ENSURING RELEVANCE

The USASOC History Office in 2023

With a mission to document, collect, and preserve Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) history, and to use it to inform and inspire a broad range of internal and external audiences, the USASOC Command History Office executes a historical program along five primary lines of effort (LOE): 1) USASOC Command Group support, 2) historical support to the ARSOF enterprise, 3) fulfillment of Army unit history requirements, 4) collection and preservation of ARSOF history, and 5) historical outreach and publications. What follows is an overview of significant activities and accomplishments from calendar year 2023, organized by LOE.

USASOC Command Group Support

Throughout 2023, the USASOC Command Group leveraged its Command History Office in support of numerous initiatives, from answering historical inquiries, to documenting ARSOF involvement in ongoing conflicts, to designing historically themed displays, to leveraging history for recruiting and strategic communications purposes. This section provides a brief overview of some of these efforts.

Originating from a late 2022 Command Group request, the "ARSOF in Ukraine" project reached its first milestone in late January 2023 with the delivery of an eight-page classified report covering ARSOF activities in Ukraine prior to the Russian incursion in February 2022. As this report was being revised based on additional guidance, the office continued to collect information on post-incursion activities, in collaboration with the USASOC G-2 and G-3.

Recognizing the ongoing nature of the conflict, office leadership began planning for a contracted historian to assist with this project.

In April, the History Office provided historical products in advance of the USASOC Capabilities Exercise (CAPEX) 2023 and then directly supported each day's events with a Memorial Plaza tour. The following month, office personnel supported the USASOC Gold Star Ceremony by providing one-on-one tours of the Memorial Plaza and USASOC Headquarters for a total of 17 visiting Gold Star families. The office also provided copies of The Last Full Measure of Devotion, which includes profiles of the 377 ARSOF Fallen of the post-9/11 era, to USASOC Family Programs for distribution to Gold Star families. In collaboration with USASOC Family Programs, we collected three Gold Star stories for the "ARSOF Fallen Project."





TOP: This statue honoring the late MG Eldon A. Bargewell is the centerpiece of a park dedicated in his honor in Hoquiam, Washington. **BOTTOM:** Staff Sergeant Robert J. Miller, a posthumous Medal of Honor recipient from 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), was one of several ARSOF heroes to have a street on Fort Liberty, NC, renamed in his honor in 2023

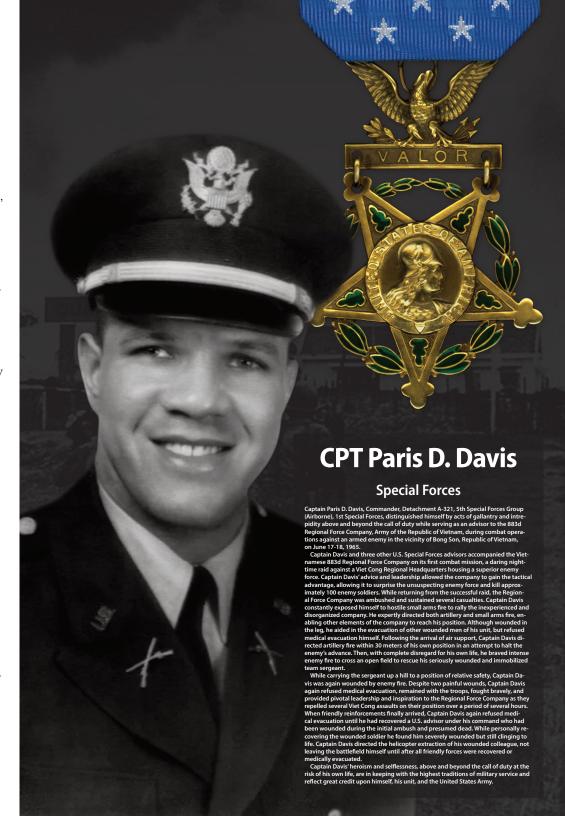
Also in May, the History Office's Marketing Integration Manager supported the dedication of a park in Hoquiam, Washington, in honor of Major General (MG) Eldon A. Bargewell. A Silver Star recipient from Vietnam, Bargewell later received U.S. Special Operations Command's highest honor, the Bull Simons Award. The office also supported the Command's Black and Red Ball with the theme, "Past, Present, and Future," and produced a video for the event.

