



JOURNAL OF U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS HISTORY

VERITAS

2023 ROUNDUP

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMAND HISTORIAN



With 2023 in the rear-view mirror, the USASOC History Office now reflects on a tremendously busy year supporting the command and honoring ARSOF soldiers. This office was USASOC's representative in the Army effort to rename Fort Bragg to Fort Liberty. As part of the renaming, the office helped redesignate roads on Fort Liberty that had been previously memorialized for select Confederate soldiers. This allowed USASOC to recognize the excellence of ARSOF soldiers by dedicating roads for Special Forces Medal of Honor recipients Master Sergeant Roy P. Benavidez and Staff Sergeant Robert J. Miller, Generals Peter J. Schoomaker and Carl W. Stiner, and Major General Sidney Shachnow. Elsewhere, the office helped celebrate the life of Major General Eldon A. Bargewell by supporting a ceremony in Washington in which a statue and park were dedicated in his memory.

In another initiative, the office learned that Mr. Ellsworth Johnson, the last remaining veteran of the World War II Office of Strategic Services Operational Groups, was turning 100. Two staff members drove to his residence in Michigan to interview him and, once returned, started the process of retroactively awarding him the Special Forces tab. On 1 September, the USASOC Deputy Commanding General, Major General Patrick B. Roberson, and 1st Special Forces Command Commanding General, Brigadier General Lawrence G. Ferguson, presented Johnson with the Special Forces tab and the Green Beret. This exemplified our commitment to honor ARSOF history and veterans.

We also commemorated numerous anniversaries in 2023, as this issue of *Veritas* attests. You, the reader, can see some of the products the History Office created to support these occasions. Events such as the 60th anniversary of Special Forces support to President John F. Kennedy's funeral, the

40th anniversary of the creation of the 1st Special Operations Command, the 30th anniversary of the Battle of Mogadishu, and the 20th anniversary of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM did not pass unnoticed. In 2024, the History Office looks forward to celebrating more historical milestones, including the 80th anniversaries of numerous World War II events. We plan to publish more educational and inspirational products that help bring these events to life and honor our rich heritage.

Finally, 2023 was significant for our Unit Historical Officer (UHO) program, which allowed the office to have by-name points of contact in and increased engagement with fifty-three ARSOF units. Individual UHOs conducted interviews, wrote Annual Command History submissions, and leveraged the USASOC History office for assistance with requests for information. We look forward to continuing to provide the same high level of support to the ARSOF Enterprise in 2024.

Sine Pari



STAFF

USASOC HISTORY OFFICE

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All USASOC History Office efforts, to include publication of *Veritas*, are a team effort. They would not be possible without participation and support from our graphic and web designers, archivists, video production experts, and digitization specialists.

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<https://arsof-history.org>

Answers to frequently asked questions can be located at:
<https://arsof-history.org/about.html>



Fort Bragg was officially renamed Fort Liberty on 2 June 2023. Fort Bragg is used in this magazine to provide historical context.

GENERAL INFORMATION

ABOUT THE USASOC HISTORY OFFICE:

MISSION STATEMENT

Preserve the institutional memory and organizational history of ARSOF; inform ARSOF leaders and soldiers, the Army, the DoD, and the nation on ARSOF legacy; and inspire ARSOF soldiers past, present, and future by connecting them with their rich heritage.

PRIORITIES

1. Execute a historical program in accordance with Commanding General, USASOC priorities and guidance.
2. Perform regulatory functions of a U.S. Army command history office, including production of the annual command history and execution of an oral history program.
3. Preserve the institutional knowledge of the command by collecting and safeguarding ARSOF historical assets.
4. Publish print and web-based historical products conveying ARSOF history and legacy.
5. Provide historical support to commanders and units across the ARSOF enterprise.

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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The USASOC History Office in 2023



A NORMANDY SURPRISE

By Troy J. Sacquety, PhD

The USASOC Command Team poses outside the Manoir de l'Ormel during their visit to Normandy. Lieutenant General Jonathan P. Braga is immediately under the U.S. flag. His wife, Melanie, and Command Sergeant Major Joann Naumann are on his right, and Command Chief Warrant Officer Robert A. Davis to his left.



LEFT: The USASOC Command Team at the 6 June 2023 ceremony at the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial, in Colleville-sur-Mer, France, honoring the 79th Anniversary of D-Day. There are 9,388 American service members buried on the grounds. **RIGHT:** LTG Braga speaks at the French Resistance Monument, honoring the resistance and special operations soldiers of the inter-allied Jedburgh teams that participated in the liberation of France. It is in Sainte-Marie-du-Mont.

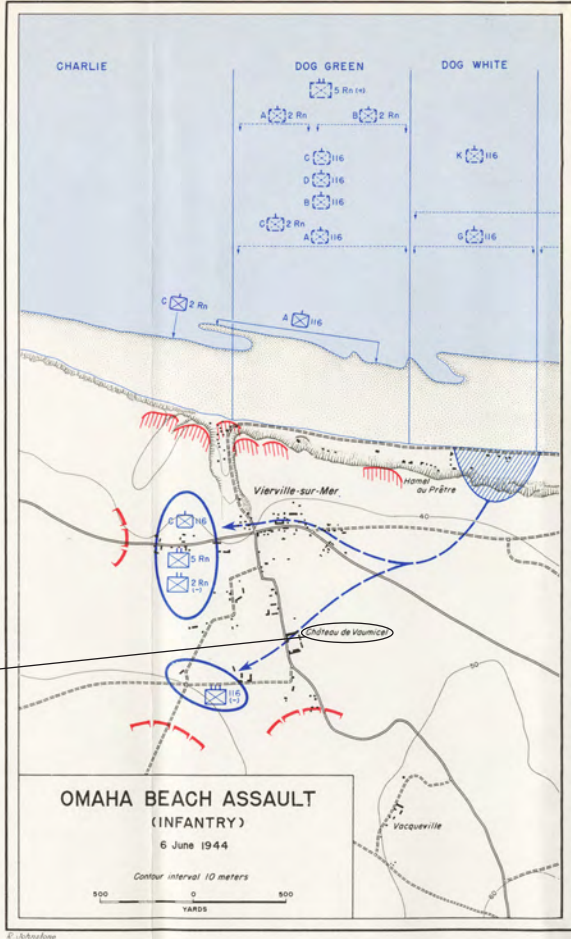
In June 2023, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) leadership visited Normandy to participate in the commemoration of the 79th anniversary of D-Day, the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied France. Because of the size of the party and the lack of hotels in the region, it was more economical to secure a house for lodging. The Manoir de l'Ormel was central to all the events and speaking engagements that the Command Group planned to attend. Unbeknownst when reserved, it also had a place in Army Special Operations history. This one house's story helps illuminate the Rangers' shared history with the Virginia Army National Guard's 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 29th Infantry Division. To

learn that story, one must turn back time to World War II.

France fell to Nazi Germany in 1940. As the war went on, the Allies knew they had to get back into northern Europe to defeat Germany but there were no good options, as the Allies had learned in the failed Dieppe raid on 19 August 1942. The Nazis had spent years building coastal defenses from the French border with Spain to the northern tip of Norway. Dubbed the "Atlantic Wall," this system of reinforced bunkers, fighting positions, and defensive obstacles presented an incredible planning challenge to the Allies. All potential landing areas were defended by emplaced artillery and machine gun positions, manned in some cases by veteran

troops. Such was the case with OMAHA Beach, one of the two landing beaches assigned to U.S. forces for the planned invasion of Normandy.

OMAHA was the code-name given to a beach landing zone almost five miles wide. A successful landing there would link U.S. forces landing to the west, at UTAH, and British forces to the East, at GOLD. However, the beach itself was an obstacle. At low tide, when the Allies intended to land, it had a large sandy area, filled with emplaced antitank and antipersonnel obstacles, that was approximately 300 yards deep. This ended with a shelf of rocks, approximately eight feet high, backed by a seawall. Then, another 200 or so yards of open terrain ended in steep bluffs, up to 150



Manoir de l'Ormel

feet in height, and protected with rows of barbed wire. U.S. forces would have to cross this stretch of beach while facing direct fire from German machine guns in fortified positions.

To break the German defenses, the U.S. developed a staged plan. First, Allied ships would pour naval gunfire onto the landing area with a short but intense barrage. Then, aircraft would bomb the beaches and bluffs to incapacitate the remaining defenders and blow holes through the obstacles. Following the bombings, M-4 Sherman tanks specially modified for amphibious operations would 'swim' to shore. Five minutes after the tanks hit the beach, troops would land in the first of multiple waves. However, on D-Day, 6 June 1944, things did not go as planned. The seas proved so rough that many of the tanks either sank soon after launch or had to be brought to shore by landing craft. There, they were sitting ducks and had to wait for the infantry to land.

OMAHA was broken into eight separate code-named sectors. Farthest to the west was CHARLIE, DOG GREEN, then DOG WHITE. Company A, 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry Division, landed first at DOG GREEN. Those unlucky soldiers walked into a hell storm. Packed into six British Landing Craft Assault (LCA), the soldiers of Company A made their way to shore. At 1,000 yards out, the first boat went down, leaving five boats to drop their ramps on the beach at approximately 0630 hours, designated as H hour. The Germans rained machine gun fire onto the beach as the men piled out into waist deep or higher water. Soldiers, many wounded, jumped into the water to escape the gunfire. Many drowned as they were carried to the bottom by the weight of all the equipment they carried. The survivors vainly



29th Infantry Division SSI



116th Infantry Regiment DUI



TOP: Map of CHARLIE, DOG GREEN, and DOG WHITE sectors of OMAHA Beach. It shows the planned landing sequence, which changed after the initial wave. **BOTTOM:** This photo, taken from the top of the bluffs off CHARLIE sector of OMAHA beach shows the open expanse that the invasion troops had to cross while under heavy fire.

LEFT: The USASOC Command Team follows the path of Company C, 2nd Rangers up the cliffs at OMAHA beach. In the background to the right is the steeple of the Eglise Saint Andre, which gives a good visual marker for the location of the nearby Manoir de l'Ormel.

RIGHT: The Germans sited fortified machine gun and artillery bunkers to fire down the beach while being hidden from the shore. This is the view from inside the bunker eliminated by Company C, 2nd Rangers.



struggled to conceal themselves in the water or behind beach obstacles, where they were slowly picked off. Within fifteen minutes, Company A was no longer a fighting force and few soldiers from Company A survived the day unscathed.¹

The sixty-five men of Company C, 2nd Ranger Battalion landed on CHARLIE just fifteen minutes later. Seeing the chaos on DOG GREEN, they did not hesitate at the water's edge, but rushed to the base of the cliffs. About half managed to cross the beach, where they huddled against the cliff face. After a brief pause, the Rangers began to climb the steep cliffs. Once at the top, the Rangers started eliminating German fighting positions. This helped alleviate the enemy fire being placed on succeeding waves of American troops.²

Back at DOG GREEN, Company B, 116th Infantry, followed Company A and landed at 0700 hours. However, its boats were widely scattered. Two boats landed their troops at the same sector as Company A. Those soldiers met with the same stiff opposition. The other LCAs landed their troops to the far left and



Ranger SSI, which was worn by both the 2nd and 5th Ranger Bns on D-Day.



The USASOC Command Team poses with 2nd Ranger Bn reenactors on the morning of 6 June 2023. The photo shows a German machine gun bunker halfway up the cliff, which, although eliminated by Company C, 2nd Ranger Battalion, had already caused immense devastation to Company A, 116th Infantry Regiment on DOG GREEN.



2LT Walter P. Taylor, 116th Infantry

right of DOG GREEN. The soldiers that landed to the right joined the Rangers of Company C and fought with them for the rest of the day. Four boats veered to the left. One, whose troops were led by Second Lieutenant (2LT) Walter P. Taylor, landed near Hamel-au-Prêtre, where the beach was relatively clear. Taylor led his twenty men over the seawall, losing four killed. The group infiltrated through a gap in the barbed wire and, joined by other survivors from Company B, made their way into Vierville-sur-Mer. The twenty-eight-man force headed to their rallying point at the Manoir de l'Ormel.³

Following Company B, 116th Infantry, came Companies A and B, 2nd Ranger Battalion, and the entire 5th Ranger Battalion. These two companies of the 2nd Rangers landed at the ill-fated DOG GREEN and went into the same maelstrom as the prior units. Seeing this, the combat-hardened commander of the 5th Rangers, Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Max F. Schneider, ordered the coxswains of the boats carrying the 5th Rangers to land instead to the left at DOG WHITE, where the enemy fire was much lighter.⁴ The 5th Rangers landed at 0715 hours, and made it mostly intact as a unit to the seawall.⁵

It was there, while huddled with troops from the 116th Infantry, that Brigadier General Norman D. Cota, Assistant Division Commander, 29th Infantry Division, ordered the 5th Rangers to get over the seawall and lead the way.⁶ Therefore, “at a signal from the Battalion Commander [LTC Schneider], the leading echelon scrambled over the wall, blew gaps in the protective wire, and protected from enemy observation by the curtain of rising smoke advanced unhesitatingly to a point near the top of the hill.”⁷ After taking out defensive positions at the top, the way was now cleared for troops at DOG WHITE to get off the beach.

The Ranger's pre-invasion directive was to get ashore and then head west to assist Companies D, E, and F, 2nd Rangers, which, under the leadership of LTC James E. Rudder, had seized the German strongpoint at Pointe Du Hoc. With this prior directive, First Lieutenant (1LT) Charles “Ace” Parker, commanding Company A, 5th Rangers, immediately went inland through the smoke to the rallying point, also the Manoir de l'Ormel. However, once past the beach, LTC Schneider paused to consolidate the rest of his men. Unlike 1LT Parker's Company, they encountered stiff opposition and moved into Vierville. There, COL Charles D. W. Canham, the 116th Infantry commander, pressed the Rangers into helping secure and then defend the town. 1LT Parker



1LT Charles A. Parker, 2nd Rangers

and his Rangers were on their own.⁸

While this was happening, 2LT Taylor and his men were making their way overland to the Manoir. Just as the Rangers were experiencing, they encountered the first of the Normandy bocage. These thick hedgerows between small farming fields hid enemy movement and were ideal defensive positions from which the Germans could engage. In addition, because the Germans used smokeless powder, it was extremely difficult to discern their firing locations. This slowed the advance as 2LT Taylor's group cautiously followed the coastal road into Vierville-sur-Mer.



TOP: According to their after action report, 2LT Taylor's group followed this road to the Manoir de l'Ormel. The Manoir is to the left.

BOTTOM: As they approached the Manoir de l'Ormel, 2LT Taylor's group took fire, losing three wounded. The enemy fire may have come from this grouping of trees, located just on the beach side of the Manoir. In the distance is a drainage ditch, much like 1LT Parker's Rangers had to crawl through to reach the Manoir.

As 2LT Taylor's group neared their rally point, they took enemy fire from the field to the left of the Manoir, suffering three wounded. The U.S. soldiers worked their way along the hedgerow, and then countered with small arms fire and grenades. One of the grenades exploded in an enemy foxhole. A German soldier "screamed at top voice and that ended the skirmish. The other fourteen surrendered."⁹ 2LT Taylor detailed one of his few men to escort the prisoners back to the beach.

The rest secured the Manoir de l'Ormel, where they captured a German doctor and his aid man. According to the 116th's after-action report, "Taylor put them on a kind of parole and left his three wounded in their charge."¹⁰ Seeing no other U.S. troops in the area, the Company B soldiers pressed further south to the crossroads just past the Manoir. As they moved forward, three truckloads of German soldiers deployed. The much larger enemy force engaged 2LT Taylor's force, placing them in danger of envelopment.

