AIR COMMANDO JOURNAL

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Dedicated to Air Commandos Past, Present, & Future

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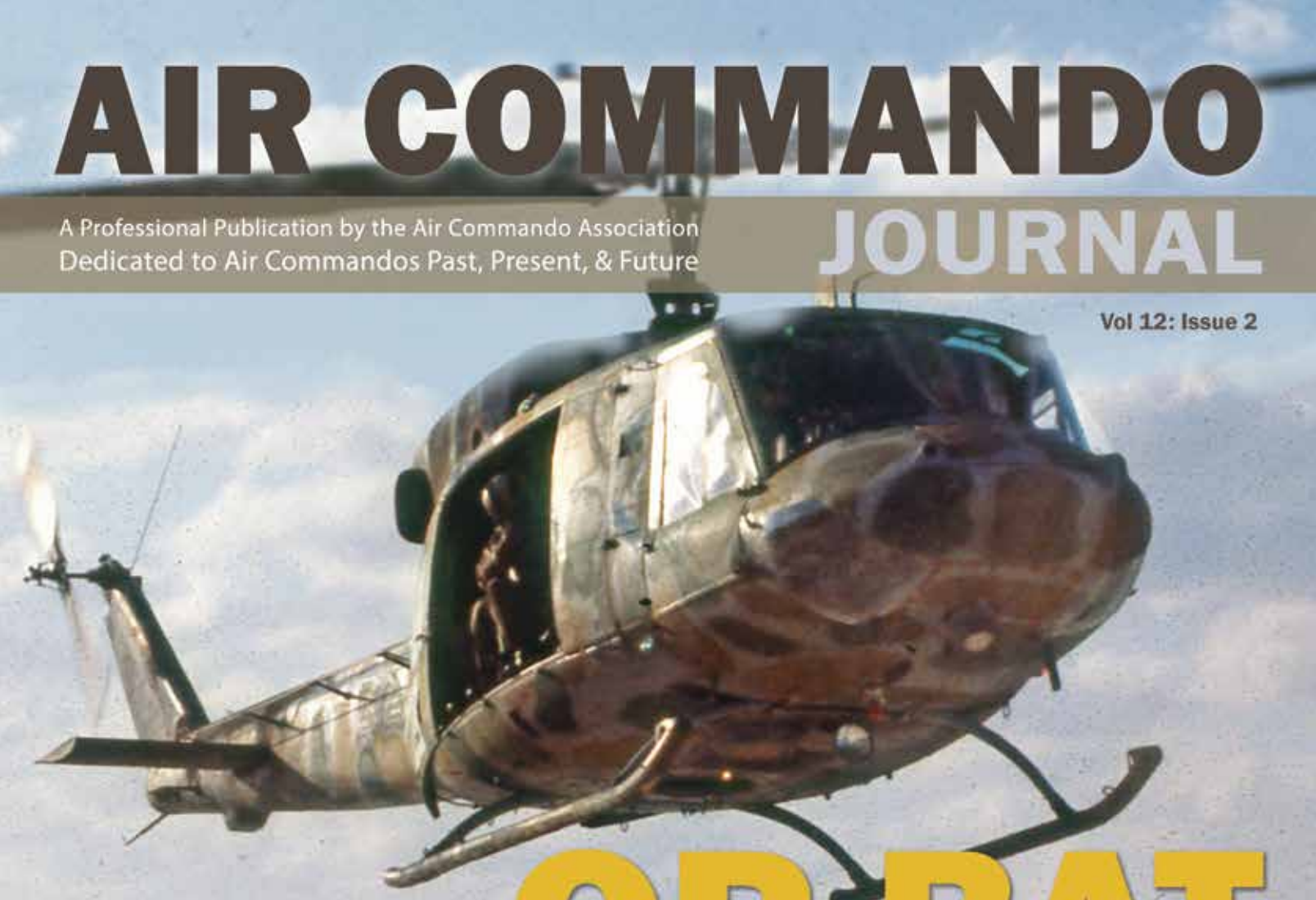

OP BAT
Operation Bahamas and Turks

Air Force Special Operations — How Far We've Come...

20th SOS Supports Drug Interdiction

Ditching and Search and Rescue of UH-1N 69-6644

The Tinian Accident A Retrospective

Foreword by Robert Armfield
Brigadier General, USAF, Retired

ANY TIME - ANY PLACE
ACA
AIR COMMANDO ASSOCIATION

Air Commando JOURNAL

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SMSgt Butch Aldridge, Capt Scott Cummings, Lt Grant Hardin, SSgt Keith Moore. Early OP BAT mission servicing remote radio repeaters in Bahamas. (Photo courtesy of Keith Moore)

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Inside This Issue

ON THE COVER:

Operation Bahamas and Turks and how the 20th SOS and the UH-1N gave chase to drug smugglers.

Foreword

Every edition of the *Air Commando Journal* squarely hits the target with value-added historical perspective for our Air Commandos. Today, our force needs the journal more than ever as they face a return to possible great power combat, but a guaranteed continuation of high-consequence special operations.

What the *Air Commando Journal* offers is a chance for current leaders to take a minute and learn from the past as they prepare to lead Airmen into what lies ahead. As was written long ago, there is nothing new under the sun.

Thanks to the ACJ Team for consistently producing such a professional product. I'm very humbled and honored to write this foreword.

This summer's issue offers some golden nuggets of insight into very unique missions that our teammates got after -- many times with limited resources and guidance -- and in typical Air Commando fashion, made the impossible possible. That is why the word "special" is in the name. If it was easy, somebody else would have already done it.

The highlight of this edition is one of those uniquely complex and difficult missions: Operation Bahamas and Turks, aka Op BAT where Air Commandos supported a White House effort to interdict drug smugglers in the early '80s using Vietnam era equipment while pioneering the use of NVGs and precision navigation. As you'll read, this was one hard mission and it came at a cost. For those who have been around for a while, your pulse will certainly quicken when you read Lt Col Warren Hubbard's "First Report" detailing the January 1984 loss of UH-1N, callsign 44 Alpha, and the search for missing crew members.

From the Caribbean to the Pacific, Butch Gilbert recounts the near tragedy that occurred on Tinian Island during a joint readiness exercise in 1985 that provides great lessons on operating in the remote Pacific islands.

For me, the most inspiring vignette is the epic story of Capt Warren Tomsett and his crew flying their C-47, callsign Extol Pink, into rising terrain and deteriorating weather to land on a remote Vietnam hillside runway marked with a few burning rolls of toilet paper; all to save the lives of a handful of critically injured Vietnamese soldiers.

The issue opens with an AFSOC history lesson by Lt Gen Donny Wurster. I was fortunate to have served under General Wurster and he succinctly recounts how Air Force Special Operations grew from the 1st SOW being a tenant unit on Hurlburt Field with just three flying squadrons in the late 70s into what AFSOC is today. General Wurster relates how a handful of Air Commando budget programming ninjas, strategically placed on Air Force, USSOCOM, and AFSOC staffs, recapitalized our entire fleet of aircraft. Emerging leaders need to study and remember how AFSOC pulled off this recapitalization feat as it will need to be done again in the future.

This edition also highlights the dedication of the Spirit 03 memorial at USAFA so that future Air Commandos can study and honor those who did not return from their final mission.

Finally, the ACJ always provides clear-eyed and straight-shooting book reviews and this edition is no exception as they comment on *Wisdom of the Bullfrog* (it's good) and hopefully bury once and for all the infamous *Relentless Strike*.

Hoo-yah Team, RA

Brig Gen Robert "Gwyn" Armfield, USAF (Retired)
Former Commander, 24th Special Operations Wing
Hurlburt Field, FL

Hotwash

55th Special Operations Squadron

Once again I spent many enjoyable hours reading the recent Air Commando Journal (Vol. 11-2) about the exploits of the 55th Special Operations Squadron. Every article was excellent but, in particular, I enjoyed reading Maj Gen Chad Franks' foreword which highlighted the outstanding accomplishments of the 55th SOS as they were being deactivated as the command transitioned from the MH-60G to the CV-22 Osprey.

I applaud the 55th's accomplishments and agree they were indeed a dedicated unit that had a positive impact on the overall accomplishment of the Air Commando family. But my primary enjoyment was thinking about my time in the 55th Air Rescue Squadron (ARS), which was the "Papa" to the 55th SOS.

1. I signed in to the 55th ARS in 1961 when they were flying out of Kindley AFB, Bermuda, with fixed wing aircraft (C-54 and later C-97) and helicopters (H-19). Our primary mission was twofold: Provide navigational and possible rescue for all aircraft (in particular single engine fighter aircraft) using the southern oceanic route flying from the States to Europe, where we would fly an orbit half way between Bermuda and a Coast Guard ship, "Ocean Station Echo," which was stationed in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Then, half way between "Ocean Station Echo" and the Azores, another rescue aircraft would orbit to ensure total coverage for the complete oceanic route.

2. Our second mission was to provide search and rescue for lost or distressed aircraft and ships throughout the western Atlantic Ocean. This area included the infamous "Bermuda Triangle" where we spent many long hours searching for lost aircraft and ships.

During this time, the 55th ARS accomplished many outstanding missions throughout the western hemisphere which may be of interest to all who are celebrating the more recent outstanding accomplishments of the 55th SOS.

Most people believe the United States ceased flying U-2s over the Soviet Union after Francis Garry Powers was shot down in 1960. I believe all the United States did was transfer the mission from the CIA to the USAF and we in the 55th ARS spent many months flying in Alaska supporting their operation. On one classified mission, which I feel is safe to comment on since it happened some sixty years ago, our navigator prevented another international incident when a U-2 pilot became "disoriented." While orbiting one night close to the Soviet border, our navigator was able to reverse the U-2 pilot's heading and safely return him to Alaska. He accomplished this outstanding act by having the U-2 pilot tell him the position of the stars while flying various headings. Finally, realizing the U-2 route was 180 degrees wrong, he had the pilot reverse direction and safely returned to Alaska.

The 55th also supported the U-2 mission flying out of Howard AFB, Panama, during the period when China was developing their nuclear weapons. The U-2 pilots would depart Howard, fly west at maximum altitude, and return with air samples showing the type of weapons China was developing. Nothing of note happened to the U-2s during that mission, but the month spent in the Canal Zone produced many enjoyable events.

I was also fortunate to support all the Mercury and Apollo flights that took place during my Bermuda tour. We trained extensively to be ready to deploy two PJs with a horse collar to secure the capsule if it splashed down outside the planned landing area where Navy ships were stationed to make a normal pickup. The programs went well and it was exciting to be part of the start of Space Flight.

> "The *Air Commando Journal*... Massively Successful! I save all mine."
>
> **Marshall "Brad" Webb, Lt Gen (Retired)**
> **Former AFSOC Commander**
> (Used with permission by Lt Gen Brad Webb)

When President Kennedy gave his Cuban Missile Crisis speech on 22 October 1962 I was in the air flying to Homestead AFB, Florida where the 55th would remain until the Soviets accepted Kennedy's terms to give up their missiles in Cuba. Our mission was to rescue any pilot who had to bail out or ditch north of Cuba. I believe we flew an eight hour orbit just north and below Cuban radar at 100 feet off the ocean. All in all the mission was very boring, but we found one small land mass where kids were producing salt

ACA members from the Northwest Florida area volunteered to share their history and experience with students from the 492nd.
(Photo submitted by MSgt Delois Sistrunk-Giles, 492nd SOTRSS)

HOTWASH CONTINUED

so we made parachutes and delivered candy to them every day. I thought our flight was boring – just imagine those kids slaving every day harvesting salt. The only other excitement was when we returned and checked in with Miami Center. Since we were gone so long and always below radar they would scramble F-102 aircraft because they didn't believe who we said we were. Knowing that fighters were scrambled we would speed up until we spotted them approaching us from the rear. We would then slow down to almost stall speed and watch them flash by. A little humor to end a boring day.

Finally, another very interesting TDY was participating in Operation Iucho, a joint United States and Peru Air Force exercise. Exploring Peru with a local sponsor, an air force captain and son of the Peruvian Defense Minister, proved to be a year's education in two weeks.

All in all serving with the "Papa" of the 55th SOS was an outstanding and extremely busy three years. It will go down as one of my most enjoyable assignments during my 30 plus years as an active duty Air Force pilot. Keep up the great work in reporting our Air Commando history!

Col Philip J. Conran, USAF (Retired)
ACA Life Member #2174
Editor's note: Col Conran is a member of the ACA Hall of Fame, Class of 1998

Picture Mistake

The picture of the MH-53J and Chinook in this months ACJ is labeled wrong. The "Pave" that is supposed to be pictured is a CH-53E, the three engine Marine version of the H-53. The canted tail is the most obvious feature. Common mistake, I remember when the Safety Office published a magazine cover with the wrong 53 version once too.

Love the magazine and articles, I look forward to it every month.

James Abbott
ACA Life Member #5796

James,

Thank you for your comment about the picture accompanying the BRAVO 20 article.

Yes, we knew we'd get a critique or two, so we added that it was a representation of a MH-53 leading the RAF Chinook in the caption. It was the best picture we could find to graphically depict the mission Bill LeMenager wrote about.

Yes, it is a Marine CH-53E, but the CH-47 is an RAF Chinook... Can we get partial credit for trying?

Thanks again for your comment and your loyal readership of the Air Commando Journal.

Paul Harmon
Editor, ACJ

Dear Editor — Colonel Harmon,

The *Air Commando Journal* is an outstanding publication. I was especially interested in the Bravo Two Zero article, as a squadron mate of mine from the 7SOS was almost launched in an MC-130E to drop that team a Fulton kit and pick them up in northern Iraq. Unfortunately, SOCEUR cancelled that mission, and it never was executed. I was glad to know that at least someone went looking for them.

The Air Commando Journal is the ideal mechanism to keep the history of Air Force Special Operations alive and to celebrate our accomplishments, and remember those who have given "the full measure of devotion."

I look back with great pride as the new MC-130J model aircraft come online, and only wish I could get back in the left seat for a night low level/NVG mission. However, I think that it's important for the next generation of AFSOC Warriors to understand the successes and mistakes of the past, not to mention the sacrifices and struggles to establish an Air Force Special Operations capability that the USAF never really wanted. This is why the *Air Commando Journal* is so important.

Harold B. "Butch" Gilbert
Major, USAF, Retired. (S-78)

The *Air Commando Journal* wants to hear from you!!
Send in your comments or thoughts about our publication for the HOTWASH section
Email: info@aircommando.org

AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS

By Donny Wurster, Lt Gen, USAF (Retired)

As Lt Gen Bauernfeind flew the last MC-130H Combat Talon II to the boneyard recently, it brought me to a moment of reflection regarding AFSOC and how far the command has come.

In the early years between the end of the war in Southeast Asia and the tragic events at Desert One in 1980, the forces had slowly aged and been reduced over time. In the late 70s Hurlburt Field was owned by TAC (Tactical Air Command, now Air Combat Command) and the entire stateside special operations inventory consisted of six MC-130E Combat Talons in the 8th SOS, ten AC-130H Spectre gunships in the 16th SOS, and six Hueys and four CH-3Es in the 20th SOS. Overseas there were four MC-130E Combat Talons assigned in each of the 1st SOS and 7th SOS with these assets being assigned to the theater. Additionally, the Air Force Reserves in the 919th Special Operations Group (SOG) flew SOF AC-130As while the Air National Guard's 193rd Electronic Warfare Group, (later SOG in 1983) flew EC-130 Commando Solos in a PSYOP role. Within that small but dedicated community, the flames of commitment to mission and precision execution burned brightly.

Following the mishap at Desert One national leadership sought to reconstitute a more robust special operations capability. Congress approved budgetary actions to procure new MC-130s and AC-130s, but they would take years to deliver. Rapid, immediate actions moved the nine existing HH-53H Pave Low helicopters to the 1st SOW replacing the UH-1Ns and CH-3Es. These were promptly employed in numerous difficult exercise scenarios to rapidly develop capabilities and tactics that are still in use today.

Courageous and shrewd staff actions resulted in numerous modifications and logistics upgrades to the aged fleets as well as the modification of all remaining C/HH-53s to the MH-53J Pave Low configuration. MH-60G Pave Hawks were purchased and filled the role of dedicated combat rescue for SOF.

There was significant turbulence

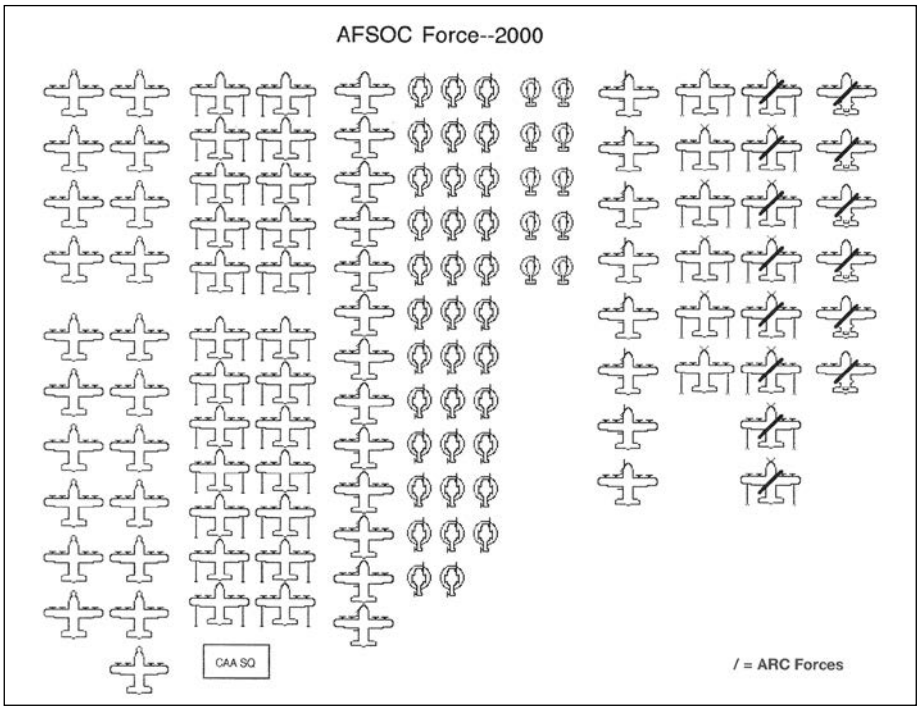
HOW FAR WE'VE COME

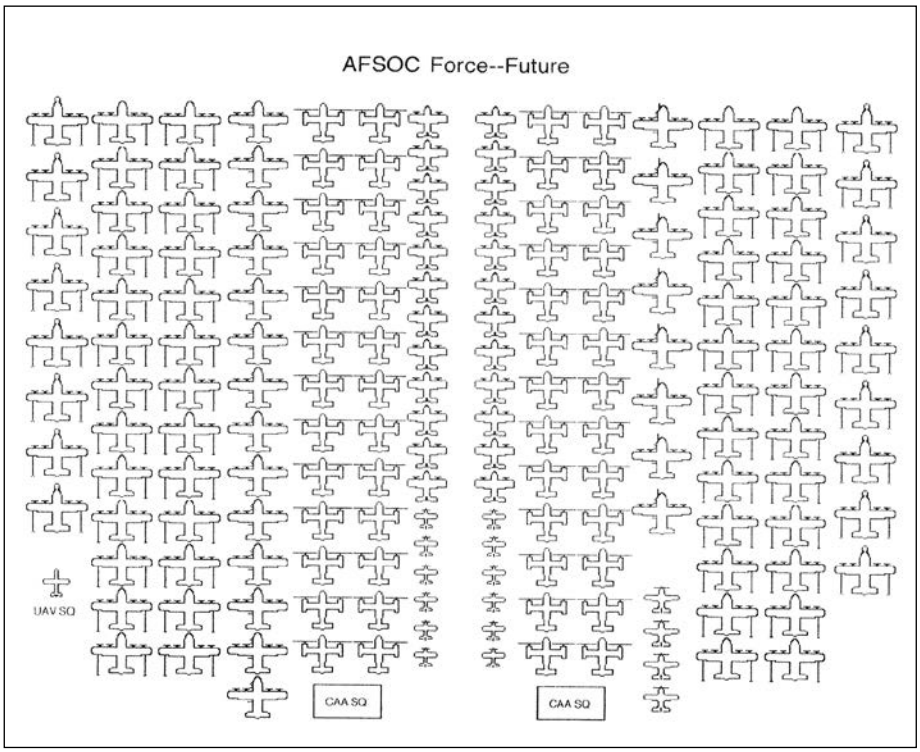
as forces moved from TAC to MAC (Military Airlift Command, now Air Mobility Command), as 23rd Air Force stood up under MAC and moved to Hurlburt Field, and the later challenges of personnel and asset reallocation when AFSOC became an Air Force major command (MAJCOM). MAC established the 834th Air Base Wing (ABW) at Hurlburt with the 1st SOW as a tenant wing. MAC selected commanders for the 1st SOW who frequently had little or no SOF experience. Additionally, response time and priority of 834th ABW assets needed to successfully execute the 1st SOW rapid deployment mission generated points of friction. Eventually, the 1st SOW gained control of Hurlburt Field and most assigned support organizations were included in AFSOC. In the midst of this SOF forces were heavily employed in operations in Grenada and Panama. Following the 1987 Goldwater-Nichols Congressional action that established USSOCOM and collected additional fixed and rotary wing forces into the special operations community, the force structure increased dramatically bringing numerous MC-130Ps into the inventory, as well as the rest of the H-53 fleet. Also, all overseas special operations forces came under the centralized SOF command structure.

