

# Veritas

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*In This Issue:*

In the past sixty years, ARSOF units and personnel have made history in diverse places throughout the world. Locations highlighted in this issue of *Veritas* are indicated on the map above.

- ♣ *Burma*—Merrill’s Marauders
- ♣ *France and Germany*—512th Airborne Signal Company and 112th Airborne Army Signal Battalion
- ♣ *Korea*—2nd Ranger Infantry Company and U.S. Special Forces Detachment–Korea
- ♣ *El Salvador*—Special Forces trainers
- ♣ *Philippines*—E Company, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment
- ♣ *Turkey*—528th Special Operations Support Battalion
- ♣ *Iraq*—5th Special Forces Group, 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion, and 315th Psychological Operations Company

# Veritas



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COVER: World War II airborne troops in Operation DRAGOON—the invasion of Southern France—arrived by parachute and by glider. Soldiers with 1st Airborne Task Force Headquarters, including signalmen from the 512th Airborne Signal Company, moved quickly from their gliders to the command post near le Mitan.

# The Azimuth of the USASOC History Office

The very positive responses to the second *Veritas*, a “spectrum” issue, indicate that we are “on azimuth” with our audience in how we are presenting ARSOF history. We have been pleased to see that our distribution has grown weekly, and comments and feedback continue to arrive from the field. E-mails and letters from our readers are always welcome; that is one way we stay attuned to the ARSOF community.

Ensuring that all of ARSOF gets covered in each *Veritas* is a constant challenge. Regular features like “Books in the Field,” “Historical Snapshot,” and the back cover preview of upcoming articles in the next *Veritas* will continue. Because 2005 was the start-up year, only two issues were published. In 2006, the journal will truly become a quarterly publication.

The azimuth defines the direction of the USASOC History Office. In the immediate future are book-length studies on ARSOF in the Korean War, ARSOF in El Salvador, ARSOF and Camp MacKall, and Somalia. *Veritas* will continue to examine the early roots of Army Special Operations, from the legacy units of World War II through on-going campaigns in the Global War on Terrorism. Future historical studies will encompass the ARSOF campaigns in the Balkans and in Latin America as well as specific events involving USASOC units.

Ongoing interests include legacy units in the China-Burma-India Theater—Merrill’s Marauders, MARS Task Force, and the OSS. Early Special Forces, Psychological Operations, and Civil Affairs operations are of constant interest. The History Office welcomes input from the field in the form of articles, photographs or interviews.

Forthcoming projects include the book *All Roads Lead to Baghdad: ARSOF in Iraq* and three posters. The first poster was produced in conjunction with the 21 November 2005 memorialization of the Special Operations Academic Facility in honor of Colonel Aaron Bank. The poster features an oil painting of Colonel Bank by Lieutenant Colonel Edward A. McHale, a long-time 10th SFG officer. The second ARSOF history poster depicting the OEF-Afghanistan campaign will be distributed in late January, and one for LTG William P. Yarborough is scheduled for March 2006.

Effective September 2005, the USASOC History Office was relocated to H-1715 on Son Tay Road.

To all the veterans—from World War II to OEF and OIF now—thanks for agreeing to be interviewed and sharing photos, maps, and memorabilia. The time and contributions provide “life” and make ARSOF history more interesting and meaningful.

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# Airborne Signal

## The 112th (Special Operations) Signal Battalion in World War II

by Cherilyn A. Walley



**“THOUGH** the life of this unit was only seven months and its achievements or name will never be recognized by the historians of World War II, the role it played during the invasion and liberation of Southern France will be remembered in the heart of every soldier in the First Airborne Task Force.”<sup>1</sup> This lament is found in a 1945 pamphlet recording the brief history of the 512th Airborne Signal Company. Little did the authors know that the unit they served and loved would form the foundation of today’s 112th Special Operations Signal Battalion (Airborne), a vital part of Army special operations combat support. This article chronicles the adventures and accomplishments of the 512th Airborne Signal Company and 112th Airborne Army Signal Battalion in World War II.



*Troops with the 512th wore the Airborne Command shoulder patch during Operation DRAGOON.*

Beginning in 1943, Allied war planners considered an invasion of Southern France in support of Operation OVERLORD, the Normandy invasion. The decision whether or not to execute Operation ANVIL was debated, made, and retracted more than once, even as planning continued. General Dwight D.

Eisenhower’s argument that the port of Marseilles, France, was needed to support a thrust into Germany prevailed over British Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s desire to push north through Italy and into the Balkans ahead of the Russians. When Allied forces seized Rome earlier than expected in June 1944, the necessary men and assets became available to conduct ANVIL. With Allied troops stuck halfway up Italy and unable to break out of the Normandy beachhead, and with storms further limiting use of northern French ports, the second half of August was determined to be the ideal time to execute what was now being called Operation DRAGOON.<sup>2</sup>

Like Normandy, the invasion of Southern France was a combined sea and airborne assault. The division-sized 1st Airborne Task Force (ABTF) led the air phase of the operation. It was under the command of Major General Robert T. Frederick, former commanding officer of the First Special Service Force (FSSF). In addition to the battle-hardened FSSF, which made an amphibious assault, the task force was composed of virtually every available parachute and glider unit in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations to support Seventh Army’s three-division VI Corps landing force. The British 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade and 64th Light Artillery Battalion were joined by American parachute and glider units: the American 517th Parachute Combat Team (consisting of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, 596th Airborne Engineer Company, and the newly glider-qualified Antitank Company of the Japanese-American 442nd Infantry Regiment), the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion reinforced by the 463rd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, the 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion, and the 550th Glider Infantry Battalion. Various other specialized units were drawn from forces in Italy and North Africa, including the 512th Airborne Signal Company.<sup>3</sup>

The 512th Airborne Signal Company’s mission was to provide communications support to the airborne element of the Allied invasion force. Headquarters Seventh Army at Lido de Roma, Italy, issued General Orders No. 41 on 14 July 1944, activating the 512th Airborne Signal Company.<sup>4</sup> When the Seventh Army Airborne Division (Provisional) was renamed the 1st Airborne Task Force on 21 July 1944, the 512th was already organizing men and equipment in support of the task force’s mission.<sup>5</sup>



*First Airborne Task Force Tab*



*First Special Service Force*



*British 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade*



*517th Parachute Infantry Regiment*



*460th Parachute Field Artillery*



*596th Airborne Engineer Company*



*509th Parachute Infantry Battalion*

Company personnel came from a number of sources. Many of the 512th's soldiers hailed from the 6766th Signal Service Company (Provisional), while others were recruited from the Airborne Training Center in Rome, and the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions. Private First Class Dane Wolfe, however, was recruited out of the replacement depot in Santa Maria, Italy. He had been a switchboard operator with the Telephone and Telegraph Section of the 45th Infantry Division since the invasion of Sicily and operations in Anzio; as a result, Wolfe was assigned to train other men in the 512th on switchboard operations. As of 31 July 1944—fifteen days before D-Day—the strength of the 512th stood at 3 officers, 102 enlisted men, and 2 warrant officers, with 27 more enlisted men attached to the company.

Even with the additional personnel, the 512th was not equipped to support the division-sized 1st ABTF.<sup>6</sup>

The 512th used the month before D-Day (15 August) to train personnel and gather the necessary equipment to support the imminent operation. Because the majority of the company had not served in airborne units, all soldiers immediately entered into a training program designed to bring them up to speed on airborne signal equipment and basic airborne skills. At the Airborne Training Center located outside of Rome, the signalmen received special training in the loading and lashing of equipment in Waco CG-4A gliders, and all personnel qualified as glidermen—most having actual-

ly gone through the training. Wolfe's glider qualification was slightly more perfunctory: [Major William James, 1st ABTF Signal Officer] came to me and said "Hey, Wolfe, I want to talk to you. Would you go in without any glider training?" I said, "Let's get this d— war over with." And he said, "This is our boy." After a moment's further reflection, however, Wolfe did remember to ask for the all-important airborne bonus: But wait a minute, give me that fifty dollars more a

month. The order went through on 9 September 1944, effective 6 August 1944.<sup>7</sup>

The company was divided into five functional sections—Wire Section, Radio Section, Message Center, Signal Office Section, and Supply Section—and each section's personnel focused on its mission-specific tasks. The Wire Section was responsible not only for internal telephone communications in the task force command post, but also for extending hard wire communications to higher headquarters and to the major combat units of the command. Even as they trained, the Wire Section soldiers installed two telephone exchanges (the corps-level TC-4 and smaller TC-12 intended for use by the Army Air Force) at 1st ABTF Headquarters, and assisted an Airborne Training Center signal detachment with installing trunk lines from Headquarters to the 509th Parachute Infantry, 551st Parachute Infantry, 550th Glider Infantry, and the 51st Troop Carrier Wing. Wire Section personnel developed and successfully tested a standard Waco CG-4A glider-load setup for their ¼-ton truck (jeep) with mounted RL-31 wire reels. The load configuration was a significant factor in ensuring that the 512th wire teams landed without mishap or loss of equipment, unlike many other glider-borne troops.<sup>8</sup>

The Radio Section was



*The jeep-mounted SCR-193 radio set provided Morse code and voice capability at a range of 25 to 100 miles, even while the vehicle was moving.*



*The workhorse radio of the frontline troops was the SCR-300 walkie-talkie. At 40 pounds, the SCR-300 was man-portable and had a range of up to 25 miles.*

Photo courtesy of Dane Wolfe

*Dane M. Wolfe served with the 512th Airborne Signal Company during Operation DRAGOON as a switchboard operator.*



Cap badge worn by glider troops 1944.



463rd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion



551st Parachute Infantry Battalion



550th Glider Infantry Battalion



442nd Infantry Regiment

responsible for the 1st ABTF Headquarters' wireless communications, including operation and maintenance of all radio equipment. The training period was primarily spent acquiring and familiarizing the soldiers with the equipment used by airborne units. The most common radio sets used by the 512th were the long-range SCR-499, the medium-range SCR-193, the short-range SCR-284, and

the man-portable SCR-300, also known as the walkie-talkie. The Radio Section spent its last preoperation days finalizing radio procedures and glider-load configurations. An 8 August command post exercise revealed certain "inefficiencies" in the task force radio network—problems the Radio Section was then able to fix before D-Day. Radio Section personnel also concentrated on preparing all radio equipment for airborne operations. Notably, the SCR-499 and SCR-193 radio sets were installed in ¼-ton trailers that could be safely loaded into gliders.<sup>9</sup>

The Message Center Section acted as the distribution center for all hard copy messages. In addition to glider training, the Message Center soldiers spent their initial training time learning Message Center procedures and practicing cryptography. The company initially lacked enough qualified motorcycle messengers and had to conduct an intensive course

on motorcycle operation during the training period. The relative scarcity of motorcycles in prewar America made it a challenge to find skilled riders during World War II. Only one third of all soldiers even possessed licenses to drive cars. An oblique reference to pre-D-Day activities in a 1945 unit history—"Practical experience received at ABTF Headquarters was mostly of physical nature"—indicates that the Message Center also spent much of its training time acting as runners for the command.<sup>10</sup>

The Signal Office Section acted as the company's headquarters and consisted of the 1st ABTF Signal Officer, Major James, and a small staff, which included the unit commander, Captain Charles L. Howard. As would be expected, Signal Office personnel spent their training time organizing equipment and personnel, and planning for the operation. They spent a great deal of time and effort finalizing the task force signal plan and producing the Signal Operations Instruction booklet, the instruction manual for signal operators and commanders that contained the procedures, call signs, frequencies, challenges, and passwords for the operation. In addition to time constraints, production of the booklet was further complicated by the lack of experienced personnel and a shortage of office supplies. Major James wrote Paragraph 5 of the operational Field Order, and the Signal Office Section had to prepare numerous copies of both Paragraph 5 and the Signal Annex. In spite of the challenges, the section met all deadlines.<sup>11</sup>

The Supply Section was perhaps the busiest of the sections as it scrambled not only to acquire the equipment itemized in the Table of Organization and Equipment and Table of Basic Allowance, but also to seek additional equipment required for the upcoming airborne operation. While most requisitions were filled from the Signal Depot



Photo courtesy of Edwin S. Van Dusen Collection, Military History Institute

Message Center personnel often relied on motorcycles, such as this 1941 Harley Davidson WLA 750, to deliver important messages during Operation DRAGOON.



Waco C6-4A glider tow ropes had to be laid out very carefully to avoid tangling during takeoff. The sturdy ropes served as a literal lifeline until gliders were aloft and able to maintain altitude on their own.



1st Airborne Task Force Headquarters personnel kneel in prayer before boarding their glider "The Leakin Deacon" for Southern France early the morning of 15 August 1944.



*On D-Day for Operation DRAGOON, thousands of paratroopers dropped from the sky near the town of Le Muy. More than half the men missed their drop zones, sometimes to their salvation since German defenses were concentrated on the designated landing sites.*

at Naples, Italy, some items had to be obtained from signal depots in Oran, North Africa, and on Corsica. Upon inspecting available equipment, the Supply Section also requisitioned additional equipment for delivery by air on D+1 and D+2. Supply issues were an ongoing challenge for all signal units involved in the invasion of Southern France, and kept the 512th's Supply Section more than occupied for the duration.<sup>12</sup>

On 13 August 1944, just one day short of the one month anniversary of the 512th Airborne Signal Company's activation, the company separated into three groups (flights) and moved from Lido De Roma to the Voltone, Orbatello, and Canino airfields near Rome. At the airfields, the troops were assigned to specific gliders, into which they loaded and lashed down their equipment. The signal soldiers passed the final hours before launch receiving final mission briefings, rechecking equipment, and waiting.<sup>13</sup>

The invasion of Southern France began at 1045 hours on 14 August, when the First Special Service Force left Corsica in preparation for amphibious assaults on Isle du Levant and Isle de Port Cros to prevent German artillery from firing on VI Corps as it approached the coast. A naval bombardment and a dummy parachute drop between Marseilles and Toulon then preceded the invasion proper,

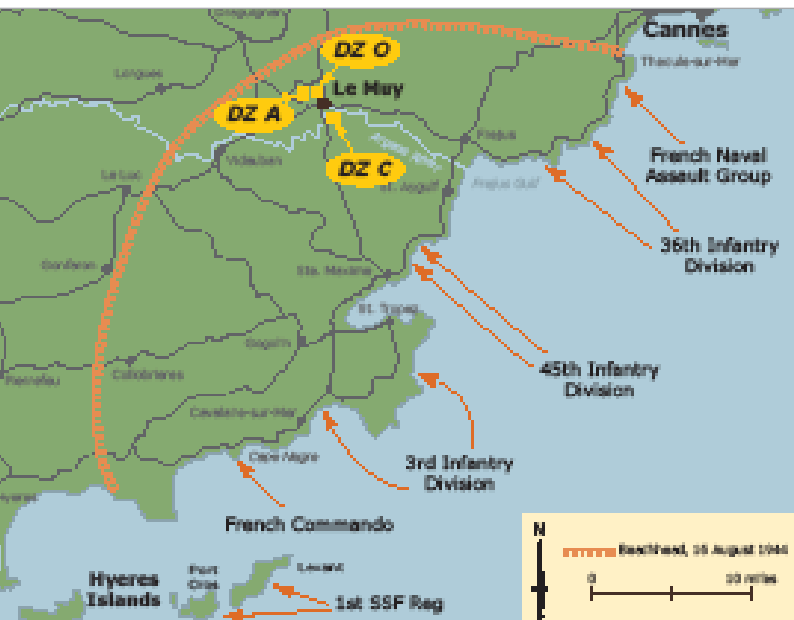
which began early in the morning on 15 August.<sup>14</sup>

The main body of the 1st Airborne Task Force used ten departure airfields along the Italian coast to marshal troops and aircraft. The route into the drop zones was over five hundred miles long, and was flown in the dark with the aid of navigation aids onboard ships in the Mediterranean. Once the aircraft approached the drop zones, beacons emplaced by nine pathfinder teams were supposed to provide final guidance to the drop zones. However, six of the nine pathfinder teams missed their drop zones and were unable to properly emplace their signals. Lack of pathfinder assistance and poor visibility caused fully 60 percent of the paratroopers in the first wave to be dropped outside their drop zones.<sup>15</sup>

The 512th made its airborne assault in three glider flight waves on D-Day, beginning at 0525 hours. The first group of signal gliders landed near Le Muy, France, at approximately 0900, with little opposition and relatively few incidents, in spite of the Rommel Asparagus—short telephone pole-thick stakes driven into the ground all over the landing zones. Only one of the 512th's gliders failed to land at Le Muy that morning—the one carrying Major James. The glider's tow rope broke over the Mediterranean Sea, forcing the aircraft to make a water landing. All personnel were recovered by the British Royal Navy, but a motorcycle, radio equipment, and two crates of courier pigeons on board were lost. Wolfe was on the downed glider—his first glider trip ever—and described the incident:

*The pilot said, "Boys, we are going down." The rope off the C-47 lay right over the nose of the glider. I said, "Holy s—!"... But anyway, down we go and boy did they bring us in perfect... Well, I didn't strap myself in, because I was sitting close to [this] little window [here, and] the door is back there... Anyway, I was the first one out of there on that side. I'm out there pedaling water, and the wings are right here and the holes are here, and the guys are coming out on both sides. I'm helping them come out... Finally, I saw the canvas flapping. I said, "My God, there's somebody in that." I reached in there—[the man] was about 180 pounds; I weighed about 140 soaking wet—I reached in there and got him, and I finally got him untangled and came up. He fought me, and I cussed him and sort of shook him and slapped his face in the water, and we finally got him calmed down and we pulled him up.*

*Now, the airplane had circled us and dumped its three two-man [rubber] boats. We were all up on top of the glider, two pilots and all [six] of us. Anyway, the major*



Seventh Army advance.



Seventh Army





*Glider troops quickly moved from the landing zone to their designated rally points. Signalmen with the 512th rendezvoused and established their command post near the hamlet le Mitan.*

*says, "Who is going to go after the boats?" I says, "I'll go." I'm not nuts; I'm dumb like a fox. So I jumped in and the jeep driver says, "I'll go with you." I says, "Come on, let's go." So we swam. Well, we can't get in. [When] one guy [tries], it tips over; so he has to hold one side [while the other man] crawls in. [We] got the second [boat], and the major [calls], "Hey, Wolfe! Come on back, two is enough." "We're coming, Major." We came back, [and we put] Tommy Rider—my buddy [who] I came overseas with—in a boat on top of the glider.*

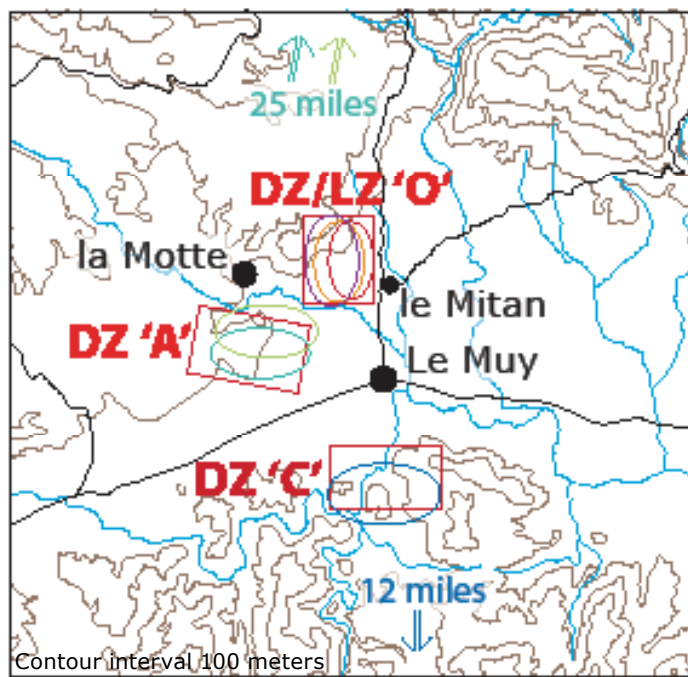
*Now the major says, "I have a fifth of whiskey down in there. Do you think we could get it?" [The major] went down in there, and he came up with the bottle. [We] eight guys killed that whole bottle in about an hour. The major let us drink it all. So that's the story.<sup>16</sup>*

In spite of their unsuccessful first flight, Wolfe, Major James, and most of the rest of the men on that glider participated in the second wave of glider launches in the afternoon.

Those of the 512th that landed in the first wave assembled on Drop Zone "O" north of Le Muy, gathered their equipment, and moved out to establish communications at the task force command post established in a farm house near le Mitan. The wire team quickly ran trunk lines to all the sections in the command post, and extended a line to the British 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade. However, the team running a line to the 517th Combat Team encountered enemy resistance and had to withdraw. When the rest of the company arrived at 1821 hours on the second glider flight, another wire team was able to safely approach from a different direction and patch a line through to the 517th.<sup>17</sup>

The first echelon of the Radio Section landed only a few hundred yards from the area designated for the 1st ABTF command post near le Mitan. Section personnel quickly organized themselves and their equipment, and proceeded to set up the radio nets. A rear echelon radio net to Italy was established using the vehicle-mounted SCR-499 radio, which had a dependable hundred-mile range for voice communications and many times that

## Designated and Actual Drop/Landing Zones 15 August 1944



for Morse code transmissions. The net between Seventh Army's VI Corps and 1st ABTF Headquarters used the SCR-193, which had a range of between twenty-five and one hundred miles. The 1st ABTF's own command net used "portable" SCR-284s (range less than twenty-five miles, weighing 250 pounds) and the short-range SCR-300 walkie-talkies. All nets worked efficiently, except the command net, which was hampered by the loss of some combat team radio sets. Once those sets were replaced the next day, the command net became fully operational. The rest of the Radio Section arrived in the second wave of gliders, and rendezvoused with the command post without incident.<sup>18</sup>

The Message Center Section and Signal Office Section both sent teams in the first wave of glider landings, and with the exception of the single downed glider, all arrived and began work as planned. The Message Center was up and running, or motoring, at 1027 hours. The center handled an average of twenty-nine electrical (teletype) transmissions, twenty-two foot messages, and ninety-one motor messages in every twenty-four hour period. Once Major James arrived in the second glider wave, the Signal Office was fully functional. Other than the downed glider and its equipment, the 512th suffered no losses during the landing operations.<sup>19</sup>

The 1st ABTF continued the attack north and the command post moved to the town of Le Muy on 17 August, two days after the landing. Even as the command post moved forward, the 512th maintained communications. When the 36th Infantry Division arrived at Le Muy on 20 August, the 1st ABTF's initial mission was completed. The task force reverted to Seventh Army control and assumed the mission of protecting the army's right flank



On 17 August, the 1st Airborne Task Force command post moved to Le Muy, where Major General Frederick and his staff continued to orchestrate the airborne elements of the invasion.

as it fought its way up the Rhone Valley.<sup>20</sup>

As the task force moved northeast toward Nice, the speed of the advance created problems for the wire teams trying to keep up with the forward units, as the average demand for wire was approximately one hundred miles per day. By the end of August, the axis of signal communications extended northeast from Grasse through Vence and on to Colomars. With each relocation of the task force command post, the Wire Section successfully laid the necessary trunk lines to maintain communications. In order to keep up with the advance, the 512th attached wire teams to each of the three major combat teams (the First Special Service Force, 517th, and 509th/551st/550th). The installation of tactical switching centrals at les Adrets (half way between Le Muy and Grasse), les Veyans (half way between les Adrets and Grasse), and Vence (northwest of Nice, on the same axis as the previous switches) made wire communications possible to all combat teams and to Seventh Army's rear echelon.<sup>21</sup>

Switching centrals were rudimentary but crucial solutions to the extended line-of-communication problem. A trunk line from the command post fed into the switching central, where signals were transferred, or "switched," to the appropriate line to each combat teams. After running the main switchboard at the command post in Nice, Wolfe was tapped to maintain the switching central northwest of Nice:

*Major James called me into the office. He says, "Wolfe, I want you to go up into the woods up here and maintain a switching central." I said, "Okay, who is going with me?" and he says, "Nobody." I says, "Wait a minute. You haven't got anybody? I'm not telling you [I'm not] going, but give me a couple of hand grenades." "We haven't got any." "What do you mean? I want to have a fair fight if it happens. You can't blame me for that." He said, "Well, I can't." I said, "Okay," and*

*I went up.*

*I was in the woods with a canvas over my head. About two o'clock in the morning, I finally called, "Boy, you had better come and help. Something is going on down through here and I'm going to take care of myself." And they said, "Hang on, Wolfe." Major James came with his driver and a couple of other guys, and they left a guy with me that night. About two hundred yards down the road there was a dead German, dead for about ten days. He was on the west side of me, so I could smell him every now and then. That was the last of my experience in, well I'll call it combat, because we soon pulled out of Southern France and went north."<sup>22</sup>*

The 512th provided signal support to all components of the 1st ABTF as they secured towns stretching from Nice northeast to the Italian border. The 517th Regimental Combat Team spent the rest of August capturing Fayence, Callian, Saint Cezaire, Saint Vallier, Grasse, Bouyon, and La Rouquette. Overcoming heavy German fortifications, in September the 517th took Col de Braus, Mont Ventabren, and Peira Cava. The unit also took part in the bitter battle for the Sospel Valley, finally moving into Sospel proper on 29 September, and took Mount Agaisen soon thereafter. Elements of the 517th pursued the retreating enemy throughout October and into November.<sup>23</sup>

The rest of the 1st ABTF shared the 517th's fight northeast in pursuit of the Germans. The 509th and 551st Parachute Infantry Battalions and 550th Glider Infantry Battalion were part of the line of advance. Among the towns in the line of march were Cannes, Grasse, St. Martin Vesuble, Lantosque, Peira Cava, and Barcelonnette.<sup>24</sup> Having taken a short rest from its invasion of the Hyeres, the First Special Service Force joined the 1st ABTF southwest of Grasse near Le Planestel on 21 August, replacing the British 2nd Parachute Brigade, which returned to operations in Italy. The Force took part in the push to the east and north, liberating towns and villages such as Taneron, Chateaneuf de Entrenes, Velleneuve-Loubet, Biot, Vence, St. Jeannet, Gattieres, Carros, St. Paul, Cagnes-sur-Mer, Nice, and Contes—all by the end of August. Wire teams from the 512th kept up with the combat teams' movements, laying field wire as quickly as they could in order to keep the teams connected to the command post.<sup>25</sup>

Radio nets supplemented and occasionally replaced



36th Infantry Division



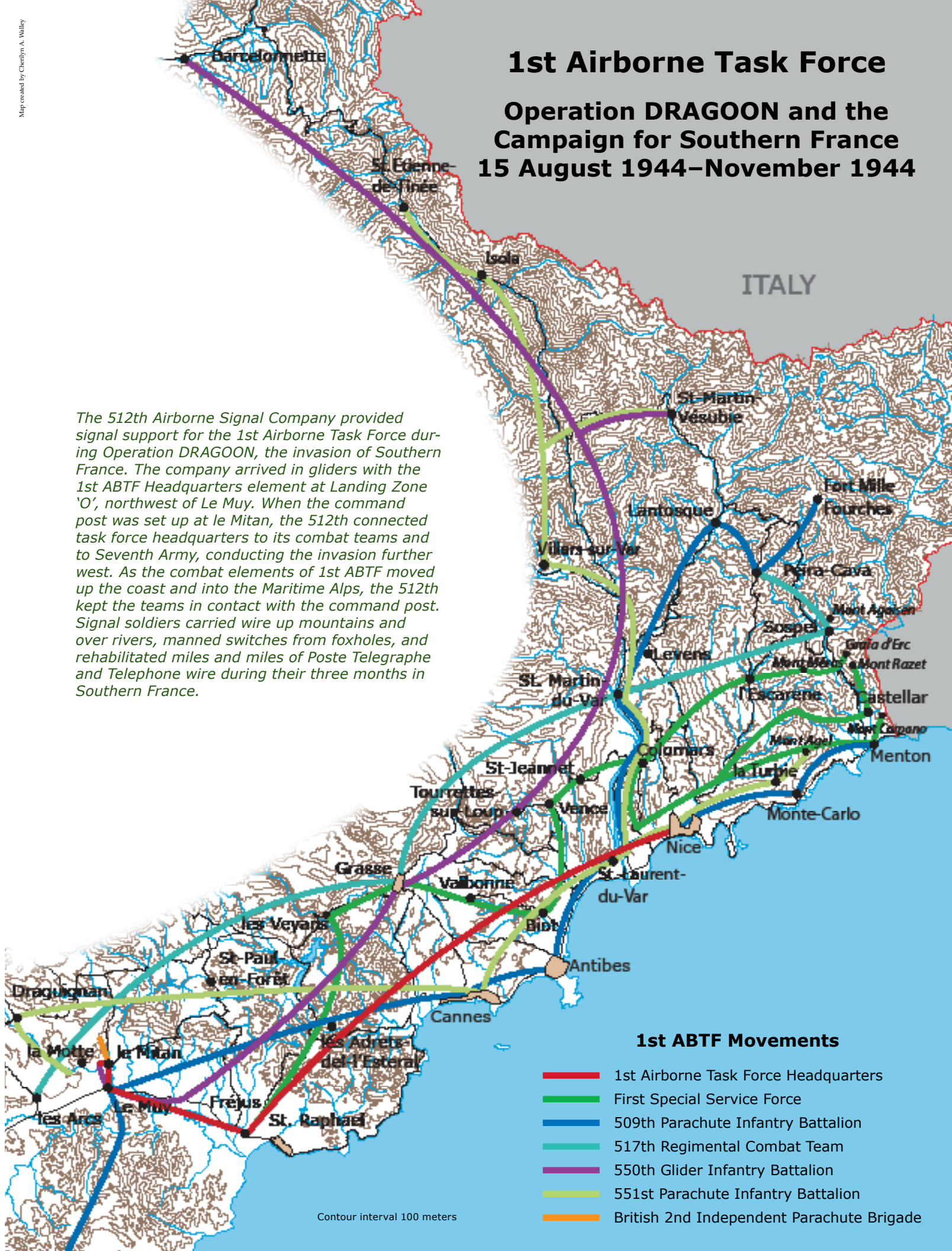
45th Infantry Division



VI Corps

# 1st Airborne Task Force Operation DRAGOON and the Campaign for Southern France 15 August 1944–November 1944

The 512th Airborne Signal Company provided signal support for the 1st Airborne Task Force during Operation DRAGOON, the invasion of Southern France. The company arrived in gliders with the 1st ABTF Headquarters element at Landing Zone 'O', northwest of Le Muy. When the command post was set up at le Mitan, the 512th connected task force headquarters to its combat teams and to Seventh Army, conducting the invasion further west. As the combat elements of 1st ABTF moved up the coast and into the Maritime Alps, the 512th kept the teams in contact with the command post. Signal soldiers carried wire up mountains and over rivers, manned switches from foxholes, and rehabilitated miles and miles of Poste Telegraphique and Telephone wire during their three months in Southern France.



## 1st ABTF Movements

- 1st Airborne Task Force Headquarters
- First Special Service Force
- 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion
- 517th Regimental Combat Team
- 550th Glider Infantry Battalion
- 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion
- British 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade

wire communications during the operation, especially as combat teams ranged further away from the command post. Radio communications were generally reliable, but distance and mountainous terrain did provide challenges to the Radio Section. In spite of the difficulties, the section established five radio nets by the end of August. SCR-193 and SCR-499 radio sets connected the 1st ABTF command post with Seventh Army Headquarters. The same setup also connected the command post with VI Corps, 3rd Division, 45th Division, and 36th Divi-



*As the 1st Airborne Task Force's fight moved into the Maritime Alps and fall turned to winter, snow became another factor in combat and combat support operations. The jungle-trained 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion added ski patrols to its tactical repertoire.*



*The M-209 cipher machine encoded and decoded messages in five-letter groups. Because the British were unfamiliar with the machine, the 112th sent cryptographic teams with the 6th Airborne Division to ensure continuity of communication.*

sion, and supported the 1st ABTF's own command net. The SCR-499 enabled radio communications with the 1st ABTF rear echelon, and the portable SCR-300 radio sets made up the task force's antitank warning net.<sup>26</sup>

As fighting progressed northeast along the coast and into the snowy Maritime Alps, distance and mountainous terrain made it increasingly difficult for combat units to maintain communications. The 512th remedied the combat teams' lack of long-range radios by attaching radio teams with medium-powered radio sets to each combat team. Resources were stretched so far that such assistance was only possible because of the attachment of 6759th Signal Detachment troops—four officers and fifty-six enlisted men—and equipment to the 512th, which enabled radio communications to be maintained with even the most far-flung combat units.<sup>27</sup>

The Message Center's scope of responsibility expanded along with the battle. Beginning on 6 September, 6759th Signal Detachment personnel also provided invaluable assistance and equipment to the 512th's Message Center. The detachment's cipher machines expedited transmissions to higher headquarters, and the additional personnel enabled the section to train new troops while maintaining a high volume of message traffic. The 512th continued to use motorcycle couriers and established air dispatch letter service between 1st ABTF Headquarters and the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion and 550th Airborne Infantry Battalion combat teams, Sixth Army Group, Seventh Army Headquarters, and Continental Base Section to the west.<sup>28</sup>

With the battle lines moving so quickly and spreading out so widely, the 1st ABTF Signal Officer concluded that field wire was inadequate to the needs of the task force and turned to the commercial wire system for a solution. With the cooperation of the director of Poste Telegraphe and Telephone of Nice, the existing wire system was absorbed into the military network. Civilian repairmen under military supervision performed the majority of the repair work, and soon all combat teams were again interconnected by wire communications. The high volume of telephone traffic on the system required an upgrade in switching capability, so in September the Wire Section installed two telephone exchanges (a TC-2 and a TC-4) at the 1st ABTF command post. Between the commercial wire system and the military trunk lines, the Wire Section handled approximately one thousand calls and twenty-five teletype messages per twenty-four hour period.<sup>29</sup>

Once the Mediterranean port city of Nice was taken, the 1st ABTF went into an "active defense" along the French-Italian border, on a line extending southeast from Barcelonnette in the mountains to Menton on the coast. The 512th continued supporting the task force with much the same setup as before. The commercial wire system supplemented military trunk lines wherever possible, and proved vital to the success of ongoing operations. The Poste Telegraphe and Telephone system was extensive, but fifteen years old and run-down. Leaky insulators were

Photo courtesy of the International Spy Museum



especially troublesome. Wire maintenance was a constant challenge, and both civilian and military repair crews struggled to keep up with the damage caused by both enemy artillery fire and inclement weather.<sup>30</sup>

As the front moved closer to the Italian border, shelling irreparably damaged parts of the commercial wire system. Also in keeping with the de facto joint nature of the wire system, repair teams used military field wire to replace commercial wire taken out by shelling. Due to the long

distances involved, the heavier spiral-4 cable was also used in lieu of field wire to connect combat teams to each other and to the new switching central established at Sospel. In spite of the work required to lay so much cable, especially in areas made hostile by both the enemy and the terrain, the Wire Section provided communications to all combat teams in time for offensive operations.<sup>31</sup>

Wireless communications continued to present challenges, but the Radio Section met them as well as possible. In spite of having signal teams with medium-power transmitters attached to each combat team, the mountainous terrain often interrupted communications with headquarters. Signals completely faded between 2000 and 0700 hours every night due to atmospheric changes, and no antenna could be found to remedy the problem. The Sixth Army Group net experienced similar difficulties, but in that case better antennas were helpful. Radio operators from the 512th working with the 325th Fighter Wing then 340th Fighter Group net found themselves faced with a completely different challenge: boredom. Message traffic on the net was so sparse that operators easily lost interest in the task at hand; rotating one hour shifts alleviated much of the problem.<sup>32</sup>

The Message Center Section had to cope with bad weather as well as extended battle lines. Air courier service was discontinued to one combat team located up in the mountains, eighty miles from the command post. Motorcycle messenger service proved to be impractical for such a distance, so radios had to be used for tactical messages and administrative message traffic was passed along through the informal supply truck and traveling officer courier system. In spite of such challenges, the section continued to train personnel and refine its procedures, resulting in ever increasing efficiency.<sup>33</sup>

In the midst of battle, the 512th Airborne Signal Company underwent an administrative change. The 6759th Signal Detachment was officially brought under the com-



*The work of a World War II signalman could take him to new heights—as in the case of this lineman atop a telephone pole—or to new depths, as demonstrated by these men burying spiral-4 cable near the Rhine.*

mand and control of the 512th in October, making official a state of affairs that had existed since early September. At the end of October, the combined effective strength of the 1st ABTF signal units was 10 officers, 1 warrant officer, and 157 enlisted men.<sup>34</sup>

In mid-November, the 1st ABTF was alerted to prepare to move west and join XVIII Airborne Corps at Soissons (about 60 miles northeast of Paris). In addition to inventorying and organizing all equipment and systems in preparation for a turnover to their replacements, personnel of the radio and message sections



*XVIII Airborne Corps*



*First Allied Airborne Army*



*IX Troop Carrier Command*



*17th Airborne Division*



*British 30 Corps*



*British 1st Commando Brigade*



*Ninth Army*



*194th Glider Regiment*

engaged in Operation JUPITER, a deception plan to mask the 1st ABTF's withdrawal. The Message Center serviced cryptographic messages prepared by each combat unit intended to create the appearance (sound) of business as usual on the front. The Radio Section collected the radio sets from each combat team and used them to carry out the deception. The ruse apparently worked, as the enemy did not adjust its tactics in accordance with 1st ABTF's troop movements.<sup>35</sup>

On 21 November 1944, the 44th Anti Aircraft Artillery Brigade relieved the 1st ABTF and assumed responsibility for the wire systems and signal supply dump. At that point, the 6828th Signal Detachment was also transferred and attached to the 44th. The 512th spent the rest of the month inventorying and consolidating equipment in anticipation of movement orders. An advance party left Nice by motor convoy on 1 December, followed on 7 December by the main body via rail, and the rear echelon by motor on the following day. All three elements of the 512th reunited at Soissons on 12 December and bivouacked with the 517th Regimental Combat Team.<sup>36</sup>

Signal personnel do not typically receive combat awards, but Staff Sergeant Harold G. Kauble from Upper Sandusky, Ohio, did earn a Bronze Star for "heroic achievement in action against the enemy near Les Arcs, France, on 15 August 1944." The only other person from the 512th to

earn an award from the 1st ABTF was Major William L. James, the task force signal officer, who was awarded the Bronze Star "for meritorious achievement in direct support of combat operations in Southern France, from 1-18 November 1944."<sup>37</sup>

On 18 December, the 512th was ordered to join the First Allied Airborne Army (FAAA) at Sunninghill Park, near Ascot, England. Within six hours, all sections were en route to Airstrip A-70 near Reims, where the majority of personnel and equipment were loaded on aircraft and transported to England. Remaining company assets traveled by motor convoy and sealift, rejoining the unit in England. Once established at Sunninghill Park, the 512th and the 6966th Signal Service Company (Provisional), which was already located in England, provided communications for the FAAA Headquarters.<sup>38</sup>

