



THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SENTINEL

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

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2017 SFA International Conference



SENTINEL

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COVER: SF on duty protecting America! Photo courtesy SFC Tony Pirone



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Lonny Holmes
Sentinel Editor

In the Viet Nam War there were numerous Recon and Surveillance teams organized under the 5th Special Forces Group. SF Soldiers who specialized in recon were assigned to Project Delta, Omega, and the recon teams of the 4 Mike Forces Corps Companies. MACV-SOG had some of the most secret—and now well known—recon and surveillance teams which deployed into enemy held areas of Cambodia, Laos and North Viet Nam. Special in-country schools were established to provide advanced training and included the MACV-Recondo School and the MACV-SOG 1-0 School. Recondo School also trained members for various divisions in Viet Nam for their specific search requirements.

Chapter 78 members John Stryker Meyer, Ed Barrett, Kenn Miller, Mark Miller, Lou Smith (deceased) and SGM Ramon Rodriguez conducted many recon missions to support our war effort. Brad Welker and Ramon Rodriguez were also instructors in "The Recondo School."

Members for recon teams were frequently hand picked from the best of the best then subjected to extensive training by Green Berets who had been members of recon teams and garnered a huge amount of experience in combat. Following training and assigned to a team these new members then really began to learn their trade. Thus a rigorous selection and tough training program only concluded with extensive learning in actual combat which produced highly qualified member of a select speciality to observe, report and conduct missions in enemy held territory.

Following the Viet Nam War these recon schools and teams were deactivated. The level of combat education they provided could not be maintained in CONUS and there were no requirements for such teams in 'peace time.' However, Ranger School at Fort Benning, GA continued and up-graded its training program year after year and the Ranger Regiments were reactivated. Various divisions such as the 82nd Airborne Division began specialized programs for selected officers and NCO's.

As Kenn Miller mentions in his story about the deactivation of the Army LRS Companies, this specialized field of expertise will be significantly reduced or lost. In the long history of war it is frequently necessary to start from the beginning when well trained soldiers are required. Its a shame to loose such expertise in the 'regular' army in todays uncertain times. SF has specialized training and organizations to support its requirements but the infantry battalions and brigades may be a little short. Drones, satellites and electronic sensors are fantastic but according to American intelligence agencies, human intelligence sources (HUMINT) are frequently the very best. Recon men are the eyes and ears of the army. They see, hear and react in real time and provide immediate information to their commanders and can take action if necessary.

Lonny Holmes
Sentinel Editor



Bruce Long
President SFA 78

Our Chapter meeting started early on Saturday 02/18/17 due to our low attendance. I blame this on all the rain we received over the last 48 hours.

Mike Keele led us in the flag salute followed by **Richard Simonian** leading us in the invocation.

Our guest on this rainy day was **MSG Bryan Sato**, A Company NCOIC of the Rear Det for A/5/19. MSG Sato is responsible for all support activities while the unit is deployed in Afghanistan. According to MSG Sato all is well with the unit, and the care packages arrived in theater and have been distributed to the ODA's.

A Question & Answer was then conducted between MSG Sato and the chapter members present. Overall, everything is going well for A Company.

MSG Sato also wanted to thank Chapter members who volunteered their time to help out during the last Special Forces Readiness Evaluation (SFRE) that was conducted on 02/11/17 at the Los Alamitos Joint Training Base.

Those present, included myself, **Mark Miller** and **Gary Macnamara**.

A total of thirteen individuals took part, and after nearly fifteen hours of grueling physical and mental testing that also included the Obstacle Course at CSUF (see photos on page 2) and an oral board, only three were selected to attend the Special Forces Assessment Selection Course. The SFAS lasts twenty-three days in beautiful Camp Mackall. The individual soldier is then placed on "Orders" and allowed to attend the Q Course.

Old Business: I advised the Chapter members that a \$500 donation has been given to the Lions Club in the name of **LTC Frank J Dallas**. I hope all of you take a couple of minutes to read the memoriam prepared by **Lonny Holmes** on the last page of the February 2017 *Sentinel*.

Our new challenge coins should be delivered within the next two weeks. The cost of the coins has risen. It cost us \$500 for one hundred coins in 2009, and it now costs \$660 for the same amount of coins.

New Business: Our new Chapter member **Mike Pierson** passed out flyers at our January Chapter meeting promoting "An Evening of Recognition & Awareness" to be held at the Marriott Desert Springs Resort in Palm Desert. Please see the additional flyers that were again passed out by yours truly.

I really would like to see a good attendance by the Chapter membership for this event. There is also a good possibility **SGM**

Eylicio of A/5/19 will be in attendance. More to follow as this develops.

An A Company "Home Coming Event" is a work in progress and will be coordinated the Rear Det and Family Support.

I've been in contact with **SGM Eylicio** along with **SFC Tony Pirone**, Senior Intel SGT for ODA 9514 who have sent me some photos (see photos on page 3).

