



# ***SOF News***

February 2020 Issue

News, analysis, and commentary about special operations forces (SOF), national defense, military, and conflicts from around the world.



**Special Operations News From Around the World**

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**Image on front cover:** A Jump Master assigned to 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) gives the command of ‘GO’ to a paratrooper during an airborne operation in honor of the 101st birthday of the Warrant Officer Corps July 19, 2019 at Fort Bragg, N.C. To honor the 101st birthday of the Warrant Officer Corps, 3rd SFG (A) had a luncheon that proceeded a cake cutting conducted by the oldest and the youngest Warrant Officer who attended the event and conducted an airborne operation. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Steven Lewis)

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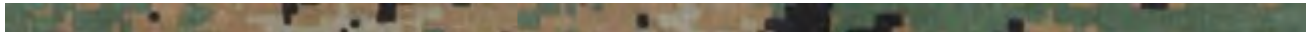
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**Contents.** This publication contains the feature articles and contents of other articles posted on [www.sof.news](http://www.sof.news) over the past month. Unless otherwise noted all photos are from the Department of Defense.

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## Military Freefall Association (MFFA)



The US Military Freefall Association is a collective of freefall parachutists, jumpmasters, and military freefall instructors bound by their common training, experience, and passion for military parachuting. The association seeks to promote an understanding of military freefall and to maintain a close relationship with the USAJFKSWCS Military Freefall School, veteran's organizations, and the larger parachuting community. This is a newly formed organization that will fill a void for a selective group within the special operations community.

There are numerous veterans interest groups and organizations across the country. Some are general in nature – providing information or services to current military service members or veterans. Others are more specialized – such as the Navy SEAL Foundation that seeks to assist active and former members of the SEAL community with events, scholarships, and assistance to wounded SEALs and their families.



(Continued)

## *(Military Freefall Association - MFFA . . . Continued)*

The Military Freefall Association (MFFA) is focused on the very technical and high-risk discipline of military freefall (MFF). One of the most technical skills in the United States armed services is MFF. It is a qualification usually restricted to the U.S. special operations community. Less than 1% of 1% of the U.S. military have received MFF training. Another purpose of the MFFA is to take actions that will memorialize fallen warriors from the MFF community.



### Members Wanted

Like any newly formed organization the MFFA is looking for new members. If you are a graduate of a United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) recognized MFF school or a former schoolhouse cadre member, then you qualify to join the MFFA. What does membership in the MFFA offer? First of all, you will receive an exclusive MFFA membership packet, full of MFFA swag! But beyond the bragging rights and the ability to connect to other members, you are also helping the association support the wider MFF community through sponsorship of events, honoring sacrifices of our fallen, and supporting the MFF schoolhouse to meet requirements that cannot be paid for with appropriated funds.

In addition, the organization will pass on relevant information (reports, policy, etc.) to members via email or through its online forum. There is also a "Members Area" (requires logon and password) that will allow you to connect to other MFFA members. And you get to purchase some MFFA swag through its online store. It is easy to [become a member](#).



(Continued)



## (Military Freefall Association - MFFA . . . Continued)

### Sponsors Wanted

All non-profit organizations require a certain level of funding to conduct its operations. If your organization, firm, or business would like to contribute to the work that the Military Freefall Association does then [becoming a sponsor](#) is the way to achieve that goal. Any person, business, or organization can sponsor, donate, or become an affiliate member of the Military Freefall Association. A sponsor's help can assist the MFFA help our fellow military freefall warriors.

### Upcoming MFFA Events

**Military Freefall Instructor Reunion.** The U.S. MFFA will host its annual Military Freefall Instructor Reunion on Friday, April 3, 2020 in Yuma, Arizona. Current and former instructors can share their stories, experiences, and challenges from across the generations of instructors since 1968.

**Military Freefall Ball.** The U.S. MFFA will host its annual "Freefall Ball" in Yuma, Arizona on Saturday, April 4, 2020 in Yuma, Arizona.



Military Freefall Association

<https://www.usmffa.org>

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**Photos:** All photographs and images are from the Department of Defense.

Article can be viewed online at:

<https://sof.news/sof/military-freefall-association/>



<http://www.blacksmithpublishing.com>

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# Afghanistan Conflict Update - February 2020



Curated news, analysis, and commentary about the conflict in Afghanistan. Topics include security, ANDSF, Resolute Support, NATO, governance, elections, peace talks, development, and more.

**More U.S. Deaths.** Two members of the U.S. Army Special Forces were killed on Saturday, February 8, 2020 in an [apparent insider attack](#). The incident took place in Shirzad district, Nangarhar province shortly after a key leader engagement (KLE) at the district center. As the Green Beret team and Afghan SOF partner unit were waiting on a helicopter on a pickup zone (PZ) on a nearby field an individual in an Afghan uniform opened up with a heavy machine gun. On February 12, 2020 a Soldier assigned to the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade based at Fort Drum, New York [died from a non-combat related incident](#) at Bagram Airfield. Last year in Afghanistan 23 U.S. troops died.

**U.S. Contractor Abducted.** Mark Frerichs, a 57-year old contractor has been kidnapped in Khost province on Friday, February 7, 2020. The likely abductors are the Haqqani network. He was traveling in the province while working for International Logistics Support. The FBI's Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell is on the case and the U.S. military forces are very likely searching the area and gathering intel.

**Insider Attacks.** There seems to be a slight increase in attacks by Afghan security force members against U.S. and NATO troops. On Saturday, February 8, 2020 an [Afghan policeman killed two Americans](#), wounded six other Americans, and killed up to eight Afghan SOF. The causes are difficult to ascertain – but it likely is a combination of Taliban infiltration, cultural differences (slights), disaffection with the U.S and Coalition troops, and other factors. Read [“Green-on-Blue Attacks: Too Much, Too Often”](#), *SOFREP*, February 9, 2020.

**Continue the TAA Mission – Best Hope for Future.** Karl Nicolas Lindenaub provides a detailed and informative analysis of why peace talks will fail and argues that continuing the train, advise, and assist mission for Afghan SOF units, Territorial Force, and other specialty units is the best hope for the future. Read [“Crossroads Afghanistan: Alternatives to a Forlorn Deal”](#), *Strategy Bridge*, February 10, 2020.

**Insider Threat – Preventive Measures**, by Jack Pagano, COMISAF Advisory and Assistance Team (CAAT), International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), 2012, 4 minutes. Posted on YouTube by Afghan War News. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=veUTnZTP4WQ>

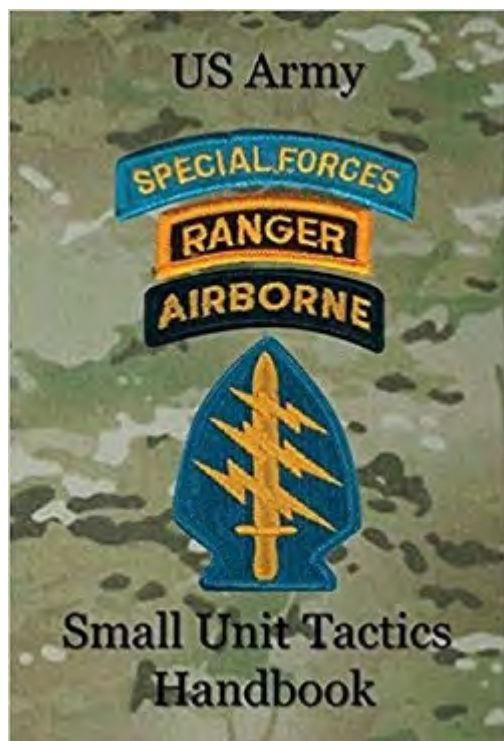
**“A Grunt at Work” in the Hindu Kush.** Colonel (Ret) Keith Nightingale writes about the lonely job of an infantryman at work in the mountains of Afghanistan during winter. [A Grunt at Work](#), *Small Wars Journal*, February 1, 2020.

**Top Photo:** Guardians at a checkpoint at Dande Patan District along the Durand Line – 203rd Corps, Afghanistan.

Read the entire article:

<https://sof.news/afghanistan/afghan-conflict-update-feb-2020/>





A conceptional overview of all relevant topics of small unit tactics every soldier ought to be familiar with in order to be effective on today's battlefield. The handbook is categorized into five functional areas; history, doctrine, planning, operations, and common skills.

While the book is useful to any one in the Army it is especially beneficial for the prospective Green Beret who is about to or is currently attending the Special Forces Qualification Course. The author was an instructor with the U.S. Army Special Forces Small Unit Tactics course that prepared Army soldiers for attendance at the Special Forces Qualification Course.

Published by Blacksmith Publishing, the book is available through several publishing outlets. You can read more at the link below:

[Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)



The Special Operations Warrior Foundation (SOWF) is a non-profit organization located in Tampa, Florida. The SOWF exists to care for the families of fallen and wounded special operations forces. The SOWF was founded in 1980 after the attempt to rescue 53 American hostages in Iran. The operation resulted in the loss of eight special operations servicemen who left behind 17 children.

Read more in [“Special Operations Warrior Foundation \(SOWF\) - A Good Cause!”](#), by SOF News, August 9, 2019.

# Southern Strike 2020



Special Tactics Airmen and Green Berets from the 3rd and 20th Special Forces Group participated in Southern Strike 2020. The event was a large-scale, joint multinational combat exercise hosted by the Mississippi Air National Guard. This exercise provided special operators a unique training opportunity that provided tactical level training for the full spectrum conflict.

**Exercise Scope.** The time frame of the exercise was from January 30 to February 13, 2020. The Southern Strike exercise is a National Guard Bureau (NGB), Title 32 funded, tactical exercise program. The Joint Exercise Control Group (JECG) is comprised of military and civilian personnel with extensive SOF experience. The Mississippi National Guard hosts and supports this annual event.



## (Southern Strike 2020 . . . Continued)

**Training Areas.** The large-scale exercise took place in Mississippi at several military installations. Many of the primary (C2) events took place at the Combat Readiness Training Center (CRTC) in Gulfport, Mississippi. Outlying locations provided many of the field training opportunities. These included Camp Shelby, Fort Morgan (AL), Camp McCain Training Center, and Naval Air Station Meridian.

**Participating Units.** More than 2,000 service members from 22 states – and some international participants as well – conducted missions designed to enhance their effectiveness. The participating air units came from diverse fields to include ISR, close air support, airlift (fixed and rotary), and Aeromedical Evacuation. Active duty, National Guard, Reserve units were all represented. The countries of Bulgaria, Uzbekistan, and the Netherlands all provided military personnel.

### List of Units:

- 3rd Special Forces Group
- 20th Special Forces Group
- Dutch SOF
- Air Force Special Operations Surgical Team (SOST)
- 125th Special Tactics Squadron (STS) (ANG)
- 183rd Airlift Squadron
- 1st Battalion, 185th Aviation Regiment
- Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133 (Seabees)
- Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 60
- 49th Fighter Training Squadron
- 119th Wing
- 266th Range Squadron

And many more . . .

### Aircraft Participating:

- UH-60 Blackhawks
- CH-47 Chinooks
- Apaches
- T-38 Talons
- KC-135 Stratotanker
- A-10 Thunderbolt II
- B-1 Bomber
- MQ-9 Reaper
- MH-60R Seahawk

**Exercise Features.** The Southern Strike 2020 event featured counterinsurgency, air supremacy, close air support, en route casualty care, non-combatant evacuations, maritime and riverine special operations. In addition, staffs were provided the opportunity to further develop staff functions and procedures.

(continued . . .)



(Southern Strike 2020 . . . Continued)



Photo: U.S. Air Force Special Tactics operators clear an objective at Fort Morgan, Alabama during Southern Strike. USAF photo by MSgt Jason Robertson, Feb 6, 2020.

**SOF Ground Unit Training.** Ground units from Special Tactics, 3rd Special Forces Group, and the 20th Special Forces Group conducted a variety of missions supported by air assets. COIN, Direct Action, Close Air Support, and other missions were exercised. There was a lot of air activity due to the huge role played by the air units. This afforded the SOF ground elements plenty of opportunities to conduct air infils, exfils, close air support calls for fire, helicopter hoist operations, and more.

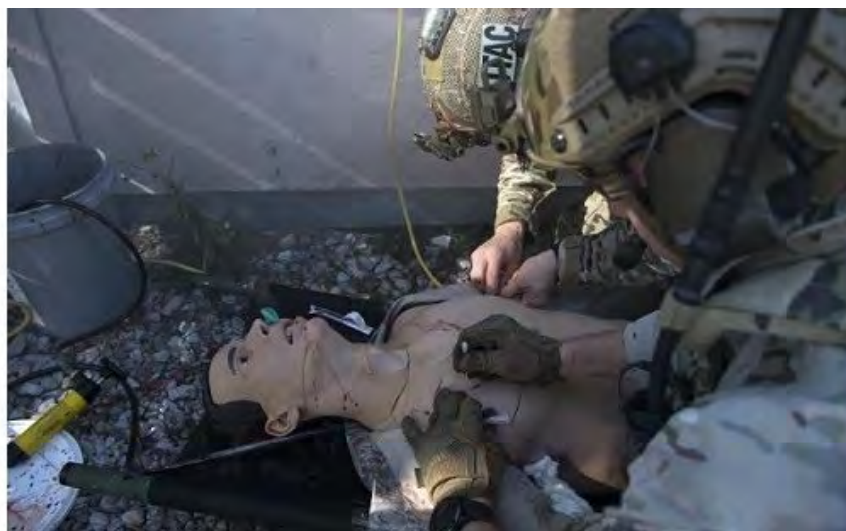


Photo: A Tactical Air Control Party airman practices medical care on a simulated wounded person during Exercise Southern Strike 2020. USAF photo.