The First Allied Airborne Army had been activated on 2 August 1944 as a higher command over all available (uncommitted) Allied airborne forces in the European Theater of Operations: the newly formed XVIII Airborne Corps, which comprised the 17th, 82nd, and 101st Airborne divisions; British 1st and 6th Airborne Divisions; 1st Polish Parachute Brigade; U.S. IX Troop Carrier Command, and any British Royal Air Force troop carrier units allocated for airborne support. As the 1st ABTF fought its way up the French coast and into the Maritime Alps, the FAAA—including signal elements assigned to FAAA Headquarters—had participated in Operation MARKET-GARDEN, the invasion of Holland.<sup>39</sup>

Soon after the 512th Airborne Signal Company relocated to England, elements of the FAAA were sent to the Battle of the Bulge. The majority of 512th and 6966th signal personnel continued to provide communications support for the FAAA main headquarters in England, but on 23 December 1944, six enlisted men—including Technical Sergeant 5 Dane Wolfe—were assigned on temporary duty to forward headquarters at Maisons-Laffitte, France. The signal section was set up in the Hotel Royal, a location the battalion maintained through the war's end. At the same time as the majority of the 512th and 6966th personnel were providing signal support to FAAA headquarters in England, the two signal units reorganized and readied for their inactivation and reactivation as a new element. Soon after the Battle of the Bulge ended and the FAAA could concentrate on activities other than survival, the 512th Airborne Signal Company was inacti-

vated on 6 February 1945.<sup>40</sup>

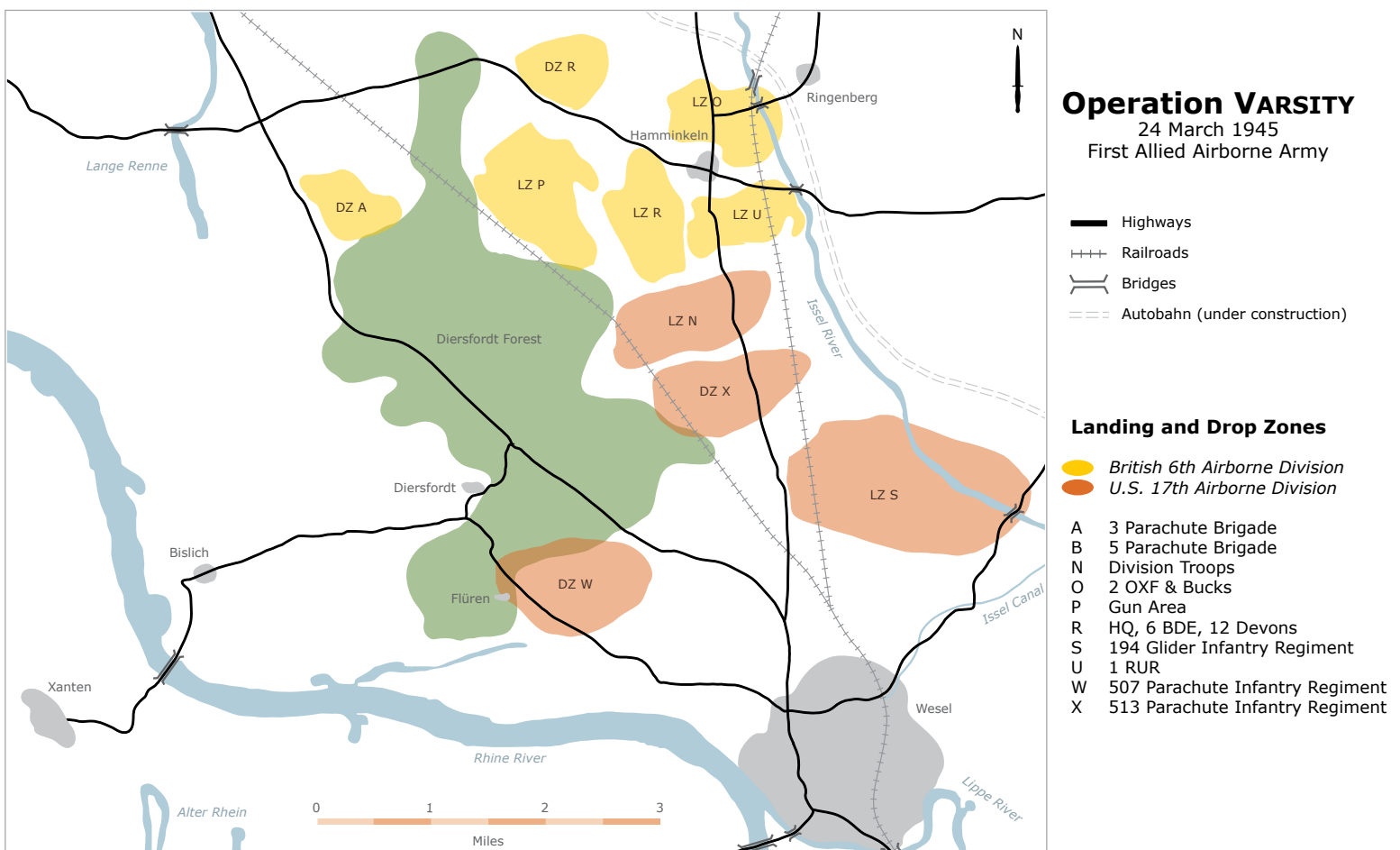
From the remnants of the 512th and the 6966th, the 112th Airborne Army Signal Battalion was created to support First Allied Airborne Army Headquarters. Officers for the new battalion were drawn from every source available. As First Lieutenant Alphonse J. Pacella, who was from the 6966th before the 112th was formed, said, "I'm telling you, they had officers from all over." In spite of their diverse military origins, Pacella knew many of the signal officers from their shared pre-war Army Reserve days, including the FAAA Signal Officer, Lieutenant Colonel William L. James. Pacella noted that many of the officers had worked for American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T): "The Signal Corps was loaded with them."<sup>41</sup>

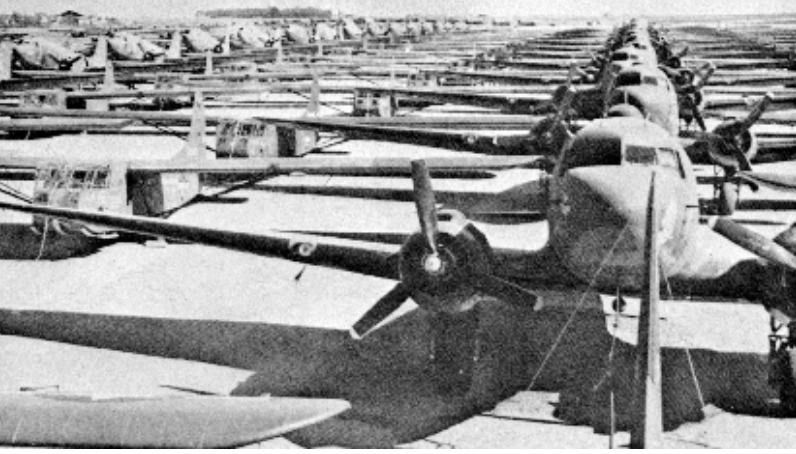
While the FAAA was involved in planning a number of possible airborne operations, the first—and last—to be executed was Operation VARSITY in support of the last major Allied offensive: crossing the Rhine. Assigned to support the British Second Army's crossing at Wesel, the XVIII Airborne Corps, commanding the British 6th Airborne Division and the American 17th Airborne Division, was to capture and hold the high ground northwest of Wesel. Contrary to typical airborne planning, Operation VARSITY would not be the vanguard of the assault. The ground attack needed heavy artillery support and was planned for the early hours of the morning; both requirements were dangerous to airborne troops. The decidedly unconventional solution was for the paratroopers and glidermen to wait until the British ground troops had

crossed the Rhine, and then in daylight land the airborne elements ahead of them near their assigned objectives.<sup>42</sup>

The plan worked beautifully. With intense artillery support fires, at 2100 hours on 23 March 1945, elements of the British 30 Corps crossed the Rhine west of Rees (approximately ten miles northwest of Wesel). At 2200 hours, the British 1st Commando Brigade crossed the river just west of Wesel. Again with heavy artillery preparation, the British 15th Scottish Division crossed north of Xanten at 0200 hours on 24 March. The U.S. Ninth Army continued the assault south of Wesel, with similar success. All up and down the Rhine, the German units were undermanned and unprepared to withstand the Allied offensive. The end of the war in Europe was in sight.<sup>43</sup>

The airborne assault began at 1000 hours on 24 March, capitalizing on the heavy artillery and bombing preparation throughout the morning. The 17th Airborne Division seized its objectives at Diersfordt by dark, in spite of some battalions landing miles from their designated drop zones. The British 6th Airborne Division overcame both flak and ground fire to seize its main objective, the town of Hamminkeln, and several bridges over the Issel River. The 194th Glider Infantry, the last to land, had the best luck hitting its drop zones north and northeast of Wesel. By 1230 hours, all airborne troops were on the ground, and by that evening, the FAAA achieved all its D-Day objectives—Operation VARSITY was a resounding success. In the process, the FAAA landed 21,680 paratroopers and glidermen, 695 vehicles, 113 artillery pieces, and 109 tons of ammunition.<sup>44</sup>





*In March 1945, C-47 airplanes and Waco CG-4A gliders lined a dozen airfields near Paris, waiting for the order that would send them aloft as part of the largest single-day Airborne operation in the war.*



*While a success, VARSITY was a costly operation. A total of 706 men were killed, another 1,253 wounded, and at least 640 missing in action.*

Signal planning for Operation VARSITY began in late 1944 and continued up until the operation's execution in March 1945. Unexpected headquarters relocations made planning difficult, so the signal plan for VARSITY was basic but sound. FAAA Main Headquarters forward deployed to the Combined Command Post northwest of Paris in Maisons-Lafitte, France, on 18 February. First Lieutenant Pacella recalled the journey: "We went by C-47. I remember my wife had sent me a fruit cake; we shared eating it over the English Channel. You know, we had one of the cargo doors wide open. Pretty stupid, when you think about it. Dangerous." The move required the 112th Airborne Army Signal Battalion to provide communications from the continent to all attached units on the continent and in England, all on a scale sufficient to provide control for planning and executing a two-division airlift starting from two separate locations. With a few extra men and some specialized equipment, it did just that.<sup>45</sup>

The 112th established its primary signal facility at the Combined Command Post alongside FAAA Main Headquarters. From that facility it established wire communication circuits (telephones and teleprinters) with both France-based units and commands and those located in England. All told, it established sixty-six circuits, forty-two speech and twenty-four teleprinter, primarily to the U.S. and British troop carrier units assigned to the FAAA. The IX Troop Carrier Command Forward, in Louveciennes, west of Paris, was responsible for running three speech circuits from the airfield switchboards out to the transit camps for the airborne troops adjacent to the airfields.<sup>46</sup>

The 112th also put in place special signal traffic control measures at FAAA headquarters, limiting the number of extensions with access to trunk lines and local calls. These protocols ensured that the eight-position switchboard would not be overloaded, and that trunk lines would always be available for operational needs. With the heavy traffic that the circuits endured during Operation VARSITY—1,979 trunk calls from FAAA Headquarters on 24 March alone—the precautions were wise.<sup>47</sup>

Radio nets also needed to be established, both as backups to landlines and cross-channel circuits, and as the sole means of communication between the Combined Command Post and the airborne units in the drop and landing zones. With approval from Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, the 112th used twenty radio frequencies for Operation VARSITY. All equipment and almost all personnel used to establish and operate the radio nets came from the 112th, enabling the unit to draw on the experience of those who had been with the 512th in Southern France. Any necessary equipment lacking from the 112th's table of organization and equipment was acquired, ranging from specialized radio receivers to typewriters.<sup>48</sup>

By the signal battalion's own calculations, wire communications were so reliable that the radio nets were mostly superfluous, if necessary insurance. That same backup protocol, however, proved very necessary when it came to radio equipment sent with the airborne troops. Forty-five SCR-300 radio sets were sent with 17th Airborne Division to enable the heavy weapons companies to direct mortar fire from forward positions, not something they were usually required to do. Two radio sets were sent for each one required, and with a 60 percent radio loss rate, the precautions were more than justified.<sup>49</sup>

The 112th Airborne Army Signal Battalion was also responsible for the FAAA's cryptographic systems. Lacking a common cipher for British and U.S. airborne forces, the 112th used a combination of the British one-time pad system and the American M-209 cipher machine. To make the technology swap work, M-209 teams were assigned to the British 6th Airborne Division and 1st Commando Brigade, and one-time pad teams were assigned to FAAA and XVIII Airborne Corps headquarters and to 17th Airborne Division. The British cipher officer assigned to XVIII Airborne Corps was "invaluable as he was able to assure



the smooth functioning of the one-time pad system.”<sup>50</sup>

Radar systems also fell under the aegis of the 112th. A committee of signal and radar officers from the various air commands involved in VARSITY decided to rely on the “Gee” (short for grid) network of navigational beacons, as well as the Rebecca-Eureka beacons usually employed in airborne operations. In spite of enemy jamming of the Gee network, the signals operated well. The Rebecca-Eureka beacons also sufficed, and both networks averaged more than 95 percent serviceability. On the other hand, weather was so good that most of the planes were able to fly without relying on the radar at all.<sup>51</sup>

Operation VARSITY was a success, if a costly one. Of the 21,680 British and American paratroopers and glidermen that participated in the assault on 24 March—two full airborne divisions and a glider regiment—706 were killed, 1,253 wounded, and at least 640 were missing in action. The two U.S. infantry divisions that crossed the Rhine by amphibious assault that day suffered only 41 killed, 450 wounded, and 7 reported missing in action.<sup>52</sup>

While the last great airborne operation of the war had ended, the 112th Army Airborne Signal Battalion had not yet finished its work. At FAAA Headquarters at Maisons-Lafitte, the signal battalion regrouped and readied itself for possible future airborne operations. The FAAA’s combat elements continued to fight and move further into Germany, which challenged the battalion to provide communications support to a headquarters responsible for an increasingly diffuse force.<sup>53</sup>

The war in Europe finally came to an end on 7 May 1945, when the German High Command signed the surrender act in Reims, France. From his position on the 112th switchboard in Maisons-Lafitte, Dane Wolfe got the word before the official announcement was made: *I’m on the switchboard at Maisons-Lafitte. Eisenhower comes through on the phone [from Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force]. I hooked him up with his light colonel, his aide. I listened in; this I’ve never done very much, but the war was over with. And [Eisenhower] says, “Colonel?” [The aide responds], “Yeah, General?” “The war’s over tomorrow in Reims.” And I just pulled my cords [in surprise and excitement]!”* When the official statement of surrender was issued, Corporal Patricia A. Malone of the 112th’s Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps Detachment, handled the message.<sup>54</sup>

The FAAA and the 2nd Armored Division were to be the initial occupying force in the American sector of Germany. In anticipation of moving into Berlin, First Allied Airborne Army Headquarters and most of the 112th advanced to Halle, Germany. Arriving at Halle in a convoy of one hundred vehicles, the men and women (Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps personnel) of the 112th quickly established communications capability for FAAA

Headquarters and the other elements readying for the occupation of Berlin. Near Halle, this forward element of the 112th met up with its first Russians: “Strangely enough, an all female unit. It was a reconnaissance unit. They were a tough outfit; they had been through a lot of war,” recalled First Lieutenant Thomas E. McNeary.<sup>55</sup>

The Russians did everything they could to resist the turnover, but during the night of 3–4 July, the Americans moved in. Signalman Dane Wolfe again found himself making history: “We went to Halle, Germany, first . . . and we finally moved to Berlin. We couldn’t get into Berlin because the Russians wouldn’t let us in. They were taking the toilet stools and everything else.” Once in the city, but still being held off by the Soviet command, FAAA Commanding General Major General Floyd L. Parks became the first U.S. military Commandant of Berlin by moving into his new headquarters early the morning of 5 July—before the Russians awakened. Finally, on 12 July, the last of the Russian troops left the American sector.<sup>56</sup>

The 112th left a rear element in Maisons-Lafitte when the battalion advanced to Berlin. Soon after the U.S. took possession of its sector of Berlin, First Lieutenant Pacella and twelve enlisted men set out in seven trucks to join their fellow signalmen. Typical of the confusion and delays common in the weeks and months immediately following the end of the war in Europe, Pacella’s journey to Berlin was anything but direct. The convoy first traveled northeast to Bielefeld, Germany, taking its signal equipment with it, including an M-134-C Sigaba cipher machine and accompanying equipment housed in an HO-17 plywood shelter. Pacella and seven other men then traveled by freight train to Halle, south of Berlin, where they received word that they had to go to Helmstedt railroad, where trucks would pick them up and take them to Berlin.<sup>57</sup>

Taking enough rations to get them to Helmstedt by train and to Berlin by truck, Pacella and his men arrived at

*During World War II, the 15-rotor SIGABA machine was used by the U.S. Army (and the U.S. Navy under the name Electric Cipher Machine) for highly secret communications. This machine system was the only mechanized cryptographic system used by any country that was never broken by an enemy.*



Photo courtesy of the Department of Defense



Map showing the location of the meetings in Potsdam, Germany.

the railhead, only to find no trucks. “We were there about three weeks. We lived like a bunch of bums, because all we had was the food we had taken with us, and it really wasn’t a lot of food. While we were waiting there, a big train pulled in loaded with Russian people who had been prisoners of the Germans. The English Army was shipping them back to Russia. We were cooking some bacon, and the aroma of bacon had reached all these people. I looked up and there were all these people; I couldn’t really give them anything. I figure there were at least a thousand people.” The trucks finally arrived, and Pacella and his men made their way to the Zehlendorf suburb of Berlin, where the 112th’s officers were quartered. “We lived in these apartment houses that were built by the Germans before the second world war. They were really nice; they were built for working class people.”<sup>58</sup>

With Berlin’s own telephone system stripped bare by war and Russian soldiers, the 112th moved quickly to establish communications for the occupation forces. As McNeary recalled, “The headquarters for the First Allied Airborne Army moved into Berlin, and of course we moved with

it. The signal center was set up at the [former] telephone company. We took over the telephone system, and we had German civilians doing all of the repair work.” As happened throughout Germany during the Occupation, German civilians had to be vetted before they could work for the U.S. Army. First Lieutenant Pacella was in charge of hiring personnel to work on the telephone system: “We had hired about six hundred Germans. But before we hired them, I’d have them fill out a form and I’d give it to CID [Counterintelligence Division]. And once in a while they’d say, ‘No, don’t hire this one.’” The CID tipped Pacella to one woman who “looked like anything would melt in her mouth. She was the private secretary, during the war, to the officer in charge of running Yugoslavia. So we didn’t hire her.”<sup>59</sup>

After V-E Day, the Army announced the point system for sending personnel home to the U.S. McNeary recalled that “everybody in the battalion was eligible to go, because they’d piled up a lot of points. I think the eligibility started at 70 points, and most of our people had about 114. We took a big hit; a lot of people went home. But even those that were eligible, myself included, were held; I think we were held almost six months.” Wolfe was caught up in the 112th’s freeze on rotations home: *Lieutenant [Philip S.] Bundschu says, “Wolfe, I think you’re going to take over the VIP switchboard, and the general’s.” I said, “Balooney. Give it to somebody else. I got 101 points . . . I want to go home.” “No,” he said, “Wolfey, I’ll give you four WAACs [Women’s Auxiliary Army Corp personnel] daytime and four GIs nights; you just run it.” I said, “It’s a deal.”*<sup>60</sup>

As the primary signal element in the early days of America’s occupation of Berlin, the men and women of the 112th supported the Potsdam Conference. From 16 July through 3 August, the FAAA signal personnel provided the radio, telephone and teletype capabilities required for the “Big Three” leaders—U.S. President Harry S. Truman,

The Potsdam “Big Three” meetings were held in the Cecilienhof Palace. Flags from the USSR, United States, and Great Britain flew over the entrance while Soviet officers served as guards. The floral star in front was planted by the Soviets.



*The first ever color photo transmitted by radio: British Prime Minister Clement Atlee, U.S. President Harry S. Truman, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin at the Potsdam Conference, 3 August 1945.*



British Prime Minister Clement Atlee, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin—to conduct business. The communications setup included a six-position switchboard, five hundred telephones, approximately seventy miles of cable, two radioteletypewriter systems, and two very high frequency radio relay systems.<sup>61</sup>

The Potsdam Conference also featured the Army Command and Administrative Network system, the Army's secure semiautomatic radioteletype system, a predecessor of today's Defense Switched Network. However, the most significant signal accomplishment during the conference was the first ever radio transmittal of a color picture. On 3 August 1945, Army Pictorial Service transmitted a color photograph of Truman, Atlee, and Stalin from Berlin to Washington DC. The radiophoto transmission took twenty-one minutes: seven minutes for each of the three color negatives that comprised the final photograph.<sup>62</sup>

In late 1945, over the very signal networks it had established, the 112th received orders to return home to the United States—this time by train and by ship, with no parachutes or gliders involved. On 12 December 1945, one year and five months after the 512th was organized in Lido de Roma, Italy, the 112th Airborne Army Signal Battalion was inactivated at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia. The battalion remained inactive until its reorganization and activation in 1986 as the 112th Signal Battalion and—in keeping with its airborne heritage—was assigned to support Army special operations units at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.<sup>63</sup>

As the very first airborne signal battalion in U.S. Army history, the 112th provided signal support in two major World War II airborne operations, served as the signal element for two unique airborne commands, and was one of the first U.S. units to enter Berlin. The men and women of the 112th traveled by truck, airplane, motorcycle, glider, and foot to string wire, establish radio nets, operate switchboards, and run teletype machines. They served in Italy, France, Britain, and finally Germany, suffering heat, cold, hunger, and combat. While sixty years of technology and time separate the men and women of today's 112th Special Operations Signal Battalion from their predecessors in the 512th Airborne Signal Company and the 112th Airborne Army Signal Battalion, they still share a common ethos and a common mission—to provide superior communications to highly specialized airborne headquarters and tactical units. It is a mission that is still “remembered in the heart of every soldier” the battalion has served. 📌

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# From Ledo to Leeches: The 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional)

by Cherilyn A. Walley

**T**HE story of the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional)—Galahad, or Merrill’s Marauders—is well known. Patterned after Major General Orde C. Wingate’s Chindits, Lieutenant General Joseph “Vinegar Joe” D. Stilwell’s American long-range penetration unit made one of the deepest dismounted incursions into enemy territory in U.S. military history. The Marauders—so dubbed by a newspaper reporter who named the increasingly ragtag group after their commander, Brigadier General Frank Merrill—trudged over eight hundred miles through the jungles of Burma in an effort to divert the Japanese while Stilwell and his Chinese X Force moved in for the kill. By the time the 5307th was inactivated on 10 August 1944, after four months of marching and six of fighting, it had captured its objective, Myitkyina in Burma, but had lost more than a thousand men to war and disease, with nobody com-



pletely escaping the latter.

The story of the Marauders’ march into leech-infested glory has been told by veterans, written about by historians and novelists, and even acted out by movie stars. The men who were chosen or volunteered to fight in the jungles of Burma against the Japanese (with their larger-than-life reputation for jungle fighting) were brave, yes, but they were also “regular Joes”—soldiers struggling to survive in an environment made hostile by more than the enemy. What follow are photographs highlighting various aspects of the campaign, some well known and others less so. Three pages in a magazine cannot begin to touch on the full story of the Merrill’s Marauders, but it is a start.

*Thanks go to the Merrill’s Marauders Association for allowing the USASOC History Office to scan valuable photographs in their possession.*

*The Marauders had to cross and recross streams and rivers throughout their campaign, most notably the unpredictable Irrawaddy River. This photo of Corporal Phil Morrissey (center) and his companions was taken by Yank reporter Dave Richardson, who accompanied the Marauders the entire way through Burma. The intact state of the soldiers’ uniforms in the picture indicate that the photograph was taken early in the campaign. Each man was issued only one uniform, and because of the heat, many soldiers discarded jackets early.*





*After two months of hiking and fighting, the Marauders of 1st Battalion took time to rest and celebrate Easter on 9 April 1944. This was Father Thomas J. Barrett's first opportunity to say Mass in three months.*



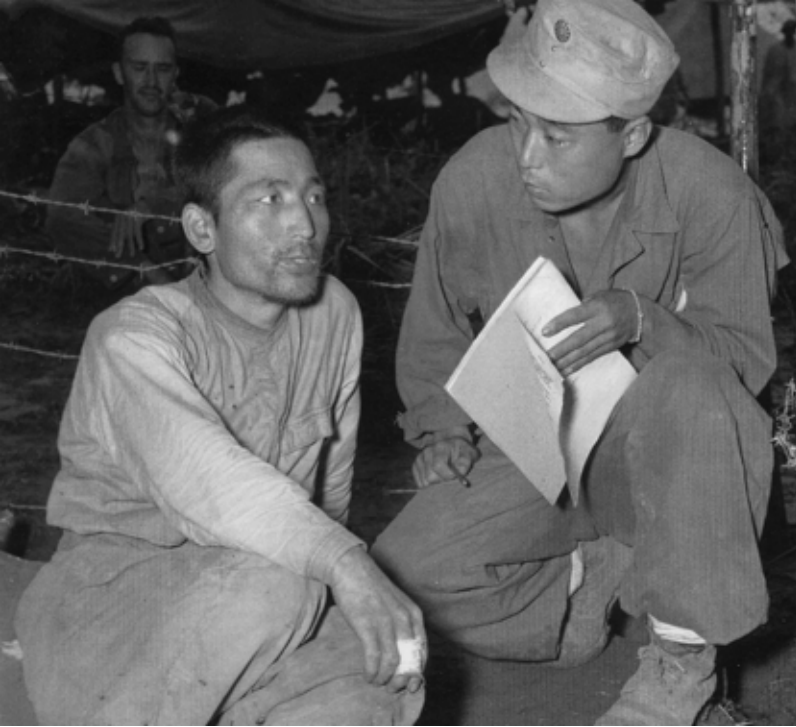
*Indigenous Kachins served as guides for the Marauder combat teams through the unfamiliar and unmapped territories of Burma. These mountain tribesmen were looked down on by the lowland Burmese, but fiercely resisted the Japanese invasion.*



*The first part of the 5307th's march followed the newly constructed Ledo Road. While the graded surface helped for a while, the soldiers still had to contend with steep slopes and mud. Soon enough, the soldiers decided that any resting place was a good resting place, even a drainage ditch on the side of a mountain. The attached quartermaster companies packed equipment, rations, and ammunition on sturdy Missouri mules, which could follow almost anywhere a man could walk or crawl, and did not mind a rest stop, either.*



*When the 5307th started out on their campaign in February of 1944, they followed the Ledo Road from Assam, India, into Burma. As shown here, the Marauders occasionally marched side-by-side with allied Chinese troops under Lieutenant General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell's command. Conditions in Burma varied from uncomfortable to downright miserable. The soldiers waded rivers, slogged through mud, hacked bamboo, trudged through elephant grass, crawled up mountains, and stumbled down slopes. The temperature ranged from hot to hotter, inspiring many a Marauder to discard his jacket and blanket the first day on the trail. Many also swapped their hot, heavy combat helmets for the comfort of cloth hats.*



Each of the 5307th's six combat teams had an assigned Nisei (second generation Japanese-American) interpreter for intelligence purposes. In this August 1944 photograph, Technical Sergeant Ed Mitsukado interrogates a Japanese prisoner being held at Myitkyina. The soldier had been found floating down the Irrawaddy River on a raft after the Americans prevailed at the Battle of Myitkyina. All of the Nisei assigned to the 5307th not only had native language proficiency, but many had trained at the Military Intelligence Service Language School in Minnesota. Even with experience and training in the Japanese language, many Nisei had difficulty communicating with captured soldiers having different dialects.



This 29 April 1944 photograph shows the Marauders of Khaki Combat Team picking up a three-day supply of 'K' rations as they set out on yet another leg of their march through Burma. The daily K ration, divided into three meals, contained three thousand calories compressed into the most compact form possible. Ration staples included the four ounce U.S. Army field ration D (a dense bar consisting of chocolate, skim milk powder, sugar, oat flour, cocoa fat, vitamins C and B, and artificial flavoring), a small can of chopped ham and egg or a can of processed cheese, a K-1 biscuit, sugar cubes, and coffee or bullion powder. Meant only for survival situations, the K ration was not an adequate diet for men marching through the jungle, but was better than what they ate when the K rations ran out—nothing.



While the adventures and glory of K-9 units in the Pacific Theater were well publicized, those of their brothers in the China-Burma-India Theater have largely been forgotten, though the men and dogs were just as deserving. This K-9 detachment joined the Marauders during the two-month battle for Myitkyina, Burma. Front row, left to right: Corporal Peter E. Erdman, Technical Sergeant 5 Robert E. Cross, Technical Sergeant 5 Del. B. Armstrong, Technical Sergeant 5 William Irving, Corporal Jesse Cowan. Back row, left to right: Technical Sergeant 5 Gerald G. Weston, Technical Sergeant 5 Walter A. Geesler, Technical Sergeant 5 Joseph A. Balak, Private Russell P. Miszner, Technical Sergeant 5 Garland Clark, Corporal Kenneth W. Remen.

# The End Run of Galahad: The Battle of Myitkyina

by Kenneth Finlayson



*Men of the 5307th move through the jungle on their march into Burma.*

A critical component of the Allied plan in the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater focused on the taking of the Burmese town of Myitkyina (Mitch-in-a), whose airfield was considered vital to the continued supply of the Chinese forces supporting the Allied fight against the Japanese. The seizure of Myitkyina would greatly shorten the aerial supply route and free up the use of the Ledo Road, then under construction. With the clearing of the Mogaung Valley in the spring of 1944, General Joseph (“Vinegar Joe”) Stilwell had accomplished half of his campaign plan. The other half was the seizure of Myitkyina. To accomplish this part of the campaign, Stilwell directed that Brigadier General Frank Merrill use his 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) named Galahad, to spearhead the attack across the rugged Kumon Range. Stilwell called his plan End Run, and it resulted in the end of Galahad as an effective fighting force.<sup>1</sup>

Galahad, commonly referred to as Merrill’s Marauders, was the United States Army’s first long-range penetration unit in the CBI. First entering combat on 24 February 1944, the original strength of the unit was 2750 men. By April, after virtually continuous combat operations in the brutal jungle conditions of Burma, the three battalions of Galahad were down to 1400 men when the approach march on Myitkyina began on the 28th. By the time Myitkyina fell on 3 August, barely 200 of the original Galahad force remained combat effective, the unit having evaporated in the face of combat losses and disease. The battle of Myitkyina marked the end of the Marauders as the unit disbanded on 10 August 1944.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to embarking on the movement to Myitkyina, the unit was recovering following the bitter battle around Nphum Ga. The 2nd Battalion in particular suffered heavy casualties when surrounded and isolated for thirteen days—it held on in the face of determined Japanese assaults until relieved. The Galahad force lost fifty-two killed and three hundred-two wounded as well as having three hundred seventy-seven evacuated with



various diseases. For the men of Galahad, the fresh food and new clothes they received after the battle could not overcome the fact that the unit was rapidly deteriorating under the strain of near constant combat and illnesses. Malaria, dysentery, mite typhus and the steady erosion of the men's stamina caused by non-stop marching and fighting on inadequate, airdropped rations drained the force. By the end of April, Galahad was rapidly approaching combat ineffectiveness.<sup>3</sup>

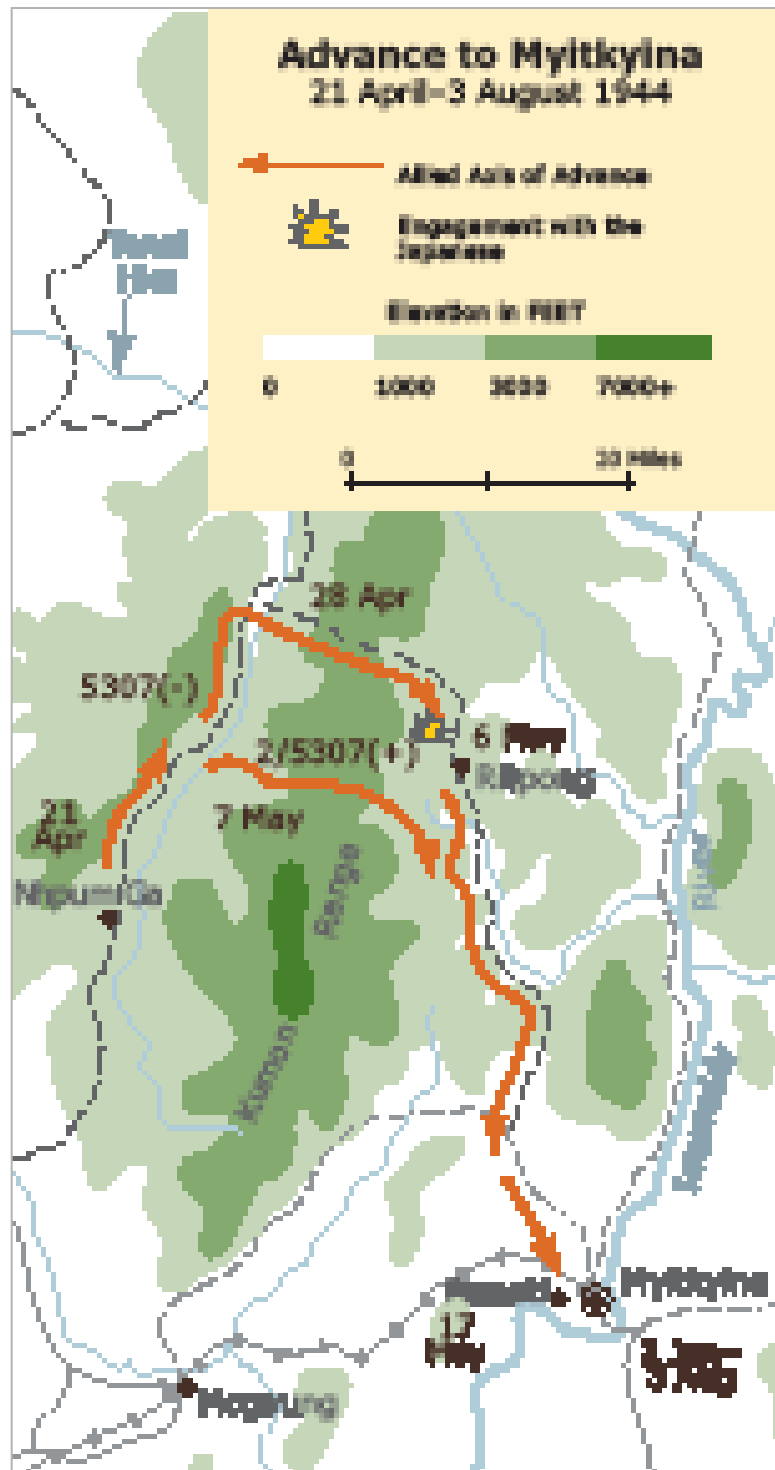
Despite this, Stilwell was forced to push Galahad into the forefront as the only American unit available to lead the attack on Myitkyina. Under considerable pressure from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to seize Myitkyina before the spring monsoon season, Stilwell could not leave the task to his Chinese regiments alone. He recognized the poor condition of Galahad, but promised Merrill that the unit would be evacuated "if everything worked out as expected."<sup>4</sup>

With the thought of relief to sustain them, the Galahad force moved out on the 65-mile march over the crest of the 7,000-foot Kumon Mountains. Merrill divided his forces into three combat teams. H Force under Colonel Charles N. Hunter consisted of the 1st Battalion of Galahad, the 150th Regiment, 50th Chinese Division, the 3rd Company of the Animal Transport Regiment and a battery of the 22nd Division artillery. Colonel Henry L. Kinnison led K Force with the 3rd Battalion of Galahad and the 88th Regiment of the 30th Chinese Division. The M Force under Lieutenant Colonel George A. McGee, Jr consisted of the 2nd Battalion of Galahad and 300 Kachin tribesmen trained by the OSS Detachment 101 under Colonel Ray Peers.<sup>5</sup>

The unit moved out on 28 April with K Force leading, followed two days later by the H Force. H and K Forces crossed the Kumon via the 6100-foot Naura Hyet Pass, then moved south to the village of Ritpong where the plan called for the columns to diverge and move on Myitkyina by separate routes. M Force moved on a more southerly axis screening the main force as it moved south toward the objective.<sup>6</sup>

The K Force march over the pass was grueling with twenty of the heavily laden mules slipping and falling off the steep, narrow trail. Approaching Ritpong, Kinnison surrounded the village and the Chinese regiment successfully attacked and overran the Japanese defenses. The village fell on the 9th of April. During this time, H force passed through and headed for Myitkyina. The M Force, hacking its way through dense jungle, repulsed one set of Japanese skirmishers along its route. Despite the loss of half of their mules, M force kept up the pace and stayed within two days march of H and K forces. When a strong Japanese force near the village of Tingrukawng held up the K Force, Merrill directed H Force to by-pass the fighting and for K Force to break contract and follow. It was during this time that Colonel Kinnison contracted the deadly mite typhus. He was evacuated, but died as a result of the disease.<sup>7</sup>

The H Force continued to push south and soon reached



*The advance of the 5307th was along a two-pronged route that crossed the spine of the Kumon Range and then paralleled the Irrawaddy River south to Myitkyina.*

the outskirts of Myitkyina. On 17 May, Colonel Hunter boldly attacked the airfield located on the northwest side of the town. The Japanese were caught by surprise as the 150th Regiment rushed across the airfield while the Galahad personnel seized the nearby ferry terminal at Pamati. Soon the airfield was under Allied control and the roughly 700 Japanese were bottled up in the town. With the airfield secured, the Galahad force looked forward to their promised evacuation, but unfortunately, it was not to be.

Stilwell determined, for strategic reasons, that he

could not pull Galahad out of the line when the airfield fell. The Chinese regiments had sustained heavy casualties in the fighting with few evacuations for illness and needed the presence of American troops to sustain the coalition. Galahad was the only available American



*LTG Joseph Stilwell and BG Frank Merrill prior to the assault on Myitkyina. Stilwell was forced to employ the 5307th and in doing so finished the Marauders as a viable force.*



*Kachins trained and led by COL Ray Peers OSS Detachment 101 acted as scouts and guides for the move on Myitkyina.*

unit in the theater. The strength of the Japanese force in the town was growing daily as forces streamed into Myitkyina through the porous Allied lines, further reinforcing Stilwell's decision to keep Galahad in the fight. The loss of Galahad would have sundered the Allied coalition and led to the loss of the critical airfield.