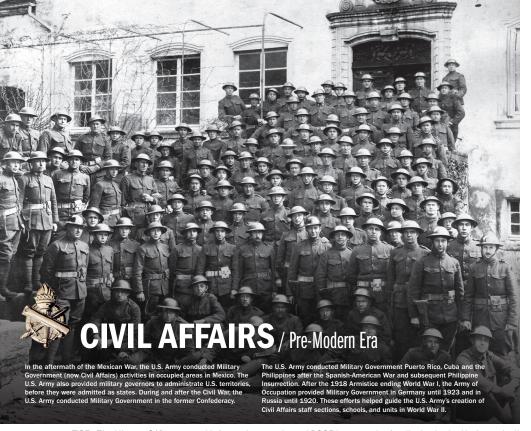
In June, the Command Historian accompanied the USASOC Command Team on its visit to Normandy, France, for the 79th anniversary of the World War II D-Day landings. That same month, the Army officially rechristened Fort Bragg, North Carolina, as Fort Liberty. The Command Historian represented the command at the Army level during the protracted renaming process. Concurrent with the base renaming, numerous roads and streets on Fort Liberty were also renamed and the History Office ensured that ARSOF was well-represented during this process.

At the request of the USASOC G-1, the History Office designed, produced, and installed a display honoring all 38 ARSOF Medal of Honor recipients on the first floor of the USASOC Headquarters. The complete list of these ARSOF heroes, along with citations and biographies, can be found at https://arsof-history.org/medal of honor/index.html.

The office also designed new display panels for the Heritage Auditorium interior highlighting a variety of ARSOF legacy units from the Colonial Period of American History through the Korean War. Each of these units influenced ARSOF in its own way, despite not being directly connected to any modern ARSOF unit's official lineage.

In March 2023, Colonel (Ret.) Paris D. Davis became the most recent ARSOF soldier awarded the Medal of Honor. As a Captain, he demonstrated exceptional valor while leading Special Forces Detachment A-321, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), during the Battle of Bong Son, Republic of Vietnam.







TOP: The History Office created information panels on ARSOF legacy units for display in the Heritage Auditorium, two of which are pictured above. **BOTTOM:** As part of a recruiting initiative, the office placed stickers of historical ARSOF insignia, such as the one pictured here, on a backing that contained a QR code to the ARSOF History website.

Recognizing the popularity of existing History Office stickers of iconic ARSOF unit insignia (the First Special Service Force and World War II Ranger Battalions), the Command Group commissioned the History Office to produce more stickers that linked to landing pages on the ARSOF History website, with the intent of providing sticker recipients with historical context and links to information about joining ARSOF.

Historical Support to ARSOF Enterprise

In addition to supporting Headquarters, USASOC, the History Office also served the entire ARSOF enterprise, consisting of 85 subordinate units at the O-5/battalion level and above. This support took many

forms in 2023, including answering requests for information (RFIs), providing unit-focused history talks, liaising with the Center of Military History and the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) History and Research Office, coordinating delivery of historical products, and participating in unit-sponsored podcasts. Still, the demand for historical assistance inevitably exceeded the capacity of the History Office.

To help offset this shortfall, the History Office launched an enterprise-wide Unit Historical Officer (UHO) program in late 2022, initially enlisting 64 UHOs. This number grew to more than 80, representing 55 subordinate units, within the program's first year. During 2023, we hosted one UHO research visit, answered dozens of UHO RFIs, and leveraged



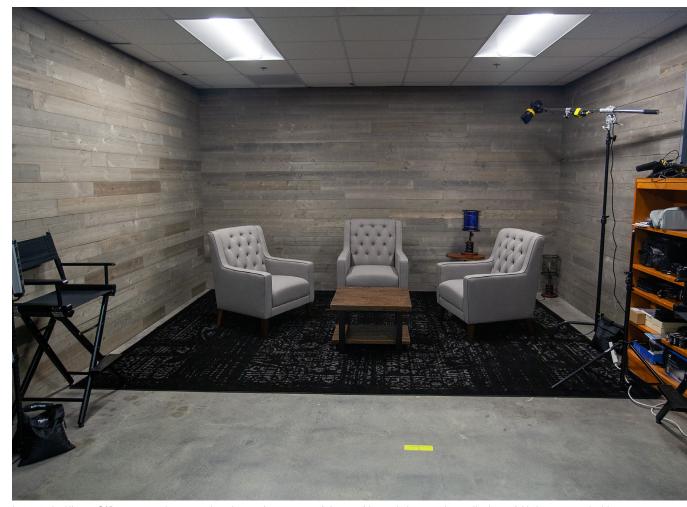
UHOs to get a variety of printed historical materials into the hands of ARSOF soldiers. The UHO Program Manager provided Annual Command History (ACH)-focused training to UHOs in February and orientation training for new UHOs in October.