**USAF SOST.** A [Special Operations Surgical Team](#) (SOST) was able to work with other SOF elements during the exercise. The training helps mitigate medical risk factors on deployments where the SOST may need to perform lifesaving surgeries and medical care en route to a Role 2 medical facility. The SOST provides four unique medical capabilities – advanced trauma resuscitation, tactical damage control surgery, post-op critical care, and critical care evacuation. [1]

(continued . . .)

## (Southern Strike 2020 . . . Continued)

**MQ-9 Reapers.** Remotely piloted vehicles were integrated into the exercise. One of the missions was flown from Gulfport up to Camp Shelby where it dropped a GPS guided inert bomb (GBU 38). The MQ-9s belong to the 119th Wing in Fargo, North Dakota. It is one of only five Launch and Recovery Elements (LRE) in the Air National Guard. The Reapers were launched by local controllers in Gulfport using “line of sight” takeoff. Once airborne the Reapers were handed off to pilots in Ohio’s Mission Control Element (MCE) in Springfield, Ohio. From there the aircraft is flown by the pilot using satellite architecture. The MQ-9 pilots work with JTACs on the ground for the missions. [2]



Photo: A U.S. Navy MH-60R Seahawk from the Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 60 is refueled at a Forward Arming and Refueling Point during Southern Strike 2020 at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. Photo by USAF SSgt Trevor McBride, February 4, 2020.

**Setting Up FARP.** One of the exercise events was the establishment of a Forward Arming and Refueling Point or FARP. The FARPs were used as temporary refueling sites for helicopters to refuel – extending the time and range that they can fly. FARPs were set up at Gulfport and Camp Shelby.

**Ninth Iteration of Southern Strike.** This year’s Southern Strike was the ninth iteration of the exercise. The event is an excellent opportunity for ground special operations teams to work closely with a variety of air platforms during training events.

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### References:

[1] [“Special Tactics Airmen participate in Southern Strike 2020”](#), 24 SOW, February 11, 2020.

[2] [“Flying the MQ-9. One of the Many Firsts at Southern Strike”](#), DVIDS, February 9, 2020.

[3] [“All Systems Go”](#), JFH MS National Guard, February 11, 2020. A Senior Airman discusses the role of the MQ-9 Reaper in the Southern Strike 2020 exercise.

**Top Photo:** MH-60R Seahawk aircrew member, assigned to the Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 60 out of Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida conducts live-fire close air support at Camp Shelby, Mississippi as part of Southern Strike 2020. USAF photo by SSgt Trevor McBride, February 4, 2020.

Visit the below link to read the article online:

<https://sof.news/exercises/southern-strike-2020/>

# Report - Counterterrorism Operations in Africa - OIG Feb 2020



The Lead Inspector General has published an unclassified report to Congress entitled *East Africa and North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operations*. The 84-page report covers the period of October through December 2019. Congress requires (since 2013) the IGs of the Departments of State, Defense, and USAID to provide quarterly reports to Congress on active overseas contingency operations. The DoD Inspector General was designated the Lead IG for CT operations in Africa. The report also includes an appendix containing classified information that is provided to relevant agencies and congressional committees.

The report is timely given the desire of the U.S. to shift assets – military personnel and resources – from Africa to Europe and the Pacific. The shift in focus will allow the U.S. to counter threats from Russia and China. AFRICOM has presented its view that the threats in Africa remain and are growing – from jihadist groups and from Russia and China.

The threat by ISIS-Somalia and al Shabaab in East Africa remains high. The U.S. recently suffered three deaths and several aircraft destroyed in January 2020 in the [al Shabaab raid at Manda Bay](#). In West Africa the U.S. is assisting French and Africa partner forces to conduct counterterrorism operations against jihadist groups. The attacks by these violent extremist organizations (VEOs) have been intensifying. In West Africa U.S. Africa Command has shifted its strategy from degrading the VEOs to one of containment. North Africa is not spared the threat from VEOs. These groups remain active and there is concern that they will once again rise up in Libya.

AFRICOM and SOCAfrica may soon be losing resources to employ in the counterterrorism fight. These lost resources will affect a host of other activities that ensure stability and security across the region. The ability to sustain or grow U.S. influence in the region may also diminish due to the loss of assets and resources. This is happening at the same time that China and Russia are seeking to expand their security cooperation efforts and their influence in Africa.

The threat in Africa remains high; yet the challenge presented from Russia and China cannot be ignored. The defense budget can only go so far and tough decisions will be made over the next several months that will have consequences around the globe.

The report can be accessed on the website of the Department of State Office of Inspector General:

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*East Africa and North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operations*  
Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress  
February 2020

[https://www.stateoig.gov/system/files/q1fy2020\\_leadig\\_ea\\_nw\\_africa\\_cto.pdf](https://www.stateoig.gov/system/files/q1fy2020_leadig_ea_nw_africa_cto.pdf)

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<https://sof.news/africa/report-oig-ct-africa-feb-2020/>





<https://reconfoundation.org>



[www.specialforcescharitabletrust.org](http://www.specialforcescharitabletrust.org)



[www.specialoperations.org](http://www.specialoperations.org)



<https://specialops.org/>

# Al Shabaab Raid on Manda Bay



On January 5, 2020 militants from al-Shabaab attacked the U.S. airfield and base at Manda Bay Airfield in Kenya. Three Americans died in the attack. In addition, several aircraft were destroyed or damaged to include U.S. special operations aircraft. Two other Americans were wounded in the attack.

Despite losing fighters – estimated at five – in the attack, the insurgents likely consider this raid on Manda Bay a significant victory. Al Qaeda linked groups have been using social media to capitalize on the Manda Bay attack by Al Shabaab. Posters have been released in several languages congratulating the attackers of the Manda Bay raid.



## A Successful Raid

Most press accounts reflect the prevailing view that this was a very successful attack by the terrorist group. On January 6, 2020 AFRICOM acknowledged that “the enemy achieved a degree of success in its attack.” The attackers took advantage of a fairly undefended base perimeter. The small base had been considered an ‘out of the way’ installation that seemed to not be at risk of attack. [1]

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## (Al Shabaab Raid on Manda Bay - January 2020)

The attack began early on a Sunday morning on January 5th when it was still dark. Al-Shabaab fired mortar rounds onto Camp Simba while attacking the nearby airfield. Al Shabaab forces operate in some of Kenya's dense forests just miles away from the base. However U.S. defense officials believe the attacking force originated from within Somalia's borders. There are also indications that the attackers were supported by a component inside of Kenya. The size of the attacking force is not known – but it probably was in the range of 15 to 30 personnel. The attackers would have to transit over 50 to 70 miles once across the Somalia border to reach Camp Simba.

**Americans Killed.** Army Specialist Henry Mayfield Jr. and two U.S. Department of Defense contractors died in the attack. Two other defense contractors were injured. Specialist Mayfield, age 23, was working as an air traffic controller from a truck on the airfield. [He was assigned](#) to the 58th Aviation Regiment based at Fort Rucker, Alabama. Mayfield was deployed in support of Operation Octave Shield. [Dustin Harrison](#) and Bruce Triplett were private pilots for [L3 Technologies](#). They were killed when their aircraft was hit with a rocket as it was taxiing on the runway.



One of the aircraft destroyed at Manda Bay Airfield  
(Photo credit al Shabaab, January 5, 2020 - screen grab Twitter)

**Aircraft Destroyed.** Six contractor-operated aircraft were destroyed in the attack. A few were highly sophisticated surveillance aircraft used by the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). One of the destroyed aircraft include a modified [Havilland Canada Dash-8](#). The Dash-8 is believed [to be equipped](#) with wide-area sensors to carry out surveillance missions in support of SOF units. Some news reports indicate that one of the other destroyed aircraft was a MC12W used for ISR missions in support of SOF. Two or three helicopters are reported to be destroyed. One news report indicated the [value of the equipment and aircraft](#) destroyed is believed to be above \$20 million. [2]

## Why is the U.S. at Manda Bay?

The U.S. military is in Kenya training the country's military and conducting counterterrorism operations in the region. The U.S. is also assisting the Kenyan security forces in the fight against al-Shabaab. Camp Simba and the Manda Bay Airfield are used as a base and staging area for U.S. surveillance aircraft and for U.S. SOF working alongside Kenya security forces in the porous border area between Kenya and Somalia to the north. It is also a [staging point for operations into Somalia](#).

(continued . . . )



## (Al Shabaab Raid on Manda Bay - January 2020)

### Where is Manda Bay?

Camp Simba is a very small outpost about a mile away from the Manda Bay Airfield. It is situated on the Kenya coast and near the Somali border. The camp and airfield are located on the Kenya Defense Military Base at Manda Bay. The small complex was established in 2004 as the United States established regional staging areas to combat terrorism around the world. If you do a check on the Internet you will find two airfields. One associated with Camp Simba and the other – just to the south – handles commercial and civilian air traffic.



There are a variety of training courses conducted at the Manda Bay complex. These include anti-piracy, human trafficking, explosive detonation, vessel boarding, and search and seizure. At first the US part of the camp was extremely small but in 2012 it was upgraded considerably with new facilities. [3]

For many years the base was relatively quiet with a small maritime training mission in place. There were at times no more than a dozen U.S military personnel with some DOD contractors. With the growth of the U.S. involvement in the fight against al Shabaab in Somalia, Manda Bay has increased in size. In 2017 the small camp started a [base operating support-integrator](#) (BOS-I) mission. Training, medical, and administrative support is provided to Kenya partner forces – Kenyan Rangers, law enforcement organizations, and the Kenyan Navy. [4]

One of the units based at Manda Bay Airfield is the 475th Expeditionary Air Base Squadron. The airfield serves as a launching location for air operations in the region – including Somalia. There are about 350 Defense Department personnel in Kenya at various locations.

### U.S. Unprepared for Attack

Several news accounts stated that the base [was lightly defended and unprepared for an attack](#). There very likely was a reliance on Kenyan security forces to provide overall security.

“I think it’s self-obvious we were not as prepared there at Manda Bay as we needed to be. Al-Shabab managed to penetrate onto that airfield . . . They were able to get access to that airfield, kill three Americans, and destroy six aircraft there. So we weren’t as prepared, and we’re digging into that to find out why that’s the case.”

*General Townsend, Commander of AFRICOM, January 30, 2020 while testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee.*

### U.S Reaction to Attack

**Initial Response.** A Marine special operations team of about a dozen Marines located in Camp Simba [responded to the airfield attack](#) alongside some Kenyan Rangers. Al-Shabaab suffered at least five fatalities in the attack. At least one Marine Raider was injured in the fighting. The responding Marines were from the 3rd Marine Raider Battalion based at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. An AFRICOM statement said “. . . a timely and effective response to the attack reduced the number of casualties and eliminated the potential for further damage.” MARSOC has been sending Marine Raiders to Kenya on Foreign Internal Defense (FID) missions to train up the Kenyan Rangers for a number of years.

(continued . . . )

## (Al Shabaab Raid on Manda Bay - January 2020)

**Additional Reinforcements – EARF.** The Manda Bay facilities were quickly [reinforced with U.S. troops](#). The responding unit were members of the U.S. Africa Command's East Africa Response Force (EARF). They were deployed to the Manda Bay Airfield to augment security. Currently the EARF are comprised of soldiers from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division. They were transported to Manda Bay via a C-130J Super Hercules assigned to the 75th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron on January 5, 2020. It is unknown how long these additional forces will remain at Manda Bay. A small Special Forces contingent arrived at Camp Lemonier, Djibouti as well. There are no details on the composition of this element at this time.



**EARF Mission.** The mission of the EARF, a company-sized element, is to protect U.S. citizens, diplomatic locations, and conduct other missions as appropriate. They are a combat-ready, rapid deployment force. While in theater they operate out of Djibouti under the control of the [Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa](#) (HOA).

**Senior Commanders Visit.** Senior U.S. Africa Command officials [visited the Manda Bay Airfield](#) and Camp Simba on January 9, 2020 to meet with troops and commanders on the ground about details of the attack by al-Shabaab. One of those was Major General Michael Turello – the commander of Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). Turello is a long-time Special Forces officer with previous deployments to the Horn of Africa. [5]

**New Security Measures in Place.** About 120 American infantrymen were securing the Camp Simba and Manda Bay Airfield area in the period immediately after the attack. Efforts are being made to upgrade the defense posture to ensure the small base can be properly defended. This will likely include additional troops to guard the two facilities (airfield and camp) and to patrol the immediate area. Patrols would likely be joint with units of the Kenyan security forces.

**MD-530F Helicopters for Kenya.** On January 23, 2020 – just days after the January 5 raid on Manda Bay – the United States delivered six Cayuse Warrior helicopters to Kenya security forces. Another six MD-530Fs are programmed for delivery in the future. The MD-530F's will replace aging MD-500 utility helicopters currently in use. The small, agile attack helicopters carry machine gun pods, M260 rocket launchers, and other armament. The helicopters are ideal for scouting, reconnaissance, attack, and close air support for Kenya Defense Force ground operations. The U.S. has provided a number of [MD-530F helicopters](#) to the Afghan Air Force. The delivery of the helicopters are very likely not related to the Manda Bay raid and had been a long time in the planning process. [6]

**US-Funded JTTF.** Kenya has been chosen as the site for the first US-funded Joint Terrorism Task Force that will be located outside of the United States. Kenyan investigators will attend a 12-week intensive counter-terrorism course at the U.S. FBI Academy. They will form the nucleus of Kenya's JTTF. The assistance provided is in response to the growing threat to Kenya posed by al Shabaab. [7]

(continued . . . .)

