



SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 8 • AUGUST 2022

SAVE TEAM 11

Nat'l Guard SF Soldier Works
to Evacuate Former Afghan
Colleagues from Afghanistan

Wounded Warrior Part Two

Special Forces Association 2022 CONVENTION —

Honoring Medal of Honor Recipients and
Featuring the De Oppresso Liber Symposium Series



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VOLUME 13, ISSUE 8 • AUGUST 2022



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



8TH SF GROUP



11TH SF GROUP



12TH SF GROUP

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FRONT COVER: An Afghan National Mine Removal Group (NMRG) soldier takes aim at a 25-meter target during marksmanship training at Jalalabad on Jan. 21, 2017. The NMRG is Afghanistan's premier force for route clearance and mine reduction. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew B. Fredericks)



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From the Editor



How Miller
Sentinel Editor

We open this *Sentinel* with an introduction by our enthusiastic new chaplain, Si Rangel. He will occasionally be contributing articles of interest and has already submitted his book for review ([see Page. 3](#)).

Our Kenn Miller's book review this month about Matthew Cole's *Code Over Country* contrasts his last review of a book about SEALs (*Alpha* in the [May 2022 Sentinel](#)) with this book, which contains history, corruption and more.

I got the chance to review Si Rangel's book, *A Christian Warrior Training Manual*. He dials down in detail his prescription for combining military and spiritual skills.

"Save Team 11" tells of a courageous group of Afghans, formed under SF, who unfortunately got mostly left behind last August. Thomas Kasza describes how his growing 501(c)(3) charity Save Team 11 is being critical to the emigration efforts of the Afghan National Mine Reduction Group, that was trained by and worked exclusively with SF, contributing enormously to the success of SF operations, especially at night.

Greg Walker's "Wounded Warrior" continues in Part 2. The amazing Mike Echanis has overcome his combat wounds, defying medical assessments that he would forever be crippled, and has become the go-to instructor for his radically reformed hand-to-hand combat techniques.

At the invitation of Charlie Beckwith, Mike Echanis trained his newly formed Delta operators, and was also invited by later SEAL Team 6 founder Richard Marcinko to come train his SEALs. Greg takes us through Mike's demise in the assassination of Nicaraguan General Jose Ivan Alegrett in 1978, while they were flying together, as well as some of the controversy that followed his death. It is quite a tale.

And check out the details of the presenters and events at SFACON2022 in Colorado Springs, Sep 20-24. There is an outstanding lineup of presenters who cover subjects beginning with the OSS and weaving through Vietnam, Berlin, El Salvador, Afghanistan, Iraq, and present day activities of manning and deploying of SF troops. There will be half a dozen Medal of Honor recipients, a tour of facilities with the 10th SFG, and many other activities. There is not much time left to get on board, but plenty of opportunity.

Enjoy. ❖

How Miller
Sentinel Editor

From the President | August 2022



Gregory Horton
President SFA Ch. 78

Greetings! Our meeting on 16 July had a good turnout with 28 members present. Mike Keele gave our invocation and we were off and running. It was a big day because we were celebrating Richard Simonian's 90th birthday. We celebrated this momentous occasion with an awesome American Flag cake. I found a very nice article from years ago extolling Richard's accomplishments! And believe me they were legion!

Debra Holm gave a brief on our Chapter's participation on the SFA Teamhouse website and on our Chapter website. Participation by Chapter members on the SFA Teamhouse is increasing steadily, with more members becoming visible on the Member Directory. Chapter members with questions about the SFA Teamhouse website can contact Debra by using the contact form on our Chapter 78 website SpecialForces78.com. In addition to the SFA Teamhouse, members were also encouraged to add their member profile to the Chapter 78 website. A form to help with this is available on the Chapter website under the "[Member's Directory](#)" menu option.

Our Associate member Nimo gave us an update on our Afghan community, as they integrate into life in the local area. Once again, we are thrilled with the birth of the newest members of our community! He also added that the Afghan community needs vehicles, especially minivans or station wagons. The vehicle donations are eligible for a tax deduction.

Member Len Fein had been working with the staff at the USS Iowa for our chapter to take a tour of the Battleship on August 20th. He made several trips to the site and spoke to the staff. The bottom line is they needed 25 attendees to make the trip fiscally possible and unfortunately, we were unable to make it happen.

We had an outstanding speaker, Ross Andrews, who served over 17 years with SF on active duty and over 20 years as a SERE instructor. He gave an excellent presentation of SERE training and many successful missions. The Chapter presented Ross with a Certificate of Appreciation and a Chapter Coin.

Don't forget that the 2022 SFA Convention in Colorado Springs will be held September 20-24. Hope to see you there.

Sorry this is a short column but I am fighting off COVID, and my brain is in slow motion!!!! ♦

The next Chapter meeting will be held on Saturday, August 20, 2022, at the JFTB Los Alamitos. The venue is the same as several previous meetings:

Fiddlers' Green, JFTB, Los Alamitos
[4745 Yorktown Ave #5176, Los Alamitos, CA 90720](https://www.google.com/maps/place/4745+Yorktown+Ave,+Los+Alamitos,+CA+90720)

Breakfast will be served at 8AM, followed by the meeting at 8:30.

PLEASE NOTE, THE IOWA TRIP HAS BEEN CANCELLED.

Greg Horton SGM (Ret)
President
SFA Chapter 78

ACL Afghan Refugee Community Update



affordablecommunityliving

By Debra Holm

As Greg has written in his President's column, Nimo reported in his update at the July Chapter meeting on the ACL Afghan refugee community growth— both with new families and babies!

Due to the continual growth of the community, the need for donations persists. A full up-to-date list of community needs and contact information is available at <https://www.special-forces78.com/acl-afghan-refugee-housing-project/>.

Nimo specifically mentioned that automobile donations would be helpful. Of course, supplies for the infants are needed, and school supplies for the children who will be going back to school would be extremely appreciated. Cash or gift card donations help with purchasing items too. Nimo's contact information for questions or to arrange a pick up of donated items is also available on the page mentioned above. ♦

The Chaplain's Hooch



Si Rangel
Chaplain SFA Ch. 78

Let me introduce myself. My name is Salvador "Si" Rangel. I joined Chapter 78 recently and excited to be back in the SF community once again after a long absence. I'm a former member of Chapter 12. I joined the Army Reserve in 1964 as a member of the 63rd Inf Div. I transferred to 12th SFGA in 1967 and remained there until 1980 when I transferred to the National Guard's 40th Inf. Div. I retired from the National Guard in 1998 as CSM of the 40th Engineer Brigade. I was transferred to the Retired Reserve awaiting a retirement pension on my 60th birthday.

While a Reservist I joined the Long Beach Police Department in 1968. I worked Patrol Division for 6 years, then Vice for 6 years, and was a member of the SWAT team for 3 years. I was medically retired for a back injury in 1979. After a year, I became a Private Investigator for the next 20 plus years, and for ten years I was an adjunct teacher at Mt San Jacinto Jr. College.

On February 14, 1974 I was asked a question that changed my life. The question was, "If you died tomorrow at work or while making a jump would you go to heaven or hell?" When the conversation was over, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour receiving God's promise of eternal life. My wife Christine was saved and baptized a few months before me, and we joined a Bible believing Bible preaching church together. Over the years I began studying, not just reading, the Bible and was called to Bible college. Upon graduation in 1997 I was licensed by my church to preach and teach the



Si Rangel, Chaplain SFA Ch. 78, and wife, Christine Rangel

Gospel and served as Associate Pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Temecula CA. I continued my education and received a Master's in Biblical Studies, and years later a Doctorate in Theology.