Fulfillment of Army Historical Requirements

Like all U.S. Army Command History Offices, USASOC must balance command-directed historical projects like those listed above with the Army-mandated responsibilities listed in Army Regulation 870-5. Chief among these is the production of an ACH (also known as the Annual History Report), execution of an oral history program, and the establishment and maintenance of a command historical research collection.

The History Office got an early start on the Calendar Year (CY) 2022 ACH by initiating a tasker for ACH inputs in late January. This tasker directed all Headquarters, USASOC, staff directorates and all subordinate commands and units at the battalion level and above to provide the History Office with ACH submissions. By the late summer, the office had collected inputs from 26 of 31 staff directorates, all three general officer-level subordinate commands, and all but two O-6 headquarters. The office then edited and collated more than 1,400 pages of staff and unit input into a master USASOC ACH that included separate annexes for each major subordinate command. Critical to this effort were dozens of diligent UHOs across the enterprise.

Oral history, the second core requirement of a Command History Office, received some much-needed emphasis in 2023. Seeking to better codify oral history requirements with the USASOC enterprise, the History Office drafted and successfully staffed a command-wide policy letter and developed supporting interview templates. Office personnel also conducted, or supported, end-of-tour interviews with



In 2023, the History Office converted an unused workspace into a state-of-the-art video and photography studio that quickly became a valuable asset to both the office and to USASOC.

the outgoing commanders of the U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command and 4th Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Group (Airborne). Lastly, it conducted two rounds of after-action interviews with 6thPSYOP Battalion teams returning from deployments in the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) area of operations.

Moving forward, the office plans to consolidate its three current policies (ACH, UHO, and Oral History) into one regulation that will provide guidance for implementing a historical program within USASOC. The intent is for this to be published during CY24.





Preservation of ARSOF History

The History Office treats the third core Army requirement of a Command History Office, the command historical research collection, as a distinct LOE, due to its scope and importance. The office employs two general schedule (GS) civilians for the express purpose of preservation. They currently are augmented by contracted digitization specialists and one field grade officer. The office's three historians also contribute to the preservation LOE by actively seeking out and collecting materials with historical significance to ARSOF.

In 2023, the office continued to actively collect historical materials to add to the ARSOF historical research collection, including two week-long trips to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) facility in College Park, Maryland. There, office personnel evaluated a wide array of print and video recorded materials to determine which should be copied for inclusion in the ARSOF collection. Topics researched included Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) Taiwan, the Special Action Force – Asia, World War II Rangers, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam – Studies and Observations Group (MACV-SOG), the Vietnam-era Arctic Ranger Company, 1st Special Operations Command, and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The office's digitization personnel processed these files, along with more than 100 other collections, comprising over 60,000 individual assets, accessioning them into the collection.

The office's archival experts coordinated with the USASOC G-6 and the USASOC Force Modernization Center to ensure that digital holdings were backed

TOP: In September 2023, LTC Jacob A. Allen of the History Office capitalized on the office's new video studio to interview U.S. Army Civil Affairs COL Kurt Sisk. **BOTTOM:** Retired GEN Peter J. Schoomaker, who served as Chief of Staff of the Army from 2003 to 2007, discussed his long career in Army Special Operations during a December 2023 interview with the History Office.

up to an offsite location. By doing so, we safeguarded over 100 terabytes of irreplaceable data. Archival personnel continue to work with the G-6 in pursuit of a digital asset management system (DAMS).

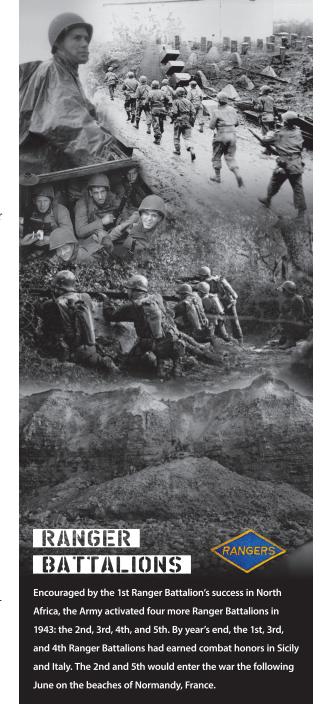
To aid in the collection and preservation of oral history, the History Office repurposed an unused workspace as an audiovisual and photography studio. Work on the room began in February and was completed by April. Two months later, we debuted the new state-of-the-art facility to interview Mr. Charles Coaker, a Vietnam-era Ranger. Following additional renovations, our videographer filmed the first two-person interview in the facility on 12 September with Civil Affairs COL Kurt Sisk and LTC Jacob A. Allen.