## (Al Shabaab Raid on Manda Bay - January 2020)

### Impact of the Raid

**Immediate Impact.** The successful raid by al-Shabaab will have some consequences. Of course the most important impact will be on the families of the three Americans who lost their lives. An immediate result of the raid will be the diversion of time and energy of some of the Americans based at Camp Simba and the Manda Bay Airfield from their normal responsibilities and duties to that of base defense and force protection. In addition, the complex will need to be augmented with additional personnel taken from their jobs somewhere else (Europe, Camp Lemonier, etc.) to heighten the security posture.

**Strategic Impact.** This raid took place at a time that the Department of Defense is attempting to reduce the number U.S. personnel based in the AFRICOM area of responsibility. The raid also points out the vulnerability of small bases from which U.S. SOF and conventional personnel are conducting training with partner mission forces and counterterrorism missions. While DOD is likely focused on cutting back its engagement in West Africa; there is the possibility that the mission in the Horn of Africa could also be downsized.

### Future Prospects for Manda Bay?

**Upgrading Security.** AFRICOM, CJTF-HOA, and SOCAfrica are all very likely reviewing their force prevention plans, quick reaction force posture, MEDEVAC procedures, and personnel recovery plans. It is likely that some locations where training is conducted or CT missions supported from in Africa will be eliminated due to force protection concerns.

**U.S. Will Remain in Manda Bay.** The importance of Manda Bay cannot be overstated. The base is small, far from a U.S. military facility, and a long way from PR assets. However, it is an important base for the training of Kenya ground and maritime units. In addition, it is a staging base for mounting a variety of counterterrorism missions against al-Shabaab in the region. Camp Simba and the associated airfield will likely be reinforced with security personnel and the security and force protection posture will be significantly increased.

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#### Footnotes:

- [1] An article by Katie Bo Williams provides more information about the lightly defended perimeter of the Manda Bay Airfield in "[Kenya Base 'Surprisingly' Undefended During Attack, US Officials Say](#)", *Defense One*, January 29, 2020.
- [2] For a detailed analysis of aircraft destroyed [read an article](#) published in *The Aviationist*.
- [3] Read more in "[US Military Base at Camp Simba Bay in Lamu](#)", *Kenyans.co.ke*, January 15, 2020.
- [4] See "[The U.S.'s overlooked counter-terrorism outpost in Kenya](#)", *Conflict Geographies*, November 29, 2016.
- [5] "[Senior U.S. Africa Command Officials Visit Troops at Manda Bay](#)", *United States Africa Command*, January 9, 2020.
- [6] See "[United States delivers MD-530F helicopters to Kenya Defense Force](#)", *CJTF-HOA*, January 23, 2020.
- [7] See "[Kenya, FBI partner on first anti-terror task force outside US](#)", *The East African*, February 11, 2020.

#### References:

- [1] *Camp Simba Attack*, Wikipedia  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp\\_Simba\\_attack](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_Simba_attack)
- [2] *Al Shabaab*, Congressional Research Service (CRS), January 16, 2020.  
<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10170>
- [3] "[Between Blackhawk Down and Simba](#)", International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, January 12, 2020.
- [4] "[U.S. Using Local Soldiers to Fight al-Qaida Allies in East Africa](#)", *NTI*, March 11, 2013.

**Photo:** EARF lands at Manda Bay Airfield following al-Shabaab attack in January 2020. Photo by USAF January 6, 2020.

Read the article online:

<https://sof.news/africa/manda-bay/>





[www.longtabbrewing.com](http://www.longtabbrewing.com)



[www.75thrangerregiment.org](http://www.75thrangerregiment.org)



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[www.cia.gov/careers/opportunities](http://www.cia.gov/careers/opportunities)

# K2 Vets, Cancer, and the VA



The U.S. military occupied a base known as “K2” (Karshi-Khanabad Airbase) in southern Uzbekistan from 2001 to 2005. This was a former Soviet base where chemical weapons and hazardous materials were stored and hazardous waste buried. There is increasing evidence that K2 Vets – veterans who were formerly assigned to K2 – are experiencing a significantly higher than normal rate of cancer. Many K2 Vets have died from cancer and many more are ill from cancer. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has been negligent in its recognition of the health hazards associated with K2 and non-responsive to the requests for medical treatment by veterans who served at K2.

## History of K2

The base was used to launch airstrikes and support operations against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in the fall of 2001. K2 was one of the initial launching pads of Special Forces teams that entered northern Afghanistan. As K2 operations and facilities expanded, several thousand U.S. military personnel would serve there over a period of five years. As initial OEF offensive operations concluded, K2 evolved into a significant logistics hub.

**Soviet Era at K2.** The Soviet military extensively used the Karshi-Khanabad air base to support its operations in Afghanistan during the 1979 – 1989 period. In addition, it was a base where it produced, stored, and tested various types of weapons – to include chemical weapons. When the Soviets withdrew from the base it dismantled the chemical weapon production facility and removed the stockpile of its chemical weapons. However, residual contamination remained in the ground and associated facilities.

In addition, the Soviet airbase was a former storage area for fuel, solvents, and other contaminants. It also served as a dumping ground for the Soviets for toxic waste materials, asbestos, enriched uranium, and other hazardous materials. Spills of toxic materials were a common occurrence at the former Soviet base.

**Launching Pad for Operations into Afghanistan.** Very little was known about the base when it was initially occupied by the 5th Special Forces Group, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (-), Air Force units, and other supporting units. In the early phases of the war, having just experienced the 9/11 attacks, there was a huge push on setting up an operational base from which to conduct operations into Afghanistan. In addition, the base was vital for airstrikes, medical evacuation, and resupply airdrops. A base was needed to launch SF teams into Afghanistan to link up with the Northern Alliance and topple the Taliban. [1]

(continued . . .)



(k2 Vets, Cancer, and the VA . . . Continued)



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**Black 'Goo' and 'Green Liquid'.** What was known about K2 in the early stages of its occupation is that 'black goo' and 'green liquid' would seep up from the ground, nearby ditches and trenches held questionable water (discolored), . . . and people were getting sick. When heavy rains flooded the compound, strange-looking 'green' water flowed into tents occupied by US personnel. Some ponds were nicknamed 'Skittles' because they glowed like candy. When the U.S. initially occupied the base there were numerous signs posted by the Uzbekistan authorities warning of the presence of chemical agents and radioactive materials.



**K2 Tent City.** Most K2 residents lived and worked in tents. Some worked in hard structures but later were moved to other structures due to contaminants. (photo provided by CSM Ret Jose Silva)

(continued . . .)



## (K2 Vets, Cancer, and the VA . . . Continued)

**Initial Concern.** There was concern among those based at K2 about the health ramifications of the camp. A favorite 'photo op' was taking a picture next to a warning sign about chemical contamination or radiation hazards that were posted in various sections of the airfield. Medical sections of some of the units that were based at K2 distributed memos listing the medical hazards of K2 for personnel to enclose in their health records. These memos highlighted the extraordinary levels of noise at the airbase, the intense dust storms and airborne particulate matter, and volatile fumes in some of the air base structures where U.S. military personnel worked. However, conducting detailed risk and health assessments on the real estate of hastily occupied bases supporting the initial war effort was not a priority.

### A Growing Awareness Among K2 Vets

After returning to the states it soon became apparent to members of the units that were based at K2 that an extraordinary number of their fellow service members were falling ill and some of them dying of a host of illnesses. The most serious illnesses plaguing the K2 Vets were the different types of cancer – lung, prostate, colon, and head and neck cancers. In addition, personnel were experiencing respiratory and gastrointestinal problems, skin rashes, and other unexplained medical ailments.

As the years progressed unit members transferred to other units, left military service, retired, or passed away. No one was keeping tabs on the medical health of service members stationed at K2 as a group. So initially, there was just lots of rumor and speculation among K2 Vets who stayed in contact with each other. However, it was more than speculation for those veterans afflicted with a health condition or diagnosed with cancer. To those K2 Vets there was a very distinct line drawn from their medical condition to a tent city on the edge of an air base in Central Asia.



### Veterans Affairs – Very Little Help

Many K2 Vets filed claims with the Veterans Administration (VA) – some with a variety of health concerns. Many of the health concerns could not be directly linked to K2 – even though the veteran certainly had some strong opinions on that topic. For many veterans, dealing with the VA is problematic. A typical retiree with 25 years' service in the infantry will experience a host of medical issues that develop over time. A bad back, bad knees, traumatic head injuries, and so on. The dilemma is the 'documentation' that ties the injury to a specific event in the service. The same can be said about a cancer that develops years after exposure to radiation or chemical agents. How does a K2 Vet with a health condition link it to a nine-month deployment spent in a chemical wasteland years ago?

### A Movement Grows

What slowly became obvious to K2 Vets was that fact that many of their colleagues who worked with them at K2 were ill or dying off. It took a lot of years for the K2 Vets to finally come together and organize themselves. Certainly, on an individual basis or as part of a small group, efforts were made, but these were isolated and not tied together in a larger movement.

**News Articles Highlighting the Issue.** However, things have changed and the K2 Vets are getting organized. In December 2019 Tara Copp, a journalist for McClatchy News Agency, began running a series of stories about the cancer rate of K2 Vets. Her stories were picked up by other news agencies. The story began getting some traction. Other news outlets soon published their own articles. Links to these articles can be found under References: below.

**K2 Vets Facebook Group.** Some K2 Vets got together and decided to establish a Facebook group for K2 Vets. The membership of this Facebook group – K2 Karshi-Khanabad, Uzbekistan Radiation and Toxic Exposures Group – grew quickly in the past several months. Friends starting inviting friends to the group. It now has thousands of members.

(continued . . . )

## (K2 Vets, Cancer, and the VA . . . Continued)

Stories were shared about who died, who was sick, and the current frustration with the Veterans Administration. Pictures were posted of the 'poo' trenches, green pools of water, flooded tent areas, and chemical warning signs. The administrators of the group provided reference documents for detailing the issue. A survey form was posted encouraging K2 Vets to complete – so that a database could be populated with information that would provide a more informative picture of the K2 problem.

**National Attention.** As a result of the Facebook page, the news reports, veterans contacting their congressional representatives, and other factors – the K2 Vets are receiving notice and becoming more organized. As a group they are sending letters to congressional representatives and offering tips to fellow veterans for dealing with the VA. K2 Veterans have been meeting with congressional committees in Washington to raise awareness of this issue.



**Stronghold Freedom Foundation.** The founders of the K2 Facebook group and other activists have come together to form the Stronghold Freedom Foundation. The name that the U.S. gave Karshi-Khanabad camp during Operation Enduring Freedom was Camp Stronghold Freedom. The mission of the “. . . Stronghold Freedom Foundation is to utilize awareness and partnerships to serve those who were exposed to toxic conditions while deployed in the service of our country.” The SFF is a legal, non-profit organization. The Stronghold Freedom Foundation can be found on Facebook.

## VA Response

The Veterans Administration's response to claims by veterans about illness related to K2 has been dismal. Most claims filed at local VA locations were dismissed, stonewalled, or lost in the passage of time. In the bigger picture – in Washington – the VA has not done much better. A recent statement in January 2020 by a spokeswoman for the Veterans Administration, Ms. Susan Carter, said:

*“The limitations of self-reported surveys are well documented in the medical research community, but the VA will work with the Department of Defense to study this issue further as new empirical data becomes available.”*

While Ms. Carter alluded to the necessity of empirical data, she neglected to describe who would generate it and when it would be become available. Her response was viewed by K2 veterans as just another example of the VA dismissing and downplaying the problem. The response of the Veteran's community was immediate. Many Veterans are writing letters to the VA with their concerns about VA avoidance on the topic. Most have not received responses.

(continued . . . )

## (K2 Vets, Cancer, and the VA . . . Continued

During a recent press conference (5 Feb 2020) the head of the Veterans Administration was questioned about the issue and he provided a quick response. He used some reassuring phrases such as: 'come forward', 'come see us', 'file a claim', 'this is not your grandfather's VA', and more. But reassuring words are worthless without the action that goes with it. His statements put the burden on the veteran to take action – by once again filing a claim with the VA. [2]

The Veterans Affairs has denied K2 veterans service connection of their illnesses to deployment at K2. This affects the veteran's disability ratings, medical services, and support that the VA provides to the K2 vets.



**The K2 berms were constructed from dirt top soil within the camp. When the wind picked up, dust from the berms was airborne throughout the camp.  
(photo provided by CSM Ret Jose Silva)**

**Veterans want more on this issue.** They want action at the national level. The VA should reach out to the Department of Defense and put some effort into identifying those veterans who served at K2. The VA and DOD should work together to develop the 'empirical data' concerning the contaminants at K2 and the subsequent health benefits suffered by K2 vets. The military does a good job of monitoring the health of current military personnel. However, those personnel who departed the service shortly after their tour at K2 are not monitored by the VA or military. In addition, the great number of National Guard and Reserve service members who served at K2 are not monitored as well. The VA should reach out to these 'forgotten vets' to notify them of possible health repercussions associated with service at K2 and to inquire as to their current health status. There is so much more that the VA could do than encourage the individual veteran to 'file another claim'.