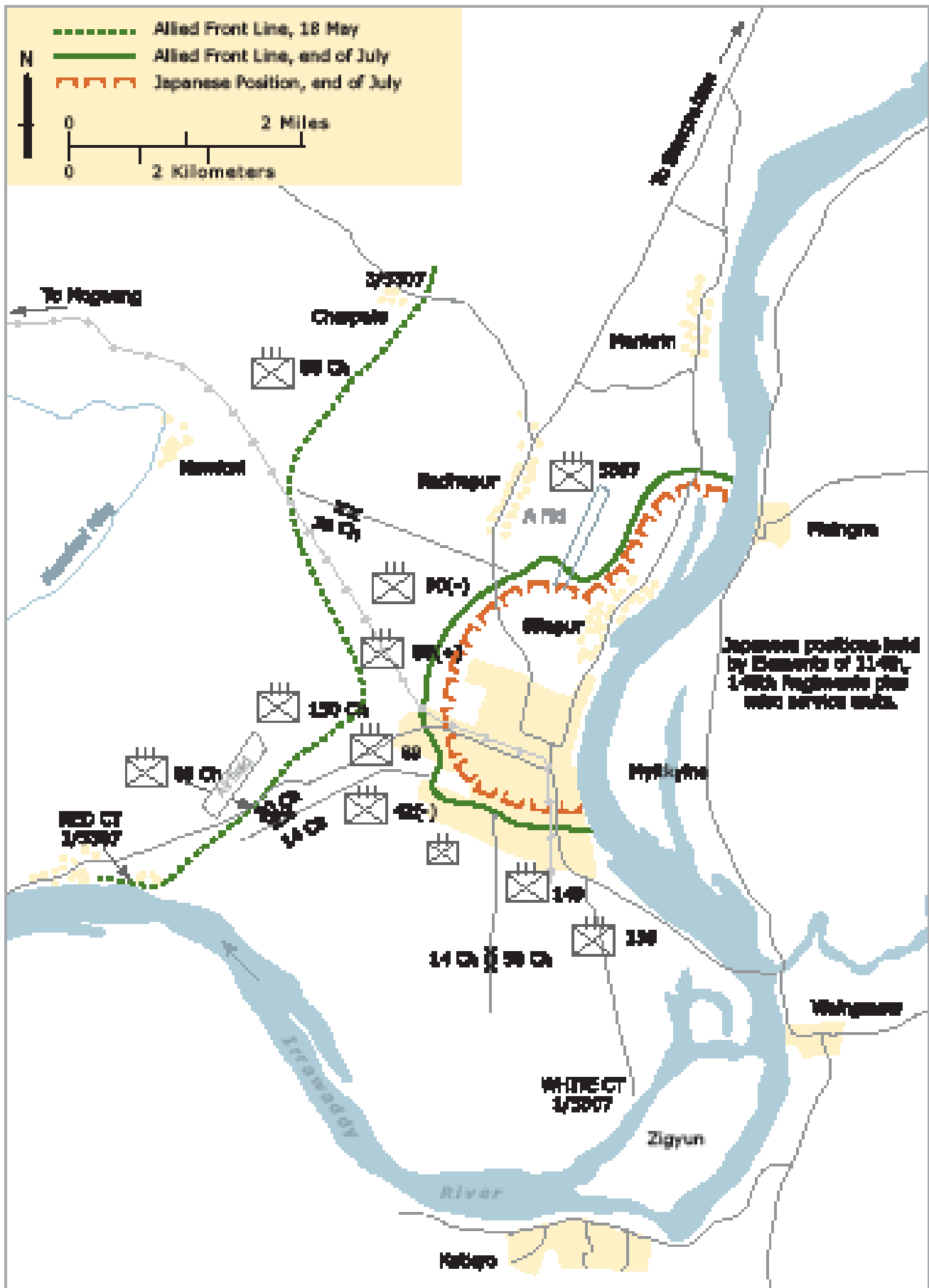
The battle for the town became a grinding siege with both sides suffering heavily from the constant fighting along the perimeter and the ever-increasing toll of medical problems. By late May, the Second Battalion was down to 12 effectives with the Third battalion little better off. Only the First battalion retained any real strength, about 200 men. Two engineer battalions were pulled off of their duties constructing the Ledo Road and flown in to serve as infantrymen. In early June, 2,500 replacements, the scorings of the units in the rear area in India and returnees from prior Galahad evacuees were flown in to rebuild the force. The "old Galahad" hands were grouped together into the First Battalion and the "new Galahad" arrivals were used to form two new Second and Third Battalions. Throughout the summer the battle to take the town raged on.

The examples of heroism in the fight to take Myitkyina were many. Private Howard T. Smith, his platoon stalled in front of a Japanese bunker and his platoon leader dead, single-handedly assaulted the position and silenced it with grenades. Tech Sergeant Richard E. Roe of the New Galahad force crawled forward and grenaded a Japanese machine gun raking his unit, at the cost of his own life. Private Willard J.D. Lilly and Master Sergeant Charles Ward beat back a Japanese attack with machine gun and rifle fire and saved a platoon from an ambush. Sergeant Fred Coleman of the 236th Engineers threw himself on a Japanese grenade to save two of his comrades. He and the others mentioned received the Distinguished Service Cross or Silver Star for their heroic actions.<sup>8</sup>

Ultimately, the sustained Allied pressure and the deteriorating condition of the Japanese forces won the day. Incrementally, the Americans and Chinese punched into the Japanese perimeter and by the end of July, the siege was nearly at an end. General Mizukami, commanding the Japanese troops committed suicide on 1 August and on the night of 2 August, the Japanese began to float their wounded on rafts down the Irrawaddy River. Under the cover of darkness, the Japanese began to slip out of town. An Allied push on 3 August secured Myitkyina by afternoon with 187 Japanese taken prisoner.<sup>9</sup>

The end of the battle eliminated Galahad as a viable force. The men brought in to fill the ranks became the 475th Infantry Regiment of the newly formed Mars Task Force. The "Old Galahad" hands were virtually gone. Samuel V. Wilson, the reconnaissance platoon leader for First Battalion, noted that on 10 August "there were about 100 combat effectives left in the field, and 99 of them were not very effective." When Wilson himself was finally evacuated, he had a wound in his right leg, malaria, amoebic dysentery and typhus. In the hospital, "there were six in the typhus ward with me when I came in. I'm the only one who survived and the rest just had clean cases of typhus."<sup>10</sup>

The seizure of the airfield at Myitkyina was the final battle for Galahad. The payoff came with the Allies ability to move supplies from India into China, which rose steadily to a peak of 25,454 tons in July 1944. The capture



*Myitkyina was the critical transportation center at the southern end of the Marauder's area of operations. The capture of Myitkyina would greatly simplify the supply route from India into China.*

## Master Sergeant Charles Ward: Silver Star at Myitkyina

**COMBAT** in the jungles of Burma pitted the Allied forces under Lord Louis Mountbatten against the veteran Japanese soldiers of Lieutenant General Masaki Honda's 33rd Army. In vicious no-holds-barred fighting no quarter was asked nor given. Some of the most ferocious fighting occurred between 18 May and 3 August 1944, during the siege of the town of Myitkyina. It was for actions in this battle that Master Sergeant (MSG) Charles Ward was awarded the Silver Star.



MSG Charles Ward was a heavy weapons platoon sergeant in the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), the Galahad Task Force. Called Merrill's Marauders by the American newspapers after the unit's commander Brigadier General Frank D. Merrill, the 5307th was a long-range penetration column modeled after the British "Chindits" led by Orde Wingate. Having been in virtually continuous combat operations since February 1944, by the time the 5307th reached Myitkyina in May 1944, the unit was on its literal last legs. Casualties and disease had reduced the force to 1,400 effectives from the original 2,997, with nearly every man suffering some tropical disease.<sup>12</sup> Soon after reaching Myitkyina, during the week of 13 June, MSG Ward earned his Silver Star.

Moving to place his weapons platoon in a position to support E Company, 2nd Battalion, Ward spotted a unit of Japanese soldiers moving into position to ambush the Americans. With his section



sergeant, Willard J. D. Lilly, Ward rushed forward with a .30 caliber machine gun to engage the enemy. At that moment, an enemy machine gun opened fire on them and Lilly and Ward had to deploy their gun immediately, with no chance to dig in. As they returned fire, a horde of Japanese rushed their position in a "Banzai" charge. Ward fired at them with his rifle as Lilly opened up with the machine gun. The two men beat back the onrushing Japanese and continued to fire into the

retreating enemy. Over two hundred Japanese fell in front of their position. As MSG Ward said, "We set a whole lot of suns that day."<sup>13</sup> As the fire slackened, a Japanese sniper hit Ward in the helmet and knocked him out. When he awoke, he walked back to the aid station. He was in the line the next day. Both Ward and Lilly were decorated for their heroic actions, by General Stilwell personally pinning Ward's Silver Star on his uniform. Ward's action is a microcosm of the bitter fighting that characterized the siege of Myitkyina.

of Myitkyina became the springboard for the Allied drive into Burma and the end of the isolation of China. For the men of Galahad, the trials of their brief, and bitter campaign reached the limits of human endurance. As Lieutenant General (retired) Sam Wilson expressed it: "The Marauders became very much a chip-on-their-shoulder outfit."<sup>11</sup> 🗡️

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*Kenneth Finlayson has been the USAJFKSWCS Command Historian since 2000. He earned his PhD from the University of Maine, and is a retired Army officer. Current research interests include Army special operations during the Korean War, special operations aviation, and World War II special operations units.*

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# The 2nd Ranger Infantry Company: "Buffaloes" in Korea

29 December 1950–19 May 1951

by Charles H. Briscoe

**AFTER** intense weeks of training at Fort Benning, Georgia, the Army's four newly created Ranger Infantry companies parted ways after their December 1950 graduation. While the 1st Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) was rushed to Korea by air, the 2nd and 4th Ranger companies were shipped by train to San Francisco for a slower journey to war. The 3rd Ranger Company was left behind to train Ranger companies to support all active Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard divisions.

The 2nd and 4th Ranger companies maintained unit integrity on board the train carrying them across the country to their port of embarkation. The only exceptions to the unit separation were the cooks, who were all consolidated to operate a single dining car. During the long train ride west, Rangers in both companies began to refer to themselves as "Buffaloes"—simply as an inside joke rising from a city-born Ranger's mistaken identification

of longhorn steers for buffalo.<sup>1</sup>

At Camp Stoneman near San Francisco, California, the Rangers exchanged some weapons and received winter clothing, the sum total of which was pile inserts for their field jackets. The 2nd Company, at least, granted no passes to visit the city while it awaited movement orders to ship aboard the USTS *General H. W. Butner*. The two Ranger companies joined a large group of military families on the transport ship for the long trip to Japan. Beyond Hawaii, rough North Pacific seas reduced movie and meal attendance among the Rangers, but the increasingly cold weather helped the men acclimate for Korea.<sup>2</sup>

When the USTS *Butner* arrived at Yokohama, Japan, on 24 December, the two slightly overstrength Ranger companies (5 officers and 105 enlisted soldiers authorized) were met by their executive officers, Lieutenant James C. Queen and Lieutenant John Warren, who had been flown ahead to Japan. The companies loaded their equipment and boarded a train for Camp Zama, northwest of Yokohama, where they celebrated Christmas.<sup>3</sup>

On the 29th of December 1950, the two Ranger companies boarded C-46 Commando and C-47 Dakota transports at nearby Tachikawa Air Base to fly to K-2, an air base near Taegu, Korea. By then, Eighth U.S. Army in Korea and the United Nations forces had withdrawn below the 38th parallel. The 4th Rangers joined the recently arrived 1st Cavalry Division at Kimpo Air Base near Seoul. The 2nd Rangers were attached to 7th Infantry



*The first four Ranger Infantry companies graduated from training at Fort Benning, Georgia, in December 1950. The new Rangers proudly wore the recently approved Ranger tab and the Airborne Ranger Infantry Company scroll, reminiscent of those worn by World War II Rangers.*





*2nd Ranger Infantry Company at the Columbus, Georgia, train station in December 1950, awaiting transport to Camp Stoneman, California, en route to Korea. Staff Sergeant Cleveland Valrey has his hand raised.*



*Combat actions at Changnim-ni, Tanyang, Andong, and Majori-ri had reduced the 2nd Rangers to an effective strength of 63 percent by the end of January 1951. These North Korean artillery pieces were abandoned near Tanyang.*

Division (ID) elements near Tanyang.<sup>4</sup>

Major General Edward M. Almond, the X Corps commander, directed that the 2nd Ranger Company “be moved up as rapidly as possible and employed.” Thus, by nightfall on 4 January 1951, the 2nd Rangers were part of the 32nd Infantry Regiment defensive line near Tanyang. After X Corps had been evacuated from Hungnam, General Almond had deployed the 7th ID near Tanyang as part of a defensive line across the peninsula to stem the Chinese Communist Forces and North Korea Peoples Army (NKPA) counteroffensive. Just before dawn on 6 January 1951, the 2nd Rangers fought their first combat action, from defensive positions abutting a railroad tunnel near the village of Changnim-ni.<sup>5</sup>

By the end of January 1951, combat actions at Changnim-ni, Tanyang, Andong, and Majori-ri had reduced the 110-man company to 63 combat effective soldiers. The high number of frostbite cases prompted the 7th ID to finally issue pile caps and rubber galoshes for the Rangers’ boots.<sup>6</sup> Although vastly understrength for the mission, Major General David Barr, the 7th ID commander, followed General Almond’s directive that all colored\* soldiers assigned to the division be temporarily assigned to the 2nd Ranger Company for basic tactical training.<sup>7</sup>

The task of providing basic combat training—from individual soldiering skills to company-level infantry tactics—to all 7th ID colored replacements was rotated among the



*7th  
Infantry  
Division*

*Upon their arrival in Korea, the 2nd and 4th Rangers found themselves deployed in support of line divisions. The 2nd Rangers were assigned to the 7th Infantry Division of X Corps and the 4th Rangers were attached to the 1st Cavalry Division.*



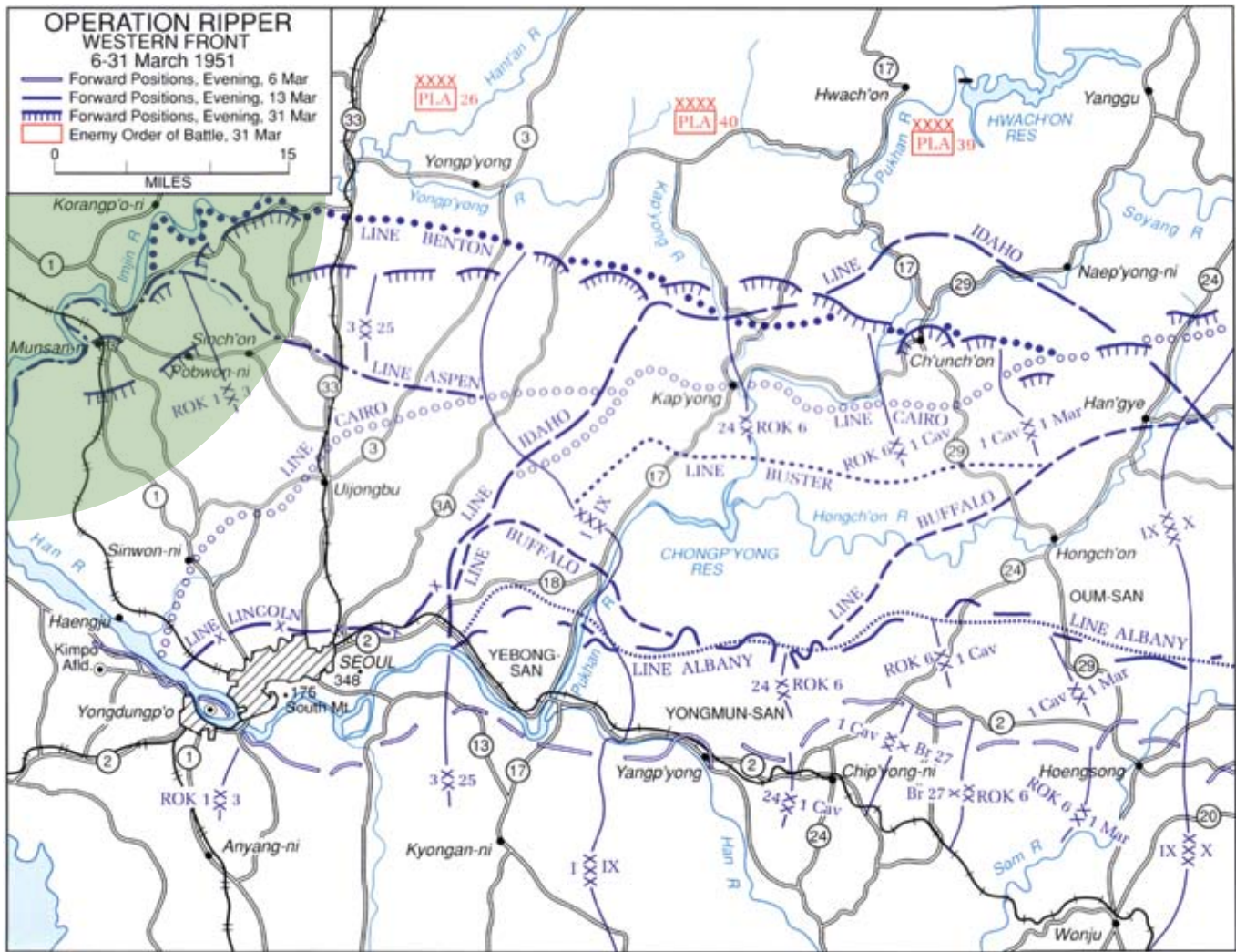
*1st Cavalry  
Division*

three 2nd Ranger Company platoons.<sup>8</sup> Those Rangers not serving as cadre supported the offensive operations of the 17th Infantry Regiment in the vicinity of Chunch’on. On 22 February 1951, the 2nd Rangers were alerted to join the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team (ARCT) for a future parachute operation. 4th Ranger Company was also alerted. First Lieutenant (1LT) James B. Queen, the 2nd Ranger executive officer, and Corporal William Weathersbee, the operations sergeant, were driven by Private First Class (PFC) Lester James to K-2 Air Base to establish liaison with the 187th ARCT.<sup>9</sup>

By this time, Chinese and North Korean armies were withdrawing north under pressure from counterattacking American and United Nations forces. To support a IX Corps offensive on 22 March (Operation RIPPER), Eighth Army had ordered an airborne assault north of Seoul to cut off retreating communist forces. Operation HAWK called for the 187th ARCT and two Ranger companies to seize key objectives at the north end of the Chunch’on Basin on 20 March in order to block that escape corridor, and link up with the 1st Cavalry Division moving northwest. The city of Chunch’on was an important supply and communications point with a good road network in the center of

the basin. When Lieutenant General Mathew Ridgway encountered lead elements of the 1st Cavalry in Chunch’on during an aerial reconnaissance on 19 March, he canceled HAWK. The objective for the airborne assault was moved further north to Munsan-ni, and the execution date changed

\*“Colored” is used to refer to African Americans in this article in keeping with the accepted terminology of the day.



Source: Billy C. Mossman, *Eds and Foes: November 1950–July 1951* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1990), Map 26.

*Operation RIPPER was the IX Corps offensive against North Korean and Chinese forces in March 1951. In three weeks, enemy forces were pushed back twenty-five miles north of Seoul.*

to 23 March. The replanned assault was named Operation TOMAHAWK.<sup>10</sup>

Operation TOMAHAWK was the first combat parachute jump ever made by Rangers. The airborne assault was about twenty-four miles northwest of Seoul, near Munsan-ni. The 187th ARCT was to smash the withdrawing NKPA 19th Rifle Division against two tank infantry task forces from the 3rd Infantry Division that would come north on the Seoul–Kaesong Highway (Task Force Growden) and Seoul–Uijong-bu Highway (Task Force Hawkins).<sup>11</sup> Concerned about personnel shortages, Captain Warren E. Allen, the commander of the 2nd Rangers, had sergeants begin checking daily troop trains for airborne-qualified personnel and wounded Rangers returning from hospitals.<sup>12</sup>

Newly promoted 1LT Albert Cliette, 3rd platoon leader, was discovered on a train headed back to the 7th ID. Wounded in the leg while “attacking some nondescript hill” in the Chunch’ on operation, Cliette had been evacuated to a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital near Pusan. “When the guys told me about the Munsan-ni operation, I grabbed my .45 caliber Thompson submachine gun and

field gear and jumped off that train. It was to be a combat jump—the paratrooper’s dream,” said Cliette. “1LT Bernard B. Pryor, the 1st platoon leader, wounded in the same action as me, had fought with Merrill’s Marauders in Burma during World War II. His steel helmet saved him from being killed by a sniper’s bullet that punched clean through the lieutenant bar on the front. Fortunately, the bullet, slowed by the helmet liner, just plowed across the top of his skull, neatly parting his scalp. Because the top of his head was super sensitive afterwards, Pryor couldn’t wear a helmet. He couldn’t jump without a helmet so he was put in charge of bringing the individual ‘A and B bags,’ supplies, mess team, and two Korean officer interpreters to the drop zone aboard a truck convoy. Unsure about the Korean attachments, they tried to reassure us by saying, ‘Do not worry about us. We watch you guys and do what you do. Everything OK.’”<sup>13</sup>

By 28 February 1951, the 2nd Rangers had joined the 4th Rangers at K-2 Air Base, near Taegu, for Operation TOMAHAWK. Attached to the 2nd Battalion, 187th Infantry, the Rangers were assigned to a row of squad tents next to an apple orchard. “There was no dispersion of the units,

just row after row of tents. Air attack did not appear to be a concern," said Sergeant Joe C. Watts of the 4th Ranger Company. "The tents had straw-filled mattress ticks for sleeping."<sup>14</sup> "I knew it would be a combat jump when the MPs [military police] locked the K-2 airfield gate behind us," said PFC Donald Allen, an original recruit from K Company, 3rd Battalion, 505th Infantry, 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

The Rangers and the 187th dedicated two weeks to preparing for the mission. The Rangers practiced small unit infantry tactics from squad to company level; zeroed their rifles, carbines, Browning Automatic Rifles, and .30 caliber A-6 light machine guns; and fired the two-part 3.5-inch antitank rocket launchers and 60mm mortars. The officers focused on learning 187th ARCT standing operating procedures. The 4.2-inch heavy chemical mortar, fougasse (a field-expedient jellied gasoline explosive in fifty-five gallon drums), and aerial resupply were also demonstrated. Only supplies and ammunition would be airdropped during Operation TOMAHAWK. Planning was aided by the terrain sand table that Corporal Weathersbee built. During the Rangers' stay at K-2, replacements from the States arrived to fill losses.<sup>15</sup>

First Lieutenant Antonio M. Anthony, who received a battlefield commission with the 92nd ID in Italy during World War II, brought thirty colored airborne Ranger replacements from Fort Benning, Georgia. The 7th Company in the Army Ranger Training Command had a colored platoon specifically to provide replacements to the 2nd Rangers. When the men arrived, they were spread throughout the company. At a special 187th ARCT jump school, two 7th ID colored soldiers, tactically trained by the 2nd Rangers, also became airborne qualified.

On 16 March 1951, the 2nd Ranger Company conducted two practice jumps using the daily C-46 mail aircraft. These were the unit's first jumps since leaving Georgia. Before these training jumps, the Rangers practiced parachute landing falls off the back of the 2½-ton mess truck.<sup>16</sup> Shortly after the practice jumps, the rains came.

Inclement weather delayed the scheduled airborne assault. While they waited for the weather to clear, the 2nd Rangers painted large parachute badges on the sides of their steel helmets. The silver "jump wings" were painted on a black oval background with a thin gold border—the black and gold of the Army Ranger shoulder tab insignia.<sup>17</sup> Helmets of the 187th ARCT ("Rakkasans") were painted with a white "rising sun" half-round pattern on the sides for easy identification—solid for the regimental headquarters; 1st Battalion had one vertical divider; 2nd Battalion had two vertical dividers; and 3rd Battalion insignia had three dividers.<sup>18</sup> These helped paratroopers scattered in the air to assemble into units after landing.

Following 187th standard operating procedure, individual weapons were jumped "exposed"—wedged under straps of the T-7 parachute harness and reserve parachute "belly band." Even .30 caliber Browning Automatic Rifles and 3.5-inch rocket launchers were jumped exposed on A-frame boards. The canvas (Griswold) weapons con-



*To facilitate unit assembly after the parachute assault, the 2nd Rangers painted gold and silver parachute wings on the sides of their helmets, as First Lieutenant Al Cliette (above) has on his. The 187th Infantry Rakkasans marked their helmets with a divided half-round pattern: 3rd Battalion had three vertical bars, 2nd Battalion had two bars, and 1st Battalion had one bar, while the headquarters half-round remained solid white.*



tainers that required taking weapons apart were not used. Most Rangers "were loaded for bear" when they jumped. Private Billy Thrasher, a 4th Ranger Browning Automatic Rifle man, carried eighteen magazines of .30 caliber ammunition, four fragmentation grenades, and two 57mm antitank rounds. The Rangers, like the 187th Rakkasans, wanted to be ready to fight as soon as they cleared their parachutes.<sup>19</sup>

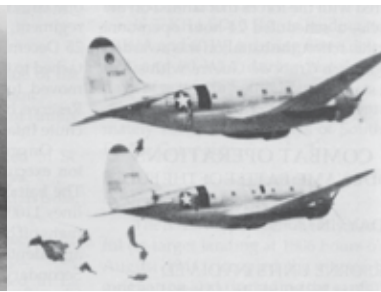
The twelve door bundles in A-22 canvas containers kicked out by each company had colored parachutes: pale yellow with bright yellow stripes for 2nd Company light machine guns, mortars, and ammunition; and yellow with red stripes for the 4th Company. After the jump, Rangers made scarves and lined their wool blankets with parachute silk to keep warm.<sup>20</sup> Though a combination of camouflage, white, and colored parachutes became available, the camouflage silk was the most preferred.<sup>21</sup>

Eighty C-119 transports from the 437th Troop Carrier





*The 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team jumped from the twin-tail boom C-119 Flying Boxcar on Munsan-ni, as they had on Such'on and Sunch'on in October 1950 during the Eighth U.S. Army drive to P'yongyang and the Yalu River.*



*The 2nd and 4th Ranger Companies jumped on Munsan-ni from World War II-vintage C-46 Commando aircraft. The planes had a distinctive "pregnant guppie" fuselage shape, and two sets of doors: the smaller right-side door was for parachutists, while double doors on the left side facilitated loading heavy equipment.*



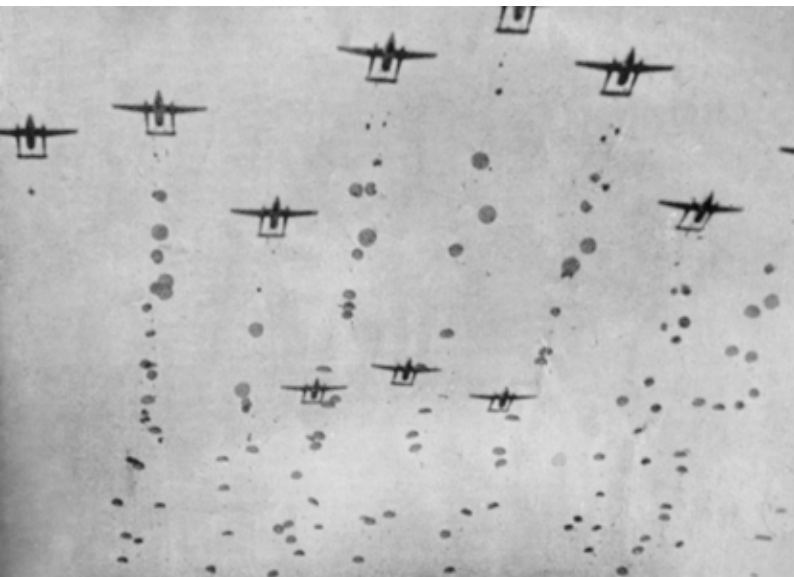
*Before being used for jumps in the Korean War, the C-47 Dakota, or SkyTrain, carried cargo over the Burma Hump into China, and conveyed the bulk of Allied paratroopers and gliders to Normandy on D-Day 1944.*



*A four-engine C-54 Skymaster led the airborne armada to the Munsan-ni north and south drop zones, and provided command and control for the assault.*

Wing at Ashiya Air Base, Japan, and fifty-five C-46 and C-47 aircraft from the 21st Troop Carrier Squadron at Brady Air Base, Japan, were assembled at K-2 on 21 March to support two combat air assaults on 23–24 March. C-119s typically carried forty-six men in two "sticks" of twenty-three men each, fifteen monorail bundles, and four door bundles. The C-46 and C-47 aircraft carried twenty to twenty-eight paratroopers and three door bundles each. The C-119 aircraft scheduled to carry heavy drop loads (75mm pack howitzers and 105mm artillery, ¼-ton jeeps and trailers, ¾-ton weapons carriers, ammunition, water, and supplies) had their rear clamshell doors removed prior to departing Japan. The large troop carrier armada was led to the drop zone by a C-54 Skymaster four-engine transport, piloted by Brigadier General John P. Henebry, the 315th Air Division commander.<sup>22</sup> Just before separating to board their aircraft, Captain Allen gathered the 2nd Rangers together for a moment of silent prayer, and then wished them well.<sup>23</sup>

On Good Friday, 23 March 1951, at 0750 hours, in the



*C-119s flew in "V of V" formation for the airborne assault on Munsan-ni.*

second aircraft serial of five, eight World War II C-46 Commando transports took off from K-2 carrying the 2nd and 4th Ranger companies. The three 187th parachute infantry battalions and the 674th Airborne Field Artillery Battalion (105mm, 75mm, and quad-.50 caliber antiaircraft artillery guns) flew in new twin-boomed C-119 Flying Boxcar transports and the C-47 and C-46 aircraft. The armada of 140 air transport planes flew over the Yellow Sea, arranged themselves in nine-plane staggered "V of V" formations with separation between serials, and then headed inland to the two drop zones. When the troop carriers were en route, the two drop zones and the Seoul-Munsan road were bombed and then strafed by sixteen F-51 Mustang fighter-bombers intent on eliminating reported enemy antiaircraft artillery sites in the area. Surrender leaflets had been dropped on several locations in and around the area several days before the operation in order to deceive the enemy as to the exact location of the paradrops.<sup>24</sup>

Surrender leaflet drops and broadcast C-47s ("The Voice" and "The Speaker") were effectively employed to support the airborne operation. On 19 March, 250,000 leaflets were dropped over Hungsu-ri. Bad weather on 20 March prevented leaflet operations, but the next day, 750,000 were dropped on Sariwon. On the 22nd, another 250,000 were scatter-dropped from Mindong to Sokkyo-ri, and over Chunch'on.



*Leaflets depicting invading paratroopers and tanks surrounding enemy positions implored North Korean and Chinese troops to surrender. Such leaflets and safe conduct passes proved effective tools against soldiers often pressed into service by the Communists, and were utilized at Munsan-ni.*

## The Voice

ONE of the biggest Psywar operations early in the war was conducted in support of the 187th ARCT jump on Munsan-ni. Four Special Air Mission (SAM) C-47s dropped surrender leaflets from low altitudes. The leaflets pointed to the massive show of force and urged Communist soldiers to surrender. Some 127 North Korean soldiers surrendered, each carrying a safe conduct pass. SAM aircraft flew as often as six times per day for seven days in support of the Munsan-ni operation.

During the airdrop mission, one of the C-119s from the 315th Troop Carrier Wing, which arrived in Japan in late 1950, was badly hit and the crew bailed out. The crew members were spotted by a SAM C-47, "The Voice," that circled their position and talked to them via the loudspeaker system to determine their health and status. The airmen on the ground used the cloth panels from survival kits to spell out "Yes" and "No" responses. "The Voice" circled for three hours until a rescue helicopter arrived.<sup>25</sup>



*The C-47 loudspeaker plane "The Voice" broadcast surrender appeals to North Korean and Chinese forces in conjunction with Operation TOMAHAWK. They also warned civilians to stay clear of specific locations where engagements were planned.*

Aerial broadcasts warned civilians to stay away from communist troops and installations at nine different points in North Korea.<sup>26</sup>

The 2nd Rangers and 2nd Battalion, 187th ARCT, jumped at H-hour—0900 hours local time—on Drop Zone North. 4th Rangers, in the same serial, jumped five minutes later.<sup>27</sup> In about fifty minutes, some 3,500 paratroopers, equipment, and several batteries of howitzers and antiaircraft artillery were dropped on Drop Zone North. *Stars and Stripes Pacific* reporters jumped with the 4th Rangers. In the midst of searching for their 60mm mortars, light machine guns ("light thirties"), and the ammunition bundles, and attending to jump injuries, the men of the 2nd Ranger Company were surprised when paratroopers of the 1st Battalion, 187th Airborne Infantry, began dropping on Drop Zone North.

The 1st Battalion was supposed to jump to the southeast on Drop Zone South, near its objectives. Because the lead aircraft with the battalion commander aboard developed engine

problems, his replacement airplane inadvertently became the unofficial single airplane "Sixth Serial," and was the only 187th ARCT dropped on Drop Zone South. Having noted the obvious 1st Battalion foul-up, the Rangers hurried to their assembly areas, picking up some surrender leaflets and safe conduct passes for souvenirs on the way.<sup>28</sup>

Yellow marker panels identified the 2nd Ranger Company assembly area on the northwest side of Drop Zone North. The 4th Ranger Company was to gather at a green panel highlighted by green smoke. The additional use of smoke turned out to be a bad idea, because green smoke was the ground signal for a "Go" on the parachute drop and was used five times for the five airdrop serials. Thus, the sign built to be displayed after the jump with the words, "Have no fear, the Rangers are here," was lost in the green smoke—as were many of the 4th Rangers trying to find their assembly area.<sup>29</sup>

While a Psywar C-47 was broadcasting around the two drop zones from low altitude, General Douglas A. MacArthur

watched the ground activity from high overhead in his Lockheed C-121 Constellation aircraft. Lieutenant General Mathew Ridgway, landed on Drop Zone North in an L-5 liaison aircraft, just before 1st Battalion was mistakenly dropped there. The general managed to escape

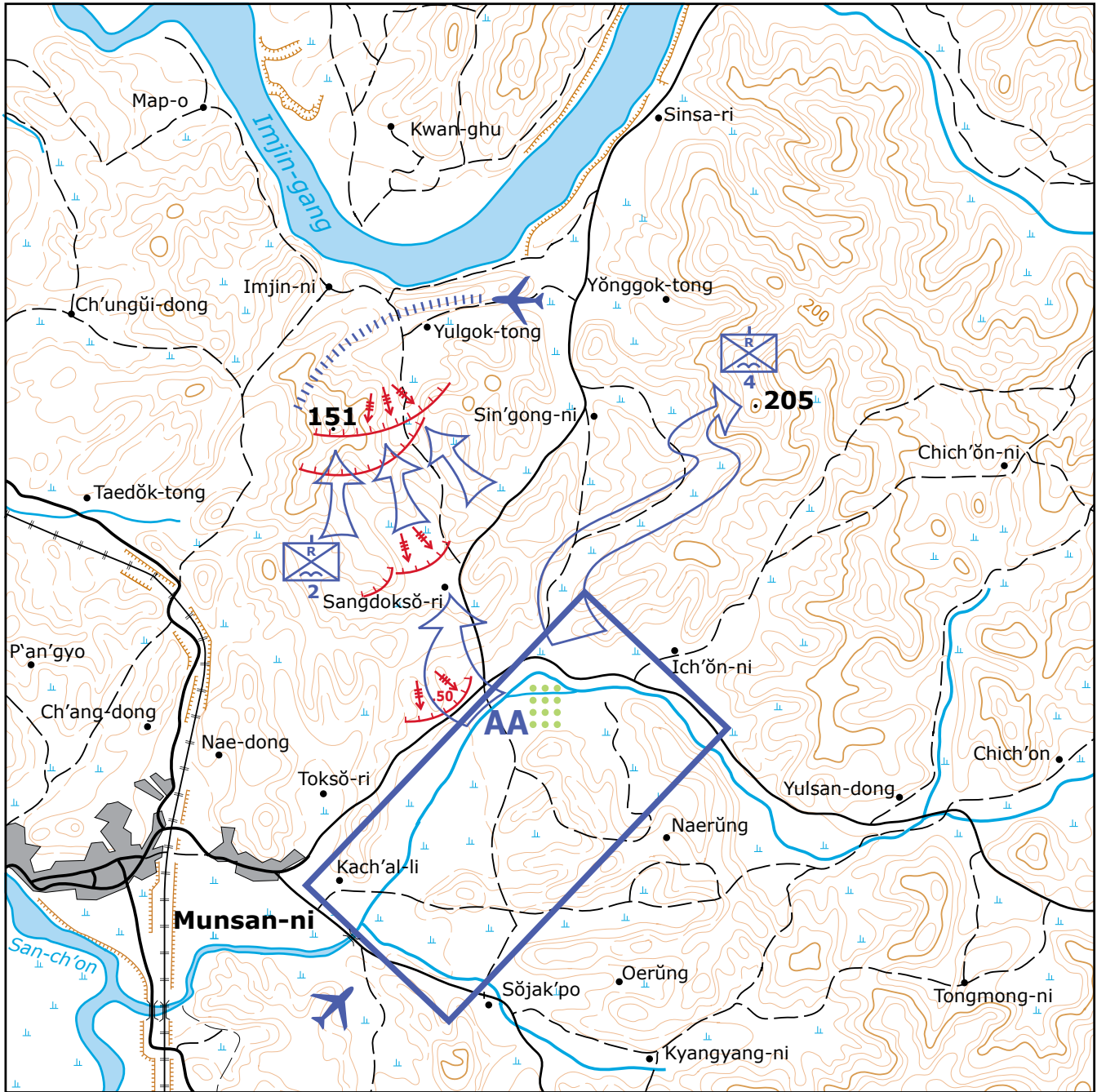


*The narrow valley running northeast from Munsan-ni afforded the Rangers and Rakkasans a relatively small margin of error in hitting their drop zones. The uneven and damp surface and the rice paddy dikes provided a less than ideal drop zone.*

As part of Operation RIPPER, the 23 March airborne assault—Operation TOMAHAWK—took place northwest of Seoul near Munsan-ni. Accompanying the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team—the Rakkasans—the 2nd and 4th Rangers made the first ever Ranger combat parachute jump. The drop altitude was nine hundred feet above ground level, but the terrain at the north end of Drop Zone North gradually rose in height. The rise was so significant that all paratroopers were warned not to jump after the Red Light came on, because aircraft would bank away to the northeast to avoid higher elevations to the northwest. Once on the ground, the 2nd Rangers' objective was Hill 151 and the 4th Rangers' was Hill 205.<sup>30</sup>

This map is based on accounts and sketches by James C. "Big Jim" Queen of 2nd Ranger Company.

2nd Ranger Co., Operation TOMAHAWK, Munsan-ni, South Korea, 23 March 1951



- |                              |                          |                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| — Unpaved, all weather road  | • Village                | • 205 Hill objective |
| — Unpaved, fair weather road | ◼ Densely populated area | ➤ Assault route      |
| - - - Track or trail         | ••• Orchard              | ➤ Machine gun        |
| == Double track railroad     | AA Assembly area         | ✦ Air strike         |
| — Embankment                 | ▭ Drop zone              | ✦ Line of Flight     |
| ▭ Paddy field                | ▭ Ranger company         |                      |

Map created by Charlynn A. Wallley



*U.S. Air Force C-121 Constellation aircraft. General MacArthur nicknamed his plane "SCAP"—short for Supreme Commander Allied Powers in Japan.*

just as the next flight began dropping paratroopers.

