



THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SENTINEL

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 4 • APRIL 2019



STARS — Surface to Air Recovery System
February 1967: Skyhook and MG Singlaub
POW/MIA Update



SENTINEL

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COVER: The first USAF C-130E(I) live Fulton SKYHOOK pickup in Southeast Asia. Col Singlaub, USA, was picked up by Det 1 314th TCW, crew SG-3 at Long Thanh, VN on 24 Feb 1967. Photo courtesy of Stray Goose International (SGI)



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From the Editor



Lonny Holmes
Sentinel Editor

The focal point of this issue of the *Sentinel* is Major General "Jack" Singlaub when as MACV-SOG Commander in Viet Nam he was lifted by the STARS, Surface To Air Recovery System (Fulton Recovery System) or as we simply called it years ago, Skyhook. This is a riveting account by John S. Meyer following an interview with the General at his home which describes why he was the first person to be recovered in South East Asia using Skyhook and some revelations about

the later use of the system "up north."

Colonel John Gargus contributes his third story to the *Sentinel*; *STARS Surface To Air Recovery System* describing each job of the crew of the C-130 E Combat Talon aircraft on an extraction. Colonel Gargus, then major, flying as navigator has personal experience in STARS recovery of personnel in both Viet Nam and Thailand in 1968. He became aware of the Fulton Recovery System in 1966 while doing his postgraduate studies at Texas A&M when he viewed a monthly documentary film on the system. This new technology led him to get into special operations of the Air Force and subsequent assignment to Nha Trang, South Viet Nam where he planned and flew "Top Secret" SOG Missions to the north.

Gargus also contributed the story in *The PRAETORIAN STARShip* on the *Loss of the Aircraft 64-0547 and Crew of S-01* in 1967. This was a C-130 Blackbird on a SOG mission which crashed 32 miles northeast of Dien Bien Phu well inside of North Viet Nam and just south of the Chinese border. For further reading I suggest reading Colonel Gargus's second book, *Combat Talons In Vietnam* and Colonel Thigpen's book *The PARETORIAN STARShip: the Untold Story of the Combat Talon*. ❖

Lonny Holmes
Sentinel Editor



Chapter 78 recently presented Richard Green, USSOCOM Historian, with a custom plaque designed by Chapter member John Joyce in appreciation of his support of Chapter 78 and the *Sentinel*.



John Stryker Meyer
President SFA 78

Gentlemen,

I sincerely hope everyone enjoyed our March 9 speaker SF retired Lt. Col. and fearless combat correspondent **Mitch Utterback** as much as I did. I met Mitch when he was the official SF liaison with the Bank family from the 10th Special Forces Group after Col Bank reported for duty in the big LZ in the sky. During that time, we older SF troops came to highly respect the “young” SF officer. Since that time, Mitch

has never disappointed anyone, although we heard that he was a tough, demanding CO.

His report and video from his recent trip to combat zones in Iraq as a reporter/videographer provided some remarkable stories and surprising insights on U.S. efforts in Central Asia — events reported in an honest, straight-forward manner seldom seen in today's modern media. And, of course, Mitch's comments, sidebars, and quips added a lot to his presentation.

By the time the April edition of the *Sentinel* rolls off of the presses, the SOCOM parachute team, The Black Daggers will have jumped into Carlsbad, CA, as part of the 2nd Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home event that's part of the Vietnam War Commemoration Commission based in Washington, D.C. and into an LA soccer game on Sunday March 31. The Black Daggers OIC is CW3 Chris Wilkerson, who also serves at Chapter 1-18 president. The Black Daggers were outstanding, gliding into the DZ with one soldier having the American flag trailing behind him and a second soldier with the poignant national POW/MIA Remembrance flag fully extended behind him.

As you turn through this edition's pages, you'll see a column on POWs and MIAs from the Vietnam War and the upcoming National

League of POW/MIA Families' 50th annual meeting in Arlington. The League CEO/Chairman of the board is **Ann Mills-Griffiths**. She and her family have been heavily engaged in the POW/MIA mission since her brother, Navy aviator **Jim Mills** went MIA in September 1966. Four years ago, Ann was given honorary membership to both the SFA and SOA due to her continued efforts over 50 years to bring home our missions troops, including CIA Air America personnel. She has dedicated her life to this effort. Coincidentally, her brother's remains were recovered last year. On June 24, those remains will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery with full honors. Even with that personal good news, Ann continues to work seven days a week on this issue.

Changing topics: Part 2 of the Lee Martin's Loc Ninh story will appear in the next edition of the *Sentinel*. Part 2 was delayed one month.

For those planning to attend our April meeting, please e-mail VP **Don Deatherage** at: drdeathca@gmail.com. We need an exact headcount, as Don explained at our last chapter meeting. Our guest speaker will be **Michael Schwartz** of the San Diego County Gun Owners organization which vigorously supports the Second Amendment and gun owners' rights. Mike will update us on some successes in and pending attempts to erode our rights.

