

BUILDING GENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS



The Commander of 3rd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group, Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Jason A. Clarke, presents a case containing memorabilia to retired Royal Thai Army Colonel (COL) Sri Tesana, at the Royal Thai Special Warfare Command, Lopburi, Thailand, on 4 May 2017. The case contains a graduation certificate and photo of Special Forces Officer Course 2-60, and a Yarbrough Knife and Scabbard, available only to graduates of the SF Qualification Course. From left to right: LTC Clarke, COL (Ret.) Tesana, LTG Sirichai Tesana.

In March 2017, while preparing for the visit of Lieutenant General (LTG) Sirichai Tesana, Commanding General of the Royal Thai Special Warfare Command in Lopburi, Thailand, staff members discovered that the general's father had graduated from the U.S. Army Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC) almost sixty years earlier. On notification of the visit, the USASOC History Office conducted some research into that class and located others who had gone through the course with then-First Lieutenant Sri Tesana. It became apparent that the class was a special one as a number of its students went on to exert great influence in SOF circles for years to come. One fellow graduate, Colonel (COL) (Retired) Jerry M. King, provided the Office with his personal class photo and shared stories of the course and its attendees.¹ That information was used to create a packet to give to LTG Tesana that commemorated his father's SFQC experience.

The History Office created a high-resolution photo of LTG Tesana's father's SF 'Q' Course photo and a reproduction

graduation certificate. The photo and certificate were presented to the general during his visit, adding a deeply appreciated personal touch to the occasion. In addition, Dr. Jared M. Tracy from the History Office provided a brief on the Memorial Plaza. The visit was a big success.

Separately, the leadership of the 3rd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group was also keen to show its appreciation for COL Tesana's shared service and the close relationship between their unit and Thai Special Forces. They put together a display case and acquired a Yarbrough Knife for presentation to retired COL Tesana recognizing the more than sixty years of brotherhood with Thai Special Forces. That generational bond was symbolized by COL Tesana's attendance of SFQC early in his career, his son's command, and continues an SF tradition. Over those years, thousands of American and Thai Special Forces soldiers have worked side-by-side in the field and shared skills and experiences.



46th SF Company and the Royal Thai Army

U.S. Army Special Forces has a long history of close relations with the Royal Thai Army (RTA), and in particular, with the RTA Special Forces. These two elite military organizations share more than a half century of close and continuous training, education, and operations. Although TDY Military Training Teams (MTTs) and deployments for training (DFTs) to Thailand occurred as early as the late 1950s, a milestone in this relationship took place on 15 April 1966 when the U.S. Continental Army Command (CONARC), the predecessor of today's Forces Command (FORSCOM) and Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), formed Company D, 1st Special Forces Group.¹

CONARC established Company D to provide a permanent SF presence in Thailand to train RTA units in counterinsurgency tactics and procedures. After a few months of mission preparation at Fort Bragg, NC, the majority of the 369-man company boarded C-141 aircraft and arrived in Thailand on 15 October 1966. By November, detachments had been dispersed to select RTA units throughout the country to teach five-week courses in basic counterinsurgency techniques. The program was very effective. Less than five days after one of the initial Thai companies finished its training, that unit successfully defeated an insurgent element in the field.² In addition, on 9 January 1967 the company began training select RTA soldiers to cadre the first Special Forces Proficiency Course, the start of a long tradition with Thai SF soldiers.

On 10 April 1967, U.S. Army, Pacific (USARPAC) deactivated Company D and activated an independent 46th SF Special Forces Company under U.S. Military Assistance Command, Thailand.³ By

September 1967, soldiers of the 46th Company had trained over 7,000 RTA soldiers. In addition, the 46th Company prepared the first RTA contingent for service in Vietnam (Task Force SLICK).⁴

Training continued unabated for the next seven years. However, as part of the theater-wide Southeast Asia troop drawdown associated with Vietnamization, USARPAC inactivated the 46th SF Company on 31 March 1972. Concurrently, 46th Company personnel and equipment were assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group.⁵ The circle was complete: what began as a 1st SFG element in 1967 officially returned to the Group.⁶

Although it did not maintain a permanent presence in the Kingdom, RTA and American Special Forces soldiers continued their close relationship through MTTs and DFTs. By working side-by-side with the RTA, old friendships are preserved and new ones begun. The groundwork of mutual respect and cooperation established by the 46th SF Company a half century ago continues to flourish.

Endnotes

- 1 77th Special Forces Group, "Subject: TDY Orders," 18 May 1954, copy in Stephen Sherman, Editor, "46th Special Forces Company, Thailand" (Undated CD/ROM: Radix Press); U.S. Continental Army Command (CONARC), General Orders, Number 34, 15 April 1966.
- 2 See Stephen Sherman, Ed., "46th Special Forces Company, Thailand" (Undated CD/ROM: Radix Press); and n.a., "Beginnings of the 46th Special Forces Company in Thailand," *Special Forces: The First Fifty Years* (Faircourt, LLC: Special Forces Association, 2002), 154-61.
- 3 U.S. Army Pacific Command (USARPAC), General Orders, Number 67, 10 April 1967.
- 4 N.a., "Beginnings of the 46th Special Forces Company in Thailand," 158-61.
- 5 Department of the Army message 212154Z March 1972; USARPAC General Orders, Number 193, 27 March 1972; USARPAC General Orders, Number 212, 4 April 1972.
- 6 Document, Larry J. Redmon, "Lineage and Honors, Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), undated, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC; Interview, COL Larry J. Redmon by Dr. Michael E. Krivdo, 10 July 2017, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.