Most of these actions stabilized by the early 1990s and over the next few years the MC-130H Combat Talon II and AC-130U Spooky fleets were delivered to the field. Most of AFSOC's inventory were still Vietnam era aircraft and needed replacement, especially since, frequently only one aircraft would be assigned to a difficult, but critical mission. The logistics and maintenance teams that kept these machines flying were exceptional, but recapitalization of the fleets was needed. The first graphic on page 10 shows AFSOC forces in the year 2000.

But national requirements left little time for modernization as combat actions in Desert Storm, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq stressed the aging fleet as well as the crews who flew and maintained

them, however, the commitment to mission and precision execution remained steadfast in the growing SOF community. Four MC-130Ps and all of the MH-60Gs were reduced by budget cuts at USSOCOM, four Combat Talon IIs, one MC-130P, and one AC-130H were lost due to combat and accidents, Four MC-130Es were cut from the budget, and the rest of them were moved into the 919th SOW (AFRC) while the AC-130As were sent to the boneyard. Several MH-53s were lost in the difficult environments of high altitudes and brownouts in the desert campaigns, further reducing AFSOC's force structure. MC-130Ws had been added to support combat operations, but the pressing need for armed overwatch resulted in the diversion of these aircraft and crews from a mobility mission to an AC-130W gunship capability.





To remain relevant, AFSOC had to modernize and recapitalize. The CV-22 was coming, but too slowly. The first aircraft arrived in 2007, but the MH-53s had been drawn down in the USSOCOM budget and they were gone from the inventory by the end of that year. New mission sets had produced new requirements in combat and manned and unmanned ISR became a priority mission for AFSOC. Procurement of Predator (MQ-1) and later Reaper (MQ-9) remotely piloted aircraft, and U-28 Dracos became a pressing priority and the entire command and acquisition community responded to this need, fielding each system in minimum time along with the processing, exploitation, and dissemination architectures to make them effective. Within a year, thanks to the herculean efforts of many, these systems were up and running while growing capability rapidly and supporting combat operations.

The future of AFSOC required a modern, balanced, recapitalization effort that supported both old and new missions. In 2007, a detailed way ahead was captured in what became known as 'The Little Airplane Brief." These charts laid out the types and numbers of aircraft needed to build AFSOC to answer the challenges of current combat operations and future requirements. The plan would bring non-standard aviation into the inventory to support small team movements, manned and unmanned ISR, CV-22s, and a variant of the C-130J for both mobility and strike roles. Missions for active, reserve, and National Guard units would be adjusted to match the current and evolving mission needs of USSOCOM's air component and gained forces.

The graphic to the left, is the last chart from the "Little Airplane Brief" that represented the vision of what AFSOC would become and beyond. It was never shown outside the command as all of us worked to completely recapitalize the AFSOC fleet. The

Air Commando leaders from WWII until today at an Air Commando Association gathering in Fort Walton Beach, FL. Maj Gen Johnny Alison, Lt Col Dick Cole, Brig Gen Heine Aderholt, and Lt Gen Donny Wurster. (Photo courtesy of General Wurster)

AFSOC General Officers commemorating the 10 year anniversary of Cannon AFB becoming the 27th SOW. (Photo courtesy of General Wurster)

vision of a 94 C-130J recapitalization across the entire AC and MC-130 inventory promised to be a challenge.

With Tony's nostalgic flight to the boneyard, that vision is complete. To the best of my knowledge, the aircraft that entered AFSOC's inventory first in today's force is probably a U-28 that we bought out of Trade-A-Plane in the early days of that highly accelerated effort, although the Dornier's had time on them when they entered the inventory. This effort succeeded with only relatively minor adjustments because six commanders in a row shared a vision of the future and carried it out. General Holland's words that the command always needs a "consistent, compelling message" proved true.

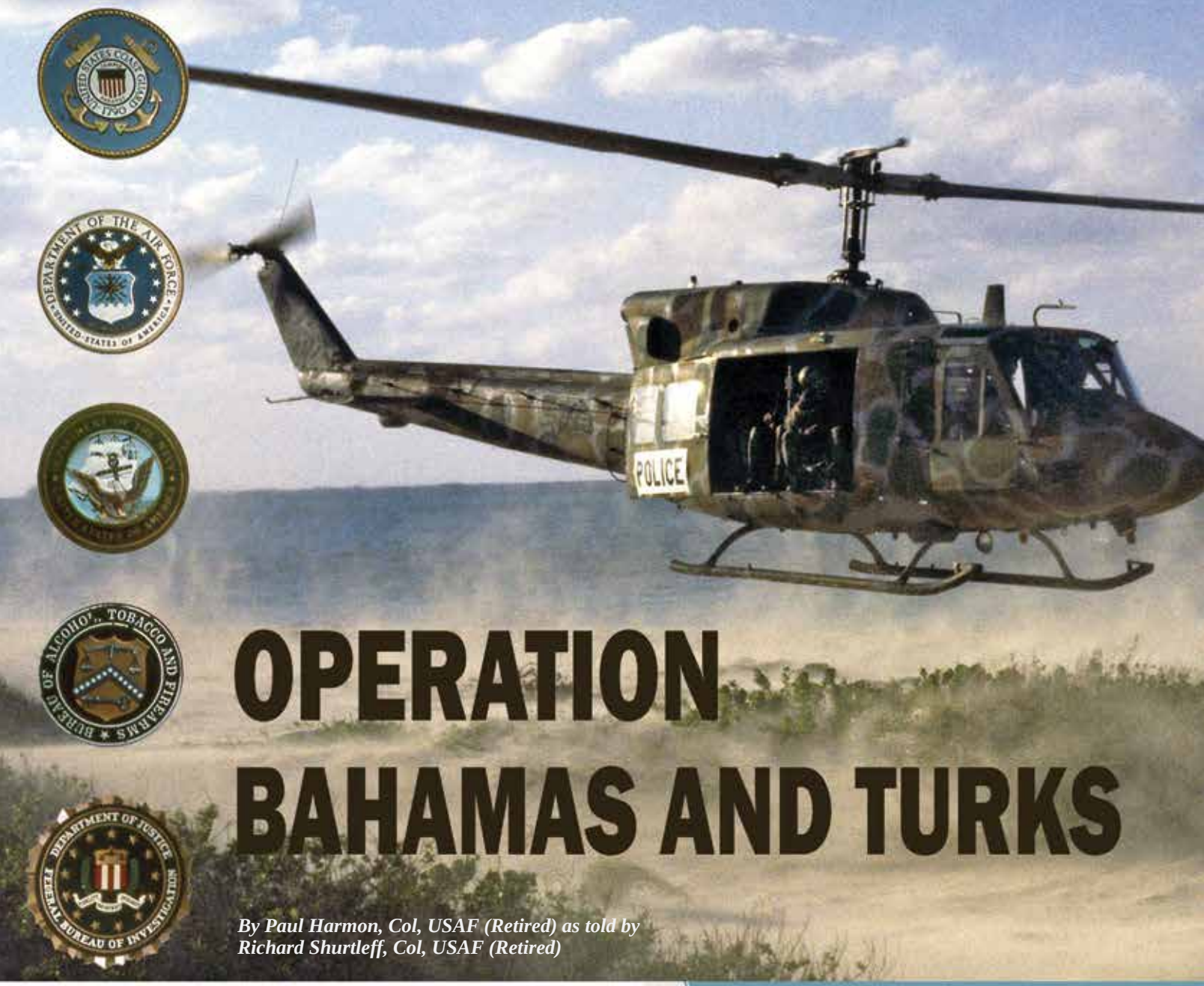
All of the Vietnam era aircraft (AC-130H, MC-130E, MH-53, UH-1N, and MC-130P) and even the post-Desert One procurements (AC-130U, MH-60G, MC-130H, M/AC-130W) have been retired, replaced by MC-130Js, AC-130Js, CV-22s, U-28s, NSAVs, RPAs, and others. Although the M-28s were lost to a budget cut, the C-146 Wolfhounds continue support theater commander requirements effectively. Further, our special tactics squadrons and force overall grew dramatically, eventually becoming a wing after reacting aggressively to a critical Joint Terminal Attack Control shortfall, resulting in the most decorated enlisted force since the Vietnam era PJs.

Decades ago, before USSOCOM was established, one would wonder if a handful of Hueys and later Pave Lows, a few Spectres, and disparate Combat Talon squadrons could spawn an organization of 20,000 Air Commandos who would prove on a daily basis that the culture of excellence and commitment could expand to that magnitude. At a time when the 1st SOW consisted of three small SOF operational squadrons on a hosted base that would frequently import a wing commander from outside the community…one would wonder if such a result could occur.

The command has responded in ways unimagined, the leadership of officers and NCOs across the board have driven the pillars of integrity, excellence, and service before self deeply into the culture of the command…I would add courage to that list too.

Since the sad times of an imported wing commander, AFSOC has produced about 40 general officers. Take a look at the faces in the picture of the Cannon AFB 10 year reunion. Last year AFSOC had six 3-star officers on active duty simultaneously. Three former AFSOC commanders have gone on to a second 3-star position and one now serves as the first HAF/Directorate…in the A-3, no less. A CSAF, JSOC commander, USSOCOM commander, multiple USSOCOM deputy commanding generals, two deputy commanding generals of combatant commands, the National Defense University commander and more talent on the rise. The command has arrived and is seen with respect by our Air Force, our nation, and our enemies.

Well done Air Commandos!



OPERATION BAHAMAS AND TURKS

By Paul Harmon, Col, USAF (Retired) as told by Richard Shurtleff, Col, USAF (Retired)

Background — America's Drug Problem

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas consists of 700 remote and sparsely populated islands, 2,000 cays and islets widely dispersed over 100,000 square miles of ocean. The northern Bahamian islands begin 70 miles east of Palm Beach, Florida, and extend south to just northwest of Haiti. The area is an economically poor third world country with limited transportation and communications. The Bimini Island chain, the western most district of the Bahamas, is only 65 miles east of Miami making it an ideal location for the transload or staging of drugs destined for south Florida.

The islands gained their independence from the United Kingdom in 1973. Carlos Lehder, one of the more notorious kingpins of the Medellin Drug Cartel, arrived to the

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20th SOS Supports Drug Interdiction

islands in 1978 and began buying up property on Norman Cay, which is about 40 miles southeast of Nassau in the Exuma island chain. By 1980 Lehder controlled the entire island.

The Bahamas became a trans-shipment point for both marijuana and cocaine. At the time, cocaine was not really on the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) radar screen and the Carter Administration saw no health hazard associated with it at the time, but Lehder's plan to revolutionize the cocaine trade changed that. By early 1985, Federal authorities estimated 70 percent of cocaine entering the U.S. came through the Bahamas. Previously, drug dealers relied on human "mules" to smuggle the drugs on regular commercial flights into the United States. Using Norman Cay as a trans-shipment point much larger quantities of the drug could be transported with far less risk of being intercepted by law enforcement. To facilitate the operation, Lehder built a 3,300 foot runway and protected it by installing a radar and employing armed guards with sentry dogs. Lehder's pilots flew from his island to northern Columbia regularly to pick up cocaine and returned to Norman where the product was transferred to smaller personal-type aircraft that would fly it to drop points in the United States. En route to the States, these small aircraft blended in with the high density, low-altitude weekend traffic between the Bahamas and the Florida coast. Early on the Bahamian government 'looked the other way' and did

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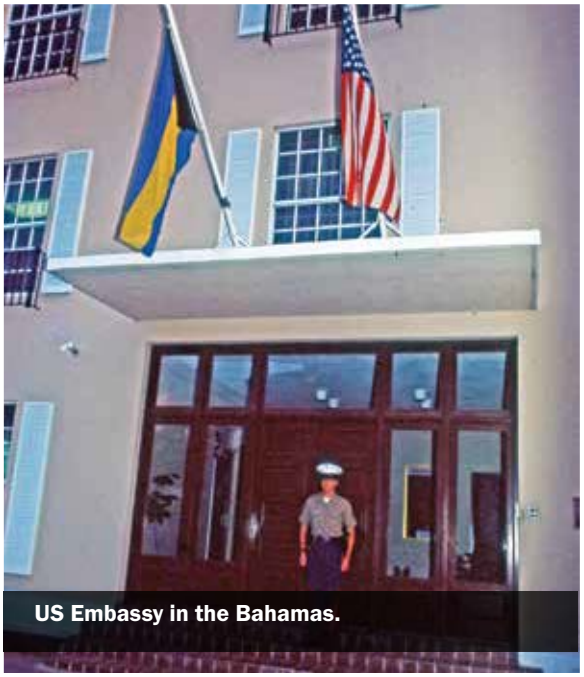
nothing to curtail these and other operations.

One of President Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign promises was to take action against the criminal organizations that were moving into south Florida. These organizations were financed primarily through the illicit drug trade and the problem was growing. The Reagan Administration began diplomatic discussions with the Bahamian government to enlist its assistance with the drug trafficking emanating from within its territorial borders and in 1982, the Bahamian authorities, under pressure from the U.S., finally shut down the Norman Cay operation. However, the use of the Bahamian islands as trans-shipment points for marijuana and cocaine continued unabated. During the discussions with the Bahamian government and the British-administered Turks and Caicos, it became apparent that their law enforcement agencies were not equipped to locate and stop the smugglers' aircraft and small boats. Ultimately, the US administration entered into an agreement to cooperate with and improve the ability of the Bahamian and Turks and Caicos governments and law enforcement agencies to prosecute and convict drug traffickers. Further, the agreement also authorized U.S. forces to fly within Bahamian airspace and to patrol their contiguous waters. It is important to note that while the U.S. agencies and eventually military units appeared to be supporting and assisting the Bahamian government, it was the United States that had the drug problem and the Bahamians were actually assisting us.



US Embassy in the Bahamas.

The Reagan administration's focus on the problem led to the creation of the South Florida Task Force (SFTF) in February 1982. The SFTF was a conglomeration of 19 federal, state, and local law enforcement organizations and demonstrated the administration was engaged with the issue. Reagan tasked Vice President George H. W. Bush to oversee and direct the task force. The SFTF became the blueprint and other Joint Drug Task Forces were created in several other large cities around the country. One big difference was the SFTF mission extended outside of U.S. territorial borders and waters and into other sovereign nations, which had their own military and law enforcement entities. The SFTF also used military assets in an interdiction role because they [Air Force] were uniquely capable of disrupting the traffickers before they could reach the U.S. shores.

A DEA special agent working as the narcotics attaché in the United States embassy in Nassau conceived of the Bahamas and Turks task force. The goal was to cut the drug flow before it reached the United States. This project was integrated into the SFTF and as a result, Operation Bahamas and Turks (Op BAT) quietly became operational in April 1982 with the DEA as the lead agency. The DEA directed Op BAT from the American Embassy in Nassau with cooperation and support from U.S. Customs Service, the State Department, U.S. Coast Guard among others, and several Bahamian agencies.

The DEA used two UH-1H helicopters, on loan from the U.S. Army, to provide the Royal Bahamian Police Strike Force (RBPSF) with tactical mobility to get to the islands identified as air and boat trans-shipment sites. For clarity, Op BAT was not technically a part of the SFTF, it was a part of the U.S. State Department's Bahamian country team under the direction of the U.S. Ambassador, Lev E. Dobriansky.

In March 1983, President Reagan created the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System (NNBIS) to coordinate the efforts of the federal agencies that had responsibilities and capabilities to interdict seaborne, airborne, and other cross-border importation of narcotics. The NNBIS complemented, but did not replicate the duties of the regional drug enforcement task forces operated by the Department of Justice. The Miami based SFTF evolved into a regional headquarters (in Miami) of NNBIS.

Conducting the Operation

To better understand the SFTF drug interdiction mission and how the Air Force supported the overall operation, then-Major Richard Shurtleff described the three phase process for effective drug trafficking interdiction in his 1986 Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) paper.

Intelligence/Detection Phase:

First, it was critical for the SFTF, or any agency, to know who they were up against, their methods and tactics to facilitate their operation, then they had to find the offenders. Good intelligence and detection of the traffickers was the first request for military support to the problem set. The Air Force had radars at Cudjoe Key (18 mile northeast of Key West) and at Cape Canaveral. The US Navy used long range P-3C Orion and E-2C Hawk Eye surveillance aircraft which could detect low flying aircraft and boats which were being used for drug trafficking. The Air Force also supported the operation with B-52H bombers flying maritime

patrol training sorties, as well as with the E-3A AWACS, which could coordinate various intelligence collection and detection activities. Additionally, the North American Aerospace Defense Command or NORAD could supply information collected by the U.S. air defense systems.