Then in 2001 9/11 happened. I was as shocked as everyone else in America. The next month I turned 56 years old. Over the years I kept in touch with a former member of the 12th SFG, Don Sexton, who lived in Fayetteville N.C. Over the next year he advised me that Special Forces still needed qualified SF senior NCO's. I talked to my wife about it. She thought I was crazy and too old, but we prayed about it. I told her that I was going to apply for active duty and that if it was God's will then He would open all the doors.

The next day I called Army Personnel Center in St. Louis, MO. A female clerk told me I could not apply for active duty as a retiree, but I could join the Army all over again. The next day I took all my Army documents and walked into the Temecula Army Recruiting office. I went into the commander's office and told him I wanted to enlist. As soon as he began to say why I couldn't I gave him the phone number to the clerk I talked with at the Personnel Center. I took the written test the next day, went to San Diego MEPS then the Navy Hospital in Balboa for the "way" over 40 part of the physical. About one year later, at 58 years old, I received orders for Afghanistan.

I was assigned to the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan in Kabul as the Command Sergeant Major. Six months later I was reassigned to the 3rd SFGA then the 7th SFGA as the Operations Sergeant Major of the Combined-Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan at Cp Vance, Bagram Air Base. When I returned home I turned 60 a few months later and retired after 41 years' service. I returned to my PI business and completely retired two years later.

In 2017 I joined the CA State Military Reserve as a Chaplain. I completed the Chaplain Officer Basic Course and received Suicide prevention training. I served as Chaplain to National Guard units of the 40th Inf Div in Long Beach and CA Troop Command HQ'S at March Air Reserve Base. I resigned in 2020.

As Chaplain for Chapter 78 I will carry on the duties of an Army Chaplain which is to "Nurture the Living, care for the wounded, and Honor the fallen." My duty for our chapter is to provide religious support and pastoral care to members and your families. I can provide Bible study, conduct marriage ceremonies, baptisms, funerals, and grave site services. I'm available for spiritual, emotional, pre-marriage and marriage counselling (all counselling is confidential). I will respond to members and your family members in need because of illness, accidents, hospitalization, or death. I am always available to pray for your specific needs.

If anyone has Biblical, spiritual, or theological questions I can be contacted at 951 440-6778 or email at sihrangel60@gmail.com.

It is an honor to serve with you and for you. ♦

In His service,
CH Si Rangel
Command Sergeant Major, US Army, SF, Ret.

Book Reviews

Code Over Country: The Tragedy and Corruption of SEAL Team Six by Matthew Cole



Kenn Miller

By Kenn Miller

In the May 2022 issue of the *Sentinel* I reviewed *ALPHA*, a rather depressing book about a troubled SEAL platoon. And now here's yet another book about a SEAL Team that is not exactly glorifying. The Navy SEALs are so widely glorified that two books which deal with some of the Teams' "tragedies and corruption" shouldn't hurt the feelings of too many Frogmen. To the extent that the

Sentinel and SFA Chapter 78 represent members and veterans of Army Special Forces, we can say that there is one hell of a lot more to admire about the SEALs and their skill kits than there is to look down on — though, of course, Army Green Berets and Rangers will continue to make amiable jokes about "The Squeals."

Code Over Country: The Tragedy and Corruption of SEAL Team Six contains a rather amazing mound of "Tragedy+Corruption" to be found in the history of Naval Special Operations — have you ever heard about Army battalion commanding officers demanding that the Army buy them Mercedes Benz sedans for no conceivable military

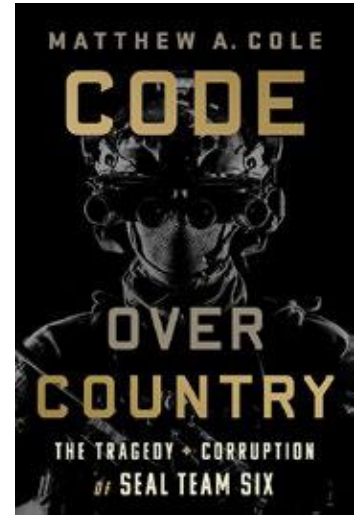
reason? Well, it seems that the Navy is somewhat more generous than the Army in some downright ridiculous ways.

This is the perfect book for someone who dislikes SEALs, but to hell with such people. *Code Over Country* does show how much the USA needs its Frogmen, and there is some good history in this book. But I wonder why books about or by SEALs very rarely contain more than a splash or two of saltwater, while SEALs seem to be trying to take over the jobs of Army and Marine Corps infantry and special operations. ❖

[*Code Over Country: The Tragedy and Corruption of SEAL Team Six*](#)

By Matthew A. Cole

Bold Type Books (February 22, 2022)
368 pages



Survival on the Spiritual Battlefield: A Christian Warrior Training Manual on How to Safely Lead Your Family on the Battlefield and How to Be Victorious by Salvador "Si" Rangel



How Miller

By How Miller

Si Rangel, our new Chapter 78 Chaplain, is eager to be of service to the chapter. He also has written a notably unique book titled *Survival on the Spiritual Battlefield: A Christian Warrior Training Manual on How To Safely Lead Your Family on the Battlefield and How To Be Victorious*.

In it he draws on both his military knowledge and experience and explains how the warrior ethic is useful to both military and spiritual endeavors. He describes how the military structures are set up to favor victory, giving examples of command structures and doctrine. He stresses the importance of doing things "by the book," along with trusting superiors and the system to ensure mission success.

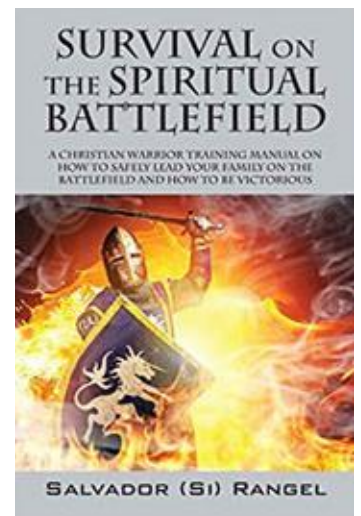
Likewise, he describes how a born-again Christian Warrior needs to have many military attributes such as vigilance and a willingness to "follow the Book," in this case the Bible. He has gathered a very impressive amount of pertinent scriptural references to back up each of his assertions.

Since I am not a born-again Christian, Si welcomed the chance to have me give a dispassionate review of his book. I was quite impressed with how much the book is internally consistent and how much detail he presented. This book is an excellent reference book and training manual for those that are willing to be totally dedicated to a spiritual life. ❖

[*Survival on the Spiritual Battlefield: A Christian Warrior Training Manual on How to Safely Lead Your Family on the Battlefield and How to Be Victorious*](#)

By Salvador (Si) Rangel

Outskirts Press (November 27, 2013)
196 pages



SAVE TEAM 11

Nat'l Guard SF Soldier Works to Evacuate
Former Afghan Colleagues from Afghanistan



Team 11, a unit of Afghan counter-IED specialists known as the National Mine Reduction Group (NMRG), worked with the U.S. Army Special Forces to clear IEDs in Afghanistan operations.



By Thomas Kasza

All photos courtesy of Tom Kasza

Well before the disastrous withdrawal from Hamid Karzai International Airport last year, Afghan interpreters, and the risks they took by aiding US Forces were well known. Their tenacity in rising above the crushing poverty of their home villages via their own innovation and persistence is admirable in the extreme. Now, exchange that well-known narrative of “They provided Dari-English translations” with “They swept for IEDs at the forefront of Special Forces night-raids,” and you begin to have a sense for the kind of risks undertaken by the Afghan men of the National Mine Reduction Group.