Things went from bad to worse when another three soldiers were wounded, one killed, and the squad Browning Automatic Weapon (BAR) lost.¹¹ This is where 2LT Taylor's unique background came of use. In 1936, he had been an exchange student in Germany and attended the Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten [National Political Institutes of Education] at Plön.¹² The school, like others in the system, was heavily militarized and designed to indoctrinate and produce future Nazi leaders. On D-Day, this experience had served Taylor well as, according to his son, he was able to call out to the Germans in their own tongue to be soldierly and let him retrieve his wounded man. Perhaps startled by fluent German coming from a U.S. soldier—as were 2LT Taylor's men—the enemy complied.¹³ Their wounded secured, the small U.S. force retreated to the Manoir. Constructed of thick stone walls, with periodic view slots in the wall itself, it was an



TOP: Once 2LT Taylor and his men secured the Manoir de l'Ormel, they pressed on to the crossroads just past the building complex.

BOTTOM: While at the crossroads, three truckloads of German troops came down the road to the left, dismounted, and engaged the Americans. On both sides of the road one can see the thick hedges which made offensive operations in Normandy so difficult.



LEFT: Before the War, 2LT Taylor, pictured here in school uniform, had been an exchange student at a Nazi-indoctrinated German high school. His German language ability came of use when he used it to help save a soldier that was wounded and exposed outside the walls of the Manoir de l'Ormel. **RIGHT:** Once they retreated back into the grounds of the Manoir, the U.S. troops were fortunate to have an excellent defensive position from which to drive off the superior numbers of attacking Germans. The thick stone walls had view slots which permitted the Americans to return small arms fire with little exposure to the superior firepower of the enemy.

ideal defensive position. Despite having lost their only automatic weapon, the much smaller force managed to hold off the enemy. Just when worries arose about running out of ammunition, help arrived in the form of 1LT Parker and 23 Rangers.

1LT Parker's men had made their way to the Chateau by following a drainage ditch in a farm field.¹⁴ They had been forced to crawl through the ditch because German fire had pinned them down, killing one and wounding another. After three and half hours of crawling to get past the German gunfire, the Rangers made it to the Manoir

De l'Ormel around noon. This was just in time to help 2LT Taylor and his Company B, 116th Infantry soldiers beat off the German attack.¹⁵

Once the enemy was driven off, each of the two elements reverted to their separate missions. When no other Rangers came to the rally point, 1LT Parker decided he had arrived late and had to catch up with the rest of the Ranger force. He and his small unit set out for Pointe Du Hoc. On the way they engaged several small groups of Germans, capturing about twenty. As they got closer to the Pointe, the Rangers encountered stronger enemy

forces. Because they could not infiltrate through these troops saddled with prisoners, 1LT Parker simply let them go. He said later, "I was not going to murder them. They had no guns."¹⁶ The Rangers decided to leave the roads and paths they had been following and went overland to get to the 2nd Rangers. As they were moving, a voice called out in English, "What's the password," to which 1LT Parker answered "Tallyho." A welcome sight to the beleaguered 2nd Rangers, Parker and his men were immediately assigned a sector in the small defensive perimeter around Pointe du Hoc. It was



The USASOC Command Group with a Ranger Captain at Pointe du Hoc, where Companies D, E, and F, 2nd Ranger Battalion scaled the cliff to prevent the Germans from using the artillery believed to be emplaced on the site against the Allied landings. This is where 1LT Taylor managed to arrive on the evening of 6 June 1944. His small Ranger force was the only element that landed on OMAHA beach to complete its pre-invasion objective.

then that they learned that, instead of being the last of the 5th Rangers to make it to Pointe du Hoc, Parker and his men were the first and only Rangers who landed on OMAHA Beach to complete their assigned objective.¹⁷

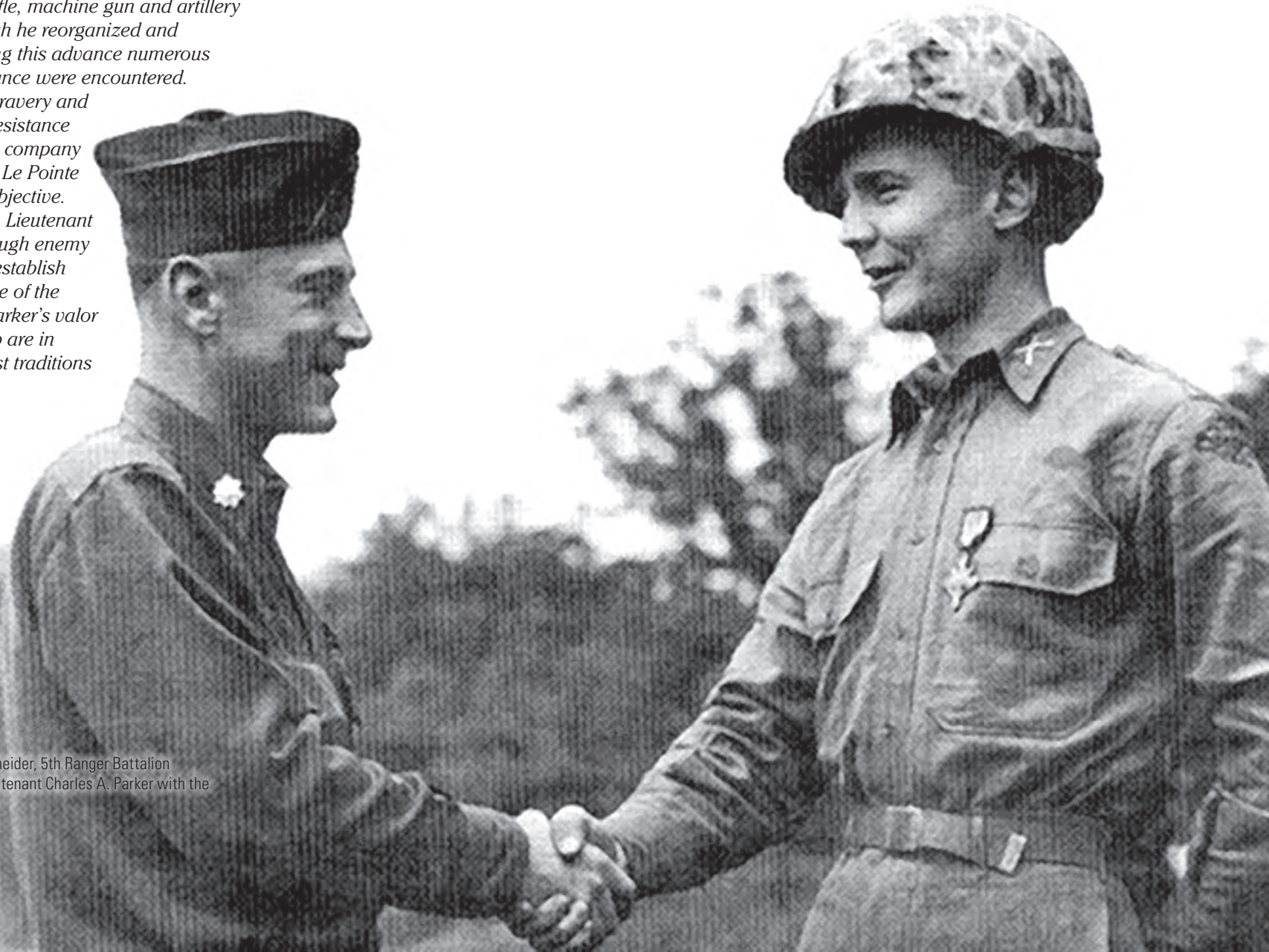
Meanwhile, 2LT Taylor led his force to the southwest, near Louvières. He had moved the furthest south of any troops to make it off the beach near Vierville-sur-Mer, when he received word to pull back into the town to help secure the perimeter.¹⁸ Ironically, he was with the combined 2nd/5th Ranger, 116th Infantry, and 743rd Tank Battalion force that relieved LTC Rudder and his Rangers, including 1LT Parker, on 8 June.

In conclusion, the Manoir de l'Ormel, originally selected as a convenient place to stay for the USASOC Command Group's visit on the 79th anniversary of D-Day, had a secret of its own. Seemingly just another stone mansion, it was in fact a pivotal location near OMAHA Beach where two groups of brave soldiers pressed the farthest inland of any unit that day and repelled a German counterattack. This story highlights the shared history of today's 75th Ranger Regiment with the Virginia Army National Guard's 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 29th Infantry Division. It also tells the amazing story of two young officers from two separate units, who both managed to achieve their D-Day objectives despite facing enormous challenges. For their actions on 6 June 1944 and the days that followed, these young officers also received the second highest award for valor, the Distinguished Service Cross. Their citations are as follows:

FIRST LIEUTENANT CHARLES H. PARKER

“For extraordinary heroism in action on 6th, 7th, and 8th of June, 1944 from Vierville-sur Mer to Le Pointe du Hoc, France. In the invasion of France, Lieutenant Parker led his company up the beach against heavy enemy rifle, machine gun and artillery fire. Once past the beach he reorganized and continued inland. During this advance numerous groups of enemy resistance were encountered. Through his personal bravery and sound leadership this resistance was overcome, and the company succeeded in capturing Le Pointe du Hoc, the Battalion objective. The following morning, Lieutenant Parker led a patrol through enemy territory in an effort to establish contact with the balance of the Battalion. Lieutenant Parker’s valor and superior leadership are in keeping with the highest traditions of the service.”¹⁹

Lieutenant Colonel Max F. Schneider, 5th Ranger Battalion commander, presents First Lieutenant Charles A. Parker with the Distinguished Service Cross.



SECOND LIEUTENANT WALTER P. TAYLOR

“For extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against the enemy. On 6 June 1944, Lieutenant Taylor landed with his boat section near Vierville-Sur Mer, France and led his men on to their initial objective through enemy machine-gun, artillery and mortar fire. After being joined by another section, Lieutenant Taylor and his group headed for the predetermined battalion rendezvous area. In this move one of his men was wounded. Disregarding his own personal safety and in the face of enemy fire, Lieutenant Taylor moved to aid the wounded man. In so doing his weapon was shot from his hand, but he courageously proceeded in his task and evacuated the wounded man to safety. During the following days, Lieutenant Taylor displayed inspiring leadership and outstanding courage as he skillfully led his men in numerous advances on enemy positions. At one time he led the spearhead of a battalion attack across a river and a heavily fortified enemy-held hill. On 13 June 1944, Lieutenant Taylor was wounded but his display of skillful, courageous leadership contributed immeasurably to the success of his unit and was the source of inspiration for his men. The extraordinary heroism and courageous actions of Lieutenant Taylor reflect great credit upon himself and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service.”²⁰

Thank you to Mr. Geoff Taylor, son of 2LT Walter P. Taylor, for providing items from his father’s estate. Thank you also to Mr. Ron Hudnell for providing copies of Parker’s and Raaen’s books. Mr. Hudnell is the driving force behind the effort to recognize the WWII Ranger Battalions with the Congressional Gold Medal. Finally, thanks to Mr. Al Barnes, Virginia Army National Guard Command Historian, and Mr. Joseph Balkoski, former Maryland National Guard Command Historian, for their assistance.



The original citation and Distinguished Service Cross presented to Walter P. Taylor.

ENDNOTES

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- 17 *Reflections of Courage*, 98-101.
- 18 War Diary, 4.
- 19 *Reflections of Courage*, 124-125. The original citation, with locations redacted, can be found in Headquarters, First United States Army, General Orders No. 28, 20 June 1944, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Liberty, NC.
- 20 Headquarters ninth United States Army, "General Orders Number 75: Award of the Distinguished Service Cross," 20 December 1944, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Liberty, NC.

USASOC Commander, Lieutenant General Jonathan P. Braga at the grave-site of Private Howard Bowens, 2nd Ranger Battalion, killed 6 June 1944 at Pointe du Hoc. USASOC honors and will never forget the ultimate sacrifice given by Army Special Operations soldiers.



“A FINAL MEMORIAL”

SPECIAL FORCES HONORS JFK

By Jared M. Tracy, PhD





President John F. Kennedy (JFK) was a staunch advocate of U.S. Army Special Warfare, as highlighted in previous articles about his 12 October 1961 [visit to Fort Bragg, North Carolina](#) (Fort Liberty since 2023) and his [remarks to the U.S. Military Academy's graduating class](#) on 6 June 1962. He viewed Special Forces (SF) in particular as being a critical component of his “flexible response” strategy to address the challenges of Communist-inspired “wars of national liberation.” In April 1962, the President famously described the green beret as “a symbol of excellence, a badge of courage, a mark of distinction on the fight for freedom.”¹ The name of JFK thenceforth became irrevocably linked with Special Forces.

President John F. Kennedy



(Image credit: John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum [JFKPLM])

LEFT: JFK speaks with Brigadier General William P. Yarborough, Commanding General, U.S. Army Special Warfare Center and School, during his visit to Fort Bragg, NC, in October 1961. **ABOVE:** JFK presents his remarks to the West Point Class of 1962, in which he specifically mentioned U.S. Army Special Forces.

Unfortunately, Kennedy's life was tragically cut short by his assassination in Dallas, Texas, on 22 November 1963. The President's widow, Jacqueline Kennedy, and brother, U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, insisted on an SF presence at his memorial services in the ensuing days. The 60th anniversary of Kennedy's death inspired this article detailing how SF soldiers honored their fallen commander-in-chief, initiating a longstanding tradition of memorialization. What follows is a daily recounting of events in late November 1963 as they unfolded. It will then summarize the many ways in which Army Special Forces have honored JFK in the decades since.



(Image credit: JFKPLM)

Friday, 22 November 1963

Having arrived at nearby Love Field in Dallas aboard Air Force One an hour earlier, the President and Texas Governor John Connally were shot while riding in an open limousine in Dealey Plaza at 1230 hours local time. Kennedy was driven immediately about four miles away to Parkland Memorial Hospital for lifesaving aid. While Connally would survive, Kennedy's wounds were too severe, and he was pronounced deceased at 1300 hours (the formal White House announcement being made about 35 minutes later). Shortly thereafter, CBS news anchor

Walter Cronkite famously became emotional as he informed the nation of JFK's passing.²

Kennedy's body was transported to Love Field and placed on Air Force One. Onboard, Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) took the oath of office from U.S. District Court Judge Sarah Hughes at 1438 hours. The plane soon began a roughly three-hour flight to the capital, arriving at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, around 1900 hours local. Kennedy was transported to Bethesda Naval Hospital, where an autopsy was conducted overnight.³

LEFT: JFK and the First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy, arrive at Love Field around 1130 hours, 22 November 1963. **BOTTOM LEFT:** With Texas Governor John Connally seated directly in front of him, President Kennedy smiles at an adoring crowd just minutes before his assassination in Dealey Plaza. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Police and onlookers outside of Parkland Memorial Hospital, shortly after the arrival of the mortally wounded JFK. He was pronounced deceased at 1300 hours local, with the nation getting the news about a half hour later.



(Image credit: Wikipedia [public domain])



(Image credit: JFKPLM)



TOP: JFK's casket is loaded onto Air Force One at Love Field, for transport back to the capital. **BOTTOM:** With a visibly shaken Jacqueline Kennedy at his side, Lyndon Baines Johnson assumed the oath of office onboard Air Force One at 1438 hours local, shortly before takeoff. **RIGHT:** JFK's casket arrives at the East Room of the White House in the early morning hours of Saturday, 23 November 1963.





Saturday, 23 November 1963

Around 0400 hours on Saturday, JFK's casket arrived at the White House and was greeted by a U.S. Marine Corps Honor Guard. A six-man joint casket team then transported it into the East Room. A private religious ceremony was held there at 1000 hours.⁴ An hour later, the U.S. Army Special Warfare Center and School (SWCS) at Fort Bragg received notification of Mrs. Kennedy's and Attorney General Kennedy's desire for an SF contingent in Washington. The Center scurried to publish and distribute temporary duty orders for 46 soldiers from 5th SF Group (SFG), 6th SFG, 7th SFG, and HQ, SWCS. The largest group (21) came from 7th SFG (mostly from Company C), followed by 5th SFG with fourteen, 6th SFG with eight, and HQ, SWCS with three. Ranks ranged from private first class (PFC) to colonel (COL), with the most represented rank (13) being sergeant first class (SFC). The head of the contingent was Deputy Commanding Officer, SWCS, Colonel (COL) William P. Grieves, accompanied by the SWCS Sergeant Major (SGM), Francis J. Ruddy.⁵

TOP LEFT: SWCS Deputy Commanding Officer, COL William P. Grieves, inspects soldiers from the SF contingent prior to their departure for the capital.