All the above assets were integrated with Federal Aviation Administration radars, Flight Service Stations, U.S. Customs Service radars in Miami (Slingshot), Andros Island in the Bahamas(Rampart), and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (Almighty). In addition non-radar equipped helicopters and DEA aircraft flying visual patrols in the Bahamas and as far south as Panama and other parts of Central America and South America supported the drug interdiction enterprise.

There was a lot of information collected by this multitude of sources. The information needed to be analyzed and disseminated to the all the involved law enforcement entities and the DEA's El Paso Intelligence Center or EPIC managed this critical process. Established in 1974, EPIC' s mission was to integrate, analyze, and disseminate all the drug information available from all the engaged federal and state agencies. The focus of this article is the Bahamas, but EPIC received and disseminated intelligence on drug trafficking from and to multiple sectors across the U.S. This process enabled the SFTF to setup an operational plan of action in order track suspected targets.

Radio operator. (Photo courtesy of Smokey Hubbard)

Tracking Phase:

Once the intelligence proves correct and a suspicious target is detected, it is handed over to SFTF. They launch a small fixed wing aircraft, such as a U.S. Marine Corps OV-10 or other small twin-engine aircraft, to "put eyes" on the suspected trafficker. The E-3A or ground radar operators would then vector the SFTF aircraft toward the target until it was within visual range. Once the intercept was made, the pilot pulled up, usually to the target's six o'clock position, to visually inspect the aircraft. The SFTF pilots passed additional information, such as type and color of the aircraft, tail number, other distinctive markings as well as how many people were on board, and anything else they could see inside the suspected trafficker aircraft. The SFTF aircraft stayed with the target until they landed, and either landed behind it, or called for additional assets, such as helicopters with law enforcement aboard.

Seizure Phase:

The seizure phase is generally the easiest phase, but has the potential to be the most dangerous for law enforcement because they were dealing with armed cartel-backed drug traffickers. As mentioned, the tracking aircraft followed the suspected traffickers to the landing or a boat to a remote area and contact other SFTF assets, either federal, state, or local law enforcement that can effect an arrest and seizure of contraband.

While it takes just a few paragraphs to describe the process, in reality it took quite some time, once detected, for the target aircraft to get to where they landed or airdropped their loads to waiting boats who then needed to be tracked and seized.

Integrating the US Military More Directly:

After nearly a year of operations it become apparent to the DEA in Nassau, the SFTF in Miami, and the leadership in Washington, DC, that the DEA could not support Op BAT alone. To get some help, the DEA requested additional military support through the Department of Justice to the Vice President's office. After much discussion between the DOD, the military services, and Congress, two U.S. Air Force helicopters were tasked to augment the DEA in support of Op BAT and the SFTF operation in May 1983.

There were several legal concerns with the U.S. military supporting civilian law enforcement agencies. The Posse Comitatus Act is a federal statute, enacted in 1878, and it forbade the use of the U.S. Army (after 1956 the Air Force and ultimately including U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and Space Force in 2022) for domestic law enforcement purposes without the approval of Congress. The limitation does not apply to the National Guard of the United States when it is activated by a state's governor and operating under Title 32 of the U.S. Code. Congress, using the 1982 Defense Authorization Act, revised multiple sections of the Posse Comitatus law outlining Military Cooperation with Civilian Law Enforcement Officials. The revisions clarified the use of information collected during military operations; use of military equipment and facilities; training and advising civilian law enforcement officials and assistance by the DOD personnel; and amended the restriction of direct participation of military personnel, which authorized military members to operate and maintain the equipment used for civilian law enforcement. Finally, Congress made it clear that it viewed the Posse Comitatus Act and the remaining prohibitions, not addressed within the areas mentioned, against military involvement in civilian law/drug enforcement as applying only within the territories of the United States and not "extra-territorially." The Attorney General of the United States and the Secretary of Defense signed a joint declaration of emergency due to the severity of the drug problem, clarifying that the law restricts military personnel from

It was all hands on deck when loading and unloading the UH-1s.
(Photo courtesy of Smokey Hubbard)

making arrests, conducting searches or seizures, or directly interdicting vessels, aircraft, or other vehicles. In short, the military did (does) not have any law enforcement authority.

The 20th SOS 'Green Hornets' Join Op BAT

After much discussion within the Department of Defense and the Air Force, the responsibility for supporting the Op BAT drug interdiction mission was assigned to the Military Airlift Command (now Air Mobility Command), down through the 2nd Air Division (since deactivated) to the 1st Special Operation Wing, and ultimately to the 20th Special Operations Squadron at Hurlburt Field effective 1 May 1983.

Before the operation began, instructions from Headquarters Air Force was to "do it skinny," meaning use the minimum force required at the minimum expense to meet the tasking. This guidance begot a lean and tailored force of 2 Vietnam vintage UH-1N twin-engine helicopters and 19 personnel with crews coming primarily from the 20th SOS. The Op BAT team consisted of a temporary duty commander, an operations officer, two 4-man aircrews, eight maintenance personnel, and one fuel specialist, who operated a USAF fuel truck flown down to Nassau for the mission.

Once in the Bahamas, the team operated out of the Royal Bahamian Police College on Nassau, which became the center for flight operations. The 20th routinely used an abandoned airport ramp adjacent to the Police College and the maintenance crew performed routine service and maintenance at the Nassau heliport. The deployed personnel lived in comfortable contract quarters at the rate of $24 dollars a night avoiding expensive hotel rates in the tourist oriented economy. The crew also had six rental cars to support the operation in Nassau.

The U.S. Navy's Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center or AUTEC on Andros Island provided additional support for the 20th's operation. The Navy operated helicopters from AUTEC and had the hangar space, special tools, and equipment to support the 20th SOS contingent. The 20th SOS maintainers were able to source a lot of spare parts and could perform heavy maintenance at the AUTEC facility.

In addition to the USAF assets, the DEA had three permanent and three temporary duty agents assigned to Op BAT. These agents staffed the operations center, conducted joint planning with the 20th SOS aircrews, flew as law enforcement advisors to the Bahamian Police, and acted as liaisons between the Bahamian Police and the 20th SOS leadership and crews. The DEA also maintained two light twin aircraft, a King Air and an Piper Aerostar, and four pilots to support Op BAT with air patrols and mobility for the Bahamian Police.

The DEA and the 20th SOS operated a joint operations center located in the American Embassy in Nassau. Tasking was received from the Vice President's office through the U.S. Ambassador at Nassau and the Narcotics attaché. The 20th SOS officers conducted joint planning and coordination of efforts in order to execute the assigned missions.

The 20th SOS's mission was to support Op BAT by providing tactical mobility for the Royal Bahamian Police Strike Force (RBPSF). The strike force was made up of five or six-man paramilitary tactical teams, similar to what we know in the U.S. as SWAT, and they had law enforcement authorities. The teams were carried M-16s and side arms (aircrews were not authorized to carry weapons) and the 20th SOS UH-1N crews delivered the Bahamian teams to the scene of the drug activity to witness the violations, seize contraband and other evidence, and make arrests. Interesting point is that the 20th SOS helicopters flew with a "POLICE" sign affixed

Refueling and maintenance in the Bahamas (Photo courtesy of Smokey Hubbard)

SPECIAL OPERATIONS WARRIOR FOUNDATION

Honoring the fallen by taking care of their children... to ensure future happiness through academic success... it's the least we can do.

In 1980, during Operation Eagle Claw, a courageous, but failed, attempt was made to rescue 52 Americans held hostage in Iran. On that tragic day, eight Special Operations Forces lost their lives, leaving behind 17 children.

In memory, their teammates made an immediate enduring battlefield promise to take care of those and subsequent surviving children by providing a program that would expand to include full educations, and additional educational opportunities, "cradle to career" (preschool – college), to the surviving children of Special Operations Forces lost in the line of duty. The feeling then was, and will continue to be, it is the least we can do to honor those who made, and unfortunately will make, the ultimate sacrifice.

In 2020, Special Operations Warrior Foundation enhanced eligibility to include children of all Medal of Honor Recipients. SOWF continues to provide financial assistance to severely wounded, ill, and injured Special Operations Personnel.

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PROGRAMS AND SERVICES INCLUDE:

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- Preschool programs for children ages 2 – 5 (up to $8,000 per year)
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- Educational programs specifically designed for students with disabilities
- Unlimited private tutoring for students of all ages (kindergarten through college graduation)
- High school summer academic, leadership, and professional programs
- Access to online and in person tools for ACT/SAT test preparation
- College planning conference (Operation E.P.I.C.) hosted by SOWF for high school students
- Access to online college planning platform, College Success Academy
- College to Career transition program, including funds available for internship relocation and an opportunity to study abroad

EXPANDED ELIGIBILITY

Expanded eligibility to include active-duty Special Operations Personnel who have lost a spouse - this recognizes the critical role spouses play in the lives of our families.

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If you, or someone you know, may be eligible for our programs, please email us at scholarships@specialops.org

PO Box 89367
Tampa, FL 33689

warrior@specialops.org
(813) 805-9400

Mission Statistics:

1 May 1983 - 8 Aug 1985

(**Source:** SITREP: 081328Z Aug 85)

Hours flown	2,887
Sorties	2,592
Island Sweeps	18
Infiltration Missions	136
Patrols	310
Response to aircraft crashes	21
Response to sensor activation	6
Sensor Field Support Missions	12
Aircraft Intercepts/Tracking	66

20th SOS Participation Results/Impact

- Individuals Apprehended: 166
- Drugs seized:
  8,442 lbs of cocaine in 18 operations
  256,387 lbs of marijuana in 69 operations
- Drug diverted:
  1,188 bales of suspected marijuana jettisoned at sea
  47 packages of cocaine jettisoned at sea
  3 unknown loads jettisoned at sea
  9,000 lbs of marijuana burned in 2 aircraft crashes

Equipment seized:

Vessels:	28
Aircraft seized/crashed under pursuit:	42
Vehicles:	10
Weapons:	16
Radios:	9
NVGs:	3

to each side of the aircraft. According to Lt Col Warren "Smokey" Hubbard, "This was done at the request of the Bahamian officials, so drug smugglers could not use the legal defense that they thought we were 'drug pirates,' if they fired on us."

At the time, the system had its limits. Several of the radars used were old Federal Aviation Administration systems and lacked a low-level capability. The old equipment had frequent mechanical problems and outages impacting the operation. Further, operators were limited to eight hours per day and it was not uncommon for the Guantanamo radar to be down for days at a time due to the lack of sufficient numbers of operators.

Rather than be stymied and reactive to the limited radar resource, the 20th SOS aircrews developed other techniques to look for traffickers. The aircrews flew aerial patrols out of the islands during the day and at night, using early generation night vision goggles (NVG). On some of these patrols, the 20th crews would infiltrate Bahamian surveillance teams into the known drug operating areas. Other times, the teams installed ground sensors, similar to the devices used to monitor the Ho Chi Minh Trail during the war in Southeast Asia, at selected sites throughout the islands. Lastly, the task force used intelligenc-e and the confidential informants of both Bahamian and U.S. law enforcement agencies.

Ride Along:

Smugglers used many methods to get the illicit drugs into the United States. With support from the DOD, our southern borders began to tighten making it more difficult for traffickers to infiltrate the U.S. by air. As the loads became larger, boats became the primary means of moving these shipments of marijuana and cocaine from Columbia to the Bahamas. Smaller loads were still air-dropped or air-landed for transfer to boats within the islands. Smugglers used commercial vessels which could "hide" among similar sized fishing boats or "cigarette" type boats to make the run to the Florida coast at very high speeds. These 'go fast' boats were generally 28 to 40 feet long powered by three or four 250 horsepower engines. The smugglers would pass through the Windward Passage between Haiti and Cuba hugging the Cuban coast. About halfway up Cuba's northern coast the smugglers turned their boats north and raced into Bahamian territory, hoping to make landfall unobserved.

DEA aircraft and 20th SOS UH-1N. (Photo courtesy of Smokey Hubbard)

Major Richard Shurtleff, a 20th SOS pilot, operations officer, and commander for Op BAT, relayed just one of many examples of the 20th SOS crews supporting an actual drug interdiction operation in his ACSC paper:

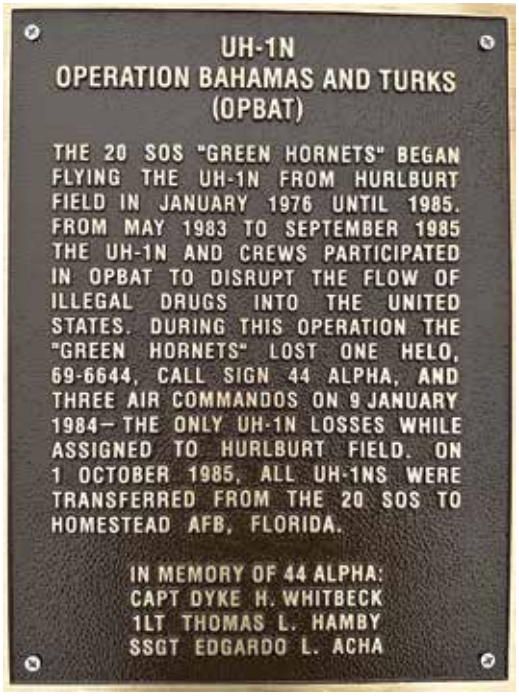
> On the night of 2 June 1983, the U.S. Customs Service radar at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, callsign "Almighty" picked up a radar target approaching the North Windward passage. The particular target fit the profile that Customs developed to identify potential drug traffickers and began the tracking phase of the interdiction operation by launching one of their aircraft from Guantanamo Bay to make a visual identification. This visual ID began with the U.S. Customs Service radar operator at Guantanamo Bay vectoring the aircraft to a successful intercept. The Customs aircraft pulled up behind the suspect aircraft, copied its tail numbers, and made a close visual inspection of the aircraft (completely unobserved by the pilots of the suspect plane). Once again, the visual inspection of this particular target fit the profile previously developed to visually isolate potential drug traffickers.

With both the radar and visual profile confirmed, the Customs pilots began tracking the suspect aircraft through the Windward Passage into Bahamian airspace. At the same time, the numbers and identification of the suspect aircraft were fed into the EPIC information system which reported back that this particular aircraft, a red and white Aztec-#N48168P, had been suspected of being used as a contraband transporter on previous occasions. With this confirmation in hand, Customs operators notified the Op BAT operations center that a suspect aircraft was entering its area of operations and requested support in apprehending this suspect. By this time, the suspect had entered the Central Bahamas and a DEA aircraft and a 20th SOS helicopter, with an RBPSF team on board, were launched to follow the suspect. The Aztec flew toward the Bimini Islands. The first U.S. Customs aircraft was replaced with a second aircraft launched from Homestead AFB, near Miami, and continued tracking the Aztec. Behind the Customs Service aircraft came the DEA aircraft, and further back the 20th SOS UH-1N with the RBPSF onboard.

During this shadowing process, the train of aircraft following the Aztec was spotted by smuggler boats that were waiting to receive the contraband. The boats contacted the Aztec and its pilot began to make erratic maneuvers in an attempt to run his pursuers out of fuel. The maneuvers were not effective in shaking law enforcement and the smuggler's pick up boats turned tail and headed for Florida, empty. With the pick up boats departing, the Aztec pilots began throwing the bales of marijuana cargo into the ocean. However, they were unable to get rid of all the contraband before they, themselves, ran out of fuel and had to ditch their aircraft approximately 2 miles south of the main island of Bimini.

After the Aztec ditched, the 20th SOS pilot landed the RBPSF team ashore on Bimini. The team commandeered a local boat and motored out to the Aztec and arrested the two pilots who were floating in their survival dingy, successfully concluding this particular drug interdiction operation.

Forty years ago (1983-1985), the 20th SOS aircrews flew missions to intercept armed and dangerous Columbian cartel smugglers seeking to transport drugs into the United States during Op BAT. The Green Hornet crews flew in the day and at night, using NVGs, with basic navigation aids over vast miles of ocean, sometimes in less than optimal weather. Make no mistake, all the



Memorial Plaque

Op BAT missions carried a level of increased risk and as with any inherently risky endeavor, sometimes those who enter the arena are lost. Sadly, this happened on the evening of 9 January 1984 when a 20th SOS crew, callsign 44 ALPHA, carrying a DEA agent and four Royal Bahamian police officers were investigating a report that a DC-3 cargo plane made an airdrop of narcotics near Bimini and was headed to Freeport on Grand Bahama Island. 44 ALPHA landed at Freeport and the Bahamian police and DEA did their investigation. When the investigation was completed, 44 ALPHA departed Freeport at 2000 and headed back to their base in Nassau over a 100 miles away. At 2108, the pilot radioed that his helicopter had developed mechanical problems, lost power in both engines, and was going to ditch in the sea about 10 miles north of Nassau. U.S. Coast Guard and Navy ships were immediately dispatched to the area and rescued two men just before midnight and two others early the following morning.

A Coast Guard H-52 helicopter rescued USAF Sgt Paul Cartter suffering from spinal injuries, and Royal Bahamian Police Sgt Oswald Ferguson, who had a broken leg. Royal Bahamian Police Corporal David Emmanuel and Constable Selzin Evans were rescued by the frigate USS *Koelsh*. The pilot, Capt Dyke Whitbeck, copilot Lt Thomas Hamby, flight engineer Sgt Edgardo Acha, DEA Special Agent Larry Carwell, and Royal Bahamian Police Corporal Autry Jones were lost in the mishap. During the accident inquiry the investigators determined that the two fuel boost pumps on the mishap aircraft, tail # 69-6644, failed causing both engines to flame out.

On 14 October 2017, the 1st Special Operations Wing hosted a ceremony in the Hurlburt Air Park unveiling a plaque and memorial dedicated to the men of 44 ALPHA, who perished on the night of 9 January 1984 while supporting Op BAT.

Epilogue:

The 20th SOS was released of the Op BAT tasking 30 September 1985. The newly re-activated 48th Rescue Squadron, assigned to Homestead AFB, supported by other UH-1N equipped rescue squadrons, assumed the mission on 1 October 1985 until 31 December 1987. As the 20th SOS passed the Op BAT torch, several of its officers were recognized by Vice President Bush for achievement in supporting Operation Bahamas and Turks. They were: Lt Col Warren S. Hubbard, Lt Col Charles R. Merriott, Maj Richard W. Shurtleff, and Maj Donald Nieto.