## Congressional Action

Many Veterans are calling or writing letters to their Congressional delegations. Some Veterans are getting 'polite' responses thanking them for their question and reassuring them that the Veterans concerns are 'at the top of my list'. Other Congressional representatives are promising action. A few have even taken action and have called or wrote letters to the Veterans Administration and Department of Defense on the topic.

K2 is a unique situation, compared to Agent Orange and burn pits, in that there is a very specific and clearly identifiable population (7000+ personnel) who occupied a very small piece of real estate for a clearly defined period of time (2001 – 2005). The VA has absolutely no excuse for not already notifying the service members who served at K2 that they may have been exposed to certain hazards. The onus should not be on the veterans, some of whom have not and will not receive any pertinent notification, to close the loop on this issue. [3]

## What Can K2 Veterans Do?

One of the first actions a K2 Vet should take is to complete the health survey on the K2 Facebook group. This is a private group and to belong you need to be vetted. Once in the group, take the survey.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/174401532675073/>

(continued . . .)



## *(K2 Vets, Cancer, and the VA . . . Continued*

As the head of the Veterans Administration said, go back to the VA and file or refile a claim. Surely the VA is addressing the issue internally, memos have been sent to all, and VA personnel in the local clinics will now be aware of the K2 cancer incidence situation. At least one would hope this has happened.

One K2 Vet who found he had cancer within months of returning from a long deployment to K2 has some tips for K2 Vets. It is an informal yet informative info paper on how to deal with the VA. [4]

Address your concerns with the Veterans Administration at the national level as well. The more pressure put on the VA the more likely they are to respond. Letters should be professional and detailed. [5]

Contact your Congressional representative. The more exposure Congress has on the issue the more likely 'veteran friendly' Congressional staffers and representatives will get involved. This will encourage Congress to apply pressure to the Veterans Administration and the Department of Defense to take action.

## Lessons Observed for DOD

There are some enormous lessons that the Department of Defense should have learned from the K2 debacle – particularly as they relate to establishing a lodgment where US forces are compelled to occupy facilities that might be contaminated. Everyone who deployed to K2 understood the necessity of the mission and the risks it entailed. Despite this, it is clear that DoD failed to mitigate the risks early on, and what little they did (putting a layer of dirt on top of contaminants) offered scarce protection to future occupants.



**Flooding at K2 Tent Camp. The entire camp was covered with stones and gravel to 'cap' the contaminated ground. However, when rain or flooding occurred the contaminants would rise to the surface and spread.  
(photo provided by CSM Ret Jose Silva)**

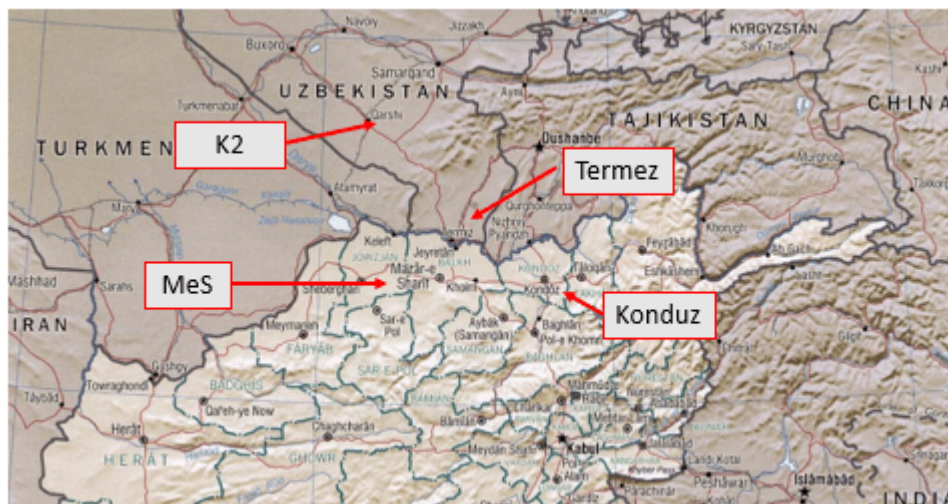
The DoD was aware of the serious environmental (radiation, chemical, and hazardous waste products) at K2. There are a number of unclassified and classified documents, memos, and studies about this issue. It was well-known that personnel at K2 were living in an environment where they were exposed to these hazards present in the air, dirt, dust, and water. The K2 vets were continually exposed to these dangers through skin contact, inhalation, and ingestion.

Strategic planners, once they were made aware of the existing hazards, should have recommended that K2 be occupied only long enough to meet the initial contingency requirements. K2 should have been occupied with a minimal footprint. Housing and work areas should have been relocated on hardstand surfaces. The base should have been displaced to another location as quickly as possible.

K2 was a huge place and there was plenty of other real estate with existing facilities, taxiways, parking areas, etc. available. One lesson that DoD should take from this is that there should be a rapid deployment assessment team, as part of an advance party, capable of executing a relatively thorough environmental assessment to discover hazards that may exist before we put troops on the ground. Granted, the fall of 2001 was hectic, and the mission had priority. But at some point, as the months went on, the welfare of the troops should have become a concern.

(continued . . . )

*(K2 Vets, Cancer, and the VA . . . Continued)*



**Possible alternative sites for a northern logistics hub included Mazar-e-Sharif, Konduz, and Termez.**

There were other suitable locations that could have been used as a northern logistics hub once initial contingency operations were complete. If not in 2001, then certainly as time went on in 2002 or 2003. The operations at K2 probably could have been displaced to Termez Airfield (just across the river from Afghanistan), where the Germans set up their logistics hub and operated C-130s. Another location could have been Mazar-e-Sharif Airport in northern Afghanistan where the Jordanians established a hospital early on in the conflict. MeS is currently the location of Train, Advise, and Assist Command – North where over a thousand Europeans are based at Camp Marmal on the MeS runway. Another option was Konduz Airport in northern Afghanistan.

Clearly, these other facilities would have likely required considerable development to expand their capabilities, but the US also spent years (and millions of dollars) developing K2 as a power projection hub for Afghanistan and Central Asia.

However, the above paragraphs are history. They represent a ‘lesson observed’ if not a ‘lesson learned’. But it is not too late for the Department of Defense to take action. DoD should be coordinating with the Veterans Administration to do the right thing for the K2 veterans.

## **What Happens Now?**

The Veterans Administration is staffed with caring and competent people – for the most part. But it is a huge bureaucracy that moves slowly. Hopefully the growing movement of K2 Vets will not get discouraged and will continue the fight. It is time for Congress to become more involved. The Veterans Administration and the Department of Defense need to make this veteran’s issue a priority and work together to come up with some solutions.

This article was first published on February 15, 2020. The online article has numerous footnotes and references about K2. You can read the article online at the link below:

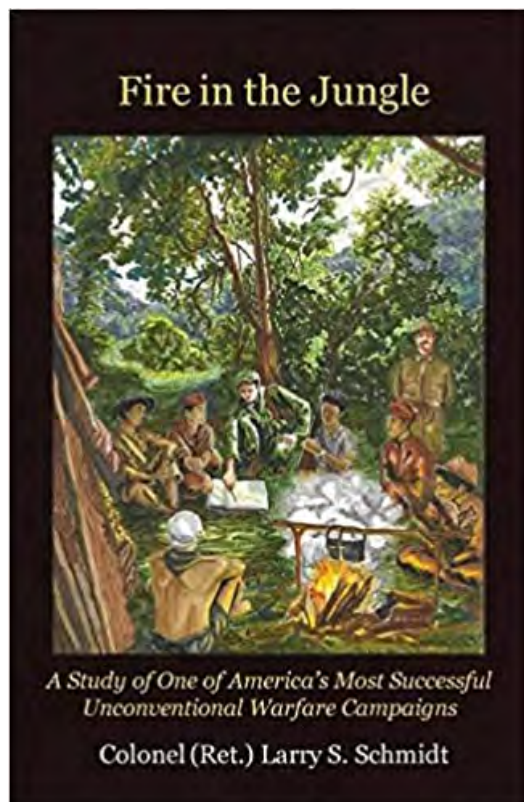
<https://sof.news/veterans/k2-vets-cancer-va/>

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Read another article published by *SOF News* on Feb 5, 2020. The author, LTC (Ret) Mike Jenne, served with Special forces at K2 in 2002-2003. Within a month of his return from K2 he was diagnosed with cancer. He sent a letter to the Veterans Administration in February detailing his concerns about K2 Vets and the lack of response by the Veterans Affairs Department.

Read “K2 Veterans Experiencing High Cancer Rate - VA Nonrespondent”.

<https://sof.news/veterans/k2-vets-cancer/>



## ***Fire in the Jungle: A Study of One of America's Most Successful Unconventional Warfare Campaigns***

By Larry Schmidt, Blackstone Publishing: 2019

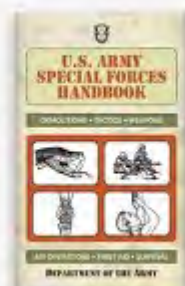
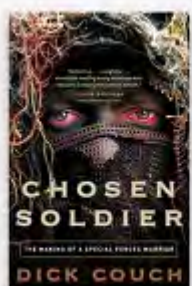
During World War II - as the occupation of the Philippine nation by Japan commenced - a resistance movement was born among the defeated people. There were many guerrilla units in the Philippines - among them the 10th Military District. The Mindanao guerrillas were commanded by Colonel Wendell W. Fertig. This book helps in understanding how resistance movements grow and achieve success.

To order online:

[Fire in the Jungle](#)



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# 7th Group Casualties in Afghanistan (Sat, Feb 8, 2020)



On Saturday, February 8, 2020 the news broke that U.S. Soldiers were involved in a firefight that caused several casualties. Two U.S. service members were killed and six others were wounded in an attack in Sherzad district, Nangarhar province. The Department of Defense [identified the casualties](#) on Sunday as members of the 7th Special Forces Group based at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.

SFC Javier Jaguar Gutierrez, age 28, of San Antonio, Texas  
SFC Antonio Rey Rodriguez, age 28, of Las Cruces, New Mexico

The 7th Special Forces Group released a statement on Saturday evening:

“Several 7th SFG(A) Soldiers were injured or killed during combat operations in Afghanistan on February 8, 2020. The families of the deceased and wounded are being notified. In accordance with DoD policy, the names of the casualties are being withheld until 24 hours.”

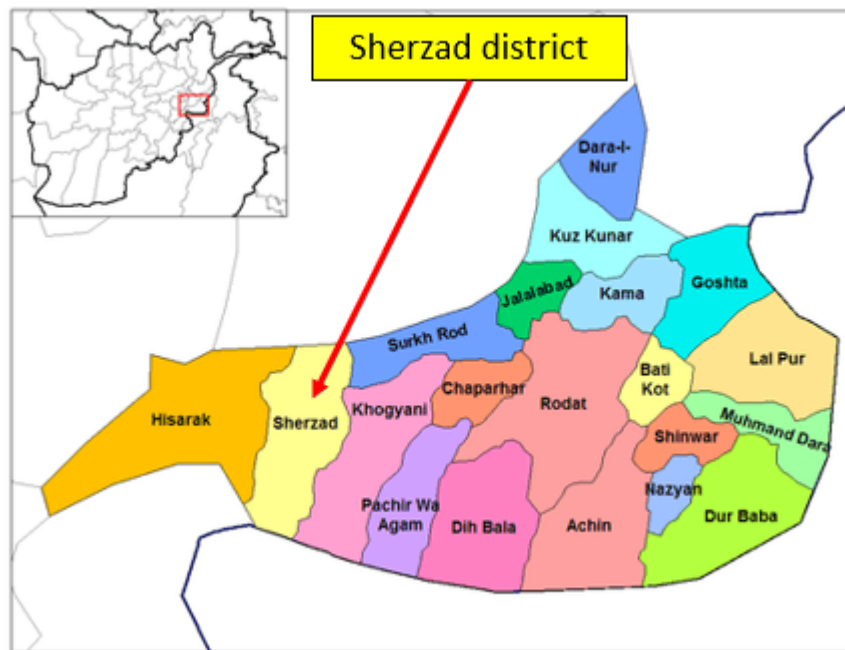
*7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Twitter, @7thForces, February 8, 2020, 9:01 PM.*

**An Insider Attack?** A possible insider attack in Shirzad, Nangarhar province may have occurred. Apparently it happened just after a ‘key leader engagement’. Most major news outlets are saying that it was a ‘green-on-blue’ incident; or as the U.S. military would phrase it – an ‘insider attack’. Then again, it could have been an incident where a member or members of the Taliban in an ANDSF uniform(s) managed to infiltrate and conduct an attack. This is sometimes referred to as a ‘sleeper cell’ operation. U.S. forces in Afghanistan tend to refrain from calling it an insider attack until an investigation is complete. Resolute Support (or USFOR-A) will usually say that an individual in a Afghan army or police uniform conducted the attack.

Most news reports say it was an individual in an Afghan police uniform. He seems to have acted alone and wielded a heavy machine gun (DSHK?) on American and Afghan soldiers. The attack happened on an open field near the district center – the U.S. troops were waiting for a helicopter pickup. A Green Beret and an attached Special Operations Team – Alpha (SOT-A) member were killed. Two other Special Forces soldiers were severely wounded and others shot in the legs. Some reports indicate 8 Afghan SOF were killed.

