



SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78
The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 3 • MARCH 2020



The Betrayal of a U.S. Army Officer

SOG Compromised

POW/MIA Update



SENTINEL

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US ARMY SPECIAL
OPS COMMAND



US ARMY
JFK SWCS



1ST SF COMMAND



1ST SF GROUP



3RD SF GROUP



5TH SF GROUP



7TH SF GROUP



10TH SF GROUP



19TH SF GROUP



20TH SF GROUP



11TH SF GROUP



12TH SF GROUP

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FRONT COVER: A U.S. Marine heads toward the gun line for a training exercise at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California. (Marine Corps Cpl. Jack C. Howell)

BACK COVER: Soldiers conduct port operations in Rotterdam, Netherlands to prepare for their Atlantic Resolve rotation. The mission demonstrates continued U.S. support for NATO allies in Europe. (Army courtesy photo)



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From the Editor



Jim Morris
Sentinel Editor

HOW I GOT INTO SPECIAL FORCES

The first time I heard of Special Forces was in an article in the Saturday Evening Post in November of 1955. The unit was only three years old then. I was a college freshman, a ROTC student, so I knew I'd be in the army for a couple of years, and I thought, "That's the outfit for me."

I met a few guys from the pre-Vietnam SF, mostly techies with an arcane sense of humor. Right about the time I went on Active Duty, in January, 1960, they had distinguished themselves by kidnapping the opposing general in a field exercise. This may surprise you, but generals don't like that. This wasn't the start of the army's effort to get rid of SF, but it boosted it along a bit.

My next experience with SF was in Jump School. We were trucking back from our fourth jump when a couple of guys in fatigues and beanies jumped out of the woods and flagged down our truck. The aggressors were still looking for them, and they wanted to hide with us. We were glad to welcome such exotic specimens to our company. One of them observed that their team leader wanted them to jump back into Bragg that afternoon. His comment was, "The old man don't know when to quit."

Once more, I wanted to be in that unit. But I figured I'd never get in as a reserve officer on a two-year tour. Back at Dix after Jump School I ran the record ranges on the Trainfire rifle course. One of my lane graders had gone to SF and came to visit after he got his beanie. "What's it like?" I wanted to know.

He told the story of his first field exercise. The night before he went to check the bulletin board to see what to take. The list wasn't there, so he went to his team sergeant, who said, "You're a big boy, figure it out for yourself. But, if you ain't got it you ain't goin' back for it." Once more, I wanted in. I knew there was a reserve SF unit in Oklahoma City, where I lived, and maybe I'd be acceptable to them.

But there was a joker in the deck. I'd had to extend into an indefinite category to go to jump school. If I caught an overseas tour I'd be stuck in the army for five years instead of two. I did not want to be in a mech infantry unit in Germany. So I went to the Pentagon to make it clear I wanted to get out of the army. The major in the infantry branch that I talked to said, "Have you been talking to anybody here, lieutenant?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I have here a set of orders sending you to the 1st Special Forces Group on Okinawa for thirty months. Now it's not to late ..."

"Let it ride sir. I'm happy with that assignment."

When I left the Pentagon I was laughing so hard I fell down across the hood of a car in the parking lot. I knew my life would never be the same.

Jim Morris
Sentinel Editor



Bruce Long, President SFA 78

Hello everyone! Welcome to our March issue of the *Sentinel*. We had our last and final meeting at the Embassy Suites this month, and will start hosting our Chapter meetings at the Fiddlers Green, located at the Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos, home of the 40th Infantry Division, and of course our Brothers in Arms, A Company, 5th Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group (A). See the map below for the location of the Fiddlers Green. I will also be sending out additional maps of the Base that will show the location of A/5/19, and other general

facilities. All times for breakfast and meeting remain the same. Suggest you come early if you have never been to the Base. As I stated during the last Chapter meeting, when you are at the gate, twelve o'clock being straight ahead, eleven o'clock is your destination.

The Chapter greeted **James McLanahan III** a new member of the Chapter. James is recently off active duty and brings a wealth of information with regards to operational experience. He had numerous tours of duty in foreign counties to include both Iraq and Afghanistan. Welcome aboard James! Hope to see you at future meetings.

Special guest was Bill Whalen, Chief of Police for the city of El Segundo. Chief Whalen has been in this position for the last 2 1/2 years. He previously served with the police in Garden Grove, and Irvine for over 30 years experience. The Chief's father served with

the 77th SF and the 11th ABN in Germany from 1954-57, and was discharged as an E-5. The Chief's father passed away in 2003.

Also present at our meeting was **LTC Hans Hunt (Ret)** Senior Army Instructor for the JROTC at Sonora High School in La Habra, and a Chapter member. Hans received a donation of \$500 from the Chapter. This donation is to be used for providing supplies and equipment for their JROTC Army Raider Battalion. As most of you may remember, the JROTC Sonora High School, provided the Honor Guard for our 2019 Christmas Party. They will also be our Honor Guard for 2020.

Our Guest speaker was Annie Jacobsen author of numerous books, to include; *Area 51, An Uncensored History of America's Top Secret Military Base, Operation Paperclip, The Pentagon's Brain, Phenomena*, and her most recent book, *Surprise, Kill, Vanish*. Annie is right in the middle of writing her new book, which involves a unit from the 82nd ABN Division in Afghanistan. **Mike Keele** will conduct an exclusive interview with Annie for the *Sentinel*. We will definitely have Annie back after her book is published.

The 2020 SFA Convention is being hosted by SFA Chapter 26 on August 12th-15th 2020 at the Sandestin Golf & Beach resort in Destin, FL.

In 2021 our Chapter along with SFA Chapter 51 will be hosting the International Convention in Las Vegas. Check out the website www.sfacon2021.com. Point of contact is Chapter member **John Joyce** (702) 649 2292, john@sfacon2021.com.

On a sad note, twenty-two Service members were KIA in Afghanistan in 2019. Fourteen of these were from the SF community.

Please feel free to contact me anytime with questions or concerns. ❖

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

March Chapter Meeting

Planning to attend our March 14th meeting? If so please e-mail **VP Don Gonneville** at: don@gonneville.com, no later than Thursday March 12th, midnight. We need an exact headcount.

DATE: March 14, 2020

TIME: Breakfast – 0800 • Meeting – 0830

LOCATION: The Pub at Fiddlers Green

ADDRESS: 4745 Yorktown Ave Bldg 19
Los Alamitos, CA 90720-5176
(Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos)



POW/MIA Update

National League of POW/MIA Families
January 14, 2020

AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR: The number still missing (POW/MIA) and otherwise unaccounted-for (KIA/BNR) from the Vietnam War is still 1,587. Of that number 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia or Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam—1,246 (VN – 443, VS – 803); Laos – 286; Cambodia – 48; PRC territorial waters – 7. Since chartered in 1970, the League has sought the return of all POWs, the fullest possible accounting for the missing, and repatriation of all recoverable remains. The total accounted for since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is **996**. A breakdown by country of these 996 Americans is: Vietnam – 672, Laos – 279, Cambodia – 42, and the PRC – 3. In addition, 63 US personnel were accounted for between 1973 and 1975, the formal end of the Vietnam War, for a **grand total of 1,059**. These 63 Americans, were accounted for by US-only efforts in accessible areas, not due to cooperation by post-war governments in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. A total of 287 have been accounted for from Laos, 727 from Vietnam, 42 from Cambodia and 3 from the PRC. **NO IDs have been announced since July 29th.**

VIETNAM WAR ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS: Newly assigned DPAA Director of Operations RDML Darius Banaji, USN, visited Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia for the first time. His visit included time with DPAA teams conducting field operations in Laos and Vietnam and personnel assigned to Detachment 2 in Hanoi and Detachment 3 in Vientiane. In addition, he met with US Embassy staff, as well as counterpart government officials in both countries and in Cambodia and Thailand. Before he retired on October 25th, RDML Banaji's predecessor, **RDML Jon Kreitz, USN**, held POW/MIA Technical Talks in Hanoi and Phnom Penh and consultations with the Lao in Hawaii. In all instances, the talks were described as positive, helpful and productive; DIA Stony Beach intelligence specialists were included in all sessions. Best wishes are extended to RDML Banaji as he assumes the significant responsibilities inherent with his new position and learns more about the mission.