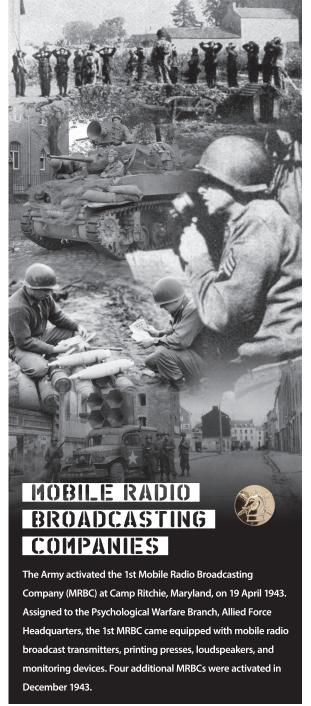
Historical Outreach and Publications

Publications have long been a staple of the History Office's outreach efforts. Since 2018, a steadily increasing percentage of its publications have been web-based, using both internal (NIPR/SIPR) and external platforms. Since launching in 2020, ARSOF-History.org, the office's public-facing website, has become a prominent source of information for those interested in Army Special Operations History. Our online offerings expanded significantly in 2023, to include the addition of several archival videos and downloadable products. Though print remains a small part of the office's overall output, we also published one noteworthy new print product in 2023: the *U.S. Army Special Forces History Handbook*.

Following a precent established in recent years, the History Office used its web-based publications to highlight key ARSOF anniversaries in 2023. This included seven articles published directly to ARSOF-history.org, five articles published to Army.mil, and

The two information panels pictured on the right were part of the "ARSOF in 1943" display located outside the Heritage Auditorium in the USASOC Headquarters (Building E-2929).





nearly thirty social media posts disseminated via USASOC channels. One focus throughout the year was the 80th anniversary of several ARSOF lineage and legacy units during World War II. As seen below, we addressed these anniversaries in several web features and social media posts, and in a display outside the Heritage Auditorium in the USASOC Headquarters (see nearby "Publication Highlights" feature for more detailed information).

Conclusion

In 2023, the USASOC History Office demonstrated its value and relevance to the Command.

and to the ARSOF community, in innumerable ways. Our timely support to the Command Group and subordinate units promoted the utility of history. Our publications reached more people than ever before with the ARSOF story. Our UHO program encouraged units to take ownership of their own history, while providing them with the tools and training to do so. Lastly, our committed staff ensured that the ARSOF history was documented and preserved for the benefit of both current and future generations.

We're looking forward to what 2024 has in store.



USASOC personnel pose for a photo at Omaha Beach in Normandy, France, prior to a staff ride detailing the valorous actions of Company C, 2nd Ranger Battalion on 6 June 1944. USASOC Commander, Lieutenant General Jonathan P. Braga, is flanked to his right by Command Sergeant Major JoAnn Naumann, and to his left by Command Chief Warrant Officer Robert A. Davis. The flowers LTG Braga is holding were laid in the surf that morning in memory of the Rangers who lost their lives there seventy-nine years earlier. Command Historian Troy J. Sacquety is pictured on the far left.

PUBLICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY

Reflecting the shift away from print publications, the History Office published the first-ever all-digital issue of *Veritas: Journal of U.S. Army Special Operations History.* This transition resulted mainly from increased printing and distribution costs. The digital publication was available through <u>ARSOF-History.org.</u>

The office also contributed two articles to the January edition of the USASOC G-5's *STRATCOM Monthly* newsletter. The first was an overview of upcoming ARSOF anniversaries in 2023, many of which are addressed below. The second was a tribute to the ARSOF Fallen from the month of January that featured four Night Stalkers from the 160th Special Operations Regiment who lost their lives in Afghanistan twenty years earlier.

As January drew to a close, the office commemorated the <u>55th Anniversary of the Tet Offensive</u> during the Vietnam War, during which four Special Forces soldiers earned the Medal of Honor, with an Army.mil article and a USASOC social media post. A separate social media post highlighted the start of 5th Special Forces Group (SFG) involvement in Operation RESTORE Hope, Somalia, in <u>1993</u>.