TOP RIGHT: SF soldiers board a military aircraft bound for the nation's capital, 23 November 1963. **BOTTOM:** Special Forces soldiers selected for the honor of participating in JFK's memorial activities, 23-25 November 1963.



Moving out on extremely short notice, the contingent left by air from Pope Air Force Base, arriving in Washington at around 1600 hours. Upon arrival, three SF soldiers immediately reported to the White House and stood by the casket in the East Room. For the remainder of the memorial activities, at least one SF soldier accompanied the slain President around the clock. According to a *Veritas* article at the time, “Because of the hurried manner in which they were rushed to the capital, the Special Forces soldiers had little time to practice and many of their actions were without rehearsal.”⁶ Their prompt and dedicated support were indicative of the adaptive spirit of Army Special Forces that had been so prized by the former President.

Immediately upon their arrival in DC at 1600 hours local on 23 November, three SF soldiers reported to the White House, where the deceased President lay in repose. One SF soldier can be seen in the background.



SF soldiers accompany the caisson during the two-mile procession from the White House to the Capital Building in the early afternoon of Sunday, 24 November.

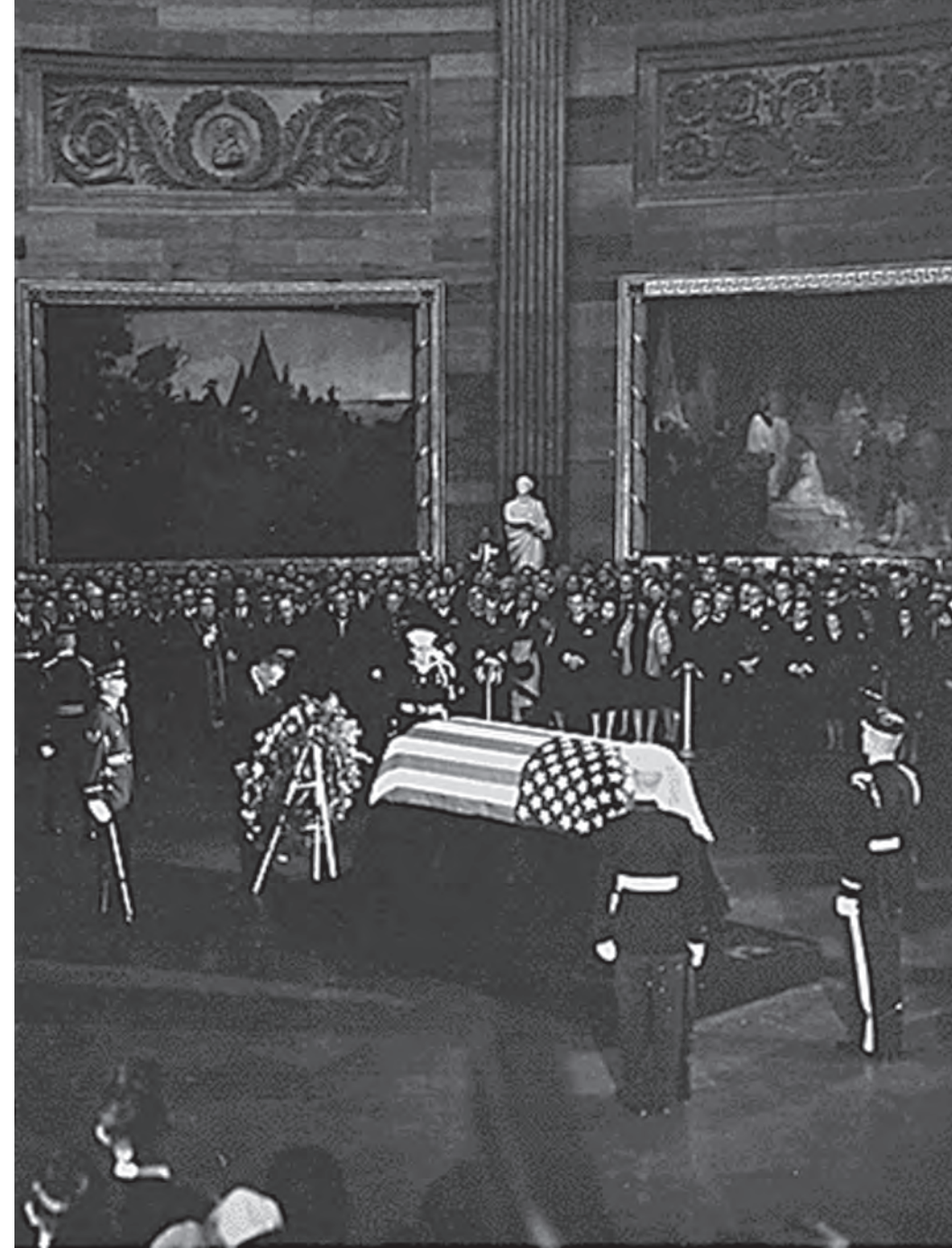
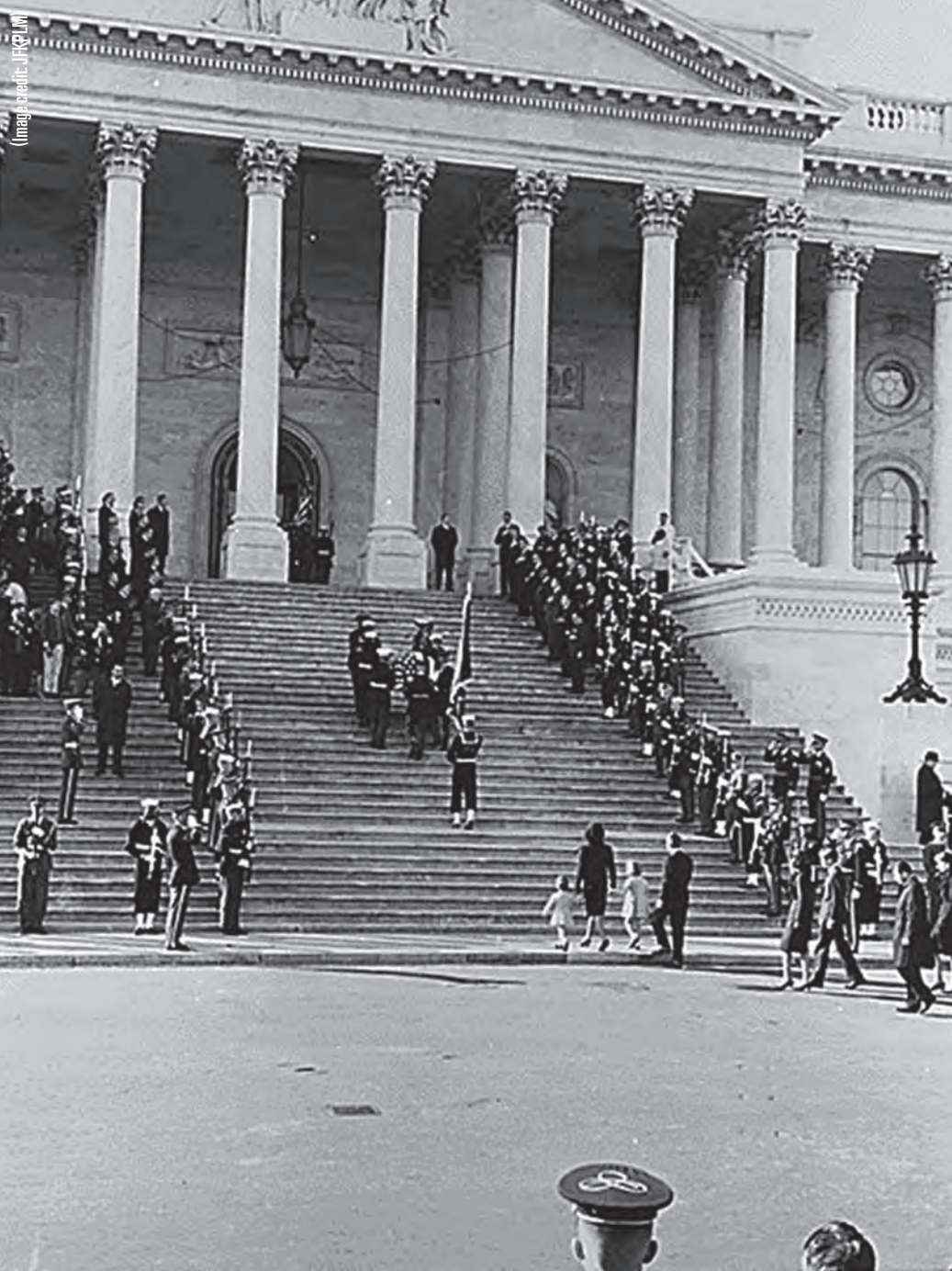
Sunday, 24 November 1963

At 1308 hours on Sunday, a caisson bearing the President’s coffin, drawn by six grey horses and followed by one riderless black horse, departed the White House for the U.S. Capitol. Special Forces soldiers were among those in the two-mile procession, with mourning crowds lining both sides of Pennsylvania Avenue. One of the four SF escorts, SFC Robert C. Rumrill, Company C, 7th SFG, later remarked, “It is the greatest honor I have ever had as an individual . . . There could be no greater honor, especially for the professional soldier, than to serve at such a time. I was very proud to be on [the SF escort detail].”⁷

Forty minutes later, the President’s casket had arrived at the Capitol and was placed in the Rotunda on a platform that had been constructed to hold President Abraham Lincoln’s casket nearly one hundred years prior. There, he would lay in state for the next 18 hours, to be visited by roughly a quarter million people, some of them waiting for

up to twelve hours. Master Sergeant (MSG) William E. Heintzleman, Company C, 7th SFG, “couldn’t believe that so many people would stay out all night in the cold without being compelled to pay their respects . . . It was very impressive.”⁸

At 2100 hours, MSG Thomas F. Gaffney, Company B, 7th SFG, arrived with and assumed command of the SF relief element in the Rotunda. During their watch, the former First Lady made an unexpected visit to the casket.⁹ “She came with Robert Kennedy,” Gaffney recalled, “approached the casket, crossed herself, knelt and kissed the coffin.”¹⁰ Staff Sergeant (SSG) William H. Fuller, Company D, 5th SFG, was one of the SF team members on duty in the Capitol, and recalled the presence of such notables as Chief Justice Earl Warren, Senate Majority Leader Michael J. Mansfield, and Speaker of the House John W. McCormack who, like the general public, were visibly grieved. Fuller noted how so many people “looked as though he (the President) was a personal friend; as though they had lost someone in the family.”¹¹



LEFT: JFK's casket arrives at the Capitol Building close to 1400 hours on 24 November. **RIGHT:** The deceased President lay in state in the Capitol Rotunda for 18 hours on 24-25 November 1963. Some 250,000 people would view the casket and pay their respects.



Monday, 25 November 1963

The 25th of November marked the culmination of memorialization activities for the fallen President. At 0900, the doors to the Capitol Rotunda were closed to the public. The caisson left Capitol Hill nearly two hours later at 1059 hours. Pausing briefly at the White House, the caisson and procession, among them marching SF soldiers, moved to St. Matthew's Cathedral at 1140 hours. At about a quarter after noon, the President's coffin entered St. Matthew's Cathedral for a religious service, which was attended by more than a thousand people representing nearly 100 countries.¹²

TOP: Dignitaries representing nearly 100 countries stand outside the White House, where the caisson made a brief stop en route from the Capitol Building to St. Matthew's Cathedral around noon on Monday, 25 November. **BOTTOM:** Drawn by six gray horses, the caisson moves from the White House to St. Matthew's Cathedral, 25 November.

TOP LEFT: The casket arrives at St. Matthew's Cathedral, shortly after noon on 25 November.

BOTTOM LEFT: A view of the interior of St. Matthew's Cathedral during the service for JFK, which was attended by more than a thousand people.

RIGHT: After the conclusion of the service at St. Matthew's Cathedral, the caisson is readied for the three-mile procession to Arlington National Cemetery.



At 1330 hours, the funeral procession began making the roughly three-mile trek to Arlington National Cemetery, with an estimated million people lining the route. Several SF soldiers noted the overwhelmingly somber mood of the occasion. According to Specialist 4th Class George M. Thompson, Company A, 6th SFG, "We had gone about halfway along the route . . . when suddenly I realized that all you could hear was the sound of the drums. Nobody was talking, just some people crying."¹³ One sergeant from 7th SFG recounted how some of his friends who had seen him in the procession on television had accused him of chewing gum. In reality, "I was having great difficulty keeping my face straight and restraining my emotions. A number of big, tough, airborne soldiers were having the same problem."¹⁴



(Image credit: JFKPLM)



(Image credit: JFKPLM)



LEFT: Special Forces line the path between the road and the gravesite at Arlington as JFK's casket passes by. Jacqueline and Robert Kennedy follow behind, towards the right side of the photo. **RIGHT:** Fifty USAF and U.S. Navy aircraft, followed by Air Force One, conducted a flyover shortly after the arrival of the casket at the gravesite.

Upon arrival of the procession at Arlington shortly before 1500 hours, the National Anthem was played, followed by a marching U.S. Air Force (USAF) bagpipe troupe. As they played, eight military pallbearers removed the casket from the caisson and made their way to the gravesite, with SF soldiers lining the pathway. According to Major James C. Hefti, Company A, 7th SFG, responsibility for this cordon would have normally fallen to a joint service detail, but Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara directed that it be solely SF soldiers. One of those along the walkway, SFC Robert G. Daniel, Company C, 7th SFG, recalled Prince Philip of the United Kingdom conducting impromptu inspections as he passed by the SF soldiers, "paying close attention to their medals and ribbons."¹⁵

At 1454 hours, just as the casket arrived at the gravesite, fifty fighter aircraft (thirty F-105



Thunderchiefs from the USAF 4th Tactical Fighter Wing and twenty Navy F-4B Phantoms), followed by Air Force One, conducted a flyover.¹⁶ The service continued as the casket team held the flag taut over the coffin. Among the dignitaries graveside were Kennedy's immediate family, President Johnson, French President Charles de Gaulle, Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie, and the West German President and Chancellor, Heinrich Lübke and Ludwig Erhard, respectively. SF soldiers maintained their bearing and composure during their solemn duties but passively observed the demeanor of those around them. SFC Daniel viewed Johnson as "well in command. He had a good bearing and showed great authority." He also noted that De Gaulle "demanded respect" just by his general appearance.¹⁷

Interspersed with the ensuing religious proceedings were a 21-gun salute and three rifle volleys. Taps was played at 1507 hours, followed by the folding of the flag. At 1515 hours, Jacqueline Kennedy, accompanied by Robert and Edward ("Ted") Kennedy, lit the eternal flame.¹⁸ The lighting of the eternal flame essentially concluded the graveside service, with the departure of the official party soon after. Following the services, with four SF soldiers standing guard, SWCS SGM Francis J. Ruddy placed a green beret, crest forward, at the foot of JFK's grave. In words that have since become

TOP: The graveside service takes place as the flag is held taut over JFK's casket. **BOTTOM LEFT:** The American flag is folded near the end of the graveside service. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The Green Beret placed on Kennedy's grave by SGM Ruddy, bearing the SWCS insignia and flash. It is now held by the JFK Presidential Library and Museum in Boston.





Ernest Hayward

Tragically, just less than two years after JFK's assassination, on 25 October 1965, the SF contingent would lose one of its own, then-MSG Ernest Hayward, who was killed in action while serving with 5th SFG in Minh Thanh, Republic of Vietnam. He would likewise be buried at Arlington National Cemetery, in Section 43, roughly a quarter mile from JFK's grave.²¹



(Image credit: U.S. Army)



(Image credit: USAF SWCS)

(Image credit: USAF SWCS)

TOP: This statue commemorating JFK's visit to Fort Bragg in October 1961 stands outside of Kennedy Hall, located on the campus of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

BOTTOM: A bust of JFK and the lectern that the President used during his 1961 visit to Fort Bragg are on permanent display in the lobby of Kennedy Hall.

immortalized, Ruddy explained, "He gave the beret to us and we considered it appropriate that it be given back to him. It was a final memorial from the Special Forces to the President."¹⁹ This beret is today held by the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston, Massachusetts.

