



# THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SENTINEL

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78  
NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

THE LTC FRANK J. DALLAS CHAPTER

## VOLUME 6 ISSUE 3

## MARCH 2015



### Presidents Page

**The 46th Special Forces Company, Part 2**

**The USO**

**A service organization that unites us all**

**Front Sight LIFETIME Diamond Membership**

**World War II 1st Special Service Force**

**honored with Congressional Gold Medal**





Lonny Holmes  
Sentinel Editor

## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

### CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL Awarded to the FIRST SPECIAL SERVICE FORCE

Members of the U.S. Congress led by Speaker of the House John Boehner and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell presented the Congressional Gold Medal to the First Special Service Force for their superior action during World War II, on Tuesday, February 3, 2015 in the U.S.

Capitol's Emancipation Hall. This is the highest civilian honor Congress can bestow. The Award was long overdue.

Forty-two men representing the unit out of 75 living members of the 1st Special Service Force (FSSF) attended the ceremony and were presented the "Gold Medal." Those soldiers living 71 years after the units disbanding on December 5, 1944 consist of 46 Americans, 29 Canadians and one Australian, out of 1800 original men that were activated on July 20, 1942. The unit sustained upwards of 600% casualties during their combat missions consisting of about 22 campaigns to include the Aleutian Islands, Italy and France. Yes, there were a lot of replacements who continued the fight and lived up to the units reputation.

Led by the "Last Fighting General," Robert T. Frederick, who was promoted from LTC to Colonel to both train the freshly organized unit and lead them in combat, he rose through the ranks to Major General by the war's end. General Fredrick led from the front, wounded eight times and awarded eight purple hearts, two DSC's, two DSM's, a Silver Star plus two Legions of Merit.

Assigned some of the most brutal missions of WWII, the FSSF was always successful and its men garnered a large number of individual and unit awards. The German's during the "Anzio Campaign" of 1944 dubbed them the "Devils Brigade" for their tenacity and fighting ability. Thus their nickname led to the naming of a movie and a book based on their exploits.

The First Special Service Force and the OSS are the direct lineage of the "Green Berets," the Special Forces of today. Both units set the standards for today's soldiers.

Congratulations to the First Special Service Force and the men who served and helped win World War II. A "Tip of the Beret" to these great soldiers. ❖

Lonny Holmes  
Sentinel Editor

## IN THIS ISSUE:

Presidents Page.....	1
The 46th Special Forces Company, Part 2.....	2
The USO — A service organization that unites us all.....	5
Front Sight LIFETIME Diamond Membership .....	5
World War II 1st Special Service Force honored with Congressional Gold Medal .....	6

**COVER PHOTO:** Eugene Gutierrez (US) and Charlie Mann (CAN) accepting the Congressional Gold Medal on behalf of the First Special Service Force. Photo by Eric Morgensen, from the website [www.firstspecialserviceforce.net](http://www.firstspecialserviceforce.net), which he has created to honor all members of the First Special Service Force.

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# THE PRESIDENTS PAGE



**Bruce Long**  
President SFA 78

## PRESIDENTS COLUMN MARCH 2015

Our February 14th Chapter meeting was conducted at the American Legion Post 291 in the Fireside Room. We conducted a business meeting at 0830 hrs followed by our general meeting at 1000 hrs. We had a great turnout with some Chapter members who have not been in attendance lately.

It's now official, **COL Mike Wise**, Commander of Special

Operations Detachment North, located in Los Alamitos, California, is now a member of our Chapter. However, based on his very busy schedule, I don't think we will see him at a lot of our Chapter meetings. COL Wise assures me that they will support our Chapter.

A Company and SOD (N) will be conducting their annual training in May of this year.

During our business meeting it was decided to push out the SF Recognition / Law Enforcement / Fire / Fund Raiser until September to better prepare for the event. Post 291 /Auxiliary will be our main support.

Our training event scheduled on March 7th for the California State University of Fullerton ROTC is still in 'hang fire' until pistols can be secured. **Gary McNamara** informed the Chapter that he should know something definitive no later than February 23rd. **Jim Duffy** also advised that he might have a contact for securing pistols. Gary will follow-up with Jim Duffy.