The commendation read:

"These exceptional officers have served as the pioneers and pathfinders in a completely new and uncharted territory for military involvement and support of civilian law enforcement in the war on drugs. With little official direction or precedence on which to rely, they set into motion one of the most comprehensive, lengthy, and far-reaching drug interdiction operations in our nation's war against illicit narcotics trafficking. As a direct result of their perseverance and professionalism over the past 27 months, a disparate group of U.S. and Bahamian agencies have been welded into an effective counter drug force. Their exceptional leadership, personal demeanor, and diplomacy has won friends and support for the United States throughout the territory of the Bahamas and at all levels of its government. Their self sacrifice, professional expertise, and total dedication to their country, their profession, and their fellow man have been the key factors in the outstanding success of Operation Bahamas and Turks. Through their achievements, these exceptional pioneers in blue have set the course and laid the groundwork for a completely unique, unparalleled arena of military endeavor. In so doing, they have made a major contribution to assisting in sending a clear signal that our government will not tolerate this illegal activity, but will continue to fight to eliminate drug trafficking and its negative impact on out society."

It is my belief that the officers recognized above would heap the same, perhaps more, praise onto the shoulders of all the aircrews, maintenance experts, interagency professionals, as well as the Royal Bahamian Police officers [all too numerous to list here] that flew and supported the early days of Op BAT.

This was a brief telling of the little known history of the 20th Special Operations Squadron's participation in the early days of Operation Bahamas and Turks supporting law enforcement to slow the flow of drug into the United States. The 27 month deployment of 20th

SOS personnel and equipment was rewarding for those who participated in a 'real world' operational mission and provided a tremendous learning opportunity for the mostly junior aircrews and maintainers. The 20th SOS Op BAT efforts certainly did not stop the drug flow into the United States, but Vice President Bush on a visit to the SFTF operation in Miami said, "The situation has improved, but there is still much to be done"… Forty years on, we still have a very long way to go.

Operation Bahama and Turks continues in 2023 and is supported by the U.S. Coast Guard, DEA, and another 15 U.S. agencies alongside the Bahamian Royal Police using updated technology, surveillance techniques, and aviation assets.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The majority of research material used in this short history was provided by Col Richard W. Shurtleff, USAF (retired). He was a 20th SOS UH-1N pilot, mission operations officer, and commander for the Op BAT campaign 1 May 1983- 30 September 1985. He sent me multiple documents, point papers, briefings, pictures, and handwritten mission logs of dates, crews, and type missions flown during his time working Op BAT. Without his help, and that of several others highlighted in the following articles, bringing this unique chapter of Air Commando history to our readers would have been much more difficult and less impactful.

About the Author: Colonel Harmon retired in 2010 after a 30-year career in the United States Air Force. As career helicopter pilot, he deployed in support of Operations Desert Shield/Storm, Joint Guard, Allied Force, and humanitarian relief operations Shining Hope in Albania and Atlas Response in Mozambique. Colonel Harmon held several command positions in operations and training, and served three tours as the Director, Special Operations Liaison Element in the Combined Air Operations Center during Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Dear General Mall,

The crucial role the men and women of your command played in Operation Bat Trick was an extraordinary example of dedication and service to their country. The operation called for the utmost interagency cooperation, imagination and innovation, and your people came through magnificently.

The men and women of the First Special Operations Wing, 20th Special Operations Squadron and 40th Airspace Rescue and Recovery Squadron deployed to the Bahamas during Operation Hat Trick distinguished themselves with their professional support to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the Royal Bahamian Strike Force. Their enthusiasm and dedication were crucial to the success of this Operation and sustained a spirit of cooperation between the United States and the Bahamian Governments that will reinforce our joint effort in halting the movement of illegal narcotics.

I am pleased and proud to express appreciation on behalf of myself and the President. We count on you to continue your efforts in the battle against the menace of illegal drug traffickers.

Sincerely,
George H. W. Bush

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Letter from Vice President George H.W. Bush to Maj Gen William Mall, Commander, 23rd Air Force—appeared in Hurlburt Field's The Commando, March 1, 1985.

OP BAT MISSION REPORT

By Dennis Jones, Col, USAF (Retired)

When Paul Harmon asked me to write a "Mission Report" on a couple of my most memorable Op BAT missions, the first thing that went through my mind was I should have kept a flight log or journal of my missions throughout my Air Force career. It would have helped my memory tremendously, especially in recalling individuals and tail numbers, as it seems like those events were a very, very long time ago. As a result, I was hesitant at first, because I didn't have the source documents, but then thought it would be fantastic to add to the Op BAT legacy and honor, in some small way, the crew of 44 Alpha.

My most memorable missions involved intercepting fixed-wing aircraft. The drug runners would fly their shipments to a point in the Bahamas, usually using the outer limits of the islands knowing about Op BAT and the limitations of our helicopters. We flew the UH-1N Huey during Op BAT in the special operations configuration with

Capt Eugene Haase in cockpit.

a crew of four: pilot, co-pilot, flight engineer, and aerial gunner. During Op BAT we normally carried a DEA agent/advisor and a three-man Bahamian police team on board for law enforcement. Our normal cruising speed was 90 knots and that gave us roughly 2.5 hours of flying time before we needed to refuel. Without gas stops, operations in the Bahamas were limited to about 110 nm out and back leaving a little spare fuel due to overwater flight considerations. However, we did have various places to refuel, if the timing was right, i.e., they were open and we had an agreement with them. With the geographical layout and distances between the Bahamian islands, we usually needed a refueling stop to give us any loiter or search time. If the team was going to spend any time on the ground, we normally shut down and waited for the them to do their work.

Another capability we brought was night vision goggles. The early generation PN/PVS-5 NVGs were originally designed for Army ground operators and covered the face. Using the full-face goggle while flying prevented the pilots from seeing their instruments, so some smart operators in the 1st SOW figured out they could modify these NVGs by cutting the face frame down to about half. The goggles were attached to the crewman's helmets and this modification allowed pilots to see under the goggles to monitor cockpit instruments while flying. The flight engineer and gunner usually wore full-face NVGs.

When we started supporting Op BAT direct communications with our headquarters in the embassy was not possible due to the line of sight limitations of our UHF/VHF radios, but we asked various flight following agencies to call the the team in the embassy on a land-line to relay any support requests. Our helicopters received some COMM/NAV modifications during this time. When the HF radio set and its "towel-bar" antenna were installed, we could relay some radio traffic through a DEA site, callsign ATLAS, in the states, but not directly to our operations center, callsign PANTHER, in the embassy.

Navigation over the water was also a bit of of a challenge. In the beginning we used basic dead reckoning—time, distance, and heading —using an aeronautical chart and some airport navigation aids, when we were within range. This situation improved some what when the Omega navigation system was installed on our birds. If the Omega radio received signals from three stations, the system could triangulate our position to within 4 nautical miles; sort of like GPS, but without the satellites and accuracy. Omega did give us a better idea of our location and enroute times than pure dead reckoning, but we couldn't always receive the radio signals.

At the time, we were the only vertical lift capability supporting the Bahamian police that could possibly interdict the drug traffickers' remote area transfer operations because they (traffickers) were relatively quick in making the transload and neither boats nor ground vehicles were able to get there in time to catch them. On most intercept or interdiction missions, we had to launch in front of the suspect aircraft due to the airspeed differential and try to arrive at the transfer point just in time. Timing was critical, if we arrived too early the reception party could spot us or we might need refueling and that may or may not be available. If we arrived too late, the transfer would have occurred and we would likely lose track of the shipment.

Crew waiting on a mission. (Photo courtesy of Eugene Haase)

On one mission, a DEA fixed wing aircraft was trailing a suspected drug running aircraft out of Central America. The DEA thought it was heading to Great Abaco Island northeast of our base in Nassau, specifically Marsh Harbor's airport,

but we couldn't trust the filed flight plan. It was nighttime so we took off with our NVGs on and headed northeast toward Marsh Harbor. Our helicopter had Omega installed and it helped get us in a general vicinity. As we listened to the radio relays enroute, it became apparent that we would just make it to the Marsh Harbor airport in time. However, about 30 minutes from the destination, the target altered his course further northwest on the island chain, probably making us

Royal Bahamian Police. (Photo courtesy of Smokey Hubbard)

late to the party. Sure enough, the chase aircraft confirmed the drop started by watching the target aircraft orbit over a spot in the ocean about 5 miles off the coast of Treasure Cay; we were still about 10 minutes away. As we got closer, we could see what looked like runway lights in the water through our NVGs. The reception boats set up a temporary light pattern/target for the drug drop aircraft, but we could not see him flying with his lights off. When we got to the drop site, the reception boats rapidly departed heading west, leaving many floating bales of contraband marked with chem sticks in the water. The trafficker flew toward Treasure Cay, and our chase aircraft watched as he ditched in the water, and ran the aircraft up onto the land.

The DEA requested we check out the aircraft first, so we landed in a small field next to the crash site. It turned out to be an old DC-3 and the crew was nowhere to be found, but the DEA agent suspected they weren't far away because the co-pilot had evidently wet himself during the crash and his seat was wet and reportedly, still warm. The Bahamian police and the DEA agent went to search for the crew, but didn't find them, to our knowledge. By now it was almost daybreak and gradually becoming light, so we decided to recover some of the contraband for evidence before refueling on Grand Bahama Island and returning to Nassau. Luckily, we found the bales and while hovering with the skids in the water, the crew was able to drag a waterlogged bale of marijuana into the cabin. The rest of the mission was uneventful, except for the very unpleasant smell of wet marijuana, which stayed with that aircraft for a very long time.

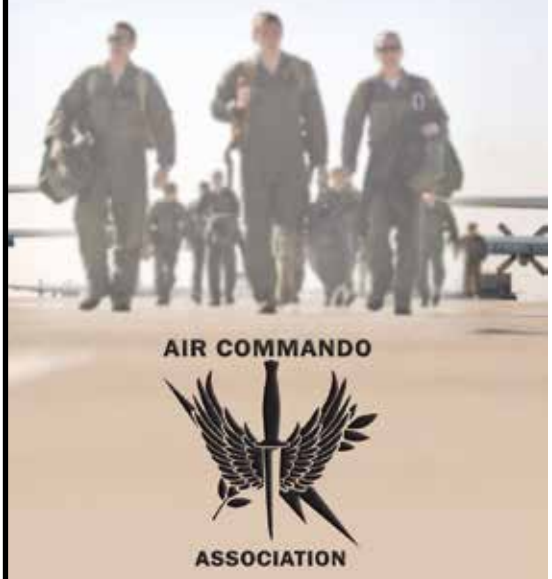
On another mission, this time a rare daytime intercept of a suspected fixed-wing aircraft, we were about perfect with our timing. The small, twin-engine aircraft was headed to the east end of Grand Bahama Island just before dusk and we arrived overland about 5 minutes before the traffickers did. Their apparent intent was to land on a remote, dirt road, transload their contraband to a waiting ground vehicle and then take off again. However, as they came to a stop and shut down, we were in our flair landing directly behind them. A couple of things happened in quick succession. The ground vehicle sped off, leaving the aircraft's crew who scattered into the surrounding woods. One of them decided to shoot at us over his shoulder with an Uzi before running into the woods, but we didn't know it until a little later. When we touched down, the Bahamian Police and the DEA agent jumped out and gave chase, using the "recon-by-fire" technique while we took off and tried to help by providing overhead situational awareness. It was starting to get dark, so after a short time we landed next to the aircraft and waited for the police and DEA agent to return. That's when the agent told us the trafficker fired at us. Our law enforcement team did manage to capture the suspect who shot at us. After an interesting interrogation he found out that his rights as an American citizen were not recognized in the Bahamas and we ended up taking him back to Nassau. The Bahamian police also impounded the plane, apparently with the entire load of cocaine.

Confiscated cocaine and marijuana. (Photo courtesy of Smokey Hubbard)

In our debrief, we suspected these were inexperienced drug runners due to several factors. First, they didn't know they were being followed. Second, they attempted to transload the drugs during daylight. And lastly, they used a firearm — a hanging offense in the Bahamas at that time.

About the author: Dennis Jones, Col, USAF (retired) graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1980. During his 27 year career, he flew the UH-1N in the 20th SOS before transitioning to the MH-53 in 1985 and serving as initial cadre at RAF Woodbridge,UK in 1988.He accumulated over 3,800 hours of flight time and participated in numerous operations including 49 Op BAT drug interdiction missions, Operations Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom. Colonel Jones also commanded the 551st SOS at Kirtland AFB and the 352nd Special Operations Group at RAF Mildenhall before his final assignment as Director of the Special Operations and Personnel Recovery Division on the Air Staff.

Calling All Air Commandos!



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By Brian L. Massey for the Playground Daily News, October 1, 1984, discussing Op BAT with Lt Col Warren Hubbard, USAF. (Editor's note: adapted for this issue of the Air Commando Journal)

In the month of September,20th Special Operations Squadron aircrews from Hurlburt Field, Florida, helped the Bahamian authorities seize 359 kilos of cocaine, 13,000 pounds of marijuana, and arrest 10 suspected smugglers. The "Green Hornet" aircrews and support team were deployed to Nassau, Bahamas as a part of Operation Bahamas-Turks or Op BAT, which works with Vice President George Bush's South Florida Task Force in an effort to stem the flow of illegal narcotics into the U.S.

The detachment commander, Lt Col Warren "Smokey" Hubbard commented, "We had a good month at BAT in September…We had more seizures than normal," but Hubbard quickly emphasized that his crews are strictly transportation and tactical mobility for the Royal Bahamian Police Strike Force (RBPSF) who could not otherwise respond in a timely fashion to reported smuggling. The RBPSF have the law enforcement authorities and the 20th crews put the team into position to effect an arrest.

In the late afternoon on September 10, a 20th SOS UH-1N Huey was scrambled for a mission to intercept a Piper Aztec, light twin-engine airplane. The suspect was detected by radar and was under pursuit by a U.S. Customs Service fixed wing aircraft. The radar operators vectored the 20th SOS helicopter to an area where the suspect aircraft had gone.

The smuggler Aztec landed at the West End Airport, a 8,000 foot runway on Grand Bahama Island, which at the time was an uncontrolled airport. The smugglers pulled to the side of the runway and were off-loading their "products" into a van. The Op BAT crew interrupted the operation when they landed right along side of the plane 30 seconds after they stopped. But, the drug smugglers hit the ground running and had already unloaded 191 kilos of cocaine. They do not fool around when moving the "product" and timing is a lot of the game for both sides.

The Aztec pilot made a spectacular takeoff through the trees at the end of the runway. The pilot taxied through the brush, lifted off and brushed over the first tree line. He sank below the treetops and managed to fly over a second line of trees. He

Copter Crews Give Smugglers the BAT

Smokey Hubbard in OPBAT operations center.


Air Commando with truckload of confiscated marijuana.

Royal Bahamian Police.


Air Commandos and DEA agent on another mission.

did a hell of a job getting out of there. In the meantime, the RBPSF team had jumped out of the helicopter and fired at the Aztec with their M-16s.

The Aztec headed to the U.S. and jettisoned the rest of his load into the sea, some of which was picked up by fisherman. The Aztec pilot landed at the Fort Lauderdale airport where U.S. Customs agents were waiting. The Aztec crew of two were arrested and the aircraft was seized, apparently with several bullet holes in it.

A day later, on 11 September, we were alerted again when another Piper Aztec was detected coming up from the south and deemed a target of interest by the DEA's El Paso Information Center or EPIC. The suspect aircraft was tracked to Bimini island where he landed, immediately followed by a DEA airplane and a 20th SOS helicopter with Bahamian police on board. The suspected smuggler's aircraft was searched and the police found 105 kilos of cocaine on board. As a result the cocaine and Aztec aircraft were seized as evidence, and three people were arrested. One of those arrested was an American policeman from south Florida.

The missions described were typical of what the Op BAT team did, but we normally didn't get missions two days in a row. That said, seven days later another suspect aircraft was being monitored. It was night time or more correctly early morning, about 0255 when our radar operators began tracking a suspicious aircraft. When the aircraft was visually acquired using NVGs, it turned out to be a four-engine DC-4, similar to a commercial airliner of the time. This was unusual because the drug traffickers usually flew in light twin-engine aircraft.

The smuggler's reception committee was waiting on the runway near central Andros Island. On final approach the reception committee illuminated the runway and the DC-4 pilot landed and rolled to the end of the runway and our helicopter landed right behind him, effectively trapping him, and discharged the Bahamian Police team. The smugglers knew they had nowhere to go, so he shut down and abandoned his airplane.

It was very dark and several of the DC-4 crewmen slipped away. The RBPSF seized two vans and arrested three of the off-load crew. The following day the copilot came out of the woods and surrendered. The area where he was hiding was remote…no fresh water or food, just mosquitoes. The police searched the DC-4 and found 13,000 pounds of marijuana wrapped in paper bales with a few marked "Made in the USA."

The Green Hornet crews flew regularly, usually every day. When we weren't tracking a suspect aircraft, we would fly patrols or sometimes transport the Bahamian Police on investigations. On one of these missions we took the police to a site they thought was involved in drug activity. The smugglers were gone, but the investigators found ledger sheets, paraphernalia, residue and packing materials. It was obvious, the traffickers used the site for processing loads. In the ledgers, the investigators found that the traffickers trans-shipped 5,600 pound of marijuana from that site and sold it for $1,736,000, estimating $1,260,000 in profit.

Ditching and Search and Rescue of UH-1N 69-6644

By Warren "Smokey" Hubbard, Lt Col, USAF (Retired)

The following is a narrative of the events surrounding the launch and search and rescue of 44 ALPHA in aircraft 69-6644 on the evening of 9 January and early morning of 10 January 1984.

At 1438 hours (all times local Bahamas) 9 January, the U.S. Customs Service (USC) radar operator in Miami, callsign "Slingshot" advised via landline that Omaha 41, a USC Cessna Titan, was in pursuit of a light twin aircraft at Orange Cay. The aircraft appeared to be headed to Bimini. The Royal Bahamian Police Strike Force (RBPSF) was advised by the DEA-USAF operations center at the American Embassy-Nassau, callsign "Panther." At 1443, Slingshot advised the aircraft had turned towards the U.S, At 1449 Slingshot advised that the target did 360 degree turns over a red/white boat 15 miles NE of Bimini and then headed back to Bimini. Bimini local police were notified by Panther.

At 1512 Slingshot advised the aircraft jettisoned his load six miles NE of Bimini and USC was in pursuit.

At 1617, Slingshot advised that the light twin was a Navaho and he was 65 miles NW of Nassau and appeared to be headed for Andros (Island) or New Providence. Slingshot also advised they had a new target, a DC-3, south of Bimini that would be at Bimini within 10 minutes.

At this point, with two chases in progress, I directed Captain Whitbeck's crew to go to the Police College and standby the aircraft. The DEA also sent a fixed-wing crew to the airport. The RBPSF was advised to send troops to both aircraft and to standby. The police log indicates the troops were dispatched at 1646. Prior to arrival of the police at the helicopter, Whitbeck contacted me from the Police College and I advised him to standby and I would launch him via telephone pager because I didn't know how I was going to employ him at the time. Also, the DEA fixed-wing crew called and said they were having difficulty getting fuel but would advise Panther when ready to launch.