The Psywar C-47 overflew the drop zones after the last airdrop serials to broadcast warning messages telling the North Korean and Chinese troops that they were surrounded and cut off from retreat or aid. The C-47 also dropped another 750,000 surrender leaflets emphasizing the parachute and tank envelopment.<sup>31</sup> After the airborne drop, over a hundred enemy soldiers appearing waving these safe conduct passes.

In the course of three days, 1.3 million more leaflets were scattered on the enemy north of Uijong-bu, caught between the 187th ARCT advance to the east and the I Corps northward drive. One leaflet was specifically addressed to the Chinese 78th Division, whose flank had been exposed by the withdrawal of the NKPA First Corps.<sup>32</sup> The first North Koreans captured had these surrender passes, and after that, the numbers capitulating were so great that paratroopers and Rangers stopped counting.<sup>33</sup> Still, the assembling paratroopers and Rangers had to eliminate pockets of resistance near their assembly areas.

First Sergeant Lawrence D. West, one of the first Rangers to arrive at the 2nd Company assembly area located by an orchard, spotted two enemy machine gun positions overlooking the assembly area. Gathering a group of early arrivals, Sergeant West, and 1LT "Big Jim" Queen, who was carrying an M1 Garand, ordered bayonets "fixed" and proceeded to attack the two machine gun positions before the enemy could react. Two communist soldiers were killed, and two more were wounded and captured. The two 36th Regiment, 19th North Korean Division, soldiers were the first prisoners of war taken during Operation TOMAHAWK.<sup>34</sup> Other North Koreans abandoned stockpiled ammunition and rations, fleeing with just their weapons. In addition to the two prisoners of war, the Rangers turned over a Russian Maxim .31 caliber heavy water cooled machine gun to the 187th ARCT S-2.<sup>35</sup> Having eliminated the immediate threat, the 2nd Rangers assembled, got accountability (verified the presence of all personnel and critical equipment), and moved to clear the village of Sandokso-ri en route to their primary objective, Hill 151.<sup>36</sup>

Sergeant First Class James E. Freeman, acting 1st Platoon leader, led the attack on the communist forces in the village of Sandokso-ri. The Rangers fixed bayonets and assaulted. The attack was a fast, violent, furious fight that resulted in six enemy soldiers killed and another twenty captured. Before momentum was lost, Captain Allen prepared to seize Hill 151, the unit's primary objective. The North Koreans were direct-firing 76mm artillery at the 674th Field Artillery Battalion positions on Drop Zone North. The company 60mm mortars were brought up to "prep" the hill. As the mortar barrage began, 1LT Queen and Sergeant Marion "Mighty Mouth" Austin, the communications sergeant with the AN-GRC 9 radio, verified their location on the unit's only map and called the U.S. Air Force for close air support.<sup>37</sup>

At approximately 1030 hours, the 2nd Rangers, supported by their 60mm mortars and several F-51 Mustang fighter aircraft, commenced to attack Hill 151. The strafing Mustangs, with shark teeth painted on their engine cowlings, came in so low over the attacking Rangers that the shell casings raining down from their six .50 caliber machine guns bounced off the men's steel helmets. PFC William Van Dunk, a Ranger replacement from Fort Benning (originally with the 80th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division), fell wounded in the thigh just as the assault started. SFC Daniel Boatwright and Sergeant Smead Robertson were also wounded clearing the objective.

After consolidating and reorganizing on Hill 151, the wounded were collected for evacuation to the 60th Indian Field Ambulance Unit on Drop Zone North. The airborne medical team had dedicated U.S. Air Force Sikorsky RH-5 helicopters for serious injuries. As Sergeant Boatwright, Sergeant Robertson, and the attached 187th ARCT medic, moved back down Hill 151 to collect PFC Van Dunk for medical evacuation, they found him dead from shock.<sup>38</sup>

The turbaned Indian Army medics created quite a stir among the American paratroopers and Rangers. PFC Paddy Purcell, 4th Ranger Company, was knocked unconscious when he landed. When the Irishman regained consciousness, he regaled later, "Here was a large black-bearded Indian medic cutting my parachute harness off. I could remember thinking before the jump, 'Good Fri-



*Lieutenant Colonel A.G. Ranga Raj, 60th Independent Indian Field Ambulance Unit commander, and his surgical teams jumped with the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team at Munsan-ni on 23 March 1951.<sup>39</sup>*



Photo attributed to Life magazine.



Photo attributed to Life magazine.

*Air Force Sikorsky RH-5 helicopters with patient pods flew medical evacuation missions from Drop Zone North near Munsan-ni to Seoul, twenty minutes away.<sup>40</sup>*

day—it was no better time to be in the sky close to God. Sure and Bejesus I knew I was going to meet my maker, but I didn't know that he would be black.<sup>41</sup> Men with jump injuries and combat wounds were treated swiftly by the Indian doctors and medics, placed in the patient pods of the RH-5 helicopters, and then whisked away. Twenty minutes later they were unloaded at a field hospital in Taegu.<sup>42</sup>

While the 2nd Rangers had great success on 23 March, the 4th Ranger Company, encountering stiff resistance on their objective—Hill 205—did not enjoy the same. In fact, as the 2nd Rangers were linking up with the tank-heavy Task Force Growden at 1848 hours that day, the 4th Rangers had pulled back into a night defensive perimeter below their objective after two unsuccessful assaults.<sup>43</sup>

“Those guys had a tough time,” said 1LT Queen, who talked afterwards with their executive officer, 1LT John Warren. “Every time the assaulters threw a grenade up the hill, the enemy caught it and tossed it back at them. Hill 205 had steep sides, and only a single exposed trail went to the top. That objective was really tough.”<sup>44</sup> Huddled against a slight depression at the base of the vertical butte, the enemy continually dropped grenades down on the 4th Ranger attackers. The narrow base of the concave refuge quickly eroded into a very steep, slippery moraine that extended more than a hundred feet to the rice paddies below. The Rangers “climbed deep into their steel helmets as they hugged the depression wall,” trying to survive the constant falling grenades. Fortunately, most were concussive rather than fragmentary. Hill 205 was key terrain that favored the North Korean defenders.<sup>45</sup>

Ranger Sergeant Joe Watts remembered: “That hill stuck up there like the obstacle it was, jutting and seemingly pointing toward the clear blue sky.”<sup>46</sup> Rakkasan PFC Robert Schusteff had oriented himself in the air by locating Hill 205—the most prominent terrain feature on the northernmost tip of Drop Zone North.<sup>47</sup> The south side

of the butte, much like those in the American Southwest, was vertical, with a view of Drop Zone North; the north side had been sharply cut by the Imjin River, which was over a hundred feet below. On Hill 205, “best described as a hill on a hill,” the stubborn defenders poured a heavy volume of small arms fire down on the attacking Rangers, while the 674th Field Artillery Battalion on Drop Zone North provided little assistance that first day.

Sixteen sorties of close air support—F-80 Shooting Star jets and F-51 Mustang fighters—fired rockets, delivered napalm, and strafed Hill 205 with .50 caliber machine gun fire the next morning. With such heavy air support, the 4th Rangers took their objective that afternoon. In their “first bleeding,” the 4th Rangers had suffered one man killed in action (Corporal Frederick Manship) and nine men wounded in action.<sup>48</sup> In the meantime, the 2nd Rangers had been shifted to support Task Force Growden, which had been sent to join the 1st Battalion, 187th ARCT, in the vicinity of Drop Zone South. The tank-heavy task force had suffered heavy losses moving to Musan-ni, and was glad to have the Rangers perform advance guard for them.

Task Force Growden had lost four M46 medium Patton tanks, two jeeps, and an armored scout car to enemy anti-tank mines, and two more Pattons to NKPA artillery as the task force traveled to join the 187th ARCT.<sup>49</sup> Still, the linkup proved to be a reunion for the colored officers in the 2nd Rangers. Lieutenants Van Exel and A.C. McLean,



*F-80 Shooting Star jets and F-51 Mustang fighters provided close air support to the 2nd Ranger and 4th Ranger assaults on Hills 151 and 205.*



two of the tank company commanders (6th Medium Tank Battalion) in Task Force Growden, had served in the 758th Tank Battalion of the all-colored 92nd ID in World War II, and later in the all-colored 64th Tank Battalion at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The number of colored officers in the Army during World War II and Korea was very small; almost everyone knew one another from Officer Candidate School days at Fort McClellan, Alabama, or through prior service together.<sup>50</sup>

A 2nd Ranger platoon was detailed to augment security for the road-bound M46 tanks. They were welcomed aboard the tanks as the heavy vehicles lumbered off in the darkness to find the 1st Battalion, 187th ARCT, marching to join its battalion commander on Drop Zone South. The 1st Battalion objectives were attacked a day late.<sup>51</sup>

The rest of the 2nd Ranger Company established a perimeter defense on Hill 151, organized combat patrols, and sent foraging parties to Drop Zone North for rations, water, parachute silk, and to find 1LT Pryor with the land convoy. The 2nd Ranger Company, like the 187th



*The 2nd Rangers provided advance guard security for the M-46 Patton medium tanks of Task Force Growden after they joined the 187th ARCT at Munsan-ni.*

Rakkasans, had jumped with “horseshoe bedrolls”—a GI wool blanket and poncho wrapped in half of a canvas pup tent or “shelter half”—typical of the adage, “Travel light, freeze at night,” because temperatures in that region still dropped below freezing in late March. Just before dark, the 187th ARCT convoys arrived from Taegu, as a heavy fog settled in the low areas.<sup>52</sup>

From 24 to 27 March, the 2nd Ranger Company (-) patrolled in advance of the 3rd Battalion Rakkasans as they moved east to gain control of Highway 33. This “highway” paralleled the railroad, and was a major north-south route into Seoul. By the afternoon of 27 March, the 4th Ranger Company was operating on the left flank of the 2nd Rangers. On 28 March, the 2nd Rangers met advance elements of the 15th Infantry, 3rd ID, pushing north along the highway. Following the 3rd ID linkup, the final 2nd Ranger mission with the 187th ARCT was

to provide security for A Company, 64th Tank Battalion. Elements of the 4th Rangers had been providing security for a 674th Field Artillery Battalion battery when they were released from attachment to the 187th ARCT.

While the 2nd Rangers arranged their usual ad hoc transportation aboard trucks and began the journey from Suwon to Taegu, the 4th Rangers boarded Korean “40 x 8” (forty men or eight horses) boxcars for the trip home. The 2nd Rangers arrived at Taegu in the early morning hours of 31 March 1951. It took several days to get all of their individual equipment back from Munsan-ni. They then rejoined the 7th ID on 7 April to resume training colored soldier replacements.<sup>53</sup>

The 2nd Ranger Company trained colored replacements for 7th ID until early May 1951. The initial tasking was to give fifty-two colored replacements two weeks of basic infantry training. Then, another seventy-eight soldiers were attached, followed by eleven more, and so on. By 30 April 1951, the 2nd Ranger Company morning report reflected 125 men assigned, and 282 men attached for training. This was, in fact, a reduction from the peak of 440 attachments on 24 April.<sup>54</sup>

Following the basic training model in the Army, 2nd Rangers formed specialized instructor groups and rotated replacements through formal programs of instruction. Captain Allen organized committees to teach infantry tactics (from the fire team to company level), rifle marksmanship, tactical radio classes, and soldiering skills. He added “a good dose” of bayonet, hand-to-hand, and physical fitness training. The length of basic combat training had been reduced so drastically in the U.S.—to fill the understrength post-World War II divisions and replace wartime casualties—that replacements arrived in Korea lacking basic soldiering skills. 1LT Queen even tasked a colored bandsman to learn Communist Chinese Forces bugle calls using a captured manual.<sup>55</sup>

In return for the additional training duty, the 2nd Ranger Company received a small quid pro quo. Major General Claude B. Ferenbaugh, who replaced General David G. Barr, allowed Captain Allen to select ten Ranger replacements. Washington DC, the hometown of 1LT Queen, proved to be the common denominator among those selected. Queen knew many of them from his days as a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps colonel.<sup>56</sup> Integration was late coming to X Corps while General Almond commanded in Korea. Still, the 2nd Rangers managed to keep an attached white medic, PFC Frank Russo, throughout the colored replacement training.<sup>57</sup>

For more than three months (mid-February to late April 1951), the four 2nd Ranger platoons rotated between training replacements and serving on the 7th ID combat outpost line. On 23 April 1951, after a major Chinese offensive against the entire Eighth Army front broke through the ROKA 6th ID and exposed the 7th ID flank, the 2nd Ranger Company (-) was quickly attached to the 31st Infantry Regiment, the division reserve. To cover the exposed flank, the Rangers were moved into the gap between the 7th ID and the ROKA 3rd Infantry Regiment.



*The 2nd Ranger Company spent April 1951 training colored replacement troops for the 7th Infantry Division. The battle-hardened Rangers taught the green soldiers the combat skills they needed to survive the war.*

Heavy casualties among the 7th ID infantry regiments mandated integration.<sup>58</sup>

On 29 April, the Rangers were moved to the 17th Infantry Regiment to cover the 7th ID withdrawal across the Soyang River. As the major elements of the division were pulling back, the 2nd Rangers patrolled aggressively to maintain contact with communist forces.<sup>59</sup> This mission concluded 2nd Ranger Company combat operations in Korea between 29 December 1950 and 30 April 1951. During this time, the Rangers fought with the 7th ID, conducted basic infantry training for 7th ID colored replacements, and made the Munsan-ni combat parachute jump while attached to the 187th ARCT for Operation TOMAHAWK.

With the Munsan-ni operation, both the 2nd and 4th Ranger Companies jumped into airborne history and earned a combat star on their parachute badges. Shortly after their arrival in Korea, 2nd Rangers proved themselves in combat in early January 1951. Providing basic infantry training to 7th ID colored replacements—though not regarded by the “Buffaloes” as an appropriate use of very highly-skilled and combat effective Rangers—kept many a colored soldier alive in Korea and was appreciated by those men the Rangers trained, according to Corporal Bill Weathersbee:

*I was one of the last of the 2nd Ranger Company to rotate to the States from the 187th Airborne RCT. We traveled on the USTS Jose P. Martinez. When the ship docked at Seattle and we were getting ready to go ashore, several Black members of the 7th Infantry Division told the Rangers on board that they wanted to talk to us. The ranking [noncommissioned officer] in the group spoke: “We would like to thank you and your unit, the 2nd Ranger Company, for the training that was given to us when we arrived in the 7th Infantry Division. That training was the key to our survival. All training we had prior to that time was meaningless.” They said “Thanks,” we shook hands all around, and we went our separate ways.<sup>60</sup> ♣*

*This article would not have been completed without the assistance of two 2nd Ranger Company stalwarts, Major James Queen, company executive officer, and Sergeant First Class*

*William Weathersbee, company operations and intelligence sergeant, and unit historian. It was written to honor the Buffaloes, but especially as a tribute to Rangers Queen and Weathersbee.*

*Charles H. Briscoe has been the USASOC Command Historian since 2000. He earned his PhD from the University of South Carolina, and is a retired Army special operations officer. Current research interests include Army special operations during the Korean War, in El Salvador, and Colombia.*

## Endnotes

- 1 William Weathersbee notes, USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited as the Weathersbee Collection; Albert Cliette, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 1 October 2003, Fort Bragg, NC, recording in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited as Cliette Interview 1; Robert W. Black, *Rangers in Korea* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), 40; Victor J. Bond, “The History of the 2nd Ranger Company,” (MMAS Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2003), 20. As the two Ranger companies crossed the American west by train, one city-raised Ranger, spotting a herd of cattle, yelled, “Look at the buffalo!” The “buffalo” were in fact long-horned steers. From then on, both companies referred to themselves as “Buffaloes.” Former Corporal William Weathersbee, the 2nd Ranger Company historian, was assigned to the 2nd Platoon as a rifleman and also served as company operations sergeant. Weathersbee, originally assigned to the all-colored 555th “Triple Nickels” Parachute Infantry Regiment in June 1946, was later assigned to the S-2 Section as a Reconnaissance Scout Observer in the predominantly colored 3rd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division in 1948, after graduating from U.S. Army Photo Interpreters and Enlisted Intelligence courses. Second Lieutenant Albert Cliette, another former member of the 3rd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, was 3rd Platoon Leader, 2nd Ranger Company. His platoon sergeant was Sergeant First Class Robert O. Watkins.
- 2 Cliette Interview 1.
- 3 James C. Queen, Paul Lyle, Donald Allen, and Winston Jackson, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 17 December 2003, Washington, DC, recording in USASOC History Office Files, hereafter cited as Queen Interview 1; Cliette Interview 1; J.C. Watts, Jr., *Korean Nights: 4th Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) 1950–1951* (St. Petersburg, FL: Southern Heritage Press, 1997), 86.
- 4 Queen Interview 1; Cliette Interview 1; Watts, 86.
- 5 Cliette Interview 1; 2nd Ranger Company Morning Reports, 31 December 1950 and 5 January 1951, Weathersbee Collection; 7th Infantry Division G-3 Reports, 30 and 31 December 1950, Entry 429, Record Group 407, National Archives; 7th Infantry Division Periodic Intelligence Report 70, 6 January 1951, Entry 429, Record Group 407, National Archives.
- 6 Cliette Interview 1; 2nd Ranger Company Morning Report, 31 December 1950.
- 7 LTC Victor J. Bond, “The History of the 2nd Ranger Company,” MMAS thesis, 6 June 2003, US Army Command & General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 25, 34.
- 8 The most outspoken Army opponent of integration was Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond, X Corps commander, and former Chief of Staff for General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander Allied Powers, Japan. Almond had a poor opinion of colored soldiers based on his experience as the Commanding General of the 92nd Infantry Division (Colored) in World War II. His guidance was specific: “There will be no mixed units in X Corps. If the Ranger Company (2nd) under this policy becomes excessively overstrength—separate colored units will be formed.” 7th Infantry Division, G-3 Log, 020950 February 1951, Entry 429, Record Group 407, National Archives. Twenty years later, Almond re-emphasized his views. Letter, Lieutenant General Edward Almond to Center of Military History, 1 April 1972, Center of Military History, Carlisle Barracks, PA.
- 9 Queen Interview 1; Cliette Interview 1; 2nd Ranger Company Morning Report, 31 December 1950, Headquarters, Eighth U.S. Army, General Order 108, 28 February 1951, Entry 429, Record Group 407, National Archives.
- 10 Mathew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1967), 115; John Toland, *In Mortal Combat: Korea 1950–1953* (NY: William Morrow and Co., 1991), 421–22.
- 11 Albert Cliette, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 3 October 2003, Fort Bragg, NC, recording in USASOC History Office Files, hereafter cited as Cliette Interview 2; Black, 91; Larry E. Ivers, “Ranger History: 2nd Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) 1950–1951,” *The Ranger Link*, Winter 1994, 25–6; Arch E. Roberts, *Rakkasan!* (Nashville, TN: Printing, 19), 48; Watts, 132; “Operation

- KILLER had turned into a slow, not too profitable chase. In Tokyo, in Seoul, and at the Eighth Army command post, the planners were working over a new operation which might panic the Reds or chew them up or possibly trap them. It was a high-speed precision maneuver: an airborne regiment was to drop twenty-five miles northwest of Seoul; an armored column was to link up with them there." John Dominic and Joe Scherschel, "Airborne and Armor Link Up in Korea," *Life*, 9 April 1951.
- 12 Queen Interview 1.
  - 13 Queen Interview 1; Cliette Interview 2.
  - 14 Watts, 133. Some of Rangers came by train while others hitched rides on 7th Infantry Division trucks bound to Taegu to pick up ammunition. Queen Interview 2.
  - 15 Weathersbee Collection; Cliette Interview 2; Queen Interview 1. Operation TOMAHAWK was entirely dependent on airdrops for resupply. In fifty-six resupply drops between 24 and 27 March, Air Force cargo planes provided 264 tons of ammunition, food, and gasoline for the airborne task force. Fred J. Waterhouse, *The Rakkasans* (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing, 1991), 71–2.
  - 16 Queen Interview 1; Weathersbee Collection; Roberts, 47. First Lieutenant Antonio M. Anthony became the Mortar Platoon leader. During the Korean War, parachutists received either jump pay or combat pay, but not both for combat jumps.
  - 17 Queen Interview 1; Weathersbee Collection; Watts, 157; Headquarters, 187th Regimental Combat Team, "Marking of Aerial Delivery Containers," 20 March 1951, Entry 429, Record Group 407, National Archives.
  - 18 Roberts, 29.
  - 19 Queen Interview 1; Watts, 147.
  - 20 Queen Interview 1; Weathersbee Collection.
  - 21 D.M. Giangreco, *War in Korea 1950–1953* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1990), 187–88; Watts, 138–39.
  - 22 Waterhouse, 69, 70; Roy E. Appleman, *U.S. Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu (June–November 1950)* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 654.
  - 23 Queen Interview 1.
  - 24 Queen Interview 1; Weathersbee Collection; Watts, 135–37. C-119 Flying Boxcar transports could carry forty-six paratroops and nineteen door bundles. Edwin P. Hoyt, *On to the Yalu* (New York: Stein and Day, 1984), 239. Note: The two Ranger companies kicked out twelve door bundles from their C-46 Commando aircraft. Each Commando carried thirty jumpers. Aircraft and ground photos substantiate that the "V of Vs" aircraft formation was maintained during the airdrop while several accounts state the aircraft flew in trail to drop the paratroopers. Since the elapsed flight time from K-2 to Munsan-ni via the Seoul South checkpoint was so short, switching 140 aircraft from "V of Vs" at staggered heights to a long trail formation would have meant extending total drop time for five serials—fifty minutes (187th Regimental Combat Team After Action Report). Fifteen seconds between paratroop aircraft and substantially more time between the heavy drop serial and between heavy drop aircraft would have tallied to an hour and a half total drop time minimum. While the plan originally called for specific elements to be dropped on the north half and south half of Drop Zone North, this did not happen. And, factoring that 1st Battalion 187th Infantry, excluding the commander and half of his staff who were dropped alone on Drop Zone South later, were mistakenly dropped on Drop Zone North, lends further doubt to the aircraft dropping paratroops and heavy equipment in trail formation.
  - 25 Stephen E. Pease, *Psychological Warfare in Korea, 1950–1953* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1992), 54–55, 61. The 6167th Operations Squadron, B Flight with its C-47s, evolved from the Kyushu Gypsies of the 21st Troop Carrier Squadron, originally from Clark Air Force Base, Philippines.
  - 26 Colonel Kenneth K. Hansen, *Psywar in Korea* (Washington, DC: Joint Subsidiary Activities Group, OJCS, 1960), 196–97.
  - 27 187th Regimental Combat Team Staff Journal Entry 23 March 1951 from Watts, 138, 143.
  - 28 Weathersbee Collection; Cliette Interview 2; Queen Interview 1; U.S. Army. 2nd Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) Morning Report dated 23 March 1951; Black, 91–92; Hansen, 196–97; Roberts, 52. Corporal Glenn Jenkins Jr. and Private First Class Eugene Coleman were lightly injured during the parachute assault.
  - 29 Queen Interview 1; Weathersbee Collection; Watts, 157; Headquarters, 187th Regimental Combat Team, Marking of Aerial Delivery Containers.
  - 30 Watts, 135, 138–39.
  - 31 Waterhouse, 70. Just prior to the Munsan-ni parachute assault, the Air Force dropped tens of thousands of leaflets. After the drop, hundreds of enemy soldiers appeared waving these safe conduct passes.
  - 32 Hansen, 196–97.
  - 33 Hansen, 196–97. One prisoner of war was so anxious to produce the correct safe conduct pass that he proffered them like a bridge hand. He was very proud of his collection because the political officer searched the soldiers in his unit daily for United Nations leaflets and surrender passes.
  - 34 187th Regimental Combat Team Staff Journal Entry 23 March 1951; 2nd Ranger Company notes from Weathersbee Collection; Black, 92–3. The unit identity of the North Korea People's Army (NKPA) prisoners of war coincided with the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team intelligence brief: they were from the 19th Rifle Division from the NKPA VI Corps and the 8th Rifle and 17th Mechanized divisions from the NKPA I Corps. Watts, 136–37.
  - 35 187th Regimental Combat Team Staff Journal Entry 23 March 1951; 2nd Ranger Company notes from Weathersbee Collection; Black, 92–3. Interestingly, a 187th Regimental Combat Team After Action Report dated 12 July 1951 credited I Company, 2nd Battalion, 187th Regimental Combat Team, with capturing this machine gun and discounted how difficult the terrain was and how well defended Hill 205, the objective assigned to the 4th Ranger Company, really was. 187th Regimental Combat Team After Action Report dated 12 July 1951 in Watts, 177.
  - 36 Ibid; Queen Interview 1.
  - 37 Queen Interview 1. The 2nd Rangers attacked with shining bayonets to gain a psychological advantage. Maps were in short supply at the company; Lieutenant Queen, the executive officer and a former heavy mortar platoon leader, carried the only map because he was the fire support coordinator for the company.
  - 38 Queen Interview 1. The 187th medic had checked Van Dunk just after he was shot. Determining that the wound was not life-threatening, he had given him a cigarette and moved on. The Ranger companies did not have assigned medics; medics were attached. That was how Private First Class Russo, a white medic, came to serve with the 2nd Ranger Company for more than sixty days.
  - 39 Roberts, 50.
  - 40 Roberts, 50.
  - 41 Lieutenant General E. M. Flanagan Jr., *The Rakkasans: The Combat History of the 187th Airborne Infantry* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1997), 198.
  - 42 Lieutenant Colonel Wes McPheron, "Operation Tomahawk," *Stag*, April 1950, 51; Flanagan, 196; Watts, 132. Task Force Crowden consisted of the 6th Medium Tank Battalion, a rifle company from the 7th Infantry Regiment, and a battery of 105mm artillery.
  - 43 Black, 93.
  - 44 Queen Interview 1.
  - 45 Watts, 130, 150, 153.
  - 46 Watts, 145.
  - 47 Flanagan, 198.
  - 48 Watts, 174; Black, 93.
  - 49 Flanagan, 198. Lieutenant Colonel John S. Crowden commanded the 6th Medium Tank Battalion of M46 Patton tanks. Appleman, 676. Lieutenant General Mathew Ridgway, Eighth U.S. Army in Korea commander, had flown over Task Force Crowden en route to the Munsan-ni Drop Zones. At 0730 hours, two M46 tanks had already been disabled by land mines on the road. Toland, 422; Lt. Col. Wes McPheron, "Operation Tomahawk," *Stag*, April 1951, 16–17, 51–52.
  - 50 Cliette Interview 2; Watts, 166.
  - 51 Watts, 166; Queen Interview 1; Cliette Interview 2; Weathersbee Collection; Waterhouse, 71.
  - 52 Queen Interview 1; Cliette Interview 2; Weathersbee Collection.
  - 53 Weathersbee Collection; Black, 93; Cliette Interview 2; Queen Interview 1; Watts, 169. The 2nd Rangers could always count on the 666th Truck Company, an all-colored unit, which had been assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, NC.
  - 54 Weathersbee Collection; Cliette Interview 2; Black, 102; Bond, 30.
  - 55 Weathersbee Collection; Cliette Interview 2.
  - 56 Weathersbee Collection; Cliette Interview 2; Bond, 35.
  - 57 On 26 July 1948, President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 9981, "Desegregation of the Armed Forces," directing "that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons of the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin. This policy shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible." [www.ourdocuments.gov](http://www.ourdocuments.gov); Weathersbee Collection.
  - 58 2nd Ranger Company Morning Report, 24 April 1951; Weathersbee Collection; Cliette Interview 2; Black, 102.
  - 59 Ibid.
  - 60 Weathersbee Collection.



# SF Detachment 39: SFLE in Korea

by Cherilyn A. Walley and Charles H. Briscoe



**THE** U.S. Army Special Forces' relationship with the Republic of Korea is almost as old as Special Forces itself. In 1953, seventy graduates (officers and noncommissioned officers) of the second and third Special Forces qualification course were sent to Korea as individual replacements to the 8240th Army Unit, which was the backbone of U.N.-sponsored partisan operations during

the war. That U.S. Army Special Forces presence ended shortly after the armistice, but the necessity to train foreign soldiers in unconventional warfare to combat insurgencies in the Pacific region did not.<sup>1</sup>

Wars of national liberation were being fought in countries of Southeast Asia and the southwest Pacific during the 1950s. The French had been fighting the Viet Minh in Indochina while the new Philippines government had been combating a HUK rebellion since 1946. The Viet Minh victory at Dien Bien Phu marked the beginning of the end of French colonialism in Indochina and by the end of 1955, the HUK revolt had been put down.<sup>2</sup> Unrest in Indonesia emphasized the "domino theory" of Communist aggres-

sion during the Cold War. With 10th Special Forces Group focused on postwar Europe, the 77th SFG was initially responsible for the rest of the world. The 77th SFG spawned the 7th SFG oriented to Latin America and the 14th SF Operational Detachment (14th SFOD) for the Pacific region. The Army's Special Forces, still in their infancy, were spread thin.

The decision to provide dedicated unconventional warfare support to American allies in the Pacific was made in 1956. In April of 1956, four regionally oriented Special Forces detachments were formed: the 14th Special Forces Operational Detachment (Area) (Airborne) (SFOD) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; the 16th Special Forces Detachment (District B) (Airborne) with its two subordinate elements, the 12th and 13th Special Forces Detachments (Regimental) (Airborne) at Camp Drake, Japan. All four detachments were classified

and had a cover designation: the 14th SFOD was openly referred to as the 8251st Army Unit and the other three SF detachments were collectively the 8231st Army Unit.

*LTC Albert S. Madding, 14th SFOD and original 1st SFG commander, April 1956–November 1957.*



*Original 1st SFG beret flash.*



*Original Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) 1st Special Warfare Group shoulder patch.*



*Korea Military Assistance Group shoulder patch.*



*CPT John G. Firth, commander, FA Detachment 40, the first SF Detachment Korea commander.*



*MAJ Frank J. Dallas, commander, FB Detachment 40, the second SF Detachment Korea commander.*



*MAJ Charles W. Norton Jr., commander, B Detachment 310, the fourth SF Detachment Korea commander.*

All four detachments were ultimately assigned to 1st Special Forces Group when it was activated in June 1957 on Okinawa, Japan.<sup>3</sup>

The Republic of Korea (ROK) was in “the center of the radar screen” for U.S. Army Special Forces in the Pacific in 1957, when the Army decided to form an SF battalion. The first seventy ROKA Special Forces soldiers graduated from basic airborne training on Okinawa on 14 May 1958, and returned to Korea. 1st SFG Mobile Training Team (MTT) 12A conducted advanced SF training in Korea and graduated the first class of ROKA Special Forces on 20 August 1958.<sup>4</sup> The 1st SFG teams rotated into Korea to help the ROK Army SF cadre conduct training and assess field training exercises during their formative years.

The first indication that the U.S. Army considered a formal SF liaison with the ROKA Special Forces appropriate was in 1959. Captain John G. Firth was reassigned from the 77th SFG at Fort Bragg to 1st SFG on Okinawa with duty station Korea, effective 16 September 1959. However, those orders were amended; CPT Firth’s assignment to Korea ended at the 1st SFG headquarters on Okinawa.<sup>5</sup>

Firth spent most of 1960 commanding FA-32 and FA-33 (FA = the old designation for ODA) and conducting MTTs and field training exercises in the region. Among them were several infiltration exercises in Korea in January, February, and May 1960, and Exercise Strike Back near Seoul from 11–16 July 1960.<sup>6</sup> By the fall of 1960, 1st SFG planned to assign a dedicated American SF training cadre in Korea.

The first effort at permanence consisted of “stringing together” a series of temporary duty assignments for a split team (an officer and four enlisted men) led by Captain Firth that started 3 November 1960 and ended 8 June 1961.<sup>7</sup> Despite this “TDY cobbling,” Department of the Army, in January 1961, had begun to assign personnel to 1st



*Basic Airborne Training Course certificate presented to ROKA 1st LT Jai Soo Lee, 29674, at Camp Buckner, Okinawa, May 1958. LT Jai Soo Lee was one of the seventy ROKA soldiers in the first airborne class slated for Korea’s 1st Special Forces Battalion.*



*Original ROKA Special Forces basic airborne training site in Korea. Note that ROKA troops slept in shelter-half pup tents.*



*Basic parachute badge, ROKA.*

*Numbered ROKA parachute identity card.*



*Original insignia of ROKA 1st Special Forces Battalion.*



*CPT John G. Firth prepared to climb Tobong-san Mountain in April 1961.*

Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) for 1st Special Warfare Group, facilitated parachute badge exchanges during joint exercises by arranging U.S. military aircraft, and assisted in planning several ROKA and joint field training exercises, including small boat and amphibious operations.<sup>10</sup> The SFLE mission required considerable ingenuity, resourcefulness, dedication, and solid rapport with ROKA and American commands in Korea as well as the confidence of 1st SFG in Okinawa.

*SFDK soldiers provide flood rescue training (rappelling) to ROKA helicopter crews using the Dallas Towers in 1979.*



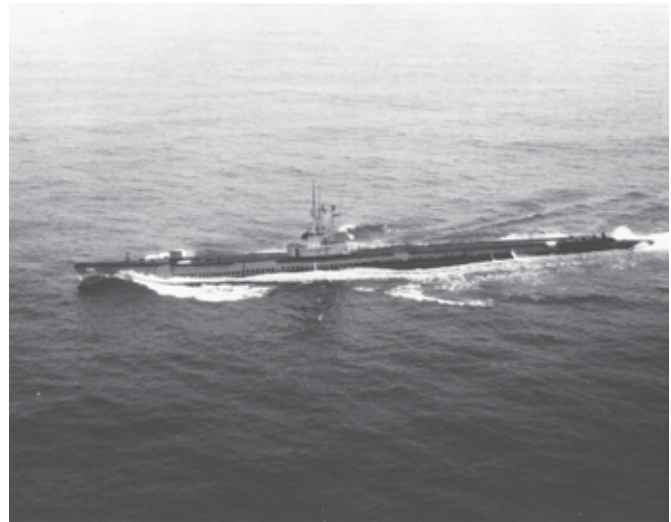
SFG with duty station Korea. Hence, a de facto stable 1st SFG presence under the operational control of Korea Military Assistance Group (KMAG) had been created.<sup>8</sup>

Once established it was perpetuated by giving the detachment a specific unit designation in November 1961. KMAG and 1st SFG recognized the element as "FA Detachment 40" and CPT John Firth received an Army Commendation Medal for his meritorious service as "Detachment Commander, FA Detachment 40, C Company, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne)."<sup>9</sup> While the detachment functioned semi-independently, it was still very much a part of 1st SFG in Okinawa.

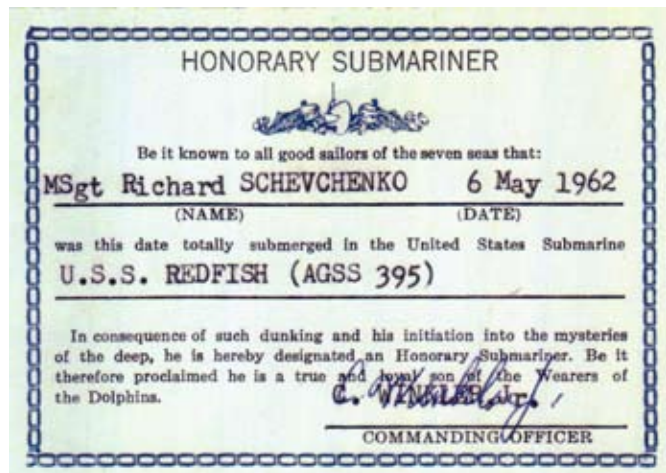
CPT Firth's split team acted as a Special Forces Liaison Element (SFLE) providing current SF course materials and advice, coordinating the 1st SFG MTT support to the ROKA 1st Special Warfare Group, and acting as liaison with KMAG, Eighth U.S. Army (EUSA), and American special operations elements training in Korea. Firth specifically helped the KMAG and ROKA prepare a new

As a former member stated, "It was tough duty, but somebody had to do it."

Major Frank J. Dallas, reassigned from the U.S. Army Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, became the second commander of Detachment 40 at the end of May 1961.<sup>11</sup> During Dallas' tenure the unit designation was changed to FB Detachment 40. Major Miguel de la Peña took command on 1 July 1962.<sup>12</sup> A month later, 1st SFG referred to FB Detachment 310, C Company, as the Republic of Korea Resident Detachment.<sup>13</sup> Major de la Peña changed command in early November 1962, with Captain (P) Charles W. Norton Jr. at Camp Mercer. Sometime prior the unit had moved from Camp Eiler. During Norton's tenure as third commander, the unit was redesignated B Detachment 310.<sup>14</sup> When Captain (P) Hugh R. "Mike" Burns took command in mid-December 1963, it was Detachment "B" 310. A jeep accident inves-



*MAJ Frank Dallas and FA Detachment 40 provided submarine infiltration training to twenty-nine ROKA Special Forces using the U.S. Navy submarine, SS-395/AGSS 395 Redfish, 6-7 May 1962.*



*Honorary Submariner card given to MSgt Richard Schevchenko, MAJ Dallas, and SSG Paul Redgate (medic) after training with the SS-395 Redfish 6-7 May 1962.*



*Original senior military free fall parachute badge, ROKA.*



*SFDK and ROKA Special Forces free falling in Korea.*



*SFDK and 1st SFG developed a rough terrain advanced parachute course for the ROKA SF. Unofficial pocket patch issued with Department of Army Certificate of Training.*

tigation caused K MAG to assume administrative control from the Army Support Command and disciplinary authority over "B" 310 in Korea. As part of its SFLE mission, the detachment not only supported ROKA Special Forces training—submarine infiltration training, mountain climbing and rappelling, and airborne training—but because of political unrest, provided riot control training.<sup>15</sup>

Detachment 40, then FB Detachment 310, then B Detachment 310, then Detachment "B" 310, and eventually B-310 by the late 1960s—performed the SFLE mission that the resident Special Forces detachment in Korea still fulfills. Although designated a "B" detachment throughout much of the 1960s, the team never grew beyond a twelve-man "A" detachment (ODA). Most often it fell below that "out of 1st SFG hide" level. While theoretically capable of acting as a B team headquarters that would command & control several "A" detachments teams, B-310 functioned as an "A" team with a SFLE mission. Independence, like that enjoyed by 46th SF Company in Thailand, almost killed the mission.