Chapter 78's Special Deputy Assistant to the Treasurer, **Mike Keele**, will pick up fines from anyone who attends without a beret or Chapter 78 coin. We will have some unique raffle items.. ❖

Meeting details:

Time: 8:30 a.m., April 13, Breakfast will be served.

Location: **Embassy Suites**
3100 East Frontera, Anaheim, CA 92807
(The SE Corner of Hwy 91 & Glassell St.)

John Stryker Meyer
President, SFA Chapter 78



Happy 92nd Birthday Col Sully de Fontaine!

Col Sully H. de Fontaine celebrated his 92nd birthday in February. He was presented with a new SFA Chapter 51 coin with his name on it (designed by Chapter 78's own John Joyce).





STARS Surface to Air Recovery System

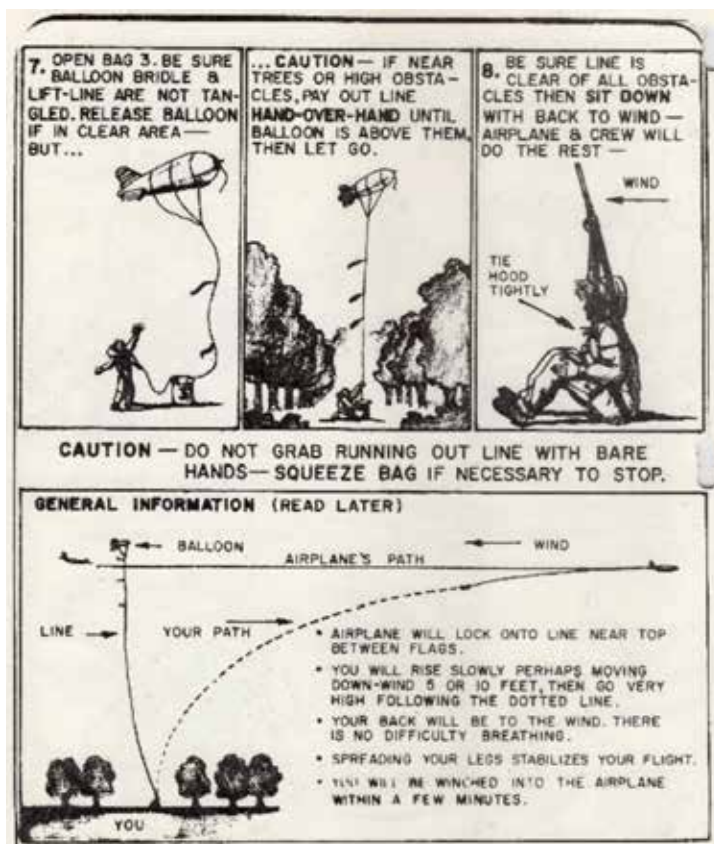


John Gargus

By Colonel John Gargus (USAF, Retired)

Surface to air recovery system (STARS) was the most exciting operational capability of the early C-130 Combat Talon aircraft. Each one of the eleven crew members had a role in this unusual event. Regretfully, it was never employed during the Vietnam War for its designed purpose to recover stranded personnel from otherwise inaccessible hostile environment. Live personnel recoveries

were staged only for the VIPs and air crews that were most likely to end up stranded deep inside of enemy territory.



A page from the Skyhook kit instructions on how to assemble the Skyhook for recovery. The diagram at the bottom of the page illustrates the aircraft snagging the line and taking the man in tow. Photo courtesy of Stray Goose International (SGI)

Ideally, a Combat Talon would air drop a one or a two man Fulton recovery kit to a survivor and then 20 minutes later return to intercept a 500 foot long lift-line for a ground to air extraction. This time was believed to be sufficient for an able bodied survivor to unpack the kit and follow enclosed instructions to don the special harnessed suit connected to an inflatable balloon by a 500 foot long nylon braided lift-line. Kit's helium containing canister was included for that purpose. Fully inflated balloon would hoist the lift-line to the level of the rescuing aircraft and the survivor was instructed to sit down facing into the wind and wait for an exhilarating lift off.

Meanwhile, the Combat Talon's crewmembers would make their own preparations. Two loadmasters would secure themselves with restraining harnesses on the lowered ramp ready to secure the lift-line to the equipment that will bring the survivor inside of their aircraft. The second flight engineer would become the winch operator who will control the reel in of the lift-line with the trailing survivor suspended at its end. Behind the flight engineer is the third pilot who will serve as the safety officer. He will monitor the movements of the ramp crew, interpret their hand signal communications and relay the recovery progress to the cockpit crew through the intercom. Loadmasters do not wear headsets because the intercom cables could restrict their movements on the ramp. During demonstration pick-ups the electronic warfare officer and radio operator observe the operation from their crew positions at the bulkhead of the cabin because they have no assigned duties. However, on pick-ups inside of hostile air space they would play key roles in keeping the aircraft out of harm's way. Then the electronic warfare officer would monitor transmissions from enemy radars and provide warnings of impending attacks and the radio operator would assist him and maintain contact with a controlling ground based or airborne command post.