(continued . . . )

## (7th Group Casualties in Afghanistan . . . Continued)



**Contested Province.** The province is located in the eastern part of the country along the Pakistan border. The province is the location of one of the major border crossing sites on the Pakistan border. The south of the province has historically been an area under Taliban and / or Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) control.

**Dangerous District.** Sherzad district is located in the western portion of Nangarhar province. The district's southern boundary is shared by Pakistan. The border area is remote, mountainous, and has many routes that the Taliban use freely to enter and leave Afghanistan while crossing the Pakistan border where they enjoy sanctuary.

**Casualties Are Confirmed.** The initial news reports varied widely. Most reports indicated two Americans were killed and several wounded. In addition, there are three to eight possible Afghan security force casualties as well. The wounded have been evacuated to nearby field hospitals – probably Jalalabad and then on to Bagram Air Field. Some reports say that total casualties numbered about 17. More news will be forthcoming from the Department of Defense once the casualty notification process to families takes place. Typically the DOD announces the names of those killed in action 24 hours after family notification.

### U.S. and SOF Partner Forces

United States special operations forces have been known to work with a variety of Afghan special operations units. These include Afghan National Army (ANA) special forces, ANA Commandos, GCPSU (police special units), [National Mission Brigade](#), units of the [National Directorate of Security](#) (NDS), [Crisis Response Units](#), and Ktah Khas. U.S. special operations forces fall under the command of the [Special Operations Joint Task Force – Afghanistan](#) (SOJTF-A).

The insider attack in Nangarhar province, Afghanistan, if it occurred, took place at a time when the [Islamic State of Khorasan Province](#) (ISKP) had been heavily attacked by U.S. and Afghan special operations forces. There has been a three-way struggle for control of this region between government forces, the Taliban, and ISKP.

### History of Insider Attacks

Insider attacks have been a problem during the many years of the Afghan conflict. The worst period of time for insider attacks was during 2012. As a result of the increased incidents of insider attacks during the later part of 2012 the United States and NATO troops sharply curtailed joint operations and advising with their Afghan counterparts. Many mitigating processes were put into place – such as 'Guardian Angels', reducing interaction with the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), counterintelligence vetting of Afghan recruits for the police and army, and other methods. [1]

(continued . . . )

## (7th Group Casualties in Afghanistan . . . Continued)

The latest insider attack against Coalition forces occurred in September 2019 when three U.S. service members were wounded. A member of the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) [fired on a convoy in Kandahar province](#). The attacker was killed by return fire. Afghan forces are also the target of insider attacks. In July 2019 an Afghan brigade commander was killed by two Afghan National Army soldiers affiliated with the Taliban.

## Insider Threat Mitigation and Training

The U.S. military places a lot of emphasis and training on being aware of when and where insider attacks could occur and how to mitigate and respond to the attacks. The causes of an insider attack vary. Some of the leading explanations include:

- Cultural differences
- Acts of insensitivity
- Highly publicized events
- Improper screening of ANP or ANA recruits
- Taliban infiltration, coercion, or propaganda

A newly [published manual provides guidance](#) on how to reduce threats from foreign partner forces. *Foreign Security Force Threats*, ATP 3-37.15, January 2020 (74 pages) provides information on how to prevent insider attacks, how to respond to the attacks, how to develop a training program, and planning considerations for operations with partner nation forces. In the past, other guides have been published to provide insight to units and advisors on how to be safe while interacting with the Afghan security forces. [2]

## Human and Operational Effects

It is always bad news when an insider attack occurs – whether it is green-on-green (Afghan on Afghan) or green-on-blue (Afghan on U.S. / NATO). [3] It is a tragedy for the families of the deceased. Of course, there is the domestic fall-out within the United States when a service member is killed by a member of the security forces he is trying to train and advise.

In addition, these types of attacks affect the overall status of operations in Afghanistan. The element of trust takes time to be re-established. Each incident slows down the pace of operations and reduces the advisory 'contact time' between the advisors and trainers of the Coalition and that of the Afghan security forces. The insider attack in Nangarhar province – if that is what it is – will certainly set back the overall effort in Afghanistan for a few weeks, if not months.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Footnotes:

[1] "Insider Threat in the ANDSF", *Afghan War News*.  
[www.afghanwarnews.info/insiderthreat.htm](http://www.afghanwarnews.info/insiderthreat.htm)

[2] *ISAF Insider Threat Handguide 2.0*, International Security Force Assistance, June 2014. This handbook was one of many steps taken to educate the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) about understanding how and why insider attacks take place.  
[www.afghanwarnews.info/insiderthreat/Insider-Threat-Handguide.htm](http://www.afghanwarnews.info/insiderthreat/Insider-Threat-Handguide.htm)

[3] The use of colors to describe forces comes from the depiction of units on a map. Red are the enemy forces, blue are the U.S. forces, and green are the friendly forces.

### References:

For a detailed listing of insider threat references.  
<http://www.afghanwarnews.info/insiderthreat/Insider-Threat-References.htm>



# 5th SFG Hosts Egyptian Commandos for Partnership Training



**Photo:** A 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Soldier assists an Egyptian Special Operations Soldier with Unit 999 with dialing in a scope on an M110 semi-automatic sniper rifle at a range on Fort Campbell, February 3, 2020. Identifying and engaging targets was one part of various tasks that both units trained on during a two-week training event. U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Gregory T. Summers / 5th Special Forces Group Public Affairs .

Soldiers of the 5th Special Forces Group hosted members from the Egyptian Special Operations Unit 999 during a joint training event at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

The two-week training event took place in early February 2020 and was focused on a variety of special operations tactics and procedures while strengthening the relationship and interoperability between both units.

“We’ve been training together on a number of tasks from shooting and moving to counter tactics,” said the team leader with 5th SFG(A). “This has been a great opportunity for us to learn from each other. After this training, we will operate together more effectively.”

The training focused on a number of tasks from shooting and moving to counter tactics. Information and ideas were exchanged in the classroom, while firing and movement tactics were executed in Fort Campbell’s training area.

From mission planning, firing multiple weapons systems, countering improvised explosive devices and unmanned aircraft systems, both units familiarized themselves with each other’s procedures.

One of 5th Group’s missions is to train with partner forces.

“Anytime we can get out and work with our partner forces it benefits all of us on the team. We had the opportunity to do it in our own backyard this time and it was great for us. Specifically for some of our younger guys who may not have had the opportunity to work with our partner forces before, this has been great for them to learn from this experience.”

*5th Special Forces Warrant Officer*

A farewell dinner and ceremony was held at Fort Campbell’s Smokehaus Restaurant where the units celebrated their hard work and friendship.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Story:** The above article adapted from an article posted by Technical Information Support Company, 4th Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group, DVIDS, February 13, 2020.

Article published on February 14, 2020 on *SOF News*.

<https://sof.news/exercises/egyptian-special-operations/>

# SFC Antonio Rodriguez

## 7th Special Forces Group - RIP



SFC Antonio Rodriguez  
KIA Afghanistan  
February 8, 2020  
7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group



SFC Antonio Rodriguez, age 28, of Las Cruces, New Mexico, died February 8, 2020 from wounds sustained during combat operations in Nangarhar rovince, Afghanistan.

"Sgt. 1st Class Rodriguez was selfless and served honorably; he was certainly among the best in our unit. Here at the Red Empire, we take care of our own, and Sgt. 1st Class Rodriguez' family will forever be a part of us, we will assist them in any way we can to help them through these trying times."

*Colonel John Sannes, 7th Special Forces Group Commander*

Born and raised in Las Cruces, New Mexico, July 26, 1991, SFC Antonio Rodriguez graduated from Mayfield High School in 2009. He enlisted in the U.S. Army, October 13, 2009, and attended One Station Unit Training at Fort Benning, Georgia. After completing OSUT he attended the Basic Airborne Course and the Ranger Assessment and Selection Program. He was then assigned to the 3rd Ranger Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. In June 2018 Rodriguez voluntarily re-classified as a Cryptologic Linguist (Spanish).

Rodriguez deployed eight times with the 75th Ranger Regiment and twice with 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

He graduated from the Basic, Advanced and Senior Leader Courses; U.S. Army Airborne School; Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape School; Special Operations Language Course (Spanish); the Ranger Assessment and Selection Program and the U.S. Army Ranger School.

Rodriguez's awards and decorations include: Bronze Star Medal; Joint Service Commendation Medal; Army Commendation Medal (1OLC); Army Achievement Medal (1OLC); Army Good Conduct Medal (second award); National Defense Service Medal; Afghanistan Campaign Medal (two Campaign Stars); Global War on Terrorism Service Medal; Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon (Numeral 2); Army Service Ribbon; Overseas Service Ribbon; NATO Medal; Ranger Tab; Combat Infantry and Parachutist Badges.

Staff Sgt. Rodriguez was posthumously promoted to Sgt. 1st Class and awarded the Bronze Star Medal and Purple Heart. He leaves behind his wife.

Article published February 10, 2020. Photo: SFC Antonio Rodriguez photo provided by the PAO of the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC).

<https://sof.news/casualties/sfc-antonio-rodriguez/>

# SFC Javier Gutierrez

## 7th Special Forces Group - RIP



SFC Javier Gutierrez  
KIA Afghanistan  
February 8, 2020  
7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group



SFC Javier Gutierrez, age 28, of San Antonio, Texas, died February 8, 2020 from wounds sustained during combat operations in Nangarhar province, Afghanistan.

"Sgt. 1st Class Gutierrez' was a warrior that exemplified selfless service and a commitment to the mission, both values that we embody here in the 7th Special Forces Group. Our priority now is to take care of his family and teammates, we will provide the best possible care possible during these trying times."

*Colonel John Sannes, 7th Special Forces Group Commander*

Born in Jacksonville, N.C., August 12, 1991, Gutierrez enlisted in the Army in 2009, as an infantryman and was stationed at Fort Bragg, while assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment. In 2012 Gutierrez attended the Special Forces Assessment and Selection at Fort Bragg, and was selected to attend the Special Forces Qualification Course. He graduated in 2015 as a Special Forces Communications Sergeant and was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

Gutierrez deployed once to Iraq while assigned to 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment and once to Afghanistan while assigned to 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne).

He is a graduate of Basic and Advanced Leader Courses; U.S. Army Airborne School; Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape School; and the Special Forces Qualification Course.

Gutierrez's awards include the Army Commendation Medal (1OLC); Army Achievement Medal; Good Conduct Medal; National Defense Service Medal; Iraq Campaign Medal; Global War on Terrorism Service Medal; Non-commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon (Numeral 2); Army Service Ribbon; Expert Infantry and Parachutist Badges; and the Special Forces Tab.

Staff Sgt. Gutierrez was posthumously promoted to Sgt. 1st Class and awarded the Bronze Star Medal and Purple Heart.

Article published February 10, 2020. Picture of SFC Javier Gutierrez provided by the PAO office of the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

<https://sof.news/casualties/sfc-javier-gutierrez/>



# Books, Reports, and Publications

**Surviving the UN.** A U.S. Army Special Forces officer who joins the United Nations writes about his UN experience. He spends four years on dangerous assignments around the world. His experiences involve murderous child-soldiers, corruption, blood diamonds, hostage-taking, brutal guerrillas, and more. Check his book *Surviving the United Nations: The Unexpected Challenge*, by Robert Bruce Adolph. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel and then worked as a Chief Security Advisor for the UN. [Read more at Amazon.com](#). (Coming March 3, 2020).

**Special Forces in the War on Terror**, by Leigh Neville, Osprey Publishing (UK), 2015. The author takes readers inside the shadowy war of special operations. He reveals the remarkable results of these SOF warriors in the war against insurgents and terrorists. The book includes maps, combat diagrams, and full-color photographs. Purchase [Special Forces in the War on Terror](#) from the SOF News Book Shop.

**Unconventional Warrior: Memoir of a Special Operations Commander in Afghanistan**, by Walter Morris Herd, McFarland & Company: 2013. A retired SF colonel writes about his time as commander of the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A). Purchase [Unconventional Warrior: Memoir of a Special Operations Commander in Afghanistan](#) from the SOF News Book Shop.

**Combating Insider Threats.** The Army has [published a new pub](#) entitled *Foreign Security Force Threats*, ATP 3-37.15, 30 January 2020. The pub will assist advisors in dealing with “green-on-blue” or insider attacks. The 74-page Army Techniques Publication (ATP) has several chapters and a glossary that deal with foreign security threat fundamentals, prevention, and training programs.

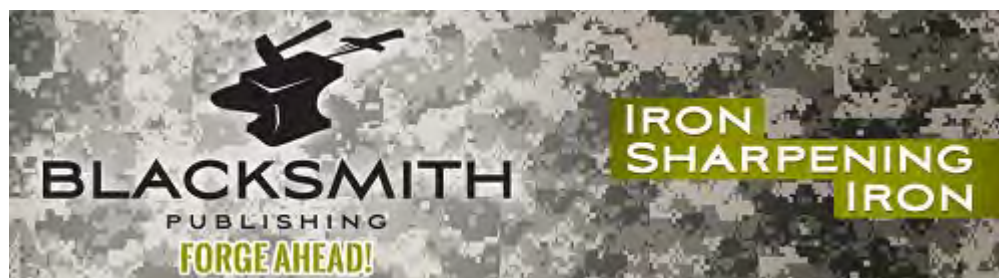
**IG Report of OIR (Iraq and Syria).** The Lead Inspector General has published its Quarterly Report to Congress on Operation Inherent Resolve. The [114-page report](#) covers several topics to include the drone strike on Soleimani, Iran-aligned militias in Iraq, street protests, U.S. troops leaving Syria, Turkish incursion into Syria, Russian and Syrian troops moving into Kurdish areas, U.S. troops moving back into Syria, ISIS leader's death and impact on ISIS operations (little impact), and more.