A raffle along with the selling of Chapter T-Shirts was conducted, and overseen by **Mike Keele** and **Mark Miller** with the assistance of **Kenn Miller**.

On February 23rd, I along with **Chris Martin**, **John Joyce** and **Sal Sanders** attended a luncheon for the USMC Veterans of Iwo Jima at the Newport Beach Marriott Resort. The date February 23rd is significant as it was the date they raised the American Flag on Mount Suribachi.

Information was again provided on how to purchase the SFA Blazer, SFA Crest for the left side breast pocket, and the Regimental tie. Just check the DROP Magazine page 111.

The Regimental Tie can be purchased through Medals of America. [www.medalsofamerica.com](http://www.medalsofamerica.com) (800) 308 0849. ❖

Bruce D Long  
President  
SGM, SF (Ret)  
SFA Chapter 78



Dennis De Rosia, 91B4S, new Chapter 78 member

## NEXT CHAPTER 78 MEETING

March 14th, 2015

at the American Legion Post 291 in Newport Beach

Business meeting at 0830 hrs • General meeting at 1000 hrs

# THE 46TH SPECIAL FORCES COMPANY

## Part II — By SGM John Martin

“If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings,  
And never breathe a word about your loss...  
Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it,  
And — which is more — you’ll be a Man, my son!”

RUDYARD KIPLING, “If”



By SGM John Martin

### Change of Venue - The First Days

I’m not exactly sure when I learned in Thailand that our B-detachments and A-detachments were not going to be deployed in Laos. However, the less than warm greeting of the embassy personnel when we first

landed at Takli RTAFB and the problems with our country clearance forewarned me that the future might not be as I had anticipated.

According to our pre-mission training at Fort Bragg, we had been formed to conduct interdiction operations against the Ho Chi Minh Trail from Laos. Instead, we were being deployed in Thailand, west of the Mekong River with no mission statement to interdict North Vietnam’s infiltration routes in Laos and Cambodia. Pre-mission training left me with little information to anticipate what we were going to do in Thailand and how it would help the war effort in Vietnam. I remember the old vets saying, “You need to maintain flexibility and a good sense of humor. Don’t worry about the small stuff. It’ll work out.” I can’t tell you how many times those phrases ran through my mind every time my mission statement changed unexpectedly in the coming years.

By the time we were at our temporary quarters at Camp Pawai near Lopburi, Thailand awaiting forward deployment to Laos, we were briefed that our mission had changed. Not only had our mission changed, our deployment location had changed. Instead of deploying into Laos, we were told our B-team, B-4610, and four A-teams would be deployed to Northeast Thailand where we would build a SF fighting camp to include seventeen buildings, bunkers and barbed wire fences. The construction would take place next to a reservoir formed by the Nam Pung Dam in a heavily jungled area 35 miles from the town of Sakon Nakhon. The dam was just completed in 1965 as a WWII war debt from Japan to Thailand and had already formed a sizable reservoir lake. Since there were only high mountain forests before the dam was built, there were no close villages near the reservoir in 1966.

In addition, the three B-teams would be widely dispersed in Thailand while the 46th SFCA Headquarters remained in Lopburi. Our B-team, B-4610, would go to Nam Pung Dam near Sakon Nakhon in the northeast. B-4620 and its four A-teams would build Camp Nong Takoo near Pak Chong in central Thailand, and B-4630 would build Camp Carroll near Trang along the Thai border with Malaysia.

We were curious where our A-teams would be further dispersed as A-teams in Vietnam built and ran combat outpost camps in Vietnam along the many infiltration routes the North Vietnamese were using to infiltrate the less populated border areas of South Vietnam and further eastward toward the major population centers nearer the coast. It was unusual to have the B-team and four A-teams all in one camp, so compared to our deployments in Vietnam this deployment to Nam Pung Dam was unusual. Adding to the confusion, we weren’t told what our follow-on missions would be after we built the camp.