At 1627, Omaha 52 (USC Cessna Citation) advised via radio that the Navaho was headed toward Nassau and 31 miles out. He described it as white with blue trim, tail number N36L. Nassau airport police were advised. At 1638, Omaha 52 advised his target was eight miles out and

landing Nassau. Nassau tower was advised and coordination was made for Omaha to orbit the field at 1,500 feet to observe the landing and reception of the aircraft by the airport police. This was done via landline so Omaha 52 would not have to coordinate with tower over the radio because the target was also using the tower frequency. Omaha 52 advised the police had met the aircraft and he was departing to resume patrol.

At 1704, Omaha 52 advised the U.S. Coast Guard (USCGC) cutter *Cape Current* had recovered a bale of marijuana from the Navaho's drop and was en route to Nassau with the evidence.

At 1711, we were advised the DC-3 jettisoned his load on the Bimini 245/25 (VOR radial/distance). The DC-3 was headed toward Freeport, Grand Bahama Island. The GBI police were advised.

At 1731 Slingshot corrected the drop coordinates to the Bimini 336/25 and advised a USC Blackhawk helicopter was going to attempt to recover a bale for evidence.

The DEA fixed-wing crew advised they still could not get fuel and they were unable to launch. DEA and AF personnel at Panther made a joint decision to launch 69-6644 (Callsign 44 ALPHA) toward GBI to assist in apprehension and investigation of the DC-3 crew's activities. At this point, I learned the DEA had not sent an agent to the Police College when they alerted the police. Agent Larry Carwell came into the embassy at 1735 and was immediately dispatched to the Police College to join the aircrew. I advised him to take out NVGs because it was getting late and to tell Captain Whitbeck I directed an immediate launch to GBI. Carwell departed the embassy at 1739.

At 1753, Whitbeck advised Panther they were airborne enroute to GBI.

At 1913, I had not heard anything from 44ALPHA and was concerned about him. I called Slingshot and had them contact Freeport tower via their direct line. They advised 44ALPHA had landed at Freeport at 1857 and the DC-3 crew was under arrest.

At 1915, I received a call from Agent Carwell at Freeport inquiring if a bale from the DC-3 had been recovered for evidence. I questioned Slingshot and learned that the USCGC *Cape Current* had picked up a bale from the DC-3 drop. I advised Carwell and he said they would proceed with the investigation at Freeport. Captain Whitbeck got on the phone and gave me his landing time (at Freeport) and said they would be on the ground waiting for the police and Agent Carwell to complete their business. I told him to call me airborne.

Freeport tower personnel indicate 44ALPHA departed at 1958. 44 ALPHA called Panther on UHF at approximately 2050 and reported an estimated time of arrival to the Police College of about 15-20 minutes. I dispatched Agent Hayes to pickup Carwell and the NVGs and return them to the embassy.

At 2108, 44 ALPHA called on UHF and stated he had two fuel boost pump caution lights. I asked his position and he replied "10 South." I said, "Don't you mean 10 North?" He replied, "44 ALPHA has lost both engines, "10 South." I questioned, "Don't you mean 10 North, Dyke?" He replied, "10 North, 10 North." No further transmissions were received.

Between 2108 and 2119, I notified the other Op BAT aircraft commander, Major McNair, the USC Operations Center in Miami, rescue at Homestead AFB (no answer), narcotics attaché R.C. Gamble, both DEA fixed-wing crews (via telephone pager), and 1st SOW/CC, Colonel Hunter. McNair arrived at the embassy at 2120 and we both proceeded to the Police College with NVGs. I directed launch of our other aircraft (69-6653) with McNair and crew to initiate a SAR. I returned to the embassy and coordinated the SAR response with

Lt Kelly from USCG OPS in Miami. McNair launched at 2155 hours and made voice contact with survivors from 44A. When a US Coast Guard HU-25, a Falcon jet arrived on scene 53ALPHA vectored them to the survivors and then held out of the area. When McNair determined he could be of no further assistance in the SAR, he returned to base at 2300L.

JAN 1984 — Search and Rescue for 44 ALPHA

The SAR was initiated by a radio call from the pilot of 44 ALPHA to the Operation BAT office located in the American Embassy at 2108 hours local time on 9 January. The pilot reported both engines out and his position was 10 miles North.

I notified the other USAF personnel, the US Coast Guard Operation Center-Miami (Lt Kelly), DEA fixed wing pilots American Embassy Narcotics attaché R.C. Gamble and the USAF officials at Hurlburt Field, Florida. I headed to the Royal Bahamian Forces Police College and launched UH-1N helicopter 69-6653 with Maj Sam McNair and crew at 2155 hours. 53 ALPHA proceeded to an area 10 miles NW of the Nassau International Airport, where a landing aircraft reported seeing strobe lights in the water. McNair immediately made voice contact with survivors in the water. They were able to identify their general location as approximately the 310 radial off the Nassau VOR at a range of 10 miles, however, 53 ALPHA was unable to actually find the survivors.

Meanwhile, Lt Kelly at US Coast Guard station in Miami diverted an H-52 helicopter from Bimini and launched a HU-25 Dassault Falcon jet, from Florida to air in the search. The HU-25 arrived on the scene and was vectored to the area by Major McNair in 653. The HU-25 crew immediately located the survivors and took over as the On Scene Commander. Major McNair departed the area to avoid confusing the survivors as to which aircraft they were communicating with. He landed at Nassau International at 2300 hours local time after he saw the Coast Guard had the situation under control and he could be of no further assistance.

At this point, the four survivors were USAF Sergeant Paul Cartter and Bahamian Police officer Sergeant Oswald Ferguson, who were in the water together, and RBPF Constable Selzin Evans and Corporal David Emmanuel in the helicopter's life raft. Sergeant Ferguson had the chance to join the other policemen in the raft, but despite his injuries instead swam to the aid of Sergeant Cartter and supported him in the water until rescue arrived. Sergeant Cartter took his radio from his survival vest and made contact with Corporal Emmanuel, who was manning a radio in the life raft to determine the number of personnel there. Sergeant Cartter helped

Emmanuel and Evans with some of the vagaries of the USAF life raft, but they were unable to reach Cartter and Ferguson due to strong winds.

The HU-25 jet dropped a raft to Cartter and Ferguson, but the parachute did not release and the wind dragged the raft from the area. The Coast Guard helicopter arrived and made a basket pickup of Ferguson and then Cartter at position 2510.5N, 7734.7W and then flew to Nassau International Airport for fuel and medical attention. The crew of the Falcon jet assumed control and by talking with Emmanuel on the raft were able to vector a small boat from the USS *Koelsch* to pick up the men in the raft.

The Coast Guard continued the SAR for the five missing men, sending a second H-52 helicopter, two CH-3 helicopters, and a replacement HU-25 aircraft. In addition, AUTEC (US Navy Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center) launched a boat, the Royal Bahamian Police Force launched three boats, Bahamas Air Sea Rescue Association (BASRA) contributed a boat, and the US Customs Service sent a fixed wing aircraft to the area. The following day, a DEA fixed wing aircraft and an AC-130H from Hurlburt Field joined the search effort. Additionally, the 1st SOW also sent three 20th SOS HH-53H helicopters supported by an Eglin AFB HC-130P/N tanker. Surface vessels, USCGC cutter *Cape Current* and the USS *Koelsch*, continued to search with the *Koelsch* assuming on-scene command.

In summary, all agencies and personnel who had the means to assist gave their full effort and cooperation to the SAR effort. I was very impressed with the immediate and highly professional response of the USC crews and the crew of the USS *Koelsch*. The SAR effort was immediate, extensive, sustained, and managed in a highly professional manner by the US Coast Guard Operations Center-Miami. The maximum possible effort was made to rescue the four survivors and continued the search for the five missing men. All have my admiration and great appreciation for a job well done under very trying circumstances. Sadly, Capt Dyke Whitbeck, Lt Thomas Hamby, Sgt Edgardo Acha, DEA Special Agent Larry Carwell, and Royal Bahamian Police Corporal Autry Jones were never found. May they Rest in Peace.

Warren S. Hubbard, Lt Col, USAF (Retired) Commander, Operation BAT

About the author: Lt Col Warren "Smokey" Hubbard served 21 years in the USAF after graduating from the LSU ROTC program. He was an original member of the 20th SOS 'Green Hornets' when the unit was formed in Thailand and then deployed to Vietnam in 1967. He served two combat tours there accumulating 1,175 hours of combat time with total of 5,500 hours flying time during his career. After serving as a USAF Security Police operations officer he separated from the Air Force and became an FBI special agent. Colonel Hubbard was recalled to active duty with the 20th SOS in 1979 where he served as UH-1N operations officer. In 1983 his past law enforcement experience served him well as the squadron's Operation BAT project officer. Colonel Hubbard retired from the Air Force in 1987 as Director of Range Operations at Eglin AFB FL and is enjoying his retirement in Epworth GA.

Interview with TSgt Paul "2T" Cartter USAF Retired

Crewmember of 44 ALPHA

By Colonel Paul Harmon, USAF (Retired)

ACJ: Hello it is nice to meet you. We don't know each other, but I was in the 20th SOS flying the MH-53s beginning in August 1988 and then elsewhere.

2T: Well once a Hornet, always a Hornet.

ACJ: Yes, that's right. I started this project to tell the story about the 20th SOS's involvement in the drug interdiction mission back in 1983. Information on the internet is scarce, but I finally made contact with former 20th SOS members involved with Op BAT: Rich Shurtleff, "Smokey" Hubbard, and Don Nieto and realized this could be much more than a single article. I received a treasure trove of documents and pictures from Shurtleff and Smokey, and had a long conversation with Don Nieto and I realized that it has been 40 years and it is a perfect time to tell this little known chapter of the 20th SOS's and our Air Commando history. Let's get started: when did you enter the USAF and what did you do?

2T: I joined the Air Force in 1972 and was a weapons specialist at Nellis AFB. I worked in the gun shop. I was reassigned and moved to Hurlburt Field and the 20th SOS in 1976. The squadron didn't even have a helicopter when I got there. It was amazing when the first Huey came in…we all went out to see it and greet the crew.

ACJ: Where did you train to become a crewmember on the "N" model?

2T: All of our training at that time was done in-house, we got OJT (on the job training). The older and experienced aircrew members, who had flown the Huey, were our instructors.

ACJ: You joined the 20th in 1976 and by the time the unit picked up the drug interdiction mission in May 1983 you were a very experienced crewmember. I found out that your first deployment to the Bahamas was in late June 1983, about a month after it started and you flew 17 Op BAT missions between then and 9 January 1984, the day of the mishap. What were your first couple of missions like?

2T: They were pretty exciting. I remember we made a bust on a ship. We received information that a ship had run aground, so we went out and swept in on it. The ship was carrying 3,000 bales of marijuana, each weighing about 70 or 80 pounds each. The DEA and Bahamian police team arrested 11 guys! After a while a Bahamian patrol boat came and took the prisoners away. They were just the laborers. The "money man" escaped in a seaplane that took off right after we got there. I got a picture of him as he banked right over us.

TSgt Paul '2T' Cartter in the Bahamas during Op Bat. (Photo courtesy of Paul Cartter)

ACJ: On 9 January 1984, you were put on standby at the Police College in the later part of the afternoon because there were two possible missions going on. The mission commander, Lt Col Hubbard, ultimately launched you guys on a suspicious DC-3 that made a drop northwest of Bimini Island and was heading northeast toward Freeport on Grand Bahama Island (GBI). Can you tell us about the night of the mishap, from a your crewman's perspective?

2T: Yes, we were standing by and finally we were told to launched on the DC-3, as you mentioned. It dumped its load and landed at GBI and the police took four guys into custody. It turns out they were Americans. While we were waiting for the police and DEA to complete their investigation we walked in and the prisoners saw us in our US flight suits. They looked at us and thought thank goodness, like we were going to help them or something…and we just looked back saying no…

When we were ready to head home, we checked the fuel and it was right at the top, so we were good to go. We got started and headed back to home (Nassau, little over 100 miles away). We were just cruising along, we had the doors closed, and we were talking about what we were going to do over the weekend…just a general conversation…about 10 miles out from Nassau two master caution lights popped on. We had lost both of our fuel boost pumps, something electrical, I assumed. Captain Whitbeck made a radio call back to the mission commander, Lt Col Hubbard, and told him the situation. Sergeant Acha and I started to open the doors and then both engines quit. We were flying at about 500 feet above the water. I tried to pin my door open, but I lost the pin overboard. I moved forward to grab the life raft and Ed grabbed it as well, so I let him take it and he got it out of the aircraft. After we hit the water, two of our Bahamian policemen found the raft and got in, but Ed never got to it. I saw the raft one time but then it was gone; lost in the confusion. There was a nasty storm going on…about 8-10 foot waves, 24 knots of wind and pouring rain—just terrible conditions.

When we hit the water, I believe we were a little nose down and in a slight left bank attitude. I think the way we hit caused my door, the left door, to stay open. Ed Acha was over on the right side and I think when we hit (nose low and slight left bank) his door closed at impact and if he was in the door way it may have slammed shut on him and he couldn't get out. I have gone over it and over it in my mind over the years and that is what I think happened. Everyone who survived, there were four of us, came out my door.

As the helicopter went into the water. Everything was black. I had my LPU (life preserver unit) on and had I deployed it right a way, it could have taken me back into the helicopter, but I was lucky. It was very disorienting, the shock of the impact, we hit hard. I broke my back in four places and dislocated my left arm. Two of my spinal injuries weren't found and treated until about 20 years later.

ACJ: Okay, so now you are out of the helicopter and in the water with 8-10 foot seas and twenty knots of wind and rain. What do you do next?

2T: I initially began to sink with the helicopter. It seemed like 50 feet, but I'm sure it wasn't more than 10 feet. I inflated my right life preserver, but I could not use my left arm; it was dislocated and in the middle of my back. So I only had one arm and I was 'dead' from the chest down

because of my back injuries. I had nothing and figured that I'd be dead before the sharks got me. I was in a lot of pain, but I guess the adrenaline kept me going.

Royal Bahamian Police crewmen on board a UH-1N awaiting takeoff. (Photo courtesy of Smokey Hubbard)

When I got to the surface, I inflated my left LPU with my right hand and it brought my left arm around, but it was still dislocated. Sergeant Ferguson, one of the Bahamian Police officers, saw that I was really hurt and he stayed with me in the water. He didn't go to the raft, when he could have. We could see the lights of Nassau, about 10 miles away. He rolled me on my back and it eased the pain , a little because it was easier than fighting with the moving currents. As I mentioned, Ferguson stayed with me, supporting my body and I was able to get my radio out and make some calls. I will tell you, I used all the techniques that I learned in water survival—it was like second nature—it all worked and helped me survive.

ACJ: So now you are floating in the water with Sergeant Ferguson and your making radio calls and trying to signal for help. Please pick it up there.

2T: Colonel Hubbard got the SAR started after he spoke with Captain Whitbeck. The Coast Guard in Miami launched a helicopter that was on Bimini to help. When the helicopter got close I tried to use my flares, but they were wet. I was able to make contact with the helicopter on my radio and the pilot told me that they were low on fuel. I said you have got to get us out of here. As he entered his hover, the pilot turned on his spot light and it lit up the entire area.

They did not have a rescue swimmer, so the crewman lowered the rescue basket. I told Sergeant Ferguson to go first because I didn't think I could get into the basket. When they lowered the basket back down for me, I could not climb in so I just hung on with my right hand and arm, shook my head, and they started hoisting me up…I was not going to let go. When I got to the cabin door, the crewman grabbed my left arm and yanked me into the helicopter, in the process he popped my shoulder back into place. Finally safe in the helicopter, I passed out.

I woke up in the Nassau hospital and it wasn't a pleasant stay. They had cut off all my clothes and had me laying on a hallway floor; I was laying there naked. I stayed over night and they got me to where I could be transported. The next morning, I was medevac'd over to Homestead AFB and because of my condition I was taken to Miami's Jackson Memorial Hospital, rather than Eglin or Keesler. I was at Jackson Memorial several weeks and received great care. The orthopedic surgeon was the absolute best.

When I was first got to Jackson Memorial, the DEA told me that the Columbians had a bounty out on us. The DEA was concerned that the Columbians might try to take me out, so they placed an armed guard on my hospital room. They also moved me around quite a bit…I probably spent a night in the maternity ward for all I know. After a few weeks, when I was stabilized, I was transferred to the Veterans Administration Hospital across the street. It was a government facility, so the DEA felt I no longer needed an armed guard at my door.

ACJ: How were you feeling after you got settled into the VA hospital?

2T: I was in the hospital, a thousand miles away from anybody, by myself. I was suffering from my injuries and the loss of my crew and one night, after visiting hours, the nurse told me that I had visitors downstairs. I was on the 12th floor, but I told her I'd go down and meet them. When I got down there I see Lt Jim Schaffer and Lt Jack Hester standing there. They had come to see me. We immediately went down the stairs, out the door, got in a car, and drove to a bar! After a while, when the nurses couldn't find me, they reported that I was taken by the two men who came to the hospital. The Miami Police put out an APB (all points bulletin) trying to find me. They must have figured I was kidnapped by the Columbians! Well, when we finished our drinks, Jack and Jim took me back to the hospital, but they dropped me off at the Emergency Room entrance and took off out of the parking lot into the night.

ACJ: That is a great story!

2T: Yes, the experience that night was a good laugh, but I was so depressed and living in hell and when they showed up, it was just what I needed. That's the support of your comrades.

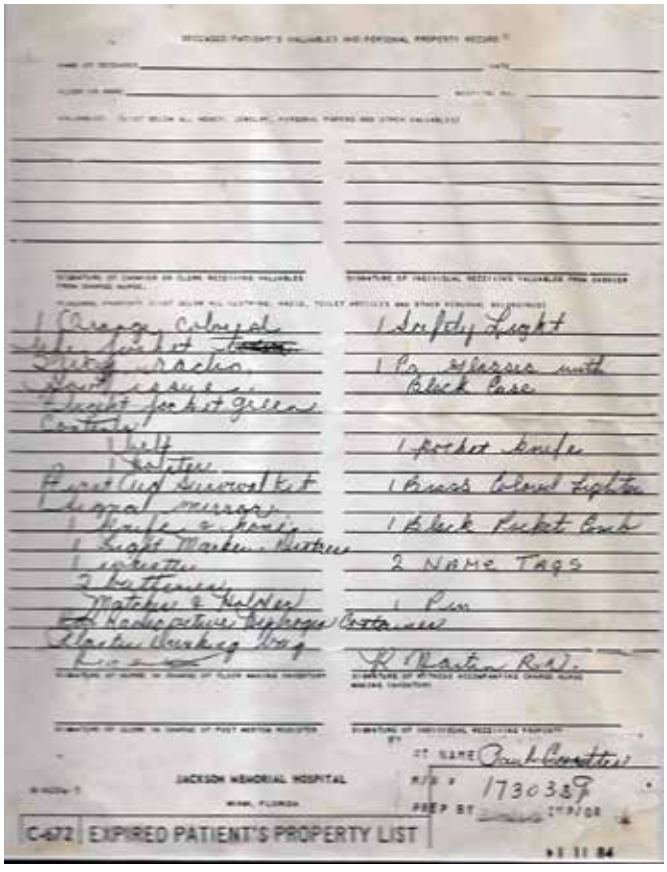
ACJ: "Support of your comrades," that's a part of our Air Commando story, we look out for each other.
Also, I think it is interesting for people to know that you guys in the 20th were flying the Bahamian Police Strike

Force and the DEA into these drug busts. The Colombians read the papers. On the mission four of their smugglers were captured. It is not a huge leap that they learned there was one of the guys alive in Miami.