DPAA STATISTICS: As of January 13, 2020, DPAA listed 72,632 still unaccounted-for from World War II, 7,603 from the Korean War, 1,587 from the Vietnam War, 126 from the Cold War, 5 from the Gulf Wars, and 1 from Operation El Dorado Canyon, for a total of 81,954. Of that total, 75% of the losses are located in the Indo-Pacific, and over 41,000 are presumed lost at sea (i.e. ship losses, known aircraft water losses, etc.). It should also be noted that over 41 IDs have been made on remains that came out of North Korea in the 55 flag-draped transfer cases. In addition, DPAA leaders stated publicly that included is DNA of more than 150 US personnel, plus just under 100 likely PRC or South Korean indigenous personnel. DNA reference samples are available on 92% of families of the unaccounted-for from the Korean War. Korean War IDs for Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) reached 73; the WWII total is 140 for FY19. **Only 5**



Vietnam War personnel were accounted for during that same one-year period, and none from the Cold War for a total of 218 IDs announced by DPAA for FY19, a record number for the DPAA Lab.

POW/MIA FLAG TO BE DISPLAYED YEAR-ROUND: On November 7th, President Trump signed into law the "National POW/MIA Flag Act," introduced by **Representatives Jack Bergman, (R-MI) and Chris Pappas (D-NH)** on March 7, 2019. The League-originated POW/MIA flag is now required to be displayed whenever the American flag is posted on prominent federal properties, including the White House, US Capitol, World War II Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, National Vietnam Veterans Memorial, every national cemetery, the buildings containing the official offices of the Secretaries of State, Defense and Veterans Affairs, office of the Director of the Selective Service system, each major military installation, each Department of Veterans Affairs medical center and each office of the US Postal Service. The League is grateful for this tremendous level of support, a meaningful signal to all nations that America stands behind and with those who serve – past, present and future – and if captured or missing, all possible efforts will be made to recover and bring home our UNRETURNED Veterans.

LEAGUE'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL MEETING: Although a full report is now out, it is noted that this year's meeting was the largest, most significant in years. That's not surprising; it was a year-long effort to plan and schedule speakers to maximize effectiveness. DPAA provided Facebook live streaming of all sessions. The following key factors applied:

1. A Retrospective featured key participants, led by eight-year National Security Council Director of Asian Affairs Richard Childress. He outlined the very difficult challenges that were met throughout the 1980s, building on President Reagan's commitment and priority;
2. Former Army Chief of Staff, now Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Lieutenant General Robert Ashley, USA, and Ambassadors Ha Kim Ngoc of Vietnam, Khamphan Anlavan of Laos and Chum Sounry of Cambodia were key participants;
3. DPAA Director Kelly McKeague again pledged five years of operational priority on Vietnam War accounting. DPAA leaders and specialists, and DIA's Stony Beach Team of POW/MIA investigators, briefed on current operations and approach.

FIELD OPERATIONS: The photos below and at right were taken during recent field activities in Vietnam and Laos.



SSG Johnathan Swope, USA, assigned to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), removes debris from an excavation site during a recovery mission in Sekong Province, Laos Democratic People's Republic, November 6, 2019. The team is searching for the remains of missing US service members lost during the Vietnam War. (USN photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Tyler Thompson)

Chairman's Comment: Despite many challenges, including continuing structural dysfunction within DPAA, there is reason for measured optimism. With sustained support from the families and our nation's veterans, the League is determined to press for priority and answers on Vietnam War accounting, as pledged by DPAA Director Kelly McKeague. The League also supports field investigation and recovery of unaccounted-for personnel from WWII, the Korean War and the Cold War as a priority over disinterment and ID of remains buried as "unknowns" in US cemeteries at home and abroad, so long as Vietnam War accounting efforts remain DPAA's operational priority.

2020 MEMBERSHIP DUES: The time has come to renew your dues for 2020, only \$25 a year for an individual, family member or associate member (concerned citizens/veterans) or organization. Please help the League save on postage by sending an email to admin@pow-miafamilies.org, and mail a check for dues to the League office, or pay your dues online at <https://www.pow-miafamilies.org/membership>. The more dues receives, the fewer postcard reminders will be needed at the end of January. We greatly appreciate your assistance in this cost saving matter!

SUPPORT THE LEAGUE: Now that the notable season of giving has passed, take a step back from the hustle and bustle to relax and support the League by shopping at AmazonSmile. It is simple and automatic, **at no extra cost to you**. Just visit <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7071242>, and you will find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping you are used to on Amazon. The added bonus? The AmazonSmile Foundation will automatically donate 0.5% of the cost of your eligible purchases to the League. ♦



Local Vietnamese workers pass buckets of dirt to the screening stations during DPAA recovery mission in Lang Son Province, Vietnam, November 3, 2019. For more than two decades, the US has conducted joint field activities with the governments of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to recover the remains of missing Americans. Throughout these countries, field teams continue to investigate crash and burial sites, as well as interview locals to gain additional knowledge. (USAF photo by SSgt Rusty Frank)



Joint service members assigned to DPAA fold flags onto transfer cases, on board a C-17 Globemaster III in Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati, September 27, 2019. The service members are preparing the transfer cases containing 12 sets of remains believed to be US service members who died in WWII. The remains will be repatriated to the US and will undergo analysis at the DPAA laboratory with hopes of being identified. (USN photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Amara Timberlake)

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SOG Compromised



John S. Meyer

By John S. Meyer

During the eight-year secret war in Vietnam, when Green Beret-led reconnaissance teams and company-sized elements ran top-secret missions across the fence into Cambodia, Laos and N. Vietnam, many of those missions were compromised before the Military Assistance Command Vietnam-Studies and Observations Group units landed on the ground. Exactly how many missions were

compromised, how many Green Berets and their courageous indigenous counterparts were killed or wounded in action as a result of these heinous actions, will never be known, due to the highly classified nature of SOG, its tightly compartmentalized command structure and extremely narrow channels of intelligence and counterintelligence reporting.

Thus, one of the hidden horrors of running highly classified missions where intelligence reports were delivered promptly to the White House is: there are few paper trails to follow and the truth about the degree of compromise, if ever documented, will likely never be known.

Recently gathered information from four separate sources confirmed the long-held fears of many SOG Green Berets who ran what many believe were the deadliest missions during that war where casualties exceeded 100 percent among SOG soldiers.

It's important for yesterday's warriors to know about the compromises, with the hope that tomorrow's warriors and command structures will be more diligent to guard against possible compromises in future covert operations.

Russians on the ground

Evidence of Russians and their commie pals in Laos, Cambodia, North Vietnam and the DMZ was reported early. "We had reports of the Russians that went back to 1967," said Lt. Col. Roy Bahr, the commander of SOG FOBs 1, 2 and 3 through 1968/1969. "We knew the communist Vietnamese didn't have the sophisticated equipment to monitor our recon teams in the field, so we assumed that sort of assistance came directly from Russia."

During an operation in Laos in November 1968, run out of FOB 1, Phu Bai, (Recon Team) RT Idaho, heard Russian pilots on their radio conducting aerial resupplies to their men and their NVA allies in Laos.

In November and December 1968, SFC Pat Watkins was flying Covey (the SOG Forward Air Controller) for FOB 1 missions over Laos and the DMZ, where he regularly encountered English-speaking North Vietnamese on the day's operational FM frequency.

"It got so bad," Watkins said in a recent interview, "that when we arrived over the AO (Area of Operations), they'd greet me on the

radio. I told them to stop playing that Vietnamese music on our frequency and at least play some rock and roll.