It did work out, and we did contribute to the war efforts in Laos and Cambodia in a very significant way. What I didn’t understand at the time was the impact of manipulations and statesmanship that were closely controlled by the State Department, other government agencies, and the Thai government who all had a wider perspective on the war in Vietnam and the diplomatic tectonics of Southeast Asia and the spread of Communism. Looking back now, I see the history of the 46th SFCA directly paralleled US involvement in South East Asia and America’s eventual withdrawal of its military strength.

### The Situation

I’ve had to piece much of what I’m going to say based on three and a half subsequent years in Thailand and much background reading, but understanding why the 46th Special Forces Company (Airborne) stayed in Thailand requires a little knowledge of the situation in Laos and Thailand preceding our arrival. To be sure, Vietnam was center stage in our interests in South East Asia. North Vietnam with the help of their Laotian allies, the Pathet Lao, conveniently disregarded the restriction of inducing combat forces





Figure 1, The Ho Chi Minh Trail

into Laotian territory. Their main purpose was to secure the areas adjacent to their supply routes from North Vietnam to South Vietnam. Originally conceived during WWII and later the French-Indochina War, this logistical network was continuously improved during the American experience. The loose network of trails and roads was named the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The Trail network continued southward from North Vietnam along the Laotian border and eventually through Cambodia with branches of infiltration and supply routes into I Corps, II Corps, and III Corp Tactical Zones (CTZ) of South Vietnam. Overtly, America protected the sanctity of Laotian and Cambodian air and ground space as required by the Second Geneva Accords while secretly carrying out air interdiction missions on the Trail and using Vietnam-based Special Forces reconnaissance teams to locate and monitor enemy activity along the trail. When American conventional units were beginning to encounter large NVA main force units in South Vietnam (1965), locate and monitoring gave way to more intense bombing and other interdiction operations against enemy troops and equipment along the trail.

To protect this logistical network, the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) enhanced the Trail with way stations and storage complexes that were protected by numerous ground and anti-aircraft units. Protecting the Trail required a lot of NVA manpower as did the maintenance of the Trail from tropical weather and bombing raids. It was thought that if we continuously harassed the Trail with SF-led indigenous recon teams, SF directed air strikes, and larger scale interdiction operations, we would tie up numerous NVA forces just to protect the supply lines. This was the origin of the idea of establishing secret US launch areas and base camps in Laos that would provide numerous US-led Laotian guerillas from Laos to harass the NVA further and maybe choke off the supplies needed to carry out the war in South Vietnam.

At least that was the mindset as we formed the 46th SFCA at Fort Bragg. It also directed our pre-mission studies to concentrate our B-team's area of interest on the southern portion of Laos east of Pakse on the Plateau des Bolovens, a plateau that overlooked the general path of the Ho Chi Minh Trail from the west. Due east of the Plateau at approximately 50 kilometers straight line distance lay the South Vietnam border and its I Corps and II Corps regions. The Fourth Military Region of Laos and especially the Plateau des Bolovens were peppered with CIA training sites, CIA-led special guerilla unit (SGU) garrisons, and technical listening sites to monitor NVA activities and movements. (See figure 2, below)

We were hopeful that after recruiting and training local indigenous forces we would be able to conduct our own interdiction operations against the NVA trail activities southward and eastward of our location in Laos. In our minds at Fort Bragg, recruiting the local Brao tribesmen to help us interdict the Trail was to be our *raison d'être*.

*“Eight village chiefs lived within the confines of Kong My, each with his own witch doctor and his own following... From this, 1,500 were organized into a local security network. Eighteen teams were then formed, some for road watch and some for action. All were given call signs of various alcoholic beverages. Nearly all of the training was at Kong My, but the best, a 12-man road-watch team named Gin, was put through airborne training at Phitsanulok.”*

*Case Officer Doug Swanson (former SGM, USSF)*

Recruiting and training Brao tribesmen was certainly not a new concept. Active recruiting and training of the Brao Hmong tribesmen was carried out by CIA and SF White Star teams as early as 1961 subsequent to President Kennedy taking office and authorizing the expansion of forces in Vietnam and Laos. Then in 1962 after the Second Geneva Accords, the SF teams were withdrawn, leaving only the CIA operatives (many were retired USSF and US Marine personnel) to train and lead Laotian tribesmen against the NVA and their Pathet Lao allies. The center of friendly Brao re-

cruitment was the village of Kong My, a small village south of Attopeu and the Bolovens Plateau. The majority of the Brao in Laos, however, were in Communist controlled areas, including fifty percent of the Brao who lived in Northeast Cambodia. Sandwiched in between Kong My and the Vietnam border was the NVA's area of control of the Ho Chi Minh corridor into South Vietnam, an area they defended vigorously and relatively successfully until the war's end in 1975.