By the end of Monday, 25 November 1963, the 46 members of the SF group were back at Fort Bragg. The team had felt a tremendous sense of pride in having been selected for the honor of participating in this solemn event. However, they likely agreed with the sentiments of SSG Ronald P. Morris, Company E, 7th SFG, who said, "I hope to God that it never happens again."²⁰ Thankfully, Morris's fears have not been realized, though an attempt was made against President Ronald Reagan's life seventeen years later on 30 March 1981.

Continuing to Honor JFK

The symbolic laying of the green beret at Kennedy's grave marked the end of the SF contingent's role in JFK's memorial activities but the beginning of SF's longstanding tradition of honoring their

late President. Within days of Kennedy's death, the Commanding General (CG), SWCS, Major General (MG) William P. Yarborough, read a note signed by Secretary McNamara which read, in part: "This world has lost a gallant spirit whose championship of freedom and opportunity will be recognized by history. All members of the Armed Forces whose welfare was his concern can pay no better tribute to his memory than to carry on in the tradition which he shared and or which he was so proud."²² These words set the tone not only for continued service on behalf of the nation, but for decades of remembrance and commemoration of JFK.

For starters, less than one year after Kennedy's death, on 1 June 1964, SWCS was re-designated as the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS). To this day, this designation serves as a daily reminder of the historic connection between JFK and Army Special Forces. Further, one building in the USAJFKSWCS campus is aptly named Kennedy Hall, which has on display in its lobby a bust of the late President and the lectern that Kennedy used during his October 1961 visit to Fort Bragg.



Image credit: Arlington National Cemetery

Modern view of Kennedy's gravesite and the eternal flame that was lit on 25 November 1963.



In addition, SF soldiers visited JFK's grave each year for a wreath-laying ceremony, a practice that continued until the late-1980s. This tradition recommenced in November 2011, in an event attended by Secretary of the Army John McHugh, U.S. Army Special Forces Command CG Brigadier General Edward M. Reeder, Jr., JFK's great nephew, Second Lieutenant Christopher Kennedy McKelvy, and soldiers from all seven current SFGs. According to Reeder, "Our purpose today was to reestablish the tradition that began when a very special contingent of Green Berets was requested from the Kennedy family to perform the honor guard for President Kennedy's funeral . . . Our intent is to honor Kennedy's unparalleled advocacy of the Green Berets," a custom that has continued through the present year for the 60th anniversary.²³

As a final example, the Special Forces Soldier statue that was completed in 1969 and today overlooks the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Memorial Plaza stands on a pedestal containing several pieces of historic memorabilia placed inside as a sort of time capsule. Among these items are a bust of President Kennedy, a copy of JFK's remarks about the green beret, and quotations from some of his other speeches. Kennedy's advocacy for Special Forces is thus highlighted to all distinguished visitors to the command when showcasing the statue and its symbolism. Sixty years after the President's death and subsequent memorial services attended by dozens of Green Berets, the bond between JFK and Army Special Forces remains strong.

TOP: Secretary of the Army John McHugh, BG Edward M. Reeder, Jr., and 2LT Christopher Kennedy McKelvy place a Green Beret-shaped wreath at JFK's grave in November 2011, reviving an annual tradition that had stopped in the late 1980s. **BOTTOM:** On 22 November 1969, exactly six years after JFK's assassination, MG Edward M. Flanagan, Jr. placed a bust of Kennedy and other items as a time capsule inside the base of the Special Forces Soldier statue, which today stands guard in the USASOC Memorial Plaza.

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- 11 SWCS, "Troopers Called to DC."
- 12 JFK Presidential Library and Museum, "A Nation Remembers."
- 13 SWCS, "Troopers Called to DC."
- 14 SWCS, "Troopers Called to DC." **Not all SF soldiers were on duty at all times, so some were able to stand along the route of the procession as bystanders. Four 7th SFG soldiers along the road were able to act quickly when a 23-year-old pregnant woman from Massachusetts fainted. They were able to lower her safely to the ground and move her to a nearby Red Cross ambulance.**
- 15 SWCS, "Troopers Called to DC."
- 16 JFK Presidential Library and Museum, "A Nation Remembers"; SWCS, "SF Soldier Places Beret on Grave of President"; Ross Tweten, "Remembering Seymour Johnson's participation in JFK's funeral flyover," 27 November 2013, <https://www.acc.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/661518/remembering-seymour-johnsons-participation-in-jfks-funeral-flyover#:~:text=Of%20those%2050%20fighter%20aircraft%2C%2030%20F-105s%20from,Force%20One%20followed%20the%20fighters%2C%20concluding%20the%20flyover>.
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Major General Eldon A. Bargewell

Coastal Washington Town Celebrates the Life of a Hometown Hero

By Suzanne Harrison

By all accounts, Major General (MG) Eldon A. Bargewell was a humble man. Dedicated to Special Operations and uneasy with the lifetime of honors bestowed upon him, many described the retired operator as the kind of man who did what was right, not what would earn awards. Yet, he was a highly decorated soldier who continued to earn recognition for heroism and valor even after his retirement in early 2007. He did so while inspiring countless others along the way.

Among his awards were the Distinguished Service Cross, four Purple Hearts, three Bronze Stars for combat valor, and three additional Bronze Stars for meritorious service. A proud Ranger and Special Forces soldier, in 2010 he was awarded the U.S. Special Operations Command's (USSOCOM) highest honor, the Bull Simons Award. Less than a decade later, in 2019, Bargewell died in a tragic accident at age 71. On 20 May 2023, his hometown of Hoquiam, Washington, dedicated a park and statue to honor MG Bargewell.

Hundreds of colleagues, friends and family members attended the dedication ceremony, many

of them speaking of Bargewell's distinguished 40-year Army career on that sunny Saturday in Hoquiam. The coastal town is about an hour south of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, where Bargewell served in his first officer assignment in 1973. However, his distinguished career began when he enlisted in the Army in 1967. After completing the Special Forces Qualification Course in 1968, he was assigned to Military Assistance Command, Vietnam – Studies and Observations Group (MACV-SOG). It did not take long for him to make his mark in Vietnam, both with his colleagues and for his heroism.

According to his Distinguished Service Cross citation, then-Staff Sergeant Bargewell exhibited valor on 27 September 1971 while operating on a long-range reconnaissance team far into enemy territory. "On that date," the citation reads, "his team came under attack by an estimated 75 to 100-man enemy force. Staff Sergeant Bargewell suffered multiple fragmentation wounds from an exploding B-40 rocket in the initial assault, but despite the serious wounds, placed a deadly volume of machine gun fire on the enemy line. As the enemy

The statue honoring the late MG Eldon A. Bargewell, created by sculptor Rip Caswell, is the centerpiece of a park dedicated in his honor in Hoquiam, Washington.



LEFT: 24 August 1986, Mount Rainier, Washington (MG Bargewell on right). **RIGHT:** Bargewell (on the right) in a helicopter.

advanced, he succeeded in breaking the assault and forced them to withdraw with numerous casualties. When the enemy regrouped, they resumed their assault on the beleaguered team, placing a heavy volume of small arms and automatic weapons fire on Staff Sergeant Bargewell's sector of the defensive perimeter. Again he exposed himself to the enemy fire in order to hold his position and prevent the enemy from overrunning the small team. After breaking the enemy assault, the team withdrew to a nearby guard. At the landing zone, Staff Sergeant Bargewell refused medical treatment in order to defend a sector of the perimeter, and insured the safe extraction of his team."

Bargewell earned a commission two years later after completing Officer Candidate School. His first officer assignment was as a Long-Range Reconnaissance Platoon Leader in Company B, 75th Infantry (Ranger), at Fort Lewis. Again, he made an impression. It was there in 1974,

as a platoon leader for the newly activated 2nd Battalion, 75th Infantry, that he met Lieutenant General (Retired) Lawson W. Magruder, III, then a captain and his company commander. Magruder said Bargewell was the only selectee who had both an OCS commission and Vietnam experience.

The unit trained non-stop, preparing for upcoming deployment. "Key to our success in that first year was the development of high standards built on a foundation of trust that led to a winning Ranger spirit and incredible teamwork," Magruder said during the park dedication. "Eldon was instrumental in helping me imbue those high standards and realism in our Bravo Company training because of his vast combat experience. Even though I was also a Vietnam combat veteran and commanding a company for the second time, I was a far more effective leader because Eldon was at my side."

In 1981, Bargewell volunteered for his first of many assignments at 1st Special Forces Operational

Detachment-Delta, Fort Bragg (Fort Liberty since 2 June 2023), North Carolina, where he would spend much of his career and would excel as a leader. Command Sergeant Major (Retired) Mike Vining, who served with Bargewell episodically for 17 years, recalls that his former commander had a high standard for his soldiers. Bargewell, he said, led by example, always put the mission first, and expected the best from his soldiers. "If you went in to see him on a matter, you had to be well prepared. You had to do your homework," Vining said.

He was described during the ceremony as rarely smiling and very serious, although those who knew him best said he had a great sense of humor. "Eldon had a dry sense of humor and at times it took a while to see that it was meant to be funny," Vining said. "He was a very hard worker and when he was given a task, he was all business."

Bargewell also listened to his soldiers and rewarded them appropriately. "If Eldon approved a military

award for you, you earned it,” Vining said. “One time, I felt a person should be getting a higher award. I went in to see Eldon and he agreed. He said if I write it, he will approve it. Eldon agreed by his standard, it should be higher, and that tells you something.”

Bargewell served in key joint assignments from 1993 to 2005 at Joint Special Operations Command, Special Operations Command, Europe (SOCEUR), USSOCOM, Allied Command Europe, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). He also served in Panama, Iraq, and Sarajevo, among other places far from Hoquiam, earning many honors along the way, and inspiring his subordinates, peers, and leaders.

“I gave Eldon Bargewell the toughest assignments. He always succeeded and never let us down,” said General (Retired) Peter Schoomaker, the 35th Army chief of Staff. “MG (William) Bill Garrison (former JSOC Commander) once commented that Eldon was the kind of Soldier that we all aspired to be. I totally agree... no better way to describe him.”

While those who knew him best said Bargewell would likely be embarrassed by all the accolades, the Hoquiam locals said that they needed to honor their “hometown hero.” To them, Bargewell served as an inspiration. Jason “Jay” Fry, a long-time friend and neighbor who led the dedication effort, said that the town followed closely Bargewell’s promotions, decorations, and achievements, which were reported in the local newspaper. Once a vibrant logging town, the town has seen hard times over

the years as industries left and the population dwindled. “The town was depressed,” said Fry. “He was someone for the town to look up to.”

Fry said the town did not want to forget the man who inspired them through the years. So, Fry and several others who grew up in Hoquiam created the MG Eldon Bargewell Memorial Committee four years ago, hoping to raise about \$300,000. He pitched the idea to the Hoquiam Historical Preservation Committee and City Council.

“There were countless people involved in making this happen,” Fry, committee chairman, said, including more than 450 donors who contributed roughly \$380,000 to pay for the statue, park landscaping, and upkeep. Fry hopes the fund will continue to grow in order to sustain the park for years to come. Since the dedication, the park has become a popular stop for locals and visitors, Fry said.

David Mitchell, who attended high school and community college with Bargewell and who serves on the committee, hopes the park and his classmate’s story will inspire a younger generation of Hoquiam residents. “He means a lot to the community – a community that’s trying to find itself again,” said Mitchell. “Eldon always had a strong focus. All the way through high school he had a drive and a focus for what he wanted to do. His story helps show young people that if you have the drive – even if you live in a small town – you can still achieve great things. Eldon is a personification of what someone can achieve if they have the will, drive, and pride to succeed if you don’t give up.”

Mitchell, an artist, assisted with the creative vision for the park and donated a drawing of Bargewell that captured the way many of the townsfolk remembered him. While he had not seen his classmate in decades, “That’s the face I knew,” Mitchell said. “I wanted to create an image that all the people I went to school with could relate to – an image of a man finding his place.”

Delta Park and Bargewell’s memorial statue is situated on a triangle formed by Emerson, N, and Maple Streets in Hoquiam. The centerpiece of the park is a bronze likeness of Bargewell, sculpted by Rip Caswell, who grew up in the nearby town of Montesano. Caswell, owner of a studio in Troutdale, Oregon, said he was honored to create the statue. He hoped to capture Bargewell’s essence, using a Vietnam-era picture of him and imagining the



The city of Hoquiam contributed signage directing visitors to the park in honor of the late MG Eldon A. Bargewell.



moment Bargewell earned his Distinguished Service Cross.

In addition to the statue, there are plaques commemorating Bargewell's leadership from Vietnam to Iraq, listing the operations he participated in, and recognizing his Distinguished Service Cross. Local businesses donated time and supplies to build much of the park. The city assisted with signage, parking modifications, and crosswalks.

More than 400 people attended the statue unveiling. Soldiers from 5th Special Forces Group and the 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, provided ceremonial honors. The dedication was also attended by veterans of the MACV-SOG.



MG Eldon Bargewell, depicted in the Vietnam era, was drawn by Hoquiam native David Mitchell, who attended high school with the late general.

Soldiers from the 1st Special Forces Group Public Affairs Office captured the event. During his invocation, Army Chaplain Major (MAJ) Patrick Cobb summarized what many attendees echoed. “General Bargewell lived a life worthy of his calling.”

Members of Bargewell's family, including his wife, Marian, attended the ceremony. Mrs. Bargewell described a time when her husband was invited to throw out a first pitch at a Yankee's baseball game in New York City. Flown in a private jet by the Yankee's General Manager and given first-class accommodations, Marian Bargewell said her husband worried he would embarrass the Army if he could not throw the ball over the plate. “Eldon was scared to death. He was so afraid he was going to make a fool of himself throwing that ball,” she said.

So, he and Marian walked over to Central Park to practice until he felt comfortable. He had his chance the next day and got the ball over the plate. “It may have been a little to side, but they called it a strike,” Marian Bargewell said.

Admiral (Ret.) Eric Olson, former commander of USSOCOM, recalled friendly competition between him and Bargewell during overlapping Special Operations assignments. “I felt not so much like a peer, but like the proverbial grasshopper at the feet of the Shaolin master. He knew that I still had much to learn in some specific areas of warfare where he was quite expert, and he taught me as much as he could,” Olson said. “The standard that I wanted to achieve was Eldon Bargewell's approval. And it was a high standard for sure.”

Bargewell and Olson served as Army-Navy counterparts for about a year, often organizing training exchanges and the occasional surprise raids on each other's units. “It was just two guys from Washington State far away from home, doing what we thought was right for our teams and our country. I know for sure that my unit was better for having trained with and against Eldon's – and I

think that Eldon would acknowledge that his force might have learned a thing or two from us.”

Schoomaker summed up the sentiment for his friends, colleagues, and townspeople. “For more than forty years, since our earliest days in the unit, I was privileged to both serve with Eldon and to know him as a close friend. He was one of the finest leaders of his generation, living all seven of the Army values to the fullest: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. Without a doubt, Eldon was a warrior ... the very epitome of the Warrior Ethos: Always place the mission first; Never Quit; Never Accept Defeat; and, Never Leave a Fallen Comrade.”



MG Eldon A. Bargewell



“YOU HAVE ARRIVED”

1st Special Operations Command & the Birth of Modern ARSOF

by Christopher E. Howard

On 7 August 1984, Major General (MG) Joseph C. Lutz stood beside his wife Joyce in the shadow of the Special Forces Soldier statue, known to many as “Bronze Bruce,” and fought back tears while the 24th Infantry Division band played “Auld Lang Syne.”¹ Fifteen minutes earlier, Lutz had passed the colors of the U.S. Army 1st Special Operations Command (1st SOCOM), which he had commanded since its founding two years earlier, to MG Leroy N. Suddath, Jr.