Being semi-independent from 1st SFG eventually was not sufficient for B-310. On 6 May 1969, Detachment B-310 (by then referred to as Special Forces Detachment, Korea) became U.S. Army Special Forces Detachment, Korea (SFDK) under the K MAG.<sup>17</sup> Less than a year later, the K MAG began to question the value of the SF Detachment [having operational control and administrative support responsibilities (funding)] and suggested inactivation. Having lost K MAG support, the SFDK went to EUSA and convinced the G-3 of the viability of its SFLE mission in Korea. In mid-August 1971, SFDK was then reassigned from A Company, 1st SFG and K MAG to Headquarters, Eighth U.S. Army, under the staff supervision of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G3, and attached to 4th Signal Group for UCMJ and the Yongsan Garrison for administrative and logistical support.<sup>18</sup> Functionally, the mission and responsibilities were the same, but the "out of hide" detachment for Korea was no longer part of the Special Forces permanent force structure.

The SFDK independent period lasted for nearly fifteen years. While there were



*SFC Spencer Gay jumpmastering a U.S. Army H-21 Chickasaw helicopter.*

The Army SF Detachment in Korea would respond to North Korean infiltrations and internal *coup d'états* in the same way—wait until the "smoke cleared"—because command of the 1st ROK Special Forces was an important "stepping stone" in the military for those with political ambitions. Two former commanders, Chun Doo Won and No Tae Woo became presidents of the Republic of Korea, and LTG Lim Dong Won was an ambassador and National Security Adviser. LTG Chung Byong Joo, however, was executed after a failed *coup d'état* attempt.<sup>16</sup>



*SFC Spencer Gay prepares to accompany ROKA SF battalion on FTX.*



*LTC Kim leads his SF battalion on a roadmarch during a FTX.*



*(LtoR) SFCs Burriss, Spencer Gay, and Kilmer with ROKA SF Colonel and his SGM before an FTX.*



*(LtoR) SGM Richard Henrickson, SSG Dewberry, LTC Lim Dong Won (retired LTG), SFC William Taylor, and SGM Chay at the ROKA SF command post during a field exercise circa 1970-73.*

numerous orders and letters of instruction of detachment and reattachment within the EUSA, the most significant order was General Order 116, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Pacific, which organized Special Forces Detachment, Korea, as a TDA (Table of Distribution & Allowances) element. Effective 1 June 1974, the TDA authorized strength for U.S. Army SFD-K was one officer and eight enlisted men . . . to be assigned from locally available personnel. Once the reorganization was complete, SFDK was attached to the EUSA Headquarters Commandant for UCMJ and administrative and logistics support.<sup>19</sup> SFDK was the only permanent SF presence in theater. Deactivation was raised again in 1980, but the detachment proved its continued value to the Army as a special operations coordinator for joint training exercises like FOAL EAGLE and TEAM SPIRIT.<sup>20</sup>

It was U.S. Army Forces Command that brought SFD-K and the Berlin Detachment back into the fold. On 1 October 1985, U.S. Army Special Forces Detachment-Korea was reassigned from EUSA to 1st Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, that a year later transferred it back to 1st Special Forces Group, Fort Lewis, Washington, a year later.<sup>21</sup> After seven years as an “out of 1st SFG hide” element and almost thirty years as a TDA unit, SFD-K effective 16 October 2005, became a permanent TO&E (Table of Organization & Equipment) unit designated 39th Special Forces Detachment (Airborne). The 39th SFD (authorized one officer and fifteen enlisted personnel) is assigned to U.S. Army Special Forces Command, Fort Bragg, and attached to EUSA in Korea for UCMJ and the 1st SFG for Title 10 support.<sup>22</sup> In the midst of organizations, reorganizations, activations, and inactivations the 39th Special Forces Detachment in Korea has certainly “enhanced ROK/US interoperability by providing liaison between U.S. SOF and ROKA SF during war, crises, and armistice” while providing a continuity of SF presence in the Pacific for over forty years.<sup>23</sup> ▲



*ROKA SF Sergeant Kim during summer field exercise.*



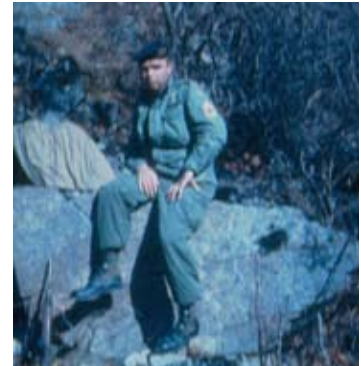
*SFC Spencer Gay in the field with his ROKA SF battalion.*



*(LtoR) SFC Page and SSG Flowers enjoying another C-Ration meal before going to the field in the winter with the ROKA Special Forces.*



*SFC Spencer Gay having lunch in the field with the ROKA Special Forces.*



*SFC Spencer Gay during a summer field exercise with ROKA Special Forces.*



대한민국 의료의 이면 (大舞衣島)

한 국 전란 이후에 세워진 한 병원은 매우 값어치는 그러나 병의 면이 커 있는 것은 저당치 주민들은 바깥 세상과의 접촉이 별로 없는 관계로 때때로 나려오는 과거 질병과 크게 다른 많은 일상 생활을 모르는 사람이 상당히 있다. 그들이 병역을 입지 못 하는 현에 시설과 구하는 적당한 치료 기관이다.

외로 기관이 없는 섬 이 이야기는 1951년 8월 미군 「루벤· <상> MSG (E-7) 대우직으로 처음으로 의학계 의료종사자였던 「미켈」 일등상사가 처음 내리 올 때부터 시작되었다. 「미켈」 상사는 그 섬에서도 불구하고 의사로서의 전문직을 기꺼워하는 한 병사로서 한 사람도 없었다는 사실이었다. 1,600명이나 되는 주민들은 중, 그 밖에 여러가지 피부병이 널리 퍼져있어서 주민의 대부분이 가난한 어민들의 가족으로서 심하게 앓고 있는 인종에도 나가는 일이 별로 없으므로 질병은 때때로 집안과 치료를 하지 못 하고 그대로 버려두는 형편이었다.

「미켈」 상사는 자기가 치료해 줄 수가 없었다고 생각하고 사형판에게 가서 자기의 근무 시간 외에 대우직으로 진료소를

개설하고 주민을 치료할 것을 자선했다. 피박 받은 그는 전적으로 잔이 전 요소를 시작하고 이 섬에서는 처음으로 「필자는 누구든지 와서 치료를 받으시오」 라는 표지를 내었다. 이 섬 사람의 대하는 것에 미국 군인을 본 일도 없기만 「미켈」 위생원은 그의 중요성과 진정 한 치료로 온 주민들의 신뢰를 받고 원수가 되었다. 그는 "두 주일 주재하는 동안 근무 이외의 시간은 전염병 치료와 예외적인 주사 출구에 거의 다 써 버렸을 겁니다. 그리고 하루에 60명이나 되는 환자를 치료하기도 했습니다" 고 한다.

「미켈」 상사의 후계자 미국의 상륙 연감 작전이 9월 초순에 끝나자 「미켈」 상사는 그 후 곧 항복을 떠나게 되었다. 그러나 그 분대가 10월에 또 다시 상륙 작전 연습으로 같은 대우직으로 다시 왔으며 그 분대 중에는 「미켈」 대장 및 학장이었던 「조지·레드게이트」 상사가 있어 그가 이 부대에서 「미켈」 상사의 일을 계승하게 되었다.

8



SSG Phillip Quinn (medic) sets up for MEDCAP with ROKA Special Forces circa 1970-73.

Special thanks to Colonel Craig Firth, Sergeant Major Jack Hagan, retired Lieutenant Colonel Mike Burns, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Randall, Command Sergeant Major Richard Henrickson, Master Sergeants Richard Shevchenko, Eugene Hall, Paul Redgate, and Spencer Gay for providing photos and documents to support this article



MSG (E-7) Ruben Michel during Medical Capability (MED-CAP) with the ROKA Special Forces. Note master paratrooper wings on beret ILO 1st SFG flash.

Temporary sign advertising the joint SFDK/ROKA SF MED-CAP exercise.

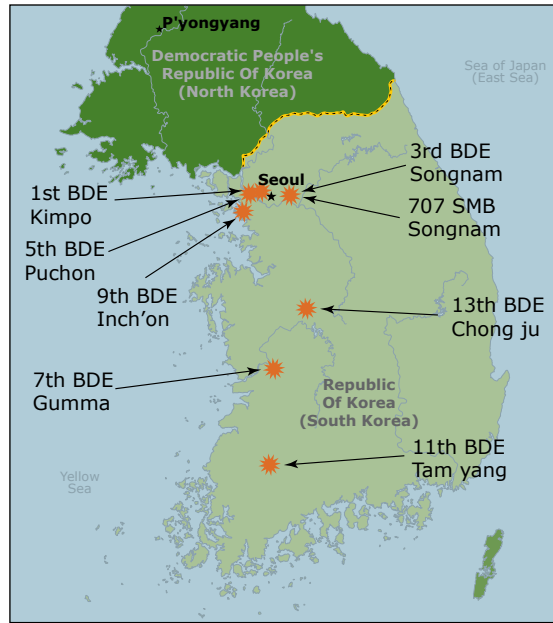


ROKA Special Forces pass out Psywar products during MEDCAP with SFDK.





*Special Forces Detachment, Korea beret flash.*



*39th SFD Liaison Element locations in Korea.*



*Special Forces Detachment, Korea coin.*

## Endnotes

- The U.S. Special Forces Detachment–Korea that formed in 1960 should not be confused with the U.S. Air Force Unit “Det K,” Special Activities Unit #1, which had absolutely no connection with Special Forces. See Michael E. Haas, *Apollo’s Warriors: United States Air Force Special Operations During the Cold War* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1995), 56–65.
- Cherilyn A. Walley, “A Century of Turmoil: America’s Relationship with the Philippines,” *Special Warfare*, September 2004, 8.
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- Stanton, 6–7; H. R. “Mike” Burns, M. Eugene Hall, Charles Randall, Dennis Veal, Al Gramando, Walter Cribbe, Craig Firth, and Choi Jang Hoon, interview by Dr. Cherilyn A. Walley, 3 June 2004, Yongsan Garrison, Republic of Korea, copy in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
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- “Award of the Army Commendation Medal” and “Citation,” General Order 104, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Ryukyu Islands, dated 27 November 1961, Local Order 11-41A, Headquarters, 1st Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces, dated 2 December 1960, Local Order T-745, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Ryukyu Islands and IX Corps, dated 13 December 1960, Local Order T-745A, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Ryukyu Islands and IX Corps, dated 7 February 1961, Local Order T-745B, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Ryukyu Islands and IX Corps, dated 10 April 1961, Major General Hamilton H. Howze, “Letter of Appreciation” to Captain John G. Firth, dated 20 June 1961, “Award of the Army Commendation Medal” and “Citation,” General Order 104, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Ryukyu Islands, dated 27 November 1961, copies in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Extract, Paragraphs 17–20, Special Order 294, Headquarters U.S. Advisory Group, Korea, dated 12 December 1961, Extract, Paragraph 65, Special Order 171, Headquarters XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, dated 25 July 1961, and Extract, Special Order 230, Headquarters U.S. Army Advisory Group, Korea, dated 23 September 1961, copies in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- “Award of the Army Commendation Medal” and “Citation,” General Order 104, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Ryukyu Islands, dated 27 November 1961, Extract, Paragraphs 17–20, Special Order 294, Headquarters U.S. Advisory Group, Korea, dated 12 December 1961, and Extract, Paragraph 7, Special Order 58, Headquarters 1st Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces, dated 2 May 1962, copies in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Lieutenant General Chang Do Young, “Letter of Appreciation” to Captain John G. Firth, dated 2 June 1961, Captain John G. Firth, Letter to Major Edgar Albrick, dated 11 May 1961, and “Award of the Army Commendation Medal” and “Citation,” General Order 104, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Ryukyu Islands, dated 27 November 1961, copies in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Colonel Cho Moon Whan, Republic of Korea Army Special Forces, Letter of Appreciation to Major Frank J. Dallas, dated 30 June 1962, copy in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Captain John G. Firth, Letter to Major Edgar Albrick, dated 11 May 1961, copy in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Local Order 5-1, Detachment 40, 1st Special Forces Group, dated 8 May 1962, copy in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Major Frank J. Dallas, “Letter of Appreciation” to Staff Sergeant George-Paul Redgate, dated 30 June 1962, copy in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Special Order 122, Headquarters, 1st Special Forces Group, dated 20 August 1962, copy in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Major Miguel de la Peña, “Letter of Appreciation” to Master Sergeant Richard Shevchenko, dated 27 November 1962, copy in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- The change of UCMJ jurisdiction came after Major “Mike” Burns administered an Article 15 to the Det K sergeant for the DUI-related jeep accident before the Army Support Command received the daily MP “blotter report.” Sergeant Major Louis Brown recommended the action to preclude the automatic “one-stripe reduction” for DUI effectively ruining the SF soldier’s career. The UCMJ jurisdiction change and “strong verbal counselling” of Major Burns precluded future circumventions of policy. Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) H.R. “Mike” Burns, interview by Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 8 December 2005, Hope Mills, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
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- Master Sergeant (Retired) M. Eugene Hall, Jump Log, entries dated 7 September 1965–8 October 1966, copy in USASOC History Office Files,

Fort Bragg, NC; Letter of Instruction, U.S. Army Pacific, dated 6 May 1969, as referenced in Letter of Instruction 8-2, Headquarters, Eighth U.S. Army, dated 16 August 1971, copy in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

- 18 General Order 316, Eighth U.S. Army, dated 16 August 1971, Henrickson, "United States Army Special Forces Detachment (Korea): 1970-1973," Letter of Instruction 8-2, Headquarters, Eighth U.S. Army, dated 16 August 1971, and General Order 335, Headquarters, Eighth U.S. Army, dated 23 August 1971, copies in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 19 Letter of Instruction 1-4, Headquarters, Eighth U.S. Army, dated 18 January 1974; General Order 41, Headquarters, Eighth U.S. Army, dated 23 January 1974; General Order 42, Headquarters, Eighth U.S. Army, dated 23 January 1974; General Order 116, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Pacific, dated 29 May 1974; General Order 275, Headquarters, Eighth U.S. Army, dated 21 June 1974; General Order 317, Headquarters, United Nations Command, U.S. Forces Korea, Eighth U.S. Army, dated 22 August 1975; General Order 357, Headquarters, United Nations Command, U.S. Forces Korea, Eighth U.S. Army, dated 15 October 1975. Copies of all the above in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
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- 21 Permanent Order 191-18, Headquarters, U.S. Army Forces Command, dated 10 December 1985, and Permanent Order 25-7, Headquarters, U.S. Army 1st Special Operations Command (Airborne), dated 13 February 1986, copies in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 22 Permanent Order 161-10, Headquarters, U.S. Army Special Operations Command (Airborne), dated 9 June 2004 (effective 16 October 2005), copy in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 23 "SFD-K Mission and METL" contained in Headquarters, U.S. Army Special Forces Command (AOSO-GG-FS) Memorandum subject: Force Design Update (FDU)—Conversion of the Special Forces Detachment-Korea to a TOE Unit dated 26 July 2002, copy in USASOC History Office Files, Fort Bragg, NC.



*Shoulder patches of the ROKA Special Operations units.*

*SSGs William Bassett (demo sergeant) and Robert Maya (medic) and Specialist Four Powell (assistant demo sergeant) circa 1966-67. Note Powell is wearing original ROKA 1st Special Warfare Group patch on button tab.*

*SFC Walter Patterson (detachment operations sergeant) circa 1966-67.*





# Los Artefactos Explosivos Improvisados

## Improvised Explosive Devices in El Salvador

by Charles H. Briscoe



**VERY** little has been written about the role of Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) in El Salvador during that country's thirteen-year civil war (1980–1993). In the decade following the Vietnam War, American military intervention to prevent the spread of Communism was looked upon with disfavor, even after the Sandanistas overthrew the Somoza regime in Nicaragua in 1979. American casualties had increased dramatically during the Nixon era of "Peace with Honor" in Vietnam, and in 1973, the U.S. Congress passed the War Powers Resolution to limit the president's authority to commit American military forces in "undeclared" wars.

During the Carter administration (1977–1981), the U.S. Army leadership hunkered down and waited for better times, and counterinsurgency was regarded with disdain. These were difficult times for the executors of U.S. military assistance in Latin America: the Special Forces, Civil Affairs, and Psychological Operations elements conducting training missions, and the Operational Planning and Assistance Training Teams (OPATT) officers and noncommissioned officers assigned to El Salvador Armed Forces (ESAF) brigades as trainers.

Employing unconventional warfare tactics to counter insurgents fighting a guer-



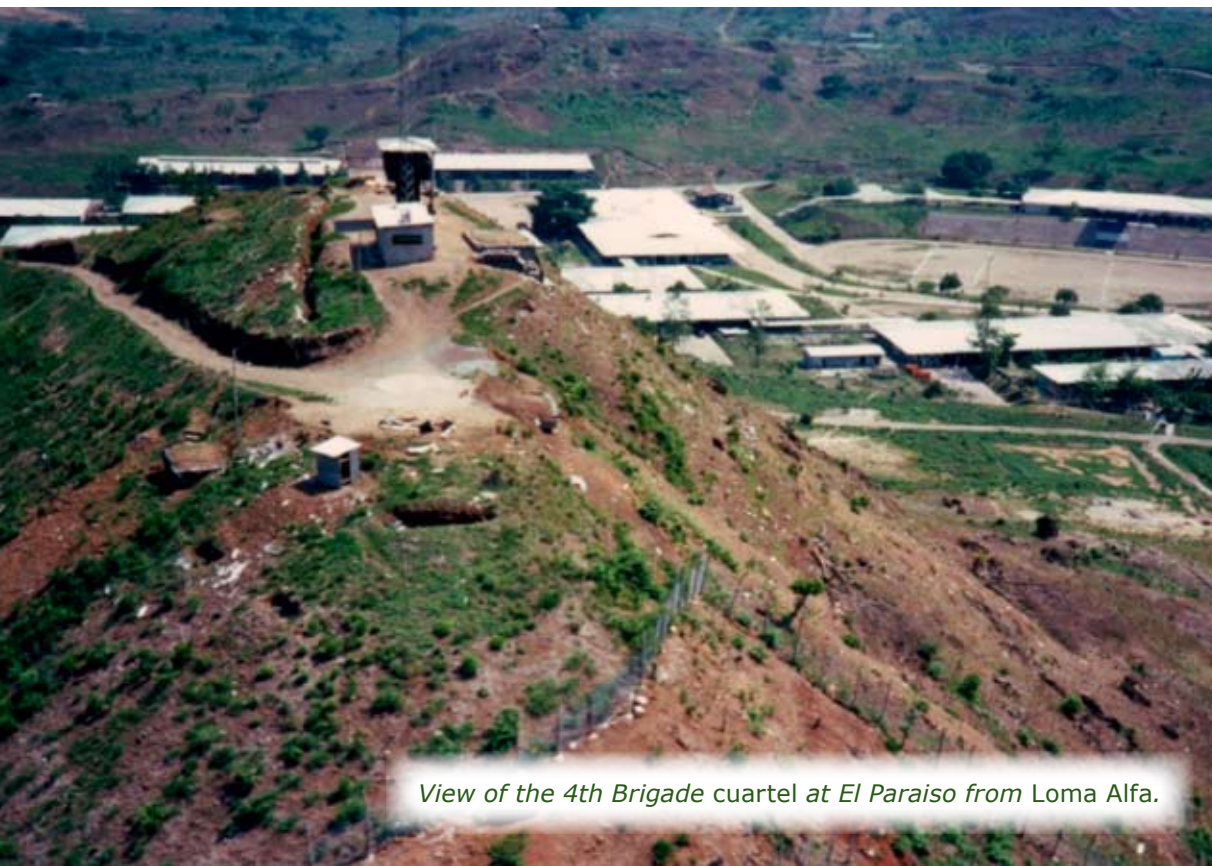
*El Salvador Armed Forces 4th Brigade*



*El Salvador Armed Forces DM-1*



*Unofficial U.S. Military Group-El Salvador shoulder patch*



*View of the 4th Brigade cuartel at El Paraiso from Loma Alfa.*

GUATEMALA

HONDURAS



Map of El Salvador showing the six military zones of the country and the distribution of U.S. Operational Planning and Assistance Training Teams officer and noncommissioned personnel with the El Salvador Armed Forces infantry brigades, military department commands (i.e., Departimiento Militar Uno), the El Salvador Armed Forces Marine infantry battalion, and the national military training center (Centro Entrenamiento Militar Fuerza Armada) at La Unión.

rilla war is now an integral part of America's Global War on Terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs), whether used in an urban or field environment, are standard guerrilla weapons. The majority of our combat losses in Iraq and Afghanistan are attributed to IEDs, and the same was true for the ESAF during its long war against the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Movement (FMLN) and the Ejército Nacional de Colombia (ENA). Though most of the IEDs used in Iraq and Afghanistan employ conventional military munitions, the purpose of this article is to remind ARSOF elements committed overseas today that simple field-expedient IEDs made from fertilizer chemicals, rebar rods, scrap metal, and rocks—homemade “first-generation munitions”—being employed by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolu-

In 2003, Colombia had the third highest number of mine victims (668) in the world, exceeded only by Afghanistan (847) and Cambodia (772). Mine laying in these countries has been significantly reduced, while in Colombia more mines are being laid now than ever before. In the first quarter of 2005, one out of every three soldiers killed was the victim of a mine or IED.<sup>1</sup>

cionarias de Colombia (FARC) cannot be discounted. As more conventional weapons and munitions caches are discovered and destroyed, the potential threat of encountering primitive IEDs in Afghanistan and Iraq will grow. Thus, a review of ARSOF experiences in El Salvador and similarities in Colombia is most appropriate.

The consistent commitment of 7th Special Forces Group mobile training teams to train El Salvadoran armed forces increased momentum in 1982. By then, the Salvadoran military had been fighting the FMLN for several years; however, levels of financial and material support provided to the FMLN by Cuba and Nicaragua during the Cold War were minimal compared to those being made available to insurgencies by al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups today. Thus, the majority of IEDs—*artefactos explosivos improvisados*—employed by the

FMLN against the ESAF elements in the war were very primitive compared to those encountered in Afghanistan and Iraq today, but similar to those in Colombia. Only the term “field-expedient explosives” and effective lethality connect them.

This article discusses the three most common IEDs encountered in El Paraiso and Chalatenango [Military Department 1 (DM-1, *Departemiento Militar Uno*)] in 1988–1989, when fighting was heaviest in El Salvador. El Paraiso and Chalatenango were the largest cities in the FMLN-dominated north. FMLN control of those two cities would split the country in half.<sup>2</sup> El Paraiso was overrun by the insurgents in December 1983 and 31 March 1987, when Special Forces SSG Gregory A. Fronius was killed. Both times the Salvadoran military recaptured the city after fierce fighting. El Paraiso was subjected to two more major FMLN attacks in March and September 1988, and again in September and November 1989, during the last countrywide FMLN offensive. This was the “hot spot” during the Salvadoran war.

Field-expedient explosives and weapons—*bloques* (TNT blocks), *torpedos bangalores* (bangalore torpedoes), *rampas* (catapults), and a homemade 12.7mm rifle *cañon* (canon)—were used during the attacks on El Paraiso. The first two were commonly employed by the FMLN throughout the war, while the *rampas* appeared in 1989. The 12.7mm rifle *cañon*, though it might have been tested, was not fired during the 13 September 1988 attack on the 4th Brigade *cuartel* in El Paraiso. It was not for lack of ammunition. *Bloques* had been used during the numerous assaults and were left as booby-traps in ESAF fighting positions and on the .50 cal M-2 machinegun on *Loma Alfa* (Hilltop Alpha) when the FMLN withdrew scattering propaganda leaflets.

*Bloques* were simply constructed by wrapping several blocks of TNT or plastic explosive together with electrical tape or heavy rubber bands and using plastic bags to make them “water resistant”—a critical factor in daily tropical rains that also collected moisture leading to misfires. Wells were dug in the one end to accommodate detonators or fuse igniters. Detonators and fuse igniters were either taped in place or paraffin was used to secure them.<sup>3</sup> Self-taught ESAF “bomb disposal” personnel called *explosivistas* would collect the abandoned *bloques* after the attacks to defuse and disarm them. Destruction of these bomblets was usually accomplished by the SF sergeants serving as OPATT NCOs in the

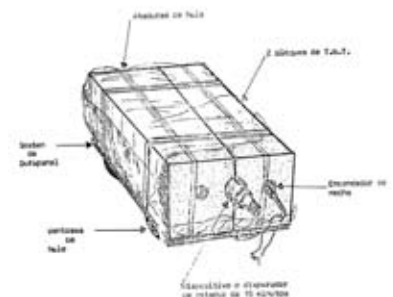
*Mimeographed Farabundo Marti National Liberation Movement propaganda leaflet directed towards 4th Brigade soldiers at El Paraiso. The call to surrender contained the simple sketch of an amputee veteran who lost his arm to an improvised explosive device. These leaflets were left scattered about the cuartel area by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Movement after the September 1988 attack.*



*The 4th Brigade explosivistas collected abandoned bloques after attacks. Operational Planning and Assistance Training Team noncommissioned officers regularly destroyed these dangerous munitions to prevent accidents.*

ESAF brigades. They understood the danger.<sup>4</sup>

After the 13 September 1988 attack on the 4th Brigade *cuartel* in El Paraiso, the “inside perimeter was littered with unexploded ordnance from the destroyed ammunition supply points and *bloques*,” according to the U.S. Military Group (MILGP) El Salvador Flight Detachment UH-1H Huey pilots sent to evacuate the OPATT personnel.<sup>5</sup> *Bloques con ventosas de hule* (*bloques* with rubber suction cups) were also used to destroy ESAF aircraft at Ilopango Airport.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the



*Schematic depicting the elements of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Movement Bloque improved explosive device.*

**SOLDADO, CLASE, OFICIAL!**



Para que no mueras en la próxima.

**FMLN**



*M2 .50 caliber machine gun on Loma Alfa above the El Paraiso cuartel. The gun was booby-trapped with bloques by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Movement.*



*This unused bangalore was abandoned by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Movement near a fortified position.*

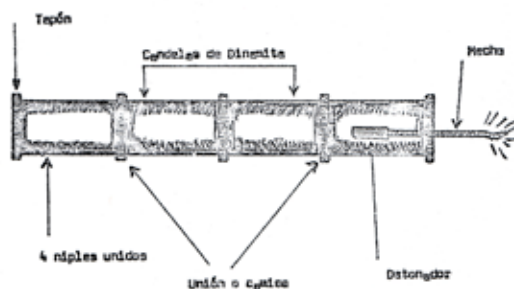
FMLN used *bloques* as large hand grenades and as satchel charges.

Cutting paths through outer defense measures—razor, concertina, and barbed wire emplacements, and improvised minefields—that conventional American military units cleared with bangalore torpedoes led to further improvisation by the guerrillas. The FMLN created its own version of the bangalore torpedo, logically called the *torpedo bangalore improvisado*, with bamboo and plastic PVC pipe. The head of the explosive contained from four to six 8-inch-long machined steel rods, which were propelled horizontally by a bundle of cloth-wrapped dynamite sticks to clear ground obstacles. The tail section of the *bangalore* contained the detonator, normally a non-electric detonator with time cord, held fast by hardened mud. The FMLN emplaced these *bangalores* at the base of walls (barracks, guard posts, and ammunition bunkers) to topple them or to blast entryways for assaulters, to clear paths through barbed wire obstacles, and to create safe lanes through minefields.<sup>7</sup>

The lack of artillery support for FMLN attacks led to the development of primitive inclined, fixed-direction systems to launch barrages of explosive “cannonballs” against *cuartels*. These direct-lay artillery systems, *artilleria sin cañon*, were commonly called *rampas* or ramps, based on their simple incline launch platforms. After a thunderous explosion, the sky above the *cuartel* walls would be filled with ten to twenty cloth-wrapped balls (a Sandanista trademark), barely illuminated by their burning detonator cords.<sup>8</sup> Made of a hardened paste mixture of powdered chlorate, aluminum, and black gunpowder, and filled with rocks and scrap metal serving as shrapnel, the cannonballs would bounce along the ground inside the *cuartel* walls, rolling about, fuses burning. The scene was reminiscent of the Bugs Bunny cartoon in which the bearded and moustached Yosemite Sam ineffectively uses an old cannon to get rid of “that pesky wabbit.”<sup>9</sup>

The few times that *rampas* did work as planned, however, the dud rate for the explosive cannonballs was fortunately quite high. Shorts in lead wires to the 12-volt car battery being used to ignite the charges reduced the number of cannonballs launched simultaneously. The ESAF soldiers’ curiosity and laughter about the comic absurdity of this innovation ended quickly as those closest to the fizzling cannonballs dived for cover.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the time required to build launch ramps—



*Schematic depicting elements of Bangalore torpedo made with PVC pipe.*

Homemade mortars used by the FARC have improved greatly and now the bombs have stabilizing fins. The 14 April 2005 bombardment of Toribio in the province of Cauca by the Pacific Coast showed the greater accuracy and range (over 800 meters) of these mobile weapons. FARC members have received homemade explosives training from three Provisional

Irish Republican Army (PIRA) members, James Monaghan, Martin McCauley, and Neil Connolly.<sup>10</sup> Originally developed with Libyan help in the early 1970s, the primitive Mark I prototype has evolved into the much more sophisticated Mark 18 “barracks buster,” named for its effectiveness against security bases in Northern Ireland. Refining this weapon earned James Monaghan

the moniker “Mortar Monaghan.”<sup>11</sup> Colonel Nelson Francisco Rocha, director of the Colombian Military Engineers School, said, “We are seeing FARC mortars with an amazing similarity to IRA barrack-busters. The rebels are now producing their own electric detonators and have begun using black-powder impulse charges.”<sup>12</sup>

whether dug-out earthworks, wooden troughs, or simple bipods—the need to locate them close to the *cuartels*, and the complicated multiple fusing for simultaneous barrage firings, *rampas* were not often discovered before employment. ESAF commanders ensconced in *cuartels* were not that concerned about close-in security.<sup>14</sup> Still, they were a novel Salvadoran war IED worthy of note.

The photos show two varieties of *rampas* encountered by Major (now Major General) James W. Parker while serving as an OPATT with the 4th Brigade at El Paraiso, 1988–1989. The ESAF 4th Brigade commander pointing out the unfired *rampas* in the photos is Colonel *Ciro Roque López*. These photos were taken the day after the attack of 6 April 1989, three months after MILGP El Salvador reported that the FMLN had called off *rampa* attacks.<sup>15</sup>

The 12.7mm rifle *cañon*, though it might have been tested, was not fired during the 13 September 1988 attack on the 4th Brigade *cuartel* in El Paraiso, though not for lack of ammunition since almost forty unfired rounds were found afterward. The 12.7mm *cañon* rifle was fabricated from a Soviet Mi-24 Hind-D attack helicopter chain machine gun breach block. The barrel was hand-machined to fit the Soviet breach mechanism, as was the trigger and pump-action assembly. The rifle had a hand-carved wooden stock, somewhat like that on an M79 grenade launcher, and a forward grip. The Soviet Hind-D 12.7mm linked rounds had been separated for individual loading. “The rifle weighed twenty pounds,” recalled Major General Parker. “Carrying it and the ammo would have been difficult for the Salvadorans. It was understandable why that ‘crew-served monster’ went unfired during the attack and was left behind by the FMLN.”<sup>17</sup> Man-portable did not seem to be part of the FMLN lexicon.

*Colonel **Ciro Roque López**, 4th Brigade Commander, points out a field of artillery sin cañon or rampas discovered outside the cuartel.*



*Schematic showing the construction of an **Farabundo Marti National Liberation Movement** artillery sin cañon improvised explosive device emplacement and how to direct-lay the 110–115° elevated system.<sup>16</sup>*



#### TECNICA PARA CAVAR LA FOSA

Se escoge un punto de referencia del enemigo y medimos la distancia al objetivo.  
Se coloca en los extremos de la fosa una estaca de madera y se hacen coincidir con el punto de referencia.



*Schematic of how to lay artilleria sin cañon with range and aim-points.*



*Field of artilleria sin cañon discovered outside the cuartel. These were made from sheet metal stove pipe.*



*A close-up of artilleria sin cañon or rampas showing wooden launchers with adjustable legs to set elevation. Earth was tamped against the backplate.*

Simply made, primitive, “first generation” IEDs were extremely lethal in the thirteen year-long El Salvador war and are proving just as lethal against ENC in Colombia. While ESAF casualties were reduced by more training and the use of dogs, the FMLN enjoyed huge success with IEDs until a peace was negotiated. The high number of ESAF amputee veterans due to IEDs compelled the post-war government to provide disability pensions and transitional job training. The Colombian military routinely use explosive detection dogs, but often both the handler and dog become mine and IED casualties.<sup>18</sup>

IED is the current popular acronym for field-expedient explosives being used by insurgents and terrorists against the American military forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Philippines. The primary difference between those encountered in El Salvador and Afghanistan and Iraq today is the use of conventional munitions instead of homemade varieties. As conventional munitions supplies are reduced, the Afghan and Iraqi guerrillas will resort to first-generation IEDs that can be just as effective (as demonstrated today in Colombia). When used against the civilian populace in Spain, Northern Ireland, Israel, Iraq, the Philippines, England, and the United States (on 11 September 2001), they are called bombs. However, to a soldier, *bloques*, *bangalores*, and *rampas* are simply IEDs in another language in another war. ♣

*Pie rompiente* or “Footbreaker” is a rudimentary anti-personnel mine commonly used by the FARC. Sections of PVC tube used in household plumbing are filled with explosives and shrapnel. It is detonated by a syringe whose rubber seal has been removed and replaced with a metal contact point. When a soldier/civilian steps on the mine the syringe is depressed, contact is made, and the device is activated. It is very cheap to make, less than \$7 apiece. “Footbreakers” are being mass-produced by FARC blocs (divisions) and in some areas there are factories at the “front” (company) level. They are not only cheap to make but take only seconds to bury and arm, meaning that FARC militiamen, often teenagers, can run ahead of army patrols and quickly place a mine in their path.<sup>19</sup>

This article would not have been possible without the assistance of MAJ (now MG) James Parker, CPT (now LTC) Byron Castleman, and SFC (CSM retired) Henry Ramirez, all veterans of El Salvador. Interviews, photographs, and memorabilia give life to documentary evidence (official reports, plans, and manuals). A manuscript, "ARSOF in El Salvador, 1980–1993," is being revised for publication.

## Endnotes

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- 15 Lieutenant Colonel David W. Kinder, Senior OPATT, El Salvador, "Historical Sequence of Events, Nov 86–Dec 89," 4 December 1989. According to Kinder, FMLN *rampa* attacks began in November 1988 and ended in February 1989. Major James C. Parker, 4th Brigade OPATT, 4th Military Zone OPATT ETSS Activities Report No. 9, 1 April 1989. "During my first six months here I never saw a *rampa* or heard of their use in this area. Since Jan 89 they were used in four different actions and we have observed two different types of construction." Parker's 3 June 1989 Activities Report stated: "...the enemy used RPG-7s, catapults (*rampas*), and TNT blocks (*bloque*s)."
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- 17 Parker interview.
- 18 "Hazaña de tres héroes: Con los pies firmes, sobre las montañas de Colombia," *Ejército* (Octubre–Noviembre 2004), 22–5.
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*Homemade 12.7mm canon rifle fabricated from Soviet Mi-24 HIND-D attack helicopter chain machine gun breach block. It was abandoned by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Movement after the September 1988 attack on El Paraiso.*



## Command Sergeant Major (Retired) Henry Ramírez

Command Sergeant Major (Retired) Henry Ramírez is a Department of the Army civilian engineer and demolitions instructor at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJKFSWCS). Before retirement in May 2001, Ramírez served as the Command Sergeant Major of the USAJKFSWCS Non-commissioned Officer Academy and the 10th Special Forces Group. After three years in Panama with C Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group, Sergeant First Class Ramírez served a year as the Operational Planning and Assistance Training Team noncommissioned officer for DM-1 in Chalatenango, El Salvador, before being assigned as Team Sergeant of Operational Detachment-A 714. The former 12B combat engineer volunteered for Special Forces after a Drill Sergeant tour.



# Night Stalkers in the Philippines:

## Tragedy and Triumph in Balikatan 02-1

by Kenneth Finlayson



**T**HE post-9/11 Global War on Terrorism brought U.S. Special Operations Forces into action around the world. Among the far-flung islands of the Philippines, Army Special Operations Forces units from the 1st Special Forces Group (SFG) focused on the Islamic insurgencies in the southern islands of the archipelago, supported by the Night Stalkers of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR). Recently established on the Korean peninsula, E Company, 160th SOAR was the Army Special Operations Forces aviation element for the Pacific Command, and consequently drew the Philippines mission. The mission proved to be both tragic and triumphant for the unit.

The three MH-47E Chinook helicopters assigned the Philippines mission self-deployed from Taegu, Korea, on 22 January 2002, with aerial refuel support from the Air Force's 351st Special Operations Wing. The eleven-hour flight

was E Company's first transoceanic self-deployment, as well as the unit's first real-world deployment outside Korea. When one of the MH-47Es hit the refuel basket too hard and locked the probe plunger, preventing refuel, the flight diverted to Kadena Air Base in Japan for fuel.