I found in the research that the USAF crews supporting Op BAT, were not authorized to carry weapons; no aircraft weapons and no personal weapons…at least not officially. The DEA agents were armed and the Royal Bahamian Police carried M-16s and sidearms.

What I am trying to bring out in the articles is that you guys were going up against the Medellin Drug Cartel smugglers and thugs. It was important work, there were a lot of drugs and a lot of money at stake and it was a serious and dangerous business.

2T: I just remembered something humorous ... I was going through my medical papers and found a Jackson Memorial Expired Patients' Property List form with my name on it! I still have it I still have the document framed on my wall.



Paul Cartter's Deceased Patient Property List (Photo courtesy of Paul Cartter)

ACJ: All these years later, coming up on 40 years actually, seeing the smile on your face while you are telling us some of the more humorous aspects of that very tough time in your life is worth every bit of effort we spend on this project.

2T: You know I've been through a lot of counseling and a lot of therapists and I learned to accept things. It was horrible, but I have to keep on, keeping on…putting one foot in front of the other. You know my birthday is in December and I was 30 years old in 1983. One month later I was in the crash. I had just turned 30 when everything happened and it was a rude awakening for me.

ACJ: So what about your road to recovery?

2T: I retired from the Air Force in November 1984. I started walking after the spinal cord injury, but my right leg was still paralyzed. I could still walk and I did that for many years…until 2015 when the accident came back to haunt me. The bones in my back that were repaired grew back and cut my spinal cord and I lost the use of my legs.The doctors determined that the injury was fully a result of the helicopter crash.

ACJ: Would you like to tell our readers anything about your crew? Your remembrances of them?

2T: Yes, Captain Whitbeck was an exceptional pilot. He was a natural at the controls…I had flown with him quite a few times and he could do anything with the helicopter beautifully. He became one with the helicopter, I believe. Lieutenant Hamby was fairly new to the unit. He had flown Hueys at Little Rock AFB before he came to the 20th SOS. The biggest thing I remember about him was he had one of Jim Croce's guitars. I thought that was just the coolest thing. [editor's note: Jim Croce was popular American folk/rock singer between 1966 and 1973.] Sergeant Acha—Ed and I always crewed together, we were a hard backend crew. We knew immediately what the other was doing and we worked together naturally, it was just awesome. I was his supervisor when he first came to the 20th, 1976 I believe, and we became the best of friends; we were close.

ACJ: I'm glad that you have the fond memories of your friends and nice things to say about them. They aren't here anymore, but those memories are what we keep in our hearts.

2T: While we have been talking about this it has brought up some memories. I escaped the helicopter and got to the surface, I started calling out for them, I was calling out their names, but no one answered…I just couldn't find them. It is a nightmare that I wish on nobody.

ACJ: We know that you overcame so much and later in your civilian life you got to give back to your community. Would you like to talk about that?

2T: Yes. You know being in the military, I loved the military…that was my whole world and I thoroughly enjoyed

it and to have it end, so abruptly, it was like, what do I do now? I drank pretty heavily for about five years. When I got sober, I learned a lot about myself…I had buried and hid a lot of things, from myself. Today, I have been sober for 36 years and once I got my head right, things started happening—good things.

Paul '2T' Cartter with Capt Dyke Whitbeck's family, Dyke's brother Craig, the captain's daughters April and Stephanie, and his wife Susan at Hurlburt Air Park during the memorial dedication for Op Bat. (Photo courtesy of Paul Cartter)

One day I bought a puppy, a redbone coonhound, and I stopped by the pet store and a woman there asked me if I was going to be in search and rescue? And I thought, now that's an idea and in 1997, I joined Southwest Rescue Dogs Inc. It was a search and rescue organization in Pima County Arizona that worked for the sheriff's office. I got into training and my dog got a couple of finds and even discovered a homicide that no one knew about. We were training and she picked up a scent and I went with her and she found the body.

More good things started to happen. I went to a training event in Oakland, California on the old navy base. The affair was run by a group of people with bloodhound dogs. I loved the breed so I got a bloodhound and started working with her and what a reward. She made several finds and then I got called to Quantico, Virginia to work with the FBI on the anthrax letter(s) scare in 2002…after 9/11. My bloodhound, Ginger, nailed a house in the suburbs of Washington DC and the FBI said that was all they needed for evidence in a prosecution. I became a dog person. I ate, slept, and drank water with my dogs in the wilderness in Arizona. I had very special times with that bloodhound—it was an awesome time in my life to be called by the FBI to go to Quantico. I did major training events with some expert bloodhound dog handlers in the Law Enforcement Bloodhound Association. They were all man hunters. It is an interesting profession that I never knew existed. Once I got into it, I thrived. I loved it. When my legs started failing me, I eventually had to discontinue doing it, but I worked 17 years with the dogs and absolutely loved it.

ACJ: That's a wonderful story—finding a passion and working with the dogs for 17 years helped you through some very tough times.

2T: Along the same time period, I joined the Arizona Disaster Medical Assist Team (DMAT). They deploy mainly in the United States, but also all over the world. I became the communications officer and worked there for about two years until my legs started hurting me and I had to withdraw from it. These days I compete in the Veterans National Wheelchair Games annually and we'll be going to Portland, Oregon this year.

Here's a fun fact, because of my work with the FBI in Quantico, they made me a founding member of Homeland Security. I have a certificate stating that I was one of the first members. After my recovery and the years since have led to a very rewarding time in my life—with the dogs and search and rescue, DMAT, and now, the veteran wheelchair games—all are things you never think are possible. It has been just great!

Paul Cartter in his tracked wheelchair and his current dog Thor in Arizona. (Photo courtesy of Paul Cartter)

ACJ: Paul, thank you for sitting down with us and talking about your time working with the 20th SOS Green Hornets and also sharing your perspective on the tragic events of 9 January 1984 that changed your life. Sharing your story about how you overcame your many challenges, as a result of that night, will be inspirational for our readers. Everyone has difficulties in their lives and your story might just help a few people know that they too can overcome the adversity and contribute to their communities and have a fulfilling life. Thank you.

Dedicated to the memory of:

Captain Dyke Whitbeck

Lieutenant Thomas Hamby

Sergeant Edgardo Acha

DEA Special Agent Larry Carwell

Royal Bahamian Police Corporal Autry Jones

CREW OF 44 ALPHA OP BAT MISSIONS FLOWN:

Capt Dyke Whitbeck (1956-1984)
flew 25 OpBAT missions

Lt Thomas Hamby (1958-1984)
flew 11 OpBAT missions

SSgt Paul Cartter—flew 17 OpBAT missions

SSgt Edgardo Acha (1954-1984)
flew 14 OpBAT missions

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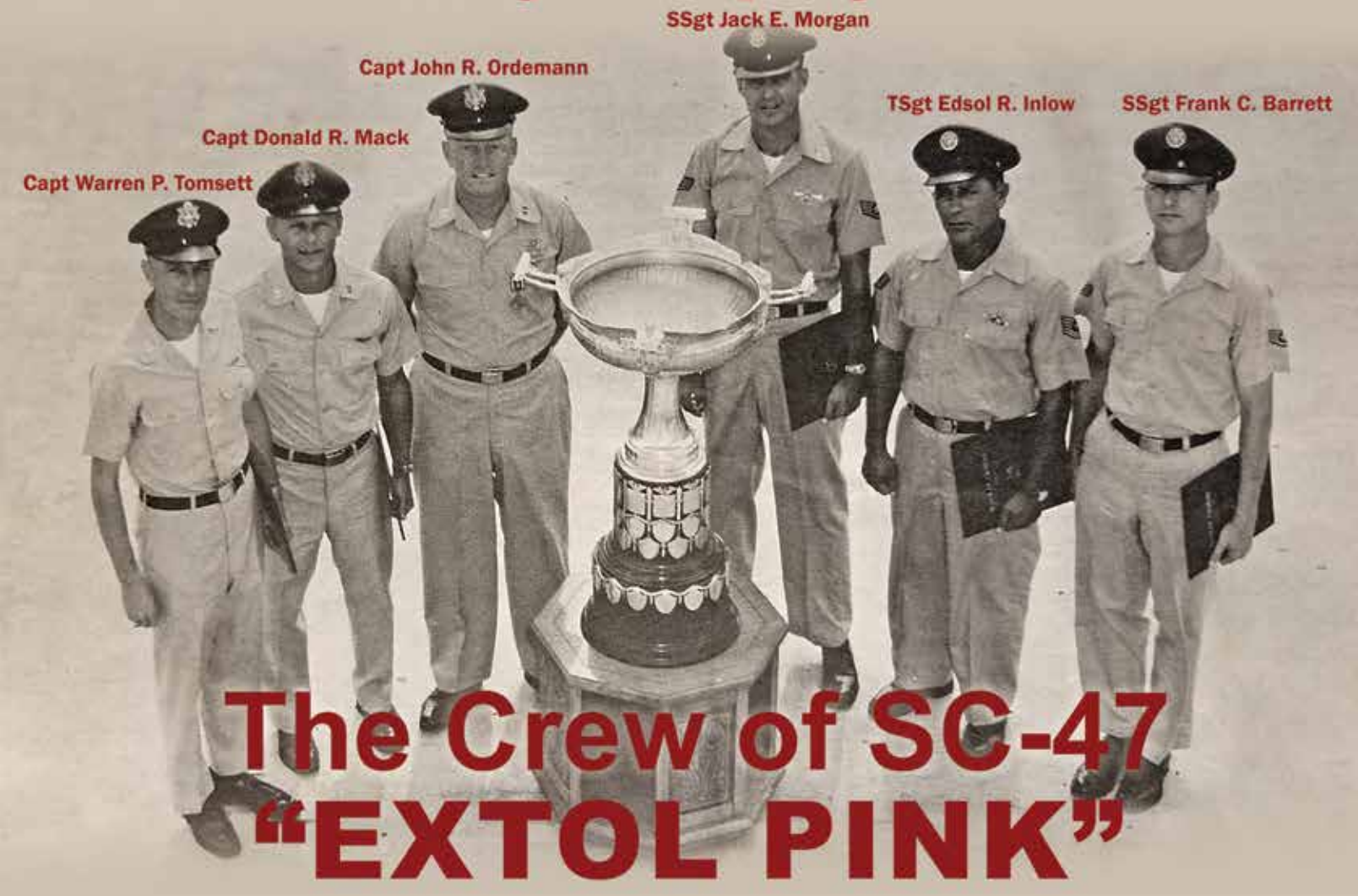
Mackay Trophy 1963



The Crew of SC-47 "EXTOL PINK"

By Mike Russell, Col, USAF (retired)

Background

In January 1961, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev announced the USSR's intent to support "wars of national liberation." During the 1950s and 60s, communist ideology had a special attraction to many nations throughout the developing world and those nations shaking off the past colonial relationships. The Soviet Union offered money, arms, and training as the reward for joining the communist Russia's sphere of influence. The shortcomings of the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations' reliance on nuclear weapons as the primary means of military deterrence were revealed when the U.S. and its allies were unable to assist the East Germans in 1952 or the Hungarians in 1956, when those nations attempted to leave the Warsaw Pact. The French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, by communist Viet Minh forces, added to the fears of communist expansion.

This clash of ideologies led to President John F. Kennedy's June 1962 oft-quoted speech about the new type of war "ancient in its origin—war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins, war by ambush instead of by combat." The President called on the Services to develop a "whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and a new and wholly different kind of military training." The Services responded by creating or expanding their guerrilla warfare and counterinsurgency capabilities. The Army expanded its Special Forces, the "Green Berets," while the Navy created SEALs and the Air Force created the Air Commandos.

In April 1961, the Air Force established the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS), nicknamed "Jungle Jim," at Eglin Auxiliary Field #9, now Hurlburt Field, Florida. The initial cadre consisted of 352 officers and NCOs with 32 Second World War vintage aircraft: C-47 transports, B-26 light bombers, and T-28 trainers. Col Benjamin King, a World War II ace, was the 4400th CCTS's first commander. According to official sources, the squadron had the dual mission of providing air support to U.S. and partner nation irregular forces and also instructing the partner air forces to teach them to use appropriate forms of air power to fight their own wars.

Six months after it was created, the squadron was declared "operationally capable." In August 1961, the 4400th

CCTS deployed two SC-47s and 17 men to Bamako, Mali, in West Africa as part of joint Army-Air Force mobile training team, code named Sandy Beach. The squadron's second detachment, code named Farm Gate, deployed to Bien Hoa AB in South Vietnam in November 1961. The Farm Gate detachment was the first U.S. unit to fly combat sorties in the Vietnam War. Detachment 3, code named Bold Venture, deployed to Panama and established an Air Commando presence and tradition throughout Central and South America.

The squadron's initial forays proved to be quite successful and with increased demand for special air warfare in Southeast Asia (SEA), in April 1962 the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen Curtis Lemay, upgraded the squadron to the Special Air Warfare Center. Interest in this "new" Air Force mission was so great that in May 1962 the Air Force Times published requests asking Airmen to defer volunteering for service as an Air Commando.

To man the unit, the Air Force sought volunteers – pilots with at least 5,000 hours of flight time, and enlisted personnel, including crew chiefs, loadmasters, mechanics, armament specialists, and combat controllers who ranked in the top tiers of their specialties. Potential recruits were only told that the program was highly classified, and it would involve combat. More than 3,500 men volunteered.

Those who made it through the interview process were sent to Stead AFB, Nevada, for an advanced survival and resistance course, small-arms training, and unarmed combatives instruction. The men of the 4400th began their training at Hurlburt Field. The SC-47 aircrews practiced short-field landings, airborne loudspeaker operations, leaflet drops, parachute drops of men and equipment, and night operations, including landing on short, unprepared strips in the dark. The T-28s and B-26s practiced day and night operations including strafing, napalm, skip-bombing, flare operations, and reconnaissance. In its first six months, the squadron logged more than 9,000 flying hours without a single mishap. In addition to aircrews, the squadron recruited combat controllers, medics, photo-reconnaissance specialists, forward air controllers, and combat weathermen. On the support side, the maintainers, armorers, intelligence professionals, etc., all cross-trained to perform multiple tasks so as to reduce the manpower requirements and logistics footprint of deployed Air Commando detachments.

And Then Came Farm Gate

In May 1963, the organization was expanded again, this time to about 5,000 people and upgraded to 1st Air Commando Wing. By 1965 the wing consisted of 11 squadrons, 6 in SEA, 3 at Hurlburt Field, one in Panama, and one in Germany. In addition, there were four Air Commando Groups in the Air National Guard. Despite being outside the mainstream of the corporate Air Force, in the unit's first three years Air Commandos were recognized with the Aviator's Valor Award, the Mackay Trophy, the Cheney award, and the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award. It was also awarded the first Presidential Unit Citation since the Korean War.

The initial Farm Gate detachment consisted of four SC-47s, four B-26s, and eight T-28 trainers. These old aircraft, which flew low and slow, turned out to be well suited for the counter-guerrilla missions they conducted in remote, austere, and normally primitive locations. The first Farm Gate combat training sorties were flown on 19 December 1961. As Viet Cong attacks increased across the countryside, calls for air support to embattled ground troops also increased. Since the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) was unable to meet all of the demands, commanders increasingly turned to Farm Gate crews to fly the sorties. Consequently, the number of USAF sorties increased steadily. During the first 12 months in country, the 12 Air Commando T-28s and B-26s flew 2,993 operational sorties, the four SC-47s flew 843 operational sorties, and HQ USAF credited Farm Gate crews with 28 percent of officially recorded guerilla casualties, as well as 4,000 structures and 275 boats destroyed.

Farm Gate Missions

Most Viet Cong guerrilla attacks occurred at night, but the VNAF had not yet developed a night strike capability, so Farm Gate B-26s and T-28s were the only aircraft available for air support between sunset and dawn.

Night missions were largely flown in support of Army of Vietnam (ARVN) outposts or villages under attack and were very demanding. Farm Gate SC-47s or VNAF-C-47s with American copilots would drop illumination flares from about 1,500 feet. The T-28s or B-26s would then strafe or bomb the target. They worked under the flares and placed their ordnance as directed by ground controllers inside the beleaguered outpost. Sometimes the Air Commandos had direct radio contact with the ground forces, but sometimes the instructions had to be relayed by the C-47s. By the end of 1963, flare ships and close air support packages were on constant alert.

The SC-47 was a beefed-up, extended range version of the reliable Douglas C-47 Gooney Bird that had originally been modified for search and rescue, hence the "S" prefix in the designation. The SC-47s had a paratroop door, shackles on the underside of the fuselage for air-dropping bundles too large to be carried inside the fuselage, and the strengthened fuselage designed for C-47s designated as glider towplanes during the Second World War. The SC-47 was heavy on the controls, slow to respond, and tough to land in a crosswind. Though the Gooney Birds were not designed for short-field operations, they were often sent to 2,500-foot, narrow, unimproved airfields that always seemed to be surrounded by very tall trees.

With few navigation aids available in Vietnam at the time, most flights to support the ARVN were made under visual flight rules in uncontrolled airspace. It was a tough and demanding environment with a seven-day work week and few, if any, routine missions. Consequently, there was a high casualty rate. By July 1963, 16 Farm Gate Air Commandos had been killed and one SC-47, four T-28s, and four B-26s were lost.

Editor's note: The following is an abridged version of

John Frisbee's article *"Valor: Night Rescue at Loc Ninh,"* originally published in the October 1993 issue of *Air & Space Forces Magazine* and used with their permission.

The Most Meritorious Flight of the Year, Extol Pink

Half an hour before midnight on 20 July 1963, Capt Warren Tomsett lifted his faithful Gooney Bird into the black sky above Bien Hoa. Scrambled on a flare-drop mission, he turned his SC-47, call sign Extol Pink, south-west over the Mekong Delta where he was vectored to a Vietnamese hamlet under attack by the Viet Cong. There, he and his crew began dropping the magnesium parachute flares that turned darkness into daylight, exposing the attacking guerrillas to the ground fire of defending villagers and the suppressing rockets from friendly fighter-bombers.