**Report – Stability Operations.** RAND Corporation has published a 273-page pub entitled *Seizing the Golden Hour: Task, Organization, and Capabilities Required for the Earliest Phase of Stability Operations*, February 2020. Sponsored by the U.S. Army G-8 this report captures the lessons learned from U.S. interventions and offer principles for success in the initial phase of the intervention and the nonkinetic efforts to stabilize the state. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2633.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2633.html)

**Report – National CI Strategy 2020.** The National Counterintelligence and Security Center has published the *National Counterintelligence Strategy of the United States of America 2020-2022*, February 2020. The nation faces an expanding array of foreign intelligence threats – Russia, China, regional adversaries, ideologically motivated entities, hackers, public disclosure organizations, and others pose a growing threat to the U.S. This new CI strategy identifies five strategic objectives that deal with critical areas that foreign intelligence services are targeting against. [Report is published](#) by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Jan 2020, 20 pages.

**Book – Cyber Deterrence.** Drawing on lessons from Cold War deterrence theory and ballistic missile defense – a [new book provides insight to cyber deterrence](#). This ‘pocket book’ proposes a ‘strongpoint defense along with a hardened critical infrastructure approach. *Strongpoint Cyber Deterrence*, by James J. Torrence, Small Wars Journal, February 2020. Available on Amazon.com.

**Book Review – Aiding and Abetting.** Harrison Manlove [has reviewed](#) a new book by Jessica Trisko Darden entitled *Aiding and Abetting: U.S. Foreign Assistance and State Violence*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020. There is a downside to foreign assistance – the military equipment and training provided to some nations is used for state violence and repression of citizens.



# Videos, Movies, and Podcasts



**Video – STS Snowmobiles in Action.** U.S. Air Force Special Tactics operators from 21 STS take a ride on snowmobiles during Emerald Warrior 20-1 in Michigan. (3 mins, DVIDS, Jan 22, 2020). (Those readers who live in Maine will say “Meh”; but if you are not used to snow . . .)

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/736093/emerald-warrior-20-1-snowmobile-transport>

**Video – Ospreys Landing and Taking Off.** Never seen an Osprey? This short B-roll video will give you a glimpse of the CV-22 Osprey flown by AFSOC pilots during training at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center in Michigan. (Jan 23, 2020, 2 minutes). Entitled *CV-22 Osprey Take Offs at Emerald Warrior 20-1*.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/736106/cv-22-osprey-take-offs-emerald-warrior-20-1>

**Podcast – NORSOF Cdr Interview.** Norwegian Major General Torgeir Gratrud is interviewed in a podcast where he discusses his perspectives on strategic leadership, Norway’s participation in the Global SOF Network, and cooperation in the Nordic region. This [30-long podcast](#), entitled *Observations From NATO’s Northern Front*, is provided by the “War Room” of the United States Army War College, February 7, 2020.

**Short Film – Guardians of All of Us.** Green Beret Greg Stube, towards the end of his Special Forces career, was severely wounded in Afghanistan. He has recovered and has a new outlook on life. He is featured in a short ten-minute film where he expresses how each of us plays a vital role in our communities and country. *Outdoor Hub*, February 7, 2020.

<https://www.outdoorhub.com/stories/2020/02/07/guardians-short-film-wildlifera/>

**Book – Britain’s Cosy Spying Culture.** Richard Norton-Taylor has a new book out entitled *The State of Secrecy: Spies and the Media in Britain*. The book has [vignettes that depict the blunders and quirks](#) of the secret world of spying and how spy organizations and special forces try to keep their secrets from journalists. (*Financial Times*, Feb 7, 2020).

**Book – Battle for a SF Camp in Vietnam.** Two Vietnam veterans collaborate on a book that details an important battle that took place in May 1968. The book places the dual battle of Kham Duc and Ngok Tavk in the geopolitical and grand strategy context of the war in the spring of 1968. In addition, it provides a detailed account of the combat by a top-secret Special Forces recon-commando unit. Read more in [“SWJ Book Review – “Bait: Teh Battle of Kham Duc Special Forces Camp”](#), *Small Wars Journal*, February 8, 2020.

**Book – Spy and Terrorism Thriller in Europe.** Steve Dimodica, a former Green Beret and intelligence officer, has published yet another fiction book. This story incorporates intelligence bureaucrats, EU-mandated immigration, conspiracies, female modern-day Nazi Germans, the CIA, German intelligence officials, and more. [Read about the book](#) – *The Hitler Progeny* – featured on Kirkus Reviews.

**Video –No Friend but the Mountains: Life in Modern Iraqi Kurdistan**, Coffee or Die, February 6, 2020. This 21-minute long video depict what post-ISIS life is like. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSQQmZpfN0w>

**Video GSF – Feb 2020.** Retired Green Beret Stu Bradin provides an update to the 2020 activities of the Global SOF Foundation. He covers strategic changes, upcoming events, Global SOF Imperatives, working with the Naval Post Graduate School (NPS), and more. (Feb 6, 2020, 6 minutes).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J8H4KTOLxa8>

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(continued . . .)

## (Movies, Videos, and Podcasts . . . Continued)

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**Podcast – Horse Soldiers and Bourbon.** Former Green Berets who were among the first to infiltrate into Afghanistan to work alongside the Northern Alliance to topple the Taliban have a new passion. These retired Special Forces soldiers have founded American Freedom Distillery and now offer *Horse Soldier Bourbon*. Two of them are interviewed and discuss how they got into the bourbon making business. Listen to *The Green Berets Who Traded Bullets for Bourbon*, Entrepreneur, February 11, 2020, 26 minutes.

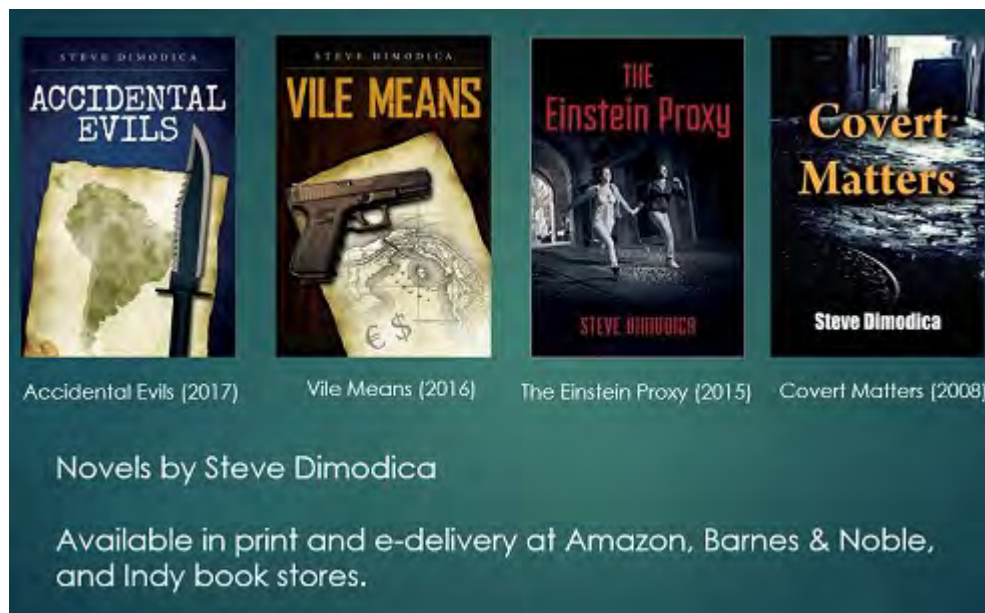
<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/346209>

**Podcast – Guest SEAL Steve Sanders.** Episode 114 by *Cleared Hot* features retired Navy SEAL [Steve Sanders in a interview](#) about freefalling, life, combat, SEAL Delivery Vehicle team Two, and NSW Dev Group. February 19, 2020, two hours.

**Podcast – Horse Soldiers and Bourbon.** Former Green Berets who were among the first to infiltrate into Afghanistan to work alongside the Northern Alliance to topple the Taliban have a new passion. These retired Special Forces soldiers have founded American Freedom Distillery and now offer *Horse Soldier Bourbon*. Two of them are interviewed and discuss how they got into the bourbon making business. Listen to *The Green Berets Who Traded Bullets for Bourbon*, Entrepreneur, February 11, 2020, 26 minutes.

*Southern Strike 2020 – 3rd SFG Conducts Hoist Training*, DVIDS, February 1, 2020, 1 minute. The SF soldiers [rehearse medical evacuation procedures](#) with a U.S. Navy MH-60R Seahawk helicopter.

*Southern Strike 2020 – TACP Training Mission*, DVIDS, February 4, 2020, 3 minutes. [TACPs work with A-10 Thunderbolt II's](#) on the range.





# Curated SOF News

*The following several pages provide a listing of  
'curated news' about special operations forces for Jan 2020.*

**SDF and U.S. SOF.** Special operations forces of the United States continue to work with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in intelligence-driven operations against ISIS – lately in Deir ez-Zor and Hasakah provinces.

**USSOCOM Cdr Visits NPS.** General Richard Clarke, the commander of United States Special Operations Command, [paid a visit to the Naval Postgraduate School](#) (NPS) in Monterey, California on January 23, 2020 to explore relevant research, engage with school leadership, and to visit with students. NPS has [graduate programs](#) that are specifically preparing professionals in special operations forces to innovate in the modern environment. (NPS, Jan 31, 2020).

**USSOCOM Wants 75 Aircraft for “Armed Overwatch”.** It appears that the United States Special Operations Command is going ahead with plans to test and [buy aircraft to support SOF missions](#). These new aircraft – fielded by Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) – would provide armed reconnaissance, strike coordination, and airborne forward air control. Kind of sounds like an [A-29 Super Tucano](#) that the U.S. Air Force has provided to the Afghan Air Force. (*Air Force Magazine*, Feb 4, 2020).

**6 Feb 2020 – USSOCOM Testimony.** The United States Senate Committee on Armed Services will be [hearing testimony](#) from representatives of the USSOCOM and U.S. Cyber Command on Thursday, February 6, 2020. Mr. Thomas Alexander (Acting ASD SO/LIC) and General Richard Clarke (Cdr USSOCOM) will be providing input.

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**Gen Clarke Visits Hoover Institution.** USSOCOM's commander paid a visit to the Hoover Institution on January 22, 2020. There are a number of U.S. SOF officers attending programs at Stanford University and Clarke spent some time with them as well as Hoover fellows, university faculty, and students. Read [“Chief of US Military Special Operations Visits Hoover Institution”](#), *Hoover Institute Report*, January 30, 2020.

**Coast Guard's Rescue Swimmers.** They don't make the news often but they conduct some of the highest risk, highest-stakes rescues around the world. The rescue swimmers of the Coast Guard jump into the ocean from helicopters or planes and then swim to rescue downed aviators or stranded ship crews. For more read [“See How the Coast Guard trains elite rescue swimmers”](#), *We Are the Mighty*, July 29, 2019.

**Room Clearing – It's Getting Technical.** A U.S. patent was recently issued that both marks when an assault force has cleared a room and alerts when a potential hostile person has entered a cleared room. Read [“Navy invents tiny motion detector for marking, monitoring cleared rooms”](#), *Tech Link Center*, February 4, 2020.

**BG Maitre Going to JSOC.** Brigadier General Benjamin Maitre (USAF), currently with U.S. Special Operations Command (Pentagon) will soon be the assistant commanding general (Air Force) at the Joint Special Operations command at Fort Bragg, N.C.

**SOF Stepping Back Into the Gray Zone.** Unconventional Warfare (UW), decades ago used to be the prime mission for Special Forces. The emphasis on UW was slowly diminished as Direct Action and Special Reconnaissance missions gained popularity. The Global War on Terror – except for a few instances – further emphasized DA and SR. But it looks like SF and other SOF units are slowly returning to their UW roots. Read [“Thinking Before Shooting: Intelligence and Special Operations”](#), *SOFREP*, February 6, 2020.

**Feb 12th – SOF Imperatives Forum.** The Global SOF Foundation will once again conduct its *Imperatives Initiative and Forum* in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday, February 12, 2020. The event brings together senior U.S. government and military leaders, security policy professionals, academics, industry executives, and others for interactive discussions about the UW threats that face SOF. <https://gsfoimperatives.org/>

**Senate's Iran Resolution – Creates a SOF Problem.** A resolution by the U.S. Senate would obstruct U.S. military covert operations in the Middle East. See [“Senate's Iran resolution has a special operations problem”](#), *The Washington Examiner*, February 13, 2020.

(continued . . . )

## ( Curated SOF News . . . Continued)

**Fixing SOF Culture.** Benjamin Ordiway – a Civil Affairs officer – has penned an extremely long and well-constructed essay on the need to integrate virtue ethics into U.S. SOF selection, education, and training. He says the latest [USSOCOM report on SOF culture and ethics](#) misses some important steps in solving the problem at hand. He gets quite philosophical – reflecting on the thoughts of Aristotle, Kegan, and Kohlberg. Some real heavy thinking; but then his next assignment will be teaching philosophy at West Point. Some of his recommendations include:

What an excellent idea for some more ‘online training’. Read [“Fixing the Problem: Integrating Virtue Ethics Into U.S. Special Operations Forces Selection, Education, and Training”](#), *Small Wars Journal*, February 8, 2020.