"However, it got real serious when we went operational working with a team on the ground. Then, they'd interfere with our radio transmissions. If we told the team to go up two clicks (on their PRC-25 FM radio) or down two clicks (on the radio frequency dial) the NVA would do the same thing."

In early December, 1968, George "Boo" Miller, a Marine gunship pilot with HML-367, received a call on his UHF frequency from an English-speaking man during a SOG extraction who knew the famous Marine gunship crew's call sign: "Scarface."

"He called me several times during the extraction of an FOB 1 recon team," Miller said in October '08. "I had run out of ammo and rockets and was making low passes so my door gunners could continue to fire on the enemy and to throw hand grenades at them."

During one of those last passes, Miller observed a Russian officer in the DMZ, just east of the team's LZ.

"I'll never forget it. He was a large, white male in a gray-colored uniform with red epaulets on his shoulders," Miller said. "He was standing in the middle of a small clearing just east of the team. My co-pilot also saw him. We made a second pass to confirm what we had seen."

However, when he returned to "fire him up," the Russian, "was gone." After successfully extracting the team, Miller reported his sighting to a marine general at Vandergrift base. He heard nothing further on that sighting.

About six months later, during a mission in Laos, Lynne M Black Jr., the One-Zero (team leader) of RT Idaho and his One-One (assistant team leader) Doug "The Frenchman" LeTourneau observed a white male, bathing with a few women in a stream at the bottom of a large series of mountains. The Russian was too far away for their weapons and Black couldn't muster up any tactical air assets to nail him.

A month later, on another DMZ target, LeTourneau received a call on his FM PRC-25 radio that he'll never forget. Speaking in English, with an accent a male said, "RT Idaho. Come in RT Idaho."

Because it was near noontime, LeTourneau thought it might be Covey doing a routine commo check. The only problem, there was no Covey in the Area of Operations at that time.

Forty-nine years later, LeTourneau said, "I'll never forget that radio call for many reasons. Out of the blue, the voice broke radio silence, spoke English, he knew our team name, he knew my name and Black's name and he knew our codenames. That really blew me away....in addition to that he didn't mention the name of a SOG

medic who had run a few missions with RT Idaho previously, but had derosed (returned to the US) out a few days before that mission. So that commie bastard knew that he was not on that mission with us.”

When Black looked at his dumbfounded One-One in 1969, he grabbed the handset and said, “Who is this?”

The mystery man told Black that he knew where the team was located, and that he and his friends were going to find the RT Idaho men and kill or capture them. He said that he had six-digit coordinates on a map where RT Idaho was located.

Black’s response was instant: “Let me help you motherfucker, here are my eight digit coordinates. This is exactly where I am.”

“I know who you are Blackjack and I’m going to get the Frenchman, too. I’m bringing my friends to get you.”

Black responded without missing a beat: “I know your mother, asshole, she fucked hundreds of Russian pigs to get your KGB assignment, except you’re dumb like your mother and they sent you to Southeast Asia instead of the U.S.”

At that precise moment, RT Idaho was near the top of a severely steep mountain. Even a dumb Russian knew that mounting an attack against a heavily-armed SOG recon team with high ground would result in many casualties. No attack was launched. Obviously

compromised, RT Idaho was extracted from the LZ by H-34 helicopters (Code-named Kingbees) piloted by highly skilled, fearless South Vietnamese pilots, under heavy enemy gunfire. Black was flown to Saigon where he gave a full report. What, if any action was taken on his report remains a mystery.

“We never got an answer to that question,” Lt. Col. Bahr said. Although he was in Kontum at that time, scuttlebutt about the incident has made it to his S-2 shop. “We knew our teams were up against extreme odds, we just never realized how serious the security within SOG communications had been compromised.”

Russia’s “Secret War” in Nam

The second confirmation of Russians in Nam, first surfaced on the Internet 12 years ago, when reporter James Brown of Russia Today covered the first public reunion of the 3,000 Russians who fought in the USSR secret war in Southeast Asia. The segment that he recorded was released on the Internet and can be found at this site: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wprT66Yjxs>.

Held in Zarya, outside of Moscow, the reunion marked the Russian secret war they fought from 1965 to 1973, hence the celebration of their 35th anniversary of when their official involvement ended in Nam. They were the Soviet Union’s “forgotten soldiers” veterans of a war their government denied involvement in for nearly 20 years.



Doug with an indigenous troop from ST Virginia in the fall of 1968.



Lt. Col. Roy Bahr, first from left, stands at attention during an Awards & Decorations ceremony at FOB 1, Phu Bai, in the fall of 1968.

Only now, long after the old communist regime collapsed in 1991, have officials – both Russian and North Vietnamese – admitted that more than 3,000 Soviet troops fought against the Americans in Vietnam.

One of those Russian veterans, identified by Russia Today as Nikolay Kolesnik, said, “We were known as a group of military experts. The commander was the senior expert. Thus, technically there were no Russians in Vietnam. The only thing we knew we were Soviet people ... Soviet soldiers, ...we had to do whatever it took to stop the (U.S.) air raids...”

Ironically, SOG's Russian counterparts had their own plausible deniability, a political subtlety not lost on SOG members who ran all missions in Indian territory without any identification for their deniability if captured or killed.

Lee Cong Niem, a Vietnam veteran of the Vietnam War, told Russia Today that the communists in North Vietnam “...have a lot of respect for Russian equipment and Russian experts.”

Confirmation of Communist connection

The third confirmation of Russians in Southeast Asia that provided further details of Ivan's penetration of SOG operational radio transmissions was unearthed by a member of the U.S. intelligence community who requested anonymity, and to not identify the exact agency that employed him for more than 15 years. SFA Chapter 78 member Doug “The Frenchman” LeTourneau – who suddenly passed away on July 26, independently confirmed the agent's story and employment history several years ago.

This operative told the *Sentinel* that in the early years of his intelligence employment he worked closely with East Germans and Czechs during the last years of the Cold War in Europe — before the wall came down. Those men had worked with the Russians who had served in Vietnam during the Russian secret war in Southeast Asia. The officer spent lengthy periods of time during the middle and late '80s behind enemy lines running clandestine operations covertly in East Germany, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, where he eventually developed a rapport with several communists.

A key element of this covert operation involved working with members of the East Bloc/Warsaw pact military forces bartering almost anything they could get their hands on and swapping it for materials they could sell. During those years the officer used his mechanical engineering skills and experience to earn credibility and acceptance while working closely with the communists.

“The black market didn't operate with currency at that time, as it was useless in Eastern Bloc countries,” the operative said. Instead of currency, he traded American blue jeans, racing goggles, gloves, T-shirts and brightly colored logo stickers for FORMAT (Foreign Material) such as radios, chemical protection gear, Geiger counters, radar bits, pilot helmets, Russian Starlight scopes and many critically sensitive items that remained classified.

A top priority for that operative was obtaining “anything that was aircraft-related, such as data recorders, black boxes, flight charts, training and evaluation manuals and anything on techniques.”

In the late '80s, infiltrating into Eastern Bloc countries wasn't difficult, because the border guards were there to keep people in, the opera-

tive said. “We'd infiltrate with materials to trade for FORMAT hardware and items, take them back to our safe house near the border, and Russian officers would smuggle all of the items into West Germany for us, for a price. Then, from there, we'd transport the booty Stateside.”

Over time, the U.S. intelligence operative ingratiated himself with the communists and eventually began hearing about the Russian, limited-proxy secret war in Vietnam helping the Vietnamese who they called “Yellow Monkeys.”

“At that point in time, I didn't really know that much about SOG,” the operative said. “Because I was an American, they wanted to impress me, so I let them fill in the blanks. In general, they wanted us Americans to know they didn't like being there. They said a large percentage of the USSR troops were artillerymen, mostly Ukrainians, who specialized in anti-aircraft defenses and operating radar around Hanoi.