Despite the unscheduled diversion, the unit managed to stay on schedule. The second refuel, about two hundred miles from Manila, Philippines, proceeded uneventfully. Two C-17 Globemaster IIIs, carrying the unit's equipment and support personnel, preceded the helicopters into Clark Air Base near Manila.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after their arrival, the MH-47E aircrews performed a Combat Search and Air Rescue mission with 1st SFG personnel. They then supported B Company, 1st Battalion, 1st SFG, at Fort Mag-saysay, where the company was training with the Philippine Army's Light Reaction Company as part of Joint Combined Exercise Bal-







*A primary mission of E Company, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, was the transport and resupply of the Special Forces soldiers during Exercise Balikatan 02-1.*

all the ODAs had time to get out to their respective Philippine Army units from Isabela, disaster struck the Night Stalkers.<sup>3</sup>

On the night of 21 February 2002, E Company's mission required them to insert the last group of ODAs onto Basilan as well as deliver supplies to the Special Forces elements already in place. The

anced Piston 01. Following this training, the MH-47Es relocated roughly four hundred miles south to Mactan Air Base, on the island of Cebu. During this period, air missions gradually shifted from daylight to sunset departures in preparation for the night flights necessary to support Exercise Balikatan (meaning shoulder-to-shoulder in Tagalog), which was a major component of the Cobra Gold exercise series. They staged out of Edwin Andrews Air Base (EAAB) at Zamboanga, on the southern island of Mindanao. The 350-mile round-trip flight from Mactan Air Base to EAAB took over six hours and required aerial refueling en route. The focus of E company's mission was to give aviation support to the Special Forces (SF) elements on Basilan Island, south of Mindanao.<sup>2</sup>

With the advanced elements already in place, the remainder of the 1st SFG Advanced Operating Base and Operational Detachment-A (ODA) personnel began deploying to Basilan on 17 February 2002. Having flown from Okinawa, Japan, on blacked-out MC-130s and arriving in Zamboanga at night, many of the ODAs were expecting to conduct an unconventional warfare mission with the normal accompanying security measures. Thus, it was quite a surprise to the soldiers when the first sortie of MH-47Es landed on the floodlit Camp Tabiawan landing zone northeast of the Basilan capital of Isabela, and a contingent of the local press was on hand waiting to take pictures. Media scrutiny of the event was intense and the teams made every effort to escape the spotlight. But before

two MH-47Es, code named Wild 41 and Wild 42, formed the two-ship mission from Mactan to Zamboanga, and flew their programmed route to the objectives at 150 feet above the water. Two MC-130P Combat Shadow refueling aircraft from the 351st Special Operations Wing accompanied the Chinooks and orbited in separate aerial refuel tracks—one on the east side and the other on the west side of Basilan Island—in the event the helicopters needed additional fuel after completing their insertions and supply runs. At the last minute, the late addition of a VIP contingent to accompany the insertion changed the load configurations of the two helicopters.<sup>4</sup>

Brigadier General Donald Wurster, the commander of Special Operations Command, Pacific Command, and a photo news team boarded Wild 41 at Camp Navarro, Zamboanga, for the initial leg into Basilan. The general and the news team got off at Isabela, along with the 160th SOAR Maintenance Contact Team. Wild 41 and Wild 42 then flew three sorties into the interior. The three Basilan sorties included carrying the last of the ODAs to Isabela and delivering supplies to remote interior sites, which

*During the initial phases of the operation, the crews flew missions in daylight. With their presence established, they reverted to their normal operational mode—flying in darkness with night vision goggles.*



required sling-loading of the materials. Sling-loading is not a routine mission for the Night Stalkers and the use of night vision goggles compounded the difficulty. The aircrews were all aware of an incident on a previous sling-load mission when one of the crewmen positioned on top of the load to hook the sling ring to the MH-47E lift pintel was blown off the load by the heavy downwash of the rotors, dislocating his shoulder. The sling-load operations to Basilan, while successful, added considerably to the already high stress levels inherent in the night flight operations.<sup>5</sup>

When the insertions were complete, General Wurster, the press team, and the Maintenance Contact Team were picked up and returned to Zamboanga. With the General back on board Wild 41, Major Curtis Feistner, the E Company commander and air mission commander, shifted to Wild 42. That move precipitated another; after the General departed in Zamboanga, the Maintenance Contact Team with its John Deere Gator was shifted to Wild 41 for the return flight to Mactan.<sup>6</sup>

The flight of the two MH-47Es, Wild 41 leading with Wild 42 in trail, left EAAB about 0100 hours and once offshore, climbed to meet the MC-130P Combat Shadow to aerial refuel. Because of turbulence, the refuel took a

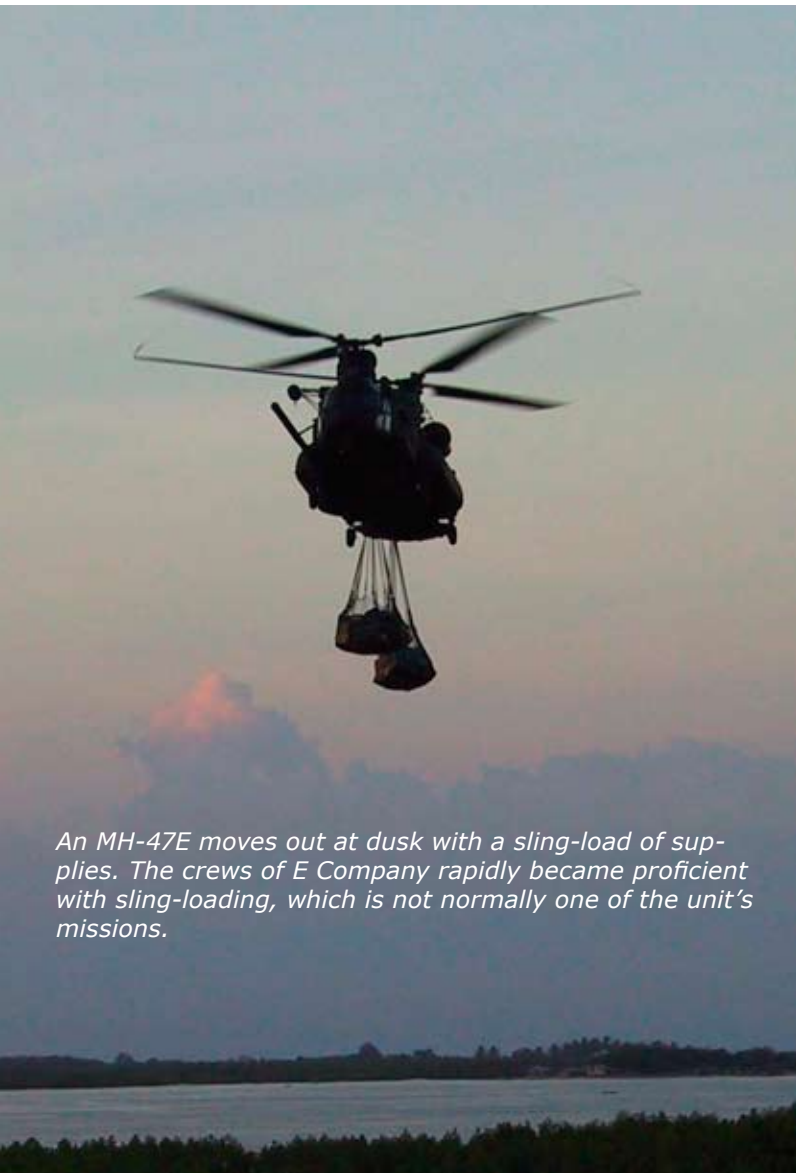
little longer than normal as Wild 42 had problems “hitting the hose.” With the refuel accomplished about 0155 hours, the two Combat Shadows turned south, climbing to get around approaching inclement weather, while the two Chinooks descended into the light rain, leveled off at 150 feet, and headed directly for Mactan Air Base.<sup>7</sup>

Staff Sergeant Ron Mason\*, an avionics mechanic on the Maintenance Contact Team, was sitting by the left bow window on Wild 41, watching out the window through his night vision goggles. He noticed Wild 42, the trail aircraft, approach close and then seem to start a “crossover maneuver,” climbing up and over as is performed during an aerial refuel. Wild 42 flew out of his line-of-sight, only to reappear fifty meters away, and then bank sharply left with the aircraft nose down. Mason did not have his headset hooked up, and he initially wondered why the door gunners began awakening the two U.S. Air Force Para-Rescue Jumpers (PJs) and telling them to get suited up. When Wild 41 slowed, turned around, and flew into a cloud of smoke, Mason saw several hundred small fires on the water below.<sup>8</sup>

Having watched the erratic maneuvers of Wild 42, hearing the warnings from the troops on the ramp, and seeing the fireball of the impact, flight engineer Sergeant John Peters\*, on Wild 41’s right-side minigun, told the two PJs to get suited up, and began to get the hoist and jungle penetrator ready. Flight lead Chief Warrant Officer 3 Dale Fargo\* witnessed the catastrophic crash from the left pilot seat. Fargo called in the emergency on the radio and immediately started Combat Search and Rescue. Hearing the emergency call for assistance from Wild 41, the two refuel Shadows (Juice 71 and Juice 72) went into two distinct orbits over the crash site—one at a thousand feet and the other at nine thousand feet—to act as a communications relay.<sup>9</sup>

Chief Fargo hovered about eighty feet above the water, searching the area for emergency strobe lights, then sweeping the crash site with his white light before the first PJ was lowered to the surface on the jungle penetrator. The airman stayed down less than fifteen minutes, getting dunked several times in burning JP-8 fuel, before being hauled back aboard. The second PJ, Senior Airman Andrew Brown\*, quickly replaced him. In the midst of the small fires, Brown noticed that almost every chemlite aboard Wild 42 activated on impact. He spotted a life preserver just below the surface of the water and recovered the body of the first Wild 42 crewmember; Brown ultimately recovered three bodies at the crash site. No other bodies from the ten-man crew were found, though Fargo and the crew scoured the crash site until forced to break off the search to climb and refuel. “This time the aerial refuel was really hairy because the weather was pretty bad. Visibility dropped to zero/zero when we were on the probe,” recalled Mason. “At times you couldn’t see the lights on the tanker.”<sup>10</sup>

After refueling, Wild 41 verified the crash site coordinates via GPS because the six-knot current moved the fire and debris away from the impact site. Wild 41 continued



*An MH-47E moves out at dusk with a sling-load of supplies. The crews of E Company rapidly became proficient with sling-loading, which is not normally one of the unit’s missions.*

*\*Pseudonyms have been used for all military personnel with a rank lower than lieutenant colonel.*

the search, even doing a third aerial refuel at five hundred feet in order to maintain observation of the crash scene. Shortly after daybreak, with a U.S. Navy P-3 Orion and an Air Force C-130P on station, Wild 41 left the crash site and headed for Mactan Air Base. By then, the Wild 41 aircrew had been flying over thirteen hours straight.

With the coming of daylight, Philippine naval personnel in Zodiac inflatables and Philippine surface vessels moved into the crash area. Later in the day, an inflatable lifeboat from Wild 42 was recovered by a passing tanker. Over the next several days, around-the-clock searches by air and surface vessels failed to locate any of the seven missing personnel from Wild 42.<sup>11</sup>

The reality that E Company lost eight of its original members, including the company commander and executive officer, as well as two Air Force personnel, hit the unit when the lone MH-47E landed at Mactan Air Base the next morning. The Maintenance Operations Center noncommissioned officer set up the traditional Night Stalker honors formation, with all personnel in two rows standing at attention, when the helicopter landed. Everyone was very concerned about Operations Security since CNN announced the crash less than two hours after it happened. The source of the news leak that alerted the 160th families in Korea of the disaster was never established, although it most likely originated with the local media. At any rate, the local news was waiting expectantly just outside Mactan Air Base when Wild 41 landed.<sup>12</sup>

Once the aircraft shut down, Captain Gordon Malcolm\* and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Ron Redmond\* debriefed the Wild 41 aircrew before a Joint Task Force Crisis Action Team spent some time with them and the rest of E Company.

As Joint Task Force-510 started planning a memorial to honor the lost airmen, the HH-60G Pave Hawks from the Air Force's 33rd Rescue Squadron at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan—originally planned for use during Phase II operations—were alerted for movement to the Philippines to back up the Chinooks on the Quick Reaction Force and casualty evacuation missions. This decision gave the Joint Task Force team better helicopter coverage, with Chinooks working at night and the Pave Hawks covering the daylight requirements, instead of the MH-47Es trying to do both.<sup>13</sup>

## In Memoriam Wild 42

ON 22 February, 2002, having completed the night insertion of SOF personnel and the resupply of units on Basilan Island, PI, two MH-47E aircraft from E Company, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), departed the area of operations for their base on Mactan Island. After completing an aerial refueling operation, "Wild 42" crashed into the ocean off the coast of Basilan. In the hours following the crash, search and rescue efforts by the accompanying aircraft, "Wild 41" recovered three bodies from the crash site. The remaining seven personnel of Wild 42 were not recovered.

At a memorial service held in the Philippines, the names of the crew of Wild 42 were inscribed on the memorial plaque. Their names are also placed on the Memorial Wall at USASOC headquarters, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. A second memorial service for the crew of Wild 42 was held at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, home of the 160th SOAR.





*A salvage operation recovers one of the rotors from the crash of Wild 42.*

General Wurster officiated at the formal memorial for Wild 42 in the 160th hangar at Mactan Air Base on 25 February 2002. Before that memorial, E Company conducted a private service where friends answered for their comrades during a final “roll call” before taps was played. More personal goodbyes were done over the crash site. On 26 February, while en route to Zamboanga to support the Special Forces teams on Basilan, the 160th SOAR airmen said their last farewells at the Wild 42 crash site. The MH-47E flight lead hovered while individual wreaths were dropped on the water and friends said final words, dropping small gifts favored by each person—a tin of Copenhagen, cigarettes, a small bottle of liquor, soft drink bottle caps, cans of beer, and bread. To conclude the ceremony, a C-130P Shadow dropped low—“down on the deck”—and slid a wreath off the tailgate into the water as a final salute to its fallen comrades. With the Special Forces teams now on the ground advising and assisting the Philippine infantry battalions, Phase I of Exercise Balikatan was officially underway. The Night Stalkers continued to drive on—there were other missions to complete.<sup>14</sup>

Under the tutelage and encouragement of their Special Forces counterparts, the Philippine commanders became more amenable to conducting serious operations and the requirements for support from the 160th grew. As the

Armed Forces Philippines began preparations for launching Operation DAY BREAK, a large counter-terrorism operation, the 160th SOAR experienced an aircraft breakdown while doing a night resupply on Basilan. Recovery of this aircraft severely tested the ingenuity and skill of the 160th personnel.

Having relocated their element from Mactan Air Base, Cebu, to Edwin Andrews Air Base at Zamboanga, Mindanao, in March 2002, the Night Stalkers were determined to avoid having an aircraft remain overnight on Basilan Island. This strategy changed in May 2002, when an MH-47E suffered a serious mechanical failure during a night resupply mission into the interior. As the new Wild 42 (recently arrived from Korea) approached the landing zone, the pilots noticed the aft rotor head of Wild 41 glowing bright white. The pilots aboard Wild 41 experienced heavy rotor vibrations even as the Wild 42 crew warned them that their aft rotor head glowed even brighter as the aircraft flared for landing. Fortunately, the aircraft landed and shutdown in time to avert a catastrophic rotor head meltdown. As it was, the aft rotor head seized up. Monitoring the situation on the radio, the Maintenance Contact Team at Isabela quickly alerted the unit’s maintenance operations center at EAAB to get a recovery operation organized.

At both Clark Air Base and Mactan Air Base, the maintenance personnel had planned and rehearsed a real-world recovery of a downed MH-47E. When the message came in about the downed aircraft, the maintenance platoon sergeant, Sergeant First Class Fred Randolph\*, formed a Downed Aircraft Recovery Team (DART). Within an hour the team began loading individual ammunition, water, rations, portable light sets, generator, fuel, and the spare aft rotor head. It took all six members of the DART (including the medic), to manhandle the rotor head aboard another Chinook. Test pilot Chief Warrant Officer 3 Arnold Gardiner\* was with the team to return the repaired aircraft to EAAB. While the DART maintenance crew was en route, the Special Forces ODA on the site of the disabled aircraft organized Philippine Special Forces soldiers to pull security around the perimeter of the landing zone.

The initial technical inspection was performed in the dark as soon as the DART arrived. At daybreak, according to Sergeant Randolph, the DART members, “were on that Chinook like ants on a Twinkie,” making preparations to pull the rotor head.<sup>15</sup> Because E Company’s only rotor head sling was back in Korea, Sergeant Randolph devised a replacement with three heavy cargo straps. He learned to use cargo straps as a field expedient head sling several years previously during a field exercise in Germany. The Night Stalker “maintainers” proceeded to “jig” the seized rotor head out with the cargo straps and to install the new one. The high humidity and heat took its toll on the team; by the time repairs were completed at 2100 hours, the medic had administered all his IV bags of rehydration solution to the dehydrated soldiers. After a full day’s effort, the new rotor head was in place.<sup>16</sup>



*Aerial view of the jungle landing zone with Wild 41 undergoing maintenance by the Downed Aircraft Recovery Team.*

Less than twenty-four hours after the Chinook's rotor had seized, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Gardiner started up the repaired Chinook and flew it back to Zamboanga. To perform a major component replacement of this magnitude in field conditions in a potentially hostile environment speaks highly of the dedication and expertise of the DART. In the morning, the team conducted another technical inspection to double-check the work and found no flaws in the field maintenance. After that exciting night in the jungle, E Company, once again at full strength, continued to support the Special Forces ODAs until the primary casualty evacuation mission for Operation DAY BREAK passed to the MH-60L Black Hawks of 3rd Battalion, 160th SOAR, which replaced the 33rd Rescue Squadron HH-60Gs Pave Hawks in May 2002.

In its first mission off the Korean peninsula, E Company, 160th SOAR acquitted itself with distinction during operations in the Philippines. A long self-deployment and a mission that tested every aspect of the unit organization, from the pilots and crews to the maintenance teams, validated its value in the theater. The tragic loss of Wild 42 cast a pall over the mission, but the remainder of the unit continued to function at a high level, in keeping with the organization motto, "Night Stalkers Don't Quit." ♣

## Endnotes



*160th SOAR  
Distinctive Unit  
Insignia.*

- 1 Staff Sergeant Donald Mason (pseudonym) interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 25 July 2003, Fort Campbell, KY, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 2 Major Gordon Malcolm (pseudonym) and Sergeant First Class Fred Randolph (pseudonym) interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 12 September 2003, Fort Campbell, KY, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Francis L. Marion, "Opening the Second Front: Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines, January-August 2002," USSOCOM classified draft history of Joint Task Force-510, USSOCOM History Office Classified Files, MacDill Air Force Base, FL.
- 3 Sergeant John Peters (pseudonym) interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 12 September 2003, Fort Campbell, KY, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Mason interview.
- 6 Peters interview.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Mason interview.
- 9 Staff Sergeant Donald Mason (pseudonym) and Staff Sergeant John Simons (pseudonym) interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 25 July 2003, Fort Campbell, KY, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Staff Sergeant Clark Keltner (pseudonym) interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 26 July 2003, Fort Campbell, KY, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 10 Mason interview.
- 11 Marion, "Opening the Second Front."
- 12 Mason and Simons interview; Keltner interview; Marion, "Opening the Second Front."
- 13 Mason and Simons interview; Keltner interview; Peters interview; Marion, "Opening the Second Front."
- 14 Keltner interview.
- 15 First Sergeant Fred Randolph (pseudonym) interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 13 September 2003, Fort Campbell, KY, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 16 Randolph interview.



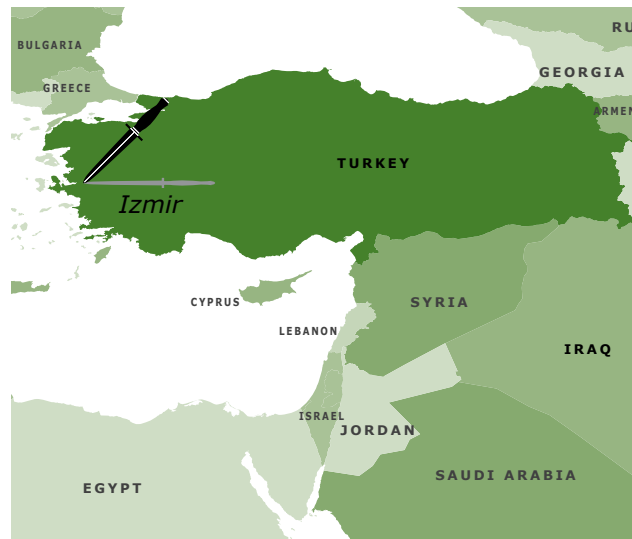
*E Company, 160th  
SOAR, logo.*

*The Downed Aircraft Recovery Team who replaced the rotor head assembly in the jungle on Basilan Island.*



# Out of Turkey:

## The 528th Special Operations Support Battalion



by Cherilyn A. Walley with A. Dwayne Aaron

**PART** of the original plan for the invasion of Iraq was for the 10th SFG to stage from Diyarbakir, and drive across the border into northern Iraq ahead of the 4th Infantry Division. Among various other forward elements located in Turkey preparing to execute the plan was a small team from U.S. Army Special Operations Command and Special Operations Support Command. SOSCOM's Lieutenant Colonel Mark Edwards served as the logistics officer for CJSOTF-North, and supervised the support actions in Turkey as part of his duties. However, it was the USASOC contracting officer, Captain Tad Woodcock\*, who turned out to be the key man in what became the CJSOTF's saga of nonstandard vehicles.

Even before CJSOTF-North troops deployed to Europe, USASOC support planners had authorized the 10th SFG a fleet of 236 nonstandard vehicles—commercial trucks modified for military use. Beginning in October 2002, Woodcock and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jose Molinaro\* from SOSCOM's 528th Special Operations Support Battalion worked through SOCEUR's logistics officer to draw up the specifications of the fleet. Woodcock was given a preliminary budget of over \$5 million to purchase, modify, and transport the vehicles to the 10th SFG at Diyarbakir.<sup>1</sup>

After evaluating various commercial vehicles, Woodcock and Molinaro concluded that Land Rover Defenders best suited the 10th SFG's needs in northern Iraq. Land Rovers were legendary off-road vehicles common to the area, were already used by special operations forces around the world, and had a solid reputation for reliability. Land Rover also had an assembly plant in Turkey, and Woodcock reasoned that the vehicles would not only be cheaper in Turkey, but also by purchasing them locally, they would avoid having to arrange and pay for shipping.<sup>2</sup>

When Woodcock negotiated with Land Rover Turkey management, the best price Woodcock could get was \$36,000 for each vehicle—before modifications. Woodcock had allotted \$30,000 per vehicle in order to stay within

budget and still have the funds to make the required combat modifications. Wisely declining Land Rover Turkey's offer, Woodcock went in person to the Land Rover factory in Solihull, England, to see if he could negotiate a better deal. Telling the Land Rover salespeople that he was there to purchase replacement vehicles for an operation, Woodcock detailed that the vehicles were to be shipped to a warehouse in Izmir, Turkey, where they would be stored until needed. The prospect of a large order satisfied management, and Woodcock negotiated a factory-direct price of less than \$25,000 per Land Rover Defender—including almost all modifications and delivery costs.<sup>3</sup>

The purchase deal with Land Rover left Woodcock with enough funds to purchase thirty Toyota Tacoma pickup trucks in Germany and another twenty-five vehicles in Turkey to use around the projected CJSOTF-North headquarters at Diyarbakir. By mid-March, Woodcock had over two hundred vehicles stored in the warehouse he had leased in Izmir. This warehouse became Wood-

*Toyota Tacoma pickup trucks were popular nonstandard vehicle choices among special operations forces. The trucks were readily available and provided a solid platform for military modifications.*



\*Pseudonyms have been used for all military personnel with a rank lower than lieutenant colonel.



*Captain Tad Woodcock\* and a small team of mechanics made final modifications to the brand-new Land Rover Defenders in the warehouse in Izmir, Turkey.*

cock's duty station for several weeks, as he and a team of mechanics outfitted the trucks with satellite tracking devices and radio platforms, added bumper numbers to each, and permanently attached extra keys to the dashboards.<sup>4</sup>

As war neared, it became clear that the Turkish government would not allow U.S. forces to use Turkey as a staging area for an attack on Iraq. The Turkish authorities placed Woodcock's warehouse under armed guard and scrutinized everything and everybody going in or coming out. According to Edwards, "The Turkish government had twenty-four hour guards on us. Anything we did with regards to getting mechanics in and out of there was under close scrutiny. In general, anything you wanted to bring into country or wanted to take out of country, you had to account for down to serial number detail. They didn't want to know how many containers you had; they wanted to know what was in each container."<sup>5</sup>

Around the first of March, Woodcock was ordered to make arrangements to get the vehicles out of Turkey as

*Much like the soldiers they were intended for, Woodcock's nonstandard vehicles navigated detours and overcame obstacles to reach their objective.*



soon as possible. The customs impound restriction was rescinded, but the Turks would not allow the logistics team to drive the vehicles across the border into Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq. Woodcock then set about arranging to ship the vehicles by barge from the port of Marmaris, some three hundred kilometers southeast of Izmir, to a Greek island where they could be transferred to a Greek ferry, taken to the Greek side of the island of Cyprus, and from there flown into Iraq on U.S. aircraft. The plan was solid, as far as transportation logistics went. Unfortunately, this particular plan did not take into account the politics of the situation.<sup>6</sup>

As soon as arrangements were finalized, Woodcock led the first convoy of twenty-five vehicles on the long drive to Marmaris. No longer under customs restriction, the convoy made the trip during daylight hours with no attempts to disguise the vehicles. Turkey was abuzz with news and controversy over the expected U.S. attack on Iraq and what part Turkey might play in it. Woodcock and his convoy of white Land Rovers sporting gun mounts and military markings was a media magnet and news crews filmed the convoy the entire way. When the convoy finally arrived in Marmaris, it was greeted by police officers and threats of arrest. While Woodcock successfully reminded the police that the Status of Forces Agreement prohibited them from arresting him or any of the American soldiers under his command, he could not protect his Kurdish drivers. Later Woodcock found out that in fact there was no Status of Forces Agreement between the United States and Turkey<sup>7</sup>

Woodcock watched in dismay and frustration as the police rounded up his drivers: "I knew if I just let them take the drivers, they would beat them up, run them off, and I'd be stuck with all these vehicles." Woodcock finally told the police that if they took his drivers into custody, they would also have to take him since they were in his employ. Woodcock "accompanied" his drivers to the police station, where the drivers were held and interrogated for twelve hours before everyone was finally released and allowed to return to the hotel. While the team was technically free, the police put armed guards on the vehicles and refused to let Woodcock or the others near them. The police also followed Woodcock and his party whenever they left the hotel. By this time, Woodcock suspected that in addition to the issue of the military vehicles, the Turks seemed insulted that he had hired all Kurdish drivers.<sup>8</sup>

The senior Turkish military representative in Marmaris was a high-ranking naval officer who soon made a point of involving himself in the conflict. He made no pretense at hiding his negative feelings regarding the convoy, and informed Woodcock in no uncertain terms that if he could, he would arrest them all—Americans included—and confiscate the vehicles. He actually did attempt to bully Woodcock into moving the vehicles onto his naval installation, but Woodcock declined, knowing that if he gave in, he would never see the vehicles again. Woodcock's resistance was rewarded when the U.S.



Embassy made it clear to the Turkish authorities that the vehicles were considered to be U.S. military equipment, and demanded that the Turks release the trucks and all the U.S. personnel and contracted drivers immediately. The Turks complied with the embassy's request, but they scuttled Woodcock's plan to ferry the vehicles out of the country by intimidating the contracted ferry owner into renegeing on the plan. Foiled at the coast, Woodcock had no choice but to return the vehicles to the warehouse in Izmir.<sup>9</sup>

About this time, Colonel Cleveland sent Lieutenant Colonel Keith Anderson to negotiate with the Turkish government for the release of the vehicles. After some very hard and intense negotiations, Anderson obtained the necessary release, though with conditions. Due to the politically sensitive nature of Turkey's involvement with the American military, the Turks insisted that the vehicles be transported on enclosed trucks and that all travel be conducted at night. Major protests were already occurring all along the route to the Iraqi border, exacerbated by the fact that the hundreds of supply trucks from the 24th Theater Support Group out of U.S. Army Europe had effectively blocked traffic on the main highway between Izmir and Diyarbakir.<sup>10</sup>

Woodcock contracted with a Turkish transport company for thirty-five cargo trucks. Edwards explained, "When we finally did get permission to leave, the way we did it was by three convoys: 210 vehicles broken into three convoys, two vehicles per truck. They were really small trucks with tarps over [them], so you couldn't tell what was in the back." Feeling a distinct sense of personal responsibility for the success of the mission, Woodcock

took it upon himself to accompany each convoy to the delivery point in Irbil, Iraq. While he led the first convoy from Izmir to its final destination, thereafter the lead driver was given the bill of lading and other documents for getting through the border checkpoint. Woodcock then met each new convoy a few miles inside Turkey and accompanied it across the border into Iraq and the rest of the way to Irbil.<sup>11</sup>

The first convoy departed the warehouse in Izmir on the night of 25 March 2003. Woodcock rode in the cab of the lead truck. As the convoy headed for Habur Gate, the only border crossing point between Turkey and Iraq, Woodcock found that the biggest challenge was not the long, dusty journey or the horde of civilian traffic, but the Turkish government: "Every time we came up on a Turkish police vehicle, they stopped us and checked all our documentation."<sup>12</sup>

While security was a constant concern for this convoy representing a country newly at war, once the trucks crossed into Iraq, paradoxically Woodcock and the drivers felt a sense of relief. Most of the route through Iraq was actually in Kurdish territory, which made the Kurdish drivers feel much more at home than they had felt in western Turkey. Even so, the only hostile activity against any of the convoys occurred in Mosul. An Iraqi taxi raced around one of the trucks and halted suddenly, causing the vehicle to make an emergency stop. While they were stopped, a crowd of Iraqis gathered and began to throw rocks at the trucks, breaking a windshield. While the incident was stressful, it was not lethal, and they were soon able to maneuver around the taxi and continue on to Irbil.<sup>13</sup>





*The 528th Special Operations Support Battalion contracted Kurdish truck drivers to transport 10th Special Forces Group's nonstandard vehicles through Turkey and into Iraq. The ethnic Kurds were resented by the Turks, but welcomed in northern Iraq.*

In Woodcock's mind, the more realistic threat was that one or more of the contracted drivers might simply disappear with his truck and sell the nonstandard vehicles on the black market. Since he always rode in the lead vehicle with no way of communicating with the other trucks, Woodcock could not keep track of every truck every minute of the journey. At each rest break, he routinely checked each vehicle before they resumed traveling, both for safety and for inventory purposes. During one such rest break, Woodcock counted trucks and came up one short. His first thought was that the driver had absconded with the valuable cargo and Woodcock was out two nonstandard vehicles. By this time, the drivers knew the route to Irbil, so Woodcock told the lead driver to take the convoy on to Irbil while he took the last truck in line back toward Turkey to look for the missing truck. Woodcock backtracked all the way back to the border with no luck. Convinced that the truck and driver had vanished, Woodcock turned his truck around in resignation and headed toward Irbil. Along the way, however, he met up with his now-empty trucks returning to Turkey. Upon talking to the lead driver, Woodcock learned that the missing truck suffered a flat tire and left the convoy to get it repaired at a truck stop. Once the tire was fixed, the missing driver caught up with the rest of the convoy and delivered his cargo in Irbil. Woodcock and his driver simply missed seeing him in the mass of vehicles at the truck stop. Woodcock reported that he was pleasantly surprised and impressed with the honesty and work ethic of his drivers.<sup>14</sup>

The successful delivery of all the nonstandard vehicles had perhaps as much to do with Woodcock's efforts to encourage loyalty among his drivers as their inherent honesty. He went out of his way to treat the contractors more like coworkers than hired hands, making gestures that cost him little but meant quite a bit to the drivers. Woodcock paid for the drivers' meals at the roadside rest stops, and when they arrived in Irbil, they were fed at the American mess. Woodcock also allowed the drivers

to take advantage of the drastically lower fuel prices in Iraq to increase their profit margins. Fuel in Turkey was between two and three dollars per gallon, but only fifty cents per gallon in Iraq; the drivers put just enough fuel in their trucks to get them out of Turkey and to the first truck stop in Iraq, where they then refueled for much less. Although the chosen fuel point only had one hose and, therefore, refueling stops took an extraordinarily long time, the strategy kept the drivers happy and Woodcock's nonstandard vehicles safe.<sup>15</sup>

The last thirty-six nonstandard vehicles arrived in Irbil on 7 April. After nearly two weeks of nonstop convoy travel, all 236 vehicles finally found their way to the 10th SFG. As the Special Forces teams exchanged their locally procured vehicles for their custom-built Land Rovers or Toyota trucks, a tired and road-weary Captain Woodcock looked on with pride. After six long months of effort, his mission was finally completed.<sup>16</sup> ▲

## Endnotes

- 1 Major Tad Woodcock\*, telephone interview by A. Dwayne Aaron, 8 July 2004, interview notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 2 Woodcock interview.
- 3 Woodcock interview.
- 4 Woodcock interview.
- 5 Mark Edwards, interview by A. Dwayne Aaron, 14 July 2004, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 6 Woodcock interview; Edwards interview, 14 July 2004.
- 7 Woodcock interview.
- 8 Woodcock interview.
- 9 Woodcock interview.
- 10 Edwards interview, 14 July 2004.
- 11 Edwards interview, 14 July 2004; Woodcock interview.
- 12 Woodcock interview.
- 13 Woodcock interview.
- 14 Woodcock interview.
- 15 Woodcock interview.
- 16 Edwards interview, 14 July 2004.

*After a journey of some three thousand miles, more than two hundred custom Land Rovers arrived in Irbil, Iraq, for use by Special Forces teams attached to Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-North.*



# Infiltrating Wadi al Khirr Airfield



by Robert W. Jones Jr.



*Wadi al Khirr Airfield is located in the barren desert 240 kilometers southwest of Baghdad. The airfield was key to getting Special Forces teams on the ground ahead of the ground invasion north through the Karbala Gap.*



**I**N the battle area of the western desert of Iraq, the 5th SFG looked for ways to help shape the battlefield for conventional forces attacking toward Baghdad. Once the ground war began, Central Command's plan was to keep the Iraqis off balance by hitting them hard and fast with armored and mechanized ground forces. Ahead of the conventional forces juggernaut, the Special Forces operators planned to support the maneuver forces with ODAs conducting deep reconnaissance of strategically important areas and making contact with anti-Saddam resistance groups. The challenge for SOF planners was how to insert the ODAs rapidly and efficiently deep into Iraq using a limited number of aircraft in order to support Central Command's plan.<sup>1</sup>

The SOF planners knew that Air Force MC-130 aircraft were required for any deep infiltration mission. The immediate problem was locating a suitable desert landing strip that met both the Air Force landing criteria and the Army's mission requirements. MC-130 Combat Talons were capable of landing on unimproved runways, but they needed a stretch of reasonably flat, firm, and open ground at least 3,500 feet long and 60 feet wide. The Air Force also insisted that runway conditions be validated on the ground by trained and qualified Air Force controllers. The Army's mission required that the infiltration be accomplished well before the conventional forces began their attack, that the landing strip be near the Karbala-Najaf area, and that the infiltration site be away from known enemy concentrations.<sup>2</sup>

The mission to find such a place was given to Major Boyd Sinclair\* and ODB 570. He was told to develop a primary and an alternate plan to establish an advanced operating base at a desert landing strip deep within Iraq. The desert landing strip would be used to infiltrate ODAs and other SOF teams for missions in support of conventional forces. His detachment needed to be prepared to receive the first ODAs within twenty-four hours of verification, and continue to operate the landing strip for up

*\*Pseudonyms have been used for all military personnel with a rank lower than lieutenant colonel.*



*AOB 570 relied on Toyota Tacoma pickup trucks and small all-terrain vehicles for its infiltration mission in the western desert.*

to forty-eight hours. When the last teams were on the ground, Sinclair's base would exfiltrate on the last aircraft. The forces available for the operation included Sinclair's ODB 570 under its operational designation of AOB 570, ODA 574, and four Air Force combat controllers from the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron (STS). The detachment was on a tight time schedule—all mission preparations had to be completed in anticipation of launching as early as the night of 17 March.<sup>3</sup>

AOB 570 was fortunate to have a highly qualified and experienced Air Force combat control team from the 23rd STS assisting in the planning for the operation. Three members of the team were veterans of Afghanistan with first-hand experience operating desert landing strips. The savvy controllers cautioned that simple dirt landing strips tend to become badly rutted after only a few landings, and the mission profile for this operation called for multiple aircraft and multiple sorties.<sup>4</sup>

The experienced judgment of the Air Force controllers caused the team to look for existing hard surface landing strips that might be useable. Unfortunately, the intensive bombing campaigns of Operation DESERT STORM and the post-Gulf War enforcement measures in the Southern No-Fly Zone left most of the existing flight strips in Iraq severely cratered or otherwise damaged. However, after a careful analysis of existing imagery and some additional low-level, high-quality photos provided by British Tornado reconnaissance aircraft, the team felt that the abandoned Iraqi fighter base at Wadi al Khirr might meet the mission needs.<sup>5</sup>

Wadi al Khirr Airfield, located 240 kilometers southwest of Baghdad, was built in the 1980s by Yugoslav contractors and had a single 9,700-foot long runway. At one time, the air base had twelve hardened aircraft shelters, but bombings during DESERT STORM had reduced them to piles of rubble.<sup>6</sup>

The 23rd STS reasoned that between the main runway and a parallel taxiway, a suitable landing strip could be pieced together. For the Special Forces, Wadi al Khirr was reasonably close to the key Karbala-Najaf area, and the only known enemy facilities in the vicinity of the airfield



*ATVs loaded down with combat gear gave AOB 570 versatile mobility in the desert around Wadi al Khirr.*

were Iraqi border posts nine miles away.<sup>7</sup>

Once it had selected a primary site for the desert landing strip, the AOB had to plan and coordinate the myriad of details that make all the pieces of a joint operation fit together. Deep penetration SOF aircraft were limited—in the opening days of the war, competition for air assets was keen. Thus, getting the AOB to Wadi al Khirr was one of the first issues to be addressed. Both ODA 574 and the 23rd STS team were high altitude–low opening qualified, which made parachute entry an option offering a degree of economy in air assets. However, lessons learned from DESERT STORM made a convincing case that in a desert environment, dismounted Special Forces teams were at a distinct disadvantage if compromised. The planners decided to use Air Force MH-53J helicopters to infiltrate the twenty-six AOB 570 soldiers and airmen, as well as five nonstandard vehicles (NSVs) and four all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).<sup>8</sup>

The days before AOB 570's infiltration were long and filled with critical tasks as the soldiers prepared themselves and their equipment for action. The soldiers checked and packed equipment, configured load plans, planned air and ground routes, coordinated fire support, scheduled aircrew briefings, and finalized communications plans. Each soldier and airman was involved in the planning, and through a series of brief-backs, each man knew the plan well enough to meet any contingency. Finally, the soldiers and airmen conducted detailed rehearsals for key parts of the plan to validate the concept of operations. On 17 March, AOB 570 was standing by, ready to go.<sup>9</sup>

No mission is conducted in a vacuum, and this mission was no different. In large campaigns such as IRAQI FREEDOM, multiple operations planned for the same time periods often competed for the same assets. In such cases, the commander must decide which of the competing missions is the most critical to the overall success of the campaign. In IRAQI FREEDOM, the "lynch pin" for SOF deep infiltrations was the availability of aircraft. During the same time period that AOB 570 planned to fly into Wadi al Khirr, U.S. Navy SEALs planned to conduct



*Wadi al Khirr is strategically located within reach of major areas of Iraq—most notably Najaf and the Karbala Gap.*

an air assault onto the Al Faw peninsula to seize and protect the strategically important oil infrastructure there. Both the AOB 570 and the SEAL operations planned to use U.S. Air Force MH-53s; however, there were only enough aircraft to support one mission. The Al Faw mission got the resources and the Wadi al Khirr mission was put on hold.