The Chapter voted unanimously, and agreed to purchase the "Officers Guide Handbook" for the upcoming graduating class at CSUF in May 2017. It was also agreed that the "Officers Guide Handbook" will include SFA Chapter 78 on the inside cover, along with the cadet's name.

This project will be overseen by **Tom Turney & Gary Macnamara**.

Tom Turney a new LIFE member to our Chapter gave an excellent Power Point update on helping the Montagnards who are still in Vietnam. Tom would really like to see the Chapter take an active interest financially in supporting this endeavor.

Unconventional Warriors, The Mission Continues

The 2017 SFA International Conference will be held at the DoubleTree Inn, June 12 – 16, 2017. You can find out all of the details in your latest DROP Magazine or by visiting the conference website 2017sfaconference.com (see ad on page 6). ❖

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

MARCH 2017 CHAPTER 78 MEETING – *PLEASE NOTE LOCATION*

Our next Chapter meeting will be at Richard Simonian's office conference room on March 18, 2017.

0830 hrs. Breakfast / Budget Meeting

1000 hrs. Chapter Meeting

Address: 326 W Katella Orange, CA 92867 bldg. L4.

Please keep in mind Richard's two-story building sets back off of Katella (South) approximately 50 meters and is easy to miss if you haven't been there before.

Special Forces Readiness Evaluation (SFRE) at CSU Fullerton's Roy Lopez Army ROTC Obstacle Course.



Images of the Men of A Co., 5th Bn. of the 19th Special Forces Group



Now...

Photos courtesy SFC Tony Pirone



Stars and Stripes Reports Army Deactivation of Long Range Surveillance Companies



Soldiers with Delta Company, 52nd Infantry Regiment (Long Range Surveillance) conduct their units deactivation ceremony Jan. 10, 2017 inside the III Corp building at Fort Hood, Texas. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jory Mathis, 3d Cavalry Regiment. (Photo Credit: U.S. Army)



By Kenn Miller

A [recent item in Stars and Stripes](#) reported that the Army will be “quietly” deactivating its three active duty and four National Guard long range surveillance companies. The word “quietly” usually goes well with any mention of long range surveillance and reconnaissance units, but “deactivating” rings like a folly alarm to some of us

who remember the history of such specialized infantry units and the sad history of the Army closing down units that will almost certainly need to be revived and reorganized and retrained all over again. This seems to be a recurring pattern. It was not until the early 1950s, with the establishment of the US Army Special Forces, that the Army ever had any sort of established and sup-

posedly permanent special mission capability; and administrative support for Special Forces has waxed and waned over its history. Throughout American military history, special units have been hastily organized in the face of need, and then been just as hastily disbanded. From King Philip’s War (1676) to the end of the Vietnam War, Army Ranger units have been organized, utilized, and then promptly deactivated so that the cycle can be repeated. The 75th Ranger Regiment is now well established, but what Fort Benning considers the regiment’s founding document, the “Abrams Charter,” still contains a clause allowing the deactivation of the Rangers. Reconnaissance—and by that I refer to ground reconnaissance—has always been critical to military success. Without effective reconnaissance, a military force is likely to stumble blindly into disaster. The importance of tactical and strategic reconnaissance has been acknowledged from the very beginning

of human warfare into our present age of satellites, drones, and high tech sensing devices of all sorts. But now it seems that the Army is determined to prove its technological modernity by disbanding its three active duty and four National Guard long-range surveillance companies and expecting machines to do the work of men. What a foolish sci-fi fantasy that is! Humans and their most complicated machines are both fallible, but humans are adaptable in ways that machines are not.

According to *Stars and Stripes*, “Computer models were used to conclude long-range surveillance companies were not in demand by ground commanders.” What does the term “computer models” tell us about how this decision was made? Who were the “ground commanders,” and were they actually consulted on this decision? The *Stars and Stripes* article also notes that “Army commanders have an aversion to risk and a growing preference to use technology such as satellites and drones for reconnaissance rather than insert small teams of soldiers.” The commanders may have an aversion to risk, but the soldiers who volunteer and go through demanding training and selection processes to become members of those small teams would not do so if they were as risk averse as those commanders. It sure sounds like a case of tigers being commanded by rabbits.

The *Stars and Stripes* article mentions the fact that the use of small self-sufficient reconnaissance teams has been part of Army doctrine since before the establishment of the United States, and that they have served when needed—and have been needed—ever since. The state of preparation and dedication of the current LRS units can be seen in the Maryland National Guard’s long range surveillance company, which has established strong training and tactical ties with Estonian special operations units with whom they would be likely to work if the need arises. One confusing and apparently contradictory reason given for the deactivation of the LRS companies can be found in this paragraph in the article:

“An unceremonious end to long-range surveillance companies comes amid a buildup of thousands of U.S. troops and hardware in Europe not seen since the Cold War and the transition to President Donald Trump, whose rhetoric has called for less engagement in the region and a stronger, more robust military.”