Opposite the incoming and outgoing commanders stood a formation representing the Army Special Forces (SF), Rangers, Psychological Operations (PSYOP), and Civil Affairs (CA) units that came under the command of 1st SOCOM upon

its provisional establishment on October 1, 1982, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina (known as Fort Liberty since 2023). Prior to that, no single command and control headquarters existed for all Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) units. Since then, the Army has not lacked one, with the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) filling that role since December 1989.

“A Rocky Road”

General (GEN) Robert W. Sennewald presided over the change of command ceremony, as the commander of 1st SOCOM’s higher headquarters, the U.S. Army Forces Command. In his remarks, he noted the rocky road that 1st SOCOM had travelled to get to where it was in August 1984.² Without elaborating on the specific obstacles overcome by 1st SOCOM, Sennewald’s comments likely resonated with the Vietnam-era ARSOF leaders in attendance, including Lutz. After great sacrifice and exceptional valor in Vietnam, many ARSOF units endured

force reductions and resourcing shortages in the aftermath of that war. By the late 1970s, ARSOF was reeling from years of neglect.

From his position as the Commander, U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Center for Military Assistance, MG Lutz had played a significant role in revitalizing ARSOF, and Army Special Forces, in particular. Under his leadership, the Center produced an Army-directed Special Operations Forces Mission Area

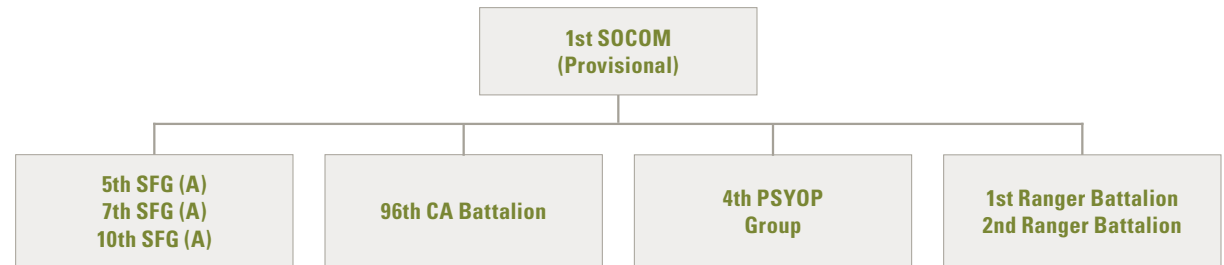


MG Joseph C. Lutz, the outgoing 1st SOCOM Commander, stands by his wife Joyce during his 7 August 1984 change of command with MG Leroy N. Suddath Jr., at Fort Bragg, NC.

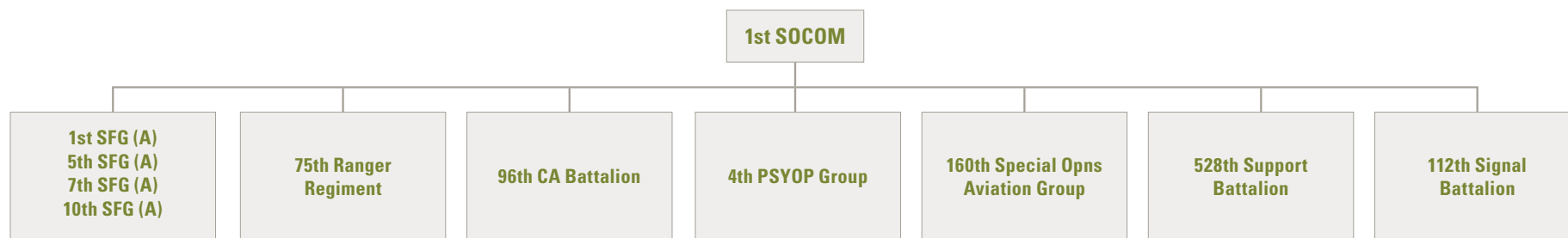
Analysis that prescribed some of the most impactful changes to ARSOF in the 1980s, including the establishment of 1st SOCOM.³ GEN Sennewald testified to Lutz's impact, saying, "Our national leadership made a commitment to develop your capabilities, and General Lutz has been instrumental in bringing this commitment to reality."⁴

With a mission to prepare, provide, and sustain active-duty Army SF, PSYOP, CA, and Ranger units, 1st SOCOM was the first headquarters to exercise both administrative and operational control of the full spectrum of ARSOF. On Lutz's watch, the command had fought a brief war on the Caribbean Island of Grenada (Operation URGENT FURY) and deployed mobile training teams to sixty-five countries, including such hotspots as El Salvador, Honduras, and Lebanon.

1st SOCOM / October 1982



1st SOCOM / 1987



GEN Robert W. Sennewald (front row, third from left), Commander, U.S. Army Forces Command, visited 1st SOCOM again in 1986. To his left is MG Leroy N. Suddath, Jr., 1st SOCOM Commander. To Suddath's left is his Deputy Commanding General, BG Wayne A. Downing, who later commanded USASOC and, after that, USSOCOM.

Under the leadership of Lutz and his successor, MG Suddath, 1st SOCOM continued to revitalize and expand ARSOF, reversing some of the post-Vietnam cuts and adding new capabilities. In 1984 alone, the command oversaw the reactivation of 1st Special Forces Group (SFG) and the addition of a Ranger Regimental headquarters and the 3rd Ranger Battalion. Early the following year, the Army transferred Task Force-160, a dedicated ARSOF Aviation unit, from the 101st Airborne Division to 1st SOCOM. This unit was reorganized into the 160th Special Operations Aviation Group (SOAG) in October 1986. 1st SOCOM also added two dedicated ARSOF Support units that year.⁵

By 1987, when 1st SOCOM became the Army component of the newly established U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), its major subordinate units were the 75th Ranger Regiment; the 1st, 5th, 7th, and 10th Special Forces Groups; the 4th PSYOP Group; the 96th CA Battalion; the 528th Support Battalion; the 112th Signal Battalion; and the 160th Special Operations Aviation Group.

Toward a MACOM

In 1988, Suddath passed command to MG James A. Guest, an SF veteran of the Vietnam War who had previously commanded the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School



GEN James J. Lindsay, Commander, USSOCOM (left), and GEN Carl E. Vuono, Chief of Staff of the Army (right), congratulate Gary E. Luck (center) on his promotion to LTG during a 1 December 1989 ceremony at Fort Bragg, NC. LTG Luck's new command, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, was formally activated during the same ceremony.



1st SOCOM Distinctive Unit Insignia

and 5th SFG. Under Guest's leadership, 1st SOCOM successfully advocated for the establishment of a Major Command (MACOM) for ARSOF. On 1 December 1989, the Army activated USASOC, under the command of Lieutenant General (LTG) Gary E. Luck, as the Army's sixteenth MACOM.⁶

Concurrently, 1st SOCOM became a major subordinate command of USASOC, responsible for all active-duty ARSOF, alongside the short-lived U.S. Army Reserve Special Operations Command, which commanded all U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) and Army National Guard (ARNG) SOF units. MG Guest continued serving as 1st SOCOM commander through this transition period, during which the command rapidly deployed large contingents in support of Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama and Operation DESERT SHIELD in Saudi Arabia.

On 27 November 1990, 1st SOCOM was redesignated as the U.S. Army Special Forces Command (USASFC) and assigned the mission of equipping, training, and validating all Army Special Forces, including two ARNG and two USAR SF Groups. This arrangement persisted until 2014, when USASFC merged with active-duty PSYOP, CA, and ARSOF Support units to form the 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne), a division-level ARSOF headquarters under USASOC that commands and controls five active-duty and two ARNG SF groups, two PSYOP groups, a CA brigade, and a Sustainment brigade.

It is difficult to see how organizations such as USASOC and 1st Special Forces Command would exist, had it not been for visionary leaders like Joseph Lutz, Leroy Suddath, and James Guest. These three were the only commanders of 1st SOCOM, the first modern ARSOF headquarters.

Despite the long and sometimes rocky road back from the post-Vietnam doldrums, GEN Sennewald saw only positives in August 1984. "Today," he said, "I am firmly convinced that road is part of history. If the words 'you have arrived' have meaning to anyone, they should have special meaning to the soldiers of 1st SOCOM."⁷

"You have arrived"

In the intervening four decades, ARSOF has continued to prove its value to the nation in myriad ways and innumerable places, in conflicts big and small, always striving to live up to the motto first adopted by 1st SOCOM in 1982: *Sine Pari*, meaning "Without Equal." In his parting comments in 1984, MG Lutz expressed a sentiment shared by ARSOF leaders ever since when he said, "I want to thank GEN Sennewald and our Army for allowing me the privilege to command the greatest soldiers in the world."⁸

ENDNOTES

- 1 Then-MG H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr, commanded the 24th Infantry Division at the time. Schwarzkopf was MG Leroy N. Suddath's roommate at the United States Military Academy.
- 2 "1st Special Operations Command Change of Command Ceremony," 7 August 1984, USASOC History Office Files, Fort Liberty, NC, hereafter, 1st SOCOM Change of Command, date.
- 3 Cheryl Morai-Young, ed., *Department of the Army Historical Summary: Fiscal Year 1983* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1990), 36-37, <https://history.army.mil/books/DAHSUM/1983/ch03.htm>.
- 4 1st SOCOM Change of Command, 7 August 1984.
- 5 Richard W. Stewart, Stanley L. Sandler, and Joseph R. Fischer, *Command History of the United States Army Special Operations Command: 1987-1992: Standing Up the MACOM* (Fort Bragg, NC: USASOC Directorate of History and Museums, 1996), 15-16.
- 6 Headquarters, Department of the Army General Order 8, 20 June 1990, copy in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Liberty, NC; USASOC Activation Ceremony, Fort Bragg, NC, 1 December 1989, copy of video in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Liberty, NC. **The complete video from the USASOC Activation Ceremony is available at <https://arsof-history.org/collections.html>. In his remarks, LTG Luck credited MG Guest for having the "drive and enthusiasm" to overcome the formidable obstacles to USASOC's creation.**
- 7 1st SOCOM Change of Command, 7 August 1984.
- 8 1st SOCOM Change of Command, 7 August 1984.



MG Leroy N. Suddath, Jr. (center) and COL John N. Dailey (right) are pictured here at the October 1986 activation ceremony for the 160th Special Operations Aviation Group at the Fort Campbell, KY.

BASED ON AN ACTUAL EVENT

The Battle of Mogadishu in Popular Culture

By Jared M. Tracy, PhD

(Image credit: DVIDS)



(Image credit: DVIDS)



The year 2023 marks thirty years since the Battle of Mogadishu in Somalia on 3-4 October 1993. The mission objective was for Task Force Ranger—which included soldiers from the 75th Ranger Regiment, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), and other Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) units—to capture high-value associates of Mohamed Farrah Aidid, head of the Somalia National Alliance (SNA). Aidid, a powerful warlord aspiring to be president, had been frustrating United Nations Operations in Somalia II (UNOSOM II) efforts to bring relief to the starving and war-torn country, to include killing UN peacekeepers. The U.S. believed it was time to bring Aidid to justice.

Task Force Ranger had already made six attempts to track down Aidid since its arrival in August 1993, capturing members of his inner circle along the way. Intended to last less than an hour, the mission on 3 October devolved into some of the fiercest urban combat since Vietnam, becoming an overnight fight for survival and exfiltration in the face of thousands of SNA and irregular fighters. With the support of conventional, joint, and international partners, ARSOF soldiers achieved their tactical objectives, but at the cost of eighteen U.S. lives lost, dozens more wounded, and two downed MH-60 Black Hawk helicopters on the battlefield.¹

ARSOF soldiers earned recognition for their heroism and sacrifice during the battle, among them Master Sergeant (MSG) [Gary I. Gordon](#) and Sergeant First Class (SFC) [Randall D. Shughart](#),

TOP: Members of TF Ranger in 1993, before the Battle of Mogadishu. **BOTTOM:** The crew of “Super 64,” one of the two downed MH-60s in the Battle of Mogadishu, in a photo from September 1993: Winn Mahuron, SSG Thomas J. Field, SSG William D. Cleveland, CW4 Raymond A. Frank, and CW3 Michael J. Durant.

who posthumously received the Medal of Honor.² However, the political fallout from the Battle of Mogadishu led to the withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Somalia within six months, followed by the end of UNOSOM II in March 1995. Public perception of the battle was initially shaped by media coverage, as it would take time for the Department of Defense (DoD) to research and publish detailed historical accounts on U.S. military operations in Somalia.³ In the meantime, the mission came into sharper view in the public eye through the book *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (1999) by journalist Mark Bowden, and the film that it inspired, *Black Hawk Down* (2001), produced by Jerry Bruckheimer and directed by Ridley Scott.

Starting in late 2000, DoD public affairs elements helped coordinate ARSOF support to the film's writers, producers, and actors. From the outset, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) sought to ensure that the battle and those who fought and died in it were appropriately represented and received a fitting tribute. This collaboration contributed to the film's harsh depictions of modern combat and its gritty yet inspiring tone. As a result, the award-winning *Black Hawk Down* helped shape popular understanding about this significant event. After providing a brief chronology of the film's development and release, this article describes how USASOC assisted the production of *Black Hawk Down*.

The time between the publication of Bowden's book and the national release of the film *Black Hawk Down* in January 2002 was less than three years. Ken Nolan was the only credited screenwriter, though he was assisted by Bowden and

TOP: President William J. Clinton addresses media questions about Somalia during a press conference on 14 October 1993, ten days after the Battle of Mogadishu. **BOTTOM:** Gold Star wives Stephanie Shughart (left) and Carmen Gordon (right) accept the posthumous award of the Medal of Honor to their husbands, Randall and Gary, on 23 May 1994.





MSG Gary I. Gordon



SFC Randall D. Shughart



Assistant Secretary of Defense Pete Williams (left) presents an award to Philip M. Strub, in recognition of his outstanding work in support of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, 15 January 1993. Some eight years later, Strub would help coordinate DoD support to the making of *Black Hawk Down*.

others with the ever-evolving script. Filming took place primarily in and around Rabat, Morocco, between March and June 2001. In late May 2001, the film's first trailers accompanied the release of *Pearl Harbor* (which also featured Josh Hartnett, who played Staff Sergeant Matthew Eversmann in *Black Hawk Down*). The film's tentative release date was 2 November 2001, but the deadly 9/11 terrorist attacks on the U.S. led filmmakers to briefly reconsider delaying it until spring 2002. As one news source at the time reported, "Just six weeks ago, as the events of Sept. 11 shook America, Hollywood rushed to postpone any terror-related films that might offend public sensibilities, abruptly pulling a number of completed pictures . . . because of fears that Americans wouldn't want to see war movies any time soon."⁴ However, by November, "those concerns appear[ed] to be receding," and Hollywood decided to start releasing *Black Hawk Down* in late 2001.⁵

The premiere of *Black Hawk Down* occurred on 18 December, followed by limited release in Los Angeles and New York City ten days later. Distributed by Sony, it hit theaters nationwide on 18 January 2002, eventually grossing roughly \$173 million worldwide against a \$92 million budget. Nominated for numerous awards, *Black Hawk Down* won the categories Best Film Editing and Best Sound at the 74th Academy Awards in March 2002.⁶ Less well known was how much support the acclaimed film had received from USASOC, headquartered at Fort Bragg, North Carolina (known as Fort Liberty since 2023), prior to and during production. This relationship all started with a phone call from the Pentagon to Fort Bragg in late 2000.