Up in the cockpit, the map reading navigator would don a restraining harness and open the overhead escape hatch through which he will have to retrieve the trailing upper portion of the lift-line. The radar navigator would determine the wind direction and velocity and guide the aircraft for a head wind approach to the survivor and his already lift-line tethered balloon. The two pilots with the flight engineer between them would begin to strain their eyes, trying to locate the deployed balloon and the three red flags on the lift-line just below it. For nighttime pick-ups there would be three pulsating

strobe lights spaced in the same lift-line location. Once spotted, the flags, or the strobe lights, must be perpendicular to the horizon to ensure that the aircraft is headed upwind. Consequently, if the flag alignment stretches at an angle from one o'clock to seven o'clock position, the aircraft must make a track correction to the right until the flags are aligned from twelve to six o'clock position. Once that is done, the intercept flying pilot aims for the middle flag and ensures that the lift-line gets engaged between the 24 foot span of extended "V" shaped yokes for a safe slide into the nose mounted locking mechanism. In case of a miss, the lift line gets cut by sharp blades imbedded in the cables that are stretched between the aircraft's nose and its wing tips. This prevents the lift-line getting wound up around the spinning propellers.

The first sensation the survivor experiences is a gentle lift one feels on an upward curve of a playground swing. This wink of an eye moment is followed by a rapid vertical acceleration that measures less in "G" forces than the opening shock of a parachute. This vertical ascent can clear a 30 foot tree 5-10 feet behind the sitting survivor. Then the vertical lift transits in to a rapid upward curved path that propels the survivor well above the aircraft's flight level. It is then followed by a downward fall along a diminishing sine wave curve until the survivor's path gets stabilized behind the aircraft at its flight level. The first downward path along this sine wave curve frightens the survivor because its descending movement increases his body's velocity and diminishes the forward pull on the line, giving him a sensation that he is freefalling and is no longer connected to the lift-line.

The sudden jerk on the lift-line ruptures the balloon and the loose end of the line slaps down on top of the aircraft's fuselage. The map reading navigator has to retrieve it into the aircraft by sticking out the upper part of his body through the escape hatch into the 135 mile slips stream. He has a tied down pole with a hook to help him to pull the line that ends up draped on either side of the fuselage into the cockpit for clean-up. He has to remove the remnants of any flags or glass strobe lights from the line and cut off the hardened pig tail of the line to prevent them from jamming in the nose locking device. This allows the loadmasters an easy pull through of the lift-line to the rear ramp of the aircraft.

Meanwhile, the loadmasters either kneel, or lie down, on the floor of the ramp and try to snatch the lift-line trailing behind the aircraft with a special bomb shaped fish hook. They pull the line inside and secure it in two places on the ramp. Then they wait for a signal from the safety officer that they can pull the top of the lift-line out of the cockpit through the released nose locking device. Once this is done, they lock the tail of the line to the winch and raise an "A" frame support for a pulley that elevates the lift line from the floor to a shoulder height level. This allows the pulled in survivor to arrive at the ramp in a stand up position. The flight engineer then operates the winch that winds up the lift-line and reels in the survivor for a joyous welcome on board event. ❖

About the Author

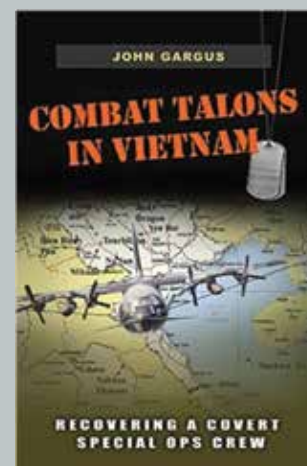
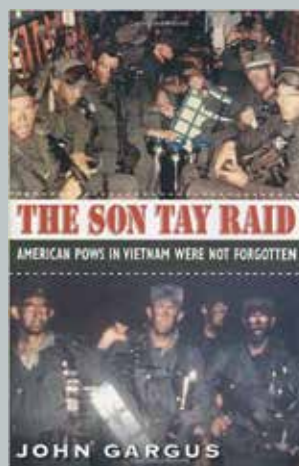
John Gargus was born in Czechoslovakia from where he escaped at the age of fifteen when the Communists pulled the country behind the Iron Curtain. He was commissioned through AFROTC in 1956 and made the USAF his career. He served in the Military Airlift Command as a navigator, then as an instructor in AFROTC.