“But, there were some who traveled further south and worked with North Vietnam's communications specialists. They told me they had monitored SOG radio transmissions from Leghorn and Hickory.”



From Doug LeTourneau's memorial program. “The Frenchman” passed away in July 2019. Read more about him in the John Meyer's “Final Salute” in the [September 2019 issue of the Sentinel](#).

[Leghorn was the first radio intercept/relay point opened on a mountaintop in southern Laos in early 1967. First called Eagle's Nest, it was operated by SOG men from FOB 2 in Kontum until the end of the secret war in 1972. Hickory was a radio relay site, where recon teams from FOB 1, 3 and 4 could reach from the Prairie Fire AO or DMZ targets on FM frequencies. The NVA overran it in June 1971. Staff Sgt. Jon Cavaiani was awarded a Medal of Honor defending that site.

The operative said, "The Russians had tremendous respect for SOG operators, but they couldn't understand why the U.S. didn't use more sophisticated commo equipment or at least encryption communications equipment in Vietnam."

As the operative accumulated time behind enemy lines, he met more higher-ranking communist officials, including a Special Operations instructor at the highest level who had experience with Soviet operators who had worked in Vietnam, Angola, Cuba, Egypt and other countries. This high-level source told the operative about one Soviet officer trained in Special Operations who functioned as a foreign military advisor.

That Special Operator would listen to SOG radio frequencies and hear Spike teams call in air strikes using open frequencies with basic code words, the U.S. operative said. This Soviet operator had the capability to speak to SOG teams. Trained in Cuba before being assigned to Laos as a communications expert, he spoke Spanish and English. (He later commanded Cuban troops in Angola where he was killed around 1979.)

"The bottom line," the U.S. intelligence operative said: "The Russians and the NVA knew a lot about SOG recon teams. They also knew, and I couldn't tell how often, where the team's LZs were. They knew many of the SOG recon teams by code name, especially in Laos, where the teams from Kontum and Da Nang, Phu Bai and Khe Sanh ran missions across the fence."

LeTourneau added in late 2018, "I tell you just how bad it was, they kept files on us. Our source said he saw the file on me and on RT Idaho. Can you imagine that?! For example, they had the mission I ran with RT Virginia with Gunther Wald as the One-Zero, where we planted the explosive device in a fuel drum that was floating down a river in Laos. That drum exploded with a powerful eruption when we were being extracted on strings. The shock waves hit us and the extraction choppers. The Russians had that mission in my file. They also had mention of that incident with Lynne and me talking to that Cuban commie SOB."

The Saigon spy

The U.S. intelligence officer also learned one more nugget of information: "I was told that there were enemy agents in the highest command levels of SOG in Saigon. Their cover was so deep, it was never exposed during the Vietnam War."

That fact confirms many One-Zeros' suspicions that there was a mole, or a spy in SOG headquarters.

Additionally, during a 1996 Hanoi television show, Maj. Gen. George "Speedy" Gaspard, was shocked when he saw an individual he knew as "Francois" receive Hanoi's highest military honor for his years of service as a spy in SOG. Gaspard, who had several tours of duty in Vietnam and in SOG, knew "Francois" and was "shocked"

when he saw the program. Francois had access to highly sensitive information while employed by the U.S.

Author and SOG recon man John L. Plaster, has a photo of Gaspard standing with "Francois" in Saigon when Gaspard had no idea of the spy's real role for the NVA. That photograph of Gaspard and "Francois" is on page 463 of Plaster's book: *SOG: A Photo History of the Secret Wars*, by Paladin Press Book.

"There's no question that he hurt SOG operations," Gaspard said. "Again, how do you gauge it all? When you look at the success rate of STRATA teams by comparison, you can see why they succeeded. We were disconnected from Saigon and we didn't have the NVA and Russians working against us."

Gaspard took over STRATA operations in October 1967, directing its missions into North Vietnam through September 1968. The unique aspect of STRATA, which operated under OP-34B, the teams launched out of Thailand, flying in Air Force helicopters. The Air Force performed all insertions and extractions without pre-mission reports to Saigon. During Gaspard's tenure at STRATA 24 teams were inserted into North Vietnam on various intelligence-gathering missions. Only one and a half teams were lost during that period of time that involved inserting and successfully extracting more than 150 STRATA team members during that time.

"Again, a key part to our success was having our separate chain of command and not telling Saigon. We worked with the Air Force on a need-to-know basis," Gaspard said in a 2008 interview with the author.

Last But Not Least

Last, but certainly not least was two Navy security breeches that intelligence experts agree had a tremendous impact on compromising SOG commo in the field as well most levels of top secret communications by Navy and Army intelligence crypto communications at that time.

On January 23, 1968 North Korean armed forces seized the USS Pueblo, a "Banner-class" environmental research ship that was a spy ship designed to capture enemy intelligence signals, with specific orders to intercept and conduct surveillance of Soviet Navy activity in the Tsushima Strait and to gather signal and electronic intelligence from North Korea. One Naval intelligence officer said the Russians pushed North Korea to seize the Pueblo, and as soon as it was docked in North Korea following its capture, Russia agents seized the encryption devices aboard the ship.

What was unknown at the time was that U.S. Navy warrant officers John Anthony Walker had contacted Russian authorities which began the notorious Walker spy ring that provided the necessary codes used in conjunction with the seized encryption devices that enabled the Soviets to read all top secret communications for several years without U.S. authorities being aware of the breach in security.

In summation, SOF Publisher Robert K. Brown, a former Green Beret who served two tours of duty in Vietnam said, "The men of SOG were amazing. Now that we've learned about how an untold number of missions were compromised, yet they somehow managed to carry on, makes the SOG legend all the more remarkable." ♦

The Betrayal of a U.S. Army Officer



Lieutenant Colonel John Paul Vann

By Larry Chambers

Lieutenant Colonel John Paul Vann spent a total of ten years fighting in Vietnam, and was KIA there, but you won't find his name listed anywhere on the granite panels of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, or any mention of his heroism or accomplishments in the official US Army archives? His wife and their five children received no military benefits, no pension, no VA educational benefits; it was as if, one day, he just disappeared from the US Army's files. That is indeed a crime.

Crazy, huh, until you find out that the person that had the most to gain by discrediting John Paul Vann's name and accomplishments was Richard M. Nixon.

The following is a true story and my motivation for the years I have spent years researching what really happened.

December 1978

I had flown into Colorado Springs the night before to attend John Allen Vann's wedding. I was to be his best man. While everyone dressed, I wandered into the family den. The room looked like a military museum. The walls were covered with combat medals, ribbons, and awards. They were some of the nation's highest honors. I had grown up in a military family but I had never seen so many military declarations in one place and awarded to one individual.

On the desk was a photograph of my friend's family standing next to President Richard Nixon and a newspaper clipping about his father's funeral. Letters of sympathy from Ted Kennedy, Daniel Ellsberg, and Neil Sheehan, *The New York Times* reporter who released the Pentagon Papers. It was like looking at a who's who of some of the most influential people on both sides of the Vietnam War.

"Those medals, they're all your dad's?" I asked John as we left for his wedding. John didn't answer me as if the answer would be too painful.

Twenty years later during a visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, DC. I couldn't find my friend's father's name. I was told that he was a civilian and didn't qualify to be on the wall.

The problem is that most of what the public knows about John Paul Vann came from Neil Sheehan's book *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*, published in 1988. Sheehan tells how John Paul Vann rose to become the first two star civilian general to command troops in wartime. I remember thinking that the whole civilian general label didn't ring true.

Try to imagine a civilian commanding one of the Navy's Ohio Class

nuclear submarines or an Aircraft Carrier? It sounds crazy. Why does the idea of civilian general sound plausible? The problem is once the mind is inhabited with a particular view, concept or idea, you will tend only to consider instances proving you to be right. We continuously re-narrate past events in the light of what appears to make what we think of as logical sense after these events occur.