A virtual unknown due to their small numbers and affiliation with Special Forces, the NMRG cleared the way for the Green Berets and other SOF they partnered with in the most literal sense possible. Stood up during the Village Stability Operations phase of the Afghan war, the Civil Mine Reduction Group, as they were known at the time, were heavily relied upon to detect and disable IEDs, as their unique familiarity with Taliban tactics and local geography mitigated the inevitable learning curves experienced by constant rotations of new ODAs. Many Green Berets are alive or unmaimed because a member of the NMRG was running point with a metal detector.

In 20 years in Afghanistan, only two groups of local nationals earned sufficient trust to share the same camps and barracks with ODAs: interpreters and the NMRG. The unparalleled risk that they undertook made them the most trusted partner force SF has seen since the Montagnards.

I served as manager for NMRG Team #11 during a 2019-20 deployment to southern Afghanistan. Like many before and after me, I was the beneficiary of their service. In late 2019, my detachment

conducted a clearance operation targeting a Taliban staging area in Uruzgan province. The village we were to hit was horse-shoe shaped, encircling a central hill. As the detachment sniper, having an elevated position where I could provide overwatch for the entire assault element was an enticing prospect. Of course, the Taliban knew this too...

After an uneventful infiltration via CH-47, we secured a foothold in a compound at the base of the hill. With the command element remaining in the compound, I selected two of my NMRG — “Ahman” and “Gordy” — along with two attached infantrymen from the 82nd Airborne, and an Afghan Commando machinegun team. With Ahman leading the way, sweeping with his CIEA (pronounced “chaya”) metal detector, and Gordy marking a safe path with infra-red markers, we began trudging up the hill.

Halfway up, Ahman’s CIEA screeched to life. While alarming, we were exposed on the open hillside, and had plenty of room to maneuver. I instructed Gordy to mark the site with a chemlight, and we bypassed it on the way upwards. The top of the hill clearly had been an old Taliban fighting position. The crest was lined with a thick embankment that hinted at the employment of heavy machinery, and through my night-vision I could see a second, interior set of raised earthen walls — perhaps an abandoned ammunition point, maybe even a mortar pit. Predictably, the screech of Ahman’s CIEA once again screamed into the night.

Having seen the effort spent in developing the fighting position it was a guarantee that other IEDs would be emplaced; it didn’t take a brilliant military mind to see the advantage the position offered, and the Taliban would do what they could to make us bleed for it. However, we couldn’t provide overwatch for our comrades if we spent the night clearing the hill.

“Alright guys, lets BIP (blow-in-place) this one and get moving.” I told Ahman and Gordy.

Unbelievably, Ahman, who at this point had gingerly began uncovering the IED, protested my decision with a decisive “NO” followed by a string of Dari and insistent gestures towards the center of the hill.

Thinking this was a misunderstanding and that there was no way he was insisting on continuing, I handed him a half-block of C4 with a datasheet explosive booster and primed with detcord; major overkill for a simple pressure-plate IED.

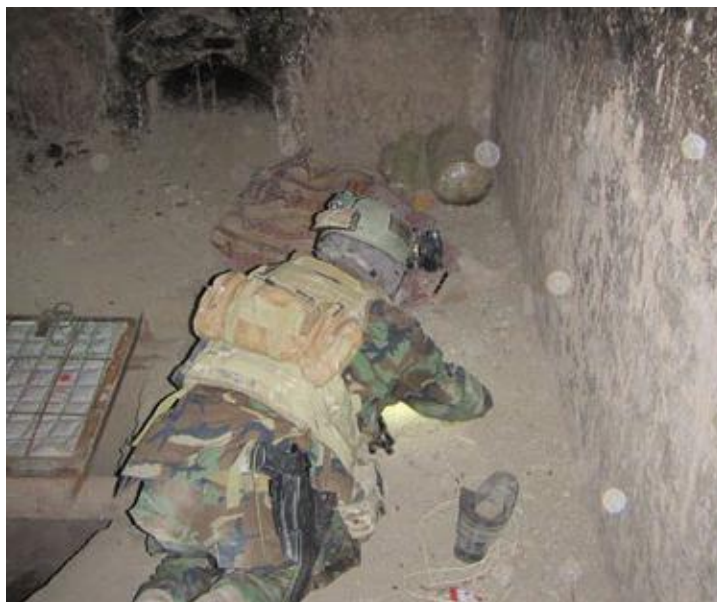
“Don’t bother digging it up; lets just blow it and move back. I guarantee there’s more of them here.”

Ahman immediately echoed what I said. “YES! MORE!” once again gesturing towards the center of the hilltop.

Back and forth the we went for several minutes, until finally, with our mutual irritation growing, I radioed for Gary, one of our three interpreters.

Gary sauntered up the hill and talked briefly with Ahman after I explained the situation.

“Hey bro,” Gary said in his typically lackadaisical manner, “He says if we blow that one up now, it’s just gonna cover the other ones with dust and make them harder to find.”



A Team 11 member works to clear a hilltop IED.



I practically laughed with incredulity. It had not occurred to me that Ahman would have been completely content to spend the night just clearing IEDs in the dark, like a gardener pulling weeds.

After overcoming my brief moment of surprise, I clarified my intent to move on through Gary. Ahman merely shrugged, and shortly thereafter, we were headed down the hill, the fuse of the C4 block burning, enroute to continue on what would be an otherwise unremarkable mission.

Not the most thrilling anecdote was that? For my detachment, that honor belongs to “Sam” who was engaged by a Taliban fighter inside a tunnel system after he stumbled upon underground weapons cache. The fighter must have been just as startled as Sam, since he escaped without injury. Nor is it the most shocking example of the risk the NMRG undertook on a daily basis; that unfortunate distinction belongs to the four NMRG of a sister team who were killed by an IED while riding in a lightly armored SUV. The Americans were in MRAPs.

I mention it simply because to the men of Team 11 and so many other NMRG Teams, clearing a hilltop full of IEDs to further the objectives of a country they’ve never known was simply just another day’s work.

Had Ahman and Gordy not been sweeping for IEDs ahead of us that night, I probably still would have been fine. It’s just that it would have been an American — myself, an EOD tech, or someone else holding the CIEA. Chaos arises unexpectedly even in the most routine military operations, and the simple fact remains that every NMRG death — and there were a shockingly high amount — was made in exchange for an American life.

To this end, I have started a 501(c)(3) non-profit on behalf of the NMRG remaining in Afghanistan. Team 11 — an homage to the team that once safeguarded my own ODA — actively fundraises, disburses aid and procures passports and visas for the families of former NMRG members still in Afghanistan. Initially, this was a small-scale effort, simply to get the 17 original members of Team 11, and their families;

100 people all told, through the winter. However, we quickly expanded to assisting members of NMRG Teams 12, 19 and 20. Now, working in conjunction with the Moral Compass Federation — an offshoot of the



SaveTeam11.org





Special Operations Association of America that encompasses 18 other Afghan-focused non-profits — we are transitioning our focus on the entirety of the remaining NMRG and their families; some 2,000 people.

While the process is frequently stymied by executive and legislative inaction, we have begun to see the effects of our efforts. This Independence Day marked a monumental achievement for this growing organization: three of the original 17 members of NMRG Team #11 received their visas to the United States. With family included, seven people will soon begin a new life, forever free from an oppression greater than you and I could ever comprehend.

This news is especially poignant for myself, as I was actively guiding six of those people when the bombing at Abbey Gate barred access to the Kabul Airport forever. One of the hardest things I've had to do was to tell the members of Team 11 that our evacuation attempts had failed. We promised them that we would aid them when able. However, it was up to them to weather the oppression of the Taliban on their own.

And weather it they did.

With immeasurable grit, resourcefulness, and no small amount of courage — those fundamental traits that America aspires to — they evaded the Taliban, survived famine and endured untold hardship. Of course, I would be utterly remiss if I did not mention our donors and supporters. This has been a massively collaborative effort, made possible by over 250 people.