He went to Vietnam as a member of Special Operations and served in that field of operations for seven years in various units at home and in Europe. He participated in the air operations planning for the Son Tay POW rescue and then flew as the lead navigator of one of the MC-130s that led the raiders to Son Tay, for which he was awarded the Silver Star.

His non-flying assignments included Deputy Base Command at Zaragoza Air Base in Spain and at Hurlburt Field in Florida and a tour as Assistant Commandant of the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California.

He retired in 1983 after serving as the Chief of USAF's Mission to Colombia, having accrued more than 6,100 flight hours, including 381 combat hours in Southeast Asia. In 2003 he was inducted into the Air Commando Hall of Fame. He has authored two books, *The Son Tay Raid: American POWs in Vietnam Were Not Forgotten*, published in 2007, and *Combat Talons in Vietnam: Recovering a Covert Special Ops Crew*, published in 2017. He has been married to Anita since 1958. The Garguses have one son and three daughters.



February 1967: Skyhook and MG Singlaub

Photos courtesy of Stray Goose International (SGI)



John Stryker Meyer

By John Stryker Meyer

One of the amazing scenes in John Wayne's movie *The Green Berets* was an agent being whisked away to safety by a specially equipped C-130 fitted with the Fulton Recovery System, or simply Skyhook. The agent was fitted into a jump suit, with a thick nylon cord attached to it and tethered to a miniature blimp that rose to 500 hundred feet into the air. That C-130 flew under the blimp,

the nylon cord suddenly lifted that agent off the ground and a specially trained Air Force crew inside the aircraft gradually winched that person inside the airplane.

By 1967, the earlier Skyhook program had been refined and replaced by the more sophisticated Fulton Recovery System. The Air Force had four C-130's equipped with complex V-jaw snares mounted on the planes nose and winches on the aircrafts' tailgates that would grip the line and pull the dangling person into the waiting arms of Air Force crew members inside the aircraft.

In early 1967, SFA Chapter 78 member MG (R) John K. Singlaub was the officer in charge of the highly classified, secret war run under the aegis of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam Studies and Observations Group or simply SOG, and he had a problem with the Air Force implementing the Fulton Recovery System in a fully operational program. "The Air Force squadron commander in charge seemed to me to be dragging his feet," Singlaub told *The Sentinel*, during a March 1 interview at his home in Tennessee. "You know how too many career officers are, even back then, were reluctant because they appeared to me to be afraid someone might be hurt or they might lose one of their valuable aircraft."

Singlaub, then a colonel, said he had a "little chat" with that colonel because "we were running more missions, there were downed pilots and this gave us an option to extract key agents, downed pilots and, perhaps small recon teams. We had to explore its capabilities in actual missions. I reminded that colonel that we were fighting a war against a tenacious enemy and we had to explore any possible way to recover key agents or SOG members from behind enemy lines, pure and simple."

Then he told the Air Force colonel to be ready to check out the Fulton Recovery System with a live pick up. Singlaub asked the Air Force colonel if he'd like to be the first to be picked up. The colonel said no thanks. "Then I told him, that's ok, because I'll be

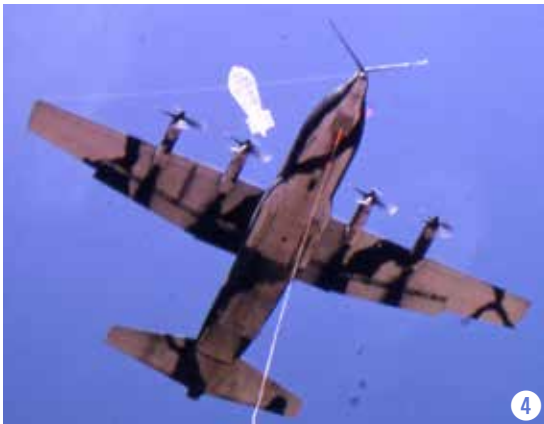
the first person to be picked up live. I wouldn't ask any men under my command to do something dangerous that I myself wasn't willing to do first...needless to say, on that day at the end of February (1967) there were many nervous Air Force officers and NCOs on the runway at Bear Cat."

First, the Air Force dropped the Fulton rig kit, including his insulated coveralls, two tanks of helium to inflate the miniature white blimp and the thick, 500-foot nylon cord that was attached to Singlaub on one end and the blimp on the other. As the blimp rose into the air, Singlaub set on the ground, waiting for the C-130 to arrive. "The C-130 approached low and down wind. Its engines were cut back and I could hear a simple whistling sound as it slammed into the line....much to my surprise the lift off was much gentler than I had imagined, due to the stretching of the nylon cord, it had some give way to it. In a matter of seconds, or less, I was flying backwards. It was hot and then I realized I had another problem. The pilot was flying over the combat zone instead of turning and flying out over the South China Sea. I said to myself, 'Where is this guy going? He's flying over enemy territory!'"