In August of 2011, I wrote a letter to the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral M.G. Mullen and requested John Paul Vann's name be added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Admiral Mullen agreed with me and assigned the Army Casualty and Mortuary Affairs Operations Center to review Vann's case. But after a short review, I received a formal letter telling me they could not find any records in the National Personnel Records Center, and unless I could prove otherwise as far they were concerned John Vann was a civilian. Case closed.

I wrote back that the reason they could not find any of Vann's military records was because of the July 12, 1973, fire at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) destroyed approximately 16-18 million Official Military Personnel Files (OMPF). The records affected the Army (1912-1959) which meant John Paul Vann's files would have been in that fire.

I contacted Air Force Maj. Gen. Ret. Charles Dunlap, who served as Air Force deputy Judge Advocate General from 2006 to 2010 and now teaches law at Duke University. He wrote back, "Citizens cannot command U.S. combat troops without authorization, or this would be a fiduciary breach of the Constitution of the United States."

If what Neil Sheehan had written were true, then John Vann's boss General Creighton Abrams must have screwed up or decided not to follow military protocol, but Creighton Abrams had a reputation of following the rules to a fault and doing things by the book.

To understand the thinking surrounding the Vietnam War is to understand that the management of the war was in a constant state of flux, chaos and, increasing complexity. Strategies and Tactics changed with administrations and were often done in secrecy. There was inner-agencies redundancy, competitiveness and rivalry.

John Paul Vann grew up in the back hills of West Virginia. He was average size, rarely smiled, but full of self-confidence and fearlessness. He didn't go to West Point or graduate from an elite university; instead, in 1943, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps at the age of 18 and graduated from flight school as a second lieutenant in 1945. But Vann fought in the Korea War with the 25th Infantry Division. In 1952, Vann became captain of a Ranger Company, leading his company behind enemy lines.

In 1961 Lieutenant Colonel Vann volunteered to become a part of the first expeditionary corps dispatched to South Vietnam and advised South Vietnam troops. On January 2, 1963, Vann, earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for his bravery at the Battle of Ap Bac. He'd spent three years as an advisor to the South Vietnamese army until he tried to warn his superiors about a system he saw as corrupt and an unwinnable war. Because of Vann's outspoken statements, Lieutenant Colonel Vann was labeled a renegade and forced to retire from the Army in 1964.

But Vann refused to quit, a year later, returned to Vietnam after being offered a position with the Agency for International Development (AID). AID had multiple missions during the war and some were diametrically opposed to its stated mission of Pacification, such as counterinsurgency. Under AID's umbrella were a wide range of programs beyond the civilian assistance, such as supervisory authority over counterinsurgent programs. In Saigon, the AID office became known as the U.S. Operations Mission (USOM). USOM shared responsibilities for secret CIA programs.

In 1969, John Paul Vann became the Deputy Director of AID operations for III Corps. His job was to undertake a significant reorganization of the existing Pacification programs. Back then pacification programs were often referred to by the phrase 'winning hearts and minds.' Rather than focusing on the destruction of enemy forces, pacification seeks to counter the insurgency by cutting off its access to the local population.

President Lyndon Johnson sought to improve counterinsurgency operations in Vietnam by officially coordinating many of these civilian assistance programs with military operations under an unprecedented interagency organization known as CORDS, or "Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support." CORDS had a hybrid civil-military structure and a pool of talented and experienced military officers that U.S. Army field commanders could draw on as the war was winding down. In 1970, John Paul Vann became a deputy for CORDS.

By 1971 President Nixon had reduced the numbers of U.S. troops by half. At the same time the NVA were busy rebuilding and enlarging their Cambodian border bases. The big question at White House and in the Pentagon was if the South Vietnamese Army would be ready. Could it hold back a full-scale NVA offensive without American help?

The commanding general of all military operations in the Vietnam War in 1972 was General Creighton Abrams, and he desperately needed someone to command Region II, the largest Corp region, and the most vulnerable to a full-scale enemy attack.

General Weyand knew John Vann and recommended him to Abrams. Vann had all the necessary qualifications. Vann had devel-

oped a special bond with ARVN officers and helped place them in positions of responsibility that Vann believed would be the best fit.

The problem was John Vann was working as a civilian deputy at CORDS. General Weyand and General Abrams solved that problem by creating a 'Letter of Instructions'. This letter of instruction acted as a warrant that would give Vann a provisional appointment as 'Director' satisfying the Washington bureaucrats concerns while also rewarding Vann with a permanent appointment as 'Brevet' general at a later date.

The term 'brevet' referred to a warrant authorizing a commissioned officer to hold a higher rank temporarily, and because John Vann had retired as a Lieutenant Colonel, he was qualified to hold the higher 'temporary' rank of Brigadier General.

Brevetting was common during the First and Second World Wars for officers in the Regular Army to be given a temporary promotion to higher ranks. In March of 1943, Creighton Abrams had been promoted to the brevet rank of Major and again in September 1943 to Lieutenant Colonel so that General Abrams would have been familiar with the brevet mechanism.

The position of 'Director' gave Vann authority over all U.S. military forces in the area, along with control of ARVN forces. Vann was now in command of the largest region in Vietnam, a position that carried the rank of a two-star general. John Vann's long term goal to end his military career as a U.S. Army general was close to becoming a reality. But for now, officially, Vann was the Director over the Second Regional Assistance Group (II Corps).

The 1972 Easter Offensive began with a massive attack on the Demilitarized Zone with 30,000 NVA aka soldiers and more than 100 tanks. Two thrusts of equivalent size, one towards Saigon and a third to the Central Highlands and provincial capital of Kontum, began soon after. The North Vietnamese knew that if they could capture Kontum and the Central Highlands, they would cut South Vietnam in half.

Because of President Nixon's Vietnamization policy, there were no American divisional forces in the Central Highlands, only Special Forces advisers, and U.S. aviation units, including Air Cavalry helicopter units from the 7/17 Air Cavalry Squadron.

On the morning of 4 April 1972, the NVA launched an early morning attack against Firebase (FSB) Delta. Instead of the usual artillery fire from the jungle, elements of the NVA's 320th Infantry Division carried out a massive frontal attack supported by artillery and rockets. For several days the NVA units hit FSB Delta and the other fire support bases along Rocket Ridge.

At one point, the NVA overran the northern part of the firebase. John Vann's helicopters already in the area to rescue a downed helicopter were able to stop the NVA's attack with two of his Cobra gunships.

On 23 April, the NVA's 2nd Division started their attack on the ARVN compound at Tan Canh. By midday, all 5 of the ARVN M-41 tanks were destroyed.

At 1100, John Paul Vann instructed the U.S. advisers to prepare to escape and evade. At 2100, a column of 18 NVA tanks were spotted headed towards Tan Canh compound. A single US Air Force AC-130 gunship arrived at 2300 and opened fire on the enemy T-54 tanks, turning them back.

The next morning, 0600, Tan Canh compound, 24 April, the NVA tanks were back. This time they attacked in two columns. The first column of tanks attacked the main gate, while the other moved on the airstrip. The US advisers had to abandon the command and control bunker and moved to a new position but morning ground fog made airstrikes impossible.

John Vann was overhead in his OH-58A helicopter. He was able to contact his US advisers who had escaped from the base perimeter. Vann landed, and 6 US Special Forces advisers squeezed into the OH-58A helicopter, then as he lifted off frightened ARVN troops hung onto the skids.

Vann flew to Dak To, dropped off the US advisers then returned to Tan Canh, where he picked up the remaining 3 US advisers. Once again Vann's helicopter was swarmed by ARVN soldiers. His helicopter crashed on takeoff. Another helicopter came in and picked up Vann, his pilot and the 3 US advisers and flew them to Pleiku. John Vann took direct control of the ARVN forces and together they fought back overwhelming numbers. Until finally, 9 June the city of Kontum was declared secure.

The American press virtually ignored the U.S. victory. It was written off only as an example of B-52 fire power. If not for Vann's actions on April 23 to 24, the battle for Kontum might have had a much different outcome.