FEBRUARY

The STRATCOM Monthly (February edition) included the History Office's tribute to the ARSOF Fallen from the month of February, focusing on Sergeant First Class Matthew Sluss-Tiller, for whom the Civil Affairs Qualification Course Culmination Exercise is named. It also included the aforementioned article on Special Forces in the Tet Offensive that had previously appeared on Army.mil. Social

media for the month highlighted the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Special Forces soldiers in Korea, which represented the first combat employment of SF, as part of the 8240th Army Unit.

MARCH

On 3 March, U.S. President Joseph R. Biden presented Special Forces Colonel (Retired) Paris D. Davis with the Medal of Honor for exceptionally valorous actions near Bong Son, Republic of Vietnam, in July 1965. The office promptly created a Medal of Honor profile for COL Davis, which is now posted to the ARSOF-History website. On 20 March, we recognized the 20th Anniversary of the start of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, a major military operation featuring the full range of ARSOF capabilities and units. Read more about this in this in All Roads Lead to Baghdad, which is downloadable from ARSOF-History.org.

APRIL

Responding to pervasive confusion between the terms lineage and legacy, two related, but not interchangeable, historical terms, the office published "ARSOF Lineage or Legacy: Which is the Right Word?" We concurrently published a related article entitled "TOE vs. TDA: What's the Difference?" Both articles were authored by the Deputy Command Historian.

April social media highlighted the activation of four <u>World War II Ranger battalions</u> in 1943 and the 8th SFG in 1963, and the start of the successful Chieu Hoi PSYOP program in Vietnam, also in 1963.

MAY

Social media for the month commemorated the 80th anniversary of the OSS Operational Groups. Aside from this, publication efforts were curtailed in favor of other priorities, including a collection trip to NARA and support to the 2023 USASOC Gold Star Ceremony.

JUNE

The office added the videorecording of the <u>USASOC</u> <u>Activation Ceremony</u> from 1 December 1989 to the ARSOF History website. The ceremony also included the promotion of its first commander, Gary E. Luck, from Major General to Lieutenant General. We also added five book-length historical publications produced by USASOC Historians in the 1990s, to the website, all of which are available for download at https://arsof-history.org/downloads.html.

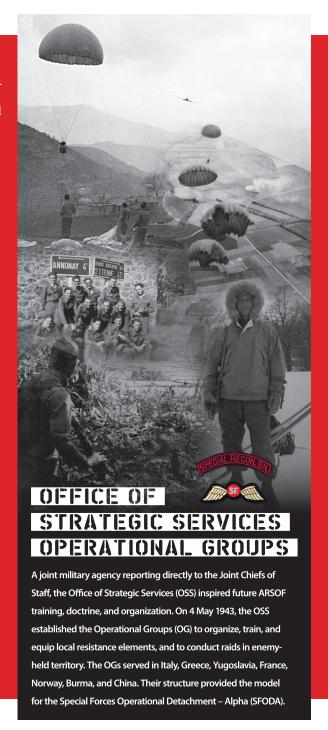
June social media offerings recognized the 80th anniversary of the OSS Maritime Unit activation, the 40th anniversary of the Special Forces Tab authorization, and 35th anniversary of the first Special Forces Assessment and Selection class.

JULY

The History Office's investment in developing an in-house video production and editing capability paid off in early July with the publication of the office's first original video production, entitled "History of U.S. Army Special Operations Forces." The culmination of a year-long effort, the video amassed over 10,000 views within four months of its release. The Command Group also ensured that the video was incorporated into USASOC's onboarding program.

The Command Historian traveled with the office's videographer to Grand Rapids, Michigan, to interview Mr. Ellsworth Johnson, the last surviving veteran of the OSS Operational Groups. The Command Historian then submitted paperwork to the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School to get approval to award Mr. Ellsworth with the Special Forces tab. This paved the way for MG Patrick Roberson

The 80th anniversary of the Office of Strategic Services' Operational Groups creation was one the ARSOF milestones the History Office commemorated in 2023.



(Deputy Commanding General, USASOC) and BG Lawrence G. Ferguson (Commanding General, 1st Special Forces Command) to present Mr. Johnson with a Special Forces Tab and Green Beret on 1 September 2023, only weeks before he passed away at the age of 100. The recording of Mr. Johnson's interview and other images will soon be available on ARSOF-History.org.