Special Forces (SF) Major (MAJ) Timothy McAllister* was serving in the U.S. Army Special Forces Command (USASFC) G-3 at Fort Bragg when he was contacted by Philip M. Strub, DoD Film/Entertainment Coordinator in the Pentagon



160th SOAR DUI



75th Ranger Regiment DUI

LEFT: BG Frank J. Toney, Jr., Commanding General (CG), USASFC, approved MAJ McAllister’s* participation in a preliminary meeting with Jerry Bruckheimer at the Pentagon in late 2000 to discuss possible DoD support to *Black Hawk Down*. **RIGHT:** As CG, USASOC, LTG Bryan D. Brown (pictured here as a full general) pledged full support to the making of *Black Hawk Down*.

in Arlington, Virginia, about the proposed film. Strub considered McAllister* an ideal DoD project officer due to his ARSOF affiliation and his previous assignment as an entertainment liaison in the U.S. Army Public Affairs Office (PAO) in Los Angeles, California. The Commanding General (CG) of USASFC, Brigadier General (BG) Frank J. Toney, Jr., approved McAllister’s* participation in a preliminary meeting with Strub and Bruckheimer in the Pentagon. At the meeting, Bruckheimer pitched the concept for *Black Hawk Down*, with assurances that “every soldier would come out as a hero,” and requested DoD technical and materiel support to the film at the producer’s expense.⁷

As the higher command for all ARSOF units, USASOC emerged as the most obvious Army command to provide this requested support. Upon returning to Fort Bragg, McAllister* relayed

Bruckheimer’s request to the CG, USASOC, Lieutenant General (LTG) [Bryan D. Brown](#). With the DoD already on board, Brown enthusiastically pledged full support to the producers.⁸ Over the next several months, USASOC support took three main forms: review of Nolan’s draft script; providing ARSOF familiarization and training to the actors; and soldiers, technical expertise, and equipment during the filming itself in Morocco. The pace moved quickly due to the short amount of time between the request for support and the designated time for filming.

USASOC received the draft script in early December 2000, which was in turn provided to the 75th Ranger Regiment and 160th SOAR (“Night Stalkers”), to be returned with comments no later than 11 December. While realizing that the filmmakers would take creative license, the 75th

and 160th went through great pains to guarantee that their units, soldiers, and fallen heroes were as truthfully represented as possible. They strove for realism and accuracy, to include ensuring that the characters talked, looked, and acted like real ARSOF soldiers. The producers accepted many but not all of their recommended changes; due to the number of deviations, they elected to change the first line of the film from “This is a true story” to “Based on an actual event.” ARSOF units continued to review revised scripts, even during filming in Morocco.⁹ Meanwhile, in early 2001, arrangements were made for actors to receive familiarization with and training from 7th Special Forces Group (SFG) at Fort Bragg, the 160th SOAR at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and the 75th Ranger Regiment at Fort Benning, Georgia (known as Fort Moore since 2023).



Those visiting 7th SFG included actors William Fichtner and Eric Bana, who portrayed fictional composite characters SFC Jeff Sanderson and SFC Norm 'Hoot' Gibson, and Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, who portrayed Medal of Honor recipient MSG Gary I. Gordon. Training received from SF soldiers included weapons familiarization, Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (MOUT), explosive breaching, close-quarters combat, hand-to-hand fighting, and Fast-Rope Insertion and Extraction System (FRIES) orientation. According to Fichtner, "Before reading the script, all I knew about what happened in Somalia was from CNN sound bites—that we had gone in there to help feed the starving people there and then something went wrong so we left." His experience at Fort Bragg was eye-opening and memorable. "In preparing for my role, I made a number of real friends in the Army down [at] Fort Bragg, not just acquaintances but friends. I am proud of what my new friends do on a daily basis in defending this country."¹⁰



TOP LEFT: Actors Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Eric Bana, and William Fichtner during explosive breaching training with 7th SFG at Fort Bragg. **TOP RIGHT:** Fichtner executes an arm and wrist lock during combatives training with 7th SFG. **MIDDLE:** Coster-Waldau, Fichtner, and Bana conduct dry fire exercises. **BOTTOM:** Coster-Waldau, Bana, and Fichtner take a break with their SF trainers at Fort Bragg.





Meanwhile, actors Jeremy Piven and Ron Eldard, who played Clifton P. Wolcott and Michael J. Durant, pilots of the two downed MH-60s, visited their 160th SOAR counterparts at Fort Campbell. This included familiarization with special operations helicopters, equipment, and capabilities; meetings with veterans from Somalia, to include receiving a briefing on the battle from Durant himself; and paying respects at the Night Stalker memorial wall outside of the regimental headquarters. In addition, Eldard participated in a portion of [Green Platoon](#), a stressful, physically and mentally intense training program that all incoming Night Stalker candidates must complete before joining the Regiment. While neither Eldard nor Piven flew any helicopters for the film, their experience at Fort Campbell helped familiarize them with Night Stalker culture and gave them a deeper appreciation for the 160th's role in Somalia.

The largest group of actors to receive training

was the nearly twenty individuals who visited the 75th Ranger Regiment at Fort Benning. Among these were Hartnett, Ewan MacGregor (who played Specialist [SPC] John Grimes), Orlando Bloom (who portrayed Private First Class Todd Blackburn), Tom Hardy (who played SPC Lance Twombly), Ewen Bremner (who played SPC Shawn Nelson), Jason Isaacs (who portrayed Captain Michael Steele, Commander, Company B, 3/75th Ranger Regiment [B/3/75]), and Tom Sizemore (who portrayed Lieutenant Colonel Danny R. McKnight, Commander, 3/75th Ranger Regiment). Given fresh "high and tight" haircuts, the actors received intensive training from roughly ten Rangers in weapons, MOUT, tactical drills, hand-to-hand fighting, first aid, signal, and helicopter familiarization. This crash course in Ranger culture and tactics were designed to help prepare the actors for the upcoming filming in Morocco. They would be joined in-country by actual ARSOF soldiers and equipment.

LEFT: Actors Ron Eldard (left) and Jeremy Piven, who played pilots of the two downed Black Hawks in the film, sit in an MH-60 cockpit while visiting the 160th SOAR at Fort Campbell. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Eldard (in black shirt with back facing the camera) attends a briefing on the Battle of Mogadishu from Michael Durant, pilot of "Super 64" who was shot down and held captive for 11 days. **MIDDLE:** Eldard chats with Special Operations Aviation Training Company (SOATC) instructors during his attendance at Green Platoon. **RIGHT:** Eldard visits the Night Stalker Memorial outside of 160th SOAR headquarters at Fort Campbell.





Actors receiving "high and tight" Ranger haircuts.



(Image credit: U.S. Army)



(Image credit: U.S. Army)



(Image credit: U.S. Army)



(Image credit: U.S. Army)



(Image credit: U.S. Army)

TOP LEFT: Jason Isaacs (standing, left), Ewan MacGregor (kneeling, second row, second from left), Orlando Bloom (kneeling, first row, right), and other “Ranger” actors receive a class on heliborne operations.

TOP RIGHT: Actors take a break from MOUT training to enjoy some field chow.

MIDDLE LEFT: Actor Tom Sizemore works on closed guard escapes during hand-to-hand fighting training with the Rangers.

BOTTOM LEFT: “Ranger” actors receive field medical training.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Hartnett loads blank rounds into a magazine during MOUT training.

USASOC developed its filming support package with the following priorities in mind: personnel safety and well-being, military credibility, and zero cost to the American taxpayer. Its “Statement of Requirements” listed the following as its desired result: “Assist in the successful support of U.S. military personnel deployed to Rabat, Morocco, and ensure Production Company is provided with authentic rotary-winged assets and ground operations personnel to complete filming of [the] movie.”¹¹ While the PAO stated that USASOC support “is authorized under DoD and [Army] policies” and that it “behooves the Army to support such projects to ensure accuracy in portrayal of our units,” it clarified that the production company would pay for or reimburse all costs for USASOC involvement.¹² It was later revealed that “total reimbursable costs for the movie were \$2.2 million.”¹³

The ARSOF package to Morocco included soldiers from B/3/75, pilots and crewmembers for four MH-60 and four MH/AH-6 “Little Bird” helicopters, and support personnel, totaling roughly 150 servicemembers. These personnel handled the real-world aspects of filming, such as fast-rope insertion by the Rangers and all of the aviation seen in the film. They would also help beef up the on-screen presence of soldiers, since the number of actors constituted only a fraction of who was present in October 1993. MAJ McAllister* was there as USASOC’s representative and as the DoD Project Officer, ensuring that the soldiers were cared for according to the agreed-upon arrangement. Production company-funded provisions for the soldiers included food, water, billeting, refrigeration, medical support, transportation and fuel, security for personnel and equipment,

TOP: Bremner receives training on machine gun operations. Other weapons introduced included the M16 rifle and Mk 19 automatic grenade launcher. **BOTTOM:** Actors and their Ranger trainers pose for a group picture at Fort Benning, early 2001.



(Image credit: U.S. Army)



(Image credit: U.S. Army)



Battle of Mogadishu veteran COL (ret.) Lee Van Arsdale, seen here addressing an audience at the U.S. Military Academy in April 2021, served as a private consultant during filming in Morocco in 2001, along with COL (ret.) Thomas Matthews (not pictured). To the left of Van Arsdale is COL (ret.) Larry Perino who, as a First Lieutenant in October 1993, helped secure the “Super 61” crash site. To the right of Van Arsdale are fellow Somalia veterans Chief Warrant Officer (ret.) Stan Wood, MAJ (ret.) Jeffery D. Struecker, and MSG (ret.) Matthew Eversmann.

communications, interpreters, office supplies, and a covered 5,000-square-foot maintenance facility and aircraft hangar.¹⁴

The production company also brought on two Mogadishu veterans, Lee Van Arsdale and Thomas Matthews, both retired colonels, as private consultants. As reported by *The Washington Post*, “Van Arsdale and Matthews were on set in Rabat and Sale, Morocco, every day from ‘rolling’ to ‘it’s a wrap,’ keeping a close eye on the stuntmen, extras and actors. Of particular importance was making sure the actors wore their uniforms and carried their weapons like real soldiers.”¹⁵ Van Arsdale noted, “There’s always someone who will find a way to hold their weapon wrong or wear something incorrectly in the background.”¹⁶ According

to Matthews, “For the memory of the soldiers who were killed in that combat operation and their families, I felt I should do the best job I could to technically advise on the movie . . . From the beginning, Jerry [Bruckheimer] and Ridley [Scott] said they wanted this to be something special, a tribute to the soldiers in the mission. Everyone involved understood that this was being done for the memory of the men.”¹⁷

As filming drew to a close and trailers began appearing in theaters, USASOC headquarters and units braced for an explosion in media attention and public interest. Their plans included preparing public announcements, releasing positive stories about Mogadishu veterans and ARSOF soldiers who supported the film, and select media engagements by ARSOF personnel.¹⁸ USASOC PAO guidance also provided answers to

common questions that media members may ask about the film. For example, when asked about historical accuracy, an acceptable response was that it was “a fictionalized account of real events,” and that it was “reasonably realistic and historically accurate,” despite the presence of artistic license.¹⁹ USASOC and unit PAOs addressed requests for interviews from such outlets as the History Channel, CNN, MSNBC, and local newspapers, on a case-by-case basis.

Select servicemembers, veterans, senior leaders, and Gold Star family members were able to view the film prior to the 18 January 2002 nationwide release. One such event in Washington, DC, on 15 January, was attended by Vice President Richard B. Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld,

Secretary of the Army Thomas E. White, U.S. Army Chief of Staff GEN Eric K. Shinseki, Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA) Jack L. Tilley, and other servicemembers and dignitaries. Many were astounded by the film’s gruesome realism. SMA Tilley, for one, said that it reminded him of his combat experience in Vietnam.²⁰

The film’s graphic depiction of the deadly event was praised, with one Mogadishu veteran calling it “90- to 95-percent accurate.” However, others pointed out historical errors or the sheer inability of cinema to truly depict what happens in combat. One SF officer attending the screening remarked, “You have to remember that we just sat through a little more than two hours of a depiction of what happened, when those soldiers were in a very hairy situation for more than 18 hours.”²¹ Post-viewing comments by Matthew Eversmann seemed to veil some misgivings about the portrayal of the battle, perhaps the inaccurate depiction of him going to the “Super 61” crash site, which he did not do in 1993. “I’d made peace with this,” he said. “Certainly, it’s difficult to watch a recreation of it, but I’ll always know inside my heart the real memories and that’s all that counts.”²²

While opinions of the film varied, *Black Hawk Down* unquestionably helped define popular perceptions of the battle. USASOC’s support to the making of the film had ensured that it was credible and sufficiently realistic. Of paramount concern to the producers and especially USASOC was honoring the ARSOF heroes who fought and died there; in that sense, it was a complete success. While the final version of the film bore its share of inaccuracies and artistic liberties, *Black Hawk Down* nonetheless retains educational and inspirational value, and stands as an enduring tribute to those who served and gave their lives there on that fateful day thirty years ago.



A memorial tribute to the ARSOF soldiers who lost their lives in the Battle of Mogadishu, 3-4 October 1993.

ENDNOTES

- 1 For an overview of the UN mission in Somalia, Task Force Ranger, and the Battle of Mogadishu, see Eugene G. Piasecki, "'If you liked Beirut, you'll love Mogadishu': An Introduction to Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) in Somalia," *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History* 3, no. 2 (2007), https://arsof-history.org/articles/v3n2_like_beirut_love_mogadishu_page_1.html.
- 2 For the upgrade of awards for ARSOF soldiers who fought in the Battle of Mogadishu, see USASOC PAO, "60 Army Special Operators awards upgraded for Operation Gothic Serpent," 1 July 2021, https://www.army.mil/article/248099/60_army_special_operators_awards_upgraded_for_operation_gothic_serpent.
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On 20 March 2003, a U.S.-led coalition launched Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) to remove Iraqi President Saddam Hussein from power. This was the second major military operation of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), following Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the successful unconventional warfare campaign in Afghanistan. However, unlike OEF, Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOFF) represented a small part of a much larger coalition during OIF. Nevertheless, it contributed significantly to the rapid victory over the Iraqi armed forces, as well as to the lengthy counterinsurgency mission that followed.

Background – The “Axis of Evil”

With OEF still underway in Afghanistan, the Philippines, and elsewhere, President George W. Bush and his administration began sounding the alarm about the threat posed by Iraq, Iran, and

North Korea. In his State of the Union Address on 29 January 2002, President Bush said: “States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an Axis of Evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred.” He concluded, “the price of indifference would be catastrophic.”¹

In a 12 September 2002, address to the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, President Bush presented his case against Saddam Hussein, saying, “If Iraq’s regime defies us again, the world must move deliberately, decisively to hold Iraq to account.”² The following month, on 16 October, the U.S. Congress authorized the use of military force against Iraq.³ Then, on 8 November, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1441 ordering Hussein to allow international inspectors to

dismantle his weapons program or “face serious consequences.”⁴ Hussein refused, just as he had done with previous UN mandates.

A week later, the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) authorized the Joint Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Task Force (JPOTF) to commence messaging intended to shape the environment for potential U.S. offensive operations against Hussein’s Baathist regime, if needed. Throughout early 2003, U.S. conventional and special operations units and their allies maneuvered into position, preparing for an invasion that seemed increasingly inevitable.

Operation IRAQI FREEDOM Begins

The invasion of Iraq began during the predawn hours of 20 March 2003. U.S. Army Special Forces (SF) Operational Detachments-Alpha (ODAs) from 5th SF Group (SFG) infiltrated into Iraq in advance of the main assault to conduct reconnaissance.⁵ More ODAs followed, seizing the abandoned Iraqi airfield at Wadi al Khirr.⁶ 5th SFG and its supported elements formed the core of Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) – West. In Romania, Task Force Viking (10th SFG augmented by

TO BAGHDAD AND BEYOND

ARSOFF in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM

By Christopher E. Howard

U.S. Army Special Forces from Task Force Viking advance on Ansar Al-Islam positions during Operation VIKING HAMMER, late March 2003.

a battalion from 3rd SFG) prepared to join the war a few days later, their infiltration having been complicated by Turkey's refusal to provide a staging base.⁷ Once in northern Iraq, they helped to open a second front, in conjunction with their Kurdish allies.