**MG Hill – SOJTF-OIR Cdr.** Major General Eric Hill, currently commanding general, Special Operations Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq will soon be the deputy commander, Headquarters Air Force Special Operations Command, Hurlburt Field, Florida.

**SOF Request for Enemy Bunker Training Facility.** Millions of dollars have been requested to [build a ‘state of the art’ training complex](#) that would replicate enemy bunkers and underground facilities. The facility is likely to be used by JSOC. (*The Warzone*, Feb 13, 2020).

**US SOF to Refocus.** The ‘new plan’ is for United States special operations forces to pay more attention to Europe and the Pacific (think Russia and China?) and less to Afghanistan, Iraq, and Africa. So it appears SOF is leaving places where there are current conflicts to work in places where we ‘might’ have one. Read more in [“After decades focused on terrorism, special operations is broadening its horizons”](#), *Military Times*, February 12, 2020.

**SOF Light Attack Planes.** If things go well SOF ground units can call in air support from a prop driven plane. USSOCOM is looking to purchase 75 light attack aircraft. The leading contenders are the A-29 and AT-6B. The [A-29 Super Tucano](#) has the edge as the U.S. Air Force has been working with the Afghan Air Force for a few years fielding and training the Afghans on the plane. Read more in [“Here’s What Special Operators Want From Their New Light Attack Plane”](#), *Defense One*, February 12, 2020. However, one top general suggested that the MQ-9 Reaper UAV is a [more suitable candidate](#) for USSOCOM’s ‘armed overwatch’ mission. (*Jane’s Defence Weekly*, Feb 14, 2020).

**USAF Says “No” to Light Attack Aircraft.** The U.S. Air Force has definitively stated it [is not going to procure low-cost light attack planes](#). Aircraft similar to the [A-29 Super Tucano](#) used by the Afghan Air Force are ideal for air support of ground troops in a low-threat environment or in a counterinsurgency fight. However, ‘Big Blue’ is more interested in high-cost fancy jets that can clear the skies of near-peer competitors like Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran. Not to worry – USSOCOM will likely buy 75 of the light attack planes in a few years. (*Defense News*, February 10, 2020).

**Checkpoint Drama in Syria.** There are a lot of players on the battlefield in Syria. A fracas took place recently in north-eastern Syria where the U.S. got into it with some armed Syrians (result one deceased Syria; slightly injured U.S.). U.S. Coalition forces exchanged small arms fire with pro-Syrian gunmen at a checkpoint while on patrol. The Russians arrive on the scene and helped the U.S. de-escalate the situation. Only ones missing from this event are the Turks and Iranians. Tensions are high and it won’t take much for these one of these type events to escalate quickly. [Read more](#) in (*The WarZone*, February 12, 2020). See also a [report](#) by the *Middle East Center for Reporting and Analysis*, Feb 13, 2020.

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**SOCOM’s PB-NSCV on Hold?** In 2018 U.S. Special Operations Command announced that it was looking for a “purpose-built non-standard commercial vehicle” (PB-NSCV). The intent was to replace the current fleet of souped-up pickup trucks used by SOF across the Middle East. Read an update in [“Why the U.S. Military Loves ‘James Bond’ Cars”](#), *The National Interest*, February 7, 2020.



[www.navysealmuseum.org](http://www.navysealmuseum.org)  
The Navy SEAL Museum is dedicated to preserving the history of U.S. Navy SEALs and their predecessors.  
Fort Pierce, Florida



# Curated ARSOF News

**Big Bonus for Green Beret Warrant Officers.** The U.S. Army wants Special Forces Warrant Officers (180As) to stay in the service – and they are using [big bucks to see that it happens](#). There is a \$20,000 accession bonus for six years of service (an enlisted going warrant) and then a \$100,000 retention bonus for another five years service as an SF Warrant. Smart move on the Army's part. (*Task & Purpose*, February 12, 2020)

**Partner of Slain 7th SFGA Soldier Attends SOU.** Green Beret [SFC Michael Goble](#) was killed in Afghanistan last year. His girlfriend, and mother of their 6-year old child, [attended the State of the Union address](#) by President Trump. (*The Destin Log*, Feb 7, 2020).

**“Becoming a Green Beret”.** A retired Special Forces NCO, George Hand, recalls the training he went through to become a U.S. Army Green Beret. Read [“Cutting the Mustard in Special Forces: Becoming a Green Beret”](#), *SANDBOXX*, February 4, 2020.

**Army Changing SF Training.** The Special Forces Qualification Course has had the tactical skills phase restructured to include an additional two weeks of foreign internal defense (FID) training. The FID slice takes place before the students head into the [Robin Sage](#) culmination exercise. The current 'Q' course is designed to be completed in just over one year (with the exception of the medics). PYSOP and Civil Affairs topics are introduced throughout the training. The SF training course has seen some significant changes with the elimination of subjects – shortening the course by many months. A very informative article on the changes to SFQC. Read [“Army spec ops training changes for future fights”](#), *Army Times*, February 4, 2020.

**Green Beret Attended SoU Address.** SFC Richard Stayskal was in the audience when President Trump delivered his State of the Union address. Stayskal recently won his year-long battle for military medical malpractice reform. In January 2017 he underwent a routine CT scan performed as part of a required physical necessary before entering the Combat Diver Course at Key West. He was cleared by a military doctor at Womack Medical Center located at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Shortly after he fell ill and his sickness [was misdiagnosed and treatment was not expedited](#). He finally got clearance to see a civilian doctor and found out he had stage 3A lung cancer. (*Sandhills Sentinel*, Feb 3, 2020).

**Becoming an Army Ranger.** How does one walk off the street as a civilian and become a U.S. Army Ranger and get onto a helicopter bound for enemy contact? There are some steps involved:

- like signing up
- attending basic training / OSUT
- going to a school to learn how to jump out of airplanes
- doing something called RASP (the name sounds intimidating)
- going to 'the regiment'
- spending 61 days without sleep and eating little food (at least that's the way it was in the last hard class – Desert Legion).

Read more in [“How to Become an Army Ranger”](#), *SANDBOXX*, February 5, 2020.

**Japan Issues Arrest Warrant for Former Green Beret.** On Thursday, January 30, 2020, Japan issued arrest warrants for a former Special Forces Soldier and two other individuals. Mike Taylor served as a member of the 10th and 11th Special Forces Group, has extensive experience in the Middle East, and has been in the security business for many years. The [warrant was issued](#) due to his involvement in the smuggling of former Nissan Motor Company boss Carlos Ghosn out of Japan to Lebanon. (*Reuters*, Jan 30, 2020). See also a [story](#) on Mike Taylor by *Fortune*, January 6, 2020.

**A More Relevant “Pineland”.** The initial field training of U.S. SF, PSYOP, and CA personnel takes place in the fictional country of 'Pineland'. Does the [scenario need a creative rewrite](#) to better incorporate Information and Influence Operations (IIO)? (*Small Wars Journal*, Feb 1, 2020).





## Curated AFSOC News

**4th SOS Airman Remembered.** One of the Americans that died in the plane C-130 aircraft crash in Australia while supporting firefighting efforts was close to retirement. Air Force Senior Master Sergeant Rick DeMorgan, Jr. was a member of the 4th Special Operations Squadron. Read more in [“Hurlburt honors airman who died fighting Australian fires”](#), *Santa Rosa’s Gazette*, February 1, 2020.

**AFSOC’s FARPs.** The Air Force Special Operations Command conducts its missions in many remote spots where fuel options are limited. That is when the FARP Airmen provide a little help. Learn more in [“FARP Tryouts Test Airmen for Special Operations”](#), *DVIDS*, January 31, 2020.

**From SOF to Space.** Brigadier General Michael Conley has been named vice commander of the Space Operations Command. His last assignment was as commander of the 1st Special Operations Wing at Hurlburt Field, Florida. See [“Air Force Special Operations Command officer named to senior post in U.S. Space Force”](#), *Space News*, January 31, 2020.

**AFSOC Refueling F-22s in Alaska.** Some Air Force special tactics airmen deployed to Alaska during the Emerald Warrior exercise to [setup a FARP](#) for F-22 Raptors. (*Business Insider*, Feb 7, 2020).

**1st TACP Class Under USAF SWTW.** The Tactical Air Control Party training now falls under the newly established Special Warfare Training Wing. The first [TACP class under the SWTW graduated](#) in December 2019. The Air force



<https://aircommando.org/foundation/>

## Curated MARSOC News

**MARSOC to Exercise in Crestview, Florida.** The city of Crestview and the Marine Forces Special Operations Command have entered into an agreement that allows the SOF Marines to conduct training operations within the city for the next five years. The first exercise will be held this year in April and May 2020. The agreement mandates that Crestview agrees not to disclose any TTPs, methods of training, or scenarios about the exercises. See [“Marine Corps special operators to train in Crestview”](#), *NWF Daily News*, February 3, 2020.

**MARSOC Consolidation.** The Marine Forces Special Operations Command will soon be implementing a phased plan to consolidate all MARSOC personnel and equipment to its headquarters aboard Camp Lejeune by the end of 2020. Moving will be over [900 Marines, Sailors, and civilian employees](#) from the 1st Marine Raider Battalion and 1st Marine Raider Support Battalion currently at Camp Pendleton, California. (*MARSOC*, *DVIDS*, February 12, 2020). See also [“Sneads Ferry, Holly Ridge ready to welcome MARSOC influx”](#), *JDNews.com*, February 13, 2020.

## Curated NSW News

**'Invisible Wounds' of a Navy SEAL.** The family of a Navy SEAL is pushing for greater recognition of the effects of traumatic brain injuries after their son's death. Ryan Larkin was a decorated SEAL and explosive breacher who committed suicide after [suffering from undiagnosed TBI](#). After his death the 29-year-old's brain was examined at Walter Reed National Medical Center where a doctor discovered that Ryan had a severe level of microscopic brain injury that was uniquely related to blast exposure.

**The SEAL Ethos.** Captain (Ret) Dan'l Steward (U.S. Navy SEAL) provides some professional advice to current SEALs. Recent negative events have led to concerns about the individual and collective integrity and culture of the Navy SEALs. Steward says some reflection of the 'SEAL Ethos' is in order. He writes about 'Elite versus Elitism', 'Never Believe Your Own Propaganda', 'Loyalty versus Integrity', 'Trust and Respect versus Popularity', 'Rules, Ambiguity, and Leadership', and 'Standing Tall and Moving Out'. Read his article in ["None of Us Is 'That Man' – All Must Aspire to Be"](#), *Proceedings*, U.S. Naval Institute, February 2020.

**A Navy SEAL, Nude Photos, and a Court-Martial.** A former member of the Navy's elite SEAL Team 6 used text messaging apps that allowed him to use a fake phone number and [pretended to be a female performance dietitian](#) in order to request nude pictures. (*Military.com*, Feb 5, 2020).

**Baseball Season Begins at SEAL Center.** The San Diego State baseball team had a visit at a NSW facility. Read more in ["Baseball tests limits at Naval Special Warfare Center"](#), *The Daily Aztec*, February 6, 2020.

**Navy SEAL Convicted – Gets 30 Days in Brig.** A Navy SEAL escaped punishment for some serious charges but [was convicted](#) of a more minor one. That netted him loss of rank, pay, and 30 days in confinement. Special Operator 1st Class Aaron Howard was found guilty of attempting to 'catfish' a woman (something about nude photos). (*Navy Times*, Feb 7, 2020).

**NSW's FID Mission.** The U.S. Army Special Forces have traditionally been the 'go to' force for conducting Foreign Internal Defense (FID). Not widely known is that the Naval Special Warfare community also has a FID mission. The SEAL and SWCC operators have a wide area of the world to cover – consider the many countries with ocean frontage. Read ["Navy SEALs and SWCCs Do More Than Shoot Bad Guys"](#), *SOFREP*, February 10, 2020.

**Navy SEAL Foundations's February 2020 SITREP.** The [monthly newsletter](#) introduces a new staff member, provides an update to the Tampa Bay Frogman Swim, details its support to families and wounded warriors, and provides info on the foundations events for the coming year.

**SEAL Commander to Retire.** Read Admiral Collin Green, the commander of the Naval Special Warfare Command, will be leaving his post one year early and heading into retirement from the Navy. The next likely NSW commander may be H.Wyman Howard III – a former commander of SEAL Team 6 and currently in command of Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT). See ["SEAL Commander Who Clashed With Trump to Leave Early"](#), *The Intercept*, February 1, 2020.

**SEALs Swimming for the Fallen.** The Tampa Bay Frogman Swim, an annual event, has raised more than \$4 million for the Navy SEAL Foundation since 2010. The next Frogman swim event is scheduled for June 7, 2020 in Boston. It will be a colder swim! Former Navy SEAL Dan O'Shea began the event in 2003. Read more in ["Swimming for the fallen: Florida frogmen take SEAL fundraiser to waters beyond Tampa"](#), *Washington Examiner*, February 3, 2020.