The office commemorated the <u>70th Anniversary of Korean Armistice</u> with an article, social media post, and the redistribution of over 500 copies each of two Korean War-focused *Veritas* issues on Fort Liberty, NC. More information on ARSOF in the Korean War can be found at https://arsof-history.org/arsof in korea/index.html.

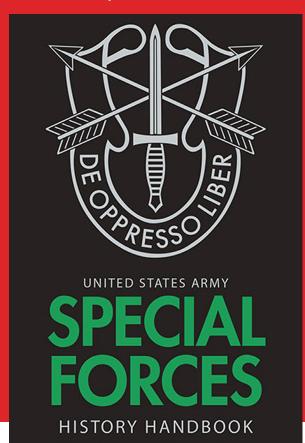
Major General Patrick B. Roberson, USASOC Deputy Commanding General (far right), and Brigadier General Lawrence G. Ferguson, 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) Commanding General (second from right), presented Mr. Ellsworth Johnson (second from left), with a Special Forces Tab and Green Beret in early September 2023.



AUGUST

The History Office continued to add to its branch/ unit history handbook series with the publication of the Special Forces History Handbook in August. This 90-page reference booklet includes a concise narrative overview of Special Forces history, a timeline of significant events, and information on Special Forces lineage, insignia, organization, and Medal of Honor recipients. Upon publication, it became the fifth entry into the handbook series, alongside those for Psychological Operations, Civil Affairs, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, and the 528th Sustainment Brigade.

The office also published a memorial tribute



to General James J. Lindsay, a U.S. Army Special Forces soldier and decorated Vietnam War veteran. As the first commander of USSOCOM from 1987-1990, GEN Lindsay successfully advocated for the activation of USASOC and endeavored to ensure ARSOF would remain relevant following the end of the Cold War. In retirement, he played an instrumental role in the establishment of the Airborne and Special Operations Museum in downtown Fayetteville, North Carolina.

In an effort to shine a light on Psychological Warfare activities in a lesser-known theater of World War II, the office added "Leaflets from the Southwest Pacific Area: The COL J. Woodall Greene Collection" to the ARSOF History website. Additionally, August social media featured posts on the 80th anniversary of the Committee to Protect Historical Treasures (the "Monuments Men") and the 30th anniversary of the arrival of Task Force Ranger in Somalia.

SEPTEMBER

The office published an article on MG Eldon Bargewell, an SF and Ranger veteran, focusing on the dedication of a park in his honor in May 2023. Read more about this in this issue or at https://arsof-history.org/articles/23aug mg eldon bargewell page 1.html. We also added a landing page featuring information on 1st Special Operations Command (1st SOCOM), in support of a Command Group initiative. September social media recognized the 70th anniversary of the 77th SFG activation in 1953. The 77th became the 7th SFG in 1960.

OCTOBER

The office published articles related to two ARSOF milestones: 30th Anniversary of the Battle of Mogadishu, Somalia, focusing on <u>USASOC support</u>

to the making of the film Black Hawk Down, and the formal activation of 1st SOCOM, the functional predecessor to USASOC. Both articles are included in this issue of *Veritas* and both topics were featured in October social media posts. Additional social media posts highlighted the 80th anniversary of the establishment of the 5307th Composite Unit ("Merrill's Marauders") and the 40th anniversary of Operation URGENT FURY in Grenada.

NOVEMBER

22 November 2023 marked the 60th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's assassination. A vocal supporter of ARSOF, and Special Forces, in particular, endorsing the wear of the green beret and advocating for wider employment of SF. To commemorate the anniversary, the office produced an article highlighting the role Special Forces soldiers played in President Kennedy's funeral.

November social media touted the Psychological Operations Regiment's 25th birthday and the 80th anniversary of the establishment of the Alamo Scouts Training Center in 1943. We also created and published a historically themed Veteran's Day video for social media.

DECEMBER

The office published several social media posts highlighting key anniversaries for the USASOC, 3rd SFG, the First Special Service Force, the World War II Mobile Radio Broadcast Companies, and the 528th Sustainment Brigade. We also focused on completing this publication, the second annual year-end roundup issue of *Veritas*.

By year's end, ARSOF-History.org had reached several milestones, reflecting the office's commitment to continually enhancing and diversifying its online offerings. The site welcomed 339,595 users in 2023, who accounted for a total of 1,375,559 page views.