The pilot flew northeast toward the Iron Triangle and War Zone D. Adding to Singlaub's frustration and anger was the fact that the C-130 appeared not climb above 1000 feet, meaning he was a flying target for NVA/VC troops. A few days earlier, Singlaub had flown over the war zone with Maj. Gen. Bill Depuy, "and I vividly remembered seeing those green tracers from enemy weapons reaching up and hitting our chopper that day, and, as I was on my back, hanging behind the C-130, unable to turn over due to the wind, I imagined enemy soldiers firing at me! Of course, had the enemy known it was a colonel hanging behind the aircraft, I'm sure there would have been more gunfire."

Singlaub said it felt as though he hung outside behind the aircraft "for what seemed like a long time," before he felt the wind change and he finally observed the aircraft's tail section. Shortly, he was pulled inside the reliable workhorse airplane. "I was real happy to be inside that airplane. Real happy....the important point here was, we proved it could work. I was real pleased it worked. Later, I went up there (over North Vietnam) and supervised one of the missions that picked up a pilot, or an agent. To be honest, I forget whom we picked up, but we did. I believe we successfully used this procedure to pick up a few pilots in North Vietnam. It gave us one more tool to use."

In 1967, Singlaub was 54 years old. His official title in MACV-SOG was "Chief SOG", the officer in charge of all SOG operations. He



- ❶ MG Singlaub inflating the balloon
- ❷ The balloon with aircraft guide flag markers
- ❸ MG Singlaub ready for pickup
- ❹ Balloon engaged by C-130
- ❺ MG Singlaub at lift off
- ❻ In the air!
- ❼ MG Singlaub being winched into the aircraft.
- ❼ MG Singlaub recovered in aircraft.



served on a Jedbergh Team in Europe and Asia during WWII, in spec ops during the Korean War and served two plus years as “Chief SOG” during the Vietnam War. Many years after the war during dinner with Gen. William Westmoreland, “Westy” reminisced about several missions and daring deeds that Singlaub ran during his military career, which began before WWII.

Under urging from his wife Joan, Singlaub admitted that Westmoreland called Singlaub his “young whipper-snapper.” Singlaub added, “Westy told me, ‘I’d think of the hardest mission I had and I’d give it to him and some way, one way or the other, he’d get it done.’”

Just like Singlaub did in late February 1967, hanging from the back of a C-130 over enemy territory. ❖



Skyhook Recovery: A Brief History



Lonny Holmes
Sentinel Editor

By Lonny Holmes

The recovery of personnel from the ground by a flying aircraft became practical in the early 1960s and continued until early 1982 using the Fulton Skyhook procedure or as the Air Force named it, Surface to Air Recovery System (STARS). The STARS system was developed by inventor Robert Edison Fulton Jr. during a long career and the first human pick-up was on August 12, 1958.

During World War II recovery systems were studied and prototypes produced to recover shot down pilots but due to technical difficulties were never perfected. Following the Korean War the CIA furthered the development of the All American System which became a forerunner of the STARS and on November 29, 1952 attempted the recovery of two American CIA Agents from the Kirin Province of Manchuria. A double agent had alerted the Chinese and the C-47 was shot down and the pilots killed. Agents Richard G. Feateau and John T. Downey spent twenty plus years as POW's and were released on December 1971 and March 1973 respectively.

The first live pick-up using STARS occurred on August 12, 1958 at Quantico Marine Base, recovering Marine SSG Levi Wesley Woods of the 2nd Recon Force.

The first operational recovery using STARS occurred on Operation Coldfeet in the Arctic on a Soviet Union research ice station that they had developed then abandoned. Two American agents were parachuted in to gather information and equipment then extracted under difficult weather conditions on May 31, 1962.

The first Green Beret recovered was Captain Farrington on February 24, 1964, at Fort Bragg by a CV-2 Caribou. On March 18, 3rd Special Forces Group Commander EB Smith was picked up, again at Fort Bragg. Continuing the saga of famous Green Beret Officers picked up by the STARS are: Major General William P. Yarborough on May 21, 1964 at Camp Mackall and Brigadier General Joseph Stillwell on August 13, 1964 at Fort Bragg.

On May 3, 1966 the first dual (side by side) recovery was performed at Edwards Air Force Base, CA, when Air Force Colonel Allison C. Brooks and A3C Ronald L. Doll were picked up.

A number of STARS recoveries were performed in Viet Nam, Thailand and the Philippines. Major General, then MACV-SOG Commander Colonel Jack Singlaub was extracted from Long Thanh, Viet Nam on February 24, 1967 by a C-130E aircraft which was by then the designated primary recovery vehicle. Colonel Singlaub's story written by Chapter 78 President John S. Meyer is featured in this issue of the Sentinel.