This was the situation in Laos that we were prepared to jump into with both feet. Unfortunately or not, Ambassador William Sullivan, US Ambassador to Laos December 23, 1964 – March 18, 1969, adamantly enforced the restriction of allowing US combat troops (SF) into Laos in accordance with the 1962 Geneva Accords while turning a blind eye to the more deniable secret armies operating in Laos under the control of the CIA. Ambassador Sullivan was a senior statesman in the State Department and wielded a lot of power, so his restrictions were enforced despite the objections of the Pentagon and the CIA.

So here was the 46th SFCA, sitting in Thailand but unable to deploy into Laos. What is to be done with the 46th Special Forces Company? I'll answer that question in the next installment where I will discuss the situation in Thailand prior to our arrival and what eventually we were allowed to do to pacify the State Department, the Pentagon, and the Kingdom of Thailand. ❖

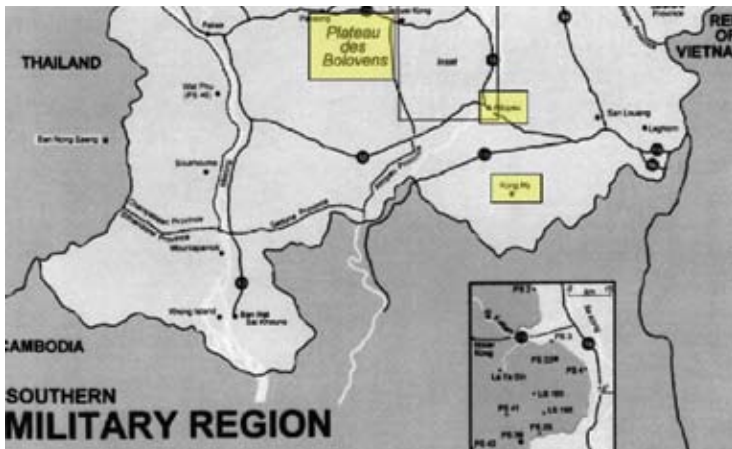


Figure 2, CIA bases in the area of the Plateau des Bolovens

This has been Part 2 of a series of articles on the establishment and operations of Company D, 1st Special Forces Group, later the 46th Special Forces Company, written by retired SGM John Martin exclusively for the Sentinel. Part 1, which appeared in the September 2014 Sentinel, detailed the start of his long journey from the United States to Thailand. In John's words, "Nam Pung Dam was not the end of a journey but, rather, the start of other journeys including some of the more bizarre bends in my path from Nam Pung Dam to the Railway Committee." Some of the topics and operations discussed have not been published before and many SF know little or nothing regarding some of these previously confidential projects.

SGM John Martin retired from the United States Army Special Forces serving over 28 years in the Special Operations Community. John served three tours in Thailand and two tours in the Republic of Vietnam, Okinawa, Korea and had extensive host nation training missions in Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait. Since his retirement from the 1st SFOD-Delta in 1992 he has worked extensively with the Department of Homeland Security and the National Guard Bureau in Washington DC in the field of Critical Infrastructure Protection. He has a BA and MA and currently is an instructor at the Northern Arizona University teaching Critical Reading and Writing in the Honors Program.



# THE USO **A service organization that unites us all**



By Mike Keele

Don't 'cha just love a party! The Women's Auxiliary from American Legion Post 291 took this universal love for socializing and transformed a large hotel meeting room into a gathering where some 360 people got together on January 31, 2015 to benefit the USO. The USO is fairly small in the John Wayne Airport in Orange County, California. Serving a burgeoning number of soldiers, marines, sailors and airmen in transit home from or to combat assignments, the USO saw the need for a bigger, more expansive operation at John Wayne Airport.