Tomsett's crew consisted of Capt John Ordemann, copilot; Capt Donald Mack, navigator; TSgt Edsol Inlow, crew chief; and SSgts Jack Morgan and Frank Barrett, loadmasters.

Two hours into their mission, Tomsett was asked by the Air Operations Center if he would consider a rescue mission of six critically wounded ARVN troops from Loc Ninh, a Vietnamese airfield under heavy attack by the Viet Cong. Knowing that the soldiers would likely never see daylight if not quickly evacuated, Tomsett replied, "We'll give it a go." Loc Ninh was 3600-foot dirt strip located in a narrow valley just a few miles from the Cambodian border. It was limited to daylight use only as it had no navigation aids nor lights. The runway had a pronounced hump in the middle and as was typical, 200-foot trees at both ends. Finding the airstrip in the jungle on a dark night would take a miracle.

At 0230, Extol Pink was relieved by a Vietnamese flare plane and Captain Tomsett turned to the dead reckoning course his navigator had computed. By this time, clouds had started to form 500 feet above the rising terrain. The crew knew they would have to get below the cloud deck to have a chance of finding the narrow jungle strip and could only hope the rising terrain and thickening clouds didn't meet before they found Loc Ninh. With no radio communications between Extol Pink and friendly forces at the airfield, all Tomsett could do was fly the course the navigator had plotted until time was up. As the ETA (estimated time of arrival) approached, the entire crew of Extol Pink were staring intently into the black jungle, hoping for some sign of the tiny strip. Amazingly, just seconds before the ETA, Sergeant Inlow, standing between the pilot and copilot, called out the airfield directly under the nose of the aircraft. The airfield was so small and poorly marked and the weather had deteriorated so badly that had the navigation been off by as little as one eighth of a mile, the crew would never have seen it!

Tomsett wheeled the Gooney Bird into a hard left turn to keep the airfield in sight and set up his approach for a blacked out, crosswind landing on the tiny dirt strip that was haphazardly marked with toilet paper rolls soaked in gasoline, jammed on sticks, and set on fire. On his first attempt he came in high and hot and had to go around. On final approach for his second attempt, he dropped full flaps and put his aircraft into a near stall descent to clear the massive trees on the approach end and be able to land in the shortest possible distance. Once on final, he could see the flashes of gunfire aimed at his aircraft winking through jungle. The Viet Cong had completely surrounded the airstrip.

Despite the crosswind, Tomsett managed to keep the SC-47 on the narrow runway. He rode the brakes all the way to the far end of the field and then, in spite of being surrounded by enemy fighters and receiving continuous small arms fire, shut down both engines in order to safely and expeditiously load the critically injured ARVN soldiers. The six soldiers were quickly brought onboard along with an American Special Forces medical advisor. Small-arms fire continued from both sides of the strip. As soon as the aircraft was loaded, Tomsett fired up both engines, wheeled the aircraft 180 degrees, set the brakes, and pushed both throttles to the stops. A takeoff with their heavy fuel load, uphill grade, and a rear quartering crosswind would have been a challenge under even the best conditions, but just as the aircraft began to roll down the now blackened strip, the cockpit went dark. Reacting instinctively, Sergeant Inlow, well versed in cockpit emergencies, quickly pulled out a pocket flashlight that was barely able to illuminate the instrument panel. Meanwhile, enemy fire continued to search for the blacked-out airplane. Once over the hump in the middle of the runway and down the reverse side, Captain Tomsett horsed back on the control column and, with both engines screaming at full power, barely cleared the trees at the end of the field. Incredibly, the aircraft was never hit.

Enroute to Saigon, Captain Mack, Sergeant Inlow, and the loadmasters, Sergeants Morgan and Barrett, worked feverishly with the Special Forces medic to keep the Vietnamese soldiers alive for the duration of the flight. By the time the aircraft landed, all of their flight suits were covered in blood, but all of their patients were still alive. After the wounded were delivered to the waiting ambulance, the crew of Extol Pink returned to Bien Hoa airfield; landing seven hours after being scrambled for their flare mission.

On 9 July 1964, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen Curtis LeMay awarded the MacKay Trophy to the crew of Extol Pink for the most meritorious flight of 1963. With the presentation, six Air Commandos joined the roll of Mackay Trophy recipients that included Hap Arnold (twice), Eddie Rickenbacker, Benjamin Foulois, Jimmy Doolittle, Ira Eaker, and Chuck Yeager; distinguished company for a distinguished crew.

About the Author: Col Mike Russell is a retired Air Commando and USAF pilot. He flew as a Primary Jet Instructor Pilot (T-37), Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Pilot (HH-53B/C Jolly Green Giant), and Special Operations Helicopter Pilot (MH-53H/J Pave Low III). Colonel Russell also served as the Commander of the 21st SOS, Deputy Commander of the 16th Special Operations Group, Commander of the 66th Air Operations Squadron, Deputy Commander of Special Operations Command Europe, and Commander of JSOTF-Atlas Response.

The Tinian Accident

A Retrospective

By Harold B."Butch" Gilbert, Maj, USAF (Retired)

One of the most interesting parts of special operations is that, generally, you never hear about the successes of most missions, of which there are many. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true, unsuccessful missions garner both public, and high-level command scrutiny so that future generations of special operations forces (SOF) learn from previous mistakes. As we all know, special operations missions are often high risk, high rewards efforts that require intense planning, intelligence, and near flawless execution.

This story is one of the ones that didn't go as planned, but which did not get much attention, primarily due to its remote location and classified nature. It is the story of how two airplanes unintentionally tried to occupy the exact same airspace, at the exact same time on a dark night on the island of Tinian. Even though an MH-60 BlackHawk helicopter was lost, no one was killed or seriously injured.

What is even more intriguing now is that the island of Tinian has such a rich history in military operations. Used as the launching point for the B-29 nuclear weapon raids on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the island has largely been abandoned by US military forces since WWII. Today, United States Indo-Pacific Command and Pacific Air Forces are investigating Tinian and its only working paved runway (originally designated West Field) in the center of the island, for rearming and refueling operations of fighter jets, and/or an in extremis alternate landing site if necessary.

In February of 1985, the 1st Special Operations Squadron (1st SOS) at Clark AB, Republic of the Philippines was tasked to participate in exercise

Freedom Shield and deployed to Anderson AFB, Guam, with two MC-130E Combat Talon aircraft. This highly classified Joint Chiefs of Staff exercise was sponsored by the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC). The scenario was planned to exercise all aspects of high altitude/high opening (HAHO) insertion of a combat control team to Tinian airfield; airdrop of Navy SEALS with boats for an underway takedown of a ship; and a multi-aircraft airfield seizure. The air component portion of this exercise involved an 8-ship C-130 airfield seizures; a multiple MH-60 and AH-6 helicopter assault; a C-5 NVG (night vision goggles) landing at a neutral runway to deliver the MH-6 and AH-6 helicopters to support the underway ship seizure; and the airfield take down activities to all occur simultaneously. Tinian was one of the few places on the planet at that time where JSOC could practice this complex secretive mission and fire live weapons. The island was perfect because of its isolated location—only a few fish would ever know we were there.

Talon crew. (Photo courtesy of Ned Calvert)

The 1st SOS fully qualified NVG crew was Capt Frank Sharpe, aircraft commander, me as the copilot, Wayne Washer as the NVG safety pilot, and a top-notch crew consisting of Dave Smith (navigator), Ned Calvert (navigator), Eric Worles (flight engineer), John Slepetz (electronic warfare officer), Sam Garrett (radio operator), and loadmasters, Dave Frederickson and John Smith. The 1st SOS only participated in these kinds of JSOC exercises about once a year since they were mostly conducted in the contiguous U.S., and it was a big commitment to send one airplane to the States for such a big exercise. Fortunately for us, this one was right in our back yard. Also participating in this exercise was two AWADS (Adverse Weather Aerial Delivery System) special operations low-level (qualified) C-130E crews and aircraft from Pope AFB, and another MC-130E from the 8th SOS at Hurlburt Field. The Hurlburt Field MC-130E aircraft commander was Skip Davenport and Don James was his lead navigator.

This exercise also had several components that were "firsts," not only for JSOC, but also for the crews. One unique aspect of the mission that I remember well was that the entire startup, taxi, takeoff, and enroute flight was conducted with no VHF communications. Everything was accomplished according to the timeline in the published execution checklist sequence of events. All communications were conducted over a secure UHF satellite communications (SATCOM) network. This communication network would prove critical very shortly.

Another new tactic was that as we approached the initial point or IP for the airland part of the exercise, which was a rapid offload of jeeps and personnel, we were assigned designated holding patterns to await clearance for the approach to the airfield at Tinian. We were going to land on one of the four WWII coral runways that was still usable at that time. During the pre-mission brief we were told we were going to use enroute holding patterns. These enroute holding points, later became SOP (standard operating procedure) for JSOC missions because the army or other ground forces determined the time of arrivals (TOA) to the runway based on the actual conditions on the ground. I remember very vividly that Don James did not like the idea of holding patterns enroute to the runway, and he especially did not like adjustments to the TOA, that were to be determined by the JSOC command element. His apprehension proved prescient only a few hours later.

When we arrived at our airplane, we had additional surprise. The PACAF/DO (Director of Operations), a brigadier general, would be on board to observe our NVG approach and landing at Tinian. He was escorted by Colonel Steve Baker, which made for six men standing forward of the NVG curtain during the operation. Everyone was wearing PVS-5 NVGs, except me. All the ground operations, takeoff, and cruise aspects of the flight went smoothly as we approached the holding points. Once we entered holding, we just waited to hear the new TOA, which drove the navigators crazy since getting us to the landing zone on time was their responsibility. Finally, we heard the code word to adjust the TOA over the SATCOM frequency, which I will remember until the day I die – "Mercedes minus 10." To everyone's amazement, the planned TOA had just been moved up by 10 minutes! This was a surprise since arrival times are almost never moved up, they are always delayed.

We spun out of the holding pattern, as the lead ship in the 30-ship formation, and set up for the approach. Totally blacked out, everything through the slow down, configuration, and descent down the glide slope on the

PARA (precision airborne radar approach) went like clockwork. I can still remember approaching minimums and then just when I was expecting the aircraft to touchdown, I felt a big THUMP! I was shocked when Frank Sharpe said, "Was that helicopter supposed to be there?" I could feel the airplane shake and Frank immediately executed the go-around. The first thing I did was look over at the torque gauges to see if we still had four screws turning and we did. I took control of the airplane and continued the missed approach procedure, but did not change configuration, except to get the flaps up to 50 percent.

PHOTO HAS BEEN REMOVED

Immediately, I heard on every frequency including guard, "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, WE HAVE A REAL-WORLD EMERGENCY!!" We had just hit an MH-60 Blackhawk helicopter that was hovering over the landing zone! The helicopter crew had not received the moved-up TOA over their SATCOM network. The helicopter was over the approach end of the runway setting up NVG compatible landing lights for the aircraft behind us.

We had literally just landed on the Blackhawk's "Jesus Nut" (the device which holds a helicopter rotor to the shaft, so called because if it fails, you're going to see Jesus) and drove the helicopter into the landing zone. It crashed and was totally destroyed, fortunately it's crew only had minor injuries. It turned out later that the helicopter crew was on a different SATCOM network and never received or acknowledged the new TOA. Also, the MH-60 did not have any working external NVG compatible lights illuminated. Even with NVGs, Frank and Wayne couldn't see the helicopter hovering over the approach end of the runway as we were about to touch down.

Frank executed the 'go-around' on NVGs and then I took control of the airplane and climbed up to 3,000 feet. Frank directed me and the navigators to get us headed back to Guam. On the way there, another MC-130E came up on our left wing and using their NVGs and FLIR ball told us to check out the left landing gear tires. By this time, the crew had taken off the NVGs and we had gone back to normal lighting. Sometime over the next three hours in a holding pattern above Guam, we discovered that the helicopter's rotor disc had sliced the two left tires on our bird, 63-7785. Frank told the loadmasters to secure all the live ordnance load in the back. Every tie down device on board was used to make sure the load did not shift when we landed. He also coordinated the landing at Anderson AFB with a full load of live ordnance, two flat tires, questionable directional control, and a 1-star general on the flight deck. We also planned for an orderly evacuation from the airplane upon landing…and hoped the airplane didn't catch fire, or veer off the runway. Later, we were told that the Anderson AFB, Strategic Air Command base commander was not too happy that our airplane would be shutting down one of his runways.

Once all the other aircraft from the exercise had landed, and we burned enough fuel off, completed all our checklists and coordinated our emergency landing, we left the holding pattern and flew our approach. Frank flew a flawless approach and when we touched down it felt like we had two square tires on the left side. Fortunately, we had very little directional control problems until we slowed down. We had lots of runway and as I recall, we did not use the brakes because we didn't want to drag the tires. The airplane stopped on the centerline, listing to the left.

When we stopped, Frank directed me to shut down engines 1 and 2. I grabbed the condition levers with one hand and slammed them to feather. Next, I feathered 3 and 4 and hit the evacuation bell and got out of the airplane. Everyone exited safe and sound, the airplane was on centerline, but was leaning to the left. All the mission passengers got a ride off the runway, except for the crew, we had to wait for a bus to come out and get us. Before we could call it a night, we had to go to the hospital and give blood and urine and get interviewed by the flight surgeon.

Crew sitting on slashed tire. (Photo courtesy of Ned Calvert)

We finally got back to the BOQ and it took about a week to get 63-7785 a new pair of shoes and fix some landing gear door sheet metal damage. The MH-60's rotor blades also damaged about half of the left flap. I don't remember much of that week, as our daily crew debrief was aided by lots of adult beverages.

About 12 months after the accident, the squadron was briefed on the final safety report. The briefing officer said, in front of the whole squadron, that our accident was one of only very few in USAF history (at that time) where the aircrew was thoroughly exonerated. We executed the mission as briefed and modified by the command element. Had the helicopter been in any other position on the runway upon our arrival, the results would have been much different.

Slashed left tire. (Photo courtesy of Ned Calvert)

A few months later, Steve Fleming was flying 63-7785 on a night low-level mission in the northern part of Luzon in the Philippines when he took a M-16 round in the single point refueling panel that caused an in-flight fire. That is another story better told by others. This is also the reason that I have a special affinity for MC-130E 63-7785. She took a licking and kept on ticking.

On a more humorous note, in 1984 the smash hit movie "Ghostbusters" was released. The most famous line from the movie of course is "Who you gonna call? GHOSTBUSTERS! In typical dark military humor, we made up our own slogan from that mission."When you in the flare, and a Blackhawk's there…Who you gonna call? HAWKBUSTERS!!!"

About the author: Harold B. "Butch" Gilbert served 5-years as an USAF meteorologist before he was assigned, as a captain, to the 1st SOS (S-78) immediately after undergraduate pilot training in 1983. His wife, Mary Ana, was also a USAF pilot who flew the T-39 and C-12 while at Clark AB. Butch accepted a consecutive overseas tour to the 7th SOS and stood up the 39th SOW/DOV at Rhein-Main AB, GE. He retired after an assignment to USSOCOM in 1993. Major Gilbert recently retired after a 25 year career with FedEx Express.

SPIRIT 03 MEMORIAL HONORS SACRIFICE

In honor of its 40th reunion, the U.S. Air Force Academy Class of 1979 supported the creation and placement of the Spirit 03 Memorial on the Air Force Academy's Honor Court. The memorial was dedicated May 5 during a special ceremony hosted by the Association of Graduates and Air Force Academy Foundation.

The sculpture is dedicated to 1979 classmate Maj Paul J. "Dream Weaver" Weaver and his AC-130H crew, who made the ultimate sacrifice 31 January1991, during Operation Desert Storm. The Class of 1979 reunion gift, coordinated through the Air Force Academy Foundation, includes nearly $500,000 to fund the Spirit 03 Memorial and another $1.3 million in support of the construction of the Madera Cyber Innovation Center, currently under construction.

As a war-fighting heritage memorial, the Spirit 03 Memorial commemorates the crew's selfless service and gallantry in battle. Each of the speakers highlighted these qualities as they honor the crew and their heroism.

"To the cadets in the audience: May this memorial serve as a reminder of the sacred sacrifice we may all be called upon to give one day.... You share a legacy with some of the most incredible humans who ever walked on this earth," said Lt Col Colin LaFavor '07, commander of the 16th Special Operations Squadron, U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command. The squadron, [now] based at Cannon AFB in Clovis, New Mexico, was home to the Spirit 03 and its crew.

LaFavor characterized the Spirit 03 crew as "mighty warriors" and "the purest embodiment of warrior ethos" during his remarks.The story of the Spirit 03 and its crew is relayed to all gunship operators with the 16th Special Operations Squadron.

"It's fitting that we share the story of Spirit 03 and dedicate this monument to Maj Paul J. Weaver, USAFA class of 1979, and his crew, in the Air Force Academy's Honor Court," said Lt Gen Richard Clark '86, USAFA superintendent. "He led Spirit 03 with honor and courage as an example of our great institution... How appropriate that Spirit 03 has checked in, on station, to permanently provide armed overwatch over the United States Air Force Academy. Every time I see this AC-130, I will reflect on the story, and so will our cadets, our staff, our faculty and everybody that comes to this Honor Court. We'll remember the courage, we'll remember the commitment, we'll remember their dedication not only of Spirit 03, but all of our AFSOC warriors. And this monument ensures that our history and that the sacrifices of Spirit 03 will never be forgotten."

Col (Ret) Michael Van Hoomissen '79, class president, officially presented the memorial to the cadet wing as part of the ceremony.

"We believe their devotion to duty and selfless service to their fellow warriors should be learned — emulated — by every airman and guardian, especially Air Force Academy graduates" he said.

The ceremony began with an a cappella version of the national anthem followed by an AC-130J Ghostrider flyover, crewed by Academy graduates. Members of Weaver's family and the families of other Spirit 03 crew members also attended.

The Spirit 03 sculpture was created by Jim Nance '71.

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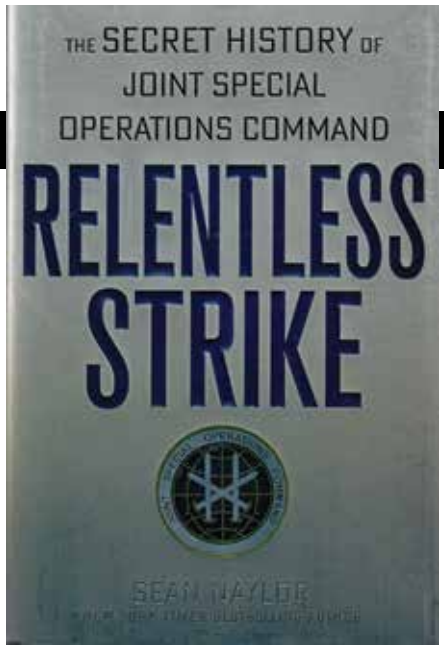
Book Reviews



Relentless Strike: The Secret History of Joint Special Operations Command

By Sean Naylor

(St Martin's Press, 2015, 560 pages)

Reviewed by Michael Hreczkosij, Lt Col, USAF (Retired)

In 2015, journalist Sean Naylor published his book, *Relentless Strike: The Secret History of Joint Special Operations Command,* and it was an immediate sensation. Dozens of military and civilian media outlets simultaneously praised the book, while also offering serious reservations on the sourcing and provenance of the information Mr. Naylor used to write it. Eight years later, the criticism has largely died down, and *Relentless Strike* remains the most popular and widely proliferated book on JSOC (Joint Special Operations Command) in print today. With the benefit of hindsight, it is high time to determine the final judgement of this infamous book.