Following my return from Viet Nam to Thailand and working at the SFOB dispensary waiting for my team assignment I was involved

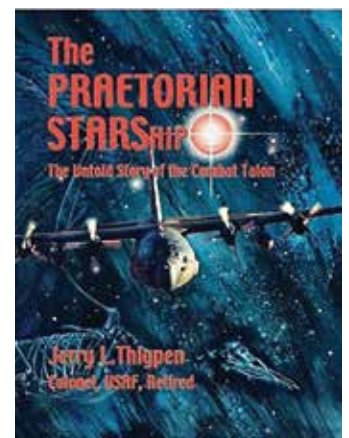


Major General William P. Yarborough, father of the modern Green Berets, was picked up the STARS on May 21, 1964 at Camp Mackall.

in the STARS recovery of Green Beret Major Douglas Horne at Lopburi, Thailand on May 23, 1969. Yes, it was exciting and was over in seconds for those of us on the ground.

Of the 166 STARS pickups recorded by Richard Green, USSOCOM Historian, there was one death — SFC Clifford W. Strickland, B-32, 10th SFGA on April 26, 1982 in Germany. This was the last STARS. The STARS historical collection effort is a work in progress by the SOCOM Historian and readers may view the manuscript on our website www.special-forces78.com

For detailed information on STARS I refer you to the story by Colonel John Gargus in this issue of the Sentinel who has participated in a number of live pickups. The single most complete source of STARS information is Colonel Jerry L. Thigpen's book, *The PRAETORIAN STARShip: The Untold Story of the Combat Talon*. ❖



The Praetorian STARShip: The Untold Story of the Combat Talon by Jerry L. Thigpen

POW/MIA Update



John Stryker Meyer

By John Stryker Meyer

[Editor's Note: From June 20-22 the National League of POW/MIA Families will hold its 50th annual meeting in Arlington, VA. The League, DoD's DIA and the Department of POW/MIA Accounting Agency are the leading group/agencies continuing in the mission of providing the fullest possible accounting for those still missing in action

and repatriation of all recoverable remains in Southeast Asia (SEA). This is the first in a series on the POW/MIA mission stories that should concern every Vietnam War veteran because at this writing, March 21, 2019, there are still 1,589 Americans listing as MIA in SEA, including CIA Air America staff. In Laos alone, there are 50 Green Berets and 100-plus American airmen who are MIA from the deadly secret war across the fence.]

During the Vietnam War, the families of American service members held captive by communist forces in SEA began an effort to draw attention to the military men held captive but also worked to raise awareness about the harsh, brutal treatment they received. In addition, they petitioned the communist nations for better treatment of American POWs at a time when anti-war protests were growing in size in the United States.

One of the major efforts that gained visibility across the country was the origin of the POW/MIA bracelet and a campaign to raise awareness about the American prisoners of war and missing in action named on those bracelets through a program launched by an LA-based student organization called Voices in Vital America, or simply VIVA – where entertainers Bob Hope and Martha Raye served as honorary co-chairmen with Carol Bates Brown, one of the group's founders.

Despite North Vietnam releasing hundreds of American POWs in 1973, at the end of the war, when Saigon fell April 30, 1975, there were 2,583 unaccounted-for American prisoners, missing or killed in action/body not recovered service members. Since 1970, the League, DIA and various reiterations of what today is DPAA have been tasked with carrying on this mission. DPAA is the lead agency in this mission, but there are many issues still confronting it because in 2015, DPAA was formed from a merger that brought together three separate federal agencies that had been tasked to work on the POW/MIA mission. The challenges confronting DPAA today are both internal and political at a time when the Vietnamese government has offered unprecedented cooperation with US staff.

DPAA was formed under a new plan triggered by former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel. DPAA consolidated three previous federal operations: the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) based in the D.C. area; the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) based in Hawaii where the forensic laboratories



are located and where the search teams are launched for missions to recover unaccounted-for American remains; and the Air Force's Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

On January 30, 2015, the JPAC colors were cased during a formal ceremony in Hawaii, the DPMO colors were cased and the DPAA was formally activated. Six months later the new DPAA building and facility in Hawaii were dedicated, bringing staff from 16 separate buildings into one headquarters and a state-of-the-art laboratory with a family viewing area for visitations. The building was named after Hawaii Senator and Medal of Honor recipient Daniel Inouye. Insiders note that it took 14 years to get this building up and running. Many of the challenges facing DPAA in 2015 remain today, including:

- 1.) **Morale:** Especially at the field and key mid-management positions in DPAA and among the (SEA) staff. "The workforce has been jerked around in a most shameful fashion in recent years by leaders who have no background in the MIA issues and no sense whatsoever of the realities of what our teams face when they are on the ground," said a former DPMO employee who requested anonymity. "They didn't care about the Southeast Asia missions. They were driven by numbers, instead of quality work in the field."