46th SF Company soldiers conduct medical training with Royal Thai Army.



Combined parachute jump during the 36th consecutive Operation COBRA GOLD. COL Guillaume Beurpere (1st SFG CO) is flanked by COL Janma (L), CO of RTA 5th SF Regt), and LTC Puwadoen (CO, 1/5 SF Bn).

A UNIQUE SPECIAL FORCES CLASS 33-G-F3, 2-60



This class photo was taken at a time in Special Forces training history when officer and enlisted trained separately. Despite this practice, the prevailing attitude was “you must be at least a three time volunteer to be a good Special Forces soldier: volunteer for the Army, volunteer for airborne, and volunteer for Special Forces.”² Much

to the dismay of many Regular Army commanders, Special Regulation (SR) 600-160-10, “Personnel, Volunteers for Special Forces Units,” published on 25 April 1952, prompted many of their best soldiers to volunteer for Special Forces training and duty. After graduation, these SF soldiers deployed overseas to assist U.S. allies. Those countries reciprocated by sending their



1LT JERRY N.
KING



CPT JAMIE R.
HENDRIX



COLOR SGT
R. H. COPELAND
22 SAS



CPT RAYMOND L.
CALL



CPT JAMES W.
JONES



CPT GEORGE E.
CARR



1LT SRI TESANA



MSG RICHARD J.
MEADOWS



CPT ELMER E.
MONGER

OFFICERS COURSE ♣

19 JANUARY — 1 MARCH 1960



best and brightest officers to the Special Forces course at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Among those who attended was then-First Lieutenant (1LT) Sri Tesana who retired as a Colonel in the Royal Thai Army.

Noteworthy in this commissioned officer class were two non-commissioned officers (NCOs). They were Master Sergeant (MSG) Richard J. 'Dick' Meadows (77th Special Forces Group) and British Color Sergeant (C/Sgt) R. H. Copeman (22 SAS). MSG Meadows, like several of his officer classmates, would spend the majority of his career in Special Forces. After graduation in March 1960, MSG Meadows was an exchange NCO with the 22 SAS, one of the first SF soldiers to do so. When he completed his SAS training, Meadows became a troop leader for a year. In 1967, while serving as a Reconnaissance Team Leader (RT Ohio) in the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) Studies and Observations Group (SOG), MSG Meadows was awarded a direct commission to captain. In 1970, CPT Meadows participated in the Son Tay prison raid into North Vietnam, attempting to rescue American prisoners of war. Later, he helped form and train soldiers for the 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment -Delta (1st SFOD-D). In addition, after retiring as a major, Meadows had a key role in the Iran rescue mission (Operation EAGLE CLAW) in 1980.³ MAJ 'Dick' Meadows is a true Army Special Operations icon.

The class also had several officers who went on to distinguished careers in Special Forces before SF became a separate branch. 1LT Jerry M. King, served as the Detachment Commander for FTT-26 in Muong Falane, Laos, in 1961-1962 as part of Operation WHITE STAR. In 1964, while deployed to Vietnam with his SF detachment, CPT King and his men

helped to quell the Montagnard Rebellion, a major event in the Vietnam War. Much later in his career, COL King was the J-3 and acting Chief of Staff for the planning of Operation EAGLE CLAW led by Major General James B. Vaught. This was the attempted rescue of American hostages in Iran.⁴

Five other officers in this class, assigned to the 77th SFG after graduation, influenced Special Forces. Captains (CPT) Elmer E. Monger, Jamie R. Hendrix, Raymond L. Call, James W. Jones, and George E. Carr were selected for the first mobile training team (MTT) sent to South Vietnam in late 1960 to organize and train Vietnamese Army Ranger units. The success of that MTT set a pattern for employing later SF officers and NCOs as trainer/advisors to the growing Army of the Republic of South Vietnam (ARVN).⁵ Several of these officers served multiple tours in Vietnam and commanded Special Forces companies during the rapid expansion of SF in the mid-1960s. Most returned to Fort Bragg to teach another generation of SF soldiers slated to serve in Vietnam. ♣

Endnotes

- 1 USASOC Protocol Office memo, "Official Military and Social Function," 241605MAR17, copy in USASOC History Support Center, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 2 LTC (Ret) Ian D.W. Sutherland, 1952/1982 *SPECIAL FORCES of the United States Army* (San Jose, CA: R. James Bender Publishing, 1990), 120.
- 3 Alan Hoe, *The Quiet Professional: Major Richard J. Meadows of the U.S. Army Special Forces* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2011), *passim*.
- 4 Distinguished Member of the Special Forces Regiment, Colonel Jerry M. King, 20 September 2012, on Internet at: www.soc.mil/SWCS/RegimentalHonors/pdf/sf_king_jerry.pdf, accessed on 4 April 2017; Steve Sherman, comp., *Who's Who from HOTFOOT/WHITE STAR* (Houston, TX: Radix Press,), 35
- 5 Eugene G. Piasecki, "The 77th SFG Mission to South Vietnam," *Veritas*, 5:3 (2009), 46-58.