On 26 March, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR) aircraft inserted 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, onto a suspected chemical and biological weapons development facility.⁸ The 160th then successfully evacuated the Rangers, after a sustained firefight. Then, on 31 March, 3rd Ranger Battalion seized the Haditha Dam complex northwest of Baghdad.⁹ Attack helicopters from the 160th SOAR provided aerial reconnaissance and fire support.¹⁰ Once the dam was secure, 96th Civil Affairs (CA) Battalion soldiers arrived to help get it back into operation.¹¹

In Operation VIKING HAMMER, TF Viking reinforced Kurdish Peshmerga forces arrayed against Iraqi Army positions along the "Green Line" in northern Iraq. Before advancing on Iraqis to its front, the TF had to deal with Ansar Al-Islam terrorists operating to their rear.¹² By 11 April, TF Viking and its Kurdish allies had captured Mosul, the third most populous city in Iraq.¹³

During the invasion, Tactical PSYOP Teams from 9th PSYOP Battalion (POB) and various Army Reserve PSYOP companies advanced into Iraq alongside their supported units, both SOF and conventional.¹⁴ Soldiers from 8th POB manned the JPOTF and later supplied a Military Information Support Team in Baghdad. The 3rd POB employed multiple Special Operations Media System – Broadcast (SOMS-B) units to disseminate PSYOP radio and television messages. It also printed large quantities of leaflets and other physical products. The Pennsylvania Air National Guard's 193rd Special Operations Wing also broadcasted PSYOP messages from EC-130 Commando Solo aircraft.¹⁵

In northern Iraq, CJSOTF-North (TF Viking)

turned to Bravo Forward Support Company (FSC), 528th Support Battalion, for logistical support and Company B, 112th Signal Battalion, for secure communications.¹⁶ In southern Iraq, Alpha FSC, 528th Support Battalion, and Company C, 112th Signal Battalion, supported the 5th SFG-centric CJSOTF-West. Meanwhile, the Special Operations Support Command, the overall ARSOF Support headquarters, deployed its command team to Iraq to take the helm of Logistics Task Force – West.¹⁷

A particularly well-publicized ARSOF success during this period occurred on 1 April 2003, when Private First Class Jessica Lynch was rescued from Iraqi captivity. Lynch had been taken captive after Iraqi forces ambushed her unit, the 507th Maintenance Company, in Nasiriya, Iraq, on 23 March.

Baghdad fell to coalition forces on 9 April and Saddam Hussein went into hiding. Combat operations were over by May, but a large contingent of ARSOF remained in Iraq to help facilitate what most hoped would be a quick and peaceful transition.¹⁸ In May, the two CJSOTFs (North and West) were consolidated into the CJSOTF – Arabian Peninsula (CJSOTF-AP), which assumed operational control of the majority of SOF in Iraq. CA and PSYOP units supported the CJSOTF-AP, Joint SOF, and conventional elements, as required. Other ARSOF units operated as part of Joint Special Operations Task Forces, hunting down Saddam Hussein, his sons, and former members of his regime.

The Insurgency Mounts

Following the collapse of the Baathist government, and the subsequent disbanding of the Iraqi Army, former regime elements and other sectarian groups launched a tenacious insurgency against coalition forces. Foreign fighters, answering the call to *jihad*, flocked to Iraq to join the fighting in the months and years that followed. This insurgency tested the coalition's resolve and severely



The 315th Tactical Psychological Operations Company developed and distributed handbills and posters warning of mines and unexploded ordnance scattered throughout Baghdad.

strained Iraq's newly established governing institutions and security forces. The insurgency expanded in 2004, despite the capture of Saddam Hussein the previous December, which some had hoped would remove their motivation for fighting.¹⁹

The ratification of a new constitution and multiple rounds of democratic elections in 2005 did not have the anticipated effect on security. By 2006, the insurgency had intensified to the point that Iraq was on the verge of all-out civil war along ethno-sectarian fault lines. Even the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the notoriously brutal leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, on 7 June 2006, did not fundamentally alter the trajectory of Iraq.²⁰ The situation was growing dire.



This U.S. Army Center of Military History graphic depicts the major lines of advance during OIF, and includes a timeline of key events from the initial invasion.

“Time is Running Out”

That December, the bipartisan Iraq Study Group (ISG) provided a grim assessment: “Stability in Iraq remains elusive, and the situation is deteriorating. The Iraqi government cannot now govern, sustain, and defend itself without the support of the United

States. Iraqis have not been convinced that they must take responsibility for their own future... [and]... [t]he ability of the United States to shape outcomes is diminishing. Time is running out.”²¹
 A month later, on 10 January 2007, U.S. President George W. Bush announced that he was sending

30,000 additional troops to Iraq to stabilize the situation through an aggressive counterinsurgency strategy.²² The move was almost immediately termed “The Surge.” Though controversial, this change in strategy proved successful. Violence decreased across Iraq, buying time for the



The USASOC Memorial Plaza features a stone recognizing Task Force Viking's contributions to OIF. The various unit insignia included on the stone reflect the task force's combined and joint nature.

Government of Iraq to prove itself capable of governing and taking the lead on its own security.

During the Surge period (2007-2008), ARSOF intensified efforts to disrupt and destroy terrorist and insurgent networks, both unilaterally and in conjunction with Iraqi partners.²³ The CJSOTF-AP operated alongside the Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF) units that it had helped create, which were now operationally controlled by the new, Iraqi-led Counter Terrorism Service.²⁴ PSYOP and CA promoted good governance, democracy, economic opportunity, and Iraqi unity, while highlighting the progress made by Iraq's security forces. By early 2009, the situation in Iraq was as stable and promising as at any point since the fall of Baghdad six years earlier. Upon taking office that January, newly elected President Barack H. Obama declared his intention to follow through on his campaign promise

to withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq.²⁵

By the conclusion of OIF on 31 August 2010, thousands of ARSOF soldiers had served in Iraq and 96 had made the ultimate sacrifice.²⁶ None were lost in the follow-on mission, Operation NEW DAWN, which lasted until 31 December 2011. Concurrent with the Iraq drawdown, USCENTCOM shifted its focus back to Afghanistan, where the former Taliban regime and other violent extremists threatened to reverse the progress made since the start of OEF. ARSOF remained engaged there for the next decade.

The strain of continuous operations, most intense at the height of OIF, prompted significant enhancements to the ARSOF force structure. By the time ARSOF returned to Iraq in 2014, as part of the successful counter-Islamic State mission (Operation INHERENT RESOLVE), each active-duty SFG had a fourth line battalion and a group support battalion. New PSYOP,



Iraq Campaign Medal

CA, and Ranger units had also been activated, along with new headquarters for Special Operations Aviation and ARSOF Support. ARSOF was also more capable and combat-tested, due to its lengthy OIF experience between 2003-2010. That experience continues to benefit ARSOF today, with OIF veterans occupying many key leadership positions within the U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

*To learn more about Army Special Operations Forces during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, go to <https://arsof-history.org>. In addition to a wide variety of historical articles, you can also download *All Roads Lead to Baghdad*.*



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The Evolution of the USASOC DISTINCTIVE UNIT INSIGNIA

1988-PRESENT

By Troy J. Sacquety, PhD

Over the course of its nearly thirty-five years, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) has had two Distinctive Unit Insignias (DUIs). What follows describes how both came to be and the symbolism in each design. It also details how the DUI changed to its current design, recognizable symbol of USASOC.

USASOC was provisionally established on 1 December 1988.¹ When formally activated a year later, the new command was authorized a Shoulder Sleeve Insignia (SSI), DUI, and Major Command (MACOM) flag. In the interim, on 12 July 1989, Colonel (COL) Juan I. Chavez, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, G-1, 1st Special Operations Command (1st SOCOM), a predecessor and then subordinate command of USASOC, requested that the U.S. Army Institute of Heraldry (TIOH) review proposed insignia designs for USASOC's beret flash, airborne background trimming, DUI, and SSI.² Both the DUI and SSI proposals were based on the red arrowhead SSI used by the lineage unit to Special Forces (SF), the World War II First Special Service Force (FSSF). Just nine days later,



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND	
ACTUAL SIZE	1 1/8" ± 1/64" HEIGHT (2.86 cm)
METAL COLOR FINISH	GOLD MIRROR-LIKE POLISH
DEVICE	
ENAMEL CHARGES	VITREOUS OPAQUE FLUSH, WINGS & REVERSE OF SCROLL TO BE RECESSED & MODELED
LETTERING PIERCING	BASE METAL NONE, RECESSED & TEXTURED BETWEEN WINGS & SPEARHEAD & SCROLL
CHIP NOS	RED #1 BLACK #26

COLORGUIDE SKETCH
for location of color
ONLY!

APPROVED 21 FEB 1990
THE INSTITUTE OF HERALDRY, U.S. ARMY
Robert F. Baker
ROBERT F. BAKER, COLONEL, GS
DIRECTOR

**FAIRBAIRN- SYKES
FIGHTING BLADE**

V-42 STILETTO



The Fairbairn-Sykes (left) and V-42 (right) knives are often confused with one another but were carried by separate units in World War II. Shown side-by-side, the difference of each are readily apparent.

TIOH created and sent four separate DUI designs back to 1st SOCOM.³

Brigadier General (BG) James A Guest, 1st SOCOM Commander, chose one of the designs with the *Sine Pari motto*.⁴ However, he requested a modification. Given its lineal connection to SF, ARSOF's largest element, TIOH originally used the V-42 stiletto in the design. The V-42 was the knife carried by the FSSF, a symbol already present in the SF DUI. However, just like he had done with the proposed SSI, BG Guest wanted to use a Fairbairn- Sykes fighting knife, issued in World War II to some personnel in the Office of Strategic 2 Services (OSS) and the 1st Ranger Battalion.⁵ TIOH concurred with this request.

TIOH authorized the insignia after USASOC's activation on 1 December 1989.⁶ Its final description was:

"The stylized spearhead alludes to the shoulder sleeve insignia worn by the 1st Special Service Forces and recalls the heritage and traditions that the U.S. Army Special Operations Command will perpetuate. The unsheathed dagger symbolizes total military preparedness and has long been associated with Army special operations forces. The gold wings surrounding the spearhead and symbolizing the command's airborne and aviation missions, are raised to denote combat readiness. Gold is representative of merit and honor. Attached below the shield is a black and gold motto scroll bearing the Command's motto 'SINE PARI' (Without Equal) in gold letters."

Personnel assigned to Headquarters, USASOC, wore that DUI until late 2011. The process of replacing the original USASOC DUI began in 2009. The USASOC Commanding General, Lieutenant General

(LTG) John F. Mulholland, along with Command Sergeant Major Perry L. Baer and Command Group, were very aware that the DUI did not represent the command well in the sense that it simply did not "resonate with the vast majority of ARSOF soldiers."⁸ To get a better understanding of the then current DUI, LTG Mulholland requested an information paper from the USASOC History Office on its creation and symbology.⁹ Then, in late 2010, the Command Group tasked Mr. Daniel W. Telles, the Art Director for the History Office, with redesigning the front atrium of USASOC's headquarters, the Major General Robert A. McClure building. Telles proposed a design that included the USASOC SSI superimposed on a globe. It met with LTG Mulholland's enthusiastic approval.

However, both LTG Mulholland and Mr. Telles saw that the new design had greater utility than just a small insignia for the command. Instead, it could be a key aspect of an effort to develop a USASOC 'brand.'¹⁰ LTG Mulholland suggested that the design become the basis for a new DUI, noting that the arrowhead overtop the globe "emphasizes the command's true nature and scope



The Institute of Heraldry initially proposed four designs for the USASOC distinctive unit insignia. The other two were variations of each without the *Sine Pari* motto.



The original USASOC distinctive unit insignia redesign (top) by Mr. Daniel Telles did not include the *Sine Pari* motto, featured in the final design (bottom).

better than golden wings.”¹¹ In so doing, LTG Mulholland was very deliberate in his methodology. As he recalled, “the guidance I gave to Dan was that I wanted our SSI to be situated on the globe [in order to] illustrate our global area of operations. More specifically, I wanted the portion of the globe that was visible to the viewer to specifically NOT be the typical display of the northern and southern American landmasses. I wanted the non-stated message of the image to be that our “normal” area of focus was abroad, not in the USA. Dan brought this powerful art-decoish design to life.”¹²

Meanwhile, LTG Mulholland also communicated the redesigned proposal with Major General (Ret) James A. Guest, who chose the original DUI. He wanted to ensure that MG Guest understood that while his prior efforts were much appreciated, there was a strong rationale for changing the DUI. MG Guest was supportive.¹³ Once this was done, LTG Mulholland then forwarded Telles’ design to TIOH. Because TIOH typically will not consider redesigns of already approved insignia, it officially non-concurred with the redesign.¹⁴

Forewarned, Mulholland garnered Army support for a change in the DUI. He informed his friend LTG Thomas P. Bostick, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, U.S. Army, which had the authority to overrule TIOH, of the reason for the endeavor. LTG Mulholland then wrote Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh on 31 May 2011.¹⁵ He wrote, “Unfortunately, the truth is that few of the soldiers within USASOC identify with the DUI, as it is overwhelmingly perceived to be an aviation unit’s style DUI.” He continued, “USASOC has always had a global operational focus, and always will. Inserting the globe in lieu of the

current golden wings is infinitely more representative and illustrative of where the men and women of USASOC operate.”¹⁶

On 10 August 2011, LTG Bostick approved Mulholland’s request.¹⁷ TIOH then worked with the USASOC Command Group and History Office to finalize the new design. It received formal approval on 5 October 2011, thereby superseding the old design. Still, the new DUI retained many elements of the old, such as the colors, spearhead SSI of the FSSF, the upturned Fairbairn-Sykes dagger, and the *Sine Pari* motto. The official description is:

“The silver globe with land masses in black represents the ground combat domain that is our Nation’s Army Special Operations Forces operating environment within the joint special operations community. The stylized spearhead is based on the shoulder sleeve insignia worn by the 1st Special Service Force invoking the extraordinary fieldcraft and fighting spirit of Native American warriors. It further recalls the heritage and traditions that the US Army Special Operations Command has promulgated since its creation. The unsheathed dagger representing the Office of Strategic Services and the World War II Ranger Battalions symbolizes total military preparedness and readiness to service anytime, anyplace, anyhow. The gold scroll represents merit and honor and perpetuates the former insignia’s motto of ‘Without Equal.’”¹⁸

Although not included in the official description, Telles added seven segments in the *Sine Pari* motto below the globe. These represent the seven tribes of USASOC: Aviation, Rangers, Special Forces, Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, and Army Special Operations Support elements.

The current DUI is now an often-used symbol to represent the command. However, it is also easy to forget that it has a backstory and is rich

in symbolism from ARSOF history, thereby tying the past to the present. Remembering this incredible legacy will be important as USASOC moves forward in the coming year to face, embrace, and overcome increasingly difficult challenges.

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The interior lobby redesign of USASOC's headquarters, the Major General Robert A. McClure building, provided the initial design for the second iteration of the USASOC distinctive unit insignia.

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- 15 Memorandum from LTG John F. Mulholland to Office of the Administrative Assistance to the Secretary of the Army, "Request to Change the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Distinctive Unit Insignia," 22 April 2011, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Liberty, NC. 6
- 16 Memorandum from LTG John F. Mulholland to Honorable John M. McHugh, "Request to Change the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Distinctive Unit Insignia," 31 May 2011, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Liberty, NC.
- 17 Memorandum from LTG Thomas P. Bostick to Commander, Headquarters, United States Army Special Operations Command, "Request to Modify the Distinctive Unit Insignia (DUI) for the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC)," 10 August 2011, copy USASOC History Office, Fort Liberty, NC.
- 18 TIOH, "U.S. Army Special Operations Command," no date, <https://tioh.army.mil/Catalog/Heraldry.aspx?HeraldryId=7833&CategoryId=4358&grp=2&menu=Uniformed%20Se rvices&ps=24&p=0>

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, a significant project reached its first milestone in late January 2023 with the delivery of an eight-page classified report describing the run-up to current activities. As this report was being revised based on additional guidance, the office continued to collect information on post-inursion 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."

Also in May, the History Office's Marketing



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

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.