The annual accounted-for number has become a controversial issue both internally and with outside groups, as there are more than 83,000 Americans still listed as unaccounted for or otherwise missing in action from prior conflicts, including World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam.

Of those, people familiar with the issue estimate that between 25,000 to 35,000 service members from previous wars can still be recovered, with the remaining being deep-sea losses during those wars.

For staff working on SEA, there's an additional problem where key management continued to push WWII missions ahead of SEA missions. Publicly, DPAA mentions SEA as a priority for DPAA but the emphasis has been increasing for WWII and Korean War remains recovery which generates much positive publicity – a valued commodity at DPAA.

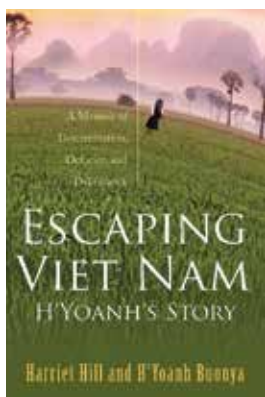
2.) Change WWII Priority: After Congress mandated the Pentagon to develop the capacity and capability to be able to identify up to 200 missing-in-action service members by 2015, key upper-level DPMO and JPAC officials had emphasized missions where they recovered large numbers of remains, which is easier with WWII remains and Korean War remains from N Korea, than digging through the acidic soil in SEA jungles.

One insider said that since 2010, key POW/MIA leaders in Wash., D.C. and Hawaii advocated privately that they wanted bigger numbers of recovered remains at the expense of cutting back on the SEA efforts. "Over time those DoD leaders and key upper management staff in Hawaii have either misread or simply don't care about the 2010 law, PL 111-84 (NDAA 2010), that directed the Secretary of Defense to develop the capacity and capability to be able to ID 200, not return 200. There is a difference."

These are among the challenges confronting those involved in the POW/MIA mission. A relatively new participant in this issue is the joint Special Operations Association/Special Forces Association POW/MIA Committee chaired by SF SOG veteran Mike Taylor, with vice-chairman Wade Ishimoto. They are scheduled to participate in the League annual meeting and have actively supported the League, DPAA and DIA. In 2018, Taylor went to SEA on a joint mission where League, DPAA and DIA officials met with leaders from Vietnam and Laos seeking increased cooperation. Both Taylor and Ishimoto have been guest speakers at Chapter 78 meetings in the last 13 months. Other committee members are SOG SF recon men Robert J. "Spider" Parks, Cliff Newman and John S. Meyer.

Letters to the Editor

**Profile of a Successful Montagnard Emigrant —
Escaping Viet Nam: H'Yoanh's Story** By Michael D. Bengé
Sentinel, March 2019



**Escaping Viet Nam —
H'Yoanh's Story**
By Harriet Hill and
H'Yoanh Buonya

Available at
HarrietHillBooks.com
for \$23.90, including
sales tax and shipping.
Email harriethill@frontier.com
for signed and
personalized copies. Also
available on Amazon.com.

Good morning, Lonny!

When I opened the mail last night, I was overwhelmed by your generosity, and I was humbled by the placement of Mike's article. It is an honor to be included in such a prestigious publication. I shall look forward to reading the entire newsletter and shall pass along copies to Surry Roberts (wrote the prologue to our book) and to others who are intrigued by *H'Yoanh's Story*. I guess that I shouldn't be, but I am always surprised when articles (accompanied by pictures) spark more attention to the subject. Hopefully, this may ignite additional interest in our book, and may even spur on more acceptability into high school summer reading programs.

Lonny, THANK YOU for granting us exposure to those who have given so much — and for those who are grateful for assistance from our Special Forces. Yes, Freedom is NOT free, or without heartache or sacrifice by the cost. You are contributing such and important connection to our history and to

our present day struggles. It would be our pleasure to meet you. I rarely get to the west coast; however, if you are "out East", please let us know.

Our very best to you,
Harriet and H'Yoanh

PS — I like to think of "Godincidences" working in mysterious ways. Your e-mail, inquiring about the safe arrival of the *Sentinel*, just came in. Two days is a short journey from California.

PSS — Also, I just spoke with Surry Roberts (the doctor I mentioned to you), and I shall take him a few copies, as he has numerous friends and connections at our bases in NC — and has resources.

From the USSOCOM History and Research Office

John, thank you for sending the March issue of the *Sentinel*, it's great! (they're all great!!!)

I handed them out this morning and was asked by the people who participated in the ceremony Paul attended if we could get a few more. I will check thru the command on Monday and see how many they are requesting.

Can't thank you enough for keeping us plugged into the *Sentinel*. A great reference document for the SOCOM Library and for our historical archives.