Now, a year after informing Team 11 that our evacuation efforts had failed, seven people stand on the cusp of a future impossibly brighter than any one of them could ever imagine.

The NMRG volunteered to do the most dangerous job in Afghanistan to further the interests of a nation they've never known. And they did so purely on faith: faith that we would be there for them when the times got hard. We aim to ensure that their faith in us Americans was not misplaced. ❖



Mahdi Hussaini serves as Deputy Director for Save Team 11. His language skills and cultural knowledge are critical in maintaining daily communications with members of Team 11 and other former NMRG members. He is shown here during his escape to the US from his native Helmand during the Taliban resurgence in August 2021.

Save Team 11 is dedicated to ensuring the safety, well-being, and SIV (Special Immigrant Visa) assistance to National Mine Reduction Group members and their families within Taliban controlled Afghanistan.

Visit [SaveTeam11.org](https://www.saveteam11.org)

Learn more about their mission and organization, find out how you can help and read updates on their progress.

WOUNDED WARRIOR

Part Two

Editor's Note: Read "[Wounded Warrior — Part One](https://www.specialforces78.com)" in the July 2022 Sentinel available at www.specialforces78.com.

By Greg Walker (ret)
USA Special Forces

Transition

Mike Echanis' successful transformation from medically retired/crippled Vietnam veteran in late 1970 to being named as the senior civilian hand to hand and special weapons instructor for the Army's elite Green Berets and Navy SEALs by December 1975 was nothing less than phenomenal. Relying upon his family and their cultural heritage, close friends, and experienced physicians and through self-education about the power of the human mind and the durability of the human spirit he proved modern medicine's assessment of his disabilities wrong.

In 1976, now as their Senior Instructor and H2H Advisor he would teach six three-week long instructor courses for the SF community. Along the way meeting and befriending now legendary Colonel Charlie Beckwith who would form and lead America's first counter-terrorism unit, Detachment DELTA. Beckwith, who in 1982 publicly acknowledged Echanis reported directly to him while working in Nicaragua, sent his DELTA operators to observe and train with Mike at Fort Bragg.

In 1977, at the invitation of then Commander Richard Marcinko, who later became the founder and leader of SEAL Team 6, Mike traveled to Little Creek, Virginia. There he taught three two-week instructor courses to operators from SEAL Team 2 and UDT-21. Echanis began writing a 9-volume series on specialized military hand to hand combatives of which three were published and remain intensely popular to this day.

"He wouldn't accept being crippled for life," Pat Echanis told me. "Mike knew he was a warrior. He knew being a warrior was his path. He never quit on himself. He never gave up. He never felt sorry for himself or for what had happened to him in Vietnam."

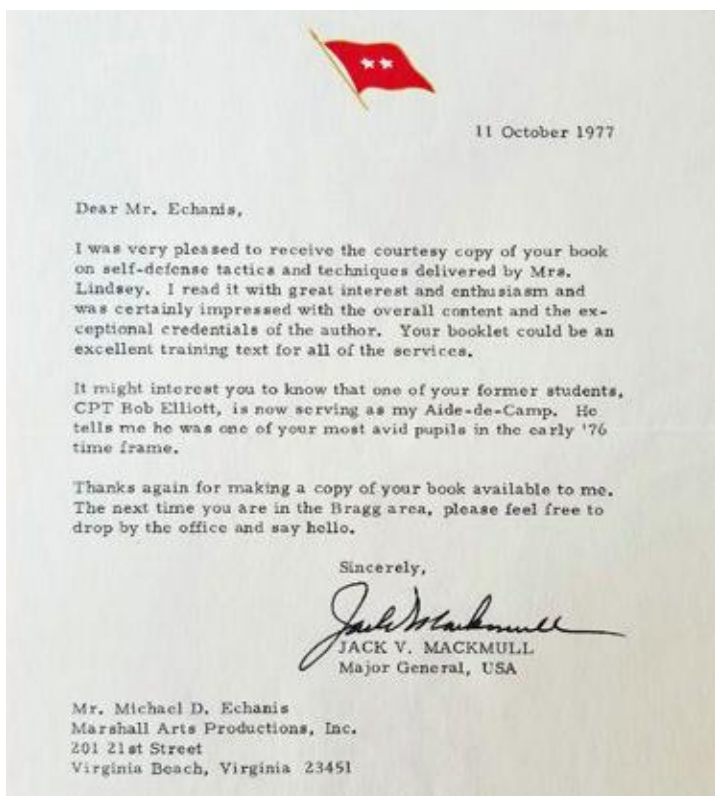
(At right) It would be MG Mackmull who would authorize and direct MSG Jake Jakovenko with the 5th SFG(A), to provide the honor guard for Mike and Chuck Sanders' funerals in late 1978. It was Jakovenko's ODA that Echanis was an unofficial member of at Fort Bragg. (Author Collection)



1LT Dan Kelso, 5th Special Forces Group (ABN), coaches selected SF and 82nd ABN students at the Hwa Rang Do H2H School on Smoke Bomb Hill. 1LT Kelso was formally captain of the West Point Karate team. (Author Collection)



In 1977, at the invitation of CDR Richard Marcinko, then the commanding officer of SEAL Team Two, Mike Echanis was formally "...appointed the permanent senior advisor and head instructor for the SEAL Team Two Hand-to-Hand Combat/Special Weapons/Special Tactics School for Instructors." "I liked him," Marcinko told me in 2017. "He was very intense." (Author Collection)





Participating in a counter-terrorist field exercise in Puerto Rico, MSG Jake Jakovenko (rear) and Mike Echanis put on a no-holds barred H2H demonstration. It was one of the few times Echanis was brought to bay when, after hitting and kicking each other with unbridled ferocity, Jakovenko was able to put a choke hold on his opponent that ended the bout. Of Jakovenko, Mike would say “He is one of the toughest men I’ve ever seen!” (Author Collection)



Echanis, commissioned by President Somoza as a major in the Guardia Nacional, formed, trained, and led an 80-man commando unit against Sandinista revolutionaries. (Author Collection)



Killing Communists in Nicaragua

During the mid-summer of 1977, President Anastasio Somoza of Nicaragua, along with his senior advisor, Mr. Joseph Raymond Molina, a Cuban American and Bay of Pigs veteran, chose to employ a small team of former American special operations personnel as an intelligence fusion cell. This team would report only to Somoza, his son, then a major in the Guardia Nacional, and Mr. Molina. Looking to interview candidates, Molina contacted his longtime friend Major Juan Montes. Montes, a U.S. Special Forces officer, then assigned to the MAAG in Managua, recommended they interview Mike Echanis.

Molina had a long and close relationship with Somoza. It began in 1972 when Molina became part of the reconstruction effort in Nicaragua after a major earthquake shattered the country. By 1978, Molina had become a senior advisor to the Nicaraguan president on a variety of matters, to include the conduct of the war against the Communists. In a September 4, 1978 article in the Washington Post, the Post wrote, “Ray Molina, an aide to Somoza, said that the president was ‘fed up’ with the administration of President Carter, and that Somoza was planning ‘open war’ on his domestic opposition.”

“As they step up violence, we will be forced to match it,” Molina said.

According to Ray Molina, now retired, he interviewed Echanis in Managua on Montes’ recommendation and hired him. Echanis was charged to put together the rest of the intelligence cell. In a hand-written letter dated August 9, 1977, Echanis wrote “[Colonel Dick] Bratton and Carter are both ex-company men...M.C.P.O. [Bob] Nissley knows Major Montes our contact [at the MAAG in Managua].

In his letter Echanis also mentions another possible mission; this one in Libya. “Libya is a C.I.A. operation with 46 adviser slots open for \$55,000 per year with a \$10,000 bonus upon completion. The interviewers are in Washington D.C., they are recruiting from Special Forces now.”