Tragically, six weeks later John Paul Vann died (June 9, 1972) when his US Army Scout helicopter crashed in an open field at the Montagnard hamlet of Ro Uay.

On June 16, 1972, John Paul Vann was given a state funeral and buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Three U.S. Army generals were pallbearers for John Vann's casket. Gen. William Westmoreland, the most senior general, walked at the front, and to the right Gen. Bruce Palmer, vice Chief of Staff, walked to the left front. The third general was the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff Lieut. Gen. Richard Stillwell. That same day the Vann family received his Distinguished Service Cross—for extraordinary heroism at the Battle of Kontum.

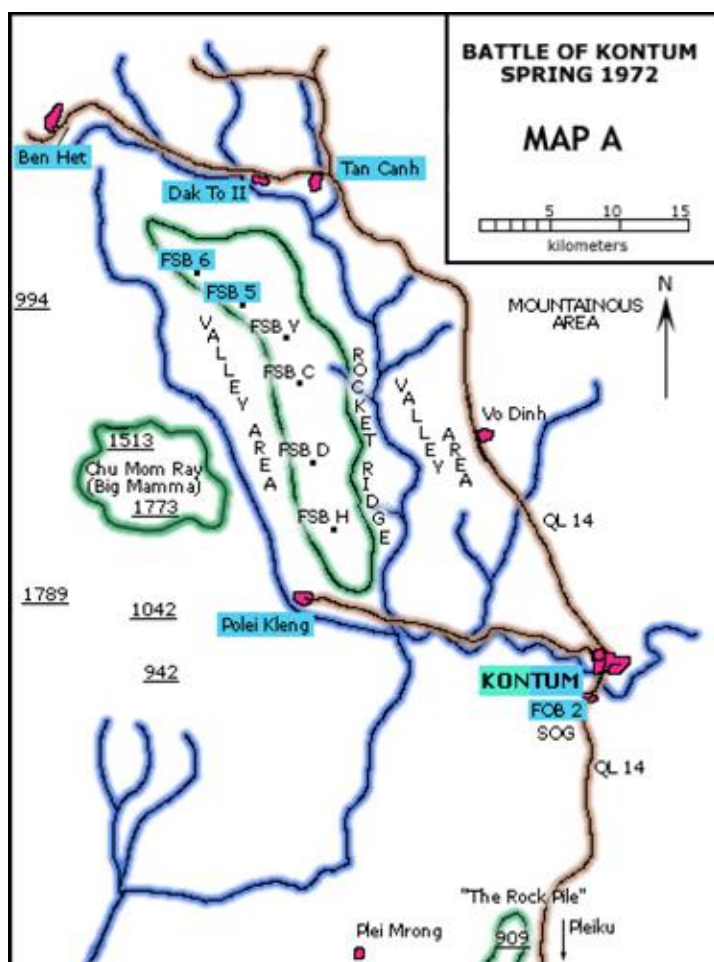
The following day, June 17, President Nixon invited the Vann family to a private ceremony in the White House, where President Nixon posthumously awarded John Paul Vann the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his ten years of service in South Vietnam.

You can listen to Audio Tape 737-7 President Nixon comparing John Paul Vann to General Lafayette in terms of what he had done for his country. Nixon mentioned three times that while John Vann deserved the Congressional Medal of Honor (CMH) but the 'law' prohibited him (Nixon) from giving his family the nation's highest honor.

It is important to note that the Distinguished Service Cross is only given to military personnel, not civilians.

I recently discovered a second DSC had been issued by the Department of the Army, almost two months after the Vann family received the original DSC.

If you read the first paragraphs of both Distinguished Service Cross awards you can see the title (Director) is missing from the second DSC.



The first Distinguished Service Cross citation the Vann family received June 16, 1972 reads:

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 9, 1918, has awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (Posthumously) to MISTER JOHN PAUL VANN for extraordinary heroism in action: Mister John Paul Vann distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in action during the period 23 April to 24 April 1972 while serving as Director, Second Regional Assistance Group, United States Assistance Command, Vietnam.

The second Distinguished Service Cross citation reads:

Department of the Army, General Orders No. 32 (August 3, 1972)

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 9, 1918 (amended by act of July 25, 1963), takes pride in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross (Posthumously) to John Paul Vann, a United States Civilian, for extraordinary heroism and distinguished service as a U.S. civilian working with the Agency for International Development, United States, State Department, in the Republic of Vietnam. Mr. Vann distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in action during the period 23 April to 24 April 1972.

The description of his actions remains the same only MISTER VANN has been replaced with Mr. Vann? While serving as Director, was replaced with John Paul Vann, a United States Civilian, for extraordinary heroism and distinguished service as a U.S. civilian working with the Agency for International Development?



Lieutenant Colonel John Paul Vann's helicopter

Why go to all the trouble to change a dead man's title to (Civilian) on this second DSC award? The second DSC award was revised by someone who wanted to ensure that John Paul Vann is seen officially as U.S. civilian working with the Agency for International Development and not as Director, Second Regional Assistance Group.

One possible explanation has to do with Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers. Ellsberg was being prosecuted by the Nixon administration for conspiracy, theft, and a violation of the espionage statute. Nixon wanted Ellsberg thrown into jail for treason.

Daniel Ellsberg had served as a young Marine officer in Vietnam and had worked with John Vann. They had remained friends long after Ellsberg left Vietnam had gone to work for the Rand Corp.

While John Vann disagreed with Ellsberg releasing classified documents, he still agreed to act as a character witness at his trial. Six different investigators from four agencies had come to Vann's headquarters in Pleiku to question him. Vann's eldest son John Allen Vann traveled to Vietnam three times in 1971, carrying papers back and forth between Ellsberg and Vann. He believed the testimony that his father had prepared would have been damaging to the government's case.

Before becoming President, Richard Nixon had been a trial lawyer and would have known that awarding John Paul Vann the Congressional Medal of Honor, or acknowledging him as an Army general would have influenced a jury and possibly put the Ellsberg case in jeopardy.

If there is any doubt about what Richard Nixon was capable of, remember the White House 'Plumbers' before being caught trying to bug the offices of the Democratic National Committee had ransacked Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office looking for anything that could be used against Ellsberg in his forthcoming trial. In other words, the people in the Nixon Administration had no problem going outside the law to ensure Daniel Ellsberg's conviction.

But let's set aside speculation as to the possible motives of President Nixon; and just focus on the actions as described in John Vann's DSC award.

I will illustrate with the following thought experiment called the 'duck test' which can be used to decide if John Vann was a civilian or a US Army general? The duck test goes like this; if it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it probably is a duck. It's kind of that simple. It really doesn't matter who fed the duck.

John Paul Vann's life encapsulated the very spirit of heroism and the ultimate sacrifice to one's country. The Department of Army should take the following actions:

- The Department of the Army awards John Paul Vann the rank of Bvt. Maj. General, United States Army.
- John Paul Vann's DD 214 be corrected to show the military awards Vann earned post-1963 (Distinguished Service Cross, Purple Heart), any changes in the title and the date of his death.
- That Director or Bvt. Maj. Gen John Paul Vann receives a Purple Heart Medal dated June 9, 1972.
- Corrections to John Paul Vann's headstone. (Missing under WWII, Korea is Vietnam) June 9, 1972, Director John Paul Vann died in the Republic of Vietnam.
- The possibility of upgrading John Paul Vann's DSC to a CMH (Congressional Medal of Honor, as suggested by Richard Nixon in his Audio Tape 737-7 (dated June 17, 1972).
- Lastly, in 2016 May 22, the CIA honored three of its Vietnam War paramilitary officers with stars on the memorial wall 56 years after their deaths. David W. Bevan, Darrell A. Eubanks and John S. Lewis, were killed on a mission to resupply anti-Communist forces in Laos. If the CIA could honor paramilitary officers, John Paul Vann should also be honored. ♦



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Larry Chambers is a self-taught dyslexic writer. A native of California, who earned Bachelor of Science, and Master's Degrees at the University of Utah. Chambers served in F Co 58th LRP, and L Co 75th Rangers, 101st Airborne Div. 1968/69, and is a MACV Recondo School graduate. He lives in Cambodia and is vice president of the Phnom Penh Rotary Club. Visit www.larry-chambers.com to learn more about the author.