Enter the American Legion Women's Auxiliary from the nearby American Legion Post 291 in nearby Newport Beach. They were approached by the USO's management with a request. Could they put together a fund raiser party? A party? Why he.....uh, heck yes, we could throw a little shindig. Let's see, we'll have a planning luncheon, get all the ladies together, invite some contributors and, voila! A fund raising party! How many people can we stuff in this little ol' Hall? About 350? OK, girls, let's get started!

With Jan Spriggs spearheading the operation and her husband Steve, doing what he was told, the ball was rolling. Trouble was, the Super Bowl was going to be played the day after the party was scheduled, and the Hall was booked for that. Setting up for that event would take all their energy for at least a day before the big game, so another venue had to be found. The nearby Radisson Hotel agreed to host the fund raiser, and the price was right. The room was free in exchange for the dinners and drinks the affair would bring in.

Fliers advertising the event were sent out to the 6,000+ members of Post 291, and word spread among the civilian population so that by the date of the party, it was a sell-out. Local businesses and benefactors donated merchandise for a silent auction. So many items were on display that they ringed three walls of the meeting hall. Bidding was set to end shortly after dinner and well-dressed bidders excused themselves from their dinner tables to get one last look at the bid sheets. Maybe one raise will be enough...oh, why not? It's for charity. And so many a monthly budget went afoul that

night. Items like jewelry, clothing, paintings, vacation trips, booze and souvenir jerseys for the two starting quarterbacks for the next day's BIG game.

Those jerseys — this reporter had never owned such a thing, so a bid was considered. No, I thought, too much money for a bobble. Then I thought, it's for charity, so I made a minimum increase above the current bid. A little later, my bid had been bumped and I thought about dropping out. After all, I'm a poor old man on a fixed income. What would my creditors say? Then I heard that evil little voice that sometimes drowns out the ringing in my ears. Bills be damned! Use that VISA card. How many people do you know who own a Brady and a Wilson? So my conscience was drowned out by greed and visions of fame. I could be a winner no matter who won the game. I could strut my stuff as the winner of the Super Bowl, or show my humility as the proud loser. The pen was right there on the bid sheet. My hand shook. I glanced around to see if the boss-lady was watching. She was engrossed in a conversation. Beads of sweat were forming on my forehead. I frowned, shook my head and started to back away. As I did, Tom Brady's voice came from that jersey, sneering-sneering, that I was a quitter. Wilson's jersey now faced away from me as though he was turning his back on me. Well, I'm not that kind of wimp, I'll show them! I snatched the pen and raised the ante.

A bit later, having collected my prizes, I sat gloating with the jersey's spread out amid the dessert plates that somehow found their way to me. A veteran who worked with service dogs offered me \$60 for the Brady jersey. Said he was from "Bahston," and would I consider giving it up. I figured he might be good for a few more bucks, so I countered. He declined. A bit later, he stood at our table talking with a woman who also worked with service dogs. When he walked away, this kind woman asked if I would take \$100 for the Brady jersey. I said yes, but the money would be passed on to the fund raisers. Quicker than a flash, she handed me a C-note, snatched the jersey and went in foot pursuit of the vet and his dog. She was happy, the vet was happy and I was happy. Amazing how a little giving can make you feel good about yourself. Still, if the guy had offered the dog...

Oh, by the way, the fund raiser made \$15,000 for the USO that night. ❖

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# WORLD WAR II 1ST SPECIAL SERVICE FORCE HONORED WITH CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL

Forty-two veterans of the original 1,800 commandos that made up the World War II U.S.- Canadian 1st Special Service Force were honored in the Capitol, February 3, 2015, as recipients of the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian award for distinguished achievement the U.S. Congress can bestow.



**1** The forty-two veterans, the surviving members of the 1800 commandos that made up the 1st Special Service Force, who attended the CGM ceremony.  
Photo Eric Morgensen

**2** Eugene Gutierrez (US) and Charles Mann (CAN), center, receive a Congressional Gold Medal honoring their unit's contributions to the liberation of Europe and the end of WWII. Army Service News, courtesy photo

**3** General Robert T. Frederick, Commanding Officer, First Special Service Force, WWII