Echanis also met often with the CIA station chief at Fort Bragg, Tom Hewett. In February 1978, Hewett asked Echanis and his team for help to formally gather information about Somoza and his activities. This, in lieu of Echanis’ direct access to the Nicaraguan president and his senior-most staff and advisors. According to retired commander Skip Crane, who on September 8, 1978, would positively identify the remains of Mike Echanis on behalf of the U.S. Embassy, Mike’s access to Somoza was unique. “Mike and President Somoza were very close,” recalls Crane today. “The CIA had no assets with

Echanis enjoyed near immediate audiences with Somoza, the latter who met personally with Echanis’ mother in Managua after his death and funeral in Oregon. Major Echanis advised and led his Nicaraguan commandos with great success against Sandinista guerrillas. Mike (left wearing his green beret) worked closely with Navy SEAL, Joe Camp (right) who was killed just months before Mike’s assassination in 1978. (Author Collection)



In 2013, Michael D. Echanis was posthumously inducted into the Black Belt Magazine Hall of Fame. In 2017, the Special Forces Association inducted Mike into its prestigious ranks based on extensive and detailed documentation from the author. (Author Collection)



Mike Echanis' ID card as issued by President Somoza himself. (Credit: SR. Raymond Molina)



Master Chief (ret) Bob Nissley and the author at Charlie 3/7, 7th SFG(A) compound, in Florida. (Author Collection)

direct contact with Somoza. Mike knew what the president was thinking, planning, doing."

Upon his return to Nicaragua in February, Echanis wrote in a private letter, "I flew in, stopped in Ft. Bragg to see the head of the U.S. Anti-Terrorist Unit [Beckwith], and the Chief of Station for the C.I.A. [T. Hewitt] I've known him for about three years now."

"When I spoke to him, he stated to me that he was very interested in our operation in Nicaragua and that I should remain in contact with him," wrote Echanis. "He originally recruited me for Clandestine Operations as a possible operative for Spain, because of my Basque nationality."

Death from Above

On September 8, 1978, Mike Echanis, Chuck Sanders, Bobby Lee Nguyen, a former MACV-SOG interpreter and later combat officer in the South Vietnamese Airborne and new to Somoza's U.S. intelligence team, were killed in an explosive aviation crash, along with General Jose Ivan Alegrett, the plane's pilot. General Alegrett was targeted by General Samuel Genie, Somoza's intelligence chief, as Genie believed Alegrett to be part of a coup d'état plot. That plot, discovered in August 1978, had resulted in over 80 Guardia Nacional officers being arrested or suspended from their duties. Alegrett's intelligence unit, which Echanis and Sanders were now advising, and the 80-man commando unit led by the two Americans was deemed capable of seizing power as Somoza was increasingly seen

in his words and actions as becoming "soft" toward the Sandinistas' increasing boldness as the war turned in their favor.

However, a formal C.I.A. report dated September 7, 1978, one day before the fatal aviation crash and released by the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library [Case # NLC 95-119] refutes Alegrett as being a threat to either Somoza or the preferred transition of authority backed by Carter and his State Department. "Only one of the other five members of the General Staff, General Jose Ivan Alegrett, would perhaps be inclined to reject Fernandez' lead [Chief of Staff, Armando Fernandez, Guardia Nacional]. Alegrett is ambitious, [sentences redacted]. He has been G-3, in command of operations, for roughly seven months, giving him some control over troops...The combat units in Managua, the bulk of the Guard's fighting force, are presently under Jose R. Somoza's command and presumably would not be allowed to fall to a maverick Alegrett."

After eight years of research and no shortage of good fortune an email led to a phone call which took me to Los Angeles, California. There I met with Mike's former Nicaraguan fiancée whose brother-in-law, Dr. Julio Molina (no relation to Raymond Molina) was working at the military hospital in Managua at the time, assisted in the autopsies of all four killed in the air crash.

Doctor Molina described in detail what he found as he processed each set of remains. General Alegrett was the only casualty who'd been decapitated by what Dr. Molina described as a powerful explo-

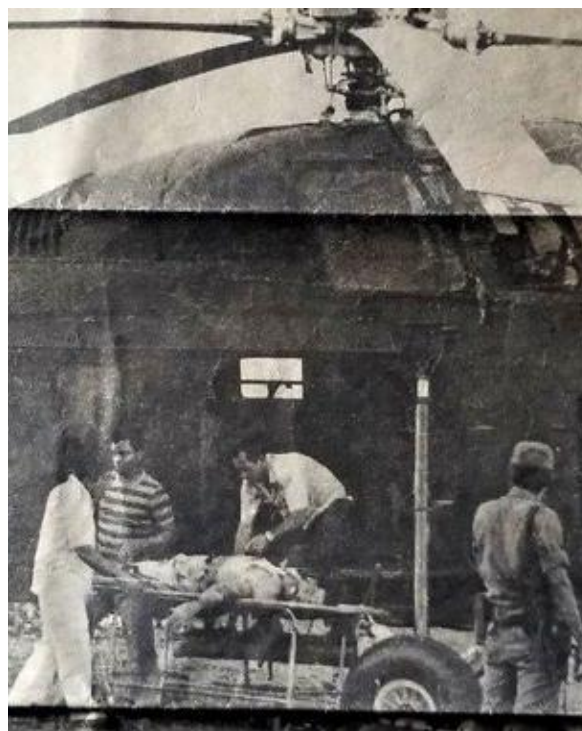
sive detonation inside the aircraft. His head was never recovered. Chuck Sanders and Bobby Nguyen, sitting behind Alegrett and Echanis, sustained catastrophic injuries to include bits of colored wiring from the bomb retrieved primarily from Nguyen's body. Mike Echanis suffered severe concussive trauma when the blast occurred. Doctor Molina described Echanis' skull as being compressed to the point of looking like a partially closed accordion. "I believe the bomb was placed inside the aircraft, in a small ceiling storage space, just behind the pilot [Alegrett]. All the wounds and injuries are consistent with both an explosion [upper body] and then the impact of the plane hitting the water when it crashed [pelvis and leg fractures / breaks]."

The plane, returning to Managua from a short-fuse briefing on the NIC/ Costa Rican border, lost one of its wings in mid-flight upon the bomb exploding. It crashed into the waters at roughly one in the afternoon just off the mouth of the Boca del Río Sapoa, on Lake Nicaragua. A fisherman close to the impact point was able to get a rope around the fuselage which kept the plane from sinking. Others on shore who witnessed the crash joined him and a larger boat towed the wrecked aircraft to shore.

The Long Trip Home

On September 12, 1978, Colonel Rafael Adonis Porras, senior executive officer to President Anastasio Somoza, issued an official directive to Senor Armando Saballos, overseer at the Las Mercedes Airport in Managua. Somoza had personally ordered handmade, ornate caskets for Echanis, Sanders, and Nguyen as well as having their remains professionally embalmed. A passenger aircraft and crew from LANICA Airlines, owned by Somoza, was tasked to fly the coffins as well as the surviving members of Mike's team to include Ms. Kimberley Kennedy O'Neal, newly married to Gary O'Neal, to the United States.

However, upon attempting to land in Miami, Florida, the flight was denied landing privileges. It re-routed to another nearby airport where again the flight was denied landing. The pilot, low on fuel, advised the tower he would be landing anyway, and he did. According to Kim Kennedy, then long divorced from Mr. O'Neal, and interviewed



Above, *La Prensa* was the first newspaper to announce the death of General Ivan Alegrett and all those onboard his Aero Commander 114-A, license plate AN-BSA. All evidence points to the bomb responsible for the aircraft's destruction was placed onboard while the plane was on the ground at a small commando base in southern Nicaragua during a briefing Alegrett was receiving regarding the incursion of 300 Sandinista fighters from Costa Rica.

