was evolving into something harder and crueler under the pressure of a long and horrific conflict.” By the end, many of these brave and vigorous men were completely spent and ready to enjoy the advantages of peacetime. Regardless, the SAS was officially disbanded in October 1945.

As Macintyre implies, the SAS was

later realized, years of training F-105 pilots to lob-toss tactical nukes was not ideal for attacking the Ho Chi Minh Trail or rescuing downed aircrews in the vicinity. The British Ministry of Defense discovered that nuclear fusion was not a good solution for liberating the 1980 Iranian Embassy in London, either. In the 1960s, the Pentagon adapted US forces for the non-nuclear fight in Vietnam. The UK was quicker to recognize the need for “a long-term, deep-penetration fighting unit” and revived the SAS in 1947.

In summation, Macintyre takes the reader from the unit’s inception—attacking Rommel’s airfields in the very inhospitable Libyan desert, up the mountainous boot of Italy, across the English Channel to Normandy, and eventually into the heart of Nazi Germany (where 1 SAS liberated 60,000 inmates at Bergen-Belsen, a particularly grim action that the book describes in detail). While he has tightened the shot-group to focus on the Second World War, the book makes it clear that by 1941 Allied forces were due for innovation. The earlier seaborne commandos were too large and unwieldy, capable of hitting “only one target at a time; but a number of smaller units, moving quickly, raiding suddenly and then retreating swiftly, could destroy multiple targets simultaneously... The peculiar geography of North Africa offered just such a possibility....” David Stirling, from a hospital bed in Egypt, recognized that possibility and sold the concept to his superiors. The aforementioned men and equipment—enabled by the innovation, audacity, the long and loose tether Stirling provided them proved that SOF could achieve strategic effects well beyond the size of the forces engaged.



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Colonel David Stirling, standing, with SAS men in the middle East.

consistently inserted and employed in battle until V-E Day, and Macintyre summarizes it thusly, “As the war approached its finale, the rules were evaporating.” In France, the opposition to the Nazi occupation was hardly unified and as the Wehrmacht retreated the SAS found itself in an environment of treachery and settling of old scores amongst the guerrillas they were tasked to instruct and support. Meanwhile the Waffen SS was hanging entire villages in reprisal for the Maquisards’ actions. Later, pushed back across the Rhine, the Germans transitioned to defending their homeland, supported by interior lines of communication and, as the Soviets were

never intended to reemerge. I couldn’t help but think of JFK reenergizing our nation’s special operations capability in the 1960s—after a decade of emphasis on nuclear forces. When I read that “with the dropping of the [atomic] bomb, military planners, saw a new kind of war in prospect, one that could be won by nuclear fusion and would have no need for highly specialized troops trained to operate behind the lines.” The men that Stirling referred to as a “freemasonry of mediocrity” in the higher staffs had decided, as the Eisenhower administration also did, that the atomic age had ended the need for humans over hardware in war. As the USAF



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-- NORTON A. SCHWARTZ, Gen (Ret) Former USAF Chief of Staff

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