Whether this enhanced and enlarged Army is to be used in Europe or in another potential area of conflict, it makes no sense to deactivate units that are almost certain to be needed. Our nation’s intelligence agencies have a plethora of technological devices and still claim that their most desired and most reliable source of information is human intelligence—something that small teams of well-trained and dedicated soldiers can supply with a level of judgement, nuance, thought, and adaptability that machines can’t always duplicate. There will always be a need for boots on the ground and human eyes, ears and brains to assess the enemy situation and capabilities in real time and in person. Are Army Special Forces and the 75th Ranger Regiment expected to fill the gaps these deactivations will cause?

They are surely capable, but they are already over-tasked with their own missions—and are likely to stay over-tasked until after the dawning of the unlikely Age of Aquarius when the moon is in the Seventh House and Jupiter aligns with Mars, and peace will guide the planets and love will steer the stars. Until then, we’re going to need all the competent ground reconnaissance assets we have, and if the current LRS companies are deactivated, they will only have to be organized, recruited, trained, equipped, and deployed all over again.

As the only NCO quoted in the *Stars and Stripes* article points out:

“With increasing capabilities on both sides like countermeasures and drones, I think that demonstrates need for manned surveillance teams. When GPS satellites are knocked out and drones can’t fly, who is going to watch the enemy?” ❖



Mark Miller on recon in Vietnam in 1968 in Tuy Hoa on the day before “Tet.”



A paratrooper with Delta Company, 52nd Infantry Regiment (Long Range Surveillance), looks out of a window of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter before exiting at Rapido Drop Zone Sept. 1, 2016 at Fort Hood, Texas. This was the last jump before the unit’s deactivation ceremony, which occurred Jan. 10, 2017. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Tomora Clark, 3d Cavalry Regiment Public Affairs)



Jon Holmes (at left), son of the editor, on duty in Iraq in early 2016. After three years in-country he returned to the good-old-U.S.A. and is currently in a police academy in his home state.



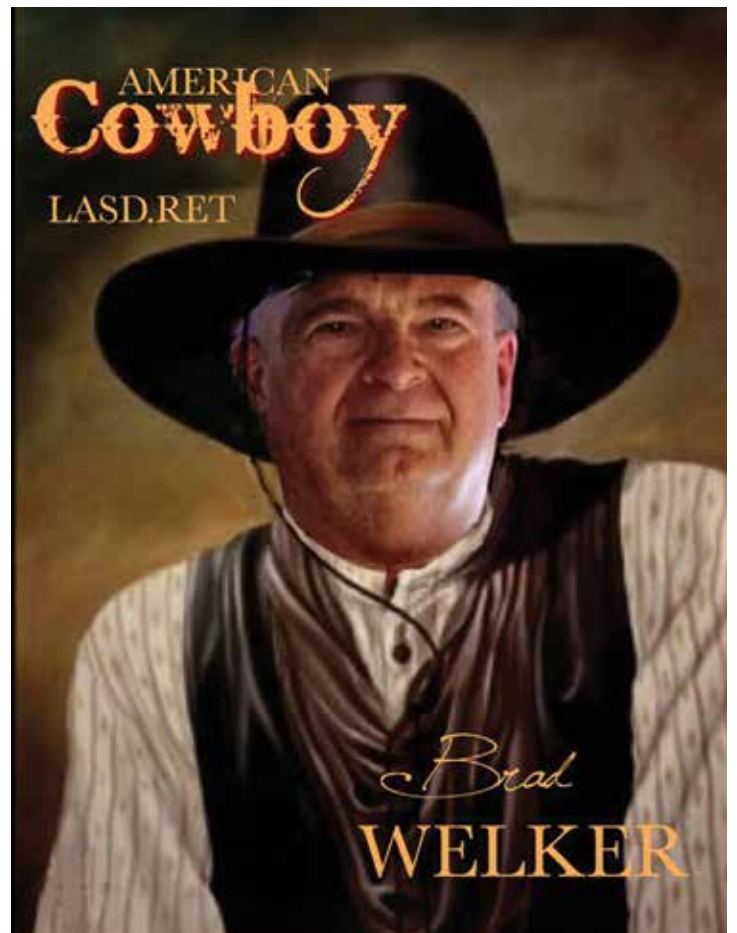
2017 SFA International Conference

**UNCONVENTIONAL WARRIORS,
THE MISSION CONTINUES**

**June 12 – 16, 2017
Fayetteville, NC**

June 2017 will mark a major milestone in our history! We are pleased to host this celebration in Fayetteville and at Ft Bragg where it all began, 65 years ago.

To register or for more information visit
2017sfaconference.com



Submitted by Chapter member, Brad Welker with the following note:
An old friend from LASD made this up and sent it to me. I kinda like it.