Left, the headless corpse of General Ivan Alegrett is unloaded outside the military hospital in Managua. Autopsies on Alegrett, Echanis, Sanders and Bobby Nguyen were immediately conducted by Drs. Molina and Juan M. Navas. (Credit: *La Prensa*)

at length by this author from her home in Fayetteville, North Carolina, she and O'Neal, Charles W. Evans, and Paul Glasser, all former "Green Berets", rented a car and then drove to the apartment the O'Neals kept near Miami.

Prior to their departure Gary O'Neal called Master Chief Bob Nissley, who along with Colonel Charlie Beckwith had been overseeing the Echanis-led operation in Nicaragua, advising Nissley they were abandoning the caskets of all three men at the airport. Nissley, already in Ontario, Oregon, with the Echanis / Sanders families, was furious. In the meantime, U.S. Customs and additional interested USGOV parties ordered the caskets removed from the plane and secured in a nearby hanger. It would take several days of wrangling with the State Department before the plane was allowed to leave, its original route changed so that all three caskets were flown to Boise, Idaho and then moved by hearse to nearby Ontario, Oregon.

175 332160 UGA 13-5-78 332160

LAS MERCEDES INTL AIRPORT, BOISE, IDAHO

LANICA

UNION SAFARI DE NICARAGUA, S.A.

HOME OFFICE MANAGUA, D.N., NICARAGUA

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MEMORIAL CHAPEL
78 N. W. 1st AVENUE
ONTARIO, OREGON, USA.

DEPARTAMENTO DE LAS FUERZAS ARMADAS DE NICARAGUA
MANAGUA, D.N., NICARAGUA

ENTRY

Angell, Rethoring-LANICA AIRLINES

3/15/78

3 1500 lbs. UGA-MIA 150000 \$0.50 \$750.00

3 56 lbs. UGA-MIA 5600 \$0.40 \$224.00

ROMANS REMAINS OF:
MR. CHARLES W. SANDERS
MR. MICHAEL D. ECHANIS
MR. NGUYEN VAN NGUYEN

TAX NICA \$215.73 TAX LAS \$231.55 BROOKAGE \$221.56 OVERSIGHT
CUSTOM OVER TIME IN MIAMI \$150.90

THREE COMPASSES ISSUED BY U.S. FOR AIRCRAFT DESTINATION

MANAGUA AS ADDS., THREE COPIES & THREE PINE PACKS PERSONAL EFFECTS.

ORIGINAL 1 FOR CASH/STAMP

176- 332160

"At left and below, M.C.P.O. Bob Nissley, Naval Special Warfare Liaison at Ft. Bragg, NC, collected key documentation from President Somoza's office and the U.S. embassy in Managua. He delivered the originals to the Echanis Family while making copies for himself. Nissley was Colonel Charlie Beckwith's 2IC and along with CIA liaison Tom Hewett, oversaw the Echanis-led operation in Nicaragua. (Author Collection)

The O'Neals, CW Evans, and Paul Glasser would make their way to Ontario for the funerals of all three but not until several days after the caskets had been delivered. "We rented a car in Boise, then drove to Ontario," recalls Kim Kennedy. "I remember we arrived at night and went to the funeral home. Gary and CW went in while I stayed in the car. Gary insisted on seeing the bodies and when they were shown to him and CW, I heard Gary howling like an animal. He was never the same person after that."

As no one knew Bobby Nguyen and were not expecting a third casket it was up to Master Chief Nissley to share with the Echanis family who Bobby was. Pat Echanis offered that if the highly decorated former Vietnamese officer had been a friend of her son's, he would be buried along side him. Arrangements were made with the local Catholic priest and Bobby was approved for burial in the Catholic cemetery in Ontario.

Chuck Sanders was cremated, and his ashes spread at his favorite mountain range near Ontario.

At Fort Bragg, North Carolina, General Mackmull directed Master Sergeant Jake Jakovenko to take ODA 594 to Ontario and act as the color guard for the funerals. Sanders had been Jake's junior medic while he was with the 5th Group and O'Neal had likewise been a member of the detachment. At the conclusion of the funeral for Mike and Bobby it would be Jakovenko who would be the first to drop his green beret onto the top of Mike's casket as the color guard filed by to pay its respects.

A Wounded Warrior's Legacy

In August 1979, Mrs. Pat Echanis advised Colonel Norman M. Rich, MD, at the Walter Reed Medical Center, of their son's passing. She had shared her son's multi-faceted approach to an almost full recovery from his wounds with the physician. Dr. Rich, soon to become Professor Rich and Chairman at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences School of Medicine at Bethesda, Maryland, was instrumental in establishing the Vietnam Vascular Registry.

In 2002, Dr. Rich was a leading expert in vascular trauma of the extremities like those suffered by Mike Echanis. In response to her letter to him Dr. Rich wrote the following about this trans-generational SOF Wounded Warrior and his remarkable recovery, rehabilitation and transition from combat disabled to warrior re-enabled:

"Dear Mrs. Echanis – Thank you very much for your communication of 23 August 1979. The additional information that you have provided regarding your son's activities prior to his tragic death are most valuable to our long-term follow-up in the Vietnam Vascular Registry. Similar to your son's approach, we continue to hope that our efforts might provide assistance for others in the future who have the misfortune of receiving injuries similar to those of your son, whether in accidents in our civilian life or on the battlefield if that occurs in the future." ♦

JEFATURA SUPREMA DE LAS FUERZAS ARMADAS
GUARDIA NACIONAL DE NICARAGUA
MANAGUA, D. N., NICARAGUA

Septiembre 12, 1978-

Señores
Líneas Aéreas de Nicaragua,
Managua, D. N.

Atn. Señor Armando Saballos
Aeropuerto Las Mercedes.

Estimados Señores:

Con cargo a la Secretaría de la Presidencia de la República, ruego a Uds. extender pasajes aéreos a favor de las siguientes personas, en la ruta especificada:

- 1). Sra. Kemberly Kennedy O'Neal.
- 2). Sr. Gary O'Neal.
- 3). Sr. Charles W. Evans.
- 4). Sr. Paul Glasser.

La ruta especificada es la siguiente:
Managua-Miami-Fayetteville-Ontario (Oregón)-Fayetteville-Miami-Managua.

Asimismo ruego a ustedes dar sus órdenes a fin de que sean transportados tres atados conteniendo los restos o cadáveres de las siguientes personas:

- 1). Sr. Charles W. Sanders.
- 2). Sr. Michael D. Echanis, y
- 3). Sr. Nguyen Van Nguyen,

en la ruta:
Managua-Miami-Fayetteville-Ontario (Oregón).

De ustedes atentamente,

RAP/ADONIS PURRAS L.
CORONEL (INF), GN.
PRIMER AYUDANTE DEL SEÑOR PRESIDENTE.

RAP/guev.

"I was with them the whole trip"

— Gary O'Neal, Ranger Hall of Fame

In 2013, Gary O'Neal with the help of noted author David Fisher released *American Warrior*, O'Neal's autobiography. In it, among other prevarications, O'Neal claims to have been present when the bodies of Alegrett, Echanis, Sanders, and Nguyen were recovered (Page 176); to have escorted all three caskets from Managua to Boise/Ontario (Page 178); and to have personally stopped the funerals of Echanis and Nguyen so he could drive 60 miles to Boise, Idaho, to purchase an American flag for Bobby Nguyen's casket (Page 179).