# Curated International SOF News

**Vikings in Africa.** Sweden is sending some of its best troops and helicopters to assist France as part of Task Force Tukuba. There are currently 200 Swedish troops in the region. Read [“Sweden Joins French-Led Special Operations Task Force”](#), *SOFREP*, February 7, 2020.

**CANSOF – One Eye on the Mission, the Other on Baghdad.** Canadian special forces soldiers are navigating a “sensitive and complex relationship with the Iraqi central government in Baghdad.” Read more in [“Canadian special forces treading carefully in Iraq amid sensitive relations”](#), *Vancouver Sun*, February 7, 2020.

**Canadian SOF.** Wes Kennedy, a former member of the Canadian Special Operations Regiment, writes about SOTF-59, GWOT, JTF2, CANSOFCOM, CSOR, and a number of other Canadian special operations units and organizations. Read [“Canadian SOF: Our Contribution to the War on Terror”](#), *SOFREP*, February 2, 2020.

**Obituary – “Mad Mike” Hoare.** The Soldier of Fortune who inspired the film [“The Wild Geese”](#) has passed away at the age of 100. An Irish accountant who turned the work in Africa as a mercenary led a storied life. See [“Mad Mike Hoare, mercenary leader – obituary”](#), *The Telegraph*, February 2, 2020.

**4 Russian SOF Killed in Syria.** Four FSB Special Operations Center [officers were killed](#) on Saturday, Feb 1, 2020 after their vehicle hit a landmine near the northern city of Aleppo. (*Spec Ops Magazine*, Feb 3, 2020).

**Royal Marines & Norwegian Stealth Ship.** In a recent exercise members of 47 Commando were dropped off the coast of Norway to [secure a key landing point](#) by a Norwegian stealth ship of the Royal Norwegian Navy. (*UK Defence Journal*, Feb 3, 2020).

**Latvia Participates in U.S. SOF Exercise.** Members of the Latvian Air Force are in Michigan taking part in Emerald Warrior 2020 – a U.S. special operations exercise held in various parts of the country. Emerald Warrior is a Department of Defense exercise focusing on irregular warfare that hones SOF air and ground combat skills and TTPs. Read [“Michigan-Latvia airbase operations partnership supports U.S. Air Force Special Operations exercise”](#), *DVIDS*, January 29, 2020.

**SAS Recruiting Women.** The Special Air Service (UK) has opened the door to women attending their selection course. They are [actively recruiting](#) for 21 and 23 SAS – seeking male and female applicants, with no previous military experience. (*The Sun*, Feb 1, 2020). The 21 and 23 SAS are part of the UK Special Forces (Reserve). Applicants are required to complete basic military training course before attempting SAS Reserves Selection.

**New NVGs for French SOF?** The French Special Operations Command (COS) is seeking to [enhance its night vision capabilities](#). (*Jane's*, Jan 30, 2020).

**HADR Troop in the Caribbean.** The Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Troop of the Royal Navy plays an important role in supporting humanitarian disaster relief. The troop recently had a trainup with the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps (RNLMC) in Curacao. Read [“Commandos of the Caribbean”](#), *Medium.com*, January 31, 2020.

**Hungarian SOF Train on 352nd CV-22 Ospreys.** Members of the 19th Special Forces Group and Hungarian Special Operations Forces had the opportunity to train up with SOF aviation on infiltration and exfiltration techniques, night combat mission profiles, and low-level flight training. Read [“Hungarian and U.S. SOF Enhance Special Operations Air Task Group Capability”](#), *352nd Special Operations Wing*, February 5, 2020.



(continued . . . )



## (Curated International SOF News . . . Continued)

**Russian SOF's Special Mi-8.** The Russian military is receiving ten Mi8AMTSh-VN special operations helicopters in 2020. Recent operations in Syria highlighted the need for a SOF helicopter with unique capabilities. Read about it in ["Special Operations: Spetsnaz Special Mi-8"](#), *Strategy Page*, February 9, 2020.

**Belgium SOF to Join Takuba in Mali?** Belgium has not ruled out participating in a French [special operations task force in Mali](#). Thus far Germany has declined. Estonia, Sweden, and others will be providing some soldiers to Task Force Takuba. (*France 24*, Feb 13, 2020).

**Canada's JTF2 Not Moving.** A decade-old plan to move the military's elite Joint Task Force 2 to a [new base has been axed](#). The unit's base will remain in Ottawa – and will not move to Ontario. (*The Globe and Mail*, Feb 10, 2020).

**Zimbabwe's SF School.** Plans are at an advanced stage to set up a Special Forces [training school](#) in Kariba. (*Pindula News*, Jan 1, 2020).

**New CT Force in Kenya.** The U.S. Department of State (CT Bureau) and Federal Bureau of Investigation are supporting a Kenyan-led initiative to establish a Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). Kenyan investigators will receive 12-weeks of intensive counterterrorism training at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia. Kenyans have seen numerous al-Shabaab incursions in recent years including the [Manda Bay raid](#) on January 5, 2020. Read more in ["U.S. announces new counterterrorism task force in Kenya"](#), *Africa Times*, February 11, 2020.

**Swedish SOF to Work with Task Force Takuba.** Sweden already has troops [deployed to the Sahel](#) – but more may be going. The French-led effort hopes to have over 500 SOF in the task force. (*The Defense Post*, Feb 6, 2020).

**Afghan SOF Still Relying on US.** A recent [DOD 1225 report](#) says that Afghan Special Security Forces (ASSF) continue to conduct the majority of the offensive actions by the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF). However, the ASSF are still relying on their U.S. and NATO SOF partners and air support from the U.S. Air Force. Attempts to make Afghan SOF more independent have stalled. Read ["Afghan special operators partnering with US forces more often, still reliant on American support"](#), *Military Times*, February 5, 2020.

**Danish SF Officer and his 'War Camaro' in Bosnia.** Flash back to a war that took place decades ago in the former Yugoslavia. Imagine that it is night time and ". . . a flat black shape emerges from the shadows, tires crunching over rubble as it navigates a cratered road. It's low, menacing, armored, and rumbling with V-8 thunder. The War Camaro is here to help." Read ["How an armored Camaro and a special forces officer kept civilians alive in war-torn Bosnia"](#), *Hagerty*, February 5, 2020.

**Afghan SOF – Overrated?** A retired U.S. Special Forces soldier with time in 3rd and 5th SFGA comes out strong against the prevailing narrative that the Afghan Commandos are a premier fighting force. He critiques the training, inability to maintain a red-amber-green cycle, threat of green-on-blue attacks, overuse, and lack of ANA SOF planning process as limiting factors. Read ["Allies, Enemies, or Just Useless? A Special Forces Operator on Working with Afghan SOF"](#), *SOFREP*, February 10, 2020.



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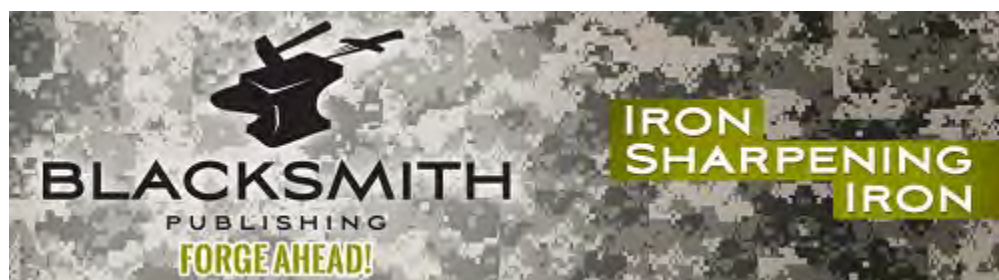
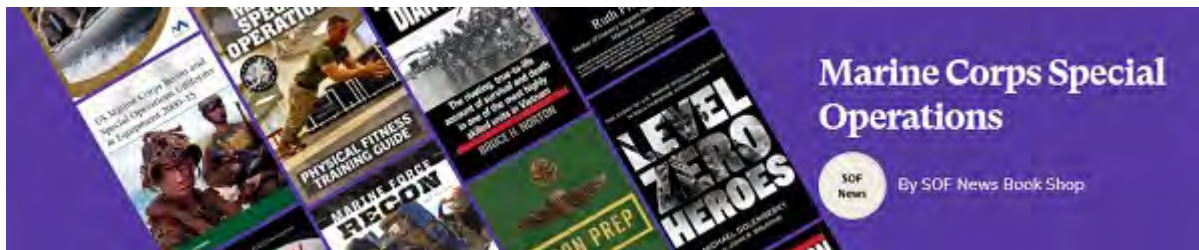
# Commentary

**Grayzone Conflict in Entertainment.** A new style of war film entertainment – by way of Scandinavia – is depicting the average citizen at the center of the plot. These are not the traditional war movies where the drama is on the soldier and violence of action. Instead, the plot involves the activities of politicians, lawyers, bankers, reporters, and every day people. National security pundits would call this type of aggression by a country ‘hybrid war’ or ‘political warfare’. One such television series is *Occupied* – now at the end of its third season on Netflix (watch the [official trailer](#)). The show is about the slow, methodical takeover of Norway by Russia – not by outright invasion but slowly . . . under the radar. I have watched all three seasons and found it enjoyable. Elisabeth Braw, of the Modern Deterrence project at the Royal United Services Institute, provides a detailed summary of this new type of war film in [“War Movies After War”](#), *Foreign Policy*, February 5, 2020.

**Political Warfare.** The U.S. can apply lessons from the Cold War. Read more in [“The Dark Art of Political Warfare: A Primer”](#), *AEI*, February 6, 2020.

**TAA and Partner Force Operations.** A retired Paramilitary Operations Officer of the CIA’s Special Activities Center and a retired U.S. Navy Commander (SEAL) advocate for the ‘tactical advantage approach’ over the ‘mirror image approach’ to developing partner nation forces. Good reading for those in the Train, Advise, and Assist business in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. [“A tale of two partners: Comparing two approaches for partner force operations”](#), *Middle East Institute*, January 29, 2020.

**Political Strategy for Stabilization of Fragile States.** “Recent U.S. legislation and policy openings provide an opportunity to establish a more realistic and effective American approach to stabilization.” In December 2019 President Trump signed the Global Fragility Act (GFA) that requires the U.S. to develop a global fragility strategy. The U.S. will be applying the [Stabilization Assistance Review \(SAR\)](#) framework to maximize the effectiveness of U.S. efforts to stabilize conflict-affected areas. Read more in [“Creating a political strategy for stabilizing fragile states”](#), *Brookings Institute*, January 28, 2020.



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# SOF History

January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019 was the 55th anniversary of the activation of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Studies and Observations Group (MACV-SOG) in the Republic of Vietnam. Formed in 1964, MACV-SOG functioned as a joint special operations task force (JSOTF) in Southeast Asia.



Read more in *MACV-SOG History*

by Robert Seals

USASOC History Office

January 24, 2019

[https://www.army.mil/article/216498/macv\\_sog\\_history](https://www.army.mil/article/216498/macv_sog_history)

## More Stories about Special Operations History

**World War I Desert Rats.** Read about the history of early British special operations by James Stejskal (author of *Masters of Mayhem*) in [“WWI Desert Rats and the Origins of Special Forces”](#), *Forces Network*, January 23, 2020.

**UK SOF in Burma in WWII.** Read up on some history of how the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and the Special Operations Executive (SOE) cooperated (sorta) in the Far East during World War II. Read [“SOE / SIS Cooperation”](#), *SOE in Burma*, January 19, 2020.

**The Last Full Measure.** A film about pararescue during the Vietnam War has had the [technical advise of a retired Air Force NCO](#) who spent 24 years in pararescue. The advisor, John Pighini, was a Silver Star recipient for his actions in Vietnam. (*New York Post*, Jan 23, 2020).



*“Preserving the history of the Combat Diver community”*

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# 2020 SOF Events

<https://sof.news/sof-events/>

## **April 2020**

April 2020. Tampa, Florida

[Heroes Unite: SOWF's 40th Anniversary Event](#)

Special Operations Warrior Foundation

April 3-4, 2020. Yuma, Arizona

[Military Freefall Instructor Reunion and Ball](#)

Military Freefall Association

April 22, 2020. Fort Carson, Colorado

[10th SF Group VA Benefits and Disability Claims Seminar](#)

Green Beret Foundation

April 30, 2020. Paterson, New Jersey

[Ronald P. Bucca Horse Soldier Award Dinner](#)

Special Forces Foundation

## **May 2020**

May 6, 2020. New York City

[3rd Annual NYC Salute to Raiders Event](#)

Marine Raider Foundation

May 9, 2020. Newport, Kentucky

[3rd Annual Riverboating for Berets – A Bourbon Excursion](#)

Green Beret Foundation

May 11-14, 2020. Tampa, Florida

[Special Operations Forces Industry Conference \(SOFIC\)](#)

NDIA

May 15, 2020. Orlando, Florida

[2020 Blackbeard Golf Tournament](#)

SSG Matthew Pucino Memorial Foundation



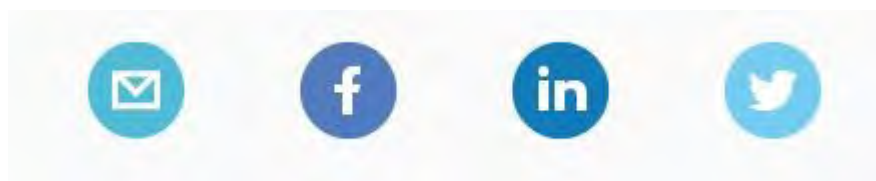
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