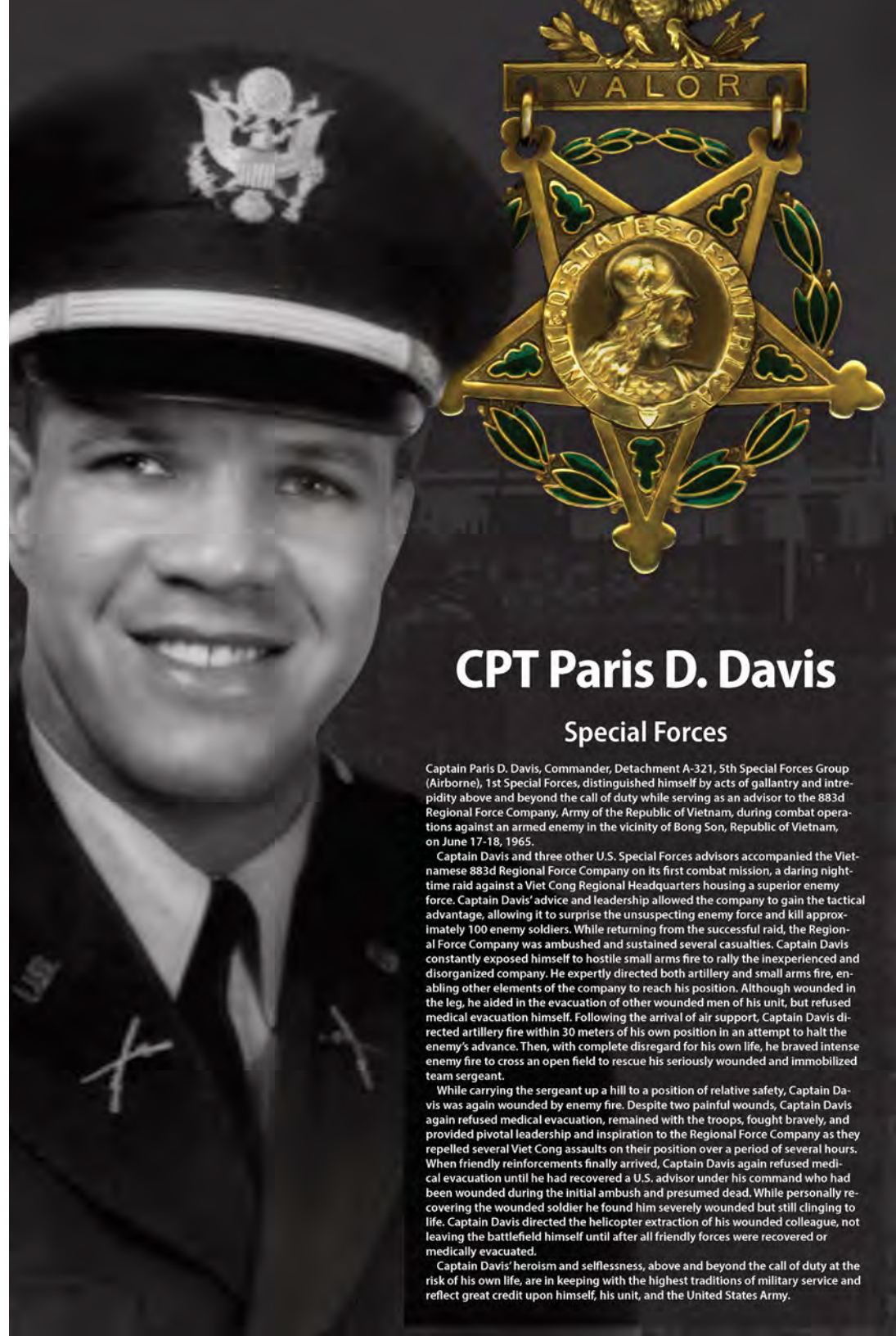
In June, the Command Historian accompanied the USASOC Command Team on its visit to Normandy, France, for the 79th anniversary of the World War II D-Day landings. That same month, the Army officially rechristened Fort Bragg, North Carolina, as Fort Liberty. The Command Historian represented the command 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](#).

Recognizing the popularity of existing History

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.



CPT Paris D. Davis

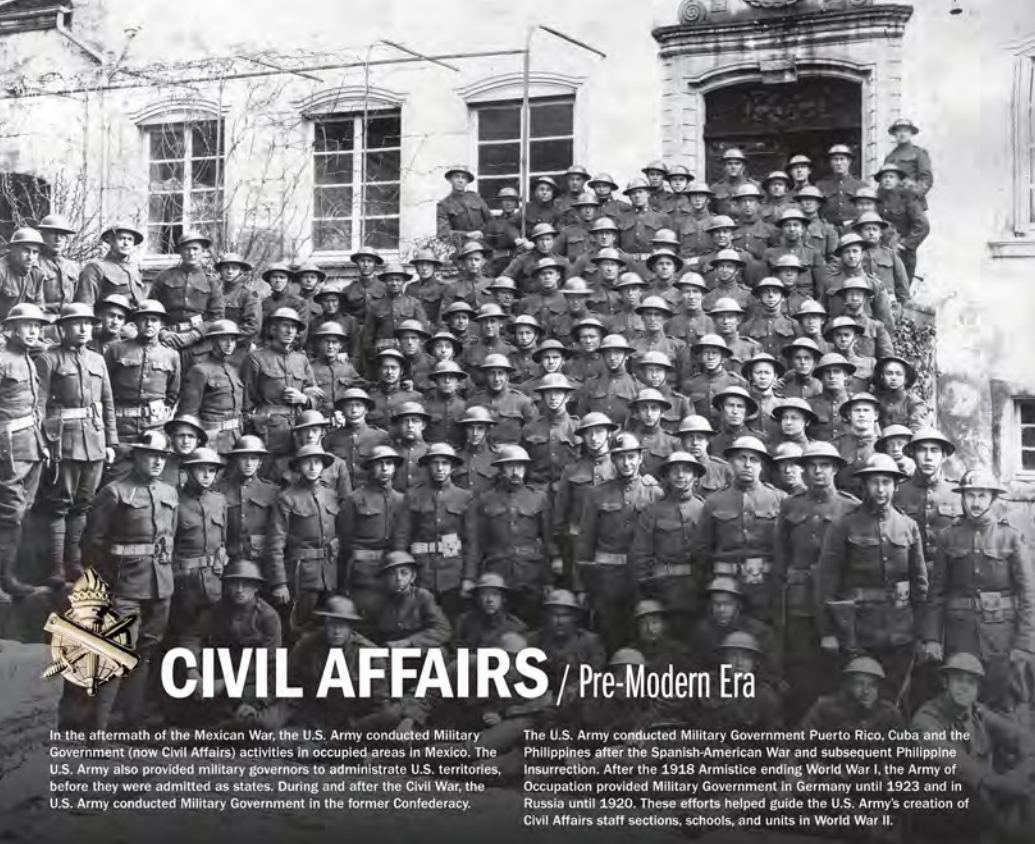
Special Forces

Captain Paris D. Davis, Commander, Detachment A-321, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as an advisor to the 883d Regional Force Company, Army of the Republic of Vietnam, during combat operations against an armed enemy in the vicinity of Bong Son, Republic of Vietnam, on June 17-18, 1965.

Captain Davis and three other U.S. Special Forces advisors accompanied the Vietnamese 883d Regional Force Company on its first combat mission, a daring nighttime raid against a Viet Cong Regional Headquarters housing a superior enemy force. Captain Davis' advice and leadership allowed the company to gain the tactical advantage, allowing it to surprise the unsuspecting enemy force and kill approximately 100 enemy soldiers. While returning from the successful raid, the Regional Force Company was ambushed and sustained several casualties. Captain Davis constantly exposed himself to hostile small arms fire to rally the inexperienced and disorganized company. He expertly directed both artillery and small arms fire, enabling other elements of the company to reach his position. Although wounded in the leg, he aided in the evacuation of other wounded men of his unit, but refused medical evacuation himself. Following the arrival of air support, Captain Davis directed artillery fire within 30 meters of his own position in an attempt to halt the enemy's advance. Then, with complete disregard for his own life, he braved intense enemy fire to cross an open field to rescue his seriously wounded and immobilized team sergeant.

While carrying the sergeant up a hill to a position of relative safety, Captain Davis was again wounded by enemy fire. Despite two painful wounds, Captain Davis again refused medical evacuation, remained with the troops, fought bravely, and provided pivotal leadership and inspiration to the Regional Force Company as they repelled several Viet Cong assaults on their position over a period of several hours. When friendly reinforcements finally arrived, Captain Davis again refused medical evacuation until he had recovered a U.S. advisor under his command who had been wounded during the initial ambush and presumed dead. While personally recovering the wounded soldier he found him severely wounded but still clinging to life. Captain Davis directed the helicopter extraction of his wounded colleague, not leaving the battlefield himself until after all friendly forces were recovered or medically evacuated.

Captain Davis' heroism and selflessness, above and beyond the call of duty at the risk of his own life, are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.



CIVIL AFFAIRS / Pre-Modern Era

In the aftermath of the Mexican War, the U.S. Army conducted Military Government (now Civil Affairs) activities in occupied areas in Mexico. The U.S. Army also provided military governors to administrate U.S. territories, before they were admitted as states. During and after the Civil War, the U.S. Army conducted Military Government in the former Confederacy.

The U.S. Army conducted Military Government Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines after the Spanish-American War and subsequent Philippine Insurrection. After the 1918 Armistice ending World War I, the Army of Occupation provided Military Government in Germany until 1923 and in Russia until 1920. These efforts helped guide the U.S. Army's creation of Civil Affairs staff sections, schools, and units in World War II.



MARS TASK FORCE

Activated on 26 July 1944, the 5332nd Brigade (Provisional) was the second American long range penetration group created for service in Burma (the first being Merrill's Marauders). Better known as the MARS Task Force, the unit consisted of the 475th Infantry Regiment, a lineage unit to the 75th Ranger Regiment, and the 124th Cavalry Regiment of the Texas National Guard. Each had attached medical elements, a pack field artillery battalion, and quartermaster troops. Until March 1945, the

"MARSmen" helped drive the Japanese from north Burma and clear a land route to China, after which they moved to China to train Chinese troops. A MARSman of note was First Lieutenant Jack L. Knight, the commanding officer of Troop F, 2nd Squadron, 124th Cavalry. For gallantry in combat on 2 February 1945, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. This was the only one awarded to a special operations soldier in World War II.

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.

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



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.

conducted, or supported, end-of-tour interviews with 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](https://www.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 precedent 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](https://www.arsof-history.org), five articles published to [Army.mil](https://www.army.mil), and

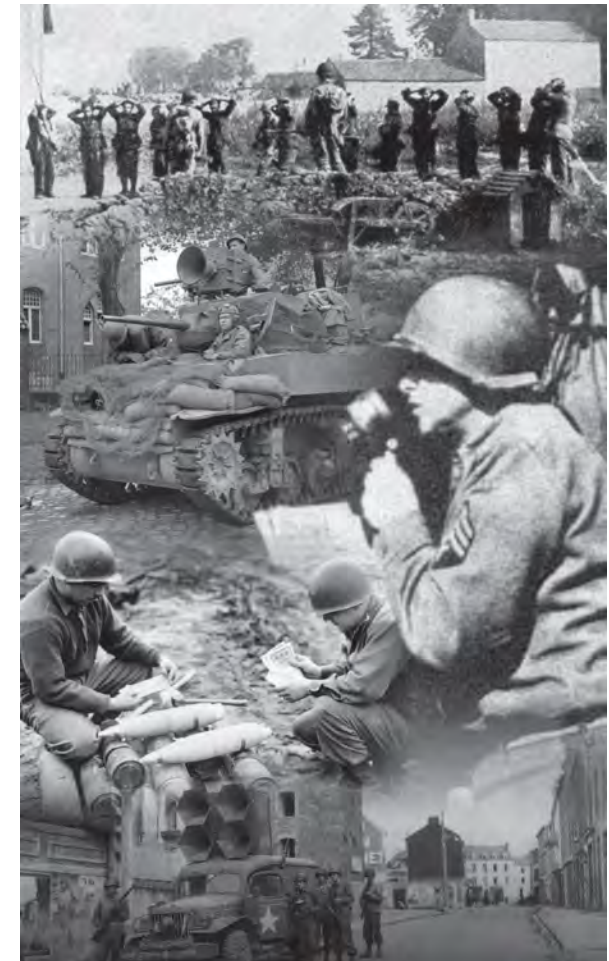
The two information panels pictured on the right were part of the "ARSOF in 1943" display located outside the Heritage Auditorium in the USASOC Headquarters (Building E-2929).




**RANGER
BATTALIONS**



Encouraged by the 1st Ranger Battalion's success in North Africa, the Army activated four more Ranger Battalions in 1943: the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th. By year's end, the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Ranger Battalions had earned combat honors in Sicily and Italy. The 2nd and 5th would enter the war the following June on the beaches of Normandy, France.



**MOBILE RADIO
BROADCASTING
COMPANIES**



The Army activated the 1st Mobile Radio Broadcasting Company (MRBC) at Camp Ritchie, Maryland, on 19 April 1943. Assigned to the Psychological Warfare Branch, Allied Force Headquarters, the 1st MRBC came equipped with mobile radio broadcast transmitters, printing presses, loudspeakers, and monitoring devices. Four additional MRBCs were activated in December 1943.

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.

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 ARSOF-History.org.

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 55th Anniversary of the Tet Offensive 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 1993.

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



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.

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 World War II Ranger battalions 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 USASOC Activation Ceremony 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.

**OFFICE OF
STRATEGIC SERVICES
OPERATIONAL GROUPS**

A joint military agency reporting directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) inspired future ARSOF training, doctrine, and organization. On 4 May 1943, the OSS established the Operational Groups (OG) to organize, train, and equip local resistance elements, and to conduct raids in enemy-held territory. The OGs served in Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, France, Norway, Burma, and China. Their structure provided the model for the Special Forces Operational Detachment – Alpha (SFODA).

(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](https://arsof-history.org).

The office commemorated the 70th Anniversary of Korean Armistice 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 USASOC support

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

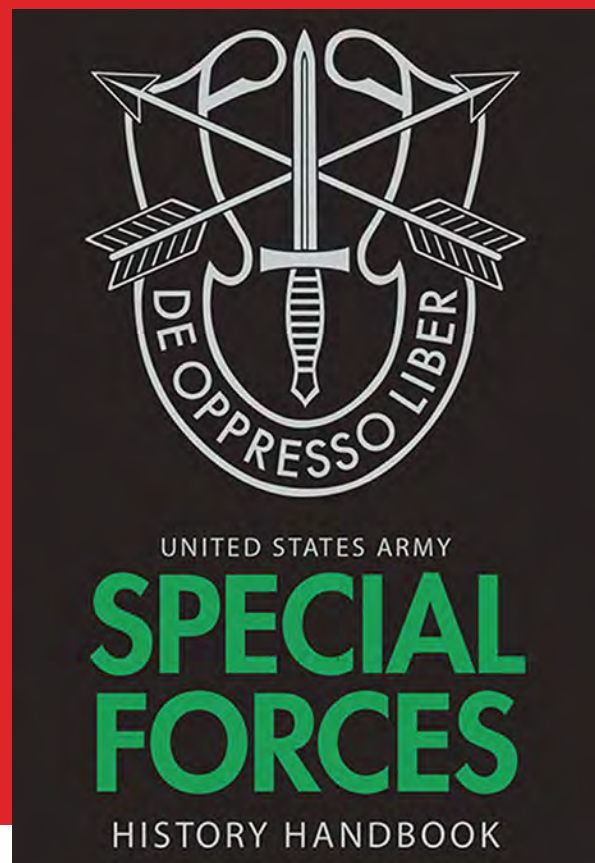
22 November 2023 marked the 60th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's assassination. A vocal supporter of ARSOF, and Special Forces, in particular, endorsing the wear of the green beret and advocating for wider employment of SF. To commemorate the anniversary, the office produced an article highlighting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





**Want more Army Special
Operations History?**

Check out our website:

[arsof-history.org](https://www.arsof-history.org)

Commander, USASOC
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E-2929 Desert Storm Drive
Fort Liberty, NC 28310-9110

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