Attention Chapter Members

Sonora High School Army JROTC Needs Your Help

Sonora High School Army JROTC has for several years provided the Honor Guard at our annual Christmas Party. As Chapter member LTC Hans Hunt the Senior Army Instructor for the Sonora High School program explained at the February Chapter meeting, the cost of providing a comprehensive and impactful program far exceeds the budget provided. The program depends on community support to supplement this budget to fund the purchase of equipment/uniforms and to fund activities.

Please make a contribution, no matter how small.

Sonora High School
Army JROTC Attn: LTC Hunt
401 S. Palm St.
La Habra, CA 90631



Book Review

Nine From The Ninth by Paul A. Newman, Bob Wallace, and Jack Bick



By Kenn Miller

Copies of SFA Chapter 78's periodical, the *Sentinel*, do seem to get around. It is read widely in the U.S. Army Special Forces, among Special Forces veterans and friends — and the U.S. Army Special Forces has lots of friends. The *Sentinel* and other SFA chapter periodicals tend to be passed along. But knowledge of this book seems to have been lost along the way.

Kenn Miller

Two veterans of the Vietnam War 9th Infantry Division's LRRP/Ranger unit, E Company, 75th Infantry (Ranger); Paul A. Newman,

Bob Wallace, and Jack Bick, a former 9th Infantry Division Public Information Officer that befriended and covered the E/75th Rangers who patrolled and operated in flat, wet, heavily populated Mekong Delta areas of interest and operations, where most military movement would be at night have told the story of E Company. How we missed it I do not know.

NINE FROM THE NINTH was first published in 2002, and somehow it seems to have been unnoticed, except perhaps among 9th Infantry Division veterans.

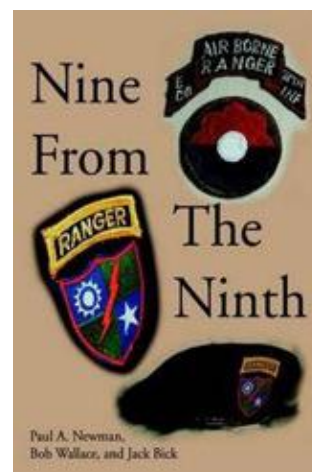
From the 17th Century to the 1970s, traditional American ranger units have been provisional units, recruited of volunteers already in

a war zone who like to fight, usually a mix of men any commander might covet and also field soldiers with little patience for chicken-shit, bullshit, and the niceties of dull garrison duty. In Vietnam, the help of Special Forces was an important influence on the establishment, operational doctrine, training, special logistics, and culture of the LRRP, LRP, and 75th Rangers of the Vietnam War. And veterans of those early Lurp/Rangers — many of whom joined SF — were the foundation of what became America's 75th Ranger Regiment. Vietnam War Lurp/Rangers tend to maintain a strong historical gratitude to Special Forces for its support and influence.

One warning about the title of *NINE FROM THE NINTH* that makes me question the importance of a good book title. *NINE FROM THE NINTH* is a good title, but the book is dedicated to the ten, not nine, E/75 Rangers from the 9th Division who died in combat in 1969. May they all be remembered. ♦

[Nine From The Ninth](#)

Writers Club Press
(December 4, 2002),
152 pages



Beat the Reaper



SELF MESSAGE

By Jim Morris

At this point in the narrative I would like to ask that the reader not indulge in obvious rude jokes. Old guys are notoriously stiff and nothing takes stiffness out of the body like a good massage. Most like to have this done by somebody else, preferably attractive and of the opposite sex, but that's not really the point. Or at least it's not really the point I'm trying to make.

The point is that self-massage is sometimes a lot better than having it done by a masseuse, because you know where it hurts and somebody else doesn't. But, to reach inaccessible areas like the back and shoulders you need a gadget. The best self-massage tool I know of is called the Ma Roller. It's also called the "Maxie-Backsie", but I personally find this name unusably stupid. It's called the Ma Roller because it rolls down the Ma acupuncture meridian in the back.

I got my first one in 1975, on the recommendation of a girl I was then seeing. She let me try hers, and I immediately ordered one. I don't even remember where I got it from 45 years ago, but you can get them from Amazon now for twenty-eight bucks.

There is one downside. When you start using the Ma Roller it hurts like a bastard. If your back is kinked and you lie on a wooden roller it's excruciating. Buuuut! There are two kinds of pain — 1) Don't do dat, and 2) Hurts so good. This was a hurts so good. I've given my roller to friends for a test run and seen strong men weep, and never ever try it again. But I kept at it with mine because I knew it was helping, and after about two weeks it cracked my back eleven times in one roll. I got an immediate rush of energy and felt better than I had for years.

I have one more story about the Ma Roller that will give you an idea of just how great it is. A year or so after I started using it I was traveling a lot to Colorado, working with Peder Lund of Paladin Press on the first edition of *War Story*. I left my Ma Roller at my friend Zoltan's house in Colorado Springs. No problem, I'd pick it up the next time I was in Colorado.

At the time I was living in a little place in the country near a lot of section line roads, and I was running twelve miles every morning. It was great. Only time in my life I could eat everything I wanted and not gain weight. But I wasn't doing anything for my upper body, and one day I reached for the refrigerator, screamed and dropped to my knees. My back had gone out, badly.

I went to an MD and he gave me pain pills, and I went to a chiropractor and he fixed everything else but where my back had gone out. I spent the next six weeks in pretty continuous agony, until I went back to Colorado Springs.

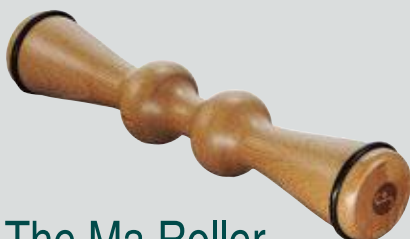
"Zol, do you have my Ma Roller?"

"Yeah, it's just behind the front door."

I got it, rolled down it to where it hurt and felt a drop as those two vertebrae realigned. Then the two that connected to those two clicked in, and a blip later the two that connected to those two clicked in. I think my spine must have dropped at least an inch. And I've never had a bit of pain or trouble in that area since. If you could carry a chiropractor around everywhere you went for thirty bucks you would do it. And you can.

So, if you have back pain, and what old fart does not, get a Ma Roller.

Here are a couple of other self-massage gadgets I have found useful. All are available on Amazon. Okay, here's what they are:



The Ma Roller



Thera Cane
Massager

You can get to places with this that you can't with the roller. It doesn't have as much pressure, but it's pretty good.



The Knobble

Great little point massager.

February 2020 Chapter 78 Meeting



By Gary Macnamara
SFA Chapter 78 Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 0835 hours by President SGM Bruce Long with thirty-two Chapter members, including new member James McLanahan and one guest in attendance.

After the Pledge of Allegiance led by Sgt.-at-Arms Mark Miller and the Invocation by Mike Keele, Bruce called for a moment of silence in remembrance of the Special Forces troops, all law enforcement personnel, fire and first responders who were killed (KIA) this past month. Fourteen Green Berets were KIA in 2019.

SGM Bruce introduced guest Bill Whelan, Chief of Police, El Segundo Police Department.

NEW BUSINESS

Chapter Web Site: Bruce briefed the members on the Chapter web-site. Terry Cagnolatti will no longer be able to do it. Don Deatherage, assisted by Susan Weeks, will continue their work on our Chapter web site. Don is travelling quite a bit and will need some help.