Richard Green
Historian
USSOCOM History and Research Office

March 2019 Chapter 78 Meeting Presentation: LTC Mitch Utterback Speaks About Mosul Experiences



Brad Welker

By Brad Welker

Chapter 78 members met together for a presentation by retired Lieutenant Colonel Mitch Utterback on Saturday March 10, 2019 regarding his recent sojourn in Mosul, Iraq as a self-financed journalist. Mitch went to gather material for his Master's Thesis in Journalism at the University of Colorado

He is a dynamic speaker as well as being a highly respected Special Forces officer.

That respect was reflected by the private

conversations with chapter members who had served under him during his tenure with the 19th Group. His youthful appearance and enthusiasm belie his extensive experience and commanding presence. Members sat in rapt attention to the presentation which was well documented with digital video and photographs of his time with Iraqi Forces liberating Mosul.

Mitch outlined how a retired SF Officer used his ability to think out of the box and eventually arrive in Iraq as a credentialed journalist from Boulder, Colorado to the front lines in Mosul in December of 2016. His goal was to document the fight there and ultimately create his Master's Thesis. He was greatly assisted in achieving that goal as a result of having served as an advisor/trainer earlier in Iraq with the Iraqi Hilli Special Weapons Team in 2008. The Iraqi commanders of that unit had gone on to command the two elite Iraqi units engaged in re-taking Mosul from ISIS.

He first teamed up with Brigadier General Al-Obeidi, whom he had served with in his prior tour as an ODA Commander the General is a much loved hero to the Iraqi military and helped expedite the situation. Mitch teamed up with the commanders one of the two Iraqi units, the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (ITCS) which had become an effective fighting force after being advised by US forces, primarily Special Forces. He was very impressed with their military capabilities and closely observed them as they fought into Mosul.

Mitch next teamed up with the Iraqi Emergency Response Division (IERD) the other unit directly liberating Mosul. The IERD was also a very effective combat force and together with the ITCS troopers drove the ISIS out of Mosul. Mitch affirmed that there was no direct involvement of US personnel in the actual fighting. He was very impressed by the way Iraqi forces were integrating the use of aerial attack to support their ground forces, equal in his opinion to that used by allied western forces.

He indicated that many of the tasks done by US Forces in the past were now being accomplished solely by Iraqi soldiers. Highlighting



Mitch Utterback speaking during his presentation about his experiences as a journalist in Mosul, Iraq in 2016. (Photo by Rick Carter)

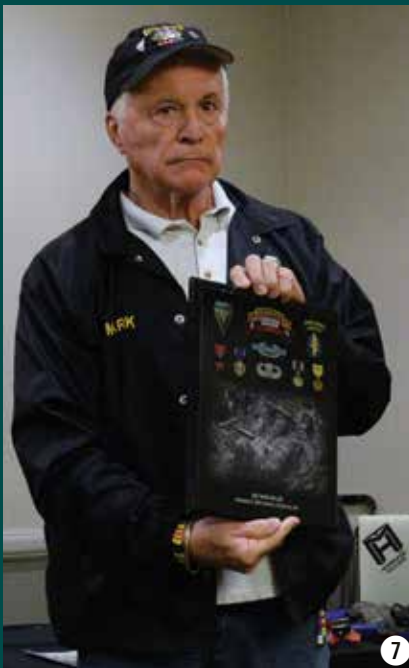


Chapter President John Stryker Meyer presented Mitch Utterback with a commemorative plaque on behalf of Chapter 78. (Photo by Rick Carter)

that the training received from US advisors had been successful and that Iraqi soldiers had indeed embraced that training. Mitch provided positive examples of how the Iraqi military has improved their military in many areas — facts which the American public does not see through the media, a duty that they should provide by accurately reporting that information. Mitch pointed out that they often look for negative issues to report no matter how minor as a method of presenting an opposing view.

Mitch held a question and answer period afterwards which was well received. The Chapter gave him a rousing ovation for a very informative presentation. President Meyer gave him a plaque in gratitude for his talk. ❖

SFA Chapter 78 March 2019 Meeting (Photos by Rick Carter)



- ❶ At left, Chapter 78 Sergeant At Arms Mark Miller and, right, Chapter member Kenn Miller setting up before the meeting.
- ❷ John Joyce presented Mitch Utterback with a set of current Special Forces Group challenge coins.
- ❸ Chapter members John Creel and Richard Simonian
- ❹ Chapter members enjoy breakfast prior to the meeting.
- ❺ *Sentinel* editor Lonny Holmes and Chapter member Mike Keele

- ❻ Dan Kinnersley, son-in-law of past Chapter President Bruce Long
- ❼ Mark Miller was presented a plaque acknowledging his long-time service to the Chapter as Sergeant At Arms/Quartermaster.
- ❽ Chapter members James Carter, Robert Crebbs and Tony Pirone
- ❾ Mitch Utterback being interviewed by Steven Nabil of Alhurra News, a U.S. based public Arabic language satellite TV channel that broadcasts to audiences in the Middle East and North Africa.
- ❿ Chapter member Don Gonneville