None of these events occurred according to eye-witness interviews, official USGOV/State Department cable traffic, and per accounts related to this author from the Echanis family, Son Tay raider SGM Jake Jakovenko, Ms. Kim Kennedy, and Master Chief Petty Officer Bob Nissley, the latter who was coordinating the return of the bodies and deconflicting challenges along the way with the State Department, CIA, and Customs from the Echanis home in Ontario. "When O'Neal called me and said he was leaving the caskets at the airport in Florida I wanted to grab him through the phone and slam him up against a wall," recalled Nissley, who served with MACV-SOG in Vietnam.

Pat Echanis, Mike's mother, was equally disdainful of the Ranger Hall of Fame member's "war story." With M.C.O.P. Nissley cross-talking with U.S. Customs, the CIA, the FAA, and U.S. State Department arranged a new flight plan (all three caskets would now be flown to Boise, Idaho) by the LANICA civilian airliner. In Ontario, the funeral director arranged for ground transportation from Boise to Ontario, Oregon. When Pat Echanis learned of O'Neal's claim to have stopped the funeral services for her son and Bobby, she had this to say. "How can anyone make such a claim? That never happened. There were easily 100 people at the graveside. There was media from Ontario and Boise. A helicopter was circling overhead with a television crew. No one even knew who Gary O'Neal was except for Jake [Jakovenko]. He was nobody and if anyone had tried to stop the services for any reason they would have been answering to me!"



Upon learning Bobby Nguyen had been a close friend of their son's, Pat and Frank Echanis received permission from the Catholic priest in Ontario for the Vietnamese SOG veteran to be buried next to Mike. Pat had her mother's marker, which had been replaced earlier, refurbished for Bobby's grave site.



"I don't know why Gary has said what he has in his book. It is shameful. I feel so bad for the Echanis'. CW Evans told us about the crash upon our return to Managua the evening of September 9th. We'd driven back as my father had given us a new car as a wedding present." — Kim Kennedy, June 2017

Echanis, Sanders funerals scheduled

Funeral services have been arranged for the two Ontario men who died last Friday in a Nicaraguan airplane crash. Charles Sanders, 39, and Michael D. Echanis, 27, lost their lives when the plane carrying them, a Nicaraguan general and a Vietnamese, plunged into a lake on the Costa Rica-Nicaraguan border.

Families of the two men received word that the bodies will be flown into Boise from Miami, Fla., today.

A military contingent will be in Ontario for the two funeral services, Saturday morning for Sanders and Saturday afternoon for Echanis. See summaries on page 2 of today's Daily Argus Observer.

http://wikileaks.org/cable/1978STATE229712_d.html

Canonical ID: 1978STATE229712_d
 Subject: M/W GARY LEE O'NEAL 4/7/48 KANSAS
 From: Department of State
 To: Nicaragua Managua
 Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
 Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
 Previous Handling Restrictions: -- N/A or Blank --
 Archive Status: Electronic Telegrams
 Type: TE
 Locator: TEXT ON MICROFILM, TEXT ONLINE
 Reference(s): 78 MANAGUA 4242, 78 STATE 228444
 Executive Order (E.O.): -- N/A or Blank --
 Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 26 Mar 2014
 Enclosures: -- N/A or Blank --
 Concepts: -- N/A OR BLANK --
 TAGS: Consular Affairs--Assistance to Citizens [CASC]
 Office: -- N/A or Blank --
 Document Character Count: 1693
 Date: 1978 September 11, 00:00 (Monday)

UNCLASSIFIED
 PAGE 01
 STATE 229712
 ORIGIN: SC5-06
 INFO OCT-01 ARA-35 ISO-00 H-02 /024 R
 DRAFTED BY: CA/SCS/JKOMITOR/WRER
 APPROVED BY: CA/SCS/SADOBRECHUK
 CA/SCS/ROBELT
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 TO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA IMMEDIATE
 UNCLAS STATE 229712
 E.O. 11652: N/A
 TAGS: CASC(O'NEAL, GARRY LEE)
 SUBJECT: M/W GARY LEE O'NEAL 4/7/48 KANSAS
 REF: MANAGUA 4242; STATE 228444

1. OSCAR KENNEDY HAS AGAIN REQUESTED ASSISTANCE OF SENATOR HELMS' OFFICE TO FIND OUT IF HIS DAUGHTER KIMBERLY AND SON-IN-LAW GARY LEE O'NEAL ARE SAFE IN MANAGUA AND ESPECIALLY TO CONVEY TO HIS DAUGHTER IMPORTANCE OF GETTING OUT OF NICARAGUA ASAP. IT IS HIS DESIRE THAT BOTH LEAVE NICARAGUA IMMEDIATELY, EVEN IF IT MEANS LEAVING HIS CAR. IF SON-IN-LAW NOT WILLING LEAVE AT THIS TIME AT LEAST MR. KENNEDY WISHES KIMBERLY HAVE FIRST AVAILABLE FLIGHT.
 2. POST REQUESTED TO REPORT ASAP RESULTS OF EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE O'NEALS TO LEAVE NICARAGUA AND IF SO REPORT THEIR TRAVEL PLANSTO FATHER AT 919-485-2699 AND DEPARTMENT/SCS.
 3. NOTICE: PRIVACY ACT AUTHORIZATION REQUIRED IN CASES UNCLASSIFIED

Married ten days earlier in Fayetteville, NC, the O'Neals, driving back to Managua, would only arrive on the evening of September 9, 1978. The newlyweds learned of the crash from CW Evans at their hotel. O'Neal's claim of "supervising" the recovery operation (Page 176) is perfidious. (https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1978STATE229712_d.html)

And what of the American flag O'Neal claimed to have stopped the funeral for Mike Echanis and Bobby Nguyen to make a 120-mile road trip to Boise, Idaho, to purchase? SGM (ret) Jake Jakovenko today scoffs at this sad exploitation of the Ranger Creed. "O'Neal brought a flag to the cemetery, and he wanted to place it on Bobby's casket. Bobby was not a U.S. citizen when he died, and I told Gary no because of that. He got upset but kept the flag to himself until passing by Bobby's open grave at the conclusion of the services. He tossed the flag down onto Bobby's casket and then left."

Upon being informed of the multiple errors, mistakes, and outright fabrications in *American Warrior* co-author David Fisher, much to his credit, called Ms. Liz Echanis, Mike's sister, and apologized for his part in unknowingly misrepresenting her brother's life and death.

Fisher then authored a letter of apology which was published in the local Ontario newspaper on September 3, 2017.

"I write this letter in an effort to correct the record about a local hero, Michael D. Echanis, who was born in Nampa and raised in Ontario. Mike Echanis served with honor in Vietnam, then recovered from wounds received there to become a celebrated member of the martial arts community..." — https://www.argusobserver.com/opinion/letter-to-the-editor/article_c4d63bb8-901f-11e7-9413-bfceeec6d647.html ❖



During the wake for Echanis, Bobby Nguyen, and Chuck Sanders, SGM (ret) Jake Jakovenko removed his ribbon bar to include its Silver Star for his exploits during the Son Tay raid, giving it to Frank and Pat Echanis. The ribbon bar is now in a shadow box arranged by Liz Echanis, Mike's younger sister.



The author (right) spent four days with Son Tay raider, SGM (ret) Jake Jakovenko, at his home in Kentucky. Jake was Chuck Sanders and Gary O'Neal's team sergeant at 5th Group with Mike Echanis a welcome unofficial member of the ODA during his time at Fort Bragg.

RANGER CREED

Recognizing that I volunteered as a Ranger, fully knowing the hazards of my chosen profession, I will always endeavor to uphold the prestige, honor, and high esprit de corps of the Rangers.

Acknowledging the fact that a Ranger is a more elite Soldier who arrives at the cutting edge of battle by land, sea, or air, I accept the fact that as a Ranger my country expects me to move further faster and fight harder than any other Soldier.

Never shall I fail my comrades. I will always keep myself mentally alert, physically strong and morally straight and I will shoulder more than my share of the task whatever it may be, one-hundred-percent and then some.