LTC Hans Hunt: Bruce introduced LTC Hans Hunt, a Chapter member and SAI for Sonora High School. LTC Hunt solicited donation for his school's JROTC Program. There was a motion by Richard, seconded by Susan Weeks to donate \$500 on behalf of the Chapter. The motion passed.

Meeting Location: SGM Long announced that the March meeting will be held at Fiddler's Green, AFRC Los Alamitos. He will distribute maps on how to get to the location. Members will only need their driver's license to enter the Post. There is also a PX for those with military ID.

Training: Jim Duffy gave an update on the new training systems at Artemis. They have some new 3d Reality Firing Program and scenarios.

Florida Convention: 2020 and Las Vegas Convention 2021: For the 2020 Convention in Florida we are planning to send at least one representative. For the 2021 Convention we are supporting Chapter 51 in holding the conference in Las Vegas. John Joyce will have information for this event on our chapter website. The 2021 will be held on 21-15 October 21 and attendance is expected to be 10,000. It will be held right after the SFA Convention.

GENERAL DISCUSSION:

Order of Saint Maurice: Jim Duffy was asked if he could prepare applications for six candidates for the Order of Saint Maurice. He will be assisted by the Chapter Secretary.

Chapter Calendar for First Quarter of 2020: Bruce opined that a visit to one of the local museums either at Chino or an alternate site might be one of our activities. He also wanted to establish a date for a live fire firing day at one of the local ranges.

Presentation: Annie Jacobsen gave a great presentation of her books and solicited ideas and discussed the research on her latest book, a platoon in Afghanistan working on biometrics to identify terrorists.

ROTC Presentations: Ed Barrett will be our ROTC Coordinator for this year. The Chapter Secretary received tentative approval to purchase copies of the Army Officer's Guide for Fullerton graduates and to obtain copies of the United States Constitution.

DROP Magazine: The Chapter posted a list of delinquent members who have not paid their dues. If members do not pay their dues they will not receive copies of the DROP magazine. Dues are \$40 a year. Life membership is \$400. If one is over age 65, life membership is \$330.

SF Memorial: There is a drive to establish a Special Forces Memorial at Fort Bragg on the "Campus" (The old Smoke Bomb Hill).

Purchase of the Army Officer's Guides: The Chapter Secretary requested that funds be allotted for purchase of the Army Officer's Guide for the newly commissioned Lieutenants at California State University Fullerton (CSUF). There was a motion by "Tilt" Meyer, seconded by Mark Miller to authorize the purchase of 35 copies at an estimated cost of \$30 a copy. The motion passed.

Next meeting: Next meeting: AFRC, Fiddler's Green on 14 March 2020, at 0830 hours. ([see President's Page for details](#)). ❖



Chapter 78 officers presented guest speaker author Annie Jacobsen with a plaque of appreciation and flowers. Left to right, Chapter President Bruce Long, Treasurer Richard Simonian, guest speaker Annie Jacobsen, Vice President Don Gonneville, Secretary Gary Macnamara (Photo by How Miller)

SFA Chapter 78 February 2020 Meeting (Photos by How Miller)



- ❶ Geri Long displays her newly autographed copy of Annie Jacobsen's book *Surprise, Kill, Vanish*.
- ❷ Chapter guest Bill Whelan, El Segundo Chief of Police
- ❸ Chapter member LTC Hans Hunt, SAI for Sonora High School
- ❹ Chapter member Jim Duffy delivering an update on Artemis training.
- ❺ Chapter member Mike Keele
- ❻ Chapter members Mark Miller, Jim Morris, Kenn Miller and James McLanahan
- ❼ Annie Jacobsen fields questions during her presentation

- ❽ There were no empty seats (except for the photographer's) in the house.
- ❾ Chapter members taking in Annie Jacobsen's presentation. Left to right, James Light, Kenn Miller, Dennis De Rosia, Bob McClain, Hans Hunt, Jim Suber, Ham Salley, James McLanahan, and Mike Jamison.
- ❿ Chapter member Barry Estell
- ⓫ Annie Jacobsen, Jeff Morgan and John "Tilt" Meyer in a discussion.
- ⓬ A full set of Annie Jacobsen's books were on hand at the meeting
- ⓭ Chapter members enjoying breakfast and catching up prior to the start of the meeting.

TAPS



By Tom Turney

If any of you have ever been to a military funeral in which taps was played; this brings out a new meaning of it.

Here is something every American should know. Until I read this, I didn't know, but I checked it out and it's true:

We in the United States have all heard the haunting song, 'Taps...' It's the song that gives us the lump in our throats and usually tears in our eyes.

But, do you know the story behind the song? If not, I think you will be interested to find out about its humble beginnings.

Reportedly, it all began in 1862 during the Civil War, when Union Army Captain Robert Elli was with his men near Harrison's Landing in Virginia. The Confederate Army was on the other side of the narrow strip of land.

During the night, Captain Elli heard the moans of a soldier who lay severely wounded on the field. Not knowing if it was a Union or Confederate soldier, the Captain decided to risk his life and bring the stricken man back for medical attention. Crawling on his stomach through the gunfire, the Captain reached the stricken soldier and began pulling him toward his encampment..

When the Captain finally reached his own lines, he discovered it was actually a Confederate soldier, but the soldier was dead.

The Captain lit a lantern and suddenly caught his breath and went numb with shock. In the dim light, he saw the face of the soldier. It was his own son. The boy had been studying music in the South when the war broke out.. Without telling his father, the boy enlisted in the Confederate Army.

The following morning, heartbroken, the father asked permission of his superiors to give his son a full military burial, despite his enemy status. His request was only partially granted.

The Captain had asked if he could have a group of Army band members play a funeral dirge for his son at the funeral.

The request was turned down since the soldier was a Confederate.

But, out of respect for the father, they did say they could give him only one musician.

The Captain chose a bugler. He asked the bugler to play a series of musical notes he had found on a piece of paper in the pocket of the dead youth's uniform.

This wish was granted.

The haunting melody, we now know as 'Taps' used at military funerals was born.

The words are:

Day is done, Gone the sun.
From the lakes, From the hills.
From the sky.
All is well. Safely rest.
God is nigh.

Fading light, Dims the sight.
And a star, Gems the sky.
Gleaming bright.
From afar, Drawing nigh.
Falls the night.

Thanks and praise, For our days.
Neath the sun, Neath the stars.
Neath the sky
As we go, This we know.
God is nigh.

I too have felt the chills while listening to 'Taps' but I have never seen all the words to the song until now. I didn't even know there was more than one verse. I also never knew the story behind the song. I didn't know if you had either, so I thought I'd pass it along.

I now have an even deeper respect for the song than I did before.

Remember those lost and harmed while serving their country. Also remember those who have served and returned; and for those presently serving in the Armed Forces. ♦

Two Special Forces Soldiers Killed In Afghanistan Attack Identified



Sgt. 1st Class Javier J. Gutierrez (DOD photo)



Sgt. 1st Class Antonio R. Rodriguez (DOD photo)

Sgt. 1st Class Javier J. Gutierrez, of Las Cruces, N.M., and Sgt. 1st Class Antonio R. Rodriguez, of San Antonio, Texas, were killed in an apparent insider attack — one that early reports indicate may not have been affiliated with the Taliban.

Both men were 28 years old and assigned to 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group, out of Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, according to Lt. Col. Loren Bymer, an Army Special Operations Command spokesman.

Both soldiers were posthumously promoted to sergeant 1st class and awarded Bronze Star medals and Purple Hearts.

Their deaths bring the number of U.S. military casualties in Afghanistan this year to four. Two paratroopers were also killed by a roadside bomb in January. Seventeen American combat casualties in Afghanistan in 2019 made it the worst year since 2014. ❖



A U.S. Army carry team transfers the remains of Sgt. 1st Class Antonio R. Rodriguez, at Dover Air Force Base, Del., Feb. 10, 2020. (Photo by Eric M. Fisher/U.S. Air Force)