Arguably, the book still holds up as an extraordinarily detailed look at the history of JSOC, from its ragtag beginnings in the late 1970s and early 80s, through the mid 2010s where the story ends just before its publication. Both casual and professional readers of the book will be impressed with the amount of detail Mr. Naylor was able to capture in his narratives, but also perhaps a bit disturbed by the amount of access and sources he needed to obtain such information (more on that later!!).

Early in the war in Afghanistan, Mr. Naylor relays a story in which the JSOC leadership assembled a nascent operations center, what would be easily recognizable today as a JSOTF JOC. The admirals and generals marveled over the wall of plasma televisions and the live-video feeds from aircraft over the combat zone. However, one keen lieutenant colonel saw the downside of such an arrangement immediately. He referred to the JOC as creating "the illusion of understanding." [emphasis added] Unfortunately, this metaphor seems all too apt for the entire book.

Despite the richness of the history offered in the book, this reviewer simply cannot recommend this book to the modern-day SOF audience, especially the Air Commando community. In fact, it is the sheer density of facts and details and innumerable tangents and sidetracks that renders this history almost unreadable. Mr. Naylor's drive to include every incidental event, irrelevant storyline, and minute factoid offer readers much to feast on, but very little to actually satisfy. By the end of the book, this reviewer felt that it ultimately resembled Shakespeare's famous line about "Sound and fury, signifying nothing."

The book is set out with a conventional structure. It begins at the beginning, the birth of JSOC as an entity. The book is divided into four main sections: the origins and pre-9/11 history, the impact of 9/11 and early operations in Afghanistan, the invasion of Iraq and JSOC's subsequent transformation, and finally the emergence of a truly global organization. The overarching thesis of the book seems to be that JSOC is an organization that is constantly and extraordinarily desperate to justify its existence, while simultaneously also being constantly praised and recognized as the most effective and lethal unit in the Department of Defense. Oftentimes these two identities are juxtaposed in such a way as to be greatly confusing to the reader. Is this the story of a scrappy underdog, determined to show the world just how needed they really are? Or is it the story of elite hunters and killers, feared by their enemies and considered the gold standard for operational execution? Mr. Naylor's answer seems to be yes to both.

The first section is a story that has been told in several iterations from other sources. Mr. Naylor's version is a synthesized version of these many prior publications, told from the point of view of JSOC as an organization. It describes a team that struggled to assemble its disparate parts from various services into a joint effective team. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, JSOC's focus was on creating a cohesive organization that could conduct very specific counter-terror operations, such as complex hostage rescue operations, and counter-proliferation operations for

WMDs (weapons of mass destruction). JSOC had numerous opportunities to execute these operations through the first two decades, with various levels of success. This section tells a well-worn history, albeit from a unique perspective, and is probably the most interesting part of the book. It is the most removed from the biases of individual personalities and emotions, and it comes together fairly well.

The next three sections deal with JSOC's evolution after 9/11 and invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The narrative style shifts dramatically in these sections, as the author changes gears from historian to journalist. Rather than telling interesting tales from long ago, the story becomes one of current events rapidly flying by. Many of the readers of this book will already be familiar with the history and military operations of the Afghan and Iraq wars. Our Air Commando readers will surely recall their own deployments, and missions such as Operation Red Devil, the fight at Tora Bora, or the searches for bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, or Zarqawi. As I read, I also began to recall my personal experiences during the same events. However, let the reader be warned, there is very little aviation narrative in these sections. Mr. Naylor must not have found any anonymous sources in AFSOC willing to spill the beans, since there are no anecdotes or stories from the flying side of JSOC. Any Air Commandos in the reading audience may be disappointed to not find their stories included, outside of a brief reference to an MC-130 or AC-130 here and there.

Section two begins with 9/11 and Afghanistan. JSOC arrived in early October but struggled to find its role. What does an organization designed for hostage rescue do in a combat zone, even one as unconventional as Afghanistan? In short, JSOC eventually focused on a specific mission, that of the hunter-killer. With no hostages to rescue or WMD to secure, JSOC's leadership recognized that they were uniquely situated to obtain and exploit intelligence and rapidly execute interdiction operations. In October 2001, helicopter gunship crews were using rudimentary intelligence methods to seek and destroy al Qaeda targets. This mission was designated Operation Relentless Strike (and thus the title of this book). JSOC's leadership quickly recognized the utility of this mission and began to pour resources into the effort. The section ends with the fruitless search for Osama bin Laden in Tora Bora, and the frustration JSOC encountered trying to execute operations alongside traditional SOF. This would later become a well-trod path, in Iraq and other places around the world.

Section three begins with the invasion of Iraq, and once again JSOC finding itself in a combat zone without a clear role to play. After pointlessly searching for WMDs in the early post-invasion days, JSOC began to replicate its Afghanistan mission by searching for notorious Iraqi figures such as Saddam Hussein and his progeny. However, a new enemy arose in Iraq, one that would offer the perfect spoiler to JSOC's operations and fueled their spectacular growth for the next decade. That individual was, of course, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Mr. Zarqawi and his organization, Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), would become JSOC's bogeyman. AQI was a highly effective organization, fomenting insurrection and fueling the persistent drum beat of car bombings and IED attacks that plagued the coalition.

JSOC realized that in order to defeat AQI and Mr. Zarqawi they would have to "use a network to defeat a network." JSOC quickly moved beyond simple hunter-killer missions for high value targets, and instead crafted an international strategy to counter and deter AQI at every step of their operation. JSOC grew rapidly, as its units focused on more than just nightly counter-terror raids. JSOC analyzed foreign fighter flows, financial structures, bomb-making supply chains, and propaganda social media machinery. It was in Iraq that JSOC learned how to conduct a full court press on the entire AQI machine. Even after the death of Mr. Zarqawi, JSOC's tempo never ceased, and it became relentless in rooting out every piece of the adversary's structure. AQI, and then later ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), was eventually destroyed by the JSOC network.

As Section four opened, JSOC was an organization transformed. In the decade since 9/11, this small organization of hostage rescuers had become a counter-terrorism behemoth. The final section of the book describes JSOC fully capable as a truly global joint organization, with new lines of operation in many diverse locations outside of Iraq and Afghanistan. It is a remarkable sign of JSOC's transformation that the operation to kill Osama bin Laden barely rates a chapter. In Mr. Naylor's telling of the 2011 raid on Abbottabad, Operation Neptune's Spear, the most notable detail about the mission was the reluctance to use specialized stealth helicopters. The Navy SEALs considered the mission to be routine and relatively easy and so they were concerned about using untested equipment. The fact that they were going to prosecute the most wanted target in the world almost seemed an afterthought. By the mid-2010s and the end of this book, the machinery of JSOC had fully matured and it had become a worldwide hunter. No one terrorist organization could escape its "persistent stare."

Also gone by the end of the book was the idea that JSOC needed to remain clandestine, covert, or even non-attributed. To be sure, throughout the late 2000s and early 2010s, countless veterans of the JSOC units had published memoirs telling their stories. By 2012, both the Washington Post and the New York Times had each published long-form pieces on then-classified JSOC operations, and the identity of JSOC as a counter-terror organization was ridiculed as the "worst kept secret in Washington." In fact, in assembling this book, Mr. Naylor provides an impressive bibliography, with 19 official government publications, 90 published books, and over 110 media articles. Perhaps the idea that one ought not to write about JSOC or classified operations may seem to be antiquated or naive.

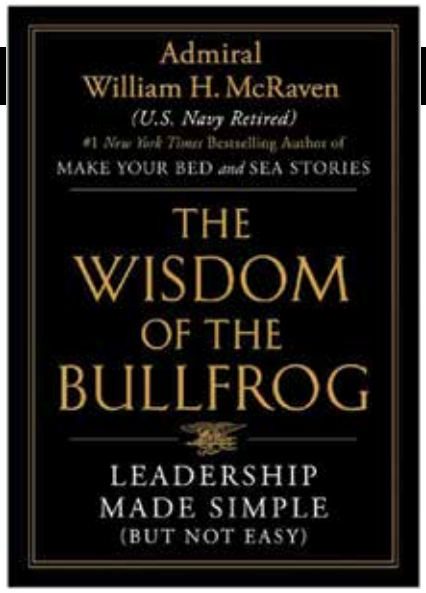
That is not the opinion, however, of this reviewer. It is, in fact, the fatal flaw of this book. Put simply, it is this reviewer's opinion that secret military organizations and operations should remain precisely that, secret. Every member of the SOF community, myself included, swore oaths to protect our nation's secrets from its enemies.

We signed agreements and gave our word that we would carefully steward our most precious secrets, and this book represents the highest betrayal of those oaths.

Despite Mr. Naylor's bibliography of publicly available information, he admits in his prologue that this book would have been impossible without the anonymous sources from within JSOC and the different SOF communities. These sources betrayed their oaths in an effort to publicize the organization, and I cannot in good conscience recommend anyone support this author or his publisher. Personally, I was extremely reluctant to even purchase and review the book. In fact, if I had written this book, I would have been subjected to shame, dishonor, and possible arrest. I was convinced by a friendly colleague, however, that perhaps it may be used as an example to our readers as a warning.

Therefore, allow me to finish this review with a final plea. Do not buy this book. Do not give this author a single penny. The summary I provided furnishes all the information you might wish, without any of the classified details. Not only is the book shamefully sourced, but it also tells a familiar history in an unenjoyable manner. The book is full of diversion, trivial details, and uncritical editorial choices. It tries to convince its reader of the need to idolize JSOC and its units, while simultaneously describing its fecklessness and lack of operational justification. In summary, the book is a mess and, unlike fine wine, has not improved with age. I give it a 2 out of 5 rating for content, but 0 out of 5 stars overall.

About the Reviewer: Steve Hreczkosij was a combat aviation advisor from the 6th SOS and C-130 pilot before retiring in 2019. He is currently flying for United Airlines as a First Officer on the Boeing 737 aircraft. He and his family reside in Niceville, Florida.



The Wisdom of the Bullfrog: Leadership Made Simple (But Not Easy)

By Admiral William H. McRaven, USN, Ret.

(Grand Central Publishing, 2023, 208 pages)

Reviewed by Rob Newton, Lt Col, USAF, PhD

Retired SEAL pens leadership book.

Is this book necessary? Do we want to hear more about the Bin Laden Raid? How many times a day does he expect me to make my bed?

You may not experience the same reactions I do whenever I learn of the literary pursuits by our (comrades, brethren?) at NAVSPECWAR. Even so, Admiral McRaven's exemplary service to our nation warrants respect, with his career culminating as Commander of US Special Operations Command. In that position until his retirement in 2015, the admiral held the title of "the Bull Frog"—the longest serving SEAL ("Frogman") on active duty. When a leader of such caliber offers mentorship or wisdom, we should listen.

That said, McRaven does not pretend to offer anything new about leadership in this book. Paraphrasing Clausewitz, he draws the subtitle from a line in the introduction: "Everything in leadership is simple, it's just that the simplest things are difficult" He then lays the book out in a simple format, providing and motivating a review of personal qualities and professional actions necessary for effective leadership.

Each chapter draws a theme from an overarching motto, creed, or saying. Those readers with a military background may recognize many of these themes, for example, "When in command, command!" (Chester Nimitz), and "No plan survives first contact with the enemy" (Helmuth von Moltke the Elder). McRaven applies non-military sources as well, "A shepherd should smell like his sheep" (Pope Francis). The power of using these themes stems from the military tradition of leaders repeating simple mantras to guide and motivate their forces.

There is immediate value to this, especially for the uninitiated. As a cadet at the USAF Academy, our air officer commanding (AOC) was a US Army Armor officer who repeated a set of adages to us until we were repeating them in conversations when our AOC was nowhere near us. When

I asked my older brother, at the time also an Army officer, about my AOC's strange habit, he laughed and told me how everyone who has ever commanded an Army company does this. One of these sayings, "inspect what you expect," is also a chapter in McRaven's book (under the title "Expect What You Inspect").

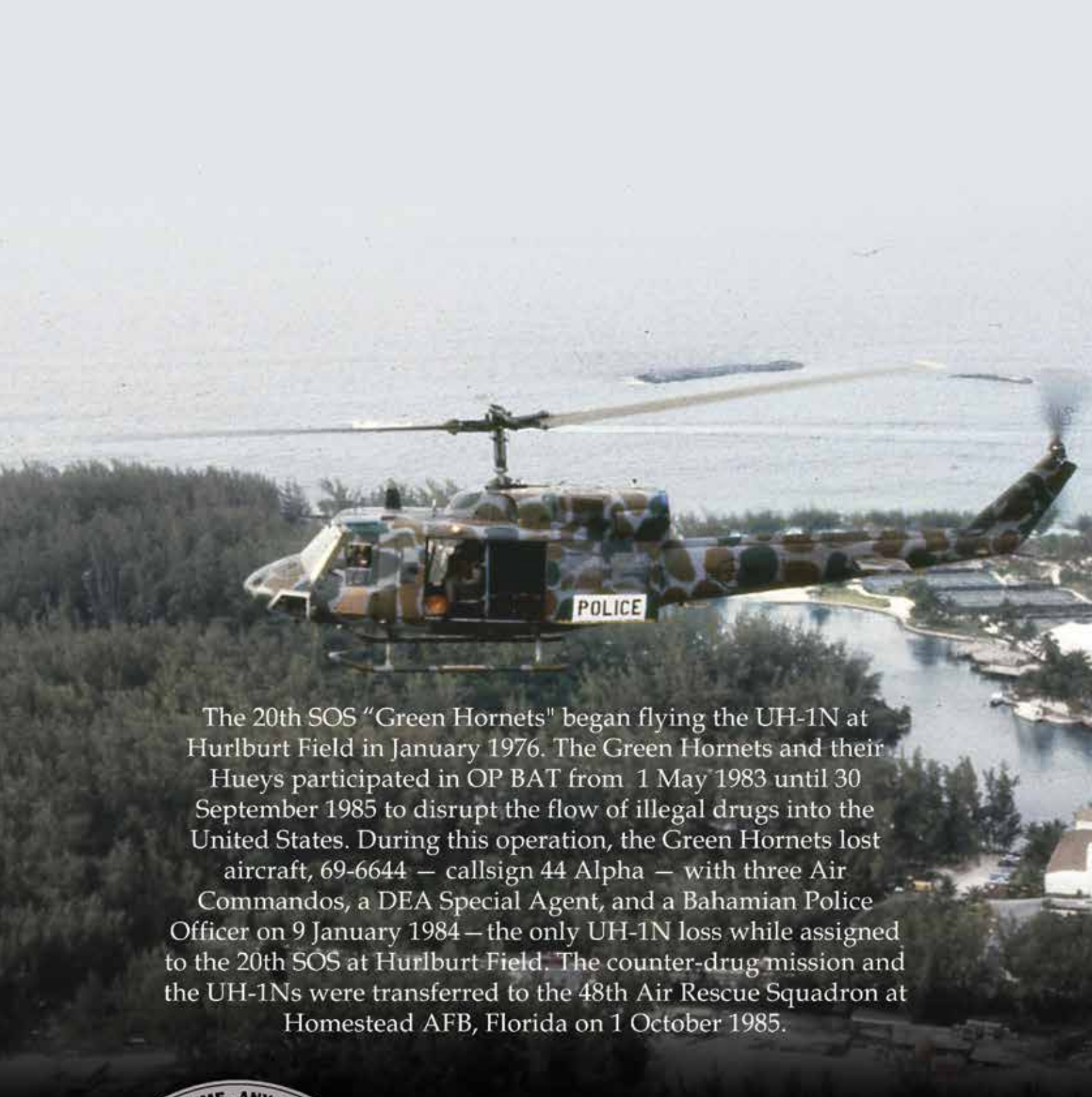
This practice communicates a message across the entire unit about leadership's intent that even a new 19-year-old Airman, Solider, Sailor, Marine, or Guardian can repeat. I am often surprised in conversations with civilian peers how few have heard some of the adages we in the military treat as commonplace. Phrases like "hurry up and wait," or "… now we all have to wear diapers," (not chapters in the book) that succinctly capture the emotion of a moment in a way a whole group quickly will understand. While those readers who have not heard many of the mantras in *Wisdom of the Bullfrog* may benefit from learning this concise method of addressing bigger ideas, every reader should appreciate the ideas McRaven addresses.

McRaven builds on each theme with a common structure. Each chapter begins with a quote relevant to the theme from a wide array of thinkers: theologians, politicians, coaches, authors, and even Taylor Swift. He then motivates each theme using relevant stories. Some of these stories, again, are well known to the military community—"Run to the Sound of the Guns" recounts Joshua Chamberlain and the 20th Maine holding Little Round Top at the Battle of Gettysburg—but most of the stories are McRaven's own from SEAL training and selection, his command of Operation Neptune's Spear, and his time as a midshipman at the University of Texas (where he served as Chancellor after retirement). To further simplify the message, he finishes each chapter with a numbered list of the lessons intended from the preceding text.

McRaven presents 18 themes; 18 mantras to inform leadership philosophies in a very straightforward manner. The admiral, however, blends these themes into larger groups, discussing throughout how a leader needs character, competence, confidence, and to communicate. Leaning into the simplicity of this model, the author drives home how the burden of leadership is not light. Even so, the message that he leaves to the aspiring leader resonates:

You are in charge, but you are not alone. So do the right thing for the mission, for the people, and for your moral compass.

About the Author: Lt Col Rob Newton, PhD, is currently serving as the commander of the 412th Operations Support Squadron at Edwards AFB, California. He is a career AC-130 CSO and a 2014 graduate of USAF Test Pilot School. He was the AC-130J Developmental Test Program manager at the 419th FLTS and has also served in the SOCCENT J5 and Commander's Action Group.



The 20th SOS "Green Hornets" began flying the UH-1N at Hurlburt Field in January 1976. The Green Hornets and their Hueys participated in OP BAT from 1 May 1983 until 30 September 1985 to disrupt the flow of illegal drugs into the United States. During this operation, the Green Hornets lost aircraft, 69-6644 — callsign 44 Alpha — with three Air Commandos, a DEA Special Agent, and a Bahamian Police Officer on 9 January 1984—the only UH-1N loss while assigned to the 20th SOS at Hurlburt Field. The counter-drug mission and the UH-1Ns were transferred to the 48th Air Rescue Squadron at Homestead AFB, Florida on 1 October 1985.