Gallantly will I show the world that I am a specially selected and well-trained Soldier. My courtesy to superior officers, neatness of dress and care of equipment shall set the example for others to follow.

Energetically will I meet the enemies of my country. I shall defeat them on the field of battle for I am better trained and will fight with all my might. Surrender is not a Ranger word. I will never leave a fallen comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy and under no circumstances will I ever embarrass my country.

Readily will I display the intestinal fortitude required to fight on to the Ranger objective and complete the mission though I be the lone survivor.

RANGERS LEAD THE WAY!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Greg Walker is an honorably retired "Green Beret" and lifelong martial artist whose close friendship with Ms. Pat Echanis, Michael Echanis' mother, has resulted in an upcoming book about this Army ranger and Special Forces legend.

Today, Greg lives and writes from his home in Sisters, Oregon.



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For the project vision, donation and corporate sponsorship information, please contact the Creative Director at:

info@specialforcesgreenberetmemorial.org

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SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION 2022 CONVENTION



20-24 September 2022 Colorado Springs, CO

Join us in colorful Colorado at the Antlers Hotel, Colorado Springs, from 20-24 September 2022. Come celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Regiment with our Nation's Green Berets.

This year we welcome Medal of Honor recipients to SFACON 2022



COL Roger Donlon



SFC Melvin Morris



MAJ Drew Dix



**SGM Matt Williams
(Speaker)**



**MSG Earl Plumlee
(Speaker)**



SGT Pete Lemon

Featuring the De Oppresso Liber Symposium Series:



The Originals Panel

LTC (ret) Mitch Utterback will lead a panel discussion with our Original members of Special Forces who joined in 1952-53. They will tell us about how they were recruited, how they trained, and how they formed our very first SF elements that eventually became Special Forces Operational Detachment – Alphas (ODAs). Come hear their stories in what promises to be a fascinating, lively gathering of Regiment's oldest members.



The Original Mike Force

In 1965, BG (ret) (then CPT) Joe Stringham commanded ODA-301 at its CIDG camp near Ben Cat in South Vietnam. His ODA got the task to activate III Corps' Mobile Strike Force battalion, known as "The Mike Force" comprised mostly of Chinese Nungs. BG Stringham will tell us about the Mike Force origin, its unique guerilla makeup, and its initial employments in what would evolve into a relevant combat design for the counter-insurgency fight.



Det-A / SF Berlin

In 1990, the Special Forces cased its final unit colors in Berlin, bringing to close 34 years of clandestine Cold War activities. Former Detachment – 'A' veteran Nick Brokhausen will review the various phases of this one-of-a-kind unit with a truly elegant mission. Nick will tell us about the Berlin based SF personnel and lead us to understand Det-A's 1956-early 1970s Unconventional Warfare design, the addition of its Counterterrorism mission, and the 1984 transition to the Physical Security Support Element (PSSE).



El Salvador

In the 1980s, Special Forces engaged in a low-visibility extension to the Cold War being played out in Central America's Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador. BG (ret) (then COL) Stringham commanded US MILGROUP El Salvador with a small 55-man SF contribution, conducting combat through strategic operations in a sensitive time when a small band of Green Berets were quietly executing America's fight against communism in close proximity to our southern border.



Task Force DAGGER/N. Afghanistan

COL (ret) Mark Rosengard was the J-3 for Task Force DAGGER, the organization that conducted Unconventional Warfare operation in Afghanistan immediately following 9/11 that reduced the sanctuary then provided to Al Qaeda by the Afghan Taliban. Mark

will tell us about our nation's combined and integrated operations alongside the Northern Alliance from infiltration of the initial SFODA's from 5th SFG, re-establishment of the Embassy in Kabul, and through TF Dagger's role in Operation Anaconda.



Task Force VIKING/N. Iraq

In 2003 LTC (ret) Mark Grdovic was the S-3 for 3/10 SFG(A) and one of the main architects of Task Force VIKING's plan for unconventional warfare (UW) in N. Iraq as part of operation IRAQI FREEDOM. This task force commanded three SOTFs and a squadron of

British SBS, two of which conducted UW with the Kurdish Peshmerga. Mark will tell us about the planning prior to the invasion, the role of the Pilot Teams and the initial Advance Force teams, the infiltration of the main body and the operations that resulted in the capture of Kirkuk and Mosul.



Shok Valley

On 6 April 2008, ODA-3336 and their Afghan commandos entered the Shok Valley in Afghanistan's Nuristan province to capture Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of the Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG).

The HIG ambushed the lead assault element in steep mountainous terrain shortly after insertion, and ferocious combat ensued at 10,000 feet for seven hours. This battle resulted in two Medals of Honor, one Air Force Cross and eight Silver Stars. Come hear MoH recipient SGM Matt Williams tell about his valiant team members and the bravery of their coalition partners.



FOB GHAZNI

On August 28, 2013, the Taliban launched a ferocious attack on Forward Operating Base (FOB) GHAZNI in Afghanistan's Ghazni province. Members of ODB-1430 were at the FOB when the Taliban

suicide bombers, disguised as Afghan soldiers, blew a 60' hole in the perimeter. The Green Berets' actions decisively repelled the enemy's attack. MoH recipient Earl Plumlee will tell of his team's valor that day alongside Polish and Afghan Soldiers.



1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) (1st SFC [A])

Deputy Commanding General (DCG) Brigadier General Gil Ferguson will host an informative, interactive discussion on how 1st SFC(A) mans, trains, equips, validates, and deploys Army Special Operations

Forces globally. We will learn about this division-sized element with corps-like responsibilities that consists of 11 subordinate brigades and more than 22,000 personnel. General Ferguson will also share with us the current state of the Special Forces Regiment and offer insights on its future.

Additional Key Events

- Medal of Honor Picnic
- Gold Star Luncheon
- 10th SFG(A) Tour
- Sporting Clay Shoot
- Volksmarch
- SF Motorcycle Ride
- Casino Night
- Manitou Springs Outing
- SF Regimental Banquet

REGISTER TODAY!

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SFA Chapter 78 July 2022 Chapter Meeting

Photos by Rick Carter, How Miller, and Lonny Holmes



1



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1. Left, Ross Andrews, the meeting's speaker, was presented with a certificate of appreciation from Chapter President Greg Horton.
2. Chapter Treasurer Richard Simonian's 90th birthday was celebrated.
3. Left, Bruce Long and, at right, John Joyce, formerly of Chapter 78 and currently a member of Chapter 51, presented a commemorative plaque to Richard on behalf of both Chapters.
4. Richard's yummy birthday cake.
5. Left to right, Len Fein, Bruce Long, Ross Andrews, and Albert Roth.
6. Tom Golden, at left, was Bruce Long's guest at the meeting.
7. Art Brown, at left, was the guest of Jim Suber, right.
8. Len Fein discussed the plans for the USS Iowa tour.
9. Jim Morris, who announced the release of his book, *The Dreaming Circus*.
10. Jim Lockhart and Ham Salley

11. Left to right, John Joyce, Lonny Holmes, Kim Holmes, Scott La Morte, and Fred Horne. The men are all members of Chapter 51, and they made the trip out from Las Vegas to help celebrate Richard Simonian's 90th birthday.
12. Art Dolic, at right, browses the merchandise John Joyce displayed from his company Excaliber Industries (xclibr.com)
13. Question: Is this the REAL Lonny Holmes? If you're not sure, read the answer below.
14. THIS is Lonny Holmes, along with his daughter Kim, and Chapter Secretary Gary Macnamara.
15. James and Susan Light
16. Left to right, Mark Miller, Len Fein, Greg Horton, Art Dolic, Bruce Long, and Ross Andrews.

Answer: No, but it is the REAL Mike Keele.