Decisions in war often have a ripple effect. The delay in air assets caused FOB 52 (2nd Battalion, 5th SFG) to scramble for another means to infiltrate ODA 551, which had a time-sensitive, special reconnaissance mission in the Karbala area critical to the 3rd Infantry Division's scheme of maneuver. The 3rd Infantry Division had imagery and signal intercept data, but the division commander wanted eyes on the target to provide him with ground-truth intelligence. Consequently, ODA 551 flew to H-5 Airfield to link up with 3rd Battalion, 160th SOAR, for infiltration into Iraq on its MH-47Ds. As ODA 551 flew to H-5, AOB 570 waited for a ride into Iraq.<sup>10</sup>

After two nights of waiting at the forward operating base, AOB 570 finally received the order to execute on 19 March. The mission used five Air Force MH-53Js, with a sixth for Combat Search and Rescue support. The AOB loaded five NSVs and four ATVs into the Pave Lows, and then distributed the personnel among the aircraft, paying particular attention to make sure that the four air controllers were on different aircraft. The controllers were critical to operating the landing strip; without at least one of them on the ground, the whole mission would have to be aborted. As always, the AOB had a "bump plan" establishing priorities for every person and major item of equipment in case one or more aircraft became inoperable. In the event of the failure of one of the aircraft, the

most important people and equipment could quickly be shifted to the remaining aircraft and the mission could continue. After the AOB was loaded, one of the helicopters did indeed develop an electronics problem that could not be resolved. The load on that aircraft was transferred to the empty Combat Search and Rescue helicopter with minimal disruption and time delay. Captain Doug Hoffman\*, ODA 574 commander and the man tasked to provide security for the operation, recalled, "The scariest part of the whole operation for me was flying in those MH-53s." Drawing on his past experiences, he added, "They are so old that you usually need twenty to get five." But he gave credit where it was due by allowing that, "This time it only took six!" Even First Lieutenant Chris Hill\*, one of the 23rd STS air controllers, breathed easier as the flight of five helicopters headed west from Ali As-Salim Air Base, Kuwait. He said, "We had problems with three [MH-53s] on the rehearsal; only one had a problem on the mission."<sup>11</sup>

The flight route into Iraq had the SOF soldiers skirting the Iraqi border for hundreds of kilometers until they dashed north to Wadi al Khirr. The helicopters rendezvoused with Air Force tankers twice to refuel in-flight. The night of AOB 570's flight into Wadi al Khirr was the same night the Air Force began its "shock and awe" campaign. First Lieutenant Wayne West\*, commander of the 23rd STS team, was listening in on the chatter of the helicopter pilots through a headset in the cargo compartment: "It was a little disquieting to hear the pilots talking about the [Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles] flying by above and below the helicopters."<sup>12</sup>

Aside from transiting a somewhat crowded night sky, the flight into the objective area was uneventful. The plan called for the AOB to be flown into a helicopter landing zone approximately ten miles from the airfield. About twenty minutes out from the landing zone, the crew alerted the soldiers and airmen to get ready. As the helicopters hovered to land, the rotor wash kicked up so much dust that the pilots decided to land two at a time instead of all at once in order to avoid colliding with one another in the "brown out" conditions.<sup>13</sup>

Once the group assembled on the ground and the helicopters lifted off, the soldiers moved a short distance and conducted a security halt to make sure the landing had not been detected. Hearing or seeing nothing to cause alarm, they moved to an objective rally point near the landing strip. The moon had not yet risen, so the night was clear, dark, and cold. The special operations forces put the nonstandard vehicles and their bed-mounted M240 machine guns in the lead, followed by the four ATVs. Travel was slow and difficult across terrain littered with large, sharp rocks.<sup>14</sup>

Intelligence reports stated that the area was infrequently traveled, but the AOB crossed numerous fresh vehicle tracks and several scraped, well-maintained, and recently used roads. The threat of discovery was uppermost in everyone's minds. Master Sergeant James Robins\* from the 23rd STS was concerned that the loud whining

noise of the ATVs carried too far in the cold, desert night air. In addition, each ATV had an engine light pinpointing its position. Nevertheless, after two hours of deliberate and careful travel, the AOB reached its objective rally point, approximately five kilometers from Wadi al Khirr.<sup>15</sup>

After arriving, Sinclair sent an NSV-mounted security team from ODA 574 to lead the Air Force ATV-mounted survey team to the airfield. Sergeant Major Thad Berino\* of AOB 570 provided rear security with his NSV. By this time, the moon was up and the improved visibility made the movement to the airfield easier; the bright moonlight also revealed how open the terrain was and how vulnerable the soldiers were to enemy observation. Once the small convoy reached the airfield, the security team established an overwatch position at the west end to provide surveillance and covering fire with its M240 machine guns. Robins and Master Sergeant Bill Dayton\* traded their ATVs for Berino's quieter, more heavily armed NSV and took a quick look at the main runway and taxiway.<sup>16</sup>

The combat control team was working against a tight deadline for completing the survey. If Wadi al Khirr were unusable, the contingency plan called for a small security and survey element to be airlifted to the alternate site at Ghalaysan Airfield seventy kilometers to the southeast. The rest of the AOB would then move cross-country to Ghalaysan. The two MH-53s for the contingency were

orbiting in a holding pattern, but could only stay on station for three hours, so the decision needed to be made quickly. The movement to the objective rally point and then to the airfield had used up most of that time. Robins said that based on their pre-mission study, he and Dayton were, "about ninety percent sure we could use either the main runway or the taxiway." They made a quick sweep east along the main runway. They found that while most of the runway was intact, near hits had thrown huge slabs of concrete and massive amounts of dirt onto the surface. At the end of the runway, they cut over to the parallel taxiway and drove back to the west. They soon decided that while the secondary strip would have to be cleared of debris, it would be much less work than the primary runway and it was well suited for the MC-130s.<sup>17</sup>

Dayton and Robins passed the message to Sinclair that the airfield was usable. Sinclair released the orbiting MH-53s and led the rest of the AOB to Wadi al Khirr. Upon arrival, the remaining ODA 574 security teams quickly moved to their positions on the high ground surrounding the airfield. Meanwhile, Sinclair established the AOB command post near the center of the runway and made his initial reports to FOB 53. The primary mission for the remainder of the night was removing all the debris from the taxiway and that portion of the runway to be used as a turnaround to prevent any dangerous objects getting sucked into the engines or damaging tires.





*The camouflaged Wadi al Khirr command post provided direction and security to incoming aircraft.*

In the words of AOB 570 medic, Sergeant First Class Bruce Kroll\*, “What it amounted to was one very long, tedious, boring police call.”<sup>18</sup>

Although the AOB had procured four wide-blade shovels to hasten the job, much of the shrapnel and chunks of concrete had to be picked up by hand. Working in shifts, the men moved on line to clear a swath 4,500 feet long and 66 feet wide. Despite the biting cold desert night, the men were soon dripping with sweat as they shoveled and picked up hundreds of pounds of debris. As daylight approached, the entire AOB moved under cover for “stand-to”—armed and alert, the AOB stood ready for action from enemy attack. After stand-to, a lot of runway still needed clearing. Although the plan was to stay out of sight during the day, everyone agreed that the flight strip needed clearing even if it meant taking the risk of being seen. However, at Berino’s recommendation, the soldiers rested before resuming the backbreaking work.<sup>19</sup>

The rejuvenated soldiers finished picking up the debris by noon, but they still had to deal with several large mounds of dirt that bombs had dumped on the flight strip. It was impossible to shovel all the dirt off the flight strip, but the soldiers came up with an innovative way to knock off the humps and smooth the surface. Berino scavenged around the old base and found a large piece of metal siding, which he rigged to the winch on his NSV, creating a slide similar to those used to smooth a baseball diamond infield. Two of the larger SOF soldiers stood on the siding to weigh it down as Berino pulled the metal across the uneven piles of dirt. By 1400 hours, Dayton and Robins were satisfied with the team’s work and reported to the command post that the flight strip was ready to receive aircraft.<sup>20</sup>

For the rest of the daylight hours of 22 March, the AOB remained under cover to minimize chances of compromise. The troops hardly had time to hunker down when, at 1500 hours, the western security team reported two civilian vehicles coming toward the airfield from the southwest. The AOB had contingencies for chance contacts with civilians and decided that unless the civilians

displayed hostile intent or their presence jeopardized the mission, the teams would let them pass unmolested. Hoffman and his teams kept the vehicles under observation and determined that they were water trucks driven by Bedouin shepherds. The vehicles stopped and the drivers conversed briefly before driving off in the direction of one of the Iraqi border posts destroyed by air strikes the night before. It appeared to the security team that the Bedouins were intent on salvaging anything of value from the ruins. When the Bedouins left the destroyed outpost, they returned along the same route, but made a wide circle around the airfield. Throughout the afternoon, the team spotted dust clouds from vehicle traffic in the distance, but had no other close encounters.<sup>21</sup>

During the afternoon and into the evening, the air controllers provided the aircrews with the flight landing strip layout, updated weather conditions, and digital imagery via e-mail. After dark, Dayton and Robins ventured back out onto the flight strip to place the runway lights—marking the runway and key points on the flight strip with infrared strobe lights visible only to incoming pilots.<sup>22</sup>

Hill, as primary air controller for the night’s operation, was responsible for talking with the aircraft pilots, advising them of current conditions on the flight strip and clearing them for landing and takeoff. West positioned himself with Sinclair, where he kept him advised on the status of the aircraft operations. On their ATVs, Dayton and Robins operated as a kind of tag team once the aircraft were on the ground. Dayton played the role of the “follow-me” truck and guided taxiing aircraft to the turn-off point, where he handed the aircraft off to Robins, who then guided the aircraft to the off-load area.<sup>23</sup>

Once the troops and vehicles were off-loaded, Berino led the teams to the release point away from the landing operations. There the AOB passed on pertinent information to the team leaders. After receiving confirmation that all team personnel and equipment were present, they launched on missions throughout southern Iraq.<sup>24</sup>

*AOB 570 established a working airstrip in the middle of nowhere, enabling 5th Special Forces Group to infiltrate teams into the western desert.*



The first aircraft arrived at 2210 hours, followed by a second aircraft two minutes later. The first aircraft stirred up a huge dust cloud and literally disappeared into the cloud. The SOF teams quickly unloaded their vehicles in the flying sand and in less than fifteen minutes, both aircraft thundered down the runway to take off again. The arrival and departure of the first two aircraft blew any remaining debris off the flight strip, making future landings easier. The first two aircraft were followed by two more flights of two at twenty-minute intervals. The first six aircraft brought in ODA 544, an intelligence team, and a CBS television crew. ODA 544 and the intelligence team quickly left to complete their missions in the Najaf area, but the CBS crew recorded a story on the flight operations at Wadi al Khirr which was then broadcast on the news a few days later.<sup>25</sup>

The next group of six aircraft landed at Wadi al Khirr at 0100 hours. The first set of two airplanes brought in ODA 572 to relieve ODA 574 of the airfield security mission so the team could exfiltrate on the second set of aircraft. By the time the next two MC-130s arrived with more SOF teams, ODA 574 was ready to exfiltrate. When the last aircraft arrived with ODA 583 onboard, Sinclair transferred responsibility for the airfield to ODA 572 and loaded the AOB command and control node and the Air Force control team on the last two aircraft for the flight back to Kuwait.<sup>26</sup>

The operation was an unqualified success and a testament to the planning and operational expertise of special operators from both the Army Special Forces and the Air Force. It was a bold move to establish a clandestine airfield deep in enemy controlled territory. With few exceptions, the actual operation followed the scenarios anticipated in the plan. West simply said it was a “seamless operation.” Sinclair summed it up: “I wouldn’t call it Desert One [referring to the desert landing strip established in Iran during Operation EAGLE CLAW in 1980], but it got five teams on the ground ahead of the conventional force and put eyes on the target.”<sup>27</sup> ♠

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## Endnotes

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- 2 First Lieutenant Chris Hill\*, 23rd Special Tactics Squadron, U.S. Air Force, interview by Lieutenant Colonel Dennis P. Mroczkowski, 25 March 2003, Ali As-Salim Air Base, Kuwait, digital recording, USSOCOM History Office Classified Files, MacDill Air Force Base, FL.
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- 10 Robins interview.
- 11 Hoffman interview; Hill interview.
- 12 West interview.
- 13 Berino interview.
- 14 Hill interview.
- 15 Robins interview.
- 16 Robins interview.
- 17 Master Sergeant Bill Dayton\*, 23rd Special Tactics Squadron, U.S. Air Force, interview by Lieutenant Colonel Dennis P. Mroczkowski, 25 March 2003, Ali As-Salim Air Base, Kuwait, digital recording, USSOCOM History Office Classified Files, MacDill Air Force Base, FL.
- 18 Sergeant First Class Bruce Kroll\*, ODB 570, 3rd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group, interview by Lieutenant Colonel Dennis P. Mroczkowski, Baghdad, Iraq, 12 April 2003, digital recording, USSOCOM History Office Classified Files, MacDill Air Force Base, FL.
- 19 Berino interview.
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- 21 Hoffman interview.
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- 26 Berino interview.
- 27 Sinclair interview.

## Correction

In the article “Helicopters in the Korean War: The Rescue of Virginia 1,” which appeared in *Veritas* Vol. 1, No. 2, Captain John W. Thornton and his son John W. Thornton Jr., were mistakenly identified as John H. Thornton.

# Order From Chaos: The 422nd CA Battalion in OIF



by Cherilyn A. Walley with Michael R. Mullins

**T**HE U.S. Army Reserve 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion from Greensboro, North Carolina, crossed the berm into Iraq with the 3rd ID on 21 March 2003. Its assignment

*As the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion advanced north with the 3rd Infantry Division toward Baghdad, it assessed villages' needs and offered help when it could. Residents of all ages offered insights into local conditions.*

to the main invasion force placed the 422nd CAB at the forefront of ground combat operations, a place few Civil Affairs teams are ever found. Once the 3rd ID reached Baghdad, the battalion successfully made the difficult transition from the military side of civil military operations to the civil side, and was instrumental in helping the capital city move forward and begin to rebuild. The experiences of the Civil Affairs soldiers on the march north and in Baghdad itself epitomize the juncture between civil and military operations.

Six-man direct support teams from the 422nd CAB accompanied the 3rd ID's brigade combat teams during the rapid advance towards the capital. The 422nd CAB direct support teams were tasked with minimizing civilian

interference with combat operations, which preserved both civilian life and combat momentum. Major Dustin Hilburn\* described the battalion's planning process:

*We focused on the ethnic makeup of the population, and whether they were pro-regime or not, agricultural or industrial, normal means of transportation, and what type of ethnic strife was going on in the city. We looked at the possibility for relocation of*

*civilians and what direction they might move. We tried to plan how we would react to different sizes of groups. We had to differentiate between [displaced civilians] and civilians on the battlefield. We ended up surprising lots of Iraqis just coming home from their fields. During the combat operation, the [displaced civilians] were not a problem.<sup>1</sup>*

While the 3rd ID did not confront significant civilian resistance to the advance, the direct support teams did have to deal with non-aggressive interference. One soldier in Direct Support Team 3, attached to the 3rd ID's 2nd Brigade, commented, "There were civilians who would try to pass our convoy in cars and we would get on the bullhorn and pull them over and tell them [to] stay off the road for their own protection. They were scared at first, and then they were very happy." As the brigade entered villages, the Civil Affairs soldiers "would go find civilians and tell them to stay away from U.S. forces."<sup>2</sup>

Loudspeakers—"bullet magnets"—helped the teams broadcast their instructions quickly and effectively. On at least one occasion, DST 3 "cruised through the town broadcasting the message that [they] weren't there to harm them." The terrorized populace received the news

*Not even a fierce two-day sandstorm kept the dedicated soldiers of the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion from interviewing villagers about local conditions.*



\*Pseudonyms have been used for all military personnel with a rank lower than lieutenant colonel.



cautiously: “We could see joy from the people, but it was restrained as there were still Baath Party personnel around,” commented one Civil Affairs soldier. “In retrospect, I understood the ambivalence toward Americans, as the Iraqis were getting barraged by the Iraqi information minister saying how the Americans were getting the crap kicked out of them. They didn’t know what to believe.”<sup>3</sup>

Many of the civilians the direct support teams encountered were not aggressive toward the U.S. troops, but actually helpful. One DST 3 soldier recounted an incident that occurred near Najaf, which aptly illustrates the benefits of allowing Civil Affairs soldiers to do their job:

*On the outskirts of Najaf, there were a bunch of civilians at this bridge, and the infantry guys were wanting to light them up [because] they had been hit by a bus the day before. There were people working in their gardens about five hundred meters away, and I asked the company commander, ‘If I could go over and talk to them, would you provide a squad for security?’ We walked over there without [an] interpreter and these guys were just farmers, and they told us not to go that way because the Iraqi Army is there. And they told us where the Baath Party headquarters was. We brought that information back and farther down the road, there were fifty to a hundred people in the road, [so] I drove down there with two tanks as protection. The people were out in the road because it was their village and they were wondering what was going on. We started talking to them and they started telling us that the Iraqi Army pulled out the night before.<sup>4</sup>*

As the direct support teams made sure civilians did not interfere with the advance, the soldiers also took the opportunity to assess villagers’ needs and tried to address them. Another DST 3 soldier related, “the Bedouins would say they used to get water trucked to them, so we would call back and get them some water from the [division] rear. If a tank [ran] over water lines, we would also call back to the [division] rear to handle it when they

*As the 422nd traversed the deserts of Iraq, the battalion encountered Bedouins and villagers in need of water. Customers carried purified water home in any container they could from this water distribution site located outside Najaf.*



*The 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion spent a week in the area around Najaf, which gave it time to conduct humanitarian assistance and other aid missions. Through the efforts of the battalion, and the generosity of individual soldiers, on 4 April 2003 these children attended classes at their newly reopened school.*

came forward.” In another case, the native Iraqis led the brigade to water: “We came across these Bedouins and asked them where the water was, and one jumped in the HMMWV [High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle] to go show us. We set a ROPU [reverse osmosis purification unit] up right there.”<sup>5</sup>

The speed of the advance usually prevented the direct support teams from providing immediate humanitarian assistance. As a DST 3 officer put it, “Our intent for humanitarian aid was like [dealing with] a stray cat. If you put a bowl of milk out, you will get every stray cat in the neighborhood. So we just didn’t put a bowl out.” Captain Merino\* of DST 4 corroborated the truth of that strategy: “The longer we stayed outside Karbala, the more civilians came out asking for water and food. We knew if we kept handing out food, it would bring more civilians.” Hilburn, the 3rd ID plans officer, recalled one incident where the lack of humanitarian assistance was met with agreeable resignation by the civilians involved: “At Karbala, we had approximately 110 people come out to a checkpoint and request food and water. We told them we didn’t have any to give them at that time and to turn around and return to their homes, and they did.”<sup>6</sup>

The direct support teams and their assigned brigades did give as much help as they could without compromising their own security and missions. DST 3 encountered one such situation near the Karbala Gap: “There was a fight that day—a lot of fighting. There was this one Iraqi woman who came out and said, ‘Please help me, please help.’ We stopped and got out to look, and the medic truck stopped and went over to find that her husband had been shot in the butt. They treated him and put him on a stretcher by the road, and we moved on. The guy was waving at us as we all drove by him.”<sup>7</sup>

At times, the direct support teams found themselves in the position of taking instead of giving, ironically much to the civilian population’s relief. The team led by Captain Ted Morgan\* found itself in just such a situation on 31 March. Residents of the town of Khairat informed



*The 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion was instrumental in finding key personnel to restore power to Baghdad. Each power industry employee received \$20 in emergency pay, which not only ensured an intact workforce, but helped revitalize the city's economy.*

the team that a local school harbored a large Saddam Fedayeen weapons cache. The Civil Affairs soldiers passed the information on to the infantry and engineers, who investigated and discovered more than nine hundred mortars, twenty-six thousand AK-47 rounds, dynamite, and chemical protective gear. After removing and inventorying the cache, an explosive ordnance disposal unit dug a hole and detonated the weapons that could not be moved very far. The rest were disposed of in a field outside the village—after clearing it of sheep.<sup>8</sup>

Their positions with the forward brigade combat teams placed the direct support teams in live-fire situations much more often than they found weapons caches. A member of DST 3 described one of the team's more stressful moments as they neared Baghdad:

*As we pulled into this little town, there was this car sitting in the middle of the road. There was a dead man in the street, and the woman in the front seat was dead, and in the back seat was a teenage boy, shot but still alive. And in the lap of the dead mother was this baby who was untouched; [she] had these wide eyes and was just crying. The city was to our left and the canal to our right. The infantry guys were freaking out, as there were bullets flying everywhere. I went over to the girl and there was this fedayeen truck coming directly at us. I said, 'There's a truck!' and the .50 [calibers] just opened up, and this truck explodes. And then we started receiving all sorts of bullets [from] the guys [who] had jumped out of the back of the truck we hit. Then we heard this whoosh and a huge explosion up in the air, and I said, 'Holy s—!' The Bradleys and us went further into the city, and we dismounted and went inside a building to establish a fighting position. They called up a tank platoon, and it came forward and everything calmed down.<sup>9</sup>*

Although the teams' primary mission was to clear civilians from the battlefield, occasionally events deteriorated forcing the soldiers to concentrate on fighting. DST 3 experienced one such incident near Najaf:

*We went to this bridge where a PSYOP [Psychological Operations] team was checking people walk-*

*ing across the bridge. There were fedayeen fighting positions underneath the bridge. We put up a PSYOP message on loudspeaker: 'Put your weapon down if you wish to surrender.' We had a couple of civilians who had already crossed the bridge and given us information on where the fedayeen fighting positions were located. The enemy then pushed about two hundred civilians across the bridge and we were totally overwhelmed. We then had to stop the people, as the company commander was scared. We told the people the bridge was closed, and this one Iraqi guy took charge of all the civilians and moved them back across the bridge. In hindsight, we should have detained him. He became very offended when we told him to leave. [Then] we were hit by mortars and RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades]. The CA [Civil Affairs] mission was pretty much over at that time.<sup>10</sup>*

Beginning on 7 April, teams from the 422nd CAB moved into Baghdad. The battalion focused on controlling civilians on the battlefield during the advance with the 3rd ID, but now that Baghdad had been taken, the Civil Affairs soldiers shifted to civil military operations. Unfortunately, the battalion was not provided with a clear Civil Affairs plan from higher and was left to its own judgment in prioritizing missions. Hilburn explained, "A plan for Phase IV was never passed from CFLCC [Coalition Forces Land Component Command] to V Corps and on to 3rd ID. There was no guidance on which targets we needed to protect once we got into Baghdad. We weren't told to protect museums or banks, and we didn't expect the scale of the looting [that occurred]." Merino concurred: "There wasn't a plan for Phase IV, and there wasn't a plan to deal with all the civilians [flooding out of Baghdad]."<sup>11</sup>

The first challenge facing the 422nd CAB was the outflow of civilians from Baghdad. The battalion had met relatively few displaced civilians during the advance north, but was confronted with hundreds of scared people fleeing the battle in the capital city. Unfortunately, adequate plans for dealing with those civilians were not in place, in spite of the fact that they were considerably fewer than had been expected. Merino reported, "We had pages and pages of schools that were to be used as collection points, but they weren't outside the cities. We would look for areas that could be set up as collection sites. The schools inside the cities were not viable, as the Iraqis held the cities." In spite of the lack of a plan, the battalion managed to direct civilians to safe locations and provide them with basic necessities.<sup>12</sup>

Once in the city, the 422nd CAB turned its attention to infrastructure. Hilburn recalled, "We started looking at what we could do with a [civil military operations] focus that could have the most impact on the civilian population." In short order, the battalion concluded that power was the most important issue, since it controlled the water and sewage systems. On 10 April, battalion commander Lieutenant Colonel R. Alan King led a mission to locate



*Dr. Ali Saeed Saldoon (center) was appointed Baghdad's interim fire chief soon after the 422nd arrived. He worked closely with Major Bob Glass\*, a captain in the Greensboro, North Carolina, fire department, to rehabilitate the capital city's ability to fight fires.*



*Major Vaughn Christian\* (far right) of the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion worked with experienced police officers from the former regime to rebuild the Baghdad Police force.*

and assess power transformers in the Firdos district of Baghdad. Local residents advised King's team that there were fedayeen forces operating in the local area, and that they had rocket-propelled grenades and other weapons. As King's team neared the transformers, it came under small arms fire. The team turned around, but was then ambushed with rocket-propelled grenades and more small arms fire. Several of the team's vehicles were struck by rounds, but functioned well enough to get the team back through the ambush—a tactic of last resort chosen because the route forward was blocked. King and the other Civil Affairs soldiers returned suppressive fire during their exit, killing several enemy personnel.<sup>13</sup>

The next morning, King's team set out once again on a mission to return power to Baghdad. This time, the team planned to meet the transformer engineer. Once again, the team ran into an ambush, this time involving a parked diesel tanker truck. Unable to retreat, the team proceeded down the middle of the fuel-soaked roadway, ducking small arms fire from two separate locations. The team called in Bradley Fighting Vehicles, which laid down suppressive fire. The team escaped unscathed and was able to return later in the day—accompanied by fifteen Bradleys—to secure the transformer site. The next day, the team located Baghdad's senior power plant engineers, who were instrumental in restoring power to the city thirteen days later.<sup>14</sup>

While Civil Affairs efforts were directed toward getting the Iraqis to rebuild their own infrastructure, U.S. soldiers had to step in and help at all levels. The 422nd CAB and the city of Baghdad were fortunate to have Major Bob Glass\*, whose civilian career was as a fire captain with the Greensboro, North Carolina, Fire Department. In late April, Glass met with Dr. Ali Saeed Saldoon of Civil Defense, who was able to report that twelve of the city's twenty-five fire stations were operable. Approximately four hundred fire

fighters were still working as well. "The good thing about it is that they, like fire fighters around the world, are dedicated to their job," remarked Glass. "The majority of them stayed on throughout the hostilities, and more were coming back each day. Within a matter of days we went from 400 to 892 fire fighters back on duty." Just weeks later, the number had risen to 1,100 out of the prewar force of 1,400 fire department personnel.<sup>15</sup>

The first priority after identifying available resources was to make sure that the operable equipment was distributed to those fire stations that were manned and operating. In rehabilitating the fire defense system, Glass focused on using the native resources as much as possible: "I wanted to utilize [Dr. Saldoon] to do this, because our job is not to stay here and do it for them, but to get them to do it and become self-sufficient. So I gave him the orders to do that, and then he went out and talked to his officers in turn." Getting as many fire stations operational as possible was vital, since by American standards Baghdad was woefully lacking in stations anyway. Other shortfalls in the fire system included the lack of a nine-one-one phone system and inadequate personal protection equipment. One advantage Baghdad did have,

*Captain Ty Patrick\* helped retrain Baghdad police officers by teaching them American police practices, such as the proper way to approach a stopped car. He also passed on professional tips, such as leaving a thumbprint on a suspect's car as evidence in case the situation deteriorated and the officer was injured or killed.*



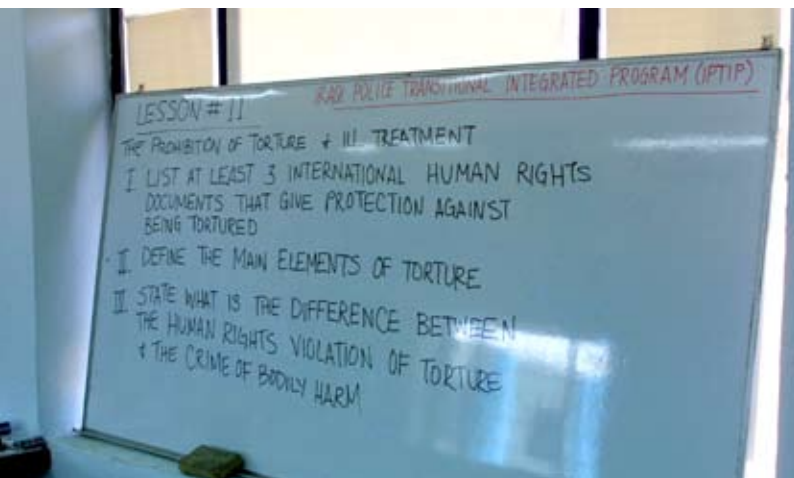


*The Coalition Provisional Authority approved emergency funds for essential employees; officers in the Baghdad Police Department qualified for payments of \$20 each, a considerable amount of money in the months following the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime.*

however, was the fact that most buildings were built of concrete and did not contain large amounts of “fire-load” to catch fire. The majority of fires historically occurred at power plants and refineries.<sup>16</sup>

Revitalizing the Baghdad police force was another high priority for the 422nd CAB. King appointed former Texas public safety officer Major Vaughn Christian\* to be Baghdad’s interim police commissioner, or the “Sheriff of Baghdad,” as some called him. In turn, Christian looked to Baghdad’s former police administration and officers to return to service. Christian and his team prioritized aspects of law enforcement, concentrating on the most immediate needs first. “Obviously I can’t come in and start setting up an arson division, an investigation division—that takes time. I tried to prioritize. The city had just come out of a war, so my priority was getting security back on the streets, for one.” The department focused on traffic, facility security (hospitals, utility plants, and such), and patrols.<sup>17</sup>

*A vital part of the 422nd’s transition program for the Baghdad Police was an education in human and civil rights. Torture, which had been a feature of police work under Saddam Hussein, was immediately prohibited.*



Christian also concentrated on teaching the police department how to function in an ethical manner. He quickly put an end to such practices as transporting suspects in car trunks, openly carrying AK-47s, challenging U.S. Army soldiers at checkpoints, and various other abuses that were customary in the former regime. On at least one occasion, Christian turned a routine evidence check-in into a lesson in proper police procedure. Addressing the evidence room officer, Christian instructed, “You are the only person who belongs in this room. You count the money, and write down the amount and names of the officers who brought it in.” Such basics needed to be explained and repeated as the 422nd CAB trained officers to represent and run what would be an entirely new kind of police force in Iraq.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the expected challenges of rebuilding a large city just emerging from tyranny and war, the 422nd CAB faced the unexpected chaos of rampant looting. With no concrete plan indicating which buildings and sites needed protection, the battalion and other Coalition forces in the city found themselves reacting to problems as they arose. Hilburn described the situation:

*We would watch some TV broadcast live from Baghdad with the reporter saying this museum is being looted, and a few hours later we would get an e-mail [fragmentary order] down from higher to protect this museum. The same thing happened with banks and other locations. In a lot of ways it was planning by CNN. We were reacting to problems being identified [by the media]. One of the problems we ran into was museum names; we would be told one name and it did not exist. We got some wrong grid coordinates, which caused some confusion about where to protect. I would still receive e-mails a week after we had secured a museum that the museum was being looted and needed to be protected.<sup>19</sup>*

U.S. forces were also surprised at some of the looters’ targets. Hilburn remarked, “We were not prepared for the hospitals being looted. We did not plan for it and did not receive any information [that] we would have problems in these areas.” While looting initially concentrated on buildings representing the former regime, the thievery quickly spread to all types of public buildings, including museums, hospitals, and schools. By the time schools were targeted, the looters were seeking basic building materials, such as electrical switches and wires, desks, blackboards, and plumbing fixtures. The thefts left the 422nd CAB scrambling for basic school items—like blackboards and desks—as they attempted to restore educational services to the city.<sup>20</sup>

One group of 422nd CAB soldiers ran into bigger crime than looting when they witnessed and foiled a bank robbery. Sergeant Chris Mercer\* recounted the story: “We were driving . . . and we got stopped by [an officer] of the 3rd ID. He said, ‘Hey, there’s a bank robbery going on. You all want in on it?’ ‘Of course!’” The team proceeded to the bank and found that the would-be robbers had been at the bank

... for a while. Because you could see on the doors that they had beaten them with pickaxes, sledgehammers, mauls, whatever they had. Eventually they got some dynamite and were able to blow a small hole in the top of the safe, through about two feet of concrete and rebar, then the steel. It was just big enough to get a small child in there. So they had lowered a child in there, and he was coming and giving them money. We think they probably got away with about \$2 million. We secured seven people inside the bank without incident. We went ahead and blew the other safe and pulled out \$6.3 million in U.S. \$100 bills. We took the money back to the airport and turned it over to the 3rd ID. While we were there [at the airport] we actually got called to another bank robbery, and went in and apprehended two [people]. They hadn't blown the safes yet. It was just another day in Civil Affairs.<sup>21</sup>

*The 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion responded to reports of looting throughout Baghdad. They caught a large group of men and boys looting the Al Rashid Contracting Company for valuable building materials, such as windows and doors.*



The roles of Civil Affairs units in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM were diverse and constantly changing. The 422nd CAB's experiences are representative of the challenges met and the successes enjoyed by all Civil Affairs units during the first months of the war. From managing and protecting displaced civilians to protecting museums and catching bank robbers, the Civil Affairs soldiers stepped in wherever they were needed. The lack of a comprehensive Civil Affairs plan often left these units in positions of determining their own priorities and reacting to situations as they arose. The units' ability to excel can be attributed to a combination of training and serendipity. More often than not, the individuals' own skills and talents created order from the chaos of war-torn Iraq. ♣

## Endnotes

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# Psychological Operations in Baghdad

by Cherilyn A. Walley

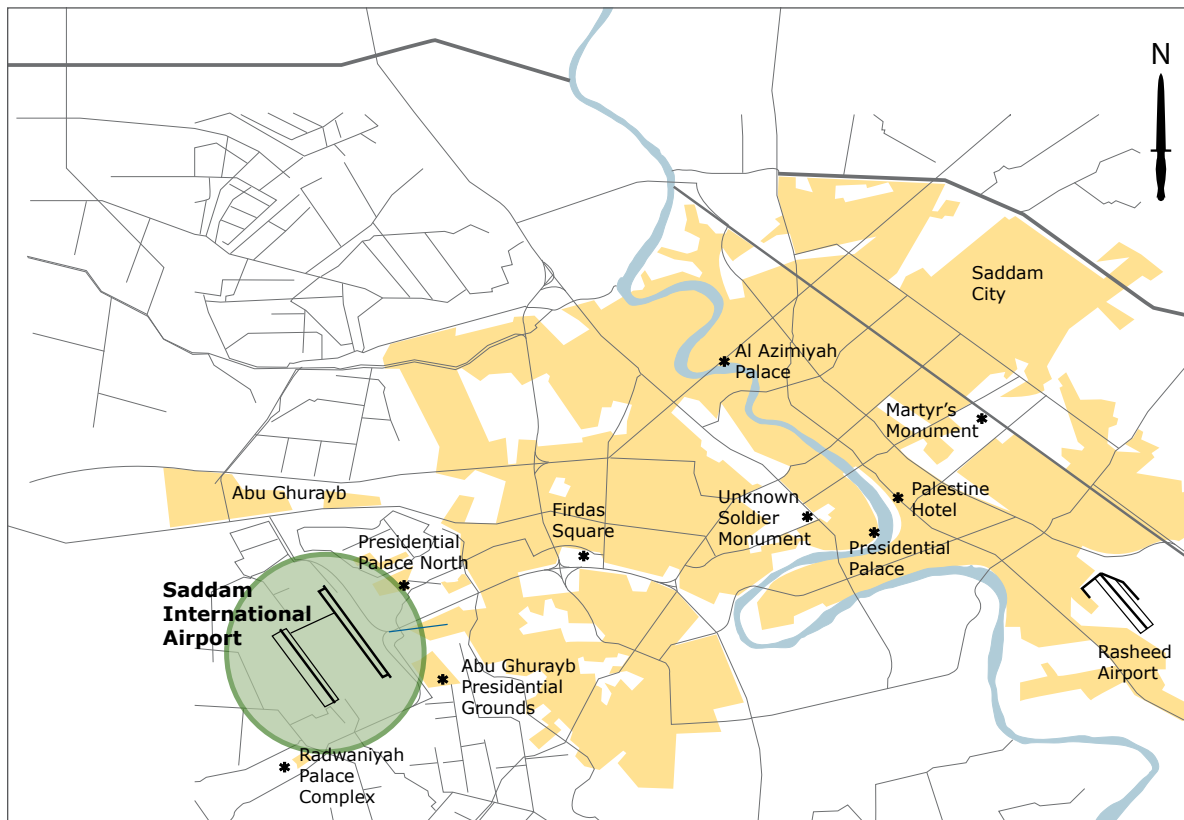


**T**HE 315th Tactical PSYOP Company from Upland, California, mobilized for Iraq on 28 February 2003. The company left for Kuwait on 12 April, but did not arrive until the 15th. After another week waiting for its equipment to arrive by sea, the 315th convoyed to Baghdad International Airport on 2 May. Various tactical PSYOP teams that had preceded the 315th were subsequently attached to the company upon arrival. The 315th TPC replaced C Company, 9th PSYOP Battalion, which was supporting the 3rd ID. It performed that mission and joined the 1st Armored Division when it assumed responsibility for Baghdad in early June. What the 315th encountered in the first two months set the tone for its entire tour.<sup>1</sup>

The 315th TPC arrival in Baghdad did not begin on a high note. Less than a week before the company rolled

into Baghdad ready to assume its mission, C Company, 9th PSYOP Battalion, lost everything in a fire. C Company went from directing around-the-clock operations to scrounging uniforms and toothbrushes. The fire had left the 315th with nothing to begin work: no products, no equipment, no plan, and no place to work. It had to start from scratch.<sup>2</sup>

Worse than no equipment was no PSYOP guidance. The 315th TPC concentrated on supporting the 3rd ID's transition to low-intensity operations. The company leaders found space to live and work in the main passenger terminal of the airport. Using a single, one-color-at-a-time copier, the production development detachment began producing handbills. A single run of 10,000 low-resolution, single-sided handbills took three hours. After running the copier almost



*Baghdad International Airport, formerly Saddam International Airport, served first as the ground force staging area for the capture of Baghdad, and then as a base of operations for 3rd Infantry Division and attached units. The 315th Tactical Psychological Operations Company struggled to find work and sleeping space in airport facilities crowded with troops and equipment.*



*The 315th Tactical Psychological Operations Company developed and distributed handbills and posters warning of mines and unexploded ordnance scattered throughout Baghdad. As Tactical Psychological Operations Teams made their distribution rounds, they took the opportunity to interview residents regarding the effectiveness of the products.*

continuously to cover the 5.6 million people who lived in Baghdad, the plastic components of the copier (in the non-air conditioned terminal) literally melted with the 100,000th copy. Nineteen three-man tactical PSYOP teams then distributed them throughout the city by hand.<sup>3</sup>

The 3rd ID had no PSYOP plan. The Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance and the subsequent Coalition Provisional Authority had no PSYOP plan, and the Central Command Joint Psychological Operations Task Force forward in Qatar, had redeployed to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Major Donald Thomas\*, the 315th TPC commander explained, "There was no plan to fall in on. There was nothing from higher coming down. You would get these short suspenses to execute on a topic. That is not a campaign plan. There was no synchronization matrix that said 'Here is our plan for the next three months, and here is what you need to start developing.' Every PSYOP company was essentially running its own PSYOP campaign plan." Although each division coordinated PSYOP plans internally there was no opportunity for external coordination.<sup>4</sup>

Each tactical PSYOP detachment commander had to establish a relationship with his assigned brigade. In the

*\*Pseudonyms have been used for all military personnel with a rank lower than lieutenant colonel.*

beginning, the 3rd ID and 1st Armored Division expectations outstripped the capabilities of the detachments. Captain Ron Castle\*, commander of Tactical PSYOP Detachment 1210, explained, "When we first got [to Baghdad], these maneuver guys were demanding a real quick turnaround, [but] we weren't able to supply that." The combat brigades and battalions responded by designing and distributing their own Information Operations products. Then, the tactical PSYOP detachments had to convince the commanders to use the PSYOP products instead of their Information Operations products. The detachments tried to anticipate brigade commanders' needs and to develop products accordingly.<sup>5</sup>

Maneuver commanders focused on troop safety. They did not initially understand nor appreciate the long-term goals of PSYOP. The commanders wanted products that would enhance security now instead of products that would lead to long-lasting changes in Iraqi culture or behavior. Thomas summarized the issue:

*When you have maneuver guys that are not PSYOP trained, they tend to have a short-term view. It's fine to address an immediate need, but it doesn't address the psychological, long-term goal that you are trying to achieve. We were constantly battling with maneuver commanders, saying, 'I know that our soldiers are getting killed, and that is something that is very important to you. But, you know what, the target audience doesn't care about our soldiers much. We need to address topics that are important to them on a long-term basis, because we are trying to change the culture of the country.' We constantly battled this. What they would want was a short-term product. All they cared about was a handbill that talks about rockets, a handbill that talks about IEDs [improvised explosive devices]. And that is not PSYOP.<sup>6</sup>*

Captain Marvin Holiday\*, commander of TPD 1220, agreed: "At least for us, that was one of the hardest parts about [product] dissemination. Some of the products

*In addition to loudspeaker broadcasts to defuse mob tension, the 315th Tactical Psychological Operations Company produced posters warning looters to stay away from public buildings, such as this one being posted on a gate outside Central Baghdad Railroad Station.*





*To reduce deaths and injuries from mines and unexploded ordnance, the 315th Tactical Psychological Operations Company designed handbills and posters illustrating the various types found throughout Baghdad. Even children could compare the drawings to objects they found in the streets and recognize the danger.*

being generated or pushed by the maneuver commander appeared to be self-serving. 'We're going to focus on IEDs. Well, only Americans are getting killed by IEDs. The Americans only want IEDs to stop because they are killing Americans. You're not helping Iraqis. Tell us how you are going to help us, and maybe we'll report this information.'" The 315th TPC tried to balance products that addressed the commanders' short-term concerns with products that addressed long-term PSYOP goals, such as those emphasizing progress in rebuilding a better Iraq.<sup>7</sup>

At times the PSYOP teams had to show the maneuver commanders that in psychological operations, often no news was good news. Captain Chambers\* described the maneuver soldiers' attitudes: "The infantry officer or the armor officer is used to putting steel on a target and seeing an immediate effect. 'I fired my weapon and I killed something.' The long-term, residual effect of a PSYOP product is going to be delayed. You may never see a reaction to a product you've disseminated in the area." But the cumulative effects of the PSYOP messages become evident over time. It was difficult for maneuver commanders to understand that PSYOP effectiveness can often be calculated in terms of negative activity. Thomas recounted, "What we'd have to do is get into these Socratic philosophical discussions. [The commanders would say], 'We want to know what you guys are doing.' 'Well, here's what we're doing: Are you seeing mass demonstrations?' 'Well, no.' 'Are you seeing negative attitudes towards Coalition forces?' 'Well, no.' 'That's where PSYOP comes in.'"<sup>8</sup>

Once the brigade combat teams understood the capabilities of the tactical PSYOP teams, the units worked effectively together. TPT 1214 worked with the 1st Platoon, Hawk Troop, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, from 10–31 May. Hawk Troop controlled the distribution of scarce propane gas. When Hawk Troop began its mission, Iraqi civilians would riot at the distribution stations, sometimes in groups of more than three hundred. On five occasions, the riots grew so large that TPT 1214 had to shut down the loudspeakers and help

the Hawk Troop soldiers employ riot control measures. However, the PSYOP team's primary weapon against the rioters was its loudspeakers. By daily broadcasting messages explaining the propane distribution system and encouraging cooperation, the team reduced the number and severity of the riots.<sup>9</sup>

One of the 315th's early missions was to disseminate safety information to the residents of Baghdad. The city's usual modes of communication—radio, television, and telephone—were so badly disrupted that the U.S. Army had to rely on old-fashioned means to spread its message: paper. One part of the safety campaign involved educating the public about the presence and danger of unexploded ordnance and munitions throughout the city. The product development detachment designed and produced two-sided leaflets with pictures of different ordnance and instructions on how to report mines and weapons caches. The TPTs then distributed the leaflets by hand to the public taking the opportunity to interact with Iraqis on the street. Sergeant Reed Costner\* summarized: "Our mission is basically encouraging mine and unexploded ordnance awareness through leaflets, posters, and face-to-face communication."<sup>10</sup>

Another PSYOP campaign was against electrical wire theft. "No sooner would they put up new wire than it would be gone the next day." Thomas described the thrust of the PSYOP effort:

*We had to constantly try to correlate the actions of the individual to the greater good. People were more focused on gaining whatever money they could by stealing and reselling electrical wire and had no interest in the bigger problem. When the locals were confronted with the situation their responses was: 'Oh, if I steal from my neighborhood, we won't have power. You're absolutely right.' If they did understand the implication, they would simply go steal from another neighborhood, not caring that they were causing problems for the entire city."<sup>11</sup>*

One detachment commander encountered a woman who simply did not care about anybody else:

*This lady told me straight up that she didn't care about anybody that did not live in her little neighborhood which had a Baath Party headquarters. They used to get electricity twenty-four hours a day. So, when they started to push [electricity] out to everyone, causing temporary blackouts, she told me, 'I don't care. If that's the way it is, then the Americans need to go out and buy generators for everyone in this apartment building. Unless we get that, I'm not going to be happy.'<sup>12</sup>*

Frustrating as it was, by the end of the PSYOP campaign, looting of wire had been considerably reduced.

Psychological operations in Baghdad were not all paper and handshakes. More than one tactical PSYOP team encountered violence, and all five of the 315th tactical PSYOP detachments participated in cordon and search operations and raids. While raids were usually conducted in conjunction with conventional forces, on





*Tactical PSYOP Detachments collected information from their teams, who in turn collected feedback from individual Iraqis, about the effectiveness of PSYOP products. When a certain handbill did not go over well with the local population, a message was sent to the product development detachment so future products would not contain similar mistakes.*

one occasion the PSYOP soldiers acted alone. On 27 April, TPD 1280 surrounded a residence and broadcast a surrender appeal to the six men inside, who were systematically robbing the house while waiting for the owner—a former member of the Baath Party—to return home so they could murder him. All six heavily armed men surrendered without a fight. While two soldiers guarded the criminals, two PSYOP soldiers cleared the house. TPD 1280 confiscated the thugs' stolen pickup truck, several grenades, an RPK machine gun, six AK-47s, six pistols, and ammunition.<sup>13</sup>

Earlier in May, teams from TPD 1230 had converged to help prevent a riot around Abu Hanifa Mosque in the Aadhamiyah District of northwest Baghdad. Using their loudspeakers to call for peaceful behavior, distributing leaflets with similar messages, and simply engaging demonstrators in conversation, the PSYOP teams helped prevent a potentially violent confrontation between insurgents, civilians, and Coalition troops. The scenario was repeated often in the days and weeks following the fall of Baghdad. The TPT response to riot situations was to broadcast appeals for nonviolence, identify key personalities in the crowds, and address the people's grievances as best it could.<sup>14</sup>

One TPT had the opportunity to use its PSYOP equipment in its defense. A TPT 1213 vehicle was hit by an IED while distributing handbills in Al Hara, Baghdad. The vehicle was damaged by the explosion, but not completely disabled. The team quickly grabbed its most effective weapon—the loudspeaker—to defend themselves. As soon as they started broadcasting, several Iraqis came forward and told them about two more IEDs along the convoy route. With this information, TPT 1213 was able to safely route help to them.<sup>15</sup>

The vast majority of the 315th TPC products were designed internally. Thomas said: "Our guys, who had never done this before, designed [almost] every product that we put out." Since the Joint PSYOP Task Force for-



*Once the 315th Tactical Psychological Operations Company contracted with commercial printers, they could produce four-color flyers and posters. The professional-grade products were very popular among Iraqis of all ages.*

ward at Qatar, the endpoint for the much-touted "reach-back system" of the 4th PSYOP Group, had redeployed to Fort Bragg, the Army Reserve PSYOP units in Iraq were on their own. Using photo editing and design software, the soldiers of the product development detachment translated ideas from the field into realities that were quickly sent back for distribution. As TPTs and TPDs saw needs and obtained feedback from civilians, they sent them back to the product development team. Situation reports from the TPTs were often very clear: "Stop using this product, because it's just pissing them off!" Once turned into a viable PSYOP design, the product was given to a locally contracted printer. They were able to produce four-color handbills or posters on demand, which cut product turnaround to a matter of days.<sup>16</sup>

Circumstances—no printing equipment—caused the 315th to resort to contracting local printers. While the mission was to distribute hundreds of thousands of PSYOP handbills, it had no capability to produce them. Major Chip West\*, chief of the product development detachment, explained how the company solved the problem:

*One of the teams came back and said 'Hey, we met this printer.' Because I had contracting experience, I went and found the division contracting officer. We discussed [the requirement] and established a Blanket Purchasing Agreement rather than a service contract. The 1st Armored Division started dumping money into it; . . . fortunately, the G-8 [comptroller] was a former Special Forces guy who understood special operations. He said, 'This is all the information that I need.' In order to have competition, I found another three printers. There are four printing contracts that run through the BPA." The purchasing agreement meant that the 315th did not have to bid each print job; rather, it simply placed orders with the contracted printers and received good, timely service. Thomas added, "In an emergency, we could [produce] 200,000 handbills, double-sided, four-color, in roughly twenty-four to forty-eight hours." Access to four local printers enabled the 315th to design and distribute about 1.2 million handbills and posters a week if necessary.<sup>17</sup>*

# Baghdad Now

A Bi-Weekly 1st Armored Division Publication

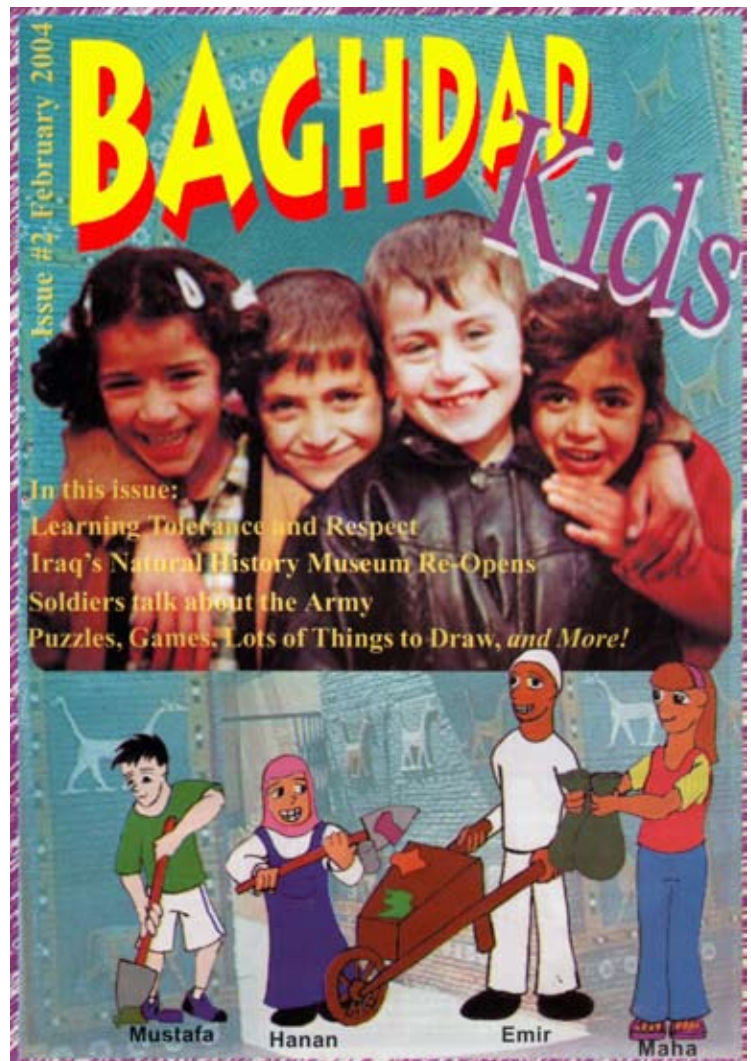


The 315th PSYOP Company published Baghdad Now biweekly. The newspaper in Arabic and English became a major part of the information campaign in Baghdad. Local print companies printed the paper under contract adding to the local economy while informing the population.

The 315th's abilities to produce PSYOP products in-house and to get them professionally printed were key to future successes. By July, the company was publishing the biweekly newspaper *Baghdad Now*. It provided both Coalition and Iraqi news in Arabic and English. Some Iraqi teachers used *Baghdad Now* in their English classes. In January 2004, the company published its first issue of *Baghdad Kids*, a comic strip offshoot of *Baghdad Now* aimed at the city's youth. Distributed free of charge by the TPTs, these newspapers gave the tactical teams an additional way to interact positively with the citizens of Baghdad. ♣

## Endnotes

- 1 Major Donald Thomes\*, Sergeant Travis Fletcher\*, Major Chip West\*, Captain Alex Donovan\*, Captain Ron Castle\*, and Captain Marvin Holiday\*, 315th Tactical Psychological Operations Company, interview by Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Jones Jr. and Dr. Cheryl A. Walley, 12 March 2004, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited as 315th TPC interview; 315th Psychological Operations Company, "Meritorious Unit Citation Packet," 22 December 2003, copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 2 Major David A. Converse, "Operation IRAQI FREEDOM Psychological Operations Field Collection Team Operational Assessment," 2004, 58–59,



An offshoot of Baghdad Now, Baghdad Kids became an information and educational tool for Iraqi children. Printed in both Arabic and English, it was designed to attract children while conveying Coalition themes.

USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

- 3 315th TPC interview.
- 4 315th TPC interview.
- 5 315th TPC interview.
- 6 315th TPC interview.
- 7 315th TPC interview.
- 8 315th TPC interview.
- 9 315th Psychological Operations Company, "Meritorious Unit Citation Packet."
- 10 Specialist Chad D. Wilkerson, "315th PSYOPS keep communication lines open," *Defend America*, June 2003.
- 11 315th TPC interview.
- 12 315th TPC interview.
- 13 315th Psychological Operations Company, "Meritorious Unit Citation Packet."
- 14 315th Psychological Operations Company, "Meritorious Unit Citation Packet."
- 15 315th Psychological Operations Company, "Meritorious Unit Citation Packet."
- 16 315th TPC interview.
- 17 315th TPC interview.

# Frank E. Allen

by Charles H. Briscoe

**RETIRED** Sergeant First Class Frank E. Allen is the son of a career Army soldier and veteran of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. After graduating from high school in Reno, Nevada, Allen enlisted in 1984 to “wear his Dad’s boots.” Allen “enjoyed eight years of the close camaraderie associated with a four-man tank crew” in the M60A3 and M1 at Fort Knox, Kentucky, in Korea, and at Fort Polk, Louisiana. “After out-shooting the Master Gunner, the brigade commander selected me to be his tank gunner,” said Allen. While serving in the tanks his airbrush watercolor of an M1 Abrams tank “Balance of Power” won the 3rd Prize in a Department of Army Art Contest. Shortly afterwards, Sergeant Allen decided that the time had come to make a career change.

Following eight weeks of training at Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado, he was sent as a 25M graphics illustrator to the 4th PSYOP Group, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in 1992. Their state-of-the-art computer graphic systems served to give Allen’s natural artistic talents a major “kick start.” Following airborne school he began his “most robust and productive” period as an illustrator. Chal-



lenges ranged from a USASOC executive calendar for Lieutenant General James T. Scott to several 4th Group posters (hardest with theme “Peacetime Contributor-Combat Multiplier”) to designing the distinctive unit insignia for 3rd PSYOP Battalion (“Power to Influence”) to a Special Forces sniper print to a Special Forces wall mural for Major General Harley C. Davis, U.S. Army Special



4th PSYOP Group print



“Balance of Power”



Special Forces Sniper print



*Special Forces wall mural in original USASFC headquarters.*

Forces Command, to a Golden Knights poster. The work earned him five AAMs (one from the U.S. Army Parachute Team), and an MSM before leaving the PSYOP Group for a second tour in Korea.

In March 1995, Sergeant Allen joined the 751st Military Intelligence Battalion at Camp Humphreys, Korea, and was promoted to Staff Sergeant. In the Military Intelligence battalion, the graphic illustrator worked in the Secure Compartmented Intelligence Facility doing more traditional work—briefings—although he did draw a 751st print. More interesting was the expansion of his artwork to designing Army aviation unit patches and t-shirt and jacket logos. “The Korean embroiderers were always looking for new military designs. That opened up a whole new enterprise,” remembered Allen. After Korea, he got the assignment of his dreams.

When Staff Sergeant Allen reported in to the Headquarters Company of the 5th Special Forces Group, he saw what had been done by his predecessor and was determined to show the group what a top-notch illustrator could do. “That weekend I painted over all the “murals” in HHC and 5th SFG headquarters areas. I thought that the first sergeant was going to have a coronary on Monday morning. But when I was done, he was impressed.” Many of Allen’s murals can still be seen on the walls of the 5th Special Forces Group at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Having seen his Special Forces prints, Brigadier General Frank Toney had him design a Special Operations Command Central coin and print. In June 2000, Allen graduated from the Jumpmaster course and was promoted to Sergeant First Class in November. Two



*Aviation unit patches*



events expanded his artistic talents—a new 5th Special Forces Group commander in the summer of 2001 and 11 September.

It was the combination of Colonel John Mulholland and America’s Global War on Terrorism that “lit a fire under my butt as an illustrator,” related Allen. Mulholland started by having him draw an “Evolution of Special Forces” print as a farewell gift for the outgoing commanding general of U.S. Army Special Forces Command, Brigadier General Frank Toney. But, when the Twin Towers went down on 11 September 2001, Allen thought: “Now, we were going to war. It was going to be the ‘real deal’ not a deployment for a ‘real world mission.’ I knew that I was in the fast-paced environment of Army special operations. It was either produce or get out of the way . . . and I loved tough deadlines.”

At their base in Karshi Kanabad (K2), Uzbekistan, Colonel Mulholland told Allen that he wanted a distinctive logo for Task Force Dagger, and turned to walk away. When Sergeant First Class Allen asked for guidance, Colonel Mulholland spun around and retorted, “I’m not the illustrator, you are. Design something,” and went into the command tent. And Allen did. The Task Force Dagger logo became the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force–North coin and was airbrushed along with all unit insignias on thirty MC-130 Spectre gunship 105mm artillery shells that been fired on combat missions as official gifts for President George W. Bush, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and other dignitaries. The Fifth Legion soldiers were quite impressed and began to provide him action photographs from Afghanistan.

Sergeant First Class Frank Allen was “the heat” to the 5th Special Forces soldiers. In response, Allen threw back a Billy the Kid phrase from the movie *Young Guns*, “I’ll make you famous, just give me your photos from the field.” And, they did. Between airbrushing 105mm artillery shell casings with Task Force Dagger logos and painting friends’ Harley Davidson motorcycles, Allen produced a Task Force Dagger in Afghanistan print of sketches made from 5th Special Forces Group soldiers’ photographs.

Frank Allen has chosen to draw only from photographs because accuracy is more important to him than artistic interpretation. “People/artists can interpret things any way they want but photographs do not lie,” said Allen. To commemorate Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, the 5th Special Forces Group illustrator produced a Task Force Dag-



*Task Force Dagger logo*



*Task Force Legion logo*

ger in Iraq print. If the reader has seen that poster, some of those sketches appear in *All Roads Lead to Baghdad*.

Allen is a self-trained artist. He was in his second semester of art during his senior year in high school when he won the Sierra Nevada Printing Association commercial art contest sponsored by Harrahs Casino in Reno. It was ten years later that Allen became an Army graphic illustrator. But it was his tour with the 5th Special Forces Group in Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM that gave him the opportunity to “give something back to fellow Army special ops soldiers.”

Having adopted the commercial advertisement art standard of 3.5 seconds to grab someone’s attention, Allen has shown that he can take someone’s vision—whether it is a photograph or the commander or a commissioner’s guidance—and graphically illustrate that view. His working philosophy is: “Tell me what you want; Give me creative license to produce; I don’t whine or complain about changes; Take constructive criticism well; When you have suggestions to make it better, demonstrate your ability to improve it.”

The USASOC History Office was fortunate to have this 5th Group veteran of ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM and the 4th PSYOP Group provide the chapter Army special operations forces sketches as well as design the cover for *All Roads Lead to Baghdad: Army Special Operations in Iraq*—in less than two weeks. As Frank said afterwards, “I hooked up a Mountain Dew IV for you guys to meet your short deadline. I like the thrill of doing an impossible mission.”

This combat veteran and Army brat retired after twenty years service. He lives in New Albany, Indiana,



*Allen painting shells*

with his two children Makenzi and Landon. USASOC thanks Frank Allen for doing the Army special operations community a real service. We look forward to your next print, “Army Special Operations in Iraq,” that will contain the sketches from *All Roads Lead to Baghdad*. ♠

This article was based on a telephone interview (Mr. Frank E. Allen, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 18 October 2005, New Albany, IN, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC) and a *The Leaf-Chronicle* (New Albany, IN) newspaper article by Stacy Smith Segovia. Copies of artwork shown were provided by Mr. Frank Allen.



*CJSOTF-AP logo*



*Glass etching*



*President George W. Bush and Colonel John Mulholland with Allen's shell.*



# Colonel Aaron Bank

1902–2004

by Kenneth Finlayson

**WHEN** Colonel Aaron Bank, U.S. Army (retired) passed away in April 2004 at the age of 101, he left behind a legacy embodied by the Army Special Forces, one of the elite units in the United States military. Popularly known as the “Father of Special Forces,” Bank was instrumental in the development of the Special Forces program and was the first commander of the 10th Special Forces Group, the first Special Forces group in the Army.

Born in November 1902, Bank spent much of his youth traveling in Europe. Fluent in French and to a lesser extent in German, Bank lived and worked in Europe including a stint as the head lifeguard at a posh resort in Biarritz, France. He joined the Army in 1939, but as an older officer he was precluded from an active combat role and he was assigned as a training officer to a railroad battalion at Fort Polk, Louisiana, when the United States entered the war. Happening upon a notice for volunteers with language capability, he volunteered for the Office of Strategic Services and was assigned to the Special Operations branch. He soon found himself in England leading a three-man Jedburgh Team behind the lines in occupied France after D-Day.<sup>1</sup>

Team Packard, composed of Bank, French Lieutenant Henri Denis, and Jean, a French radio operator, deployed from Algiers and parachuted into France on the night of 31 July 1944 into the Lazare Department in the Rhone Valley. Operating behind the German lines in the path of General Alexander M. Patch’s advancing 7th Army, Bank and his team juggled support for two resistance factions, the Gaullist Forces *Françaises de l’Intérieur* and Communist *Franco-Tieurs et Partisans* as the two groups harassed the retreating Germans and battled each other for supremacy in the liberated towns the Germans evacuated. For six weeks, Bank and his team rotated between the various partisan groups training them in guerilla warfare. By November 1944, Team Packard was disbanded along with the other Jedburgh teams in France.<sup>2</sup>

Bank found himself back in London as the leader of Operation IRON CROSS, a mission to insert five Ameri-

cans and nearly two hundred ex-German Army volunteers into the Inn Valley in Austria to create havoc in the German rear and ultimately attempt to capture Adolph Hitler and other high-ranking Nazi’s from what was thought to be their redoubt in Berchtesgarden. Bank trained his team to a razor’s edge only to have the mission aborted in April 1945 when 7th Army rolled into Austria and Bavaria and the Third Reich collapsed. With the end of IRON CROSS, Bank volunteered to join the Office of Strategic Services in the Far East and soon found himself in Kunming, China.<sup>3</sup>

Bank’s new missions included training a two-hundred man company of Vietnamese soldiers formerly in the French Army and with three French officers to lead them on a raid against an Army-level Japanese headquarters on the Red River near Hanoi. This mission was cancelled in July 1945 when it was determined that the Viet Minh would not allow the entrance of the French back into the country. He subsequently parachuted with a nine-man team into Laos to search for internees and prisoners of war and eventually made his way to Hanoi and accompanied Ho Chi Minh to Hue. In October 1945, the Office of Strategic Services was disbanded and all the teams recalled. Bank returned to the Regular Army at the end of the war.<sup>4</sup>

In 1951, Bank served as the executive officer of the 187th Regimental Combat Team in Korea. Promoted to Colonel, he was reassigned to the Army’s Psychological Warfare Staff in the Pentagon, under the direction of Brigadier General Robert A. McClure. Joined by Lieutenant Colonel Russell Volckmann and Colonel Wendell Fertig, World War II veterans who led guerilla units in the Philippines, Bank formulated the doctrine and principles that became the foundation of today’s Special Forces.

The 1951 deactivation of the Army Ranger companies for Korea freed up 2,300 personnel spaces. Bank recruited former OSS, paratroopers, Rangers, and foreign national in the U.S. Army under the Lodge Act to fill the ranks of the new Special Forces unit. Moving to Fort Bragg, North

Carolina, Bank prepared the training plan and developed the Table of Organization and Equipment for what would become the Operational Detachments A,B, and C and the SF Group Headquarters.<sup>5</sup>

On 19 June 1952, Aaron Bank took command of the 10th Special Forces Group (A) at Fort Bragg. In November the 10th deployed to Germany and established its headquarters at Flint Kaserne in Bad Tölz, leaving behind a cadre to form the 77th Special Forces Group. Bank commanded the 10th until late 1954 and then became the Seventh Army's Chief of Plans and Operations. Colonel Bank retired from the Army in 1958.

Colonel Bank was the first honorary Colonel of the Special Forces Regiment, a position he held until his death in 2004. In 2002, he was recognized by Congressional Resolution 364 as the "Father of Special Forces." The Special Operations Academic Facility at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School is named in honor of Colonel Bank.<sup>6</sup> ▲

## Endnotes

- 1 Aaron Bank, *From OSS to Green Beret: The Birth of Special Forces*, (Novato CA, Presidio Press, 1986), 2.
- 2 Aaron Bank, interview by Dr. Joseph R. Fischer, 25 June 1995, Fort Bragg, NC, tape recording, USASOC Archives, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 3 Bank interview.
- 4 Aaron Bank, letter to Louis Durogi, 24 March 1976, USASOC Archives, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 5 Durogi letter.
- 6 *Congressional Record, Daily Digest*, 107th Congress, 1st Session, 18 June 2002, H3635-39.



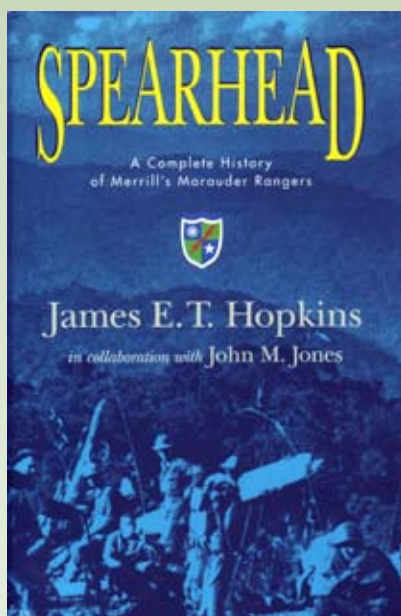
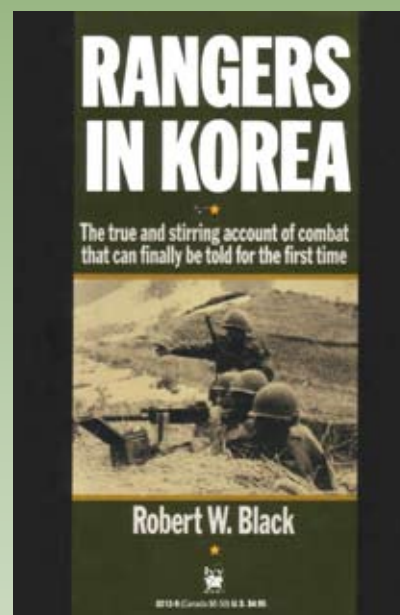
Colonel Aaron Bank commemorative poster created by Earl J. Moniz for the dedication of Aaron Bank Hall, U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

# Books in the Field

“Books in the Field” provides short descriptions of books related to subjects covered in the current issue of *Veritas*. Readers are encouraged to use these recommendations as a starting point for individual study on topics related to Army Special Operations history.

**Robert W. Black, *Rangers in Korea* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989).**

Since volunteering for the 8th Ranger Infantry (Airborne) Company to fight in Korea, Robert W. Black’s personal passion has focused on researching, collecting, recording, and telling the story of the Korean War Rangers. Black spent considerable time in the National Archives gathering the unit morning reports and collecting the Army documents that pertain to the organization and later inactivation of the Eighth Army and the thirteen Ranger Infantry (Airborne) companies during the Korean War. He also spent years recording veterans’ accounts of their major combat actions. The only weakness in the book is its chronological presentation, which constantly flips the reader back and forth between Ranger units in Korea and ongoing training in the U.S., making it difficult to summarize the activities of a single company. The book also lacks a table of contents. However, this is the only “one stop” book on Rangers in Korea. The appendices include the Tables of Organization and Equipment, background on Ranger insignia, a detailed glossary of weapons used, a list of Rangers who died in training and combat, decorations awarded, an abbreviated history of each company, and a compendium of those who served.



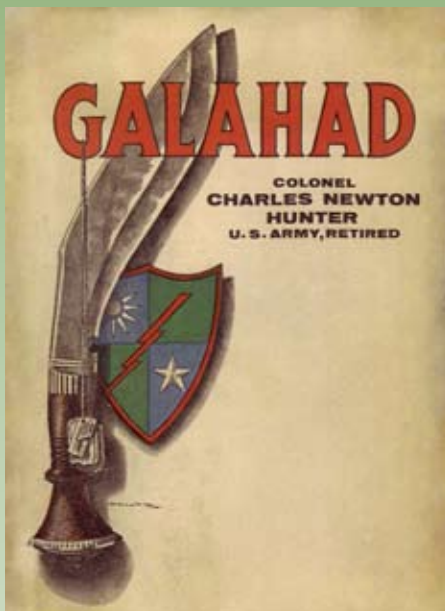
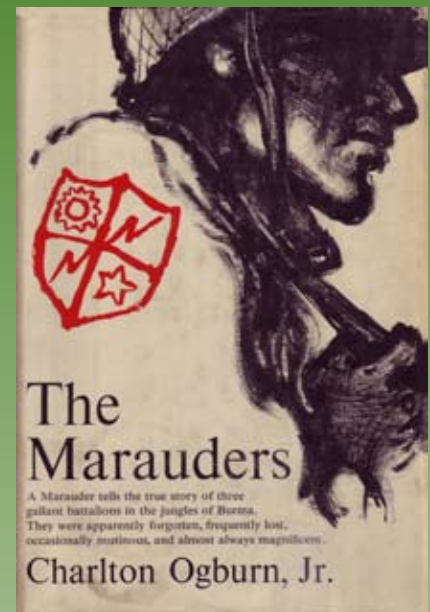
**James E.T. Hopkins with John M. Jones, *Spearhead: A Complete History of Merrill's Marauders Rangers* (Baltimore: Galahad Press, 1999).**

Many of the living Merrill’s Marauders veterans rate the newest book on the 5307th written by James E.T. Hopkins with John M. Jones as the best available—probably because a lot of them have their photos and stories included. Discounting that, *Spearhead* is a good read, and is well written by a former Marauder battalion surgeon and a battalion intelligence officer. The part that is distinctly missing are any footnotes containing cross-referenced documentary evidence to corroborate vignettes, personal accounts, and diaries. The authors have relied almost exclusively on secondary sources and uncited interviews. Appendices include individual decorations awarded, dead and wounded personnel, notes on jungle warfare, and a list of missing records.



Charlton Ogburn Jr., *The Marauders* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956).

The first published popular account of the Marauders was written by Charlton Ogburn Jr., a former battalion signal officer. The ex-lieutenant writes in the good, old-fashioned military history style: impersonal, clipped operations journal accounts strung together chronologically, with a smattering of specific commander “radio talk” to create atmosphere. For a first popular account it was good—enough to prompt the movie *Merrill’s Marauders*, with actor Jeff Chandler starring as Brigadier General Frank Merrill. Unfortunately, this book also lacks footnotes and uses limited sources.



Charles Newton Hunter, *Galahad* (San Antonio, TX: Naylor Publishers, 1963).

Though dated, *Galahad* is the best overall account of the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional)—the Merrill’s Marauders. It is written from the unit’s operational journals and contains the frustrations of a professional soldier and leader subordinated to a Stilwell favorite. Hunter actually commanded the Marauders throughout the northern Burma campaign—from India to Myitkyina—since Brigadier General Frank Merrill suffered several heart attacks that required air-evacuation and extended periods of hospitalization in India. *Galahad*, like *Spearhead* and *The Marauders*, lacks footnotes and the necessary documentation to stand the test of time. However, as one veteran said, “He tells it straight.” It has the “good, bad, and ugly” of the legendary Marauders and General Joseph E. Stilwell.

## Other Recommended Books on Topics Covered in this Issue:

- ♣ Linda Robinson, *Masters of Chaos* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).
- ♣ John Keegan, *The Iraq War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004).
- ♣ Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics, and Military Lessons* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2003).
- ♣ Michel De Trez, *First Airborne Task Force: Pictorial History of the Allied Paratroopers in the Invasion of Southern France* (Belgium: D-Day Publishing, 1998).

# Historical Snapshot

**I**N this famous World War II photograph of General Dwight D. Eisenhower talking to the officers and men of the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, before the D-Day jump into France on 6 June 1944, is the Headquarters Company commander, Captain Rudolph M. Jones (far right wearing canvas map case). The 1938 Clemson A&M University graduate was an Army Reserve Officer detailed to the Civilian Conservation Corps when he volunteered for parachute training. Jones made both combat jumps—Normandy and Holland—and survived the Battle of the Bulge during the war. When recalled to active service for Korea, World War II veteran Captain Rudy Jones commanded the 11th Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) that was activated 5 January 1951 for attachment to the 40th



*General Dwight D. Eisenhower talks to the officers and men of the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, on 5 June 1944, before the D-Day jump into France the following day. Captain Rudolph M. Jones, Headquarters Company Commander (wearing a canvas map case on his chest on the far right), was the father of retired Colonel "Rudy" Jones, Assistant G-3, USASOC.*

Infantry Division (California Army National Guard). Although the 11th Rangers were well prepared for Korea after mountain warfare training at Camp Carson, Colorado, the unit was inactivated in Japan in late September 1951, when the Army disbanded all Ranger companies. Captain Jones returned to the States and joined the Special Forces that had been created from the Ranger force structure. He served with the 10th and 77th Special Forces Groups before a shattered right femur and hip during a night jump at Camp Mackall, North Carolina, terminated his jumping days. Before retirement in 1963, Lieutenant Colonel Jones helped to write the first Counterinsurgency manual at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center. His son, Rudolph Jr., earned a Regular Army infantry commission from Clemson in 1968. Colonel (retired) Rudy Jones went to the Q Course in 1974, and served several tours in the 7th Special Forces

Group, commanding the 1st Battalion and then U.S. Military Group—El Salvador, followed by Chief of Staff and Deputy Commander, U.S. Army Special Forces Command before retirement. He is presently the Assistant G-3 for the U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

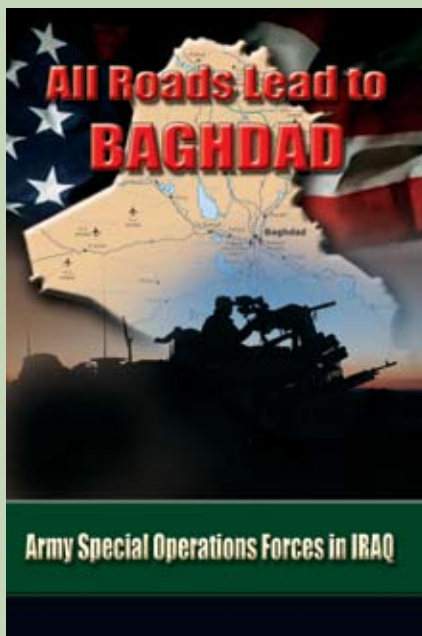


*Rudy Jones, DAC, Assistant DCS, G3, USASOC*

# Coming Soon



The second Army SOF poster produced by USASOC History Office will depict the Army Special Operations campaign in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan from November 2001 through May 2002. Only major combat actions from this period are shown. The poster, like the book, *All Roads Lead to Baghdad*, is at the publishers now. It has been sized to fit the largest standard frame available at the SSSC store. Distribution will be direct from publisher to company, battalion, group, and regiment levels. Another Army Special Operations Forces campaign poster for Iraq is being developed as well as one in honor of Lieutenant General William P. Yarborough.



The history of Army Special Operations Forces in the second campaign of America's Global War on Terrorism, Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, is at the publishers now. *All Roads Lead to Baghdad: Army Special Operations Forces in Iraq* is a current operations historical snapshot covering the campaign planning beginning in early 2002 through combat operations ending in June 2003, when ARSOF elements were most active during the war. This current history explains how Army special operations soldiers and airmen prepared for and executed their combat missions in support of U.S. Central Command. As was done in *Weapon of Choice: Army Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan*, it is the Army special operations soldiers and airmen who explain their roles and describe the combat actions. Distribution will be direct to company, battalion, group, and regiment levels, the vast preponderance going to the lowest level to reach the soldiers—the primary audience. Those individuals, organizations, and institutions on the *Veritas* (quarterly ARSOF history journal) mailing list will automatically receive a copy. The procedure for getting on this list is found in the inside front cover of the journal.

## ***In the Next Issue of Veritas***

### **The Road to Rome**

by Robert W. Jones Jr.

June 1944 was watershed month for the Allied cause in World War II. While much military history is focused on the 6 June 1944 D-Day landing in Normandy, also significant was the seizure of Rome on 4 June 1944 by the Fifth Army. The U.S.-Canadian First Special Service Force led most of the breakout from Anzio to Rome. However, the distinction of being the first unit into Rome goes to a special patrol composed of handpicked soldiers led by an officer from the First Special Service Force, Captain T. Mark Radcliffe.



### **Task Force 160 in Operation URGENT FURY**

by Kenneth Finlayson

The first operational test of the Army's Special Operations Aviation capability came in Operation URGENT FURY, the 1983 overthrow of the Marxist regime in Grenada. Although the operation lasted a scant few days, it provided the perfect testing ground for this new ARSOF capability.

### **Amputee Soccer in El Salvador**

by Charles H. Briscoe

Salvadoran veterans vied for positions on a national team that would win three consecutive World Cup Championships. The amputee soccer program evolved from a USMILGP-El Salvador humanitarian assistance project—orthopedic surgery and prosthetics. It quickly restored hope and confidence to IED victims, "spotlighted" the inhumanity of FMLN insurgents, galvanized national pride, and paved the way to post-war veterans' benefits—medical pensions and "Project Transition" occupation training. Sport by handicapped players was truly apolitical and could not be refuted by PSYOP.



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